INTERFAITH DIALOGUE
IN THE ISLAMIC CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Religious diversity has often led to problems and clashes including racial cleansing and violence. Among the approaches to reduce or overcome religious misunderstanding is through effective dialogue, which enables religious adherents to hold on to their views and beliefs while continuing to exchange ideas and live in a multi-religious society based on mutual respect and understanding. Dialogue is, thus, viewed as a religious and social pre-requisite. This research discusses the concept, the need and legitimacy of interfaith dialogue. Moreover, it is believed that interfaith dialogue faces several challenges and difficulties, such as misunderstanding of the concept of interfaith dialogue, hence, this research sheds light on these challenges and problems with the aim to clarify the misunderstanding and to correct the distortive and negative images and stereotypes associated with interfaith dialogue. In addition, a discussion of the forms of interfaith dialogue will be brought forward alongside the legitimacy of each form as well as their right context and time for use. Later, the research will provide illustrations of interfaith dialogue in Muslim Practice including the prophet Mohamed PBUH, pioneer scholars and Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID) a leading organization in the field of interfaith dialogue.

Keywords: *Islamic Da'wah, Interfaith Dialogue, Dialogue of Religion, Dialogue of Life, Religious Co-Existence.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research provides an overview of Muslim interfaith dialogue, prior to further discussion, the following road map will be taken into account. First, discussion of the basic concept of interfaith dialogue as it is plagued by many misunderstandings; this is addressed along with its importance and necessity highlighting problems and challenges of interfaith dialogue. Second, shedding light on the forms of interfaith dialogue. Here we highlight the differences between its various forms so as garner public support instead of doubt, rejection, and denial. Finally, this research provides illustration of interfaith dialogue in Muslim practice, presents a variety of examples from the Prophetic tradition using interfaith dialogue, and selects for review a number of Muslim models of interfaith dialogue. Those selected prominent individuals are both from the past like Abu al-Walīd al-Bājī (d.474/1081), a renowned scholar who lived in Andalusia known for the religious diversity of its citizens. Another contemporary religious figure is Aḥmad Deedāt (d.1426/2005), globally known as a scholar of comparative religions and famous debater with the People of the Book, and who devoted his life to discuss the theological fallacies of Christians both through writing and debating. The research has also selected Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID) as a model of modern institutional interfaith dialogue.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Numerous studies have been carried out on the subject of interfaith dialogue, in this section, we will only review the most

relevant studies, and then finally identify the gap that we will work to bridge in our current research.

One of those interesting studies is the work of Jon Azumah, *the integrity of Interfaith Dialogue* (Azumah, 2002). This research mainly aims to critically examine the challenges of interfaith dialogue, namely: Theological issues, mission and dialogue, mission and dialogue, the challenge of inherited tradition, the burden of the past and existential challenges.

One of the issues the author criticizes is combining between interfaith dialogue and *da'wah*, he denounces that there are prominent Muslim leaders who lead groups that aggressively propagate Islam in many parts of the world while simultaneously participating in interfaith dialogue. It is noted that the author does not address the forms of interfaith dialogue from Islamic perspective. If he does that, he would not have seen that there is a contradiction between participating in interfaith dialogue and practicing *da'wah*. In his view, participating in one form prevents participation in the other. In fact, each form has its own context. Moreover, the author criticizes that the parties in interfaith dialogue claim the absolute truth, but he fails to see that interfaith dialogue is an arena for knowing other and building bridges of cooperation and coexistence, and not compromising one's beliefs.

Another interesting study relevant to the field of research is made by Hamidi Ilhami, *the paradigms of Interfaith Dialogue in the Qur'ān* (Ilhami, 2020). Hamidi argues that there are at least four principles that the Qur'ān adopts to build effective inter-religious dialogue, namely: awareness of differences, religious freedom, truth universality, and the doctrine of Qur'ānic

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supersessionism as the legitimacy of previous religions. Hamidi also raises some challenges of interfaith dialogue amidst some Muslims who still refuse dialogue even if it was only related to life. He also discusses the fields and forms of interfaith dialogue, and divides them into three sections, namely: interfaith dialogue in praxis, in a spiritual plane and in cognitive terrain.

Interfaith Dialogue in Islam: A Scriptural Scrutiny (Sanaullah, 2014) is yet another relevant work to the current research. This research highlights the importance and necessity of interfaith dialogue and states that Islam is a complete code of life that did not leave this field unexplored; Therefore, Islamic guidance in this regard is very clear. Sanaullah defines interfaith dialogue and indicates that it is wrong to define dialogue as a unity of religions, as some did. He also mentions that dialogue is practiced at personal and official levels. In addition, Sanaullah briefly touches on the types of interfaith dialogue and indicates that his intention in this research is the dialogue related to doctrine *ʿAqīdah*.

This article aims to identify Islam's view of interfaith dialogue through the Holy Qur'ān and the life of the Prophet PBUH through a set of instructions that will protect the dialoguers. It is undoubtedly that Islam urges interfaith dialogue, but it is a conditional dialogue that will preserve it from deviation, for that purpose Islam has set guidelines for it, including not to engage in dialogue that makes a person compromise his faith, that interfaith dialogue should not be an excuse to stop or limit missionary work *daʿwah*, and not be an excuse to the unity of religions, and that it does not cause a weakening of trust and apostasy from religion on the part of the dialoguers.

The previous studies touched on important issues, in terms of concepts, and challenges facing interfaith dialogue, but paying little attention to its forms, and this is a very important issue that the current study attempts to fill in. Misunderstanding the forms of interfaith dialogue and their appropriate context is what causes people to oppose interfaith dialogue or deviate in terms of practice, whether Muslims or non-Muslims. In addition, the correct understanding of the concept and the forms of interfaith dialogue will not leave room for claiming a contradiction, that does not exist, between *da'wah* and interfaith dialogue.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study provides a discussion on the interfaith dialogue in the Islamic context. For this purpose, the authors used a combination of library research and conceptual approach to conduct their analysis. This task is undertaken through examination of earlier and contemporary sources pertaining to the topic of Interfaith Dialogue.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Concept of Interfaith Dialogue

Allāh created humanity in diversity. Diversity in religion and creed will continue to coexist with mankind. Humans are created with differences in language, colour, thought, race, and religion to name a few. The Qur'ān points to this reality in the verse, "And if your Lord had so willed, He could surely have made mankind one Ummah (nation or community (following one religion only i.e. Islam)), but they will not cease to disagree"

(Qur'ān 11:118).[1] This verse highlights differences in religion ('*Adyān*), behaviour ('*Akhlāq*), and actions ('*Af'āl*) (al-Rāzī, 1420H). In another verse, "Mankind were but one community (i.e. on one religion - Islamic Monotheism), then they differed (later), and had not it been for a Word that went forth before from your Lord, it would have been settled between them regarding what they differed" (Qur'ān 10:19). The verse implies diversity and difference are part and parcel of human nature, and as such not all people are expected to become Muslims (Ṭanṭāwī, 1997). This diversity only demonstrates truth from falsehood and purifies good from evil. (A group of scholars, 2010; Ismā'īl, 2008).

Among the effective ways to live with this diversity peacefully and effectively is interfaith dialogue. Interfaith dialogue consists of interfaith that refers to something occurring between or involving persons belongs to different religions (TFD, 2021). As for dialogue, in language it refers to interactive talk (al-Aṣfahānī, 1412H) exchange of thoughts or opinions between people particularly one of politics or religion, in order to reach an agreeable agreement or settlement. (Dictionary, 2021; Merriam-websiter, 2021). Ṣālih b. Abdullah b. Ḥumayd argues that dialogue refers to any discussion held between two or more people in an attempt to correct errors, presenting arguments, establishing facts, or responding to false claims or views. (A group of scholars, 2010). Dialogue also refers to a friendlier or civilized discussion (Answers, 2021).

Interpretation of the Meaning of the Qur'ān in the English [1] *Languages*, trans. Muḥammad Taqi al-Dīn al-Hilālī- Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān. (Houston: Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2011).

When the two terms *interfaith* and *dialogue* are associated, they refer to the members of participating religions, whether institutional or individual, coming together to discuss matters concerning their religions in order to improve mutual understanding. (A group of scholars, 2010) As members, they have the chance to express their views properly and listen respectfully to their counterpart (OIS, 2021; Shafiq et al, 2007). This definition focuses on one form of interfaith dialogue known as dialogue of life (*Ḥiwār al- Taʿāmul*) yet misses another form of interfaith dialogue referred to as dialogue of religion (*Ḥiwār al-daʿwah*).

Based on the above, *interfaith dialogue refers to the process of interaction held among people of different religions set to achieve specific objectives either for religious or worldly matters*. Religious matters include debate and argument on the truth of views, while life matters do not include such actions but seeks to avoid dispute. This definition is general as it encompasses different forms of interfaith dialogue.

It should be noted however that interfaith dialogue is different from syncretism leading to the creation of new beliefs or alternative religions. Rather, it is used as a tool and means to effectively bridge the gap and at the same time promote mutual understanding among members of different beliefs and religions.

4.2 Need for Interfaith Dialogue

Religious diversity has often led to problems and clashes including racial cleansing and violence. Among the approaches to reduce or overcome religious misunderstanding is through dialogue, which enables religious adherents to hold on to their

views and beliefs while continuing to exchange ideas and live in a multi-religious society based on mutual respect and understanding. Dialogue is thus viewed as a religious and social pre-requisite as Ḥumayd rightly argues. According to Ḥumayd, dialogue becomes a religious requirement when its subject is religious such as inviting people to the religion of Islam or expounding the religious truth. (A group of scholars, 2010) As Muslims, inviting others to Islam is an obligation, and an obvious means to fulfil the task of religious invitation to Islam is through effective dialogue. Dialogue is also considered a necessity in view of the legal maxim dictating that whatever leads to necessity is necessary (*mā lā yatimmu al wājibu illā bihī fahuwa wājib*) (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2005) to show that inviting others to the religion of Islam is considered to be a necessity, and that in view of the fact that dialogue is one of the ways leading to this necessity (invitation to Islam), it therefore becomes a necessity.

al-Fārūqī believes that all religions assert they have the truth, which is logically impossible and that those religions must be interested in each other's claims by means of dialogue, which is the altruistic extension of all religions. He maintains that only through dialogue will all religions ever be united in the religion of God and the truth. (al-Fārūqī, 1998) The views discussed above show that religion requires dialogue. In any given religion, dialogue is crucial both within the religion itself and with other religions. This notion finds support in the Qur'ān and the

Sunnah as mentioned in numerous verses and Ḥādīths addressing Muslims and non-Muslims through dialogue.[2]

Moreover, dialogue promotes the genuine understanding of Islam while providing an original interpretation of the Qurʾān and Sunnah as it provides first-hand information about the principles of Islam. Being based on self-definition, dialogue ensures that the true image of Islam is known as it enables Muslims to reach out to others and to correct the distortive and negative images and stereotypes associated with Islam.

Besides, dialogue is seen as a human requirement with regards to the needs and difference of people, (A group of scholars, 2010) and is further regarded as the ideal approach to peace making. There will be no peace without dialogue, as Hans Kung states, "there will be no peace among nations without peace among religions, and there will be no peace among religions without dialogue among religions" (Brown, 2013).

Today's technological and communication progress has transformed the world into a small village, which eventually led to more interaction than ever before. In view of this transformation and in order to ensure the building of a more stable and understanding, dialogue must take effect. (A group

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[2] As for dialogue within the religion itself, there are many ḥadiths of the Prophet using dialogue with the companions such as his dialogue with ʾAbū Bakr and ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb on the issue of the hostages of the Battle of Badr. As for the dialogue with other religions the Sunnah is full of the examples of the Prophet using dialogue with non-Muslims including disbelievers, and the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) when inviting them to accept Islam.

of scholars, 2010) The age of monologue should be replaced by the age of dialogue. (Swidler, 1992)

Therefore, if Muslims intend to spread the message of *tawḥīd* and contribute positively to peace making in a world terribly affected by clashes, violence, and wars, they need to take interfaith dialogue seriously and view it as a religious and civilizational priority.

4.3 Legitimacy of Interfaith Dialogue

Diversity among people is a reflection of the Will of Allāh, and that is why the Qur'ān instructs Muslims to show respect towards other religions and treat their followers in a good manner, "there is no compulsion in religion". (Qur'ān: 2/256) Muslims are instructed not to coerce anyone to become Muslim, for Islam is plain and clear, and its proofs and evidence are also plain and clear. (Ibn Kathīr, 1999; Ibn 'AshËr, 2000) There is no argument about the legitimacy of dialogue in the view of Islam. Dialogue is an obligation incumbent upon qualified scholars since it is one of the great ways for inviting people to Islam. A careful reading of the Qur'ānic verses on dialogue shows how dialogue is a Qur'ānic methodology and one of the traditions of Prophet Muḥammad PBUH which he used to invite people to the truth.

The justification of dialogue is principally drawn from two verses, first in Āl'Imrān verse 64, this verse invited to the religion of Islam known as *Āyat al-da'wah ilā al-Islam*, and as such opens the door for dialogue. (Rizā, 1990; Ṭanṭāwī, 1997) The fulfilment of this call, however, can only be actualized through dialogue.

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The second verse, however, is found in the Qur'ān: "Invite (mankind, O Muḥammad SAW) to the Way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom (i.e. with the Divine Inspiration and the Qur'ān) and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better…" (Qur'ān: 16/125) Whoever needs debate (*jidāl* and *Munāẓarah*) let it be with a cheerful face, gentle words, and good speech. (Ibn Kathīr, 1999) Moreover, Ibn 'Āshūr argues that the use of (argue with them) implies that there is an argument in the form of dialogue, discussion, and conversation occurring between the two parties. (Ibn. 'ĀshËr, 2000).

The Sunnah of Prophet Muḥammad PBUH is also full of examples of dialogue with others, including idolaters (*mushrikūn*), such as his dialogue with his uncle Abū Ṭālib and 'Utbah ibn Rabī'ah, the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) such as the Christian delegation from Najran, ('Abd Allāh, 2007)[3] or fellow Muslims. (Shafiq et al, 2007) Prophet Muḥammad PBUH even corresponded with great emperors and monarchs with the aim to guide them to the truth (A group of scholars, 2010). Moreover, in Medina Prophet Muḥammad PBUH set the constitution (*Ṣaḥīfat al-Medinah*) which left people of diverse religions to their own religion and guaranteed their protection (A group of scholars, 2010) such as the covenant made with Jewish and Christians after migrating to Medina.

4.4 Problems and Challenges of Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith dialogue in general faces several challenges and difficulties. These problems may be reflected in the opinions of

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It is considered as the first interfaith dialogue encounter between [3] the Abrahamic religions.

three distinct groups towards interfaith dialogue. (Shafiq et al, 2007). The first is the view of those who hold that participation in interfaith dialogue is an act of disbelief and believe that it is no less than *kufr* and that those who participated in it are *kuffār*. This in their view is based on the belief that Islam prohibits Muslims to deal with non-Muslims, love them, or treat them with respect. They maintain that interfaith dialogue leads to religious compromise with others and may even lead to the creation of a new religion altogether. (Shafiq et al, 2007).

The second is a somewhat suspicious attitude vis-a-vis interfaith dialogue; one in which some Muslims are generally suspicious and wary regarding interfaith dialogue. Some even raise doubts as to whether the intent behind it is reaching an understanding or it is a merely a cover for missionary work. (Shafiq et al, 2007) Others however believe that the goal of interfaith dialogue is to westernize Muslims and Muslim societies. The following incident illustrates the point. Someone asked: what is the definition of interfaith dialogue? The answer given was: *It is an organization that West supports to destroy the barriers that Islam established between Muslims and disbelievers. Generally, the corrupt Muslims are joining this dialogue*.

A third position pertains to compromise and reconciliation. Some Muslims misunderstand the concept of interfaith dialogue and have gone to the extreme to believe that interfaith dialogue implies compromise of one's religion in order to satisfy other religious groups. They hold kind of defeated attitude. Moreover, according to this attitude, the critique of other religions is not allowed.

The preceding examples vis-a-vis interfaith dialogue fail to differentiate between its forms for there exist one that relates to religious principles whereby compromising is prohibited, known as dialogue of religion (ḥiwār al-daʻwah), and another concerned with affairs of life in general set to develop understanding and social harmony referred to as dialogue of life (ḥiwār taʻāmul). The religion of Islam is far beyond attempts of compromise or reconciliation, and as such, there should be no fear about interfaith dialogue affecting religious beliefs and principles. The real challenge before Muslim scholars is rather to provide the appropriate concept of interfaith dialogue, and to highlight the differences between its various forms so as garner public support instead of doubt, rejection, and denial.

4.5 Forms of Interfaith Dialogue

Interfaith dialogue is differentiated according to its field and subject. For instance, the interfaith dialogue that deals with religious matters is found to be different in form than dealing with life. In this section, a discussion of the forms of interfaith dialogue will be brought forward alongside the legitimacy of each form.

4.5.1 Dialogue of religion (Ḥiwār al-daʻwah) (al-Saqqār, n,d):

It refers to the sort of dialogue based on inviting others to Islam and convincing them that the religion of Islam is the only true faith. This sort of interfaith dialogue represents the nature of Islam and involves argumentation with others. It focuses on the religious matters such as the issues of belief like the unity of God under. The goal of dialogue of religious is to draw people back to the truth which is the essence of daʻwah. The life of Prophet Muḥammad PBUH is replete with examples

demonstrating use of this form of dialogue, such as the invitation of the people of Quraysh to *tawḥīd*, his correspondence with emperors like Hercules, or his debates with the People of the Book.

4.5.2 Dialogue of life (Ḥiwr al-taʻāmul) (al-Saqqār, n,d):

It refers to a practical dialogue held away from issues of belief or faith. It represents a response to the diversified emerging needs of society. Social reality often imposes this kind of dialogue because of the differences among people. As such in order to live daily life in harmony, individuals would need to accept the necessity of this type of dialogue. This category of interfaith dialogue is based on interlocutors' acceptance and recognition of each other, the exclusivity of each religion and rejection of reconciliation between religions. It calls to know others as they define themselves, and to avoid prejudgments while forgetting about the past. This interfaith dialogue avoids discussion of controversial crucial matters that might disrupt dialogue and focuses on commonalities and similarities shared among religions and faiths to ensure the sustainable interests and benefits of society.

4.5.3 Dialogue of unity of religion (Ḥiwār al-wiḥdah) (al-Saqqār, n,d):

It refers to the type of dialogue that calls for removal of the differences between religions, so as to make religions equal in a manner that every religion is true and leads to God (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2005). It aims to create a new religion. Dialogue of unity of religion requires its adherent not only to avoid criticizing other religions but also to accept them as true as they are from a divine source. Some of them allow Jewish and

Christians to follow their religion and yet it also disagrees with the division of people into believers and disbelievers as this division is believed to pertain to the *dark ages*. (Nāṣir, 2001).[4]

The two first forms of dialogue, namely dialogue of religion and dialogue of life are legitimate and supported by the example of Prophet Muḥammad PBUH as will be shown in next section. The third form however is not acceptable as it intends to make the religion of Islam equal to other religions including Judaism and Christianity, which according to Muslims are no longer true. What is more important is that this form of dialogue could potentially affect the form of dialogue of invitation (*ḥiwār al-daʻwah*), which is the essence and the nature of Islam. Muslims will not need to invite others to Islam since every religion is simply genuine and true, and for the same reason no critique is allowed towards other religions. In addition, the concept of loyalty and enmity would also be affected.

Dialogue of invitation (*ḥiwār al-daʻwah)* that deals with religious matters as well as dialogue of life (*ḥiwār al-taʻāmul)* that deals only with life ones should be appreciated and supported. Meanwhile, dialogue of unity of religion (*ḥiwār al-wiḥdah*) needs to be boycotted and stopped.

4.6 Illustrations of Interfaith Dialogue in Muslim Practice

This section provides an overview of the Prophet's PBUH and Muslim scholars' use of interfaith dialogue including dialogue of

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Aqīda is the essence of Islam, hence, it cannot be compromised in [4] any form, see: Mohamed Amine Hocini et al, "The Qur'anic Aspects of Human Development with Special Reference to the Role of 'Aqīdah in Tafsīr Al-Zilāl of Sayyid Quṭb: A Thematic Study", *Afkar-Journal*, 22/2 (December 2020), 363.

religion (ḥiwār al-daʿwah) and dialogue of life (ḥiwār taʿāmul).

4.6.1 Dialogue of Religion (ḥiwār al-daʿwah):

4.6.1.1 The Prophet's PBUH use of dialogue of religion (ḥiwār al-daʿwah)

It is believed that the Prophet PBUH have used dialogue of religion in his interaction with different groups, this section illustrates examples of the use of dialogue of religion by the Prophet PBUH with regards to the People of the Book, in this form of dialogue disagreements and clashes may occur, it is mainly based on critique including debate and argument on the truth of views. However, as mentioned earlier, the principal aim of dialogue of religion is to guide humanity to the right path, thus the prophet Mohamed PBUH have used different styles of critique while using this form of dialogue as follows:

a. Encouragement and warning (al-targhīb wa al-tarhīb): On numerous occasions Prophet Muḥammad PBUH addressed the People of the Book using the style of encouragement and warning (al-targhīb wa al-tarhīb), either individually or collectively. The Prophet PBUH used this in his conversation with the People of the Book as in the following example. Abū Hurayra narrated the following: He said, "we were (sitting) in the mosque when the messenger of Allāh came to us and said: "(let us) go the Jews. We went out with him until we came to them. The messenger of Allāh stood up and called out to them (saying): O ye assembly of the Jews, accept Islam (and) you will be safe. They said: Abu al-Qāsim, you have communicated (God's message to us), he replied it twice (Muslim, n.d). This example shows how the Prophet PBUH invited the Jews to accept the truth and ensured them safety in return. When they

did not respond to his call, he mixes the encouragement with warning from life (Tarhīb dunyawī) as he adds, "You should know that the earth belongs to Allāh and His Apostle, and I wish that I should expel you from this land" (Muslim, n.d).

b. Style of argumentation: It is reported that the Prophet Muḥammad PBUH used the style of argumentation in his interaction with the People of the Book, like in his debate with the delegation of Christians from Najran concerning the humanity of Jesus. One of the methods Prophet Muḥammad PBUH used was to show their (following to mere desires) whims and illogical arguments (*al-istidlāl ʿalayhim bi iẓhār al-tashahī wa al-taḥakum bi Al-Bātil*). The Prophet PBUH asked them (the two leaders of Najran), become Muslims, they replied: we became Muslims before you. The Prophet PBUH said, you lied, what prevents you from becoming Muslims is your claim that Allāh has a son, your worship of the cross, and eating pork. The Prophet PBUH showed them that the real reason behind their rejection of Islam is mere desires.

The method of asking the subject to correct their claim and proving their false claim has also been used with regards to Christians. The Prophet PBUH argued with the Christian delegation from Najran about the reality of Jesus. He highlighted the differences between the God and Jesus, such as that God is the One who sustains and protects all existence, and that Jesus does not do that. Their response was negative. Prophet Muḥammad PBUH further says: do you not know that Jesus was born by his mother similar to how a woman bears and brought him fourth similar to how a woman brings her child. Then he was fed like the kid is being fed, then he was eating, drinking and doing Ḥadath. They replied: yes! He said, how can

he be what you claim (son of God). They kept silent and could not respond. Following their rejection of the truth the Prophet PBUH used another method of argumentation described as trial through prayer (*mubāhalah*). The Prophet PBUH prepared himself and his family, but the Christians never turned up. (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1414H).

c. Story and narration: The Prophet Muḥammad PBUH also used the style of stories and narration as a means for criticizing the People of the Book. The Prophet PBUH mentioned some of their unbecoming behaviours and crimes they have committed, such as taking the graves of their apostles as places of worship (Muslim, n.d). As for the Jews, the Prophet PBUH mentions their deception and circumvention with regards to Allāh's S.W.T. instruction, as Ibn 'Abbās narrates, "I heard 'Umar saying; "May Allāh Curse so-and-so! Doesn't he know that the Prophet PBUH said: "May Allāh curse the Jews for, though they were forbidden (to eat) fat, they liquefied it and sold it" (al-Bukhārī, 1987)[5].

The above discussion makes it clear that the Prophet Muḥammad PBUH has used dialogue of religion (*hiwār al-da'wah*) using different styles of critique towards the People of the Book. In light of this form of dialogue, the relation between the Prophet PBUH and the People of the Book is shown to have addressed the differences and religious matters and that disagreements were also involved. The aim was to let the truth

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[5] More examples can be found in: Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, "Kitāb al-Ghusl'", 20, (no. 274); Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-mufrad*, "al-Salām wa al-Muṣāfaḥah", 342, (no. 988); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, "Kitāb al-Fitan wa Ashrāṭ al-Sā'ah", 52, (no. 2944).

prevail unlike other forms of dialogue like dialogue of life (*ḥiwār al-taʿāmul*).

In addition, the aim of dialogue of religion *(hiwār al-daʿwah)* was not the critique itself, but rather the actualization of higher objectives the Qurʾān sought to convey, which are meant for the People of the Book in the first place to pounder on them so they would come back to the truth such as when the Prophet PBUH threatened them of being one of the denizens of the Hell-Fire because they knew the truth but choose to turn away from it. That threat may have a positive effect on them, which may draw them back to the right path. This shows that this critique is for their benefit.

4.6.1.2 Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī:

This section discusses the use of dialogue of religion *(hiwār al-daʿwah)* by an early prominent Muslim scholar, namely Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī. al-Bājī was a leading scholarly figure, a jurist (*faqih*), philosopher, theologian, Ḥadīth master, poet (*shāʿir wa adīb*), skilled debater, with mastery of many other sciences (ʿIyāḍ, n.d). Al-Bājī's letter to a St. Hugh, a priest from Paris, is clear example of the use of dialogue of religion *(hiwār al-daʿwah)*.

As far as the style of argumentation is concerned, al-Bājī used the style of nullification of opponent's claim by way of proving their opposite such as the belief of Jesus' divinity. In his letter, he wrote the following, "He (Jesus) is a created (human being) and is subject to many incidents (*Ḥwādith*) such as change, need for food, and death. God is not subject of those incidents. (al-Bājī, 1986).

In his use of the style of argumentation, al-Bājī further criticizes the Christians as follows, "The weirdest thing you come up with is your claim that Jesus sacrificed his blood for human salvation. How would God have blood while blood is for created and contaminated body? How is it that he could not defend himself from death" (al-Bājī, 1986)? On another occasion he says: "One of the funniest things is your statement that Jesus is the son of God and that Jesus is one of David's sons?" (al-Bājī, 1986) "How can he could be the son of his created father David yet also the son of God the Creator?" (al-Bājī, 1986).

Throughout the said letter, al-Bājī frequently used the style of promise and disheartening like his reminding the priest to let not this worldly present life deceive him" (al-Bājī, 1986). Al-Bājī also uses the style of promise as found in the introduction of his letter shown in the polite manner of addressing the priest, "We have spoken to you with kindness and gentleness which is the best way for the one expected to come back and adhere to the truth" (al-Bājī, 1986). Yet on another occasion, al-Bājī mixes promise with disheartening such as in his statement, "The one who obeys Allāh would go to Paradise and those who disobey Him would go to Hellfire (al-Bājī, 1986). He further shows compassion towards the priest when he says, "We hope that Allāh save you through Islam (From hellfire) and take you away from it by converting to the religion of Muḥammad" (al-Bājī, 1986).

The above shows that al-Bājī is one of the pioneering scholars of Islam who has engaged in dialogue of religion, and as shown in his letter, his aim was to let the truth prevail and guide back the priest to the right path.

4.6.1.3 Aḥmad Deedāt:

This section discusses Aḥmad Deedāt's use of dialogue of religion. His many debates with famous Christian priests brought him worldwide attention and reputation. In this study, Deedāt is chosen as a model of Muslim application of religious dialogue. Deedāt is an expert and skillful debater, especially with the People of the Book. Deedāt debated with some of the famous Christians priest such as Jimmy Swaggart, Clark, and Anīs Shārūsh. He played an important role in exposing the distortions that exist in the distorted religions. As such, many Christians converted to Islam, the true religion, because of his debates.

A glance at Deedāt's various debates with the People of the Book lead one to notice his adherence to the Qur'ānic styles of critique. Deedāt used the style of disheartening (*tarhīb*) as a means of critiquing his Christian opponents as found in his debate with Jimmy Swaggart (Pentecostal Pastor). Following Jimmy's completion of his discussion, Deedāt stood up and began his speech with a verse that cautions the People of the Book severely in al-Baqara verse 79 (al-Saqqā, 1988). Deedāt used this verse as a warning to those who distort the words of God such as Swaggart's twisting of some words in that debate. Deedāt's intention was to remind them of the horrible act of change and alteration.

Argumentation was perhaps one of Deedāt's favourite styles. Throughout his many public debates, he relied heavily on it. Deedāt considers the following Qur'ānic verse, "Produce your proof if you are truthful" (Qur'ān: 2/111) as one of the fundamental rules and methods to be used and followed. He

believes that the request of the evidence and proof is the natural stand on any claim made by Jews, Christians, or any others. (al-Waḥsh, n.d) Deedāt says: "When I dialogue a Christian or a Jew, I don't start and say: our religion has...and has... and has, but rather I would say: produce your evidence. For example, Christians believe that Jesus protects those who believe in him even if they drink something that kills. What would Deedāt's reaction to this claim be? Deedāt would prepare a poisonous drink and call that person to test it in order to prove the truth of this claim. Deedāt said, "This is my way (method), produce your evidence; this is perhaps why I'm successful and loved among Muslims." (al-Faqqī, n.d).

Deedāt also uses the style of providing parables and examples. He says: "The creation of Jesus -to Allāh- is totally similar to the creation of Adam. He was created from dust then He told him to be, then he was. So, if Jesus because of his miraculous creation is God, so Adam must be a God greater than Jesus" (al-Waḥsh, n.d). The above shows how the Prophet Muḥammad PBUH and Muslim scholars have engaged in the dialogue of religion. As mentioned earlier, the aim was, always, to convince people of the ultimate truth.

4.6.2 Dialogue of Life (Ḥiwār al-Taʿāmul)

4.6.2.1 Prophet Muḥammad's PBUH use of Dialogue of Life (ḥiwār taʿāmul)

Prophet Muḥammad PBUH practiced dialogue of life in his communication with the People of the Book. This is evidenced through the numerous examples that prove that Islam is able to live with others in harmony and peace. At the very beginning however, when Muslims were mistreated by the People of

Quraysh, Prophet Muḥammad PBUH instructed them to leave Mecca and migrate to Abyssinia which was then ruled by a Christian king, al-Najāshī. (al-Dhahabī, 2001) Muslims lived there for several years with no mistreatment reported. (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1999) As time passed, Prophet Muḥammad PBUH migrated to Medina and introduced many covenants with the Jews and the Christians which emphasized the Prophet's PBUH practice of dialogue of life (*Ḥiwār al-taʾāmul*) with the intention to establish friendly relations.

One of the obvious examples with regards to Jews is the Prophet's PBUH covenant with the Banī ʿAwf. The following are the most important terms of the covenant (ibn Hishām, 1999; al-Mubārakfūrī, 1999): - The Jews of the tribe of Banī ʿAwf are to be one community with the believers. The Jews would profess their religion and the Muslims theirs; - If attacked by a third party, each would come to the assistance of the other; - Each party would hold counsel with the other. Mutual relations would be founded on righteousness; sin was totally excluded; - Neither group would commit sins to the prejudice of the other; - Al-Medina would remain sacred and inviolable for all who would join this treaty; - Each would contribute to defending Medina, in case of a foreign attack, in its respective area; and this treaty would not hinder either party seeking lawful revenge.

This treaty shows that the Prophet PBUH sought to ensure justice for all citizens in society irrespective of religious denominations or creeds and to explore atmosphere in which all would be treated with respect and dignity, the treaty ensures one of the fundamental rights, namely the freedom of belief and faith, and makes it clear that every group should be left to their

own religion, and that there should be no compulsion in religion. The treaty focuses on commonalities such as the safety of the land which is a common need for all citizens of Medina whether Muslims or others while at the same time prevents any clashes that might disrupt the good relations in society. Again, this treaty stands as evidence of the Prophet's PBUH use of dialogue of life (ḥiwār al-ta'āmul) towards the People of the Book.

Prophet Muḥammad PBUH also set a covenant with the Christians of Najran. The treaty guarantees their freedom such as the freedom of belief as mentioned in the covenant: "Whoever follows the Christian faith must not be forced into becoming a Muslim" (Ḥāmīd Allah, 1987) It also gave them the freedom of practicing their religious rituals as the Prophet PBUH strongly states, "I do not remove a bishop from his bishopric, nor a monk from his monastery, nor a pilgrim from his pilgrimage, nor demolish any of their churches, nor let any construction of a mosque infringe on their own buildings, nor should any house of the Muslims do so" (Ḥāmīd Allah, 1987). It also guarantees their safety, "Mercy must be spread for them and anything harmful must be kept away from them wherever they maybe in the land." (Ḥāmīd Allah, 1987). This treaty, gives the priority to the creation of friendly relations between Muslims and the People of the Book in which everybody treats one another respectfully and politely thereby avoiding conflict.

In addition to the preceding recommendations which are theoretical in nature, there also exist other examples that show practical dimension of these treaties, such as the Prophet's PBUH interaction with the People of the Book on a daily life. The Prophet PBUH used to interact with them in terms of

business as ʿĀisha reported that he bought some foodstuff (barely) from a Jew on credit and mortgaged his iron armour to him (as a guarantee) (al-Bukhārī, 1987). He also had a young Jewish boy who was in his service and once that Jewish boy was sick, the Prophet PBUH went to visit him. Anas narrates that the Prophet sat down by his head and said to him, *Embrace Islam*. The little boy looked at his father who was sitting aside him. He said: "Obey the Messenger of Allāh". So the boy embraced Islam and the Prophet came out saying, "Praises be to Allāh Who saved the boy from the Hell-Fire." (al-Bukhārī, 1987). Ibn Ḥajar commented that this ḥadīth indicates the permissibility of hiring a polytheist (*mushrik*), visiting him if he gets sick and ḥusn al-ʿahd. (ibn Ḥajar, n.d) Besides, the Prophet PBUH even allowed the Christian delegation from Najran to pray inside his mosque when their prayer time arrived (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1986).

This form of interfaith dialogue deals with life issues in which Prophet Muḥammad PBUH focuses on the commonalities such as safety of the land and security rather than differences. Under this form of dialogue, Prophet Muḥammad PBUH avoided any kind of conflict, disagreement or clash, and worked to promote understanding and cooperation. This makes dialogue of life (*hiwār al-taʿāmul*) the ideal method to live with others in harmony and peace.

There are numerous Qurʾānic verses that confirm and support dialogue of life (*ḥiwār al-taʿāmul*). One of those examples is found in Qurʾān where Allāh says: "O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another" (Qurʾān: 49/13). Based on this verse, people should cooperate and help each other

since everybody is in need for the other to survive. (al-Saʿdī, 2000).

Another example is found in Qur'ān which instructs Muslims to deal gently and kindly with others (disbelievers) as long as they do not fight them, (al-Saʿdī, 2000) "Allāh does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allāh loves those who deal with equity". (Qur'ān: 60/8) The previous verses show that the Qur'ān makes dialogue of life legitimate, approves, and support it, as interacting with people for life issues is unavoidable.

4.6.2.2. Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue

The Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID) represents an institutional dialogue of life, which plays a significant role in the field of interfaith. It was established as a result of a recommendation of the Fifth Doha Interfaith Conference on May 2007 in Doha. The center was officially launched in May 2008. The center runs many Programs including annual conferences, journals, researches and studies, translation services and many other programs that all discuss various topics of common concerns. (DICID, 2021) The Doha International Centre for Interfaith dialogue works to promote dialogue of life (Ḥiwār al-taʾāmul) and spread the culture of dialogue, the peaceful coexistence of humanity and the acceptance the others. (DICID, 2021)

Some D.I.C.I.D's Goals of interfaith dialogue are the following (DICID, 2021): 1) become a center for advocating peaceful tolerance and acceptance of others; 2) activate religious values in finding solutions to problems and issues that concern

humanity; 3) broaden the scope of dialogue to include aspects of life that interact with religion. A glance at the D.I.C.I.D's mission, vision, and programs shows that this center is concerned essentially with finding mutual understanding on the one hand and avoiding any kind of clashes and disagreement on the other.

5. CONCLUSION

Interfaith dialogue is twofold; dialogue of religion (*ḥiwār al-da'wah*) in which focus is placed on religious matters. The other is dialogue of life (*ḥiwār al-ta'āmul*), which focuses on commonalities and similarities shared among religions and faiths to guarantee the sustainable interests and benefits on society. Prophet Muḥammad PBUH has used dialogue of religion. Prominent Muslim scholars like Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī and Aḥmad Deedāt have also used this form of dialogue. It has also been established that Prophet PBUH practiced the dialogue of life (*ḥiwār al-ta'āmul*) as a form of interfaith dialogue and the Qur'ān's support of this form of interfaith dialogue. Dialogue of life was also presented. D.I.C.I.D was taken as a model of contemporary dialogue of life to prove its compliance with the methods of Qur'ān' and Sunnah as far as the dialogue of life is concerned.

One crucial point, however, is that both forms of dialogue go alongside together. In other words, using dialogue of invitation (*ḥiwār al-da'wah*) which includes critique does not exclude dialogue of life (*ḥiwār al-ta'āmul*) and vice versa (using dialogue of life does not exclude, dialogue of invitation). Prophet Muḥammad PBUH, for instance, criticized the People of the Book and yet still lived with them on amicable terms. His

intention to set friendly relations with them did not prevent him from using critique towards them. Hence, each form of interfaith dialogue should be used in its context and the use of one of them (forms of dialogue) should not exclude other forms.

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