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## **THE CHURCH'S COMMITMENT TO RELIGIOUS INCLUSIVENESS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING THEOLOGY AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the conditions for the church's commitment to religious inclusiveness in teaching and learning theology at the undergraduate level is a competent knowledge of the doctrines and practices of religions. Yet, the candidates to priesthood and other forms of church ministry should not only have information about religions but also be able to engage in various forms of dialogue with other believers in an open and neighbourly spirit. The research highlights a few practical implications that religious plurality has for undergraduate theological education in Catholic institutions of higher learning in South Africa.

### **CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGING WITH RELIGIONS**

One of the important conditions for the church's commitment to educating candidates for priesthood and church ministry is equipping them with a competent knowledge of the doctrines and practices of non-Christian religions. This should be seen as an integral part of the theological curriculum, especially since the context of church ministry in today's world has changed radically with the marbling of

interfaith life in human society today<sup>1</sup>. Now, more than ever, we need an educated ministry able to lead us into relationships with neighbours whom we do not know and about whom we may have partial and stereotypical views. Clergy and religious people are on the frontlines of public education. Sunday after Sunday they are in the pulpit speaking to the concerns of the world and of the community. Are the Catholic institutions of higher education preparing them sufficiently for this important role?

Turning to the South African context, Catholic institutions of higher education in this country should first make their students aware of the richly diverse cultures with people of different world-views, life-styles, and religious affiliations living in South Africa. In this sense, South Africa occupies a special place in the context of world religions because of its interfaith richness (the presence of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, and African religion adherents). Living today in a multi-religious society requires interreligious engagement with other believers, seen not as conversations on theological matters but as sharing life in an open and neighbourly spirit, collaborating in works for mutual development, and participating in other believers' religious experiences<sup>2</sup>.

The South African multi-religious context and the emerging phenomenon of multiple religious affiliation (people who identify themselves not with one but many religious traditions) bring both serious challenges and enriching opportunities to Christian identity, to teaching and learning theology, to interreligious dialogue, and to Christian mission in general. The church must first recognize other religions not only as respected neighbours, but also as partners in **dialogue**. Thus, the church's education on world religions and interreligious dialogue requires the development of more advanced education methods than the existing ones; methods which will help students understand relations between religions and the processes of inter-religious transformation<sup>3</sup>.

## DEFINING RELIGIOUS INCLUSIVENESS

Before investigating the need for "religious inclusiveness" in teaching and learning theology today in Catholic institutions of higher education, it is important to define it. First of all, religious inclusiveness must not be confused with syncretism, as in fact some Christians might think. Religious inclusiveness does not mean accepting some doctrines, moral rules, myths, rituals or practices of other religions and incorporating them, perhaps in a modified form, in Christianity. This would be a contemporary, post-modern form of syncretism in which a person looks upon

<sup>1</sup> P. Knitter, *Introducing theologies of religions*, Maryknoll, New York 2002, p. xi.

<sup>2</sup> Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and proclamation*, 42 (further DP).

<sup>3</sup> P. Phan, *To be Catholic or not to be: Is it still the question? Catholic identity and religious education today*, "Horizons" 25 (1998), pp.159-189.

various religions as a supermarket from which, like a consumer, one selects at one's discretion and pleasure whatever suits one's needs, without regard to their true values and mutual compatibilities<sup>4</sup>.

Religious inclusiveness is a theological approach that gives equal attention to two essential Christian convictions: firstly, that God's love is universal and therefore reaches other believers; and secondly, that God's love is particular and is made visible in Jesus. This inclusivist perspective views other religions as containing some values and as God being present in them. Hence, one needs to dialogue with them because these religious traditions have the potential to enrich Christianity just as Christianity has the potential to enrich them. Yet, the inclusivist theologians vary in their explanations of how Christ is present in other religions. They are however all unanimous in their affirmation that the grace of Christ can be salvifically, if imperfectly, present in the religions, even though the fullness of that saving presence is found in the explicit religion of Christ alone<sup>5</sup>.

Thus, religious inclusiveness in Catholic institutions of higher education is expressed in: a) the institutions' inclusive view of the other religions; b) its openness to offering programs or courses relevant to religious diversity and; c) its willingness to equip the candidates to priesthood and ministry with sound knowledge of the religious traditions and skills that will allow the candidates to establish meaningful contact with representatives of other religions in the multireligious environment in which they will minister.

## RELIGIOUS INCLUSIVENESS IN THE CATHOLIC THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

The idea of religious inclusiveness is not new; in fact it goes back as far as early Christianity. One must admit though that authors of the New Testament books and the Christian communities, for whom the books were written, did not pay much attention to the "other religions". For them the existent relationship with Judaism, their mother religion, was more important. This situation changed during the second century as the various Christian communities interrelated with the Greco-Roman world. In this "new world", Christians constituted a minority, often challenged by the philosophies and religions in which they were immersed<sup>6</sup>. The first three centuries were the time when the early Christian theologians tried to discover the meaning, if any, of God's presence in other religions. Such prominent theologians

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<sup>4</sup> C. Jeffre, *Double belonging and the originality of Christianity as a religion*, in *Many mentions? Multiple religious belonging and Christian identity*, edited by C. Cornille, New York 2002, pp. 93-104.

<sup>5</sup> C. Grzelak, *The inclusive pluralism of Jacques Dupuis*, Lublin 2010.

<sup>6</sup> E.D. Piryns, *Current Roman Catholic views of other religions*, "Missionalia" 13/2 (1985), pp. 55-61.

as Justin Martyr (d. 165), Irenaeus (130–220) and Clement of Alexandria (150–215) argued that the eternal **Logos** made flesh and embodied in Jesus was also scattered in the Greco-Roman world. In fact, they believed that seeds of the divine **Logos** were “spread throughout the whole of humanity long before it manifested itself in Jesus of Nazareth”<sup>7</sup>.

The view of the early Fathers on other religions containing seeds of the divine **Logos** had been more or less prominent in Catholic theology until the Second Vatican Council<sup>8</sup>. Many years before the Council, authors such as Louis Caperan, Jean Danielou, Henri de Lubac and Urs von Balthasar often referred to the patristic Fathers in their theological works. Nevertheless, it was in the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s that a real shift in Catholic theology of religions was initiated. This related to the emergence of a new theological concept called a “fulfilment theory”, according to which the world religions were thought as *preparatio evangelica*<sup>9</sup>. The theory began to be seen as a step away from **exclusivism** because it no longer required from the other believers explicit faith in Jesus to be saved. A much more radical turn in the Catholic approach to the world religions took place through the theology of Karl Rahner and his “anonymous Christianity”. The argument was that if the salvation of people is possible only through Jesus, because he is the universal Savior, then even non-Christians must “somehow” be in a relationship with Christ. Implicitly, therefore, they might be called “anonymous Christians”<sup>10</sup>.

Concerning the Second Vatican Council on religious inclusiveness, firstly, the Council seriously reflected on the subject of interreligious dialogue and of religious pluralism and secondly, it gave a positive evaluation of the other religions of the world<sup>11</sup>. The religions were filled with “elements of truth and grace”<sup>12</sup> and “seeds of the word”<sup>13</sup> embodied in Jesus. These seeds now became the foundation for “seeds of contemplation”<sup>14</sup>, the “secret presence of God”<sup>15</sup> in those traditions. After the Council, the Catholic community continued exploring the frontiers of the conciliar approach to the world’s religious traditions. This exploration of the conciliar approach can be seen in the public statements of Catholic officials of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II. Especially the latter went beyond the “fulfilment” perspective by emphasizing the universal active presence of the Spirit of God in diverse cultures

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> J. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian theology of religious pluralism*, New York 1997, pp. 153-157.

<sup>9</sup> J. Danielou, *The Lord of history. Reflections on the inner meaning of history*, London 1958, pp. 115-116, 118-119.

<sup>10</sup> K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian faith. An introduction to the idea of Christianity*, London 1978, pp. 153-161, 170-175.

<sup>11</sup> Vatican Council II, Declaration on the world religions *Nostra aetate*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Vatican Council II, Decree on the mission activity of the church *Ad gentes*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 15.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

and the other religious traditions<sup>16</sup>. The two recent Pontiffs, Benedict XVI and Francis, on various occasions, have confirmed the need for establishing further good relations with the religions. Generally, the popes' stands on the other religions are that of the Council.

### **CHURCH'S CALL TO RELIGIOUS INCLUSIVENESS IN *EX CORDE ECCLESIAE***

Despite the importance of the world religious traditions in the official church statements, for the most part, post-conciliar papal documents pay little attention to the responsibility of Catholic institutions of higher education to further dialogue with non-Christians. The main publications of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID onwards) likewise pay limited attention to fostering interreligious dialogue in universities and other institutions of higher learning. But the document *Dialogue and proclamation* (1991) does recommend that 'specific studies on the relationship between dialogue and proclamation be undertaken' by 'theological and pastoral institutes'<sup>17</sup>.

In 2004, the PCID published the results of a survey conducted in Africa of what is taught in major seminaries, Catholic universities, and other institutes of higher learning about African traditional religions (ATRs onwards), Islam and interreligious dialogue. Of the six universities and institutes of higher learning surveyed, four replied. All had courses on ATRs, and two of them taught a course on Islam. None had a program for teaching interreligious dialogue. In the light of this survey, the council subsequently published *A guide for teaching African traditional religion, islam and interreligious dialogue in sub-Saharan Africa* (2004).

The real call to religious inclusiveness and dialogue with the religions, directed to Catholic institutions of higher education, is seen in the apostolic constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae* (1990) which regulates the more than 1,200 Catholic universities and even more seminaries around the world. In the document, Pope John Paul II links interreligious dialogue to a university's "continuous quest for truth through its research, and the preservation and communication of knowledge for the good of society"<sup>18</sup>. By means of interreligious dialogue, the Catholic institutions of higher learning "will assist in discerning the spiritual values that are present in the different religions"<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical letters *Redemptor hominis*, 11 and *Redemptoris missio*, 28.

<sup>17</sup> DP 88.

<sup>18</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, available at [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apc15081990\\_ex-corde-ecclesiae.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc15081990_ex-corde-ecclesiae.html) [accessed 10 February 2015], 30 (further ECE).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

An important question emerges in one's mind, even if not articulated, as to whether interreligious dialogue contributes to strengthening a university's or any other institution's Catholicity. The pope insists that "everyone in the community" should maintain and strengthen "the distinctive Catholic character of the institution"<sup>20</sup>. In other words, interreligious dialogue must further and not weaken an institution's specifically Catholic mission. Some academics, probably a real minority, would be uncomfortable with the coupling of "Catholic identity" and "interreligious dialogue". For them, such an undertaking would be a sign of weakness or even a betrayal of the faith. Despite this view, a good argument can be made to show that the institutions' Catholic identity is in fact strengthened when it fosters interreligious dialogue by introducing students to knowledge of other religions and by encouraging research in this field.

There is no reason to fear, then, that interreligious dialogue in any way compromises an institution's Catholic identity. Precisely as Catholic, an institution should recognize that the way of dialogue is the way of the church. Dialogue with the world religions is an integral dimension of an institution's ongoing search for truth. Respectful conversation and cooperation enable the academic community to be enriched by the insights of others, challenged by their questions and encouraged to deepen their knowledge of the truth. The pope wrote: "Far from stifling dialogue or rendering it superfluous, a commitment to the truth of one's religious tradition by its very nature makes dialogue with others both necessary and fruitful"<sup>21</sup>.

## **PRACTICAL WAYS OF IMPLEMENTING EDUCATION FOR RELIGIOUS INCLUSIVENESS AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL**

### **Urgency of theological education for religious inclusiveness**

One of the major tasks facing Catholic theological education at the undergraduate level nowadays is that of helping to equip the churches and their leadership to respond to religious plurality. Initially this call appears to be secondary or even unnecessary, yet it is much needed in the context of the growing awareness of multiculturalism, globalization, religious pluralism, and multiple religious belonging. Also, a great number of seminaries are located far from urban centres, often protected "not only from racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity but also from religious diversity. Seminary faculty and candidates to the ministerial priesthood tend to focus their concerns on the training for pastoral ministry to parishes"<sup>22</sup>, a ministry

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>22</sup> P. Phan, *Multiple religious belonging: Opportunities and challenges for theology and church*, "Theological Studies" 64 (2003), p. 516.

which is often isolated from contacts with non-Catholics, and even more with non-Christians.

Obviously, the societal and cultural contexts within which education to religious inclusiveness is to be addressed vary; for instance, differences between the Western church and the African church. Yet, in any context there are at least three interrelated dimensions of theological education which will need to be developed in the interfaith area: namely, learning about other faiths; equipping the church's ministry with the pastoral capacity to engage positively in faith relations; and exploring the fundamental theological assumptions and implications of interfaith encounter. Especially, knowledge of the beliefs, practices and attitudes of other faith communities is essential for theological education in contexts where people's lives have been shaped by different religious traditions<sup>23</sup>.

Those being educated theologically need first to hear what Islam means to a Muslim, or Buddhism to a Buddhist and only then should they reflect on it in the light of their own Christian faith. Without the former, theological education remains an introspective exercise without the challenge of the other; without the latter, it does not go beyond religious phenomenology. That is why, not only must awareness of racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity be raised, and to this effect, courses on African, or Asian theologies should be made available, but also, at least, "a course on religious plurality should be mandatory for ministerial students who should be required to read, though not necessarily agree with, important works on the subject"<sup>24</sup>.

These include such basics as: *Introducing theologies of religions* (2003) by Paul Knitter, *Christianity and the religions: From confrontation to dialogue* (2001) by Jacques Dupuis, but also documents of the magisterium, especially of John Paul II and the local Bishops' Conferences.

### **Importance of courses on interreligious dialogue**

Furthermore, insofar as theological education is designed to equip men and women for pastoral ministry and leadership in the church, it has to develop within the candidates the ability to deal "with the complexities of inter faith relations with confidence, sensitivity and integrity"<sup>25</sup>. "A cursory examination of the academic program offered in Catholic seminaries" in general "shows that little if any attention is devoted to [...] interreligious dialogue"<sup>26</sup>. This is especially apparent in the Western ecclesial context. The greatest attention is given to numerous basic courses in Catholic doctrine, often because candidates who come to seminaries

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<sup>23</sup> D. Warner, *Challenges and opportunities in theological education in the 21st century*, in: *World study report on theological education*, edited by D.E. McCormick, Geneva 2009, pp. 10-11.

<sup>24</sup> Phan, *Multiple religious belonging...*, p. 517.

<sup>25</sup> Werner, *Challenges and opportunities...*, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Phan, *Multiple religious belonging...*, p. 516.

do not always possess the necessary knowledge of Christian faith, and therefore require additional study of the Catholic tradition. To a certain extent this can be justified. What is problematic is the fact that courses “on interreligious dialogue and religious pluralism are at best offered as electives and often are looked upon with suspicion”<sup>27</sup>. The fact is, often acknowledged by seminary and university faculty in various countries,

that there is a disturbing number of “conservative” and extreme “right-wing” seminarians who would create trouble for the institution if there is any consideration about the question of “uniqueness” and “universality” of Christ as saviour in the inclusive sense or about non-Christian religions as possible “ways of salvation”<sup>28</sup>.

The purpose of theological education for interreligious dialogue in institutions of higher education is certainly not to undermine one’s Christian identity or cause a spiritual crisis in one’s life or reject the church as an institution in which God’s salvation is sacramentalized. It is rather to help the candidate to overcome his/her ignorance about the other religions, to see their spiritual riches which can help him/her to understand better God’s self-revelation in the one salvation history and to see the unique and universal role of Christ in it. In sum, the Catholic quest for interreligious dialogue should be deeply rooted in one’s Christian conviction that revelation and salvation, brought about by Jesus, is also present in other religions traditions through “elements of grace and truth”, which justifies one’s setting out on a journey of knowing and encountering the religious “other”<sup>29</sup>.

### **Studying theology from a comparative perspective**

Besides readings on theologies of religions and offering the candidates courses on interreligious dialogue, there is also the need to show how Catholic theology today must and can be studied from the perspective of “comparative theology”. The aim here is that one should try not only to understand non-Christian religions through the Christian lens (Christian theology of religions) but also to understand Christian faith through the non-Christian lens (comparative theology). Thus, practical examples of comparative theology, “though still few, should be offered as possible models for theologizing in the context of religious pluralism”<sup>30</sup>.

Yet religious education has to go much further than that. Religions need to be approached not only from the “outside”, as objects of critical investigation but also from the “inside” – as living sources for faith, morals and life orientation. Comparative theology, while retaining its “neutral” and critical approach from the outside of any tradition, must also recognise the value of the insider’s perspective

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> K. Grzelak, *The inclusive pluralism...*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>30</sup> Phan, *Multiple religious belonging...*, p. 517.

in order to come to grips with a particular living tradition. In other words, education to religious inclusiveness should go beyond learning about the theological concepts to step into the shoes of a devotee of another religion. Most often this happens through praying together with others in monastic settings. This means that students for priesthood and church ministry “should also be introduced to non-Christian ethical and monastic practices and meditation techniques to enrich their spiritual lives”<sup>31</sup>.

### Studying theology from the other faith’s spirituality

This above implies involvement with the other believers at the level of interfaith spirituality accompanied by interfaith worship and prayer. Historically, interfaith worship was the common form of life of the earliest Christians. As it is evidenced from the Book of Acts, Christians maintained both their newfound faith in the lordship of the Risen Christ and their inherited Jewish beliefs and practices: “They went to the temple area together every day, while in their homes they broke bread”<sup>32</sup>.

P. Phan argues that apparently, such practices “did not cause any anxious soul-searching and theological qualms”. Furthermore, “even the so-called council of Jerusalem did not rule out the possibility” for Jews and Christians from Judaism to worship God together, “it only refused to impose the Mosaic Law on the Gentile Christians”. Only toward the end of the first century, “for a number of reasons, both theological and non-theological, Christianity had to define itself as a religious entity distinct and separate from and even superior to Judaism. In turn, Judaism rejected its younger sibling as an acceptable sect within itself”<sup>33</sup>. Then the possibility of coming together and worshipping God was a less likely option.

The important question here is whether it is possible to delineate a form of worshipping and praying together with other believers in the Catholic institutions of higher education. This would require organizing an interfaith or multifaith worship in which sacred scriptures as well as prayers and rituals of non-Christian religions were used not as a substitute for, but as a complement to, the Christian Bible, prayers, and rituals. Theologically this seems possible, if non-Christian religions, as *Nostra aetate*, *Ad gentes* and *Gaudium et spes* teach, contain “elements of truth and of grace”. This would mean that their sacred texts, doctrinal teachings, moral practices, monastic traditions, and rituals have “some” potential to benefit Christian participants.

Yet, the reality is different and a common worship or praying together becomes a problem. In fact, the church is very cautious in this regard. In 2014, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue issued an official document entitled: *Dialogue in truth and charity: Pastoral orientations for interreligious dialogue* which

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 518.

<sup>32</sup> Acts 3:46.

<sup>33</sup> Phan, *Multiple religious belonging...*, pp. 504-505.

discourages worshipping together because praying “in common requires a shared understanding of who God is. Since religions differ in their understanding of God, «interreligious prayer», meaning the joining together in common prayer by followers of various religions, is to be avoided”<sup>34</sup>. The document continues that on “very exceptional occasions, people of different religions may come together to pray for particular needs in a «multi-religious prayer» service. Practically speaking, this allows persons to be in each other’s presence while praying, without actually praying in common”<sup>35</sup>. But then challenging words are said about organizing a common worship:

In preparing for occasions of “multi-religious” prayer, any practice that may give the impression of relativism or syncretism, such as the invention of “para-liturgical” services and the preparation and use of common prayers acceptable to all religions as well as compiling and reading excerpts from so called “sacred books” of different religions during public ceremonies are to be avoided. Indeed, preference should be given to silence and personal prayer during such gatherings. Thus, it should be evident to all who participate that these occasions are moments of being “together for prayer, but not prayer together”<sup>36</sup>.

It is apparent therefore that organizing a common worship with other believers is rather undesirable. Yet this does not mean that, with the permission of the local church authority, such a common worship cannot be organized in institutions of higher learning where candidates prepare for future church ministries, especially considering that none of the church’s documents directly prohibits such worship in the Catholic institutions.

### Testing theological studies through *praxis* and dialogue of life

Theological studies of other religions are not meant to be divorced from work with and for the poor and the marginalized. Nothing can change a person’s negative view about the possibility of salvation outside Christianity and about the positive values of non-Christian religions more quickly and effectively than an actual and prolonged encounter with non-Christians who are prayerful and holy, not rarely more so than Christians themselves. Interreligious dialogue is never carried out with religions as such but with flesh-and-blood believers and practitioners of other faiths<sup>37</sup>.

This leads to the last component with regard to theological education for religious inclusiveness which has been

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<sup>34</sup> Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue in truth and charity: Pastoral orientations for interreligious dialogue*, Vatican 2014, p. 82.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Phan, *Multiple religious belonging...*, p. 518.

eloquently and convincingly made by James Fredericks who proposes that Christians who are engaged in interreligious dialogue and comparative theology are likely to develop not only love (*agape*) but also friendship (*philia*) with non-Christians. Love is a command of Jesus and is obligatory for all Christians; it is unconditional and must be given to all, one's enemies included. By contrast, friendship is optional and preferential. Friendship is bestowed only on persons with whom one feels a certain attraction because of their admirable and enjoyable qualities or because of their mutual interests. Thus, Christians may become friends with other believers because of the beauty and value of their beliefs and practices<sup>38</sup>.

The above characteristics should serve as useful criteria for seeing how well a particular Catholic institution of higher learning in South Africa (and not only) is implementing the church's call to expose its students to the encounter with the religious "other".

### **Openness to religious inclusiveness among students in the South African context**

Openness to religious inclusiveness in the Catholic theological institutions (particularly in the African context) should also be seen in the quality of students which they educate. From my experience of teaching theology of religions and interreligious dialogue at the Catholic Theological Institute of St Joseph's (Cedara-Pietermaritzburg), I can argue that almost all students come from African countries of more or less diverse religious contexts in which they have already been exposed to world religions. It is not rare to find students who converted from Islam or who belong to interfaith families. This means that many of them come to St Joseph's already equipped with a general knowledge of the religious "other" and engaged, at least, in "dialogue of life" with their adherents in their live situations. This also makes students understand better the diverse religious world views and the importance of conversing with other believers as an integral element of the church's evangelizing mission.

Moreover, a majority of the students who take the modules on world religions belong to religious congregations that have inscribed dialogue with other faiths in their mission statements as an important element of success of their projects set in multireligious environments (e.g. the Missionaries of Africa, the Consolata Missionaries, the Comboni Missionaries, not excluding others). This reinforces students' interest in religious inclusiveness for they know that their future ministry will occur in multicultural and multireligious contexts where knowledge of religions is a prerequisite for the mission of the church. This positive attitude also explains their general eagerness to engage in dialogue with others, visible in their willingness to visit Hindu temples, shrines, or Muslim mosques. When assigned, as a module requirement, to interview a representative of one of the religious traditions in the Pietermaritzburg area and to see for themselves what others believe,

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

how they communicate with the divine, and what form of engagement in society they practice, most of the students had no difficulty in seeking contacts with the other believers. This has resulted in interesting interviews, profound papers, and personal enrichment. None of the above experiences led the students to weakening their Christian identity or relativising their faith, in fact, it was the opposite – they felt a deeper union with their own religion.

Perhaps one of the difficulties that the students encounter while studying religions and interreligious dialogue are the Christian non-negotiables, which must not be compromised and which also put limits on conversing with others. Remaining faithful to Catholic non-negotiables, students generally regard as a sign of Catholic intolerance towards others. This reveals that at this level of their theological and interfaith education, the candidates to priesthood and ministry still require a much more profound rootedness in their own faith. A different kind of challenge for students constitutes engaging in dialogue with Islam. Their stand on dialogue with Islam is generally apprehensive, especially taking into consideration the recent emergence of ISIS<sup>39</sup> in the Middle East and the Al Shabaab<sup>40</sup> and Boko Haram<sup>41</sup> in Africa. These groups represent a much more militant kind of Islam which, in recent times, has made people perceive Islam as a religion of conflict and violence. The students usually question the real purpose and usefulness of conversing with Muslims when thousands of Christians are persecuted or killed in numerous Muslim countries.

### THE WAY FORWARD

The above analysis revealed that theological education for religious inclusiveness in the Catholic institutions of higher learning is not an arbitrary option, but should be regarded as necessary in the context of a significant rise of religious pluralism, globalization and the phenomenon of multiple religious affiliation (not to mention the emergence of new religious movements and sects). Thus, the institutions should help their students gain a competent knowledge of the non-Christian religions and develop a genuine openness to work with others for justice and liberation in their future pastoral placements.

The research also pointed out that inter-faith learning cannot happen without one's own personal journey of direct encounters with people of other living faiths. Indeed, engaging with people of other faiths is an essential component in theological interfaith education. This engagement should take seriously the known four forms of dialogue: a) the dialogue of life, where people naturally relate to each other across religious boundaries in the course of their daily living; b) social

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<sup>39</sup> ISIS stands for the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

<sup>40</sup> Al Shabaab is a jihadist terrorist group based in East Africa, mainly Somalia.

<sup>41</sup> Boko Haram, referred to by themselves as a "Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and jihad", is an Islamic extremist group based in northeastern Nigeria, also active in Chad.

dialogue, where people of various faiths collaborate with one another in the cause of peace and justice; c) intellectual dialogue, which can explore different beliefs and their claims to truth; d) spiritual dialogue, where people open themselves to the force of one another's religious experiences.

Privileging dialogue with Muslims in Catholic theological education seems to be the right direction. Although candidates to priesthood and ministries need to be ready to engage in dialogue with people of all world faiths – as well as the “faith” of secularism – one should believe that given the contemporary world situation it is vital for Christians to be able to engage constructively and confidently especially with Muslims. The future of Christian-Muslim dialogue needs well-educated priests and religious men and women secure in their understanding of Christian tradition and knowledgeable about Muslim beliefs. The future of many Christian minority churches in Muslim countries depends to a considerable extent on the educational level of their leadership and their ability to enter into qualified dialogue with Muslim neighbours.

Furthermore, reintroducing some specific courses on “ATRs”, “comparative spiritualities” and “emergence of the new religious movements” would be of great importance for the Catholic theological institutions in South Africa. Yet, as the analysis pointed out, the best option for Catholic education for inclusiveness would be if interfaith-concerns were integrated into all disciplines of theology and not delegated just to one branch or special module. The real improvement on the openness of Catholic institutions of higher education towards inclusive pluralism should be seen therefore not so much in reintroducing courses or creating new ones as including interfaith aspects into the existing courses in systematic theology or making references to religions while discussing Catholic doctrines.

## **WKŁAD KOŚCIOŁA W RELIGIJNĄ INKLUZYWNOŚĆ W NAUCZANIU I STUDIOWANIU TEOLOGII NA POZIOMIE POLICEALNYM W AFRYCE POŁUDNIOWEJ**

Streszczenie

Jednym z głównych zadań stojących przed studiowaniem teologii na katolickich wyższych uczelniach w chwili obecnej jest kształcenie przyszłych pokoleń, tak by mogły pozytywnie odpowiedzieć na fenomen globalizacji, wszechobecną wielokulturowość, współczesną różnorodność religii i „wieloprzynależność” religijną. W tym nowym kontekście katolickie uczelnie mają obowiązek pomóc studentom w uzyskaniu kompetentnej wiedzy o religiach niechrześcijańskich i rozwijać w nich autentyczną otwartość na współpracę z wyznawcami innych religii na rzecz pojednania i pokoju w świecie. Instytucje katolickie powinny także pomóc przyszłym kościelnym elitom przezwyciężyć brak niejednokrotnie elementarnej wiedzy o religiach, a tym samym lepiej rozumieć Boże objawienie

oraz niepowtarzalną i uniwersalną rolę Chrystusa w historii zbawienia, która obejmuje także niechrześcijańskie tradycje religijne.

Niniejszy artykuł opisuje najpierw współczesny kontekst różnorodności religijnej, który stwarza dla Kościoła nowe możliwości do dialogu z religiami. Następnie definiuje „inkluzywność religijną” nie jako formę synkretyzmu religijnego (łączenie ze sobą różnych doktryn, zasad moralnych, mitów, rytuałów i praktyk religijnych), ale jako teologiczną metodę, która zwraca uwagę na dwie niepowtarzalne prawdy w chrześcijaństwie: że Boża miłość jest uniwersalna i dlatego obejmuje wszystkich ludzi, włączając innowierców; i że ta miłość jest również partykularna – wyrażona w Jezusie i przez Jezusa Chrystusa.

Autor niniejszej publikacji twierdzi, że idea religijnej inkluzywności nie jest nowa, w rzeczywistości sięga początku chrześcijaństwa. Znajduje również potwierdzenie w dokumentach Soboru Watykańskiego II i jest obecna w nauczaniu posoborowym Kościoła, zwłaszcza w konstytucji apostołskiej *Ex corde Ecclesiae* (1990) Jana Pawła II.

W dalszej swej części publikacja zwraca uwagę na praktyczne sposoby wdrażania inkluzywności religijnej w studiowaniu teologii na katolickich wyższych uczelniach, analizując szereg ważnych zagadnień, jak: pilna potrzeba teologicznego wychowania na rzecz religijnej inkluzywności; znajomość zasad dialogu międzyreligijnego; studiowanie teologii z perspektywy teologii porównawczej i z perspektywy odmiennych duchowości religijnych; „testowanie” teologicznego wykształcenia przez międzyreligijny *praxis* dialog i dialog życia. Artykuł kończy się próbą praktycznego zastosowania sposobów nauczania i studiowania teologii w kontekście południowoafrykańskiego pluralizmu religijnego.

## ABSTRACT

One of the major tasks facing Catholic theological education at the undergraduate level nowadays is that of helping to equip the churches and their leadership to respond to the growing raise of globalization, multiculturalism, religious diversity, and multiple religious belonging. In this new context, the Catholic institutions of higher education are required to help their students gain a competent knowledge of the non-Christian religions and develop a genuine openness to work with “others” for peace and unity in the world. The Catholic institutions should help future church leaders to overcome their ignorance about the other religions and thus understand better God’s self-revelation in the one salvation history, especially recognizing the unique and universal role of Christ in it.

The article firstly describes the contemporary context of religious diversity which creates new opportunities for the church to engage with religions. It defines “religious inclusiveness” not as a form of religious syncretism (incorporation of some doctrines, moral rules, myths, rituals or practices of other religions) but as

a theological approach that gives equal attention to two essential Christian convictions: God's love is universal and therefore reaches other believers; and God's love is particular and is made visible in Jesus. The author argues that the idea of religious inclusiveness is not new; in fact it goes back as far as early Christianity, finds support in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, and is present in the post-conciliar *magisterium*, especially in the apostolic constitution *Ex corde Ecclesiae* (1990) by Pope John Paul II.

In its further stage, the article pays attention to practical ways of implementing education for religious inclusiveness at the undergraduate level in Catholic institutions of higher learning by analysing a number of important areas: the urgency of theological education for religious inclusiveness; the significance of courses on interreligious dialogue; studying theology from a comparative perspective and other faiths' spirituality; and testing theological studies through *praxis* and dialogue of life. The analysis ends by attempting to apply the above practical ways of teaching and learning theology to the South African context of religious plurality.

**Keywords:** religious inclusiveness, interfaith dialogue, Catholic institutions of higher education, South African context of religious diversity, St Joseph's Catholic Theological Institute.

**Słowa kluczowe:** inkluzywność religijna, dialog międzyreligijny, wyższe uczelnie katolickie, południowoafrykański kontekst różnorodności religijnej, katolicki instytut teologiczny w RPA.

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