

Contribution of christianity in a pluralistic culture research paper sample

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

1. 0 Introduction

Today, plurality of religion is the fact of life, and must be accepted as such (Pachau & Jorgensen, 2011). Almost everyone have their own views on religion, perhaps as varied as the sands in beaches or the stars in the sky. Globalization and technology have brought nations and culture closer; different perspectives of life, rarely compatible approaches to living. In this one global village, Christ continued to call all Catholics to be missionaries to His people.

Christians are called to treat people of any faith, even those of no faith, with genuine respect in their act of witnessing to the gospel. Catholics are called to engage non-Catholics and non-Christians alike as part of that missionary call. Despite the initial reservations, the generic fear of 'strangers,' the grace of God empowers them to fulfill the missionary works of which they have been called. Thus, there is nothing to be alarmed or afraid of in encountering others in the spirit of ecumenical brotherhood and sisterhood. In fact, there is nothing to be hesitant about because God has gone ahead, relating to people within the context of their own culture and conviction, and working inside them for their salvation. And, should they be seeking to encounter that 'Unknown God' (Acts 17: 23), perhaps, much like Paul, Catholics may simply have to say: "Well, the God whom I proclaim is in fact the one whom you already worship without knowing it."

Nonetheless, amidst this great diversity of mankind, a Catholic's voice is just one among the many (Rumble, 2014). Still, Christian mission cannot progress without acknowledging the plurality of religions and the demand for a dialogical mode of existence and way of witnessing (Pachau & Jorgensen,

2011). Acknowledging plurality begins with understanding it, though.

Subsequently, this paper will explore ways in which Catholics may contribute fruitfully to a pluralistic culture.

2. 0 Background information

Despite the necessity of encountering pluralism in culture as a requirement of fulfilling the Christian mission of sharing the good news about Christ to others, the phenomenon constitutes a complex theology that may pose a serious danger to the faith of an unprepared Catholic, particularly in the context of ecumenical dialogues.

Pluralism constitutes a theology that insists in the belief of religions possessing equal validity as a means towards salvation (Pachau & Jorgensen, 2011). It is controversial among Catholics as it constitutes a relativistic theology that there is no one truth or way of salvation (Simpson, 2000). No one religion contains the truth; neither an exclusive way of salvation exists (Pachau & Jorgensen, 2011). Corollary to that is the assertion that God, or oftentimes 'the Mystery' or 'the Higher Power,' lies beyond all the many representations of divinity in various religions. This contrast in theology constitutes a fundamental point of contention that had been a source of friction in dialogues; although had been largely resolved among Christian circles through the introduction of some ecumenical rules at the onset that each member must respect.

The one significant challenge that a Catholic must face when encountering pluralism in culture, even in the context of ecumenical dialogues, is often the sometimes unspoken demand that pluralism may only be 'respected' if Catholics may enter the dialogue by renouncing, or leaving behind, his own

faith in the 'name' of respecting those who did not share the faith (Rumble, 2014). However, Catholics cannot throw away what others want them to renounce in the name of plurality or ecumenism. They must enter and leave the dialogue table as person with rights to be respected despite differences in faith or religion. The same claim of respect that others would expect from Catholics.

First rule, any motive to convert the dialogue partner of another religion is unacceptable (Pachau & Jorgensen, 2011). The goal of a dialogue must be to share the richness of their own lives and faith in an atmosphere of mutual respect where no person claims superiority over another. Coercion or any kind of persuasion is an abuse of a person's right for respect and a violation of the rights of others as well. The dialogue must not be for opportunistic tactics but should spring up from the depth of experience and enquiry.

Second rule, Christians must enter the dialogue on the basis of their own belief or confession, and recognize that others too are expected to do the same (Pachau & Jorgensen, 2011). No true enrichment happens when participants in the dialogue put up faces other than their sincere selves in an effort to conceal or hold down their true selves due to lack of trust. Such trust comes around only after each participant in the dialogue expresses before each other in clear language and gestures their sincerity to participate in it.

Third rule, the dialogue has to do with family, working place and neighborhood, things about life and the person (Pachau & Jorgensen, 2011). It must be an exchange of vulnerability so that trust may grow among them. The Christian listens because something valuable to listen flows from human

beings created in the image of God. In the same manner, others too shall share with others what is in their hearts – what they have seen and heard and touched with their own hands (Jones, 1966; 1 John 1: 1-2). The dialogue has no agenda except to know and esteem the other traditions, and to make the Christian life known. It is a pastoral mission without hidden agenda.

3. 0 Research methodology

This paper employs the descriptive method of research using literature review. Keywords such as ‘ pluralism,’ ‘ pluralistic culture,’ and ‘ Catholic contribution,’ had been used to search out primary resources from the web using the Google and Google Scholar search engines.

4. 0 Catholic contribution to a pluralistic culture

4. 1 Genuine Catholic identity

4. 1. 1 Motherly embrace of Catholicity

The Catholic faith possesses a strong maternal closeness and high regard with honor the special call to motherhood, which it expressed in assigning the Church the pronoun ‘ her’ or ‘ Our Mother Church.’ That affection is also expressed in the high honor the Church gives to Mary the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ as the mother of God (theotokos). This distinctive maternal affection and strong respect both to the life of the mother and the child represents an important contribution into a pluralistic culture that may have lost a special respect and high regard towards women and mothers. Pope Paul VI (1964) said that Christians can represent the motherly embrace of the Church as a Catholicity that fosters love, unity, and peace among men. The rich tradition of the Christian family as modeled by the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph may also contribute a special charisma of family

holiness that others may find useful in their own spiritual enrichment and need. The well-known cases of broken families, divorces, and remarriages had been threatening the concept of a strong and monogamous family across cultures and religions. This special Catholic devotion to the Holy Family may bestow upon others important graces that may work wonders in their own respective families. At the end of the day, Christians are mere agents of the Lord through which He may channel His graces for others.

4. 1. 2The face of forgiveness

The Catholic faith and the Orthodox churches have a special place for sacramental forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation wherein in the person of the priest as an alter-Christus forgives the sins of the faithful in person. The special presence of Christ (sacrament) in the act of forgiveness and reconciliation put a special grace and a unique experience among Catholics that enables them to extend the same sacramental love of God to others in a pluralistic culture. Religious traditions that had no mechanisms to heal broken souls wounded by sins abound in the pluralistic society.

Wounded people silently bear the burden of their personal sins often had no hope of finding a means to receive healing. The act of forgiveness from a Christian may become such channel of grace that may heal even those non-Christians who may receive it for the first time in their lives.

The assurance of forgiveness is possible only because of the length to which God has taken, in Christ, to reconcile with humanity and justify those who dwelt in the darkness of sins and were forgiven (Pachau & Jorgensen, 2011). Such forgiveness may also be useful to others in the pluralistic community, especially when they have need of forgiveness and their faith

had no mechanism for such a need, even those Christian traditions that lost that sacrament in the past through no fault of their own. Even the act of forgiveness, outside the Catholic sacrament of reconciliation, may perform wonders in the lives of those that had not practiced it in the past.

4. 1. 3Model of faithfulness to God

Faithfulness to God communicates a commitment of love to others even in a pluralistic society. Such faithfulness assures non-Christians and non-Catholics alike that despite the differences in religious beliefs, a Catholic is faithful with the relationship in the way that she is faithful to her God. Thus, Catholics cannot, and should not, throw away her faith to her God in the name of pluralistic demand (Wilcox & King, 2000). She joins the dialogue of religions as a religious person who knows what she believes and stays faithful to it. Rumble (2014) wrote that she can stand up as a model to others of faithfulness to her faith and convictions. Thus, a Catholic dialogue with other religions must be to explain her Catholic principles, not to explain them away in any spirit of false liberalism; she must maintain the things that she knows to be right and good and true, not to water them down.

4. 1. 4Solidarity with others

The Roman Catholic Church has a long history of solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, which may be explored deeper in the lives of her Saints, such as Pope St. John Paul II who worked in solidarity with workers in Poland during the German and Communist regimes, or Maximilian Kolbe in his works with lepers somewhere in Europe. Catholics in Saudi Arabia also are working with Muslims in their common hopes for peace (Allen, 2011). Christians in the United States also had joined hands with Muslims in prayer and in common

objectives to bring positive changes in their respective communities. This experience of solidarity with ordinary people may be shared to a culture dominated by pluralistic ideals, which may enrich the culture eventually with the Spirit of God and bring wonders in their lives.

Solidarity with people of various religious confessions allows the Christian to be present with other people, working with them, as Christ's representative and apostle serving others in the spirit of Christian love. Working with people strengthens the community in their common goals in effecting changes that make the world a better place to live in freedom and respect for their personal rights. The helpless and the weak will find consolation in the strength of others, too.

4. 2 The Four Dialogues

4. 2. 1 The Dialogue of life

Venturing outside a person's safety zone makes any person vulnerable (Pachau & Jorgensen, 2011). To engage a dialogue of life with others in a pluralistic culture is for Christians to strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations (Kolvenbach, 2006). All these humane concerns provide a common ground between Christians and non-Christians in order to bridge the divide of religious and cultural difference and live together as brothers and sisters who care for each other's needs.

There are many issues in contemporary life that may find solutions through dialogues among those who value life. Issues such as abortion, euthanasia, contraception, same-gender marriages, and similar contemporary concerns may be discussed in a spirit of common love for each other, and deliberated

for solutions that may be implemented fruitfully in their respective communities. It represents the beginning of a community actively involved with life.

The dialogue of life may also be a previously sought-after opportunity wherein families and couples may find support in times of trials, tragedies, and extreme hardships. It builds a community of loving people, transcending the differences in religious convictions, and proceed to support each other in the vagaries of life no longer alone but with the confidence of a traveler who found co-journeymen to walk with them in mutual support even for the rest of their lives.

4. 2. 2The Dialogue of action

Another contribution that Christians can contribute into a pluralistic culture is the dialogue of action (Kolvenbach, 2006). Christians and other collaborate for integral development and liberation of people. Development and liberation are common themes that Christians and non-Christians share, and which together can work on for the benefit of their respective communities in providing solutions to ills that may have hounded their communities.

4. 2. 3The Dialogue of religious experience

The diversity of race and religious beliefs bring with it the richness of various cultures, which, in the Catholic belief, contain some seeds of holiness that traces its way back to God the Creator of all. In this type of dialogue, persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute (Kolvenback, 2006). This celebration of diversity in religious experiences paves a beautiful road towards the unity of mankind under a

fellowship governed by love and a common hunger to encounter God, according to their respective religious traditions. A truly pluralistic society, said Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin, “ is one which is able to embrace the contribution of faith” (MacDonald, 2014).

4. 2. 4The dialogue of theological exchanges

Another contribution that the Christians may give to a pluralistic culture is the richness of their own theological convictions. Each person, diverse in culture and beliefs, will come to understand each other’s faith and share their own. Specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other’s spiritual values (Kolvenbach, 2011). In an atmosphere free from any motives of proselytizing, this dialogue may open up avenues for spiritual learning and growth, which may had been unavailable in the past. Each belief may be discussed, supported, and enhanced with the goal of helping each participants believe in things with the least amounts of distortions as possible. An honest pursuer of truth welcomes the ideas of people even from other faiths in order to enrich her faith and beliefs. Belief systems, for instance, filled with superstitions maybe correct with the insights of science.

5. 0 Conclusions

Christian theology is a theology of dialogue (Bosch, 1991). It is a theology that recognizes humans as created in God’s image. It also believes that what God has done in Jesus Christ is good news meant for all to share. The missionary duty of Christians therefore is a duty that they must fulfill as workers in the vineyard of the Lord. Christians, such as Catholics, must share their own specific identity as believer; something special in your religious

tradition or culture that may enrich the pluralistic culture they are engaging in. Such specific identities include the motherly love of the Catholic tradition, the model of a faithful Christian, the face of forgiveness, and solidarity with others across religious boundaries.

The goal of the dialogue is to share mutual understanding and enrichment, not the change of religion or the persuasion of others to do so (Pontifical Council of Dialogue, 1984). Certain rules of engagement would be of necessity to govern the behavior of participants in the dialogue. Like any groups of people, rules ensures that each participates self-regulate their behavior for the benefit of the dialogue and based on rules mutually agreed upon.

For Christians who co-exist with people of other religious confessions, pluralism is the context of the Christian mission, which they are called to serve God in others.

6. 0 References

Bosch, D. J. (1991). *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll,

New York, USA: Orbis Books.

Jones, A. (1966). *The Jerusalem Bible*. New York: Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd. And

Doubleday & Company, Inc.

Kolvenbach, P.-H. S. (2006). *The service of faith in a religious pluralistic world*. Xavier

MacDonald, S. (2014, November 1). True pluralism embraces faith's contribution. Catholic

Ireland.

Pachau, L. & Jorgensen, K. (2011). Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic World: Christian

Mission among Other Faiths. Oxford: Regnum Books International.

Paul VI, P. (1964). *Ecclesiam Suam*. Vatican: Roman Catholic Church.

Pontifical Council of Dialogue. (1984). *The Attitude of the Church Toward the Followers of*

Other Religions. Vatican: Roman Catholic Church.

Rumble, L. (2014, December 5). Pitfalls of pluralism. *Catholic Culture*.

Simpson, R. (2000). Can a faithful Christianity embrace a pluralistic theology of religions?

Anvil, 17(2), 109-119.

Wilcox, J., & King, I. (. (2000). *Enhancing Religious Identity: Best Practices from Catholic*

Campuses. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.