

Book Review

Interfaith Directory

Edited with an Introduction by Francis Clark; New York: International Religious Foundation, 1987, x+178 pp.

The cause of interfaith dialogue, understanding and what is sometimes described as "the wider ecumenism" has gained considerable momentum in recent years. While interfaith conflicts and sectarian tensions continue to hit the headlines, efforts to build bridges and arrive at some degree of mutual understanding are also underway. Recent years have witnessed the emergence of many groups, agencies and organizations around the globe that are working in the field of interreligious dialogue and understanding. These groupings have held numerous interfaith seminars, conferences and workshops and have contributed significantly in opening up new channels of communication and wider avenues of concord among the hitherto contending religious community leaders. One such organization is The Council for the World's Religions (CWR), a New York based organization which aims to bring believers of all faiths into mutual friendship and collaboration in the service of God and humanity. The *Interfaith Directory* sponsored by the CWR is one important step toward disseminating information about other organizations and agencies working for interreligious harmony and concord.

The Directory lists names, addresses and activities of about seven hundred interfaith organizations throughout the world. These organizations have been listed in five different categories: 1) organizations with multifaith membership; 2) organizations relating to two or three religions; 3) organizations based on one religion, but with outreach to other religions; 4) universalist movements for spiritual unity; and 5) academic institutions which are also centers of interfaith dialogue and encounter. Some organizations receive multiple entries because of the varied nature of their activities and programs. *The Directory* also includes two very useful indexes, one alphabetical and the other geographical. As has been noted by the editor, these organizations may vary considerably in size, resources and effectiveness but all of them share the common goal of interreligious harmony. Francis Clark has contributed a very thoughtful introduction to the volume in which he discusses present trends in the world-wide interfaith movement. He rightly points out that the interfaith movement "is a deeper religious expression of the new sense of oneness of the human family and the new awareness of our common responsibilities, dangers and destiny in our one shared habitat." However, he is not oblivious

of the many obstacles which still stand in the way of closer association between different religious traditions. Apart from doctrinal beliefs, loyalty of believers to their own creed and the fear of surrendering the uniqueness of their own faith, there is also "inherited hostility and suspicion remaining from past religious conflicts." Mr. Clark believes that the interfaith work, in order to be authentic and successful, must combine respect for "religious pluralism, and for the spiritual values of other religions, with conviction of the unique value and divinely sanctioned significance" of one's own faith.

This *Interfaith Directory* will be an invaluable treasure for those who are active in interreligious activities. It will also be a very useful source of information about organizations and groups that are currently engaged in such activities.

Mumtaz Ahmad
Washington, DC

INDEX OF ISLAMIC LITERATURE, 1986

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