



*Liberal
theology in
a changing
world*

Interfaith priorities

Marcus Braybrooke

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Interfaith priorities

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The moral rights of the author have been asserted.

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He is author of over 40 books on world religions and Christianity and has edited several anthologies of prayers and meditations, including *1,000 World Prayers* and *Life Lines*. His latest book is *A Heart for the World: the Interfaith Alternative* published by John Hunt, www.o-et, from which some of the material used in this article is taken.

Interfaith Priorities

Key Points

It is important for Anglicans to distinguish clearly what is central to their faith and practice from what is cultural and traditional and therefore open to change.

It is important that members of the Anglican communion are encouraged to study scripture and inherited teachings in an intelligent, open-minded and critical way.

Anglicans have a responsibility to encourage, both among their members and the wider public, a proper understanding of other religions and ‘not to bear false witness’.

Anglicans should take the initiative in encouraging personal meetings with people of other faiths – maybe for young people at camps or on the football pitch or in joint action to protect the environment. Churches could have an annual ‘open day’ for guests from other religions.

It is also vital that Anglicans join with others in the search for a more just and peaceful world, based on the values that we share.

A major contribution that Anglicans can make to a better world is to affirm there is One God of all people, although our pictures of God may differ and we may worship God in different ways. We need to see religious differences not as a threat but as an enrichment.

The search for a new world order is essentially the search for a world society shaped by shared moral values. If the Anglican Church could encourage people of all faiths to affirm and practise the values that they share, they would help to ensure that faith is good news and has a vital contribution to make to the healing of the nations.

Religion: Good or Bad News?

Christians have good news of God's reconciling love in Jesus Christ to share with others, but for many people religion is bad news. It creates barriers and is a cause of division within societies and in world affairs. It is too often linked to violence and associated with a fundamentalist rejection of the modern world. It has been said that the question today is what is true religion not what is *the* true religion?

There is, of course, much positive and encouraging interfaith work in many parts of the world, some of which has already been highlighted in the document *Jews, Christians and Muslims: the Way of Dialogue*, which was commended by the 1988 Lambeth Conference.¹ It also needs to be remembered that the relationship between members of different world religions varies from country to country and from continent to continent. Clearly members of the Anglican Communion cannot be responsible for how others behave, but by their attitudes and actions they can help to ensure that religions have a beneficial influence on the world.

Why is religion 'bad news?'

'A clash of civilisations'

In the last ten years there has been much talk about the 'clash of civilisations,' with the suggestion that conflict between Islam and Christianity is inevitable. I do not myself think this is inevitable, but it could well become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

'A clash of civilizations' was a phrase used by Samuel P Huntington in an article, published in 1993, which highlighted 'the explosive nature of religion.'² He wrote:

Blood, language, religion, way of life were what the Greeks had in common and what distinguished them from the Persians and other non-Greeks. Of all the objective elements, which define civilisations, however, the most important usually is religion, as the Athenians emphasised. To a very large degree, the major civilisations in human history have been closely identified with the

world's great religions and people who share ethnicity and language but differ in religion may slaughter each other, as happened in Lebanon, the former Yugoslavia and in the Subcontinent.³

Huntington, who sees conflict as an inevitable feature of human behaviour, predicted that the clash of civilisations, in which religion plays a major part, is likely to repeat itself 'as the world moves out of its Western phase'.⁴ In particular, Huntington foresaw a growing clash between the West and the civilisation of Islam.

Huntington was right to highlight the link between religion and identity. Although Europe has had its share of religious wars, many people in the secularised West cannot understand the passion that religion can evoke and the bloody rivalry that it can cause. This is because religion has been pushed to the margins and its role in more traditional societies has been ignored.

'Religion is a badge of allegiance'

Their religious beliefs and practices are for many people an important part of their personal identity and self-awareness. As the social anthropologist Richard Gombrich says:

For most people in the modern world religion is first of all an identity, a label, a badge of allegiance of a group. What is your religion? It says on the form, and the terrorist asks the same question. Protestant and Catholic in Ulster, Hindu and Sikh in the Punjab... In this sense religion cannot be quite separated from politics or indeed from racism.⁵

Gombrich goes on to say that in defining a religion:

The first answer which occurs to someone from a Christian background is likely to be that religion is a matter of belief, particularly of belief in God. But half the world does not think in these terms. For them, religion is first and foremost what you do not what you think. A Hindu or a Jew must avoid certain foods.⁶

The importance of religion in shaping the community with which a person identifies and therefore in shaping a person's sense of identity is easily underestimated especially by those who live in an increasingly secularised world. Even they, however, if they choose to marry someone from a different religious background, may still be surprised by the strong hostile reaction from older members of the family. In some societies, schooling, health care and family law is determined by the

religious community to which a person belongs. Members of different religions or cultural backgrounds may live in geographical proximity but there may be little human interaction beyond what is necessary to buy a bus ticket or to pay for the shopping at a supermarket check-out.

It is easy for those who have adapted to a secularised and pluralistic society to impose their assumptions on societies in other parts of the world, where, to repeat Gombrich's words, 'religion is first of all . . . a badge of allegiance to a group'. As a result, although the main causes of a conflict may be political and economic, because antagonists belong to different religions, that difference, and long remembered injustices, fuel the bitterness and are used to vilify the enemy. In the popular mind, therefore, and maybe the media, the conflict is then spoken of as a religious one or even a 'holy war.' Then, the expectation is aroused that 'religious leaders' should be able to put an end to the conflict: but this is unrealistic.

It is important for Anglicans to distinguish clearly what is central to their faith and practice from what is cultural and traditional and therefore open to change.

'Fundamentalism'

The growth of so-called 'fundamentalism' is another way in which religions may contribute to conflict. Fundamentalism, strictly speaking, was a term first used at the end of the nineteenth century by Conservative Protestants, who affirmed that the Bible is literally inspired by God. The term now, rather confusingly, is applied to ultra-conservative members of other religions. It is misleading, however, to assume that because all Muslims accept the Qur'an as a direct revelation from God, they are necessarily 'fundamentalist' in the pejorative sense that the word has acquired. There are in fact several accepted schools of Qur'anic interpretation.

It is important to distinguish between traditionalists and fundamentalists. Traditionalists have not been challenged by many of the questions of modern society, whereas fundamentalists consciously reject many of the assumptions of modernism and postmodernism. Traditionalists have grown up in a religiously monochrome society and

may never have questioned the truth of their religion. They unquestioningly assume that the religion of the society into which they were born is 'true.' They may have inherited that society's view that members of other religions were misguided, unenlightened, heathen or even destined to damnation. Only as people meet and have personal encounters with the 'other' do they begin to question your traditional monolithic assumptions. This was illustrated to me by a friend whose daughter was very ill. At the weekend, a colleague at work who was a Hindu, rang her up to enquire after her child. 'I have been praying for her,' the colleague added. This, my friend told me, made her start questioning. 'Who was the Hindu praying to?' 'Was it another God or is there only One God whom Hindus and Christians address in different ways?' My friend had never thought about this before. She had not previously questioned the assumptions of the society in which she grew up.

Fundamentalists are aware of the questions raised by modern society, but turn their backs on them. Fundamentalists reassert traditional exclusive attitudes in defiance of the 'modern world.' Fundamentalism is essentially oppositional and rejects new ways of thinking.⁷ Fundamentalists vigorously oppose any change to their religious beliefs, although they may exploit modern means of communication.

Religious belief is like all knowledge historically conditioned. Fundamentalists adopt an ahistorical attitude to the central truths of their religion, which for them are unchanging and not open to reinterpretation in a changing world. They reject also the idea of symbolism, taking their particular myth as true in a literal sense. This also implies that other religions are false.⁸ It is therefore a religious duty for fundamentalists to oppose false teaching and also those who try to change traditional beliefs and practices. Such opposition is even more the case when it is felt that the undermining of tradition is orchestrated by outsiders.

It is important that members of the Anglican Communion are encouraged to study scripture and inherited teachings in an intelligent, open-minded and critical way.

Religions have colluded with violence

If people of faith are to be ‘instruments of peace’, they have first to acknowledge that religions too often have embittered conflict and even sometimes have caused it. Until religions clean up their act, they lack credibility.

It is too easy to say that claiming God’s sanction for violence is just a misuse of religion. It is reckoned that religion was a contributory cause in more than half of the 115 armed conflicts which occurred between 1989 and 2001.⁹ With some justice, it has been said, ‘the daily news seems a catalogue of holy hatred’.¹⁰

There is, however, considerable argument about how much blame should be laid at the door of religion. Many commentators see the basic cause of violence in social, political and economic conflict, which religious difference embitters. The Carnegie Commission argued that ‘religious diversity does not spawn violence independently of predisposing social, economic and political conditions as well as the subjective roles of belligerent leaders.’¹¹

Why is religion is so often entangled with conflict?

As already suggested religion is inter-twined with many people’s sense of identity and some so-called ‘fundamentalists’ are vehement in their opposition to the secular world and to what they regard as ‘false’ religions. Moreover, most religions have claimed a special blessing from their God. Furthermore, despite their scriptures, most religions have in certain circumstances endorsed the use of force. Indeed, sometimes religious leaders have invoked God’s blessing on armies and those who killed have believed that they did so in God’s name.

Sadly, scriptures have often been used to justify violence and aggression. William Frost says, at the end of his nearly 900-page study of religious perspectives on war and peace, ‘religious institutions do not make peace their primary value because their sacred scriptures accept and even exalt war. The sacred books of religions, even while they proclaim the ultimate value of peace, also portray violence in a favourable light When religion teaches peace, it also validates war.’¹² This emphasises the need for a critical reading of scripture and

the dangers of the fundamentalists' use of proof texts. They must also repudiate the use of scripture to justify violence in God's name.

How can religions help to promote peace?

Anglicans can help to promote a culture of peace both by working to reduce prejudice and affirming the values shared with members of other faith communities and working together with them for a better world.

Dispelling prejudice

Deliberate prejudice needs to be challenged, whether it is based on religious or racial or social or gender differences. Prejudice arises from inherited attitudes, fear of the stranger and sociological factors. Too easily we compare what is good in our religion with what is bad in other people's religions. It can be dangerous also if we concentrate on defining a person's identity by his or her faith community – even if they are not practising!

Anglicans also have a responsibility to encourage, both among their members and the wider public, a proper understanding of other religions and 'not to bear false witness'. Much has been achieved in this field, especially perhaps in the dramatic change in Jewish–Christian relations

In the long run *education*, at every level, is the key to improving interfaith relations. There is still much ignorance about other religions, and theological colleges especially need to ensure that some study of world religions is included in the curriculum. People need also to learn about the artistic and musical heritage of other faiths

Personal meeting

Personal meeting needs to be encouraged. New friendships can remove past misunderstandings. Often it is more fruitful to concentrate on issues that are of common concern rather than on religious differences.

This also helps to involve a wide range of people who may be hesitant to talk about their religion but keen to discuss, for example, problems of parenting or what action they can take to protect the environment or to tackle world poverty. **Anglicans should take the initiative in encouraging personal meetings – maybe for young people at camps or on the football pitch or in joint action to protect the environment. Churches could have an annual ‘open day’ for guests from other religions.**

There are also many pastoral opportunities that require sensitivity to the faiths of others, especially for chaplains in hospital and prison and for those engaged in education. If two people of different religions wish to marry, they and their families need very sensitive and understanding care.

A global ethic

It is also vital that Anglicans join with others in the search for a more just and peaceful world, based on the values that we share. Many spiritual leaders now recognise the need for a global ethic. Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, Jains and others as well as Christians have said ‘Yes’ to a global ethic.¹³

The best known, but not the only, effort to produce a global ethic is the Declaration that was signed by most members of the 1993 Assembly of the Parliament of the World’s Religions and for which much preparatory work had been done by Professor Hans Küng.¹⁴ At a time of intense conflict in former Yugoslavia and of communal trouble in India, the Parliament sought to show that religions need not be a cause of division but agree on core moral values. A version of the ‘golden rule’ can be found in almost every religion.

Four ‘Irrevocable Directives’ were affirmed, based on the fundamental demand that every human being must be treated humanely. They are:

1. Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life.
2. Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order.
3. Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness.

- 4 Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women.

The global ethic is not intended to be a substitute for the specific moral teaching of particular religions. It is concerned simply with a 'minimal basic consensus relating to binding values, irrevocable standards and moral attitudes which can be affirmed by all religions despite their dogmatic differences and can also be supported by non-believers'.¹⁵

How can these aspirations help to change the world?

A Voice of Protest

Religions can educate and give voice to popular opinion. It is vital that they speak together in defence of human rights and act as a 'voice for the voiceless'. The poet W. H. Auden at the outbreak of World War II said, 'All I have is a voice to undo the folded lie',¹⁶ but the voice of protest can be very powerful. The impact of faith communities would be greater if they spoke with a more united voice and were more willing to join together in prayer for peace. Religions still have considerable moral authority and can activate world opinion because of their involvement in local communities across the world.

Anglicans should give more support to international interfaith organisations and back the call for a United Nations Year – or even a Decade – of 'Inter-religious Dialogue and Co-operation'.¹⁷ It is to be hoped that Anglicans will play a full part in the Parliament of the World Religions, which is to be held in Melbourne in December 2009.¹⁸

The power of prayer, fostered by the Week of Prayer for World Peace, the Peace Prayer Movement and other groups, should not be underestimated. Occasions when people of different faiths pray together on a national or international occasion or especially after a natural disaster or terrorist outrage can be supportive and inspiring.

Practical Work

There is welcome and increasing evidence of people of all faiths and of goodwill working together to help victims of war or natural

disaster, sharing in efforts to protect the environment and assisting the process of reconciliation after conflict.

The shared search for a better world needs to be supported by appropriate theology and spirituality. The Mayan spiritual leader, Abraham Garcia, who was tortured in the civil war in Guatemala, said, 'Peace isn't the simple silencing of the bullets. It must be an inner change toward other people, respect for the way they think and live.'¹⁹

The Need for an Appropriate Theology and Spirituality

Recognise that there is one God

Part of that changed attitude to other people is the recognition that they too are loved by God. As the British Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks has said, 'The fact that the great universal monotheisms have not yet formally endorsed a plural world is still the unexorcised darkness at the heart of our religious situation'.²⁰ Talk of 'the saved' or the 'chosen people' or 'the people of God' has the negative implication that others are 'unsaved', 'unchosen' or 'rejected by God'.

When we pray 'Lord have mercy upon us', who do we pray for? The distinguished scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith said that if we mean by 'us' anything less than 'all humanity' our God is too small. **A major contribution that Anglicans can make to a better world is to affirm there is One God of all people, although our pictures of God may differ and we may worship God in different ways. We need to see religious differences not as a threat but as an enrichment.** In dialogue, both with other Christians and with members of other faiths our understanding is deepened and purified.

Many governments claim that they encourage tolerance, although the relation of the state to faith communities varies from country to country and there are often limits to toleration. But tolerance is not enough. It allows others the right to be wrong, but does not remove the discriminatory influence of much traditional religious

teaching. We need to see the positive contribution that another faith makes to human understanding of the Divine and the enrichment that it offers to one's own personal faith.²¹

The Jewish scholar Shaye J. D. Cohen, has put this well when he wrote, 'It is not enough simply to believe in tolerance, not enough simply to allow the other's existence, rather, what we need is a theology on each side to validate the other's existence.'²² Cohen challenged Jews to answer the question, 'How is the divine cause somehow advanced by having millions and millions of Christians in the world?' He called on Christians to answer the question, 'Why are the Jews still here?'²³ A similar challenge could be applied to other religions as well.

At the same time that a religion binds together its members it also separates them from 'rival' believers. The interfaith discovery is that we can be loyal to our group but see other groups as enriching our faith rather than threatening it. The Native American leader Black Elk said that in a vision he saw 'the hoop of my people and it was holy'. 'Then', he added, 'I saw the hoop of many religions and I saw that they were holy too.'

In several religions there is a struggle between those who want to adopt a more open attitude and those who uphold traditional exclusive views.

In **Christian** circles, a rough distinction is often made between three approaches: 'Exclusive', 'Inclusive' and 'Pluralist.'

The exclusivist approach affirms that only through the atoning death of Jesus can people be restored to a right relation to God. Other religions do not offer salvation. This view means that only members of the true church (usually taken to be the Roman Catholic Church) or those who have faith in Jesus Christ will be saved and go to heaven.

The inclusivist approach recognises that God wants all people to be saved and that God's loving concern is for all people, but it also insists that God's final and full revelation is in Jesus Christ. Pope John Paul II, for example, has said that 'Although participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees are not excluded, they acquire meaning and value *only* from Christ's own mediation, and they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his.'²⁴ Good people of

other faiths may be saved by Christ even if they are not conscious of this and they are sometimes called ‘anonymous Christians’. As Cardinal Arinze, who was President of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, put it, ‘All human beings are included in the great and unique design of God in Jesus Christ, even when they are not aware of it.’²⁵

The pluralist approach suggests that the mystery of God is indeed present in Jesus Christ, but also in other great spiritual figures such as the Buddha, or Rama or Krishna.²⁶ The individual believer can be loyal to a particular path without having to assert that his or her path is better than those followed by other believers.

The third option obviously facilitates interfaith co-operation, but to many Christians it seems to be a rejection of the traditional claim that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour and that Christianity is the only true religion. But there are several reasons why this traditional position should be questioned on both theological and philosophical grounds.²⁷

First, the biblical material is ambiguous. If some passages are exclusive, others are universalist and speak of God’s concern for all people. Secondly, the Christian tradition is varied. For example, the second century apologist Justin Martyr hoped to meet Plato in heaven and the great theologian St Thomas Aquinas held that it was possible for people who lived before Christ to be saved. So, thirdly, if God is the God of love whom Jesus proclaimed, then God’s love is surely available to those who have not heard of Jesus. This suggests that other religions reveal at least something of God. Fourthly, as some Christians have got to know members of other faiths, they have recognised their genuine holiness. They have seen evidence of God’s presence in other faith traditions. Fifthly, as Christians increasingly learn about other religions and read their scriptures, they find them inspiring and genuine expressions of spirituality. Sixthly, critical study of the New Testament suggests that the focus of Jesus’ message was the kingdom of God rather than his own status.²⁸ Seventhly, faith is primarily trust in the Living God not adherence to doctrines. Moreover, many Christians who are well versed in interfaith dialogue testify that it has both broadened and deepened their Christian faith.

Philosophically, the modern understanding of knowledge rejects ‘absolutism’. It is recognised that all statements about reality – even in holy scripture – are conditioned by their author’s historical setting, intention, culture, class and sex and that the same is true of the person who reads these statements. We are not in a position to make ultimate, unconditioned, statements. Even symbols, which are central to a religion, are not absolute and indeed are open to multiple interpretations.²⁹

Christians rightly should share their experience of God’s loving forgiveness in Jesus Christ, but they do not have to pass judgement on the religious experience of others. As Bishop George Appleton, a former Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem and Editor of the Oxford Book of Prayer, wrote: ‘Each religion has a mission, a gospel, a central affirmation. Each of us needs to enlarge on the gospel which he has received without wanting to demolish the gospel of others We can enlarge and deepen our initial and basic faith by the experience and insights of people from other religions and cultures, without disloyalty to our own commitment.’³⁰ The more Christians reflect the love of Christ, the more others will be attracted to Him. Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, the Christian calling is to bear witness to Christ by word and deed.

The World Needs a Spiritual Message

For some 60 years, as the existence of the United Nations testifies, the nations of the world have slowly recognised the limits of national sovereignty and the need for agreed international action on major issues of global concern. In the same way, although even more slowly, ‘a post-confessional and inter-religious world is coming into being. In other words, slowly and laboriously a multi-confessional ecumenical world society is coming into being’.³¹ But if religions are to have any real impact on shaping the future of this planet, they must come together far more quickly and effectively.

The new interest of many secular leaders in the moral dimension of life presents great opportunities for the world religions to share with a world in need the spiritual riches of their traditions and release the potential for peace, which is at the heart of all great faiths.³² There are, however, dangers. One is that international bodies, instead of listening to the prophetic words of religious leaders, will try to give a cloak of respectability to their work by inviting a token presence of such leaders. Secondly, unless religious leaders recruit staff with the necessary expertise in relevant areas, they will have little to contribute. Leaders will also have to beware of attending so many international gatherings that they lose touch with local faith communities, so leaving the latter open to the influence of religious extremists. It is vital that as international interreligious co-operation increases so local communities at the same time learn about other religions and meet members of them. Sometimes people complain that there are now too many interfaith groups. In fact there is more than enough work for all of them to do – locally, nationally and internationally – but that work needs to be better co-ordinated.³³

The search for a new world order is essentially the search for a world society shaped by shared moral values. If the Anglican Church could encourage people of all faiths to affirm and practise the values that they share, they would help to ensure that faith is good news and has a vital contribution to make to the healing of the nations.

Notes

¹ ‘Jews, Christians and Muslims: the Way of Dialogue’ in *The Truth Shall Make You Free: The Lambeth Conference 1988*, Anglican Consultative Council, Appendix, p. 229. There is a good summary of this document by Michael Ipgave in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol 43, No. 1 Winter 2008, Temple University (022-38), 1114 W. Berks St, Philadelphia, PA 19122-6090, USA. See also *The Road Ahead; Scriptures in Dialogue*, and *Bearing the Word*, ed Michael Igrave, Church Publishing House.

² Samuel P Huntington, ‘The Clash of Civilizations’, *Foreign Affairs* 72, 1993 No 3, 22-49. He developed his ideas in his book from which the quotation is taken.

³ Samuel P Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), p. 42.

⁴ *The Clash of Civilizations*, p. 53-4.

⁵ R Gomblich, 'What Kind of Thing is Religion' in *SHAP Handbook on World Religions in Education* (Commission for Racial Equality, 1987).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ M.E. Marty, 'What is Fundamentalism' in *Fundamentalism as an Ecumenical Challenge*, Concilium Special (London: SCM Press, 1992).

⁸ See further my article 'Interfaith Can Save Religion for the World' in *Faith and Freedom*, Vol 52, no 149, Autumn and Winter 1999, pp. 125-133 and Leonard Swidler, *The Meaning of Life at the Edge of the Third Millennium*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992).

⁹ Oliver McTernan, *Violence in God's Name* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003), p. xiii.

¹⁰ James A. Haight, *Holy Hatred: Religious Conflicts of the '90s* (Amherst NY: Prometheus Books, 1995), quoted in the Parliament of Religions preparatory paper 'Overcoming Religiously Motivated Violence', p. 69. No page reference is given.

¹¹ The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1997, *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report*, Washington, DC, p. 29. Bruce Lincoln, a historian of religion, reached the same conclusion. He wrote that in most of the post Cold War conflicts in which religious issues have played a role, it was 'in contexts where structural problems inherent to the nation-state have become manifest: specifically the potential contradiction between nation and state.' Bruce Lincoln, 'Conflict' in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (ed. Mark C Taylor) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 57-8.

¹² J. William Frost, *A History of Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim Perspectives on War and Peace* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004). Vol.II, p. 779.

¹³ See *Yes to a Global Ethic* (ed. Hans Küng), (London: SCM Press, 1996).

¹⁴ See, *Stepping Stones to a Global Ethic*, (ed Marcus Braybrooke), (London: SCM Press, 1992) and *For All Life* (ed Leonard Swidler), (Oregon: White Cloud Press, 1999).

¹⁵ Hans Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* (London: SCM Press, 1997), p. 109.

¹⁶ W. H. Auden's poem 'September 1st, 1939' was published in 1940. It includes the line, 'We must love one another or die.'

¹⁷ E-mail Gerardo.Gonzalez.mc.cl

¹⁸ www.parliamentofreligions.org.

¹⁹ Quoted in Marcus Braybrooke, *365 Meditations for a Peaceful Heart and a Peaceful World*, (London: Godsfield Books, 2004), p. 296.

²⁰ J. Sacks, *The Persistence of Faith*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991, p. 81.

²¹ I have tried to do this in my *What Can We Learn from Islam* and *What Can We Learn from Hinduism* (Winchester: John Hunt Publishing, 2002).

²² Shaye J. D. Cohen, 'The Unfinished Agenda of Jewish-Christian Dialogue', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. 34, No 3, Summer 1997, p. 326. See also my *Christian-Jewish Dialogue, The Next Steps* (London: SCM Press, 2000).

²³ 'The Unfinished Agenda', pp. 327-8.

²⁴ From the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, quoted by Fr Thomas Ryan in his helpful article 'Catholic Perspectives on Inter-religious Relations' in *Current Dialogue*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, No.44, December 2004, p. 22.

²⁵ Cardinal Francis Arinze, 'The Christian Commitment to Inter-religious Dialogue' in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 17.7.89, paragraph 3 and paragraph 9.

²⁶ This is far too brief a summary and there are several shades of opinion under each heading. See further Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (London: SCM Press, 1983 and rev. ed. 1993), *passim*.

²⁷ There are many books on this subject. Wesley Ariarajah discusses the interpretation of the Bible in *The Bible and People of Other Faiths* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1985). See also Jacque Dupuis, *Toward A Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998), especially pp. 29-52. He also gives a good summary of various Christian approaches to this subject. Michael Nazir-Ali's *Citizens and Exiles: Christian Faith in a Plural World* (London: SPCK, 1998), gives a balanced summary of the issues, especially chapter 9. There are several books on the subject by Paul Knitter.

²⁸ This is a summary of what I wrote in my *Time to Meet* (London: SCM Press, 1990). See pp. 84-92.

²⁹ See my *Faith and Interfaith in a Global Age* (Grand Rapids:CoNexus Press/Oxford :Braybrooke Press, 1998), chapters 4 and 6.

³⁰ George Appleton, 'Faiths in Fellowship,' *World Faiths*, No. 101, Spring 1977, pp.4-5.

³¹ Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility, In Search of an New World Ethic* (London: SCM Press, 1991), p. 49.

³² Katherine Marshall and Lucy Keough, *Mind, Heart and Soul* (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2004).

³³ There is now an International Interfaith Organisations Network www.interfaithorganisations.net.

Interfaith Priorities

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An *MCU Forewords* booklet

MCU *Forewords* booklets are designed to illustrate liberal approaches to theological issues.

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