

Analysis of inter-faith dialogue between Christians and Muslims as a response to religious radicalization in Kenya

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Abstract: Interfaith dialogue is indispensable to peace and tranquility globally within the context of religious pluralism. In Kenya, Christians and Muslims need greater intercommunication and interfaith dialogue for harmonious living. In the recent past the interaction between Christians and Muslims has been characterized by distrust, apprehension and mutual rivalry, sometimes resulting into loss of life and destruction of property. Features of mistrust, disharmony, and intolerance among churches toward mosque adherents and vice versa have been witnessed in Kenya. This calls for a fresh look on the relationship between Christians and Muslims through interfaith dialogue. The methodology used, include examining the basis of interfaith dialogue with focus on Islamic radicalism in Africa and Islamic radicalistic terror activities in Kenya. In addition, it assesses inter-faith dialogue principles found in Christian and Muslim theology including Prophet Muhammad's view towards Jesus Christ. Divergent issues in Biblical and Qur'anic teachings on interfaith dialogue accompanied by Christian and Muslim view of each other. The paper underscores cross-cutting issues in biblical and Qur'anic teachings and the challenges to constructive Christian-Muslim dialogue in Kenya. Finally, the paper provides interfaith dialogue as a response to radicalization through recommendations and strategies.

Keywords: Dialogue; Inter-faith, Muslim; Christian; Relation; Religious radicalization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Interfaith dialogue is indispensable to peace and tranquility globally within the context of religious plurality. Christians and Muslims worldwide stand in need of greater interfaith dialogue, inter-faith relation, and Christian-Muslim dialogue as a response to Islamic radicalism for harmonious living. Christian and Muslim interactions as well as their relations have an intricate history occasionally marked by rivalry or war and sometimes, constructive harmonious living. This is evidenced by the early jihads towards Christians and retaliatory through medieval crusades. Over the years, Islamic radicalism has raised a great concern to Kenyans and world peace through terrorism activities and radicalistic ideologies. This paper first looks at interfaith dialogue and the general basis for Christian-Muslim dialogue. Interfaith dialogue is defined as a constructive, honest, objective and sincere conversation between Christians and Muslims. It encompasses harmonious relations, religious freedom and interfaith relations. Inter-faith relation refers to the relationship established and nurtured among peoples of different faiths. Religious radicalization in this paper refers in general to an attempt to revive and restate Islamic exclusivism teaching in a contemporary world, regardless of the religious pluralistic state of the global society. Christian-Muslim dialogue is the building up of a relationship between Christians and Muslims with an attempt to overcome doctrinal and mutual prejudices in order to enhance tolerance and de-radicalization. De-radicalization can be understood as a religious process to overcome violent ideologies, religious extremism and terrorism through positive teaching on the need to embrace religious plurality and tolerance. This for example can be done through hermeneutical process an approach that seeks to tone down violent texts within the Quran.

1.1 The Basis for Christian-Muslim Dialogue

In this paper, Interfaith dialogue and Muslim-Christian dialogue are interchangeably used because the former is a constructive, honest, objective and sincere conversation between Christians and Muslims; while, the latter is the building up of a relationship. The basis for Christian-Muslim dialogue is that Christianity and Islam are geographically the most widespread world religions. Christianity has approximately 2.3 billion while Islam 1.2 billion followers totaling to 50% of the world population. Christianity and Islam are major faiths in Kenya as confirmed through studies conducted by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life (2010), which estimated that 84.4% were Christians while 9.7% Muslims, and confirms that in Kenya, Christianity is the predominant faith. Further, Kamau, P.M (2018) has given estimates of Kenyan Muslims at 10-20%, while Christians constitute 60-70%. It matters then, not only to Christians and Muslims, but also to the rest of the world, how the followers of these two religions relate to each other and how they envision their relationship in a pluralistic society. In the last few decades, since 1960s, concerted efforts have been made between Christians and Muslims towards a new religious understanding in scholarship and dialogue. Contemporary developments, political and other reasons, are threatening to build up new attitudes of distrust and hostility. Various religious differences among Christians and Muslims create need among these adherents in both faiths to learn more about each others' faith and continue to improve their relationship. Such an endeavor would reduce a spirited terrorism attacks and religious brain-washing into radicalism.

1.2 Islamic Radicalism in Africa

Since the rise of Islam in contemporary Africa, various Islamic activities have overshadowed the interest of interfaith dialogue. For instance, the rise of Islam radicalism in Africa in the 20th and 21st Century and its role in terrorism is one of those Islamic related activities that have been a setback to Christian-Muslim dialogue. Proponents of radicalism emphasize a literal interpretation of the Qur'an and the Hadith; through a jihadist violence and jihadist terrorism as explained by Rabasa, A. et al (2006). To achieve this goal, several Islamic extremists work through Al-Qaeda to incorporate various local radical jihadist groups such as the *al-Shabaab* working in East Africa and other parts of the African continent. Apparently, Islamic radicals are linked to Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, *al-Shabaab* and other terror groups working across the global society. The Kenya National Muslim Advisory Council (KENMAC) accuse some Muslim religious leaders of promoting violence through training youths to fight in the Kenyan *al Shabaab* war in Somalia (Nation Television Media, 25.12.2011). Some Muslim radicals work freely, train militants and carry out operations in Kenya sometimes unnoticed by security personnel, as stated by Stewart, S (2012). The Islamic concept of *Salafi* (more strict observance of Islam and the Prophet's model) has presented to the public a more conflict-minded than a peaceful Islam religion. Ideally, Islamic radicals lack the spirit of interfaith dialogue embedded in the Qur'an, rendering attempts to theologize on Christian-Muslim dialogue a challenge.

1.3 Islamic Radicalism and Terror activities in Kenya

Islamic radicalism vis-a-vis Christian-Muslim dialogue in Kenya shows a level of mistrust among the Abrahamic faiths. Islamic radicalism in Kenya has its basis on the rise of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. In 1998, terrorist attacks on United States of America's embassies in Kenya and Tanzania became alarming signs on the activities of fundamentalist Muslims in Kenya. Other subsequent attacks have been met in Nairobi and other parts of the country, propagated by jihadist Muslims. Islamic jihadists use grenades, shooting of civilians sometimes in bus stations, malls, churches, institutions of learning and civilians. Such terrorist attacks continue to weaken the already fragile interfaith relationship between Christians and Muslims in Kenya. This calls for a new and urgent consideration of Christian-Muslim dialogue as a priority in coexistence and cooperation as well as an endeavor to de-radicalize already intoxicated minds. The sense of urgency for Christian-Muslim dialogue should incorporate a long-term necessity of continuing to deepen a mutual understanding and trust as indicated in the Biblical and Qur'anic teachings.

1.4 Inter-faith Dialogue found in Christian and Muslim Theology

Inter-faith dialogue is evident in Christian and Muslim theology. The bible, particularly the Old Testament tells various stories of key persons whom God communicated with regardless of their religious orientation. Such include the Egyptian Pharaoh; Nebuchadnezzar; Balaam; King Cyrus (King of Persia - current Iran) who were non-worshiper of Yahweh. God interaction with them did not provide a pre-requisite to change their religion but talked through them anyway; which may provide an avenue to interfaith dialogue. The story in the Book of Jonah towards the Ninevites did not require them

change their religious background but an act of repentance. The New Testament is not short of the interfaith notions. Jesus' birth narrative recorded in the Gospel of Matthew (2:1-12) tells an arrival of the Magi (wise men) from the East who came to Jerusalem looking for the new born King of the Jews. Ideally, they were not Jews or adherents of Judaism. Yet they showed up guided by the star to where Jesus was. Jesus' new command is 'religious love' as shown in John 13: 34. Religious love incorporates compassion, tolerance and forgiveness. Furthermore, biblical love in 1 Corinthians 13 tells that love is the most indispensable constituent in every being, a radiating light and abundant supremacy which resist and overcome evil forces. In any circumstance, love tends to promote the recipient and prepares the journey to interfaith dialogue to people perceived as 'other'. The gospel according to Mark (9:39-40) and Luke (9:49) records an incident where one of Jesus' disciples tried to stop someone casting out demons in Jesus' name. Jesus responded by saying: "Do not hinder him, for he who is not against us is for us." Jesus was open to dialogue and maybe tolerance. The implication here, based on this verse is that as we share the gospel to other people, it should not be a source of religious intolerance and conflict; instead, religious love to all humans.

Qur'an and "hadith" supports human self-worth and emboldens to live a positive life coloured with humane values for the betterment of humanity (Qur'an 4:36). Submission to Allah develops qualities of good relationship with others taken literally. For instance, Christians and Jews are regarded as People of the Book in the Quran in the following text:

"Oh... people of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we take not, from among ourselves lords and patrons other than God" (Quran 2: 136, 253, 285; 3:3, 64-65, 84, 111-115; 61:6)"

1.5 Prophet Muhammad's Attitude toward Jesus Christ

Six times Jesus is called the Christ in Qur'an 3:45, 4:157, 4:171,172, 5:17, 5:75, 9:30, and 9:31. Son of Mary (ibn-Maryam) occurs 23 times in the Quran; 16 times as Jesus, son of Mary, and seven times as son of Mary or with other titles. Ayoub, (1976) analogy has indicated that in the Bible, Jesus as son of Mary occurs only once. Mary's consecration is extensively shown in Quran 19 and some portion in Quran 3. Women of truth Quran 5:75. Mary dedicated what was in her womb found in Quran 3:44-45. Jesus was born of Virgin Mary as shown in Quran 3:47; 19:20. Jesus is supported by the Holy Spirit of God not only at his birth according to Quran, but in cradle, in youth and as a grown man (Quran 2:87; 2:253; 16:2; 16:102; 26:193; 40:15; 58:22). Muhammad thought of himself as a prophet but he called Jesus the "Christ" (Quran 3:45-46) and admitted that Jesus was "strengthened with Holy Inspiration (Quran 2:87; 5:110) and given revelation from God (Quran 3:45-49; 5:110). The Qur'an teaches that Jesus was born of a virgin (Quran 3:47-49), possibly the work of God. Muhammad taught that Jesus was of great honor, righteous, a prophet (Quran 43:59), God's Apostle (Quran 4:157). He was one to whom God imparted his revelation (3:47-49; 5:110). Moreover, Prophet Muhammad taught that Jesus healed the blind, healed lepers and even raised the dead (Surah 5:110). The idea that Jesus was much more than just a great prophet is also clear from Muhammad's own teachings. For example, to Muslims, Muhammad was a prophet, but Muhammad taught that Jesus was a 'Word' or 'Spirit' coming from Allah himself (Quran 2:87; 4:17).

Prophet Mohammed taught about the second coming of Jesus in the doctrine of eschatology (Parousia). He taught as follows:

.....And (Jesus) shall be a Sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment): therefore have no doubt about the (Hour), but follow ye Me: this is a Straight Way. By him in whose hands my soul is, Son of Mary (Jesus) will shortly descend amongst you people (Muslims) as a just ruler... Quran 43:61.

Prophet Mohammed further expounded as follows:

...And there is none of the people of the Scriptures (Jews and Christians) But must believe in him (i.e. Jesus as an Apostle of Allah and a human being) before his death. And on the Day of Judgment He will be a witness against them. (Quran 4:159).

The Prophet felt that his heart was with Jesus by saying:

.....Whosoever from amongst you lives to see Jesus, son of Mary, he should convey my greetings to him. By him in whose hand is my life, *Ibn Maryam* (Jesus Christ) would certainly pronounce Talbiyah for Hajj or for Umrah or for both (simultaneously as a Qarin) in the valley of Rawha (Sahih Muslim, Book 7, No. 2877).

The day the Prophet ascended to heaven, he reported as the follows:

I saw myself (in a dream) near the *Ka'ba* last night, and I saw a man with whitish red complexion, the best you may see amongst men of that complexion having long hair reaching his earlobes which was the best hair of its sort, and he had combed his hair and water was dropping from it, and he was performing the *Tawaf* around the *Ka'ba* while he was leaning on two men or on the shoulders of two men. I asked, 'Who is this man?' Somebody replied, '(He is) Messiah, Son of Mary.' Then I saw another man with very curly hair, blind in the right eye which looked like a protruding out grape. I asked, 'Who is this?' Somebody replied, '(He is) Messiah, *Ad-DajjaV* (Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 9, Book 87, No. 128; Malik's Muwatta, Book 49, No. 49.2.2)

It can be concluded that the Prophet did not have any ill motive of Jesus. In his mind, Muhammad thought of Jesus as the Christ both in his teaching and conviction. Such a gesture should be taught in madrasa and heavily emphasized in the mosque as a means of de-radicalization by imams, sheikhs and madrasa teachers.

1.6 Divergent Issues in Biblical Teachings on Inter-faith Dialogue

Several theological understanding between Christians and Muslims faith are quite distinct. This paper does not try to dig in on whether Yahweh of Judaism or God of Christians or Allah is the same. Instead, the paper looks at the Biblical and Islamic teaching on some doctrinal issues and their application. The doctrine of Trinity serves as the dividing line between Christianity and Islam. God, from Christian doctrine is viewed as trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the Bible attributes deity to the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 6:8-9; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Acts 28:25-26; Hebrews 10:15-17). The deity of the Holy Spirit is confirmed by the fact that the Holy Spirit is said to have the attributes of God (Gen 1:2; Job 26:13; 1 Cor 2:9-11; Hebrews 9:14) and the Holy Spirit performs the works of God (Job 33:4; Ps 104:30; Luke 12:11-12; Acts 1:5; 20:28; 1 Cor 6:11; 2:8-11; 2 Peter 1:21). The Bible affirms the existence of God in three person, God the Father, son and Holy Spirit which is an anathema to the Qur'anic teaching.

Another New Testament doctrine is found in John 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me." The passage argues for exclusive Christianity, superior to all other religion. It is only through Christ that we have salvation as shown in the passage. Any Christians will affirm that personal experience of salvation and eternal life is tagged on this passage and through the substitutionary death of Christ.

1.7 Divergent Issues in Quranic Teachings on Inter-faith Dialogue

The Quran has some teaching depicting violence, which sometimes deters viable interfaith dialogue. For example:

Qur'an 5:33; this is the recompense of those who fight against God and his Messenger, and hasten about the earth, to do corruption there: they shall be slaughtered, or crucified, or their hands and feet shall alternately be struck off; or they shall be banished from the land. That is degradation for them in this world; and in the world to come awaits them a mighty chastisement. The above verses call for a destruction of non-Muslims. It is important that Muslims jurist and teachers to hermeneutical seek the meaning of such verses in a democratic global society as compared to a theocratic concept during Islamic early formation.

The death of Qur'anic Messiah forms another controversial teaching within the Quran. One text affirms Jesus' death while the other denies it. The Qur'an says:

.....And there is none of the people of the Scriptures (Jews and Christians) But must believe in him (i.e. Jesus as an Apostle of Allah and a human being) before his death. And on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them." (Qur'an 4:159).

.....And their [Jews] boasting: "We killed Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, the apostle of Allah," but they [Jews] killed him not, nor crucified him, but the resemblance of Jesus was put over another man (and they killed that man) Qur'an4:157-158.

This type of teaching falsifies the four gospels teaching that indeed Jesus was crucified rendering their crucifixion account inaccurate. Dialogue between Christians and Muslims would be incomplete if such a discrepancy is not rectified. Furthermore, Qur'an 2:62 (cf 5:69) sounds like Christians will go to heaven but 3:85 and 5:72-73 are pretty clear that Christians will go to hell. Lewis and Churchill (2008), states that according to the Quran, paradise is in the shadow of sword as stipulated by Muhammad. Desires for some to appear in paradise adapt a radicalized ideology drawn from some

Qur'anic teaching to propagate terror attacks. Concerning jihad, Muslims have a duty under any ruler, whether a devout or tyrannical. They are reminded that a day and a week at war are better than a month of fasting and prayer. A Muslim who dies without having taken part in such campaigns dies in a kind of unbelief. Muslims may wage war against four types of enemies: infidels, apostate, rebel and bandits. The first two calls for jihad, rest do not. A new understanding of the hermeneutical interpretation of some tyrannical qur'anic verses will provide a new outlook of the verses in a pluralist society and avert more conflict. Listen to the following verses which support terror attacks:

Then, when the sacred months have passed, slay the pagans wherever you find them—take them [captive], besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush. But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due [i.e. submit to Islam], then leave their way free. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (Qur'an 9:59). Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and his Messenger [i.e. do not adhere to Islamic law], nor acknowledge the religion of Truth [i.e. Islam], from the people of the book [i.e. Jews and Christians], until they pay tribute with willing submission, and feel themselves utterly subdued (Qur'an 9:29).

Radicalized ideologies teach that non-Muslims are mandated by Islamic law to convert to Islam or be killed. For instance, Quran 9:29 offer intolerance practices against Christians and Jews. Pillaging and plundering infidels, enslaving their children, and placing their women as concubines is well founded in Quran and Muhammad's Sunna (4:24, 4:92, 8:69, 24:33, 33:50). The question would be how then inter-faith dialogue can move beyond these texts to become constructive. There is need for Islamic jurist to reinterpret the above texts in light of the current global order and religious freedom which was absent during the formation of Islamic faith.

1.8 Christian's view on Interfaith Dialogue in Kenya

Some Christians view interfaith dialogue as a mode of evangelism. Muslims are to be won to Christ by highlighting obstacles which prevent them from converting to Christianity. The gospel is God's final self-disclosure and other religions are reflection of a fallen humanity. This argument implies that appropriate methodology and a firm dependence upon the Holy Spirit, Muslims could be saved. Studying Islam and a zeal to win Muslims to faith in Christ should strengthen effective mission to Muslims. They contend that Christian-Muslim dialogue should be apologetic and polemic with an intention of winning Muslims to Christ. The call of Jesus is to reach out, influence and receive people into Christian faith, including Muslims. Some Christians feel that they should press on to propagate the gospel to those who have been blinded to the truth of God. Muslims should be approached with the claims of Christ through prayers, friendships, listening and proclaiming Christ to them. How dialogue should progress beyond negating misconceptions of the others' beliefs and praxis has to be addressed for harmonious interfaith living. Christian 'missionary' efforts to 'frontal attack' against Muslims with the gospel have ended in a disaster. There is need to evaluate possibilities of enriching religious education and existing church and Mosque policies with values of harmonious inter-faith relations. The process of Christian-Muslim dialogue involves a thorough understanding of the fundamental elements embedded in Christian and Muslim teaching on inter-faith dialogue. An adequate theological framework, therefore, needs to provide an evaluation procedure whereby the areas of contact between Christians and Muslims would be strengthened to foster mutual concord.

1.9 Muslim Attitude towards Christians

Historically, Muslims regarded Christianity with high esteem. Men Muslims were encouraged to marry from them as long as the offspring would be brought up in Islamic teaching. In our contemporary society we see for instance, Christians flourishing in Muslim dominated countries. Combined with the ecumenical principles of *ah al-kiiab* (people of the book) is the tolerance principle of *Ialkraha fid-din* (there is no compulsion in religion), an idea well felt of religious tolerance in Arab countries. In his analysis, Mazrui, (2006) affirms that Muslim world view is divided between the *dar-la-islam* (house of Islam), where Muslims rule and sharia is enforced, and *dar-al -harb* (house of war), the rest of the world adopt Islam or submit to sharia. The Quran portrays a mixed feeling towards Christian. In one end, is the teaching in Qur'an2:256 which say "there is no compulsion in religion" On the other end, calls to wage war against non-Muslim 8:38-39. Radicalized Muslim wishes to use the ideologies in Qur'an accompanied by sharia to overthrow secularist government and institutions foreign to a true Muslim ummah. Islamists believe that Islamic teaching should be applied as a complete code that encompasses all areas of life whether spiritual, intellectual, political, social or economic. In comparing Quran 2:256 and 8:38-39 one support such ideologies and the other permit violence while the other seeks truce. To move beyond these barricades which permit violence, Muslim jurist should move beyond practical application of the verses in the six hundred century as a theocratic nation to more democratic open pluralistic societies.

2. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES IN BIBLICAL AND QUR'ANIC TEACHINGS ON INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE

The importance of Muslims and Christians scriptures is that they are of divine origin. Quran 2:2 states, "This is the Book; wherein there is no doubt; guidance to the pious ones." While the Bible states, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2Ti 3:16)." The degree to which God reveals himself is found in Quran 2:3-4; "Who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what we have provided for them; and who believe in what is sent to you and what was sent before you, and (in their hearts) have the reassurance of the hereafter". A similar teaching in the Bible as indicated in the book of I Tim 3:16, "we confess, is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."

The Bible and the Quran despite their disparities have areas of contact that when well utilized will support interfaith dialogue. For instance:

Quran 5:32 "For this cause we have prescribed to Jews "whoever kills an innocent life it's as if he has killed all of mankind. And whoever saves an innocent life, it is as if he has saved all mankind."

Exodus 20:13 "You shall not kill; Matthew 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire.

Comparing these texts from the Qur'an and Bible, one would quickly notice the spirit of respect for human life. On the one hand, Christian and Muslims are called to a greater awareness for the need of dialogue and that they are called to be agents and witnesses to God's universal mercy. On the other hand, these books invite adherents to move beyond prejudice, suspicion, and half-truths in order to arrive at an understanding with each other.

2.1 Challenges to Constructive Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Kenya

The essential component in inter-faith dialogue is not to reach doctrinal agreement, but the willingness to re-examine one's faith in the light of how others relate to their tradition. This includes the ability to listen, instruct, strengthen or adjust one's own engagement and interaction with the sacred based on the experiences of the other. Understanding the faith of others should strengthen rather than weaken a person's commitment to his or her religious tradition, freeing one from prejudice and intolerance. Christian-Muslim dialogue, therefore, is the building up of a relationship between Christians and Muslims with an attempt to overcome doctrinal and mutual prejudices to enlarge areas of mutual concord. However, doctrinal differences remain a challenge and cannot be ignored if fruitful interfaith dialogue has to take place.

Relationship between Christians and Muslims in Kenya is a major challenge, sometimes characterized by uninformed presumptions, stereotypes, distorted perceptions, prejudices and discrimination. Christian-Muslim dialogue mostly may revolve around moral, socio-political, economic and ecological issues, among others. Moreover, in most cases interfaith dialogue is usually a concern of some mainline churches while other denominations appear to be absent. Fundamental beliefs and critical expression of faith is usually omitted in interfaith encounters. Muslims' *mihadhara*, open-air preaching, introduced in Kenya around 1987 has contributed in marring relationships with Christians. *Mihadhara* in Kenya are conducted mostly in Kiswahili language. The preachers in *mihadhara* normally read the Bible against the Qur'an trying to show how erroneous the Bible is. The initial reaction of Christians to *mihadhara* is normally characterized by shock and surprise; as these preachers are viewed as humiliating. *Mihadhara* sometimes attack the essence of the Christian doctrines with hostile and dismissive tones. Many of the Muslim speakers at *mihadhara* choose Biblical texts selectively to back their arguments and are reluctant to reason together with their Christian protagonists on how the Bible should be interpreted. Most *mihadhara* only generate heated controversy between Christians and Muslims with little if any light. *Mihadhara* have in some places ended up in open physical confrontation between Muslims and Christians, leading to injury, loss of property and death. *Mihadhara* could well be used to enhance Christian-Muslims dialogue through inviting seasoned preachers who are conversant with Christian doctrine.

2.2 Interfaith Dialogue in response to Radicalization

Muslims involved in radicalism should be taught on the values of inter-faith dialogue embed in the Qur'an. Allah has encouraged Muslims to dialogue as a means to iron out misunderstanding with non-Muslims. The following verses support this claim, Qur'an 2:136; 253; 3:3; 3:64-65. The verses teach that Muslims should maintain calmness during dialogue and be sincere on giving views. Participants in dialogue should be at liberty to discuss other issues which are not religious. In addition, the Quran supports that whenever there is misunderstanding between the two faiths; Muslims are directed by Qur'an 29:49 to dialogue with wisdom and to arrive at amicable solutions.

The Qur'an states that Muslims should dialogue in a peaceful, respectful, and obedient because in so doing someone may join Islam. Muslims should dialogue in a friendly and attractive manner so that the Christian or any other religion can know what Islam teaches as indicated in Quran 5:85; 5:54; 15:25. For example, the Qur'an (29:49) says that argue with non-Muslims using the best word and talk. That Qur'an warns Muslims not to insult non-Muslims or they will insult Allah (Qur'an 6:108). On the same note, the Quran warns that people in dialogue should be called without anger and fight. Do not be emotional or asking or answering the question from disrespect (Qur'an 2:62; 48:29; 3:64-65; 5:82). The Quran supports some biblical books such as the Torati, Zamburi, and Injili and this provide a good sign for interfaith dialogue. Dialogue with Muslims is proposed and much insisted on the way of dialogue and explanation given. It should be a good conversation according to Qur'an 3:64; 7:158; 16:125; and Quran 112:1-4, "We propagate only to those who want to listen" and "yes, there is no compulsion in religion (Qur'an 2:256)."

People involved in dialogue should go beyond accusations and counter accusation and major on unity of basic principles as an urge to support dialogue and sharing of values. Kung, (1994) argues that Christianity and Islam have lived at close quarters, and are closely related in a structural sense as religions of revelation, but sometimes tensions and petty rivalries have been common. As Gulen, (2006) say, Muslims accept all Prophets and Books sent to different prophets throughout history, and regard belief in them as an essential principle of being Muslim¹. Dialogue then, in spite of its many shortcomings, may be the only practical way of empathic approximation to the Truth and the way to put ourselves in somebody else's place. Gulen, (2009) further explains that when debating issues of inter-religious dialogue, the matter in question is always much more than just theology, aspects of political and economic character are involved almost by definition and conflicting claims often cause discord rather than harmony.

In fact, so great is Jesus that according to the Hadith, "Narrated Abu Huraira: The Apostle said, "So they will go to Jesus and say, "O Jesus! You are Allah's Apostle and *His Word* (6.200-201; 60.178.236)" and "Narrated Anas: The Prophet said, "Go to Jesus, Allah's Slave, His Apostle, and *Allah's Word and a Spirit coming from Him* (6.4)." In other words, Muhammad called Jesus the very "Word of God." This brings closer the concepts of Jesus as a unifying force in dialogue among these faiths. It is worth noting that dialogue should not be taken to the corridors of persuading or interfaith competition, but accommodating each other. It is impractical and insufficient to read other religious systems in the light of the assumptions of one's own. Similarly, Muslims and Christians could expand distinctive paths towards accommodation and dialogue by drawing inspiration from their specific interests and conditions. Muslim-Christian cooperation and dialogue has been emphasized by Nursi as outlined by Michel, (2011). Interfaith dialogue should reach beyond the hallways of academia and spread to the masses through education and other possible means. Ondigo, (2008) has identified one of the hadith that says "No one is fully a believer until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself. And the teaching of the Bible says in Mathew 22:39, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself". These texts invite people to avoid the past with its misunderstandings and failures and communicate love and concern for each other. Religious teaching can cause disharmony and in such situations, rather than being a hard line apologist, the theology of interfaith dialogue need to be embraced. General revelation should be used as a starting point in any dialogue accompanied by social ethics.

Both the Bible and Quran stress the ideology of Christian community and ummah. Matthew 10:36 "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household; Matt 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." It is erroneous to approach an over two billion Christian religion and over a billion Muslims from a theological perspective alone. Dialogue should be geared towards addressing sociological and theological hindrances of the community of faith. Though such may not be fully ironed out, reducing the stumbling blocks would be a better alternative. Muslims should allow each individual make their religious choices without interfering from anyone.

In some Muslims dominated countries individuals have no rights to make their religious choices. Such lack of religious freedom contravenes some qur'anic text as earlier discussed in this paper. Frontal attack against Muslims solidarity may produce negative result, since Muslims will use counterattack flavored with violence. Social Muslims solidarity gets

stronger when threatened. For instance, Muslims have a feeling that a Christian entering the mosque actually defiles the sanctity of the house of worship. A degree of caution needs to be put in place for apostate to Christianity since immediate withdrawal from Muslim *ummah* leads to extractionism (Parshall, 1989). Muslims practice 10 percent Islamic faith theologically, while 90 percent is basically socio-cultural issues practiced with the *ummah*. Apostatizing from Muslim perspective causes the individual to be secluded from the Muslim *ummah*. Freedom of worship is essential to religious practices and free expression of belief free from related communal religious or personal penalty. Religious freedom should serve as a social religious value to strengthen interfaith dialogue.

Qur'anic principles of *ummah* underscore the need to develop an all-inclusive social relation among all citizens. The Qur'an (2:35; 7:26) counsels Muslim believers to suppress any possible justifiable anger as a far superior course of action and selflessly develop relationship not only with Muslims but also with Christians. Humankind, as taught in the Qur'an descended from Adam and Eve, making everyone a brother or sister. Race, language and color are meant to show the omnipotence of Allah and should never be used for discriminating against people (Qur'an 4:1). Muslims practicing radicalism should be taught and encouraged to have good relations with people of other faiths without undue favor.

Theologically, these two religions have irreconcilable differences which only call for an obligation to honor each other's religious conviction. Dorman notes, "Muslims polemic view of Christian missionary campaign is aimed against the solidarity of easterners, against the unit of the Islamic nations, against the purity and classic perfection of the Arabic language and against the character and person of Muhammad Dorman, (1948). Christian missionaries in Islamic countries are perceived to destroy the rich heritage and lofty values of Islam and serves as a hindrance to true dialogue. Ummah is tagged to religious shared values, and common concern for the Muslims. He further states that the Muslim ummah is the shared and mutually compatible, complementary family of cultures belonging to Muslims people in many places. Radicalism ideologies should be replaced by accepting each other in mutual respect and should be taught among Muslim members. The advantage Muslims have for engaging in interfaith dialogue, Says Gulen, (2006), is thus that they acknowledge the oneness and basic unity of religion, which is a symphony of Allah's blessing and mercy, embracing all races and beliefs, a road bringing everyone together in brotherhood. A similar sentiment may be found in Paul's message to the Athenians where he preached his Message without interfering with the Athenians gods or dismantling the Athenians Ummah (Acts 17:22).

Religious misunderstanding between Christianity and Islam has often erupted into violence. Political system often confused as to empower religions has resulted in social instability and conflict among the adherents of these faiths. It is prudent to overcome suspicion in dialogue since both Christians and Muslims scriptures are in support and even religious leaders like Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II do support. Christian or Muslim faith in God is not a political philosophy for propagating at selfishness. Dialogue should remain a life changing spiritual force and experience which is meant to result in compassionate and cooperative representatives of collective armistice. The teaching from the Bible and Quran is fountainhead and lays essential ground work for interfaith dialogue.

2.3 Conclusion

The paper has shown that unity of Muslims *ummah* is a primary goal that all must strive for; and there is a serious warning from Allah for those who create division among as noted in Qur'an 3:103. Nonetheless, Muslims are encouraged from the Quran to develop constructive peaceful interfaith dialogue which is not only permitted but also commendable. Deliberate acknowledgement of Qur'anic teaching on peace is the best way to avoid mistrust and overcome indifferences with Christians. Further, the Qur'an teaches the importance and ideals of *ummah* as a socio-religious *aspect which* stresses on homogeneity where Muslims' lives are patterned and regulated by the *sharia*. The methodology of dialogue is also explained in the Qur'an. Peace is stipulated in Qur'an for Muslims as an indispensable means for dialoguing with People of the Book. In addition, Christians and Muslims have to communally address social evils which thwart peaceful co-existence. Embracing peace will enhance tolerance, respect and co-operation among diverse religious constituencies. Promoting spiritual values, shared religious traditions, and appreciation of religious teachings shall support interfaith dialogue. Thus, such an endeavor shall avert violence perpetrated against Christians by jihadist.

Christians are urged by the Bible to offer peaceful coexistence to all people irrespective of their religious orientation. Biblical peace means soundness, health, prosperity, well-being and good relations to both human and God. Christians ought to practice Biblical peace which includes untroubled tranquility, devoid of war, schism, fear, hatred, anger and malice towards non-Christian. They should desist from teachings which promote discord, hurt feelings, unforgiveness,

selfish ambition and acts of intolerance which disrupt social peace. Muslims and Christians should develop working relationships with each other as explained in the Qur'an and Bible. This should include charity, visitation, and invitation for dinner in homes and sharing free time to minimize radicalization of some qur'anic teaching.

Divergent theological interpretations of concepts such as Trinity and monotheism are sometimes used out of context to support religious intolerance. There is need to establish a planned study of each other's religion to avoid stagnation of interfaith relations at superficial level of generalizations. Attempt should be made to respond to various theological stalemates through interfaith dialogue. Christian and Muslim apologists should refrain from attacking the reliability of each other's doctrines as fake and unreliable.

2.4 Recommendations and Strategies for Overcoming Radicalism

1. Muslims should be made aware of the Qur'anic teaching that Peoples' diversity of culture or races is not recipes for divisions but Allah's immeasurable benevolence toward humankind.
2. Children and youths should be taught on the value of Qur'anic principles of *ummah* which underscore the need to develop an all-inclusive social relation among all citizens. The Qur'an (2:35; 7:26) counsels Muslim believers to suppress any possible justifiable anger as a far superior course of action and selflessly develop relationship not only with Muslims but also with Christians.
3. Humankind, as taught in the Qur'an descended from Adam and Eve, making everyone a brother and sister. Race, language and color are meant to show the omnipotence of Allah and should never be used for discriminating against people (Qur'an 4.1).
4. Collectively, the *Shariah* requires Muslims to maintain good relations with neighbors who include up to forty houses in all directions. With that in mind, Muslims need to be reminded of the Qur'anic injunctions to collaborate harmoniously with Christians (Qur'an 2:256; 4:36).
5. Muslims practice 10 percent Islamic faith theologically, while 90 percent is basically socio-cultural issues practiced with the *ummah*. Religious freedom should be taught at early age both from the Sunday school and Madrassa to avoid seclusion after apostatizing. Freedom of worship is essential to religious practices and free expression of belief free from related communal religious or personal penalty.
6. Christians ought to develop a Social Religious Peace building (SRP) process which entails activities and mechanisms that favor interfaith dialogue and constructive means of resolving indifferences. Christians should use education as an approach to fostering reconciliation, conflict resolution mechanism, transformation and sustainable peaceful relationships among themselves and with Muslims.
7. Christians should embrace religious inclusivism which underlines the work of Christ as salvific in nature. However, other religions experience salvation based on the response to the general revelation and proportional light given to them. Inclusivism as a theological concept finds scriptural support in Christianity and Islamic faiths'
8. The Qur'an urges Muslims to offer human respect as a principle which supports Christian-Muslim dialogue. This implies a condition of honor, kindness, obedience and tolerance towards Christians as a duty to honor and obey Allah.
9. Political leadership should promote Christian-Muslim dialogue as a key agenda and offer opportunities for bridging politics and religious tolerance. Political leaders have the duty to heighten the visibility and broaden the commitment to a culture of peace through interfaith dialogue. Political leadership should address and denounce extremism, intolerance, religious discrimination and terrorism perpetrated by their electorates.
10. Conferences for religious leader are integral in fostering Christian-Muslim dialogue. Christian ministers and *imams/sheikhs* should organize interfaith conferences to individually champion interfaith dialogue.
11. Intellectual dialogue should move a step further into relational dialogue. Intellectual material which encourages interfaith relations should be given to people through donations and various seminars held to substantiate the need for interfaith relations. Intellectual dialogue should be so simplified that each member of these faiths can easily grasp the material with limited difficulties.

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