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"A Dialogue of Deliberated Uncertainty"¹

**An interpretation of religious pluralism within the context of
democracy.**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Religious Studies at Massey
University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

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¹ Ref. Section Two: "Thesis Summation"

Abstract

When Race, the editor of *World Faiths Encounter*, launched the journal in 1992 he indicated that "the mixed contents" were "intended to aid many kinds of dialogue." He spoke of this in terms of an encounter which he perceived as a "many sided endeavour...[that] requires openness, respect and receptivity to whatever comes."¹

The focus of this thesis is to investigate one aspect of that encounter, the nature of religious pluralism within the context of democracy and its resolution within the concept of "process pluralism".

In line with this intention, the key statements in several selected articles² from *World Faiths Encounter* have been identified and catalogued using an adapted version of Race's familiar delineation of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. These results are recorded in a database [appendix 1] that has been constructed for this purpose. This analysis has been useful to get a preliminary idea of where the writers are in terms of their investment in pluralism but its main function has been to identify questions, arising from the key statements of each, that relate directly to pluralism in the context of democracy.

Each of these questions is addressed in a series of reports that make up the main body of the thesis. While each report follows its own separate enquiry, all of the reports also contain within their conclusion a further common question: *How do the observations made in this paper contribute to a profile of process pluralism?*

The various answers to this common question make up the final report of the thesis and address the question of what is meant by the thesis title, "*A Dialogue of Deliberated Uncertainty*." It is suggested that this report be **read first** to provide an overview of what is to follow and to "come to grips" at once with what is meant by the concept of "process pluralism" that is introduced and developed in the thesis.

¹ Race, Alan, "Launching a Journal". *World Faiths Encounter*. Number 1, [March, 1992] page 2.

² Those relevant to the topic of "Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion."

Preface:

Aim:

To deliver an interpretation of religious pluralism within the context of democracy.

Topic Area:

This study addresses key questions about pluralism arising from the work of contributors to *World Faiths Encounter* in the topic area of

"Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion"¹

Procedure:

1. To analyse the contents of articles in *World Faiths Encounter* relevant to the range of the thesis.
2. To discuss key questions arising from that analysis.
3. To deliver a summation based on that analysis.

Only those contributions that relate directly to the topic area will be surveyed.

¹ The title is taken from an editorial in *World Faiths Encounter*:
Race, Alan, "Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion" *World Faiths Encounter*, Number 8,
[July 1994] page 2.

Format:

The thesis will be divided into three sections:

i

A discussion of the nature of pluralism drawn from a wide range of secondary sources in answer to the questions identified in appendix 1.

ii

A brief overview of pluralism in the context of democracy and its relation to the concept of "process pluralism" as introduced and developed within this thesis.

iii

The identification of key questions relating to pluralism within the context of democracy identified from articles in *World Faiths Encounter*.

[Appendix 1]

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To Doctor Peter Donovan who was an excellent and patient supervisor.

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Section One:

**A discussion of the nature of pluralism in the context of
democracy.**

Introduction:

Why involve politics at all in what is essentially a thesis in religious studies?

The question is answered by the emphasis given to politics in *World Faiths Encounter* specifically volume eight: "*Religion in Democracy and Democracy in Religion*." In his introductory contribution to the volume, Harvey indicates that the 1993 Interfaith Conference on Democracy, of which the journal is a record, "originated in a number of independent initiatives."

Firstly, Goldberg's interest in whether Judaism, Christianity and Islam could reach any common understanding of the "great ethical questions that confront our society today."¹ Secondly, Badawi's concern with the "theological justification for certain authoritarian regimes in other parts of the world"² and his expression of the need to give democracy support and validation. Thirdly, Harvey's own recognition of the "ambivalent position" in which the church finds itself with regard to democracy: "giving assent to democratic principles" but not implementing these within its own hierarchy. Of the three, only Goldberg hinted at the link between democracy and pluralism and then only to contend that a conference on democracy could lead to some interfaith discussion.

The papers from that conference, held in 1993, make up most of the content of volume eight of *World Faiths Encounter*. This thesis looks at those papers, amongst others, and explores what the key statements of each contributor reveal about the interface between religion and politics. The career of the term "democracy" is used to inform and enhance an understanding of pluralism, the definition and nature of which is the focus of this thesis.

The concept of "process pluralism" is introduced and developed.

¹ Harvey, Anthony, "Religion and Democracy" *World Faiths Encounter*, Volume 8, [July, 1994] page 3.

² *ibid.* page 3