

Seven Logical Consequences of Interreligious Dialoguing: A Taxonomy of Praxis Possibilities

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Abstract: Despite the incredible amount of literature written about interreligious dialoguing, scant critical attention has been devoted to mapping out the potential logical consequences of the enterprise. This is regrettable, especially given the high hopes many expect to achieve through participation. The critical literature from various traditions was reviewed using textual criticism as the analytical lens. Seven logical outcomes were subsequently identified and explicated herein using the following taxonomy. Namely: (a) nothing happened, (b) understanding, (c) insightfulness, (d) tolerance, (e) conversion, (f) frustration, and (g) defection. It was concluded that the a priori understanding of these potential outcomes would significantly moderate future delegate expectations. In addition, professional awareness of the range, depth and contours of these dialogic consequences had important ramifications for both participant preparation and event organisation. Practical suggestions for dealing with various impediments were proffered as appropriate. Further research into this important praxis area was recommended.

Introduction

It is becoming increasingly self-evident that "religions no longer live in splendid isolation from each other" (Fredericks, 1998, p. 171). As such, this means that refusing "dialogue today could be an act of fundamental human irresponsibility--in Judeo-Christian terms, a sin" (Swidler, 1990, p. 14). So, it is not too surprising to find that much time and energy has been devoted in the recent past to official dialoguing activities throughout the world. For example, the Roman Catholic-Classical Pentecostal dialogue ran for approximately seventeen years (Sandidge, 1992) while the Roman Catholic-Lutheran dialogue lasted thirty years (Brunett, 1999). Given this incredible investment in time and energy, what outcomes can one legitimately expect from the enterprise? Despite the incredible amount of literature written about interreligious dialoguing, scant critical attention has been devoted to exploring the possible logical outcomes of all this work, and especially documented in one convenient spot. This academic deficiency was deemed in need of urgent repair. Consequently, the substantive critical literature from various traditions was reviewed, and integrated into the text to enhance narrative coherence (albeit, with a strong reportage flavour), using textual criticism as the analytical lens. This precursory

investigation revealed seven logical possibilities worthy of explication. Namely: (a) nothing happened, (b) understanding, (c) insightfulness, (d) tolerance, (e) conversion, (f) frustration, and (g) defection. The following is a brief explication of each of these outcome possibilities.

Consequence #1 - Nothing Happened: Real or Imagined?

Overlooking for the moment that dialogue can beget more dialogue, one of the first claimed results for an event is that "nothing happened." After all, as Stanley J. Samartha (1981, p. 9) pointed out: "No dialogue can ever be automatically successful" nor:

...can we forget that the discovery of truth is not inevitable. The possibility of error, distortion, and confusion are present in situations of dialogue as in any human situation. There is no guarantee that all dialogues will automatically lead the participants into fuller truth (p. 14).

Broadly speaking, "nothing happened" is a logical possibility; neither side gained nor lost anything during the process. In practice however, this response is unrealistic. Dialoguers do change as a result of exposure to knowledge and experience. Even no progress in the short-term is a result that will change expectations, attitudes and future participant behaviour in the long-term. Nor should this "nothing happened" response be dismissed automatically just because it is only a logical possibility. It is a useful pragmatic point to make to those faiths, especially new ones or ones inexperienced in dialoguing who fear contamination or conversion, and where a "the-others-weren't-affected-so-why-don't-you-try-it" style of pre-dialogue argument could be proffered for anxiety reduction reasons.

Eventually, the notion of nothing happening in the short-term can be widened to accommodate the notion of mutual transformation in the long-term. On the other hand, if the dialogue devolved into two monologues, then in reality, nothing constructive did happen; but then it would not be a dialogue (Kozlovic, 2003), whether true or otherwise! Nor would the opportunity for it present itself very soon because of this communications collapse and associated mistrust. As Norman Solomon (1991, p. 38) bluntly argued: "Missionizing undermines confidence and trust. If Christians target Jews in their "missions," there will be no dialogue; Christians will be talking to themselves, for no Jew will willingly stay to listen." This general stance is obviously antithetical to the goal of the dialogue enterprise. Religious dialoguing is not institutionalised proselytization or covert evangelism designed to change one's religious allegiance, nor is it a sublimated adjunct of religious colonialism in the form of spiritual-cum-institutional imperialism.

Consequence #2 - Understanding the Other and the Dialogic Process

Official dialoguing shows how religions feel, behave and think on various issues during the act of exchanging information, and so one "of the more obvious results of this kind of formal dialogue is the death of mythologies." Ignorance on each side about the Other is removed and a broader understanding of each other is obtained" (Sandidge, 1992, p. 243). This is always a useful first step towards understanding and growth. However, it is important to realise that understanding the Other does not necessarily mean agreeing, approving, or supporting the position of the Other. After all, one may understand, but not necessarily condone ritual sacrifice, or when Jesus Christ dealt positively with the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11 KJV) he was not recommending the life style! As the Lutheran World Federation and World Council of Churches put it: "Entering into dialogue does not mean that one supports or ascribes to the ideas or activities of the other. And dialogue does not mean that all will agree. The creative tension of mutual critique is also a part of dialogue" (Brockway & Rajashekar, 1987, p. 177). Nor can it be "expected that one renounce one's faith in order to understand another religion. If interreligious dialogue is at all possible, it is not by renouncing all proclamation, commitment, and confession" (Krieger, 1993, p. 351).

Contrary to popular belief, true dialogue is not "a form of compromise on truth" (Mitri, 1995, p. 23) and it "does not portend capitulation but interreligious understanding and the lessening of tensions" (Saliba, 1993, p. 78). Nevertheless, dialogue does involve "a continuing process of learning and re-education" (Braybrooke, 1993a, p. 108), especially since dialogue "with ecumenical partners also elicits internal dialogue with Churches" (Brunett, 1999, p. 305). Indeed, the modern American witch Marion Weinstein (1991) considered such educative exchanges to be an essential prerequisite for her pagan appreciation of holism. As she argued:

I believe deeply in the enrichment of cross-fertilization and the sharing process of spiritual traditions, rather than total superimposition of one tradition on another. I have begun to glimpse the riches of certain African and Native American magical traditions -- to name but two -- which have nourished my own work and outlook. I suspect that these traditions would be helpful to many spiritually deprived, "rational" types in the West. For me, "holistic" (which is as good a word as any for the thought-mode of occult work) means "all-inclusive"; to deny any aspect of one's own cultural heritage, or to deny the existence (in potential) of any other cultural heritage, is not holistic. It is a screening-out process -- "rational," sequential, linear and limiting. "Holistic" does not mean either/or, it does not mean instead of, or in denial of, or in replacement of. It means all-together" (pp. 264-265).

To use Karl Barth's words in a positive, revisionist way, "to dialogue with other religions was to howl with wolves ('heulen mit den Wolfen')" (Narchison, 1998, p. 61). Therefore, the greater (wolf pack?) exposure to spiritual cross-fertilisation through mutual dialoguing, the greater the information transmitted and received, and hopefully the greater the opportunity for deeper understanding. This process can create greater thirst for knowledge and even explicit calls for it, as has been reported in the past:

As we came towards the end of the three-year project people commented that they had learnt not only about other faiths, but so much more about their own beliefs and practices by having to explain them to others. Many felt a sense of loss at the thought that mutual cooperation and learning was coming to an end. As one Muslim phrased it: "We have learned to understand and trust one another; is it not possible to continue doing so?" (Hall, 1987, p. 29).

One is impelled to state an emphatic 'Yes!' And then quickly proclaim: "The symposium will end...but the dialogue must go on" (Pereira, 1987, p. 276) just as Imre Miklos, Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs in the Hungarian government did after the Budapest 1986 Catholic-Marxist Dialogue. This sort of spontaneous practical result supported Maura O'Neill's (1990, p. 104) claim that dialogue "is a commitment. The more one engages in it, the greater is the perspective and the goal" (and assuming it was true dialogue, not confrontational debate).

There are of course many benefits to be gained from dialoguing. For example, Fr. Thomas Keating (1993) reported how his encounter between Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, Native American, Protestant, Roman Catholics, Russian Orthodox and Tibetan Buddhists resulted in his group becoming more cohesive, honest and relishing the event. As he claimed:

We were surprised and delighted to find many points of similarity and convergence in our respective paths. Like most people of our time, we originally expected that we would find practically nothing in common. In the years that followed we spontaneously and somewhat hesitatingly began to take a closer look at certain points of disagreement until these became our main focus of attention. We found that discussing our points of disagreement increased the bonding of the group even more than discovering our points of agreement. We became more honest in stating frankly what we believed and why, without at the same time making any effort to convince others of our own position. We simply presented our understanding as a gift to the group (p. 108).

That very act can help participants understand the process better because dialogue "is first a practice (and a difficult one) before theories on dialogue or conclusions on the

results of dialogue are forthcoming" (Tracy, 1990, p. 76). Having experienced it in a visceral way, participants can relish the opportunity to learn from their encounters and feed this understanding back into the next one, as well as forward their fruits onto their own congregations. However, exactly what will be learnt is unclear:

...some will ask, where will it all lead? History is open-ended; interreligious dialogue, just begun, is open-ended. What the future will bring the Christian religion, we do not know. And what the future will bring the non-Christian religions, we do not know (Kung, 1988, p. 250).

Indeed, a "truly dialogical relationship has no other purpose than itself. Dialogue is the end of dialogue" (Lochhead, 1988, p. 79). However, there are at least two ways it can legitimately end. As Paul Mojzes (1989a, p. 206) put it: "one cannot speak of the "death" of dialogue, unless the partners decide to eliminate one another by warfare, or unless one or both of them should vanish as viable life styles." If war occurs, then dialogue per se has drastically failed. If religions vanish, then they have been consigned to the dustbin of history to be rediscovered, raked over and argued about by future archaeologists, historians and religionists, as currently happens with Ancient Egyptian religion.

Consequence #3 - Insightfulness into One's Own Faith and Sharing it with Coreligionists

The very act of participants conversing with other faiths can have positive personal benefits. The many "who have pioneered the search for good relations between religious communities...have found that learning about other religious traditions has helped them appreciate their own more deeply" (Braybrooke, 1993b, p. 120). In a synergistic fashion, "the power of encountering the deep faith of a religious person from another tradition has the potential of unleashing a search for one's own spiritual roots and yearnings" (Boys, Lee & Bass, 1995, p. 265). How? Because dialogue "helps any careful thinker to rediscover one's own identity. Sometimes, indeed, only such dialogue can help one discover that identity - as if for the first time" (Tracy, 1994/95, p. 109). Therefore, to ""understand" another religion in the full sense of the word can only be possible -- and responsible -- when it leads us to a more complete understanding of our own tradition, that is, when the dialogue strengthens, deepens, and completes our own faith on all levels" (Krieger, 1993, p. 353). It can do this because:

...as awareness expands, human life intensifies, moving toward the bursting of all bounds--for which all religions and other worldviews have specific terms: for example, moksha or liberation (Hindu), nirvana or "reality" (Buddhist), basileia theou

or reign of God (Christian). It is that Omega point of total awareness toward which all human life tends (Swidler, 1990, p. 71).

This phenomenon of rediscovery, strengthening and deeper appreciation was proudly proclaimed by the Christian Donald Swearer (1977, p. 20) when he said: "my involvement in the study and teaching of Buddhism has enlarged and deepened my own particular faith stance." For Revd. Paul A. Crow Jr. (2000, p. 96), his "life and understanding of the Gospel and the church were transformed" when he chose to study and then worship with the Orthodox Church. Personal religious growth was also proudly proclaimed by M. Darrol Bryant (1990, p. 20). She confessed that: "my encounter with men and women of other faiths led to a revitalization of my own faith." This positive phenomenon was also evidenced by Mary C. Boys. She proudly claimed that: "I simply cannot imagine being Catholic without being engaged with Protestants and Jews: They challenge me to new ways of understanding and proffer occasions for "holy envy," yet paradoxically deepen my own religious commitments" (Boys, Lee & Bass, 1995, p. 272). By "holy envy" she meant "experiencing something so profound in the beliefs, rituals, polity or practices of another tradition that one wishes his or her own community of faith also had (or practiced) it" (p. 273).

Such faith-stance growth can occur in two basic ways. Firstly, the participants are forced to understand their own beliefs better when intellectually challenged by competing belief systems. Especially, if Paul Mojzes' (1978, p. 11) 19th ground rule is applied, namely: "Challenge one another to be faithful to your own search for truth." This was also Revd. Crow Jr.'s (2000, p. 96) advice to those wanting to pursue the ecumenical vision as a vocation. He suggested that they: "Select some sectarian person and engage them for six months in constructive dialogue and heated debate about God's call to visible unity, diversity, and evangelization." However, before doing so officially (as opposed to unofficially, privately, personally), participants should be quite knowledgeable to start with to fulfil competency criteria (Kozlovic, 2001). Such challenges will no doubt spur on participants to do more exhaustive homework and so they will end up knowing more about the Other, which is always a useful step in the understanding process. Indeed:

It may be that what my dialogue partners will speak of is their experience of that same reality that I know in Jesus Christ as God. If so, fine; I have much to learn from them. But it may be that they will speak of something else, something of which I am even less well informed. If so, I must listen all the more intently. I will have all the more homework to do afterwards in integrating what I learn with what I thought I knew. I will need to revise not only my theology but, perchance, my metaphysics. But surely that is nothing against this approach. Surely Christians must be as open to revising metaphysics as to revising theology (Cobb Jr., 1988, p. 97).

Secondly, dialoguers can understand their own faith better by seeing it mirrored from different perspectives not previously considered. Precisely because of the mindset which is automatically inherited when learning one's own faith in its traditional religious packaging (akin to professional blindness). Therefore:

Through interreligious, interideological dialogue we will come to know better our own religious, ideological selves with all their consistencies and contradictions, their admirable and abhorrent aspects. Our dialogue partners will serve as mirrors for us, showing us our true selves. Such a prize alone is worth the price of frustration in dialogue (Swidler, 1988b, pp. 26-27).

This prized mirroring is similar to understanding a religious tradition historically, sociologically, anthropologically, psychologically, philosophically etc. The answer is not so much wrong, just different. And the more differences one gets the more comprehensive is the understanding of the totality of the religion, which can quickly exceed its traditional conceptualisation. As Avery Dulles (1992) argued:

My own involvement in ecumenism over the past forty years has led me to cherish other values. I have acquired a deeper realization of how much the Catholic Church has to contribute from the wealth of its own heritage. At the same time I have gained an enormous respect for the other churches that have venerable traditions of their own. The Orthodox, I have found, possess an immensely rich heritage of Trinitarian and sacramental piety handed down from the Eastern fathers. They have a sense of spiritual communion (or *koinonia*) that supplements and partly corrects the more legalistic approach characteristic of the West. From Lutherans and other Protestants I have learned the spiritual power of a theology of the word of God that is capable of completing and balancing the more sacramental vision of the Catholic and Orthodox churches (pp. 192-193).

In a sense, this is the religious application of the social scientist's triangulation methodology, that is, where there is "strength in the converging of weaknesses" (Williamson, Harp & Dalphin, 1977, p. 84). Or it is the equivalent of the psychologist's figure-ground perception concept (Adams, 1973). Where, for example, a black background is needed before one can truly appreciate a contrasting white foreground figure, and where white on white (or black on black) would make the figure indistinguishable. Indeed, Christian theology itself can be in peril if dialogue is eschewed. How? Because:

Many theologians have concluded that theology cannot continue to be made in isolation from an interior dialogue with other religious traditions, that in fact the future of Christian theology lies in the deepest possible assimilation of the spirit and

findings of other religions. The data from non-Christian religions has become an essential element for theological reflection... (Richard, 1981, p. 2).

Overall, dialogue requires "a willingness to be persuaded that reality might not be exactly what we thought, and that there could be some truth for us yet to learn" (Peters, 1986, p. 885). Besides, each "tradition has its blind spots. Yet by genuinely dialoguing with people deeply rooted in different faith traditions we might look for a moment through their eyes and see what our own blind spot prevents us from seeing. And this is sheer joy" (Shapiro, 1989, p. 37). Of course, this sheer joy needs to be shared, as embodied in Leonard Swidler's (1983) 2nd dialogue commandment. Namely:

Because of the "corporate" nature of interreligious dialogue...it is also necessary that each participant enter into dialogue not only with his partner across the faith line - the Lutheran with the Anglican, for example - but also with his coreligionists, with his fellow Lutherans, to share with them the fruits of the interreligious dialogue. Only thus can the whole community eventually learn and change, moving toward an ever more perceptive insight into reality (p. 2).

Raimundo Panikkar (1975) argued for the same thing in his I:9 principle:

No inter-religious dialogue can yield any fruit unless it is (at least logically and anthropologically) preceded by an intra-religious dialogue within the partners themselves...only those who can critically undergo an internal dialogue within themselves are ready for religious dialogue (p. 408).

This is one good reason why the French Bishops (Murphy, 1978, p. 150) required their dialogue participants to debate amongst their brothers in the faith (Guideline 4). Then of course, "Interreligious dialogue is also intrareligious dialogue" (Mitra, 1986, p. 122) because "Interreligious dialogue focused on justice [for example] promotes intrareligious dialogue concerning ultimate and penultimate values" (Suchocki, 1987, p. 160). Therefore, in principle, one should not tolerate limits on gaining insights, or in sharing the good news of the dialogue to all interested parties if desired and appropriate.

Consequence #4 - Tolerance and an Increase in the Public Good

During the act of listening, dialoguers are inherently forced to be tolerant of competing belief systems because they need to know what is being said fairly, accurately and correctly before they can respond appropriately. Patience and attentive perception during dialoguing:

...involves tolerating, that is, accepting, enduring, bearing, putting up with; it involves acceptance in the sense of refraining from any strong reaction to the thing in question; it is half-hearted, an attitude towards something that is not liked, loved, respected, or approved of; and it is often, though not always, understood as a praiseworthy act or virtue (Newman, 1982, p. 6).

Tolerance is thus a practical consequence because the participants are also Sources and Receivers within a transactional model of human communication (DeVito, 1991; Kozlovic, 2003). They become tolerant because of either the fear of getting-as-good-as-they-give, and/or a desire to be treated in a fair, principled way because this is the way they want to be treated (i.e., mutual respect given in a reciprocal manner). Thus, one of the biggest barriers to dialogue is quickly demolished. However, tolerance does not mean giving in, which is a useful point to stress to the more anxious faiths/religions/ participants. Also:

...the importance of interreligious dialogue is not to reach common convictions on the basis of meta-religious criteria, but to achieve an attitude of mutual respect, of mutual willingness to listen and to learn, of mutual readiness to cooperate for the well-being of all humankind in spite of our differences on the touchstones of reality (Mulder, 1989, pp. 209-210).

This was also the third criteria of Scott Daniel Dunbar's (1998, p. 456) four essential criteria for interreligious dialogue. Namely, "a mutual attitude of respect and open-mindedness, implying a willingness to learn and grow from the other." By cultivating this tolerance-inspired, open-minded mutual respect, many wonderful cooperative ventures can be achieved. For example:

Improved interreligious relations have resulted in a number of ways for Christians to join with others in the promotion of peace, justice, and the common good. Thus, a public spirituality has emerged that characterizes those who have crossed religious lines to join in special projects to negotiate the end to war, to apply moral pressure for nuclear disarmament and an end to violence as a political and social method, and to meet the needs of those who are oppressed, impoverished, and underprivileged (Borelli, 1993, p. 552).

Not only is dialoguing a significant force for societal good, but it must transcend itself to keep on doing public good otherwise stagnation sets in. Dialogue allows one to understand the Other better while learning the skills of cooperation and enriching one's faith/religious/ideological stance. In this way, dialoguing is an instrument of social change that needs to keep sharpening its tools if it is to stay pointed and relevant.

Interestingly, Robert Traer (1993, p. 115) saw dialogue as the means for fostering the legal, ethical and spiritual quest for truth and religious freedom. How? Because to "pursue the truth, without standing up for the rights of others to pursue the truth in their own ways, as religious communities and individually within those communities, would be to reduce freedom to privileged piety." This attitude fits in nicely with Prof. Michael Pye's (2001, p. 5) advocated concept of "soft" dialogue, namely, dialogue that is "gentle, patient, imaginative and creative, leaving many questions open for future consideration." Therefore, if dialoguers' tools are not kept pointed and relevant, if the pursuit of truth and religious freedom is abandoned, and if "soft" styles of dialogue are not actively encouraged, then the consequences can be disastrous. As Prof. Mallam Ishaq Oloyede reminded his fellow conference delegates: "the only alternative to dialogue is conflict; if you believe dialogue is bad, war is worse" (quoted in Blombery, 1991, p. 30)! On the other hand, it appears that for some Fundamentalists, war may be a preferable option to their biggest and repeatedly expressed fear, namely, the spectre of conversion (Dhalla, 1989, p. 39; Klenicki, 1984, p. 102).

Consequence #5 - Conversion: How to Ameliorate the Fear?

Although De Silva claimed in his 1st dialogue aspect that dialogue "does not in any way diminish full and loyal commitment to one's own faith, but rather enriches and strengthens it" (quoted in Samartha, 1981, p. 59), this claim is not strictly true. Dialogue can be like that, and for many, it is like that, but for others, dialogue poses a serious challenge. Not surprisingly, sympathy, tolerance and being truthful to oneself, to the Other and to God can seriously disturb believers' predetermined faith commitments and related loyalties. How? Because:

...we may find the very foundation of those things we cherish most deeply shaken in ways we did not anticipate and do not want. Many a theological student has become involved in study of and conversation with other faith traditions only to find him - or herself uprooted and disconnected from previously sustaining elements of Christian faith (Smith, 1991, p. 72).

Such an exposure can nurture strong pro-Other feelings and tempt believers to convert, a phenomenon that Sarah Cunningham (1987, p. 11) referred to as "co-

optation." This is an occupational hazard for interreligious dialoguers and akin to the Human Resource Manager who after giving a staff course on career planning, follows his own advice and leaves his own company for greener pastures.

Indeed, many conversion accounts exist within the literature (Carmel, 1968; Gruss, 1979), and it is a potential outcome openly conceded by many dialoguers. For example, Philip H. Hwang (1989) argued:

...we must admit the genuine possibility for us to be converted to other religions. If we are really open-minded and honestly acknowledge the similarities and differences between religions, in the due process of time, it is quite possible to come to believe that the religions of other people are somehow much better than ours in many ways... one must be willing to be converted, and risk all the consequences. Unless, we seriously entertain this sad thing, yes it is a sad possibility, we will not have a genuine dialogue (p. 13).

Or as David J. Hesselgrave (1978, p. 227) flippantly put it: "about all one can lose in interreligious dialogue is face and faith." For professed true believers, loss of their faith is something to really fear, and which dialogue organisers should address by stressing that this is not the explicit intent of dialoguing (even if it is a potential outcome). For example, Jean-Claude Basset (1992) boldly asserted in his 10th rule:

...dialogue should not coerce anybody into renouncing his or her convictions, even missionary. Instead it should offer a space where everybody may give witness to one's living faith, with its certainties, questions and expectations. To renounce envy for the spiritual and social strengths of other communities, rejoicing at their deficiencies and difficulties, and even more so, not attempting to subvert their destiny, rules out neither emulation in human solidarity, nor the quest for truth (p. 39).

Similarly, Paul Mojzes (1978, p. 11) stated in his 24th ground rule that: "You must not try to convert your partner, or the dialogue may turn again into a monologue." Indeed, a "fundamental ground rule for any dialogue between Christians and Jews must be this: there can never be a question of Christians attempting to convert Jews to Christianity" (Cox, 1989, p. 121). Instead, true "interreligious dialogue must deepen and purify all religions and, in a certain sense, preserve their uniqueness" (Krieger, 1993, p. 353).

Unfortunately, some dialoguers believe otherwise. As one Christian said: "Our aim will be that the Muslim should be converted to faith in Jesus Christ...[on the grounds that] he may well despise the lack of sure faith implied by a form of dialogue which does not seek to convince and convert him" (Goldsmith, 1982, pp. 120-121)! Its Muslim equivalent is just as worrying: "Thanks to your democratic laws [Christian]

we will invade you: thanks to our religious laws [Islamic] we will dominate you" (Bernardini, 2000, p. 53)! During the three-day Budapest 1986 Catholic-Marxist Dialogue: "One thing was clear to the Catholics: their partners in dialogue wanted to remain Marxists; they were not ready to abandon metaphysical materialism or atheism" (Pereira, 1987, p. 275). Nor should they be expected too if they were not convinced otherwise by faith, logic or God!

Fortunately, there are many useful strategies to ameliorate the fear of conversion. Firstly, be frank about such conversion possibilities, and point out that in well run dialogues the event organisers will be addressing the problem. Secondly, by asking participants to invoke the power of their own protective deities for comfort and security (e.g., God, Archangel Michael, Krishna, Sai Baba) with appropriate scriptural recitations if needed. For example, for Christians, reminding them of Matthew 18:20 (KJV): "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" keeping a watchful eye out. Thirdly, by repeating Ted Peters (1986) logical argument:

Yes, it is quite likely that dialogue will change our minds. But there is absolutely nothing to fear on this score. If the God in whom we believe is in fact the creator and reconciler of the cosmos, then there is no truth - if it be genuine truth and not just partisan propaganda - that we could ever learn that could possibly lead us away from God (p. 885).

This tactic is highly recommended. Fourthly, if more support is needed, then a useful strategy is to point to the need for a common meeting ground. Put another way: "While neither partner is out to "convert" the other, the element of conversion in this sense of metanoia must be there in the heart of both. It is in this sense that we see the dialogical process as 'creating one heart'" (Coff, 1989, p. 210). In fact, the Christian M. Thomas Thangaraj (1991) saw mutually beneficial conversion as a necessity for *missio ecclesiae*, but one which also needed to contain elements of responsibility and regard for the Other. As he argued:

The church will and should continue to bear witness to the love of God expressed in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ; but it can do so only in a setting of mutual witness, allowing our partners in dialogue to witness to us regarding their experience and vision of the mighty and salvific acts of God. Similarly, conversion will have to be defined as a two-way traffic wherein we are all converted to and by each other, which is different from an understanding of conversion as contributing to church growth (p. 175).

In short, conversion is positively characterised as a means of creating Coff's (1989, p. 210) "one heart," the soft form of positive conversion. Fifthly, Arvind Sharma (1998) posited the following argument for the anxious believers:

In a dialogical situation...truth is indivisible - I have it, but you may have it too. In order for both of us to share it, if both of us have it in some sense, it must find a place in-between us. I do not have to go over to your side; you do not have to come over to my side; it is still indivisible and it can still be shared but by perambulation (from side to side) rather than transition (from one side to another) (p. 36).

That is, the spaces betwixt faiths/religions where one can safely meet. Sixthly, for those still fearful of conversion, another tactic is to point to the method of the Permanent Council of the French Bishops for forestalling potential loss of faith (Murphy, 1978, p. 150). Namely, to debate the different options and social commitments amongst brothers in the faith within the Church (Guideline 4). And secondly, to intellectually apply themselves to the renewal of their faith, and the knowledge of the word of God, within the Church (Guideline 5).

Curiously, Paul Mojzes (1989b, p. 4) noted how this fear of conversion plus love for the Others' truths prompted some religionists to adopt both religions. "Some people are so fundamentally affected by their experience with two or more religions that they feel justified in regarding themselves as adherents of more than one religion (not a novel experience in the Orient but increasingly commonplace in the West)." This "dual religious citizenship" (Jochim, 1995, p. 36) was formally evidenced by Charles Wei-hsun Fu (Taoist/Buddhist), Raimundo Panikkar (Catholic/Hindu/Buddhist), and Bibhuti S. Yadav (Hindu/Buddhist) as documented in Leonard Swidler's (1988a, pp. 254-256) *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*. Dom Bede Griffiths is another prominent example of dual religious citizenship. Originally a Benedictine monk of Prinknash Abbey and then Prior of Farnborough Abbey in England, he went to India in 1955 to help found Kurisumala Ashram, a monastery of the Syrian rite in Kerala. However, he was soon dissatisfied with his original religious tradition and so sought a fusion between Judaic and Vedic revelations, which he described in *The Marriage of East and West* as follows:

I had begun to find that there was something lacking not only in the Western world but in the Western Church. We were living from one half of our soul, from the conscious, rational level and we needed to discover the other half, the unconscious, intuitive dimension. I wanted to experience in my life the marriage of these two dimensions of human existence, the rational and intuitive, the conscious and unconscious, the masculine and the feminine. I wanted to find the way to the marriage of East and West (Griffiths, 1982, p. 8).

He did this by courageously crossing formal faith lines and searching for his lost half. Indeed, it could be argued that Charles Wei-hsun Fu, Raimundo Panikkar, Bibhuti Yadav and Dom Bede Griffiths are the human embodiments of interreligious dialogue. They also appear to be interreligious equivalents of the Hindu saint Ramakrishna whose:

...hunger for experience of the Divine led him to try various religions. As a Hindu he practiced yoga and worshipped in the spirit of bhakta (that is, he sought God through faith and devotion); he in turn became a Jain, a Buddhist, a Muslim, and a Christian. As a Shakta he experienced Brahman; as a Muslim he experienced God as Allah; as a Christian he knew God in Christ (Christian, 1973, p. 436).

It was a very instructive form of personalised revelatory ecumenism.

Consequence #6 - Frustration: Suppressed Desire?

Whatever the dialogue journey, one is going to be frustrated and experience religious angst at some point along the way. For example, Fundamentalists (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons) may be disappointed that their biblically based words of wisdom did not result in the Other's faith transformation. That is, they did not see the light, a literal expectation of other Fundamentalists who only need to feel the Holy Ghost (via glossolalia?) to expect instantaneous conversion, and/or to attribute it to the sinners' acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour (e.g., Christian Revivalism). In a very real sense, even if unarticulated or unconscious, direct or indirect, they expect the words to have mystical or quasi-mystical properties which can trigger conversion experiences, to be "born again" (John 3:3 KJV). Or at least to protect them as evidenced by Christians who recite The Lord's Prayer, Hare Krishna's who chant the Maha-mantra, or Swami Muktananda's and Swami Sivananda's devotees who sing the Om Namah Sivaya mantra to disperse negativity. In fact, every major religion has sacred words of power (Crowley & Crowley, 1991), and which can be effectively integrated into official dialogue events as stress reducers and anxiety comforters as appropriate.

Regardless of whether this mystical conception of born-again dialogue has any ontological reality within official dialogue events, it may still be a dangerous attitude. Why? Because any expectation of instantaneous faith change triggered by words is not dialogue per se. Rather, it is a deliberate (surreptitious?) conversion attempt, and thus a gross violation of both Jean-Claude Basset's (1992) 10th decalogue item and Paul Mojzes' (1978) 24th ground rule which expressly forbids conversion attempts. Indeed, such an expectation is itself an indication of a profound misunderstanding of the human-human dialogic process (Kozlovic, 2003), and an indication of an organisational error, namely, poor personnel selection (Kozlovic, 2001). Dialogue

participants who purposely behave like this, as opposed to letting it happen "naturally," should not have been selected as official delegates. Interestingly, the evangelical Christian, Virginia Ramey Mollenkott (1987) offered the following useful comments to those offended by proselytising Fundamentalists:

The best advise I can offer to people who are disturbed by fundamentalist attempts to proselytize is to publicize broadly and repeatedly the distinction between psychological manipulation, materialistic inducement, and unethical coercion on the one hand, and simple communication of the facts of one's spiritual journey on the other (p. 63).

When such unobtrusive-looking, faith-based conversion attempts fail, then these same Fundamentalists may begin to feel personally inadequate in getting their religious points across and/or in failing to get a positive outcome for the Lord. However, this phenomenon may not be limited to just Fundamentalists. All dialoguers at some point are going to feel less than content about their performances. And then attribute this to some personal defect or past failing; as indicated by Eric Sharpe's (1992, p. 232) teaching tale about the ginger tom cat and its fearful memory of him. Nonetheless, it is to be expected, judged accordingly, and dare it be said, event organisers should not pussyfoot around the issue.

Participants may feel inadequate and frustrated because, in the dialogue context, they can no longer rely upon the following old argument form: "we-believe-in-X-because-we-are-Y-and-that-is-what-Y's-believe-in." Other delegates may not be impressed by this circular logic. Yet again, such an attempt would be the result of a misunderstanding of the non-conversion nature of the dialogic process, and of ignoring the basic point that no faith/religion/ideology has a monopoly on truth. Indeed, Paul Mojzes' (1978, p. 11) 24th ground rule is useful to recite here. Namely: "Neither's truth is absolute. Each partner needs the Other in order to get a more complete picture of the truth. Monopoly in thought leads to sluggishness in thinking and to the perversion of truth." Or as it was artistically expressed by the mystical poet Kahlil Gibran (1979, p. 66) in *The Prophet*: "Say not, "I have found the truth," but rather, "I have found a truth" [my emphasis].

For the philosophically inclined, Marcus Braybrooke's (1993a, p. 107) comment echoing the *neti-neti* tradition of Hinduism is proffered: "The Divine transcends our human thought and language and this involves a recognition of the relativity of all religious language and symbols. This "forbids any one religion from having the 'only' or 'final' word.'" For participants inclined to using fiction to nourish their faith then the following Idries Shah's (1973) Sufi teaching story *The Blind Ones and the Matter of the Elephant* is recommended:

Beyond Ghor there was a city. All its inhabitants were blind. A king with his entourage arrived near by; he brought his army and camped in the desert. He had a mighty elephant, which he used in attack and to increase the people's awe. The populace became anxious to see the elephant, and some sightless from among this blind community ran like fools to find it. As they did not even know the form or shape of the elephant they groped sightlessly, gathering information by touching some part of it. Each thought he knew something, because he could feel a part. When they returned to their fellow-citizens eager groups clustered around them. Each of these was anxious, misguidedly, to learn the truth from those who were themselves astray. They asked about the form, the shape of the elephant: and listened to all they were told.

The man whose hand had reached an ear was asked about the elephant's nature. He said: 'It is large, rough thing, wide and broad like a rug.' And the one who had felt the trunk said: 'I have the real facts about it. It is like a straight and hollow pipe, awful and destructive.' The one who had felt its feet and legs said" 'It is mighty and firm, like a pillar.' Each had felt some part out of many. Each had perceived it wrongly. No mind knew all: knowledge is not the companion of the blind. All imagined something, something incorrect (p. 25).

Feelings of inadequacy or frustration may exist because dialoguers looked at only part of the truth, which did not match the other parts of the truth, which their dialogue partners examined. Of course, this may also be an administrative function of the complexity of the topic, the number of participants involved, and the time available for such discussions.

Frustration can also arise because the dialogue has failed to meet the concerns of the participants, however conceived. For example, Letty Cottin Pogrebin's black-Jewish women's group petered out within two years, despite Maura O'Neill's (1990) thesis that women dialoguing together to avoid androcentric biases would achieve some form of feminist utopia. Or at least to help compensate for Ursula King's (1998, p. 43) complaint about female invisibility, marginalisation and exclusion which resembled "what the French call 'un dialogue des sourds' (a dialogue of the deaf)." When Letty asked an ex-member why people stopped coming to the black-Jewish dialogue she was curtly told:

"You Jews have to stop acting like God's chosen people," she barked, her eyes hard and angry. "The world doesn't revolve around you. Relations with Jews are not a priority for most African-Americans; our main concern is survival" "...In other words, blacks worry about their actual conditions and fear for the present; Jews worry about their history and fear for the future (Pogrebin & Hutchinson, 1994, p. 220).

However, this frustration source can be attributable to the administrative failure of not setting a mutually beneficial agenda, and then not ensuring its ongoing relevance and maintenance throughout the course of the dialogue. This is also an apt reminder that "post-patriarchal dialogue" (King, 1998, p. 52), in this gender exclusivist way, is not an automatic panacea for feminist ills.

As an important corollary of the above problems, feelings of inadequacy can manifest themselves as personal depression and/or devalued self-esteem for letting down the faith/religion/ideological team. After all, the "sheer psychological difficulty for some Christians of entering into such a dialogue in depth should not be underestimated" (Sharpe, 1977, p. 142). However, Paul Mojzes' (1978, p. 11) 15th ground rule is of some comfort here, namely: "Do not assume that the conclusions reached are final. There will always be a need for continual dialogue regarding these views." Not surprisingly, feelings of frustration can elicit violent impulses from even experienced, knowledgeable and respected dialoguers, such as Prof. Harvey Cox (1989, p. 98). He toured Jerusalem and engaged in an informal conversation with an independent American Christian evangelist who had just recounted a phantasmagoric end-time scenario. As he reported: "I was appalled. A strange impulse to reach out and strangle my new unsought acquaintance rose in me, then subsided." Admittedly, it was an informal conversation, but one can imagine similar feelings arising during formal dialogues (e.g., Peters, 1986, p. 883). Prof. Cox's (1989) solution of allowing the violent impulse to subside seems a wise first step, whatever the situation.

Frustration and religious angst may also arise out of the fear of syncretism (i.e., the fusing of all the world religions) or the fear of indifferentism (i.e., ignoring the basic distinctive elements of each faith). However, they have to be balanced against the positive gains made. Syncretism and indifferentism may just be another way of saying "progress;" especially for those religions that found a way around their old theological stalemates (e.g., the Uniting Church formed from three different denominations). As De Silva argued in his 2nd dialogue aspect: "Dialogue, far from being a temptation to syncretism, is a safeguard against it, because in dialogue we get to know one another's faith in depth. One's own faith is tested and refined and sharpened thereby. The real test of faith is faiths-in-relation" (quoted in Samartha, 1981, p. 59).

For intrareligious dialoguers aiming for an ecumenical vision, then Revd. Crow Jr.'s (2000, p. 96) advice is pertinent. Namely, "Practice patience, perseverance, spiritual tenacity, and confidence in God's power to renew and reconcile God's people." Or as Arnold D. Hunt (1975) put it: "The Christian engaged in dialogue has to trust the Holy Spirit and believe that the outcome is in God's hands." For those Christians still frustrated, then the following rationale is advocated:

A simple, overarching, organic, world religion-ideology is not the goal of interreligious, interideological dialogue. Rather, the goals could be said to be three: (1) to know oneself ever more profoundly; (2) to know the other ever more authentically; (3) to live ever more fully accordingly (Swidler, 1988b, p. 26).

This statement could form the motto, credo and mission statement of the religious dialogue enterprise. Of course, this does not mean that dialoguing is not subjected to potentially unsavoury problems, it is, but as Brockway and Rajashekar (1987) advised:

Church groups should discuss, though not be discouraged by, potential local problems that may arise from dialogue with people of new religious movements: will it imply an endorsement of the group and/or its activities? Will it merely provide an easy forum for the mission of the new religious movement? (pp. 177-178).

Even if these suspicions are true, although it may initially provide a superficial veneer of respectability-by-association, and a platform for doctrinal dissemination, it will not be able to sustain it if the inherent nature of the message is defective. Indeed, for the suspicious, what better way to reveal deficiencies than by listening to it straight from the proverbial horse's mouth. After all, to be fair and rational, one must first listen then consider before passing judgment. Nor does it mean that dialoguing is immune from being used for unsavoury purposes; that view would also be naive. Why? Because:

...one must not forget the political motives or purposes of the dialogue. This may be to gain a greater measure of religious or political freedom, to obtain political support for specific measures, especially those unpopular and not so easily achievable without the support of the other, and so forth. Sometimes such purposes are not primary and often they are part of the "hidden agenda." When political motives emerge as the primary purpose of the dialogue, the chances are that no real dialogue will take place or that it will soon deteriorate. The fate of the dialogue often depends on oscillating political contingencies (Mojzes, 1989a, pp. 202-203).

Whether these contingencies turn out to be important factors in any particular dialogue or not, there is always the distinct possibility of failure because the Other's (perceived?) (mis?)behaviour has generated unsavoury consequences.

Consequence #7 - Defection and Beyond: Confirmation of the Worst?

This problem is an extension of the above-mentioned conversion and frustration fears, but with far more devastating consequences, namely, the failure of "conceptual ahimsa where religious differences are communicated without harm" (Dunbar, 1998, p. 462). For example, Christians may conclude that New Religious Movements (NRM) are some form of evil incarnate. Thus dismissing the whole dialogue enterprise as "New Age thinking", seeing behind it 'a neo-Hindu-Buddhist plot' for the 'spiritual takeover' of the West" (Ariarajah, 1998, p. 14). This view can result in a deterioration of relations between faiths (and the dialogue organisers). The decline may start as a person-to-person dispute, but it can inevitably translate into a religion-to-religion dispute with the equally inevitable rebuffs. The reporting of this "failure" being relayed to coreligionists and further polluting their minds with anti-dialogue, and anti-religious sentiments about the Other. For example, an informal meeting occurred between Jehovah's Witnesses and Orthodox Christians which was reported to the Orthodox congregation as follows:

Recently I had an encounter with a young woman from the cult of the Jehovah's Witnesses. She came to my office ostensibly to ask some questions about the Orthodox faith with an Orthodox friend of hers. She then promptly proceeded to lead me through the New World mistranslation of the Bible trying to prove to me that the Kingdom of God was a future situation in which Christ would establish His rule over the earth and we would all live in Paradise. Eventually I asked her a question - 'Have you experienced the kingdom of God?' She did not know what I was talking about. How irrelevant is a gospel which has nothing to say about the existential concerns of humanity which is only concerned with speculation about the future state - even the Marxists can do better than that (Bozikis, 1999, p. 4).

Regrettably, the Revd. Anastasios Bozikis was very unkind and uncharitable by character assassinating both her and the Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) faith. He did this by:

- (a) Using the negative, emotionally loaded word "cult" to describe her faith/religion.
- (b) By comparing JWs to "Marxists" (i.e., religionists with non-religionists).
- (c) By being derogatory and inferring that she/JWs were less competent than atheists.
- (d) By (unnecessarily) ridiculing the JWs sacred text, the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures by calling it the "New World mistranslation of the Bible."

- (e) By suggesting that the JW "gospel" was "irrelevant" (not to JW's!).
- (f) Because a young (brave?, curious?) woman (possibly academically mismatched compared to the Revd.) was (supposedly) stumped by a (tangential?) question.
- (g) Even if true, it was unfair because she was seeking scriptural answers rooted in the Bible as opposed to the Reverend's non-scriptural, existential reply (for oneupmanship reasons?).
- (h) Which (unfairly) indicated to the Revd. that the JW religion was (supposedly) invalid.
- (i) And by (unnecessarily) inferring that this woman had a covert mission against the (misogynist?, affronted?) Revd. instead of an obviously keen desire to debate a scriptural point in his offices (i.e., his home turf) in the company of a fellow Orthodox (but not JW) companion.

If this was the type of response at the level of informal interreligious communications, one wonders what interreligious stress could be generated at the official dialogue level?! Nor is such a worrying scenario of contempt restricted to immature, new or foreign religions and their devotees. For example, Allan R. Brockway (1987) was secretary for Christian-Jewish relations in the World Council of Churches. He reported how an essentially nonreligious, a-theological criteria prevented interreligious dialogue with a New Religious Movement. As he reported:

A case in point is the Unification Church, which has undertaken the most extensive program of inter-religious dialogue now existing in the world. To date, we have not accepted the oft-repeated invitation to participate in the dialogue it sponsors, but, on the contrary, have shied away from it almost to the extent of being unwilling to speak with Unification members. The operative criterion for this functional decision seems to have been a negative evaluation of some of the practices of the Unification Church, including (but not limited to) the identification of the Unification organization, Causa, with right-wing dictatorships in Latin America; the conducting of multiple marriages; and "brain-washing" in recruitment... (pp. 3-4).

Although there were dialogical concerns about Revd. Sun Myung Moon's Moonies (Moss & Chryssides, 1986), and their faith was the subject of numerous exposes (Streiker, 1978), at least Brockway had courageously acted. Firstly, by acknowledging the fact of their less desirable behaviour. Secondly, by realising that each religion had and still has its obnoxious elements. Thirdly, by identifying the need to discuss the matter with each other. And fifthly, by developing ways to make better decisions

about similar New Religious Movements in the future. Cult/NRM scholar J. Gordon Melton (2000) came to a similar realisation. As he confessed:

Several approaches have dominated our response to New Religions over the past generation. Overwhelmingly, of course, we have simply ignored them. They have not been taken seriously as religious communities, and their leaders have not been seen as thinkers with a worthy perspective. Why waste time with shallow amateurs? With a Karl Barth, a Karl Rahner, or a Carl Henry to read, why would we ever pick up a book by an Aleister Crowley, L. Ron Hubbard, or Maharishi Mehesh Yogi? It has been much easier to keep the wickedest man in the world, a mere science-fiction writer, or the giggling guru at arms length. In doing so, we miss the fact that many who have read their writings had found them to be quite mature, if unconventional, thinkers (p. 93).

Then of course there is the problem of the suppression and/or subversion of issues during dialogues. For example, Sr. Ann Gillen (1987) reported her disenchantment at the Copenhagen 1980 United Nations Conference on Women. As he complained:

In my opinion and from my perspective, Western groups, including those from the United States and Israel, came ready to dialogue; the opposing coalition came determined not to dialogue but to dominate - both at the official meetings and at the Almager nongovernmental-organizational meetings. They came better prepared for that purpose, with their "goon squad" tactics. So, Copenhagen was a painful experience in power and powerlessness. As a woman of faith, I shared in the frustration of women who saw their hopes for the agenda subverted. In a special way I shared in the powerlessness of Jewish and Ukrainian women, both minorities scorned by the powerful at Copenhagen (p. 137).

It was a situation that Sr. Gillen attributed to anti-Semitism, and the desire to censor the stories of Soviet-generated suffering and oppression (in which case the goon squad tactics were easily identifiable trademarks). Regrettably, censoring dialogues runs the danger of isolating individual dialogues from each other, and of losing sight of the precious indivisibility of the interfaith movement (Meyer, 1991, p. 281).

Another stage in this deterioration process is the public denouncement of the Other's faith. For example, Juliet Sheen (1994) reported how in Geneva 1984 she attended a United Nations Seminar on encouraging understanding, tolerance and respect for religion and belief when:

A vehemently anti-semitic address by the Saudi Arabian delegate shocked the Seminar delegates. He was quoting from materials about the medieval blood libel

which he had learned in theology in university and had never questioned ...his deluge of century-old hate... (p. 16).

For a more public denunciation, one need only recall Revd. Ian Paisley's Pope-heckling, Anti-Christ accusations, and the deliberate, loutish disruption of ecumenical services, and the associated placard parades (Bruce, 1986, pp. 215, 216, 228). Despite years of contact with the Roman Catholic Church, this particular Free Presbyterian still had grave difficulties and brought shame upon himself and his faith before the whole world. From a public relations perspective, such behaviour is a disaster for the Free Presbyterians. However, it was a godsend for the Roman Catholics who repeatedly showed calmness, magnanimity and maturity while under fire, as well as toughness and organisational competence in dealing with Revd. Paisley in his obnoxious mode.

Although not as dramatic, Colin Brown (1992, p. 3) reported how some anti-intellectual Fundamentalists counter-attacked using a variety of biblically based passages. Such as: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of this world and not after Christ.' (Colossians 2:8)." However, the huge range of possible scriptural retorts was not documented. The one good thing about virulent opposition however, is that it can quickly burn itself out: "Presumably no one who has responded negatively to that exposure...is bothering to be engaged in further, on-going dialogue" (King, 1990, p. 122). Indeed, if such negative delegates persisted then it is another indication of organisational failure in weeding out such undesirables (Kozlovic, 2001).

Another unfortunate characteristic of denouncers is their frequent failure to find out what exactly triggered their wrath and then the means of resolving it. For example, during the Nairobi 1975 World Council of Churches' Fifth Assembly: "Serious confrontation between delegates did take place. There were some who considered "non-Christian" religions as demonic and were opposed to any kind of dialogue or efforts at seeking community with them" (Samartha, 1981, p. 51). Fortunately, the victims of this abuse were nonplussed and exhibited professional poise, tolerance and quick-wittedness far in excess of their detractor's behaviour:

The missiologist who described all non-Christian religions as demonic missed the chance of personally meeting these "non-Christian" guests to discover and perhaps battle with "demonic" elements in them. At least one of the guests [comprising of Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim & Sikh representatives] expressed disappointment that no one among those who talked loudest about proclamation actually came to him or others personally to proclaim the love of God in Jesus Christ (Samartha, 1981, p. 57).

Far worse than disillusioned participants avoiding future dialogues is to deliberately oppose the Other. One has only to look at some Iranian Muslim's perceptions of America as Satan incarnate, and their numerous attacks (polemical, physical and deadly) to see this regrettable possibility in action. Disillusionment can also manifest itself as increased proselytising activity, and faith reinforcing behaviour of the type demonstrated in Festinger, Riecken and Schachter's (1956) study of UFO cult believers.

Of course, proselytising activity is not necessarily a direct result of dialoguing, but the possibility of a faith/religion/ideology using the dialogue for political gain is potentially there. Paul Mojzes (1989a, pp. 202-203) warned about his, while Sara S. Lee (1991, p. 189) nervously reported: "Needless to say the recent desecration of Torah scrolls in a Brooklyn synagogue reinforces Jewish fears of anti-Semitism and reminds all of us that such fears are certainly not groundless." Then there are the conflicts that result directly from interreligious dialoguing itself. For example:

It happened at a recent interreligious gathering. At the other end of the building, in the meditation room, some members of our group were learning Zen techniques while the rest of us sat in the Gothic chapel waiting for mass to begin. Suddenly a commotion broke out in the chancel. A Catholic priest from Tibet had grabbed the microphone and was shouting something about Jesus Christ being the "only way, the truth and the life!" A couple of other priests chased him around, trying to grab the microphone. Then two men leaped out of the pews and joined the melee. I thought to myself. "Yes, now I see that religious wars are possible. When the attackers found they couldn't bodily throw the interloper out without losing every sense of dignity and decorum, the presiding priest asked us all to leave and announced the mass would be held in another room. Most left. I stayed, and so did a dozen others. We listened to the priest's impassioned rebuke. We were selling out our Christian faith, he said. The very fact that we were conversing with "Buddhist idolators" was evidence that we had lost our commitment to the Christ of God "who alone can bring us out of darkness into the light." To conclude, he bowed and prayed for our souls (Peters, 1986, p. 883).

One imagines that such wayward guests are comparatively rare, but nonetheless, it does indicate that dialogue organisers need to be prepared for many possible contingencies. Another regrettable manifestation of dialogue participation is when the religion's members begin to lose faith in their own representatives, and then nastily turn on them:

Often those who have pioneered the search for good relations between religious communities have faced misunderstanding and even hostility in their own faith community. They have been accused of compromising or "watering down" the distinctive beliefs of their own religious traditions (Braybrooke, 1993b, p. 120).

Prof. Harvey Cox (1989, p. 17) was keenly aware of this possibility. As he reported: "One of the risks [of dialoguing] is running the possibility of being viewed by one's coreligionists with suspicion or distrust." Indeed, "people in any religious tradition who are committed to dialogue often find themselves upbraided as turncoats by their own brothers and sisters" (Cox, 1989, p. 2). For example, Methodist minister Revd. Paula Niukula was considered:

...a great man who had done so much to try and promote dialogue and understanding among the various religious and racial groups in Fiji. [However, for]...his efforts he even had at times to suffer being ostracised by some members of his own Church who felt he was going too far in his outreach to people of other faiths (Ahern, 1998, p. 3).

However, Prof. Cox's (1989, p. 18) solution to the problem was, in principle, simple. Namely: "Perhaps the most unexpected thing I have learned in the dialogue with people of other religions is how important it is for me to keep in touch with those of my own faith community who remain suspicious and fearful of that dialogue." Unfortunately, this solution is not always effective if politicking was involved, for as Leonard Swidler (1990) noted regarding a Christian-Marxist dialogue:

One notorious example on the Christian side was that of Salesian priest Guido Girardi, who for his continued dialogue with Marxists was fired from the Salesian University in Rome and in September 1977 was expelled from the Salesian Society. A similar fate overtook Roger Garaudy, Milan Machovec, Adam Schaff, and scores of other Marxist scholars. Dialogue was obvious perceived by the power brokers as an activity dangerous to them--and correctly so (p. 177).

Coreligionist contact is indeed important, but to avoid future unsavoury incidents, the dialoguer's congregation should be regularly briefed and debriefed per dialogue (if only as a courtesy gesture), and by consciously deciding to eschew politicking. However, even sharing one's insights about religious Others has its inherent dangers. As Kenneth Cracknell (1987) reported:

I am...utterly lost for a response when I, or any other fellow-Christian, am reproached for sharing in a meeting organized by the Unificationists or Scientologists, or for visiting and accepting the hospitality of Rajneeshies or Hare Krishna devotees. Our very being there is a form of authentic witness... (p. 164).

Fortunately, his subsequent logical argument provided another potential solution to the problem:

For Christians to draw boundaries and establish frontiers over which neither they nor their fellow-Christians have to pass seems to me morally and theologically wrong. Some urge for example that to talk to members of NRMs [New Religious Movements] "gives them credibility", but I hear this as the sub-ethical language of diplomacy; others speak of rubbing shoulders with heretics, but I hear this as the language of the Inquisition; others fear the contamination of the "demonic", but I know this is to under-rate the expulsive power of the Holy Spirit; others suggest that NRMs need "prophetic denunciation" but such denunciations may well prevent us from hearing what God might be wishing to say to us through such movements... We cannot talk with people who have no wish to talk with us, but where ever there are those who would enter into dialogue with us, we cannot refuse. There are no limits to be set to dialogue (p. 165).

This advice also makes good rational, academic sense.

Conclusion

Clearly, there is more to religious dialoguing than first meets the eye! An a priori understanding of the above logical possibilities, practical outcomes and potential solutions would significantly moderate delegate expectations for future events. Professional awareness of the range, depth and contours of these dialogic consequences would also have important ramifications for both participant preparation and event organisation and hopefully lead to more fruitful engagements. After all, to be forewarned is to be forearmed. Therefore, the sooner the profession acknowledges these outcome contours, and actively encourages dialogue participation (Kozlovic, 2002), the more successful will future events become. In addition to enhancing the interpersonal growth of participants, and lessening the chances of stagnation, decay or death of the entire enterprise. Further research into this important praxis area is warranted, highly recommended and certainly long overdue.

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