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Presentation [VOICES, vol. 38, n ° 1 2015]

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Presentation

We are children of time, since we are children of Our Earth, -- cosmic substance of the stars. Our time -- now after the twentieth century -- has made possible for us to see Our Earth from the outside for the first time, and to recognize this little rocky, blue, white and green planet as Our Home within the vast universe. The photographs show how tremendously artificial are political boundaries and national sovereignties. Clouds and birds come and go without a passport -- as does also the pollution. Today migration increases -- both legal and illegal i.e. without a passport. Political boundaries under pressure and involved in growing conflict, give rise to new cultural and religious boundaries, offering this huge challenge to religions: either we become one large family, or we will cease to exist.

These signs of the time confirm the thesis of Hans Küng : There will be no peace among nations until there is peace among religions; and no peace among religions until there is mutual knowledge beyond that respectful recognition of what makes us unique and irreducible because of the richness of our differences. Inter-religious dialogue has become, therefore, one of the great signs of our time. If we are children of time then our challenge is also to become parents of time: parenting peace and a more humane society. Religions are like the trunk of a teacher which is able to come up with riches both ancient and modern.

This present "Pamphlet for Inter-religious Dialogue", is an offspring of the International Theological Commission of the Ecumenical Association of Theologians and Third World Theologians, EATWOT, that was brought to light through the exercise of this responsibility by children of time, engendering new eras, in which dialogue and recognition must come to replace phobia, intolerance and violence.

There are numerous initiatives, multilateral dialogues, communication -- both oral and written -- into which this effort is being spliced. This pamphlet is specifically centered on the spheres of Abrahamic traditions sprouting from the religious nursery of the Middle East, which determine the Abrahamic voice range, or rather dilemma of Abraham when faced with the divine voice: to choose between sacrifice or mercy, hostility or hospitality. The three great Abrahamic traditions have in common the words of the prophets plus wise and mystical personages. To this we can also add the many possibilities of interpretation, thereby delegating responsibility to interpreters.

In this pamphlet we find texts of different interpreters, voices in a choir that sings neither in unison, but neither off key. On the contrary, this dissonance leaves space for future decisions, and stimulates new accompanying chords. From the view point of the Theological Commission of EATWOT, this is the beginning of a dialogue that remains open, invites new dialogue, and peacefully assimilates the wealth offered by different viewpoints.

The pamphlet has been designed to be practical: to serve groups and communities that want to respond to a pressing need for inter-religious dialogue that perhaps we all feel without even recognizing it. It offers these testimonies to serve as a basis for dialogue in a discussion group, or even at a community celebration. It can be used quite freely.

Of course, there are some common principles: a good religion is one that does not exclude others, but rather promotes peaceful co-existence and enriches humanity through relationship between their religious traditions. This premise is absolutely necessary in the course of religious traditions of the word, of the book, of justice and mercy, as places where divine transcendence is manifested. As a result, in this pamphlet a good stretch of the route has been covered together, despite the news outlets that insist upon underlining our shared mistakes and conflicts. It is precisely because of the risk of misunderstandings and their sad consequences, that the authors are driven to find joy in putting into the same booklet the wealth of different Abrahamic traditions, whether Jewish, Muslim or Christian. The pamphlet seeks only to serve the common cause, helping to promote more dialogue, more meetings, more exchanges, more debates. Because if boundaries still make any sense, they are not for building barriers but rather for identifying areas of hospitality, exchange of gifts and endless conversations, similar to what took place beneath the oak of Mambré.

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The World Forum on Theology and Liberation