imported denominationalism. When the Africans reacted - as the Northern Europeans had done in the 16th century- by starting their Reformation in creating African independent churches, the westerners called these churches sects. — Many Africans have been attracted by the christian faith because they were impressed by the power and the culture of the colonizer. Their christianity has to become African in order to remain a source of hope. — Secularization means in the West that more and more aspects of life have lost a relation with God. Can this principle be applied worldwide which means also to Africa? Mugambi prefers in this respect the concept of “cultural synchronization”, which he took from Cees Hamelink, meaning the tendency to do away with the autonomy of people in their cultural development.

Mugambi claims that in the nineties Africa has become again the continent without borders for medical doctors and youth and pharmacists and missions “without borders” who in the name of religious freedom do what they want. They raise their money by portraying Africa in the mass media to be unable to help itself. For them Africa is a ‘no man’s land’ without borders, while the restrictions against Africans in Europe and in North-America become more and more stringent. They are the new paternalists. Related to them is the army or NGO’s which has become a huge industry employing thousands of foreigners. The NGO’s are the new face of the western intervention and domination in Africa. Do the christian NGO’s detach themselves from this secularist incentive for missionary outreach?

These remarks and many more are made in a book in which from time to time statements are repeated because it is partly a collection of material which Mugambi has written earlier for other occasions. Western scholars who want to participate in the missiological discussion in Africa will have to take this type of reasoning serious and will have to realize themselves that Mugambi and probably all African theologians with him, consider mission as the primary task of any christian church.—Ype Schaaf


Paul Knitter starts this work with a retrospect of the Odyssey he went since the 1960s. Contacts in the academic world, the struggle for peace and economic liberation in El Salvador and a sabbatical in India and Sri Lanka, which also meant a confrontation with the growing conflicts of communalism, have matured his ideas on interreligious dialogue. They have become more pragmatic and realistic, also more closely related to economic and environmental problems. Knitter also knows that he has to
deal with the position of the adversaries and critics. Out of the mass of literature on this field nowadays, Knitter has selected some critics like William Placher ('Good-intentioned pluralists can nonetheless become dangerous imperialists', 43-44), Kenneth Surin ('To resist the cultural encroachment represented by the McDonald's hamburger, therefore, is of a piece with resisting the similar depredation constituted by the world's [interreligious] ecumenism' 48) and Paul Griffith's plea for firm and sound apologetics.

Knowing the pitfalls and problems, Knitter nevertheless unfolds his appeal for a global responsibility as the common ground for interfaith dialogue. “Action, prayer, study” is the triad or the threefold path as designed this book (p. 163). Theologia religionum has left its phase of theoretical discussions on the abstract models of exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism and some other -isms and should rather concentrate on global ethical issues, as also suggested by Hans Küng (who wrote a preface for this book) in his appeal at the 1993 centenary of the Chicago World Parliament of Religions. Küng's call for a 'global responsibility', part of the title of a 1991-publication, has been repeated in the title of this book.

After some more general chapters, the final part of the book is devoted to a confrontation with reality in India and Sri Lanka, where the dream seems every day further away from reality: “the historical track record of religion in India .. seems to be that of an agent of animosity rather than of amity .. That's the world one hears over and over again in discussions of India's present plight and of the role of religion in that plight: communalism” (160). With Samuel Rayan, Michael Amaladoss and Felix Wilfred as main colleagues (I wondered why only Catholic theologians were quoted from India: Knitter's personal network or the ecumenical reality of present-day India?) Knitter pleads for an interreligious dialogue with liberation as its first goal. He knows about the controversy between the quiet sphere of ashrams and the liberationist critic of cooperating with discriminating Brahmanic institutions, but wants to defend the special spirituality of these places and stresses the need for liberative dialogue and the necessity “to learn to resist without excluding, to resist and at the same time embrace” (166).

While reading this book it became clear to me, how great the difference is between what in the 1960's was called the general and the specific theology of religions. The general theology of religions in fact starts with christian dogmatics and tries to find some more space or recognition for non-christian religions. The specific theology pays attention to the particular doctrine, practice and condition of an individual religious tradition. From this perspective, the abstract statements of the general theology of religions often lack significance, become meaningless and bleak. In the chapters of this book we can see very clear the shift in perspective from