

# THE WAY OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: THE HONG KONG EXPERIENCE

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This paper is based on two decades of experience of interreligious relations among six religions in Hong Kong.<sup>1</sup> The six religions are Buddhism, Confucianism,<sup>2</sup> Islam, Taoism, and Catholic and Protestant Christianity.<sup>3</sup> The writer has been involved in these religions' interreligious activities from the very beginning, and is therefore intimately acquainted with the interreligious situation in Hong Kong. The paper is especially interested in showing what is at the basis of what may be called interreligious dialogue. To that end, some theoretical or theological perspectives are needed, and this comes out of the author's knowledge in the field of interreligious dialogue as well as his considerable dialogue experience, not only in Hong Kong, but elsewhere as well.

## FRIENDSHIP AS A PRE-CONDITION FOR DIALOGUE.

The initiative to cultivate friendship among people of various religions in Hong Kong was first taken by the Catholic Diocesan Commission for Non-Christian Religions. Following the formation of the commission in 1972, its members paid courtesy calls to the various representatives of those religious organizations which have a largely Chinese constituency. That was the first social contact some of the religious leaders had ever had with official repre-

1. Partial documentation is found in *The Colloquium of Six Religions' Leaders of Hong Kong. 10th Anniversary*, Hong Kong, n.d.

2. It is always arguable whether Confucianism is a religion or not. The Confucians who participated in the interreligious activities in Hong Kong do consider Confucianism to be a religion.

3. Due to Chinese translations of the names and other historical factors, Catholicism and Protestantism are erroneously taken to be two separate religions in the Chinese setting.

sentatives of another religion—in this case Catholicism. Before long, enough groundwork of cordiality had been laid that the first Lunar Calendar New Year social gathering of six religions could be held in 1974. Top-level representatives of these religions gathered together to exchange New Year greetings, with refreshments served in Chinese fashion to enhance sociability. This first New Year social gathering among religious representatives was the beginning of an annual event which still goes on to this day, with each religion taking turns to be the host. From these gatherings cordial friendships among individuals across religious lines have emerged.

At the 1977 New Year gathering individuals from different religions spoke up in favor of extending interreligious activities in two directions: forming a forum for the religious leaders to address community issues and providing opportunities for representatives from the religions to meet and introduce beliefs and doctrines to one another.

The first proposal led to the formation of the Religious Leaders' Colloquium which met for the first time on June 16, 1978. It was decided from the beginning that the Colloquium would meet at least twice a year, addressing itself to community issues. Each religion sends three representatives to the Colloquium and the religions rotate in chairing. The Colloquium has been held faithfully up to the present, with an efficient Joint Secretariat to carry on the organizational work.

The second proposal was implemented by the convening of dialogue seminars on religious thought. These dialogue seminars have been held on average three times a year since 1978. At each seminar representatives from the six religious traditions speak on a chosen topic to an audience composed of adherents of these and other religions.

As a result of these interreligious activities cordial friendship has developed among representatives of the several religions. Indeed the cordial relationship among religions in the Hong Kong community stands out in striking contrast to other parts of the world where the religious factor intensifies national or international conflict.

On the basis of their friendship people from different traditions can easily talk with one another on topics of a religious nature as well as on subjects of common interest, like community-wide issues. That is to say, friendship is a precondition for dialogue.

To put it differently, without at least a friendly contact, dialogue cannot even begin. It was noted earlier that all the six religions concerned have predominantly Chinese constituents; other religions like Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism, whose followers are non-Chinese, are not included in the in-

terreligious fellowship. Since the former group of religious bodies and the latter group have had no contact with one another, let alone friendship, it cannot be expected that interfaith dialogue ever takes place. Another qualification should be noted, and that is that many of the Hong Kong Protestant groups have taken an antipathetic or apathetic attitude toward non-Christian religions. These Protestant Christians do not have the slightest interest in dialogue with non-Christians.

Admitting these qualifications, the experiences of the six religions' interrelationship over the years have amply demonstrated that friendship is a basic requirement for interreligious dialogue.

## 2. CONSENSUS: ULTIMATE GOAL OR PREMATURE FORECLOSURE OF DIALOGUE?

Participation in the interreligious activities referred to here leads to the establishment of relationships; moreover, in business and discussion, the participants characteristically conduct themselves in such a manner as to achieve a consensus. Rarely do the religious representatives at a meeting take a vote; they prefer to reach a consensus of mind. When they have the occasion to make a public statement, it is a consensus of opinions.

Now, this being the case, two questions arise: Is reaching a consensus the goal of interreligious dialogue? Does a consensus foreclose the dialogical process prematurely?

Let us take the [Lunar Calendar] New Year Message that has been issued each year since 1979. The New Year Message is issued by the Religious Leader's Colloquium. The main thrust of the message for the year is chosen by the Leaders' Colloquium. A drafting committee consisting of at least one representative from each of the six religions then goes to work. The members of the drafting committee freely express their viewpoints. The moderator, usually one who is skilled in formulating a consensus statement, quickly seizes upon the convergent points and smoothes over the divergent views. The religious representatives, in a give-and-take manner, agree in the end on a draft statement. The draft is then sent to the religious leaders for approval. Unless major controversies are involved, the draft statement is usually quickly approved after some minor corrections. It is indeed a rare accomplishment that leaders of six major religions can all sign a message addressed to the whole community year after year. However, the message usually speaks in generalities and lacks any cutting edge. Naturally,

doctrinal controversies would have no place in such a statement. Understandably, too, political controversies cannot be included in a joint message. Nevertheless, the New Year messages have seen fit to support, if not to promote, worthy causes, e.g. the grafting of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights into the future legal structure of Hong Kong (1985 message), and the plea for a halt on “reckless, speculative profiteering” in the economy (1988 message).

Consensual agreement is possibly an acceptable aim at a certain stage of the dialogical process. The New Year Message, if it is to be issued jointly by all the religious authorities concerned, is by necessity a consensus statement. Assuming that the message serves a valuable purpose, the consensus reached by representatives of different religions is a worthy goal.

But consensus cannot be the ultimate goal of interreligious dialogue. All great world religions have a measure of transcendence in their central beliefs, transcending human speech and reason; in their transcendent reaches these religions may have areas of common agreement, yet they have dissimilarities and diversities which cannot be readily absorbed into mere verbal or rationalized consensus. An easy agreement on religious matters hastily reached by representatives of different religions comes under suspicion as being a premature foreclosure of the dialogical process.

Even concerning matters on the social plane, it can happen that a prematurely made consensus cuts short the dialogical process too early. That sometimes happens. As an illustration, in preparing for the New Year Message of 1988, concerns were expressed by the drafters over the question of the restructuring of the Legislative Council. The representatives did not have a unanimous view on the percentage of directly elected councilors, nor could the religious leaders be expected to hold one single point of view. Indeed the public was hotly debating that very question. The Message then slid out of a complicated issue by wishing that “opposition shall change into cooperation and hostility into goodwill, that reason shall prevail over impulsiveness and harmony over contentiousness.”

Reflected here is a typical Chinese predisposition toward “harmony.” Such a disposition does not like to see conflicts and contentions. If these exist, it wishes that they would go away somehow. People having such a disposition are disinclined to be argumentative. They can resort to reasoning and some of them are good at rhetoric; differences and oppositions then

thin out into generalities or vaporize into rhetoric. The more articulate among the religious people in the given setting can carry on an intelligent conversation on a topic of general interest, but they usually stop short of a religiously and intellectually substantive dialogical experience.

The ethos of the Religious Leaders' Colloquium exhibits what the American sociologist of religion, Will Herberg, calls "civic religion." Writing on the religious scene (Catholic, Protestant and Jewish) in mid-20th century America, he identified a common culture-religion which was part and parcel of the so-called "American way of life." "Civic religion" is characterized by him as "the sanctification of the society and culture of which it is the reflection."<sup>4</sup> The six religions of Hong Kong whose activities we have been following, both by themselves and in interrelationship, have features of "civic religion." These religions may think that they provide the standard of morality in society, yet to a large extent, they simply sanction the dominant social and cultural values and they are quite helpless in dealing with deviations from the norm, offering only moralizing laments. For all practical intents and purposes they have lost or subdued what is transcendent in their religions. Under these circumstances, concerns on the horizontal social plane are visible enough but dialogue over what is vertically transcendent is minimal.

Parenthetically, the forging of a consensus both within each religious body and among the religions themselves is an explicit tactic of the religious policy of mainland China. While officially the ideology of PRC is unfriendly toward religion, her United Front policy is to unite the religious elements as much as possible for the national good. At various periods in the past, the Communist regime in China has followed alternately a hard line and a soft-sell approach to the religions; but always with the intention of aligning them with the government. The government likes to work with leaders and through organizational channels that can give a consensual unity. The motto is "seeking the common ground and preserving differences." The "common ground" really depends on the official point of view and the acceptance of differences is often forced. The Bureau of Religious Affairs in Beijing and the New China News Agency in Hong Kong have not attempted to exert control over the religions in Hong Kong but have, rather, used soft-sell tactics to try to "win over" the religious leaders and they like to work through individuals who are compliant with the Chinese official

4. Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (New York: Anchor Books, 1960), p.263.

point of view. To some extent certain heads of institutionalized religions allow themselves to be compliant, and certain institutionalized channels are made accessible to the “United Front.” Yet, when the pressures for submission are great, it is not so sure that a consensual unity would be as ready-made as the Chinese officials would like. Among the Protestant groups there is no one single head, nor is there one all-embracing structure. The Catholic Church may have a more tightly organized hierarchy, yet it allows for more divergent points of view than may appear on the surface. So looking to 1997 and beyond, it would be better wisdom on the part of the religious bodies of Hong Kong to make room for a diversity of expressions rather than to readily submit themselves to a civil authority by way of a false consensus. If there is common ground, it should not be an official position, but a wide perspective of the common good—that would provide a more valid basis for dialogue.

### 3. The Pooling of Religious Resources for the Community.

The Joint Secretariat for the Religious Leaders’ Colloquium assumes a low profile, preferring to work behind the scenes; yet it is highly effective in forging interreligious cooperation. The Joint Secretariat, whose workers receive no honorarium, prepares all the work for the Religious Leaders’ Colloquium and carries out its decisions. Besides getting the New Year Message to the public and preparing public pronouncements, the Secretariat organizes interreligious programs with community interest in mind. Worthy of note are letters to the United Nations on disarmament and peace; to the Hong Kong government on moral education; an exhibition on work with the elderly; a World Peace Prayer Day; tree-planting in a public park as a gesture of environmental protection; and a fund-raising walkathon for the homeless.

In addition, two religious leaders were appointed to the Drafting Committee of the Basic Law (the Constitution for Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region of China). All the six religions were asked to submit their opinions on religious freedom.

As an instance of the religions’ effort to pool resources for the good of the community, let us examine the series of actions taken to promote moral education in the school system.<sup>5</sup>

For a time, the religious leaders took moral education for the community quite seriously. On July 21, 1980 leaders of the six religions sent a letter

5. All the actions are documented in *The Colloquium*, op. cit.

to Governor Murray MacLehose underlining the importance of moral education for HK society and proposing the establishment of a committee for the development of moral education in the school curriculum. The Secretary for Education, Mr. K. W. J. Topley, raised certain queries about the inclusion of moral education in the curriculum and appeared to be content with letting the religion-sponsored schools inculcate moral values in their own ways. The religious leaders further wrote to urge positive action on the implementation of moral education in all the primary and secondary schools. The Education Department then convened a seminar on moral education attended by the heads of secondary and primary schools. The Religious Leaders Colloquium not only sent representatives to the seminar but presented a prepared statement, outlining concrete steps to be taken for the strengthening of moral education, including the working out of a syllabus, training of teachers in the subject, and setting up a central steering body composed of senior officials from various branches of the government and members of the public specializing in the field of moral education.

The religious people in their attempts to promote moral education showed considerable moral earnestness; moreover, they gave careful thought to the implementation of their proposal. The Education Department called a large meeting with school principals but without any concrete plans to further moral education emerging. In the end the religionists fell back on their own resources to work on a syllabus for use in schools sponsored by religious bodies. The preparation of the syllabus was left in the hands of those who were not especially trained in moral education. In fact the syllabus was never completed, and what fragmentary results there were consisted mainly of moralistic teachings which failed to speak to the contemporary world. The one exception was Fr. Luke Tsui who, after specializing in moral education, wrote a full syllabus and complete set of textbooks on moral education which are widely used in Catholic schools.

The project shows that moral earnestness and hard work on the part of a handful of people are not enough; expertise in the matter at hand is essential; and there is a question of tactics to be used when working through bureaucracies. The rich resources which exist in each religions' treasury remain untapped. Those who were involved did have ample occasion to be in dialogue, yet the dialogue failed to produce the desired results.

This is the point at which to raise the question whether the religions in question really show dynamic moral power to shape lives in the commu-

nity. Earlier it was alluded that the established religions in Hong Kong are characteristically “civic religion” in the sense that they are already tamed by the forces of society. Can they also be “civil religion,” to refer to another American sociologist of religion, Robert Bellah, in the sense that the religions can play a more positive role in exercising social responsibility? Bellah, too, recognized the domesticated tendencies of the religions in America which Will Herberg characterized as “civic religion”; but the former was more willing than the latter to give the religions in America the credit of channeling moral responsibility for the good of society.<sup>6</sup> Returning to the Hong Kong scene, we can ask whether the established religions are capable of becoming a moral force in the community? The effort to promote moral education shows that the institutionalized religions betray a large measure of moralism, but that no dynamic moral power for renewal is forthcoming in the face of moral decay in society. To put it in another way, the religions hardly face up to “the powers and principalities” of the age, and they fail to tap what moral and spiritual resources there may be in their heritages to meet the demands of moral uplifting.

The several religions in Hong Kong are spoken of as though they are one entity. As in the case of Will Herberg’s civic religions in America, so the six established religions of Hong Kong are hardly distinguishable from one another insofar as they are more or less identified with the prevailing cultural values and forces.

Experiences in interreligious dialogue at a deeper level suggest that it is in dynamic interaction that the spiritual and moral resources from the various religious traditions can be brought out more effectively. Listening to a Muslim speaking on the *Ramadan* at one of the earliest dialogue seminars (on the theme of “Prayer” on that occasion), a Catholic youth was impressed by the earnestness with which a devout Muslim might take on the month-long fasting and thereby he rediscovered the power of moral purification in the practice of fasting in his own religious heritage. At another dialogue seminar, a Muslim listening to a Protestant speaker referring to the “prophetic” stand against social evil gained a new understanding of what it means to be a prophet. A Taoist speaker’s reference to the *T’ai- p’ing Ching* caught the attention of the present writer, who then went on to do research on that ancient Taoist religious classic and wrote a piece entitled “The Liberative Elements in Religious Taoism” for an international inter-

6. “Civil Religion in America,” in Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-traditional World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).



faith colloquium on "Liberation in Asian Religions."<sup>7</sup> It was at the first International Confucian-Christian Dialogue Conference held in Hong Kong, 1988, that the ethical teachings of Confucianism impressed Christian theologians as being both permanent and worthy contributions to world civilization.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. LEVELS OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Interreligious dialogue in the Hong Kong situation takes place at various levels. We may follow the development of the Dialogue Seminar on Religious Thought, which had its first meeting in November 1977, to illustrate these various levels of dialogue. On the average three seminars a year have been held since the first meeting. At a given seminar at least three religious representatives speak on a chosen topic; sometimes six persons speak. At the earlier seminars the speakers did no more than pass out information about their respective religious traditions; there was nor much dialogue. As time went on, the religious representatives gradually learned to exchange ideas and to respond to one another. Only when the interflow of information or exchange of ideas is a two-way communication can it truly be said that a dialogical process has begun.

We begin, then, at that level of dialogue where there is a minimal mutual relationship sustained by religious ideas, perhaps with accompanying religious sentiments. It should be added that in a true dialogue the participants are on an equal footing and their religious identities are unmistakable. Both the Dialogue Seminar and the Religious Leaders' Colloquium meet these conditions adequately. At the earlier seminars communication tended to be superficial and restricted; later on it penetrated more beneath the surface and made room for freer expression. It can be recalled that some memorable dialogical moments occurred at the seminars: "Joy and Sorrow;" "Destiny"; "Realizing the Authentic Self in a Busy World"; "Spiritual Pollution," However, dialogue at the seminars was usually not sustained enough and lacked focus. Hence, interreligious dialogue seldom reached a deep level where religious consciousness might be touched.

7. Published in *Ching Feng*, Vol.35/No.2, 1992.

8. Reference Peter K. H. Lee, ed., *Confucian-Christian Encounters in Historical and Contemporary Perspective* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991).

We move on to a level of dialogue which is an existential encounter. The participants are engaged in dialogue with “ultimate concerns,” to invoke an expression made famous by the theologian Paul Tillich (in fact that is his characterization of authentic religion). The regular dialogue seminars rarely reach this level. But at a series of four dialogue sessions attended by a committed group of religionists on the subject “Life and Death,” the depths of existential encounter were plumbed. It was, after all, literally a life and death matter, and the participants spoke not only from their understanding of their respective faiths’ teachings but from their personal experience as well. The participants probed themselves and each other at considerable depth. In the end, each benefitted greatly, both intellectually and spiritually, from the others’ presentations and testimonies. All had rich contributions to make. There was no danger of losing one’s faith; on the contrary, one deepened, enriched and enlarged it. That is a fine illustration of what John B. Cobb, Jr. calls dialogue or encounter “toward mutual encounter.”<sup>9</sup> Based on his extensive experience in Christian-Buddhist dialogue, Cobb concludes in his book *Beyond Dialogue* that as a result of the dialogical encounter the Christian transforms the Buddhist counterpart’s understanding of both Christianity and Buddhism, even as the Buddhist transforms the Christian’s understanding of the Buddhist religion and the Christian faith. The Christian remains a Christian, and the Buddhist remains a Buddhist, but in a deepened and enlarged way, and with continuous mutual communication to enrich both.

We further take up that level of dialogue at which religious persons from different traditions address themselves to the public good in a holistic way. We actually already touched upon this level in the last section when we were discussing how the religious bodies in Hong Kong sought to pool their resources for the community. It was noted that they did things for the good of the Hong Kong community in a piece-meal fashion, with some results to show for it, but sometimes without great success. The difficulty in the situation at hand is that the identity of Hong Kong is in question and the future of China, of which it will become a part, is unclear. How, then, can we expect the religious bodies, or indeed anybody else, to have a vision of the public good for Hong Kong, China or the world for that matter?

9. John B. Cobb, Jr. *Beyond Dialogue: Towards a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p.143.

Without such a holistic vision interreligious dialogue remains on the periphery of the social order. It is for that reason that Felix Wilfred, an Indian theologian, characterizes much of what goes by the name religious dialogue as “gasping for breath.” In his article entitled “Dialogue Gasping for Breath? Towards New Frontiers in Interreligious Dialogue,”<sup>10</sup> he goes on to suggest that interreligious dialogue be placed at the center of the socio-political context; that it be placed in the interrelationship between anthropocentrism and cosmic vision; and that it be placed within the wider horizon relating soteriology to creation. All this is heavy theological language. Yet some such theological or theoretical reorientation is called for in order to bring interreligious dialogue “towards new frontiers.”

If the language here is too abstract, let us try something else. This time we borrow from the discussion of Robert Bellah and his associates on religion and society with reference to individualism (in private life) and commitment (to public life) in America. In their recent book, *Habits of the Heart*,<sup>11</sup> one chapter is devoted to “The National Society” (Chapter 10). There is no single blueprint for the good society for all times; rather, six visions of the public good can be identified at various periods of recent American history: the establishment vs. populism; neo-capitalism vs. welfare liberalism; the administered society vs. economic democracy. Elsewhere in the book, the authors argued that while none of these visions has a primarily religious orientation, religious-minded intellectuals at one time or another address themselves to the issues contained in these social visions, and in so doing, religion (Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism, and, of late, other religions too) is put back at the center of things. Coming back to the Hong Kong scene, it is true that few religious-minded intellectuals show a large social vision, yet if they go back to the sources of their religious heritages, they will rediscover great social themes (*ta-t'ung* in Confucianism, *t'ai-p'ing* in Taoism, the great prophets' vision in the Old Testament and Jesus' teachings on the kingdom of heaven, and Islam's teachings on brotherhood, etc.). Is it asking too much of the religious leaders and intellectuals

10. Felix Wilfred, “Dialogue Gasping for Breath? Towards New Frontiers in Interreligious Dialogue,” in *Ching Feng*, Vol. 30/No.4, 1987.

11. Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

of Hong Kong to draw out some implications from these themes so as to speak to such debates as the establishment vs. populism, neo-capitalism vs. welfare liberalism, and the administered society and economic democracy? It seems that these are not only American debates but issues that are relevant to Hong Kong and China and other parts of Asia. If the religious spokesmen can address themselves, in dialogue among themselves and with the world, to these larger, pressing social issues, then interreligious dialogue opens itself to new horizons.

#### 5. THE QUESTION OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Whenever religions are in dialogue the question of religious pluralism arises. How can the conflicting universal claims of a plurality of religions be reconciled?

Traditionally, Chinese people have not been bothered by the question of religious pluralism. The existence of a plurality of religions (or ways of life, or worldviews) has been, generally speaking, accepted as a matter of course. There were times when blurry syncretism of one kind or another was produced, e.g. various expressions of *san-chiao-ho-i* (three-religions-in-one). At other periods a creative synthesis was achieved, as in Zen Buddhism, which incorporates Taoist elements into Mahayana Buddhism, or Neo-Confucianism, which is a new expression of Confucianism assimilating the challenge of Buddhism and Taoism. There have also been literary figures and scholars who are known to have satisfyingly integrated Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism in their personal lives (sometimes at different stages of their career), e.g. Su Tung-p'o and Ch'en pai-sa.

Christian theology in general has not accepted a syncretistic Christianity, though there have been Christian intellectuals who envision a universal religion, e.g. Arnold J. Toynbee synthesizing the "best" in the world's religions.

In Christian theological quarters the question of religious pluralism has been taken seriously, especially in the last several generations when Christianity is found to be one among a number of religions having a world following. Indeed, now that the existence of a plurality of religions is a recognized fact,—all with a long history and followers spread all over the world,—is a recognized fact, no thinking Christian can ignore the question of religious pluralism. In the last two or three decades a large spate of works on the topic have been produced, mostly in the West but some in India. A wide spectrum of positions have been put forward.

Along with theological reflections on the relationship of the Christian faith to other faiths, interfaith dialogue on the local, regional and international scale has become increasingly common.

Coming back to the Hong Kong scene, interreligious activities have become more widely accepted than ever before (though in some Protestant circles this is still unacceptable). However, no theoretical or theological discussion has been pursued on the question of religious pluralism. True to the Chinese mentality, the Chinese religionists and religious bodies have not bothered with this question. A group of Catholics are active in promoting interreligious relations, but very few have engaged in theological reflection on the matter of religious pluralism. The Protestants are the least enthusiastic about interreligious activities and dialogue, and hardly anyone (with the possible exception of this writer) has given thought to the subject.

As we have seen, interreligious dialogue with some intellectual substance has been carried on, though the level is never as high as the writer would wish (he has participated in interfaith dialogue in depth in other settings and therefore he can make a comparison). His own inclination is that, instead of forming any over-all theoretical framework to explain the interrelationship of the plurality of religions, he would immerse himself in interreligious dialogue, out of which new horizons of thinking will then open up. His stance can be best summed up by the following quotation from John B. Cobb, Jr.'s *Beyond Dialogue: Toward a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism*. Speaking as a Christian theologian with a genuine sense of mission, he said:

Our mission is to display the universal meaning of Christ freed from our past compulsion to contradict the truths known in other traditions. As long as we present Christ as the opponent of something that others know to be true, they will not be open to hearing what Christ has to say to them. But once we allow Christ to speak apart from the impediments we have placed in the way, Christ will carry out the authentic Christian mission. Christ as Truth will transform the truths of all other traditions even as they transform ours.<sup>12</sup>

12. Cobb, op. cit., p.143.

We conclude by adding that not only are the religions of the partners in dialogue mutually transformed; but that the cultures and societies in which these religions “live and move and have their being” may be transformed by interreligious encounter if the participants have the vision of a public order. When the present six religions of Hong Kong—hopefully the other non-Chinese religious constituents will be added in the future— together through interaction share this wider perspective, then momentum will be generated to enable each religion to make its individual contribution, and all of the religions to make their contributions together to the Hong Kong community, to China and to world civilization.