SEEDS OF CONFLICT
IN A HAVEN OF PEACE
FROM RELIGIOUS STUDIES
TO INTERRELIGIOUS STUDIES IN AFRICA

Frans Wijsen

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Foreword

This study is the outcome of a research project that started in 2001, culminating in three months of fieldwork in Nairobi in 2004. Because of its relative stability Nairobi has quite a number of departments of religious studies and schools of theology, as well as headquarters of continental ecclesiastic organisations (ecumenical, evangelical and African instituted). The exception is the Catholic one, which is based in Accra. Our sources are the texts that are produced and reproduced by these institutions, as well as the academic discourses that are conducted there. One of the aims of the fieldwork was to upgrade my knowledge of African philosophy – a field that I have neglected in the past, I must admit, because of my preoccupation with anthropological research. I found recent developments in African philosophy very promising, drawing a true picture of Africa. That is why the reader will find more philosophical insights in this book than in my previous publications.

Table of contents

Introduction

Between 1984 and 1988 I conducted fieldwork for my doctoral dissertation on popular religion in Sukumaland, Northwest Tanzania. It was a transitional period, in which Tanzania gradually moved from a one-party political system and state-controlled economy to a multi-party government and an open market economy. During the same years there was growing religious tension between Muslims and Christians. Up to 1985 Tanzania had been considered a haven of peace in a region otherwise troubled by religious and ethnic conflicts. But even in this haven of peace seeds of conflict were sprouting. Seeds need fertile soil to germinate and flourish. I will argue that present-day Africa offers such a breeding-ground for seeds of conflict and that many scholars of religion in Africa overlook this because of an overly Afro-centric ideology about Africa's community spirit and tradition of peaceful coexistence.[1] Undoubtedly there was such a tradition. But when it is romanticised, scholars of religion fail to see the cultural contradictions and tensions that were there as well – contradictions that could lead to serious trouble under different conditions, such as the contemporary process of globalisation. On the other hand, evidence shows that seeds of conflict fail to grow if preventive measures are taken, such as the language policy of the post-independence government of Tanzania (Wijsen & Mfumbusa 2004: 76–79).

After defending my doctoral dissertation, which focussed on the interaction between Christianity and African Indigenous Religion, my interest shifted to Islam and Muslim-Christian relations in (East) Africa. My first article on that topic was written in an optimistic mood (Wijsen 1997a). I wrote that religious tensions occurred mainly in the minds of religious leaders, not at the grass-roots, and that it was predominantly a problem in the coastal regions, not in upcountry Tanzania. But after conducting a survey among 250 students at St Augustine University of Tanzania in Mwanza (Wijsen & Mfumbusa 2004) I had to revise my thinking. When the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam were bombed and 200 people, mostly Africans, lost their lives on 7 August 1998, it was clearly evident that something had gone seriously wrong.

The bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam shattered the image of Africa's tradition of peaceful religious coexistence (Van't Leven 1993; Dopamu 1988) and, although largely ignored in the West, they deeply affected the lives of

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1   Reflections of Africa's tradition of peaceful coexistence of religions are Kwame Nkrumah's *Consciencism* (1970) and Ali Mazrui's *Triple heritage* (1986).

Africans. Eventually, when the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington were attacked on 11 September 2001, and it became known that Bin Laden had been trained in Sudan, that Al-Qaeda's second-in-command was an Egyptian, that the Muslim Brothers' ideology had been a source of inspiration, that the attacks in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi had been a trial run for those in New York and Washington, and that 'locals' were actively involved in these attacks, the African connection became manifest. Local had become global, global had become local (Robertson 1995).[2]

Since the 11 September 2001 debacle there has been a mushrooming of activities in the field of interreligious dialogue, organised mainly by ecclesiastic and religious organisations such as the All Africa Conference of Churches, the Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa, the Interreligious Council of Kenya (formerly the World Conference on Religion and Peace – Kenya) and the United Religions Initiative.[3] In 2003 the National Agenda for Peace project of the National Council of Churches in Kenya organised a three-day interfaith consultation on violence and building cultures of peace, with contributions from the perspectives of African Indigenous Religions and African Instituted Churches, as well as Christian, Muslim and Hindu religious perspectives (Getui & Musyoni 2003).

Theoretical reflection on the practice of interreligious dialogue, however, has yet to come. An investigation into *Faces of African theology* at the beginning of the 21st century contains not one contribution on interreligious dialogue (Ryan 2003). Likewise, Sam Maluleke's study of *Emerging paradigms in post-Cold War and post-apartheid African theology* (2002) does not mention dialogue as a paradigm, neither does Jesse Mugambi's *Christian theology and social reconstruction* (2003). The first two volumes of the Ecumenical Symposium of Eastern African Theologians on *Theological reflections of the 21st century* contains no contribution on interreligious dialogue (Ndung'u & Mwaura 2005; Chepkwony 2006). A theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective is lacking.[4] The most recent volume *African Christianity: an*

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2   Egypt – both the religious ideology of the Muslim Brothers and the political ideology of Jamal Abdul Nasser – remains a source of inspiration for many young Muslims in Africa.

3   These activities were happening all along, but they remained hidden or were disregarded. Now interreligious encounters are advertised and organised in public places.

4   Theories of Africa's peaceful coexistence such as Nkrumah's *Consciencism* (1970) and Mazrui's *Triple heritage* (1986), could be interpreted as the beginning of such a theory. I would argue, however, that they need revision in the light of present-day conflicts in Africa, in which religion does play a role, although it is not the only factor involved. To some extent Ali Mazrui's *Islam* (2006) can be interpreted as a review of his *Triple heritage* (1986) in the light of the contemporary globalisation process, though he does not change his earlier argument fundamentally. Mazrui (2006: 214) says: "Africa has had an impressive record of dialogue of cultures and civilizations. This record is now endangered both by internal tensions in Africa and external pressures and stresses." The danger becomes evident when Mazrui (2006: 218) urges: "Speedy action is needed to restore the sense of dignity of Coastal and Muslim Kenyans before Kenyan Islam is radicalized into a new Black Intifadah."

African story (Kalu 2005) has one contribution on Muslim-Christian relations in Africa, but tucked away in the historical part. It does not feature as a topic under "new dimensions".[5]

In volumes edited and authored by international scholars, too, the African perspective is almost totally absent. Most volumes published in *Faith meets faith*, the Orbis series in interreligious dialogue, feature neither an African writer nor an African perspective. In one of the first volumes, *The myth of Christian uniqueness*, edited by Paul Knitter and John Hick (1987), there is not a single African contribution, nor is there one in the recent volume *The myth of religious superiority*, edited by Paul Knitter (2005). The same applies to *Many mansions*, on multiple religious belonging, edited by Catherine Cornille (2002), a theme that African scholars of religion certainly could say a lot about. An exception to the rule is Lamin Sanneh's *Piety and power* (1996), as is the recent issue of Voices from the Third World on *Inter-faith dialogue. Listening to African voices* (Mwaura, Gundani & Dolamo 2005). Most contributions in these collections are, however, descriptive rather than theoretical.

Questions and objectives

This book is an attempt at making good this deficiency. It is written by a European, but a European who has been working and travelling in Africa for 25 years. There are African scholars who claim that Europeans can produce philosophies and theologies in Africa, but not African philosophies or African theologies. Hountondji and Bodunrin, among others, say that African theologies or African philosophies can only be "written by Africans" (Hountondji 1983: 33). A study of Kant written by an African is African philosophy, but Tempels's *Bantu philosophy* is not because Tempels is a European, says Hountondji (1983: 173). This is counter to the view that the labels 'African' and 'European' do not refer primarily to the geographical origin of those philosophies and theologies, but to ways of thinking underlying them. Some scholars born on the African continent think and act more European than scholars born on the European continent, and vice versa. Moreover, outsiders sometimes see more clearly what is happening on the inside (Fortmann 1971).[6] This is also evidenced by 'reverse mission' projects launched by Africans in Europe.

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5   Obeng (2000: 22) says that there is some dialogue, "but largely on a theoretical level". I do not know what level of theory he has in mind. On the contrary, I would say that there is some dialogue at the practical level of ecclesiastic organisations such as the All Africa Conference of Churches and the Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (Mbillah 2001; Mbillah 2002; Temple 2001), but not at the level of theory building in departments of religious studies and faculties of theology.

6   Some colleagues make a distinction between 'African' and 'Africanist' scholars. African scholars are scholars of African descent. Africanists are foreign academics who conduct African studies. I do not find this distinction very helpful. African descent does not tell us whether the scholar allows for a view from below and from inside Africa. Inclusion of such

The main questions that will be answered in this book are the following. Why are African scholars of religion and theologians so remarkably silent about interreligious relations? Is there an African model for interreligious relations? If so, what does it look like? How should the subject of interreligious relations be taught in departments of religious studies and schools of theology?[7] Sub-questions are: What are the religious developments and current trends in the study of religion in Africa? What happened to the insights of the early pioneers in this field of study?[8] Is there any progress in this field?[9] Have African scholars of religion and theologians anything to contribute to the (inter-national) debate on this subject?

This book focuses on East Africa, not only because it is the region that I am best acquainted with, but also because it is highly pertinent to our topic.[10] East Africa has a tradition of peaceful coexistence of religions. Its unique, centuries-old association between Arab traders and Bantu people created a new culture and a new language, Swahili. Coastal people have adopted and trans-formed not only Islam but also Arab culture. They introduced Arab vocabulary into Bantu languages and Islamic spiritual beliefs into African Traditional Religion. Yet this very region is becoming a hotbed of Muslim extremism.[11] Muslim extremism in Africa has its roots in the Muslim Brothers movement, founded in Egypt in 1928, although its centre of gravity shifted to Sudan in 1989. From there it spread to other East African countries (De Waal 2004).

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a view depends very much on the author's identity construction and identification. I would like to apply the term 'Africanist' to any academic who conducts African studies, irrespect-ive of his or her colour or place of birth. The same would apply to European studies or Islamic studies that are conducted by academics, insiders and outsiders alike.

7   As will be explained elsewhere, we are of the opinion that good leadership is crucial to solve Africa's problems, also in the churches. So leadership training is of the utmost importance.

8   One thinks of scholars like Byang Kato, John Mbiti, Charles Nyamiti, Bolaji Idowu, Samuel Kibicho and Okot p'Bitek, to name only some pioneers of major trends in African studies of religion (Westerlund 1985).

9   Whether or not there is 'progress' depends, of course, on one's view of what the study of religion should be. Some would see emancipation of religious studies from theology as progress; others would see a shift to an all-embracing study of religion as the way forward. We shall return to this point in due course.

10   West and South African developments are dealt with only insofar as they influence the dis-cussion in East Africa. In contrast to the situation some decades ago, there is far more inter-action between theologians in various regions in Africa today, attributable to such factors as the greater availability of media and opportunities to travel, but also to a new sense of African unity as a result of the African Union. I observed more influence from South Africa than from West Africa in the academic study of religion in East Africa.

11   Various scholars have noted Arabisation in East Africa. Whereas *madarasa* were mostly held in Swahili, more and more mosques are changing to the use of Arabic in religious instructions. I noticed that Muslim *walimu* increasingly use the word '*Allah*' for God instead of the Swahili word '*Mungu*'.

My objective in this book is to develop a theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective.[12] It is important to clarify what the nature of this theory will be. My doctoral thesis, which was sub-titled *A social-scientific and theological study* (Wijsen 1993), was poised at the intersection of religious studies and theology of religions. I will use the same approach in this book, thus aiming at both socio-scientific and theological theory building while carefully interrelating empirical and normative insights. This kind of approach has been labelled 'empirical theological' (Van der Ven 1998). Empirical theology may be seen as the antithesis of systematic theology, as will be explained below. Towards the end of this study I will describe my growing dissatisfaction with this approach and will advocate a further step in the development of a science and theology of religions, which I would call interreligious studies.

The classification 'empirical theological' appears to clarify little and in fact poses problems, since empirical and theological research are often seen as competitors in the study of (African) religion. Bourdillon (1996: 150) summarises the debate: "The study of religions is sometimes opposed to theology precisely in that theology requires some kind of commitment while the study of religions is essentially neutral." As will be argued throughout this book, from an African perspective this distinction is itself highly problematic. Part of the search for a theory of interreligious relations will be to look for "innovations in religious methodologies", a theory that "overcomes the polarities created by the classic insider and outsider distinction in research, and thereby defuses the controversy between religionist and reductionist methodologies" (Cox 2003: 34–36).[13]

Fruits of the Spirit

When writing my doctoral dissertation about popular religion in Sukumaland, Northwest Tanzania in the early 1990s I was greatly inspired by the Kenyan scholar of religion Samuel Kibicho, who had published his own doctoral dissertation two decades earlier. Kibicho is a good example of a scholar who combines a theology and a religious studies perspective, as is common at many public universities in Africa.[14] Kibicho's criterion for evaluating non-Christian

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12   "A theory is defined as a system of explaining phenomena by stating constructs and the laws that interrelate these constructs to each other. A construct is a concept, abstraction or idea drawn from the specific" (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003: 6).

13   It is evident that the African perspective will lead scholars of religion to postcolonial discourse and its connection with postmodern discourse.

14   Samuel Kibicho was professor of religious studies at the University of Nairobi; John Mbiti and Anatole Byaruhanga-Akiiki were professors of religious studies at Makerere University, Kampala. The University of Dar es Salaam has not started a department of religious studies, for reasons that will be explained later.

religions is the biblical idea of the fruits of the Spirit, but he looks for empirical evidence of the presence of these fruits in African religion. He finds his evidence in the communitarian spirit and neighbourly love in African societies.

I made the criteria of empirical evidence and the biblical idea of fruits of the Spirit my guiding ideas in writing this book, not only because they resemble the spirit belief and pragmatism in African Indigenous Religion, but also because they have close parallels in Qur'anic writings and in Pentecostal churches, as well as in the prosperity gospel that seems to be so attractive in present-day Africa (Omenyo 2003; Nwankwo 2004).

Various authors claim that African cultures are conducive to peaceful societies. They help people to live together harmoniously and respect each other. "The way to social harmony and peaceful co-existence lies in going back to our African past and emulating the rich treasures and precious strands of our cultural heritage. Our law-making and law-enforcing must reflect our past – African communalism," says Eboh (2004: 219). Africa's community spirit is rendered with terms like '*ubuntu*' (Mbigi 1997) and '*ujamaa*' (Onwubiko 1999). What is needed is an *African renaissance* (Magesa 2002a). Thus Africa's *community spirit* and *tradition of peaceful coexistence* are interpreted as an African model of interreligious dialogue. But do these claims hold water? Is there 'empirical evidence'?

Beyond Eurocentrism

For many people, at least in the West, the world is not the same as it was before 11 September 2001. This appears to be an overly Eurocentric view. For Europeans and Americans life undeniably changed, if only because they have to live with the – for them – new and frightening thought that 'the centre' of the world can be attacked by 'the periphery' and that they have to protect themselves, their leaders and their prestigious buildings permanently by maintaining tight security. But for many Africans the world is 'not the same as it was before' the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the Berlin Conference, or the 7 August 1998 bomb blasts in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam mentioned at the beginning of this introduction. All these events have coloured Africans' collective memory up to the present.

Whatever we say about interreligious dialogue in Africa, we have to realise that for many, if not most, Africans Christianity is the white man's religion, closely associated with colonialism and imperialism. This immediately places the discourse on interreligious dialogue, notably Muslim-Christian relations, in the context of the tension between "the West and the rest of us", to borrow the title of Onwuchekwa Chinweizu's book (1987). Africans like to remind their European dialogue partners of the history of slavery, imperialism and

colonialism. As the famous quotation, attributed to both Jomo Kenyatta and Desmond Tutu, says:

> "When the missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land and the missionaries had the Bible. They taught us how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the land and we had the Bible."

Beyond culturalism?

Since 11 September 2001 'clash of civilisations' (Huntington 1992; Becker 1999) rhetoric has become quite fashionable. According to this view those events clearly show that we are facing cultural differentiation, not cultural homogenisation. For Huntington international conflicts are no longer about political or economic ideologies but have become struggles for cultural hegemony. Three superpowers are going to determine the future course of human history: Christian culture in the West, Islamic culture in the Near East, and Confucian-Asian culture. Five other cultural zones will switch sides periodically in tune with developments in the aforementioned three: Japanese culture, Hindu Indian culture, Orthodox culture in Russia, Latin American culture and African culture.

Obviously, these cultural entities are influencing today's world trade and political alignment. But there is quite a lot of culturalism in Huntington's statement, interpreting culture as a determining factor. In the 1960s scholars thought that all problems were economic and political, calling for economic and political solutions (Habermas 1984).[15] This view was clearly reductive. At present there is an opposite trend. Some scholars suggest that all problems are cultural and religious and can be solved by intercultural and interreligious dialogue. This, too, is a reduction.

Many conflicts in Africa do not primarily relate to religious and cultural differences, but to a struggle for fertile land and clean water, and for control over natural resources like oil, gas, gold, diamonds and tropical hardwood (Elbawadi & Sambanis 2000; Fosu & Collier 2005). Undoubtedly struggles for scarce resources are breeding-grounds in which seeds of conflict can flourish (Sherif 1966). But they are complex and require a multi-dimensional, poly-methodical approach. Hence to believe that interreligious dialogue (alone) can solve the problems is naive and simplistic.

Mission and counter-mission

Sometimes it is said that the clash between Muslims and Christians is the sequel to the clash between communism and capitalism during the Cold War era. This,

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15 According to Habermas economics (profit-driven) and politics (power-driven) determine the life world. In the 21st century scholars have come to understand more clearly that "culture matters" (Harrison & Huntington 2000).

too, seems simplistic. Anti-Western and anti-Christian sentiments have been prevalent in Africa ever since Europeans started penetrating the continent. These sentiments are closely related to the history of colonisation and mission. Christianisation and Westernisation often went together in health care and education, and even at that time they triggered 'counter-missions', as evidenced by the early African Instituted Churches and the Muslim Brothers in Egypt.

The Society of Muslim Brothers was founded in Isma'iliyya, Egypt in March 1928 by a primary school teacher, Hasan al-Banna, who fought for the preservation of Islamic morality and against the work of Christian missionaries in Egypt. He visualised the Muslim Brothers as a reform movement, not a revolutionary party that caused friction and divisions. Whereas some members wanted to promote the moral salvation of Egypt, if necessary "with the force of the hand", al-Banna wanted his members to defend Islamic values "with wisdom", inspired by Sura 16:125: "Call unto the way of the Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way" (Mitchell 1969: 18).

Long before de-colonisation started missiologists foresaw that Western penetration into the rest of the world would cause a reaction in non-Western countries. As far back as 1936 Hendrik Kraemer pointed out the danger of unilateral Westernisation:[16]

> "The Western hegemony in the affairs of the world belongs to the past . . . All prognosis about the future religious and spiritual development will have to adjust itself to the new fact that all great religions may become worldwide in their effects and possibilities and are no longer confined to definite sections and religions of the world" (Kraemer 1960: 21).

Van Leeuwen (1964: 349–398) wrote a chapter on "The Western impact and the 'awakening' of the non-Western world". And in his preface to John Taylor's *The primal vision*, Max Warren (1963: 6) urged: "What we are called upon to realise is that in the world of our time there is a widespread revolt against any form of domination by the West" and that "the very cry of *uhuru*, freedom" will affect African affairs deeply (Warren 1963: 11). This is exactly what happened. The collapse of the colonial system has led to the waning of Western hegemony in the world at large and the demise of inferiority feelings in the non-Western world. Consequently there is a revival of old cultures and religions, a rise of new religions in former colonies and a resurgence of a missionary élan among non-Christian religions.

Jihad versus McWorld

In his controversial book, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, Benjamin Barber (1995) stated that economic globalisation leads to a worldwide culture of consumerism and

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16   Despite much criticism of his work, Hendrik Kraemer remains the first scholar of religion and theologian to have written systematically about interreligious dialogue (Kraemer 1960).

individualism (McWorld) on the one hand, and on the other to 'the retribalisation of the world' (a phrase introduced in the discourse on globalisation by the media expert Herbert Marshall McLuhan in 1962), in which individuals or groups construct narrow-minded identities and start a holy war (*jihad*) against other ethnic groups and a world culture that has no place for ethnic identities. Disregarding his exaggerations, it is an interesting thesis.

For now it suffices to say that what we are seeing goes far beyond a clash between Muslims and Christians. It is, in general terms, a clash between *Tradition and modernity* (Gyekye 1997), in which modernisation stands for Westernisation and – in the Western view – the rest of the world has just one option: take it or leave it.[17] As president Bush of the United States of America put it, those who are not with us (in the struggle against terrorism) are against us. Not surprisingly, many people in Third World countries, Christian and non-Christian alike, sympathised with the people who made the 11 September 2001 attacks, albeit without justifying them.

The invention of tradition debate

Since Terence Ranger (1983) started writing about the invention of tradition, many scholars of African religion have agreed that inventions did and do take place.[18] In their ideological need to dominate Africans Europeans did not discover African traditions but created them. Colonial administrators invented ethnic groups and customary law, Christian missionaries invented indigenous cultures and traditional religions. Intent on establishing the kind of order prevailing in the West, colonial administrators and Christian missionaries systematised customs and traditions in order to cope with the existing heterogeneity and disorder. Anthropologists and scholars of religion provided scientific proof of their ideas and Africans accepted and internalised these ideas. In his *Invention of tradition revisited* (1993) Ranger modified the argument, saying that it was "too one-sided" and "once and for all", and exchanged the term 'invention' for 'imagination', without fundamentally rejecting his earlier argument.

When I came to East Africa as a doctoral student some twenty years ago, I attended lectures by Aylward Shorter at the then newly established Catholic Higher Institute of Eastern Africa (later the Catholic University of Eastern Africa). Shorter introduced his students to Victor Turner and the idea of discovering root metaphors by criss-crossing binary oppositions. This approach

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17   As will be seen later, the clash ultimately questions the modernisation project and the Enlightenment values of autonomy and rationality. This is where postcolonial critique and postmodernism, however different they may be, meet.

18   Franz Fanon is considered a representative of the invention of tradition thesis *avant la lettre* (Masolo 1994: 35; Mudimbe 1988: 92–93; Daniels 1996).

to African cultures and religions is clearly reflected in my *There is only one God* (1993), but it is an approach that I am increasingly uncomfortable with. It is influenced by the golden age of American anthropology, in which cultures were seen as meaning systems, analogous to languages.

Anthropologists and philosophers of culture acknowledge that cultural orientations are to some extent shared, otherwise intercultural communication would be impossible (Wiredu 1996: 21). But now they put more emphasis on cultural complexity (Hannerz 1992).[19] The invention of tradition discourse made me critical of my own work. There is a world of difference between my *There is only one God* (1993) and *I am just a Sukum*a (2002, co-authored with Ralph Tanner). Anthropological fieldwork cannot be the same as it used to be. Not that I regard ethnic or religious identities as illusory, but I do think there is and was a lot of invention and construction in African views of culture.[20]

The 'modern' understanding of culture

The modern understanding of culture is closely linked with the development of the social sciences in the 19th century (Kroeber & Parsons 1958). Certainly in English-speaking countries, scientists were heavily influenced by the biologically oriented thinking of the generation after Darwin's evolution theory. Having adopted evolution theory as an appropriate model for the natural sciences, social scientists (the distinction between sociology and anthropology came later) tried to demarcate their own field of study from the organic, biological order. Tylor's concept of culture and Spencer's concept of the social order must be understood as attempts to define such a field (Moore 1994: 8–14). Henceforth organisms were assigned to the biological order, and culture/society (not yet differentiated) to the socio-cultural sciences.

In anthropology Tylor and Boas designated as culture that aspect of human behaviour that was independent of the genetically constituted, biological characteristics of organisms. In sociology Comte, Spencer, Weber and Durkheim spoke of society in essentially the same sense. For a long time this concept of the socio-cultural domain was maintained. The difference between sociology and anthropology was operational rather than conceptual: anthropology was done in illiterate societies and sociology in literate societies.

Eventually the concepts were defined more precisely: culture referred to patterns of values, ideas and other symbolic meaning systems as factors shaping

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19   As a result concepts like organisation of diversity, hybridisation and creolisation feature prominently in this study.

20   My socio-scientific method in this book is inspired by discourse analysis. A key premise of discourse analysis is that ways of talking (discourses) do not reflect the world neutrally but play an active role in producing and reproducing it (Jørgensen & Philips 2002). I depend on written and oral 'texts', mainly from East African sources. I do not pretend to be exhaustive.

human behaviour and artefacts; society indicated the relational system of interaction among individuals and collectivities. This analytical independence of the cultural and social systems does not mean that the two are unrelated – an insight that was overlooked because of the structure-actor dichotomy in anthropology, but which has since been rediscovered by contemporary anthropologists like Ulf Hannerz (1992: 10–15).

Present-day understanding of culture

Influenced by, among other things, postmodernist theories, anthropologists came to understand cultures as complex wholes. They no longer describe culture in terms of shared knowledge, but of organisation of diversity (Hannerz 1992: 19). The underlying assumptions are that cultures are not homogeneous but diverse, that cultural knowledge is not only shared but also contradictory, that cultures are not timeless but dynamic, and that they are not simply there but depend on actors.

When it comes to the nature of cultures today there are two schools of thought. According to culturalists, essentialists and primordialists culture is a *natural* reality (e.g. kinship ties), more or less homogeneous (shared), and stable (continuous), integrated or coherent (internally) and closed or exclusive (externally). Culture is reified; it exists 'out there'. According to constructivists, circumstancialists and instrumentalists culture is a *social* reality through and through, extremely diverse and pluriform, dynamic (changing), highly fragmented, flexible and open.[21] Cultures do not exist independently of the actors.

The postmodern view of culture has consequences for the understanding of multiculturalism. Multicultural societies are not to be understood as a mosaic or patchwork of separate, well-defined pieces but as a salad bowl or fruit cocktail (Hannerz 1992: 218), for which 'creole cultures' can serve as a metaphor (Hannerz 1992: 264). The new understanding of culture also has implications for the study of culture, which Hannerz (1992: 15–16) sees as interactionist, processualist, and interpretive.

The presupposition is that people shape cultures in their interaction but are also shaped by them; there is a dialectical relation between actors and cultures. Culture is not a frozen reality but an open-ended process. Actors are always inventing or maintaining culture. Hence anthropologists are no longer interested only in the internal logic of structures but also in what people do with them (Droogers 2003: 26). In the cultural studies version of the actor-structure dilemma Hannerz (1992: 17) finds himself somewhere in the middle.

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21   Present-day studies suggest that the concepts of 'race' and 'tribe' based on genetic characteristics should be properly defined or abandoned altogether.

Do cultures exist?

Of course, modernist anthropologists were equally aware of the huge varieties and even contradictions in cultural patterns, but these were brushed aside for the sake of systematisation. They spoke about 'the Nuer' (Evans-Pritchard 1956) or 'the Ndembu' (Turner 1969). It is this modernist view of culture that predominates in the discourse on African theology and African philosophy.

When present-day anthropologists say that cultures do not exist (Van Binsbergen 2003) they mean that cultures do not exist in the way anthropologists always thought they existed. There is a host of overlapping cultural orientations, with the result that everybody is committed to several orientations at once, none of which coincides with a particular group or territory (Keesing 1994; Brightman 1995). Cultural orientations are associated with language, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, education, profession and social background. In public life people are situated at the intersection of ever changing cultural orientations with no systematic connection between them. Even in their private lives people have multiple identities that cannot simply be integrated; they are polyphonic selves, constantly negotiating with (various voices inside) themselves. The individual is a fragmented subject. Cultures in a holistic sense are simply an illusion of the participants, according to Van Binsbergen (2003: 478).

I persist in using terms such as 'culture' and 'cultural identity', not only because I do not think that dispensing with a problematic term will get us much further, but also because in my view some anthropologists take constructivism too far. Many ethnic groups in former colonies strive for liberation by invoking practices and notions that anthropologists describe as essentialist. Dismissing these as popular or pre-scientific knowledge that should make way for the more profound anthropological insight that any alleged cultural identity is a product of construction, an 'illusion of the participants' with no correlate in the real world, is expressive of scientific self-overestimation, which is also not very helpful to the emancipatory strivings of subaltern movements.

Moderate constructivism or strategic essentialism?

Actors in multicultural societies have various identities at their disposal, each with its own cultural orientation. These are perfectly real. They are what Victor Turner (1974) calls root paradigms and Geertz (1973) cultural patterns. Pierre Bourdieu (1991) uses the term '*habitus*', a tendency to behave in a particular way. A *habitus* is inculcated by education and training, is more or less stable, structured and, up to a point, corporeal. But it depends on the specific time and place – what Bourdieu calls the market – which mix of cultural orientations is selected to interpret experience and generate behaviour. Thus radical constructivism denies the existence of structures, be they cognitive or social.

Radical constructivism also ignores the dialectic relation between reality and mental representations of reality, as Pierre Bourdieu shows in his debunking

of 'objective' science. Classifications produce differences and are themselves products of differentiation. Calling the language Sukuma, spoken by people called the Sukuma, and calling the area in which they live Sukumaland was not ineffective. Whereas until about 1945 the name 'Sukuma' was not used to indicate an ethnic group, there are now eight million people calling themselves Sukuma (Wijsen & Tanner 2002).

Thus, however much cultural identities may be constructions, they are not to be reduced to pure illusions or strategic manipulations. They may appeal to certain group characteristics that are instrumentalised in specific circumstances (hence constructivism is also called circumstancialism, as opposed to primordialism). Present-day African people's identities are increasingly no longer constructed only, or even predominantly, on the basis of ethnicity, but on the basis of gender, nation, social position or religious preference (Van Binsbergen 2003: 492). Nowadays religion has become an important identity marker (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004).

Religion and culture

Although anthropologists of religion speak about religion as a cultural system, the relation between religion and culture is complex (Mugambi 2004: 5–8). On the one hand we obviously do not have religion except in cultural forms. On the other hand it is generally accepted that religion cannot be equated with culture, otherwise religious opposition to culture would not be possible. In African studies the relation between religion and culture is further complicated by the absence of a word for religion in African languages. This would suggest that religion is not a separate entity. When East Africans refer to religious beliefs and practices they are speaking about customs and traditions (*mila na desturi*). This is not to deny, however, that growing division of labour in present-day Africa has resulted in a religious domain, for which they would use the Arab word '*din*'.

Shorter and Onyancha (1998: 25) hold that culture has various levels, depicted as concentric circles. Culture is what makes people human, as distinct from the biological order (see above). Thus one can distinguish between an industrial level (e.g. work patterns, settlements, clothing fashions, transport), a domestic level (culture of the home, leisure time, cuisine), a level of norms and values (customs, ideals) and a level of worldview (religions and ideologies). Religion is a dimension of culture.[22] It gives the worldview an aura of absoluteness

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22 I consider culture to be a 'network of perspectives' (Hannerz 1992: 68) or 'cultural orientations' (Van Binsbergen 2003: 476). Religion is a perspective in which the actors postulate a world other than the visible one. Byaruhanga-Akiiki (2004: 35–38) consistently speaks about 'Spirit-World'. This comes close to Tylor's minimal definition of religion as belief in spiritual beings. The advantage of this definition is that it leaves room for popular expressions of religion in Africa.

and a generality, without which people cannot live, say Shorter and Onyancha (1998). And it does so by referring to a reality other than the visible world.[23]

Religion and power

According to Geertz (1973: 90) religion is "(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic". Geertz's theory is not without problems, as Asad (1983) points out, since he fails to explain why certain human speech acts and practices become religious speech acts and practices. Geertz seems to suggest that particular moods and motivations become religious because they are placed in a religious framework or are seen from a religious perspective, and that this is simply a matter of belief or prior acceptance of authority, independently of worldly conditions. He presupposes the priority of belief as a state of mind, a precondition.[24]

   Geertz is right in making a connection between (religious) theory and practice, but he is wrong in seeing it as cognitive. It is social through and through. What makes human speech and practice religious speech and practice, says Asad (1983), is the power of the authority who claims that this is religious speech or religious practice. So the religious perspective is not *sui generis*. Human speech and practice become religious speech and practice when an authority declares them religious, starts calling them so, and when this is accepted by his or her followers. Consequently the focus of the study of religion should be: what historical conditions are necessary for the existence of religious discourse?

   The study of the relation between power and religion in Africa is imperative, not only to understand the boundary between religious and extra-religious discourse, but also to interpret specific forms of religion. In Africa the spirit world is perceived as powerful. Rich businesspeople and successful athletes are believed to possess more spiritual power than average people. Famous politicians regularly seek support from religious leaders or promote their own reputation for possessing mysterious powers (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: 90–113). One sees the same relation in prosperity churches and Power Christianity (Nwankwo 2004: 29–36).

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23   From an African perspective, however, all definitions of religion that make a distinction between this world and another world, human and supra-human, empirical and meta-empirical, are problematic. We return to this problem in section 3.1.

24   Asad (1983) accuses Geertz of working with a theological presupposition: the assumption that religion is a reality *sui generis*.

'Inner mission' and 'outer mission'

The 11 September catastrophe triggered many debates on the intrinsic relation between religion and violence. It was said that violence is given with the missionary nature of religions. In other words, religious truth is essentially absolute and exclusive, hence potentially violent. One has to admit that various religions make exclusive truth claims. Even some forms of Hinduism, otherwise known as a tolerant religion, claim to be "eternal religion" (Mall 2000: 28). As noted already, in present-day Africa religion is an important identity marker and identity markers often create boundaries, however flexible, between self and other. Seeds of conflict are present here.

It must be noted, however, that many missionary movements started as reform movements within their own religion. Initially Jesus, Buddha and Muhammad respectively tried to reform the Jewish, Brahman and Arabic faiths. In 1928 the Muslim Brotherhood's aim was to encourage social, educational and missionary activity and parliamentary action in Egypt (Mitchell 1969). Similarly, the Islam in Africa Organisation, the outcome of the Islam in Africa Conference held in Abuja, Nigeria in 1989, is first of all an expression of solidarity and sense of community among Muslims to build up Islam in Africa (Alkali et al. 1993).

Here we need to remember the classical distinctions between inner mission and outer mission, mission *ad extra* and mission *ad intra*, mission and evangelism, first/primary evangelisation and second/new evangelisation, missionary and pastoral evangelisation. Whereas primary evangelisation, or *missio ad gentes* in the classical definition, focuses on the propagation of the faith (*propaganda fide*) outside the missionary's own cultural and religious community (*missio ad extra*), hence on expansion,[25] inner mission focuses on deepening faith in one's own community. Mazrui (1993: 247) makes a distinction between revivalism and expansionism in Islam. Expansionism is about spreading the faith and increasing the number of conversions. Revivalism is about rebirth of faith among those who are already converted. The two should not be confused.

Confusion about the word 'mission'

The meaning of the word 'mission' in an expansionist sense is of recent origin. The only Gospel that refers explicitly to mission is John's, which speaks of the sending of the Son by the Father and the sending of the Holy Spirit. In biblical theology, therefore, the word 'mission' primarily connotes communication between God and the world and communication within the Trinity.

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25   This gave rise to the popular notion of mission as a frontier-crossing activity of the church, as cross-cultural Christian communication.

When the Irish monks who Christianised Europe referred to their activities they called them *peregrinatio ad Deum*, a pilgrimage to God, hence the opposite of what is normally regarded as mission. It is not the missionary who brings God to those who do not know him. God is already there, working in mysterious ways. The missionary's task is to discover and reveal God among them (Healey 1981). This understanding derives from the early Christian belief in the universal presence of the divine Logos.

The technical meaning of mission as we know it now dates back to 16th century Jesuit mission, when mission was equated with territory. 'Going into the mission field' meant going abroad to serve the church in a foreign country. In contemporary terms, however, missiologists regard mission as demonstrating the universal relevance of their own message. In Christian biblical terms mission is to "[b]e ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope that is in you" (1 Pet 3:15) or, as Jesus told his disciples: "You will be witnesses for me . . . to the ends of the world" (Acts 1:8).[26]

Mission and market

This does not mean that the popular understanding of mission as winning souls or making disciples (Matt 28:46) is a misrepresentation. It clarifies the term and distinguishes it from other terms such as 'dialogue'. Business people in search of new markets use the mass media to advertise their products and convince people to buy their products. Universities send out recruiters and fundraisers, political parties campaign to persuade voters that their political views are better than others (Biernatzki 1991).

'Going out' and 'searching for growth' feature in most, if not all religions. In a section on the dynamics of religions in his *Phänomenologie der Religion*, Gerardus van der Leeuw (1956) deals with mission as an essential aspect of religion. Whereas the interaction of religions triggers change, albeit unintended, mission refers to intended change. Originally a Christian term, the word has been adopted by non-Christian believers as well. Nowadays Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims all speak about their 'mission'. In Islam the comparable word is *da'wah*. Islamic *da'wah* is primarily the maintenance of Islamic order (through the *sharia*) and secondarily the expansion of the 'house of Islam' (Esack 1997). But there is an imbalance: whereas mainline Western Christians no longer like to speak about mission as expansion or quantitative growth, except in Evangelical

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26   In the preface to *The Christian message in a non-Christian world*, Hendrik Kraemer (1936: vii) defines mission as "the witness of the church in relation to non-Christian faiths". Witness is not persuasion or propagation. See also Tariq Ramadan (2004: 208) in his chapter on "Interreligious dialogue".

and Pentecostal circles, other religions do.[27] On the religious market in Africa a real battle for converts is being waged between Christianity and Islam, which is often misunderstood in the West.

Primacy of practice

In trying to avoid the dilemma between theology and religious studies I referred to empirical theology. It is called empirical because it uses empirical methods. Moreover, its object is not God or any other meta-empirical reality, but people who believe in God and in those meta-empirical realities. As such an empirical theological approach differs from a systematic theological approach. Systematic theology is primarily concerned with beliefs, or conceptualisations of God. It analyses and explains the content of beliefs and tries to present it coherently and systematically. Empirical theology is not so much interested in belief systems as in believers and their practices.

Classical approaches to the study of religions and interreligious relations examine beliefs as recorded in texts. They adopt a historical literary approach. Thus scholars of Islamic-Christian relations study the Bible and the Qur'an. A good example is Badru Kateregga and David Shenk's study, *Islam and Christianity*.[28] In their preface the authors write: "Badru has relied heavily on the Qur'an for his presentation and David has based his writing primarily on the Bible" (Kateregga & Shenk 1980: xvii). Another East African example is *Comparative study of religions*, which adopts a historical phenomenological approach (Mugambi 1990: 9). In most studies of African Indigenous Religion the emphasis is on reconstructing African worldviews from narratives.

However worthwhile these studies may be, in my view there is little progress in systematic theological approaches to interreligious dialogue. This is because of an apparently fundamental incompatibility between two beliefs: belief in God's universal will to save, and belief that Christ and/or the church is necessary for salvation. Since the early 1970s positions have ranged from radical discontinuity to radical continuity between Christianity and other religions, with many positions between those extremes (Bediako 1998: 61–63). This study focuses on believers, not beliefs. The object of an empirical theological approach is practitioners of religion and their practices. A good example is Kim's study, *Islam among the Swahili*.[29] Following Kraft, Kim is not primarily

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27   The plea for a moratorium on mission in the West can be understood as a reaction, prompted by shame about past mistakes of mission.

28   Both Kateregga and Shenk were lecturers in the department of philosophy and religious studies at Kenyatta University, Nairobi.

29   Caleb Chul-Soo Kim is a Korean who lectures at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology.

interested in the "structure thing" but in the "people thing" (Kim 2004: 3), not in Islam but in Muslims and the way they reproduce and manipulate their beliefs. If one compares Kim's study with Kateregga and Shenk's, one discovers that an empirical approach does make a difference.

It is not easy, however, to find an appropriate name for such an approach. I have already pointed out that the name 'empirical theology' strikes me as problematic, since it seems to be a contradiction in terms. The label 'socio-scientific and theological approach' has the disadvantage that it refers to classical disciplines, whereas the boundaries between these disciplines have become increasingly fluid and make little sense in the non-Western world anyway. The term 'studies' is preferable to the term 'discipline'. The labels 'multi-', 'inter-' and 'intra-disciplinary' have the same drawback. Maybe trans-disciplinary is the better option. In this book, however, I use the label 'multi-perspective and poly-methodical'. The implications of this choice will become evident at the end of the study.

Teaching interreligious relations

The object of investigation in this book is interreligious relations, more particularly the teaching of interreligious relations in departments of religious studies and faculties of theology.[30] This is where pastoral ministers and teachers of religion – the future religious leaders of Africa[31] – are trained.[32] The premise is that leadership training will have a major impact on future interreligious relations in Africa.[33] This prompted the question at the beginning of the introduction: how should the subject of interreligious relations be taught in departments of religious studies and schools of theology? Before we can answer that question we need to ask another: how is the subject of interreligious relations being taught in departments of religion and faculties of theology at present?

Religion in Africa is taught in departments of religious studies at public and private universities and in faculties of theology, seminaries, and denominational and interdenominational colleges. There are two target groups. Faculties

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30 Between 1986 and 1992 the University of Utrecht and the University of Zimbabwe conducted a joint project to research religious education. It focused on multifaith issues and African Traditional Religions rather than interfaith issues and Islam (Nondo 1991).

31 Hassan Mwakimako (2000: 43), former lecturer of Islamic studies at the University of Nairobi (currently attached to the Centre for Modern Oriental Studies in Berlin), points out the importance of Islamic leadership in the Muslim community in the context of power.

32 Obeng (2000: 19–23) wants interreligious dialogue to be part of 'ministerial formation'. Mugambi (1995: 28–29) sees a need to include religious plurality in training for pastoral ministry, but regards it as a comparative enterprise. "It will be possible to introduce courses in Islam and oriental studies."

33 Various scholars, including Landes (1998), have showed that poor leadership contributes to the 'crisis' in Africa. Good leadership is crucial for Africa's development, it is said.

of theology (in private, denominational universities) usually train students to become pastoral ministers in their churches. Departments of religious studies in public universities train students to become teachers of religion in schools. Until the late 1970s teaching of religion in Kenyan schools was the equivalent of biblical knowledge or religious instruction. The distinction between religious instruction and religious education was not made till much later. At secondary schools "a student can follow a course in either Christian Religious Education (CRE), Hindu Religious Education (HRE) or Islamic Religious Education (IRE)," says Hinga (1996: 223). Wamue (2004: 367) adds: "ATR is taught alongside these other religious traditions". Both Hinga (1996: 223) and Wamue (2004: 367) say: "This pattern is also reflected at the university level."

In seminaries and faculties of theology other religions are taught from the perspective of the institutions' own (Christian) religion. In departments of religious studies, other religions are studied in their own right, from a historical, phenomenological or comparative perspective, but mostly in an insular way. Interaction between religions is not an object of investigation. There is a relation between institutional settings and points of view, whether secular or a religious (Cox 2003), as we explain in section 3.1.

Another question is whether interreligious relations are studied and taught for their own sake, or whether certain values such as respect and tolerance or practices like dialogue and proclamation should be promoted. This brings us to a key issue: should academic education be disinterested or committed? In general, a multi-perspective and poly-methodical approach is not only interested in existing practice (empirical perspective), but also in practice as it should be (normative perspective).[34] Hopefully, then, our investigation will lead to new and better ways of teaching interreligious relations in departments of religious studies and faculties of theology.[35]

From action theory to theory of practice

Our approach is not action-theoretical, however. Action theory operates according to a methodical individualism: it reduces reality to actors' interpretations

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34 To some extent these perspectives could be linked to Geertz's concepts of 'model of' and 'model for', which are interrelated but distinct (Geertz 1973: 93).

35 In my earlier work I dealt extensively with the issue of 'objectivity' of research (Wijsen 1993: 19, 36, 102). I argued that "no research is neutral, free from biases" (Wijsen 1993: 39 n. 5). I tried to overcome subjectivity by advocating participatory and intersubjective research. I now advocate Bourdieu's participatory objectification. By this Bourdieu means the objectification of the objectifying subject, that is the researcher him- or herself. For the past twenty years I have participated in the discourse on African religion and theology. In terms of Bourdieu's participatory objectification theory the aim is not to analyse the researcher's experience but to analyse its societal conditions.

of that reality. Following the French philosopher and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, we consider this approach too subjectivist. We take into account objective factors such as power relations. On the other hand, we reject the objectivist view that the reality we observe is not real. Structuralists claim that 'real' reality lies behind observed reality in the deep structures of the mind.

Bourdieu started studying philosophy in Paris in 1950. In those days existentialism reigned supreme. On completing his studies he did his military service in Algeria (1955–1958). During the colonial war, when European and African realities clashed, Bourdieu experienced existentialism as too subjectivist. He became aware of the impact of power relations. After completing his military service Bourdieu wanted to stay on in Algeria to express his solidarity with the people. He worked at the university of Algiers (1958–1960), where he switched from philosophy to anthropology. In the early 1960s he returned to France, lecturing at the universities of Paris and Lille. At that time the intellectual elite in France was enthralled by a new fashion called structuralism. But this fashion, too, did not interest him. Structuralist analyses are purely internal or intratextual; they remain within a symbol system, ignoring socio-historical conditions. In addition they ignore the position of the analyst, Bourdieu maintained.

Bourdieu's theory of practice or praxeology is an attempt to move beyond objectivism without relapsing into subjectivism. The key concept is *habitus*. A *habitus* is a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. Dispositions are inculcated, structured, durable, generative and embodied. *Habitus* gives people a practical sense. Particular practices are not the product of *habitus* as such, but of the relationship between *habitus* on the one hand and the social context, 'field' or 'market' on the other. A field or market is a structured space in which different positions are determined by different kinds of resources or 'capital': economic, social and cultural capital. Fields allow one form of capital to be converted into another.

Metaphor of the market

A field is always the scene of struggles in which individuals seek to maintain or alter the distribution of its specific forms of capital. The participants in these struggles have different aims, but they share some fundamental presuppositions. They must believe in the game they are playing. Although Bourdieu borrows the terms 'market' and 'capital' from economics, they are not economic in the narrow sense. Though practices may not be governed by a strictly economic logic (e.g. they may not be geared to financial gain), and some may even be illogical in strictly economic terms, they do have a logic that is economic in a broader sense: the augmentation of some kind of capital (e.g. cultural or symbolic capital) or the maximisation of some kind of 'profit' (e.g. honour or prestige).

Bourdieu's metaphor of the market can be applied to religious markets as well. Just like other multinational organisations, world religions try to expand their sphere of influence,[36] to maintain or regain their share of the market. Mission could be seen thus. It tries to attract potential customers. I think this is a fruitful perspective for analysing interdenominational and interreligious relations.

As pointed out above, the practice under investigation is not so much interreligious dialogue as such, but the teaching of religious interactions (intended and unintended) in departments of religious studies and faculties of theology. Institutes of higher learning are agencies that supply the market with qualified personnel, ambassadors and agents, aiming at the reproduction of religion and at creating clients and consumers of religious products.

Bourdieu was critical of higher education, as it is a producer of taxonomies. Our thinking is always threatened by intellectual ethnocentrism. Historical categories, mediated by institutes of higher learning, undermine the role of independent, critical thinking. Instead of creating openness in students' minds they teach them dichotomies and fixed concepts. Education has a liberating potential when it frees students from the determinism of its own thinking. Social scientists must see the limits of their own thinking and accept that all thinking is socially conditioned (Bourdieu 1991).

Structure of this book

We start with some preliminary explorations of key concepts in this study. What do we mean by a multi-perspective and poly-methodical study of interreligious relations from an African perspective (chapter one)? Next we investigate current trends in the three major religious traditions in Africa – Indigenous Religions, Christianity and Islam (chapter two) and in the academic study of religion in Africa – science of religion, philosophy and theology (chapter three). The dilemma of religionism versus secularism and the issue of methodical agnosticism in the study of religion get special attention. I then present the results of my fieldwork on education in interreligious relations at faculties of theology and departments of religious studies in East Africa; these stemmed from content analyses of documents, interviews and a questionnaire (chapter four). The first four chapters are predominantly descriptive.

Next I explore some key issues in the study of religion in Africa: religion and conflict, human rights and reconciliation (chapter five), as well as dual allegiance and syncretism, secularism and extremism, mission and dialogue (chapter six). This is followed by theological reflections on Christ, the Spirit and mission, and an exploration of the value of social identity theory for a theory

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36   Later I will argue that this market mechanism applies also to indigenous or primal religions. In this sense they are missionary, just like other religions.

of interreligious relations (chapter seven). I then consider what scholars of religion can learn from Africans in diaspora with a view to a theory of interreligious relations: their identity construction and the clash between the West and the rest of the world. Against this background I evaluate the theory that explains interreligious relations in terms of switching and coordination of perspectives (chapter eight). I then proceed to review the plea for a dialogical and diaconal church in Africa. I investigate whether the image of the church as a family of God is helpful to facilitate interreligious dialogue, and propose an alternative: the church as a community of pilgrims on the way to God, together with other God-seekers as fellow pilgrims (chapter nine). Finally I outline a way forward for an African theory of interreligious relations, reconstruction or renaissance, and the contribution of concerned African women theologians (chapter ten). In the general conclusions I present a future project for the academic study of interreligious relations: from a theology of interreligious dialogue, through interreligious theology and religious studies, to interreligious studies.

Chapter One

Preliminary explorations

To work out a theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective by way of a multi-perspective and poly-methodical approach, we first have to clarify what we mean by the three concepts: African perspective, theory of interreligious relations and multi-perspective and poly-methodical approach. Who is an African and what is Africa? How is Africa viewed? That view will shape our theory of interreligious relations in Africa. We must clarify, moreover, various theories of interreligious relations and the connections between them in philosophy and theology of religions, missiology, comparative religion, comparative theology, interreligious theology, and so on. In so doing we can clarify our own multi-perspective and poly-methodical approach.

1.1 What is an African perspective?

Africa is a continent with 800 million inhabitants, but also with great numbers in diaspora. Africa is a continent that has been marginalised on the world market and in world politics, but it is working at a comeback, an African renaissance. Africa is a continent threatened by droughts, diseases and civil wars, but it has spiritual power to survive and a long tradition of peaceful coexistence of religions and cultures. Africa is a continent where 40 percent of the people are Muslims, 40 percent are Christians (14,5% Catholics) and 20 percent are adherents of Indigenous Religions; where religious extremism is growing,[37] both in Islam and in Christianity, but where dual allegiance (syncretism) is the religious orientation of the majority; where Christianity grows fast but Islam grows faster;[38] where there is a real battle raging between Islam and Christianity to win the hearts of the 'untouched', but where Indigenous Religions remain the foundation of most people's everyday lives.

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37 I prefer the term 'extremism' to 'fundamentalism'. Believers who have extremist views go to extremes; the term shows that extremism is the exception rather than the rule.

38 The African continent has more Muslims than any other continent. Nigeria has more Muslims than any Arab country, says Mazrui (2006: 181–182). Jenkins (2002: 79–105) describes the rise of Christianity in Africa; Nigeria has one of the five largest Christian communities in the world.

Africa and Africans

Who is an African? What is Africa? By an African perspective we mean primarily the perspective of Africans, people born on or originating from the African continent, and others who study Africa and Africans from within and from below. In the introduction we criticised scholars like Hountondji and Bodunrin who define the African-ness of views exclusively in terms of the geographical origins of proponents of those views.[39] The principal concern in this book is the teaching of interreligious relations at institutes for higher learning. Hence its main focus is African intellectuals: philosophers, theologians and scholars of religion, rather than Africans at the grassroots.[40] We include European scholars who specialise in African studies, as well as African scholars in diaspora.

One can debate what the African continent is, for instance whether or not North Africa is part of Africa (Mugambi 2003: 112–114). The answer depends very much on the context in which one speaks. Whereas some confine the continent to sub-Saharan or black Africa, present-day theologians and philosophers like to see ancient Egyptian culture as part of the African heritage (Ochieng'-Odhiambo 1997: 21–42). I settle for a formal definition: the African continent consists of the 54 member states of the African Union. Since the leaders of the North African countries are among the founding members of the African Union, North African countries are included (Mugambi 2004: 24). My emphasis, however, is on East Africa – Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Crisis of a continent

One must view religious dynamics in Africa against its wider background (Stamer 1996: 54). In the de-colonisation era most African countries had high expectations. Slave trade, imperialism and colonialism were over and Africa looked forward to a bright future. But the links with the former colonial powers remained and little by little most African countries got caught up in Cold War tensions. For ideological and neo-imperialist reasons many African countries received a lot of development aid and African dictators were kept in power. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 the situation changed. The United States of America and Russia no longer had an interest in Africa. To some

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39   What was said about the identification of Europeans and Africans (see introduction) applies also to Arabs and Africans, and to Africans among themselves. 'Place of origin' is a tricky concept, as is evident in many ethnic conflicts (e.g. Rwanda, West Sudan, South Africa). Does origin mean where one was born, or where one's parents or grandparents were born? Partly because of intermarriage, place of origin would be difficult to determine. Language or dialect presents similar difficulties: some people speak several languages, others do not speak the language of the region where they were born.

40   When we later advocate a subaltern approach we mean that we want those intellectuals to study and speak about interreligious relations from within and from below.

extent the Islamic-Arab bloc filled the gap left by the superpowers. Whereas once there had been a scramble for Africa, albeit motivated by sheer self-interest, now nobody seemed interested (Maluleke 2002: 170).[41]

Much deeper than the economic and political crisis, however, was the identity crisis (Stamer 1996: 59–60). After independence the spotlight was on the national identity of African states and their links with the superpowers, 'West' and 'East', although some remained non-aligned. Today some of those new nation-states are disintegrating and their people are looking for new identities, which they find in the security of Islam with its strict rules, as well as in Christian sects (Gifford 1996). Moral erosion in African societies, manifesting in social evils such as alcoholism, drugs and prostitution, is blamed on the influence of Western culture, disseminated by the omnipresent television, videos and newspapers (Mazrui 2006: 232) and not always distinguished from Christianity as a system of sacred values (Mazrui 2006: 224). The impression is created that without Western Christian civilisation all will be well.

Some Muslims think Islam is the only religion that can help people solve their problems, basing themselves on the Qur'an: "You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in God" (Sura 3: 110). Also Afrocentric thinkers (e.g. Odak) and neo-traditional groups (e.g. *Mungiki*) think that they are better off without Western Christian civilization. Other factors contributing to the crisis on the African continent are drought and ecological disasters (deforestation, erosion), rapid population growth, corruption and self-enrichment among political elites and businessmen, rampant unemployment and the collapse of the family structure, and last but not least, diseases such as aids.

Christian-Muslim tensions

The universal and thus missionary nature of Islam and Christianity cannot be ignored. Matthew 28:19, "Go then to all peoples everywhere", has its parallel in Sura 34:28, "And We have sent you to all humankind." Both religions lay exclusive claim to divine revelation and have programmes to convert Africa. The objective of the Islam in Africa Organisation "to support, enhance and co-ordinate Da'wah work all over Africa" (Alkali et al. 1993: 435) had its parallel in the objective of the Evangelisation 2000 campaign of the Catholic Church "to give Jesus Christ a more Christian world as the best 2000th birthday gift possible".[42]

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41 An exception must be made in the case of the United States of America, which continued undercover meddling in the internal politics of oil-rich African countries. To a large extent the same applies to China.

42 In a magazine of the sister organisation Lumen 2000, published in Swahili in East Africa, it read: "[T]he objectives of the Decade of Evangelization are to unite all Catholics in the common effort, and to inspire all Christians to the common goal of giving Jesus Christ the 2000th birthday gift of a world more Christian than not."

Jihad against Christians is countered by crusades for Christ (Wijsen & Mfumbusa 2004).[43]

The adjustment to a free market economy in Africa saw the introduction of videocassette recorders and videocassettes that were used in religious campaigns. The emergence of a free press allowed people to express their opinions in ways that were not possible before. Sects began to publish newspapers. Some of them are also active on the internet.[44] The introduction of multi-party politics led to the formation of political parties and free expression of opinions (although many dissidents ended up in prison, exile, or dead). Some political movements, both Islamic and Christian, are manifestly sponsored by outside agencies, but the religious dynamics within African countries cannot be ignored.

The complacency of the world's most industrialised countries (G-7) is said to be at the root of Muslims' problems. This is what Mazrui (2006: 96) calls global apartheid. Six of the seven most industrialised countries are predominantly Christian and prevent predominantly Islamic countries from securing an equal share in the world market. Historical and demographic reasons are also cited, such as the former identification of Christianity with colonialism and bad leadership after independence. In the post-independence era most African leaders were Christians. Since many of them amassed vast wealth, leaving their subjects wallowing in abject poverty, all the evils that engulfed Africa were identified with Christianity. Sometimes Muslims claim to be a majority, as in Nigeria; sometimes they claim they are second-class citizens and under-represented in government and at universities, as in Tanzania.[45] Jumbe (1994: 15) says about Tanzania: "Muslims are not the cause, they are in fact the victims of a deliberate build-up of a hostile system which exploits both religion and politics to marginalize them and suppress them."

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43   Probably the first confrontation between the West and the Muslim world occurred in 1099 when Jerusalem was taken after the first crusade. But that crusade in its turn was a reaction to the Muslim conquest of southern Spain four centuries earlier (Hall 1992: 287).

44   An example is the numerous videotapes, books and brochures spread over all of Africa by Ahmed Deedat (1993, 1994). Ahmed Hoosen Deedat was born in India in 1918 but emigrated to South Africa with his father soon after his birth. He dedicated his life to defending Islam against distortion by Christian missionaries. A comparison with the preaching of the German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke (Gifford 1996: 199–204) would, I expect, reveal many similarities.

45   In many countries in Africa, religious statistics are highly politicised, so the figures are unlikely to be accurate. In Tanzania it was claimed for many years that one third of the population is Christian, one third Muslim and one third indigenous believers. At present 40% of Tanzanians are said to be Christians, 40% Muslims and 20% adherents of Indigenous Religion. But again one has to question whether these percentages are based on reliable statistics, or on a political desire to preserve harmony between the largest religions.

A first manifestation of African-Arab solidarity was the founding of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (Rabbat, Morocco, 25 September 1969) at the first meeting of the leaders of the Islamic world. It was held during the Israeli-Arab war in the wake of the Zionist attempt to burn down the Al Aqsa Mosque (21 August 1969). Six months later the first conference was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. After the 1973 oil crisis many African countries joined the Organisation of Islamic Conference. At present almost half of its 53 members are African.

Afro-pessimism: the lost continent

Many scholars hold that Africa is a lost continent. Africa is no longer what it used to be and there seems to be little hope of recovery. One radical critic of African realities, though he does not consider himself a pessimist, is Kä Mana. Mana (2004) does not blame only European colonial administrators and missionaries for present evils in Africa; he also criticises the African heritage and values. Africans are overly concerned with an unseen reality, they are prisoners of tradition and not future-oriented. Attempts to solve Africa's problems by going back to the past are just another form of alienation. Kwasi Wiredu (1980: 5), too, explicitly deals with the 'three evils' of African culture: anachronism, authoritarianism and supernaturalism.

These and other authors review all the explanations for Africa's crisis. It is said to be the result of slavery, imperialism and colonialism (Magesa 2002b: 93–110), which instilled an inferiority complex and a psychological distrust of the African personality. The present crisis is also attributed to artificial boundaries. Ethnic groups are divided among as many as three nations and African people are forced to express themselves in foreign languages (Mugambi 2003: 114–115). This causes alienation. The neo-liberal free market economy destroyed the African community spirit and multi-party democracy made African leaders self-interested. Yet all these factors are present on other continents as well, so in themselves they are insufficient to explain what went wrong with Africa (Van der Veen 2004).

Other scholars, therefore, stress internal influences. "The communitarian social structure, an outstanding and famous feature of the African cultures, has thus come to nurture patronage," says Gyekye. It leaves offices with unqualified and incompetent personnel and promotes overstaffing, inefficiency and laziness. It destroys incentive and drives away qualified and competent people (Gyekye 1997: 254). Communitarianism may have functioned well in closed societies, but in present-day open societies those systems are dysfunctional. Many African refugees in Europe say that they are fleeing from family ties, group pressure and social control. Jealousy is another factor: those in the community who prosper are bewitched; witchcraft is even seen as the major reason

for Africa's backwardness (Signer 2004). The subsistence economy is also to blame, being based on a view that is more interested in maintaining the status quo than on progress. The focus is on consumption, not on production.

What is certain is that Africa is in transition (Bahemuka & Brockington 2001). Many Africans feel it is no longer what it used to be (Wiredu 1992: 60). This was already described by authors like Chinua Achebe in his *Things fall apart* (1958) and *No longer at ease* (1969), and in Kwame Anthony Appiah's *In my father's house* (1992). Whether Africa as it used to be was better off than it is now remains to be seen. There might be a lost paradise ideology in such thinking (Robertson 1995). People everywhere in the world tend to idealise the past in the face of contemporary hardships, just as Israel lusted for the flesh-pots of Egypt (Ex 16:3).

Dependence, independence, interdependence

Much of the Afro-pessimism is inspired by a rigid, one-dimensional centre-periphery analysis of the world system. Analyses are made from a macro-economic perspective, stressing domination by the centre and dependence of the periphery. They are often inspired by instruments used to analyse Latin American colonial history, without taking into account that Latin American colonisation lasted much longer and was more brutal than African colonisa-tion. These analyses are legitimate but often one-sided (Wijsen 1999). Nowadays scholars of African conflicts advocate a multi-dimensional analytical model called the post-Cold War model (the 'new' model) as opposed to the Cold War model (the 'old' model). It acknowledges that most conflicts in Africa are complex and have many roots. Economic and cultural causes of oppression go together, as do international and intra-national oppression. And there is no domination without collaboration. Thus African agency becomes a key to understanding African affairs (Maluleke 2002: 165)

The old model analysed the world system in macro-economic terms. It looked at African affairs from an international, global perspective. Hence most problems in Africa were considered to be caused by external factors. The new model stresses the interplay between global and local (intra-national) dimen-sions of oppression.[46] Secondly, the old model stressed the economic and political dimensions of domination and oppression. It looked at African affairs mainly from the perspective of distribution of resources and means of produc-tion. The new model stresses the interplay between economic-political and

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46   Global forces not (only) oppose local ones; the local situation is to a large extent a product
      of global forces. Robertson (1995) uses the term 'glocalisation' to refer to this complex
      interplay of local and global forces.

cultural-religious domination.[47] Last but not least, the old model saw power relations as a one-way traffic. It looked at African affairs from the perspective of dependence. Europeans were the oppressors and Africans the oppressed: Europeans were the rulers, Africans their victims. The new model looks at African affairs from the perspective of interdependence between oppressors and oppressed, and stresses local reactions to domination – both local opposition to domination and local collaboration with oppressors. Thus the new model moves beyond the fatal impact theory (Wijsen 1999).[48]

The post-Cold War model allows "a slightly different view of Africa", says Maluleke (2002: 172), one that takes into account African agency and responsibility for its present state. Slavery and colonialism play a role. Yet various parts of the world were colonised and their people enslaved, but this did not stop them from developing.[49] Artificial boundaries and foreign languages may cause conflicts. Yet many countries in Asia have artificial boundaries and foreign languages and it does not prevent them from becoming stable and united.[50] The neo-liberal system causes the marginalisation of Africa. Yet most Asian tigers operate in the same system and are doing extremely well (Van der Veen 2004: 356–357). When President Kufuor of Ghana visited Singapore in 2002 he noted that four decades ago Ghanaians and Singaporeans were about equally poor. At present Singaporeans on average earn about seventy times more than Ghanaians. How come? According to this president, it is largely attributable to poor leadership in Africa.

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47 Cultural (symbolic) systems and social structures are interrelated (Hannerz 1992: 10, 15). Although not all problems in Africa can be attributed to culture, culture does matter (Harrison & Huntington 2000).

48 A fresh look at missionary history in Africa shows that in this field, too, scholars must move beyond victimisation thinking. There was much more interaction between Africans and missionaries than was thought (Peterson & Allman 1991).

49 There are countries in Africa that were never colonised and perform badly (Ethiopia). Others were colonised and perform well (Botswana). The criteria of 'bad' and 'good' performance are economic growth, accountable governance, infrastructure, social welfare, trade deficit, inflation, child mortality, literacy, and so on. The situation on the ground is often more complex. Botswana, for example, is the main producer of diamonds in the world. The country invests in roads, clean water, electricity, education and health care for its people, but income disparities are enormous. Kenya recorded an economic growth of 5,8% in 2005, but only 20% of Kenyans are making progress: 80% of Kenyans did not profit from the growth. Kenya is the country with the highest income inequality in the world (57% on the Gini index; in Tanzania this is 37,4% and in Uganda 38,2%).

50 Sometimes African people themselves voted for independence from their fellow Africans in the same territory, as in the case of French Somaliland, which became the independent state of Djibouti in 1977. There are African countries that have one ethnic group and one language and still have civil war on their territory.

Beyond the fatal impact theory

It is said that Columbus and Vasco da Gama's voyages of discovery were the beginning of globalisation and Europeanisation of the world (Magesa 2002b: 97). This view is considered to be too Eurocentric. Maybe it applies to the European discovery of the Americas, but it seems inappropriate to interpret European expansion in Africa in terms of invasion and domination. The cultural life of most of black Africa remained largely unaffected by European ideas until the late 19th century. Coastal peoples in East Africa traded with Arabia, Persia and China long before the Portuguese disrupted that trade in the late 15th century. And even after the arrival of the Europeans they did not dominate the markets, at least not until the 18th century. Extensive direct contacts with Europeans was a late 19th century phenomenon. "European cultural influence in Africa before the twentieth century was extremely limited," says Appiah (1992: 173–174).

Direct colonisation of Africa only began in earnest in the late 19th century. European traders had been doing business on the African coast without settling on the continent (except for South Africa) and without maintaining a permanent military presence other than in a few forts (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: 143). Osei Tutu, ruler of the Ashanti (Ghana), and Mirambo, ruler of the Nyamwezi (Tanzania), to mention only two examples, were not dominated by the Europeans but in alliance with them. To interpret the voyages of discovery as the beginning of 500 years of Europeanisation is to exaggerate European influence in Africa.

Talking about five hundred years of European expansion in Africa is not only Eurocentric, it is also elitist. There is no denying that there was a lot of Europeanisation and that Africans did internalise European values. But this applies largely to the upper classes, those who were assimilated into the Western educational and medical system. People on the underside of society mostly remained outside these systems (Wiredu 1980: 62–63). A large majority of people in Africa have no higher education. Most Africans do not join the information super highway; more than half of Africa's population have never even made a phone call! Many people continue to use indigenous medicine and customary law, and most economic activities of African subsistence farmers are not included in official statistics.

In addition many studies of European expansion in Africa are superficial. Some scholars speak about the 'coca-colanization of the world' (Mazrui 2006: 179). 'Coca-colanization' or 'McDonaldization' is certainly happening, but it happens mainly on the surface of the culture. Beneath the surface a large reservoir of root paradigms remains.[51] The upshot is that there is too much talk of

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51   Even "the postmodern anthropologist does not deny that cultures may be made up of taken-for-granted meanings, or may be given shape by stable configurations of cultural elements," says Tanner (1997: 56).

victimisation in studies of colonisation and globalisation. Very often colonised people are presented as objects of change or victims of history. This view largely ignores the massive rejection of oppressive colonial policies, for example by way of go-slow actions and civil disobedience campaigns (Maluleke 2002: 183). Victimising Africans means depriving them of their 'symbolic capital': the spiritual power by which people who are economically down and out manage to survive (Maluleke 2002: 172).[52]

African theologians such as Eboussi Boulaga and Engelbert Mveng describe the consequences of European expansion in Africa in terms of "anthropological poverty" and Laurenti Magesa speaks about "cultural death". Without denigrating their personal experience of training in the seminary system, these interpretations seem historically untrue and pedagogically unwise (Wijsen 1999: 130). By seeing Africans as victims they do not serve the interests of ordinary people. A 'view from within' clearly shows Africa's creative, innovative and active spirit, says Maluleke (2002: 172). Africans have always been agents, never simply passive receivers (Peterson & Almann 1991). Thus the post-Cold War paradigm allows a less embittered, less schizophrenic relationship between Africans and their painful Christian past than the discourse on 'anthropological poverty' (Maluleke 2002: 174–175).

This 'slightly different' view of Africa does not replace and disprove other views of Africa (Maluleke 2002: 172), nor does it give missionaries and colonisers arguments for cleansing their consciences by suggesting that they were not at all that powerful (Maluleke 2002: 190). That would be a fatal mistake, sometimes committed by Afro-optimists. Those who take this slightly different look at Africa are not "calling for an artificial conjuring up of a positive attitude towards Africa in the facile hope that such a positive attitude will magically produce a triumphant Africa", writes Maluleke (2002: 173).

Afro-optimism: the power of ubuntu

There is, however, growing awareness of the unique contribution of Africa and Africans to world history. Since Martin Bernal wrote his *Black Athena* African philosophers have stressed that Egyptian, and thus African, philosophy is at the root of European civilisation (Ochieng'-Odhiambo 1997: 21–42). What would philosophy be without the Egyptian sage Plotinus? And what would theology be without the North African bishop Augustine, they ask?[53] The same applies

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52 According to the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1991), who reverses the classical Marxist view of religion as the opium of the masses by saying that popular religion is a source of cultural identity to subaltern classes, and thus enables them to resist the ruling classes.

53 Whether St Augustine is a true representative of 'African' theology is a moot point. Some see him only as a collaborator with the Church of Rome (Oduyoye 1986: 18–19, 22–24).

to African theologians, who cite the monastic tradition and the catechetical school of Alexandria. What would tap-dancing be without African dance? What would cubism be without African masks? What would holistic healing be without African medicine? What would pop music be without African rhythm? The 'new wave' of African music attests the prominent place of sub-Sahara Africa in world music.

In world politics one thinks of Bouthos Gali and Kofi Anan, former and present secretary general of the United Nations. In religion there is Samuel Kobia, secretary general of the World Council of Churches who, on taking office on 1 January 2004, said he would run the council the African way. In his view *ubuntu* philosophy contains insights conducive to peaceful coexistence of peoples, cultures and religions. According to South African president Thabo Mbeki the African renaissance offers hope for all African people. Last but not least there is the African contribution to intercultural management and Afro-Business, headed by South African Lovemore Mbigi (1997).

The new spirit of optimism is manifest in the New Partnership for African Development (Nepad). This was the message of a paper read by Moody Awori (2005: 9), vice president of the Republic of Kenya and minister of home affairs, at a congress organised on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Institute of Social Ministry at Tangaza College, Nairobi:

> "The rebirth of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) is a renewed hope for Africa. It lays clear objectives and action plans for the rejuvenation of the socio-economic programme and governance of our continent. Its ideals and vision require all governments to work in partnership with one another, and more so, with our development partners, the private sectors, civil society and religious organizations. It presents us with a golden opportunity for the African leadership to break away from the civil strife, poverty and other factors that impede development."

It is recognised that underdevelopment in Africa is partly a result of bad leadership, corruption and mismanagement. The aim is to reduce poverty in Africa by 50 percent in 2025. To meet this target a Marshall plan for Africa is needed, according to these African political leaders. Mugambi (2004: 28) warns:

> "If NEPAD can deliver the promise of economic prosperity to Africa, confidence will be restored between the former colonial masters and the former colonial subjects. If not, it will go down in history as yet another of those slogans that wasted the breath of African leaders at a time when they had better things to do."

But vice president Moody Awori (2005: 7) is hopeful:

> "Africa is not a dark continent, as many would want us to believe, neither is it doomed to remain poor and underdeveloped. It is a continent endowed with enormous resources."

Africanism and postcolonialism

An African perspective is often, but not necessarily, combined with postcolonialism. It is noteworthy that Franz Fanon, a French citizen of West Indian

descent who participated actively in the Algerian revolution, voiced his African cultural critique of France long before Edward Said wrote his *Orientalism*. Fanon's work is considered to be "a prelude to the idea of invention" (Masolo 1995: 35; Mudimbe 1988: 92–93; Daniels 1996). In a nutshell, the argument is that Western scholars constructed images about 'the others' in order to dominate them. Thus they furthered domination by colonial powers. These images must be deconstructed by the colonised peoples in order to reclaim their history and identity.

However worthwhile the legacy of postcolonialism is, cultural scholars have come to realise that cultures are complex, that knowledge is never a pure reflection of reality and that all knowledge is constructed. In the process of reclaiming their history and identity, Africans construct their own images of themselves and of 'the others'. This is what Buruma and Margalit (2004) call occidentalism. In this study, therefore, I use the term 'postcolonialism' to analyse the relation between knowledge formation and exercise of power, not only in former colonies, but anywhere and everywhere in the world. Thus it also applies to categorisation and domination (e.g. of minorities) in postcolonial states (Desai & Nair 2005: 10). The hermeneutics of suspicion must become mutual and permanent.

1.2 A theory of interreligious relations

Much has been written about theology of religions, theology of interreligious dialogue, interreligious theology and comparative theology. These are all labels for different approaches to interreligious relations, encounter, dialogue, interaction – whatever one chooses to call it – but all of them are essentially theological: they reflect theologically on the interaction between adherents of different religions. I prefer to speak about a theory of interreligious relations. This is because from an African (postcolonial) perspective it is difficult to make the distinctions, so self-evident in the West, between theology, philosophy and religious studies. The theory that I aim to develop in this study will be multi-perspective, theological and socio-scientific, with philosophy as the mediator between them.

From theology of religions to interreligious theology

The classical understanding of theology is faith seeking understanding (*fides quarens intellectum*). Classical theology proceeds from the premises of a particular religious tradition, although one may argue that a theologian like Thomas Aquinas, the Catholic Church's most celebrated thinker, developed his theology in dialogue with the 'pagan' philosopher Aristotle through the works

of the Jew Moses Maimonides and the Muslim philosophers Averroës and Avicenna. Theology of religions could be defined as theological reflection on (the presence of) other religions from the perspective of one's own religion. In most cases it adopts a systematic theological perspective and the theologian is supposed to argue coherently in terms of her own belief system. The aim is to reinterpret that system with reference to other religious traditions. Theology of interreligious dialogue also operates from within the theologian's own belief system,[54] but it differs from theology of religions in that its object of reflection is the practice of interreligious dialogue. The scholar is often a practical theologian who reasons primarily from the dialogue partners personal perspectives, not those of their belief systems. Again the aim is to provide a new theory (theology), but one focused on new (better) practice. Whereas the systematic theologian's main tool is philosophical reflection, the practical theologian's main tool is socio-scientific analysis.

Interreligious theology goes a step further, in that theologians of different religious traditions theologise together in a 'diatopical' way (Panikkar 1978). They switch from the position of their own theology (insider perspective) to that of another religion (often called outsider perspective), seek to coordinate the two in an intrareligious dialogue, than test their newly acquired insights for their authenticity (Krieger 1991: 75–76). Whereas theology of interreligious dialogue primarily aims at improving the quality of dialogue, interreligious theology seeks to produce a new system. In this sense interreligious theology theologises in the terms of more than one religion. I hesitate to use the name 'comparative theology', favoured by some scholars as a designation for this field of study (Valkenberg 2006: 200). Comparison is primarily a method used by scholars to discover similarities and differences between theological expressions of religions. It is used in both intercultural and interreligious theology. In Germany the term 'comparative theology' has been applied to comparisons between various expressions of Christian theology since the 1970s. Theologians of Eastern Orthodox traditions use the term for what Western theologians would call ecumenical theology – that is, comparison of Eastern and Western theological traditions.

As will be explained in section 8.3, the terms 'insider' and 'outsider' perspective are ambiguous. Sometimes they are used to refer to the perspective of

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54   In this respect I differ from Küster (2004: 74), who says that a theology of religions has to argue coherently within its own system, whereas a theology of dialogue integrates the positions of the dialogue partners. Valkenberg (2006: 196–197) seems to endorse Küster's view. In my view the difference is not that theology of religions is intra-religious, whereas theology of dialogue is interreligious. When I see the publications in this field I cannot but conclude that theology of dialogue is equally based on a Christian point of view: both theology of religions and theology of dialogue are intra-religious. I reserve the name 'interreligious theology' for an interreligious approach.

the theologian's own religion as opposed to that of another religion, as happens in comparative theology. I prefer to use the terms 'insider' and 'outsider' to indicate an intra-religious and an extra-religious perspective.[55] Hence an insider perspective is a religious perspective (that of all the religions involved), and an outsider perspective is essentially nonreligious. Used thus they are respectively equivalent to what is called a hermeneutic and a contextual perspective in the sciences of religion. In section 3.1, where we discuss the religionist and reductionist models of religious studies, we will see that in an African perspective the distinction is relevant but not absolute, as the distinction between religious and extra-religious appears to be typically Western.

It is not clear at this stage whether coordination of perspectives leads to dualism or synthesis – retention of two religious systems, leaving them as they are, or integration of two systems.[56] Following Raimundo Panikkar and David Krieger, the scholar of African religion James Cox proposes a 'diatopical hermeneutics'. Wim van Binsbergen's conversion from anthropological fieldworker to diviner priest (Van Binsbergen 2003: 155–313) is an interesting case, but it is questionable whether he creates a new system out of two or more existing ones. Rather he seems to be exploring the intercultural space or cultural overlaps between Africa and Europe. Intercultural should not be seen as a 'third culture' or an 'in-between culture' (Van Beek 1990: 109) in the sense of an intermediate culture, a neutral zone or meeting place between different cultures, a cultural no man's land. There is no such thing as a cultural no man's land or vacuum (Mall 2000: 36).

Interreligious relations in Africa

Strictly speaking 'theology of interreligious dialogue' is a misnomer. Religions cannot have dialogue, only human beings can. This is why I said that theology of interreligious dialogue consists in reflection on dialogue between adherents of different religions. Here one should bear in mind the distinction between an actor and a system perspective. Actors may reflect the belief system of their religion, but more often they do not, certainly not the whole of it. This makes discourse about 'pure' or 'authentic' Islam or Christianity questionable.

In the introduction we distinguished between various types of interreligious relations in Africa: relations between indigenous believers and Christians, between indigenous believers and Muslims, and between Muslims and Christians. Often they are between all three these groups. A further complication is that it is not always possible to distinguish between religion and culture in Africa

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55 Emic and etic are primarily linguistic terms used to distinguish the language of actors in a field from the language of analysts of that field.

56 The issues of 'double belonging' (dual allegiance) or 'multiple (religious) identity' (Cornille 2002) are dealt with in greater detail in section 6.1.

(Mugambi 2004: 5–8). African cultures tend to be religious cultures. I consider interreligious dialogue to be a specific form of intercultural communication (Krieger 1991; Cox 2003).

One can distinguish between various levels of interreligious dialogue. There is the level of living together as people of different faiths, the dialogue of everyday life. There is also the level of working together for a common good, the dialogue of cooperation. Then there is the level of praying and worshipping together; this is interreligious dialogue in the strict sense of the word. Lastly, there is the level of reflecting together, which is inter-theological dialogue.

Interreligious or interfaith dialogue?

Following Smith's *The meaning and end of religion* it seems more usual to speak about interfaith dialogue in Africa. Is 'interfaith' a more appropriate term (Cheetham 2005: 16)? I do not think so, for it disregards the complexity of religion. Religion is not just a matter of faith or belief; it is institutional and doctrinal as well. Just as the term 'religion' was exchanged for 'faith' in the 1960s, now there is a tendency among Third World (and other) theologians to abandon the term 'religion' and speak about 'spirituality' (Abraham & Mbuy-Beya 1994; Olupona 2000). This seems to be part of postcolonial discourse, in which world religions, notably Christianity and Islam, are seen as sources of evil.[57] Many people claim to have religious experiences and practise religious rituals, but they do not like to be affiliated to religious institutions or religious doctrines. Yet these are all dimensions of religion; spirituality, too, is a dimension of religion.[58]

The Western tendency is to ignore the fact that institutionalisation or community development is an essential aspect of religion. After some time new religious movements, too, start to institutionalise, or they die out, as has happened

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[57]   The same tendency exists in the West, where the shift in terminology from religion to spirituality is an effect of postmodernism and de-institutionalisation. Spirituality can be found outside institutionalised religion: in nature, sexuality, aesthetic experience, etc. But I think it is unwise to broaden the meaning of the term 'spirituality' to include experience outside religion as defined above: reference to a reality other than the visible world. If we wish to develop a theory of interreligious relations, we have to deal with all the complexities and ambiguities of religion.

[58]   The book *African spirituality*, edited by Jacob Olupona (2000) and part of a series on world spirituality, gives no definition of spirituality as a phenomenon distinct from religion. In the preface Ewert Cousins says, "no attempt was made to arrive at a common definition of spirituality". The series studies "that inner dimension of the person called by certain traditions 'the spirit' . . . It is here that the person is open to the transcendent dimension" (p. xii). Most contributions to the volume are not much different from those found in other volumes on the study of African Religions. I tend to agree with Mugambi's (1995: 141) assumption "that 'spirituality' is synonymous with religiousness or religiosity".

to many African Instituted Churches. Even African Indigenous Religions have a measure of institutionalisation. Spirit mediums cannot be seen as office bearers in the sense that they are ordained ministers, yet some of them do have secret societies with various initiation rites.

Whereas I continue to use the term 'interreligious', I am hesitant about the word 'dialogue'. This is because it has not only an explicit Christian and theological connotation,[59] but also tends to mask interreligious conflicts. The same applies to the term 'encounter'. In his *Qur'an, liberation and pluralism*, Farid Esack (1997: 179–206) speaks of both interreligious and interfaith solidarity and collaboration (*wilayah*). Some would prefer terms such as interreligious 'interaction' or 'communication', which include both confrontation and collaboration and seem more neutral.

Science of religion and theology of religions

This brings me to the distinction between theology and science of religion. Within theology, theology of religions deals with 'other' religions but does so from an explicitly religious perspective. In science of religion interreligious relations usually fall under comparative religion, but the perspective, at least in the dominant school in the West, is religiously neutral or extra-religious. Most Western scientists of religion themselves do not engage in interreligious dialogue, nor want to promote it.

Of course, the relationship between theology and science of religions is complex and views of their relationship are shifting. A dilemma in science of religion is how to justify its existence vis-à-vis other social sciences that study religion. It seeks to do so by claiming to study religion as a phenomenon *sui generis*, thus concentrating on religious contents and not (only) on functions of religion. But it does not have the instruments necessary for the purpose. It seems impossible to study meta-empirical realities empirically. Thus science of religion is either theological or it is not.[60] If it is not theological, it simply does what all the social sciences do and thus becomes redundant (Cox 1996: 166).

Happily Western European scholars no longer have the sole say. For our study it is more interesting what non-Christian and non-Western scholars think.[61] And in this respect one observes that the majority of scholars of religion in Africa hold that one can only study interreligious relations 'from within'.

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59   This is not to deny that interreligious organisations such as the World Parliament of Religions, the United Religions Initiative or the World Council on Religion and Peace, all of which are active in East Africa, do speak about 'dialogue'. Critics would say that they have a Christian background.

60   Consequently Talal Asad (1983: 245) accuses Clifford Geertz of "taking up the standpoint of theology".

61   See the critique by Olabimtan (2003) of Platvoet and Van Rinsum (2003) in section 3.1.

Muslim scholars at Islamic and public universities are not looking for collaboration with scholars of religion who operate in terms of methodological atheism, as they feel that they will not be understood by them. These scholars are met with suspicion.

What interreligious relations actually are is a question that can be answered by sciences of religion, such as history and phenomenology, psychology, sociology and anthropology of religion. *How* interreligious relations should be is a question that can be answered by theology, and to some extent by philosophy of religion as well. Scientists of religion show a certain reluctance to engage in interreligious dialogue. At most they can formulate conditions for the possibility of such dialogue. But promoting interreligious dialogue as an objective of science of religion is going too far, according to present-day scholars of religion – though religionists in their ranks (e.g. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Mircea Eliade, Ninian Smart) would have no problem with such a claim.[62]

Mono-religious, multireligious, interreligious?

There are various models of and for relations between cultures.[63] The monocultural model is based on the assumption that we and the others are basically the same; the others are like us, they are equals. This is what Mall (2000: 33) calls the identity model. The multicultural model is based on the assumption that we and the others are essentially different; the others are not like us, they are strangers. In the terminology of Mall (2000: 16) this is the alterity model. The intercultural model is based on the assumption that there are cultural overlaps between us and the others. Human potential is universal, but this does not mean that people are the same, as they are also products of socialisation and acculturation. This is what Mall (2000: 3) calls the analogy model.[64]

Late 19th and early 20th century scholars of culture and religion saw European culture as *the* (only) culture and European religion (Christianity) as *the* (perfect) religion. All people were perceived as rational or essentially religious beings (*homo religiosus*), only some are less advanced. Thus the others

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62   By promoting better understanding between adherents of different traditions these scholars of religion hoped to contribute to a world community.

63   According to Clifford Geertz (1973: 93), the 'model of' stresses manipulation of symbolic structures so as to bring them into line with pre-established, non-symbolic systems. The 'model for' stresses manipulation of non-symbolic systems in terms of the relationships expressed by symbols. These two meanings of the term 'model' are just different aspects of the same basic concept. "Culture patterns have an intrinsic double aspect," says Geertz (1973: 93): "They give meaning . . . to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves."

64   According to Mall (2000: 6) interculturalism is interreligiosity. The three models operate in anthropology, philosophy, theology and science of religions in different ways.

were considered pre-logical and their religions 'primitive' (Moore 1994: 8–10). Encounter with the others was focused on assimilation. In this respect, mission and modernisation were the same; both applied an apologetic universalism (Krieger 1991: 18–37). Before the First World War cultural and religious studies were largely conceptual. After the war they became more empirical, based on fieldwork (Moore 1994: 10–14). The particularity of cultures was discovered. The others were seen as unique, completely different, non-identical, strangers. Cultural relativism reacted against the speculative universalism of the previous period. There is no common ground, no meeting point between religious cultures. Thus tolerance of, and respect for, the others' otherness are imperative. At present there is a search for a new, concrete universalism, carefully balanced between identity and alterity. We and the others are similar. There are 'family resemblances' between us, but we are not the same. Encounter between religions focuses on complementation.[65]

To some extent the mono-, multi- and intercultural models are comparable to the exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralistic models, introduced in philosophy of religion and theology of religions by John Hick and widely used in the discourse on interreligious relations (e.g. Mbillah 2004: 171–175). The inclusivist model can be seen as equivalent to the mono-cultural (identity) model: one's own religion is *the* (only) religion. The others are already included in our religious system, although they are not aware of it. Fulfilment theology is an expression of this model in Roman Catholic theology. The exclusivist model can be seen as equivalent to the multicultural (alterity) model: the two religions are completely distinct; there is no meeting point or common ground between them. This is what dialectical theology is all about. The pluralist model, however, differs from the inter-cultural model. It can be seen as another expression of the multicultural model, in that it views all religions as *different* ways to the Ultimate. We shall examine this further in due course. What interests us here is: what is an African model of interfaith dialogue (Temple 2001)?[66] In other words, how is Africa's peaceful coexistence of religions to be understood?

Theology of interreligious dialogue and missiology

In the history of (Christian) theology two disciplines dealt with non-Christians: fundamental theology and missiology. Nowadays boundaries between theological disciplines are disappearing rapidly and certainly in non-Western

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65 For sake of clarity the models are presented in a chronological order, but at present they exist side by side. Sometimes they are also called the modern, postmodern and post-postmodern models.

66 Temple (2001) summarises the conservative Evangelical model, the mainline Protestant model, the Roman Catholic model and the pluralistic model, as identified by Knitter, and then asks what an authentic model for Africa would be.

contexts they make little sense. Liberation theology, once a hallmark of missiology, is now more at home in social ministry. This is not to deny that interreligious dialogue always relates to integral liberation, and rightly so. In the same way inculturation, another hallmark of missiology, is now more at home in church development and even in liturgy. By the same token interreligious dialogue is now slotted into religious education (Kasonga wa Kasonga 2001).[67]

Neither fundamental theologians nor missiologists can claim interreligious dialogue as their preserve; interreligious dialogue is and should be a concern for all theological disciplines. I consider the theology of interreligious dialogue to be the core of missiology, which was mainly concerned with the study of and reflection upon the *missio ad gentes*. This is not to deny that missiology deals with other subjects as well, or that other disciplines also deal with interreligious dialogue. But it is not their main business. I think missiology specialised in this field more than any other discipline.

Comparative theology studies and reflects on various themes, such as God and Goddess, salvation and spirits. Of special interest for a theory of interreligious relations is the comparative study of other religions' views and of interreligious relations in various religions, for instance concepts like *dhimmi*, *tabligh* and *da'wah* in Islam,[68] or *sanata dharma* as eternal religion in Hinduism. In this study we will explore the Muslim division of the world into *Dar al-Islam* (Abode of Islam) and *Dar al-Harm* (Abode of War), and the Christian (mainly Evangelical) distinction between the Saved Ones and the Lost Ones. Thus a comparative missiology can lead to interreligious missiology.

Another field in which missiology specialises is intercultural theology, that is theology in different cultures' terms. If religion is seen as a cultural system, interreligious theology is included in intercultural theology. More often it is seen as reflection on the interaction between adherents of the same faith (thus intra-religious) but originating from different continents: African and European Christians, or Muslims of African and of Arab descent. However the terms are defined, the interreligious and intercultural discourses are closely related. Since Christianity is the 'white man's religion' and Islam is identified with Arab civilisation, geographical notions like North and South, Western and non-Western feature in the interreligious discourse.

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67 If we look at various overviews of theological studies in (East) Africa (Ryan 2003; LeMarquand & Galgalo 2004; Shorter 2000) it is apparent that traditional boundaries between disciplines are fading.

68 In his *Qur'an, liberation and pluralism*, Farid Esack (1997) has a chapter on "Redefining self and other" (pp. 114–145) and another on "The Qur'an and the other" (pp. 146–178). He thus presents a theory of interreligious relations from an Islamic perspective. Tariq Ramadan (2004: 200–213) does the same in his *Western Muslims and the future of Islam*. Ali Mazrui (2006: 81–93) also has a chapter on interreligious dialogue.

Mission and interreligious dialogue

The relation between mission and interreligious dialogue is complex, as was apparent in the introduction. Some scholars are convinced that mission is out of date and should be replaced by interreligious dialogue. Others are of the opinion that interreligious dialogue is a method for, or a preliminary to, mission. Yet others believe that mission and dialogue are separate activities, closely related but not identical (Arinze 1997: 41–49).

In this study we take the third view. Mission and dialogue are different activities. Dialogue primarily aims at understanding other believers; mission primarily aims at being understood by others (Mall 2000: 43). The concern in understanding other believers may be cooperating with them for the common good; the concern in being understood by others may be to convince them of the relevance of one's own standpoint, witnessing why it is important to them, which may or may not lead to conversion.

In its Vatican II document, *Dignitatis humanae*, the Roman Catholic Church recognised freedom of conscience, including the freedom to have a religion, profess a religion and spread that religion. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Islam* likewise recognises the freedom of the human being, which is mutual and reciprocal (Arinze 2002: 124–136). There is a difference between proclamation of faith and persuasion. As noted already in the introduction, 'witnessing' is the preferred term to describe mission as distinct from other pastoral activities: teaching, preaching, caring, curing, celebrating and managing.

1.3 A multi-perspective and poly-methodical approach

In the introduction I said that this study adopts a socio-scientific and theological approach, often called an empirical theological approach. I explained briefly what an empirical theological approach entails and what distinguishes it from a systematic theological approach. I also said that the classification 'empirical theology' is itself problematic, as it seems to harmonise two perspectives that appear incompatible: a theological and a social science perspective. Hence I prefer the designation 'multi-perspective and poly-methodical approach'. Below I explain what such an approach entails and what it implies for a theory of interreligious relations.

Towards an empirical missiology

In 1972 my predecessor in the chair of mission studies at Radboud University Nijmegen, Arnulf Camps, advocated developing a more empirical approach. Not that mission studies had not been empirical before, but it was not empirical

enough. What was called ancillary sciences, such as cultural, social and reli-
gious anthropology, remained largely under theological control. Also in 1972,
Camps's colleague Jan van Engelen (1972) reported on his extensive fieldwork
in Brazil in the late 1960s, which was based on Hugo Assman's praxeology. In
pursuing his search for an empirical missiology Van Engelen (1996: 174)
urged the use of socio-scientific methods in missiology as far back as 1952.

Camps's predecessor, Alphons Mulders, gave mission studies in Nijmegen
a broad orientation. In 1948 Mulders introduced such disciplines as history
and phenomenology of religion (including Islamic studies), cultural anthropol-
ogy and general linguistics (including the study of oriental languages) in his
Missiological Institute, which was the start of these disciplines at Radboud
University Nijmegen. What was propagated in 1961 (at the celebration of fifty
years of missiology in Münster, the cradle of Catholic studies of mission),
namely the study of ethnology, linguistics and science of religion, was already
happening at Nijmegen, Mulders (1963: 156) pointed out.

The first professor of cultural anthropology at the Missiological Institute
was Bernard Vocklage. Vocklage was a member of the *Societas Verbum Divini*,
a confrère of the founders of the *Wiener Schule,* Wilhelm Schmidt and Wilhelm
Koppers, and a member of the editorial staff of the leading Catholic ethno-
logical journal *Anthropos*.[69] In those early years cultural anthropology at
Nijmegen more or less followed the example of the mission ethnology of the
Wiener Schule. Vocklage's successor to the chair of cultural anthropology was
a fellow student, the German priest Richard Mohr, who had been introduced by
Koppers from Vienna. Gradually Mohr developed cultural anthropology inde-
pendently of missiology, until the chair became part of the newly established
faculty of social sciences in 1964 (Meurkens 2002).

The collaboration between missiology and science of religion, however,
continued. In 1966 the Missiological Institute became the Institute for Missiology
and History of Religions and the institute, which until 1966 had functioned
independently of the faculty of theology, was incorporated into that faculty.[70]
Collaboration with Etienne Cornélis, professor of comparative religion, and
his successor Wilhelm Dupré, also trained in Vienna, remained close.[71] This
short history shows that since 1948 mission studies in Nijmegen has had a
strong empirical orientation. Gradually disciplines such as mission linguistics,

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69   Another member of this school and former member of the same society, Johannes Fabian,
      became professor of anthropology at the University of Amsterdam in 1979.

70   At the first staff meeting of the new institute Arend Van Leeuwen's *Christianity in world his-
      tory* (1964) was discussed. Later Van Leeuwen, a student of Hendrik Kraemer, held the chair
      of social ethics in the same faculty (1973–1985).

71   Camps obtained his PhD from the University of Freiburg, where Wilhelm Schmidt became
      a professor after his departure from Vienna (1940–1948). In his autobiography Camps
      (2006: 27–30) describes Schmidt's dramatic departure from Vienna.

mission ethnology and comparative religion were emancipated from theological control.[72]

Theology and the social sciences

Empirical theology can be defined as the study of religious practice from the perspective of the dialectical relation between what this practice is and what it ought to be (Van der Ven 1998). Thus empirical theology correlates empirical and normative insights. Just as historical theology is the designation for theological disciplines that employ historical methods, literary theology for disciplines that employ literary methods and systematic theology for disciplines that employ systematic methods, empirical theology refers to theological disciplines that employ empirical methods.

Another discipline with a long tradition in this field is practical theology. Both in Germany and in the United States of America practical theology evolved in close collaboration with the social sciences: psychology, sociology and pedagogy. At the Early Chicago School the development of empirical theology was closely associated with the clinical pastoral education movement. Other disciplines that use empirical methods include liturgical studies, church history and canon law. In Chicago the initial idea was that empirical theology would include all theological disciplines (Van der Ven 1998: 1–8).

In mission studies empirical sciences such as linguistics, anthropology, communication science and comparative religion were used from the very beginning (Rommen & Corwin 1996). In his encyclopaedia of missiology Jongeneel (1995) distinguishes between science, philosophy and theology of mission. Apart from the sciences already mentioned, he cites mission history, mission statistics, mission geography and mission pedagogy. He rejects the view that these disciplines have been under theological control.

The question whether the roles of anthropologist and theologian can be combined is not an easy one (Tanner 1997; Davies 2002).[73] Van der Geest (1990) launched a discussion among Dutch anthropologists about their relationship

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72 In German speaking countries there are still some chairs (e.g. in Heidelberg and Rostock) that combine missiology and the study of religion. At other universities (e.g. Salzburg) these disciplines merged into a broader field of study called intercultural theology, or intercultural theology and the study of religions. In Africa the boundaries between theology and religious studies have been less rigid. On the one hand the departments of religious studies inherited the secular tradition of the parent universities in Europe. On the other hand the founders of these departments were often trained theologians and even ordained ministers in their churches.

73 Placing the debate in the context of African studies, Magesa (1997: 29–32) says: "Due to the inseparability of the religious and secular models of African existence, the link between anthropology and theology is especially important" (p. 31).

with missionaries. The main debating point was whether methodological atheism and methodological agnosticism were the best approaches when studying
'the others'. Whereas some anthropologists were sympathetic towards missiologists, others were sceptical (Bonsen, Marks & Miedema 1990). Ten years later
the discussion was repeated. From a postcolonial perspective it was noted, "that
the debate has already slipped out of our hands" as "it has become part of the other
peoples' reconstruction of their history" (Borsboom & Kommers 2000: 10).[74]

    As far as "the other peoples' reconstruction of their history" is concerned,
it must be noted that the boundaries between the traditional disciplines are less
strict in the non-Western world than in the Western world. Some early Latin
American theologians were sociologists and economists. They insisted that
theological reflection is only a 'second step'. Various pioneers of African theology studied anthropology or religious studies and taught religious studies at
public universities. Nevertheless the relation between missiology and religious
studies remains complex. A group of missiologists gathered in Lund in 1990
supported the idea of missiology as an independent academic discipline.
However, "this discipline has won its emancipation from theology and locates
itself within the larger area of religious studies rather than within the field of
theology". It has "a strong empirical orientation" and "deals with the dynamic
change" as a result of "interaction between religion and society" and "the interaction between this larger community and the religious bodies". Its academic
location is "outside theology, perhaps within a department of religious studies"
(Ustorf 2001: 74–76). Whereas the link between missiology and science of
religion remains strong – not so much in the Netherlands as in Germany and
other European countries – I am of the opinion that in the new academic location proposed by the Lund symposium 'mission studies' should be renamed
'interreligious studies'.

Multi-, inter-, intra- or transdisciplinary?

If religious practice is the material object of empirical theology, what is its formal object? In other words, what is the difference between empirical theology
and sociology, anthropology or psychology of religion? Some scholars regard
empirical theology as a social science: it is the theological branch of the social
sciences. Others see it as multidisciplinary cooperation between theology and
the social sciences: empirical theology belongs to both domains. Yet others see
it as theology, with an intra-disciplinary approach (Van der Ven 1998: 89–112).

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74   As noted already, the 'objects' of religious studies have become 'subjects' (Platvoet 1996)
      and there is a need for dialogue between the two. Postcolonial scholars of religion (e.g.
      David Chidester 2004) analyse the links between forms of knowledge and colonial power
      formation with reference to the development of religious studies in South Africa.

The intra-disciplinary model differs from the interdisciplinary approach. In the latter theologians cooperate closely with social scientists and interpret and evaluate their findings from a theological point of view. In the former theologians themselves use empirical methods for theological research. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. In interdisciplinary research social scientists may misunderstand theological concerns. In the intra-disciplinary approach the socio-scientific research may become narrow-minded and even deductive, as the researcher may be preoccupied with theological concerns and put socio-scientific theories under theological control.

In missiological anthropology one finds anthropologists adopting missiological perspectives and missiologists using anthropological methods. Some are trained anthropologists who worked as 'missionaries' at overseas universities, such as André Droogers and Harold Turner. Others are trained theologians, quite a few of them ex-seminarians (Johannes Fabian, Sjaak van der Geest, both ex-SVD), priests (Mathew Schoffeleers SMM, Aylward Shorter M.Afr.) or ex-priests (Jan Platvoet, ex-SMA and Michael Singleton, ex-M.Afr.), to confine myself to Roman Catholic scholars. They use anthropological methods and perspectives, either completely detached from or largely controlled by theological concerns, or freely combine the two perspectives. Last but not least there are trained anthropologists who never worked in missionary settings but were devout Roman Catholics, which clearly influenced their work. Famous examples are Edward Evans-Pritchard, Monica Wilson and Victor Turner. To some extent a religious orientation also applies to Clifford Geertz.[75] In my doctoral dissertation I described my approach as multi-perspective and poly-methodical (Wijsen 1993: 18).[76] I still find this a more adequate qualification than multi-, inter- or intradisciplinary, because the boundaries between traditional academic disciplines have become less rigid. Maybe trans-disciplinary is the better option. Harold Turner (1981) has much the same approach, as will be seen below.

An issue to be investigated further is how exactly socio-scientific and theological insights are to be interrelated. Van der Ven (1998: 114) bases his research design on the 'empirical cycle'. He distinguishes between five components of empirical theological research: formulating a problem and goal, induction, deduction, testing and evaluation. I myself used a model that is

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75   This clearly shows that methodical atheism as such is not a dividing line between the disciplines. As said before, Asad (1983: 245) accuses Geertz of "taking up the standpoint of theology".

76   In his overview of Dutch contributions to the study of African religions in faculties of theology Platvoet (2004: 88) distinguishes between those in which the particular theology of the scholar "is no longer traceable" and those in which scientific description and analysis are "clearly kept distinct" from theological interpretation. He mentions his own and Ter Haar's work as examples of the former, and my work as an example of the latter approach.

often called the circle of praxis, because it emphasises a continual interplay between reflection and action. It is related to what is known as the hermeneutic circle, the interpretive method of continually raising new questions to challenge older theories in the face of new situations (Wijsen 1993: 12).[77]

The practical or hermeneutic spiral

In this model science of religion and theology interrelate in an iterative way. Science of religion is directed to description and interpretation of religious practice; theology is directed to evaluation and innovation of religious practice (Wijsen 1993: 22). The stages of description, interpretation, evaluation and innovation are meant to proceed cyclically rather than sequentially, which means at least four things. The empirical theological spiral has no clear starting point or end, but repeats itself – one can start wherever one pleases; at any moment one can switch to another stage; what is presented schematically in sequential order in fact often occurs simultaneously. Hence it is better to speak about a spiral (Wijsen 1993: 11–12).

The aim of the first stage is to become acquainted with the practice under investigation. The appropriate method is fieldwork. Fieldwork is a specific style of socio-scientific research in which the researcher generates research material through intensive, protracted contact with the research population. In the second stage the researcher seeks to understand the practice in question. The appropriate method is analysis. By analysis I mean interrogation of the observed practice from a certain perspective, determined by the researcher's specific interests and the objective of the research. The aim of the third stage is to evaluate the practice that has been described and analysed. The appropriate method is reflection. By reflection I mean critically interrelating the factual situation and the normative references. The fourth stage entails a proposal for innovating the practice. The appropriate method is planning: suggesting ways to move from the existing to the desired state.[78]

"The interactions between theology and phenomenology therefore form an ongoing dialectical process of mutual disclosure and mutual stimulation in which each performs essential instrumental, regulative and critical functions towards the other," says Harold Turner (1979: 356). The first two stages "may be regarded by all phenomenologists as acceptable features of their own proper

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77   In mission studies the 'three mediations' – socio-analytical, hermeneutic and practical, as practised in liberation theology (Boff 1987) – featured prominently.

78   Mission studies has always been highly practice-oriented. It was influenced by planned-change theories and pedagogy of liberation. Seen thus, mission studies has much in common, not only with cultural anthropology, but also with development studies. Whereas cultural anthropology is primarily interested in describing and analysing the situation as it is, development studies is also interested in the situation as it should be.

procedure". From the third stage onwards the researcher "ceases to do phe-nomenology and commences to do theology".[79] These stages are optional, according to Turner (1979: 354–355). Anthropologists like Andre Droogers (2003), Mathew Schoffeleers (1989), Michael Singleton (1977), Michael Kirwen (1987) and Aylward Shorter (1985) do not hesitate to engage in theo-logical evaluations and even propose pastoral innovations.

We reiterate our earlier point: conflict between science of religion and the-ology is a greater problem in Western than in non-Western societies, where the division of scientific labour is less strict. African scholars such as Samuel Kibicho, Anatole Byaruhanga Akiiki and John Mbiti were trained anthropolo-gists who taught religious studies. Introductions like *A comparative study of religions*, edited by Mugambi (1990), and *Religions in Eastern Africa*, edited by Mugambi and Getui (2004), see these disciplines as different but related. The envisaged theory of interreligious relations must deal with the issue of theology and science of religion in a postmodern (African) perspective.[80]

A theory of practice

The study of religious practice requires a theory of practice. I see religion, and especially the interaction between religions, in light of Pierre Bourdieu's sym-bol and practice theory. As explained in the introduction, Bourdieu presents a 'third way', which he calls participatory objectification and which goes beyond the dichotomy between objectivism and subjectivism, between interac-tionism and structuralism. He calls himself an essentialist constructivist, or a constructivist essentialist, to underscore that he wishes to go beyond the dichotomy between actor and structure, *habitus* and market.

Bourdieu assumes a link between actions and interests. While he rejects the notion that interests are always narrowly economic, they invariably apply an economic logic. This is his basic assumption about human action, his theory of practice. But it is also a heuristic principle. It requires the researcher to elucidate the interests at stake in the practices occurring in certain fields. What the inter-ests are can only be determined through meticulous empirical and historical

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79   It is noteworthy that scholars like Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Mircea Eliade and Ninian Smart did science of religion for humanitarian ends. In his inaugural lecture Cantwell Smith explicitly defined the aim of the discipline as creating understanding between people across religious boundaries with a view to establishing a world community.

80   In this study the practical or hermeneutic circle is followed fairly eclectically. We use data obtained from both fieldwork and the literature throughout all chapters. And we correlate them with normative notions from African theology and African philosophy. The steps of description, interpretation, evaluation and innovation feature in all chapters. However, the first few chapters are more descriptive; the remaining chapters incline to be normative.

inquiry. The fact that some actions appear to be disinterested (in a narrow eco-
nomic sense) does not mean that they are interest-free.

Bourdieu's theory of practice has methodological consequences. It requires
systematic reconstruction of the field in which practices are produced and
reproduced and its relation to the broader social arena: a rigorous reconstruc-
tion of the fields, and of the links between the positions and agents within
them. The problem with semiotic analysis is that it remains internal (intra-
textual) or formal.[81] It fails to take into account the socio-historical conditions
in which the object of analysis is produced and reproduced. On the other hand
these phenomena cannot be reduced to socio-economic processes. The prob-
lem with most forms of Marxist analysis is that they treat the social world as a
one-dimensional space. This is antithetical to Bourdieu's approach.

Religious identity and identity construction

The same dialectics applies when Bourdieu deals with ethnic and religious
identities. Counter to Marxism, Bourdieu holds that religion is not just a reflec-
tion of the social structure. On the other hand he denies that it is an autonomous
reality. Counter to Weber, he argues that Weber reduces objective relations to
interpersonal relations. For Weber, interests are determined by individual peo-
ple's existential needs. For Bourdieu interests are always related to social
groups. One can avoid the alternative dualism of objectivism versus subject-
ivism by taking into account that reality is the scene of a permanent struggle to
define reality, that classification produces difference as much as it is produced
by difference (Bourdieu 1991: 224).

In view of this one can understand that Bourdieu relativises social science.
In his view scientific classifications help to produce precisely what they profess
to describe. This is as true of classification into social classes (as happens in
sociology) as it is of classification into ethnic groups (as anthropologists tend
to do). By naming ethnic groups the erstwhile colonial administrators created
them. Any position postulating the 'objective' existence of an ethnic group
upgrades a representation of reality to a reality. Scientific discourse gives rise to
a symbolic effect by consecrating a state of di-visions, and of vision of di-visions
(Bourdieu 1991: 225). The so-called 'objective criteria' are used to produce
either real unity or a belief in unity, which ultimately tends to create real unity.[82]

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81 The editor of Bourdieu's *Language and symbolic power*, John Thompson (1991: 28), speaks
    about semiotics or 'discourse analysis', but it is doubtful whether his qualification 'internal
    analysis' applies to discourse analysis. There are at least three forms of discourse analysis
    and they all seem to stress that speech acts shape the social world, albeit in varying degrees
    (Jørgensen & Philips 2002: 18).
82 For the same reason Ulf Hannerz (1992: 35) goes beyond the modern understanding of cul-
    ture as shared meaning system to "the view of culture as an organization of diversity".

The most 'neutral' scientific verdict helps to modify the object of science. 'Scientific' mythologies can produce their own verification if they manage to gain collective credibility and create the conditions for their own realisation.

In their orientation towards an objectivist or subjectivist view of the relation between the scholar and the object of study, social scientists are determined by social factors such as the status of their discipline among other disciplines and the prestige of their specific research strategies (Bourdieu 1991: 226). But if they submit their own practice to sociological criticism, they will keep together what goes together in reality: on the one hand objective classifications, on the other hand the practical use of the classifications by agents in pursuit of material or symbolic interests.[83] Cultural identity (be it ethnic, social, religious) is a resource or 'capital' which people or groups use to serve their own interests, that is to gain material (financial) or symbolic (prestige) 'profit'. Identities are not so much natural as social, the product of social classification or categorisation. Practical (identity) classifications help to create what they ostensibly describe or designate. They bring into existence what is named in performative discourse by virtue of the authority of the classifier but also of the objective existence of the group thus classified.

Myth and reality of African religion

When scholars of religion oppose reality and representation (mental image) of reality, they tend to forget that (cognitive) classifications are always subordinated to practical functions and aimed at producing social effects. Moreover, practical classifications may help to create what they ostensibly describe (Bourdieu 1991: 220). Struggles about identity (or its properties) are a particular case of struggles about classifications, that is to say, about the power to impose the official definition of social divisions and thus to make and unmake social groups. What is at stake here is the power to impose a vision of the social world through principles of di-vision which, when imposed on a group, establish meaning and consensus about that meaning, in particular about the unity and identity of the group, and which creates the reality of its unity and identity. Drawing (*regere*) the frontiers (*fines*) of a region (*regio*) is a religious act, demarcating interior and exterior, sacred and profane, indigenous and foreign (Bourdieu 1991: 221).

There are no criteria capable of establishing 'natural' classifications separated by 'natural' frontiers. The frontier is always a product of di-vision, which

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83 Again and again, Bourdieu stresses the analysis of the social position of the analyst. In the lecture that he gave on the occasion of his retirement as professor of sociology at the *Collège de France*, Bourdieu spoke about participatory objectification: the objectification of the subject of objectification, i.e. the analyst him- or herself.

will be more or less 'realistic' depending on whether the elements grouped together in the classification are more or less alike. Reality is social through and through and the most 'natural' classifications are based on characteristics which are not 'natural' at all, but to a great extent are products of the arbitrary imposition of previous relations of power. The frontier creates cultural difference just as much as it is created by such differences (Bourdieu 1991: 222).

Ethno-centric or religio-centric discourse is performative discourse, aimed at imposing a redefinition of frontiers. The act of categorisation has the power to establish a reality by using the power of constructing, exercised by objectification in discourse. In section 3.1 we will show how the very concept of African Traditional Religion was 'invented' by Western scholars of African religion. This is not to deny that African Traditional Religion has become a 'reality', that plenty of books have been written about African Traditional Religion, that it has been taught in institutions of higher learning and systematised by philosophers and theologians, and that there are approximately 200 million Africans today who consider themselves to be African traditional believers.[84]

Conclusion

In this first chapter we clarified what we mean by a theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective, using a multi-perspective and poly-methodical approach. Africa is a continent in transition and Africans are no longer at ease with themselves. In asking themselves who they are, they observe that they are no longer what they used to be. When looking for an African perspective it might be better to look, not at what Africa used to be, but at what it ought to be (Wiredu 1992). In the religious field there is growing interaction. According to some observers religion will be the battlefield in Africa in the 21st century (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004). The task facing African scholars of religion is critical: how to build just and harmonious African societies where all people, young and old, male and female, Christian, Muslim or African traditional believers are respected and cared for, and where believers of all religions collaborate to save Africa and its people from ecological and medical disasters. How to make Africa a place where it is good to live? We contend that a multi-perspective and poly-methodical study is better able to answer that question than a strictly systematic theological study.

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84   In the same vein Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1963: 63–66) argued that Hinduism is a Western construct. Yet there are undeniably millions of people who consider themselves Hindu, and Hinduism has become a powerful political ideology of national unity with a Hindu party based on it.

Chapter Two

Transformation of religion in Africa

Some decades ago John Mbiti (1969: 1) wrote, "Africans are notoriously religious." Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that religion is active and alive in Africa (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004). But what exactly is that religion? How religious are the religions? What Mbiti had in mind was that the African worldview is not (yet) compartmentalised, that religion in Africa is not a separate domain but a dimension that runs through all other domains. The trouble is that when everything is religious, ultimately nothing is. It cannot be denied that secularism is growing in Africa and that it has always been there (Metogo 1997; Shorter & Onyancha 1997). Early anthropologists already referred to the materialism and pragmatism of the African worldview (Evans Pritchard 1937). Maybe a better question would be, not how religious are Africans, but how are they religious? One thing is clear: there is a plurality of religions and growing interaction between them, and as a result quite a lot of religious dynamics and change (Olupona & Nyang 1993).

2.1 Survival and revival of African Religions

It is said that dialogue with African Religions, African Traditional Religions or African Indigenous Religions is not very important in our time, as these religions will disappear in the process of economic globalisation and cultural homogenisation.[85] Judging by present-day global trends it does not seem to be the case.

African Religions are alive as never before

In the first place there is the survival of African Indigenous Religions as more or less independent traditions among some 20 percent of Africa's inhabitants.

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85   The proper name for these religions is subject to debate. In general I prefer the name 'Indigenous Religions', because 'traditional' suggests that they are something of the past. It is, however, not always possible to avoid the other names. Another debating point is whether one should speak about African Religions in the singular or in the plural. I use the plural, because there are major differences between religious traditions in Africa. There is undeniably a basic pattern, but it is shared with all primal religions or religions without scriptures and is not uniquely African.

Some ethnic groups resisted conversion to any of the world religions and remain so-called 'untouched people' up to the present. A Dutch missionary, who worked in Sukumaland, Northwest Tanzania where I did most of my field-work, recorded a conversation with an old man (*mzee*) in his diary. The old man said (Wijsen 1993: 7):

> "Padre, you trouble yourself for nothing. I will never agree to join your religion. All people have their own religion. The Germans were here and they had their own religion. The British came; they also had their own religion. The Protestants at Ng'wagala also have their own religion. The Ba-Swahili [Muslims] of Shanwa have their own religion. You Padres also have your own religion. And we black people also have our own religions. Our religion is the one of Masamva [ancestral spirits]. All religions are good."

"All people have their own religion" and "all religions are good". The old man's attitude is shared by most people in Sukumaland, and in other parts of Africa as well. Even in places where modernisation is far advanced the indigenous religions survive.

Secondly indigenous religiosity persists beneath the surface of Islam and Christianity, on an individual or institutional level, in folk religiosity and African Instituted Churches. This leads Kwame Bediako (1992) to speak, not about "Primal Religions and Christianity", but about "Primal Religions within Christianity". We deal with syncretism and dual religious allegiance in section 6.1.

Thirdly, there is a process of de-conversion or revival of African Indigenous Religions (Hackett 1991). In response to globalisation there is a worldwide search for alternatives in indigenous spiritualities. Many Africans feel a need to break free from the world market and return to the way of their ancestors (Odozor 1999).[86] This is apparent not only in the call for an African renaissance (section 10.1) but also in neo-traditional cults (section 6.3).

African alternatives to globalisation

At grassroots level there is resurgence of cultural identity among many indigenous people. In many parts of Africa the informal or second economy remains an important alternative to the world market. Between 60 and 70 percent of Africa's economic activities are conducted in what is called the grey or informal sector. African farmers are mostly subsistence farmers with a strong sense of freedom and independence (Hyden 1980).

Most Africans use traditional medicine in the form of herbs, amulets and rituals, alone or alongside modern medicine. In areas where modernisation is

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86   In section 10.1 we will show that there is not (only) a resurgence of indigenous religion but a production of it. In the process of globalisation, local traditions are not (only) rediscovered, but to a large extent (also) invented (Robertson 1995: 35).

far advanced people still go to traditional healers for indigenous medicine, because they feel modern medicine does not meet their needs (Erdtsieck 2003). Besides, more and more people cannot afford modern medicine. One of the consequences of globalisation is a widening gap between rich and poor.

In various parts of Africa customary law is being reinstated, following the failure of the Western judicial system based on separation of powers introduced by colonial administrations. In Tanzania the *sungusungu* developed in reaction to an ineffective police force (Abrahams 1987). In Rwanda people's tribunals, *gacaca*, were instituted to cope with the overload of cases. Ethiopia and Eritrea use the *gada-gada* system. In Uganda, and to some extent in Tanzania, chiefs are being reinstated. The enduring popularity of the *sharia* can also be seen in this light (section 5.1).

The same trend is visible in the religious field. Benin recognised ancestor veneration as an official religion and spirit mediums collaborate with political leaders (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: 66–69). After independence various African states opted for secular, nationalist ideologies. The collapse of these ideologies has left people frustrated and they find alternatives in traditional religious leaders.

African Instituted Churches and folk religion

Members of African Instituted Churches always felt that mission churches did not take their African Indigenous Religions into account. Thus they developed forms of Christian worship and church structures in continuity with African religiosity, such as the East African *Dini ya Masambwa*. Some of these churches are neo-traditional in that they revive the indigenous religion in new forms. Others are considered synthesist in that they offer a mixture of traditional and Christian beliefs and practices (section 3.3).

The same applies to what is called popular or folk religion. The majority of Africans perform traditional African rituals alongside rituals of the world religions. Among the Luo, as well as other ethnic groups, it has been observed that indigenous and Christian funeral rites are performed side by side (Ongong'a 1984). Syncretism and dual religious allegiance are widely prevalent (section 6.1). The main issues in both African Instituted Churches and folk religion seem to be acceptance of polygamist marriages and traditional healing.

African consultancy and management

As mentioned already, there is a resurgence of indigenous African knowledge in management and consultancy. This knowledge has been used to transform big business and parastatal organisations such as national railways and national postal services in South Africa. The beliefs and practices of African Religions are used to enhance social capital management. In contrast to the Western

world, it is recognised that an organisation has a spirit, which represents its values and essence. No organisation can function well if the spirit is not good. Thus Lovemore Mbigi (1997) predicts an African renaissance in which the spiritual power of Africa and Africans will bring prosperity and fullness of life.

In a uniquely African approach to management and consultancy Mbigi employs the communitarian, spiritual and emotional resources of African traditions as 'social capital'. Unlike Westerners who run companies and governments via democratic majority rule, Africans rule by consensus. A company operates efficiently only if decisions are taken and shared by all. This may take more time, but in the long run it is more efficient. Moreover, unlike in the West where choices are made on rational grounds, Africans know that emotions are important.[87] You cannot rule out emotion. If there is not a good spirit in the company, the company will not function efficiently. We have noted that Samuel Kobia, on taking office as secretary general of the World Council of Churches in January 2004, said he would rule the Council the African way – that is to say, *ubuntu* style (Kobia 2003).[88]

Return to the path of the ancestors

Various scholars advocate a return to the path of the ancestors. One example is Osofo-Okomfu Kwabena Damuah, a former Roman Catholic priest and professor of ancient history and Black studies in the United States of America. At the beginning of 1982 he joined the Provisional National Defence Council of Ghana and actively participated in most decisions during the early days of Jerry Rawlings's revolutionary government. In November 1982 he voluntarily resigned from government and on the 25th anniversary of his ordination on 22 December 1982 he left the priesthood to devote himself to his new mission: to promote *Afrikania*, a reformed African Traditional Religion.

"We are portraying our own culture and tradition to serve God. The time has come for us to reject obnoxious Western culture, which was forced on us by the colonialists. *Afrikania* will break all these defects," Damuah said in the early days of the *Afrikania* mission. A major rite of *Afrikania* is to pour libations during worship. "When we pour libation, we are invoking the spirit of God and our ancestors, and this is the African way of praying to God." Damuah maintains that the Roman Catholic Church failed to reveal and unfold the glorious secrets of worship and prayer to its flock. "Tell those church leaders

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87   Following professional philosophers like Hountondji we try to avoid dichotomies between Europeans and Africans, Westerners and non-Westerners. Cultural orientations are not so much linked to territories as to means of living and even moods.

88   This was implemented when the ninth assembly of the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre in 2006 opted for decision making according to the consensus model. The Council's response to the model is mixed. It is feared that it will obstruct necessary changes.

that we are all under mental bondage and colonisation and we have to unchain ourselves. I have released myself from the 'chain' and I want to release those still in chains" (Sarpong 2002; Damuah 1983).

Another example is Osaga Odak, a professor of anthropology at the University of Nairobi, who propagates *Kemeticism* as the world religion for black peoples. He urges black people "who are still members of the colonial and slave religions to quit them and join this true religion of African Spirituality" (Odak 1997: 16). There are also neo-indigenous grassroots movements such as the *Mungiki* movement in Kenya (Kagwanja 2004), modelling itself on the Mau Mau freedom fighters. We will discuss this movement in section 6.3.

Towards a theology of African renaissance

In reaction to the replacement of African Indigenous Religion with Christianity, various scholars maintain that the time has come to do away with Christianity and replace it with the 'path of the ancestors'. Some scholars of religion hold that African indigenous knowledge is superior to the knowledge brought by Western missionaries in their schools and hospitals, just as the *mau-mau* freedom fighters knew that their God was stronger than the Christian God. They argue that Christianity and other world religions are responsible for religious intolerance and violence in Africa, which were unknown in African Religions.[89]

Other scholars are less radical. In reaction to Afro-pessimism they advocate a theology of African renaissance to promote sustainable development, based on community spirit and holistic growth in harmony with the earth. We will return to this de-conversion movement when we deal with the missionary dimensions of African Religions (section 6.3). One can, however, also see de-conversion as a manifestation of secularism in Africa. It reflects a 'do-it-yourself' religion that takes refuge in a cosmic African spirituality, which has its parallel in the Euro-American New Age movement (Shorter & Onyancha 1997: 126–128; Shorter 2004: 264–265; Wijsen & Tanner 2002: 213–220).

2.2 Mission and dialogue in African Islam

Revival is not confined to African Indigenous Religions. There is also a revival of Islam in Africa.[90] Some Muslims see black Africa as their new theatre (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: 178). A distinctive feature of Islam in Africa is its huge variety.

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89   This was the message of an open letter written to his bishop by a Roman Catholic priest in Rulenge diocese, Tanzania, on 15 May 1995 during the preparations for the first centenary of that diocese (letter in my possession – FW).

90   Mazrui (2004: 1–2) writes: "It is often not realized that Africa has more Muslims than any Arab country, and that Africa is probably the first continent to have a Muslim majority."

Although acceptance of the Qur'an as God's last revelation is shared by all Muslims, African Islam is divided into brotherhoods. The brotherhood system is seen as its defining characteristic (Stamer 1995: 42).[91] This accords with the African chieftaincy system. It should also be noted that there are various expressions of Islam in Africa (Mvumbi 2005). In North Africa and Sudan Islam is predominantly Arab. In West Africa it is predominantly African (e.g. Senegal). In East Africa it is predominantly Afro-Arab or mixed (e.g. Tanzania). In Southern Africa it is predominantly foreign (mainly Indian and Pakistani).

The Abuja Declaration

In the introduction we spoke about the dramatic change in Africa after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. That year was also important for Islam in Africa. There were two key events. The first was the Islam in Africa Conference, held in Abuja from 24 to 28 November 1989. The communiqué released after the Islam in Africa Conference, popularly known as the Abuja Declaration, says among other things:

> We, the delegates assembled here at Abuja, this 1st day of Jumada at Awwal, 1410 (28.11.89), do hereby resolve:
> To call on Muslims throughout Africa to unite as an important part of the Ummah which is blessed with the guidance and mercy brought by the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (PBUH).
> To call on Muslims to review the syllabi in the various educational institutions with a view to bringing them into conformity with Islamic ideas.
> To urge Muslims to pay attention to the education of women at all levels.
> To encourage the teaching of Arabic language which is the language of the Qur'an as well as the lingua franca of the continent.
> To urge Muslims to establish strong economic ties between African Islamic countries and other parts of the Muslim world.
> The conference notes the yearnings of Muslims everywhere on the continent who have been deprived of their rights to be governed by the *Shar'ia* and urges them to intensify efforts in the struggle to re-instate the application of the *Shar'ia* (Alkali et al. 1993: 433).

The Islam in Africa Conference also accepted a resolution to form a permanent body, known as the Islam in Africa Organisation "to ensure the continuity of the noble work initiated at this conference". The Organisation, which was established in 1991, seeks to attain the goals and objectives specified in the "Resolution to establish the Islam in Africa Organization". These include the following:

> To serve as a mouthpiece for the articulation of issues of common concern to Muslims in Africa and the Muslim world generally.
> To commission experts to write the history of Islam in Africa and of Muslims and their institutions from authentic Islamic view point.

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91   Opinions on the influence of brotherhoods differ. Nimtz (1980) gives them a prominent place. Trimingham (1964: 97) says that "they affect only a small proportion of the population directly".

To establish Islamic Tertiary and Vocational Centres which are designed to train Da'wah workers who will be trained to acquire trades and skills which will equip them to be self-employed and productive.

To promote unity, spiritually and materially, among Muslims all over the world, particularly in Africa.

To promote peace, harmony and general human development and strive to remove all forms of discrimination.

To support, enhance and co-ordinate Da'wah work all over Africa on Islamic matters and publicize the research findings.

To actively pursue the respect for and observance of human rights in Africa and elsewhere.

To support the establishment and application of the *Shar'ia* to all Muslims.

To ensure that women are accorded their due rights and roles in society in accordance with the Shari'a (Alkali et al. 1993:435–436).

The central idea is *da'wah*. Sura 16:125 reads: "Call men unto the path of your Lord by wisdom and goodly counsel." *Da'wah* is the fulfilment of this commandment "to call men unto the path of Allah".[92] Shortly after the Islam in Africa Conference, in the spring of 1990, another version of the Abuja Declaration was circulated. The resolutions of this version go much further than the version published in the Proceedings of the Islam in Africa Conference in 1993. Among other things it urges Muslims in Africa –

To ensure the appointment of only Muslims into strategic national and international posts of member nations.

To eradicate in all its forms and ramifications all non-Muslim religions in member nations (such religions shall include Christianity, Ahmadiyya and other tribal modes of worship unacceptable to Muslims).

To ensure the declaration of Nigeria [as] a Federal Islamic Sultanate at a convenient date after 28 March 1990, with the Sultan of Sokoto enthroned the Sultan and Supreme Sovereign of Nigeria.

To ensure the ultimate replacement of all western forms of legal and judicial systems with the Shari'a before the next Islam in Africa Conference.

To ensure the transformation of a national political party into a national Islamic political party in all member states.

The Conference ratifies unanimously Nigeria's full membership of the Organisation of Islamic Conference.

The latter resolution shows clearly that this version is a forgery, as the Conference did not have the authority to ratify membership of the Organisation of Islamic Conference. Moreover, some of the resolutions not only cannot be executed but are also in stark contrast with Islam's official teaching, for example the resolution to eradicate all non-Muslim religions. However 'unofficial' the copy may be, it nevertheless demonstrates the presence of a more militant Islam in Africa.

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92   Esack (1997) comments that it is not a call to convert non-believers and adherents of other faiths to Islam, but to make them do the will of Allah.

The Muslim Brothers in Sudan

The second event in 1989 was general Omar al-Bashir's overthrow of the democratic government of Sudan in a coup. Omar al-Bashir was under orders from the Muslim Brothers, headed by Hassan al-Turabi (De Waal 2004). The Muslim Brotherhood, also known as *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, was founded by Sheikh Hasan al Banna (1906–1949) in Egypt in 1928 to encourage social, educational and missionary activity and parliamentary action. In the 1940s it founded a branch in Sudan. In a farewell message to the Ikhwan in 1943, Al-Banna, convinced that the British were planning to send him into exile, said (Mitchell 1969: 30):

> "My Brothers: you are not a benevolent society, nor a political party, nor a local organisation having limited purposes. Rather, you are a new soul in the heart of this nation to give it life by means of the Qur'an; you are a new light which shines to destroy the darkness of materialism through knowing God; and you are the strong voice which rises to recall the message of the Prophet."

The Muslim Brothers are inspired by Wahabism (Stamer 1996: 70–71). The Brotherhood's aim was to de-secularise Egypt. Grass root cells were set up in universities, schools, industries and the military establishment. In 1949 the prime minister, Nuqrashi Pasha, outlawed the movement in Egypt and Al-Banna was killed. One of the Muslim Brothers assassinated Pasha in retaliation. Pasha was not the last prominent victim of the Muslim Brothers' holy ire. President Anwar Sadat was another. In 1981 he was assassinated by a group of Muslim Brothers, who accused him of being a turncoat. Sadat's sin was signing the Camp David peace accord with Israel. The Muslim Brothers' doctrine is expressed in five succinct slogans (Mitchell 1969):

> "God is our objective; the Qur'an our constitution, the Prophet our leader; struggle is our way; and death for the sake of God is the highest of our aspirations."

The Muslim Brothers call for a return to pure Islam and avoidance of the Western world. According to them Islam is the answer to all the needs of the people.[93] Minorities – Jews and Christians – must be confined to strict *dhimmi* status; that is, they are 'protected' people, but they have various obligations (e.g. paying a protection tax) and are not allowed certain behaviour (e.g. marrying a Muslim).

The movement has a particular appeal for Muslim youth. The Brothers influenced such groups as *al-Gamia'a al-Islamiya* that killed 58 tourists and four Egyptians at Queen Hatshepsut Temple in Luxor, southern Egypt on 17 November 1997, and another tourist party at Sjarm al-Sjeik on 23 July 2005. In Sudan the Muslim Brotherhood was transformed into a political party, the

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93   There is a striking parallel here with some evangelical Christian groups, who proclaim that Christ is the answer to all problems.

National Islamic Front, which took power in 1989 under the leadership of Hassan al-Turabi. In the early 1990s Khartoum was a hotbed of Muslim extremists from all over the world. Muslim extremism spread to neighbouring countries. Because of national and international opposition, al-Turabi was removed from office in 1999 (De Waal 2004). It is said that the Muslim Brothers now focus on Pemba and Zanzibar, where they expect the support of people of Arabic descent. This is the connection with the United States embassy bombings in 1998 and Bin Laden's terrorist network through its second-in-command, the Egyptian Al Zawahiri**.**

Folk and formal Islam in Africa

Islamic revival in Africa can also be understood from another perspective. Islam has always been open to indigenous African beliefs and practices, hence it started out as 'popular' Islam (Peel & Stewart 1985), Islam at the grassroots, heavily influenced by mysticism and brotherhoods (Trimingham 1964: 68). Most Muslims were illiterate people, who hardly knew what Islam was about and were not even able to recite the creed.

Today, with the rapid spread of information and communication technologies and opening up of markets, including the educational market, more and more African Muslims are getting higher education. As educated people they start asking: who are we Muslims? They start to discover their own identity. They feel a need to know more about Islam. Thus revival of Islam should also be understood as Islamic emancipation and renaissance. There is a transformation from a predominantly folk Islam to a more formal Islam (Kim 2004: 49–73).

Mazrui (2006: 223–24) observes that the terrorist targets on 11 September 2001 aimed at the symbol of economic power (World Trade Centre) and the symbol of military power (Pentagon). What was missing was a desire to hit a symbol of religious life. The Muslims' confrontation is not with Christianity, but with the West. At the macro level mainstream churches and mainstream mosques are experiencing diminishing rivalry. The post-Cold War situation is pulling mainstream Islam and mainstream Christianity closer together as allies in an increasingly irreligious world.[94] There is a convergence of Islam and Christianity in their common struggle against forces of secularism (mass media and education), materialism (capitalism and individualism) and hedonism (alcoholism, drugs and easy sex). Both religions fight against the eroding morality of the West (Mazrui 2006: 231–232). At the micro level, however, militants may find it difficult to draw the line between being anti-Western and

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94   Mazrui (2006: 230) refers to the good relations between pope John Paul II and the Muslim world. This pope "has gone further than any previous Pope to foster good relations between Catholics and Muslims".

anti-Christian sentiments. According to Mazrui (2006: 224) this may put a strain on Muslim-Christian relations in countries like Egypt or Nigeria.

Strategies to promote Islam in Africa

Several strategies are used to promote Islam in Africa. In section 1.1 we noted the historical and demographic reasons given to justify the propagation of Islam in Africa, as well as the dichotomy between the West and the rest of the world. Other strategies include investing money, securing political power, influencing manners, promoting education, building mosques, training Islamic missionaries, marrying Christian women, using the media and encouraging *hajj*.

Money is considered an important weapon for winning the modern *jihad*. Petrodollars are pumped into African countries and used to finance projects. An example is the rice project in Rufiji, Tanzania, that was used as a training ground for Mujahidin. Later Mujahidin became active in Mwembechai and Jabaliyyah mosques in Dar es Salaam and Morogoro respectively. Banks and other financial institutions, advertised as Islamic, are emerging in various towns. Securing political power is seen as an effective way of spreading Islam. To this end Muslims are encouraged to form political parties or to influence the policies of other parties. The National Reconstruction Party in Tanzania was such an attempt (Wijsen & Mfumbusa 2004: 52–55).

Other means of propagating Islam are socio-cultural. They include encouraging women to wear *hijab* and banning the sale of pork and alcohol in predominantly Muslim areas. Arabisation is evident in clothing styles and Islamic eating and drinking rituals. Education is used as a stepping-stone to power and control. The quest for education has led to the establishment of exclusively Muslim schools, colleges and universities.[95] Mosques are mushrooming, funded by foreign donors. They are built right next to Christian institutions such as churches and schools.

Islamic missionaries are trained abroad and locally. Some of them, incongruously called Islamic Bible scholars, specialise in poking fun at the Bible and key Christian doctrines. Marriage between Muslim men and Christian women is promoted by offering huge dowries or simply impregnating Christian women in the conviction that the offspring will be Muslims. There is a proliferation of

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95   Outgoing Tanzanian president Benjamin Mkapa donated a site to the Muslim community to establish an Islamic University in Morogoro. The Protestants and the Catholics have universities; the Muslims should have one as well, said Mkapa. There is also an Islamic university in Zanzibar, next to the (public) University of Zanzibar, and there is an Islamic university in Mbala, Uganda. Nairobi has an Aga Khan University. There was a plan to upgrade the Kisauni Islamic Institute in Mombasa to an Islamic university, but so far this has not materialised. The same applies to the Islamic Training Centre in Maragua in Kenya's Central Province.

television programmes, videocassettes and newspapers propagating Islam and publicising scandals involving Christian leaders. Encouraging as many Muslims as possible to go on hajj subsidised with money from the Islamic states is seen as another effective strategy. There have also been calls for *hijra*, which means moving away from areas controlled by unbelievers, patterned on Muhammad's *hijra* from Mecca to Medina.[96]

Islamic organisations and movements in Africa

Another strategy used to promote Islam in Africa is via international Islamic organisations. The World Muslim Conference (WMC) was founded in Mecca in 1926. Its seat, however, is in Karachi, Pakistan. The organisation seeks to promote solidarity among Muslims all over the world. It has helped to gal-vanise Islamic activity in Africa through publications such as *The Muslim World* (weekly), *The Muslim Minority* (annual), and the *World Muslim Gazette.* It propagates a moderate form of Islam and has sponsored dialogues with the World Council of Churches.

The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) started in Rabbat, the capital of Morocco, in 1969. Various African countries joined it, either secretly or openly. Saudi Arabia plays a leading role. The Islam in Africa Organisation (IAO) was launched in Abuja, Nigeria in 1989, the result of the Islam in African conference in that city (see above). Its objectives are to unite Muslims in Africa and to pro-mote Islamic mission on the continent. Tanzania joined the IAO and sat on one of its committees, focusing on promoting Islam in Eastern and Southern Africa; it withdrew from the committee because of strong opposition in the parliament.

The Muslim World League was founded in Saudi Arabia in 1962. It is used by the Saudi dynasty to spread Wahabist beliefs in Africa. It explicitly seeks to counteract Christian evangelisation and encourage Arabisation of Africa (Stamer 1995: 69). The Solidarity Fund was started in Lahore, Pakistan in 1977 to deal with Islamic affairs, culture and financial well-being. It funds the construction of mosques, clinics and schools. The Kuwait based Muslim Youth or Student Movement and the Libyan Islamic Call Society are likewise active in Africa. The International Islamic Propagation Centre, founded by Aghmad Deedat in Durban, South Africa, operates throughout Africa.

2.3 Trends in African Christianity

A typology of the various expressions of African Christianity is even more complicated than that of the various Islamic groups, partly because of the

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96   Here again there is a striking parallel to establishing Christian villages. This shows that Muslim *da'wah* is doing the same as what Christian mission used to do, and still does.

many separate churches. Jesse Mugambi (1995: 115–121) classifies the denom-
inations according to their ecclesial structures. In the Episcopal model
authority is vested in the bishop (e.g. Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican
Churches). In the Presbyterian model authority is vested in a council of elders
(e.g. Reformed Churches). In the Congregational model authority is vested in
the entire congregation (e.g. Baptist Churches). In the Pentecostal model
authority is attributed to the Holy Spirit and every member of a Pentecostal
church is expected to manifest the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Charismatic
model authority is ascribed to a charismatic leader, who is considered to
possess special spiritual gifts.

Danfulani Kore (1998: 266) also categorises denominations and churches
according to their views of religious authority. The first group comprises
denominations and churches that accept the Bible as the infallible, inspired
word of God and authoritative in all matters of faith and practice. They can
broadly be classified as Evangelical. The second group comprises denomin-
ations and churches that have drifted away from adherence to the authority and
reliability of Scripture and have substituted human reason and social or cul-
tural consensus as the basis of religious authority. This group may be labelled
liberal or ecumenical Protestants. The third group consists of those who accept
church tradition as equal to or greater than Scripture, for example Roman
Catholics. The fourth group consists of all those who base their religious author-
ity on direct revelation, either through an inspired prophet or through members
of the community in general. Many African Instituted and Pentecostal churches
fit into this category.

In this section we take communication with the African religious heritage
as our criterion for classifying the various forms of Christianity and their
views and practices in relation to non-Christian religions. In section 3.1 we
deal with dogmatic differences, as reflected in their theologies of revelation
and salvation.

Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity

In the early 1960s it was predicted that African Instituted Churches would 'have
the future' in Africa. As de-colonisation proceeded the trend towards freedom
would continue, not only in the political but also in the religious field. More and
more churches would cast off the yokes of the former mission churches or start
new churches. This prediction, it seems, did not come true. The most visible, not
to say dominant form of Christianity in Africa is Evangelical and Pentecostal.
Evangelical and Pentecostal churches are mushrooming everywhere.

A distinctive feature of Evangelical Christians is their emphasis on biblical
Christianity. They accept the Bible as the infallible, inspired Word of God and
authoritative in all matters of faith (Shaw 1998: 226). In this respect they see

themselves as the true heirs of the Reformation's *sola scriptura* principle. They stress that revelation is found only in the Bible and that salvation is only by grace. For this reason they see a radical discontinuity between biblical Christianity and African Indigenous Religion or Islam in Africa. As one informant, interviewed at the Nairobi office of Life Challenge Africa, explained: "We promote knowledge of Islam. If you want to attack your enemy you have to know him." Another informant in the same office said:

> "It is better to die of aids than to die as a Muslim. When you die of aids you die only physically, but if you die a Muslim you die both physically and spiritually."

According to its advertisements, Life Challenge Africa is a ministry of the Society of International Ministries. This society is an international community of interdenominational evangelical Christians committed, among other things, to "evangelising the unreached" by "planting, strengthening and partnering with churches around the world". It has its headquarters at Fort Mill in the United States of America. Life Challenge Africa promotes Muslim evangelism through training seminars, community based outreach initiatives, personal evangelism, and the production and distribution of printed and electronic resource materials. Life Challenge Africa team members form partnerships with church groups, theological institutions, para-church organisations and individuals to bring the gospel to Muslims. In Kenya the organisation has had a partnership with the African Inland Church for the past 25 years.

Evangelical Christians in Africa are found in churches affiliated to the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar.[97] This organisation distinguishes itself from its ecumenical partner organisation, the All Africa Conference of Churches, by claiming that the latter is not governed by biblical Christianity but by reasoning and consensus. Evangelical Christians hold that Christianity and African Indigenous Religion or Islam are absolutely discontinuous. There is no meeting point or common ground between them. Thus non-Christian religions represent a false understanding of God. This perception leads to a practice of abolishing non-Christian religions and replacing them with the Christian message, which means translating that message and transplanting Christianity. Evangelical Christianity is characterised by great missionary zeal.

A distinctive feature of Pentecostal Christians is their emphasis on spiritual gifts (Omenyo 2003: 15). They require a direct revelation through an inspired prophet or through the members of the community in general (Kore 1998: 266). A person is considered saved (only) if he or she is able to speak in tongues, engage in long prayers and heal others (Kore 1998: 275). One must distinguish

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97   Nowadays Madagascar is omitted from the official name. The association was founded in 1973 and has its headquarters in Nairobi.

between denominational Pentecostalism, such as the various branches of the Assemblies of God, and pentecostalism as a movement found in all denominations, such as the charismatic movement in the Roman Catholic Church (Galgolo 2003).[98] Some new Catholic movements also fit into this category. In the new edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (2001), David Barrett places African Instituted Churches in the category of Pentecostalism.[99] We will return to this issue below.

Undoubtedly I do Pentecostal and Evangelical Christians an injustice when I bracket them together, and 'insiders' do not see themselves thus. They differ on such issues as direct revelation (Kore 1998: 266; Shaw 1998: 225–227). Whereas Evangelicals believe that God spoke once and for all through the Bible, Pentecostals hold that God speaks in tongues, not in contradiction to the Bible but nevertheless independently of it. Yet they do have one outstanding feature in common and that is their missionary outreach. Evangelicals and Pentecostals share a negative attitude towards African Indigenous Religions and Islam and emphasise Christian witness. Since Evangelicals and Pentecostals are the saved, the others are lost. So they feel a need to make the others share in their happiness. Conversion means a new life and an almost total break with the old life. As Pentecostals would say: since they were born again, they have become new people; the old no longer exists. If one considers the chaos prevailing in many African countries today, one can easily see the attraction of this type of Christianity. It is not so much conversion-to (pull factor) but conversion-from (push factor).

Ecumenical and Orthodox Christianity

Here we again bracket two forms of Christianity together, but in this case it seems more legitimate, since all of them belong to the All Africa Conference of Churches.[100] Protestant churches represent the largest and the oldest branch of Christianity that came to Africa in the 19th and 20th century; of course, Orthodox Christianity has existed in Africa much longer. The main denominations are the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican churches. True to the Protestant principle, Ecumenical Christianity's attitude towards African Religion has always been ambivalent. On the one hand it maintains that there

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98   It is also good to distinguish between the old Pentecostal churches that originated in the United States of America, some of which became pretty much 'mainline' and joined national councils of churches, and the newer Pentecostal churches.

99   This shift from classifying African Instituted Churches as African reform movements to classifying them as Pentecostal movements seems synchronous with Barrett's relocation from Africa to the Unites States of America in 1975.

100 The All Africa Conference of Churches was founded in Kampala, Uganda in 1963 and has its headquarters in Nairobi.

is revelation in African religion, but because of human sinfulness that revelation cannot bring salvation. Thus non-Christians religions have only a partial understanding of God. This perception leads to a practice of fulfilling non-Christian religions and completing them through encounter with the Christian message.

Orthodox Christians are proud of representing the oldest and purest form of Christianity in Africa. According to them St Mark established the Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa in the year 63. For centuries the catechetical school of Alexandria was the heart of Christian theology and the Egyptian desert was the cradle of Christian monasticism (Tillyrides 2000). After the Council of Chalcedon in 451 the Copts adopted monophysitism. In 563 Greek Orthodox and Coptic Christians separated (De Gruchy 1997). With respect to its view of African Indigenous Religions and Islam, the African Orthodox Church reflects the mainline Protestant view. Until 1959 the Ethiopian (and Eritrean) church depended on the Coptic Patriarch in Cairo. Their creed stresses that humankind is saved already.

Roman Catholic and Catholic Oriental Churches

It is common to speak about the Roman Catholic Church in the singular, but it is more realistic to speak about Roman Catholic Churches. Referring to Christianity in general, Magesa (2006: 38) writes:

> "[T]here is no 'pure' Christianity. Neither now nor at any other time, anywhere in the world, has there ever been a form of Christianity free from cultural influences. What we have had, and what we have got, are simply 'christianities', local theologies and spiritualities."

This corresponds with the notion, especially since the Second Vatican Council, of the Roman Catholic Church as a community of communities with the pope as their unifying symbol. There is a world of difference between the Roman Catholic churches in the former English, French or Portuguese colonies.[101] Catholic churches in Africa are united in the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar.[102]

In the Roman Catholic view other religions are a *preparatio evangelica*, as the seeds of the gospel (*semina verbi*) are already there. But the supreme revelation and full salvation are found in Christianity. Thus non-Christian religions contain imperfect knowledge of God. This perception leads to a practice of

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101 The difference between French and British colonial rule was tremendous, as can be seen in their language policies (Mazrui & Mazrui 1995). Whereas France promoted assimilation, Britain favoured indirect rule. This had an impact on the churches in these colonies as well.

102 The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar was founded in Kampala, Uganda in 1969. It has its headquarters in Accra, Ghana. One of its regional organisations, the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa, is based in Nairobi.

purifying non-Christian religions and bringing them to perfection through an encounter with the Christian message.

The Coptic Catholic Church (Egypt) and the Ethiopian Catholic Church (Addis Ababa) are Oriental churches that were brought into a union with Rome by Latin missionaries. They were forced to adopt Western ecclesiology, but were allowed to maintain their liturgical tradition and canonical discipline (Kyeyune 1997).

African Instituted Churches and extremist Christianity

The African Instituted Churches started more than a hundred years ago in reaction to colonial governments and mission churches. They claimed that the spirit of Africa was the same as the spirit of Christianity. Whereas mission churches forced their African converts to abandon African customs and beliefs, the African Instituted Churches did not. They insisted on the continuity between the African and the Christian God. A brochure published by the Organisation of African Instituted Churches reads:[103]

> "A hundred years after the first African instituted churches were founded, the situation on our continent is more complex. We are no longer subject to colonialists, but outside powers still seek to control and manipulate us."

In an interview the secretary general of the Organisation of African Instituted Churches, bishop Njeru Wambugu, distinguished between three categories.[104] First there are the break-away or separatist churches, which protested against colonial and missionary power. They are also called Ethiopian-type churches, because they look to the ancient kingdom of Ethiopia as a model for African Instituted Christianity. They stress institutional independence but copy doctrines and liturgies of the mother church. They are more like political than spiritual movements. Next there are the spiritual or prophetic churches. They, too, parted ways with the mission churches, but mainly on theological grounds. They are also called Zionist-type churches because of their focus on Mount Zion, the new Jerusalem and the kingdom of God. Lastly there are the new Pentecostal or Charismatic churches – not the ones that were imported from the United States and Canada, often called 'ministries', which are strongly opposed to African spirits, but those which recognise African spirits as a legitimate channel of God's saving grace.

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103   The Organisation of African Instituted Churches (formerly called Organisation of African Independent Churches, also referred to as Organisation of African Initiated Churches) was founded in Cairo in 1978. It has its headquarters in Nairobi.

104   This classification follows the one given by Harold Turner (1967). See also Philomena Mwaura (2004) and Marthinus Daneel (2001).

These Christians maintain that there is a fundamental continuity between African Indigenous Religion and the Christian faith. The spirit that was present in Jesus Christ was none other than the spirits who are active in African Indigenous Religions. Thus African Indigenous Religions are themselves full and fully saving religions. This perception leads to a practice of mutual enrichment and critical interrogation in interreligious relations. This view is shared by some members of the Organisation of African Instituted Churches. It has been noted that this organisation is becoming increasingly 'mainline', and that the mainline position more and more resembles the position of African Instituted Churches as a result of indigenisation and inculturation.

There is a link between Charismatic and Pentecostal movements and Christian extremism. Put differently, Christian extremism often originated in Charismatic and Pentecostal groups (Waliggo 2003). Some observers no longer consider these expressions of Christianity to be religious movements but see them as political ideologies. This applies to the Lord Resistance Army in Uganda and, to a lesser extent, the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments based at Kanungu in Uganda (Shorter & Njiru 2001: 11–14; Waliggo 2003: 86–90), as well as the *Wana maombi* in Tanzania (Comoro & Sivallon 1999; Shorter & Njiru 2001: 103–110). One can also argue that these new Christian movements have gone secular; they simply represent African quests for health and wealth under the umbrella of religion (Shorter 2004: 264).

Conclusion

In this chapter we examined various expressions and transformations of religion in Africa: Indigenous Religions, Islam and Christianity. Our brief exploration of religious dynamics in Africa shows that religion is an ambiguous reality, not easily grasped by scholars of religion. Whereas some maintain that Africans are "notoriously religious", as John Mbiti (1969: 1) put it, others say that secularism and religious indifferentism are growing in Africa (Metogo 1997; Shorter & Onyancha 1997). This chapter shows that religions are flourishing in Africa (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004), that there is – and as far as we know, always has been – a plurality of religions in Africa (Olupona & Nyang 1993), but that they increasingly interact because of globalisation and interconnectedness of cultures. As a result there is reformation and revival in all three main forms – Indigenous Religion, Islam and Christianity – sometimes leading to proselytism and even extremism. This is a challenge to Africa's tradition of peaceful coexistence of religions.

Chapter Three

The study of religion in Africa

Until recently the study of religion in Africa – whether phenomenological, comparative, historical, anthropological, philosophical or theological – was dominated by European and American scholars like Edwin Smith, Edward Evans-Pritchard, Victor Turner, Geoffrey Parrinder and John Trimingham, described in the study by Ludwig and Adogame (2004).[105] Then came a generation of Africans studying religion in Africa, but still very much influenced by European and American ways of thinking, either for or against, such as Bolaji Idowu in Nigeria, John Mbiti in Kenya and Okot p'Bitek in Uganda (Westerlund 1985). That period has now come to an end and a new generation of African scholars is emerging, trained in Africa, often on Afrocentric lines (Platvoet, Cox & Olupona 1996). This is not to suggest that the earlier approaches no longer exist. New and old approaches function side by side. African studies conducted by Westerners are now peer-reviewed by Africans. This makes the study of religion in Africa far more exciting and possibly more adequate.[106]

3.1 Religious studies in Africa

In (East) Africa religion is studied in departments of religious studies at public universities, often combined with philosophy and classics; in faculties or departments of theology or divinity at private universities; and in seminaries and other theological schools and colleges (Platvoet 1989; Getui & Nelson 1997; Gatwa 2003; Shyllon 2003; Chepkwony 2004).[107] As was noted in the

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105 In her *Anthropology and Africa* Sally Moore (1994) gives an overview of European and American pioneers of African studies in anthropology. The two discourses, religious studies and anthropology, are distinct but partly overlap.

106 Wilfred Cantwell Smith said that a statement about a religion is not true unless it is confirmed by the believers. In this sense religious studies has changed completely in the postcolonial era. The objects of science of religion have become subjects (Platvoet 1996). It is promising that professional organisations, such as the African Association for the Study of Religion, have Northern and Southern, Christian and non-Christian members. It is no longer true (if it ever was) that when the centre speaks, the periphery listens. When the centre speaks, the periphery does talk back.

107 Interestingly, the University of Dar es Salaam has never had a department of religious studies. It is said that president Nyerere did not want to establish one because he felt it would create antagonism in Tanzania's multireligious society (Chepkwony 2004: 54).

introduction, institutional and disciplinary distinctions often go together. At
public universities religion is studied from a secular point of view; at private
universities – at least those run by churches or other denominational bodies,
which is the vast majority – it is studied from a religious point of view. According
to Aylward Shorter and Edwin Onyancha (1997: 13) the secular and religious
perspectives represent two different angles on one and the same reality. From a
religious perspective reality is perceived as being under the governance of God.
From a secular perspective the same reality is seen as humanly controlled.

Westernisation or Africanisation?

In the early 1970s Okot p'Bitek started a debate with his *African Religions in
Western scholarship*. In this book p'Bitek accuses scholars like Idowu and
Mbiti of hellenising African deities (p'Bitek 1970). Mbiti and p'Bitek represent
two positions in a methodological battle between two or three schools of
thought in African studies that exist up to today.[108] The debate centres on the
invention-of-tradition thesis of Terence Ranger and others, as was briefly
explained in the introduction. Just as colonial rulers and anthropologists cre-
ated ethnic groups for administrative purposes, Christian missionaries and
phenomenologists of religion invented Africans religions in order to dominate
them, it is said.

In tracing the origin of the invention of African Religion various scholars
mention Geoffrey Parrinder, who was the first to use the term in his *African
Traditional Religion* (1954). It was adopted by African scholars of religion like
Bolaji Idowu and John Mbiti, who popularised its use. Henk van Rinsum
(2003: 57) refers to Edwin Smith and other Christian missionaries as the first
to pioneer the concept. Although they did cite evidence that African 'pagans'
had their religions, which they described in their own terms, they considered
African Religions inferior, seeing them as preparation for the gospel and in
need of purification and fulfilment. "Not only Western but also African
scholars of religion have tended to 'Westernise' African religions," says
Westerlund (1993: 54). Recently various African scholars of religion have
challenged the idea of 'fulfilment' as an attempt to fit African Religions into a
Christian framework. Instead of the erstwhile Christianisation of African
Religion, they seek to Africanise it (Westerlund 1993: 55).[109]

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108   The most prevalent ones go under names like reductionism and religionism (Cox 2003:
       27–30). Platvoet (1989) calls them positivist, religionist and empirical studies of religion;
       Olabimtan (2003) speaks about atheism, agnosticism and religionism.
109   Jacob Olupona (1991) and Laurenti Magesa (1997) could be mentioned as examples.
       Magesa's *African Religion* is rapidly replacing Mbiti's *Concepts of God in Africa* as a text-
       book in East African departments of religion and faculties of theology.

Platvoet and Van Rinsum are critical of attempts to (re-)construct African Religion. Mostly they are ideological, prompted by strategic reasons. These ideological constructs need to be countered by a scientific view. A view of African Religion must be based "on verifiable historical data, if academic status is claimed for it," Platvoet and Van Rinsum (2003: 143) maintain. Religionists, however, claim that Westernisation is also evident in scientific studies of African traditions from a secular point of view, seeing them as reflections of social, economic or psychic structures. Okot p'Bitek (1970: 99–100), who regards religion as a social phenomenon, holds that "in so far as Africans believed in certain 'powers', they may be called religious; but, as most of them did not hold beliefs in any deities similar in conception to the Christian God, we may refer to traditional Africans as atheistic in their outlook". According to Westerlund (1993: 59) the views of theologians who Christianise African Religion and anthropologists who secularise it are both reductionist.[110]

Does African Religion exist?

Early scholars of African Religion doubted whether African Religions exist. Influenced as they were by evolutionist thinking, they argued that Africans did not and could not have the notion of a High God, or that it was obscured. Thus Lévy-Bruhl and Diedrich Westermann saw African beliefs and practices as distorted ways to God (p'Bitek 1970: 52–57; Ochieng'-Odhiambo 1997: 1–19).[111] Religionists, however, say that these early Western scholars did not study African Religions from the point of view of their believers. They took their own religious categories as normative premises for their research and concluded that, because they were absent in Africa, Africans do not have a religion. Mudimbe (1988), who wrote extensively on *The invention of Africa*, believes that if they had taken an insiders' view, their conclusion would have been different.

In reaction to early Eurocentric views, religionists like Idowu in Nigeria and Mbiti in Kenya – inspired inter alia by Wilhelm Schmidt's thesis of original monotheism – argue that Africans have always known a High God. Idowu made an in-depth study of one religion, Mbiti's influential *Concepts of God in Africa* was a comparative study. However constructed or invented religion in Africa may be, according to Ellis and Ter Haar (2004: 9) it cannot be denied that it is very much alive and active on the continent. This is because there is

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110   Platvoet and Van Rinsum (2003: 139) rightly note that p'Bitek criticised Mbiti for Westernising African Religion. But p'Bitek did the same, drawing his inspiration from John Robinson's *Honest to God*.

111   Stoecker (2004: 169-174) indicates that Westermann saw a similarity between the African High God or Sky God and the Christian God. Nevertheless he advised missionaries to act ruthlessly against so-called tribal religions.

a dialectical relation between reality 'out there' and the representation of reality in the mind (Bourdieu 1991: 220), as was explained in the introduction.

The 'social magic' that brings into existence the thing named (e.g. African Traditional Religion) is proportional to the authority of the namer. The object-ification may succeed if the person is able to impose a new vision (of the fron-tier) and a new di-vision of the social world. But the objectification in discourse also depends on the degree to which the discourse is grounded in the objective existence of the group to which it is addressed, that is, in recognition by the members of the group, as well as in the economic and cultural proper-ties they share in common (Bourdieu 1991: 224).

How religious are Africans?

Religionists not only claim that African Religion exists and that Africans are religious, they hold that Africans are incurably or, as Mbiti puts it, notoriously religious. This statement is clearly inspired by the religionist idea that the human being is *homo religiosus* (i.e. religious in essence) and will always be religious. Again, this seems to be a reaction against earlier views that Africans were sceptics and had always been so, maybe not atheists but clearly agnostic: doubt, scepticism and religious indifference were widespread (Platvoet & Van Rinsum 2003: 146). These views are now backed by empirical evidence, pro-vided by scholars like Metogo (1997) and Shorter and Onyancha (1997), showing that the majority of Africans are not churchgoers, as will be seen in section 6.2 in greater detail.

However, "[if] Africa is growing in secularism," asks Olabimtan (2003: 334), how come African scholars of religion successfully overcame the secu-larism of their alma mater, the University of London, "first in counterbalan-cing its atheism and then gradually eliminating it"? And "why has the dominant response to the economic and political crises on the continent, from Dakar through Cape Town to Mombasa, been religious, taking religiosity to mean the preponderant recourse to the transcendent" (Olabimtan 2003: 335)?[112] "The revival of African traditional religion is not a simple return to the past, but, rather, a reconfiguration for modern times," write Ellis and Ter Haar (2004: 6).

How are Africans religious?

More pertinent to the topic of this book, however, is not how religious Africans are, but *how* are Africans religious? Religionists maintain that Africans are one

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112   With respect to Olabimtan's definition of religiosity as recourse to the transcendent, we has-ten to reiterate that the transcendent is not supernatural, other-worldly or meta-empirical. All these terms presuppose a distinction between this world and another, a distinction made in Western sciences of religion but inappropriate from an African point of view.

with the invisible world, which they participate in and venerate; their attitude towards meta-empirical realities is relational rather than instrumental. This was a reaction against earlier scholars, who claimed that Africans manipulate the invisible world to satisfy their own needs. Their religion was utilitarian and pragmatic, magic rather than religion: power versus piety; egocentric manipulation versus other-centred veneration.

According to some scholars of religion Africans' magico-religious pragmatism and utilitarianism explain the present-day attraction of a prosperity gospel and prosperity churches, just as earlier 'rice Christians' were attracted by the schools and hospitals of mission churches. Others argue that when scholars of African Religion say that African pragmatism and utilitarianism give rise to secularism and unbelief, magic rather than religion, they take a 'clerical' view of religion, using the elite or official religion as their norm instead of folk or popular religion (Olabimtan 2003: 334). It is a conceptualised religion, not the real religion of every day (Van Beek 1975).

African Religion as 'ethnic' religion

So far we have discussed schools of thought in the study of African Religion. One complication is that Africans in general distinguish between, but do not separate society, culture and religion as separate domains. This could explain why African theologians do not speak much about interreligious relations, as noted in the introduction. For them the debate falls in a different category. In contradistinction to dialogue between Christians and Muslims, most African theologians would classify dialogue with indigenous African Religions under inculturation.

Certainly one important contribution made by African theologians to the worldwide discourse on interreligious dialogue is that religion is always inculturated. Put negatively, 'pure' religion simply does not exist. Nowadays much of the theology of interreligious dialogue in Africa goes under a different heading, namely theology of inculturation, and interreligious dialogue falls primarily under intercultural communication (Krieger 1991). This is partly because of the complex relation between culture and religion in Africa, where religion is always 'cultural religion' and culture is always 'religious culture'. This applies to African indigenous believers as much as to African Christians or African Muslims. Most Catholics would say: "I am Catholic, but I do not practise it" (Hastings 1989). Peel (1978) refers to African Religions as ethnic religion, indicating that in Africa, as in most primal societies, beliefs are largely identified with a specific ethnic group and cater for the needs of that group.

Afrocentric studies emphasise community spirit, neighbourly love, solidarity, respect for strangers and so on, using such labels as *ujamaa*, *harambee* and *ubuntu*. Other studies say that African Religions are characterised by reciprocal, pragmatic, utilitarian, instrumental relations (Platvoet & Van Rinsum 2003: 147).

For our discussion of interreligious relations this is an important issue, to be dealt with in section 5.1.

Christianity and Islam in Africa

What we said about scholars of African Religion taking a 'clerical' or elitist view of religion applies equally to the study of Islam and Muslim-Christian relations in Africa, which took official Christianity and official Islam as its norm and thus failed to recognise African religious dynamics. These studies were based on a Western view of institutionalised religion. They could only conceive of an Islamisation of African beliefs and practices, not of Africanisation of Islam (Kim 2004).

   Much of the present-day confusion in Muslim-Christian dialogue exists because it is a dialogue between unequal partners, a comparison between apples and pears. Christians see Islam as a religion in the European sense of the word. But Islam is much more than that: it is also a political ideology (Tayob 1999), a culture, a way of life, a state within the state. It can be compared to the Catholic and Reformed 'pillars' in the Netherlands between the First and Second World Wars,[113] which comprehended everything from a person's birth till his or her death. These 'pillars' were both self-sufficient and self-satisfied.

   The difference is clearly evident in comparative studies of religious instruction for Christians and Muslims in East Africa. Whereas Catholic religious instruction is an initiation into a religion, Islamic religious instruction goes much further. It is an initiation into a civilisation, a way of life, including law, health and conduct.

Secular or religious point of view?

At the beginning of this section we noted a difference between a religious and a secular point of view. The religious point of view is seen as biased and prejudiced, the secular as objective and neutral. But, as Olabimtan (2003: 127–128) points out, when scholars of African Religion say that the secular approach is 'neutral' or scientific' and the religionist view 'biased' or 'ideological', they fail to see that the secular approach is "only a phase in Western study of cultures", very much part of European history and rooted in the worldview of the Enlightenment, hence no more neutral than any other worldview. When they moreover say that a secular approach is normative and universal in African studies, this is just another expression of European arrogance and a superiority complex, says Olabimtan.

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113   One informant noted the parallel in understanding of the terms 'tribe' in Africa and 'pillar' in the Netherlands: both were more or less closed (confined), coherent, stable and reified. 'Pillarisation' is equivalent to what was called 'religious tribalism' by one of my interviewees (section 4.2).

It should be noted that the difference between reductionism and religionism is not to be equated with European or African scholarship, nor does it reflect a difference between historians and anthropologists of religion on the one hand and phenomenologists of religion and theologians on the other. There are various historians and anthropologists of (African) religion, such as Lienhardt, Turner and Evans Pritchard, who were believers themselves and worked in a religionist paradigm (Westerlund 1993: 48–49).

Platvoet and Van Rinsum (2003: 130–131) criticise Mbiti and Idowu for being normative. Mbiti and Idowu's insights are dismissed as methodologically unsound, because their descriptions lack metaphysical neutrality and testability. When they prefer to quote Metogo (1997) and Shorter and Onyancha (1997) because of their "minimal rather than … maximal interpretation of religion in African indigenous societies" (Platvoet & Van Rinsum 2003: 143–144), they admit that these scholars study them for normative reasons, and therefore "from an alarmist rather than neutral perspective". Yet "they provide us with many useful data", say Platvoet and Van Rinsum (2003: 150–151). According to Olabimtan (2003: 333) this self-contradiction demonstrates "their allegiance to the old, secularist school even though they feign an agnostic position in the debate".

The agnostic position is based on two presuppositions, says Olabimtan (2003: 333). The first is that an approach to African Religion that takes the religious worldview seriously cannot be authenticated, hence is unscientific. Secondly, such an approach seems always to contain more ideology than facts. What Platvoet and Van Rinsum fail to see is not only that the scientific method of inquiry and its parent movement, the Enlightenment, are "only a phase in the Western study of cultures" (Olabimtan 2003: 227) and consequently not neutral at all, but also "that the so-called scientific method of inquiry no longer holds the ace in investigating societies" (Olabimtan 2003: 333).

Among other factors, Platvoet and Van Rinsum's failure is due to their unwillingness to investigate "whether the Western scientific tool of inquiry can ultimately grapple with an experience like religion" (Olabimtan 2003: 322) and "to allow the nature of religion to shape the methods of its inquiry", not the other way round (Olabimtan 2003: 339). The secular-scientific method of inquiry "is in our times fast losing ground to a new movement – the postmodern – as the unassailable method of inquiry in the study of cultures" (Olabimtan 2003: 327). In opposition to the Enlightenment ideal of autonomy and rationality, the postmodern approach "allows imagination to roam widely and freely" (Olabimtan 2003: 338–339).

Teaching of religion: committed or detached?

At the beginning of this chapter I referred to a rising new generation of scholars of African Religion, trained in Africa and often – once again – in an anti-Western

way.[114] Platvoet and Van Rinsum refer explicitly to this new generation. They speak about the shift in departments of religion at anglophone universities in Africa after 1970. The secularist and rationalist climate of unbelief that their alma mater, the University of London, had fostered among staff and students of African university colleges "gradually lost control over them" (Platvoet & Van Rinsum 2003: 131).[115] Now there is "a much stronger religious presence at universities and institutions of higher learning, in particular through the Departments of Religious Studies", say Platvoet and Van Rinsum (2003: 152). Shorter and Onyancha (1997: 21) likewise note that "the last quarter of a century has witnessed a stronger religious presence at universities and institutions of higher learning and, with it, a certain erosion of academic unbelief".[116]

For the theme of this book this is important. What are the implications for the teaching of interreligious relations? Should the subject be taught from a secular or a religious point of view (Cheetham 2005)? Platvoet and Van Rinsum (2003: 143) opt for a neutral approach based on verifiable historical data.[117] Like Harold Turner (1981) and James Cox (2003), Olabimtan (2003: 322) points out a paradox in the secular-scientific study of religion. He doubts whether this approach is able to grasp its object, because the scholar tries to understand an invisible reality from visible data only.

Ellis and Ter Haar's approach (2004: 7) "takes full account of the content of people's belief, rather then regarding religion primarily in terms of social structures or processes". This refers to the age-old distinction between studying the substance (what religion is in itself) and the function (what religion does for a person or society) of religion. Using Horton's distinction between symbolism, fideism and an intellectual approach, Ellis and Ter Haar (2004: 17) opt for the latter: "The main feature of the intellectualist approach is its propensity to

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114 Burama and Margalit (2004: 5) see Occidentalism as a "dehumanising picture of the West painted by its enemies". "The view of the West in Occidentalism is like the worst aspects of its counterpart, Orientalism" (p. 10). Some Orientalists perceived non-Western people as "less than full adult human beings," say Buruma and Margalit (2004: 10). "Occidentalism is at least as reductive … To diminish an entire society or a civilization to a mass of soulless, decadent, money-grubbing, rootless, faithless, unfeeling parasites is a form of intellectual destruction."

115 Platvoet and Van Rinsum (2003: 131) speak about the period between 1945 and the 1960s. It must be noted that the founding fathers of the departments of religious studies were often clerics such as bishop Stephen Neill and White Father Joseph Donders at the University of Nairobi (Chepkwony 2004: 56).

116 It is noteworthy that the same applies to the United Kingdom, where their alma mater was. Some scholars of religion there plead for a return of theology (Hyman 2004) or theological religious studies (D'Costa 1996).

117 The problem is that for the sake of academic enquiry scholars of religion not only abandoned their specific religious affiliation (as is the case in seminaries and schools of divinity) but all links with religion altogether.

consider statements on religious matters in the first instance in the believers' own terms." However, "it is most important to note that this does not imply that an analyst who adopts the emic forms of analysis shares the religious beliefs of the people she or he studies" (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: 18). Thus it is good to distinguish an insider view from an emic view: the two are not the same.[118]

James Cox and Wim Van Binsbergen take another approach. Following Panikkar and Krieger, they seem to say that one can only understand another religion, like African Religion, when one is convinced; and in order to be convinced one must be converted to that religion (Cox 2003). Only then can intra-religious and interreligious dialogue start. For Van Binsbergen (2003) this literally meant identifying with the sangoma point of view to the extent that he became one himself. Apart from the distinction between reductionist and religionist study of African Religion (outsider or insider perspective) there is the distinction between detached or committed study of African Religion. Is knowledge of African Religions gathered for its own sake, or must it be applied, for example to reduce poverty and improve relations between the religions?

3.2 Philosophy in Africa

In describing various forms of African Christianity we made communication with the African traditional heritage our point of departure. We will do the same in the case of African philosophy and African theology. The introduction of philosophy as an independent discipline in East African universities was a relatively late development (1965 in Kampala, 1969 in Nairobi) and it was often combined with other disciplines such as religious studies and/or classics (Oruka 1997: 229–240). We consider the basic problem in African philosophy to be African identity (Masolo 1995) or Africa's self-definition in the contemporary world (Wiredu 1992), hence the relation between self and others. The danger of taking identity as a premise is that some positions are over-represented and others are under-represented, but that is a limitation of almost all classifications.

Using the criterion of African identity we can classify African philosophies on a continuum ranging between two extremes: traditionalism and modernism (Masolo 1995: 194–246; Gyekye 1997: 217–272). African philosophy can be seen as an expression of mental de-colonisation, a protest against the cultural

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118   Wiegers (2005: 162) notes rightly that emic and etic approaches are not equivalent to insider and outsider approaches. He wants an alternative to the notions of reductionism and religionism. I prefer to distinguish between a hermeneutic and a contextual approach. The hermeneutic approach interprets religious data by relating them to other religious data. A contextual approach explains religious data by relating them to extra-religious data. The two approaches are complementary.

imperialism of the West. According to Hountondji there have been two reactions to the superiority of the 'white man': acceptance, leading to rejection of traditional cultures and a quest for modernisation, and rejection of white superiority, leading to romanticising of traditional cultures and going back to the past. Both positions are ideological simplifications.

Ethno-philosophy and nationalist-ideological philosophy are expressions of traditionalism; professional philosophy can be seen as an expression of modernism, whereas sage philosophy looks for a middle way. The labels ethno-philosophy, nationalist-ideological, professional and sage philosophy are taken from Oruka (1990: 13–22).[119] We conclude this section with a reflection on self and other, but we start with a philosopher who may be considered the founding father of African philosophy, the Belgian Franciscan Placide Tempels.

Bantu philosophy

Placide Tempels wrote his *Bantu philosophy* 60 years ago. In this book he argues against the widespread idea, propagated among others by Hegel and Levy-Bruhl, that Africans are primitive and hence incapable of logical thinking. Tempels argued that every culture is organised round a set of philosophical principles that are implicit in its language, beliefs and customs, though not always explicated by all members of that culture (Hountondji 1983: 15–17). Both proponents and opponents of Tempels's theory attach paradigmatic status to the work of this Belgian missionary. Up to the 1960s anthropologists still spoke about Africans as primitive people. Okot p'Bitek experienced this while studying at Oxford. p'Bitek (1971: vii) writes:

> "I first met a number of Western scholars at Oxford University in 1960. During the very first lecture in the Institute of Social Anthropology, the teacher kept referring to Africans or non-Western peoples as barbarians, savages, primitives, tribes, etc. I protested; but to no avail. All the professors and lecturers in the Institute, and those who came from outside to read papers, spoke the same insulting language."

Tempels dealt with one of the basic issues in African philosophy up to the present: 'white' superiority and oppression of African people, European expansionism and domination of Africa (Withaar 1986: 168–170). Since Tempels's time the basic issues in African philosophy have become political independence and the cultural identity of Africans and Africa. A distinctive feature of African philosophy certainly is that it is closely linked to current political and cultural issues, issues of development and identity, hence it is more 'practical' than European philosophy (Oruka 1997).

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119   In his *Sage philosophy* Oruka (1991) adds two other trends in African philosophy, artistic or literary philosophy and hermeneutic philosophy. We will not deal with them here, as they do not really offer new dimensions for the purpose of this book.

Ethno-philosophy

The main point of traditionalism is to demonstrate that there is an African philosophy, just as there is European, Indian or Chinese philosophy (Withaar 1986: 166–175; Oruka 1990: 14–16). The existence of this philosophy must 'prove' that Africans are not primitive and that European and African thinking are on an equal footing. This philosophy is hidden in language, beliefs and customs. According to traditionalist thought philosophy's primary task is to explicate the hidden wisdom of African culture.

The dominant form of traditionalism, and of African philosophy for that matter, is ethno-philosophy. Its object of research is the popular worldview and its main task is to systematise that worldview. The premise is that analysis of collective thinking or worldview can produce a philosophy. This is the position of Alexis Kagame from Rwanda and John Mbiti from Kenya.

The ontological opposition between African and European ways of being is combined with the epistemological opposition between African and European ways of thinking, represented by Leopold Senghor of Senegal. His *théorie negritude* postulates a uniquely African way of acquiring knowledge via affective participation and emotion. This non-propositional way of thinking does not result in the logical systems found in European philosophy, but in the mythical and symbolic systems of African culture.

Whereas Tempels rejects European superiority by showing that African thinking is no less logical, Senghor rejects European superiority by assigning superiority to the primitive mentality. The dichotomy between African and European thinking is the framework for ethno-philosophy; it is refined but not criticised. The aim is to show that African philosophy is unique and thus distinct from other philosophies, European or otherwise.

Nationalist-ideological philosophy

A second form of traditionalism is the nationalist-ideological philosophy of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (Withaar 1986: 176–179; Oruka 1990: 17–18). These philosophers have in common that they revert to traditional cultural norms and values with a view to philosophical justification of a political theory. Modern African society should be built on traditional African social values.

In various nationalist-ideological philosophies traditional African society is seen as a harmonious community in which the collective is more important than the individual. The only hierarchical principle is age (gender is not mentioned by these philosophers). In short, for nationalist-ideological philosophy traditional African society is the ideal-type of modern socialism.

In his *ujamaa* socialism Nyerere is a pure 'traditionalist'. In Kaunda's humanism and Nkrumah's consciencism traditionalism is less dogmatic.

Nkrumah, in fact, rejects unmodified restoration of traditional African society. He envisages a new society, in which African tradition is broadened by European Christian and Arab Islamic influences. Harmonisation of traditional African, Islamic and Christian thought creates the condition for peaceful coexistence of African indigenous believers, Christians and Muslims.

In his later works Nkrumah rejects the traditionalist justification of African socialism and turns to Marxism (Gyekye 1997: 144–170; Hountondji 1983: 133–155). In so doing he prepared the way for professional philosophy. In his critique of an African socialism based on traditional African classless society Nkrumah (1975: 440) says that this idea "is certainly a facile simplification; there is no historical or even anthropological evidence for such a society. I am afraid the realities of African society were somewhat more sordid."

Professional philosophy

Both forms of traditionalism, ethno-centrist and nationalist, are highly political and ideological. Modernism, also called professional philosophy, is a critique of traditionalism. According to Wiredu (1980) traditionalism is based on the methodological mistake of confusing different categories. By locating the alternative to Western philosophy in common sense thought one compares unequal entities, namely traditional, pre-scientific African thinking and modern, scientific European thinking. This mistake reinforces a widespread misconception, namely that Europeans are scientific and Africans are pre-scientific (Withaar 1986: 180–185; Oruka 1990: 18–20). Philosophers have to disconnect modes of thought from geographical territories. Traditional, pre-scientific or common sense thinking is not typically African; it is typical of pre-modern societies. Europe also had and still has its traditional or common sense thinking. A contextual, intercultural analysis of modes of thought leads to the conclusion that modern societies still maintain traditional modes of thought. A case in point is alternative medicine.

Kwasi Wiredu's analysis concurs with Robin Horton's, but Horton is not concerned with the critique of traditionalism. His sole interest is intercultural analysis. Wiredu is not concerned with the political consequences of his analysis, although these consequences are certainly there. The methodological error referred to above can only be corrected by distinguishing strictly between two modes of thought, namely traditional, pre-scientific thinking and modern, scientific thinking, and relating these modes to specific societal and historical contexts in which they function. They usually overlap, as I pointed out above.

Hountondji (1983) asks why traditionalists made the mistake of equating African wisdom with philosophy. He answers the question by examining the context in which traditionalism occurred. The aim of traditionalism was to refute Lévy-Bruhl's concept of a primitive mentality that served as a justification for

colonialism. The traditionalists tried to upgrade popular wisdom to philosophy, but the project was doomed to fail. They repeated Lévy-Bruhl's mistake of constructing a primitive mentality for ideological purposes: both are ideological constructions or mystifications.

Unity and diversity

Traditionalists suggest that all members of non-Western societies agree with each other and all of them share the same worldview (Hountondji 1983: 156–169).[120] Consequently these societies leave no scope for individual beliefs or philosophies and for individual freedom of expression, since their philosophy is collective, shared and uniform. The myth of unity leads to an emphasis on harmony, and ultimately to repression and dictatorial regimes. Nationalist-ideological philosophers use the myth of unity and harmony to justify their one-party states and repressive policies. A condition for the existence of philosophy and science, however, is critical discussion between individuals and free exchange of ideas.

This means that African identity cannot be taken for granted. It is not given a priori but is the result of free discussion and exchange; it is not the starting point but the end result. For African philosophy to become real philosophy it must, first of all, be critical, free and pluriform. Secondly, it must be relevant. Traditionalist philosophers always engage in extraneous discussion. Indeed, their philosophy is addressed first and foremost to Europeans, rejecting their superiority and responding by postulating a distinctive African identity (Withaar 1986: 184–185). All modernists claim that philosophy must be professional and scientific, creating conditions for the development of scientific knowledge. This presupposes an atmosphere of academic freedom without a priori claims of whatever kind. Only then can African culture be rationalised.

Sage philosophy

Sage philosophy is an attempt to answer the critique of professional philosophers while maintaining the heritage of ethno-philosophy (Oruka 1990: 34–69). Sage philosophers hold that professional philosophers are good at criticising ethno-philosophers but offer nothing of their own. Like ethno-philosophers, Oruka and Ochieng'-Odhiambo's main preoccupation is to retrieve philosophic trends in traditional African belief systems and thought

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120 Gyekye (1997: 32–33) distinguishes between contingent and essential universalism. Whereas the latter's universal status is intrinsic to human nature, the former acquires universal status over time as people situated beyond the cultural cradle of certain ideas or values accept them as appropriate to their own situation.

patterns. But unlike ethno-philosophers they stress that wisdom is individual rather than collective.

According to this school of thought it is the true representative of African philosophy. Although professional philosophers exposed various fallacies in ethno-philosophy and disqualified it as philosophy altogether, they have themselves come under fire of a different kind: "The professional African philosophers having been schooled, colleged and universitied in the Western Tradition are often accused of illegally using the western techniques and methods in African philosophy, largely because of their training in Western philosophy. … They use Western spectacles to see African philosophy, hence what they conceive is not African philosophy as it is in itself" (Ochieng'-Odhiambo 1997: 98).[121]

Sage philosophy "seeks to identify African philosophy in the technical sense as seen through African spectacles, or as portrayed by those Africans that have had little Western influence" (Ochieng'-Odhiambo 1997: 98). Sage philosophers hold that "even in traditional Africa there are individuals who are capable of critical, coherent and independent thinking". However, "unlike the professional school, philosophic sagacity is an exposition of the beliefs and wisdom of individuals who have not been 'spoiled' by the Western educational system" (Ochieng'-Odhiambo 1997: 98). Sage philosophers hold that among African communities there are individual thinkers who "have not had the benefit of modern education. But they are nevertheless, critical independent thinkers who guide their thoughts and judgments by the power of reason and inborn insight rather than by the authority of the communal consensus" (Oruka 1990: 16). They are real African philosophers, though not trained.

Between tradition and modernity

In conclusion, one can discern two stages in African philosophy. The first entailed a search for African identity in the context of cultural and political de-colonisation, a period in which philosophers tried to come to terms with the colonial past (Withaar 1986: 185–186). Now that political de-colonisation is a fact in all African societies, preoccupation with the past makes way for reflection on the future of Africa. This shift goes hand in hand with a development from traditionalist to modernist philosophies, although traditionalism is still the dominant trend in Africa (Withaar 1986: 186–187).[122]

The modernist position is much more convincing than the traditionalist position, but its weakness is that it is only an ideological critique of the latter.

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121   We found the same argument used by religionist scholars of religion against their atheistic colleagues. See section 3.1.
122   In African theology one finds a parallel in two schools of thought: theology of African renaissance and African reconstruction theology.

A further disadvantage is that modernisation is not very promising in other fields in Africa. The transition from traditional to modern societies is a slow process, in which traditionalist and modernist positions exist side by side. Hence there is an urgent need for further dialogue between traditionalist and modernist philosophies in Africa (Withaar 1986: 187–188).

'We' and 'the others'

Of utmost importance for the theory to be developed in this book is the relation between self and others and the tradition of peaceful coexistence in Africa. Early advocates of this idea were Edwin Blyden and Kwame Nkrumah. In Nkrumah's vision harmonisation of African traditional, Euro-Christian and Islamic Arab culture must create the condition for peaceful coexistence of people in Ghana – not just a restoration of Africa's traditional past, but the emergence of a common African identity or pan-Africanism (Hountondji 1983: 131–155). The best known expressions of pan-Africanism in East Africa are Julius Nyerere's *Ujamaa* and Ali Mazrui's *Triple heritage*.[123] Mazrui argues that Africa is the product of a fusion of three cultures: African, Islamic and Western. In his latest books Mazrui (2004, 2006) reviews Africa's triple heritage in the light of the relation between Islam and the West in the post-Cold War era.

According to Placide Tempels the Bantu respect 'others', that is non-kin. However hostile the others may be, they know that it is not allowed to kill them without reason. The others are also possessors of vital force that comes from God, hence they have to be respected (Tempels 1946: 83). On similar lines other philosophers stress the value of universal brotherhood and respect for others in Africa (Gyekye 1997: 290–291). Sundermeier (1998: 18–19, 174) does the same, also speaking about 'reverence for your neighbour'.

Other philosophers are more critical of Africans' respect for non-kin. We have already referred to Wiredu's (1980: 5) explicit mention of three evils in African culture: anachronism, authoritarianism and supernaturalism. He sees the "kinship orientation of traditional morality" as one of the most subtle problems to be solved (Wiredu 1980: 24). Gyekye (1997: 242) discusses the negative features of communitarianism. Apart from internal group pressure, which prevents the advancement of more enterprising members and nurtures patronage,

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123 Mazrui (2004: 1) acknowledges his dependency on Nkrumah's consciencism when he writes: "I gave this configuration of three civilizations in Africa a different name from what Nkrumah had given it. I named the triad of civilizations: a triple heritage." Mazrui also drew inspiration from Nyerere, albeit not uncritically. Mazrui (2002) edited the proceedings of a conference on Nyerere, organised by the Institute of African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, shortly after Nyerere's death in 1999. It is entitled *The titan of Tanzania*.

overstaffing, inefficiency and laziness (see section 1.1), there are also evils perpetrated on people outside the group. "It is common knowledge that unethical acts committed by a member of one cultural group are condoned, if not positively accepted, when done against members of another group" (Gyekye 1997: 255). Trans-ethnic unethical conduct is often allowed to pass as ethical. We come back to this in section 5.1.

3.3 Theology in Africa

In his introduction to African theology Justin Ukpong (1984: 4–6) distinguishes between inculturation theology, black theology and liberation theology. Their respective focuses are culture, colour and poverty. These theologies belong to the general area of contextual theology. Black theology is mainly practised in South Africa. In other parts of Africa the theological debate is between inculturation and liberation theologians.

Classifications of African theology

Ukpong (1984: 9) starts his introduction to inculturation theology by discussing the "widespread syncretistic life among many Africans", an issue we will deal with below (section 6.1). There are two responses to this phenomenon. The first is to see Africans as uncommitted Christians who have refused to abandon their 'pagan' ways. All that can be done is to keep preaching to them and hope for conversion (Ukpong 1984: 10). The second response is to see the widespread syncretism among African Christians, not as a lack of Christian commitment, but as a sign that Christianity has not taken African culture seriously. Contemporary African theologians would like to base dialogue between Christianity and African culture on this analysis (Ukpong 1984: 13).[124]

Ukpong distinguishes between a moderate and a radical approach to dialogue – in Peter Sarpong's terms (1984: 27–31), the Christianisation of Africa, or adaptation and the Africanisation of Christianity or inculturation. Liberation theologians hold that inculturation is impossible without liberation from Western economic, political and cultural oppression (Ukpong 1984: 46–58). Ukpong's introduction was written more than twenty years ago and various African scholars of religion and theologians feel that his classification is no longer adequate (Martey 1993; Dedji 2003: 30–33) in that it upholds a typically European dichotomy between spiritual and material dimensions. Inculturation, it is said, deals with cultural and religious issues (dialogue) and

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124   Kamstra (1985) says that for the ordinary faithful syncretism is what dialogue is for religious clergy. The first is spontaneous, the second is an intellectual enterprise.

liberation theology deals with economic and political issues (emancipation). Consequently new, more comprehensive classifications have emerged, such as reconstruction and renaissance (Kobia 2003: 103–129).

Classifying African theologies is not easy. Scholars speak about ecclesio-centric, christo-centric or theo-centric models of theology, and of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. Krieger (1992: 60) calls pluralism 'indifferentism'. Kwame Bediako (1998) takes continuity or discontinuity between Christianity and African Religions as a classificatory criterion.[125] Since our main interest in this book is on how pastoral ministers and teachers of religion are being trained to cope with interreligious relations, our criterion is denomination. Although some schools and colleges claim to be interdenominational, denomination is a major determinant of church organisations, faculties of theology and theological journals. Actors in the field identify more or less separate discourses (Mugambi 2003: 94):

(1) Roman Catholic Church, guided from Rome
(2) Mainstream Protestant churches, coordinated in the ecumenical movement
(3) Evangelical Churches, loosely associated through the World Evangelical Alliance
(4) AICs, coordinated in the Organisation of African Instituted Churches.

By and large we shall use this classification, adding two related trends and positions not specifically mentioned by Mugambi: Pentecostalism and Orthodoxy. We use the theologies of revelation and salvation as our criteria and apply our conclusions to interreligious learning. In each section we take one contemporary East African theologian as an example.

Evangelical and Pentecostal theology

Evangelical theology takes an exclusivist view of the relationship between Christianity and other religions. Evangelical theologians maintain that non-Christian religions offer no (or only distorted) revelation and no salvation. Hence African Religion and the Christian tradition are absolutely discontinuous; they have no common ground or meeting point and building bridges between the two religions is not possible. It is only possible to witness that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and that no one goes to the Father except by him (John 14:6). Hence the cardinal message in interreligious learning is: no salvation outside Christ!

One of the founders of evangelical theology in (East) Africa was the Nigerian Byang Kato, the first secretary general of the Association of Evangelicals

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125 Mugambi (2003: 118) says that there is a difference between the missionary and African use of the Bible. Whereas missionaries used the Bible to condemn African culture (discontinuity), Africans used it to affirm their dignity (continuity).

in Africa, based in Nairobi. After his sudden death in 1975 Byang Kato was succeeded by Tokunboh Adeyemo, also a Nigerian. In 1997 Tokunboh Adeyemo published a revised, amplified edition of his *Salvation in African tradition*, originally published in 1979.[126] In his introduction to the second edition the author says that, in the context of African religious pluralism, adherents of Islam, African Traditional Religion and Christianity live together peacefully under one roof. Some challenge the biblical claim of Jesus, "I am the way, and the life and the truth. No one comes to the father except through me" (John 14:6). Many advocate universalism. Adeyemo argues to the contrary, maintaining "there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5).

Adeyemo says that he does not make dogmatic statements. He arrived at his conclusions after careful investigation of traditional African beliefs and practices regarding revelation and salvation. "The issue to settle is not whether or not the Africans knew God before the advent of Islam and Christianity to the continent; rather it is whether or not such knowledge is capable of bringing man back to God," says Adeyemo (1997: 8). He identifies five mistakes in the salvation debate: pluralism, universalism, second chance-ism, syncretism and humanisation. He counters with an Evangelical response:

> "As Evangelicals we must guard against these pitfalls. We must tenaciously hold to the primacy of God's Word. God's eternal unchanging Word must remain supreme in matters of faith and practice. It is not a product of the literary activity of the Church. Rather the Church bows before the authority of the Word. *Sola Scriptura* must ring loud and clear in our day" (Adeyemo 1997: 109).

The second edition of Adeyemo's *Salvation in African tradition* has two new chapters, taking into consideration the contemporary cultural mix of Africa. In "Issues in African Christian theology" Adeyemo dwells on the idea of salvation in world religions. He concludes that salvation is by grace, obtained solely through faith in Christ.

Although very different from Evangelical theologians, Pentecostal theologians share their negative evaluation of non-Christian religions and consequent commitment to evangelism. Whereas Evangelical theologians hold that salvation is found only through Scripture (*sola scriptura*), Pentecostal theologians stress salvation through 'direct revelation', through inspired prophets or through members of the community in general. Broadly speaking, those who are not baptised and reborn in the Holy Spirit are believed not to be saved (Kalu 2003; Asamoah-Gyadu 2005).

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126   Other examples are Tite Tienou and (with some provisos) Kwame Bediako and Kä Mana (see Dedji 2003, pp. 93–165 on Mana, and pp. 166–219 on Bediako). See also Ngewa, Shaw and Tienou (1998) for an overview of Evangelical theology in Africa.

Protestant and Orthodox theology

Ecumenical theology is connected with a dialectical view of the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions. Dialectical theologians hold that there is revelation in non-Christian religions, because all people are created in the image of God. But there is no salvation in African Religion, because salvation is found through Christ alone. In the entire world God has given no-one else who can save (Acts 4:12). Hence the cardinal message in interreligious learning is: no salvation without Christ.

The founding father of ecumenical theology in East Africa is John Mbiti. A contemporary example is Jesse Mugambi.[127] Although most of his recent works focus on socio-economic and political issues, his *African heritage and contemporary Christianity* (1989) deals with African Religion and its relation to Christianity. In this book Mugambi emerges as a true heir of the Protestant tradition. With reference to the use of African heritage in Christian education he distinguishes between three models. The first presents the African moral heritage as a preparation for Christian morality. The second uses material drawn from that heritage to demonstrate that Christianity is superior to the African way of life. The third model presents the African heritage in its own terms. Mugambi (1989: 163) considers this approach, which he labels 'encounter', most promising. Yet he maintains "that syncretism is a danger to Christianity, if that term is used to mean a process and a way of thinking in which the essential message of the Gospel is so mixed up with other ideas that the teaching of Jesus Christ is no longer central" (Mugambi 1989: 69). He adds: "A church ceases to be one when or if it abandons or sweeps aside the affirmation of Jesus Christ as its centre and head, and the proclamation of the Gospel as its main concern" (Mugambi 1989: 73 n. 56).

Orthodox theology is pretty much mainline (Oborji 2005: 110–114). Andreas Tillyrides, archbishop of the African Orthodox Church in Kenya, propounds Jesus Christ as the only saviour.[128] The mission of dialogue is not in opposition to the mission of evangelisation. Paul and the early church fathers did not hesitate to quote non-Christian writers. Even pagan practices were accepted and Christianised (Tillyrides 2000: 388–391). One tends to associate Christianity in Africa with the exploration of the 'dark continent' by the European colonial

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127   See also the analysis of Mugambi's work in Dedji 2003, pp. 45–92. Other examples in East Africa are Mary Getui and Zablon Nthamburi, both at Kenyatta University with long careers as scholars of religion. At present, Getui is dean of the faculty of humanities. Nthamburi, first chairman of the department of philosophy and religious studies, served a second term from 2004 till 2006.

128   Most of Andreas Tillyrides's publications are written under the name 'archbishop Makarios'. He is member of the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian Unity.

powers, yet it is one of the oldest centres of Christianity in the world. Mark the evangelist brought Christ to Africa at the time of the first Pentecost. "Alexandria was a primary centre of theological study and growth" (Tillyrides 2000: 395). Tillyrides frequently refers to the catechetical school of Alexandria and its dialogue with the Greek philosophers.[129] "This is not to suggest, however, that anyone will ever save his soul through Greek or any other species of philosophy" (Tillyrides 2000: 401).

"Although the religious instinct is found everywhere, religion outside of Christ, at its best, is distorted and inadequate," says Andreas Tillyrides (2000: 467). Many Christians in the interfaith movement seek inspiration in other religions. This movement has also penetrated other churches at the very highest level. In October 1986 an amazing interfaith service, presided over by pope John Paul II, was held in Assisi. The animist representative was an African 'witchdoctor' (Tillyrides's term). At this service the pope's forehead was anointed by a Hindu priestess, Tillyrides (2000: 268) reports. "This syncretism may possibly contain elements of value but it constitutes a grotesque caricature of true Christianity, degrading Christianity to a level of all other religions; by stark contrast the authentic catholicity of Orthodoxy stands eternally as the true faith for all men and for every era." African Orthodox theology has a great responsibility for purifying faith. Why is this? "Precisely because Orthodoxy is the religion instituted by our Lord Himself. This is the sole answer, and the answer that is decisive against all arguments for syncretic experimentation," says Tillyrides (2000: 468).

The Coptic Orthodox Church does not accept the Chalcedonian profession of faith, which says that Christ has two natures, one fully divine and one fully human. For Coptic Orthodox Christians this curtails his full divinity. The Coptic belief is that Christ has only one nature, which is divine, though fully incarnated in a human body. In 563 there was a schism between the Greek and Coptic Orthodox Churches, resulting in two patriarchates in Alexandria.[130] The Coptic patriarch later relocated to Cairo. After many years of isolation the Coptic Orthodox Church expanded to sub-Saharan Africa and established a diocese in Kenya in 1978 (De Gruchy 1997). The Coptic Orthodox Church is a founding member of the World Council of Churches and plays a significant role in Muslim-Christian relations in Africa (Assad 2001).

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129   The catechetical school of Alexandria promoted communication and understanding between Christianity, Judaism and African Religion. Clement of Alexandria used neo-Platonist philosophy to mediate between various religious and ideological systems in the 2nd century Mediterranean world. This can serve as an example for a present-day theory of interreligious relations (Shenk 1983: 1).

130   The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All of Africa also calls itself the African Orthodox Church to distinguish itself from the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Roman Catholic theology

Catholic theology is associated with an inclusivist view of the relationship between Christianity and other religions. African Religion offers both revelation and salvation and Christ is the cause of it, albeit in mysterious and hidden ways. As a result salvation in other religions remains imperfect. The highest revelation and fullest salvation are found in Christianity. Thus the task of missionaries is not to eradicate African beliefs but to make their teachings come true (Matt 5: 17), to perfect non-Christian religion. Purification is the key word. The cardinal message in interreligious learning is: there is salvation outside Christ, but Christ is the norm for judging the salvation found in other religions.

The founder of the Catholic model in East Africa is Charles Nyamiti. A contemporary representative in East Africa is Laurenti Magesa.[131] Unlike Mugambi, Magesa started his academic career as a liberation theologian and his main concern was socio-ethical issues. He is suspicious of inculturation theologians who disregard the economic and political structures in which inculturation takes place. In his recent works the emphasis is on inculturation and dialogue. In his *African Religion* there is a section on the persistence and continuity of African Religion. He says that the vast majority of Christian faithful practise a syncretic form of official Christianity and African Religion (Magesa 1997: 10). In his conclusion, however, he calls it a dual religious system in which the two systems are kept discrete. He continues: "dual religious systems hardly serve the cause of promoting dialogue between and among religions" (Magesa 1997: 287–288).

On the one hand Magesa (1997: 14) hopes "to show that African Religion has a unique moral contribution to offer to the human quest for the Truth". On the other hand he says that he does not want "to 'prove' anything, least of all to argue that African morality is just as rich as Christian or any other religious morality". He is not "engaging in an intellectual argument with any of the ideological views of African Religion". He simply intends "to indicate the fundamental elements of ethics that the religious experience of the African peoples has determined throughout the ages to be proper for themselves". In other words, he is concerned with "how a people's view of themselves … intrudes upon them and directs the foundations of their life-orientation despite the passage of time and the reality of much apparent change" (Magesa 1997: 32).

In his *Anatomy of inculturation* Magesa (2004 159–160) explores the history and theology of inculturation: "A fruitful encounter between missionary

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131   Other examples are Patrick Kalilombe, former bishop of Lilongwe and presently back in Malawi as a university professor after a long stay in the United Kingdom, and Patrick Wachege, the first PhD graduate at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa. He is a senior lecturer at the University of Nairobi.

Christianity and African culture must consist of the ongoing process of correl-
ating and integrating two resources. This discourse must take into account
God-inspired values inherent in African religious consciousness. These must
be correlated with values revealed in and through the Christian historical con-
sciousness. … The encounter is meant to enable the gospel to claim what
belongs to God in culture … When this happens, African Christians are not
alienated from their African identity. They are made instead to feel and see
themselves more radically as African, finding God in their African-ness." Thus
Magesa remains in the inclusivist paradigm. God is already present among
African peoples, working among them in mysterious ways. Accordingly "mis-
sion can only mean the 'discovery' or 're-discovery' of the Spirit within cul-
ture" (Magesa 2004: 162).

'Independent' theology and religious studies

'Independent' theology adopts a pluralistic view of the relationship between
Christ and culture. Like inclusivist theologians, pluralistic theologians hold
that African Religion does offer revelation and salvation, but they do not con-
sider it incomplete or imperfect. All religions are unique and relative ways to
salvation. Whether one religion is better than another can be judged only by
what it does for the least important of our brothers and sisters (Matt 25:40).
The cardinal message of interreligious education is: there are many ways to
salvation. Whether or not one way is better than another has to be judged by
good works.

   The label 'independent' may appear unsatisfactory, because it compre-
hends a variety of theologies: not only those of theologians associated with the
Organisation of African Instituted Churches (previously called African Inde-
pendent Churches), but also theologians who operate independently of their
denominations,[132] often in departments of religious studies at public univer-
sities, hence not under the direct control of their respective churches. Although
differing in outlook, there is a common denominator: they value independ-
ence, freedom (both religious and academic), autonomy and pluralism, and
they consider religions to be "different instruments of God" (Byaruhanga-
Akiiki 1989: 48) to teach his people to gain abundant life. Although numer-
ically they occupy a minority position, they do form a distinct school of thought.
The founders of this theology in East Africa are Samuel Kibicho, an ordained
minister of the Methodist Church who headed the department of religious

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132   In section 7.1 it will become clear that I choose this label deliberately: it also refers to the
      theological conviction that there is salvation in non-Christian religions *independently* of
      Christ. This conviction may be held by theologians of African Instituted Churches, but not
      necessarily so.

studies at Nairobi University, and Anatole Byaruhanga-Akiiki, a Catholic priest from Uganda who headed the department of religious studies at Makerere University.[133] We will deal with Samuel Kibicho's theology in section 7.1. Here we focus on Anatole Byaruhanga-Akiiki.

Byaruhanga-Akiiki (1989: 48) suggests that with its spiritual-religious heritage of 25 million years ("Religion, as belief, must have existed in Uganda and many other parts of Africa, from time immemorial, or at least from about 25 million years ago") African worship is highly experienced compared to Christian worship with its mere 2000 years. For him survival is at the heart of religion. Since African Indigenous Religion offers survival through participation, initiative, love, care and respect for others, it qualifies as a salvific religion. Byaruhanga-Akiiki does not think that the church contributed much to the understanding of God in Africa. On the contrary, in Africa Christianity and Islam introduced some confusion about the creator. He blames these foreign religions for the wars about religious and political ideologies in Africa. While he admits Christ's divinity, he claims the same status for African deities (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1989).

The position of theologians of African Instituted Churches is more complex. In 'an opinion', Ayub Osinde (1996: 12) summarises their theology. In their quest for an authentic African theology "independent churches incorporate African traditional customary traits within Christianity. … Early Christian missionaries regarded western culture as superior so much so that they did not bother to find out religious ideas, thought forms and practices of African peoples," says Osinde (1996: 12). "There was a belief among a majority of these missionaries that African culture was basically unchristian and primitive … The tragedy with this belief is that it is still also being held by black church leaders from where the white missionaries left off. Most main-line mission-founded churches do not accept independent churches as valid expressions of the Christian Church," writes Osinde (1996: 12). "Such a belief is only but a product of intellectual inadequacy." The sole purpose of African Instituted Churches "is to project the gospel in African terms".

In an interview the secretary general of the Organisation of African Instituted Churches, bishop Njeru Wambugu, said: "Africans had the spirit before the missionaries came. But the mission churches collaborated with the colonial administrators to abandon their own ways of worship." African Instituted Churches do not want to abandon Christianity in Africa but to practise Christianity in an African way. That is why they have problems with the church of Simon Kimbangu: "they mix too much"; "they are not balanced";

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133 Other examples are Bolaji Idowu (1973), then at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and Gabriel Setiloane (1976), then at the University of Botswana and Swaziland.

"we collaborate with the All Africa Conference of Churches to bring them on the right path," the secretary general said. "We stress ecumenical cooperation."

With respect to dialogue with Islam, the secretary general hesitates, for the same reason. According to Muslim thinkers there is no continuity between African culture and Islam. There is no inculturation in Islam: Muslims are not African but Arab. "We collaborate with them on national issues in the *Ufungamano* talks," says Wambugu, "but we refuse *Qa'dhi* courts to be included in the national constitution." Recently the Muslims dropped out of the *Ufungamano* talks: "There is no dialogue anymore."

Conclusion

In this chapter we investigated the study of religion in Africa. We have seen that religion, society and culture are not perceived as separate domains, and that religious studies, philosophy and theology are interrelated. In the discourse about the study of religion in Africa there is a debate on whether metaphysical neutrality and empirical testability are to be accepted as universal criteria for academic enquiry, or whether these criteria are themselves rooted in the (European) tradition of the Enlightenment, and thus biased. Much the same debate is happening in African philosophy and theology. It is a tug-of-war between advocates of the need to adapt to global modernity and the challenge of secularism on the one hand, and proponents of safeguarding and even reviving African traditions on the other. With a view to the theory of interreligious relations to be developed in this book we explored in particular how scholars of religion, philosophers and theologians perceive the relation between self and others. Is the traditional African heritage characterised by peaceful coexistence of religions? Or is it itself divisive? We conclude that we must be careful to avoid either/or positions.

Education in interreligious relations

So far I have reported information gathered from my desk research (review of literature). Before proceeding further I present the outcomes of my fieldwork conducted in Nairobi during the first three months of 2004.[134] My questions were: how do African scholars of religion cope with interreligious relations, and what can they contribute to the international discourse on interreligious dialogue?[135] As mentioned already, I focused on scholars of religion and their training in departments of religious studies and schools of theology in (East) Africa.[136]

First a few remarks on the procedure. I found that contacting informants in advance or asking them to send me their academic textbooks was not very fruitful. Consulting their websites was not really helpful either, as only a few websites were up-to-date. So what I did was to visit institutions at random, communicate face to face with staff and students and collect all available written sources – brochures, academic handbooks, journals and other publications. Where warranted I went back for a second or even a third visit. I visited twenty departments of religious studies and theological schools,[137] all of them registered or

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134   Some interviews were held earlier (April 2003) or later (October 2004). In those cases it is indicated in the overview of interviewees (appendix 1). Some information was added in footnotes while editing the manuscript. This information was gathered during a visit to Tanzania and Kenya in June 2006.

135   Throughout this study I use the phrase 'scholars of religion' in an inclusive sense. The boundaries between philosophy, theology and religious studies in Africa are fluid. In his study of African scholarship in non-theological departments at state universities, Westerlund (1985: 9) notes that as a rule these scholars are trained as theologians, and that normally studies of African Religion are implicitly theological (Westerlund 1985: 44). To the best of my knowledge this still holds true in East Africa.

136   Throughout this study I distinguish between departments of religion (or religious studies) and faculties of theology, but here, too, distinctions are not always clear-cut. Departments of religion are found at public universities, faculties of theology are found at private universities. Alternatively I may speak about 'colleges', 'schools' or 'institutes'. Some universities in Africa have departments of theology *and* religious studies, as is the case at the University of Sierra Leone (Shyllon 2003). The term 'divinity school' is rare in East Africa.

137   I visited only academic institutions with a department of religious studies and/or a faculty of theology. Other institutions have programmes related to our subject, such as the ethics course offered at Strathmore University Nairobi, an Opus Dei initiated institution, and the course in intercultural communication and international relations offered at the United States International University in Nairobi.

in the process of being registered for offering academic degrees. In all cases I saw the registrar and/or the academic dean. I interviewed them about their education in interreligious relations in the department or school and collected academic handbooks and other written sources. Last but not least, through the secretary of the Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa, Godffrey Ngumi, I distributed a questionnaire among 80 of its members.

4.1 Documents

Although in most cases we started with interviews and then asked for written documents, I first give a content analysis of the written documents, as this provides the general background to the interviews. Besides academic textbooks, I looked at billboards and in newspapers, magazines and journals published by the various institutions, as well as advertisements of educational programmes and invitations to attend conferences and meetings.

Departments of religious studies

As noted in section 3.1, departments of religious studies at public universities have a complex history, going back to their relation with their alma mater, the University of London, an issue that has been adequately dealt with by other authors (Platvoet 1989; Nelson & Getui 1997; Gatwa 2003; Shyllon 2003; Chepkwony 2004). Here I focus on the study of religion and interreligious relations only.[138]

The *University of Nairobi*'s 1997–2000 calendar (no later edition was available, but I was assured there were no changes in subsequent years) says that its objectives are "to provide . . . facilities for university education, including technological and professional education, and for research . . . to participate in discovery, transmission and preservation of knowledge and to stimulate the intellectual life and cultural development of Kenya" (p. 13).[139] The university

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138   As was the case at British universities, the religious studies curriculum at public universities in the former colonies was influenced by the requirements of the subject religion or religious education in primary and secondary schools (Getui & Nelson 1997: 14). This distinguishes universities in former British colonies from those in former French colonies. Because of the strict separation of church and state, universities in former French colonies do not have faculties of theology or departments of religious studies (Platvoet 1989: 110–111).

139   The University of Nairobi started as the Royal Technical College of East Africa in 1949, merged with the Ghandi Memorial Academy, an initiative of the Asian Community in East Africa, in 1954, and become the second Inter-Territorial University College in East Africa (after Makerere) in 1961. In 1964 the college was renamed University College of Nairobi (Calendar 1997–2000, pp. 27–30).

has a department of religious studies, founded in 1969 by bishop Stephen Neill as a department of religious studies and philosophy (these disciplines split into two independent departments in 1980), which offers a BA, an MA and a PhD in religious studies. In the MA programme students can specialise in the following six areas: African Religion, Judaism/Old Testament, Christianity/New Testament, Islam, religions of Asian origin, and religious studies in Africa. A course in phenomenology of religion is compulsory for all students. In addition to this course, there are three courses on the texts, history and modern trends in the chosen specialist field (pp. 517–518). There are courses in comparative religion, but none in interreligious relations.

The 2001–2003 calendar of *Kenyatta University* (no later calendar available) says: "The ultimate goal of Kenyatta University is to equip students properly for life which is rewarding and produce high quality graduates who can easily fit in the world of work that is highly dynamic and competitive. The University is determined to purpose [sic] the highest levels of excellence in scholarship" (p. 415).[140] The university had a department of religious studies and philosophy. The two disciplines split in 1990 but were reunited in 2004, mainly for financial reasons. The BA programme offers a wide variety of sciences of religion and courses in world religions, but none in interreligious relations.[141] The same applies to the MA programme in religious studies. Though Kenyatta University traditionally focused on training teachers of religion, it is starting a training programme for chaplains as well. It is in the process of incorporating Bishop Okullu College of Theology and Development as a constituent college. This college, located at Kokise some 50 kilometres from Kisumu, offers theological studies.[142]

Other public or private universities offer religious studies as well. *Moi University* in Eldoret offers an MPhil degree in religion, *Egerton University* in

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140 Kenyatta University started as Kenyatta College in 1965, specialising in teacher training. In 1970 it became a constituent college of the University of Nairobi, which transferred its faculty of education to Kenyatta University College in 1978. In 1985 it acquired university status, making it a fully fledged university.

141 Wamue (2004: 369) reports that the department wants to expand in various fields, such as languages, ethical and theological studies, African and cultural studies, Oriental and comparative religious studies. Interreligious studies are not mentioned. In June 2006, however, the department of religious studies and philosophy was revising its curriculum. It planned to offer a BTh to meet students' demand. Interfaith dialogue will be one of the compulsory modules.

142 At present (June 2006) neither of the two universities employ a Muslim staff member to teach Islamic studies, because the academic credentials of Muslim candidates are doubtful; Islamic studies is taught by Christians and by Muslim student chaplains at both universities. For the same reason, when I speak about African theologians or scholars of religion in this study, I have in mind African Christian theologians and scholars of religion, unless specified otherwise. There are, however, various Muslim scholars in other fields of study.

Njoro offers an MA in religious studies, *Maseno University College* near Kisumu, a constituent college of Moi University, does the same. The *Catholic University of Eastern Africa* offers a BA and an MA in religious studies in its faculty of arts, and the *Africa Nazarene University* in Nairobi offers an MA in religion, including courses in Christianity in a pluralistic society.

This brings us to denominational and interdenominational institutions.[143]

Roman Catholic Institutions

In its "General orientation" the 2003–2004 Academic Programme and Calendar of *Hekima College* states: "The theology programme is inspired by the spirit and norms of the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* of John Paul II (1979) and the General Norms for Jesuit Studies 1980."[144] It also tries "to respond to the call of the African Synod of 1994 expressed in the post-synodal exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*" (p. 5). It further says, "Ecumenical questions, relations and dialogue with other religions, and problems of unbelief and religious indifference as well as poverty and injustice in contemporary society will, as far as possible, be dimensions of all courses" (p. 5). There are second year courses in African belief systems and thought and third year courses in African Traditional Religion and conversion, and Christian faith and Muslim faith. The latter course deals with Christian-Muslim relations. There are elective courses in introduction to Islam and African religious studies.

The 2003–2004 Academic Handbook of *Tangaza College* has no mission statement. Under 'Nature of the college' it simply says that Tangaza College is "a centre of Catholic theological and ministerial education in the context of Africa" and that "it is ruled in accordance with the norms of the Catholic Church" (p. 5).[145] Under 'Aims' it says: "The programme leading to the degree and diploma in Theology aims at providing a sound basis in Theology, Scripture, Pastoral and Mission Studies for the fruitful exercise of ministry within the Catholic Church in an Africa Context" (p. 9). Tangaza College has a specialist course in mission studies, including courses in African Traditional Religion

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143   There is one other public university in Kenya, making a total of six, namely Jomo Kenyatta University, but it specialises in agriculture. The main private universities are the Catholic University, Baraton, Nazarene, Methodist, Presbyterian, Daystar, Strathmore and United States International University. Except for the last one, all have a religious orientation. Many more are in the process of registration.

144   Hekima College is a constituent college of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa and its degrees are accredited by that university. It is founded and maintained by the Major Superiors of the Society of Jesus in Africa and Madagascar.

145   Tangaza College is a constituent college of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa and its degrees are accredited by that university. It started in 1986 from the cooperative enterprise of a number of religious and missionary institutes to provide theological education for their respective students.

and Islam in Africa, as well as theology of religions and Muslim-Christian relations (pp. 77–78). The department of mission studies offers a one-year programme leading to a certificate in Islamic studies (pp. 92–93). It includes courses in Islamic thought and practice, reading of Muslim texts and Muslim-Christian relations (pp. 92–93).

The 2002–2004 Academic Programme of the *Apostles of Jesus Major Seminary* has a more explicit mission statement (p. vii).[146] It says that its programmes are "based on the Word of God, living tradition and teaching of the Church both locally and universally". It is especially inspired by the invitation of pope John Paul VI in Kampala in 1969: "By now, you Africans must become missionaries to yourselves." The *Theologicum* seeks to promote scientific theological research "for the purpose of enhancing evangelisation in Africa and the rest of the world" (p. vii). The main focus of the education programme is reflected in the Vatican II decree on mission *Ad Gentes* (no. 6): "Our proper aim is the missionary activity, i.e. all efforts to announce the gospel message; to plant the church among people and groups which do not yet believe in Christ, and to bring the Church to full development, where it is already implanted" (p. vii). The Theologate offers a course in non-Christian religions and interreligious dialogue, and one in African traditional religion, theology of inculturation and mission (pp. 78–80).

The 2001–2004 Programme of Studies of the faculty of theology of the *Catholic University of Eastern Africa* (2001–2004) contains a 'theological Vision' (pp. 12–4). It says, among other things, that its aim is "to proclaim the Salvific Word of God to the People of God and society in a relevant and meaningful manner" (p. 13). One of its objectives is "to be a forum for ecumenical dialogue and collaboration with other Christian denominations and with non-Christian theological and religious studies" (p. 7). The department of pastoral theology offers a course in models of mission (p. 81). The department of spiritual theology offers a course in dialogue between the spirituality of African Traditional Religion and Judaeo-Christian religion (p. 85). The faculty of arts has a department of religious studies which offers a BA, an MA and a PhD in religious studies.

Attached to the faculty of theology of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa is the *Blessed Bakanja Seminary*, which provides the 'first cycle' (BA level) of theological studies. It offers a module in Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue and a course in missiology. Next door to, but independent from, the Catholic University of Eastern Africa is the *Saint Thomas Aquinas Seminary*, which belongs to the Kenya Bishops' Conference and is affiliated to the

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146   The Apostles of Jesus Major Seminary is the Theologate of the Society of Apostles of Jesus. It started in 1973 and since 1989 it has been affiliated to the Pontifical Urbanian University in Rome.

Pontifical Urbanian University in Rome. The Academic Handbook mentions courses in missiology and mission anthropology (pp. 56–57), but according to its rector these courses are not taught due to lack of personnel. Missiology is integrated with ecclesiology. Interreligious dialogue receives no special attention.

Institutions of Protestant, Orthodox and African Instituted Churches

Most academic handbooks of Protestant or ecumenical institutes for higher learning start with a statement of faith. I only deal with these statements insofar as they concern interreligious relations.

The 2003–2004 Catalogue of *St Paul's United Theological College* in Limuru says: "The College is Part of the Universal Church that: Worships one God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; believes the Gospel of the Love and Grace given through the Son of God, who became man and died and rose again from the dead for the salvation of humanity, owes obedience to Jesus Christ as the Head of all things in his Church, Trusts in the promise of renewal and guidance of the Holy Spirit, proclaims the forgiveness of sin and acceptance of people by God through faith and the gift of eternal life, and labours for the advancement of the Kingdom of God through the world" (p. 2).[147] The statement of faith continues: "This College receives the Word of God as attested to in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as being the basis and supreme rule of faith and life, and receives the historic confessions of faith known as the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds as containing the substance of the faith of the Church" (p. 2). The college has a department of religious and missiological studies, which offers courses in African Traditional Religion, Islam in Africa and Muslim-Christian relations (pp. 60–61). According to the foreword to the catalogue it is in the process of introducing a postgraduate diploma and an MA degree in Islam and Christian-Muslim relations.

In the statement of faith in its 2003 college handbook the *Presbyterian University of East Africa* (Kikuyu) says: "The Spirit gives us courage to witness to Christ as Lord and Saviour, to unmask idolatries in church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom and peace" (p. 1 iv).[148] The university has a systematic theology and

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147   St Paul's United Theological College was started in 1903 and is run by the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Reformed Churches and the National Council of Churches of Kenya. It is in the process of obtaining a charter from government. At present the college offers an MA in theology in collaboration with the University of Aberdeen (2003–2004 Catalogue, p. 68).
148   The Presbyterian University of Eastern Africa started as a pastoral institute in Zambezi. The Pastoral Institute offered ministerial training for the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Since 1990 it has offered a three-year programme in theology in collaboration with St Paul's United Theological College, in which the Presbyterian Church of East Africa participates.

religious studies section. Its courses "teach the student the articles of faith and to think about the faith in a systematic, coherent and analytic fashion, so that they might present the Christian faith to the world more effectively. The study of other faiths helps in the area of apologetics" (p. 3 x). The programme includes an introduction to the world religions, Islam and ATR, and missiology (p. 3 x–xi).

The department of theology of the *Kenya Methodist University* (Meru) has no statement of faith.[149] Under "Vision" its 2002 Academic Programme says: "The university is dedicated to furtherance of the Christian faith and promotion of the required activities for the restoration of relationship between human beings and God the Creator. It strives to apply its Christian principles and practical evangelism in all its endeavours" (p. 3). The BTh programme has courses in phenomenology of religion and African Traditional Religion (pp. 11–12) and offers an African religious studies concentration, but no course in Islam or Muslim-Christian relations (p. 13). The applied theology concentration offers a course in world religions (p. 12). There is an elective course in history of religion (p. 47) and one in principles and practice of missiology, but no reference to interreligious relations (p. 52).[150]

There are several Christian or Bible colleges in Nairobi, such as Bethany College (Methodist orientation),[151] Grace College (Baptist orientation), and Carlile College (Anglican orientation).[152] These colleges offer courses leading to a diploma in biblical studies and/or theology that can be upgraded to a degree. Carlile College has a Centre for Intercultural and Contemporary Studies. This college offers degrees through the University of South Africa and, along with other partners, is in the process of establishing Concord University. The University of Eastern Africa Baraton ('Baraton University') is owned and operated by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and is located in Rift Valley Province, Kapsabet. It offers BA degrees in theology and religion. The African Orthodox Church has the Orthodox Patriarchal School – Makarios III Archbishop of Cyprus, in Riruta. The 2003 Yearbook and Review mentions courses in missiology in

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149 The Kenya Methodist University is an autonomous Christian institution of higher learning facilitated by the Methodist Church in Kenya. According to its 2002 Academic Programme (p. 3) the university maintains an ecumenical Christian atmosphere.

150 Recently two modules in interfaith dialogue were introduced into the curriculum of the department of theology at the Kenya Methodist University (Meru).

151 Bethany College started at the private initiative of a Methodist minister who had cut links with his church. It now has a link with the Kenya Methodist University, which is situated some 275 kilometres northeast of Nairobi, and serves as its city campus.

152 Carlile College is run by the Church Army and defines itself as a college for training evangelists. It is recognised as such in the Anglican Provinces of Eastern Africa. It is part of a consortium that will run a new private university, Concord University, which is in the process of being registered by the Commission of Higher Education.

year two (p. 115) and year three (p. 116), but not in world religions and inter-religious relations. Students are awarded a diploma in theology. The Coptic Orthodox Church conducts its theological and ministerial training in Cairo. The Organisation of African Instituted Churches does not have its own theological college. In the late 1990s there was a plan to start one at its headquarters in Nairobi, but it did not get off the ground because of financial constraints. However, the Organisation of African Instituted Churches offers theological education by extension at seven regional centres. For further studies they send students to Daystar University and Tangaza College, and sometimes to the United Kingdom (University of Birmingham) or the United States of America.

Evangelical and Pentecostal institutions

Most academic handbooks of Evangelical and Pentecostal schools of theology start with a profession or statement of faith. The foundation in the 2000–2002 Prospectus of the *Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology* (Karen) reads: "The Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology is founded on the Bible and its revelation of Jesus Christ. Its constitution enshrines the statement of faith of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, which all students and staff must subscribe to, and which reads: We believe in: The Holy Scripture, as originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy, and the authority in all matters of faith and conduct . . . The bodily resurrection, of all the dead, of believers unto everlasting blessedness and of unbelievers unto judgment and everlasting punishment."[153] This graduate school is the youngest among the Evangelical institutes. The 2000–2002 Prospectus says: "We believe that Africa's problems will not be solved by political 'big men.' We believe that our social realities will only change when we take Africa on [sic] our heart, when the quality of African Christianity is transformed, when Christian leaders and Christian people bring Christ into all life and carry his Word with energy, vision and integrity to heal our continental anguish" (p. 7). The school has a department of mission studies, which offers an MTh and a (two year) MA programme in mission studies (pp. 77–82). The MTh programme has an African Traditional Religions seminar and a course in the impact of Islam and the attitude of the church in Africa. The MA programme has courses in Islam in Africa (p. 159) and African Traditional Religions (p. 160).

   Scott Theological College (Machakos) is the oldest Evangelical school of theology.[154] Under 'Mission of the college' the 2001–2003 Prospectus

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153   The Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology was founded by the Association of Evangelicals in Africa in 1983 and is maintained by that association.

154   Scott Theological College was established as the national theological college of the African Inland Church in 1962. Its purpose was to provide training for church ministers at a more advanced academic level than was available through its Bible colleges.

says: "Scott Theological College is a community of Christians united in the acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and striving to grow into maturity in the knowledge of the Lord. Its mission as a community is to glorify and build the Church through high quality programmes of training and research" (p. 4). The statement of faith in the Prospectus reads: "As a community of Christians who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour we affirm our belief in: The Unity and Trinity of God, eternally existing in three co-equal Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit . . . The eternal blessedness of the saved and the eternal punishment of the lost" (pp. 7–8). The college is "fundamentally and unalterably committed to a distinctive theological position recognised as historical, evangelical orthodoxy" (p. 7). The courses are grouped into general studies, biblical studies, theological studies and ministry studies. The general studies category includes a course in major religions of Africa (p. 33) and a course in African Traditional Religion (p. 34). Under theological studies there is a course in apologetics and applied theology. Under ministry studies there is a course in Christian missions (pp. 20–21). One of the following vocational concentrations is chosen according to the student's anticipated future ministry: pastoral concentration, missiology concentration and Christian education concentration (pp. 24–25). The missiology concentration has no course in interreligious relations, but it does have one in cross-cultural communication.

The 2002–2004 Bulletin of the BTh programme of the *Africa Nazarene University*,[155] another Evangelical institution of higher learning, says that it seeks to prepare men and women for service in the church by equipping them intellectually, socially and spiritually. The programme meets the requirements of the course of study for ordination in the Church of the Nazarene of the African Region. One of the objectives is to help students to grow intellectually and spiritually so that they will be able to "effectively share the Christian faith with others for their salvation, sanctification and growth in Christian maturity" (p. 3). The BTh programme offers a course in world religions and one in evangelism (p. 5). The 2002–2004 Bulletin of the MA in religion programme mentions a course in phenomenology of religion, a course in the nature, mission and growth of the church and one in Christianity in a pluralistic society (p. 2). The MA in religion has two concentrations: a leadership concentration and a teaching concentration. Neither of these focuses on interreligious relations (pp. 10–11).

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155 In its brochure the Africa Nazarene University says: "The University is affiliated with the Church of the Nazarene International, a Holiness Church in the Wesleyan (Methodist) tradition."

Daystar University is an interdenominational and evangelical Christian university.[156] It is committed to "developing Christian men and women to serve in a variety of supportive and leadership roles in church and community". The 1999–2002 Prospectus says that the mission of the university is "to provide Christian-based higher education, training and research for the expansion of God's kingdom in the world, and especially in Africa" (p. 4). Daystar University's Christian philosophy of life and conduct, teaching, training and research are founded on Christian principles and values. As a "community of people who follow Jesus Christ" staff and students are committed to "spreading the gospel to the world", "the freedom of thought and conscience to practice and propagate the gospel in accordance with the will of God, and to remain faithful to the gospel whatever the cost", "the sharing in God's concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of man", "love for one's neighbour and obedience to Jesus Christ" (pp. 5–6). The faculty of arts offers a four-year BA programme in Bible and religious studies and a two-year MA in Christian ministries. The BA programme has courses in comparative world religions, Christianity and Islam, and Christianity and Islam in Africa. The MA programme has one course in evangelism and discipleship and an elective course in church and mission, but none in interreligious relations.

According to its 2003–2006 prospectus the *Nairobi International School of Theology* is a non-denominational Christian institution of higher education.[157] The mission of the school is "to provide post-graduate level evangelical theological training to Christian man and women who profess faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord, in order to develop them into Christ-like servant leaders who are equipped and demonstrate a passion to help fulfil the Great Commission in Africa and the world" (p. 2). Under "Philosophy and distinctive of the school" the prospectus says: "The Nairobi International School of Theology is an evangelical Christian institution. As such, the school affirms the absolute authority and reliability of the Bible, salvation from sin by God's grace through faith in Jesus alone." The prospectus has a three-page statement of faith. One of the articles reads: "Jesus Christ . . . is the only mediator between God and man" (p. 3). Another reads: "Hell is a reality. At physical death the unbeliever enters

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156   Daystar University was originally known as Daystar Communications in Zimbabwe, but moved to Nairobi during the Zimbabwean civil war. In 1976 Daystar Communications offered a two-year post high school diploma programme in Christian communication. In 1978 it started a two-year MA programme in Christian communication and Christian ministries. In 1984 it launched a four-year BA programme and changed its name to Daystar University College. In 1994 the college was granted a charter by the Kenyan government and became Daystar University.

157   It was founded in the early 1970s as a ministry of the Campus Crusade for Christ International, which operates in Kenya under the name of LIFE Ministry.

immediately into eternal, conscious separation from the Lord and awaits the resurrection of his body to everlasting judgement and condemnation" (p. 5). The school offers a two-year MA degree programme with a concentration in mission and a three-year MD degree programme with a concentration in mission (p. 35). The mission concentration in both the MD and MA programmes has a course in theology of missions and evangelism to the unreached.

Pentecostal Institutes of Higher Learning stress God's action through his Spirit. As the 2003–2005 Prospectus of the *Pan African Christian College* says on its cover: "Academic excellence with spiritual anointing."[158] In its doctrinal statement of faith (p. 11) it says, inter alia, that the Bible "is inspired by God and the only infallible and authoritative Word of God" (p. 11) and that "the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the outward evidence of speaking in tongues according to Acts 2 is given to believers who meet God's conditions for receiving [it]" (p. 12). It believes in "the resurrection of both the saved and the lost, the one to everlasting life and the other to everlasting damnation" (p. 12). The college offers a BA in Bible and theology and a BA in Bible and translation studies through the International Correspondence Institute, Global University in Springfield, Missouri. The division of church ministries offers courses in evangelism and missiology (pp. 48–49). Under general education the college offers courses in world religions in Africa (p. 53), Islam in Africa (p. 55) and African Traditional Religions (p. 56).

The *East Africa School of Theology* (Buru Buru) says in its doctrinal statement in the 1995–1999 college catalogue: "We believe: The Bible to be the inspired and only infallible and authoritative Word of God . . . That the regeneration of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for salvation" (p. 18), "That the baptism of the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:4 is given to all believers who ask for it" (p. 19), and "that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them the utterance" (p. 19), "That there will be a final judgement in which the wicked dead will be raised and judged according to their works . . . Whoever is not found written in the Book of Life . . . will be consigned to everlasting punishment in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (p. 20).[159] The college offers a BA degree with majors in Bible and theology through the International Correspondence Institute, Global University in Springfield, Missouri. Under general education it offers courses in ATR and Islam (p. 69) and world religions (pp. 70–71). The BA degree programme offers introductions to evangelism and

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158   The Pan African Christian College was founded in 1978 by the Pentecostal Assemblies of God of Canada, which is still its prime sponsor.

159   The East Africa School of Theology is a ministry of the United States of America Assemblies of God serving East and Central Africa. It was founded in 1968, originally in Arusha, Tanzania, and is now run by the Kenya Assemblies of God.

missions in the church ministries component (pp. 77–78). Under general education it offers a course in African Traditional Religions from a historical perspective (p. 81), and an introduction to Islam and world religions from a social sciences perspective. Introduction to missions is prerequisite for both courses. Besides an overview of the history and theology of Islam, Muhammad and the Qur'an, the introduction to Islam includes methods for ministry to Muslims. The course in world religions offers a survey of eight non-Christian living religions that are contrasted with Christianity and biblical teachings with a view to establishing meaningful communication with non-Christians for the purpose of evangelism (p. 84).

4.2 Interviews

In Nairobi and its surroundings I visited 20 departments of religious studies and schools of theology and interviewed administrative and teaching staff (appendix 1). In contrast to the previous section (4.1), this one makes no denominational classification. The reason is simple. I found that what academic handbooks state in their professions of faith is one thing, what staff members tell you may be quite another. In one mainline Protestant college I found that the orientation was strongly Evangelical, whereas in an Evangelical institution I spoke to staff whose orientations were fairly mainline. Thus individual staff members do not necessarily reflect the statements of faith or doctrinal statements recorded in the academic handbooks, despite the fact that some of these handbooks stipulate sanctions, for instance that "any member of the community, which includes all Council members, staff and students" who fails to conform to the university philosophy is "subject to disciplinary action which may result in suspension or dismissal from the community".[160] There is also a fair amount of cross-fertilisation or 'shopping'. One may find one and the same person teaching at several very different institutions.

In view of this I use a classification based on the arguments advanced by individual staff members. I started the otherwise unstructured interviews with two questions: why are so few African theologians involved in the discourse on interreligious dialogue, and have African theologians anything to offer in this discourse? In this section I report only the answers to these questions; in the

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160 In: 1999–2002 Catalogue, Daystar University, p. 6. One finds similar formulations, for instance in the 2001–2003 prospectus of Scott Theological College (p. 14) and the 2002–2006 prospectus of Nairobi International School of Theology (p. 7). The latter adds: "We allow latitude of beliefs on matters not specifically mentioned in the Statement of Faith." Students are required to sign forms containing the profession of faith as an admission requirement.

general conclusions I will come back to the answers and reflect on them in light of the previous investigations.

Historical reasons

"Since 7 August 1998 there are many activities in the field of interreligious dialogue. But theological reflection on these activities is lacking," one interviewee said. Asked why this is so, another interviewee said: "After independence everything was at peace in Africa. Unlike some Asian countries that had to face religious plurality after independence, for example India and Pakistan, for Africa the main challenge after independence was cultural identity and ethnic diversity." Whereas contextual theologies in Asia had to face religious pluralism right from the start, for Africans dialogue with different cultures was more important. Thus one finds plenty of publications on Christianity and African cultures, gospel and culture, and inculturation.

Another interviewee stated: "From the British we inherited a tradition of comparative religion. Thus African universities started departments of religious studies, where religion is studied in a neutral or objective way." Theology was left to the seminaries, this interviewee said. In these seminaries they have so far followed traditional curricula comprising classical subjects such as apologetics, mission and evangelism, but theology of religions and theology of interreligious dialogue are not included. "We have yet to learn to understand and appreciate other religions."

A third informant relativised present-day talk about interreligious dialogue. "There were Arabs in Africa before Islam started as a religion." Trade between Africans and Arabs has a long history. In various African countries there have always been *Qaʾdhi* courts and there have been Muslims in government for quite some time. In Kenya the attempt to form an Islamic party failed, not because it was forbidden by the government, but because people did not feel the need to have a party based on religion. "The *ufungamano* talks have never been a problem up to the constitution review process."[161] This is not to deny the current problem, but to put it in a proper historical context.

Missionaries brought religious tribalism, one interviewee said: "Just as the colonialists divided our peoples into 'tribes', the missionaries divided us into 'denominations'." Another interviewee added: "There is a link between European ethnicity and European denominationalism. *Cuius regio, eius religio*! This ethnic denominationalism was exported to Africa with colonial and neo-colonial invasion of Africa, and produced African denominationalism which has

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161 *Ufungamano* talks refers to the gatherings of religious leaders at *Ufungamano* House, in which they discussed their relations with government, especially under president Moi.

complicated ethnic identity in tropical Africa." Thus European missionaries brought a divided gospel: "I follow Paul, I follow Peter", and so on.[162] This attitude of religious tribalism extends to other religions. "Religion as a source of conflict came only with Christianity and Islam," says another interviewee. "There were conflicts in Africa, for sure, but these were inter-ethnic, not inter-religious. Our problem is not religious plurality but ethnic plurality."

Cultural reasons

"Dialogue is not a big problem for us," some interviewees said, "we have always lived harmoniously in mixed communities." The African tradition of peaceful coexistence has continued right up to the present, but you do not hear about that. "In my own country, Sierra Leone, we have had a Muslim president with a Catholic wife. There was no attempt at Islamisation." Two of his children were Muslim, two were Catholic. "If I have not been able to Islamise my family, how would I be able to Islamise the nation, this president said." The interviewee continued: "Malawi has a Muslim president; the majority of the population is Christian. Religion was not a factor in the election. The same applies to Senegal. Ninety-four percent of the population of Senegal is Muslim. But the people there elected Léopold Senghor, a devout Roman Catholic, to be the first president. He remained president for twenty years without Muslims arguing for the introduction of *sharia*. His successor, Abdou Diouf, was a Muslim but his wife was a Roman Catholic. And he also remained president for twenty years. You only hear about the bad practices, not about the good practices."

"We are not ready for dialogue," I was told, "We are still struggling to find an African Christian identity. So dialogue with others would be too ambitious at this stage." One interviewee said, "We are not invited to international conferences. In the West, Africa is still regarded as the 'dark continent'. So it is presupposed that no light can come from Africa." Another interviewee said: "We are not invited to these international conferences. People in the West do not like our uncompromising views. People in the West say: I'm okay, you're okay. But we are not okay. The strong opposition in Africa against the ordination of a homosexual bishop in the Anglican Church is just one example."

Economic and political reasons

"Dialogue is not our first priority," some interviewees said. "We have other concerns: drought, disease and civil war." Most African theologians are "more

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162 Possibly referring to 1 Cor 1:12–13: "Each one of you says something different. One says, 'I follow Paul'; another 'I follow Apollos', another 'I follow Peter', and another 'I follow Christ'. Christ has been divided into groups."

interested in development projects than in religious or interreligious issues". Another interviewee said: "Until recently we would not get funds to organise conferences on interfaith relations. It was not an issue for our donor organisations." The funding agencies would say: "Better concentrate on aids. Now they want us to organise conferences on interreligious dialogue."[163]

"We do not have the means." Various interviewees said that they simply lack funds for travelling and publishing, or: "We are marginalised." Although the first attacks by Muslim extremists occurred on the African continent, the 11 September 2001 events in Washington and New York seem to be more important to the world. "You [people in the West] say that we [Africans] are ethnocentric. But you are ethnocentric," said one of my interviewees. "Increasingly you close your borders to us. For us it has become almost impossible to travel to Europe and the States due to complex visa regulations."

One interviewee stated: "The Muslims are not interested in dialogue, so why should we be?" Dialogue, it is said, is to a large extent a Christian affair. "We teach our students to listen to and learn from other believers. But they [the Muslims] continue to teach and preach. This is to promote Christian self-destruction, euthanasia."

Religious and theological reasons

"We are controlled by the churches." Some informants said that African theologians are still dependent on financial aid from churches in the West and their funding agencies, and these agencies do not want them to write about certain issues. "We are not free to say and publish what we like."

"We are excluded from international conferences," one informant said, because "we are uncompromising". "We do not like dialogue. Dialogue is something of the West." Dialogue is associated with relativism and pluralism. "Don't export your problems to Africa," said another. "We accept the Bible as it is." Reacting against relativism and indifferentism, he said: "If everything is true, nothing is true." Yet another interviewee said: "Dialogue and evangelisation necessarily go together; we do not separate them as you do in the West."

People in the West propagate peaceful coexistence, but: "There is no tradition of peaceful coexistence in Africa, at least not since the coming of Christ." Jesus said: "I have come to bring not peace but the sword" (Matt 10:34). "To accept peaceful coexistence," according to this interviewee, "would be to destroy Christian uniqueness and universality, and to accept pluralism and syncretism." Thus dialogue and Africa don't go together.

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163 Referring to the marginalisation of religion in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, and the renewed interest in the relationship between religion and development now.

4.3 Questionnaire

With the help of the secretary general of the Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa (ATIEA) I was able to distribute a questionnaire to some 80 representatives of theological schools in East Africa (the questionnaire appears in appendix 2).[164] The title of the questionnaire contains the specification 'theological institutions', because this is the name of ATIEA. However, it comprises departments of religious studies/religion in public universities, besides faculties/schools of theology. The questionnaire uses the term 'interfaith relations', because pre-testing showed that this was the preferred terminology. The questionnaire was distributed to participants in the ATIEA conference on globalisation, held in Karen, Nairobi in April 2004. Twenty forms were returned. The responses were as follows.

Independent or integrated?

Asked whether the study of interfaith relations is part of the curriculum, 15 respondents answered affirmatively and 5 negatively. If the answer was affirmative, the next question was whether this study is done in (an) independent course(s) or whether it is integrated with (an)other course(s). Seven informants answered that it is independent, 8 that it is integrated. If they answered 'integrated', they were asked, "with what course(s) is it integrated?" Ten informants answered this question. The courses mentioned were: comparative religions; Christian mission/missiology/mission studies; mission and evangelism; ecumenism; African Traditional Religion; Islam (mentioned twice)/Islamic studies; Christian and other religions; Christian worldview; Islam and African Traditional Religion; Christianity and world religions; African studies; religious education; introduction to religious studies/introduction to religion; world religions; contemporary religious trends; faith studies and apologetics; human studies and religion (combinations are mine).

   Asked whether they offer one or more than one course in interfaith relations, 9 informants answered 'one' and 5 answered 'more' To the question, "Is this course/are these courses (a) compulsory or (an) elective course(s)?", 14 informants answered 'compulsory' and 2 ticked both options. Asked about the level on which the course(s) is offered, 3 informants answered 'diploma', 6 answered 'bachelor', 4 ticked both diploma and bachelor level, and one informant ticked bachelor and master level. None of the informants ticked doctoral level.[165]

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164 The Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa started as an accrediting association. At present, ATIEA comprises some 80 partner institutions.

165 This can be attributed to the fact that most partner institutions of the Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa teach at undergraduate level.

Perspective and objectives

The next question was whether this course/these courses is/are offered from a historical perspective, a phenomenological perspective, a theological perspective, or from all these perspectives. One informant ticked historical and phenomenological, 4 ticked phenomenological and theological, one ticked only theological, and 7 informants ticked 'all'; one inserted a further alternative: "social science perspective" .

Asked what the general objective(s) of this course/these courses is/are, one informant ticked only "to know how to preach the gospel to people of other faiths" and one ticked only "to know how to love and respect people of other faiths"; one informant ticked both "to know and understand more about interfaith relations" and "to know how to preach the gospel to people of other faiths"; one ticked both "to know and understand more about interfaith relations" and "to know how to love and respect people of other faiths"; 6 informants ticked three options, "to know and understand more about interfaith relations," "to know how to preach the gospel to people of other faiths," "to know how to love and respect people of other faiths," whereas 2 informants ticked these three options and completed the fourth option – "other, namely" – saying "deepen one's stand on the response to God" and "missionary perspective". One informant completed only "other, namely", saying "to know how to love and respect people of other faiths but also to preach the gospel to them".

To the question, "Do you present interfaith relations dialogue in general or with a special focus on (a) particular religion(s)?", 4 informants answered "in general" and 10 answered "with a specific focus". If the second answer was given, informants were asked to identify the specific focus: "What religion(s)?" One informant ticked only Islam; 3 ticked both African Traditional Religion and Islam; 6 informants ticked all three options (African Traditional Religion, Islam and Hinduism), whereas two informants ticked all the options and completed the open question "other, namely", saying "Protestants in general" and "Christianity", apparently including ecumenical relations in the domain of interfaith relations.

Textbooks and church documents

Eight informants answered the question: "What basic textbooks do you use for this course/these courses?" The answers were: "Old Testament/New Testament," "African Traditional Religions and Philosophy";[166] "Islamic Books; ATR books; Hinduism books"; "Islamic books"; "The myth of the uniqueness of Christianity"/ "Vat. II documents";[167] "Documents of the church about dialogue"; "Comparative religious texts"; "Encyclopaedia on World Religions/Particular books on each

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166   Probably referring to Mbiti's *African religions and philosophy* (1969).
167   Probably referring to Hick and Knitter's *The myth of Christian uniqueness* (1987).

institutional religion/Historical and theological books saying something on the issue of interfaith relations".

To the question "Do you use guidelines/documents from (a) denominational organisation(s)?" 6 informants answered "yes" and 3 answered "no". If the answer was 'yes', informants were asked, "From what organisation(s)?" The following answers were given: "Islamic organisation/church councils"; "Catholic/Vatican II & ecumenism"; "Uganda Christian University, Mkono"; "Islam documents"; "Doctrine of the church/Directives of the Congregation of interreligious dialogue"; "Islam"; "Hinduism/Islam".

Training of staff and further studies

The next question was: "In what institution(s) did the lecturer(s) of the aforementioned course(s) get his/her/their training?" The following answers were given: "St Paul's United Theological College/Natal University, South Africa"; "University"; "Pontifical Universities"; "Catholic University of Eastern Africa/University of Ibadan, Nigeria"; "Theological institution" (mentioned twice); "Bishop Tucker Theological College/Makerere University/Yale Divinity School of Theology"; "Uganda Christian University"; "University of Birmingham, U.K."; "Makumira Theological College"; "St Paul's Theological College/Catholic University of Eastern Africa"; "Catholic University". In answer to the question, "On what level did the(se) lecturer(s) get his/her/their training?", one informant said "diploma" and "bachelor", 3 informants said "bachelor", 4 said "master", 2 said "doctoral", 2 said "bachelor" and "master", one said "bachelor", "master" and "doctoral", and one said "master" and "doctoral".

To the questions "Would you appreciate assistance in developing courses in interfaith relations?" and "Would you appreciate assistance in getting further studies for the lecturer(s) of the courses on interfaith relations?" all informants answered "yes". The last question was: "If yes, what would be the best institution to get these further studies on interfaith relations?" The answers to this question were: "many of the universities in Africa"; Birmingham University, U.K./St Paul's United Theological College/Natal University, S.A.", "School of Oriental and African Studies"; "any college"; "St Paul's Limuru"; "any of the institutions in Africa where courses are offered"; "Maryknoll/Kenyatta"; "University of Nairobi" (mentioned twice); "any institution overseas (abroad)/in Africa/in East Africa" (mentioned twice); "Public universities – departments of religion/theological colleges"; "Anglican Centre in Rome"; "London Bible College". One informant added a written comment: "In many cases one would not know the best universities that are offering the courses." Another informant said: "We would appreciate assistance in developing a course in interfaith relations/dialogue, especially so in this era of rising tension between Christianity and Islam in response to terrorism."

Conclusion

In this chapter we explored education in interreligious relations in departments of religious studies and schools of theology in Nairobi. My conclusion is that, although interest in and practice of interreligious dialogue are growing, it is certainly not a priority for African scholars of religion at this stage. I found a wide variety of approaches. First, there is sheer disregard or ignorance of other religions. Secondly, there is confrontation and attack. The third is an intermediate approach: neither ignoring nor attacking other religions, but simply attesting one's own faith and leaving the others to make up their minds.[168]

Working towards a theory of interreligious relations and abandoning the theological models of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism, I come back to the philosophical distinction between a mono-cultural, a multicultural and an intercultural model. I conclude that the main models in Nairobi are mono-cultural (missionary) and multicultural (comparative),[169] but not (yet) the intercultural (dialogical) model.[170] The concept 'religious tribalism' (along with 'ethnic tribalism') mentioned by one of the interviewees calls for further reflection in subsequent chapters, since it suggests religious 'pillarisation' or re-tribalisation (McLuhan 1962). There are many ways to the Ultimate, but there is no overlap, no meeting ground between them. In this sense they exclude each other. Viewed thus, one could ask whether the pluralistic and exclusivist models are at all different. Are both models not essentially exclusivist?

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168 Note: 7 out of 20 responses to my questionnaire state that interreligious relations are dealt with in an independent course, but this finding is not confirmed by my sample of academic handbooks.

169 By 'comparative' in this context I mean the teaching of different religions as separate entities in schools, a practice that is reflected at university level (Hinga 1996: 223; Wamue 2004: 367).

170 Note that the word 'missionary' is used here the way it is used in East Africa. In the explanation given in the introduction, a missionary and a dialogical approach are not necessarily antithetical.

Chapter Five

Religion, conflict and reconciliation

In May 2004 a peace agreement was signed at Naivasha between 'northern' and 'southern' Sudan. Almost at the same time a new conflict broke out in Darfur in western Sudan. It exasperated peace and development workers in the Western world. What is going on in Africa? Why can't those people live in peace, it was asked. The conflict in western Sudan (Darfur) had been going on since 2002, but it seemed to have been exacerbated by the peace agreement. It became evident that the civil war was not just between north and south. The conflict in western Sudan seems even more complicated, as it appears to be not just a matter of Islam versus Christianity and Indigenous Religions. It also entails internecine conflict between Arabised groups, between African groups, and between African and Arabised groups, aggravated by government's divide-and-rule policy and superpowers' manipulation behind the scenes.[171] In short, all the ingredients that fuel most, if not all, conflicts in Africa are present.[172] If we wish to understand 'seeds of conflict' in interreligious relations in Africa, we need to investigate the relation between religion and conflict and to review some of existing theories on inter-group conflict.[173]

5.1 Religion in Africa and conflict

There is a widespread idea – popularised by, among others, the historian of religion Friedrich Max Müller – that monotheistic and world religions are or can become intolerant and that religions without scriptures cannot. Looking at present-day Africa, one must acknowledge that this view is no longer tenable. As noted in section 3.1, Peel (1978) considered primal religions to be ethnic

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171   China is not in favour of a United Nations intervention in Darfur. This country gets 7% of its oil supplies from Sudan. It recoups part if the expenses from arms traffic, backed up by president Omar Al Bashir.

172   At present (June 2006) 18 of the 54 member states of the African Union have civil wars raging on their territory. Four of the five largest refugee populations in the world are African. This clearly shows that something went seriously wrong in Africa.

173   Two theories are current in the literature. The realistic group conflict theory (Sherif 1966) holds that inter-group conflict is caused by conflicting goals (perceived or actual) or competition for scarce resources. The social identity theory (Tajfel 1978) holds that inter-group conflict is not necessarily caused by competition; other causes are strong in-group identification and categorisation into groups per se.

religions catering for the needs of one specific group. Many conflicts in Africa are ethnically oriented (Chepkwony 2002: 142–146), and very often they are motivated by religious sentiments. This is why African Religion, like any other religion, can become intolerant and violent. Many ethnic groups believe that they are 'the only people' and other ethnic groups are non-people. Not infrequently there is a religious myth underpinning the superiority complex. The Maasai cattle raiding among the Kikuyu is justified by a myth that all cattle were given to the Maasai by God and belong to them. The same applies to Akamba kidnapping of Kikuyu women (Getui 1999: 13–14). Ellis and Ter Haar (2004) show the interconnectedness of politics and religion in Africa. To some extent this applies to the Rwanda tragedy. While religion may not be the sole cause of conflict, it certainly contains seeds of conflict.

The Rwanda tragedy

The Rwanda tragedy is the result of a multidimensional problem, in which ethnocentrism merges with colonial and anthropological prejudice and political and economic pressures. According to oral history the Rwanda territory was once sparsely populated by pygmies called Twa, some of whom were hunters and others potters. Then Bantu speaking Hutu moved in through Chad, most of them agriculturists. Last but not least, Cushitic speaking Tutsi invaded the Great Lakes region from south-western Ethiopia. Most of them were cattle herders (Balihe 2000: 26; Aguilar 1998: 32). However, a lot of the migration histories of these groups remains uncertain, and one may not exaggerate their differences as these became blurred by intermarriage and change of social status.[174]

Economic relations between these groups consisted in exchange of goods. Tutsi power and wealth derived from cattle. The Hutu became their clients in order to secure food and other resources. Politically the Hutu had a loose administrative structure of clan organisations. The Tutsi established feudal kingdoms in central Rwanda and ruled over the Hutu. In return the Hutu were granted the use of land and cattle, and protection by their overlords. Protection was needed because of the kings' continual wars over conquest of each other's territories (Balihe 2000: 27). Tutsi rule was justified by a myth, according to which their hegemony was ordained by God (Skinnader 2000: 49–50).

When the Germans came to Rwanda in 1899 they found Tutsi economic and political dominance over the Hutu already in place. They used the power of the Tutsi kings to establish their protectorate. In 1919 the Belgians took over the colony from the Germans. They, too, used the Tutsi as an administrative over-class (Aguilar 1998: 32). This was justified by invoking the Hamitic myth, according to which the Tutsi were closer to Semitic stock, hence not

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174   The same applies to bodily features. Some Rwandans are tall and thin, others are small and thickset. But it would be difficult to link these features to ethnic background.

'real' Africans and as such more acceptable to the colonists. After independence Kayibanda ruled, not as a Tutsi noble but as a unifying symbol, detached from the ethnic fray. Opposition was mainly regional. This changed when the international 'community' enforced structural adjustment programmes on Rwanda, resulting in growing unemployment and rural poverty. In addition, multi-party democracy, also enforced by Western agencies as a condition for development aid, meant that belonging to an ethnic minority or majority became a political factor (Linden 1995: 257–258).[175]

Undoubtedly this brief analysis does not do justice to all the complexities of the multidimensional problem. But it is evident that in this case international oppression and domination went hand in hand with intra-national oppression and domination (Aguilar 1998: 21). The conflict in Rwanda would certainly not have assumed such tragic proportions without outside influences, but the Tutsi's superiority complex and their oppression of the Hutu antedate the European presence.[176]

The situation in Nigeria

Tensions between the Hutu and the Tutsi arose in a predominantly Christian context. The situation is different in Nigeria, where the tensions were between Christians and Muslims. Nigeria has 130 million people, 250 ethnic groups, 400 languages, three major religions (45% Muslims, 40% Christians and 15% indigenous believers) and 30 states. Each of the 30 states would require a separate study. Nigeria has a larger Muslim population than any Arab country and larger Muslim and Christian populations living in one and the same country than any other country in the world.

Social, regional and ethnic tensions and confrontations have long been part of the Nigerian scene. "Tribalism . . . is at the centre of Nigeria's life," a Christian observer wrote in 1967, at the beginning of the Biafran War. "To many a southern Nigerian, the Northerner is summed up in the word *Gambari* – by which we mean not just the herdsman . . . To many of us Southerners, the Northerner is incapable of any higher intellectual development than that required of a cowherd . . . To many a Nigerian the Ibo is selfish, grasping, ubiquitous, always seeking a place for his brother Ibo . . . fiercely unscrupulously competitive; determined to get to the top and to fill the bottom with yet more Ibos. . . . As for the Yoruba, he is cowardly, untrustworthy, lazy, cunning, 'diplomatic',

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175 Chepkwony (2002: 140) suggests that the re-introduction of multi-party politics in Kenya in 1991 was a factor in the ethnic violence in that country's Rift Valley province and in various other African countries. If this is true, it challenges the African model of multiculturalism.

176 Conflicts in Africa are quite often between agriculturalists and pastoralists, for instance between the Maasai and the Sonjo in Nogrongoro district, Tanzania, and between the Maasai and the Kikuyu in Kenya. With growing populations, both groups vie for land and water. Increasingly access to water will be a cause of friction between ethnic groups in Africa.

essentially dirty in his habits. It is impossible, we say, to trust a Yoruba. Behind his outward smoothness and finery there lurks a basically self-seeking, dirty nature" (Ikime 1969: 46–47).

Religious confrontation is a rather new phenomenon in Nigeria, as Muslims and Christians had coexisted peacefully for decades. This country experimented with a system "in which Christians controlled the economy and Muslims controlled political power", says Mazrui (2006: 214). Many scholars are convinced that religious confrontations are just a cloak for economic and political grievances (Kenny 1996: 360). In general one can say that since independence political and military power was held by northerners under Hausa-Fulani leadership, most of whom were Muslims; economic and educational power was in the hands of the Ibo (south-east) and the Yoruba (south-west), divided in the missionary era between Catholics (Ibo) and Protestants/Anglicans (Yoruba). The oil boom in the 1970s was one factor that made the southerners (Ibo and Yoruba) recognise their own power. They saw a chance of inheriting the earth because of their economic skills and educational qualifications. The introduction of multi-party democracy was another factor, to be dealt with in section 5.2.

Some misconceptions must be removed. It is often said that Nigeria is a construction of the British colonisers who united the north and the south, and that the time has come to separate the two territories. One should not forget that contact between north and south was not introduced by the British. For centuries there had been intensive north-south trade contacts. It is also said that the conflict stems from the introduction of the *sharia* in 1992. One tends to forget that prior to British colonisation the *sharia* was the only legal system in the north. Being committed to indirect rule, the British accepted the *sharia*, excluding only the penalties of amputating hands and stoning. In other countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Gambia) *sharia* courts – with less jurisdiction – cause no problems.[177] Undoubtedly the oil boom in the 1970s played a role in the conflicts, but the northern Hausa realise that north and south are interdependent and that they cannot do without the oil. Certainly the switch from military to political rule raised the issue of religion in politics (Kenny 1996: 361).[178]

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177 Recently the introduction of *Qa'dhi* courts in the Kenyan draft constitution caused great concern among Christian groups. However, *Qa'dhi* courts have existed on the East African coast for centuries. They were included in the 1895 treaty between the British and the sultan of Zanzibar and in the 1963 Kenyan constitution (Hashim 2005).

178 Probably the first civil war in post-independence Africa that challenged Africa's tradition of peaceful coexistence was the Biafran war (1967–1970). In retrospect this war demonstrates the danger of a convergence of ethnic and religious sentiments (Ibo Christian identity), economic power (oil reserves) and international involvement (the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union supported the federal government, France supported the Ibo). The federal government was supported by the non-Ibo minority in Iboland. Above all, this war shows that one cannot build a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state on exclusive ethnic or religious enclaves.

Who fights whom in Darfur?

Whereas the interreligious factor played a significant role in the conflict between northern and southern Sudan (Hasan 2002) as well, the northerners being predominantly Muslim and the southerners Christians or indigenous believers, the conflict in Darfur is between two Muslim factions:[179] African Muslims and Arab or Arabised Muslims (Flint & De Waal 2005). In the 1980s soil erosion caused competition for clean water and pasture between African farmers and Arab and Arabised nomads. The conflict became politicised, as African farmers feel marginalised by, and rebel against, the Sudanese government. Since the 1989 coup it has been dominated by conservative Muslims, who provide Arab *Janjaweed* with arms to fight against the African farmers. The conflict that started with an ecological problem (soil erosion) has become political (pro- or anti-government) and religious (more or less Arabised faith). The situation in Darfur is complicated further by two factors: firstly, intermarriage between Africans and Arabs has led to mixed families, and secondly, African groups are divided and now fight each other.

Another factor is the power struggle between president Omar al Bashir and his former friend and ally Hassan al Turabi, who provided the ideology for the Islamic revolution in Sudan (De Waal 2004). When the experiment of a political Islam in Sudan failed the erstwhile friends parted company in the late 1990s. Hassan al Turabi proclaimed his solidarity with the marginalised African groups in Darfur against the president. Last but not least is international involvement in the conflict. The international community, represented by former Dutch minister Jan Pronk, would like to send a United Nations peace mission to Darfur. But the African Union is against such a mission, fearing that it would attract Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network to the African continent to help Muslims fight against the Western world.[180] In addition there could be a confrontation between the Western world and the Chinese,[181] who

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179 In Sudan the British administrators adopted a secular approach to the task of government. They categorically forbade any attempt by missionaries to proselytise north of the Nilotes and the Nuba mountains (Gray & Hasan 2002: 19).

180 A video speech by Osama bin Laden that appeared on the internet on 30 June 2006 shows that this danger is not imaginary. In this speech, which is not about Sudan but about Somalia, Bin Laden explicitly warns the international community not to intervene in Somalia.

181 Even now (June 2006) China is Africa's third most important trading partner, after the United States and France but ahead of the United Kingdom. Whether this is a win-win situation or a form of neo-colonialism remains to be seen. China seems to be less strict than the European Union about making observance of human rights a condition for loans to African countries. Although Chinese have been active in East Africa since and even before independence (e.g. in railway construction and health care), for Africa's traditional partners China is a relatively new player in the field. Its presence is bound to put Africa's relations with its traditional partners under pressure and change relations between superpowers.

benefited from the civil war when they could exploit the rich oil fields in Sudan. The situation in Darfur shows that conversion to the same religion does not necessarily lead to racial integration (Mugambi 2004: 25).[182]

Religiosity and ethnicity

In section 2.1 we saw that some scholars advocate returning to indigenous spiritualities as an alternative to globalisation. If this happens, religions can become channels of anti-globalisation sentiments. But returning to indigenous systems is not without problems, not only because some of them oppressed women and exploited the earth, but also because they were primal, hence ethnic religions, meant for the benefit of one ethnic group to the exclusion of others.

Globalisation gives rise to an opposite trend, namely a revival of ethnocentrism and religionism, a re-tribalisation (McLuhan 1962) of the world, in which certain people and groups, in the name of narrowly conceived faiths and identities, fight a 'jihad' against other 'tribes' and against the discarding of identity by the 'McWorld' (Barber 1995), often by inventing traditions (Ranger 1993). The situations in Central Africa, also in northern Uganda, western Sudan and the Horn of Africa, are examples.

In the introduction it was said that many clashes in Africa are not primarily the result of religious and cultural differences (as would be assumed by social identity theorists), but of competition for fertile land, clean water and control over natural resources such as oil, gas, gold, diamonds and tropical hardwood (Elbawadi & Sambanis 2000; Collier & Sambanis 2005). This is not to deny that conflicts about material conditions can whip up religious and ethnic sentiments, but it still begs the question: why is it that people who lived together peacefully for centuries suddenly start fighting?[183]

Undoubtedly mass media play a part (Mazrui 2006: 73–75), as is clearly demonstrated in Nigeria and Rwanda. Before and during the Rwandan genocide

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182 The situation in Somalia would certainly make another interesting case study. In June 2006 the Islamic Courts Union in Somalia took control of the capital Mogadishu and various other towns. American officials said that they backed the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-terrorism against the Islamic Courts Union, which is said to harbour three al-Qaeda leaders who were involved in the 1998 United States of America embassies bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. Somalia has only one ethnic group and one religion, yet there are conflicts. Thus religion and ethnicity alone do not explain conflict; a multi-dimensional analytical model is needed to explain (religious) conflicts.

183 In Nigeria, for example, Muslims and Christians traded with each other because they had a common interest: to make profit. This is what Sundermeier (2003: 71) calls a trader's model. The other party is evaluated not in terms of equality or alterity but of usefulness.

mass media and state organs consistently spread the message that the others were cockroaches (Ter Haar 2000: 18). It has been observed in various contexts that less than ten percent of believers are 'extremists'. Most of them simply want to live a prosperous life, more or less in harmony with their neighbours. But the normal state of affairs is not 'news'. Only the extraordinary, when people go to extremes, is exciting enough to be newsworthy. In addition religious and cultural identity is often used as 'symbolic capital' to serve the interests of a specific group (Bourdieu 1991). In present-day Africa identity derives not only from secular nationalist ideologies but increasingly also from religion (Van Binsbergen 2003: 492). For this reason I find Ellis and Ter Haar's (2004: 106) statement that "there has been rather little violence on religious grounds in African conflicts" a trifle superficial.

Unity is strength

Serving the interests of specific groups is exactly what cultures do. Culture is no longer considered to be a shared meaning system in the sense that unity is presupposed and given once and for all. Culture is the organisation of diversity (Hannerz 1992). It unites people who are otherwise divided, and it does so in situations of distress. When security is threatened people seek the support of other people, with whom they share ethnic, national, gender or religious orientations. As was observed among the Sukuma of northwest Tanzania, they did not have regular communal rituals except during severe droughts or Maasai raids (Wijsen & Tanner 2000). Hence culture is a unifying factor in situations of economic deprivation or political oppression. The motto '*umoja ni nguvu*' (unity is strength) was a pillar of *ujamaa* socialism. As the Swahili proverb goes, one finger cannot kill a louse. This is the essence of ethnic cooperation (*harambee*), says Chepkwony (2002: 150).

The advantages and blessings of African community spirit (*ujamaa*) are well known (Eboh 2004; Onwubiko 1999). It is seen as the foundation of peaceful coexistence of African people. Less well known are the disadvantages and risks of the same community spirit, both internally and externally. Internally there is strong solidarity and neighbourly love, but consequently also group pressure and social control. Not infrequently this leads to witchcraft accusations and violence against members of the in-group, especially those who prosper, thus giving rise to jealousy (Gyekye 1997: 252–257; Signer 2004; Van der Veen 2004). Externally, outsiders or strangers are not seen as neighbours, hence neighbourly love does not apply to them. Among the Ashante (Ghana) it was accepted that outsiders were sold as slaves (Schildkraut 1997); the same applies to the Nyamwezi (Tanzania). Among the Pokot (Kenya) stealing from fellow Pokot is considered a sin, but stealing from non-Pokot is considered heroic (Visser 1989).

Is inculturation helpful?

Missionary approaches to ethnicity have been ambiguous. Sometimes the ethnic identity of a people was squashed as devil possession, to be replaced by Christianity. In other cases the missionaries preserved and even promoted ethnic identity as resources for local theology and church development. Sometimes churches became channels for ethnocentric and nationalist sentiments, as was the case when Belgian missionaries supported Tutsi political aspirations in Rwanda.

Inculturation theology is not always helpful in solving conflicts. If inculturation means embroiling the church in the divisions of a divided society, if it reinforces ethnic identities rather than criticising them, this is certainly not going to further reconciliation.[184] The church must challenge the givenness of ethnic boundaries. This requires a critical theory of ethnicity and culture and a critical theology of acculturation (Linden 1995: 261–263).[185] In our study Bourdieu (1991) helps us to see that boundaries are social through and through, rather than natural. Mugambi observes that "corporate identity is essential in African thought". According to him, "Kinship relation is the basis for corporate identity. . . . [I]t is this fact that makes 'tribalism' a great problem in Africa" (Mugambi 1989: 136). "At the beginning of the third millennium, it is important to strongly affirm that African identity transcends race and religion" (Mugambi 2003: 112).

A critical theory of culture and a critical theory of acculturation are building blocks for the theory of interreligious relations that this study is aimed at. As we said in the introduction, a theory is a system that explains phenomena by postulating constructs and the laws that interrelate them (Muganda & Muganda 2003: 6). In the introduction we spoke about multicultural societies in terms of a fruit cocktail, and about multicultural persons in terms of multiple identities. What we have learnt so far is that in Africa peaceful coexistence tends to be interpreted as live and let live. "I let you do your business as long as you let me do mine." As the old man (*mzee*) quoted above said, all people have their own religion and all religions are good. Thus the African model of interreligious relations tends to be multicultural. It is a step ahead of the European mono-cultural model, which seeks to adapt the other to one's own point of view. But does this step go far enough?

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184   If inculturation merely affirms culture, it may compromise the Christian message, as in Nazi Germany where the concept of *Volkskirche* bound theology to culture. The same applies to the Orthodox Church and Serbian ethnic identity in Bosnia Herzegovina.

185   This is what I try to develop in this study using a hermeneutics of suspicion and critical discourse analysis. As mentioned already, I believe that Mazrui's concept of triple heritage and the discourse on Africa's tradition of peaceful coexistence needs revision.

5.2 Conflicts in Africa and human rights

Narrow-minded ethnic identity reconstructions are often opposed by referring to a common norm, such as the Declaration toward a Global Ethic of the Parliament of the World's Religions and/or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations (Tarimo 2004: 1). It is said that these rights are based on human nature, which is shared by all people (Wiredu 1996: 21–33). The problem is that those who construct narrow-minded ethnic identities do not accept the universality of human rights, or at any rate greatly curtail their universal relevance. Makua Mutua (2003) explores the intersection of indigenous religion and human rights. For him local religions are the stage on which the local conception of indigenous philosophical, political and cultural dynamism is enacted. The West should not be allowed to proselytise African Religions. Western groups use practices like female genital mutilation to depict Africans as savages and to demonise African cultures. Of course African women who fully understand this practice may oppose it. Matua only has problems with Western women who hijack African women's campaign against it.

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

In an earlier section (2.1) on the survival and revival of African Religions we spoke about the revival of customary law, such as *gada-gada* among the Oromo, *sungusungu* in Tanzania and *gacaca* in Rwanda. Here we concentrate on the debate on human rights in Africa, particularly the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.[186] Most African states promulgated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and most Africans accept that human rights are universal. But universality is not the same as uniformity (Ankumah 1992: 25). The priorities differ and omissions in the Universal Declaration are added to the African Charter. The Universal Declaration and the African Charter differ in degree, not in essence. From an Ibo perspective, Frank Uyanne (1997: 190) writes that human rights are universal, but not all rights are universal to the same extent. It depends on whether one is a member of a community or a stranger. The problem is that there is confusion between universal rights and duties and particular ones, says Uyanne (1997: 191).

   Africans firmly reject the misuse of the term 'universal' in the human rights debate to impose Western ideas and values on non-Western people, as happens in the case of multi-party democracy (pluralism) and free market capitalism (liberalism). Human rights activists are the latest in a lineage

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186   The African Charter was adopted on 27 June 1981 at the 18th assembly of the heads of state and government of the Organisation of African Unity. It took effect on 21 October 1986. So far 38 African states have ratified the charter.

of European dominators that includes colonial administrators and Christian missionaries, says Mutua (2003). The African Charter basically subscribes to international human rights principles, such as the rights to life, liberty and property (Ankumah 1992: 26–27). Thus one cannot say that human rights are a Western concept (Ankumah 1992: 25). But the African Charter differs from the Universal Declaration in three ways. First, it provides not only individual but also collective rights. Second, it provides not only rights but also corresponding duties. Third, it grants not only civil and political rights (first generation rights) and economic, social and cultural rights (second generation rights), but also rights of solidarity (third generation rights): peace, development and a healthy environment (Mbaye 1992: 184–211).

Benezet Bujo (1997: 149–155) mentions four areas of tension between the Universal Declaration and the African understanding of human rights: property, education, marriage and the dead. First, according to the Universal Declaration individuals have a right to possess property. Africa has a different emphasis. In Africa property is never private. The individual administers property in the name of the community, for instance the extended family. Individuals are not permitted to use property at their own discretion but should first consult the relatives. Second, according to the Universal Declaration parents have the right to choose the kind of education they consider appropriate for their children. In African tradition children do not belong to the parents alone but to the lineage. Hence again the family has to be consulted. It is the duty of every relative to ensure that their children receive a sound education. Third, according to the Universal Declaration marriage is a free decision by the intending spouses. In Africa marriage is not an individual affair but is meant to perpetuate the lineage. Thus the partners' free decision is not understood as individual freedom, which allows children to act against their parents' wishes. Fourth, the African community includes its deceased members, thus the dead, too, have human rights. They can be said to possess land, watering places or parts of the forest as their rightful property. This land can be used by later generations, but with due deference to the ancestors. Laws concerning land and minerals must likewise respect these rights, which obviously has far-reaching consequences (Bujo 1997: 153).[187]

Enduring popularity of Islamic law

In many states people can choose between customary law, Western law or Islamic law (Tier 2002: 73–74; Wijsen & Tanner 2000: 92–99), and it is obvious that

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187   The question is to what extent Bujo's observations apply to the continent as a whole or just to specific parts of Africa, and to what extent they still apply to contemporary Africa. I discussed Bujo's chapter on human rights (Bujo 1997: 143–156) with various groups of African students, both in Nairobi and in Nijmegen, and the reactions were mixed. Some recognised what Bujo says; others said that Bujo's observations did not apply to their ethnic group or that they did apply in the past but not anymore.

Islamic law remains popular among Muslims. In the previous section (5.1) we mentioned the introduction of *sharia* in Nigeria, which materialised in the twelve northern states in 2000. Politicians promoted Islamic law because it was the only way to get the support of the people. Those who opposed the *sharia* had no chance of winning the elections. Most people wanted Islamic law as an alternative to the prevailing political and judicial system, which was chaotic and corrupt. They believed that the *sharia* would cure all ills, Allah himself would see to that. So the introduction of Islamic law was a consequence of the restoration of multi-party democracy in Nigeria. Many people in the northern states always wanted *sharia*, but politicians did not listen to them. The multi-party political system changed all that.

Why did people prefer the *sharia* to other legal systems? Various answers are given to this intriguing question. First, Muslims consider *sharia* a religious duty. A Muslim who does not observe the *sharia* is not a 'good' Muslim, according to popular belief. Second, there is social pressure. Most Muslims cannot explain why *sharia* is good but simply say that 'this is the way we inherited from our fathers'. Third, *sharia* is more efficient. It is strongly oriented to the community (*ummah*), in which everybody knows everybody else, so it is less bureaucratic. Fourth, *sharia* is an alternative to the corrupt state. It gives the law a transcendent character and is thus a powerful instrument against human self-interest; it is to a large extent a protest. Fifth, *sharia* has many loopholes and interpretations differ in various countries. For example, the veiling of Muslim women, hotly debated in the West, is not a big issue in the *sharia* or in the Qur'an; and Islamic family law and rights of inheritance guaranteed women more rights than they had in the West until modern times. The bad image of *sharia* is Western propaganda, it is said.

The introduction of *sharia* seems part of a general anti-Western feeling, the last step in the de-colonisation process. The former European colonies are politically and economically free, but culturally they have yet to gain their freedom. Introduction of *sharia* means liberation from yet another Western influence, in this case the legal system inherited from the colonialists and still used in many countries, and a revival of local culture. When people in the West oppose *sharia* they behave like the old colonialists did, it is said. Afrocentrism and Islamism have a common root in anti-Western sentiments: Occidentalism (Buruma & Margalit 2004). Christianity, too, is seen as a Western influence, a 'white man's religion'. This shows once again that the clash between Islam and Christianity is a counterpart of the clash between the West and the rest of the world (Mazrui 2006: 223–224). It is important to clarify, however, that 'the West' is a historical, not a geographical, construct. The West refers to societies which are industrialised, urbanised, capitalist, secular and modern. They arose in the 16th century as a result of economic, political, social and cultural processes. Nowadays any society, wherever it is located, which possesses the aforementioned characteristics belongs to the West. The word

'Western', therefore, means much the same as the word 'modern' (Hall 1992: 277).

The problem of liberal individualism

The problem with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is that it is based on liberal individualism. The theory of liberal individualism was formulated in Europe during the Enlightenment in reaction to the theory that the ruler of a territory determines what religion is practised in it (*cuius regio, eius religio*). This theory had prevailed since the time of early state Christianity (first in Armenia, later in the Roman empire) and was reinforced during the Reformation, but it caused interreligious conflicts. The theory of liberal individualism was designed to end those conflicts. It postulated individual freedom as overriding membership of society. A society is composed of individuals who come together through a social contract in pursuit of their own interests (Tarimo 2004: 36–39).

According to Bujo (1997: 144) the premise of human rights in the West is Kant's concept of autonomy. Individuals are free to determine their own lives, but not arbitrarily: self-determination must be reasonable and responsible. One's self-determination should be compatible with that of others. The problem is that this theory is rooted in European history. It is contextual through and through and not universally accepted (Tarimo 2004: 36). Liberal individualism concurs with the African notion of God, who created the world but left it to his creatures to make something out of it. But it is counter to the African concept of personhood, according to which the individual is subordinated to the wider community (Kirwen 1987). From an Islamic perspective, liberal individualism accords well with the Islamic notion of individual responsibility, but it conflicts with the understanding of Islam as submission to the will of Allah – hence not a claim to autonomy but acceptance of authority.[188]

The concept of human rights as expressed by the Universal Declaration is basically humanistic and secular. In many countries, however, policies to protect human rights find their theoretical justification in religion. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Islam, for example, is explicitly based on Islamic values, as is the 1993 Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, which was adopted by some fifty member states of the Organisation of Islamic Conference. If human rights are to be accepted by the majority of people, they must include religious orientations, since for most people in the world religion is an integral part of their lives. The secular idea of human rights will be challenged again

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188   Without making differences absolute, there is a stark contrast between the Western claim of autonomy (rooted in the Enlightenment) and non-Western 'submission' to authority (e.g. that of the Bible or the Qur'an). Kim (2002: 19) speaks about "Independent Self-Construals" and "Interdependent Self-Construals".

and again, as was observed by the Parliament of the World's Religion in Cape Town in December 1999 (Ter Haar 2000: 2–5).

Freedom of religion and interreligious dialogue

One basic human right is freedom of religion. In its Declaration on Human Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Roman Catholic Church recognises freedom of conscience, including the freedom to have a religion, to practise one's religion and to propagate it (Onwubiko 1999: 31–40). But this freedom is reciprocal (Arinze 2002: 134–137). A challenge to Muslim-Christian dialogue is that Christians' right to express their religion is under pressure in some countries with a Muslim majority, for instance Egypt and Sudan. Muslims, on the other hand, feel they are second-class citizens in countries with a Christian majority such as Kenya and Tanzania (Wijsen & Mfumbusa 2004). According to Muslim scholars the recent Christian concern over *Qa'dhi* courts in Kenya shows the growing influence of American sponsored, anti-Muslim oriented Evangelical groups.[189]

There seems to be tension between acceptance of freedom of religion and the necessity to propagate the faith. Whereas the Second Vatican Council's declaration on the church's attitude towards non-Christian religions, *Nostra Aetatae*, shows openness and respect for other religions, its decree on missionary activity, *Ad Gentes*, urges the propagation of faith. The creation of a Secretariat for the non-Christians during the Second Vatican Council,[190] alongside but separate from the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith,[191] raises suspicions of ambiguity in the Council's theology of other religions.[192]

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189 In section 2.2 I spoke about the Abuja Declaration and the Muslims' campaign to influence political parties and government leaders. A similar campaign is underway in certain Christian churches. "We do not want to mount a coup, but we certainly do have a plan," says Bishop Bonifes Adoyo, head of the Christ is the Answer Ministries Church in Nairobi and chairman of the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya. In June 2006 I witnessed an 'explosion' of evangelism in Mwanza, Tanzania. Twenty-two members of a small American Baptist church came to Tanzania on a Crusade for Christ. "Our pastor invites volunteers to a mission trip annually," my informant said. "This year we came to Tanzania. . . . We go to market places to proclaim Christ." "Are you successful?" I asked. "Oh yes, many have come to know Christ," my informant answered. Similar 'evangelism explosions' happen all over East Africa.

190 The Secretariat for the non-Christians was established in 1964 and was renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1988 by Francis cardinal Arinze.

191 The Congregation for the Propagation of Faith was established in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV and was renamed the Congregation for the Evangelisation of the Peoples in 1967.

192 In February 2006 the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue ceased to exist as an independent body and merged with the Pontifical Council for Culture. According to some Vatican watchers this indicates that interreligious dialogue is less important to pope Benedict XVI than it was to pope John Paul II. Others say that it was purely a matter of cost-cutting. Yet others say that the president of the council, archbishop Michael Fitzgerald M.Afr., was considered too liberal. Fitzgerald became apostolic Nuncio to Egypt. The President of the Pontifical Council for Culture denied that the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue ceased to exist.

Globalisation of the church's social teaching offered a way out of this funda-
mental dilemma. It meant that mission theology was increasingly interpreted
as a theology of development, later as a theology of liberation, leaving the
dilemma of religious freedom versus proclamation where it was.[193]

In the current debate the conflict between missionary and diaconal work
remains unresolved, as will be seen below (section 9.1). Partly because of the
proliferation of charismatic and Pentecostal churches, this is a hot issue in
a theory of interreligious relations. As is well known, the evangelical churches
did not accept the reduction of mission to the social consequences of the
gospel. Moreover, the tension between group solidarity and individual free-
dom becomes an issue in less individualised societies where corporate iden-
tities are stressed, as happens in most African societies (see section 3.2). For
example, however tolerant of other people's religious beliefs traditional Akan
may have been, persons disagreeing fundamentally with the Akan worldview
risked isolation from the community. Yet if these persons were prepared to per-
form their civic duties without bothering too much about underlying beliefs,
they could live in peace with their kinsmen (Wiredu 1996: 167).

Plea for concrete universalism

The problem underlying this debate is the tension between ethical universalism
and cultural particularism (Tarimo 2004: 23–70). Ethical universalism empha-
sises the universal validity of human rights, basing its claim on transcendence and
human nature. Cultural relativism, on the other hand, maintains that local cultures
determine the existence and scope of individuals' political and civil rights in a
society (Wiredu 1996; Mall 2000). We saw the same dilemma when we spoke
about the (history of) mono- and multicultural models (section 1.2). The
dichotomy between universality and particularity is based on a dichotomy
between theory and practice, says Tarimo (2004: 23). Universalistic approaches to
moral issues such as human rights are theoretical and abstract, context-free and
a-historical, detached from the concrete struggle for life. Particularistic approaches
are linked to the historicisation of moral norms: they try to contextualise the
interpretation and realisation of human rights in specific social situations.

Tarimo (2004: 24, 28) advocates 'concrete universalism'. Concrete univer-
salism is based on the historical experience of moral agents. It refers to a moral
value created in a concrete culture, which, because of historical significance, inter-
action and cooperation, is embraced by other peoples and cultures and finally

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193   One can, however, interpret the existence of two separate institutions for dialogue and evan-
       gelisation as a sign that the Vatican sees dialogue and evangelisation as two distinct ecclesi-
       astic activities that are not to be confused or reduced to each other.

achieves universality in the sense of inclusiveness and universal acceptance. This could give rise to problems of cultural diversity. Such problems can only be overcome through dialogue, not through a set of moral principles legalised by a particular convention such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

How do African cultural values feature in all this? There are two opposing positions: those who accept African traditional values uncritically and nostalgically, and those who reject their relevance, saying that they are primitive and have nothing to offer the modern world. Tarimo (2004: 58) does not agree with either of the two extremes. A balanced approach is needed. We have to admit that African culture, like Western culture, has both positive and negative features (Gyekye 1997). They are not opposites, like heaven and hell.[194]

Africa needs modernisation, so one cannot just perpetuate its traditions as if nothing has changed. But modernisation is not the same as Westernisation, that is abandoning Africa's traditions and imitating the West (Tarimo 2004: 58–59). Idealising Africa's past is not constructive, says Tarimo (2004: 61), a point we shall return to later (section 10.1). We must accept Africa's responsibility to deal with its present-day problems. Many studies emphasise the negative legacy of colonialism without sufficiently acknowledging Africa's own responsibility for contemporary social injustice. A balanced approach to African communitarianism is needed. Africa's community spirit (*ujamaa*) should not be opposed to individuals' rights.[195]

5.3 Religion and reconciliation

Everyone knows that religions often cause conflict and violence, but they can also be instrumental in promoting peace and reconciliation. This is because they teach people not to look at the world from their own narrow perspective but from that of the world as a whole (Hick 1981; Karecki 2005). A positive feature of African Religions is their rich tradition of reconciliation and purification rituals (Magesa 1997: 234–240; Eboh 2004: 148–154; Van Binsbergen 2003: 349–371). They can be fruitful for present-day conflict resolution. But it should be noted that in most cases these rituals are limited to relations between kinsmen; they are seldom effective at meso and macro level (Van Binsbergen 2003: 369–370).

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194 In similar vein, Mazrui (2006: 76–77) argues against the 'good cop, bad cop' strategy in the war against terror. Muslims around the globe are not more sinning than sinned against (Mazrui 2006: 97).

195 According to Tarimo (2004: 13) neither holistic nor closed communitarianism is an alternative to individual liberalism.

Reconciliation and forgiveness

Christians tend to look at reconciliation from a biblical, normative perspective. They cite biblical injunctions, such as Jesus' teaching that his followers must forgive others, not seven times but seventy times seven (Matt 18:22); you must love your neighbour as yourself (Matt 19:19); if anyone strikes you on one cheek, turn the other as well (Luke 6:29); in the community all are one, whether Jew or gentile, slave or free (1 Cor 12:13); and do to others as you would have them do to you (Luke 6:31; Matt 7:12a).

From a Christian point of view reconciliation has four dimensions (Assefa 1996: 46–49). The first is reconciliation with God, creating harmony by healing the conflicts that separate people from God. The second is reconciliation with the self, minimising internal conflict. The third dimension involves reconciliation with one's neighbour and the wider community. The fourth is reconciliation with nature. This stems from recognition that one cannot be reconciled with the creator while showing disrespect for his creation. Reconciliation with the neighbour is prerequisite for reconciliation with God, not the other way round, says Assefa. "If you are about to bring a gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God" (Matt 5:23–24). As the Lord's prayer puts it: "Forgive us the wrongs we have done, as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us" (Matt 6:12).

Besides looking at biblical sources one should look at facts, at concrete examples of reconciliation in Rwanda, Sudan and South Africa. One member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Piet Meiring (2002: 286–288), summarises six lessons to be learnt from the South African experience. First, reconciliation needs to be clearly defined. It is doubted whether this was the case in South Africa. As will be shown below, minimalist and maximalist definitions were used side by side. Second, reconciliation and truth go hand in hand. Third, reconciliation requires sincere confession of guilt – towards God and fellow human beings – and willingness to forgive. Fourth, there is no reconciliation without justice, which involves restitution of land, redistribution of resources and so on. Fifth, there is no reconciliation without genuine commitment; examples show that ordinary citizens really went to enormous lengths to facilitate reconciliation. Sixth, the road to reconciliation is full of pitfalls and disappointments, but full of surprises as well.

Was the reconciliation process successful?

How successful was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, asks Meiring (2002: 285–286). There are three prerequisites for success. First, the people should own the process. Second, government should not only facilitate the process but also implement the proposals that issue from it. And third, the

process needs to come to an end. As far as the last prerequisite is concerned, the process did end as though the participants had endorsed it. Meiring (2002: 288) quotes archbishop Tutu:[196]

> "We have been wounded but we are being healed . . . It is possible even with our past of suffering, anguish, alienation and violence to become one people, reconciled, healed, caring, compassionate and ready to share as we put our past behind us to stride into the glorious future God holds before us as the Rainbow People of God."

With respect to the second prerequisite, government has started to pay individual reparation grants. But it is asked whether these are sufficient. Whether reconciliation was achieved depends on the definition of reconciliation, and that definition was unclear. One observer, Peter-John Pearson, states that, whereas some members of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission spoke of peaceful coexistence as 'absence of killings', others had a deeper understanding of reconciliation: reconciliation is a struggle against all forms of injustice with a view to "new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet 3:13). What needs to be reconciled is not the divide between the white colonists and the black peoples, but the divide between rich and poor, the powerful and the marginalised, which continues to exist and in fact to widen. The issue is not one of race but of poverty. Another observer, Marcelle Manley, says that in her view Mbeki and the other leading lights in the ANC world – both political and economic, many of them highly capable – embody the old capitalist world without racial strings attached.

As far as the first prerequisite is concerned, the following statistics are pertinent. A national survey indicated that most black and brown South Africans (90%) were satisfied with the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; only one third of white South Africans were positive about it, one third was negative and one third was undecided (Meiring 2002: 285–286). What about the Muslims? Farid Esack (2002: 296–297) cites the Christianisation of the Truth and Reconciliation process as a reason for Muslims to remain on the sidelines. There are "many Christians who do not understand that Christianity as a privileged religion and discourse must make way for a more humble one which regards all other faiths as co-equals," says Esack. And he continues: "On the day of testimony, I spoke critically of the symbolism of having Jews, Muslims and Hindus coming to testify to an all-Christian panel, headed by an archbishop sitting under a huge crucifix in a church hall."

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196   In his *No future without forgives*, Tutu (1999) puts forward Christian and Africa's tradition of forgiveness as resource for overcoming experiences of dehumanisation and oppression. Tutu's view was not shared by all – many of the witnesses and appellants were critical. Quite a lot of bitterness was expressed in the media. However sincerely intended by Tutu and others, it was at least to some extent (political) histrionics. There *has* been a lot of very real reconciliation – incredibly much – but it comes more from give and take in a free society, from children sharing desks and playgrounds, from ordinary life and a common struggle against crime.

Ways to promote reconciliation

How can one promote social reconciliation? Answers to this question can be summed up in the following six categories (Tarimo 2004: 117): public education about what happened in the past with the accent on education rather than restitution, prosecution, retribution and punishment; silence; public confession and psycho-spiritual healing; legal justice and multiplication of laws; and promotion of economic growth. The Rwandan tragedy shows, among other disasters, that prosecution and punishment without transformation of conscience and attitude only breed adversarial attitudes, which turn victims into killers (Tarimo 2004: 119). A more balanced approach is needed.

A way forward is to rediscover African agency, both in causing and combating evil (Maluleke 2002). One consequence of communitarianism is that introspection is not very well developed in Africa.[197] In the film *Katibo ye ye*, produced by Interact in Amsterdam, one sees a group of Surinamese people visiting the Asantehene in Kumasi, Ghana. The Surinamese ask the spokesman of the Asantehene why his ancestors sold their children to the whites. "Well," answers the Asantehene, "it sometimes happened that a little prince was given to the white men as a present." The Surinamese persist: "This is not what we mean . . . Why did your ancestors sell their children to the white men?" But the Asantehene seems to be deaf to their question. There is no reconciliation without confession.

At its 2003 meeting the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences in Africa and Madagascar publicly asked forgiveness for the role played by Africans in new and old forms of slavery. The bishops acknowledged "that slavery took place thanks to the complicity of some Africans". "The trade," they wrote, "would not have taken place and would not be perpetuated under such harmful and hidden forms if we did not bear the responsibility that we have." The public confession was not very well received in Africa. It was said that the bishops were only kowtowing to the Western nations, as "this is what the West wants to hear", according to one informant. The African contribution to slavery is not widely discussed in Africa.

Role of religion

Since the 11 September 2001 events there has been a lot of discussion about the role of religion in conflict and reconciliation. Can we expect religion to play a positive role? Is religion a solution to conflict or part of the problem? Following Habermas and others, modernists would rely on rationality more than religiosity in conflict resolution. But according to postmodernists 20th century

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197 In cross-cultural counselling theories communitarianism is seen as an obstacle. There is group pressure to preserve harmony, so people do not easily express what is in their minds. Moreover, to paraphrase Mbiti once again, who *we* are is more important than who *I* am.

history shows that rationality is certainly no more successful in combating violence than religiosity. After the Russian revolution thousands of people were killed in the name of freedom, not to mention the First and the Second World Wars.

Tarimo makes three observations. First there is the ambivalence of religion. Many people fear the dangers of religious involvement in public affairs because religious identities often become a source of division (Tarimo 2004: 122–123). Second there is the constructive role of religion (Tarimo 2004: 128–135). Religious commitment promotes civic virtues, so religions promote the common good in a society. Referring to Hans Küng's search for a world ethic Tarimo (2004: 134) holds that the major religions share key principles regarding the good life.[198] Third is the limitations of religion (Tarimo 2004: 135). One may not exaggerate the role of religion, as we live in religiously mixed communities. We cannot impose one religion, not even certain religious ideas, on everybody.

Is religion part of the problem or the solution? Often it is both. During the rioting by North African youths (in which many black Africans were also involved) in France in autumn 2005 religious sentiments played a role. But imams declared a *fatwa* against these uprisings as being contrary to Islamic teaching. The *fatwas* were largely ignored by the mass media. The activist for the rights of black Americans, the late Protestant minister Martin Luther King, said: "If we are to have peace on earth, our loyalties must become ecumenical rather then sectional. Our loyalties must transcend our race, our class, our tribe, our nation, and this means that we must develop a world perspective."

Happily there are many instances of peaceful coexistence. For most Africans, coexistence is the normal state of affairs. Inter-ethnic and interreligious coexistence took many forms, such as barter between Kikuyu and Maasai in Kenya and between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. Another form of peaceful coexistence is intermarriage between Maasai and Kikuyu, and between Muslims and Christians. In fact, many African families are interreligious. A third example is inter-ethnic alliances in cases of ethnic rivalry (Getui 1999: 15). It is wise to look into African traditions of reconciliation and purification for contemporary conflict resolution, but without romanticising them.

Ali Mazrui (2006: 226–229) reminds his readers of many instances of an African sense of forgiveness and reconciliation. When Jomo Kenyatta was released after being imprisoned for founding the Mau Mau movement, he forgave those who imprisoned him and even wrote his *Suffering without bitterness* (1968). When the Rhodesian civil war ended Ian Smith was not subjected

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198 Panikkar (1978) and Krieger (1991) make the same point when they speak about cosmotheandric solidarity, as does Hick (1981) when he speaks about the transition from self-centredness to reality-centredness.

to a Nuremberg style trial, but became a member of parliament of black-ruled Zimbabwe. When the Nigerian civil war ended strongholds of Catholicism like Enugu and Onitcha did not become monuments of devastation and blood-letting. When Nelson Mandela was released from prison he emphasised the policy of reconciliation. "[W]here else but in Africa could such tolerance occur," says Mazrui (2006: 227). But according to Tim Allen (2006) there is another side to the story of reconciliation. By giving leaders of the Lord's Resistance Army amnesty and urging locals to integrate them in their communities through rituals of reconciliation President Museveni compromises justice. Allen's research among 2500 people in northern Uganda shows that 66% of the people want justice to be done.

United Religions Initiative

At the beginning of this study I mentioned that there are many interreligious initiatives. At the end of this section on religion and reconciliation I want to cite one example, the Nairobi Circle of the United Religions Initiative. The United Religions Initiative started in 1993 when Bill Swing, bishop of the Episcopal Church, was approached by a representative of Bhoutros Gali, then secretary general of the United Nations, to plan a religious component for the 50th anniversary of the United Nations charter. Swing gathered a committee of 20 members, which organised a celebration involving 26 religious traditions.

After the celebration, Swing travelled around the world to meet religious leaders. Among them were the Dalai Lama, the archbishop of Canterbury, the pope, the grand mufti of Egypt, the chief rabbi in Jerusalem and the Shankaracharya of India. When he asked them whether they cared to be involved in a peace movement of religions he met with hesitation and rejection. He then realised "that if there is ever to be peace among religions it is going to have to start at a grassroots level". Consequently he envisaged an organisation "whose power resided not in a hierarchical structure but in Cooperation Circles initiated locally throughout the world," as one of the brochures of the organisation put it. Nairobi hosts one Cooperation Circle. Its first public advertisement read as follows:

> "The United Religions Initiative cordially invites you to a public meeting
>
> *Interfaith for Peace*
>
> Saturday 27th March 2004
> 4 to 6 pm
> at the Village Market Auditorium
>
> The purpose of the United Religions Initiative is to promote enduring daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the earth and all living beings."

At the first meeting, in which the present author participated, the Africa coordinator of the Global Communication Network, Mitch Odera, gave an overview of threats to peace in the world, especially in Africa. As the 1998 bombings of the United States embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam showed, conflicts have become global. The speaker dealt with the major conflicts in Africa and their causes: the struggles about land, oil, diamonds and water. The week before the meeting Nairobi had hosted the summit of the Nile Council of Ministers, which negotiated about the utilisation of the waters of the Nile. "If there will be a new world war, it will be about water," the speaker concluded. After this overview of conflicts, Hamad Ehsani, chairman of the United Religions Initiative Circle in Nairobi and member of the Baha'i community, presented the Circle's commitment to peace and harmony. The programme included prayer, dance and poetry from various religious traditions presented by their adherents. It concluded with St Francis's prayer, "Make me a channel of your peace". The meeting at the Village Market struck me as the direct opposite of my visit to the office of Life Challenge Africa, also in Nairobi, which I described in section 2.3.

Conclusion

In this chapter we looked into the relation between religion, conflict and reconciliation in Africa. What does our investigation signify for a theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective? Our brief analysis of conflicts in Rwanda, Nigeria and Sudan showed that, while these are not in themselves religious, religion certainly plays a role. This applies to African Religion as well. The term 'religious tribalism' (paralleling 'ethnic tribalism'), used by one of my interviewees and narrated in the previous chapter, is pertinent. Conflicts are not only inter-ethnic but also interreligious; the distinction is often hard to make. In the discourse on human rights the question is whether and to what extent these rights are universal. We advocate concrete universalism. Moral values are created in particular cultures but can become universally accepted through cooperation and interaction. In the process of reconciliation religion can play a purifying role, but scholars of religion should be aware that religion is also part of the problem. Thus caution and a hermeneutics of suspicion remain necessary.

Chapter Six

Synthesis, extremism and dialogue

As far as we know Africa has always been a multicultural and multi-religious continent (Olupona & Nyang 1993).[199] For a long time it was believed that Africans lived in closed, well defined communities, but given the many migrations that are known to have happened in African history this is unlikely. Luo society, for example, comprises various subgroups, probably originating from different parts of Africa. The Ibo include patrilineal and matrilineal groups. Again, their origins may differ. The same applies to the Sukuma of Tanzania and no doubt to many other ethnic groups across the continent. Whatever Africa's past may have been, one thing is clear: contacts between people of various religions and cultures will increase.

For our theory of interreligious relations in Africa it is important to know how ordinary people react to contacts between cultures and religions. Ignatius Pambe (1982: 22) identifies four attitudes. Some people keep a foot in both African Religion and Christianity, benefiting by spiritual and material help from both sides (dualism). Others completely reject either African Religion or the Christian view (extremism).[200] Some people reject both African Religion and Christianity (agnosticism). But a large number create an intermediate set of beliefs and practices, which combines African Religion and the Christian message (synthesis).[201] One can easily apply the same scheme to the interaction between African Religion and Islam (Kim 2004).

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199 We abstract this from the theory that it was the tower of Babel that first brought divisions among peoples (Van Binsbergen 2003: 520). Genesis 11:5–8 reads: "Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower that the sons of man had built. And Yahweh said, 'See! The people are one and their language is the same for all of them. And now they have begun to do this; in the future nothing that they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and let us confuse their language so that they will not understand each other's language, each will not understand their fellow.' So Yahweh scattered them from there over the face of the entire earth, and they stopped building the city."

200 As said before, I try to avoid the term 'fundamentalism' wherever possible, first because it is overly Christian, and secondly because the alternative, 'extremism', indicates more clearly that this attitude is an exception to the rule.

201 The term 'syncretism' has negative connotations. I use the term 'synthesis' as an equivalent. Agnosticism is often called atheism, but this is incorrect. Maybe a better term would be 'indifferentism'. People with this attitude are indifferent to religion, not necessarily against it.

6.1 Dualism and synthesis

To an outsider the first and the fourth attitude seem almost identical, yet there are some essential differences between dualism and synthesis. The latter (synthesis) is an expression of Christianity, in which African Religion and Christianity are mixed; in the former (dualism) they are not. Dualistic believers leave the two systems as they are, using both according to their needs. They are Christians on Sunday and adherents of Indigenous Religion the rest of the week. In the synthesised form Christian symbols get an indigenous meaning, or indigenous symbols get a Christian meaning. Thus traditional amulets may be interpreted as Catholic rosaries, or Catholic priests referred to as indigenous healers (Wijsen 1993: 93–93).

Institutional dualism and synthesis

When the synthesis of African Religion and the Christian message is institution-alised it attracts much attention from scholars of religion. There are innumerable studies of African Instituted Churches. Initially these churches were mainly political/messianic protest movements striving for political and cultural emanci-pation from colonialism and mission churches. Later they became more spiritual, basing their independence on theological grounds such as acceptance of indigen-ous, hence holistic, healing and indigenous, hence polygamous, marriage.

   In section 2.3 we distinguished between break-away churches, spiritual churches and the newer Pentecostal churches. There are others that are called neo-pagan and Hebraic. They draw their inspiration from Indigenous Religion and the Old Testament respectively. For that reason they are not called Christian churches. In my interview with the secretary general of the Organisation of African Instituted Churches, he talked at length about their problem with the Kimbanguist Church. "They are mixing too much," he said. At the eighth gen-eral assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare (3–14 December 1998) there was a debate on whether or not to admit the Celestrian Church as a full member because it accepts polygamous clergy. The issue was resolved and the Celestrian Church was granted membership, because it had ruled in 1986 that new clergy must be monogamous.

   In Islam religious orders (*tariqas*) or brotherhoods based on mysticism (Sufism) could be seen as a parallel. The major difference from the African Instituted Churches is that in Africa the Sufi brotherhoods are pretty much mainline, as the majority of Muslims in Africa are linked to them to some extent. In global Islam, however, the Sufi brotherhoods are seen as marginal, as they include practices and beliefs that are not recognised by formal or offi-cial Islam: spiritual healing, veneration of saints and spirit possession (Stamer 1995: 40–53; Peel & Stewart 1985).

Individual dualism and synthesis

When synthesis occurs on an individual level it remains largely unnoticed, yet this is the everyday religion of the masses. In African Christianity synthesis is not a marginal but a key phenomenon (Van Beek 1975: 68; Wijsen 1993: 138). This is what is meant by popular Christianity or the Christianity of the ordinary faithful, as opposed to official Christianity or the Christianity of the church officials. The same applies to popular Islam as distinct from the Islam of Muslim scholars, the *ulama* (Kim 2004).

Sometimes 'double belonging' is described as religious schizophrenia, a phrase used by Desmond Tutu and others to express that seemingly African Christians live in two worlds – both an African and a Christian one. The expression is questionable; religious concepts are never completely untranslatable. Hence being African is not in opposition to being Christian and vice versa, says Maluleke (2002: 174–175). Schizophrenia is a mental illness diagnosed when a person is unable to balance thoughts and feelings. Schizophrenics cannot distinguish between reality and illusion and withdraw from social relationships into a delusional world. If we accept that double belonging is the religion of the majority in Africa, it would mean that the majority of Africans are mentally ill.[202]

One can also regard the ability to combine opposites as a sign of mental health and spiritual strength: a balanced person is able to combine and coordinate the advantages and spiritual help offered by both sides (Pambe 1982: 22). Cross-cultural psychology hypothesises that all people have many 'selves' and 'voices'. In decision making, for example when faced with serious illness or misfortune, the various voices engage in dialogue and negotiate between themselves. The dialogical self is a mini-society, in which what happens at micro level is not much different from what happens at macro level (Hermans & Kempen 1993).[203] The Indian philosopher and theologian of religions Raimundo Panikkar (1978) claims that interreligious dialogue starts with intra-religious dialogue. Following Panikkar, James Cox (1998: 91–96) develops a method for studying African Religion that requires 'methodological conversion' as a condition for understanding the other, instead of 'methodical atheism' or 'agnosticism'.

Popular and official religion

Both dualistic and synthesised Christianity are popular forms in the sense that they are opposed to the Christianity of the official church. Both forms resist

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202 Communication theory postulates that people strive for cognitive consistency. Cognitive dissonance is an uncomfortable state of mind that people seek to avoid by harmonising contradictions. The question is whether this is culturally universal or culturally relative. We come back to this issue in section 7.3.

203 This view differs from a Fanonian approach, which stresses alienation and the task of overcoming it (Daniels 2000).

the official church as an institution that claims to be universal but is in fact Western. But their rejection takes different forms and stresses different aspects. Whereas the educated elite theoretically accept official Christianity and in practice go their own way, ordinary people do not identify with official Christianity and freely combine it with African tradition in an existential mix of their choice. This popular religion is not a revival of tradition but a creative process.

The two expressions of popular Christianity, dualism and synthesis, correspond with different social groups. Dualism occurs mostly among the well-to-do leaders in society, businesspeople and government officials, most of whom live in towns, while synthesis is usually found among people on the underside of society, such as subsistence farmers and workers (Wijsen 1993: 156–157). The well-to-do and the religious leaders often occupy similar positions in the social hierarchy and approach each other as equals. Thus they have an interest in professing to adhere to official Christianity, as this accords with the norms of their social group. 'Ordinary' people have nothing to lose, so it is not important how they are regarded by the leaders. They do not need the support of a priest.

Folk religion and elite religion

Dualistic popular Christianity is associated with a European, modern, hence individualistic lifestyle. For its adherents official Christianity serves as an ideology to justify a lifestyle that does not accord with the traditional community spirit and cooperative values, tacitly ignoring the fact that the social teaching of the official church clearly condemns egoism. Since businesspeople are more or less assured of a regular income, they need not rely on others. Hence they value their independence.

Peasant farmers, too, like freedom, but their income is less stable, as agriculture has many risks. They rely on relatives and neighbours for mutual help. Interdependence is a fact of life. Like businesspeople, they use official Christianity as a means to obtain material things, but they reject it insofar as it promotes individualism. For the same reason they reject dualistic Christianity inasmuch as official Christianity ideologically legitimises an egoistic lifestyle for 'important people', which is immoral according to the traditional value of cooperation.

Hence popular religion is not simply a religious phenomenon, namely embodying greater or lesser faith, but also a social phenomenon. It reflects a power struggle between different groups in African society (Asad 1983). Both forms of popular religion have economic and social correlates. They are associated with different livelihoods and lifestyles. Folk religion and elite religion are social categories; popular religion and official religion are religious categories.

Truth or truthfulness?

Very often European partners in interreligious dialogue are mainly concerned about the truth of religious beliefs – whether they correspond with reality, whether thinking accords with being. For African Christians the truth of religious beliefs is not a primary concern, as the question cannot be answered. Their main concern is not what the spirits *are* but what they *do* for believers. Most African Christians, and indeed most ordinary faithful, do not seek dogmatic precision ('true faith') in their religion, but practical help in time of need. For them religion is a problem-solving strategy (Wijsen 1993: 137–138). As subsistence farmers they have a utilitarian, pragmatic approach, called 'magic' by earlier scholars of religion. For these farmers, the meaning of religious symbols is their use/usefulness.

If the main question in interreligious dialogue is whether religious beliefs are true or not, there is a danger of intellectualism and elitism. For most ordinary believers religion is a problem-solving strategy. This is not to say that it is the best way of looking at religion, but if scholars of religion want to promote interreligious communication and understanding, they should look at religion and interreligious relations from the perspective of people's everyday thinking (Wijsen1997b: 142–43).[204] If religion as problem solving is not taken seriously in interreligious dialogue, if its meaning is limited to an intellectual debate between professionals, the dialogue will remain irrelevant to ordinary believers – a misunderstanding based on different epistemological interests.[205]

Truth by exclusion or interrelation?

The European concept of truth is defined by exclusion. In keeping with the Aristotelian principle of contradiction, most Westerners would argue that if one proposition affirms something and the other proposition denies the same thing, one must be true and the other false. Truth is based on exclusive dualism. Thus one must choose: acceptance of one implies rejection of the other. In Western logic truth is essentially either/or (Mall 2000: 20–21; Krieger 1991: 77–123). Many Africans think differently.[206] To the Western mind the statements, 'there is one God' and 'there are many Gods', are contradictory. For Africans

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204 This is what we called a subaltern approach: an approach from within and from below. When I spoke about African intellectuals there, I had the research object in mind, not the research perspective.

205 As mentioned already, Kamstra (1985) said that for the ordinary faithful syncretism is what dialogue is for the religious leaders. It requires an intellectual point of view.

206 It is to the credit of early comparative philosophers – Franz Wimmer, Ram Adhar Mall's predecessor at the University of Bremen, and Heinz Kimmerle, Wim van Binsbergen's predecessor at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam – that they drew attention to these differences in Europe.

this is not (necessarily) the case, as I experienced in my fieldwork – at times it nearly drove me crazy (Wijsen 1997b: 144–145). African scholars of religion are very creative in coining new labels for complex realities, such as 'pluralistic monotheism', 'diffuse monotheism' and 'implicit monotheism' (Idowu 1973: 135–136).

Most Africans would define truth in terms of interrelation. For them truth is 'both … and'. Their view of reality is one of a dynamic unity of opposites. Blessing and cursing are opposites, yet they are part of the same mystical power given to people. What seems a contradiction at one level is unity at a higher level. Thus the principle of binary oppositions must be modified by a principle of hierarchic oppositions (Wijsen 1993: 130). As one of my Sukuma informants said: "Just as all people see the same sun, so they worship the same God" (Wijsen 1996). Basically they believe that all people have their own religion and that all religions are good, as the *mzee* quoted above said. Or, as the Sukuma say, there is only one God but many religions (*mungu mmoja, dini mbilimbali*).[207] In terms of the three models we have identified the African model of interreligious relations tends to be multicultural, but it has the potential to become intercultural: it recognises (be it at a higher level in the hierarchy) unity in diversity.[208]

By their fruits you will know them

Does this mean that African Christians do not grade religions? Not at all! However, their valuation is not rational but empirical. In this sense they are pragmatists *avant la lettre*. As John Dewey *cum suis* said, do not ask whether something is true, ask whether it works. Evans Pritchard (1937) observed the same pragmatism among the Azande. Pragmatism could provide a very concrete basis for interreligious dialogue. It does not matter where help comes from – if it works, it is good. As a Sukuma proverb says: "I have all kinds of medicines. No one can harm me" (Wijsen 1997b).

There are, of course, serious objections to a purely pragmatic understanding of truth. We do not mean that empirical evidence is the only criterion when evaluating truth claims (Küng 1987: 192; Wijsen 1993: 192). The African understanding of truth, however, is that without empirical evidence there is no truth (Kibicho 1972: 323; Kibicho 1981: 34). Pragmatism is firmly rooted in

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207   Shehe Mbaraka Rusheke of Sirari had a different interpretation. Confronted with the popular saying, '*Mungu mmoja, njia mbalimbali*' (one God, many paths), he said: "No, there are only two paths [*njia*], one leading to heaven and the other to hell. And these two paths are present in all the religions."

208   This formulation modifies my conclusion to section 5.1, where I said that the African model of interreligious relations tends to be multicultural.

African thought. This attitude is profoundly biblical: "By their fruits you will know them" (Matt 7:16).

Happily, in this respect Christians have the support of their Muslim neighbours, as the same notion is found in the Qur'an (Wijsen 1997a). "To each among you have We prescribed a Law and a Way. If God had willed, He would have made you a single people, but . . . [his plan is] to test you in what he has given you. So strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which you dispute" (Sura 5:48). The context of this verse is Muslims' relationship with the 'people of the book', Jews and Christians. The text expresses a fundamental recognition of religious pluralism. It also posits that responsibility for a just society is the aim of all (book) religions, says Esack (1997: 166–172). Ramadan (2004: 202–203) adds a rider: the text not only shows that religious diversity is willed by God but also that interreligious dialogue is indispensable.

6.2 Secularism and extremism

In the previous section we explored two attitudes towards contact between, and interconnectedness of, religious cultures, namely dualism and synthesis. In this section we consider two other attitudes towards cultural contact: secularism and extremism. The former is the rejection of both religious cultures out of sheer pragmatism, indifferentism or even atheism, saying that all religions are false. The latter completely accepts one religion (one's own) and regards all others as false. Having dealt with secularism in section 3.1, here we focus more on extremism.

Secularism

In their study of *Secularism in Africa*, Aylward Shorter and Edwin Onyancha (1997) distinguish between four types of secularism in Nairobi: the philosophically argued atheism of university staff and students, the sheer indifferentism of the urban poor and that of the extremely rich, and the pragmatism of the nominal Christians. Secularism in their study "refers to a situation in which religious faith, for one reason or another, is felt to be superfluous" (Shorter & Onyancha 1997: 14). The fact that in Africa churches are full does not imply that Africans are 'notoriously religious'. Shorter (2004: 255) notes "that church attendance and participation in urban parish life is relatively low in African cities and towns".

Shorter and Onyancha (1997: 19–20) mention the unbelief of intellectuals and elites at universities and institutions of higher learning. They consider religious authority repressive and opposed to academic freedom. Academic scholarship

demands an open mind, methodological atheism or agnosticism. Okot p'Bitek, for example, frankly confesses: "I admit I am neither a Christian nor a pagan. I do not believe in Gods or spirits. I do not believe in witchcraft or supernatural forces. Heaven and hell do not make sense to me and for me metaphysical statements are nonsensical" (quoted by Platvoet & Van Rinsum 2003: 139).[209] Shorter and Onyancha (1997) do not mention African intellectuals who are agnostic for political reasons – African humanists or socialists, although most of them have never been really anti-religious.[210] Most post-colonial African states were secular, but left room for religion. As Julius Nyerere, himself a devout Catholic, always said in his speeches to religious leaders, "Don't mix religion and politics", but at the same time he urged: "Play your part" (Nyerere 1991).

Whereas Aylward Shorter and Edwin Onyancha (1997) concentrated on the urban setting, Frans Wijsen and Ralph Tanner (2000) wrote about the rural Sukuma of northwest Tanzania. As subsistence farmers, the Sukuma simply cannot invest in things which yield no return. So they do not have communal rituals except in times of distress, and they do not regularly venerate their ancestors except when summoned for patrilineal rituals to make a greater impact on the ancestors. The small huts built as dwelling places for ancestral spirits are not treated with any reverence and are not maintained as shrines for everyday rituals; when they fall down they are not repaired. Many African peasant farmers care for very little beyond the fertility of their cows, their land and their wives.

Materialism may have motivated some Sukuma to convert to Christianity, as they saw the benefit of mission schools and mission hospitals. But the fact that Christianity seems irrelevant to them in their everyday situation is a reason for de-conversion. Pragmatism, materialism and utilitarianism may explain the attraction of the gospel of prosperity and prosperity churches to present-day Africans, not because of their religious teaching but because of their emphasis on health and wealth.[211] All of sudden my friend and neighbour in the village where I used to live, a staunch traditionalist, became a Muslim, because he was offered a loan to build a house by Muslims. The same happens in Pentecostal churches.

In section 3.1 we discussed at length whether Africans are notoriously or incurably religious (Platvoet & Van Rinsum 2003; Olibimtan 2003). Maybe it is

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209 Platvoet and Van Rinsum (2003) omit to add that in his private life Okot p'Bitek was a staunch Roman Catholic. He died in 1986 and was buried in the graveyard of Gulu cathedral in northern Uganda.

210 Kwame Nkrumah (1970), for example, had considered training for the priesthood and his "consciencism" was born of a religious ideal (Mazrui 2004: 1).

211 Prosperity churches are based on prosperity theology, popular in new Pentecostal and charismatic movements, which states that if people are faithful to God they will prosper in life: if we believe in God and give money to the church all our problems will be solved (Nwankwo 2004: 29–34).

better to ask in what way they are notoriously religious. Religion is a Western concept based on division of labour. In the African worldview, the sacred and the profane are distinguished but not separated. Thus it is not clear what is religion and what is not. The statement that Africans are notoriously religious could be as true as the statement that Africans are notoriously secular, as both categories are Western constructs and do not seem to reflect African realities.[212]

For the same reason scholars of African religion must be careful not to describe the religious domain in terms of superhuman, other-worldly, meta-empirical or transcendent realities, as they represent distinctions that are not made in Africa. Monica Wilson referred to nature religion or cosmic religion as the basis of all religion. Thus the secular is not intrinsically opposed to the sacred.[213] In this sense one can understand secularism as the counterpart of cosmic religiosity (Shorter & Onyancha 1997: 13, 26–27).

Extremism

The second attitude is that of identifying with only one religion. Fundamentalism or extremism may be defined as absolutist belief systems (Brouwer, Gifford & Rose 1996: 9). To some extent it is the opposite of the previous option. It is 'anti-syncretism' (Stewart & Shaw 1994), but it is inappropriate to see fundamentalism as anti-modern. The picture of fundamentalism as a reaction against modernism and globalism overlooks the way fundamentalism itself is tied up with globalism and modernism (Brouwer, Gifford & Rose 1996: 3).

Although the word 'fundamentalism' originated in early 20th century Protestantism, it is now used for trends in all world religions. Islam in Africa and, to a certain extent, African Indigenous Religion also have fundamentalist trends. Afrocentrism and Islamism, although different in their manifestations, have a common root and feature: black-and-white thinking, in which everything in African culture or Islamic faith is good, and non-African or non-Islamic cultures are bad.[214] Sometimes it is said that the African community spirit

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212 Again a caveat is needed. Religious attitudes may vary over place and time. Scholars of religion must be careful not to use Western concepts to refer to African realities. I would not try to apply secularisation theory to the study of religion in contemporary Africa, as Mugambi (2004: 8) does.

213 In the same way one could reason, with Arend van Leeuwen (1964), that Christianity itself is a secularising force in world history. When missionaries started to build churches and chapels in Africa they localised the sacred in specific places and thus secularised the rest of the earth. This interpretation presupposes, however, that Africans had a special reverence for nature, which was not the case always and everywhere.

214 Muslims make a distinction between the *dar al-harb* and *dar al-Islam*; Pentecostals make a distinction between the born again or saved and the lost; Afrocentrists make a distinction between ego-centrists (Europeans) and communo-centrists (Africans); and so on.

(*ujamaa*) favours peaceful coexistence of religions and cultures, so that Africans are synthesisers par excellence. Consequently, it is argued, Africans cannot be extremists. But African allies of the al-Qaeda network show that extremism exists in Africa.[215]

It is not easy to explain extremism and its growth in Africa. In section 1.1 we explored the present-day African context of frustration because hopes of a better life after independence did not materialise. African ideologies of national unity were secular. Now that these 'grand narratives' no longer seem self-evident (Maluleke 2002: 176), religious ideologies fill the gap (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004). Another factor is the economic 'collapse' in Africa and the consequent adoption of African initiated churches by American-influenced fundamentalist groups (Gifford 1996: 155), not to mention deliberate interventions in these churches by the United States of America intelligence agency. In addition there is the spread of a free market economy, to which end public media are taken over by fundamentalist American broadcasting corporations.

Frustration is a breeding ground for extremism. There is a lot of hopelessness in it, but also sheer opportunism. Adults and youths were paid to participate in the Zanzibar riots (26–27 January 2001) and Evangelical preachers openly admit that their vocation is profitable. As one of them said, "When you love God you must feel it in your pocket. Financial offering is a graduator for religious commitment." Another cause is humiliation (Stern 2004). In many African states Muslims consider themselves second-class citizens (Wijsen & Mfumbusa 2004). Except for Japan the seven most industrialised countries in the world are all predominantly Christian, and they dominate the world. Muslims long for the centuries in which they dominated the markets.

It should be noted that modernity has taken root in Christian cultures since the 16th century (Hall 1992: 281). If one sees how long it took Christianity to embrace modernity – and many Christians have not yet done so – one cannot expect Muslims and indigenous believers to embrace it in a few decades. This makes it clear that Afrocentrism and Islamism have the same roots: strong anti-Western (not necessarily anti-Christian, but often combined with it) sentiments or Occidentalism, as Buruma and Margalit (2004) also observed.[216]

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215   An example is Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, the Tanzania citizen born in Zanzibar, who was actively involved in the bombing of the United States of America embassy in Dar es Salaam in 1998.

216   A clear manifestation of anti-Western sentiments was the speech by Zimbabwean president Mugabe at an FAO meeting in Rome on 17 October 2005, in which he criticised president Bush and prime minister Blair for their global colonialism and compared them with Hitler and Mussolini. This is an extreme example. Shortly before his re-election president Museveni of Uganda also blamed the West for all the evils in his country and said that Uganda no longer needed the West. It is hypothesised that many Africans tacitly agree with Mugabe and Museveni's public statements.

African Religion and extremism

In section 1.1 we spoke about the profound identity crisis in Africa. This is evident in its ambivalent attitude towards the West.[217] Many Africans are caught between rebellion against and imitation of the West. On the one hand Africans are (hyper-)critical of Western influence on Africa. On the other they lament when Western nations do not intervene or intervene too late in situations of civil war, as was the case in Rwanda and is the case now in Darfur.

Fundamentalism is often seen as the literal interpretation of texts, hence it is linked with religions that have scriptures. People speak about Christian, Muslim or Jewish fundamentalism, and even about Hindu and Buddhist fundamentalism. Religions without scriptures cannot be fundamentalist, it is said. This interpretation overlooks the fact that oral traditions can become as rigid as written traditions; in addition there is little control. Thus there are absolutist truth claims in oral traditions authorised by its main representatives, the spirit mediums, as I found in various interviews with diviners and healers in Sukumaland.

There is also the phenomenon of ethnocentrism in African Religion. Earlier we spoke about African Religions as ethnic religions (section 5.1). They can be as exclusive as Christianity or Islam. Their exclusiveness has two sides to it. As closed communities there is group pressure and thus possible violence against insiders but also against outsiders, who are considered strangers and possible enemies.

New religious movements and sects

Extremist groups, Christian, Islamic and Indigenous alike, can become militant and even violent. Examples are the Lord's Resistance Army and the Movement of the Restoration of the Ten Commandments in Uganda. The two groups differ in form and function, but both appear to be rooted in spirit movements. The Lord's Resistance Army is a remnant of Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit movement in northern Uganda. After her conversion to Catholicism in the mid-1980s, Alice Lakwena became possessed by a spirit, who instructed her to lead her followers in a war against the National Resistance Movement that came to power in 1986. Having started out as a religious movement propagating emancipation from Roman Catholic and Anglican monopolism, male dominance and state control under Amin and Obote, the Holy Spirit

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217   It is expected that in the near future more African governments will look for allies in the non-Western World, e.g. Saudi Arabia, Iran and China, but possibly also some Latin American countries, e.g. Brazil and Venezuela.

movement evolved into a violent opposition party to the government of the National Resistance Movement. After Alice Lakwena's departure from Uganda some of her followers continued resisting under various names. The most dramatic is the Lord's Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony (Kassimir 1999: 250–253).

The Lord's Resistance Army started as a political opposition movement against the National Resistance Movement of president Museveni. It strived for a government based on the Ten Commandments, but it degenerated into a gang of bandits and criminals, kidnapping children, raping women, murdering and plundering. A complication is that the civil war in northern Uganda had links with the conflict in southern Sudan. The Lord's Resistance Army was supplied with arms by the Islamic government in Sudan. In return, the Lord's Resistance Army had to fight the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the military wing of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. This shows again that Muslims and Christians can collaborate if there is a common interest.

The Movement of the Restoration of the Ten Commandments likewise originated from a spirit movement, in this case the Marian visions in Mbuye parish, which were influenced by the Marian visionaries in Kibeho, Rwanda (Waliggo 2003: 86–90; Shorter & Njiru 2001: 11–14). The movement was founded by Credonia Mwerinde, who claimed to have had visions of the blessed virgin prophesying the end of the world in 2000 and enjoining her followers to sell all their possessions, which would be restored to them in heaven. Credonia's followers were people who had lived under a dictatorial regime and civil war, and on top of that faced the HIV/aids epidemic. It ended with a dramatic massacre at Kanungu in March 2000, in which hundreds of people – later it turned out to be thousands – lost their lives. There is a parallel with the Marian Faith Healing Ministry of Felician Nkwera in Tanzania (Shorter & Njiru 2003: 103–110; Wijsen 1997b: 138–141).[218]

Marian Faith Healing movements are part of a global network that is attracted to traditional Roman Catholic prayer life. In Tanzania the *wanamaombi* revive traditional practices and beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church, as opposed to the church's dominant secular, modern explanation of mission. Traditional Roman Catholic cosmology resonates better with the traditional African worldview (Comoro & Sivalon 1999: 277). It is often said that people on the underside of society can become fundamentalists and that learned people cannot. This seems to be untrue. Often highly educated people become fundamentalists, mostly people trained in technical professions, often in the

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218   The present author happened to be in Uganda shortly after the Kanungu events and witnessed the debates about how this could happen and how to prevent it.

West or in Western institutions. The leaders of the Movement of the Restoration of the Ten Commandments were (ex-)priests and (ex)seminarians.

Rigorism in early African Christianity

The existence of rigorist trends in early Christianity is enlightening. As Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1986: 18) observes, the early north African church was not monolithic but split into various parties. One insight commonly predominated, says Oduyoye (1986: 19), namely "the willingness to die for one's beliefs". In a way early African Christians were uncompromising, a 'church of martyrs'. Traditional rigorous attitudes towards the gods were reinforced by biblical statements (Oduyoye 1986: 20).

   Even then rigorism and humiliation went together. The clash between the Donatist and the orthodox Catholic positions was largely political rather than religious. The Donatists saw themselves as confessors, who criticised the Catholics' compromise with the Roman emperor (Oduyoye 1986: 23). Viewed thus Augustine was not a 'real' African theologian: the real African church was represented by the wing that did not ally itself with the Roman empire. That is why the Berbers later converted to Islam en masse (Oduyoye 1991: 23).

6.3 Mission and dialogue in African Religions

Following Friedrich Max Müller and other historians of religion, who make distinctions such as those between mythic/prophetic, closed/open and introvert/extrovert religions, it is generally presupposed that only monotheistic religions with their exclusivist truth claims are missionary in the sense of expansionist. According to this classification, African Religions and primal religions in general are not missionary. But the classification is problematic. Judaism is monotheistic, but is not normally seen as missionary religion.[219] Buddhism is a mythic religion, but it has been missionary right from the beginning. If one adheres to Gerardus van der Leeuw's *Phänomenologie der Religion* (1956), briefly explained in the introduction, one can even say that mission forms part of the essence of religion, hence that every religion is missionary in one way or another. The question, then, is not 'are African Religions missionary?' but 'in what way are they missionary?'

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219 Blauw (1961: 60–70), however, notes that Jewish proselytism not only took place during the Diaspora but also before that, for instance by receiving foreigners into the Jewish community. In later biblical books, too, there is a universal missionary trend, for example in the wisdom literature and the prophetic texts.

Missionary in what way?

The problem, as noted in the introduction, is that we do not have clear-cut definitions of mission. Missiological handbooks define it in terms of conversion, inculturation, dialogue and service (Oborji 2005). If we see mission as conversion, we can say that African Religions are missionary in that spirit mediums try to convert people to their point of view. Another example is the Mau Mau freedom fighters, who were convinced that their God was better than the God of the colonial oppressors (Kibicho 1972). If we see mission as inculturation, we must note how amazingly flexible African Religions are and how easily they adapt to new situations. Afro-American religions could serve as examples.

African Religions are open and merge with other religions, as can be seen in some African Instituted Churches. Thus they are missionary in the sense of being dialogical. They are also missionary in the sense of being liberationist. Spirit mediums promoted social transformation, as happened during the liberation struggle in what was then Rhodesia. If we take 'belief in being sent' as an indicator of mission, we must say that most spirit mediums believe that they are called by their ancestors to promote healing and fullness of life (Kirwen 1987).

The religious market place

If we use Bourdieu's (1991) metaphor, we can see the religious domain as a market, in which believers use spiritual power as a resource (capital) to make profit (gain spiritual or other powers) in coalition or competition with others. In the field of spiritual healing, for example, one can see competition between healing churches and healing ministries on the one hand and indigenous healers on the other, with the mainline churches' mission hospitals in between.

Just like business firms and non-profit organisations, churches and religions try to increase their market share and, if they lose it, to regain it. And consumers make a cost-benefit calculation and act to obtain maximum benefit at minimum cost (Finke & Stark 1992). Mission could be seen as an effort to win the hearts and minds of others. It is 'selling' spiritual goods and exploring or expanding markets, using marketing and advertising mechanisms just like commercial companies do. Missionaries – whether for religions such as Christianity or Islam, ideologies such as Marxism or liberalism, business firms such as Coca-Cola or Toyota, or non-profit organisation such as Amnesty International or Green Peace – try to convince potential clients that they, too, should adopt a favourable opinion of a doctrine, product, or ideology, and that they should integrate it with their own worldview (Biernatski 1991: 4–5).

African Indigenous Religions are not exceptions to this rule. If we take spirit mediums and healers to be the most prominent representatives of the indigenous religious system, we see them advertising their specialities on almost every street corner, especially in modern towns where alternatives are available, and in magazines like this one in *Mfanyakazi* (11 May 1994):

> "Witchcraft is not cured in modern hospitals but it takes thousands of lives of people everyday through ordinary illnesses, like twinges, ulcers, blood pressure, diabetes, hiccup, psychical sickness, mental retardation, delivery, fever, diarrhoea, swelling of the stomach, swelling of legs, anemia, asthma, things moving around the body, paralysis of one side, blindness (given by somebody), serious headache, pains of organs, spirits and many others. Dear citizen, if you notice that you are not cured by modern medicines, go and see this famous doctor for your problems. He is Dr. Nathani Misi, traditional healer who has saved thousands of patients who could not be treated in some of the modern hospitals within the country. There are also some medicines to remove bad omen for short time. Treatment services will continue to be given daily from his clinic, situated at Keko Magurumbasi near the Keko jail."

The religious market approach is criticised, among other things, for concentrating only on the supply side. In section 8.3 we criticise rational choice theory, which parallels the religious market model.[220] In Bourdieu's (1991) terms practical sense (*habitus*) is not only rational but also emotional and even embodied. People may have many reasons to choose one or another religious alternative, or a combination of both, and not all of them are rational; some may even be irrational. Yet the religious market approach remains helpful to understand missionary movements within religions.

Mission as conversion

The market mechanism is the basis of the concept of mission as conversion in African Indigenous Religions. Some spirit mediums say that it is better not to adopt Christian beliefs, since they do not bring peace and harmony. Christianity was and remains the 'white man's religion', essentially linked with colonialism and imperialism (also their present-day forms of globalism and neo-liberalism) and consequently all the evils 'of the West'. This was the case among the Kenyan Mau Mau freedom fighters, as we already saw. Among the Sukuma of northwest Tanzania I heard people say that they de-converted from Christianity to African Religions because "it is better to go back to the path of the ancestors, since the God of the Christians does not liberate us".

220　In September 2004 the Free University of Amsterdam organised a symposium to stimulate theoretical discussion of the concepts 'conversion career' and 'religious market'. Some of the papers presented at the symposium appeared in a special issue of the journal *Exchange* (Bakker 2006).

In the introduction I quoted the conversation of a Dutch missionary with a Sukuma *mzee*. The conversation continues with a reflection by the *mzee*, in which he reverses the meaning of mission: it is not Africans who need conversion, but Europeans (Wijsen 1993: 221).

> "Father, your religion has Christ as your ancestor. I know Christ was a European. Your forefathers tortured him. He died through beating. He died a very bad death, hanging from a tree, as you have been showing me in the pictures. This man has turned into a very fierce ancestor. He has tortured you very much. You kill yourselves by wars. You are not at peace because of this ancestor. For years you have tried to appease him through your sacrifices and prayers. I think you need us to help you to appease your own ancestor when you want us to become Christians."

From the foregoing we conclude that there is a concept of mission operating in some African Indigenous Religions. Scholars of religion should therefore correct their image that mission is confined to 'world' religions like Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. The influence of African Indigenous Religions is still present beneath the surface of Christianity, for instance when people perform traditional marriage rites after their Christian marriage, or when they use traditional medicine alongside Western health care. All this conveys the idea that there can only be real peace and harmony if the paths of the ancestors are respected. Last but not least, African Indigenous Religions spread to other continents. We can speak of Afro-American, Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Caribbean religions. Thus African Religion has itself become a 'world' religion (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 2004: 30).

The dominant missionary model during the 19th and 20th centuries was to abandon African Indigenous Religions and replace them with Christianity. According to some Africans the time has come to abandon Christianity in Africa and go back to African Indigenous Religions. Chief Musamaali Nangoli (1968: 168) concludes his *No more lies about Africa* by saying: "Now is the time to think about a true identity – an African identity."

And Osaga Odak (1997: 16) advocates making the ancient Egyptian religion *Kemeticism* the world religion for black peoples. "I am also taking this opportunity to urge those black people who are still members of the colonial and slave religions to quit them and join this true religion of African Spirituality." The same holds true for Damuah's *Afrikania* (see section 2.1) as reformed African Traditional Religion.

Neo-traditional cults in Africa

The movement to return to the path of the ancestors leads to the emergence of indigenous quasi-political and quasi-religious cults, such as *sungusungu* in

Tanzania and *mungiki* in Kenya. The *sungusungu* in northwest Tanzania originated spontaneously in the 1980s. The first one started in Kahama in 1982. Originally the *sungusungu* were formed to prevent cattle rustling, but later on they were active in preventing and combating almost all forms of social evil, including armed robbery, and allegations of witchcraft or adultery. Their main task was to keep the peace (*usalama*; which is why they were called *wasalama* as well) in their society, since the police were not able to fulfil their task (Abrahams & Bukurura 1993).

In these people's defence committees, which act as political pressure groups, indigenous religious symbols such as divination and medicine play an important role, as well as the belief in mystery and counter-mystery (Abrahams, 1987: 181–189; Bukurura 1994: 25). Initiation into the *sungusungu* resembles initiation into secret societies and relies on magico-religious powers. At first they were feared by the government as being anti-party and aimed at reintroducing the chieftaincy. But since the 1990s they have been accepted and even hailed for bringing stability and security to the country. Some of these groups are doing a good job, while others have abused their power (Masanja 1992; Bukurura 1993).

Mungiki emerged in the mid 1980s during the introduction of multi-party politics in Kenya. It started as a protest movement against the political establishment. The majority of its members are young people, fairly well educated but often unemployed or underemployed. They feel marginalised, not only economically but also politically. The political arena has been dominated by elders and in an era of growing freedom of expression *Mungiki* expressed the aspirations of the youth, disillusioned with what they perceive as misrule of their country (bribery, corruption, mismanagement) and campaigning for change in the running of the country's affairs (Kagwanja 2005).

The cultural roots of the *Mungiki* go back to the Kikuyu and they see traditional values as a solution to the evils of present-day society. Their members are inspired by the Mau Mau, the pre-independence movement that forced the colonialists out of Kenya in the 1950s. In the same way the *Mungiki* movement, which claims to have 300.000 members, fights the degenerate aspects of Western culture, including cinemas, alcohol, tobacco and miniskirts. Religiously they worship the Kikuyu God *Ngai*, who dwells on Mount Kenya. Thus when conducting their worship they face Mount Kenya. They also stick to traditional customs that unify the community, including mandatory female circumcision, polygamy, oath taking, sacrificial rites and rites of passage (Nthamburi 2003: 32–34). Interestingly, *Mungiki* tried to link the movement with Islam. Some *Mungiki* leaders converted to Islam, as some of the Mau Mau freedom fighters had done. They thought that a strategic alliance with the Islamic movement in Kenya would hasten the realisation of the movement's goal of fighting bad governance and immorality (Kagwanja 2005: 95–96). This accords with

Bourdieu's theory of practice, which says that actors try to serve their interests in competition or (as in this example) in coalition with others.[221]

During the 2002 election campaign the *Mungiki* supported Uhuru Kenyatta, a rising star within the ruling party, grandson of Kenya's founding father and an inspiration for nationalism. But during the December 2002 elections the ruling party suffered a devastating defeat. The new president, Mwai Kibaki, was in his seventies and his election was seen as not only a political but also a generational defeat. After the election there was widespread violence, in which 25 people in Nakuru lost their lives. Since then *Mungiki* behaves like a gang of criminals seeking to control the public transport sector (Kagwanja 2005: 100–105).

Conclusion

In this chapter we explored various attitudes towards the interconnectedness of cultures. One can understand both synthesis and anti-synthesis in the context of the identity crisis, which we dealt with in section 1.1. We must be open to the possibility that the discourse about peaceful coexistence of religions has little to do with Africa's historical heritage (Eboh 2004), but is based on recent reconstructions in the context of ongoing globalisation, pluralisation and invention of traditions. Anthropologists have become aware of the difference between locutionary (factual), illocutionary (putative) and perlocutionary (persuasive) speech (Van Binsbergen 2003: 435–436). This is where we start to grasp the meaning of strategic essentialism. Cultural identities, be they ethnic or religious, are formulated in times of economic scarcity or political oppression. They bring people together. Or, as Hannerz (1992: 10–15) puts it, culture is not a shared meaning system but the organisation of diversity. This must have consequences for the theory of interreligious relations that we aim at in this study.

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221   See also Mazrui (2006: 224, 232) on the convergence of Islam and Christianity. A Roman Catholic bishop in Tanzania once told me: "The Muslims are our best friends." This, of course, is not true in general. The bishop had a specific issue in mind: the common struggle against the use of condoms in combating aids. It is often seen at international conferences that Roman Catholics and Muslims join forces in pro-life issues. A *shehe* in Sirari, Mbaraka Rusheke, told me that he regularly gathered with Catholic and Protestant pastors to prepare sermons on the same topic, on Friday (for Muslims), on Saturday (for Seventh Day Adventists) and on Sunday (for Christians). "Only together can religious leaders fights issues like aids and injustice," said this *shehe*.

Chapter Seven

Fully committed and fully open

In the early 1980s a silent revolution took place in European and North American theology of religions, described as the "crossing of a theological Rubicon" (Knitter & Hick 1987: viii). Some scholars proposed a shift from an inclusivist to a pluralistic theology of religions. Less well known is that this shift had already happened a decade or more earlier in the so-called 'young churches' of the southern hemisphere. Whereas religious pluralism only became an issue in the Western world in the latter part of the 20th century, it had always been a reality in the churches of the southern hemisphere, most profoundly in Asia where a small minority (3%) of Christians lived in a pre-dominantly non-Christian context, but also in Africa. This chapter explores the roots of what might be the beginning of an African model (Temple 2001) in the theory of interreligious relations.

7.1 The legacy of Samuel Kibicho

In a paper read at a meeting of European and African theologians in Yaoundé, 4–11 April, 1984, Samuel Kibicho (1984) considered "The mission of Jesus Christ today from the perspective of the younger churches, with particular reference to those in Africa". In this paper Kibicho quotes at length from his doctoral dissertation, defended in 1972. His empirical observations of, and theological reflections on, the encounter between Western Christianity and African Religion led him to conclude "that the Spirit of the One God, who was in Jesus of Nazareth and through whom alone God brings men and women everywhere to a saving knowledge of or faith in himself, seems to have been no less fully present and accessible in the Kikuyu community of faith, *independently* [my italics] of the Christian revelation in both the pre- and post-Christian eras of Kikuyu history" (Kibicho 1972: 308–309; see also 307; 311; 314). Note that these were the early days of what much later became known as the pluralist model, explored by scholars such as Stanley Samartha and Raimundo Panikkar in India and John Hick in Europe.

Beyond prejudice of traditional theology

Samuel Kibicho is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Born at Nyeri in 1932, he taught at various theological schools and colleges in

Kenya before proceeding to Vanderbilt University, where he completed his doctoral dissertation under professor Jack Forstman.[222] After his return to Kenya Kibicho taught at St Paul's United Theological College in Limuru and became its first African principal. He then joined the University of Nairobi, where he was professor of religious studies and later headed the department of religious studies and philosophy. He interprets the relation between African Religion and Christianity as serving the cause of freedom (Kibicho 1972: 335–336, 346–347), "freeing Christianity from its western cultural and conceptual garb and trappings in which it was clothed when it was shipped to Africa, and making it truly indigenous in the African soil" (Kibicho 1984: 22).

Early Western views of African Religion were highly prejudiced and negative (Kibicho 1972: 309). Westerners saw Africans as primitive savages, implying that African Religion could hardly be expected to contain any revelation of God. Only a few people still hold these views but their influence continues. They also influenced Christian and theological views of African Religion (Kibicho 1983: 166–168). The principal ones are evolutionary revelation theory, which sees all religions except Christianity as totally erroneous; natural and revealed knowledge of God theory; general and special revelation theory; and anonymous Christianity theory. They all end up denying the presence of complete and fully redemptive revelation in other religions (Kibicho 1981: 29–33).

According to Kibicho none of these theories adequately interprets revelation in African Religion. He maintains that its revelation is as complete and fully salvific as any religion could expected to be (Kibicho 1972: 313, 319). And there is empirical evidence of this. In the first place, throughout black Africa people knew God long before the coming of Christianity. They called him by various names; they worshipped him and turned to him for help whenever they were in difficulty. The second piece of empirical evidence for a full and fully saving revelation in African Religion is the strong presence of what in Christian terms would be described as fruits of the Spirit, such as faith, hope, love, reverence for life, generosity, courage to be human and to fight against all forces which threaten human survival and well-being (Kibicho 1972: 317, 323). Thirdly, in their struggle for justice and freedom African freedom fighters turned to the God of African Religion. They rejected the God of Western colonialist Christianity as a false God. They believed, however, that the God of African Religion who led them in their struggle was the same as the God of the Christian Bible. These African freedom fighters had a truer vision

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222   Recently (June 2006) an updated version of Kibicho's doctoral dissertation was published by Acton Publishers (Kibicho 2006). In this study I use the original version (1972). I had the pleasure of writing "An appreciation of Samuel Kibicho's work" in the updated version (pp. 6–14).

of God than their Christian missionary opponents. Finally, the African God concept continues into the modern period, even via and within Christianity (Kibicho 1981: 33–36).

Radical reinterpretation of theology of revelation

An important conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing arguments is that traditional Christian attitudes towards African Religion were mistaken. There is no reason to look upon the revelation in African Religion as inferior or incomplete. Rather there are good reasons to see it as a full and fully salvific revelation. This should not be construed as a claim that African Religion was perfect (Kibicho 1972: 314). It, too, had its share of human sinfulness, ignorance, superstitions and many other weaknesses, just as Christianity had and still has its share of serious and scandalous involvement in all manner of human depravity and sinfulness (Kibicho 1981: 34, 36; 1983: 71–72).

Thus on the one hand Kibicho (1972: 350; 1983: 171) seems to stress that African Religion and Christianity are equally valid. On the other hand he says "that the Kikuyu might even have *a better claim* [my italics] as monotheisms to the true faith than such a domineering Christianity" (Kibicho 1972: 317). "Of course, these pre-Christian African societies had their share of moral-religious evils. But the point is that judged by the 'fruits of the Spirit' (even Jesus said that human beings must ultimately be judged on this question rather than by their professed faith) these societies were certainly *more* [my italics] God fearing, and therefore had *better* [my italics] existential saving-knowledge of God, than the colonialist Christian societies to which the missionaries who came to evangelise them belonged" (Kibicho 1981: 34).

For Christians to be able to acknowledge that there is saving knowledge of God in African Religions and in other genuine non-Christian religions "a radical re-interpretation of Revelation is called for," says Kibicho (1981: 37). What is needed is the idea of a fully pluralistic revelation instead of the traditional monolithic one (Kibicho 1972: 328, 345; 1981: 36–37; 1983: 172, 175). Kibicho holds that there is good and adequate knowledge of God in African Religions and such knowledge is only possible through God's own self-disclosure. Consequently Kibicho (1981: 37) adheres to "*the fact* [my italics] that there is full and fully saving revelation in African Religion and in other genuine non-Christian religions and *independently* [my italics] of Jesus."[223]

Kibicho (1984: 17) stresses that his position is "the same as that of the New Testament Church, and of the older Churches". In my interview with him, Kibicho clarified the point: "Maybe we cannot say that there is salvation in

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223 Interestingly, John Taylor, author of *The primal vision*, made the same point in his *The go-between God*, also published in 1972.

African Religion independently of Christ. The saving Spirit of the one God has
been there since the creation of the world and it has got many manifestations in
various genuine religions. The saving Spirit of God is manifest in Christ, but
not only in him. So you can say: salvation in African Religion exists independ-
ently of Christ, but not completely independent, since it is the same Spirit who
is active in Christ and African Religion." Maybe with our present insight we
could say that whereas salvation in African Religion is not dependent of the
Christ event, the salvations through Christ and the Spirit are interdependent.

New view of Christ and mission

"The step being suggested here has already been taken by many Africans who
have insisted, like the early Kikuyu converts, that the God they worship
in Christianity is the same God who was known and worshipped by their pre-
Christian forefathers," says Kibicho (1972: 358). "What is required is for
Christian theology to officially recognize this notion as a more sound doctrine
of revelation than that of an exclusively absolute, unitary revelation."

Kibicho realises that his radical reinterpretation of revelation calls for an
equally radical reinterpretation of the Christ event and the missionary endeav-
our. "If there was full and fully salvific revelation in pre-Christian religions,"
asks Kibicho, "why did God find it necessary to send Christ as the Saviour of
the world?" The African indigenous believer would answer: it was necessary
only for those destined to be saved through this particular stream of revelation.
But for the continual mutual correction and upliftment of religions it was also
necessary to make them progressive and in step with the changing human situ-
ation (Kibicho 1983: 172–173; 1984: 24). In 1981 Kibicho said: "One problem
here will be that of Jesus Christ, especially since Christians believe that there
is no full salvation anywhere apart from his redemptive work. But if we remem-
ber that we are talking about God in his universal saving work, we should have
no problem in acknowledging the fact that this divine Spirit who was in Jesus
Christ was fully present and well known in African religious communities of
faith" (Kibicho 1981: 34).

A similar reinterpretation is needed of the traditional understanding of
evangelisation and good neighbourly love (Kibicho 1972: 317, 323). These
missions have always been there in all genuine communities of faith, says
Kibicho. "As basic ideals, they are part of our nature as humans, as creatures
with the divine command imbedded in our nature to teach one another con-
stantly what the good Lord continues to teach us about the nature of and the
way to the blessed life – the human and godly life of sharing, caring for one
another (especially for the poor and the suffering)." In African Religion and
society these missions were effectively conducted mainly within individual
religious communities. Because of their isolated nature there was no need for

trans-ethnic mission. "In the present-day pluralistic society, each religion must evangelise as if it is the only carrier of the only fully-saving revelation," says Kibicho (1984: 24–25). "However, in its continuing dialogue and cooperation with other religions, every religion must acknowledge and accept the claim of uniqueness and ultimacy or finality in every other genuine religion."

Are Kibicho's two seemingly contradictory 'musts' a translation of what the intercultural model with its partial cultural overlaps could mean in Africa? And does such a position pass the tests of theology and social science? How, then, are "Christ as the Saviour of the world" (Kibicho 1983: 172) and the "Fruits of the Spirit" (Kibicho 1983: 171) to be related?

7.2 Christ and the Spirit

The idea that there is revelation and salvation in other religions through God's action in his Spirit independently of Christ seems far removed from an authentically Roman Catholic interpretation of other religions. The official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is that there can be salvation in other religions through God's action in the Spirit, but this Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and does not work independently of him.

A Roman Catholic response

In the official Roman Catholic understanding of mission, the 'mission' of the Holy Spirit is subordinated to the 'mission' of Christ. Therefore, the Spirit is "not an alternative to Christ, nor does He fill a sort of void which is sometimes suggested as existing between Christ and the Logos". Thus the fruits that the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions, "can only be understood in reference to Christ". This is clearly the message of pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990 no. 29), and is reiterated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its declaration *Dominus Jesus* (2000 No. 12).

The Spirit is "not an alternative to Christ" and "Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions . . . can only be understood in reference to Christ," says the pope in *Redemptoris Missio* (no. 29). He continues: "Every form of the Spirit's presence is to be welcomed with respect and gratitude, but the discernment of this presence is the responsibility of the Church, to which Christ gave his Spirit in order to guide her into all the truth (cf. Jn 16:13)." It is to be noted that in the original version of John 16:13 the source of the Spirit is not specified.

In its document, *Christianity and the religions*, the International Theological Commission (1996) gives a thorough and accurate summary of the current

debate on the theology of religions. It also reflects on it, looking for theo-
logical criteria to evaluate other religions. The authors are fully aware "that many
questions remain open and need further research and discussion" (no. 3).

One such question concerns the uniqueness of Christ and the salvation
offered by other religions. Whereas Catholic theology of religions stresses
God's universal love and will to save, it insists on the indispensability of Christ
and the church for salvation. Following the Second Vatican Council, the
International Theological Commission recognises that there is some tension,
but it strongly denies that there is a contradiction between belief in God's uni-
versal will to save and the necessity of Christ.

Catholic theologians have tried to resolve the tension in various ways. Best
known are Rahner's theory of anonymous Christianity and Schlette's distinc-
tion between general and special salvation history. Another well-known
attempt is Knitter's pluralistic theology and the many reactions to it. D'Costa
(1990), for example, says that the doctrine of the Spirit allows us to link the
particularity of the Christ event to the entire history of humankind.[224] But he
offers no solution: "this dialectical tension between Son and Spirit must neces-
sarily remain unresolved until the eschaton," says D'Costa (1990: 19).

How do we deal with this problem?

The Greek Orthodox position

In the New Testament – and in early Christianity – there are at least two ways
of speaking about Christ's relationship to the Spirit: as the carrier and as the
sender of the Spirit. Later the second idea came to dominate in theology, as is
evident in the document of the International Theological Commission (1996,
no. 58). For our purpose, however, it is important to keep the two ideas together.
In Greek Orthodox tradition the first line of thinking dominates, stressing the
free-floating Spirit, which has a place in God's activity in this world independ-
ently of Christ. According to the Greek Orthodox Church the Spirit originates
directly from God. It never accepted the idea of the Holy Spirit as the spirit of
both the Father and the Son (*filioque*).

In its dialogue with the Greek Orthodox Church the Roman Catholic Church
tends to interpret the relationship between Christ and the Spirit in complete
agreement with the Greek Orthodox view (Pontifical Council for Promoting
Christian Unity, 1995). It says that there is a "legitimate complementariness"
between the theologies of the two traditions and that the Father is the sole

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224   Gavin d'Costa is a Kenyan of Indian descent but works in Britain. His advocacy of a theo-
      logical study of religions makes him a leading figure in the debate on the theology of inter-
      religious relations (Cheetham 2005).

source of both the Son and the Spirit, thus assigning God's action through the Spirit a certain autonomy (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 248). While not claiming that in practice the Greek Orthodox Church is better at acknowledging other religions in their own right, in theory it could be. We maintain that very often dialogue with other Christian churches ('small ecumenism') has paved the way for dialogue with non-Christian religions ('big ecumenism'). The ecumenical debate on the *filioque* issue has the potential to open up the interreligious debate, as has happened in mission history before.

The filioque debate

In my interview with Andreas Tillyrides, alias archbishop Makarios, I asked him about the *filioque* debate. This is what he told me. In 589 the Council of Toledo made the 'catastrophic' decision to add the *filioque* clause to the Apostolic creed. The original creed stated: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father." This is scriptural truth: "But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 15:26). When translating the Apostolic creed into Latin the Western church inserted the *filioque*, 'and the Son'. The aim was to emphasise, counter to the Arians, that Christ was no less divine than the Father. However, the statement that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son* is contrary to Scripture and the ecumenical councils. It is theologically false and heretical, says Tillyrides (2001: 173).

In the Bull of Excommunication (1054) the pope mentions the refusal to insert the *filioque* into the creed among the errors attributed to the Orthodox Church. He overlooked the fact that the creed had been drawn up by the ecumenical councils and that only another ecumenical council could change it. In the first half of the 15th century the Byzantine emperor came under pressure from the Turks and sought help from fellow Christians in the West. In exchange he offered religious submission. At the council of Florence the Byzantine church accepted the *filioque* clause as part of the creed. It is noteworthy, Tillyrides maintains (2001: 174), that the Nestorian and Monophysite churches preserved the Orthodox creed uncorrupted.

For our debate on interreligious dialogue this is not unimportant. It means that in essence the Godhead is one. The three persons are co-equal, but there is one 'source', the Father, from whom the other two persons originate. The Bible uses different terms to explain this origin: the Son is 'begotten' by the Father and the Spirit 'proceeds' from the Father. The difference between the two processes is not clear, but what is clear is that the Spirit is not subordinate but equal to the Son (Tillyrides 2001: 174). The dean of the African Orthodox

Seminary in Nairobi took the consequences of the Greek Orthodox position on the Spirit seriously when he said:

> "The relations are good in general. There is mutual respect. If Muslims want to become Christians but want to maintain the name Mohammed we baptize them Mohammed. When we pray together, we pray the Our Father. Muslims have no difficulty in praying the Our Father. Of course, we have a different understanding of God. For us God is Father, Son and Holy Sprit. But the Son, Christ, is not mentioned in the Our Father. We are neighbours. Muslims and Christians share the same problems. That creates solidarity."

One Godhead, two ways of salvation

In general, however, if we look at the practice of interreligious dialogue by Orthodox churches in Africa, it is certainly not true that greater emphasis on the independent activity of the Spirit necessarily leads to greater openness to other religions. As we saw in section 3.1, the positions of the African Orthodox and Coptic Orthodox Churches in this respect are pretty much 'mainline', but theoretically they are in a better position to accept other religions in their own right. If the Father is the sole source of the Spirit, "then there will be far more theological space for the Spirit proceeding from the Father to breathe freely through the whole *oikoumene* which includes neighbours of other faiths as well," says Stanley Samartha (1997: 193). Samartha is referring to the metropolitan George Khodr (1971) of Lebanon, who took the same position in his address to the World Council of Churches' central committee in 1972.

On the same lines as the Orthodox doctrine of 'the two hands of the Father', expressed during the Seventh General Assembly of the World Council of Churches on "Come, Holy Spirit – renew the whole creation", held in Canberra in 1991, Karl Rahner (1978) spoke about God's twofold mission. God sends the Word into history as a human being, and he sends the Spirit into history as an empowering gift. The sending of the Word results in incarnational singularity, the sending of the Spirit results in general openness to God's grace. Thus God communicates with the world in two ways, which are distinct but not separate since both are extensions of the persons of the trinity. Consequently a pneumatological approach takes us back to a trinitarian approach (Valkenberg 2000: 126; Nwankwo 2004: 373–376).

Faith in the Holy Spirit who "blows where it wills" (Jn 3:8) leads missionaries towards an "optimistic expectation" of interreligious dialogue (Durand 2001: 62). "We may be used to thinking of the activity of the Spirit within the hearts of individuals, inspiring them [to] goodness and beauty, and calling for unconditional respect and wonder, but the activity of the Spirit is not to be limited to this. The Spirit also works through the different religions and cultures of the planet, which have to be met with the same attitude of unconditional respect and admiration, for all that is good in them. Properly considered they present different facets or sketches of God," says Durand (2000: 68).

The Spirit in Africa

In their reflections on Christianity's encounter with African Religion African theologians have developed various Christological models, using traditional African symbols as a hat stand for Christian doctrine: Christ the Ancestor (Nyamiti 1984), Christ the Chief, Christ the Healer (Shorter 1985), Christ the Guest (Udoh 1988), Christ the Elder (Wachege 1992), Christ the Stranger (Koyama 1996; Gittins 1996) (see section 9.2).

For a theology of interreligious dialogue from an African perspective a pneumatological approach seems more promising than a Christological approach, as the experience of the Spirit is common ground or a meeting point between the religions.[225] Kim (2004) asserts that 70 to 80 percent of Muslims in Africa are adherents of folk Islam, stressing spiritual revelations and mystical experience. The same seems true of folk Christianity. Kenny (1999) warns that the Qur'an contains many intriguing hints of the Spirit as divine force. But we must realise that the 'Spirit of Holiness' – the term used in the Qur'an, also in the Hebrew scriptures – means something quite different to Muslims than to Christians. Much of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Bible is attributed to Allah in the Qur'an.

One may debate whether there is continuity or discontinuity between African spirits and the Holy Spirit (Theological Advisory Group 2000; Mfebo 1996: 122–130). Certainly the criteria to assess whether or not the fruits of the Spirit are present and whether or not we are dealing with 'genuine non-Christian' religions need to be clarified. But when we take a subaltern hermeneutical position, we have to start from the fact that at the grassroots there is definitely continuity. Many African Christians see Christ as the Great Spirit.[226]

One of our Evangelical informants pointed out the danger that theologians may confuse categories. Referring to his doctoral dissertation (Kombo 2001), he said, "Theologians should not forget that the Holy Spirit is divine, but African [ancestral] spirits are entirely human. Nowhere are ancestors identified with God. If we do not distinguish the Holy Spirit from African spirits we end up in the Lord's Resistance Army. The Holy Spirit and the African spirits are not the same." As we have seen already, the main clash between Pentecostals and Evangelicals concerns the issue of direct revelation. Whereas Evangelicals

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225 Byaruhanga-Akiiki (2004: 35) asserts, "For the majority in Africa the Spirit-World is the driving force for faith." This could be the foundation for "unity beyond religion, race and nationality" (p. 41).

226 Based on this *sensus fidei*, Spirit Christology must be given priority over Logos Christology in Africa (Nwankwo 2004: 374 n. 138). For the same reason we will argue later that a theory of interreligious relations in Africa must be pneumatological. This means that the African model of interreligious relations has a different emphasis from the Asian model, which would stress Wisdom Christology.

say that God spoke to us once and for all in Holy Scripture, Pentecostals say
that God continues to speak to us through the Spirit.

7.3 Social identity theory revisited

As mentioned before, our approach in this study is multi-perspective and poly-
methodological. This means that the theory we aim at is both theological and
socio-scientific. We study religious practices (material object) from the per-
spective of the dialectical relation between what they are in reality and what
they should be (formal object). The practice studied in this book is interreli-
gious dialogue, in particular the teaching of interreligious relations in depart-
ments of religious studies and schools of theology in (East) Africa.

Fully committed, fully open

From a normative perspective one could say that Kibicho's ideas on mission
and dialogue are in harmony with the World Council of Churches' sub-unit on
Dialogue with People of living Faiths and Ideologies.[227] Its first director, the
Indian theologian Stanley Samartha, who held this position from 1968 till
1980, epitomised the task of interreligious dialogue in four words as being
"fully committed, fully open": fully committed to one's own faith and at the
same time fully open to the faith of the others (Samartha 1997), as the World
Council of Churches' *Guidelines on the dialogue with people of living faiths
and ideologies* puts it.

   Much the same applies, though less explicitly, to *Dialogue and mission*, the
1984 document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and *Dia-
logue and proclamation*, the 1991 joint document of the Pontifical Council for
Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelisation of Peoples.
Being 'fully committed' is an attitude associated with mission, being 'fully open'
is an attitude associated with dialogue. Francis Arinze (1997: 35–49), president
of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue from 1984 till 2002, states
that mission and dialogue are two distinct but closely related activities. To bor-
row the terms of the Indian philosopher Mall (2000: 43), the desire to under-
stand the others (aim of dialogue) and the desire to be understood by them (aim
of mission) are two sides of the same coin: hermeneutic communication.[228]

   From a social science perspective the scholar of religion must ask: is this
possible? Can one be fully open and fully committed at the same time? Or is

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227   Jack Forstman, Kibicho's doctoral dissertation supervisor, was a member of the Commis-
      sion on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches.
228   As we said in the introduction: (Christian) mission is to "[b]e ready at all times to answer
      anyone who asks you to explain the hope that is in you" (1 Pet 3:15).

this to be qualified as a pathology of interreligious cynicism? Cynicism and pathology in this context are not perceived as afflictions of individual people but as institutional phenomena. Based on the distinction between church as a community and church as an institution, one observes a double morality: to the outside world the church shows respect for other religions; inside its walls it urges its members to convert other believers (Van der Ven 2005). The fact that mission and dialogue are in the hands of two different Vatican institutions, as indicated in section 5.2, may suggest an affirmative answer to the question whether the Vatican position is to be qualified as pathology of interreligious cynicism. However, the relation between the desire to understand (dialogue) and the desire to be understood (mission) is more complex.

Social identity theory

In the social sciences there is a widespread idea that a positive attitude towards one's own (religious) group implies a negative, hostile attitude towards other (religious) groups. It was first propounded in the early 20th century by the ethnologist William Sumner (1906) in his functional ethnocentrism theory, and was developed further by Gordon Allport (1954) in his theory on prejudice. These ideas are strongly supported by social identity theorists (Tajfel 1978). Social identity theory in its turn draws on Festinger's social comparison theory and entails the following. First, a person's identity or self-concept derives to a large extent from group membership. Secondly, people strive for positive self-esteem and therefore desire a positive social identity. Thirdly, people are even willing to skew their view of the other negatively to enhance their own self-esteem.

   This process can be clarified further with reference to categorisation. Categorisation means treating different things as if they were the same. For example, by saying that Europeans are individualistic and Africans are communitarian, or that Muslims believe in one God and Christians believe in three Gods, people simplify reality. To enhance a positive sense of belonging or 'we-feeling' members of a group tend to perceive only its positive features, whereas they tend to perceive only the negative features of other groups' members. Van Wiele (2000) distinguishes five indicators of prejudice: omission, selection, stereotype and cliché, dichotomy, and simplification.

   In missiology Hoekendijk's view of mission history as a process of paganisation supports this theory. Needing a justification for their missionary endeavours, missionaries perceived themselves as representatives of Christian civilisation and non-Christian people as pagans, uncivilised and unsaved. They were convinced that they had the light of Christ and that the pagans lived in darkness. The pagans would be eternally damned unless they believed the Christian message brought by the missionaries and converted to their point of view. By using the light/darkness dichotomy they reduced empirical reality to what they

wanted to see (Friedli 1974: 69–72). European colonisers did the same when they made the distinction between 'savage' and 'civilised' (Bitterli 1991).

The same black-and-white thinking applies to Muslims, who distinguish clearly between *Dar al-Harb* (Abode of War) and *Dar al-Islam* (Abode of Islam), or Pentecostals who distinguish between born again Christians as the saved and all others (including other Christians) as the lost. A similar position is adopted by the *takfir* ideology, which is not primarily directed to non-Muslims or infidels but to lapsed Muslims. 'Orientalism' and 'Occidentalism' could be understood in terms of the same mechanism of bracketing disparate things together as if they are one. European scholars labelled a whole complex of local traditions 'Hinduism' and by so doing they were able to dominate them; the same applies to African Traditional Religions, as we have seen in section 3.1.

Social identity differentiated

Empirical evidence substantiating social identity theory is overwhelming. Various studies suggest that faithful churchgoers are more ethnocentric than others. Others conclude the reverse: the higher the church attendance, the lower the ethnocentric attitudes (Eisinga, Felling & Peters 1988: 40). Eisinga, for example, found that people who attend church infrequently are more pre-judiced than regular churchgoers.

The Religion and Values department of the Gallup Organisation, which introduced the Religious Tolerance Index in 2003, found in its public opinion poll of that year that "a higher level of tolerance is correlated with a higher likelihood of membership of a faith community". This suggests that "most faith communities are doing a good job in promoting respect for other faiths", the researchers say, hence active participation in a religious community is likely to make people more tolerant. Yet others suggest that the relation between church attendance is not linear but curvilinear: people who are completely separated from the church and people who are completely faithful to the church are least ethnocentric. Infrequent churchgoers are the most ethnocentric (Eisinga, Felling & Peters 1988: 41).

If social identity theory were true, an attitude of full openness and full commitment would be practically impossible. Yet this is the attitude of many sincere missionaries who 'went native' and developed what is called multiple identities (Wijsen 2003).[229] Studies of popular religion and synthesis moreover

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229   An example in the scholarly field is Wim van Binsbergen (2003: 155–193), who combined the roles of social scientist and diviner priest. To some extent he puts Cox's methodological conversion into practice (though he does not refer to it). In a further elaboration on what he called the "Panikkar-Krieger thesis" (Cox 1996: 168), Cox (1998: 137) stresses that "methodological conversion remains methodological rather than confessional, it never really involves conversion". For Van Binsbergen (2005: 220–223) his conversion to *sangoma* beliefs was real, however contradictory and questionable it may have been.

show that most faithful develop an intermediate set of beliefs and practices, which synthesises two or more traditions (see section 6.1). Research on the ground suggests that logically exclusive ideas can be combined and integrated on an existential level (Wijsen 1997b).

Cognitive consistency

The tendency towards cognitive consistency is often interpreted as characteristic of human rationality and might therefore be expected to be (almost) universal. According to Festinger (1957: 4) cognitive dissonance is an uncomfortable state of mind in which people feel they "find themselves doing things that don't fit with what they know, or having opinions that do not fit with other opinions they hold". The inconsistency may be between convictions and practices, or between conflicting convictions. Festinger theorises that people tend to harmonise the contrasting elements.

The empirical evidence supporting this theory seems overwhelming. The fourth attitude that we distinguished in the introduction to chapter six – an intermediate set of beliefs and practices that most Africans create to cope with interconnected cultures – could be explained as an attempt to harmonise the conflicting truth claims of various religious traditions. The second attitude, extremism, can be explained in terms of the same mechanism. For example, extremist Muslims believe that they are "the best nation ever brought forth to men" (Sura 3:106). When confronted with believers of other religions who claim equality or even superiority, they refuse to compromise. Instead they try to bring the situation in line with their conviction, by peaceful means or forcibly.

The problem is that most of the research that supports Festinger's theory was conducted in North America and Western Europe. To what extent is cognitive dissonance experienced as 'disturbing'? Could it be that certain personality factors influence acceptance of cognitive dissonance? Research conducted in non-Western countries suggests that to people living in communitarian societies cognitive dissonance is not as uncomfortable a state of mind as it is to members of individualistic societies. Put differently, independent selves are more likely to see inconsistency as disturbing than interdependent selves. Cross-cultural research suggests that cognitive consistency is more accepted as normal in the Western world than in other parts of the world, hence is culturally relative (Kim 2002: 76).

Exclusion on various levels

Scheepers, Gijsberts and Hello (2002) made an important contribution to the debate by distinguishing various dimensions of religiosity and showing that not all dimensions lead to exclusivism to the same extent. These authors distinguish

the dimensions of practice, belief, experience and consequence. In a study of religious instruction in Christianity and Islam we found that in the intellectual (doctrine) and institutional dimension (community development) an exclusivist attitude is stronger than in the spiritual and ethical dimension.[230] Spirituality entails a strong sense that all are one in the face of Absolute Mystery; and ethics implies a strong feeling of respect and solidarity. In our research into Muslim-Christian relations in Tanzania we found that Muslims considered their main opponent to be the government, not Christians as such (Wijsen & Mfumbusa 2004).

Here studies of multiculturalism prove helpful. Societies are not multicultural in the sense of a mosaic or patchwork with well-defined components, but more like a salad bowl or fruit cocktail (Hannerz 1992; Van Binsbergen 2003). In pluralistic societies total identification with one point of view is sociologically speaking impossible, unless people choose to live an insular life imprisoned in their own 'pillar' or 'tribe'. These ghettos can become rigoristic, as present-day extremist movements (both Christian and Islamic) show. Yet these trends represent a minority (less than 10%), as we have seen, and most believers prefer to live together peacefully and develop partial identification with two or more cultural orientations (Van Binsbergen 2003: 492). Thus global ecumenism (Hannerz 1992: 217–267) is possible and the hope that "all may be one" (1 Cor 15:28) may be kept alive.

Dialogue as 'working misunderstanding'

How, then, must we understand the conflicts that we described earlier (section 5.1)? Is there a contradiction in our theorising? In previous works (Wijsen 1993: 251–252; Tanner & Wijsen 1993: 193; Wijsen & Tanner 2000: 34) I spoke about the encounter between Christianity and other religions as a 'working misunderstanding'. Adherents of different faiths use the same symbols but they attach different meanings to them (Pambe 1982; Wijsen 1993; Meyer 1995).[231] The dean of the African Orthodox Seminary, whom we quoted before, gave an example of this. Muslims and Christians use the same word for

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230   For this reason, Christian and Islamic mysticism (Sufism) might offer a better ground for Christian-Muslim relations than dogmatic precision (Wijsen 1997a: 173–174; Shenk 1983). The same would apply to ritual and, as we will argue later, to ethics (referring to Matt 7:16 and Sura 5:48).

231   In my doctoral dissertation on interaction between Christians and indigenous believers I gave various examples of the polysemy of symbols. For example, my informants would speak about a rosary as an (traditional) amulet; the eucharist as a (traditional) sacrifice; the host as (indigenous) medicine; the priest as a (local) healer, and so on (Wijsen 1993: 93, 112, 116).

God (*Mungu*) and may even say the Our Father together, but they attach different meanings to the word *Mungu*. For Muslims Allah "begetteth not, nor was begotten" and there is "none comparable unto Him" (Qur'an 112:2–3). The Christian idea of incarnation is foreign to them.[232] Muslims and Christians in East Africa use the same religious vocabulary, but the meanings of the words may be different. This is what Mazrui and Mazrui (1995: 2) mean when they speak about the integrative role of Swahili. Swahili facilitated a "diffusion of Christianity and Islam". That is why they call Swahili an ecumenical language (Mazrui & Mazrui 1997: 171). As a lingua franca Swahili mediates between Christians and Muslims.[233]

It is hypothesised that there are cultural universals (Wiredu 1996: 21–33) or cultural overlaps (Mall 2000: 6). That makes intercultural communication possible. There is, however, neither total translatability (identity) nor radical un-translatability (alterity), only analogy.[234] "Understanding cultures is a complex matter," says Mall (2000: 16), thus "there are degrees of understanding and degrees of misunderstanding both in cases of self-understanding and understanding of the other." In other words, intercultural communication is an 'understanding misunderstanding' or a 'misunderstanding understanding' (Van Binsbergen 2003: 287).

The 'working misunderstanding', then, is a basis for both social cohesion and conflict. It works as long as life goes smoothly. But in times of distress, as noted earlier, things may go haywire. Here social identity theory (Tajfel 1978) must be complemented by realistic group conflict theory; conflicts are caused not only by social categorisations but also by conflicting interests and competition for scarce resources (Sherif 1966). The intermediate set of beliefs and practices mentioned in the introduction to chapter six may turn into a form of extremism. Today's 'syncretism' may become tomorrow's 'anti-syncretism' (Stewart & Shaw 1994), as was observed in Nigeria and Sudan. This is the complexity of interculturalism, in which cultures overlap partially.

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232 As noted already, the same applies to concepts like religion and spirit. No African language has a word for religion (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 2004: 31). Religion seems to be an alien concept in Africa, though it is helpful in societies with division of labour. The Arab word '*dini*' has different connotations in Christianity and in Islam. The same applies to 'Spirit' (Kenny 1999).

233 In an interview with *shehe* Mbaraka Rusheke in Sirari, Tanzania he used typical Christian terms, apparently to create rapport between him and me. He spoke about the mosque being the *kanisa* (church) of the Muslims. He also spoke about the niche (*mihrab*) being the *altari* (altar) in the mosque. And he said that he was sent as pastor (*mchungaji*) to Sirari by the diocese (*jimbo*).

234 This insight makes Sanneh's theory about the translatability of Christianity and the untranslatability of Islam questionable. Both religions are neither totally translatable, nor radically untranslatable.

The polyphonic self

The theory that perceives the human being as a polyphonic self and a mini-society (Hermans & Kempen 1993) explains multiculturalism and multi-religiosity better than social identity theory. In present-day pluralistic societies people have multiple identities. There is polyphony and dialogue between various positions (Hall 1991). This was proved by a study of burial rituals in Luoland. When confronted with death people hear various voices that start negotiating, not only between people but also within one and the same person. There is the traditional voice (Indigenous), the religious voice (Muslim or Christian) and a modern, secular voice. According to the traditional voice the Luo must 'bring the body home', according to the religious and secular voices it is not necessary and sometimes even unwise to do so.[235]

Here the insight that most Africans have a pragmatic worldview (see section 3.1) is helpful. They look for health and wealth and go where it is available at the lowest cost. They just cannot afford to invest in things that yield no return. As one of our informants said:

"I was baptised a Catholic. When I married a Muslim, I became a Muslim. Then, when we had to educate our children we sent them to a Catholic school and I became a Catholic. Now my children are grownup, and I have become a Muslim again."

Grounded theory approach

The first theologian to speak and write about dialogue in a systematic way was the Dutch historian of religion and missiologist Hendrik Kraemer (1960). He had had missionary experience in the non-Western world himself. With our current knowledge and understanding of non-Western religions we may no longer agree with him, but nevertheless he laid the foundations for a theology of dialogue (see introduction). Unlike his teacher Karl Barth, Kraemer claimed that data gathered by history and phenomenology of religion can and must be used in developing a theology of religions. By doing so he was able to see that there is revelation in non-Christian religions, be it incomplete. Like Samuel Kibicho – although they came to different conclusions – Kraemer depended heavily on religious scholarship.

The insight to be gained from Kraemer and Kibicho is that a breakthrough in theology of religions or theology of interreligious dialogue cannot come from a systematic theological point of view alone. Real transformations may

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235   Because of the HIV epidemic more and more families in Luoland are affected by aids and people have to be creative, as they cannot perform traditional funeral rites because of financial and other constraints. Disputes about where the body is to be buried are common in Kenya (Ojwang, Mugambi & Aduwo 1989).

be expected only if one includes empirical data and brings them into a critical dialectic relationship with normative references. And these data should not be generated behind a desk, but through participant observation in the field (Wijsen 1993: 273). As Krieger (1991: 124–125) points out, believers do not first *have* truth and then communicate it to others; instead they *discover* truth in their communication with others.

This approach is summarised by Max Warren (1963: 10–11) in his general introduction to John Taylor's *The primal vision*, words which introduced the ideas underlying his *Christian presence series*, so typical of the Anglican tradition of Kenneth Cragg and others.[236]

> "Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes, for the place we are approaching is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on men's dreams. More seriously still, we may forget that God was here before our arrival. We have then to ask what is the authentic religious content in the experience of the Muslim, the Hindu, the Buddhist, or whoever he may be. We may, if we have asked humbly and respectfully, still reach the conclusion that our brothers have started from a false premise and reached a faulty conclusion. But we must not arrive at our judgement from outside their religious situation."

This approach comprises four steps: crossing the frontiers of one's own culture, participation in the world of 'the other', careful observation and interpretation of what is going on there, evaluation from within and feedback to our own point of view. It is a matter of getting an inside perspective and crossing over to the other's point of view. This is what scholars of religion would call switching and coordinating perspectives. In section 8.3 we criticise this way of looking at intercultural and interreligious understanding, but it should be noted at this point already that Max Warren adds a social dimension to switching and coordinating perspectives, which makes it a much broader concept than a purely cognitive one. It is probably no coincidence that John Taylor (1972), after having used this approach 'from within' and 'from below', was able to write *The go-between God*, in which he advocates a more or less independent relation between the Holy Spirit and Christian mission.

Conclusion

In this chapter we explored the contours of a theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective. The envisaged theory is theological and socio-scientific. We are indebted to the legacy of Samuel Kibicho, who said that

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236 In Ludwig and Adogame's (2004: 227–236) overview of *European traditions in the study of religion in Africa*, Kevin Ward describes Max Warren and John Taylor under the heading "A theology of attention". Warren prefers the term 'attention' to 'dialogue' (p. 231).

a believer of a specific religion "must evangelise as if it is the only carrier of the only fully–saving revelation" *and* "must acknowledge and accept the claim of uniqueness and ultimacy or finality in every other genuine religion" (Kibicho 1984: 24–25). Is this an African model of a theory of interreligious relations? Can it be defended from a theological and socio-scientific perspective? We advocate a theological theory in which the Spirit is not subordinated to Christ, but in which "the Spirit blows where it wills" (John 3:8). A theology of interreligious dialogue from an African perspective must be pneumatological and pragmatic, hence empirical. Both Christians and Muslims could agree on that.[237]

These insights correlate with socio-scientific insights. Whereas social identity theory can explain why believers tend to be hostile toward believers of other faiths, it explains openness only partially, recognising that some dimensions of religion tend to be more exclusive than others. The theories of the human being as a polyphonic self and of intra-religious dialogue as a condition for interreligious dialogue explain believers' being 'fully committed' and 'fully open' at the same time better than the theory regarding switching and coordination of perspectives. Understanding is always partial misunderstanding; thus the 'working misunderstanding' in interreligious relations is a condition for both cohesion and conflict.

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237   Samuel Kibicho's pragmatic, pluralistic interpretation of the gospel notion of fruits of the Spirit seems to accord perfectly with Farid Esack's interpretation of Sura 5:48, which we outlined at the end of section 6.1. See also Tariq Ramadan (2004: 202–203).

Chapter Eight

Africans in diaspora

One of the last discoveries a fish would make is the existence of water, says Fortmann (1971: 7). Only on the fish vendor's cart would it realise what it means to be a fish. Much the same applies to Europeans living and working in Africa, and to Africans living and working in Europe. It is in a strange environment that one's own characteristics obtrude. Thus it is in diaspora that one discovers what it means to be an African. So what light does the diaspora experience shed on the issue of Africa's community spirit and its tradition of peaceful coexistence? It is often said that Africans consider themselves Africans first, and only secondly Muslims or Christians. That would facilitate communication between Africans in Europe, be they Christian, Muslim or Indigenous believers, as they have common ground, a meeting point, namely their Africanness, the typical African worldview. Research on the ground suggests otherwise. African Christians seem to see themselves first and foremost as Christians and only secondly as Africans. By doing so they hope to facilitate their integration into (what they perceive as) predominantly Christian nations (Ter Haar 1998a: 83–84).

8.1 Reversed mission

Most countries in Europe host a variety of migrant communities (Ter Haar 1998b), among them many African communities (Ter Haar 1998a; Gerloff 2001; Adogame 2005). In most cases this is a consequence of European colonial and missionary history and its present form of globalisation. Promoting open markets also means free traffic of ideas, goods and people. In a planned way this was the case with post-war migrant labourers, who were invited to European countries to contribute to economic growth, and it is still the case with information and communication technicians from India and South African nurses today. In an unplanned way it applies to economic and political refugees, who come and will continue to come in ever greater numbers.

Integration while retaining identity?

The scholarly debate centres on the extent to which, and the way in which, African migrants are integrated into European societies, and whether or not

they need to integrate. Whereas some decades ago the dominant view in Europe was that ethnic minorities must integrate, albeit retaining their identity, some scholars now speak about a 'multicultural tragedy' or 'multicultural illusion' (Huinders 2000), especially after the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004 and in London in 2005. Racial upheavals in Paris and Birmingham in the autumn of 2005 clearly show the limits of multicultural societies, these critics say. They see growing segregation of ethnic minorities and stress the need for assimilation to the dominant European culture (*Leitkultur*).

Empirical research findings on integration of migrants in the Netherlands are ambiguous. Some researchers suggest that socio-economic integration is successful, but the socio-cultural gap between the indigenous people and foreigners is widening. Others claim that migrants' lifestyles do not differ essentially from the individualised, secularised lifestyle in most European societies. Apart from pillarised education, there is no indication of a reversal of the modernisation process. The assimilation of migrants, and especially their children, to dominant Western European cultural patterns proceeds more rapidly than is usually thought.

African migrant communities

Various scholars concentrate on identity interactions of African migrants, more particularly on the conditions permitting such interaction and its effects. In the case of conditions the question is whether a clear, strong identity implies that African migrants close themselves to others. Or does it guarantee openness to others, does it provide a springboard to society? In the case of effects the question is whether interaction with others means that migrants lose their identity, or whether it strengthens that identity.

African Muslims in Europe have not formed their own religious communities to the same degree as African Christians have done. African Muslims pray in mosques that are frequented by Muslims from other countries (e.g. Pakistan), they pray at home or they don't pray at all. Research suggests that West African Muslims have found their way into Pakistani mosques partly through the use of Arabic, the lingua franca of Islam.[238] Thus they do not feel the same need to create own communities as West African Christians do. Muslims from Senegal have formed networks through their brotherhoods, as they did in the United States of America (Ter Haar 1998b: 44).

The research into African Christians in Europe adds an interesting dimension to the scholarly discourse on multiculturalism, which is otherwise focused

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238   This observation seems to support the thesis that Islam is globalised, whereas Christianity is localised. Within Christianity, Protestantism is more localised than Roman Catholicism, which stresses its universalism.

on Muslims. Is the non-integration of non-Western Muslims attributable to ignorance of Islam, as some scholars suggest? And is the integration of non-Western Christians facilitated by the fact that it takes place in a society, which, while highly secularised, still has a dominant Christian culture? To what extent is religion a factor in the integration process?

The finding of several scholars is that there seems to be a decline in institutional affiliation, hence growing individualisation among migrants in Europe. But in contrast to Europeans, religion remains important to migrants and they continue to adhere to non-Western norms and values. As an African Christian interviewee put it: "We have to adapt all week long. On Sunday we want to be ourselves" (Wijsen 2003).[239] What they find difficult to accept is the liberal individualism of Western culture.[240] This confirms Mazrui's (2006: 223) observation that the gap is not only, and maybe not mainly, between Muslims and Christians, but between Africans and Europeans, between Western and non-Western perspectives. We will explore this further in section 8.2. It is where the reversed mission of African Christians starts.

The African diaspora in Europe

Again we are not primarily interested in grassroots movements. As in the other chapters, our focus is primarily on African intellectuals. It is noted that more and more non-Western migrants, many of whom are Africans, settle in Europe, where they are growing not only in numbers but also in societal influence.[241] Various African intellectuals have leadership positions in political parties, municipal administrations, labour organisations, universities, church and other non-governmental organisations.[242]

Not surprisingly, African intellectuals' views of multicultural societies and interreligious relations are as varied as those of Europeans. In a small country

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239 Another interviewee expressed his response to living in the diaspora by citing to the popular song based on Psalm 137: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion."

240 This accords with our earlier finding (section 5.1) concerning Western and non-Western opinions about human rights. Mazrui translates the autonomy versus authority dichotomy into a liberty versus dignity dichotomy. Applied to the situation of women it means: "By the 20th century women in the Muslim world were accorded more dignity and less liberty than women in the West. And women in the West were correspondingly accorded more liberty than dignity than women in the Muslim world" (Mazrui 2006: 77).

241 Recent examples are the appointment of an Anglican archbishop of Ugandan descent in York and the appointment of Samuel Kobia of Kenya as secretary general of the World Council of Churches.

242 In the Netherlands ten percent of members of parliament are of non-Western descent. This accords with the proportion of non-Western members of the Dutch population. In other European countries, notably France and Germany, participation of non-Western migrants in government is much lower.

such as the Netherlands, with no more than 16 million inhabitants, Cape Verdean politicians are represented in both left wing and right wing parties. Ayaan Hirsi Ali (2002), a woman politician of Somalian descent, wants to liberate Muslim women from their 'ignorant beliefs'; another Somalian woman, Yasmine Allas (2006), a famous writer, considers herself a 'black liberal Muslim woman'. Mohammed B., the Dutch citizen of Moroccan descent who killed film maker Theo van Gogh, preaches radical Islam, whereas Ali B., also a Dutch citizen of Moroccan descent, is a popular rapper who preaches love and respect.

African Muslim scholars in Europe

Some African Muslim scholars, mainly North Africans, are quite influential in the discourse on interreligious relations in Europe. Mohammed Arkoun (1987) is an Algerian philosopher who has been professor of the history of Islamic thought at the Sorbonne (Paris) and at the University of Amsterdam. He advocates a radical reinterpretation of Islamic thought to make it (more) compatible with European culture. Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid (2004) is an Egyptian. He was professor of Islamic literature at the famous Al-Azhar university in Cairo, the most influential Islamic university in the world, which is situated in Africa. He is currently professor of Qur'anic studies at the University for Humanistics at Utrecht. He favours a hermeneutic understanding of the Qur'an and a humanistic form of Islam. Both scholars maintain that Islam is completely compatible with European society and advocate assimilation. Tariq Ramadan (2004) is a Swiss philosopher of Egyptian descent who is a visiting fellow at the University of Oxford and holds an endowed chair on identity and citizenship at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. He seems to have more reservations and is therefore more popular among Muslim youths.[243] He propounds integration of Muslims into European societies while retaining their identity. Hence he advocates women's right to wear the veil and the protection of other Islamic rights. Ramadan taught philosophy and Islamic studies at the University of Fribourg and is currently visiting fellow at Saint Anthony's College, Oxford.[244]

Abdulkader Tayob (1999), a South African Muslim, worked at Radboud University Nijmegen (2002–2006) but is now back at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. He concentrates on the study of Islam in the modern

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243   A problem with some liberal Muslim scholars is that they are not recognised by the wider Muslim communities. This obstructs communication between indigenous and foreign populations.

244   At present there are two Islamic universities in the Netherlands, though not yet recognised by the Dutch government as institutions of higher learning. There are two programmes for Islamic theology, one at the Free University of Amsterdam, the other at the University of Leiden. Recently a training programme for imams was recognised at the Holland Institute for Higher Learning.

world. His countryman, Farid Esack (1987), is working at the University of Cape Town but is quite influential in Europe and the United States of America, where he holds the chair of interreligious studies at Xavier University, Cincinnati. Also influential is Ali Mazrui, a Kenyan who lives and works in the United States of America. Mazrui (2004: 1) seeks to elaborate further on Kwame Nkrumah's concepts of 'consciencism' and pan-Africanism, which he prefers to designate Africa's 'triple heritage' or 'trinity of cultures': harmony between African Religion, Christianity and Islam, the last two being African religions as well. Thus whereas some Muslim leaders advocate assimilation, others want to retain Islamic identity.

African Christian theologians in Europe

Compared to Muslim scholars of African descent, Christian scholars of African descent are remarkably silent about interreligious relations in Europe.[245] As director of the Black and White Christian Partnership Centre at Selly Oak, Birmingham,[246] Patrick Kalilombe from Malawi was very much involved in the discourse on multicultural societies in Europe but not so much in Muslim-Christian dialogue. Kalilombe's cause was taken up by the Centre of Black Theology at the University of Birmingham, led by Garnet Parris. Theologians like Benezet Bujo from Congo, working in Fribourg, and Elochukwu Uzukwu from Nigeria, working in Dublin, primarily occupy themselves with the rehabilitation of African Christian identity, being both authentically African and truly Christian. To the best of my knowledge John Mbiti, who has lived in Europe for many decades, never published about the African diaspora. Probably he takes it for granted that Christianity is already 'at home' in Europe. Thus the issue of integration is considered less relevant to Africans Christians than to African Muslims. Adogame (2005), a University of Bayreuth graduate who is now lecturer in World Christianity in the University of Edinburgh, did write about the Black Diaspora.

Quite influential is Kwame Bediako, director of the Akrofi-Christaller Memorial Centre for Mission Research and Applied Theology in Akropong-Akuem, Ghana but regular guest professor at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the non-Western World at the University of Edinburgh, where he collaborates with Andrew Walls, his doctoral thesis supervisor. Bediako

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245   Seemingly these scholars see or prefer to see Europe as a 'Christian' continent, rather than a
       multireligious continent. Their emphasis is on African Christian identity and inculturation in
       Europe.
246   The centre was founded by Roswith Gerloff in 1978 and headed by her till 1985, when
       Kalilombe took over. Leadership was taken over by Joe Aldred till the centre closed down in
       2003.

also focuses on the rehabilitation of African culture and making 'Christ feel at home in African Christianity'. An exception to the rule is Gavin d'Costa, as already mentioned, an Indian of Kenyan descent, working in the department of theology and religious studies at Bristol University, United Kingdom. He wrote quite extensively on theology of religions, mainly from a philosophical point of view, seemingly quite detached from concrete interreligious dialogue. Recently he moved to other systematic theological topics.

Another example is Lamin Sanneh, born in Gambia. Since 1989 he has been professor of missions and world Christianity at Yale Divinity School. His distinction between mission as diffusion and mission as translation is quite influential in Europe, partly because he can claim to have been a Muslim himself. Sanneh argues for the un-translatability of Islam into African culture, as opposed to the translatability of the Christian message ('vernacularisation'). He seems to inspire more conservative European Christians who are sceptical about interreligious relations.[247] Other influential African voices in Europe are African philosophers working in the United States of America, including Kwame Appiah, whom we dealt with already in section 3.2.

Religious acculturation

It remains a question whether, and if so for how long, migrants maintain their 'different-ness' in their new environment. Convergence theory holds that migrants need three generations to adapt. The first generation maintains the values and norms of their country of origin; the second generation lives in two worlds; and the third has largely adapted to the new country. Another theory is that adaptation starts with a phase of confusion, followed by a spell of acculturation, whereupon there is swing back to earlier norms and values.

Research into the position of African Christians in the Netherlands shows that both theories contain some truth. It matters a great deal which group one is looking at, in which place and at what time. Integration seems easier when the host society is itself culturally mixed (as in most mega-cities), in times of economic growth, and so on. Are these scholars talking about Cape Verdeans in Rotterdam, Ghanaians in Amsterdam, or Somalians (at present the fastest growing group of migrants in the Netherlands) in the east of the country? Apart from the size of the group and the duration of their residence, religion is an important factor, something that is often overlooked in studies of new migrants in the Netherlands. Cape Verdeans and Ghanaians are usually Christians and

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247   Lamin Sanneh orginates from Gambia, but he became an American national. He converted from Islam to Protestantism and from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism. In 2005 pope John Paul II appointed him consultant to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

prefer to present themselves as such in order to promote integration (without forfeiting their identity) with Dutch society (Ter Haar 1998a: 83–84).

The Dutch, on the other hand, see African migrants primarily as Africans, thus stigmatising them and keeping them at arm's length. This illustrates the ambiguity of identity politics. Some identities are created as part of a classification system for oppression; they are used as instruments of subordination. Yet the reverse is that these identities are also used to empower people as possessors of a self-affirmative identity; they provide a basis for community and solidarity (Appiah 2005: 112). African Christians' religious self-definition as 'Christians first' in order to facilitate integration with Dutch society is a clear example of religion being used by people and groups as symbolic capital to serve their interests (Bourdieu 1991). In reaction to the condemnatory attitude of Dutch citizens and not out of choice, African Christians isolate themselves in their own communities.

African Christians as bridge builders?

What about the relation between African Christians and African Muslims in Europe? Do they meet on the basis of common African-ness? At a gathering organised by Catholic and Protestant organisations for Christian migrants it was asked whether Christian migrants are or can be bridge builders in European mult-icultural societies. One Ethiopian participant said: "In Ethiopia we are not in the first place Muslim or Christian but Ethiopian." But is this true, and is it also true in Europe? Ter Haar's observation that African Christians emphasise their religious identity at the cost of their ethnic identity for strategic reasons is contested by Roswith Gerloff, who suggests that there may be a time lapse between black migration into Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, and black migration into the Netherlands and Germany in the 1970s and 1980s. "New arrivals may speak a more conciliatory language than those who have already experienced the harsh-ness of European racism," says Gerloff (2001: 172). The only difference seems to be between those who think Afro-centrically and those who regard themselves as 'Black Atlantic'. But "all of them feel 'African' as an answer to the process of de-culturalisation and de-spiritualisation" (Gerloff 2001: 173).

The question, then, is whether religion or ethnicity is the dominant factor. It would seem both, as Ter Haar's and Gerloff's studies show. In the diaspora situation religion becomes an important identity marker. At home religion is often taken for granted and most people identify only partly with it. But in a diaspora situation it becomes an important identity marker, a resource or 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1991). That is what culture does: it unites, it brings different people together, it is the organisation of diversity (Hannerz 1992) (see section 5.1). Ethnic and religious cultures become more important in situations of economic scarcity or political oppression; they unite people in defence against common enemies.

A factor that may prevent African Christians from being bridge builders is that many of them feel attracted to Pentecostal or charismatic churches, because these churches take spirit beliefs more seriously than mainline churches.[248] These Christians consider themselves born again and their attitude towards others, both European 'atheists' and Muslims, tends to be negative.[249] At a conference on non-Western Pentecostalism in the Netherlands, organised at the Free University of Amsterdam on the occasion of the institution of the chair of Pentecostal Studies and the opening of the Walter Hollenweger Centre at this university (Droogers, Van der Laan & Van Laar 2006) it was noted that African Christian communities seem more missionary than Asian communities, fuelled among other things by their own organisation GATE: Gift (previously: Gospel) from Africa to Europe.[250] The name is an allusion to the biblical metaphor 'gate'. "I am the gate. Whoever comes in by me will be saved" (John 10:9).

On the other hand, Africans have a pragmatic attitude and they can cooperate well even when they differ. Muslims and Christians in Nigeria have traded together for centuries. Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda coexisted. Thus Africans can collaborate even if they disagree or agree to disagree. An example is the Representative Council of Ghanaian Organisation which united to promote the emancipation and to counter the negative reputation of Ghanaians in the Netherlands. Both Christian and Muslim organisations are members – Redemption Faith Ministry and God's Word Centre as well as Ghana Muslim Union and Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission (Ter Haar 1998a: 142–146). In this case ethnicity, or rather nationality, is used as a resource to serve common interests.

8.2 The West and the rest of us

The foregoing discussion of the African diaspora in Europe shifts the discourse on interreligious relations from conflict between Christians and Muslims to conflict between Africans and Europeans or, to borrow Onwuchekwa Chinweizu's (1987) title once again, conflict between the West and the rest of us. The issue at stake is acceptance or rejection of modern values such as liberalism and individualism, a conflict that exists not only between cultures but also within them. Although Bediako (1992) claims that Christianity is a non-Western

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248   The term 'mainline churches' is tricky and must not be understood as dominant or majority denominations. Maybe 'old' and 'new' churches are better terms, though some Pentecostal churches are pretty old.

249   This is certainly not to deny that there are many 'ecumenical' evangelicals who have a dialogical spirit.

250   GATE was inaugurated at Tyndale Theological Seminary in Badhoevedorp, the Netherlands in 1994. It is an initiative of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa [and Madagascar] and aims to stimulate African ministers in Europe to evangelize Europeans.

religion, it cannot be denied that during 19th and 20th century mission in Africa Christianisation and Westernisation went together (Jenkins 2002: 33–38).

For many people in Africa, Christianity remains the 'white man's religion'. This also shows that a theology of interreligious dialogue must be supplemented by a theology of intercultural dialogue: dialogue between people who share the same religious faith but come from different cultural backgrounds, sometimes called intra-religious dialogue (not to be confused with Raimundo Panikkar's use of this word). Intra-religious dialogue is needed in both Christianity and Islam. In both religions there is a debate between advocates of tradition and those of modernity (Gyekye 1997), between conservatives and liberals, or whatever labels are used.

The cry for uhuru

Since the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001 calls for intercultural and interreligious encounters in Europe have increased. After being marginalised as socially irrelevant in earlier debates, religion is suddenly the centre of political interest, also in Africa (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004). 'No integration without religion' and 'religion as the mortar of society' have become slogans overnight. Interreligious conferences are organised everywhere. While these initiatives are estimable and needed, their influence should not be overrated. When scholars of religion speak about an interreligious hermeneutics (Sundermeier 2003) they should not forget that religions are always intertwined with social positions, minority or majority positions. In Europe, for example, Christians do not in the first place meet Muslims. They meet Moroccan or Turkish 'guest' workers, usually on the underside of society and they meet them not primarily as Christians but as employers, landlords, and so on.

In the introduction we pointed out the danger of culturalism. Problems are not solely economic and political, nor are they purely cultural and religious. There is also a perennial struggle for material assets – in Africa for fertile land, clean water and control over natural resources such as oil, gas, diamonds, gold and tropical hardwood (Collier & Sambanis 2005), in Europe for well-paid jobs and comfortable houses, their own schools, mosques and churches.

What the events of 11 September 2001 and subsequent developments have demonstrated is that there is widespread protest against Western expansionism. This was pointed out long ago by Hendrik Kraemer (1937), Max Warren (1963) and Arend van Leeuwen (1964), but Westerners seem to have difficulty grasping it. President Bush and prime minister Blair's 'global coalition against terror' does not mean that the world has embraced the Western notions of human beings and society. Anybody who engages in intercultural and interreligious dialogue knows that in this regard 'the West' is often diametrically opposed to 'the Rest' (Hall 1992; Becker 1999).

No dialogue without liberation

Looking at the rapid spread of mosques across urban Europe it would be easy to believe that Islam might be Europe's future religion. Yet a great many European immigrants are Christian and they raise the prospect of a revitalised Christian presence on European soil, says Jenkins (2002: 98). "People of African and Caribbean stock have revived Catholic communities in the metropolitan countries." At present about half of all churchgoers in London are black. Of course, "there is also the issue of harmonization". It is hard to predict "in how far the children of immigrants will adopt the laxer and more 'modern' thought-ways of Europe". But based on the American experience it is likely "that new immigrants are commonly more religiously active than their forebears at home . . . the process of secularisation is not yet that advanced, and for the next few decades, the face of religious practice across Europe should be painted in Brown or Black," says Jenkins (2002: 99).

It is striking that many theological studies of intercultural and interreligious interaction speak in terms of exchange, a mutual learning process and 'co-pilgrims in the world church', but they pay little or no attention to power and domination. Intercultural religious communication alone cannot resolve the conflicts. Interreligious dialogue, then, cannot confine itself to the problem of pluralism, but must always consider the problem of poverty as well.

This implies, furthermore, that a theology of interreligious and intercultural dialogue cannot happen without a theology of integral liberation, an issue that we will deal with in section 9.1. That is what African theologians mean when they advocate a theology of reconstruction, which does away with the Western distinction between inculturation and liberation. In terms of such a 'comprehensive approach' (a term that was propagated at the Jerusalem Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1928) it is extremely unwise to banish liberation theology from the curricula of faculties of theology as 'no longer applicable' and replace it with intercultural and interreligious theology. For this reason African scholars like Samuel Kibicho and Farid Esack advocate a liberation theology of religions, as did Aloys Pieris and Tissa Balasuriya in Sri Lanka in the 1970s.

Why is there a gap?

Why is the gap between European Christians and Christian migrants apparently growing? Psychological theories see the importance of religion to migrants as a source of security and identity in a context where everything is strange – religion as an identity marker, also observable among Dutch migrants in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Sociological theories hold that a positive attitude towards one's own (religious or ethnic) group more or less inevitably leads to a negative attitude towards other groups, as we saw in section 8.1.

Bourdieu (1991) perceives society as a pluralistic space of more or less independent fields (markets) where people or groups of people (actors) try to serve their own interests (make a profit), using various resources (forms of capital), partly in coalition and partly in competition with others. This explains why inclusion in one field (e.g. politics) can be accompanied by exclusion from another field (e.g. religion).[251] Bourdieu's answer to the question about the growing gap between European and migrant Christians would be quite simple: because the Christian migrants' share in the market of spiritual goods is growing, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Their numbers are increasing and their positions in the church become more influential, partly as a result of higher education. Hence European Christians fight back to reclaim their share in the market of spiritual goods.

Whereas Western forms of Christianity were still dominant some twenty to thirty years ago and non-Western Christian minorities were accepted as 'guests' or cared for as poor 'refugees' that needed help from the churches (clearly demonstrating their superiority), those guests have become residents and the poor refugees increasingly become church leaders, reversing the old sender-recipient relations: European mission has become reversed mission. The growing influence of Latino Roman Catholics in the United States of America is a case in point. The same might happen with black Christians in Europe. We have already cited the example of the black Anglican archbishop in York, United Kingdom. By the same token the power centre of the Anglican Church is getting nervous about what is happening on the periphery, for instance the growing homophobia displayed by some of its Nigerian bishops. In the Roman Catholic Church there was a debate about pope John Paul II's succession by a Latin American or African pope, which would have been inconceivable a few decades ago. According to various Vatican watchers a non-European pope is just a matter of time. This clearly shows the interconnectedness of cultures. The days when the periphery listened when the centre spoke are over. When the centre speaks, the periphery speaks back (Hannerz 1992: 264). There is a real struggle going on for material and spiritual goods, not only church buildings and church funds but also worldviews: against an individualistic, secularised image of human beings and society and for a more communitarian, charismatic view.

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251 The Tanzanian bishop who said "Muslims are our best friends" can once again serve as an example. There was a common struggle against condom usage, thus inclusion. But the Roman Catholic bishops were certainly not the best friends of Muslims in the field of politics. At the same time the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference issued various statements about the danger of growing Islamic influence in the Tanzanian government (Wijsen & Mfumbusa 2004).

Afrocentrism and Islamism

There is a lot of talk about the revival of Islam in Africa, Islamic fundamental-
ism or Islamic extremism. Our fieldwork shows that there is not a revival of
Islam as such but an increase in anti-Western sentiments, channelled both
through Islam and Indigenous Religion, and against a Western type of
Christianity. Seen thus, Islamism and Afrocentrism are part of the same
dynamics; the attempt at a coalition between *Mungiki* and Islam showed just
that. Just as there is 'Orientalism', so there is 'Occidentalism'. Buruma and
Margalit (2004) maintain that by simplifying European realities and creating
dichotomies between the Western and non-Western worlds a distorted picture
of the West is created by its enemies.

    After the re-election of president Bush in the Unites States of America on
2 November 2004, a dominant view expressed in talk shows on television and
radio in Kenya and in letters to the press was that it makes no difference
whether one is beaten by the cat or the dog. Neither Bush nor his competitor
Kerry were much interested in Africa, although Kerry's wife, an heiress of the
Heinz family and company, had lived in Africa.

    What we see happening is a clash between the lucky few well-to-do people,
a globally oriented minority, and the anti-Western masses. We hasten to add
that anti-Western feelings are not found only, and maybe not primarily, among
the poor but also among intellectuals, highly educated people, often trained at
universities in the West, and that anti-Western feeling often goes together,
strangely enough, with imitation of the West.[252] Moreover, the gap worldwide
is not between rich and poor countries but between rich and poor people every-
where, also in Europe and the United States of America. Therefore, once again,
interreligious dialogue and poverty reduction must go together, an issue that
we will deal with in section 9.1.

8.3 Switch and coordination of perspectives

To overcome the gap between the West and the rest of the world requires not only
combating poverty, crime and injustice but also intercultural religious communi-
cation, both intra- and interreligious communication. In an earlier chapter (1.1)
we noted that intercultural religious communication is not easy, because of the
history of slavery and colonialism. There are accusations on both sides. Let us
look at some of the obstacles to intercultural communication and understanding.
Certainly the legacy of slavery and colonialism on the side of the Western

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252   The image comes to mind of staff and students at various Nairobi universities, dressing and
      behaving more Western than Westerners at universities in Europe or the United States of
      America, but criticising the West.

dialogue partner is an obstacle, as demonstrated by Laurenti Magesa (2002b: 93–110) and others. But there are other obstacles, also on the African side.

Shame or guilt?

In an earlier chapter we spoke about disadvantages of Africa's communitarian spirit, especially in relations between insiders and outsiders (Gyekye 1997: 252–257). Without lapsing into simplistic dichotomies between European and African codes of conduct or collective and individualistic societies, various observers note that different worldviews and communication styles cause misunderstanding between Africans and Europeans (Bruce 2001: 300).[253] Studies in cross-cultural psychiatry, for example, show that Africans, when confronted with evil, tend to look primarily for extraneous sources such as witches or evil spirits. Their main question is, *why* did it happen? Why to me and not to my neighbour? Why now and not yesterday? For Europeans illness or death are explained primarily on the basis of *how* they happen, not why (De Jong 1987: 28–29).

Studies of pastoral care and counselling in Africa show that many Africans fear harming the group rather than doing something wrong. Evil means losing face and not being accepted by society rather than feeling guilty. This is because the behaviour of the individual is thought to have repercussions for the community. That is why in Africa aids deaths are shrouded in secrecy and shame (Gichure 2006: 97). Thus Africans tend to look at external factors ('I am bewitched') rather than at themselves ('I have been promiscuous').[254] To some extent this also applies to the recognition of African agency in colonial history. As was noted earlier, for many Africans it is difficult to accept that Africans did have and still have a share in what goes wrong in Africa. This makes communication between Africans and Europeans complex and conflictual (Wijsen 2003a)

Different communication styles

Studies of intercultural teaching show that understanding is impeded more by different communication styles than by different worldviews (Hofstede 1986; Fox 1994). In African societies group pressure is high. Thus it is more polite to maintain harmony than to speak one's mind openly; it is better to hide one's

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253   In her contribution to *East Africa in transition* (Bahemuka & Brockington 2001) Mary Bruce spells out all the differences between Africans and Americans: Americans are direct and open, Africans are not; Americans value egalitarianism highly, Africans do not; Americans value the future, Africans value tradition, and so on. See also Van der Walt's twelve differences between African and European thought worlds in Ochieng'-Odhiambo (1997: 65–66).

254   I think Magesa (1997: 169–170) misses this point when he says that in Africa, because of its holistic perception of human beings, guilt and shame are not properly differentiated.

opinion than to contradict or even criticise the other publicly; messages are hidden and indirect rather than transparent and straightforward; in exchanging ideas the emphasis is on form rather than on content. In general Africans avoid making others lose face and shaming the group.[255] One of my interviewees, a qualified marriage counsellor, particularly of HIV victims, said bluntly, "Husband and wife do not communicate." She told a story about a couple who were constantly falling sick. They went to hospital separately and both were diagnosed as HIV positive but they hid the truth from each other. "I believe they were trying to avoid the confrontation that frequently follows such news, with each party blaming the other," my informant said. Maybe that is why upheavals in Africa are so brutal. Frustrations that remained hidden over many years are expressed openly. Lacking the words to express anger, frustration takes the form of physical violence.

Whereas in many areas Africans are extremely creative in inventing new words, there is no good Swahili equivalent for 'dialogue'. The new dictionary gives '*mazumgumzo*', which means conversation. The word used by the Missionary Awareness Committee of the Religious Superiors' Association of Tanzania is '*majadiliano*', discussion. The word '*malumbano*' is used in a negative sense but has a neutral meaning. '*Vurugu*', too, is mainly negative. The difficulty in finding a suitable word seems to indicate that dialogue is not an indigenous concept in Africa.[256] Although African scholars tend to attribute the revival of Islam and Islamic extremism in Africa to outside influences, analysis of the bombing of the United States embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam clearly shows the interconnectedness of global and local movements in political Islam. One of the extremists who bombed the embassy in Dar es Salaam was a Tanzanian citizen; one of the people involved in the July 2005 bombings in London was a Somalian citizen of Ethiopian descent. The second-in-command of al-Qaeda, Ayman Al Zawahiri, who was behind the bombings in Tanzania, Kenya, Egypt and the United Kingdom is an Egyptian. This 'African connection' is often overlooked by scholars who attribute everything that goes wrong in Africa to outside influences.

Is a third-order perspective neutral?

In the context of intra- and interreligious dialogue one often hears of the need to switch and coordinate perspectives. This model was developed by social

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255   There is, however, also a new trend in African politics, where intellectuals are publicly and defiantly advocating what is known as 'naming and shaming' corrupt government officials, partly as a result of the New Partnership for African Development (see section 1.1).

256   Segeja's (1998) translation of the Sukuma word '*shikome*' as 'reverential dialogue in the family' is rather free. Originally the word '*shikome*' referred to the place where that dialogue took place, that is around the fire outside the home.

cognition psychologists (Selman) and adopted inter alia by theorists of communicative practice (Habermas, Appel). Briefly, it refers to the ability to understand the other's point of view and coordinate it with one's own. First the dialogue partners try to understand the point of view of their own religious tradition. That is the 'I'-perspective. Next they try to understand the point of view of the other's religious tradition. That is the 'you'-perspective. This is what Malinowski (1922: 25) calls "to grasp the native's point of view" and what Victor Turner (1969: 11), in his study of the Ndembu, calls "the Ndembu inside view".[257] For those who are acquainted with the hermeneutic tradition of Dilthey, Schleiermacher and Gadamer this is nothing new.

Both the 'I'- and the 'you'-perspectives are insider perspectives, as the 'you'-perspective also seeks to understand the others from their point of view, in terms of their religious tradition, to grasp "his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world" (Malinowski 1922: 25), or as Turner (1969: 11) puts it, "how the Ndembu themselves felt and thought about their own ritual". Last but not least, both perspectives must be coordinated from a third person or 'he/she'-perspective, also called an outsider perspective. The problem is that the term 'outsider perspective' has two meanings. First, it is the interpretation of the other's point of view from my point of view, not from that person's own point of view. Secondly, it is a 'neutral' or 'objective' interpretation of both my and your point of view.

But is this possible? Is there a 'neutral' or 'objective' observer? Postmodern anthropologists are less naive about objectivity and doubt whether it is possible to grasp the insider's point view, at least not completely.[258] They say that every observer has a standpoint and is rooted in a tradition. The 'modern' viewpoint, too, is rooted in a tradition, that of the European Enlightenment, and thus biased.[259] In his later work Habermas tries to resolve this dilemma by making a distinction between neutrality and impartiality: the third-order perspective does not favour one point of view more than another.

Switch of perspective

In light of Bourdieu's theory of practice the model of switching and coordinating perspectives is problematic for two reasons. First, in this theory a point of view or perspective is mainly cognitive. Bourdieu (1991), however, shows that

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257   When Max Warren (1963: 10–11) said, "Our first task in approaching another people . . . is to take off our shoes" he meant that missionaries must remove their cultural spectacles.

258   In contemporary theories of interviewing there is, therefore, a shift from positivism through emotivism to constructivism. Facts are not 'collected' but 'generated' in the field through the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Philips & Jørgensen 2002).

259   See also Olabimtan's postmodern, post-colonial critique of Platvoet and Van Rinsum's empirical approach, referred to in section 3.1.

worldview or perspective is part of our *habitus*, and *habitus* is emotional and even embodied. It is part of our life history and not easily set aside. It may even be irrational, ideological.

In addition points of view or perspectives are not (only) embedded in cognitive structures but reflect social structures and social positions. 'Visions of the world' reflect social di-visions. For this reason Bourdieu does not speak about participant observation but about 'participatory objectification', in which the observer explicates his or her social position in the field and his or her contribution to the production of the research material. Bourdieu criticises the epistemology of symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism is intersubjective, interpersonal, whereas he sees knowledge as related to social positions.

In his theory of communicative action Habermas presupposes that agreement among actors is induced by the force of stronger arguments. This requires communication without domination. But this is an ideal situation, a-historical and de-contextualised (Mall 2000: 39). It moreover presupposes logo-centrism. Without equating modes of thought with geographic territories we can say that the African approach is more emotive, as Lovemore Mbigi (1997) shows in his *ubuntu* management.

Coordination of perspectives

For the same reason one must relativise the possibility of coordination of perspectives. If perspectives reflect and relate to social positions, social differences must be levelled, or at least reduced. Research into pragmatics and discourse analysis has shown that language is dependent on context. Mutual understanding is possible only insofar as there is a mutual context (Gutt 1991: 97). This was understood by Max Warren (1963: 10–11). His comment that "we must not arrive at our judgement from outside their religious situation" (see section 7.3), continues:

> "We have to try to sit where they sit, to enter sympathetically into the pains and griefs and joys of their history and see how those pains and griefs and joys have determined the premise of their argument. We have in a word, to be 'present' with them."

In order to understand the other we have to try to sit where they sit and, in a word, be present to them. By this Max Warren meant that missionaries should reduce social differences between themselves and the people they are sent to. Thus understanding is not only a cognitive but also a social affair. That is why people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds who share the same social position understand each other quite well. This is the case with women worldwide, as we will see in section 10.3, but also with university professors and businesspeople. If understanding requires reduction of social differences, interreligious dialogue and social ministry must go together, as will be seen in section 9.1.

Gadamer would stress a 'fusion of horizons', a hermeneutics of harmonisation. But we must accept the possibility that fusion of horizons is not always and not entirely possible. Understanding is mostly partial understanding (Hall 2000: 16), misunderstanding understanding (Van Binsbergen 2003: 387) or working misunderstanding (Wijsen 1993: 251).

We have noted that points of view are very much related to social positions and as long social positions differ, fusion of horizons may well be impossible. In section 1.2 we distinguished between three models of interreligious hermeneutics: the mono, the multi- and the interreligious model. On similar lines Theo Sundermeier (2003: 70–72) distinguishes between three models. First there is the equality model, which perceives the other as an equal and a companion on the assumption that all people are basically the same. Secondly, there is the alterity model, which perceives the other as a stranger and potential enemy, on the assumption that all people are essentially different. Thirdly, there is the trader model, which perceives the other as a resource to serve one's interests. Traders are exempt from the fundamental enmity towards strangers, which is typical of the second model, yet they are not considered equals. Both parties accept the ghetto situation. In times of unrest, however, foreigners are easily branded scapegoats. Muslims and Christians in Nigeria traded together because they had common interests. Hutu cultivators coexisted with Tutsi pastoralists in Rwanda. But under the conditions of a free market economy and multi-party politics they became enemies. What attracted them to each other at one time became a threat at another. This fundamental ambiguity and complexity of the relation between 'we' and 'others' is what a theory of interreligious relations must get a grip on.

Conclusion

In this chapter we investigated whether Africans in diaspora can shed light on the issue of interreligious relations. In Africa, Africans in diaspora are not held in high esteem as they are seen as people who fled their countries. Yet African migrants in Europe and America can teach scholars of religion a lot about interreligious relations, as they look from a distance and thus more critically. Are Africans in diaspora bridge builders? What we see in the diaspora is that culture unites, both ethnically and religiously. But unity goes hand in hand with exclusion. There is competition between natives and foreigners, but also among the foreigners themselves. If there is a clash of cultures, it is not only between but also within cultures. Switching and coordination of perspectives alone will not resolve this clash. At best the other is not seen as an enemy but as a resource to serve one's interests. This is in keeping with the market mechanism mentioned in section 6.3. Thus one can understand that African

Christians seek the company of Dutch Christians, as Ter Haar observed in the Dutch situation. But one can also understand that Africans will unite in their struggle against the natives, as Gerloff observed in the United Kingdom. The 'other', however, is not seen as an equal. Both parties accept the ghetto situation. The 'other' is either a coalition partner or a competitor, depending on the situation (Bourdieu 1991). In this sense, Sundermeier's trader model (section 8.3) is a specification of Mall's intercultural model. The cultural overlap is a common interest to make profit (of whatever kind). But this is a risky enterprise, as the companion can become a competitor! Believers are 'merchants' (looking for profit) and 'missionaries' (professing and propagating faith). This is the ambiguous situation that scholars of religion have to cope with.

Chapter Nine

Towards a dialogical and diaconal church

In the previous chapter we argued that interreligious dialogue couldn't work without integral development. We summarised and reflected on Samuel Kibicho's statement that the missions of evangelisation and good neighbourly love were already exercised in African Indigenous Religions. We also saw that the fruits of the Spirit are the criterion of the authenticity of religions, both in Christianity and Islam. The Christian theologian, Samuel Kibicho, refers to Matthew 7:16: "By their fruits you shall known them". His Muslim colleague, Farid Esack, refers to Sura 5:48: "Strive in competition for good deeds" (section 6.1). All these insights provide an empirical, pragmatic foundation for a theory of interreligious relations. In this chapter we elaborate on the relation between dialogue and diaconal work, the African image of the church as the family of God, and pilgrimage as a root metaphor for interreligious relations.

9.1 Interreligious dialogue and social ministry

In his *Jesus and the witchdoctor* Alward Shorter (1985: 133) narrates a conversation between a Chinese doctor and an African patient in a Tanzanian hospital. The doctor was working in the context of a Chinese programme for medical development cooperation. One day he gave a patient medicine. The patient replied, "Thanks be to God." The doctor, a communist, replied: "I do not believe in God." The patient then said: "In that case you may keep your medicine." As noted in the introduction to chapter two, most Africans do not distinguish between objects and subjects, body and soul. All things have soul. Thus the spiritual and the material domains are interwoven. They deal in wholeness and 'integral' liberation, liberation of body and soul.

From social mission to integral mission

Christian mission in the 19th and 20th centuries was very different from 15th and 16th century mission. The evangelisation of Latin America in those early centuries consisted primarily in an initiation into the mysteries of the Christian faith. It was religious mission focused on the sacraments. In the 19th and 20th centuries mission was conducted in the wake of the European revolutions

(Malishi 1987: 103–107). The industrial revolution in England fired optimism about development and progress. From the point of view of Christianity it was a mixed blessing. On the one hand there was growing materialism, on the other greater affluence meant that philanthropists could afford to give generously to the church and its mission. The French revolution established the ideals of freedom, equality and brotherhood. Again the impact on the church was ambiguous. On the one hand the French revolution caused growing secularisation, on the other there was a religious revival, evidenced by the flowering of pietism and Methodism, and a humanitarian movement. Founders of missionary congregations like Francis Libermann and Charles Lavigery first promoted the welfare of slaves and later their emancipation (Burke 1998; Kollman 2005).

Nineteenth and 20th century mission was equated with modernisation and development. It was a 'mission of good works'. During those years European churches were having a running battle with Marxism, which took root among working class people. The Catholic church responded by formulating its social teaching. The popes, especially Leo XIII, promoted the globalisation of Catholic social teaching. Hence the 19th and 20th centuries saw the emergence of 'social mission'. Even today, when Africans show visitors 'the mission' (an anachronistic term but still widely used), the visitors will see a church, hospital, school and community hall all in one compound together.

Maybe this is another reason why interreligious dialogue does not feature prominently in Africa. In Asia mission was dominated by dialogue with Confucian and Daoist philosophers. In Africa it meant building hospitals and schools and offering the people all kinds of social services. Being converted was almost identical with learning to read and write and receiving an education. At present this one-sided approach is making way for a more balanced view. There is a shift from social mission to integral mission.

Holiness and wholeness

In section 6.1 we considered the influence of American fundamentalism in Africa (Gifford 1996). To understand its impact we need to draw a broader picture. North American Protestantism was the faith of the Pilgrim Fathers and Puritans, inspired by John Calvin. Among other things Calvin taught justification by faith alone and predestination. In reaction to Calvinism John Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism, stressed human agency. Grace transforms human beings and enables them to attain perfection in this life.

This gave rise to the holiness movement, which seeks to foster perfection through special techniques applied at revival meetings. The holiness movement highlighted the social dimension of the gospel. Science and technology were seen as God-given means to establish God's kingdom on earth and hasten the

coming of Christ.[260] The holiness movement is sometimes seen as a predecessor of the liberation theology of the 1970s and 1980s (Nwankwo 2004: 16–22).

Pentecostalism and prosperity gospel

Modern Pentecostalism is best interpreted against the background of the holiness movement. For Wesley perfection meant leading one's life with and in Christ. His vision was Christ-centred, although the Spirit was not excluded. Pentecostalism highlighted the pneumatological dimension of perfection. Sanctification was linked with the Holy Spirit and Spirit baptism. Inspired by Wesleyan optimism about grace, Pentecostalism emphasises the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are not only purifying and healing but also empower people for service and open them up to social justice and ecumenical dialogue (Nwankwo 2004: 23–29).

The prosperity gospel or faith movement can be interpreted as an expansion of this theology. God overcomes not only sin and sickness but also poverty and other forms of suffering. Prosperity preachers use faith instrumentally. The faithful believe that trust in God makes events turn out the way they wish, a mentality that accords with the positive thinking of Norman Peale but also differs from it, as it is not the human being but God who makes the difference. This outlook contrasts sharply with the evangelical view. John Stott declares the health-wealth gospel a false gospel (Nwankwo 2004: 29–32).

Nevertheless the prosperity gospel is a major influence in present-day Africa. Power Christianity suits Africans' orientation to magic and cosmic spirituality (Nwankwo 2004: 32 n. 74). Many Africans are not primarily interested in life after death but in a good life here and now. Maybe this was one reason for the relative success of Christianity in Africa, as conversion often brought material benefits (rice or beans Christians) – salvation of body and soul.

A biblical view

One of the disagreements between evangelical and ecumenical Christians is the place of human activity in salvation history and the dilemma of mission as proclamation of God's word versus mission as good works (Vähäkangas 2003: 78–80). This is an age-old problem in the missionary movement, closely related to the theory of indirect and direct missionary methods. On the one hand the movement stresses the missionary mandate as the biblical foundation of mission: "Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples"

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260   This spirit is evident in the programmes of the Africa Nazarene University in Nairobi. Among the objectives listed in its brochure is the following: "Identify the major issues that constitute Christian theological thought, and especially those theological issues that are at the core of the Wesleyan holiness tradition."

(Matt 28:19). On the other hand the last judgment is said to provide the biblical foundation: "whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me" (Matt 25:40). One tends to forget, however, that both texts have their origin and context in the sermon on the mount: "You are like salt for all mankind" (Matt 5:13) and "You are like light for the whole world" (Matt 5:14). So from a biblical perspective the dilemma between gospel witness and social ministry is artificial, as 'new' evangelicals or 'ecumenical' evangelicals would readily concede.

From a communication science perspective, too, the dilemma of dialogue versus diaconal work or social ministry is artificial. In most theories the aim of (interreligious) dialogue is understanding, harmony between the speaker's intention and the listener's reception. In section 8.3 we saw that understanding requires a reduction of social differences; the more distant the context of communicators, the lower the level of understanding (Gutt 1991: 97). Thus social ministry can be seen as a condition for (interreligious) dialogue. Moreover, if harmony between speaker and listener is achieved, understanding in its turn leads to solidarity, an awareness that the other's situation could have been my own. Hence social ministry is also a consequence of (interreligious) dialogue.

Spiritual power

It cannot be denied, however, that mainline churches have become 'secular' and that spiritual power is a forgotten dimension of cross-cultural mission and ministry (Kraft 1995: 3–11). If a possessed woman were to come to the Catholic Church saying, "Father, I have evil spirits", the parish priest would refer her to the mission hospital saying, "We don't believe in spirits" (Wijsen 1993: 237). Comoro and Sivalon (1999: 277) found that "the dominant secularised explanation of mission Roman Catholicism" was a motivation for people to join Felician Nkwera's Marian Faith Healing Ministry (see also Shorter & Njiru 2001: 103–110; Wijsen 1997b: 138–141). The same holds true for the healing ministry of Emmanuel Milingo (Shorter 1985: 187–190).

Africa's cosmic religion has a spirit of wholeness. Sacred and profane, spiritual and secular cohere (Agbasiere & Zabajungu 1989). "This should also be reflected in our engagement with people of other faith communities. I therefore propose a model of dialogue as 'engagement for the promotion of the Kingdom of God in our midst'. An engagement that seeks to remove all forms of injustice and promote a new humanity," says Temple (2001: 30–31). And he continues:

> "This model is both creative and liberative and should be seen as an essential part of the theology of reconstruction that is so vital and a priority to the African continent today. I therefore present to you 'dialogue as engagement for the promotion of the Kingdom of God' as *an authentic African model* [my italics] for further study and consideration."

9.2 The church as the family of God

Until the Second Vatican Council Catholic mission studies was church-centred. The objective of mission was formulated as 'winning people for the church', as it was taught that there is no salvation outside the church. Thus *plantatio ecclesiae* was the main mission model. The missionary mandate, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19–20), was seen as Christ's mandate to the church. Mission was *missio ecclesiae*.

During and after the Second Vatican Council concepts of mission changed, but the Council's own concept is not quite clear. There are various reasons for this: the Second Vatican Council was a three year process (1962–1965); mission concepts are spread over various documents; and a council always reflects some sort of power struggle. Besides, ambiguity seems to be a hallmark of Catholic pronouncements. There is always a possibility of other interpretations, which keeps the discussion open and few people feel excluded.[261] This complicates interpretation of the Second Vatican Council, in particular its concept of mission, evidenced by the fact that immediately after the council various – often contradictory – interpretations emerged: mission as development and later liberation, and mission as dialogue with cultures and religions. In his encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, pope John Paul II clearly recognised this legitimate pluriformity. At the same time he drew the boundaries of an authentic Roman Catholic understanding of mission in this letter (no. 83):

> "It is not right to give an incomplete picture of missionary activity, as if it consisted principally in helping the poor, contributing to the liberation of the oppressed, promoting development or defending human rights. The Missionary Church is certainly involved on these fronts but her primary task lies elsewhere: the poor are hungry for God, not just for bread and freedom. Missionary activity must first of all bear witness to and proclaim salvation in Christ, and establish local Churches which then become means of liberation in every sense."

Mission remains church-centred

The conciliar mission theology is not described in just one document (Arinze 1997: 58). Whereas the mission decree *Ad Gentes*, which stresses the necessity of evangelising non-Christians, was promulgated during the last session (7 December 1965), the council also produced *Nostra Aetate*, a declaration on

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261 The advantage of ambiguity and leaving open a multiplicity of interpretations over dogmatic precision is that it permits compromise. Maybe that is why there are more 'break-away' churches in the Protestant tradition than in the Roman Catholic tradition.

the church's attitude towards adherents of other religions (28 October 1965). The ecclesiological foundation was laid a year before in the dogmatic constitution on the church, *Lumen Gentium*, which describes the church as a sign and instrument of salvation (21 November 1964). But even more explicitly than the mission decree *Ad Gentes*, the pastoral constitution on the church in the contemporary world, *Gaudium et Spes*, also promulgated during one of the last sessions of the council (7 December 1965), defines the 'real' mission concept of the Second Vatican Council when it clarifies the relation between the church, the world and the kingdom of God.

The pastoral constitution on the church in the contemporary world was not foreseen in the original schedule. Seemingly the council fathers were not comfortable with the dogmatic constitution on the church, *Lumen Gentium*, so they felt a need for a further one. That is why there are two constitutions on the church, a dogmatic and a pastoral one. Whereas the pastoral constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, presents the church as a local community which is prepared to engage in a dialogue with the world, other religions and other churches (*Gaudium et Spes,* no. 92), the mission concept in the decree on mission, *Ad Gentes*, remains traditional. The theory of *plantatio ecclesiae* is upheld, and with it the church-centred view of mission. The new name for this view was 'mutual missionary assistance of churches'.

In the early 20th century theologians said that mission was not *missio ecclesiae* but *missio Dei*. It was Karl Barth who first introduced the *missio Dei* concept to safeguard mission from overly human interests. Mission is primarily the Father's sending of the Son. It is nothing more nor less than a manifestation of God's will and its fulfilment in the world. Thus mission is not there to serve the purpose of the church. It is exactly the other way round: the church exists for the purpose of mission, more especially the mission of God. Whereas Hendrik Kraemer (1969) saw mission as expansion of the church and Christianity, Johan Hoekendijk (1966), another Dutch missiologist, saw the church in the service of mission: demonstrating God's acts of salvation and liberation, justice and peace in the world, the universal *shalom/salaam*. That is what Hoekendijk meant when he wrote *The church inside out* (1966).

Up to now there have been two extreme positions in missionary ecclesiology, with many variations in between. One is the church growth model, the other the church-for-others model. Ecclesio-centric missiology revived in Donald McGravan's church growth movement. The aim is not to convert souls but to multiply churches. Arthur Glaser represents the same position. The reaction to this ecclesio-centric missiology was a world-centred missiology: a missionary church is a church for others. This model was adopted by the World Council of Churches and is now the main trend in Third World and liberation theology.

Missiological anthropology as a tool

African inculturation theologies centre on the interaction between Christianity and African culture, or rather, Christian culture and African cultures.[262] Here we find various attempts to borrow cultural patterns (Geertz 1993: 93) or root metaphors (Turner 1974: 33–42) to serve as a hat-stand, demonstrating the value of Christian ideas about Christ, the sacraments and the church to African people. Often the root metaphors are not based on real knowledge but on notions of an idealised or romanticised past. These inculturation theologies are systematic theologies in the sense that they start from a philosophical analysis of concepts, rather than a socio-scientific analysis of realities on the ground.

Segeja (1998) is a pastoral theologian who tries to inculturate the Christian concept of the church in Sukuma culture, using the practice of *shikome* (which he defines as reverential dialogue in the family). He concludes "that the reality of *shikome* defines the Basukuma understanding of the Church" and that this reality "sets out another possibility, probably better than that of Bujo and Nyamiti, at least among the Basukuma, of understanding the church in Africa" (Segeja 1998: 51).[263]

In his fieldwork Segeja found that 54.4% of his respondents still consider the reality of *shikome* a necessity that guarantees prosperity of *kaya* life. "The majority of these respondents are women and youth" (Segeja 1997: 13). He acknowledges that the fruits of *shikome* are not always the best. "Evidence indicates that not many young people spend much of their time at home. They are often on the move for business except when there is an urgent need or event that demands their presence". And he continues: "Many men often arrive at home late and drunk. In many *kayas*, you find mostly women and children at home in the evening hours" (Segeja 1997: 18–19). Yet he maintains that *shikome* is a model for the church in Africa, to be implemented in Small Christian Communities, at least in Sukumaland.

Missiological anthropology is a form of applied anthropology. Applied anthropology uses anthropological insights and methods to solve problems in

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262   If we take culture to be a shared meaning system, however complex and contradictory it may be, Christianity is simply another culture. This puts inculturation in the right perspective. It does not mean relating Christianity (as a religion) to culture, but relating Christianity (as a culture) to other cultures. In that sense inculturation is communication between cultures, not (just) communication between the gospel (as a religious system) and culture. The complexity stems from the fact that religion is a cultural system but also transcends culture (Mugambi 2004: 5–8).

263   Segeja (1998: 49–51) explains that Bujo and Nyamiti develop their understanding of the church in Africa from an ancestral perspective. But "although the ancestors have a peculiar position and influence in the life of the Basukuma, the younger generation seems not to put much emphasis on them" (Segeja 1998: 51).

a specific field, such as medical or judicial anthropology. In the same way missiological anthropology is used for missionary ends (Droogers 2003). Whereas missiology helps to clarify the motivation and objectives of mission, anthropology clarifies the context in which it is practised (Shorter 1973; Luzbetak 1988).

An example of the use of anthropological insights in missiological discourse is the debate on continuity or discontinuity between the Christian and the African God. Is there a concept of God in Africa? Is there one God or more than one? Is the African God loving or indifferent? On this issue Mbiti (1970), Kibicho (1972), Idowu (1973), Nyamiti (1977) and Setiloane (1976) differ considerably, and sometimes anthropological insights are twisted for ideological ends (see section 3.1).

Christology in Africa

The same applies to Christology in Africa. Some theologians see Christ as an ancestor (Nyamiti 1984). But what was the ancestors' place in African Religions, and what is it today? It may be that nowadays ancestors are more feared than loved. If so, the ancestor is not a good paradigm to start with. Other theologians portray Christ as the guest (Udoh 1988). These Christologies are based on African traditions of hospitality and neighbourly love. But is this hospitality an unconditional love, or rather a matter of give and take, *do et des*? Christ is also seen as the elder (Wachage 1992). Elders were liberators, reconcilers, guardians, leaders, rulers and stabilisers. But again there are limitations: some contemporary female theologians see the elders as oppressors, patriarchal rulers, who do not reflect the ideas of young people and women.

Yet others see Christ as a healer. It stands to reason that the healer, representing the indigenous religious system, was the greatest enemy of Christianity, represented by the missionary. But anthropological study has shown that this was a misunderstanding. 'Healer' is an inclusive term for herbalist, shaman and diviner, in the literature often referred to as medicine man (although there are many woman healers) and witchdoctor (a derogatory and ambiguous term, as 'witch' and 'doctor' are often confused).[264] It is recognised that Christ can be interpreted as a healer (Shorter 1985; Kirwen 1987; Schoffeleers 1989).[265]

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264   As was noted before, in Africa the mystical power is one; blessing and cursing are basically the same.

265   Although various theologians of East African descent write about healing as an ecclesiological and pastoral-theological problem, or as an aspect of African Indigenous Religion and African Instituted Churches, very few of them write about Christ the healer. In the volume on *Religion and health in Africa* (Chepkwony 2006) the opening chapter on *Jesus as healer* is written by Diana Stinton. She found that 25 out of 27 respondents affirmed that the image of Jesus as healer is meaningful (p. 25). See also the study by Domingues (2000). In 1989 I recorded a song about Jesus the healer in a small Tanzanian village (Wijsen 1993: 82).

This is both a major breakthrough in dialogue with the healing churches and an important contribution to the world church. In the same way the image of a priest can be based on the African concept of a healer and the sacraments can be understood as gifts of healing (Schoffeleers 1989: 165–168; Wijsen 1993: 129).[266]

The church as the family of God

The same combination of African tradition with the Christian message is now being applied to ecclesiology (Healey & Sybertz 1996: 104–202). The idea of the church as the family of God comes from the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on *The church in Africa* (no. 63): "It is earnestly to be hoped that theologians in Africa will work out the theology of the church as family with all the riches contained in this concept." The synod fathers acknowledge this image as "particularly appropriate for Africa", because it emphasises care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relations, acceptance, dialogue and trust. Thus the image of the African family can serve as a model for the Christian church.

The response of Roman Catholic African theologians has been overwhelming. Community spirit (*ujamaa*) is the meeting point between the African family and the Catholic Church, says Onwubiko (1999: 6). The community is built on principles of kinship, teamwork, sharing, togetherness, known in East Africa as *ujamaa*.[267] From its verbal root *jama'a* means to gather, to unite, to combine, to bring parts to a whole. There is no place for racism, tribalism, religious intolerance or discrimination (Onwubiko 1999: 13). But some serious questions have to be answered: Has there ever been such an ideal family in Africa? And where is this African family now? To mention but one example, what about the phenomenon of single motherhood in Africa (Gitome 2002; Wachege 2003)?

The African family has undergone many changes that have generated considerable conflict between men and women, children and adults (Kayongo-Male & Onyango 1991: 56–74). Members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians have repeatedly called attention to domestic violence against both women (Nasimiyu-Wasike 2000; Hinga 2000) and children (Shisanya 1999; Nasimiyu-Wasike 1992b). This is not a new phenomenon. In patriarchal societies women were regarded as second-class citizens and treated like men's personal property to be exploited, oppressed and degraded. "The list of these injustices purporting gender imbalance is exhaustible, and what is said

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266   See also the exploration of christologies in Africa by Healey and Sybertz (1996: 62–103) and Stinton (2004). At present Stinton is secretary of the Ecumenical Symposium of Eastern African Theologians.

267   As noted already, in the South African discourse *ubuntu* would be the equivalent term. It underlies the consensus model according to which Samuel Kobia rules the World Council of Churches.

about Ganda culture in relation to women can apply to the remaining ethnic groups and cultures in Uganda and Africa in general," says Waliggo (2002: 5). Children are valued for the labour they provide: fetching firewood and water, for which they often have to walk long distances; for older children taking care of younger siblings is a daily task, at least in rural areas.[268] Fathers looked forward eagerly to the time when their daughters get married, because they would be exchanged for gifts in the form of cattle or money (Okemwa 2002: 113; Nasimiyu-Wasike 1992a: 154–156).

Undoubtedly these conflicts have become worse. The extended family system worked well in the days of a subsistence economy. The introduction of a cash economy posed plenty of problems for the family. Although few people participate in the cash economy, their relatives expect to share the income. Jobs, support, education, mobility and so forth are still sought through the extended family network. This puts great strain on some family members, especially those who are better off. Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1991: 63–64) write:

> "Homicide, apathy, extravagance, large families, underdevelopment, lack of creativity, unnecessary conformity, feelings of irrelevance, petty jealousies and dependency. A man faced with an inability to support himself or his immediate family as well as other relatives may decide not to support anybody at all, and may indulge in practices of self-destruction like excessive drinking, gambling or refusing to work, as he sees no point in working if expectations are too high."

The other members of the family, on the other hand, realising that they are being outshone by their successful kinsfolk, may become hostile, according to Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1991: 64):

> "This is often shown by gossip, curses, unnecessary land disputes, homicide and witchcraft in Africa – all these forms of aggression being directed at the relative who is denying them their extended family right not only to have a share in but also to influence the spending of the relative's income . . . Hence, the extended family system that used to support families in times of need has in some ways become destructive of the African family."

Segeja (1998: 14) acknowledges that the Sukuma concept of *shikome* includes some elements of ethnocentrism and particularism. "[S]hikome deals mostly with matters and issues that influenced the life of the *kaya* and *nzengo*.[269] Minimal effort is made to reflect on issues in a broader context beyond the *nzengo* level." And further: "Although the non-Basukuma may be invited to participate in *shikome*, their views would not be taken seriously." Yet Segeja

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268   When African women in rural areas hear that an average family in Europe has only two or three children they react with unbelief and wonder. "Who is going to help you when they die?" (Child mortality is still high in many parts of Africa.) One middle-aged informant told me that in her time women in urban areas preferred to have fewer children, but nowadays women again want large families.

269   *Kaya* means family or house; *nzengo* means village.

(1997) proposes *shikome* as a model for interreligious dialogue. This is what happens quite often in African theologies of inculturation: they are based on ideal/idealised concepts rather than social realities.

Ujamaa and beyond

The image of *ujamaa* is more apposite to the relationship between members of the community than to relations between members and outsiders, non-members, strangers. In African philosophy the question is whether the solidarity that applies to community members extends to non-members as well. Uyenne (1997) maintains that it does not. Care for others and solidarity were based on a complex network of mutual obligations and interdependence rather than on neighbourly love and generosity. As Wiredu (1980: 14) puts it bluntly:

> "[T]he family is the witches' acknowledged domain of operation . . . I would be surprised indeed if the number of families in this country completely untouched by fears of witches in their midst is more than a very few, even allowing that there are any. Not unexpectedly, there is tension, suspicion and ill-feeling, often concealed by public shows of solidarity and harmony, in well-nigh every family."

One of our interviewees stated that African cities are not real cities. Very few families live in town permanently. Often they remain behind in the rural areas to look after the family property, while the husband or the wife finds a job in town. He or she sends part of his/her earnings to the family 'at home'.[270] This arrangement creates many problems, the first being mothers' separation from children living in the rural area and fathers staying alone in town. It is common for men in towns to have female partners and raise children with them. Possession of two houses tends to limit the family's ability to develop either of them (Kayongo-Male & Onyango 1991: 61–63).

Thus for most people who come to town to earn a living 'home' is up-country where they have their land. This is evident during the Christmas season when people go back home, also at funeral rituals when the body is brought home. "Nairobi is one big village," one informant said. But, surprisingly, rural patterns survive. "The whole city consists of tribal networks," my informant continued.[271] This is an obstacle to church development in towns. The parish is

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270   This pattern has become globalised as a result of the many African migrants in Europe (section 8.1). Their remittances often exceed bilateral development aid, as is the case with Ghanaian migrants in Europe. Nowadays seen by the World Bank as an important source of development for non-industrialised countries, this system nevertheless puts serious constraints on family life in Africa.

271   Hannerz (1992: 229–230) notes that the mega-cities in the centre become extensions of the societies on the periphery, in which migrants retain their membership. This applies to both Third World mega-cities and to those in Europe and North America. Migrants build their own hamlets in the mega-cities where they have "home plus higher income" (Hannerz 1992: 248).

not a community or family of God. It is a network of segregated groups organised according to ethnic origin, 'living apart together' (Wijsen & Tanner 2000).

To receive a guest is a blessing

Various authors and interviewees refer to Africa's tradition of hospitality (Healey & Sybertz 1996: 168–200; Udoh 1988). Chief Musamaali Nangoli (1990: 56–57) has this to say about "Visitors and strangers in the African society":

> "In Africa a visitor is anyone who arrives at one's door. All he does is arrive! He may not be previously known to the hosts. Nor is his visit previously announced! It is custom then to make the visitor welcome and entertained immediately – no question asked . . . It is considered immoral to turn away or deny hospitality to anyone who comes to your door. Tradition demands that the person is looked after first of all, and if any explaining is needed, that is left entirely to the visitor . . . This is how Europeans were welcomed into African society. The trouble was that they urinated on that hospitality."

In keeping with this custom, various authors and interviewees advocate African hospitality as a "model for the communication of the gospel in the African cultural context" (Olikenyi 2001). But again, culture is complex and there appear to be contradictions between the official image of a culture and what really happens on the ground. Attitudes towards strangers vary with time and place (Wilson 1979: 55). In Swahili there is a saying, *kupata mgeni ni baraka*: to get a guest is a blessing (Healey & Sybertz 1996: 168–202). In Africa guests are sacred in the sense that they are highly esteemed and respected. But one must distinguish between known and unknown guests, expected and unexpected guests. "In case of an unknown guest (expected or unexpected), the welcome given him, although warm, is usually mixed with suspicion" (Olikenyi 2001: 106).

> "We must not fail to point out that however committed Africans are to African hospitality – especially the generosity dimension – it remains a tradition practised not by angels but by human beings. In other words, it is *not seldom* [my italics] that crooked people have concealed wicked designs beneath the façade of hospitality" (Olikenyi 2001: 125).

Despite the fact that members of different ethnic groups coexist in various African states, they perceive one another as strangers. A stranger is not just somebody you do not know but a person who does not belong to your group. You may have gone to the same school, you may have been employed by the same company, you may be members of the same political party or even religious congregation. Yet the person remains a stranger inasmuch he or she does not belong to the group, as distinct from the 'insider' or 'brother' (Gyekye 1997: 91). Gyekye continues:

> "Attitudes toward the stranger are often not charitable. Fear, distrust, suspicion, and sometimes antipathy are evoked by the presence of the stranger."

This is why African leaders, for example politicians and even bishops, like to surround themselves with family and clan members. Nepotism is a big problem in present-day Africa.

Agape and philadelphia

It is not known whether and to what extent Julius Nyerere's *ujamaa* was inspired by the Christian idea of neighbourly love. His writings state no direct inspiration; as 'father of the nation' Nyerere wanted *ujamaa* to be accepted by all citizens and a direct allusion to gospel values would have hindered its acceptance by Muslims (Mazrui 2002). But since Nyerere was a devout Roman Catholic, one can assume that *ujamaa* was indirectly inspired by Christian neighbourly love (Magesa 1991). This was certainly the case with one of his most faithful followers, Christopher Mwoleka, then bishop of Rulenge. Mwoleka (1988: 91) stresses that Christian neighbourly love is universal and all-embracing.

It is noteworthy that in the New Testament there are two attitudes towards neighbours, rendered with two different words: *philadelphia* and *agape. Philadelphia* is love for physical (family members) or spiritual brothers and sisters (fellow Christians). *Agape* is the unconditional love shown to all humanity. The former is a function of the latter. Neighbourly love within the Christian community must strengthen Christians to practise neighbourly love outside their community. Just as Christians practise neighbourly love among themselves, breaking down walls between Jews and gentiles, they must practise universal love, breaking down walls between all people.

This is exactly where Christian neighbourly love (*agape*) goes beyond and criticises Africa's community spirit (*ujamaa*). As Christopher Mwoleka (1988: 90–91) says:

> "Love as we so often see it in families, in marriages, and in various social groupings is not really Christian love. It is mainly self-interest, motivated by social or economic need. And it rarely emanates [sic] toward other people outside the marriage or the family or the social groups. Love that is genuinely Christian is free, total and all embracing. Ideally, all of our natural bonds and relationships should exercise us, strengthen us to develop this kind of universal Christian love."

Small Christian communities

It seems to me that various authors who see Africa's community spirit (*ujamaa*) as a model for the church in Africa as God's family miss this point. Onwubiko (1999: 63) advocates a "community-oriented *ujamaa* ecclesiology". He quotes Jozeph Ratzinger as saying that the "community character of the church also necessarily implies what may be termed its we-ness". But, Ratzinger argues, "this 'we' is not a group that cuts itself off from others but a group that inserts itself into the entire community". Onwubiko (1999: 7–16)

does not reflect on the limitations of the *ujamaa* spirit, nor does Orobator (2000: 37–39), who sees the family as a foundation for interfaith dialogue. The same applies to Eboh (2004: 89–90), who considers the African community spirit a principle for peaceful coexistence.[272]

Various authors point to small Christian communities as the ideal implementation of *ujamaa* (Onwubiko 1999: 192–207). But reports on small Christian communities are ambivalent. Whereas some case studies stress their strengths (Healey 1993; Healey & Sybertz 1996: 137–145), others emphasise their weaknesses. In some instances small Christian communities in Africa foster true fellowship and mutual help among their members; in others they are not self-help units but prayer groups. These communities did not originate from the people. They are new structures imposed by the bishops. The intention, moreover, was not to emancipate the people but to control them better and get more money out of them, said one of my interviewees. It was not a new model for the church or a pastoral policy to deepen faith, but a way of making the organisation more efficient. The parish remains the administrative centre and the priest the only source of sacramental ministry. Since the inauguration of this policy two decades ago the history of small Christian communities in East Africa "is a story of failure of implementation of a beautiful and scriptural aspiration," says Magesa (1993: 7). Three decades later, at the tenth anniversary of the African Synod of 2004, the situation was pretty much the same (Magesa 2002b: 14).[273]

9.3 Spirituality of the road

Maybe a better root metaphor for a theology of interreligious dialogue would be the African tradition of walking a guest home (*kusindikiza*). *Kisindikiza* means to accompany a departing guest a little way on his or her road as a gesture of respect. An African will always 'walk you home' at least halfway (Healey 1981: 164–166). In the same way people accompany each other on their path of life

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272 Thus it must be asked whether or not these authors, just like the nationalist ideological philosophers before them, confuse *ujamaa* as a socio-ethical doctrine with *ujamaa* as a socio-economic system (Gyekye 1997: 149).

273 In their book *Small Christian communities today*, Healey and Hinton (2005: 97) admit: "The growth and influence of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) throughout the continent are mixed . . . But where they are flourishing, SCCs are an important pastoral strategy and even a new way of being a communitarian church." I agree with the editors that SCCs are a pastoral model that can help to revitalise parishes. But I do not know any instances where SCCs in Africa are a new model for the church. The few examples that I knew were gradually marginalised by the authorities.

(Healey 1985: 59–62; Olikenyi 2001: 215). Healey (1981: 1–18) proposes a 'journey theology'. He describes mission in terms of a search for meaning in life, exploring the far ends of the world, discovering Christ in our lives as a spiritual pilgrimage, values which are closely linked with the kingdom of God. Increasingly, pilgrimage is seen as a model of and a model for interreligious relations (Eggen 1993; Camps 1997; Kalliath 2000; Kalliath 2004).

Followers of the way

One of the insights of present-day religious studies is the rediscovery that all religions see themselves as a path or a way. *Tao*, a key word in Chinese religion, means 'way', as does s*hinto*, the name of the indigenous religion of Japan. Hinduism has its three ways (*marga*) and Buddhism its eightfold path (*atthangika magga*). Many Jews are primarily concerned with the *halacha*, the way. In early Christianity Christians were referred to as followers of the way, which was often identified with Jesus. Islam is called the 'straight path' (*sirat al-mustaqim*). An Islamic term for religion in general is *mazhab*, the way, and *shari'ah* means road, path or way. Sura 1:6–7 reads: "Show us the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast favoured, not the path of those who earn thine anger nor of those who go astray." And African believers follow the path of the ancestors. Thus religions in general can be interpreted as ways to salvation (Tworuschka 2002: 15–55; Kirste, Schwarzennau & Tworushka 2004).

In many cultures and religions people are seen as journeying from this world to another, better world. To some extent they are estranged from the world. They are of this world but do not belong to it, as the gospel according to John (15:19; 17:11, 14–16; 17:18) puts it. They are pilgrims or nomads searching for a heavenly homeland, the city of God (Nnyombi 2000: 46–47). Being a stranger is a social, existential and religious experience that is shared by both Christians and people of other faiths. All people are strangers to one another, strangers in the world and strangers to the Absolute. Consequently, 'strangeness' is a space for encounter, in which both Christians and people of other faiths are faced with the same challenge to overcome their fundamental and common 'estrangement' from the world (Friedli 1974: 21–26).

The Nigerian cardinal Francis Arinze, who was prefect of the Pontifical Council for interreligious Dialogue from 1984 till 2002, wrote in his *Religions for peace*: "the will of God the Creator is that each person should respect the rights of others and be willing to work with them as fellow pilgrims on the journey of life" (Arinze 2002: 2). "By solidarity we accept one another as brothers and sisters who are companions in the pilgrimage of life" (Arinze 2002: 62). In his view our common pilgrimage does not exclude conversion. Basically, however, it is not conversion to the church or to Christ but to the will of God or Allah, that is the will to promote *shalom* or *salām*.

A pilgrimage to God

In the introduction we explained that the word 'mission' as it was used for a long time in the sense of going into the mission field, mission as a territory, is of recent origin in mission history. It was introduced by the Jesuits in their 16th century counter-Reformation. Before that other words were used, such as *peri-grinatio*. There is an old and ongoing 'journey theology' that views mission as a *perigrinatio ad Deum*. One thinks of the 6th and 7th century Irish monks with their *perigrinatio ad Christum*, the Franciscan and Dominican *fratres perigrinantes pro Christo* in the 13th century, and Bartolomé de las Casas, Roberto de Nobili and Matteo Ricci in the 16th and 17th centuries. They all learned to see mission as exploration rather than expansion.

All people are pilgrims to a promised land, the kingdom of God. This is expressed by the Roman Catholic Church in its dogmatic constitution on the church, *Lumen Gentium* no. 48 (in relation to the church itself), which describes the church's situation on its earthly pilgrimage between creation and eschatology; and by the World Council of Churches in its *Guidelines on Dialogue* no. 19 (in relation to people of other faiths), which reads: "We feel able with integrity to assure our partners in dialogue that we come not as manipulators but as fellow pilgrims."

Like Jesus' disciples on their way to the village of Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35), pilgrims vacillate between fear and hope. Christians and Muslims can become fellow pilgrims on the journey of life and faith. Both Christianity and Islam teach that creation has a common origin and a common destiny. For Christians the goal of life is to become children of God (1 John 3:1–2). For Muslims it is to become servant worshippers of God and his vicars on earth. (The Arab term *'Abdallah'* means servant worshipper of God, and the Qur'anic term *'khalifa'* means vicar, deputy – Nnyombi 2000: 48–53.) According to Tayob (1999: 111) the search for God in Islam is epitomised best by the pilgrimage (*hajj*). It is a spiritual journey that takes believers out of the mosque to beyond the here and now (Tayob 1999: 85–86). Thus Muslims and Christians share this spirituality of the road.

People on the move

To some extent migration has become a root metaphor in our globalised world, showing that mobility is rapidly becoming the hallmark of our time: people become metropolitan but maintain close links with 'home'. In the migrant the interconnectedness of cultures becomes visible, says Hannerz (1992: 229): the migrant returning home and bringing Europe and North America to the Nigerian village and the migrant bringing the Nigerian village to mega-cities like London and New York – which become extensions of the Third World – where they create home plus income, home plus safety, home plus freedom.

Migration in Africa has consequences for the study of African religions, says Hock (2004).

Hannerz (1992: 219) argues that cultural centre-periphery relations do not necessarily reflect political and economic centre-periphery relations. Moreover, the relation between centre and periphery is not one of dependence but of interdependence. When the centre speaks, the periphery does talk back (Hannerz 1992: 221). Or as Kraemer (1936: 20) put it decades earlier, "the great change that has come in the twentieth century is that . . . the victims have become actors. Mainly passive impulsive reaction has become conscious action." This leads to the view of complex culture as a network of perspectives (Hannerz 1992: 64–68) or, as Van Binsbergen (2003: 475–479) puts it, of cultural orientations. Hannerz (1992: 218), an anthropologist, speaks about the interconnectedness of cultures in terms of the global ecumene. In theological terms this is the vision that some day "all may be one" (1 Cor 15:28). Combining the two perspectives means that we could interpret the process of interculturation as 'ecumenisation'.[274]

Mission and migration

The classical image of mission is that of missionaries crossing the frontiers of their countries to live and work abroad. The residual importance of this image is frontier crossing, interpreted metaphorically as crossing the frontier of one's own culture, religion, church. The story about Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well is above all a missionary text. Here Jesus is crossing not only the frontier of Jewish culture but also the frontier between men and women (Jn 4:7–26).

Being missionaries in another country, missionaries know what it means to be a stranger, to speak a foreign language, to live in another world. They know what it means to acculturate, to integrate. Having been migrants themselves, it is not strange that everywhere in the world we see missionaries associating with migrants, strangers and refugees. Today ministering to migrants has become a missionary priority. There are also missionary parishes welcoming migrants in their midst, showing hospitality.

But there is another side to the coin, as we saw in section 8.1. So far churches in Europe have spoken about mutual missionary assistance between churches. But how mutual was this mission? In many ways it remained a one-way traffic. With increasing migration bringing more and more non-Western Christians to the West, there is at least a possibility of real mutuality. That is

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274   In my present research I focus on the use of Swahili as an 'ecumenical language' (Mazrui & Mazrui 1998: 117) with reference to its role in the diffusion of Christianity and Islam in East Africa (Mazrui & Mazrui 1995: 2).

why churches in Europe now speak about 'reversed mission' by African Christians, or African Christians 'bringing the gospel home'.

Pilgrimage as a root metaphor

In our present-day world there is a revival of pilgrimages. This phenomenon has been studied by anthropologists and scholars of religion (Turner 1974; Tworushka 2002). It makes Hoekendijk's definition of mission as communication with fellow travellers extremely meaningful. To Hoekendijk (1966: 47–67) mission is not primarily winning people for the church but demonstrating the kingdom of God – in his terms, universal *shalom* or *salām.* Mission is not there to serve the purpose of the church; the church serves the purpose of mission.

Pilgrimage may be defined as a journey to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion. In the African context various forms of pilgrimage may be distinguished: individual foci of religious activity outside the local communities, places and objects as foci of persistent religious associations, the development of cult centres, religious foci staffed by professional intermediaries, and institutionalised religious foci with no human intermediaries (Tanner 2003: 128–131).

Spirit mediums as intermediaries

The religious paradigm in which members of most African societies operate is so loosely formulated that in effect any individual can develop their own religious practices without much conceptualisation.[275] Individuals can acquire a reputation for providing solutions to the personal problems of those who come to consult them. Those nearest to them socially would be the ones most likely to resist attributing religious powers to them because of jealousy of their religious status and financial success. Their reputations – based on successfully helping people through a combination of personality, religious attributes and homeopathic medicines (for few would risk using large quantities of any ingredient for fear of being accused of poisoning) – would spread geographically and be augmented by social distance.

In practical terms this is a buyer's market, in which people in difficulties travel to where those with the best reputations are practising and they will continue to travel to such personal foci as long as hope stays alive and their resources last, or until a cure has been effected, either because the social problem has been resolved, the disease has gone into remission or the social tension has relaxed. Sukumaland in northwest Tanzania is criss-crossed by many childless

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275   Maybe this flexibility also applies to the personalised nature of some of the newer Pentecostal churches. They centre very much on the personal charisma of the founder. In the pastor's absence the church leaders would rather play a tape of his sermon than allow another pastor to preach.

women seeking a spiritual solution to their infertility. The clients of traditional healers tend to come from some distance away, for the Sukuma prefer to use the services of those who theoretically have no knowledge of their social background. The public nature of such consultations is reduced by social and geographic distance.

Based on the same religious paradigm one may find Christians visiting Muslim healers, and Muslims visiting Christian healers.[276] In towns healers are often Muslims using Islamic vocabulary, but their clients are Muslims, Christians and indigenous believers alike. It has been noted that Christian healers such as Felician Nkwera and Immanuel Milingo attract both Christians and non-Christians (Wijsen 1997: 140).[277]

Holy places

Northern Nigeria and Kenya are on the southern periphery of devotion and petition to the tombs of Muslim saints (Trimingham 1962: 1964), which are common and popular in north Africa from Egypt to Morocco (Eickelman 1976). The decorated, flag-bedecked tomb of Pir Baghali, a railway worker who was believed to possess extraordinary spiritual powers, at Mackinnon Road on the highway between Mombasa and Nairobi is regularly visited by petitioners, who may not all be Muslims. Traditional pilgrimages to cult centres may well be a long-standing feature of West African religion, although most contemporary Ghanaian shrines which attract pilgrims are of recent origin and more openly commercial. It has been commented (Field 1960: 53) that "literates have more serious mental trouble than illiterates, for they have heavier demands on their diligence", which would account for the reported presence of pilgrims who are teachers, lawyers and politicians.

The Boghar cult, which spread south from northern Ghana, has client shrines in the south and there is pilgrimage traffic across and between very different cultures and societies, which allow safe conduct and trading channels between potentially hostile communities. At the same time it provides local religious foci clearly suited to a region with a centuries old history of large-scale migration for trade and work (Werbner 1989: 227–242).

Christian holy places – more usual in Catholicism than in Protestantism – are often visited by Muslims. While working in a rural parish in Northwest

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276 The present author observed several sessions of a Catholic healer in which Muslims participated actively. Healing is a communal affair in which everybody is supposed to participate, irrespective of religious affiliation (Wijsen 1993: 237–238).

277 In East Africa this is facilitated by the use of Swahili, which is an ecumenical language (Mazrui & Mazrui 1998: 117). Many words have a Christian or an Islamic background but are used interchangeably, as evidenced by the various words connoting 'spirits' (Wijsen 1997b).

Tanzania the present author observed the statue of Holy Mary being visited by Muslims. It was a regular outing on Sunday afternoons, mixing recreation with devotion.[278] The same applies to the Lourdes grottoes, which are spread all over Africa and are frequently visited by Muslims.

Pilgrimage and purification

Mecca is an example of a religious focus with no human intermediaries and this is where all Muslim pilgrims come face to face with Allah at least once in their lifetime. Muslims from northern Nigeria have travelled the slow route to Mecca across the lower Sahara and the Sudan to the Red Sea for centuries, spending months, even years on their pilgrimages and carrying disease and trade with them. Among the Hausa religious pilgrimage became established as a status symbol for those who returned. With the increasing commercial wealth of the Hausa and their dominance in the military sphere many more Muslims are able to make the pilgrimage by air. As a result the status of those who meet the obligation has diminished. It is no longer a sign of physical strength and endurance.

In East Africa some coastal Swahili have gone on the pilgrimage and many more from Zanzibar, which has always been a centre of Islamic theological thought and training, probably using for transport the annual visit of trading dhows from Oman, sailing both ways with the changing monsoon winds. Elsewhere few Muslims have gone to Mecca, because the expense is beyond the means of subsistence farmers and their wives.

Apart from its religious significance, going on the pilgrimage was a means for rulers in the medieval states of West Africa to acquire legitimacy when they had seized power by force and their Islamic credentials were suspect (Hiskett 1984: 237), thus reducing potential tensions between the Muslim theocratic establishment (*ulama*) and the ruling group. It also served as a pretext for Muslim leaders to start a holy war (*jihad*). Those who made a detour via Cairo, a long established centre of Muslim learning and Sufi socio-religious groups, came back with new and influential ideas such as Mahdism and the notion of preparing for the end of time (Hiskett 1984). Perhaps the most important of these ideas was awareness of Islam as not only an international but potentially a universal faith, which made the pilgrims see societies in which indigenous religion and Islam were mixed as a provocation to their Muslim identity and a good enough reason for starting a holy war. The connection between returning from the pilgrimage and initiating a purification of faith is also observable among Catholic pilgrims returning from Lourdes.

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278   Our Muslim visitors to the parish had high esteem for Mary, the mother of Jesus. On one
      such occasion, a Muslim girl incorporated Mary into the Our Father when she asked me
      about Christians praying "in the name of the Father, the Mother and the Son. Amen".

Pilgrims or nomads?

The foregoing typology shows that any true pilgrimage has a clear goal. Maybe a more appropriate metaphor for African theology would be the nomad. Pilgrims know where their destination is; nomads wander around the desert searching for water, not knowing where it is. The Greek word 'nomad' indicates people who move around with their herds. The emphasis is on their habit of moving. One can distinguish various forms of movement. The first is when whole households move together with their livestock. The second is when some members remain where they are, but the animals are taken to better pastures elsewhere by the young men for part of the year. The latter form is more common nowadays, because it can be combined with agricultural and other non-pastoral economic activities.

More important is the cultural aspect of nomadism. It entails constant preparedness to move. Abraham was supposed to leave his country. He is a source of 'nomadic spirituality' (Nnyombi 2000). In a way this cultural trait applies to many Africans. They are always on the move, as seasonal labourers in the big cities while the family stays at home, as migrants to neighbouring countries with better economic conditions, even to Europe or the Unites States of America where many Africans migrants end up. This would be more in line with the original meaning of mission as *Perigrinatio ad Deum*: searching for the traces of God's creative presence in people. The pilgrim knows where the holy places are; the nomad does not know where the watering-places are – they are searching for them. Or as the African proverb goes, 'we create the path by walking'.

Being fully committed to one's own faith

In section 7.1 we analysed Kibicho's understanding of interreligious dialogue as being fully open and fully committed. This can be combined with the metaphor of pilgrimage, as it is in a module entitled *Dynamics of interreligious encounter* offered by the University of South Africa (Karecki 2005: 146). In this module students are asked to find a pilgrim companion to share their learning pilgrimage. This companion is a person from another religious tradition. They are called pilgrim companions because they are themselves 'places of pilgrimage' where students can encounter faith in another, very tangible form. The idea behind this requirement is that generalisations are commonly made about people of other faiths: Muslims behave like this, adherents of African Indigenous Religion believe that. The module wants to show that faith is embodied in and expressed by persons.[279] This makes it more difficult to write people off because of their different beliefs.

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279 This accords with our statement in the general introduction: we are primarily interested in believers (actors) and not so much in belief systems.

In the study guide the module is presented in two cycles. The first helps students to reflect on their knowledge of and commitment to the Christian faith as they experience it in their own denomination. This cycle is meant to make them to feel secure in their identity as Christians, so they will not feel threatened when entering into an interreligious relationship. The cycle begins with identification. It has to do with students' sense of belonging to their Christian tradition. During the analytical stage they examine their level of commitment and involvement in their Christian denomination. In the stage of theological reflection they are asked to consider the impact of their faith commitment on their lives. The action stage is called living with faith. Here the students are asked to plan actions that will strengthen their Christian identity. Reflection questions are provided for each stage, but since this is an advanced module students are expected to take the initiative in using the cycle as a preparation for encountering a person from another religious tradition.

Being fully open to the faith of others

The purpose of the second cycle is to prepare students for interreligious encounter with people of other faiths. This entails acquiring the necessary competence to form a relationship with a pilgrim companion. The first two stages of the cycle consist in attentiveness and openness. In the first stage students are asked to become aware of themselves and their ability to listen, not only to their pilgrim companions' spoken words but also to the meaning they hold for the person.[280] In the second stage students are challenged to be open. Openness does not imply wishy-washiness about one's own faith. It means willingness to learn from the other and letting go of the need to have all the answers.[281]

The third stage of this cycle focuses on reflection in the sense of finding meaning in one's experiences in life. Here, too, inner and outer worlds converge. This stage represents a pause in the students' pilgrimage in order to discover the meaning of interreligious relationships and their effect on the praxis of dialogue. Without such reflection they can have endless experiences without learning from them in ways that enhance their faith and commitment to dialogue. The passage through the cycle brings them to the fourth stage of acting responsibly. It requires a high level of honesty about their own faith commitment while showing respect for the other person's faith. It implies that they work together to strengthen areas of common commitment that acknowledge their common humanity and common origin in God. Such responsible action

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280   The author states that this stage is inspired by Bernard Lonergan's method of doing theology (Karecki 2005: 147).

281   To my mind this module at the University of South Africa is an educational translation of Kibicho's model of being fully open and fully committed (section 7.1).

encourages cooperation in action that will enhance the quality of human life and restore justice in the face of oppression so that all people can experience the blessings of God's kingdom (Karecki 2005: 147–148).[282]

Conclusion

In this chapter we explored the emerging African model of interreligious relations. We spoke about the relation between dialogue and diaconal work, the image of the church in Africa as the family of God and pilgrimage as a root metaphor for interreligious dialogue. From the perspective of African Religion, authentic religion is cosmic and holistic, this-worldly and person-centred. Hence from an African perspective interreligious dialogue must be accompanied by integral development and liberation. As Temple (2001: 30–31) puts it, the African model of interreligious dialogue is one of wholeness. In analysing the church as the family of God we discovered an obstacle to interreligious dialogue, namely the closed nature of the African family system. The African community spirit, though hailed by various African theologians, does not favour interreligious relations, as it sharply distinguishes between members and non-members (Uyenne 1997). In an attempt to open up this closed circle I referred to the African tradition of walking guests home. It is on the road that co-pilgrims discover each other as equals. This is why migration is so important for the study of religion and theology, as was argued in chapter 8. The concept of partners-in-dialogue as fellow pilgrims on the journey of life is in harmony with the old ideal of *peregrinatio ad Deum*, pilgrimage to God. Believers do not possess truth a priori and then communicate it to others. It is in communication with others that they discover truth (Krieger 1991: 124–125).

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282 This calls for caution. As I said earlier (section 8.2), being fellow pilgrims is not easy. Intercultural communication goes hand in hand with intercultural conflict. It will always be a misunderstanding understanding.

Chapter Ten

Renaissance or reconstruction?

So far African theologies have been presented as ranging from inculturation the-ology and liberation theology to African theology and Black theology (Ukpong 1983; Martey 1993). In chapter three we dealt with African theology. There we applied a confessional classification, being the classification used to organise theological schools and colleges in Africa, which are the focus of this study. We noted, however, that at present it seems more appropriate to classify African the-ologies according to the trends of reconstruction and renaissance (Kobia 2003: 103–128). What do these theologies say about dialogue between adherents of different faiths? What do they contribute to a theory of interreligious relations? Should 'dialogue as engagement for the promotion of the Kingdom of God' be seen as an essential part of the theology of reconstruction (Temple 2001: 32)?

10.1 Return to the path of the ancestors?

In chapter three we cited the theology of African renaissance as an example of the survival and the revival of African Religion. Here we focus on the signifi-cance of the theology of African renaissance for a theory of interreligious rela-tions from an African perspective. In section 8.3 we gave some socio-scientific insights into interreligious relations. We now ask what an African renaissance theology could contribute to the understanding of such relations.

Ujamaa: African community spirit

The theology of African renaissance advocates the return and revival of Africa's community spirit and tradition of peaceful coexistence. "The way to social harmony and peaceful coexistence lies in going back to our African past and emulating the rich treasures and precious strands of our cultural heritage. Our law-making and law-enforcing must reflect our past – African communalism," writes Eboh (2004: 219). And Magesa (2002a: 27) says: "The number one task of governments and all citizens of Africa in the new century is to sustain and accomplish the hope of independence, using the continent's own philosophical vision in the context of present-day realities."[283]

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283 My questions here are: To what extent is the hope of independence illusory? Is the picture historically true? Have there ever been 'independent' communities? Is it meant to be a true picture of history or a source of political inspiration? And is the hope of independence pedagogically wise in a world characterised by growing interdependence?

Throughout this study we have spoken about both the strengths and weaknesses of Africa's community spirit. We have pointed out that the theology of African renaissance romanticises Africa's community spirit (*ujamaa*) and tradition of peaceful coexistence in a way that is not helpful for the future. Of course it is good and necessary to love one's cultural heritage, but, as the saying goes, love is blind. In African theology Mbiti's classical dictum has been repeated time and again: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti 1969: 108–109). The only hierarchical principle in African societies was seniority (gender is not mentioned by Mbiti), but this principle was based on respect, not power. There was no private property and people collaborated for the common good. According to Julius Nyerere (1967, 1968) the peaceful coexistence that existed in pre-colonial Africa was brutally disrupted by Western influences, mainly in the form of the political theory of liberalism and the economic system of capitalism. The way forward is to go back to the past, to Africa's cultural heritage.

In section 3.2 we referred to Nyerere as a traditionalist par excellence. According to him traditional African society had socialist characteristics. It was based on mutual respect, common property and an obligation to work. All basic commodities were communally owned. There was mutual concern and farmers used to help each other in the fields (Nyerere 1967, 1968). Thus in his philosophical justification of political theory Nyerere reverted to the norms and values of African culture in the past. The development of modern African society was to be based on the traditional African community spirit, *ujamaa*.

Is ujamaa a phantom?

"It is false to believe that *ujamaa* is or was an African reality," says Schweigman (2001: 121). He continues: "The claim that the imposed *ujamaa* policies had African roots was therefore also false. In fact, these policies failed since realities in practice and views of the local people were not sufficiently taken into account." We are not making fun of the Tanzanian experiment. It was a fascinating endeavour with a tremendous impact on national unity. But being an experiment, it was a learning process and that is what Africans must do: learn from both achievements and mistakes (Ludwig 1996; Lee 2001). It is not a period to long back for, and I am of the opinion that very few Tanzanians really do long back for its rigid policies (Wijsen & Tanner 2002: 109–144). Let me cite just one example. In the early 1980s there were serious food shortages in northwest Tanzania. People were starving. Strangely enough, there was enough food in the country. But because of the rigid food security policy introduced in the 1960s, production and marketing of agricultural commodities were state controlled, private trade was suppressed and inter-regional movement of staple

grains restricted. The government, however, did allow food distribution by Catholic Relief Services, a USA based funding agency.[284]

Modern African philosophers criticise Afrocentric views. Kwasi Wiredu (1980: 1, 5) considers the three evils of African culture to be anachronism, authoritarianism and supernaturalism, and Kwame Gyekye (1997: 242–258) discusses the negative features of African cultures, the communitarian social arrangement being one of them. Gyekye holds that the idea that African traditional societies were harmonious and egalitarian and that their worldview was shared by all members of the group is "overstated and somewhat misleading" (Gyekye 1997: 37). His assessment of the "Socialist Interlude" is harsh. In a critical response to Julius Nyerere's claims he points out that "a hierarchical social arrangement, such as the traditional African system undoubtedly was – and still is – would not be devoid of exploitation of some sort" (Gyekye 1997: 151).

According to Gyekye (1997: 156–157) Nkrumah's view "that 'the presuppositions and purposes of capitalism are contrary to those of African society' will not hold up to a closer scrutiny of the ideas and practices of economic thought and management of the traditional system". Traditional African values are used by nationalist ideological philosophers to justify one-party governments and to maintain the status quo. Since worldview is presupposed to be collective, shared and uniform, there is little room for individual freedom and industrious creativity. Consequently the myth of unity leads to repressive policies and dictatorial regimes (Hountondji 1983; Appiah 1992).[285]

In instrumentalising Africa's community spirit to advance their socialist ideologies African political leaders misinterpreted the idea in two ways, says Gyekye (1997: 148–149). First they ignored the individualism, private property and private enterprise that did exist in traditional Africa. Secondly, they interpreted communitarianism to be an economic system. He considers this interpretation erroneous, oversimplified and misconstrued. The communitarian doctrine is essentially socio-ethical. Wiredu (1980: 60) says that in answering the question 'who are we?' Africans look for what they used to be and not for what they ought to be. The mistake of traditionalism is that 'what we ought to be' is confused with 'what we used to be' (Wiredu 1980: 60). One of our

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284 The same contradiction was observable in the few *ujamaa* villages which adhered openly to the ideology of self-reliance but could only survive through funds granted by international donor agencies that wished to support the experiment of African socialism. Ideological reasons also seem to be behind the food shortage in northeast Kenya that threatens the lives of 3,5 million people there. For some six months the government knew that this was going to happen, but it did not act or acted too late.

285 A recent example is Museveni, president of Uganda, once the favourite leader of Africa, who ruled the country for twenty years (1986–2006) and sought re-election by neutralising opposition parties and blaming Western countries for all evils in Uganda.

interviewees said:

> "Africans drive a car. But they only look in the rear-view mirror. They do not look through the front window. This is asking for problems."

Is Afrocentrism going to help Africa further?

Philosophy and theology of African renaissance is an expression of Afrocentrism. "Afrocentrism means Afrocentredness," says Eboh (2004: 4). He continues:

> "This is an effort to re-establish, recover, dig out, what has been destroyed, stolen, suppressed, and denied to Africans whether culture, religious, economic, scientific, philosophic or other forms of their heritage."

Referring to the debate on the African roots of Greek philosophy, Eboh (2004: 4) says that Afrocentrism does not confront any person or people, but is an attempt to put the record right. It concerns itself with a rediscovery of the African way of thinking and accepting this as a normative guide for living.

> "This gives the African a psychological boost, psychological tonic from the present psychological defeatism; it instils in the African a sense of hope and optimism and leads to self-discovery, self-thinking, self-expression, self-determination, self-development and self-realisation."

So is Afrocentrism a form of psychotherapy rather than a political agenda? Is this not part of what went wrong with Africa (Van der Veen 2004), that the attempt to put the record right is guided by an ideological agenda to generate self-esteem, cultural pride and self-identity? Is it self-critical enough? And is the attempt at self-determination and self-development not wishful thinking in a world characterised by growing interdependence? Is Eboh and Magesa's hope of independence not a false hope – false in the sense of being historically untrue and pedagogically unwise (Wijsen 1999; Maluleke 2002)?

Afrocentrism is, to a large extent, a reaction to Eurocentric views of Africa and Africans. As such it has been helpful in the transition from heteronomy (dependence) to autonomy (independence). One can understand and appreciate Afrocentrism in the context of the cry for *uhuru* (Warren 1963: 11). But the question is, is it going to help Africa further in 'glocal' (Robertson 1995) and multicultural societies? Is this not a new plea for isolationism, separatism and exclusivism? There is a need to move from heteronomy, through the necessary stage of autonomy, to interaction and communication (interdependence). After my analysis of social cohesion and conflict in Africa in previous chapters, I doubt whether Afrocentrism really "offers the African a resource base to launch into the modern world of globalisation" (Eboh 2004: 7).

An interesting case is the Geita crisis in Tanganyika in 1957. At that time Geita had a gold mine, which employed quite a lot of foreigners and attracted many others. The British colonial government, supported by the chiefs, wanted

to install a multiracial district council in Geita, but this was successfully resisted by the Sukuma people. It is generally seen as the beginning of the liberation struggle in Tanganyika (Wijsen 1993: 49). Was it helpful? Or was it a narrow-minded, our-own-people-first reaction – "primordial militancy", as Ali Mazrui (1979: 262) would call it? According to Mazrui this militancy was one of the factors that led to the expulsion of Luo workers and, later, the Asian bourgeoisie from Uganda. There are similar examples in Kenya and Tanzania. It may even have been a factor in the break-up of the East African Community in 1977, Mazrui maintains.

There is a parallel here with the debate in development and globalisation studies. The colonial way was to blame Africans for the underdevelopment of Africa: Africans were lazy, stupid, primitive, narrow-minded and short-sighted. The post-independence way is to blame Europe and Europeans for underdevelopment in Africa: Europeans are the source of all evils. The way forward is to combine the internal and the external approach, the global and the local. There is no international oppression without intra-national oppression, and vice versa, as was said earlier (section 1.1). In Ethiopia philosophers and politicians made a strong plea to return to traditional Ethiopian concepts. But the present-day upheavals connected with the federal system of administration have cast doubt on the ability of traditional African values to promote national unity and economic progress.

Beyond the 'ideology of home'

The plea to go back to the path of the ancestors is often rooted in the view that globalisation is an attack on localism, which is based on the assumption that globalisation is a consequence of modernity (Giddens 1990). Pre-modernity is the local, the community and the culture dimension; modernity is the global, the society and the civilisation dimension.[286] In a spatiotemporal perspective this categorisation overlooks two things. First, global does not come after local. World formation has been going on for hundreds, maybe thousands of years. This is shown, among other things, by the Indian Ocean trading complex extending all the way to the Arab world, India and China for more than 2000 years;[287] the Indonesian community that settled in Madagascar in the 4th century; and the community of African Muslims (*Sidis*) in India that settled there during the 12th or 13th century.

Secondly, global is not opposed to local. The local is an aspect of the global; the local is largely a product of the global. The idea of a *Heimat* where

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286 The distinction is based on Tonnies's classification of a pre-modern and a modern era, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*.

287 A clear manifestation of this long history in popular culture is East African *taarab* music, which is a mix of African, Arab and Indian influences.

everything is peaceful and well is to a large extent a construct, an invention of trad-
ition (Robertson 1995: 35), partly in response to homelessness and rootlessness.
Also, in traditional Africa ethnic groups were not homogeneous in all respects. In
most societies poly-ethnicity and war were a normal state of affairs.[288] What we
see now might not be a return to the path of the ancestors, but an "invention of
locality" (Robertson 1995: 30–35). So we must be open to the possibility that
Africa's peaceful coexistence and community spirit have little to do with Africa's
past and the rich treasures of its cultural heritage (Eboh 2004: 219).

"It is unfortunate, yet inescapably true, that the contemporary African situ-
ation in all of these dimensions can only be appreciated in relation to events
taking place elsewhere," says Magesa (2002a: 14). Why is it unfortunate?
Magesa refers to happenings that shaped Europe and America in the 19th and
the 20th century, which have created present-day Africa.[289] The consolidation
of European nations resulted in the partition of the African continent. The
boundaries the Europeans drew were arbitrary so that they remain a cause of
conflict among and within African states to this very day.[290] "In most, if not all,
of these cases of conflict, religion in the form of Christianity and/or Islam has
played a significant role," says Magesa (2002a: 15). He continues: "Conflict –
once unknown in Africa [my italics] – has now become perhaps one of the
greatest sources of Africa's suffering."[291]

Is there a 'lost paradise' ideology at work here? What about the religiously
inspired conflicts described in section 5.1? Are Africans more amiable and
peace loving by nature than other people (Wijsen & Mfumbusa 2004: 46)?[292]

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288   Robertson (1995: 30, 35, 36) refers to the 'nostalgic paradigm' in Western science, the view
      that we once lived in a multitude of secure, collective 'homes'.

289   The picture is created that there was a 'pure' Africa prior to these events taking place else-
      where. Magesa seems to overlook the mass migrations within Africa and between Africa
      and other continents, e.g. the Arabic peninsula and Southeast Asia, that have shaped present-
      day Africa (Mazrui 1986). This is, of course, not to cleanse the conscience of the missionar-
      ies and the colonisers (Maluleke 2002: 190), but to put the situation of present-day Africa in
      a broader perspective.

290   However, artificial boundaries alone cannot explain the conflicts. Many countries in the
      world have artificial boundaries, yet this does not prevent them from becoming stable and
      prosperous (Van der Veen 2004: 357). The conflict between Wallonian and Flemish people
      in Belgium becomes very heated now and then, but so far it has not led to civil war (Wijsen
      1999: 125). And what about African countries that do have one ethnic group and one lan-
      guage and still have civil war on their territory?

291   Byaruhang-Akiiki (1989: 50) also claims that wars in Africa are not indigenous but were
      introduced by foreign religions.

292   As we saw in section 7.1, Samuel Kibicho, whom we took as our inspiration, is ambiguous
      on this point. On the one hand Kibicho (1983: 171) says that African Religion and Christianity
      are equally valid. On the other he says that pre-Christian African communities "were
      certainly more God fearing" and had "better existential saving-knowledge of God" (Kibicho
      1981: 34).

I tend to agree with Aguilar (1998: 21): "It would be unrealistic to portray Africa as a place with peaceful villages and grain filled granaries." He immediately adds, "just as it is unfair to imply that violence and bloodshed represent the totality of African life. These are mere caricatures and stereotypes of very complex historical, social, religious and political processes." Aguilar (1998: 22) concludes: "In every country or community of the world, there are two realities which can either merge or confront each other. These are: concern for humanity and a total disregard for human dignity and values." When Musamaali Nangoli (1986) says that Europeans should tell no more lies about Africa this is, of course, correct. But it applies equally to Africans themselves. When Nangoli says "here is the truth from an African", the question is: *what* truth, or even more pertinently, *whose* truth?[293]

Global Africans

Ali Mazrui, whose alumni have named him the 'global African par excellence' (Kokole 1998), is critical of 'romantic gloriana' or 'romantic primitivism' and 'Tanzaphilia'. Following him, Africans should be urged to think globally and act locally. Moreover, cosmopolitanism is not something of the West, says Appiah (2006). Referring to his hometown, Kumasi has been a cosmopolitan city for a long time, where you find people from all over West Africa and even from Arab countries. Its market is the largest in West Africa. Thus globalism is not so strange in Africa, says Appiah.

Be that as it may, it is good that scholars are starting to look back at the *ujamaa* experiment in Tanzania (Stöger-Eising 2000; Schweigman 2001; Lee 2001). One must admire the late president Nyerere for the way he promoted national unity, independent of ethnic background or religious affiliation. But one must also question whether his national understanding of fellowship was realistic. After all, it was not long-lasting, and ethnocentrism and religionism are still realities and are even growing in Tanzania today (Ludwig 1996; Niwagila 1999; Wijsen & Mfumbusa, 2004).

The *ujamaa* experiment clearly shows that peaceful coexistence is not going to last long without good leadership and societal structures, which Nyerere provided, for instance by introducing Swahili as a national language, universal education and national service. It is not because Tanzanians are more amiable and peace loving by nature than other people that Tanzania has been

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293 Of course, it is a complicated question. On this point I tend to agree with Platvoet and Van Rinsum (2003: 142–143) that scholars of religion must move beyond ideological convictions and must produce verifiable historical data. But whether or not these data will provide enough evidence will be determined in a dialogic, intersubjective process (Krieger 1991).

a relatively stable country during the past few decades. It is because of deliberate policies adopted by the government of the United Republic of Tanzania in the post-independence era (Wijsen & Mfumbusa 2004: 46), policies that may have been adequate in their time and must be admired, but that cannot work in the post-Cold War era and thus cannot be repeated or sustained.

10.2 Come, let us rebuild!

In the previous section we criticised African renaissance theology and the wish to return to the path of the ancestors for being too nostalgic and romantic. Is there an alternative? And if so, what? Kwame Gyekye (1997: xi) argues against both wholesale, uncritical, nostalgic acceptance of the past or tradition, and of wholesale, out of hand rejection of it on the grounds that a cultural tradition, however primitive, would have positive as well as negative features.

Theology of reconstruction

The eighth assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches at Yaoundé in November 2003 proposed a shift from the exodus theme to the reconstruction theme, from "Let my people go" (Ex 8:1) to "Come, let us rebuild" (Neh 2:17). This is not to disregard the theme of liberation; it is not either/or but a matter of emphasis. Now that Africa is liberated from colonial powers it is the task of Africans themselves to build up their nations![294]

The theme of rebuilding Jerusalem followed the devastation of the city as a result of Babylonian imperialism. The fall of the Babylonian empire to the Persians marked a turning point. God entered into a strategic alliance with Cyrus, a Persian, to rescue the chosen people. This adds an interreligious dimension to the story: "God is capable of partnership with people outside the covenant as strategic alliance to fulfil this purpose" (Temple 2003: 1).[295]

The theme of rebuilding Africa is not new. The fifth assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in Lomé, Togo (1987) already saw the introduction of a theology of reconstruction. The theme has been taken up by the General Committee of AACC which met in Nairobi, March 1990 (Chipenda 1991), and, among others, by Charles Villa-Vicencio (1992) in South Africa,

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294   There are African theologians who are critical of the reconstruction paradigm. As Maluleke (1999: 107; 2005: 492) points out, post-cold war Africa is not fully free and the new world order is not new. Temple (2003: 3) says much the same. There are many places in Africa that are yet to be liberated (southern Sudan, western Sahara).

295   God's strategic alliance with Cyrus might be interpreted as a justification of Sundermeier's trader model (2003), in which competitors collaborate for the sake of a common interest.

Kä Mana (2004) in Benin and Jesse Mugambi (1995) in Kenya. Since then various volumes on reconstruction have been published.[296]

We create the path by walking

In the previous chapter (section 9.3) we spoke about a theology of interreligious dialogue as a pilgrimage theology. In harmony with Nehemiah's pragmatic spirituality, a pilgrimage spirituality of interreligious encounter (Karecki 2005: 46) would be more to the point than a theology of interreligious dialogue. We take spirituality here to be a vision and a belief that inspire and motivate us.[297] It is noteworthy that Nthamburi (2000: 10–26) has a chapter on Muslim-Christian dialogue in a book entitled *The pilgrimage of the African church*. The relevant chapter is entitled "The church at the crossroads", another journey metaphor.

It is good to distinguish between organisational and motivational aspects of interreligious dialogue and to realise that often our endeavours do not have the intended effect. They might have unintended, sometimes even contrary effects. A doctor who prescribes a treatment cannot guarantee that it will work: the patient may or may not recover. And if the doctor decides not to prescribe treatment, the patient may or may not recover. Between input and output there is a black box. Theologians cannot 'manage' interreligious relations, as the effect of what they do will to a large extent be a surprise. Interreligious dialogue is not a process of planned change whose outcome one can control, but a spirituality whose seeds one hopes and prays will bear fruit.

Convivencia and kenosis

For Theo Sundermeier (1992: 68) the basic structure of 'ecumenical existence', and consequently the mission model for the 21st century, is expressed by the term '*convivencia*'. In the late Middle Ages the term was used for the coexistence of Muslims and Christians in Spain,[298] but in contemporary literature it appears mainly in the work of Paulo Freire and Latin American liberation theology, says Sundermeier (1992: 69).

For Paulo Freire good teachers are not those who consider themselves experts, but those who see themselves as learning subjects. It is not professional pedagogic

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296 The terms 'construction' and 'reconstruction' derive from engineering vocabulary. The way 'construction' is used in reconstruction theology accords more with the use of the term in the social sciences as introduced by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (Mugambi 1995: 12).

297 Note that this is a different definition of spirituality from the one we gave in section 1.2.

298 One may question whether Sundermeier (1992: 69) has an over romantic picture of medieval Spain. According to various historians of religion Christians and Muslims coexisted peacefully in Spain at that time, though they were strictly separated. Jews and Christians were considered second-class citizens.

or theological training that makes a teacher, but the person's willingness to listen and to learn. Theologians have to give up the old roles of teaching and preaching and devote themselves completely to the people in a kenotic existence. They have to find a new form of existence together with other people: *convivencia*.

Sundermeier's missionary ecclesiology shifts from 'pro-existence' to 'con-existence'. After the Second World War Dietrich Bonhoeffer suggested that the church has to be a church for others, and not others for the church. The church must turn inside out (Hoekendijk 1966). Unfortunately this mission and church for others soon adopted an attitude of superiority and charity. What is needed now is to move from a church for others to a church with others (Sundermeier 1992: 70–71).

Interestingly, Mazrui (2006: 12) refers to the medieval Islamic law of Dar al-Ahd or Dar al-Sulh (Abode of contractual Peace or Abode of peaceful Coexistence), besides the already mentioned Dar al-Islam and Dar al-Harb. Dar al-Ahd or Dar al-Sulh was not accepted by most jurists, as they felt that if the inhabitants of the territory conclude a peace treaty or paid tribute to the Muslim treasury it became part of Dar al-Islam (Mazrui 2006: 13). Mazrui says that the West appropriated this tripartite view of the world and substituted itself for Islam. During the Cold War era the territory of peace was the West, the First World. The communist world was the territory of war, the Second World. And the territory of contractual peace or peaceful coexistence was the Third World. The Third World paid tribute to the West in the form of a debt burden (Mazrui 2006: 13; 285). Now, in the post-Cold War era, the Muslim world has become the territory of war.

Prophetic and/or Abrahamic?

In section 9.3 we suggested that the nomadic model might be apposite for present-day Africa (Nnyombi 2000). Africans would recognise themselves in the Jews' description: "My father was a wandering Aramaic" (Deut. 26:5). The model of *convivencia* is inspired by the Abrahamic tradition more than by the exodus tradition. Liberation theology has drawn heavily on the Exodus story, but there salvation is defined as liberation from the enemy. That enemy must be identified and defined (pharaoh, Egypt). In the Abrahamic tradition Abraham is called to a land occupied by other people and has to live with them. He lives among them and in so doing gets to know his God more deeply (Sundermeier 1992: 70–71).

The model of *convivencia* is also inspired by Jesus himself, his kenotic existence and his incarnation. He is Immanuel, God with us. Jesus broke down many barriers to be with people, barriers between clean and unclean, male and female, rich and poor, Jew and Greek. He did this by seeing all people as creatures of God, and in so doing he created common ground for a new community, says Sundermeier (1992: 71–72).

In view of present-day globalisation, which makes fragmentisation and disunity a reality, *convivencia* is a call for hope and reconciliation. *Convivencia* is not an empty dream but a missiological call for the 21st century, based on the stories of Abraham and Jesus: repairing broken relations, creating common ground for mutual learning and celebration. But *convivencia* does not lead to harmonisation of cultures and religions (Sundermeier 1992: 79–80). It is wrong to incorporate the stranger into our own self-understanding. Scholars of religion must acknowledge the otherness of others, and not only the images they have made of them. And this is dangerous, as encounter threatens the scholars' self-evident truths.

My father's house has many mansions

As was noted in the introduction, interreligious relations are not widely discussed among African theologians. This applies to theologians of reconstruction as well. In Mugambi's *From liberation to reconstruction*, which is a collection of papers, there are various references to religious pluralism (Mugambi 1995: 29–31, 79, 153) and the need to include comparative religion in the training of theologians and pastoral ministers (Mugambi 1995: 28–29), but pluralisation does not appear among the "dominant concepts of our time" (Mugambi 1995: 53–68), which seems more concerned with secularisation.

In Mugambi's *Christian theology and social reconstruction*, which responds to questions and challenges raised by readers of the previous book, there is one section on Christianity and Islam in democratisation (Mugambi 2003: 104–106), but no theology of interreligious dialogue. The author, however, does observe: "At the beginning of the third millennium, it is important to strongly affirm that African identity transcends race and religion" (Mugambi 2003: 112). Reconstruction demands that African theologians ask themselves "what it means to be 'African' in this particular time in history. What is the significance of racial and ethnic identity in Africa today? How can Africa's identity be defined to include all the people that live on the continent?" (Mugambi 2003: 128). These are important questions, but the author does not answer them, at least not as far as religious identity is concerned.

What about other advocates of theology of reconstruction? A book facilitated by the Kenya Chapter of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (Getui & Obeng 1999) contains sixteen extremely important articles on various themes, but not one on interreligious relations. In another volume, facilitated by the All African Council of Churches (Mugambi 1997), there are twelve authors, but none of them write on interreligious relations. The review article by Sam Maluleke (1997) mentions various emerging theologies but not a theology of interreligious dialogue. The same applies to his recent contribution to *African Christianity: an African story* (Kalu 2005).

Two other authors must be mentioned here. Villa-Vicencio wrote his *A theology of reconstruction* (1992) before Mugambi, but Mugambi had already advocated a theology of reconstruction in a paper read to the general committee of the All Africa Conference of Churches in 1990. "We need to shift our theological gear from liberation to reconstruction," says Mugambi (1991: 35). Villa-Vicencio is concerned about the political and judicial aspects of reconstruction, not about the interreligious dimension of the new South Africa. Probably the most critical and fundamental contribution to theology of reconstruction comes from Kä Mana (2004).[299] He describes the African cultural heritage as a reality in decay. Any attempt to solve Africa's problems by going back to the past is just another form of alienation.[300]

10.3 Concerned African women theologians

It is noteworthy that more often than not it is African women who strongly reject the plea to go back to the paths of the ancestors, because these paths meant oppression of women and the earth (Chitando & Chitando 2005: 31). Hence it is appropriate to conclude this book with an outline of African women theologians' attitudes towards interreligious relations. This brings in two dimensions that I have neglected thus far: gender and ecology.

Concerned African women theologians

An important platform for African female theologians is the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, referred to briefly in section 8.2. The Circle was officially launched in 1989, when Mercy Amba Oduyoye gathered a group of women theologians at Trinity College in Legon, Ghana, but the idea was initially conceived at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland. The Circle meets every seventh year, but circle members can organise regional meetings in the intervening years. The Circle is interdenominational, international and interreligious.[301] One of its aims is to enable women to identify common interests in their faiths that would strengthen their common identity as African women (James 2003: 46–49).

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299   Kä Mana's parents were Rwandese emigrants to Congo. Being a child of refugees, he is sensitive to chaotic situations in Africa and feels the need to reconstruct Africa.

300   Note that the discourse in reconstruction theology is conducted mainly in the circles of the All Africa Conference of Churches and related institutions. It is almost non-existent in the Roman Catholic, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches.

301   Some South African Circle members prefer to describe themselves as adherents of African Traditional Religions and only secondarily as Christians or Muslims, says Martha Frederiks (2003: 77).

Although most members of the Circle are Christians, they invite Muslims and adherents of African Religions to their meetings and to contribute to their publications. This is because "[t]he subordination of women by men has been a common feature in the history of humankind, in virtually all cultures of the world" (Kahumbi 2002: 198). This creates solidarity among women of various faiths and thus provides a forum for religious interaction. Rabiatu Ammah (1992: 84) writes:

> "[T]he problems faced by Muslim women in Africa and those of other African women may be only slightly different. Whether we are Muslim or Christian, we belong to an African traditional culture that influences our lives. Hence in a way, as African women, it is religion in general that affects all of us."

"[T]he picture might be bleak for Muslim women, but we must also aim at the ideal. So must women of all religions," says Ammah (1992: 84). In many places in Africa there are groups to combat violence against women and sexually transmitted diseases. The Kenya Chapter of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians has produced some outstanding volumes, such as *Violence against women* (Wamue & Getui 1996) and *Conflicts in Africa* (Getui & Ayanga 2002).

"The concern for inter-faith reconstruction is high on Mercy Oduyoye's agenda," says Carrie Pemberton (2003: 79). In 1996 the Circle dedicated a full morning of its conference to Muslim-Christian dialogue; one morning prayer service was led by Muslim participants, another by adherents of African Traditional Religions. The East and South African Circles have undertaken a three-year study project which resulted in *Groaning in faith* (Kanyoro & Njoroge 1996). This publication includes African Traditional Religious, Hindu and Muslim authors, but most contributors are Christians.

Women in African Traditional Religions

Contrary to what is commonly thought in the West, African societies are not predominantly male-oriented. Africa in fact has a higher proportion of matrilineal societies than any other continent in the world (Mazrui 1998: 226). Some African Indigenous Religions, especially in West Africa, assign a prominent place to Goddesses (Olupona 2005) and priestesses, and women participate in sacred rituals. The prominence of Goddesses in West African religions seems to reflect and be reflected by West African market women, who counterbalance male dominated economic processes. The political systems of West Africa may have facilitated a better gender balance than one finds in East Africa (Mazrui & Mazrui 1995: 68).

There are also market women in East Africa but they play a far lesser role than their West African counterparts. Some African Instituted Churches are dominated by female prophetesses and healers (Chitando & Chitando 2005: 30).

But the prominent position of African women should certainly not be exaggerated or generalised. Although women undeniably have some rights, in most cases they are controlled and even possessed by men, first by the men of their own family and then by the men who paid the bride price (Nasimiyu-Wasike 1994: 50–51).[302]

African women in Islam

A source of misunderstanding between Christian and Muslim women is the position of women in Islam. This is because Christian women are often educated in Western style schools, which are heavily prejudiced against non-Christian religions. Contrary to the general belief, "the teachings of Islam could be considered to have liberated women" (Kahumbi 2002: 201). Ammah (1992: 83) likewise asserts "that the Koran elevated the status of woman vis-à-vis her status during the pre-Islamic era".

At least in theory women are better off in Islam than in Christianity.[303] This includes the right to inheritance, which the Qur'an accords to women but not the Bible. There are also women preachers in Islam. A Muslim woman cannot be forced to marry without her consent, and she is not forced to wear a veil (Kahumbi 2002: 201). Contrary to popular belief, female circumcision cannot be attributed to Islam (Ammah 1992: 81). Female circumcision is customary in various African cultures, indigenous, Christian and Islamic alike. Kahumbi (2002: 199) writes, "There are some lessons that a Christian woman should learn from Islam."[304]

However, not all authors are positive about the position of women in Islam. "Despite the injunctions in the Qur'an, Hadith and Sunnah about the status of a Muslim woman, there is evidence that the family in a way is an avenue for oppressing women. Subordination of Muslim women is still a common phenomenon in the society," says Kassily (2002: 41). In Islam a woman is expected to function first as a mother, but 'first' often signifies 'only'. The woman is supposed to be a devoted wife and ideal mother and her role in the wider society

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302   The origin of the bride price, whatever it has become now, seems to have been that the bride 'donated' her fertility to her husband's family, so her own family had to be recompensed for the loss of 'their blood'.

303   As already noted Mazrui contrasts liberty of women in the West with dignity of women in the Muslim world. "In the Muslim world there was far less prostitution than in the West, far less use of female sex appeal to sell commercial products, almost no beauty competitions in the Muslim world, and too much protection of women from the rat race of the market place. Sons in the Muslim world respect their mothers more than sons in the West – because Muslim mothers are accorded higher dignity" (Mazrui 2006: 77).

304   With respect to the veil, authors make a comparison between Muslim women and Roman Catholic nuns. The veil is not a symbol of oppression but of dignity (Kahumbi 2001: 207–208).

is limited. Discrimination against women in Islam is demonstrated clearly in their education: they are educated at home and are taught to be good wives. After ascribing more dignity to Muslim women than to Western women, Mazrui (2006: 77) says: "But husbands in the Muslim world respect their wives less than husbands in the West – because Muslim wives enjoy less liberty."

African women in Christianity

Whereas African women in Islam and Indigenous Religion are allowed to engage in polygamous marriages, in Christianity they are not. In the Catholic Church they are even excluded from the sacraments if they are second or third wives. Various interreligious dialogues concern polygamy. It is argued that polygamy is a reason for conversion to Islam rather than to Christianity, as polygamy is accepted in Islam but not in Christianity. But who is better off?

Empirical findings are ambiguous. Some studies state that African women seem to prefer a Christian, hence monogamous, marriage, as this will most likely prevent them from becoming a second wife. Other studies show that African women seem to prefer polygamous marriages, as this reduces house-hold work (Nasimiyu-Wasike 1992a).[305] It has been suggested that the polyg-amous marriage is preferred in rural areas where agriculture is the dominant source of income, whereas the monogamous marriage is an urban phenom-enon among educated women who work as professionals or are housewives. It has been observed, however, that educated young women in towns opt for polygamous marriages, as this allows the possibility of dropping their hus-bands when they tire of them or want to make career, which clashes with being a housewife.

Commonalities in the situation of women

These differences between Christianity and Islam notwithstanding, there are some commonalities in the position of African women. Women's subordination to men and their marginalisation in society are common features. In conflict situations, irrespective of their religion, women are often targets of extreme acts of violence, especially rape (James 2001: 69). African women are the main transmitters and preservers of cultural values and traditions (Nasimiyu-Wasike 1994: 51). Thus feminism is a movement that cuts across all religions and breaks down the boundaries between them.

What do African women theologians have to say about a theology of inter-religious dialogue? For one thing, they emphasise "acceptance of the total

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305   This also appears to be the reason for female same-sex marriages in various parts of Africa (Kayongo-Male & Onuango 1984: 7; Njeru 2004).

human situation" or "the wholeness of the human community in which male-humanity and female-humanity shape a balanced community within which the humanity of each and every person experiences a fullness of being" (Nasimiyu-Wasike 1994: 47). This means that more than anything else the acceptance of the 'common humanity' (Pemberton 2003: 80) or wo-man-kind is a precondition for interreligious relations. James (2003: 43) speaks about holistic partnership as "all-inclusive sharing of men and women".

Another issue, which is an extension of the previous one, is the holistic and all-inclusive sharing of humanity and the earth. Environmental degradation, often justified by 'other-worldly religions', was taken up early by African woman theologians. One of the promising developments in African feminist theology is the relation between spirituality and ecology. Often eco-feminism is combined with eco-spirituality. Women are usually the ones who prepare the food, and they are the ones who are confronted first with ecological devastation, demonstrated by shortages of water and firewood. Thus they plead for a theology of creation, drawing inspiration from various religious sources, not least a close relation to mother earth. They make theologians aware that concern for the other and concern for the earth go together.

The will to arise

To conclude this section, and the study for that matter, let us return to women's critical attitude towards the plea to return to the path of the ancestors, in particular to Africa's community spirit and traditions of peaceful coexistence. Bujo (1997) and Eboh (2004), for example, applaud the democratic decision making in traditional Africa. It is true that the power of the chiefs was somehow mitigated by the council of elders, but the council was dominated by men and the elderly. Women and the young had no say.

Theresa Okure (1992) expresses the concern of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in her epilogue to *The will to Arise*:

> "Let us lend supportive hands to one another and help one another to arise. For Africa will not arise unless its womenfolk, the mothers and bearers of life, arise. What an awesome thought. What a heavy responsibility on our part!"

Conclusion

In this chapter we looked at current developments in African theology and their implications for interreligious relations. In contemporary African theology the major trends are renaissance and reconstruction. One should not repeat the mistake made in regard to inculturation and liberation theology, namely that of opposing he two. The two trends are different sides of the same coin;

they aim at Africa's emancipation. Yet they are not the same. Whereas the theology of African renaissance thinks primarily in terms of the past, of reviving traditional values, the theology of reconstruction thinks in terms of the future. The exodus is more or less over. It is time now to build up the Promised Land. From our analysis and evaluation it follows that a future-oriented approach is more promising, an approach that does not mourn for the past, a model that stresses building rather than restoring, reconstructing rather than reviving or restoration (Mana 2004). From this perspective we reflect upon Africa's tradition of peaceful coexistence (Eboh 2004). We must ask: how peaceful is this coexistence? It seems that communities in Africa coexist, but remain strictly separated from each other. It is what we called earlier a LAT relation: living apart together (Wijsen & Tanner 2000: 74). But peace is more than the absence of war. We presented African woman's theology as a third current that can possibly bridge the gap between renaissance and reconstruction. African women theologians stress common humanity, both male humanity and female humanity. Common issues such as gender (oppression of women) and ecology (environmental degradation) may offer breakthroughs in interreligious relations.

General conclusions

In the introduction to this study we stated that there is as yet no adequate theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective and that we want to make good the deficiency. We proposed to answer the following three main questions. First, why are African theologians and scholars of religion so remarkably silent about interreligious relations? Secondly, is there an African model for interreligious relations, and if so, what does it look like? Thirdly, how should interreligious relations be taught in departments of religious studies and schools of theology? We did not, however, deal with pedagogical considerations, as did Cheetham (2005). We studied publications written by African theologians and scholars of religion, official declarations and conference proceedings of ecclesiastic organisations, and we interviewed informants in the field. What insights did we gain from our study? In these general conclusions we recapitulate what we did and reflect on our research findings. At the end we come up with a concrete proposal for further development.

Why are Africans silent about interreligious relations?

Without professing to be exhaustive and fully aware that the number and order of the reasons we advance are to a large extent arbitrary, we found the following. The majority of theologians and scholars of religion whom we interviewed are of the opinion that "dialogue is not a big problem for us." Some informants said that Africans have always lived harmoniously in mixed communities and that there was a tradition of peaceful coexistence. If this were the case, however, it would have been a good reason to share this spiritual gift with others. Other informants said, "Dialogue is not our first priority. We have other concerns: drought and disease, justice and peace." In reply one could say: yes, but without peace among the religions there will be no peace in the world (Tarimo 2003), as the members of the World Conference on Religion and Peace in Kenya would argue.

   Some informants said, "Conflicts in Africa are not interreligious but interethnic." So Africans focus on ethnicity and culture. Indeed, African theologies of culture and inculturation abound. But from an African perspective one cannot deny that there is an intrinsic relation between culture and religion. Some informants said that Africans are still struggling to find an African Christian identity, so "dialogue with others is over-ambitious at this stage . . . We are not ready for dialogue." There is an element of fear in this statement, as

if dialogue is a threat to identity. These theologians and scholars of religion tend to forget that identity is always relational. People do not first 'have' an identity and then relate to others; it is in their relations with others that their identity is formed and constructed.

Other interviewees stressed external constraints. Some said that they lack the funds for travel and publishing: "We do not have the means." In general this is true, but the same would apply to many Asian theologians. Good speakers and good publications always secure funding. Moreover, in journals and book series that are published in Africa interreligious relations is not a big issue either. Some informants said that African theologians are still dependent on financial aid from church agencies, which do not want them to write about certain issues. "We are not free to say and publish what we would like. We are controlled by the churches." This is true, but it applies to theologians working in ecclesiastic institutions everywhere in the world. And it does not apply to theologians working outside ecclesiastic universities.

"We are not invited," it is said. My informants said that the West still regards Africa as the dark continent, so it is presupposed that no light can come from Africa. In general this is true, but it would apply to many parts of Asia as well (Choe 2004). "We are excluded," my informants said. "People in the West do not like our uncompromising views." By way of example they cite the strong opposition in Africa to the appointment of a homosexual bishop in the Anglican Church. Indeed, the influence of evangelical Christianity is strong and in general evangelical Christianity is anti-Islam and anti-dialogue (Brouwer, Gifford & Rose 1996). Evangelicals tend to be first and foremost interested in Christian witness and church growth, not in interreligious dialogue: "We are marginalised." But it must be asked, respectfully and humbly: who marginalises who? Could it be that Africans marginalise themselves by stressing their right to be different (Wijsen & Hoeben 1993: 73), saying that Africa is unique and distinct?

There are also scholars who point out the special position of Christianity in Africa, both in relation to Western Christianity and in relation to Islam in Africa. "Dialogue is something of the West," we were told. Some interviewees maintained that the attacks on the American embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi were the work of 'foreigners', despite evidence that African Muslims were involved. The African connection in international terrorism is relatively strong, as was shown at the beginning of this study, and the Muslim Brothers' ideology remains a source of inspiration. The Al-Azhar University in Cairo grants scholarships to hundreds of Africans every year. The attitude of blaming outside factors only is widespread in Africa. When problems arise many Africans tend to look at others, at outsiders: "Do not export your problems to Africa." Dialogue is associated with relativism and pluralism; these are considered to be 'typical Western' attitudes, results of the Enlightenment values of liberalism and individualism. "We accept the Bible as it is." Others said: "The Muslims are not interested in dialogue, so why should we be?" Dialogue is to

a large extent a Christian affair. "In the mainline churches, the faithful are told that they must listen to and learn from other believers, but the Muslims continue to teach and preach."

What does an African model of interfaith dialogue look like?

The aim of this study is to develop a theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective. The theory has to be socio-scientific and theological. From an African (post-colonial) perspective the distinction between philosophy, theology and social science is not as rigid as in Europe (Mall 2000: 6). (From a postmodern perspective the sharp distinction between disciplines is diminishing anyway.) This is because societies with a predominantly holistic worldview have not (yet) compartmentalised reality. Throughout this study I have shown that there are bits of an African model of interfaith dialogue (Temple 2003) here and there, but that it is not yet systematised. Except for some Evangelical and Pentecostal theologians, most mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians would claim that Africa has a communitarian spirit and a tradition of peaceful coexistence (Eboh 2004), referred to as *ubuntu* in South Africa and as *ujamaa* in East Africa (Punt 2004: 104 n. 20). From a socio-scientific point of view we criticised this claim by asking: Was this tradition as peaceful as these theologians claim? Does it still exist? And is it going to help Africans to build harmonious societies in the 21st century (Mana 2004)?

We have shown that there is historical and empirical evidence that the fruits of the Spirit are indeed discernible (Kibicho 1972). Undoubtedly Africa has a tradition of solidarity and hospitality, of neighbourly love and care for others. But this tradition must not be oversimplified by claiming that there was no crime in Africa (Nangoli 1986: 18), that conflict based on religious faith was unknown in Africa (Magesa 2002a: 15), and that if these evils are there now, they were brought by Europeans. Africans are not angels; they are no worse than any other people, but neither are they better. As anthropological studies show, the community spirit varied over time and place. Sometimes it was extremely weak, as seems to be the case with the Ik in Uganda (Turnbull 1972); sometimes it was very strong, as seems to be the case with the Nyakyusa (Wilson 1951). In many cases, solidarity and care for others remained family-oriented. Under pressure from globalisation and pluralisation, the fruits of the Spirit may turn into seeds of conflict (Wijsen & Mfumbusa 2004). In no way does this study aim at "cleansing of the conscience of the missionaries and the colonizers and their progeny" (Maluleke 2002: 190), only at counterbalancing excessive Afrocentrism.

Against this background, what are the building blocks for an African model for interreligious relations? What would a theory of interreligious dialogue from an African perspective look like? Let us first point out what it is not. It is said that believers of different faiths are Africans first before they are Christians or Muslims. They share their African-ness, a common ground, pan-Africanism. The

problem is that Africa is an extremely pluriform and diversified continent, indeed one of the most pluralistic continents of the world. *The* African, *the* African model, simply does not exist (and undoubtedly this study, too, did not do justice to the huge diversity of Africans views), despite the longing for African unity. So it is doubtful whether a presupposed common African-ness is going to help Africa much further in the 21st century, whether, for example, *the* African religious heritage or tradition can serve as a mediator between Christianity and Islam.

It is said that Africans are peace loving people, more egalitarian than hierarchical, more consensus-minded than authority-minded, more communitarian than individualistic, more relational than functional, acting out of generosity more than reciprocity. "Consensus models of administration, democratic and participatory governance and social organisation are closer to African paradigms of leadership than the monarchical, authoritarian and totalitarian models inherited from the Greco-Roman world and transplanted into Africa through colonialism and evangelisation," says Eboh (2004: 7–8). And Bujo (1997: 158) advocates the traditional African 'palaver' model. "The fact that the King or Chief was not an absolute ruler is proven by the fact that he was supported by a council of elders. On all decisions of public importance he had to consult this council." However true this may be, our studies show that very often women and youths were and still are excluded from decision making, not to mention outsiders and strangers. (Incidentally, the situation was not much different in Athens, which the West still sees as the cradle of democracy). The *Mungiki* movement in Kenya can be seen partly as a result of the exclusion of youths from decision making (Kagwanja 2003). Collective thinking moreover suppressed individual freedom of speech. A poll during the constitutional review process in Kenya showed how diverse opinions about controversial issues are. Would this really have been so much different fifty years ago? Was the traditional way of decision making really based on consensus or simply on compromise?

Having dealt with simplistic Afrocentrism, what are we left with? Whatever constructivists say about religion in Africa, there is 'polytheistic monotheism'. To a Western mind, trained in binary logic, this seems a contradiction in terms, but to a large majority of Africans it is not. The striving to avoid cognitive dissonance may not be as universal as cognitive dissonance theorists claim (Kim 2000). A theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective should be pluralistic. More fundamental, maybe, is a strong belief in a spirit world (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: 49–69), spiritual power or a world 'in between'. This is not uniquely African, as it would apply to most primal cultures, but possibly this belief is stronger in Africa than on other continents. Anyway, a theory of inter-religious relations from an African perspective should be pneuma-centric. This would accord with spirit belief and mysticism in popular Christianity and popular Islam (Shenk 1983; Wijsen 1997a: 173–174).

A theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective should be pragmatic rather than speculative. Although the two are not necessarily contradictory, from an African perspective conclusions about the truth or truthfulness of religions are not primarily based on reasoning but on facts. A theory of interreligious relations from an Asian perspective would be more concerned with the philosophical traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism. Related to this pragmatism there are some other characteristics. A theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective is a theory of the heart, not only of the mind; it gives emotions a place without being emotive. In addition the theory will depend on narratives, not only on scriptures.

Such a theory should be based on early African Christian sources and on thorough comparison of Christian-Muslim relations in medieval North Africa and Egypt (Oduyoye 1986: 15–28). More studies need to be made of the foundations of the Catechetical School of Alexandria and the Coptic Church (especially the Coptic Church in relation to Muslims), ancient Egyptian religions, and the early links between Egypt and Europe.

A theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective should be holistic. It should be based on a cosmic religiosity underlying the world religions, in which the sacred is not intrinsically opposed to the profane and mind is not opposed to matter (Shorter & Onyancha 1997: 13), thus stressing integral liberation and healing. This cosmic religiosity emphasises vitality, life – the good, not necessarily abundant, life. It is life in this world here and now, not other-worldly. For the same reason, a theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective should be based on a different concept of religion. Most concepts of religion are Western in the sense that they see the essence of religion as non-human, non-worldly, non-natural, meta-empirical or metaphysical. In Africa spirits are in this world, they are human and natural. Consequently religion is not opposed to culture or civilisation; religion *is* civilisation, a way of life. Thus from an African perspective inculturation is not opposed to interreligious dialogue, or as Mall (2000: 6) puts it, "From the theological perspective, interculturality is interreligiosity."

Last but not least, a theory of interreligious relations from an African perspective should be based on values from the African cultural heritage, but not naively so. Some African Christian theologians speak about *ujamaa* (Magesa 2002; Onwubiko 1999), others about *ubuntu*, the South African equivalent of *ujamaa* (Punt 2004). There is a guest Christology and a theology of African hospitality. In Africa a guest is sacred and thus respected. But if he or she is unknown, these attitudes are mixed with suspicion and ambiguous (Olikenyi 2001: 106). In the same way, a theory of interreligious relations based on a theology of the church as the family of God (*ujamaa*) must not be naive. Charity and generosity are practised within the family, not outside it.

How should interreligious relations be taught?

At the beginning of this book we said that our investigations focused on the teaching of interreligious relations in departments of religion and schools of theology in Africa, more particularly in East Africa. In our fieldwork we found that there is some reflection on interreligious relations in ecclesiastic organisations such as the All African Council of Churches and the Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa. There are two educational programmes on interreligious relations in East Africa, one on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at (the Protestant) St Paul's United Theological College in Limuru, the other on Christian-Muslim encounter at (the Roman Catholic) Tangaza School of Theology in Nairobi. On the ground we found various attitudes towards other religions, from ignorance and fear to triumphalism, arrogance and nostalgic romanticism, but mainly there is a total disregard of other religions or aggressive confrontation.

In the conclusion to chapter four we distinguished two main models in the education on interreligious relations: the missionary model, which is dominant in schools of theology, and the comparative model, which is dominant in departments of religious studies. Most institutes of higher learning in East Africa teach other religions and interreligious relations either from the perspective of a theology of religions, in which non-Christian religions are interpreted and evaluated from a Christian point of view (Mugambi 1995: 26–29), or from the perspective of religious studies, in which various religions are taught in an insular, neutral way (Hinga 1996: 223; Wamue 2004: 367). In terms of the three models that we identified earlier we can say that theology of religions uses a mono-cultural model (identity), because other religions are interpreted in terms of one's own religion and to some extent reduced to it: the other is like me. Comparative religion, on the other hand, uses a multicultural model (alterity), in which all religions are studied in their own particularity and compared neutrally.

Throughout this study we argued that we see little progress in systematic theological treatises on interreligious relations during the past few decades. They all seem to stick to the models of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. We would prefer scholars of religion to teach interreligious relations using a multi-perspective and poly-methodical (i.e. socio-scientific and theological) approach. Such an approach does not study Christianity and Islam qua belief systems but focuses on the believers, adherents of African Traditional Religions, Christians and Muslims (Kim 2004). This prevents scholars of religion from making generalised statements about other religions and interreligious relations. If one adopts a multi-perspective and poly-methodical approach, the pluralistic model of interreligious relations appears not to be an alternative to the exclusivist and inclusivist models. When pluralistic theologians claim that the various religions are "*different* [my italics] instruments of God" (Byaruhanga-Akiiki 1989: 48) or that they "present *different* [my italics] facets or sketches of God" (Durand 2000: 68)

this shows that pluralism runs a risk of becoming a new form of exclusivism (Krieger 1991: 60). It uses a multi-religious perspective based on otherness and differentness.

An intercultural model of relations between religions

How do we go about this? The European missionary endeavour was based on a mono-cultural model. Thus assimilation of Africans to the European point of view was imperative. Africa's tradition of peaceful coexistence, on the other hand, is best understood in terms of a multicultural model. When the old man (*mzee*) quoted at the beginning of this study says that all people have their own religion and all religions are good his perspective is multireligious. Thus it is imperative to live and let live – living apart together (Krieger 1991: 60).

In our present-day global world both the mono- and multicultural models no longer seem adequate. On the one hand, in the post-colonial era no culture has the power to impose its worldview on others (Krieger 1991: 9–44), despite ongoing cultural imperialism. On the other hand, however helpful Africa's tradition of peaceful coexistence may have been in the past, in an era of increasing cultural interconnectedness it is no longer applicable. Tolerance and intolerance do not differ in essence but in degree. Both presuppose a negative attitude towards the other, which is dysfunctional. The difference between tolerance and intolerance is not that the former implies a positive and the latter a negative attitude towards the other. The difference is that tolerance remains passive and intolerance is put into practice (Kamstra 1985: 200–202). That is why there can be seeds of conflict in the haven of peace – and seeds can flower if they have a breeding-ground.

A step forward would be to teach interreligious relations according to the intercultural model. This is what we mean by interreligious studies, a field of study straddling theology of religions (based on the mono-cultural model) and comparative religion (based on the multicultural model). There are already chairs of interreligious studies at Xavier University, Cincinnati, at the University of Birmingham (there it is called interfaith studies) and at the University of Oslo. Interreligious studies is based on the assumption of cultural overlaps (Mall 2000: 6) or cultural universals (Wiredu 1996: 21–33), carefully balancing universality and particularity, unity and diversity, identity and alterity. There is neither total identity nor radical difference. Thus mutual learning and critical interrogation are imperative. To some extent this implies abandoning my earlier notion of African studies as abiding by the otherness of Africa and the Africans (Turkson & Wijsen 1994). In the course of this study I have become convinced that we must move beyond -centrisms, Afrocentrism and Eurocentrism alike, to become global Africans and global Europeans, or better still, 'glocals'.

Our proposal that interreligious studies should study relations between religions (material object) from an intercultural perspective (formal object) in a

comparative way (method) while acknowledging that the objects of religious studies have become subjects brings us back to the burning issue of neutrality and the dilemma of an extra-religious or secular (contextual) as opposed to a 'religious' (hermeneutic) point of view. It may be asked whether the advocates of methodical atheism or agnosticism confuse ontological and epistemological neutralism. It is generally accepted by both scholars of religion and (empirical) theologians that they cannot make scientific statements about the existence of God and other spiritual beings, so they confine their studies to humans who believe in God, and conceptualisations about God. But one cannot know and understand religious beliefs and practices without (I deliberately refrain from saying outside) a religious paradigm, which does not mean that the researcher shares the believers' religious convictions (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: 17–18). So a religionist point of view is not only legitimate but necessary in studies of other religions and interreligious relations.

What we observed is that Christian scholars of religion operating from a neutral or agnostic point of view are not taken very seriously by their Muslim counterparts in Africa. As one Muslim scholar said, "They do not take their own religion seriously; how can they take ours seriously?" Thus the issue is not neutrality or agnosticism, but empathy and commitment as epistemological principles. In order to understand others we have to take them seriously (empathy), which does not mean that we have to take everything equally seriously (Van Beek 1990: 106–107). For this reason I hesitate to agree with James Cox (2003: 30–31), who proposes methodological conversion as and alternative to methodological agnosticism. Following Panikkar and Krieger, methodological conversion signifies that I can only understand others if I convert to their point of view, even if only temporarily. To a certain extent this is what Van Binsbergen (2003: 155–193) did when he not only studied *sangomas* but actually became one. Understanding will most often be partial, an understanding misunderstanding (Mall 2000: 16) or a working misunderstanding (Wijsen 1993: 251–252). This also implies that we opt for a position between total translatability and radical untranslatability (Mall 2000: 14), an issue that has not been taken seriously enough in comparative and cross-cultural studies.

Coming back to the question of neutrality, interculturalism is not seen as a 'culture in between', a culture between other cultures, a 'third culture', a neutral space, vacuum or no-man's land where cultures can meet. There is no no-man's land (Mall 2000: 36). From a post-colonial and postmodern perspective we cannot but acknowledge that we never operate in a cultural vacuum. The Enlightenment ideals of autonomy and rationality are also rooted in a particular historical tradition and thus are not value-free or universal (Olabimtan 2003: 327). Interculturalism is understood as cultural overlaps, recognising that religion is always inculturated but cannot be equated with culture. On the one hand the contents of religious beliefs can only be expressed in cultural

forms, on the other they cannot be equated with cultural forms but transcend them. This implies that Christianity cannot be equated with European culture and Islam cannot be equated with Arab culture. Thus a theory of interreligious relations must be complemented by a theory of intercultural (intra-religious) relations: relations between people who share the same faith but come from different cultural backgrounds. This applies not just to Christians but also to Muslims, as is shown by the complex situation in western Sudan (Darfur).

The case for interreligious studies

In this study we have been looking for a socio-scientific and theological theory of interreligious relations in Africa. From the socio-scientific point of view we showed that as a rule relations are good. Religions coexist peacefully in most parts of Africa. In this sense Africa may be considered a haven of peace. When scholars of religion state that religions themselves cause conflict (social identity theory) by making absolute truth claims, they must explain why most believers everywhere try to live peacefully and harmoniously. Religious extremism is an exception, not the rule. But there are seeds of conflict in the haven of peace. One function of culture is to unify people in times of distress. As the Swahili saying goes, *umoja ni nguvu* – unity is strength. And unification implies – to a certain extent – exclusion; today's companion can be tomorrow's competitor (Bourdieu 1991). That is what culture does. In Sukumaland the name 'Sukuma' was not used as a label for an ethnic group up to the 1950s; it became one during the Tanzanian struggle for independence (Wijsen & Tanner 2002: 71–108). Culture unites under conditions of economic scarcity or political oppression (majority/minority). Culture as organisation of diversity can be ethnic (as seemed to be the case in Rwanda) or religious (as seemed to be the case in Nigeria) or both (as seems to be the case in western Sudan). Increasingly, however, people's identities are defined non-ethnically, more especially religiously (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004).

In most faculties of theology and departments of religious studies in East Africa religions and interreligious relations are studied and taught from the perspective of either theology of religions or comparative religion. These disciplines respectively operate according to a mono- and a multicultural model, as noted already. Thus one studies other religions from the perspective of one's own religion, for example in the framework of mission or evangelism, or one studies them as other and different (Islam, Christianity, African Traditional Religion), as is common practice in departments of religious studies (Hinga 1996: 223; Wamue 2004: 367). There is an urgent need for a new field of study to be taught in faculties of theology and departments of religious studies, one that goes beyond traditional religious studies courses and traditional disciplines such as theology, science of religion and philosophy. From a postmodern perspective the distinction between these disciplines has become irrelevant

anyway. In this new discipline interreligious relations (the material object, as opposed to the classical religious studies approach) should be researched in a multi-perspective, poly-methodical way (Turner 1981). This approach overcomes the classic distinction between insider and outsider perspectives and thus defuses the controversy about religionist versus reductionist research methods (Cox 2003). In this approach the other is no longer perceived only as an object of research, as usually happens in what is called religious studies, but is taken seriously as a subject of religious studies. In this sense it is appropriate to advocate a shift from religious studies to interreligious studies, and to see a faculty of theology or a department of religious studies as what Alasdair MacIntyre calls a community of contested discourses (Hyman 2004: 195).

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Institutions and informants participating in the study

University of Nairobi

Accreditation: Fully chartered by the Commission for Higher Education
Denomination: None; public university
Programmes: BA, MA, PhD in Religious Studies
Interviewees: Prof. Jesse Mugambi, Prof. Samuel Kibicho, Dr Patrick Wachege
Interreligious Education: Specialisations in African Religion, Judaism/Old Testament, Christianity/New Testament, Islam, Religions of Asian Origin, Religious Studies in Africa. There are courses in comparative religion, but none in interreligious relations.

Kenyatta University

Accreditation: Fully chartered by the Commission for Higher Education
Denomination: None; public university
Programmes: BA, MA, PhD in Religious Studies and Theology (in process)
Interviewees: Dr Michael Katola (head of Department of Religious Studies), Prof. Mary Getui (dean of Faculty of Humanities); Prof. Zablon Nthamburi, head of Department Religious Studies & Philosophy (November 2004), Dr Philomena Mwaura (June 2006)
Interreligious Education: At BA level, specialisations in Christian Religious Education, African Religious Education, Islamic Religious Education; at MA level, specialisations in African Religion, Religions of East Asian Origin, Judaism, Christianity, Islam. There is no course in interreligious relations (a course in interfaith dialogue is planned for the new curriculum).

Pan Africa Christian College

Accreditation: Registered as a private university in Kenya by the Commission for Higher Education, not yet chartered; degrees through Global University, Springfield, Missouri
Denomination: Pentecostal; Assemblies of God (Canada)
Programmes: BA Bible and Theology, BA Bible and Translation Studies, BA Bible and Counselling, MA Bible and Theology (through Global University)
Interviewees: Mr Kirk Kauffeldt, academic dean; Mr Bill Gardner, lecturer Bible and Translations Studies

Interreligious Education: Two courses, one in evangelism and one in missiology, both in the church ministries component (compulsory). In the general education division there are courses in world religions in Africa, Islam in Africa and African Traditional Religions. There is no course in interreligious relations.

East Africa School of Theology

Accreditation: Registered as a private university in Kenya by the Commission for Higher Education, not yet chartered; degrees through Global University, Springfield, Missouri

Denomination: Pentecostal; Assemblies of God (USA)

Interviewee: Mr Dan McGhaffee, academic dean

Programmes: BA in Bible and Theology (through Global University)

Interreligious Education: Two courses, one in mission, the other in evangelism, in church ministries component (compulsory). There are courses in world religions and ATR and Islam in the general education division. There is no course in interreligious relations.

Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology

Accreditation: Registered as a private university in Kenya by the Commission for Higher Education, holding an Interim Letter of Authority

Denomination: Evangelical; Association of Evangelicals in Africa

Interviewee: Dr Alemayehu Mekonnen (head of mission studies department)

Programmes: MTh, MA; MD; PhD

Interreligious Education: The mission studies department offers an African Traditional Religions seminar, a course in Islam in Africa and a course in the impact of Islam and the attitude of the church in Africa. There is no course in interreligious relations. There is a Research Institute for the Study of African Realities (ISAR).

Nairobi International School of Theology

Accreditation: Registered as a private university in Kenya by the Commission for Higher Education, not yet chartered

Denomination: Evangelical (Campus Crusade for Christ)

Interviewees: Mr Jackson Ngalyuka, registrar; Mr Bill Mumley, director extension studies; Dr Julius Muthengi, professor of mission and intercultural studies

Programmes: MD, MTh

Interreligious Education: There is a concentration (a major, comprising 6 courses) in mission in both programmes. There are no courses in other religions or interreligious relations.

Scott Theological College

Accreditation: Granted a charter by the government of the Republic of Kenya in order to operate legally as a private university, accredited by the Commission for Higher Education

Denomination: African Inland Church/Baptist Church

Programme: BTh

Interviewees: Dr Gregg Okesson, dean; Dr Esther Kibor, head of the department of studies in ministry and missions

Interreligious Education: In the general programme there is a course in major religions in Africa and one in African Traditional Religion. The missiology concentration has a course in cross-cultural communication, but not in interreligious relations.

Daystar University

Accreditation: Granted a charter by the government of the Republic of Kenya in order to operate legally as a private university, accredited by the Commission for Higher Education

Denomination: Evangelical

Programmes: BA in biblical and religious studies, MA in Christian ministries

Interviewee: Dr James Kombo (systematic theology)

Interreligious Education: The BA in Biblical and Religious Studies offers courses in comparative world religions, Christianity and Islam, and Christianity and Islam in Africa. The MA in Christian ministries programme does not focus on mission or dialogue.

Presbyterian University of Eastern Africa

Accreditation: Registered as a private university in Kenya by the Commission for Higher Education; not yet chartered

Denomination: Presbyterian

Programme: Diploma in Theology (four years)

Interviewee: Dr John Gicheru, academic dean

Interreligious Education: There is a systematic theology and religious studies area. There are courses in world religions, Islam and ATR, and missiology.

Kenya Methodist University

Accreditation: Registered as a private university in Kenya by the Commission for Higher Education, given a letter of interim authority

Denomination: Presbyterian Church of East Africa

Programme: BTh

Interviewees: Mr Charles Moywaywa, Dr Michael Chester, head African Religious Studies Department

Interreligious Education: The BTh programme has courses in African Traditional Religion and phenomenology of religion. The applied theology concentration offers a course in world religions. There is an African religious studies concentration, but no course in interreligious relations. There are elective courses in history of religion and principles and practice of missiology, without reference to interreligious relations.

Nazarene University

Accreditation: Granted a charter by the government of the Republic of Kenya in order to operate legally as a private university, accredited by the Commission for Higher Education

Denomination: Nazarene Church (Methodist; Wesleyan)

Programmes: BTh, MA in religion

Interviewee: Dr Joseph Kisoi

Interreligious Education: The BTh programme has courses in world religions and evangelism. The MA in religion programme offers courses in phenomenology of religion, nature, mission and growth of the church, and Christianity in a pluralistic society. There is no focus on interreligious relations.

St Paul's United Theological College

Accreditation: Registered as a private university in Kenya by the Commission for Higher Education, given a letter of interim authority

Denominations: Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist

Programmes: BA, MA

Interviewee: John Chesworth, head of Department of Religious and Missiological Studies

Interreligious Education: The Department of Religious and Missiological Studies offers courses in African Traditional Religion, Islam in Africa and Muslim-Christian relations. It is about to offer a postgraduate diploma and MA in Islam and Christian-Muslim relations (through Aberdeen University).

Carlile College

Accreditation: Registered as a private university in Kenya by the Commission for Higher Education, given a letter of interim authority

Denomination: Church Army (Anglican)

Programmes: Higher Diploma; BA through University of South Africa

Interviewees: Dr Godffrey Ngumi (director, Centre for Intercultural and Contemporary Studies), Dr Francois Vincent Nsengiyumva (Bible), Mr Paul Mwingi (director of studies)

Interreligious Education: The College has a Centre for Intercultural and Contemporary Studies, with a research interest in interreligious relations.

Ecclesiastical School "Makarios III"

Accreditation: Not yet in the process of registration
Denomination: African Orthodox Church
Programmes: Students are awarded a Diploma in Theology.
Interviewees: Dr Andreas Tillyrides (principal; archbishop); Dr Innocentius Byakotonda (dean of studies)
Interreligious Education: There are courses in missiology in years two and three. There are no courses in (world) religions and interreligious relations.

Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Accreditation: Granted a charter by the government of the Republic of Kenya in order to operate legally as a private university, accredited by the Commission for Higher Education and thus capable of granting civil degrees. Authorised by the Congregation for Catholic Education to award ecclesiastic Baccalaureate, licentiate and doctoral degrees.
Denomination: Roman Catholic
Programmes: MA and PhD in theology (Faculty of Theology); MA and PhD in religious studies (Faculty of Arts)
Interviewees: Dr Dieudonné Ngona, dean faculty of theology; Dr Caesar Lukudu, canon law (January 2001); Prof. Victor Zunkuratire, biblical theology (January 2001); Dr Juvenalis Baitu, moral theology (January 2001); Dr Patrick Ryan, pastoral theology
Interreligious Education: The Department of Pastoral Theology offers a course in models of mission. The Department of Spiritual Theology offers a course in dialogue between the spirituality of African Traditional Religion and Judeo-Christian religion.

Blessed Bakanja Seminary

Accreditation: The seminary is part of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa.
Denomination: Roman Catholic
Programme: BTh
Interviewee: Dr Patrick Ryan
Interreligious Education: Missiology is given in year three. There is no course in interreligious relations.

St Thomas Aquinas (National) Seminary

Accreditation: Affiliated to the Pontifical Urbanian University in Rome
Denomination: Roman Catholic

Programme: BTh (Urbania)

Interviewee: Dr Boniface Kariuki, academic dean

Interreligious Education: The curriculum mentions courses in missiology and mission anthropology, but they are not taught due to lack of personnel. There is no course in interreligious relations.

Hekima College

Accreditation: Constituent College of Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Programmes: BTh

Interviewees: Dr Eugène Goussikindey, principal (April 2003); Dr Francois de Paule Randriamanalina, systematic theology (April 2003); Dr Peter Schinneler, systematic theology

Interreligious Education: There are courses in African belief systems and thought (year two), African Traditional Religion and conversion and Christian faith and Muslim faith (year three). The latter course deals with Christian-Muslim relations. There are elective courses in introduction to Islam and African religious studies.

Tangaza College

Accreditation: Constituent College of Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Programmes: BA Religious Studies, BTh

Interviewees: Dr Albert de Jong, deputy principal (academic); Dr Fritz Stenger, head Mission Studies Department; Dr Fernando Domingues, head of (proposed) Master's programme; Dr Fredric Mvumbi; Fr Guy Vuillemin

Interreligious Education: The Mission Studies Department offers courses in African Traditional Religion and Islam in Africa, as well as theology of religions and Muslim-Christian relations. The department offers a one-year programme leading to a certificate in Islamic studies. It includes courses in Islamic thought and practice, reading of Muslim texts and Muslim-Christian relations.

Apostles of Jesus Scholasticate

Accreditation: Affiliated to the Pontifical Urbanian University in Rome

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Programme: BTh (Urbaniana)

Interviewee: Dr Gabriel Msoka, academic dean (April 2003)

Interreligious Education: There are courses in non-Christian religions and interreligious dialogue and in African Traditional Religion, theology of inculturation and mission

Note on accreditation: The Commission for Higher Education was established in 1985 to advance university education in Kenya. As the accreditation body of the government of the Republic of Kenya it is legally empowered to ensure that the standards of the courses and the examinations in private universities are comparable with those at public universities and that standards are maintained. A charter from the government of the Republic of Kenya, through accreditation by the Commission for Higher Education, allows a private university to operate independently and offer its own degrees. Some institutions of higher learning that have not yet been chartered by the Kenyan government are accredited by other (ecclesiastic) bodies (e.g. Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa) or offer degrees through affiliation with other universities (e.g. Global University, University of South Africa, Pontifical Urbanian University).

Other organisations visited (if not included in the list above):

United Religions Initiative
Life Challenge Africa, Society for International Ministries
All African Conference of Churches
Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa
Organisation of African Instituted Churches
Project for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa
Interreligious Council of Kenya (World Conference on Religion and Peace, Kenya)
Coptic Orthodox Church
Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Survey of the study of interfaith relations in theological institutions in East Africa

1. Is the study of interfaith relations part of your curriculum?

   [] yes   [] no

2. If so, is this study presented as (an) independent course(s) or is it integrated with (an)other course(s)?

   [] independent   [] integrated

3. In the latter case, with what course(s) is it integrated?

   1 . . . .
   2 . . . .
   3 . . . .

4. Do you offer one or more than one course in interfaith relations?

   [] one course   [] more than one course

5. Is this course/are these courses (a) compulsory or (an) elective course(s)?

   [] compulsory   [] elective

6. On what level is/are this course/these courses offered?

   [] diploma   [] bachelor
   [] master   [] doctoral

7. This course/these courses is/are offered

   [] from a historical perspective
   [] from a phenomenological perspective
   [] from a theological perspective
   [] from all the aforementioned perspectives

8. What is the general objective of this course/these courses?

   [] to know and understand more about interfaith relations
   [] to know how to preach the gospel to people of other faiths
   [] to know how to love and respect people of other faiths
   [] other, namely . . . .

9. Do you present interfaith relations in general or with a special focus on (a) particular religion(s)?

   [] in general   [] with a special focus on (a) particular religion(s)

10. In the latter case, what religion(s)?

    [] African Traditional Religion   [] Islam
    [] Hinduism   [] other, namely . . . .

11. What basic textbooks do use for this course/these courses?

    1 . . . .
    2 . . . .
    3 . . . .

12. Do you use guidelines/documents from (a) denominational organisation(s)?

    [] yes   [] no

13. If so, from what organisation(s)?

    1 . . . .
    2 . . . .
    3 . . . .

14. In what institution(s) did the lecturer(s) of the above mentioned course(s) get his/her/their training?

    1 . . . .
    2 . . . .
    3 . . . .

15. On what level did the(se) lecturer(s) get his/her/their training?

    [] diploma   [] bachelor
    [] master   [] doctoral

16. Would you appreciate assistance in developing courses in interfaith relations?

    [] yes   [] no

17. Would you appreciate assistance in getting further studies for the lecturer(s) of the courses in interfaith relations?

    [] yes   [] no

18. If so, what would be the best institution to do further studies in interfaith relations?

    1 . . . .
    2 . . . .
    3 . . . .

We thank you for your cooperation.

Index of names