

Foreword

In a multicultural and globalised world it is inevitable that people with different religious affiliations come into contact with one another. In the end, it is not religions that meet, but people. Religion can no longer be considered to be a monolithic block consisting of beliefs and practices. Without the intention of simplifying the definition of religion, let us rather agree that the concept 'religion' is too fluent to delineate precisely. The way in which the relationship between religions (theology of religions) is viewed, has much to do with the way in which the origin and nature of religion (theology of religion) is understood. This publication wants to focus on the former.

The purpose of this book is to present several perspectives on how theology of religions plays out in different contexts. This includes historical perspectives (i.e. Luther's theology of religions as well as the position of the Roman Catholic Church towards other religions as declared at Vatican II), as well as cultural and religious interactions.

In the first chapter a brief overview is given by the Editor of the development of the discipline of theology of religions, to indicate how in a postmodern era an almost non-foundational approach has become evident. In the second chapter an overview of the development of this discipline in the Roman Catholic tradition is presented. This contribution is based on the insights of P.J. van der Merwe (1944–2014), who for several years acted as researcher and eventually Head of the Department of Science of Religion and Missiology at the University of Pretoria. Under his guidance the theological position on non-Christian religions was developed. His thoughts influenced a whole generation of theologians trained within this school of thought. With his passing in 2014, this publication serves much as a testimony to his life's work spent on studying religions and their relationships.

The rest of the contributions comprise research done by postgraduate students at the University of Pretoria. Chapter three is a perspective on the Reformation, in particular from the point of view of Martin Luther, as presented by Elmien Shaw. As this is the year of the 500th celebration of the Reformation special attention is given here to a Reformed perspective. In Chapter 4 Allen Baatsen attempts to describe the relationship between Christianity and Islam from the perspective of a willingness to embrace. Johannes Janse van Rensburg then attempts in Chapter 5 to analyse the relationship between Christianity,

Judaism and Islam from the perspective of intergroup threat theory. In the final chapter Tessa Freeman presents a model for theology of religions within a South African context.

With this publication, acknowledgement is given to P.J. van der Merwe as mentor and theologian.

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