## INTER-RELIGIO:THE BIRTH OF AN IDEA

*From March 4-7,1982, a Conference of Christian Organizations for Interreligious Encounter was held in the outskirts of Manila under the sponsorship of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, drawing together for the first time representatives of 16 organizations from 8 countries in Eastern Asia. What follows is a report of that meeting, its background and resolutions.*

### BACKGROUND

When the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture was officially established in 1975, the ideals it set for itself were of the lofty sort, written up into the lyrical prose that is wont to accompany groundbreakings and ribboncuttings just about everywhere. Its initial brochures and pamphlets spoke of a "growing convergence of religious values" and pointed to Japan as a "laboratory for synthesis between cultures East and West." It announced its commitment to "an international, ecumenical, and interdisciplinary approach" to the "critical issues facing the human community in a scientific, technological world." It described itself as a think—tank in which to "search out that cultural base within Japanese society that has so long been wanting in Christian life and thought." It boldly embraced the challenge of "opening the traditional Japanese conscience to the problems of Asia as reflected in the great Asian religions," and of "taking part in the interfaith encounter going on across the globe." The local newspapers featured its inauguration as "a place for dialogue and exchange free of sectarianism" and it was welcomed by a number of the leading religious academics of Japan as "a promise of new insight and inspiration in the promotion of One World Community."

All of which is a pretty heavy load to lay on the shoulders of any one group of people, let alone the motley assortment that we who make up the Institute represent. At any rate, once the ideals had been forced and tempered into official statutes and by—laws, a splendid plant of facilities erected and paid for, and a preliminary staff assembled, it quickly became clear that a major decision had to be made. Either the Institute as a unit pledge itself to a small number of very concrete aims and set up long—range programs for their implementation, or it treat itself as a kind of skin into which a wide variety of scholars interested in its general goals night step with their different skills and interests to give it a shape that would change with the changes in personnel. Happily, as we small band of survivors look back over the past five years of full—scale operations, the choice was for the latter. For this flexibility has meant an enrichment that none of us could have anticipated. The scores of scholars who have spent time at the Institute participating in its symposia and seminars, conducting colloquia, or just retreating from their regular environments to find the peace and quiet to think and write, have stretched our little skin into shapes almost too many and varied to remember, and gone a long way to opening up the

complexities and hopes hidden in those initial, noble ideals.

But then two years ago we set to examining the patterns of activity that had begun to show themselves, and discovered that there was indeed a certain direction taking shape in the natural course of things. Or perhaps better put, we found that we were being swept along in a stream of conventions that had seeped in almost without our noticing. We had published books in Japanese around major conferences we had held for Japanese religionists. We were editing and publishing a series of monographs in collaboration with publishers in the United States, aimed at the Western academic community. We had taken over the editorship of a major scholarly journal of Japanese religions, most of whose subscribers were in European and American academia. Looking over the record of foreign scholars who had passed through or come for longer stays, we found them to be almost without exception from the West.

The explanation for these patterns is not hard to come by. Outside of Japan, the major scholarship being done on Japanese religions is centered not in Asia but in Europe and the United States, and more particularly in the most economically established centers of the West. Before the first member ever set foot across threshold, the Institute was already of a feather with this flock and invested with all the instincts to fly compliantly in formation. What is more, the response from the West and from within Japan to our efforts was so favorable and so encouraging that there seemed no reason to question whether what we were doing was enough. Of course, we knew vaguely of the existence of a handful of centres for interreligious dialogue in neighboring Asian countries, among ourselves had visited a small number of them, and were even exchanging periodicals with a few. But unless some concerted steps were taken to bring into focus our professed ideal of belonging to the wider Asian community, it seemed unlikely that much of anything would happen on its own. We were neither reaching out nor finding ourselves being reached out to.

When, in the course of the following year and a half, we took positive initiative to find out what was going on in other countries of Eastern Asia in the way of organized interreligious research, our suspicions of a wider pattern were confirmed. Most of the other institutes were either of too small a scale to admit of much if any international contact, or else were directing their best efforts into establishing ties with the academic world of interreligious dialogue in Europe and the United States. It was then that we decided we night do something positive to help. The Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities in the United States was approached for financial assistance and generously agreed to handle expenses for a preliminary meeting of organizations like our own in this corner of Asia. We put together the best list we could and sent Out invitations to the respective groups asking each to send one representative to Manila for a conference. The response was overwhelming. Almost as an afterthought we decided to invite a representative from the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), and to our embarrassment learned that an Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs had already been set up in Taipei with the expressed aim of coordinating the interfaith work of the Catholic Church in Asia. The head of the Office, Rev. Albert Poulet—Mathis, not only agreed to attend but welcomed the initiative as "a providential answer to one of our most earnest wishes."

The more detailed the preparations became, the more we came to think that we had hit upon the right idea at the right time, or rather that such a move was already long overdue. Correspondence back and forth between Nanzan and the other organizations all favored a conference that would be basically nonacademic in nature. The most important thing was that we meet, that

we recognize ourselves as an Asian unit, and that we explore avenues of possible cooperation for the future. The exchange of theory could wait until we had a good look at what was actually going on and bow we might help one another make it go better. Bringing together people from throughout the whole of Asia seemed too grand a first step; but even in restricting invitations to one section of Asia, many important individuals carrying on interreligious dialogue and research without a supporting Institute or group behind them were being in principle excluded. Both decisions were difficult ones to make, but distances and financing seemed to make them necessary. In this way, the following group came to be assembled in Manila on March 4, 1982:

PHILIPPINES
Dolores SIKAT
*Institute of Oriental Religions and Cultures*

Peter GOWING
*Dansalan Research Center*

Adolfo de NICOLÁS
*East Asian Pastoral Institute*

MALAYSIA
+Anthony SELVANAYAGAM
*Catholic Research Center*

TAIWAN
Yves RAGUIN
*Ricci Institute for Chinese Studies*
*Institute of East Asian Spirituality*

Albert POULET—MATHIS
*FABC Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs*

THAILAND
Michael Seri PHONGPHIT
*Thai Interreligious Commission for Development*

INDONESIA
Michael SASTRAPRATEDJA
*Driyarkara Institute of Philosophy*

HONG KONG
Sebastian SHIN
*Diocesan Commission for Non-Christian Religions*
*Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Centre*

KOREA
KIM Sung-Hae
*Institute for Theological Research*

JAPAN
Raymond RENSON
*Oriens Institute for Religious Research*

YUKI Hideo
*NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions*

Thomas IMMOOS
*Institute for Oriental Religions*

Jan VAN BRAGT
Jan SWYNGEDOUW
James HEISIG
*Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture*

## Introductions

The Maryhill Retreat Center in Taytay, former major seminary of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Mission Society (C.I.C.M.), lies nestled amidst the lush, green hills of Rizal that lift it out from under the ominous cloud of soot that hovers over metropolitan Manila. The current paterfamilias of the Center, Rev. Frans Wittezaele, had been gracious enough not only to permit us the use of the facilities, but spent most of his time trying to make everything as comfortable and efficient for us as possible. (Let it be noted, however, that his longtime legendary taxying skills in Manila traffic tended to favor efficiency over comfort.) Although a few of us had come a day in advance to help with the preparations, we found ourselves most often on the receiving end of the hospitality of this bighearted man lodged in a corpus of proportions unmistakable even from squinting distance, whose shy and subtle Belgian wit, flavored with a quite inimitable Flemish– Filipino accent, made you break into a smile of anticipation the moment his frame passed into the room.

By the following afternoon the rest of the group coming from abroad had arrived, and after supper retired to the second–floor veranda to relax from their travels and chat informally. As the hours passed by and the sun slipped quietly into the sea, evening wrapped its own peaceful welcome about us:above, the stars shining strong and proud in the summer sky; below, the haze of city lights outlining the vast reaches of the capital city. Whichever way one looked, it was a world at once new and familiar, drawing us closer together and tangling us up in one another's thoughts and enthusiasms. It was well after midnight by the time the last stragglers bid their good–nights and slipped under their mosquito nets and off to sleep.

The general assemblies began promptly in the morning and continued for the next three days, spilling over into as many hours of personal contact between the sessions. Looking over my notes and listening to the tapes of the conference in preparation for this report remind me again and again not only of how much has to be sacrificed for the sake of brevity, but also of how feebly ideas limp when wrenched from the voices that spoke them and then paraphrased for others to read. On paper ideas beg to be crossed out and underlined, corrected, classified, and judged. When spoken they beg first to be listened to and let reverberate–which is another thing altogether and something we constantly waste opportunities to do. I will not be the only one who entered that first formal session with the sense of stepping into a dark room with 16 windows and not knowing what to expect. Someone would speak and a curtain would draw open to reveal a whole panorama, partly known, partly strange. And then another and another, until in no time at all one's head was spinning in all directions with more questions than

time to sort them out and ask them. And yet merely to have had the opportunity to sit at the center of so many outlooks and have a look out oneself, however brief the experience, was a grace all its own and there is no passing it on here.

The first day was given over entirely to introductions, the various representatives attempting to outline the aims and works of their organizations, the problems they face, their hopes for the future.

PHILIPPINES

Dr. Dolores Sikat, a native Filipina who had completed her doctoral studies in Spain, in addition to a postgraduate degree in Chinese studies from Taiwan, before assuming a position at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, spoke first on behalf of the *Oriental Religions and Culture Institute,* an affiliate of the University's faculty of theology. (Its current director, Rev. Fausto Gomez, O.P., was unable to attend because of prior commitments.) As Dr. Sikat, a member and acting secretary of the Institute explained, the *ORCI* is a teaching establishment aimed at preparing scholars for interreligious work and organized around an M.A. program. Of the 40 students that have come into the Institute since its inception three years ago, 5 have already completed the program and another 20 are in the process of writing their theses. While the majority are Catholic clergy and religious, a scholarship program has attracted students not only from the Philippines but also from Korea, India, Japan, and Indonesia. The staff, which is entirely Christian, is as yet inadequate to the needs, and has to be supplemented by visiting professors. The long—term goal is to engage Buddhists, Muslims, and those of other religions to teach, but so far this has not been possible. For the present, personnel problems are the single most pressing issue for the Institute, but for Dr. Sikat herself, an equally important concern for the future will be the attitude it takes towards inspiring interest in native Filipino religiosity. Merely to concentrate on the encounter of Christianity with the major religions of Asia would be to forego the unique contribution that such a center of study could make by virtue of being located in the Philippines where, despite its uniqueness as a Christian land in Asia, has only recently begun to cultivate a theology from its own native inheritance.

Rev. Peter Gowing, an American minister of the Church of Christ, spoke next of the *Dansalan Research Center* in Mindanao, where he is presently serving as director and curator. Holding doctoral degrees in both religious and social studies, Rev. Gowing has been working among Philippine Muslims for over twenty years and has authored several books on the basis of his experience. Unique among all the organizations represented at the Conference both for its scope of activities and its structure, the *DRC,* which began in 1975, looks on itself as a center for study and concrete research projects. Its facilities include the world's largest collection of Filipino Muslim material, and is often consulted by the Mindanao State University and foreign scholars. Its study programs aim to promote concrete dialogue between Christians and Muslims in order to counter the traditions of mistrust, suspicion, and violence that have long biased their relations. Formal conferences are held occasionally on Muslim—Christian dialogue, in addition to regular summer courses on Mindanao and Sulu cultures (a total of 7 have been run to date with 112 graduates, mostly schoolteachers, clergy, graduate students, and seminarians, Protestant and Catholic). In terms of research, the Center has 7 ongoing projects, some of them commissioned from outside, some initiated from within, covering such topics as the role of Marano women, Muslim—Christian intermarriage, and Muslim—Filipino group attitudes. The official publication of the Center, the *Dansalan Quarterly,*

features articles and documentation related to these research projects. There is also a Research Intern Training Program carried on in collaboration with the graduate school of the University of San Carlos in Cebu. Its goal is to provide a small number of interns with technical competence in a variety of social science research methods. As Rev. Gowing explained, although the *DRC* and the larger Dansalan Foundation to which it belongs represent a partnership of Muslims and Christians devoted to confronting the human situation in the southern Philippines, and although 9 of its 12 staff and the majority of the Foundation's regents are Muslim, the suspicion of "Christian" still hangs over their work and impedes its effectiveness to some extent.

The *East Asian Pastoral Institute,* as its director, Rev. Adolfo de Nicholás, S.J. next described to the group, began originally as a catechetical center after the expulsion of the missionaries from China, and then broadened in scope until it finally assumed its present form as an updating center of pastoral and personal renewal. Its participants are about 80% Asian, coming from 19 countries from around Asia and the Pacific. Its chief publication is the *East Asian Pastoral Review.* Rev. Nicolas, a native of Spain who did his major seminary studies in Japan and returned there to teach for seven years after earning his doctoral degree in Rome, admits that in terms of interreligious dialogue the *EAPI* has not accomplished much, even though the religious background of Asia necessarily affects all the questions it treats. The educational challenge facing Christian ministry in Asia, he went on, includes effecting a "paradigm shift" to enable cooperation with other religious traditions. For a center like the *EAPI* this creates two immediate problems. Perennial headaches over adequate staffing would be aggravated by the demand for greater numbers of Asian teachers knowledgeable in Asian religions. In addition, given its strong ties to the structural Church, there is some fear that institutional complications might arise if sharp ecumenical and interreligious shifts of direction were to be taken at this time. The same is true of social concerns within the Philippine Church. At the same time, however, those who come to study at the *EAPI* come sensitive to the changes taking place and are prepared to change themselves, and this bodes well for any initiatives that might be taken in the years to come.

MALAYSIA

Bishop Anthony Selvanayagam, recently appointed auxiliary prelate of Kuala Lumpur and a member of the standing committee of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences responsible for interreligious concerns, spoke in the name of the *Catholic Research Center* situated in his diocese and headed by Rev. Paul Tan, S.J. The largest portion of Malaysia (43—45%) is Malay, which means also Muslim. There are no Christians in this group, and indeed up until independence in 1957 there was virtually no contact at all between the Malays and others. In theory Christians, Buddhist, Taoists, Confucianists, Hindus, and Animists enjoy freedom of religion (only a small group of Islam extremists are opposed to this on principle), but the strong political influence of the Muslims in government makes it difficult to meet on equal ground. As a step in this direction, the *CRC,* which is now in its third year, is trying to provide training in order to promote a closer rapprochement between Christians and Muslims in daily life, and in isolated instances to bring them together in actual dialogue. The low level of education of those running the Mosques compared with that of the leadership in the Christian Churches has, at least up until recently, been a major obstacle. The new young intellectuals hold out promise, but great numbers of them have turned pro—Iran with the recent revolution and this means only

further complications for Christian efforts at dialogue. As crucial as Christian—Muslim relations are, therefore, it is hard for new habits to get a foothold anywhere. The *CRC* also took responsibility for organizing the Second Conference of Bishops for Interreligious Affairs (BIRA II), where many of these issues were also discussed. As the nature of the problem becomes clearer, hope strengthens. For the future, the encouragement of dialogue between Muslims and Buddhist and Taoist elements, as well as an improvement in the seminary curriculum in the area of non—Christian religions, would seem to be of great importance.

TAIWAN

Rev. Yves Raguin, a French Jesuit who did Chinese Studies at the Universities of Paris and Harvard and whose writings on Eastern spirituality have had a wide influence, first came to the Orient in 1949. In 1953, after being expelled from China, he was appointed director of the "Chinese Dictionary Project" (a collaborative effort with English, French, Spanish, Hungarian, and Latin linguists), which led in 1966 to the foundation of the *Ricci Institute for Chinese Studies.* The aim of the Institute was to study Chinese culture in its historical, social, philosophical, and religious aspects, in addition to seeing the Dictionary Project through to completion. Its actual research has changed over the years in accord with the interests of its members. At present there are 4 members, including Rev. Raguin who serves as director, and an independent affiliated Institute in Paris. It is not interreligious in the composition of its staff or in the organization of joint research projects, but only in its subject matter. Greater efforts at actual dialogue will depend on new membership in the future, particularly from among the Chinese (the present staff are all Europeans). It will mean not only continuing to inform Christians of Chinese religiosity, but helping the Chinese themselves to understand the meaning of religious practices that are carried on traditionally without understanding.

In place of Archbishop Lokuang, official head of the *Institute of East Asian Spirituality,* and Rev. Peter Chow, its acting Prefect of Studies, Rev. Raguin next explained the history and function of this second Institute based in Taipei. Unlike the *Ricci Institute* which was Jesuit inspired, the *IEAS* grew out of the initiative of the Asian Bishops to set up a center for the promotion of native Asian spiritualities. Certain of the Bishops favored an English—speaking Institute for all of Asia, but Rev. Raguin, who took part in the original meeting, encouraged the plan for local centers— one in Taiwan in Chinese, one in Japan in Japanese, and so forth—with a view to setting up combined seminars in English for all of Asia. It was this plan that materialized, and in 1976 the Institute began teaching courses which have run twice weekly in two—year cycles ever since that time, on Buddhist, Confucian, Taoist, and Christian thought. With the permission of the Taiwanese Ministry of Education, it was integrated into the curriculum of the University of Fu Jen in Taipei, where it continues as a semi—independent Institute based in St. Thomas Seminary near the campus. Some students enroll for credit; many audit. In the course he is teaching, Rev. Raguin pointed out, there are only 5 officially registered and another 15 who come out of interest. For a time a Buddhist monk was invited to teach and drew some 60 young Buddhist nuns into the course, but he was not able to make himself understood to the Christians and the experiment was forced to discontinue. Finally, mention was made of two groups for interreligious dialogue not initiated by Christians in Taipei, one with members from 8 religions, the other from 5. Both are academically oriented, and Christians participate in the latter.

The floor was next turned over to Rev. Poulet—Mathis, also a French Jesuit, whose more than twenty years in Taiwan as a chaplain to university students and higher studies in Chinese religions in Paris have served him well in his work as secretary of the *Office for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs* of the FABC, where he has been since 1979. He described the aims of the *OEIA* as threefold: (1) to serve the Bishops of Asia in their education for dialogue; (2) to form a band of "animators for dialogue" who would be Asians (most at present are not); and (3) to promote dialogue in all its aspects of shared religious experience, of life, and of research. Since the stress of the *OEIA* has fallen principally outside of theory and research, up to the present there has been little if any contact with institutes like those represented at the Manila Conference. The history of the Office began with a survey sent to the Bishops' conferences of Asia to determine the state of interreligious dialogue. Only a dribble of information came in response. In 1976 a questionnaire went to major seminaries in Asia to ascertain what teaching was going on in the way of preparation for dialogue. The results this time were more abundant, but it became clear that most of the education being given was of the classroom variety, and did not actually bring the seminarians into contact with those of other faiths. In 1978 a more detailed questionnaire was taken among the Bishops to assess their level of interest in various aspects of dialogue. The results, which were subsequently published by the Secretariat for Non—Christians in Rome, showed interest to be low, in spite of the fact that when the FABC was set up in 1971 dialogue with other religions had been stated as one of five major concerns. A lack of time, personnel, and interest among the clergy were the reasons most often given. The first step to be taken was clear: to begin seminars for the Bishops, and in 1979 a First Bishops Institute for Interreligious Affairs (BIRA I) was held in Thailand on the theme of Buddhist—Christian dialogue, and then two months later in Kuala Lumpur BIRA II was organized to discuss Muslin—Christian dialogue. Both of these seminars ended with the request for the FABC to set up suitable training programs for dialogue animators. This led to the first Asian Seminar for Interreligious Affairs (BIRA I) in Taipei in late 1980, where resource persons were brought together to discuss the proposal. The idea of "mobile teams" that might journey from country to country for the purpose was rejected in favor of local arrangements made in cooperation with an all—Asian consultative group. In that same year two national seminars were held in Thailand and Taiwan to promote consultation on a local level. The plan for the coming decade is to hold such seminars in each of the Asian countries. The next step was the organization of regional seminars, which would bring together religious superiors, rectors of seminaries, and directors of pastoral centers from neighboring countries. The first is slated to take place in May of this year for Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, and is specifically aimed at preparation for dialogue in the seminaries. This will be followed in turn by a Bishops Institute in the summer, and the results of these two meetings will be presented to the next plenary assembly of the FABC in the fall. In addition, BIRA III, focusing on the Christian—Hindu dialogue, is in preparation. The *OEIA* Rev. Poulet—-Mathis went on to explain, works with the full support of the Secretariat for Non—Christians in Rome, and also cooperates with the WCC, the CCA, and the ACRP (Asian Conference on Religion and Peace). Its work is overseen by a standing committee of five Bishops from the FABC, of which Bishop Selvanayagam is one. In addition to access to the *FABC Papers*, it has just begun to publish its own *Newsletter*.

THAILAND

Dr. Michael Seri Phongphit, a native of Thailand who did doctoral studies in

Germany and is currently Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Bangkok's Thammasat University, spoke next on behalf of the *Thai Interreligious Commission on Development* which he serves as co—chairman and treasurer. The very idea and activities of the *TICD,* it immediately became apparent to the assembly, was something unique among all the organizations represented. Dr. Seri had first been invited to participate in the Catholic Commission of Thailand for Development at a time when he was engaged in research on Buddhist and Christian notions of religious language. Further academic research undertaken in collaboration with Muslim and Hindu thinkers (and which resulted in a book), as well as his work with the Commission, strengthened his conviction that there were ample common grounds to enable joint social action among the various major religions of Thailand. From there the idea was born to form a coordinating body for the various religious groups engaged in the work of human development. In 1981 the *TICD* was formed with 8 member organizations and a number of other individuals participating in a private capacity, with the aim of promoting a dialogue that grows from the needs and ideals of the Thai people, and not one that merely responds to models imported from the West. Since Protestant and Catholic development organizations were already comparatively well established, the *TICD* decided to focus its attention first of all on the Buddhist community through programs and training seminars aimed to foster the role of Buddhist monks as local leaders. The first steps taken in this five—year plan included the reform of religious ceremonies connected with the "Buddhist Lent." In addition to concerns of appropriate technology, development, and the preservation of religious tradition, Dr. Seri stressed the need to bring this experience of dialogue—in—action to bear on intellectual research also. In this regard little is being done by Catholics or Protestants, most attempts being made at an individual level, even though there is considerable interest from the side of the Buddhists. At this level Dr. Seri himself participates in a program of comparative religions at the State University and in a Buddhist Research Institute at one of the two Buddhist universities in Bangkok. Finally he made mention of the Coordinating Group for Religion in Society, a member organization of the *TICD,* founded five years ago by Catholics, Buddhists, and Protestants concerned with human rights. The courage of this group has been inspiring, despite political accusations of "subversion" raised against it.

INDONESIA

Rev. Michael Sastrapratedja, an Indonesian Jesuit who did higher studies in India and Rome, is currently rector of the *Driyarkara Institute of Philosophy* in Jakarta and also serves as director of the Center for the Development of Ethics at the Atma Jaya Catholic University. In a detailed and carefully prepared paper he described the difficulties facing interreligious dialogue in Indonesia. The most complicating factors are political and hence related to the Muslim majority. To begin with, the religious statistical data is unreliable, since the Muslims do not consider indigenous religions as "religions," so that when the government made it obligatory for all people to proclaim allegiance to a religion, many of them announced themselves as belonging to Islam, since the decision to join one of the Christian Churches would require greater preparation and a more committed choice. Moreover, recent decreases in Muslim numbers (which in the 1971 census comprised 95% of the total population) have led to the suppression of publication of the results of the 1980 census. Dialogue in Indonesia has accordingly had to focus first on promoting religious tolerance and the support of national development. In the former area, about 11 meetings were arranged between 1972 and 1975, centering about the crucial issue of

competition through propagation and conversion. (In 1970 the Ministry of Religious Affairs had issued a demand forbidding proselytizing among those already enrolled in an official religion, which the Christian Churches officially rejected.) Between 1971 and 1975 another 10 meetings were held around the theme of religion and development. It was in this context that the *DIP* has been promoting the study of philosophical ethics as a common meeting ground. In the same vein the Atma Jaya Center has conducted public discussions and is publishing a handbook for teaching social ethics in universities. Prospects for interfaith dialogue are further dulled, Rev. Sastrapratedja went on to note, by the rise in Muslin fundamentalism and the tendency of Catholics to favor an inward—looking spirituality that withdraws from social questions. On the positive side, however, the growing interest in the Asian contextualization of theology among young thinkers at the Atma Jaya Center and the *DIP* holds out new hope. Finally, mention was made of the Karti Sarana Foundation which was set up by scholars from different religions and whose research, seminars, and publications for the coming five years are aimed at identifying the sources of conflict and evaluating methods for solutions through common ethical frameworks.

HONG KONG

Mr. Sebastian Shin, a native of Hong Kong who did higher studies in Chinese philosophy and history, and is at present Principal of St. Joan of Arc High School in Hong Kong, represented the work of the Catholic *Diocesan Commission for Non-Christian Religions* (which he serves as chairman) and the *Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Centre* (whose director, Dr. Peter Lee, was himself unable to attend the meetings.) Founded in 1972, the *Diocesan Commission* has as its goal improving relations among the followers of various religions, and is composed of religious and lay members. In addition to strong contacts with Confucianists, Taoists, Buddhists, and Muslims, it has also established ties with the Hindu, Baha'i, and Tin Tak Shing Kaau faiths. The *Commission* carries out its aims through personal contacts, jointly sponsored social activities, youth camps, a program of lectures, and occasional joint statements with other religions on common social problems. It has also organized a series of dialogue seminars to promote mutual understanding at a more academic level. The seminars began back in 1977 with a Buddhist—Christian encounter on the subject of "Prayer," and to date 12 such seminars have been held covering Christian, Taoist, Buddhist, Muslim, and Confucian points of view.

The *Tao Fong Shan Ecumenical Center* began in the 1930's under the leadership of Dr. Karl Ludwig Reichelt, a Lutheran missionary from Norway, and was called the Christian Mission to Buddhists. Through his knowledge of Chinese Buddhism, he was able to attract Buddhists for study and meditation together with Christians and succeeded in converting some of their number to Christianity. In the late 1950's another center of wider scope, known as the Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, was established on the site. Not directly concerned with evangelism, this Centre sought to reflect on native Chinese religiosity in the light of the Christian faith, and began the publication of a quarterly journal, *Ching Feng,* in Chinese and English versions. From the outset ecumenical in outlook and committed to the challenge of modernization, the Centre was always wanting for sufficient staff. The present *Tao Fong Shan* represents a merger of these former two organizations, and in recent years has further broadened the base of interest to include the religious situation in the People's Republic of China, at the same time as it works to promote the full contextualization of Christian theology into Chinese tradition past and present. In addition, it participated regularly, as a representative of the Hong Kong Protestant

constituency, in other programs of interreligious encounter.

KOREA

Sr. Kim Sung—Hae of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, a recent doctoral graduate from Harvard University and a native of Korea who is presently on the staff of Sogang University in Seoul, presented a comprehensive outline of the work of the *Institute for Theological Research*. (Its directors, Rev. Paul Sye S.J., was convalescent at the time and sent his regrets.) The religious scene in Korea shows Buddhism at about 35% and Christians about 27%, though the most pervasive force is Confucianism whose numbers are difficult to calculate. Shamanism, it should also be remembered, is practiced in all religions and exerts considerable influence, even if not in an institutional form. One of the early attempts at interreligious dialogue began in 1967 with the foundation of the Korean Association of Religions. Within a year and a half of its inception the group changed character rather drastically and lost so many of its leading members that it reorganized into a Korean Association of Religionists. The *ITR* began in 1974 with the aim of forging the tools for a native Korean Christian theology on the one hand, and furthering interfaith dialogue on the other. Its graduate program, begun in 1978 at Sogang University, now numbers some 16 students. The undergraduate Department of Religion at the University began only this year, with an enrollment of 32. In addition to working with these programs, the Institute has published a total of 21 volumes, mainly translations and theological studies in the areas of scriptural and systematic theology. Though it has issued only one volume in the area of the history of religions, the goal is to publish more in this area. In addition to the *ITR,* Sr. Kim pointed out, there are three academic associations of religion at present in Korea: the Academic Association of Religion in National University, which has just published the first number of its journal, Korean Religion; the Academic Association of the History of Religion based in the Protestant Yonsei University; and a resurrected Korean Association of Religion, which publishes an annual Journal of Religion. This latter group still holds great hope, but is experiencing financial difficulties at present. The Catholic hierarchy for its part has begun to take a more positive attitude to interfaith work, and Catholic publications are beginning to reflect this change. The Protestants tend to be more dubious of the benefits of easing up on proselytizing to engage in such dialogue, despite the efforts of certain individuals and associations. Young Buddhists in the Buddhist Sangha show openness to dialogue, though with some reservations about “compromising” their belief. At the campus level, Christian universities have started to permit Buddhist research associations to form among the students, and many look to these young students as the promise of greater strides in the future.

JAPAN

Rev. Raymond Renson, C.I.C.M., who has been in Japan for over thirty years and is acting director of the *Oriens Institute for Religious Research* in Tokyo, began his report with an overview of the state of interreligious encounter in Japan. He spoke of the close cooperation that exists among Catholics and Protestants, witnessed in the formation of an Ecumenical Group for the Study of Interfaith Dialogue (EGSID) , to which the four Japanese Institutes represented at the Conference all belong, and which brings them together at regular intervals throughout the year to share ideas and plans. The interest in Zen that has sparked such enthusiasm in the West offers one base for interreligious work in Japan, Rev. Renson observed, though interest appears to be somewhat on the wane. CORMOS (Conference on Religion in Modern Society), an organization of scientists and religionists of all faiths,

meets twice annually to discuss matters of common concern, and there the Christian influence is strong, although the orientation tends to be abstract and academic. International conferences on religion of every sort are regularly attended and even sponsored by major Japanese religious movements (particularly by the new, postwar religions), but these tend to produce little of academic value and to avoid direct confrontation over differences. Here, too, the Christian presence is often crucial, for without it Japanese religions do not seem to make much significant contact with one another at the level of dialogue. The complexities surrounding the World Religion and Ethics Conference of last year is a good case in point, and also serves to show the political overtones that religious meetings can assume in Japan. Meantime, serious dialogue has been going on at the Christian centers and through the WCRP and ACRP, these latter focused more on common social issues.

The *Oriens Institute* traces its history back to Rev. Joseph Spae, C.I.C.M., who began a Committee for the Apostolate after the war, which later grew into a National Committee. In 1955 this group took over the publication of the *Japan Missionary Bulletin* (founded in 1948). When the Committee was discontinued in 1961 by the Bishops' Conference, the C.I.C.M. asked Rev. Spae to set up *Oriens,* where he continued until 1972 when Rev. Renson took over the directorship. In addition to the *JMB* and other pastorally oriented publications, *Oriens* published a large amount of Rev. Spae's own work, which has had considerable influence on the Japanese Church, particularly with regard to opening the way to contact with other religions. The pioneering efforts he made in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue led to a wide range of contacts, many of which are still upheld at the Institute. Most recently *Oriens* has been working directly with a Pastoral Center established by the Bishops' Conference and housed in the same facilities. At present talk is going on to amalgamate the two into a single entity. Meantime, the Institute participated regularly in interreligious events going on throughout Japan.

Dr. Yuki Hideo of the *NCC* (National Christian Conference) *Center for the Study of Japanese Religions* explained that the Center was originally started to promote missionary work. Its first director, Ariga Testusaro, whose father was a convert to Islam, gave it an interreligious character from its early years, and it is that dimension which has now become primary under its current director, Prof. Doi Masatoshi. The purposes given the Center fall under three headings: (1) to provide material and information related to Japanese religions and their impact on Japanese culture and society; (2) to provide Christians with an opportunity to meet with people of other religions; and (3) to publish studies helpful to Christian apologetics throughout Asia. To these ends it publishes the English journal, *Japanese Religions,* which carries a large number of articles posing questions of Buddhist–Christian dialogue in theological terms, and a Japanese journal entitled *Deai* (Encounter), which features a large number of articles on Japanese religions. The Center also holds annual seminars in Japanese (since 1964) and English (since 1974) to help Christian pastors and missionaries come into contact with other religions by bringing them to the head temple of a religious sect for three days of actual, firsthand experience of another religious way. Since finances make full–time researchers impractical, annual study groups are organized around monthly meetings focused on some topic of religious concern. Some of the papers presented at these meetings are later published in *Deai.* Moreover, the offices of the *NCC Center* serve as a secretariat for the CORMOS referred to by Rev. Renson. Monthly meetings are also arranged around the study of some text of the Buddhist scriptures, for which an expert is called in to direct the proceedings. Furthermore, the Center is one of the sponsors of the Kyoto Round Table Conference on

Religion, together with 4 other Mahayana Buddhist sects, which meets once every two or three months. This conference has held a number of international conferences, on such themes as "The Possibility of Common Worship." (Incidentally, the Omoto-kyo, one of Japan's new religions, has already taken creative initiatives in this direction.) Finally, Dr. Yuki alluded briefly to the active role that the Protestant Churches have taken in opposing movements to create a State Religion in Japan. At the conclusion of the report, Rev. Jan Van Braght spoke from the chair to inform the group that the *NCC Center* is the most active of all Christian organizations in Japan working for interreligious dialogue, and that its efforts have been an inspiration to everyone in the field.

Rev. Thomas Immoos S.M.B., a native Swiss who has been in Japan some thirty years and has done higher studies in Classical Chinese and German Literature, is currently director of the *Institute for Oriental Religions* in Tokyo's Sophia University. The Institute was originally founded in 1969 to support the lifelong research on Buddhism and dialogue with Japanese Religions of Rev. Heinrich Dumoulin S.J. From its start it has been a research centre. (The teaching of Oriental religions is conducted in the Department of Anthropology, in Japanese; and in the International Division, in English. There is no postgraduate program in the former, and the latter's curriculum is still in need of much development.)Personnel problems, coupled with Rev. Dumoulin's illness, left the Institute ailing for several years with the result that the standards of research fell into decline. At present, there are 5 members, none of them able to give more than part-time attention to its work. Since 1974, an annual lecture series on some aspect of interreligious interest has been held by the Institute, and its results published in Japanese. There have also been regular study groups on a wide variety of topics. The latest of them is focusing on the deeper inculturation of liturgy in Japan. The Institute does not publish its own journal, and the original research it has issued so far has been almost entirely the work of Rev. Dumoulin. Since Rev. Immoos took over as director, he has established a C.G. Jung Club in Japan in loose association with the Institute, with a membership coming from all over Japan, aimed at promoting the critical appreciation of interreligious work from the aspect of depth psychology.

The final report was presented by Rev. Jan Swyngedouw, C.I.C.M., who has been in Japan over twenty years and completed the doctoral course in religious study at Tokyo University. The *Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture* of which he is a permanent fellow is located on the campus of Nanzan University in Nagoya, and in 1979 was fully incorporated into the University, its four permanent fellows (3 Westerners, 1 Japanese) being accorded University posts as full-time researchers. Each year, one or two Japanese research fellows are invited to join the Institute on a modest scholarship, to carry out their own work and participate in joint activities of the Institute. Many of these have also chosen to share in a common life at a nearby residence, thus adding another dimension to interreligious encounter. In addition, a number of part-time research associates, visiting scholars, and visiting research fellows from both Japan and overseas have spent time at the Institute. *Nanzan* is not a teaching center, nor are there sufficient courses at the University to constitute a curriculum on religious studies. Besides the publications of the individual members and books prepared in Japanese and English by the staff, it issues an annual *Bulletin* and recently took over editorship of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* which is mainly sociological in focus. To date it has held three major symposia, all of them on Buddhist-Christian dialogue. The next symposium will deal with Shinto. In addition, important scholars from Japan

and abroad are frequently invited to hold colloquia with a group of 20-30 associates of the Institute; and the members of the staff come together formally to share their research and discuss topics of common interest. Three years ago the Institute collaborated in the organization of an "East-West exchange" that gave a select group of Buddhist monks and nuns the opportunity to experience life in a European monastery. A special fund has been set up at *Nanzan* to support researchers coming from overseas who wish to use the facilities for a longer period. To date, there have been no Asians in this program. Indeed, the heavy predominance of Westerners on the staff has led to the search for a permanent Japanese Catholic member, and plans are underway to found a Chair of Buddhist Studies ar the Institute. Fromthe very start, the Bishop of Nagoya has been most supportive of the work, and three years ago co-sponsored a year of seminars on problems of evangelization in Japan. Unlike other countries represented at the conference, Rev. Swyngedouw noted in conclusion, there is no difficulty for Christian Institute like *Nanzan* to be invited to participate in interreligious activities in Japan—quite the opposite, the problem is often how to avoid too many invitatins.

## Issues

That night on the veranda the group gathered for another several hours, trying to digest the day's information by thinking out loud to one another in smaller clusters. Eventually the chairs turned to form a large circle and Rev. Gowing caught the mood. "I had no idea there was such activity going on elsewhere. One gets so boggeddown in one's own show..." And from there the discussion turned to common concerns and issues that were to become the aganda for the following day. Running through the conversation like point and counter-point were two contrasting motifs: those closest to the official Churches were continually coming back to the need to promote the idea of dialogue itself and to find ways to train Church leaders for the task, while those engaged in the work itself were anxious to discuss concrete issues encountered in dialogue. In this way, one by one the biases hidden in the notions of "dialogue," "interreligious," "institute," and even "Asian" came up for consideration. The questions were not new to any of those assembled, but somehow they seemed to take on an urgency and a vitality there with so many individuals coming from so many different settings, all engaged in the same work. Exhaustion from the day's work gradually claimed its toll and the group thinned out, leaving a few late-owls to sort out the agenda for the next morning—which ti had alredy become by the time the last lights went out.

After a hearty breakfast the meetins were once agian underway. Revs. Van Bragt and Swyngedouw, who co-chaired the day's discussions, began by outlining a number of major issues and expressing the hope that the talks would lead to concrete proposals on the following day. Condensing eight hours of tapes into a few pages is editing enough, and I will not complicate matters further by imposing any order on them other than to highlight the flow of ideas that emerged around the main questions put forth:

*1. Interreligious dialogue in Asia seems to be carried on largely by non-Asians. Not only the reports of the previous day but the very composition of the group confirms this. Is dialogue itself an Asian concept? Might it not be that the Western preference of a "choc des*

*idees" needs to be replaced in Asia by an orientation to a "conciliatory attitude"?*

2. *Dialogue, at least in our corner of Asia, seems everywhere to be the initiative of Christians. Does this mean that no need is felt outside of the Christian community? Or perhaps the need is present but merely not articulated? Could it be that the Christian call for dialogue is a less subtle but no less aggressive imposition than the straightforward preaching of Christianity as the sole way to salvation?*

From a Christian perspective, it was agreed, dialogue is indeed a priority and one that belongs to the very nature of our belief, however long it has taken us to recognize the fact. One member mentioned that in professing faith in the Divine as personal, we commit ourselves to an interpersonal approach to religion, whereas the impersonal Absolute common to many Asian religions does not so readily make such a demand. Others pointed out that the call to dialogue arises from sources outside the spheres of religion, forces that are creating a global community and sweeping religions along in the tide willy—nilly.

One positive aspect of the Christian initiative can be seen in Japan. For while it is true that Japan is a world leader in interreligious dialogue in the WCRP and elsewhere, without a Christian presence the religions of Japan seem to lack the motive to talk with one another. During the trip to Europe with the Buddhist monks, many of the monks admitted that it was the first time they were talking to members of other sects. The growth of the World Federation of Buddhism is not to be ignored here, but their initiatives to dialogue represent only a small part of the general picture.

One complicating factor in assessing the role of Christians is that in lands where they are in the minority, Christians tend to belong to the middle classes, which gives them a social superiority and better base of operations for dialogue. Even if the spirit of Vatican II and the WCC's commitment to dialogue has only been weakly appropriated by Christian leaders, they are already in a privileged position to assume the leadership. Another is that Christian thinkers in Asia who might be looked to for leadership have by and large been educated in the West and carry back with them a great number of interpretative models and organizational ideas foreign to the Asian reality. The result is that programs they help to establish and staff get stuck in the dependencies that have plagued Christian education in Asia these many centuries.

As one of the Asian members pointed out, the translation of religious realities into academic issues is far more important to foreigners than it is to the Asians themselves. One does not feel the need to do research on one's own lived identity spontaneously, and when that need is introduced, it creates a false sense of cultural superiority in the outsider who with very little experience at all talks much better about the religious sensitivities of a group of people than they at first can of themselves. If this in turn sparks a sense of inferiority in those who have only trusted their unreflective, cultural instinct, the dialogue that results can only be a falsification of life. In this same regard mention was made of the fact that the drive to "dialogue" is in fact quite a modern phenomenon, and naturally attracts to itself all the biases that hold verbal, systematic exchange as of greater value than actual lived experience. The fact that Westerners interested in dialogue bring an agenda that is backed up by a financial security and a strong institutional commitment cannot but have an

intimidating effect all its own. But the fact remains: like psychological tests created in Europe and applied in Asia, interreligious dialogue has not been imported to Asia as a value—free exercise in human communication. The spirit of tolerance and interpenetration and conciliation that comes most natural to the Asian may offend the Western spirit of righteousness, but it is the only base on which to found a truly Asian dialogue.

The fact that Christians are more experienced at dialogue as they understand it frequently creates a sense of inequality in those of other religions. Some have simply withdrawn from the initiatives of the Christians, which provokes a still greater sense of urgency among the latter. Some have joined without any conviction that they might have something to learn or to change because of the experience. In either case, the avoidance of confrontation may be interpreted by the Christian partner as a lack of conviction, when just as often it is an attempt to protect convictions from trivialization.

In spite of the many examples that were offered in illustration, the point kept coming back that, when all is said and done, dialogue remains a basic Christian commitment. If the Vatican Council has encouraged us to live in the context of what is truthful and valuable, wherever it may be, our failures at dialogue should not compromise this demand but rather remind us of the cultural overweight that keeps us from reaching the ideal of true Christian encounter.

Returning to one of the topics that had been talked about the previous evening, several members spoke of the need to recognize that the root causes for current interest in dialogue are not to be found in our inherited theological apparatus but in phenomena taking place in the secularization of culture. Driven into similar predicaments of losing their once dominant cultural positions and having to survive in a pluralistic world, many religions have naturally taken to talking with one another. While this is not everywhere the case (the Muslim—dominated countries can be considered an exception), it is something that transcends differences of East and West, North and South. This is said not to cast skepticism over motivations for dialogue, but to avoid the dangers of confusing causes with effects.

At this point the chair introduced two further questions:

3. *Even with Christian domination of the dialogue, it is only a small minority in the Christian community that feel the need for dialogue at all. As had been stated several times, the Asian Bishops themselves do not as a group show a firm commitment to its importance, and at the grass-roots level there seems to be little call coming from the Churches for them to think otherwise.*

4. *Is the activity in dialogue going on at present merely a passing fashion to which we might expect a backlash and then its disappearance for something else?*

Picking up the topic of religious pluralism once again, one of the group offered the sobering impression that dialogue and ecumenism, in spite of their critical facade, can easily become walls to protect religious truth from the hostilities of a secular, scientific society rather than come to grips with it. In a way, the intellectual dialogue that goes on among academics of various religions is the safest place to stand, but it is a standpoint reserved for a very few. The point of allowing dialogue to filter down from its airy heights to the lived reality of religious men and women is not merely in order that the riches of insight be shared with all, but also in order that it become a fully historical reality. The example of liberation

theology was brought up. This trend has often been accused of merely importing ideas from Europe after they had outlived their time in their place of birth. The fact is that these ideas were put to work in the Third World in a new way, and it was this praxis that gave them their distinctive character. Something like this might as well happen with notions of dialogue imported from a Western elite, and save them from becoming either tactics of survival or foreign impositions.

At this point the discussion broke off to welcome Archbishop Mariano Gaviola, chairman of the FABC, who had driven in from his diocese in Lipa to address the assembly. He expressed his gratitude to each of the organizations represented for the work they were doing and for their efforts to come together in closer cooperation. At the same time, he apologized for the apparent neglect on the part of the Asian hierarchy toward their work, explaining that it was first necessary for the Bishops themselves to become aware of the promise of interreligious dialogue in order that they might promote it out of conviction at all levels of Church life. He went on to note that the seeds of the Word have been scattered throughout the great religions of the world, and that only honest dialogue faithful to belief in that Word can help to recover them. This may begin with common concerns of social justice and human development, but from there it must go higher, and deeper, to face common points and differences. This becomes more necessary in Asia because before the advent of Mao Tse—tung Asia was calculated to have been 9% Christian, while now the figure is closer to 3%. We need to find new ways to recover the ground we have lost, Archbishop Gaviola urged. "We do not question or condemn those who have grown at our expense, but should emulate them and take them as an example of real missionary work towards our common Cod and Father."

One of the assembly was quick to pick up the problem and its relevance to our discussions, noting that the failure of the Churches to support dialogue, at least the sort of dialogue we were talking about, might he traced back to a difference in motivation: namely, the goal of continued expansion for the Churches. The WCC and the Secretariat for Non—Christians are both convinced of the enormous importance of dialogue from a global perspective. But the CCA and the local Bishops' Conferences have done little or nothing. As long as the goal is to "gird ourselves for the clash" with other no less aggressively oriented missionary religions, there can be no dialogue in the full sense of the word. Whether it is history that is pushing us together, and whatever word or set of theoretical explanations one may use to speak of dialogue, looking at ourselves through the eyes of other religions can only be an enrichment in the long run. But this requires of us that we lay down our arms from the battle for size and numbers that has inspired most missionary work in Asia.

At this point one of the group observed that although support by the Churches is certainly welcome, those engaged in dialogue often cannot act as official representatives of their Churches. To do so would restrict dialogue to an exchange of information. But dialogue is a creative business and has rules of its own which include the freedom to experiment with new ways of thinking. From the side of the official Churches, those actually engaged in dialogue may be seen as instruments of Church policies and goals; hut for those on the inside, conscientiousness requires aims that extend beyond the concrete reality of the Churches, into areas where the Churches have yet to tread.

Two more questions were then posed for discussion by the chair:

5.G*iven the wide variety of situations in Asia, is the*

*need for dialogue perhaps felt more in some countries than in others? The single greatest factor here seems to be the presence or absence of Muslims, with whom dialogue is the most difficult.*

6. *Dialogue, in spite of its high ideals, is by no means exempt from exploitation or manipulation by state or religious leaders for their own prestige or political aims. Alight not the way we choose our partners for dialogue also be affected here? De facto it has been the most institutionally, economically, and theoretically established religious traditions that have attracted the attention of the Christian Churches.*

The fact that arises most immediately out of the information exchanged the previous day, it was noted, is that the choice of partners is severely limited by the facilities and structures set up for dialogue. Where the emphasis is on research, religions without a consciously developed thought structure are of interest only as objects of study. Or again, in a situation as difficult as that faced with the Muslims, one runs the risk of gathering about oneself "select dialogue friends: who have enough similar training and education to make discussion fruitful, while the overall effect would be to cut oneself off from the reality of Islam. If we leave ourselves free to choose, we invariably choose our friends. The question then becomes whether in such dialogue—and this extends beyond the Muslim question—one has really come in touch with another religion or only confirmed one's own expectations. Those who join hands for common social aims are often, in this sense, closer to real dialogue, even if differences of faith are allowed to rest between the brackets of tolerance.

One of the group suggested that the way around this dilemma is not to widen our base to include dialogue at this early stage with folk religions and popular religiosity of every sort, but to deepen the contact we already have in preparation for such encounters at a later time. In this same vein it was also pointed out that in the same way that Christians engaged in dialogue feel the need to present a unified front to those of other religions, who would only be confused by the seemingly minor differences that have separated us, too much emphasis on respecting the differences with Buddhism or Islam or Hinduism and so forth from one country to another, from one sect to another, may result in an unnecessary scattering of attention at too early a stage, and prevent anything of general significance from taking place.

Several examples were offered of the ways in which political manipulation of interreligious meetings can take place without one noticing what is going on, thus imperilling future efforts at dialogue. The main problem here was coming up with criteria. In the case of financing, for example, it was noted that there has been a rather lax attitude taken towards the help and protection offered by the major religions, whereas when a newer, theoretically weak, and perhaps cultish religious movement invites our participation something within us recoils and calls their money "bad." While it would be naive to suppose that financial help is mere nonpolitical philanthropy, at the same time those responsible for distributing funds and providing assistance are often possessed of information and viewpoints worthy of careful attention.

Finally the chair turned to the question of "institutes" for dialogue:

7. *How important are teaching and research institutes for the overall aims of interreligious encounter? What should their role be?*

To begin the discussion, it was observed that the group was composed of individuals connected with various forms of organizations, whereas actual academic institutes involving the joint efforts of those from different faiths are few. Clearly the plurality of models has to be counted as something positive, but since several of the organizations seemed clearly to be at a point of making choices for a future direction, it would seem important to assess the possibilities open.

The example of the *Dansalan Research Center* was brought up as a model of a truly interreligiously structured institutes, where not only the work but the actual administration was a shared venture. Movements in this direction were said to be taking place in Korea. One member of the group raised doubts about this form of co—sponsorship, favoring cooperation among organizations sponsored separately by the various religions or Churches. Returning to an earlier topic, the view was expressed that if one does not represent one tradition as an institute or organization, dialogue cannot be expected to go anywhere. The opposite opinion was then raised, that although official statements of belief and policy are not unimportant, the standpoint from which they are made is not that of dialogue but of confession of one tradition. This does not mean, however, as another member was quick to point out, that one does not welcome the support of one's Church, lamenting, "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child.. .a long, long way from home."

The FABC's plan to train "animators for dialogue: was questioned at this point as something artificial precisely because it attempts to melt the standpoint of dialogue into Church policy. One learns dialogue, it was said, by *doing* it, not by *being trained* to do it. It takes years to become even mildly sensitive to the feelings of those from other religions, and this is the only real training that can produce results. Here again the question was raised: What if we train ourselves legions of young leaders for dialogue while the religions we hope to dialogue with do not undergo similar training? Does this not confirm the suspicions of a new aggressivity in the Churches? Nonetheless, the FABC aim to sensitize people in the Asian Churches can be seen as something imperative to the dialogue inasmuch as it serves to counter current attitudes, to help Church leaders unlearn models of being missionary that produce interreligious friction. The Bishops of Indonesia, it was noted, favor "exposure: or "training" at specifically Christian centers. Other examples of this were given, such as the Taize brothers in Bangladesh who begin by living among the Muslims before they leave for more intensive training. Perhaps the most important thing here, one of the group summarized, was that any preparation for dialogue has to be wary of reducing the religion of one's partner to something that can he studied at secondhand without actually experiencing its power and vitality through firsthand discipleship.

Proposals

The final meetings were given to considering concrete ways in which the various organizations assembled and the common issues that concern them might suggest collaboration in the future. On the basis of the by now conventional late—night veranda discussion of the previous evening, several broad areas were offered to focus attention, and the following proposals were arrived at:

1. The World Council of Churches in cooperation with the Christian Council

of Churches in Singapore has published a preliminary catalogue of inter—religious information for Asia, but it was felt that something more directly aimed at disseminating the information made available at the present Conference was needed. The *OEIA* agreed to serve as a clearing house for the documentation and to publish it as one of the *FABC Papers.*

2. In addition, it was felt that a regular bulletin for the exchange of information might be inaugurated, to serve as a means of keeping contact with one another, to make new documentation available, and to solicit help for one another's programs. Since no single organization represented at the Conference could be expected to take this upon itself in isolation, the group decided to form itself into a *Network of Christian Organizations for Interreligious Encounter in Eastern Asia* and to publish such a bulletin twice a year. [The title for the network and the bulletin, decided subsequent to the conference, is to be *INTER-RELIGIO,* and to be published in the spring and fall of each year.] The *Nanzan Institute* agreed to assume the task for a period of three years, after which it would pass into the hands of one of the other member organizations. The bulletin is to be distributed to all interested parties, though it will remain primarily an organ of liaison for the *Network.*

3. The group agreed to begin exchanging journals and newsletters with one another and to keep everyone informed of new publications that could not be offered gratis. At the same time, those centers that have more experience with publishing expressed a willingness to be of help to the others. In particular, the *Nanzan Institute* offered to review material related to the dialogue between religions East and West for its English— language series of *Studies in Religion and Culture.* The *FABC Papers* were also announced as a possible outlet for information and ideas that might be of interest not only to Asia but to the West as well.

4. In addition to information on educational programs to be gathered for publication by the *OEIA* and new information that would be reported in the bulletin of the *Network,* the group expressed general interest in supporting the ongoing attempts of the *OEIA* to organize seminars and conferences for interreligious encounter. A series of helpful and detailed proposals were circulated among the assembly by Rev. Poulet—Mathis with the request for cooperation in drawing up guidelines and serving as research consultants in the future.

5. The question of funding is admittedly a difficult one, but the group agreed in principle to aid one another in establishing contacts and providing the necessary recommendations.

6. Aware of the .restricted area of Asia that the *Network* represents, it was proposed that thought be given to sponsoring another Conference to expand membership and continue what has been begun. No definite dates were set, but it was agreed that the party responsible for the bulletin serve as a coordinating center for concrete proposals on this and other matters related to the *Network.*

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The day's meetings adjourned to the chapel, as they had each day, this time for a Catholic service at which Rev. Thomas Immoos spoke on the theme of Transfiguration. At the very hour he was standing before us at the pulpit, someone was breaking into his house in Tokyo to scrounge about for

whatever there was to steal. The return to the world we had left behind to come to Manila may not have been so great a shock for the rest of us, but perhaps it should have been. Basking in the sunshine and bright ideas of Taytay was, after all, pretty far removed from the future most of the world is dreaming about. In the military centers of the West plans are being discussed, and guidebooks prepared, for survival after an exchange of nuclear attacks. In great areas of Asia and Africa millions are wondering what they might do to feed themselves and their families for one more day. In a few days an alignment of all nine planets within a 960 area on the same side of the sun would occur, and a respected Indian astrologer was predicting that Los Angeles would be swallowed up into the Pacific Ocean. Peruvian "cosmo—biologists" were announcing that the event would send hungry animals to stalk the earth and prey on humans. And about 60 kilometers to the south of where we were gathered, Casiano Nasaire, a 65-year old jeweler who had had a vision from God that the alignment would bring doom to the world, was helping some 4,000 people of his Ako sect, all fitted out with a medallion inscribed with the nine planets, to barricade themselves against the boulders that would ran down on the earth and the snows that would cover the Philippines.

The contrast of all these future visions of horror, be they sophisticated (one can hardly say "civilized") or primitive, may be less important than their similarity. For whether the disaster be of divine intervention, astrological chance, consumer gluttony, or technological stupidity, the anticipated results are all pretty much the same. When looked at from that perspective, the effort and the time spent juggling one's kaleidoscope of favorite ideas at a conference on religion begins to look pretty silly. The lessons that the great religions of the world should have taught humanity but could not begin to look so important now that it would almost seem as if we could do no better than to hand our every hope over to the most sensible ideology, and turn our efforts into barricading the race against its own destructive instincts. It would indeed. If we did not believe in a Spirit whose rhythms transcend the winds of history, in a healing Word that speaks itself eternally in countless ways and waits only to be listened to.

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The logo for *INTER-RELIGIO* and the design of the title page were prepared by John Conliss, an Irish Divine Word Missionary working currently in Japan.