

Reinhard von Kirchbach

A PROJECT concerning interreligious Dialogue¹

THE PLAN

A. The Project

- | | | |
|------|---|------|
| I. | A short outline of the situation | p. 2 |
| II. | The need for a dialogue between the religions | p. 3 |
| III. | The practical side | p. 4 |
| IV. | What is it about and what is it not about? | p. 4 |

B. The Signals

- | | | |
|------|---------------------------|------|
| I. | From the Christian domain | p. 6 |
| II. | From Judaism | p. 7 |
| III. | From Islam | p. 7 |
| IV. | From Hinduism | p. 8 |
| V. | From Buddhism | p. 8 |
| VI. | From Marxism | p. 9 |

The important third part "Notes, addressed to the reader"	P. 10
---	-------

¹ Note of the editor: By the help of his scripture "A Project" Reinhard von Kirchbach since Christmas 1978 looked for dialogue partners within the religions and for understanding and support within his protestant church according to his "expectation".

A. THE PROJECT

I. A Short Sketch of the Situation.

We have been living for quite a long time on this earth in a kind of co-existence of which we are now more or less aware. This co-existence is essentially characterised by three features:

1. by a scarcely or superficially questioned, naturally presupposed dominance of one's own position,
2. by an only very blurred perception of other positions.
3. This perception usually being combined with the inability to identify oneself as being part of one mankind on this earth.

As the world population, stamped by technical-industrial progress increases so the necessity grows to find fundamentally reasonable roots for the variety of human species.

Here concentrated initiatives are indispensable. Under various aspects they have been set going for some time. I hereby refer to worldwide unions on political, social, cultural grounds. With respect to the specifically religious domain and to "Weltanschauung" we are still at the start.

This is why my project is designed to discuss one topic only: it concerns the belief and the Weltanschauung of man, not from the point of view of comparative religious and philosophical history, but as a dialogue between persons of differing traditions and convictions as they attempt to live together.

The fundamental assumption being that each one should contribute his own self and not be wrapped up against his partner's way of life.

II. The Demand for a Dialogue between Religious Systems

1. In the near future very decisive encounters in the domain of religion and Weltanschauung can be expected. Until lately controversial discussions on subjects of religion and Weltanschauung ran chiefly on two lines: The annihilation of the supporter of a different conviction - or the attempt to integrate him into one's own cultural domain, thus bereaving him of his own identity. Today, less than ever, neither course can be pursued with a good conscience.

There is a third course: that of living a dialogue. A course that knowingly abandons those two objects, a course that does not avoid the contrasts, but - while keeping in mind the fundamental differences of all kinds - retains the candour of the conversation, or keeps struggling to do so. We must make common cause in finding the conditions and possibilities for this kind of dialogue.

2. Having this in view I want to invite people of diverging active belief and sincere Weltanschauung to come to my home at Altenhof near 2230 Eckernförde. We shall require much time for this dialogue, time to get acquainted in mutual respect also to be able to ask questions and answer them.

3. As participants and partners for this dialogue I want to find people from every notable religious or philosophical domain. Each of them would have time to ask everyone questions, or else be asked.

At the same time he should contribute the profile of his own tradition (non-tradition) and represent it.

I am trying to find people who can devote themselves freely to this task for some length of time, and who would like to do so.

III. The Practical Side

For the practical accomplishment of such plans for a dialogue I propose the following points:

1. My possibilities of accommodation being restricted and simple I propose for the first meeting a small group of 6 to a maximum of 10 persons belonging to a great variety of traditions, (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity).
2. Concerning time and duration I suggest two or three months in late summer and fall of 1980.
3. For daily routine I think it is important:
 - a. that each member has half the time to himself, and is ready for common discussions the other half;
 - b. that subjects of discussion should not be previously fixed. Our conversation will lead us to central topics from which we will deduce themes and define their limits.
4. We shall speak English, French and German to understand each other.
5. For donations **to** finance the project, especially its high travelling costs, I have opened an account with the Deutsche Bank in Kiel under the name of "Interreligiöser Dialog". Account-Number; 0443267

IV. What is it about ?

What is it not about ?

1. This dialogue is not meant to turn into a discussion-group on religious or philosophical subjects, but rather be like a living approach to one another in view of the future burdened with our various and frequently opposing traditions.

2. We are not meant to defend our own position, nor to try drawing the partner into our own domain. We should, however, earnestly try to understand the position, the roots and the motivating forces of the other within his tradition.
3. We are not meant to attempt blending the diverse traditions, nor to find a common denominator by selecting or effacing. What is needed is a patient mutual endurance to widen and deepen traditions by living that dialogue.

B. Signals

I. From the Christian Domain

1. Teilhard de Chardin

"From this position" (i.e. the required transformation towards a continual increase of consciousness) "it becomes immediately apparent that in order to unite the active human forces which are now unfortunately apart, the straightest and most effective way would be to sound the drums and form a block of all those who - may they stand right or left - believe that it is the pre-eminent interest of modern humanity to open up a path forward by crossing a bridge towards a higher consciousness...."

Teilhard de Chardin,
Gedanken über den Fortschritt 1941,
Ges . Werke Bd. V. p. 110

2. C.F. v.Weizsäcker

The attempt to set the intercourse going between these two (i.e. between the great cultural blocks of the West and the East) is perhaps the most urgent spiritual demand today. At the present time the Asian world is being swamped with European inventions by means of technique, democracy, nationalism, and marxism. At the same time, however, Asians provide us by communication with treasures of their wisdom, their experience, their technique of man's relation towards himself. To balance these influences one against the other may perhaps become the most important spiritual task to be achieved by the next generation.

C.F. v.Weizsäcker,
Gedanken über unsere Zukunft
Aufl. 1968 p. 21f

3. Dom Helder Camara

"I suppose we are still in the first days of creation,"

Dom Helder Camara ,
"Wenn wir leben wollen" M. Peitz, 1972 p. 211

II. From Judaism

Martin Buber

"We are at the beginning of a period of genuine religious intercourse, - not of those pseudo-talks where no one really addressed nor understood his partner, but of a true dialogue from one firm conviction to another, and also from one open-minded person to another. Only then will the genuine communion manifest itself, not that of a common content of faith allegedly discovered in all religions but that of the situation, of apprehension and of expectation."

Martin Buber,
Das dialogische Prinzip
Lambert Schneider, 1962 p.149

III. From Islam.

Prof. Bouhdiba (Tunisia)

Doutless the message of Islam is addressed to every man, to all mankind, whoever is involved. We have our faults, in everyday life this respect is frequently neglected and forgotten.

Yet there are numerous correlations beyond Islamic boundaries springing from the mutual root of religions and leading towards intercourse between people. A true dialogue is in a way sharing life, as long as each partner is sincere towards himself and to the other. Sincerity, I believe, is what matters most. Not to be dishonest to oneself, nor to the other - isn't that the only chance of understanding one another in our complicated world? In one way or another we each have received a noble message. Are we not all obliged to share this message and to hand it on?

Prof. Bouhdiba,
Wenn wir weiterleben wollen. 1972 p. 159 f

IV. From Hinduism.

Mahatma Gandhi

"My religion has room. I should not like my house to have walls on all sides, nor my windows curtained. I would like civilisation of all countries to pass through my house, touching it unhindered like the wind does. But I refuse to be overthrown. My religion is not that of a prison. It has room for the humblest among God's children, but it is proof against pretentious pride and intolerant religions or races."

Mahatma Gandhi, zit. aus Lutherischen Monatsheften, April 1975 S. 187

V. From Buddhism

D. T. Suzuki

1 . The greatest truth is an affirmative.

D .T. Suzuki,
Die große Befreiung 1972, S. 50

2. We must always keep in mind that the finger that points to the moon remains being a finger and will never change into being the moon.

a. a. O. S . 10S

VI. From Marxism

R. Garaudy.

"I think that every belief today has only a chance of survival as long as it is not an ideology, but chiefly helps to live."

R. Garaudy,

in "Wenn wir weiterleben wollen." Peitz, 1972 p. 201

"The freedom of others is the necessary assumption for my own freedom."

R. Garaudy, a.a.O. S.191

NOTES

addressed to the reader and

Informations

concerning an i n t e r r e l i g i o u s dialogue

SCHEMA OF ARRANGEMENT

I.	A request	p. 11
II.	Concerning your belief	p. 13
III.	What I do hope for?	p. 16

I. A Request

1. I beg you
to be with me a place
where the fire can dwell.

I beg you
not to retreat
when the fire is burning us.

I beg you
to wait with me
in the fire
for one another.

2. I place my life alongside of you
not knowing
where you are.

I am trying to find you
however much the space grows
that keeps us apart
and which encloses our life.

I will listen to you
even though incessantly
I am being flooded
by the whirr of voices.

3. I shall wait with you for steps
which nobody yet foresees.

I want to leave the old haunts
with you.

The beams are decaying.

I shall keep a lookout
with you
for roads that are being built.

With you
I shall look out for the light
which has no falsehood.

II. Concerning your belief

1. I beg you,
do not deny your faith
but live it
as deeply as you can,
keeping the past alive
yet giving space to the future,
and tearing down walls today
that hold us prisoners.

I beg you
to question precicely,
to listen with your heart
and to answer with what
you have discovered.

2. I beg you
to penetrate
to the source of your belief,
and there to pitch your tent.
I feel
that it will be a hard and lonely way
for you
and for me.
You may not find many
who follow you.
Perhaps your own people will call you
a deserter.
The point is
that you are not a deserter.

I feel, there will be a token.
In the tents
put up near the well
there will be

for each of us
an immeasurable expanse of light.

3. I beg you
to bear my presence
and that of others'
for some time.
We shall be conscious of each other
more than we shall see each other.
But we shall feel
whether we have that amount of room
for one another
in which we can stand upright
and breathe freely.

Even though your belief
must shut out mine,
don't give me up
and hold me
close to you
at the place, where you have finally
found your answer.

4. I have nothing
which can shelter
or satisfy you.
But in communion with you
I want to wait
for peace,
for bread,
and for the spirit.

I am hungry
for the bread of righteousness.
I am thirsty
for love,

which is the home of truth.
I must strain for breath
and an atmosphere that became
pure for all.
I long to awake to life
and to wander with you
towards a sun
that does not set.

III. What do I hope for?

1. I think
God will be waiting for us.
Having linked us together
to become one mankind.
He is expecting us combined.
As He is leading the entire mass of men
He is expecting
that each of us turns more deeply
towards Him,
and in doing so
turns towards his neighbour.
I hope
that drawing nearer together
contains a quality of growth
which we yet can scarcely foresee.

I hope
that God will help mankind
to advance one step
regardless of all contrasts.

I do not expect
this to be the kingdom of God,
nore a perfect social community.
Yet I hope
by affirming this contrasts
they will be transformed
to a realm of hope,
and that a new area of relations
will result in the lives of men.

2. I hope
that God will remain
the source and the end
of these changes,
and that He does not forsake us
even though we begin to discover
how we differ
and what strangers we remain to be.
I hope
that God will keep us
living side by side
even if we do not find bridges
to cross towards one another.
I hope
God will move people
to decide living together
although their conviction
and their way of life
may exclude each other.
I expect
God to take an active part
in this effort of approach.

I am expecting Him
to cast the beam
out of our own eyes,
and when He does
to avail Himself
of our own hands.

3. I am trying to find people
regardless of their own opinions
who risk making an extreme effort
of a step into a dimension which
embraces the entire world.
A dimension which becomes
near and intimate to them
like a person they love.
I am trying to find people

ready to renounce
their despondency,
their despotism,
their hardness
and their foolishness.
I am trying to find people
to whom despair is of as little use
as a perfect system is.
I am trying to find people
who overcome
the fear of their own extinction,
who have become timid
and whose heart is aching
in expectation of love.

4. It is not an enterprise,
but an expectation.
It is being created to a form
that as yet we do not know.
It is a beginning, just set going,
a poorness
that cannot comprehend the abundance.
It is like being exposed
to the drought of the desert.
It is panic,
because everything is changing
and fear
because we are losing ourselves.
It is like being pressed together
while each one is given a new heart.
It is like being united
with new worlds appearing.
It is dwelling in love
and in the spirit.
It is the first signal
towards being sheltered
within the highest danger.
It is an arrival at home.