

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ISLAMIC DISCOURSE
OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE**

by

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I dedicate this thesis to my sons, Dylan and Dante, their future, and the hope that we will all strive to address our conflicts with understanding, patience, perseverance, and love.

Thus creating security *with*, rather than *from*, “the other.”

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a critical analysis of the contemporary Islamic discourse of interfaith dialogue (IFD) founded on normative examinations of the Qur'an and *hadith*. Expanding from this baseline, theories of religious universalism and particularism are engaged as well as underlying themes of humanism, social stability, and acceptance of God's will. These are further placed along a Dove-Hawk framework to demonstrate the patterns underlying interpretations regarding the legitimacy of IFD in situations of conflict. It examines the writings and speeches of nine recent and contemporary Muslim intellectual-activists scholars. This analysis reveals a fragmented discourse, which is generally supportive of IFD, and indicates limits to the religious legitimization of IFD during Christian-Muslim hostilities.

INTRODUCTION

Although it was not the first time Muslims engaged in dialogue with non-Muslims, Leonard Swidler places the public entrance of Islam “into dialogue” with an article written by Isma‘il Ragi al-Faruqi, a Palestinian-born Muslim in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* in 1968.¹ Since then the quantity of scholarship addressing Islam within a context of interreligious dialogue has increased, with an emergent focus on interreligious peacebuilding appearing in the 1990s.² This concentration has continued to expand since 2001. Scholarship has progressed from offering an account of the philosophical and religious development of interfaith dialogue (IFD) and a focus on the nature of Christian-Muslim interfaith dialogue,³ to connecting religion with peacebuilding.⁴ There has been a further expansion specifically linking interfaith dialogue to conflict resolution,⁵ and to handbooks detailing implementation models.⁶

¹ Leonard Swidler, *Muslims in Dialogue: The Evolution of a Dialogue* (New York, NY: E Mellon Press, 1992): iv-v.

² As apparent in the works of Abu-Nimer, 1996 & 1999; Assefa, 1993; Kasimow and Byron 1991; Smock 1998; et al.

³ Ataulloh Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1997); M. Darrol Bryant and Ali, S.A., *Muslim-Christian Dialogue: Promise and Problems* (St Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1998); Jutta Sperber, *Christians and Muslims: The Dialogue Activities of the World Council of Churches and their Theological Foundation* (New York, NY: WdeG, 2000); David Emmanuel Singh and Robert Edwin Schick, *Approaches, Foundations, Issues and Models of Interfaith Relations* (Dehli: ISPCK, 2001); Catherine Cornille, *The im-possibility of Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2008).

⁴ Sheryl Brown and Kimber Schraub, *Resolving Third World Conflict: Challenges for a New Era* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1992); Appleby, R. Scott, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000); Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: the future of world religions, violence, and peacemaking* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000); Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam: Theory and Practice* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003); Amy Benson Brown and Karen Poremski,

This reflects the attention to IFD from the fields of religious studies and political science. Religious studies academics tout the religious and philosophical rationale linking religion, peace, and IFD, while political scientists are anxious to present IFD as a specific mechanism to facilitate peacebuilding in a variety of capacities.⁷ This results in largely parallel discourses, both touting the potential of religion in peacebuilding and peaceful nature of religion. Although political scientists, including Nathan C. Funk, Abdul Aziz Said,⁸ Marc Gopin,⁹ and Mohammed Abu-Nimer,¹⁰ have referenced the

eds., *Roads to Reconciliation: Conflict and Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005).

⁵ Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution, and Change* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999); Marc Gopin, *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002); Donald W. Musser and D. Dixon Sutherland eds., *War or Words? Interreligious Dialogue as an Instrument of Peace* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2005); Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Amal Khoury and Emily Welty, *Unity and Diversity* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007); Mohammed Abu-Nimer and David W Augsburg, *Peacebuilding By, Between, and Beyond Muslims and Evangelical Christians* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

⁶ Muhammad Shafiq and Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Interfaith Dialogue: A Guide for Muslims* (Washington, D.C.: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2007).

⁷ “Peacebuilding” encompasses conflict prevention, management, resolution, and reconciliation or transformation.

⁸ Abdul Aziz Said, Nathan C Funk, and Ayse S Kadayifci, *Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam: Precept and Practice* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001); Nathan C Funk and Abdul Aziz Said, *Islam and Peacebuilding in the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009); Abdul Aziz Said and Nathan C Funk, “Making Peace with the Islamic World,” *Peace Review*, 15 (September 2003): 139-347; George E. Irani and Nathan C Funk, “Rituals of Reconciliation: Arab-Islamic Perspectives,” *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 20 (Fall, 1998): 53-74

⁹ Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000); *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002); “The use of the word and its limits: a critical evaluation of religious dialogue as peacemaking,” in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacemaking* (Washington, D.C.: University of Peace Press, 2002): 33-46.

¹⁰ Abu-Nimer, 1999; *Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence* (Lanham, MD: Oxford Press, 2001); *Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam: Theory and Practice* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003); “The Miracles of Transformation through Interfaith Dialogue: Are You a Believer?” in *Interfaith Dialogue: A Guide for Muslims*, David R Smock, ed. (Washington, D.C.: United States Institutes of Peace Press, 2007): 15-32; Abu-Nimer, Khoury

Qur'an and included some *hadith* in their justifications for IFD between Muslim and Christians, this defense has limited interaction with the Islamic discourse of IFD. Ironically although declaring the ties between peace and IFD, both political science and religious discourses of peacebuilding remain general with little examination of the Islamic legitimization of IFD specifically in hostile or violent environments. Social, rather than religious, considerations of potential obstacles to IFD in contexts of violence are presented.

Although attention to the links between IFD and peacebuilding has surged, ironically there has been a failure to initiate a comprehensive and synthesized Islamic discourse either internally within the Muslim religious and activist communities or externally by political scientists or religious studies academics. Ataullah Siddiqui's examination of IFD in the twentieth century studied six Muslim individuals and three Muslim international organizations.¹¹ He concluded that the "Muslim position on and participation in dialogue, with few exceptions, has been *ad hoc* and reactive."¹² Thirteen years later, the Islamic discourse itself remains *ad hoc* and segmented. Ironically, there is no documented or official internal dialogue within the Islamic discourse of IFD. This is

and Welty, 2007; Abu-Nimer and Augsburg, 2009; "Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion: Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peacebuilding," *Journal of Peace Research*, 38 (Nov, 2001): 635-704; Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, Glen Harold Stassen, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, United States Institute of Peace; et al, *Abrahamic Alternatives to War: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives on Just Peacemaking* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008).

¹¹ Siddiqui includes the individuals: Isma'il Raji al-Faruqi, Mahmoud Ayoub, Hasan Askari, Khurshid Ahmad, Mohammed Talbi, and Seyyed Hossein Naser. He also looks at three Muslim international organizations: *Mu'tamar Al-'Alam Al-Islami* (World Muslim Congress), *Rabitat Al-'Alam Al-Islami* (The Muslim World League), and *Jam'iyat Al-Da'wah Al-Islamiyah Al-'Alamiyah* (The World Islamic Call Society).

¹² Siddiqui, 1997:196.

despite official calls for IFD through a variety of means including the promulgation of “A Common Word Between Us and You” and conferences focusing on IFD sponsored by Muslim states and heads of state. The official website of “A Common Word Between Us and You” includes the text of the “Common Word” document, original and new signatories, news stories regarding the declaration, and Jewish and Christian responses, as well as links to the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre and Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought.¹³ It does not include Muslim responses, or links to Muslim scholar-activists also advocating Muslim-Christian dialogue. None of the nine prominent Muslim intellectuals included in this thesis refer to the writings or presentations of other Muslims also advocating Muslim-Christian IFD. There are no critiques of other arguments nor references of support of between prominent Muslim scholar-activists. Each case stands alone, isolated from other support for IFD.

What is this Islamic discourse of interfaith dialogue? Although this thesis uses the phrase “the Islamic discourse” there is no single discourse of IFD. As explained, there are instead multiple voices, or discourses, which are not synthesized, creating many strands that have yet to be woven together into a unified discourse. This thesis examines the voices available in English from primarily Western-educated and Western-based Muslim intellectuals, although three of the nine are trained in traditional Islamic studies and reside in Lebanon, Qatar, and Nigeria. Monographs, articles, websites, two sermons presented to Muslims in Qatar, and lectures to American and Canadian audiences are evaluated for this thesis.

¹³ <http://www.acommonword.com> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

Responding to the missing foundation of political science and religious studies' presentations of Muslim-Christian IFD and peacebuilding, this thesis initiates the collection of an Islamic discourse. After examining the history, process, and underlying principles of IFD, the critical examination of the Islamic discourses is first anchored within a multi-layered consideration of Islamic texts. This creates a foundation of the Islamic perspective. The baseline verses and *hadith* reports forming this groundwork each relate to the themes underpinning interfaith dialogue as well as the context of entering dialogue with non-Muslims during hostile conditions. This roots the discourse within the Qur'an and *hadith* before examining the manner in which this normalized groundwork is engaged through the narratives of Muslim scholar-activists.¹⁴ We present a dual framework structuring Muslim intellectuals' perspectives of religious plurality and obstacles of violence to IDF efforts. With this framework the manner in which IFD is supported and promoted through religious texts by the diverse pool of Muslim individuals is examined as well as indicating ambiguous parameters possibly hindering IFD efforts.

The goal is not to examine every Muslim scholar's interpretation, but to show how the discourse is structured, framed, and engaged. It serves as a starting point for further research contributing to the creation of an academic discourse. The purpose is to examine the diversity in potential interpretations of the foundational sources and show how these different perspectives justify, or condemn, calls for dialogue, with particular attention to how situational complications are addressed. While the primary sources of the Qur'an and *hadith* are important considerations for the use of interfaith dialogue in

¹⁴ Badawi refers to normalization as the process separating Qur'anic interpretation from the historical factors influencing interpretation.

cases of violent conflict, it is their interpretation that primarily affects this modern construction of interfaith dialogue.

This is also not an attempt to prove the legitimacy of IFD. Rather than manipulating the discourse and limiting the presentation of verses and *hadith* to those supportive of IFD, we shall present a more encompassing portrayal of the actual scope of the discourse. After providing the missing foundation, we then examine the implications of this Islamic discourse to IFD efforts as a peacebuilding tool.

I. INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

1. Introduction

The Nigerian story of “the Pastor and the Imam” presents an intriguing shift of two religious leaders who transformed their initial perceptions of the religious “other” as an enemy to be forcibly defeated. They changed from promoting this hatred to religious militant youth to working collaboratively to promote interfaith dialogue (IFD) between the religious communities in the state of Kaduna. Imam Muhammed Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye were each touched personally by the 1992 Zangon-Kataf riots. Wuye lost his arm and Ashafa lost family members and his spiritual teacher. These riots fueled their mutual hatred and distrust of each other personally, as leaders of militant youth organizations, and collectively for members of the other religion. Through life and religious experiences, they came together to establish the Interfaith Mediation Center in 1995, seeking peace between the religions in Kaduna. Accessing the same youth they once mobilized for fighting, Ashafa and Wuye initiated opportunities for IFD in Kaduna targeting this population. Involved in the Kaduna Peace Declaration in 2002, the two continue to offer IFD encounters in workshop and seminar formats throughout Kaduna, enlarging their efforts to include other Nigerian states and Sudan.

Ashafa and Wuye did not meet and transform their perspectives of each other through encounters that were structured as IFD opportunities. Rather, a mutual acquaintance brought the two together during a state-led meeting explaining the safety of immunizations to religious and community leaders. The friend challenged the enemies to find away to work together to build Nigeria, rather than destroy it. This prompted the

two to collaborate on organizing a religious debate. Through their encounters, as well as religious experiences, the two gradually came to see the humanity in each other. This shift in perception also led to an acceptance of the other and his religious beliefs. This dramatic change shifted the two from the desire to kill each other, to the need to disprove the other through a debate setting fueled with distrust, finally to fully collaborating as partners referring to one another as married.

We are like a husband and a wife that must not divorce. If we divorce, our children will suffer. And because of our children, which is the global community, the Nigerian youth and Christian and Muslim. We cannot separate...We are stuck together in this, no separation whatsoever, so, that is it.¹⁵

This curious shift from preaching and promoting religious hatred to advocating tolerance has brought the attention of several nonprofit organizations, including Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding and the United States Institute of Peace. Both organizations refer to this story to show the power of religion in peacebuilding efforts. While other factors, including economic development, certainly play a role in the diminished levels of violence in Kaduna state, the role of IFD presents several questions. What exactly is interfaith dialogue? How does it serve to change individual and group perceptions? And what is the connection of IFD to peacebuilding?

¹⁵ This quote is from Pastor James Wuye. David Chaner, *The Imam and Pastor* (Surrey, BC: FLT Films, 2006. DVD).

2. What is Interfaith Dialogue?

Ironically, our determination of an Islamic perspective of interfaith dialogue (IFD), also called interreligious dialogue, begins with a Christian history of the subject. Muhammad Shafiq and Mohammed Abu-Nimer credit the beginning of interfaith dialogue as a Christian initiative in Third World countries so that Christian missionaries could “keep themselves relevant.”¹⁶ Through their use of interfaith dialogue with leaders in these countries, they hoped to show non-Christians that the missionaries could work with people of other beliefs without violating anyone’s faith.¹⁷ In 1948 the World Council Church was formed in Amsterdam in response to the deterioration of Christian missionary work. The group held conferences in India (1961) and Sri Lanka (1967) to determine how Christians could better work with non-Christians to benefit humanity.¹⁸ It was, however the Second Vatican Council’s *Nostra Aetate* decree (1965), which Shafiq, Abu-Nimer and Cosijns credit with transforming attitudes in support of interfaith dialogue.¹⁹ The Council (or Vatican II) pressed for Christian unity with recognition of intrareligious differences and formally extended the concept of revelation in other religions. The council encouraged Catholics to enter dialogues with other religions, including Islam.

¹⁶ Shafiq & Abu-Nimer, 3. It is important to note that this reference to the “beginning of interfaith dialogue” refers to the western conceptualization of IFD as a formal procedure of bringing people of different religions together, rather than natural daily interactions between Christians and Muslims which have occurred throughout time.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Shafiq & Abu-Nimer, 3.

¹⁹ Ibid and Lucien F Cosijns, *Dialogue Among the Faith Communities* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2008): 127.

Much of the scholarly IFD literature addresses the purpose of dialogue and defines the process in contradiction to religious debate. This is important, because interactions could be viewed as potential attempts to disprove other religious beliefs, whereas the *goal* of dialogue is to attain a respect and tolerance of different religions, not disprove, or even necessarily understand all of its complexities.²⁰ Ultimately, regardless of the “model” or process of IFD used, its ultimate objective, which promotes peacebuilding between communities, is the “recognition of the irreducible dignity of each person, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, or religious background.”²¹ With this emphasis of creating a safe environment by encouraging the exchange of ideas, thoughts, and beliefs, recent research has addressed different processes and models of dialogue with some examples of implementation in conflict situations.

Understandably, interreligious dialogue is often viewed skeptically with concerns regarding its true intentions. In addition to realizing its potential for enabling conversion, it is also seen as an attempt to create an ecumenical faith, or blend of religions. On the contrary, interfaith dialogue may be seen as an opportunity to explore one’s own faith as well as that of another religion. Because conversion is not generally the intent, entering into interreligious dialogue with a strong understanding of personal interpretations of religious beliefs is useful. Scholars promote *intrafaith* dialogue as a method to further personal understandings of one’s own religion and religious beliefs before engaging in

²⁰ Appleby stresses the need for respect, not necessarily complete understandings, or even seeking “common ground.” *Foreword in Unity in Diversity*, xiii.

²¹ *Ibid.*

interfaith dialogue, with members of shared beliefs continuing to meet throughout *interfaith* dialogue encounters.

The intention of *interfaith* dialogue joint activities is to help divided communities create a common understanding, respect, and even language from which to engage. When people do not regularly interact, the lack of shared experience and language (particularly if the language each employs actually serves to widen the gap between communities) becomes an obstacle to building a common vision of coexistence. Although termed “*interfaith* dialogue,” the experience does not necessitate revolving around conversation, or questions and answers. While this is one type of model, which may explore religious similarities or differences on a variety of levels, IFD also encompasses shared tasks completed by different religious groups. This is action-oriented dialogue, through which participants may converse, but not necessarily directly regarding beliefs. As well as occurring in a variety of formats, IFD may occur at a range of levels.

Dialogue may occur at grassroots or official levels, with religious officials meeting symbolically in support of religious tolerance, or to collaborate on community initiatives, or to discuss commonalities or differentiations at a theological level. This official dialogue, while promoting acceptance, is not always perceived as authentic or action-driven, and sometimes viewed as hollow and without meaning. It is important to consider that although *interfaith* dialogue may be perceived as “empty” and meaningless, all dialogue makes an impact. The use of any dialogue implies changes, however subtle they may be. The engagement of dialogue at any level, particularly in a context of

ongoing or resolving conflict implies a change in the discourse or language of people. It is a change from dehumanizing the “other” and using religious rhetoric from which to mobilize people to engage in violent behaviors. Even at a Track One or official level, when officials meet this signifies a change in the structure of the conflict. A different action is being taken, allowing new feelings and perceptions of the problem to be explored or permitted.

Interfaith dialogue is not limited to Muslim and Christian encounters. Although this thesis and most of the advocacy for IFD concentrate on dialogue between the two religious communities, the religious dialogue may be enlarged to include the third Abrahamic tradition, Judaism, or even further to encompasses non-Abrahamic religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. The voices for IFD predominantly focus on Muslim-Christian relations, with limited exploration of possible expansion of dialogue efforts.

Clearly, interfaith dialogue occurs in a multitude of manners, with diverse leadership. There is no one model of the dialogue, nor should there be one. The context in which each dialogue occurs is unique, therefore the format must reflect each unique circumstance. Abu Nimer suggests three major factors influencing the IFD setting: (1) the cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors possibly changing individual attitudes; (2) effectiveness of engaging individual participants or representative participants of communities; (3) effectiveness of experiential learning as compared to instrumental

learning²² should be considered an excellent stepping stone into the restorative justice allowing people to share differing perspectives in a neutral environment.²³

3. Developmental Stages of the Interfaith Dialogue

Advocates of Muslim-Christian IFD strive to attain tolerance or at a deeper level, acceptance of religious pluralism between the religious communities, as evidenced throughout the Islamic discourse. In order to understand how IFD serves to promote tolerance, even acceptance of religious pluralism, we refer to Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman's adapted model of Intercultural Competence Development from Bennett's original Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The DMIS theoretical framework assumes that the complexity of individuals' experiences of cultural difference directly impact the ability of people to understand the "other" in more complex ways and to competently engage in intercultural interactions.²⁴ Using the Intercultural Development Inventory, Hammer and Bennett argue that individuals' universal perspectives tend to fall within three categories, "ethnocentric," "ethnorelative," or "transitional."²⁵ An individual within the "ethnocentric" perspective experiences culture with his or her culture forming the reality from which other cultures are judged. On the other extreme, "ethnorelative" individuals experience culture within contexts of other perspectives. Lying between the two is the "transitional" state in which a person's

²² Abu Nimer, 2001, 687.

²³ Theophus Smith, "Vengeance is Never Enough," in *Roads to Reconciliation: Conflict and Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century* (Amy Benson Brown and Karen M. Poremski, eds. New York, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005): 35-54.

²⁴ Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty, 28.

²⁵ Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty, 28.

perspective is developing toward the “ethnorelative,” although conflict may cause one to regress back toward “ethnocentric” points of view. Using this developed theory, Abu-Nimer, Khoury, and Welty propose applying it to religious identities, substituting “religiocentrism” and “religiorelativism” at either extreme.

Within the “religiocentric” state, individuals begin at a Denial/Defense (DD) orientation.²⁶ At this stage of development, people polarize religious and cultural differences and tend to use the “us versus them” paradigm. Other people and religions are not judged with equal respect or complexity. This potentially dangerous stage can be attributed to isolation, denial of others’ rights, and in its extreme could lead to attempts of genocide.²⁷ This mentality underlies policies that serve to assert dominance of religious groups over others. Examples of this are prevalent in segregation policies of populations based on religious belief as well as the official demolition or desecration of religious sites. This point of view may also promote intolerance for the creation of new religious sites and institutions. Ashafa and Wuye began their relationship at this developmental level, seeing each other’s religion and religious institutions as threats. They each promoted and engaged in acts of violence to assert the dominance of their religion over the other.

For individuals or groups in this stage, *intrareligious* dialogue is first recommended to address ways in which religions may relate to other religious groups. It is important at this stage that exposure to other values, beliefs, norms, and rituals occur in

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, 29.

a safe environment.²⁸ The goal is to increase awareness while diminishing the “defensive” nature of this DD orientation emphasizing the superiority of personal beliefs. Interfaith dialogue may assist individuals with this orientation to broaden their perspectives, primarily by first focusing on the commonalities of different religions. Although Wuye and Ashafa do not speak to intrareligious support throughout their encounters, their exposure to each other without physical or emotional harm facilitated their transition to the “religiorelative” phase of development. Their discourse concentrates first on acknowledging the overwhelming commonalities between Christianity and Islam before addressing the differences in theology. “A Common Word Between Us and You” also concentrates on presenting the religious similarities without addressing the religious divergence.

The transition phase provides a bridge to the “religiorelative” stage. At the first “minimalist” point people focus on commonalities and universal values while beginning to see differences in beliefs and religious rituals. In this minimization phase, personal beliefs still are used to measure others, while avoiding contradictions within the individual belief system.²⁹ Because these individuals continue to judge other beliefs from their personal viewpoint, it continues within the “religiocentric” paradigm, but is a gradual transition from the Denial/Defense (DD) orientation. With this transition, there is a growing toleration of religious plurality, as the sense of fear and need to create defenses are alleviated. At this point, interfaith dialogue activities are recommended to further

²⁸ Mohammed Abu-Nimer, “Religion, Dialogue, and Non-Violent Actions in Palestinian-Israeli Conflict,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 17 (Spring, 2004): 491-511.

²⁹ Abu-Nimer, Khoury, Welty, 32.

explore nuances of similar practices and beliefs. These encounters should explore differences from other perspectives in order to further awareness and respect. Abu-Nimer recommends using a secondary or universal language at this point to facilitate trust.³⁰

As individuals begin to deepen their tolerance for differences they enter an “acceptance/ adaptation” (AA) worldview that involves a comprehension and accommodation of culture and religion at a more complex level. At this point people learn to accept and respect religious plurality and even adapt or alter behavior as necessary for different religious contexts. At this point there is no negative judgment to different beliefs and a person may participate in different religious experiences, requiring “religious frame-shifting” and “behavioral code-shifting” allowing the person to develop additional frames of reference.³¹ IFD for participants at this phase must be cognizant of the hesitancy to engage in other religious experiences with the fear of perceived or actual conversion. Finally, with the DMIS theory the authors posit that the culmination of this transition is the integration worldview. Such an individual may consider him or herself spiritual, although without religious affiliation.

This developmental model shows us the link between tolerance and the transition, or shift, from a “religiocentric” to a “religiorelative” paradigm. With the increased tolerance for differences, individuals enter the more complex “acceptance/adaption” mode of the religiorelative level. The distinction between the two terms “tolerance” and “acceptance” is significant in the level of patience for plurality. While tolerance indicates

³⁰ Abu-Nimer, (2007), 20-22.

³¹ Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty, 33.

enduring that which is not believed or agreed and considered of less value, acceptance entails equality and a level of agreement or approval. As we will see, progression along this continuum depends on successful occurrences of dialogue. Encounters inadequately structured or facilitated may actually solidify an individual's perspective, or even cause a regression away from tolerance and acceptance. Such events would not enable, but hamper peacebuilding efforts through reinforcement of positional attitudes.

4. Interfaith Dialogue as a Peacebuilding Tool

Dr. Hans Küng, a Catholic theologian and professor emeritus of the Tübingen University in Germany is cited throughout interfaith dialogue literature:

No human life without a world ethic for the nations. No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions.³²

This elucidates the crucial role of religious tolerance and acceptance in building peace. Recent calls for interfaith dialogue are primarily between Abrahamic traditions and largely in response to violent conflict. IFD is seen as an essential mechanism for Track Two, or grassroots, action. Although religious officials and interfaith dialogue have also been used to facilitate Track One, official diplomacy and conflict resolution attempts, Track Two dialogue is seen as a tool to initiate and promote reconciliation within communities. Unless groups within a society can rebuild, or construct bridges within communities establishing intergroup confidence and trust, it is assumed that peace agreements are destined to fail. Cilliers stresses the foundation of these bridges and

³² This particular quote is from Cosihns, 4.

interfaith dialogue must be justice and reconciliation, with supporting pillars forged on truth, forgiveness, and mercy.³³

The goal of IFD is to increase participants' understanding of each other so that they may respectfully perceive and receive each other with tolerance, even acceptance. As a space for diverse groups to find ways to work or come together, whether on a project, or in discussing religious differences and similarities, or simply to respectfully interact, IFD is a forum enabling communication between parties who might not otherwise interact. Generally these participants are curious and recognize a personal need to reconcile possibly inaccurate viewpoints of a different religion. Voluntary participants are possibly wary, but usually not hostile to the religious "other" and share a belief that in order to more effectively maneuver within diverse societies, channels of communication must be opened.

Hence calls for IFD aren't propelled by dialogue for its own sake, but dialogue for the ultimate purpose of social change through working or coming together so that we may learn how to peacefully coexist. Advocacy for IFD recognizes the misconceptions, inaccurate perceptions, mistrust, or ignorance groups of Christians and Muslims have of each other; all of which contribute to conflict between the religious communities. This action, of opening the channels of communication between factions who may not normally interact, acknowledges that at some level there is a need either for personal or community growth and understanding. Hence, there is a struggle or conflict, not

³³ Jaco Cilliers, "Building Bridges for Interfaith Dialogue" in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding* (Smock, David ed. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2002): 47-60.

necessarily violent, at either an individual or community level that brings people together. Proponents of IFD are calling for individuals, communities, even civilizations to engage IFD as a way to clarify and provide channels for communication and alleviate conflict, even possible violence.

With growing recognition of the possible impact of IFD to peacebuilding, IFD initiatives have emerged in areas characterized by Christian-Muslim hostilities, even violence. The application of IFD to such areas of heightened religious antagonism presents social barriers in addition to potentially religious obstacles. Researchers looking at the application of dialogue in Israel and Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan found that in highly charged political situations, when groups have become polarized, even discussing interfaith dialogue becomes increasingly difficult. During the initial attempts to obtain interviews, researchers were often told, “this is not a good time to discuss interfaith relations and peace.”³⁴ This indicates that interfaith dialogue is easier to implement as a preventative social measure rather than a direct reaction to religious conflict. In addition to being socially less complicated, we will find through our examination of the Islamic discourse that IFD as a preventative measure is collectively understood as religiously legitimate. This is in contrast to the more unclear determinations of IFD efforts responding to conflict. Political and contextual factors during times of conflict tend to polarize and lock into positions the same segments of society who most benefit from dialogue. This requires interfaith actors to acknowledge and recognize the possible need for a “cooling” period before members of communities

³⁴ Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty, 4-5.

are ready to interact and engage in interfaith dialogue. This avoidance of IFD during hostilities is again also reflected in the Islamic discourse.

With IFD forums established preventatively, should contentions become perceived as critical or dangerous, characterized by religious rhetoric condemning other populations' religious beliefs and violence, IFD continues as a conflict management tool. Dialogue then becomes a place to mediate this heightened sense of danger and perceptions that fighting is the most cost-effective approach to resolving the dispute. At this point, implementation of dialogue, whatever the format, provides an instrument to minimize the destruction either to an existing rapport, or further damaging tenuous relationships. As a management tool, effective IFD also serves to bring together segments of a population who disagree with the use of violence as a means to stability.

Once members of the dispute are prepared to resolve the contention, IFD continues to serve as a means to peel religious rhetoric from the underlying issues. At this point it helps people to dissociate from their positions based on religious affiliation and identity, and address the true components.³⁵ Continuing into conflict transformation or reconciliation, dialogue not only allows participants to distance themselves from the rhetoric veiling the contending interests, but to humanize the "other." This is a critical turning point to reestablishing communal ties and relationships.

Recognizing the potential setbacks to IFD is also important. First, as we will see, negative encounters may facilitate frustrations with IFD efforts, discouraging participants

³⁵ Roger Fisher and William Ury's deem these "positions" as the solidifying of a standpoint, tying the problem to the ego, which then must be defended. Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton (ed), *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* (New York, NY: The Penguin Group, 1991)

and potential participants from participating in dialogue. In the extreme, negative encounters could facilitate conflict, perpetrating negative perceptions of the other. Thus, it is important to not force IFD on communities, but time efforts and work with communities and according to the needs of the population and situation, differentiating dialogue styles and activities. As Stuart E. Brown asserts, there is no “universal pattern” in interfaith relations.³⁶ The different natures and histories of these relationships form distinct frameworks through which Muslim-Christian contact is negotiated. Current efforts to apply IFD into conflict situations must take this into account and recognize that in this case the Islamic need for consensus may only need to come from within each community facing conflict. These efforts must also recognize that when IFD is used as a conflict management tool, it may actually prevent the levels of violence from influencing the need to move into a resolution phase.³⁷

5. IFD within a Hawk and Dove Framework

The discourse of Hawks and Doves became widespread in the American Vietnam era to distinguish between those advocating military action (hawks) and those promoting the avoidance of military force (doves). Although the terms are generalizations of a

³⁶ Stuart E. Brown, “Religious Pluralism in Africa: Two Examples,” in *Seeking an Open Society: Interfaith Relations and dialogue in Sudan Today* (Stuart E. Brown, ed., Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1997): 11-16.

³⁷ According to Zartman’s theory of “ripeness,” this occurs for two possible reasons. First, a conflict cannot be resolved until the situation becomes “ripe” for resolution, meaning the benefits of continuing the conflict outweigh the costs for resolving it. The second possible influence is that the management of conflict may actually prevent parties from attaining resolution because until a conflict becomes too costly for one or both sides, it will continue. I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985).

possible range of beliefs and behavior in conflict, the discourse is helpful in understanding the interpretations of Islam concerning IFD in hostile contexts.

The discourse of Hawks and Doves describes a dichotomy within societies, with hawks and doves at opposite ends of a spectrum. Each claims force and collaboration, respectively, is essential to attaining or securing peace and stability. Within this schema exists a continuum with both hawks and doves ranging from extreme to moderate.

Extreme versions believe stability will only be attained through their means. The term “extreme” is generally reserved for hawks, but extremism appears in doves as well. An extreme hawk sees no value or purpose in dialogue or cooperation with the contending party. The extreme hawk perceives such behavior as projecting weakness.

Counterbalancing this point of view is the dove, who sees dialogue and cooperation as the only means to actually solve contentions and promote stability and peace.

Moderate doves and hawks incline primarily to their respective viewpoints, but understand that situations may warrant engaging in “opposing” methods. Those falling between these points remain in a central, “neutral” category. Ronald Higgins terms this neutral population, “Owls.”³⁸ The owls contextualize each situation before determining whether a militant or cooperative response is optimal for that circumstance. Owls may be influenced by the rhetoric of either dove or hawk groups.

In order to garner public support, hawks and doves attempt to marginalize the opposing group. By targeting the “middle ground” audience leaders attempt to achieve increased patronage from a community. The larger the audience a group persuades, the

³⁸ Higgins, Ronald, *Plotting Peace: The Owl's Reply to Hawks and Doves*, (London: Brassey's, 1952).

more power they achieve. Kenneth Schultz shows that voters assert power over political leadership, hence the persuasion of the members of a community may also influence leadership decisions.³⁹ If a leader fails to resonate with the community, he or she runs the risk of the community no longer seeing him or her as legitimately serving in that position.⁴⁰

Logically, the loudest voices for IDF emanate from the dove portion of society. Generally this would be considered to encompass religious leaders, but, religious leaders may actually be participating in the violence or endorsing it in some manner. As we will examine, the range of Muslim interpretations of Islam with regards to IFD are easily classified within this Dove-Owl-Hawk framework.

A moderate dove foremost supports interfaith dialogue, while recognizing that there may be times when dialogue is not appropriate, such as in situations of conflict when force may become an appropriate response. A moderate hawk primarily endorses the use of force, understanding that dialogue may be a necessary or helpful venue through which to achieve peace. An owl relies completely on the influence of situational factors in considering the interactions of people. The extreme points of view along this continuum, however, do not shift behaviors in accordance with situational variables. Moderate hawks may concede that possible changes in circumstances create opportunities warranting cooperation, or dialogue, as the most cost-effective mechanism for managing

³⁹ Kenneth A. Schultz, "The Politics of Risking Peace: Do Hawks or Doves Deliver the Olive Branch?" *International Organization*, 59 (Winter, 2005): 4.

⁴⁰ This argument may be applied to nondemocratic societies, which while able to maintain power without a voter-base, still run the risk of alienating the general public. An estranged populace increases the potential of overthrow.

or resolving conflict. Extreme hawks never view changes in conditions supportive of IFD.⁴¹ This position is solidified without any situational influences.

In his 1981 essay, Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi responded to what has been considered “Islamic extremism.” This essay is reflective of a general tendency to conflate the term with the hawk discourse and serves as a basis for our definition of “extreme.” Al-Qaradawi argues religious extremism is manifested in four manners: bigotry and intolerance; a perpetual commitment to excessiveness and expecting others to do the same; overburdening of others; and harshness in the treatment of people.⁴² In the case of this thesis, “a person [who] does not allow any opportunity for dialogue with others so that he may compare his opinion with theirs, and chooses to follow what appears to him most sound,” is specifically an extreme hawk.⁴³ This perspective finds no value in or religious legitimacy to interfaith dialogue. This discourse is characterized with suspicion and distrust of the “other.” In conflict, an extreme hawk would advocate only for the use of violence and force and would not support the use of IFD as a conflict management, resolution, or transformation mechanism.

Also undeterred by situational factors, the extreme dove is in many ways the antithesis of the extreme hawk. This perspective is indicated in complete acceptance and tolerance of diverse beliefs and instead of espousing harshness or distrust of others,

⁴¹ These situational variables encompass a variety of possibilities creating perceptions that the costs of continued fighting outweigh the benefits. These are not limited to: cease-fires, fiscal inability to continue fighting, loss of popular social support, loss of life exceeding social capacity, etc.

⁴² Yusuf al-Qaradawi, “Extremism,” in *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook* (Charles Kurzman, ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998): 196-204.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 199.

professes love. For this thesis an extreme dove was determined to espouse discourse supportive of interfaith dialogue, with no support for violence or deviation from dialogue due to hostilities. Extremists may not even directly address the specific concept of interfaith dialogue, because their discourse inherently supports or opposes it.

II. ISLAMIC DISCOURSE OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

1. Introduction

Determining an Islamic discourse of the “modern” conceptualization of interfaith dialogue is similar to navigating the Islamic discourse of human rights. The two western concepts are strikingly similar in several manners. First, in order for the “Islamic world” to appear modern, these notions must be considered. Additionally, in order to mollify Muslims who argue that engagement in the modern discourse plays into attempts of the “West” to dictate norms and secularize the religious societies, IFD must be reconciled within the Islamic discourse. What evolves is a discourse that cannot be avoided. Interfaith dialogue and human rights also parallel each other in the manner they are addressed in Islamic discourse. Since neither discourse is directly addressed in the Qur’an or *hadith*, the underlying themes must be first identified, then interpreted. This leaves scholars and intellectuals two options with which to navigate the discourse. They may simply refer to the traditional interpretations of these underlying themes, avoiding the difficult subthemes; or they may show how deviations from the traditional interpretations are acceptable within Islam. Thus two primary approaches emerge to the discourse: the dismissive-traditional approach which fails to adequately address complicated elements of the discourse; and modern interpretation of religion which deviate from the traditional historical factors which influence classical interpretations. This latter “modern” approach requires distinguishing the unchangeable, *thabit*, from that

which is subject to change, *mutaghayyir* in Islam.⁴⁴ This necessitates reexamining the text of the Qur'an and tradition of *hadith* to determine whether previous interpretations are influenced by the contexts in which they were established or are actually a fundamental basis of belief. Thus, looking at the primary texts and tradition is important, as is the manner in which these foundational components of Islam are employed in support or opposition to interfaith dialogue.

The discourse of all Muslim scholars and activists concerning IFD cannot be addressed in this thesis, but we *can* examine the distinctive characteristics with which they are presented. This section first identifies topics relevant to IFD then demonstrates the manner in which the Qur'an and *hadith* address these themes. Jamal Badawi refers to this, in his personal explorations of IFD, as “normalizing” the concept of IFD. Initially isolating IFD to its conceptual themes as they are presented in the Qur'an separates the primary text from the historical narratives influencing interpretation and the development of Islamic perspectives. For this purpose Muhammad Asad's *The Message of the Qur'an* and the Arabic concordance, *al-Mu'jam al-mufahras li-alfaz al-karim al-Qur'an*, were used.⁴⁵

The inherent flexibility and ambiguity of the Qur'an enables a variety of Muslim interpretations. Collections of *hadith*, narrations of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, have been a traditional religious tool used to help maneuver and manipulate

⁴⁴ Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 9.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abd al-Baqi, *al-Mu'jam al-mufahras li-alfaz al-karim al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1988).

these ambiguities to reach further insight. These texts are engaged by Muslim scholars as indicators of how to handle or interpret items of uncertainty. Thus, we consult al-Bukhari's collection of *hadith* to further determine a baseline Islamic perspective. As a prominent collector and interpreter of *hadith*, an English translation of his collection of nine volumes was inspected for any narratives including Muslim/non-Muslim relations, fighting, and characterizations of non-Muslims (particularly Christians).

Once this baseline of Islamic perspectives was assembled, we selected a diverse group of prominent modern Muslim scholars with the goal of assembling discourses representing a range of perspectives. Thus, the pool of Islamic scholars includes Muslims with western education (Ramadan, Badawi, Talbi), as well as traditional Islamic education (Muhaiyaddeen, Gülen, al-Qaradawi, Fadlullah, Ashafa) and in some cases both (al-Faruqi).⁴⁶ These scholars have differing engagements with the West. Some chose to reside in Europe, Canada, and the United States after completing their western educations. Talbi returned to Tunisia. Qaradawi and Fadlullah have both remained in the Middle East, while Ashafa has remained in Nigeria. Muhaiyaddeen and Gülen represent mystic training and beliefs, while al-Qaradawi represents moderate Sunni Islamists and Fadlullah represents Lebanese Shi'i Islamists.

This diverse pool of scholars is presented through an application of the Dove-Hawk discourse, with an extreme and moderate for each perspective of IFD during times of Christian-Muslim contention. Our analysis of the collective discourse revealed a theme of universal humanism underlying the perspectives of scholars classified as

⁴⁶ Ramadan completed studies in Arabic at al-Azhar, but not formal training in Islamic studies.

“doves.” These scholars justified interfaith dialogue as a natural practice to better understand each other, facilitating peaceful coexistence. Although these scholars generally avoid the issue of the legitimacy of IFD as a tool with which to negotiate conflicts, most recognized its ability to prevent a crisis from developing or re-emerging. Aside from the inherent complications of engaging the “enemy” during episodes of violent conflict, the legitimacy of dialogue is consistent with the goals and principles of the primary texts of the Qur’an and *hadith*.

Al-Qaradawi was originally selected as representing the hawk discourse. However, after careful examination we determined the discourse meets the criteria for the designation of owl. The lack of a hawkish discourse in English engaging Islam in the determining IFD between Christians and Muslims as illegitimate is astounding. There are currently many repercussions to speaking out against dialogue efforts now, not excluding suspicion, and expulsion or being barred from entering the European countries and/or the United States.⁴⁷ Certainly there are underlying currents, like in the discourse of human rights that do not agree with IFD. But the unavailability of official and international condemnations of IFD in English is surprising, since it would be in many groups’ interest to translate such discourse in attempts to further the security consciousness of Westerners. For this reason, while such discourse cannot be declared nonexistent, it is certainly difficult to access and not voiced by prominent and internationally renowned Muslims.

⁴⁷ Post 11 September 2001 even proponents of IFD have been perceived skeptically. If they are depicted as potential wolves masquerading as sheep, certainly speaking against IFD would be perceived as a direct security threat.

The resulting dove and owl discourses are characterized by three theories of religious pluralism: universalism, particularism, and a combination of the two.⁴⁸ The first, as explained by John Hick yields a theo-centric pluralism that sees the diversity of faiths centered upon God, or a transcendent Reality.⁴⁹ This perspective sees all religions as equal paths to the same ultimate Reality, or God. This viewpoint views interfaith dialogue as an opportunity to learn from each other to further one's own knowledge of the divine, with an end-point of acceptance. This universalist perspective evident in the Islamic discourse of interfaith dialogue assumes an underlying theme of universal humanity. Within this theme scholars focus primarily on all "believers," or in the extreme, all of humanity as *banu adam*, sons of Adam. Muhaiyaddeen, Gülen, and Badawi, and al-Faruqi's reasoning for IFD adopts a universal humanity, calling for the love and acceptance of all humans. This is exemplified in Gülen's assertion that "religions are meant to unite people separated by misunderstandings."⁵⁰

The particularist view of pluralism considers religions fundamentally different, with interfaith dialogue as an opportunity to acknowledge these differences and foster mutual tolerance. This does not necessarily entail acceptance of the other religions, but acceptance of their differences. Within this theory, IFD is legitimized with underlying themes of humanity, social stability, and acceptance of God's will. Ramadan's discourse

⁴⁸ This combination of the two is not named, but a "communicative" pluralism formulated by Yong Huang.

⁴⁹ Huang, Yong, "Religious Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue: Beyond Universalism and Particularism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 37 (June, 1995): 127-144.

⁵⁰ Fethullah Gülen, "Jews and Christians in the Qur'an," <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/about-fethullah-gulen/251-fethullah-gulens-speeches-and-interviews-on-interfaith-dialogue/1342-jews-and-christians-in-the-quran.html> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

of pluralism and interfaith dialogue speaks of our need to know each other better in order to garner respect and tolerance for each other. His focus on using IFD as a tool to handle religious diversity for the betterment of society resonates with a particularist perspective of social stability. Al-Qaradawi's argument for IFD engages a humanist theme of teaching the "confused humanity."⁵¹ Fadlallah is also a particularist, using the themes of social stability and humanism. This is evident in his calls for coexistence and love of your neighbors. Ashafa's discourse from Nigeria also entails a particularist view, as it sees IFD as a mechanism from which to move from a focus of similarities in Islam and Christianity to tolerance of their differences; using IFD to create social stability.

The final, more messy theory proposes that "different religious traditions are all different but not to be isolated and all interconnected but not to be universalized."⁵² This forms a middle ground between the dialectic universalist and particularist theories with interfaith dialogue an opportunity to learn and teach each other based on our interconnectedness.⁵³ This is represented in the discourse of Talbi, who engages a universal humanist call for interfaith dialogue, while differentiating between religions according to a particularist perspective. This differs from al-Qaradawi, who was determined a humanist particularist, in that Talbi does not just see Muslims as teaching others, but learning from other believers as well.

⁵¹ Al-Qaradawi, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/Q_Priorities/ch4p1-1.htm#The%20Movement%20And%20Dialogue%20With%20Others, 33 (last accessed 15 July 2010).

⁵² Huang, 137.

⁵³ Huang, 137-140.

Upon careful analysis of these scholars' perspectives, what emerges is an apparent consensus of religious scholars regarding the legitimacy of Muslim-Christian dialogue according to Islam. This consensus does not extend to the implementation of IFD within conflicts, but wavers in this context. Similar to the human rights discourse, we find the affirmation of only what is clear and is easy to affirm, and avoidance or incomplete attention of the complication of conflict.

2. Themes underscoring the Modern Discourse of Interfaith Dialogue: Normalizing the IFD discourse with the Qur'an

Each of the themes concerning IFD warrants its own in-depth investigation of the Qur'an, *hadith*, and other bodies of Islamic literature. This thesis does not delve into the profound nature of each of these subjects in isolation, but highlights their connections to each other and the overlying thesis. At its basic level, interfaith dialogue is an effort to foster an understanding between different religious groups. These parties, particularly for Muslims and Christians, may enter dialogue with an understanding that while each follows different religious traditions, both are comprised of "believers." As shown by the theoretical framework of Hammer et al., participants may also enter the dialogue with a Denial/Defense point of view, perceiving the other as a 'nonbeliever.' Thus, we commence with Fazlur Rahman's theme of "Man in Society."⁵⁴ In particular, we establish the parameters of a "believer," and determine the relationship between the Muslim and nonbeliever (*kafir*), believer (*mu'min*), and the more general categories of neighbor (*jar*), ally or friend (*wali*), community (*umma*), children or sons of Adam (*banu adam*),

⁵⁴ Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis, MN: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980).

followed by the increasingly more specific People of the Book (*ahl al-kitab*), and Christians (*al-nasara*, or *al-masihiyah*).

Next we look from the relationship of participants to the fundamental purpose of getting to know each other (*ta'aruf*), and coexistence (*ta'ayush*). Adding the situational layer of conflict, we must address the different manifestations of fighting, struggle or warfare, and killing (*kafaha*, *muharaba*, and *qatl*); and fighter (*muharib*); as well as concepts of bringing peace (*sulh*); engaging in patience (*sabr*); and compassion (*rahma*); and justice (*'adl* and *qist*). These keywords are used to reference the concordance for additional verses pertaining to these themes, which are then organized into the following categories: supporting the principles of IFD, opposing IFD in some manner, and generally in support or opposition to fighting.

We are specifically determining the manner in which the Qur'an distinguishes Muslims from non-Muslims, as well as the complications of Muslim/non-Muslim societal interactions. This allows us to determine potential Qur'anic barriers as well as mechanisms facilitating interreligious dialogue between the parties. Because the Qur'an frequently refers to "believer" (*mu'min*), "he who believes" (*man amana*), even "whoever believes," rather than "Muslim," exegesis and interpretations focus on determining the meanings behind these distinctions. We will not directly focus on the traditional *tafsir* of al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir, and many other prominent classical exegetes, or engage with a detailed discourse of etymology, syntax, semantics, and grammar; rather, our point is to recognize that these inherent ambiguities facilitate the variety of interpretations concerning the modern discourse of interfaith dialogue.

Facilitating the Qur'anic ambiguities of the determination of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is the nature of Islam in relation to other religions. Islam does not present itself as a religion completely disconnected from Judaism and Christianity, but rather a correction of the previous Abrahamic traditions. This immediately insinuates a special relationship between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in contrast with other non-Muslims. In addition to direct references of Jews and Christians, the Qur'an refers to them collectively as *ahl al-kitab*, or "People of the Book," also translated as "followers of earlier revelation," as in 3:199. Hence, Islam is projected as a renewal of the previous forms of the equivalent, but errant, religions of Judaism and Christianity. While, according to Islam, Judaism was mistaken in conferring a preferred status to Jews, and faulty Christian beliefs elevated Jesus from a human prophet to immortal son of God, there is recognition that all three religions are connected through their common worship of the same God. Further indication of this unique relationship of "the People of the Book" is the lack of Qur'anic references to other non-Abrahamic religions, including Buddhism and Hinduism.⁵⁵ This provokes the question; Although errant, are Jews and Christians then included in the status of "he who believes?"

The boundaries of "he who believes" are ambiguous in the Qur'an. Generally, Muslims consider the references to "believer" found throughout the Qur'an in a narrow sense, to include only Muslims. Al-Tabari determined the parameters of "believer" to include only those in acceptance of Muhammad's message, and to this Ibn Kathir further

⁵⁵ Q.22:17 refers to Zoroastrians merely in passing.

added acceptance of Muhammad as the seal of the prophets and messenger of God.⁵⁶ This designation may be further limited to exclude Muslim hypocrites. In the opposite manner, the classification may be broadened to include Christians and Jews, with the remaining “non-believer, non-Muslims” encompassing other non-Abrahamic religions, and primarily pagan atheists and polytheists. While the relationship of Muslims with those not recognizing any God, or multiple gods, receives some overlap with that of Christians and Jews, we shall primarily address the relationship of the “People of the Book,” with particular emphasis on Christians.

There are several references, not directly to Christians, but to monks, who worship “the One God.”⁵⁷ Sura 28 verses 52 through 55 refer to both Jews and Christians as “those unto whom We have vouchsafed revelation aforetime,” predicting Christians and Jews would recognize and profess that the beliefs of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity were one and the same.⁵⁸ Jane McAuliffe’s translation of verse 53 indicates further acceptance of Islam in the statement “truly we were Muslims before it [Muhammad’s revelation],”⁵⁹ indicating a representation of what McAuliffe terms “pre-Qur’anic Muslims.”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur’anic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 98.

⁵⁷ 9:31.

⁵⁸ McAuliffe only relates this verse to the relations between Muslims and Christians in Qur’anic Christians whereas Asad indicates that this vague verse encompasses both Jews and Christians, *The Message of the Qur’an*.

⁵⁹ McAuliffe, 240; This translation corresponds with Asad’s, “.even before this have we surrendered ourselves unto Him!” 667.

⁶⁰ McAuliffe, 240.

Christians are specifically mentioned as *al-nasara*, and *masihiyun* in Sura 2:62, 5:69, 5:82, and 22:17; included in the category of *ahl al-kitab* in 3:199 and 28:53; and described as “those observing the Gospel” in 5:66, and “those who are bent on ascribing divinity to aught beside God” in 5:82 or “those who truly followed him [Jesus]” in 57:27. Several verses indicate a preferred and closer association between Christians and Muslims, even offering praise of Christians. This includes 57:27, in which God says, “We engendered compassion and mercy” in Christian hearts, some of whom had “[truly] attained to faith.”⁶¹ Sura 3:113 also offers approval for some “followers of earlier revelation” who are “not all alike,” with some “upright people who recite God’s messages throughout the night, and prostrate themselves before Him.” The shared belief in one God is also found in Q.3:64, “O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but God.” Sura 23:52 even alludes to possible equality in the reference to a “single community, since I am the Sustainer of you all” after talking about different apostles. Asad notes that this verse addresses all who “truly believe in God, whatever their historical denomination.”⁶² Sura 5:82 offers the warning,

Thou wilt surely find that, of all people, the most hostile to those who believe [in this divine writ] are the Jews as well as those who are bent on ascribing divinity to aught beside God; and thou wilt surely find that, of all people, they who say, “Behold, we are Christians,” come closest to feeling affection for those who believe [in this divine writ]” this is so because there are priests and monks among them, and because these are not given to arrogance.

⁶¹ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’an* (Bitton, Bristol: The Book Foundation, 2003): 956-957.

⁶² Asad, note 28, 584.

This provides a warning of possible Christian hostility, while proposing that at the same time, they are closer to Muslims than Jews. McAuliffe responds to this, noting, “the opening phrases of this verse group provide a lexical focus for that castigation of the Jews which often accompanies praise of Christians. At no other point in the Qur’an does the one group stand so sharply contrasted with the other.”⁶³

This verse, 5:82, while relating a closer kinship between Muslims and Christians, than Muslims and Jews, simultaneously reveals an underlying sentiment of distrust. While some Christians are described as “true believers” this is not presented as characteristic of all, even most, or many Christians. If this distinction remains, what is the relationship between Muslims and People of the Book, particularly Christians?

The basic circumstances of Muslim and non-Muslim interaction and dialogue must be addressed. What limits to interaction and dialogue are present in these texts? Then, the relationship and dialogue must be further contextualized, addressing the potential barrier of violence to dialogue. In order to assess this we must consider *hadith* and Qur’anic verses both supporting and condoning fighting and reconciliation with non-Muslims.

While several verses directly engage with the interactions of Muslims and non-Muslims, the underlying themes of unity, ethics, and peace also can be used to support IFD. Both the Qur’an and its concordance were consulted to determine the desired characteristics of believers, as well as injunctions or commands, of proper behavior, and consequences for inappropriate actions all somehow concerning the principles of IFD.

⁶³ McAuliffe, 237.

The theme of unity is evident in the previous references to “People of the Book,” and also draws from the inherent ambiguity of the “believer” discourse, and the more implicit concept of *banu adam*, or sons of Adam, drawing all of humanity under one umbrella. Seventy-four verses fall within the ambiguous discourse of “believer.”⁶⁴ This ambiguity is within the pronouns beginning phrases including *those*: “who attain to faith” and do “righteous deeds” or “good works” or are “conscious of Him, or “who avail themselves of [His] guidance.”⁶⁵ And “*all*.” “who pay heed unto God,” “believe,” “who hold fast to the divine writ and are constant in prayer,” “are humble,” or “attain to faith.”⁶⁶ This ambiguity is also apparent in: “*they* who repent, and live righteously, and hold fast unto God, and grow sincere in their faith in God alone,”⁶⁷ “*him* who believes,”⁶⁸ the God-conscious,”⁶⁹ “Vie, therefore, with *one another*...,”⁷⁰ or even more broadly, “*anyone*- be it man or woman- who does [whatever he can] of good deeds and is a believer.”⁷¹ A believer is also someone who loves and is conscious of God.⁷²

⁶⁴ The emphasis is added to the following.

⁶⁵ Q.2:82 and 277, Q.3:57, Q.4:57; 122; 173, Q.5:9; 69; 93; 105, Q.7:42, Q.10:9, Q.11:23, Q.12:29, Q.14:23, Q.16:128, Q.19:96, Q.22:14 and 23, Q.22:50 and 56, Q.24:55, Q.25:70, Q.26:227, Q.28:80, Q.29:7 and 9, Q.30:15 and 45, Q.31:8, Q.32:19, Q.34:37, Q.37:7, Q.40:58, Q.41:8, Q.42:22; 23; and 26, Q.45:30, Q.46:14, Q.47:2, Q.65:11, Q.84:25, Q.85:11, Q.95:6, Q.98:7, Q.103:2, Q.19:76.

⁶⁶ Q.4:69, Q.6:48 and 170, Q.10:4, Q.21:106, Q.34:4 and 11, Q.22:35.

⁶⁷ Q.4:146, Q.19:65, Q.20:82, Q.28:67.

⁶⁸ Q.17:88.

⁶⁹ Q.20:132.

⁷⁰ Q.2:148.

⁷¹ Q.4:124, Q.16:97, Q.20:110.

⁷² “those who have attained to faith love God more than all else” 2:165; “God is with all those who are conscious of Him” 2:194.

The additional discourse of *banu adam* portrays all of mankind as originating from a single community⁷³ created of “one living entity,” “children of Adam” with “ties of kinship,”⁷⁴ “neighbors,”⁷⁵ deserving the “promotion of peace between men,”⁷⁶ whose diversity was willed by God.⁷⁷ These references to the inherent unity of believers, even more universally mankind, are supportive of interfaith dialogue. No verses condone fighting between Muslims and peaceful non-Muslims.⁷⁸ Rather than portraying humanity as divided, without common roots, naturally at odds with one another, the Qur’an instead reminds Muslims that if God had wished for homogeneous communities, he would have created such a society. Instead, God “made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another.” This frequently cited verse (Q.49:13) is a popular basis of calls for interfaith dialogue within Islamic discourse. It is an important one that implies an “equality of biological origin reflected in the equality of the human dignity common to all.”⁷⁹ Furthermore, Asad argues that the division of people into “nations and tribes” “is meant to foster, not diminish mutual desire to understand and appreciate the essential human oneness underlying their outward differences.”⁸⁰ Sura 29, verse 46 also lends implicit support for interreligious dialogue with Christians,

⁷³ Q.2:213 and 10:19.

⁷⁴ Q.4:1, 5:189, 7:35.

⁷⁵ Q.4:36.

⁷⁶ Q.2:224 and 4:90.

⁷⁷ Q.5:48, Q.6:35, Q.10:99, Q.11:117 and 118, Q.16:93, Q.30:22, Q.42:8, Q.49:13.

⁷⁸ Badawi, Jamal, “Muslim and Non-Muslim Relations Reflections on Some Qur’anic Texts,” April, 05, 2005, <http://islamonline.net/english/Contemporary/2005/04/Article01.shtml> (last accessed 14 July 2010).

⁷⁹ Asad, note 15, 904.

⁸⁰ Ibid, note 16.

Do not argue with the followers of earlier revelation otherwise than in a most kindly manner- unless it be such of them as are bent on evildoing- and say: “We believe in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, as well as that which has been bestowed upon you: for our God and your God is one and the same, and it is unto Him that we [all] surrender ourselves.

The Qur’an also offers numerous injunctions and characterizations of Muslims, which support interreligious dialogue, such as to “answer with an even better greeting” when “greeted with a greeting [of peace];”⁸¹ and “speak in the most kindly manner [unto those who do not share their beliefs];”⁸² and not “turn thy cheek away from people in [false] pride;”⁸³ say “I am bidden to bring about equity in your mutual views...Let there be no contention between us and you.” Sura 42:15 offers further support of dialogue,

Because of this, then, summon [all mankind], and pursue the right course, as thou hast been bidden [by God]; and do not follow their likes and dislikes, but say: “I believe in whatever revelation God has bestowed from on high; and I am bidden to bring about equity in your mutual views. God is our Sustainer as well as your Sustainer. To us shall be accounted our deeds, and to you, your deeds. Let there be no contention between us and you: God will bring us all together- for with Him is all journeys’ end.

Supporters of IFD also argue that if the Qur’an permits a Muslim man to marry a Christian or Jewish woman, there is inherent support for interreligious dialogue.⁸⁴

The concept of *da’wa*, or Islamic objectives to convert, may be perceived as an incompatible with IFD goals not to convert, but to understand. This may be addressed with the model of *da’wa* by individual example, rather than direct conversion efforts.

⁸¹ Q.4:86.

⁸² Q.17:53 and 29:46.

⁸³ Q.31:18.

⁸⁴ Q.5:5. Jamal Badawi is one such scholar-activist, “Muslim and Non-Muslim Relations Reflections on Some Qur’anic Texts” April 05, 2005-
<http://www.islamawareness.net/MusChristRelations/reflections.html> (last accessed 14 July 2010).

Forced conversion is clearly presented in the Qur'an as impermissible.⁸⁵ This is reflected in 16:125, "Call thou [all mankind] unto thy Sustainer's path with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the most kindly manner." Asad references 29:46, to stress that these calls for kindness and tact, and the use of reason in all religious discussions with people of other faiths, align with the basic principle of no coercion in religion. Acting respectfully towards all, regardless of religious affiliation, is also an inherent message of 6:108: "But do not revile those [beings] whom they invoke instead of God, lest they revile God out of spite and ignorance: for, goodly indeed have We made their own doings appear unto every community." And, should someone adhering to a different belief mock the beliefs of Muslims, 6:68 states "turn thy back until they begin to talk of other things." All of these ideas are best synthesized in Sura 25:63, "For, [true] servants of the Most Gracious are [only] they who talk gently on earth, and who, whenever the foolish address them, reply with [words of] peace."

These verses all address the general notion of interfaith dialogue. As we will see, these verses commonly appear in the discourses of Muslim scholar-activists in support of IFD. Now, to further consider the role of IFD as a tool with which crisis and conflict may be prevented, mitigated, resolved, or even reconciled, circumstances of fighting must be considered. In particular, we are examining the context of Muslim/Christian fighting. As we will see, scholars do not have problems with IFD, without this added context. However, once religion becomes tangled within the conflict, barriers emerge between Muslims and Christians, hindering IFD efforts. In other words, if a greeting of

⁸⁵ Q.2:256.

peace necessitates “an even better greeting” as Sura 4:86 commands, what if the other party is not presenting, or initiating the peace? What if a Christian is presenting such a greeting of peace, but only as an individual, not representative of the Christian community? Before continuing into themes of verses unsupportive of IFD, we present supportive verses pertinent to this situation.

The concept of fighting in God’s cause is a powerful tool employed by those seeking to call Muslims to arms. There are significantly fewer verses in opposition to the use of violence rather than in support of it. However, six verses stand out as generally against the use of force. The first engages with the theme of patience: “Nay, but if you are patient in adversity and conscious of Him, and the enemy should fall upon you of a sudden, your Sustainer will aid you with five thousand angels swooping down!”⁸⁶ This verse insinuates that God will protect the believers without requiring them to fight. This principal characteristic and command to exercise “patience in adversity” is interwoven throughout the Qur’an fifty times.⁸⁷ Five more verses are pertinent to our discussion. Sura 4, verse 93 says, “But whoever deliberately slays another believer, his requital shall be hell.” This use of the term “believer” refers us back to the previous understanding that generally this is assumed to be another Muslim but, given the ambiguity of the Qur’an, a Christian may also be considered a “believer.” The next verse conveying a consequence for fighting encompasses the deeper universal message encompassed in the *banu adam*

⁸⁶ Q.3:125.

⁸⁷ Q.2:45; 153; 155; 177; 250, Q.3:17; 120; 200, Q.4:25, Q.7:87; 126; 128, Q.8:46, Q.10:109, Q.11:11; 49; 115, Q.12:18; 22; 83; 90, Q.14:5; 12, Q.16:96; 110; 126; 127, Q.18:27, Q.20:130, Q.21:85, Q.22:35, Q.23:111, Q.25:75, Q.28:54 and 111, Q.29:59, Q.30:60, Q.31:17 and 31, Q.33:35, Q.34:19, Q.37:102, Q.38:17 and 44, Q.39:10, Q.40:55 and 77, Q.41:35, Q.42:33 and 43, Q.46:35, Q.47:31, Q.50:39, Q.68:48; 51; 52, Q.70:5, Q.74:7, Q.76:24 and 12, Q.103:17; 2; 3.

discourse. “If anyone slays a human being- unless it be [in punishment] for murder or for spreading corruption on earth- it shall be as though he had slain all mankind; whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind.”⁸⁸

Unfortunately, the initial clause provides allows for the manipulation of the calls of violence so that they are not in opposition to this verse, claiming the need to act in punishment or against the spread of corruption. But the general message of the verse clearly engages universal language. The third verse, 41:36, is an injunction, calling for one to “seek refuge with God,” when “blind anger” emerges. This anger is characterized as emanating from Satan and therefore iniquitous. Obviously anger does not necessarily denote fighting, but it is easily associated with the action. The fifth verse, 42:37, also mentions anger, offering the consequence of rewards for those who “whenever they are moved to anger, readily forgive.” The final verse included within this group of offering an argument against fighting, 42:40, reminding believers that “[remember that an attempt at] requiting evil may too, become an evil, hence, whoever pardons [his foe] and makes peace, his reward rests with God- for verily, He does not love evildoers.” Asad notes this serves as a warning to not allow oneself to overindulge in acts of revenge against a former oppressor.⁸⁹ This serves to limit the use of force, while encouraging pardoning the enemy.

The injunction of 2:109 and verse of consequence of 64:14 also calls for people to “forgive and forbear.” These are not directly in regards to fighting, but nevertheless support a theme of peace and forgiveness. Sura 60:7 even promises the possibility of

⁸⁸ Q.5:32.

⁸⁹ Asad, note 41, 844.

having God cultivate affection between believers and “some of those whom you [now] face as enemies.” This is followed, however, by a verse adding a clause requiring reflection:

As for such [of the unbelievers] as do not fight against you on account of [your] faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity.⁹⁰

Verses such as these, without further explanation, easily initiate a series of questions.

Does this restrict the equitable treatment to groups of unbelievers not fighting or driving “you forth from your homelands?”⁹¹ If an unbeliever belongs to a group who is engaged in these activities, are they then eligible for kindness and equity? Again, would Christians and Jews be considered in this category of “unbelievers?” These are all items subject to interpretation.

Again in considering Q.60:8, does this require Muslims to *not* show kindness and act equitably towards “unbelievers” if there is fighting? The most difficult situation to reconcile is when there are no offers of peace from the non-Muslim party engaging in the conflict. There are no verses commanding such a Muslim response to ongoing violence. Many forbid fighting against those not engaged in fighting or generally “let you be,” which may be interpreted as the entirety of a group, or individuals. Perhaps the strongest support for the use of IFD as a conflict-mediating tool is:

And never let your hatred of people who would bar you from the Inviolable House of Worship lead you into the sin of aggression: rather help one another in furthering virtue and God-Consciousness, and do not

⁹⁰ Q.60:8.

⁹¹ Q.60:9.

help one another in furthering evil and *enmity*; and remain conscious of God...⁹²

This verse reminds us to not only avoid aggression, but feelings of hostility and ill-will.

This verse is powerful because it commands Muslims to not only avoid aggression, but the underlying sentiment contributing to violence, enmity, which is equated with evil.

Surat al-Isra (17) verse 53 further offers support for dialogue in times of contention,

“And tell My servants that they should speak into the most kindly manner [unto those who do not share their beliefs]; verily, Satan is always ready to stir up discord between men.” This repeated connection between evil, Satan, and hostility and discord sends a powerful message.

The verses appearing to be in opposition to interfaith dialogue are less in direct opposition to the process itself than generally facilitating distrust of potential participants. Interestingly these verses offer more characterizations of the non-Muslims and fewer injunctions regarding interactions with them. These characterizations are divided between general descriptions of behaviors and intents and depictions of physical impairments. These portrayals are aimed specifically at Jews, followers of earlier revelation, and more generally non-Muslims.

Unlike the universal language of previous verses facilitating harmonious relations with non-Muslims, the universal language used in these verses creates clear distinctions between the parties. These verses facilitate distrust. “Down with you, [and henceforth]

⁹² Q.5:2, emphasis added.

enemies unto one another.”⁹³ Asad notes that the address changes from dual to plural, which indicates this verb relates to all humans. This is repeated in 7:24, “Said He: “Down with you, [and henceforth] enemies unto one another, having on earth your abode and livelihood for a while.” Interestingly these verses do not distinguish between Muslims and non-Muslims, but are broadly directed towards mankind. Included in this distinction of “enemy” are hypocrites, who are distinguished as “the [real] enemies [of all faith], so beware of them.”⁹⁴

The danger of being with non-Muslims, is not only in their actions, but their influence,

The evil impulses [within men’s hearts] whisper unto those who have made them their own that they should involve you in argument.... And if you pay heed unto them, lo! You will become [like] those who ascribe divinity to other beings or forces beside God.⁹⁵

Not only will these evil impulses potentially influence a Muslim, but, according to several verses, it is the desire of non-Muslims to corrupt Muslims. The Qur’an describes this desire to see Muslims in distress emerging from the rage and hatred of non-Muslims.⁹⁶ Therefore, Muslims are commanded to not take “people who are not of your kind” or “deniers of the truth” as friends or allies, particularly in preference to believers, and to generally beware of them.⁹⁷ It should be noted, that al-Tabari interprets 3:118 as applying only to those whose opposition to Islam is apparent and Asad indicates this

⁹³ Q.2:36. Although this refers to the animosity between Satan and humans, Asad contends that because the address changes from the dual form to plural, this indicates the entire human race. Asad, note 30:17.

⁹⁴ Q.63:4.

⁹⁵ Q.5:121.

⁹⁶ Q.3:118 and 119.

⁹⁷ Q.3:118, Q.4:89; 139; 144, Q.5:49.

contradicts 60:8-9 and should only apply if a genuine friendship appears impossible.⁹⁸

Asad also points out that *wali* includes both political allies and friends and that the “moral alliance” is discouraged with the understanding that such alliances may lead to an adoption of the “deniers” way of life.⁹⁹ This last fear that interaction may lead to conversion, or in the least, a lapse in moral judgment is echoed in many verses.¹⁰⁰

The portrayal of non-Muslims in less than flattering manners may be considered unsupportive of IFD because the descriptions dissuade interaction with non-Muslims. Who would want to engage in dialogue with someone who rejoices in your misfortune?¹⁰¹ Who is hoping to “turn others away from the path of God?”¹⁰² Non-Muslims are described as untrustworthy,¹⁰³ deceitful liars,¹⁰⁴ spreaders of corruption¹⁰⁵ with evil and wicked impulses;¹⁰⁶ impure,¹⁰⁷ arrogant,¹⁰⁸ stubborn,¹⁰⁹ jealous,¹¹⁰ and filled with iniquity.¹¹¹ Christians are also frequently chastised for their belief in the trinity.¹¹² In addition to these unforgiving portrayals, the physical description of these errant people is equally detrimental in promoting dialogue. Non-Muslims are described as having

⁹⁸ Asad, note 87.

⁹⁹ Asad, note 154:150.

¹⁰⁰ Q.2:120, Q.3:69, Q.4:167, Q.5:49, Q.5:51 and 116.

¹⁰¹ Q.3:120.

¹⁰² Q.4:167 and 5:49.

¹⁰³ Q.9:11.

¹⁰⁴ Q.2:9 and 10.

¹⁰⁵ Q.2:12.

¹⁰⁶ Q.2:14, Q.9:9, Q.18:57, Q.34:43, Q.43:36.

¹⁰⁷ Q.9:28.

¹⁰⁸ Q.10:11 and 75, Q.17:60, Q.23:75, Q.31:7, Q.34:43, Q.37:30, Q.40:75, Q.45:31, Q.46:10, Q.52:33, Q.40:56.

¹⁰⁹ Q.13:13 and 21:24.

¹¹⁰ Q.42:14.

¹¹¹ Q.2:47.

¹¹² Q.9:31, Q.4:171, Q.3:64.

diseased and corroded,¹¹³ hardened,¹¹⁴ veiled¹¹⁵ and sealed¹¹⁶ hearts; they are deaf and blind,¹¹⁷ and dumb and without reason.¹¹⁸

“Severe is their warlike discord among themselves: thou wouldst think that they are united, whereas [in fact] their hearts are at odds [with one another]: this, because they are people who will not use their reason.”¹¹⁹ After descriptions such as all these, certainly Muslims would *want* to “leave alone all those who chose to be ignorant.”¹²⁰ What would the sense be in even attempting dialogue with evil, arrogant, untrustworthy people who’s hearts are hardened and sealed to change? If they are deaf and blind and unable to use reason, what would the purpose in engaging this population be?

“Do you, perchance, seek to guide those whom God has let go astray- when for him whom God lets go astray thou canst never find any way?”¹²¹ If people perceive non-Muslims in these terms, with hearts more hardened than rocks,¹²² and are additionally provided verses in support of fighting, it would make more sense to fight than enter senseless dialogue. According to this perception, fighting is not only endorsed by God, but more productive than dialogue. A significant number of verses present clear support

¹¹³ Q.2:10 and Q.83:14.

¹¹⁴ Q.5:43 and Q.39:22.

¹¹⁵ Q.5:25, Q.11:5, Q.17:46, Q.18:57, Q.41:5.

¹¹⁶ Q.2:7, Q.4:155, Q.10:74, Q.30:59, Q.45:23, Q.46:16; 18; 24, Q.47:15.

¹¹⁷ Q.2:17-18, Q.5:71, Q.18:57, Q.23:75, Q.31:7, Q.36:7-10, Q.36:45, Q.41:5 and 44, Q.43:36, Q.46:27, Q.47:23.

¹¹⁸ Q. 2:171.

¹¹⁹ Q. 54:14.

¹²⁰ Q.7:199.

¹²¹ Q.4:88.

¹²² Q. 2:74.

for fighting.¹²³ Ignoring these verses appears apologetic and additionally fails to present the complexities facing those advocating for IFD efforts. This component of the subject serves as an enormous stumbling block many advocates fail to adequately engage. As we will see, these verses are briefly, if at all, mentioned in the discourse of IFD advocates. The problem is, without engaging and adequately addressing this component, the elephant in the room remains. Any efforts to advocate for IFD cannot neglect to address these verses.

Verses that directly and favorably address fighting fall into three primary categories: characteristics of those who fight, consequences for fighting and not fighting, and injunctions to fight. Surat 4:76 distinguishes Muslims fighting in God's cause as "those of faith." Muslims who fail to fight and remain passive are deemed unequal to those "who strive hard in God's cause with their possessions and their lives."¹²⁴ The final characteristic of those who fight is in contradiction to the Jews who failed to fight, "when fighting was ordained for them," likening passive Muslims to those "evildoers."¹²⁵ This would indicate that unless a Muslim wanted to be compared to such "evildoers," he will fight. The rewards that accompany such sacrifice are also great.

¹²³ The verses that are most difficult to reconcile in this discourse of IFD with Christians include: 4:89, 91; 9:5, 29, 36, 123. Other verses *appear* to support fighting and contradict verses calling for patience in adversity: 2:190-193, 216, 244; 4:74-75, 84; 8:57; 9:39, 41; 33:18; 47:4; 49:9; and 61:4. These verses complicate calls for IFD as a conflict resolution tool. As we will see, however, these verses are not engaged except to explain any possible historical contexts that now yield interpretations promoting violence between Muslims and Christians void.

¹²⁴ Although "striving in God's cause with one's life" does not necessarily indicate doing so violently, the contrasting "striving with one's life passively" facilitates such an interpretation. (Q.4:95).

¹²⁵ Q.2:246.

Seven verses mention the positive consequences for fighting in God’s cause and two warn of the chastisement Muslims will receive for failing to fight¹²⁶ and the punishment of brutal war against those who make war on God.¹²⁷ “God loves only those who fight in His cause”¹²⁸ presents a clear message that does not necessarily dictate violence, but may be interpreted in a violent manner. In addition to promising God’s love, Q.4:74 promises “a mighty reward” to those “willing to barter the life of this world for the life to come.”¹²⁹ Many of these focus directly on dying while fighting for God’s cause. These warriors who die while fighting are actually alive,¹³⁰ have received God’s forgiveness and grace,¹³¹ and are granted paradise in return.¹³² These verses do not only focus on striving hard with one’s possessions and life, but specifically indicate these Muslims “slay and are slain.”¹³³

After recognizing these rewards and the characterizations of those who fight, 4:75 and 9:13 ask: How could you [Muslims] not fight? With permission to fight against those whom wage war¹³⁴ and God knowing those who “would divert others [from fighting in His cause]”¹³⁵ coupled with injunctions to fight, it is a good question. Of the

¹²⁶ Q.14:39.

¹²⁷ Q.5:33.

¹²⁸ Q.61:4.

¹²⁹ Again, it is important to note that this could also be interpreted as peacefully sacrificing life to God’s will.

¹³⁰ Q.2:154 and 3:169.

¹³¹ Q.2:154 and 3:195.

¹³² Q.9:111.

¹³³ As quoted from Q.9:111.

¹³⁴ Q.22:39.

¹³⁵ Q.33:18.

nineteen verses portraying a religious obligation to fight, one specifies fighting People of the Book, or those who have received revelation.¹³⁶

And fight against those who- despite having been vouchsafed revelation [aforetime]- do not [truly] believe either in God or the Last day, and do not consider forbidden that which God and His Apostle have forbidden, and do not follow the religion of truth [which God has enjoined upon them], till they [agree to] pay the exemption tax with a willing hand, after having been humbled [in war].¹³⁷

The second verse, also in Surat *At-Tawbah*, Repentance, (9) most likely targets polytheists, but could include Christians, “And fight against those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God, all together- just as they fight against you, [O believers,] all together- and know that God is with those who are conscious of Him.”¹³⁸ Asad stresses that in each case Muslims are not to fight non-Muslims because of the differences in religions, but in “circumstances in which the Muslims are authorized to make war against unbelievers,” as explained in 9:12-13 and 2:190-194 and generally in self-defense.¹³⁹ Asad also translates fighting “those bent on denying the truth” in 47:4 as those depriving Muslims of social and political liberty, as another means of self-defense *jihad*.

Brutal self-defensive fighting is encouraged so that the enemy may serve as a “fearsome example for those who follow them;”¹⁴⁰ hopefully preventing further hostilities. Counterbalancing calls for forgiveness, patience, and reconciliation are two verses are 49:9 and 47:35. The first of these, 49:9 commands,

¹³⁶ These nineteen verses include: Q.2:190-193; 244; 216, Q.4:84; 89; 91; Q.8:57, Q.9:5; 12; 14; 41; 29; 36; 123, Q.47:4 and 35, Q.49:9.

¹³⁷ Q.9:29.

¹³⁸ Q.9:36.

¹³⁹ Asad, footnotes 40 and 55, pages 294-5 and 298.

¹⁴⁰ Q.8:57.

if one of the two [groups] goes on acting wrongfully towards the other, fight against the one that acts wrongfully until it reverts to God's commandment, and if they revert, make peace between them with justices, and deal equitably [with them].

The phrase "goes on acting wrongfully" implies the delay of fighting until other means of resolving ongoing problems have been attempted. Only with the cessation of hostilities following the "wrong-doers" acceptance of God's commandment can the conflict be resolved and reconciled. This is further stressed in 47:35, "And so, [when you fight in a just cause,] do not lose heart and [never] beg for peace." Peace should not come from a weak resolve to fight, but once Muslims have defeated non-Muslims.

Engagement in IFD during phases of conflict management or resolution is further hampered by 60:9,

God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of [your] faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid [others] in driving you forth: and as for those [from among you] who turn towards them in friendship, it is they, who are truly wrongdoers!

Does this encompass both individuals and the parties engaging in the hostilities? This has clear implications for involvement in IFD, which facilitates interactions that may be considered "turning in friendship" with the enemy. Maintained at an individual level, does this imply that only those not actively engaged in the fighting would be permitted to enter such relationships, or would affiliation with the "enemy" further restrict IFD efforts? Additionally, what does this indicate for hawks actively engaged in hostilities who determine that building such relationships is crucial to attaining peace?

3. Interfaith Dialogue in the *Hadith*

Next we examine the *hadith* found in *Sahih al-Bukhari* in order to obtain a larger picture of Muslim relations with non-Muslims and *jihad*.¹⁴¹ The narratives of the Prophet are categorized and divided into separate books within each volume. These books are divided into chapters, which may include one or several stories exemplifying the chapter topic. Nineteen of these books included chapters with some connection to the relations of Muslims and non-Muslims. These chapters are characterized by the five themes of business transactions, political affairs, manners, religion, and other. The books in which each of these chapters and themes are found are detailed in the following chart:

Table 1.1. Books Containing *Hadith* Pertaining to Muslim/Non-Muslim Relations, According to Theme

Business Transactions	Political Affairs	Manners	Religion	Other
Book of <i>Fara'id</i> , Laws of Inheritance, (volume 8)	Book of <i>Al-Diyat</i> , Blood money (volume 9)	Book of Funerals (volume 2)	Chapters of <i>Witr</i> (volume 2)	the Book of <i>Ar-Riqa'iq</i> , Softening of hearts (volume 8)
Book of <i>Wasaya</i> , Wills and Testaments in (volume 4)	Book of the Obligation of <i>Khums</i> , War Booty (volume 4)	Book of Good Manners (volume 8)	Book of Invocations (volume 8)	Book of Wishes (volume 9)
Book of Partnership (volume 3)	Book of Representation, or Authorization (volume 3)	Book of Asking Permission to enter somebody else's dwelling place (volume 8)	Book of Belief (volume 1)	Book of <i>Jihad</i> , (volume 8)
Mortgaging in Places Occupied by Settled Population (volume 3)	Book of Oppressions (volume 3)		Book of <i>Tawhid</i> , Monotheism (volume 9)	
Book of Gifts and the Superiority of Giving Gifts and the Exhortation for Giving Gifts (vol 3)				

¹⁴¹ Muhammad al-Bukhari, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari* (Translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan. Al-Nabawiya: Dar Ahya Us-Sunnah).

We initially examined each volume for any chapters regarding any of the following topics: conversation with non-Muslims, generally as well as People of the Book specifically; themes of conflict resolution; themes of non-Muslim equality or non-equality; patience; and *jihad*. The *hadith* from these chapters were then analyzed to find connections and themes, which included business transactions, manners, and religion. Most of the references were to non-Muslims, with some specifically referring to the People of the Book. Unsurprisingly, most of the stories called for treating all non-Muslims with respect, not only *dhimmi*s, while affording them a lower status than Muslims. Non-Muslims are not entitled to receive the inheritance of a Muslim,¹⁴² but Muslims are encouraged to show kindness to those not fighting them¹⁴³ and able to give gifts to non-Muslims.¹⁴⁴

The *hadith* provide several examples of Muslim engagement with non-Muslims and respectful treatment in these encounters, despite the latter's lower status. First, according to the *hadith*, it was permissible for Muslims to engage in business with non-Muslims, as found in chapters related to mortgaging to Jews and polytheists and partnering with a *dhimmi* in sharecropping.¹⁴⁵ The book on asking permission to enter somebody else's dwelling place, chapter 20 specifically presents how to greet a gathering

¹⁴² Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of *Fara'id* (80), chapter 26, *hadith* 756, 8: 498.

¹⁴³ Q.60:8.

¹⁴⁴ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Gifts and the Superiority of Giving Gifts and the Exhortation for Giving Gifts, chapter 29, *hadith* 788 & 789, 3: 476-477.

¹⁴⁵ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Partnership, chapter 11, *hadith* 409, 3, 409 and Book XLV of Mortgaging, chapter 5, *hadith* 416, 3: 416.

in which there are Muslims and pagans.¹⁴⁶ According to the *hadith* Muhammed spoke with the group, invited them to Islam, and recited the Qur'an.¹⁴⁷ When he was not accepted and treated poorly, the Prophet did not become enraged, but excused their behavior, showing patience. This respect and patience was also reflected in Muhammed's admonishing of 'Aisha not to curse pagans when greeted with a curse, but simply reply, "and upon you."¹⁴⁸ The Book of Good Manners recommends smiling while cursing internally if needed, remaining gentle and polite with people.¹⁴⁹

The manner in which Muhammad greeted the gathering of non-Muslims and Muslims, by inviting them to Islam and reciting the Qur'an, *could* be extrapolated as a model of behavior in interfaith dialogue, requiring such interaction to entail an invitation to Islam, which would contradict the goals of IFD. However, since this gathering included non-Muslims, but not People of the Book, we can also assume that this does not present such a model, since pagans would not be involved in IFD. A *hadith* tells of Muhammad granting a pagan request to pray for rain during a drought,¹⁵⁰ showing tolerance and acceptance of the person's status as a non-Muslim, and in another he shows respect by standing for a Jewish funeral procession.¹⁵¹ While non-Muslims may be of a lower status, Muhammad urged Muslims to trust Jews to tell the truth in determining their guilt or innocence in an apparent murder. When Muslims refused to trust the oaths

¹⁴⁶ "Mushrik" is translated as pagan in this translation, but is more correctly translated as polytheists or someone who associates partners with God.

¹⁴⁷ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book on Asking Permission to Enter Somebody Else's Dwelling Place, chapter 20, *hadith* 271, 8: 178.

¹⁴⁸ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book Asking Permission, chapter 22, *hadith* 273, 8: 180-181.

¹⁴⁹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Good Manners, 8: 95.

¹⁵⁰ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of *Witr*, chapter 12, 2: 72.

¹⁵¹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Funerals, chapter 48, 2: 224.

of Jews, Muhammad paid the blood money himself, signifying resignation to the lack of trust and higher goal of the need to keep the peace.¹⁵²

Several *hadith* show the Prophet slow to anger and unhurried to fight non-Muslims. Rather than calling for *jihad* when the tribe of Daus refused to embrace Islam, he prayed for the tribe to accept Islam.¹⁵³ Further emphasis of patience is in al-Bukhari's declaration that "patience is to be observed at the first stroke of a calamity."¹⁵⁴ Perhaps some of the strongest language in support of peace efforts is narrated from Abu Hurayra, who said, "Allah's Apostle said, "The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger."¹⁵⁵

Several more vague *hadith* speak of people in general, recommending Muslims be kind to their neighbors,¹⁵⁶ never harming a neighbor,¹⁵⁷ and even helping a "brother" whether oppressed or the oppressor.¹⁵⁸ While the "brother" is generally assumed to be a Muslim, the neighbor is much more unclear. As in the Qur'an, this ambiguity is also found in statements referring to "believers." Two *hadith* refer to the need for cooperation between believers who serve as a "building whose different parts enforce each other"¹⁵⁹ and are like a single body.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵² Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Obligation of *Khums*, chapter 32, *hadith* 398, 4: 265.

¹⁵³ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Invocations, chapter 61, *hadith* 406, 8: 270.

¹⁵⁴ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Funerals, chapter 41, 2: 218.

¹⁵⁵ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Good Manners, chapter 76, *hadith* 135, 8: 86-87.

¹⁵⁶ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Good Manners, chapter 28, *hadith* 43, 8: 27.

¹⁵⁷ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Good Manners, chapter 31, *hadith* 47, 8: 29.

¹⁵⁸ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Oppressions, chapter 2, *hadith* 623, 624, 3: 373-374.

¹⁵⁹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Good Manners, chapter 36, *hadith* 55, 8: 33-34.

¹⁶⁰ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Good Manners, chapter 27, *hadith* 40, 8: 26.

Jews and Christians are specifically conferred with a preferred status, with twice the reward when embracing Islam, which reflects their special status as People of the Book.¹⁶¹ Several *hadith* describe this preferred status, pointing out that Jews and Christians had access to “the truth,” yet failed to follow correctly God’s wishes.¹⁶² This is very apparent when Muhammad used the Torah in determining the punishment of Jewish adulterers, whose community had opted for less harsh punishments than God had commanded.¹⁶³ What may be seen as the first call for a “common word” is a *hadith* narrated by Ibn ‘Abbas, who tells of a letter written from Muhammad to Heraclius, in which Muhammad declares “O, the people of the Scripture! Come to a word common to you and us that we worship none but Allah!”¹⁶⁴

The theme of avoiding extremes recommends Muslims not to overburden themselves,¹⁶⁵ yet stresses the importance of *jihad*. Although one is not supposed to long to meet the enemy,¹⁶⁶ there are two chapters emphasizing the esteem of warriors guarding Muslims from infidels.¹⁶⁷ The first chapter of the Book of Good Manners emphasizes *jihad* as one of the deeds most loved by Allah.¹⁶⁸ Although a *hadith* narrated by ‘Abdullah b. Mas‘ud declares participation in *jihad* for God’s cause is the third best deed,

¹⁶¹ This is also found in Sura 57.

Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of *Wasaya*, Wills and Testaments, chapter 145, *hadith* 255, 4: 158.

¹⁶² Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of *Tawhid*, Monothesim, chapter 51, 9: 469.

¹⁶³ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of *Tawhid*, Monothesim, chapter 51, *hadith* 633, 9: 474-478.

¹⁶⁴ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of *Tawhid*, Monotheism, chapter 51, volume 9: 474

¹⁶⁵ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of *Ar-Riqa’iq*, chapter 18, 8: 312 and Book of Belief, chapter 30, *hadith* 38, 1: 34.

¹⁶⁶ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Wishes, chapter 8, *hadith* 343, 9: 259.

¹⁶⁷ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of *Wasaya*, chapter 38, *hadith* 96 and 97, 4: 68 and chapter 73, *hadith* 142, 4: 91.

The glory of martyrdom is also in the Book of *Jihad*, chapter 3, *hadith* 47: 38-39.

¹⁶⁸ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of *Jihad*, chapter 1, 8: 1.

after offering prayers at their fixed times and being good and dutiful to one's parents, most *hadith* declare no deed equal to it.¹⁶⁹ It is declared impossible to equate *jihad* with any other deed, but endlessly praying at the mosque while never breaking a fast while “the Muslim fighter is in the battle-field.”¹⁷⁰ Another *hadith* narrated by Ibn ‘Abbas equates *jihad* or the intention to participate in *jihad* with *hijra* (emigration).¹⁷¹ He states that it requires immediately fighting when summoned by a Muslim ruler. This part of faith comes with great rewards, instigating a great drive and desire to answer the call for *jihad*.¹⁷²

Al-Bukhari's Book of *Jihad* extensively examines many other concepts of *jihad* including: bravery and cowardice;¹⁷³ the treatment and use of animals during battle;¹⁷⁴ role of women;¹⁷⁵ weaponry;¹⁷⁶ appropriate clothing;¹⁷⁷ even times and manners of departing and traveling.¹⁷⁸ Interestingly the topic of whom to fight is less thoroughly addressed. The Byzantines are mentioned,¹⁷⁹ as are Jews and Turks,¹⁸⁰ and non-

¹⁶⁹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapter 1, *hadith* 41, 4: 35.

¹⁷⁰ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapter 1, *hadith* 44, 4: 36.

¹⁷¹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapter 1, *hadith* 42, 4: 35.

¹⁷² part of faith with great rewards: Book of Belief, chapter 27 *hadith* 35, 1: 32-33.

desire, drive to fight: Book of *Wasaya*, Wills and Testaments, chapter 33, *hadith* 87, 4: 64.

rewards: Book of *Wasaya*, Wills and Testaments, chapter 93, *hadith* 175, 4: 109.

The rewards and superiority of martyrs are also prevalent throughout the Book of *Jihad*.

¹⁷³ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapter 24, *hadith* 74-75, 4: 56.

¹⁷⁴ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapters 46-61, *hadith* 117, 125-129, 137, and 139, 4: 72-83, 135-136, 143-146, 152, 153.

¹⁷⁵ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapters 62-66, *hadith* 125, 4: 83-87, 143.

¹⁷⁶ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapters 78-86, 88-89, and 92, 4: 96-103, 104-107, 108-109.

¹⁷⁷ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapters 90-91, 142, 4: 107-108, 156.

¹⁷⁸ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapters 104-107, 112, 114-116, 118, 134-136, 4: 126-128, 132-133, 135, 136-137, 149-152.

¹⁷⁹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapter 92, *hadith* 175, 4: 109.

¹⁸⁰ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapters 94 and 95, 4: 110-111.

Muslims,¹⁸¹ even prisoners of war¹⁸² and “people wearing shoes made of hair,”¹⁸³ but nothing directly mentions Christians.¹⁸⁴ More vaguely, it is determined that Muslims must invite non-Muslims to Islam before declaring war, but once engaged may kill non-Muslim warriors secretly and kill any non-Muslim warriors in Islamic territory who are there without an assurance of protection.¹⁸⁵ However, protection is mandated of *dhimmis*, non-Muslims paying the *jizya* tax in the Islamic territory.¹⁸⁶

Conflict resolution is apparent in the discussion of treaties and truces with non-Muslims. These references reflect the agreement between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Constitution of Medina, ensuring that once a treaty is made, all people in that area are protected,¹⁸⁷ and non-Muslims who have a covenant with Muhammad are protected regardless of whether the region in which they are located has an established treaty.¹⁸⁸ Additionally, Muslims may legitimately deputize non-Muslims in non-Muslim territories.¹⁸⁹ The role of the Muslim ruler establishing peace is shown in several *hadith*, with reference to the need for forgiveness of past oppression, Ibrahim narrates, “They disliked to be humiliated, and when they were powerful, they would forgive (their

¹⁸¹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapters 98, 100, 151, 155, 4: 112-114, 115-124, 161-162, 164.

¹⁸² Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapters 142, 144, 167-172, 4: 156, 157-158, 176-180.

¹⁸³ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, The Book of *Jihad*, chapter 96, *hadith* 180, 4: 111.

¹⁸⁴ That is aside from the Byzantines.

¹⁸⁵ invite: Book of *Wasaya*, Wills and Testaments, chapter 101, 4: 115-116.

killing secretly: Book of *Wasaya*, Wills and Testaments, chapter 159, 4: 168.

killing in territory: Book of *Wasaya*, Wills and Testaments, chapter 173, (286), 4: 181.

¹⁸⁶ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of *Wasaya*, Wills and Testaments, chapter 174, 4: 182.

¹⁸⁷ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Obligations of *Khums*, War Booty, chapter 22, *hadith* 387, 4: 255.

¹⁸⁸ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Obligations of *Khums*, War Booty, chapter 23, 4: 256.

¹⁸⁹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Representation or Authorization, chapter 2, 3: 282.

oppressors).”¹⁹⁰ This need to exercise forgiveness and trust in order to protect the established peace is also apparent in the *hadith*, previously mentioned, of Muhammad paying blood money himself in order to maintain peace between Muslims and Jews.¹⁹¹

While there are some references to relations with non-Muslims in the *hadith* of *Sahih al-Bukhari*, the amount presented in the nine-volume set is limited. There is reference to fighting, but there are also several exhortations to refrain from starting problems amongst people. Quarrelsome people, particularly those who convey false information in order to create hostilities, are described as “the most hated person in the sight of Allah.”¹⁹² So, while the glory of *jihad* is present, few *hadith* actually refer to fighting People of the Book, and only one *hadith* refers directly to the great sin of manipulating information to create and perpetuate hostilities. The same Qur’anic themes of patience and the preferred status of People of the Book are mirrored in the *hadith*. The interesting nature of the *hadith* is that it presents examples of the Prophet’s actions and recommendations, hence serves as an interpretation of sorts for the Qur’anic verses. Like the verses, there is some vagueness in the *hadith* when referring to “believers.” Muslims generally interpret these unspecific references as referring to Muslims, but the broadness could include the People of the Book, Christians and Jews.

This exploration of al-Bukhari’s collection of *hadith* reveals several pertinent items. First, there are more examples of protecting and interacting with non-Muslims than references to directly fighting them. No references directly called for fighting

¹⁹⁰ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Oppressions, chapter 7, 3: 375.

¹⁹¹ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of the Obligations of *Khums*, chapter 32, (398), 4: 265.

¹⁹² Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Book of Good Manners, chapter 49, 8: 51 and Book of *Al-Diyat*, Blood Money, chapter 34, *hadith* 298, 9: 225.

People of the Book. Support for and encouragement of *jihad* involved more general principles of the high esteem in which warriors were held and their rewards in the afterlife. The *hadith* indicate an acceptance of non-Muslims. If one can engage in business with a non-Muslim, or pray on the behalf of a pagan, it is a logical assumption that one may engage in IFD with Christians. The determination of the sin of *an-namima*, conveyance of disagreeable false information from one person to another to create hostilities between them, serves as a reminder to beware of such people. Further, as a tool that could hinder such individuals from perpetrating the sinful behavior of instigating conflicts, the *hadith* offers no grounds for the opposition of dialogue.

4. An Official Discourse of Interfaith Dialogue

As we have seen, political and social environments greatly impact an individuals' ability to engage in, or even discuss interfaith dialogue.¹⁹³ Fortunately, official Muslim support for IFD continues to grow, as indicated by annual conferences and the creation of interfaith centers in the Middle East and other Muslim societies.¹⁹⁴ "A Common Word Between Us and You," is another reflection of this official Muslim support.

"A Common Word Between Us and You" represents the official Muslim Track One call for IFD between Christians and Muslims. September 2007 H.M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, the king of Jordan, released the "historical, universal, and unanimous religious and political consensus (*ijma'*) of the *Ummah* (nation) of Islam in our day."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ As noted, the environment may also impact the ability to oppose IFD.

¹⁹⁴ Conferences include the 2002 Alexandria Interreligious Conference, Annual Doha Inter-faith Conferences, and the 2008 Interfaith Conference in Mecca.

¹⁹⁵ The Amman Message- <http://www.ammanmessage.com/>

This consensus was a continuation to the October 2006 “Open Letter to the Pope” and serves as an important effort to offer a united Muslim voice stressing the common Muslim-Christian principles of: unity of God and the necessity of love for Him;¹⁹⁶ and the necessity of love of the neighbor.¹⁹⁷ The document uses parallel Biblical and Qur’anic verses for each theme to show that between the two religions exists a common ground, which should form the basis of interfaith dialogue. Verses 60:8, 3:113-115, 3:64, and 5:48 each attempt to show the religious bond between Muslims and Christians.

The first of these, 60:8, reminds us of the situational problem confronting this thesis, when there is ongoing violence between Muslims and Christians, stating that unless there is war, “Islam is not against them [Christians].” Although it intends to promote IFD so that Muslims and Christians may “live in sincere peace, harmony, and mutual goodwill,” the call for IFD avoids addressing conflict.¹⁹⁸ By saying there is no barrier for Muslims and Christians to interact in IFD, unless there is a problem, the attention is diverted from the ignored problem. This discourse reflects the traditional manner of reconciling IFD and Islam, which tends to avoid the more complicated factors. There is no engagement of the more difficult verses to reconcile. As a potential platform from which dialogue may initiate, although serving an important cause, without even

¹⁹⁶ Q.33:4, Q.2:165, Q.39:23, Q.61:1, Q.29:61-63, Q.14:32-34, Q.1:1-7, Q.19:96, Q.2:194, Q.2:196, Q.9:38-39, Q.61:1, Q.64:4, Q.6:162-164, Q.3:31, Q.73:8. These verses encompass the themes of testimony of faith; unity of God; fear of God; gratitude to God; and devotion to God.

¹⁹⁷ Q.2:177 and 3:92.

¹⁹⁸ “A Common Word,” 11,

<http://www.acommonword.com/index.php?lang=en&page=option1> (last accessed 19 February 2010).

briefly addressing the possible barriers between Muslim-Christian dialogue it comes across as hollow. This does not, however, mean that it is meaningless or ineffective.

While it is an attempt to create and project a Muslim consensus, the primary target of “A Common Word” is a Christian audience. The “Open Letter to the Pope” and “A Common Word” are successive responses to Pope Benedict XVI’s September 2006 Regensburg address. While it claims to open official intellectual channels between Muslims and Christians, these channels had already commenced, as evidenced by international IFD conferences. Instead it serves to show the development of *intrafaith* dialogue within the Muslim community, necessary to further consideration of interfaith dialogue efforts.

Like the Human Rights discourse, this engagement, but at a superficial level, acknowledges what is easy and fails to grapple with the more complicated aspects. In 2002 this “official” IFD is reflected in the annual Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue. Government and religious officials and academics from all over the world attend these conferences. Previous conferences have included themes of human solidarity;¹⁹⁹ religious values: perspectives on peace and respect for life;²⁰⁰ spiritual values and world peace;²⁰¹ the role of religions in building the human being;²⁰² and the role of religions in the construction of human civilization.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ 7th conference in 2009- <http://www.qatar-conferences.org/dialogue2009/english/program.php> (last accessed 14 July 2010).

²⁰⁰ 6th conference in 2008- <http://www.qatar-conferences.org/dialogue2008/english/program.php> (last accessed 14 July 2010).

²⁰¹ 5th conference in 2007- <http://www.qatar-conferences.org/dialogue2007/english/index.php> (last accessed 14 July 2010).

Ironically, while the official implementation of IFD may at times be considered hollow, these conferences and official documents are important in creating popular acceptance and legitimization of the process. This is reflected in the response of Professor Ahmed to the 2008 conference held in Mecca, who said interfaith dialogue must be “rooted in a Qur’anic vision,” otherwise King Abdullah would not have organized the conference in Mecca.²⁰⁴ In other words, the act of sponsoring dialogue in the holy city of Mecca in itself serves to legitimize the process for Muslims who consider the king “a very pious man.”²⁰⁵ So, avoiding the complications in attempt to endorse IFD is better than no endorsement at all. “A Common Word” shows beginnings of an *intrafaith* dialogue regarding IFD. While there are more complicated items to address, this initial step, aimed at a religiocentric level of development is important in opening the door to dialogue at other levels of society, creating a multi-track discourse.

Calls for interfaith dialogue characterized as “intercivilizational dialogue” are increasing. Ayatollah Khatami’s “Dialogue between East and West” is such an example, stating, “One should respect the independent identity of the other side and his or her independent ideological and cultural integrity.”²⁰⁶ Anwar Ibrahim uses similar language

²⁰² 4th conference in 2006- <http://www.qatar-conferences.org/new-dialogue/english/index.php> (last accessed 14 July 2010).

²⁰³ 3rd conference in 2005- <http://www.qatar-conferences.org/dialogue/english/index.php> (last accessed 14 July 2010).

²⁰⁴ “Mecca Conference Promotes Dialogue Between Muslims and Followers of Other Faiths,” 12 June 2008, Voice of America, <http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/news-analysis/a-13-2008-06-12-voa25.html> (last accessed 14 July 2010).

²⁰⁵ Ibid. This acknowledges that not all Muslims consider the King of Saudi Arabia to be a pious man.

²⁰⁶ Mohammed Khatami, “Dialogue between the East and the West,” in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, (John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito, eds. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007): 370.

in his calls for a “symbiosis between East and West.”²⁰⁷ These encompass the goal of tolerance, while avoiding religious difficulties. It also restricts the dialogue to the official level.

Official dialogue conferences and organizations continue to emerge. The concern is that these official endeavors filter down to the Track Two level. Interfaith dialogue confined to an “official” Track One level serves to bring social awareness to dialogue efforts, but without action to bring dialogue to other levels, these endeavors appear empty. It is certainly helpful to have those supportive of interfaith dialogue continue to address the process, its implications in conflict resolution, and possible complications. But, the dialogue must grow to encompass “nonbelievers,” those who are skeptical of dialogue or involved in conflict and perpetrators of violence against others according to religious beliefs. The dialogue must continue to expand from the realm of religious officials, academics, and even government officials to reach other segments of the population, without shying away from religion.

5. Muslim Scholars’ Interpretations of Interfaith Dialogue

As we will see, all but one of the nine Muslim scholars assembled for this thesis are similar in their positions to the impact of violence on IFD. Only Muhaiyaddeen contends that there is never a legitimate use of force, voicing an extreme dove perspective. The rest of the intellectuals consent that there are appropriate times for force, generally without elucidating its impact on IFD. Although similar in their perspectives along the hawk-owl-dove framework, these discourses are distinct from each

²⁰⁷ Anwar Ibrahim, *The Asian Renaissance*, (Singapore: Times Books International, 1996).

other in the manner in which they engage each of the theories of religious pluralism (universalism, particularism, and universal-particularism).

The difference separating these theories of universalism, particularism, and the combination, universal-particularism, is in perspective of religious diversity. While the particularist argues that each religion is unique and should not be lost in comparison to others, the universalist contends that each religion is interwoven. Similar to the strands of thread creating fabric, a particularist places importance on the uniqueness of each strand. The universalist, on the other hand, focuses on the nature of the fabric which is created from all the strands of thread. The final theory of universal-particularism, on the other hand, brings awareness to the nature of the fabric, both the strands of thread and the resulting fabric.

The Extreme Dove: A Universalist

MR Bawa Muhaiyaddeen (d.1986) was a Sri Lankan Sufi, who articulated a universalist philosophy critical of all use of force. To Muhaiyaddeen and his followers, the obligation to engage in *jihad* only pertains to the internal struggle. Although Muhaiyaddeen's works, including *Islam and World Peace* do not directly call for interfaith dialogue, his calls for the unity of humanity naturally encompass the ideals of IFD.²⁰⁸ He was involved in IFD efforts in Philadelphia and his teachings continue through his disciple, Sufi Rehman Muhaiyadden, and the establishment of the Bawa

²⁰⁸ MR Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, *Islam and World Peace* (Philadelphia, PA: Fellowship Press, 1987).

Muhaiyaddeen Islamic Realization Society, which advocates for more global interfaith dialogue efforts.²⁰⁹

Muhaiyaddeen's implicit support of IFD is reflected in his sustained references to the theme of *all* people, not only Muslims, Christians, or Jews as *banu adam*, children of Adam. "He may be called by any names in any language: God, Andavan, Rahman, Adonai, Allah, or Yahweh, but He is still the One God. All the religions of the human race must realize this. May each of us understand and cut from our hearts any thoughts of divisiveness." This language appears to transcend religion, yet Muhaiyaddeen considers himself Muslim, following an Islamic path. "We must remove all thoughts that disrupt the unity of Adam's children, the unity of Islam."²¹⁰ He is not advocating a ecumenical blending of religions, but universalist acceptance for the different paths each religion may provide, appreciating that all paths lead to one and the same God, "The Qur'an does not show hatred toward any religion; it accepts them all as paths leading to the One. Can we then reject any of these?"²¹¹

Muhaiyaddeen and his followers take the IFD objective of getting to know one another a step further. It should not be the goal to tolerate, or comprehend each other, but to love one another. Once we accept each other, even love each other, we will understand that the *jihad* extolled in the Qur'an is not with an external "enemy," but within. Interfaith dialogue is seen as a possible mechanism to diminish the sentiment of a

²⁰⁹ Global Peace... Sufi Rehman Muhaiyaddeen-<http://bmirs.org/Global%20Peace.htm> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

²¹⁰ Muhaiyaddeen, MR Bawa, *Islam and World Peace*, (Philadelphia: Fellowship Press, 1987): 2.

²¹¹ Muhaiyaddeen, 31.

“superior religion,” but only a stepping-stone to achieving a deeper understanding.²¹²

With this higher understanding we will better manage conflict. Rather than feeling a need to engage in violence, defending one’s self from an attack or retaliating, a patient and calm response is elicited.

He may scream and fight or maybe even bite you. He may shout, “I will kill you!” But you must embrace him with love and patiently explain things to him, always remembering that the qualities within the child are the enemy, not the child himself.²¹³

This discourse represents an extreme, nonviolent perspective. Interfaith dialogue is assumed to be a natural exercise. There is no need to prove its legitimacy because as members of a family, it is presumed that such interaction should and does occur. Because there is no legitimate use of force, there is no barrier preventing continued, or initiated, IFD during conflict.

Several items regarding this discourse are noteworthy. First, it is very repetitive, with persistent references to the unity of all children and struggle for inner *jihad*. It also does not offer Qur’anic verses or *hadith* as evidence in support of these perspectives. Muhaiyaddeen does offer anecdotes of Muhammad, but without citations or elaborating on who narrated the stories. Each of these, particularly the lack of verses, stands in sharp contrast to the following discourses.

²¹² Global Peace....Sufi Rehman Muhaiyaddeen- <http://bmirs.org/Global%20Peace.htm> (last accessed 14 July 2010).

²¹³ Muhaiyaddeen, 49.

Moderate Doves: Universalist Perspectives

The scholars classified as universalist moderate doves differ from the extreme dove categorization of Muhayaiddeen in that they do acknowledge a legitimate use of force in some circumstances in lieu of dialogue. Although these scholars do not provide thorough discussions of this use of force, each mentions it within their discourse. These scholars also go beyond tolerance as the objective of IFD to acceptance of diversity.

Fethullah Gülen's (1940-) discourse most closely parallels that of Muhayaiddeen. Like Muhayaiddeen, this Turkish scholar received a Sufi training and has a following (the Gülen Movement) with even more extensive global influence.²¹⁴ Gülen's ecumenical argument for dialogue primarily focuses on dialogue between Muslims, Christians, and Jews,²¹⁵ yet Gülen declares the goal of dialogue to be among all world religions as an

²¹⁴ "An Analysis of the Gülen Movement" <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/about-fethullah-gulen/an-analysis-of-the-gulen-movement.html> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

²¹⁵ Gülen, "The Universality of Islam," 5 November 2003, <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/about-fethullah-gulen/gulens-thoughts/1246-the-universality-of-islam.html> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

Gülen, "Islam's Ecumenical Call for Dialogue," 6 November 2003, <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/about-fethullah-gulen/251-fethullah-gulens-speeches-and-interviews-on-interfaith-dialogue/1337-islams-ecumenical-call-for-dialogue.html> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

Gülen, "Jews and Christians in the Qur'an," 6 November 2003, <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/about-fethullah-gulen/251-fethullah-gulens-speeches-and-interviews-on-interfaith-dialogue/1342-jews-and-christians-in-the-quran.html> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

Gülen, "Love, Compassion, Tolerance, and Forgiving: The Pillars of Dialogue," 6 November 2003, <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/about-fethullah-gulen/251-fethullah-gulens-speeches-and-interviews-on-interfaith-dialogue/1339-love-compassion-tolerance-and-forgiving-the-pillars-of-dialogue.html> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

Gülen, "Dialogue with the People of the Book (Jews and Christians)," 28 August 1995, <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/about-fethullah-gulen/251-fethullah-gulens-speeches-and-interviews-on-interfaith-dialogue/1341-dialogue-with-the-people-of-the-book-jews-and-christians.html> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

acceptance of the same source, pursuing the same goal.²¹⁶ Rather than rejecting Islam to join a shared vision, both Gülen and Muhaiyaddeen proclaim this shared narrative is an essential principle of being Muslim, thus all believers are essentially Muslim.²¹⁷

Reminiscent of Muhaiyaddeen's urgent call for compassion, acceptance, forgiveness, and love, Gülen does not directly address IFD as a mechanism facilitating social stability.²¹⁸ This theme of stability is not the driving factor of IFD, but a consequence of dialogue. The emphasis is primarily on the legitimacy of dialogue with other believers, permitting an unraveling of religious interpretation from the past.²¹⁹ In contrast to Muhaiyaddeen's discourse, Gülen's is rich in references to the Qur'an. The call for dialogue is through Q.109:6, accepting religious plurality (not merely tolerating diversity) and translating the "we" in Q.1:5, "You alone do we worship, and You alone we ask for help" as a religiously plural "we."²²⁰ This is supported with the principles of forgiveness and tolerance in the Qur'an.²²¹ Dialogue with "People of the Book" is

²¹⁶ Gülen, "Introduction," 6 November 2003, <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/about-fethullah-gulen/251-fethullah-gulens-speeches-and-interviews-on-interfaith-dialogue/1334-introduction.html> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

²¹⁷ Ibid and Muhaiyaddeen, *Islam and World Peace*.

²¹⁸ While Gülen does not address IFD as a method of achieving these goals in this speech, the speech is located on the website with other speeches concerning IFD. Thus, much like Muhaiyaddeen's discourse, it is an implied connection that IFD facilitates these goals. Gülen, "Love, Compassion, Tolerance, and Forgiving: The Pillars of Dialogue."

²¹⁹ Gülen, "Dialogue is a Must," 6 November 2003, <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/about-fethullah-gulen/251-fethullah-gulens-speeches-and-interviews-on-interfaith-dialogue/1336-dialogue-is-a-must.html> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

²²⁰ Gülen, "Islam's Ecumenical Call for Dialogue," 6 November 2003, <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/about-fethullah-gulen/251-fethullah-gulens-speeches-and-interviews-on-interfaith-dialogue/1337-islams-ecumenical-call-for-dialogue.html> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

²²¹ Gülen refers to verses Q.25:63, Q.25:72, Q.28:55, Q.17:84, and Q.20:44 in support of this position, "Tolerance and Dialogue in the Perspective of the Qur'an and Sunna," 6

another consistent theme, supported by Q.2:2-4. Gülen's discourse takes an interesting turn in addressing the hostile portrayal of Jews and Christians with undesirable characteristics. This brief mention of this aspect of the Islamic discourse of "People of the Book" is complemented with references to the "very gentle words [which follow] used to awaken hearts to the truth and to plant hope."²²² Thus, the depictions of Christians as enemies, not to be trusted, were in fact directed towards the Muslims indulging in this behavior.²²³

Finally, in addressing the context of fighting, Gülen does not directly address IFD in situations of violence, but does note that Muslims must "have the approach of Yunus: not striking those who hit them, not replying in kind to those who curse them, and not holding any secret grudge against those who abuse them."²²⁴ While this implies dialogue would be legitimate during fighting, as Muslims would be taking a "higher ground," because the reference is limited to one sentence and not directly addressed, Gülen has been placed in the "moderate" dove category, because of his reference to the legitimacy of violence when dealing with People of the Book who *are* oppressors.²²⁵ Additionally Gülen recognizes the need for self-defense, not speaking against fighting, but arguing

November 2003, <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/about-fethullah-gulen/251-fethullah-gulens-speeches-and-interviews-on-interfaith-dialogue/1340-tolerance-and-dialogue-in-the-perspective-of-the-quran-and-sunna.html> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

²²² Gülen, "How to Interact with Followers of Other Religions," 6 November 2003,

<http://www.fethullahgulen.org/about-fethullah-gulen/251-fethullah-gulens-speeches-and-interviews-on-interfaith-dialogue/1338-how-to-interact-with-followers-of-other-religions.html> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

²²³ Gülen, "How to Interact with Followers of Other Religions."

²²⁴ The final sentence in "Tolerance and Dialogue in the Perspective of the Qur'an and Sunna."

²²⁵ Gülen, "Dialogue with the People of the Book (Jews and Christians)."

fighting must maintain the basis of justice and world peace, not hatred (5:8).²²⁶ Thus, recognizing the need for force in order to maintain certain principles of religious freedom and justice, Gülen reminds Muslims of the dark side of fighting without these principles; thus, anyone killing unjustly, “in effect has killed everyone,” where as the “one who saves another in effect has saved everyone.” (5:32)²²⁷

Jamal Badawi is an Egyptian born Muslim Canadian who obtained his Masters and Ph.D. at Indiana University in Management Science. He has presented extensively in North America on interfaith dialogue, which he sees as “important tools in working for such goals [of peace].”²²⁸ Badawi’s perspective on IFD extends from his “normative relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims.” Based on his analysis of the Qur’an, Badawi distinguishes historical context from Islamic principles in determining religious parameters of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. In his speech, “Commonly Misunderstood Qur’anic Texts,” to an audience of diverse national and religious backgrounds on behalf of the Ottawa Muslim Association, Badawi asserts the need to recognize the influence of 1400 years of Muslim/non-Muslim interactions. We must “be wary of the historical legacy that could becloud the thinking of Muslims or their friends.”²²⁹ In order to separate these influential historic narratives, Badawi’s discourse

²²⁶ Gülen, “How to Interact with Followers of Other Religions.”

²²⁷ Gülen, “How to Interact with Followers of Other Religions.”

²²⁸ Jamal Badawi, “Muslim and Non-Muslim Relations Reflections on Some Qur’anic Texts,” April 2005, <http://www.islamawareness.net/MusChristRelations/reflections.html> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

²²⁹ “Muslim/non-Muslim Relations: Commonly Misunderstood Qur’anic Texts” 5/7 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUgbgLGmXXM> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

centers upon the primary source of the Qur'an.²³⁰ He warns against mistranslation, literal interpretation, and what he deems a “cut and paste approach” (taking only parts of verses without consideration of the full verse, other verses, or the historical context).

Badawi supports his universal principles stressing that more than 200 verses, including 49:13, address all mankind, not only Muslims, or even believers.²³¹ Because of this, we are all “one family, human family, from one mother and father.”²³² Human diversity is explained as a sign of God’s mercy and wisdom.²³³ God judges not based on religion, color, etc., but on the righteousness of the person’s deeds.²³⁴

Badawi’s case for the universal concepts and values underlying Muslim-Christian relationships includes six themes: faith in the One Universal God;²³⁵ unity and universality of the core teachings of all prophets;²³⁶ universal human dignity and the sanctity of life;²³⁷ universal justice;²³⁸ universal human brotherhood,²³⁹ and the prohibition

²³⁰ Badawi claims to also use *hadith*, but does not cite any in his discourse on IFD.

²³¹ “Muslim/non-Muslim Relations: Commonly Misunderstood Qur’anic Texts” 5/7.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Q.30:22, “Muslim/non-Muslim Relations: Commonly Misunderstood Qur’anic Texts” 5/7.

²³⁴ Q.30:22, “Muslim/non-Muslim Relations: Commonly Misunderstood Qur’anic Texts” 1/7.

²³⁵ Q.1:1, Q.112:1-4, Q.114:1-6, Q.2:25, Q.24:35, with humans as God’s trustee or steward-Q.2:30 as cited in the January 25, 2008 debate between Jamal Badawi and Reza Safa, sponsored by the Islamic Society of Tulsa, “Can Muslims and Christians be Friends?” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2iLd4M59c> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

²³⁶ Q.2:285, Q.4:162-3, Q.42:13, Q.3:33-60; and engagement of Jesus as a common link, acknowledging and accepting different perceptions of the prophet- Q.3:33-64 and 19:36 as cited in the January 25, 2008 debate between Jamal Badawi and Reza Safa, “Can Muslims and Christians be Friends?” (The first three are also cited in “Muslim and Non-Muslim Relations Reflections on Some Qur’anic Texts).

²³⁷ Q.17:70, Q.17:33, Q.5:32 as cited in “Can Muslims and Christians be Friends?” and “Muslim and Non-Muslim Relations Reflections on Some Qur’anic Texts.”

²³⁸ Q.4:134, Q.5:8, Q.16:90 as cited in “Can Muslims and Christians be Friends?” and “Muslim and Non-Muslim Relations Reflections on Some Qur’anic Texts.”

of compulsion in faith.²⁴⁰ This final concept encompasses underlying themes of acceptance of religious diversity²⁴¹ and mercy.²⁴² The culmination of this acceptance and mercy and other themes is a universal peaceful coexistence embodied by verses presenting Muslims with the duty to treat others with equity and *birr*, which he describes as beyond kindness, encompassing a love and respect.²⁴³ These virtues extend to all non-Muslims, with special considerations for the relationship with Jews and Christians, or People of the Book, as reflected in 98:1, 5:5, 3:64, and 29:46.

Badawi does not ignore the implications of *jihad*, but also does not address the use of IFD during conflict. He argues “holy war” is a misinterpretation of the Arabic word *jihad*, which may occur on three levels as: a personal struggle;²⁴⁴ social effort for truth, justice, and good relationships;²⁴⁵ and finally as self-defense of the religious community, *umma*.²⁴⁶ At the final level of self-defense, Badawi is careful to place the portrayal of non-Muslims as the aggressors in a historical context. He says that Qur’anic passages were not endorsing combat against non-Muslims for their beliefs but because historically this was the aggressive and oppressive population in the eyes of the early Muslim community. Acceptance of Islam is not the condition for halting hostilities but

²³⁹ Q.4:1, Q.49:13, Q.5:48, Q.11:118, Q.10:99, Q.30:22, Q.49:13 as cited in “Can Muslims and Christians be Friends?” and “Muslim and Non-Muslim Relations Reflections on Some Qur’anic Texts.”

²⁴⁰ Q.2:143, Q.16:125, Q.2:256, Q.88:21-26, Q.10:99, Q.42:48, Q.21:107 “Muslim and Non-Muslim Relations Reflections on Some Qur’anic Texts.”

²⁴¹ Q.10:99 and 11:118.

²⁴² Q.21:107.

²⁴³ Q.60:8.

²⁴⁴ Q.22:77-78 and 29:4-7.

²⁴⁵ Q.49:15 and 25:52.

²⁴⁶ Q.22:39-40, Q.2:190-194, Q.49:8-9, Badawi, “Muslim and Non-Muslim Relations Reflections on Some Qur’anic Texts,” 10-11.

an end to oppression and aggression. This has significant implications for IFD efforts during conflict. Badawi recognizes the vicious cycle of ideologically driven violence and the need for religious leaders to work constructively through intra and interfaith dialogue efforts to “stem the tide of violence,” yet fails to contribute to the discourse specifically on the legitimacy of such encounters during that violence.²⁴⁷

Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, (1921-1986) was a Palestinian Muslim who is credited as an early proponent of interfaith dialogue. Al-Faruqi’s university education was primarily American, at American University in Beirut and graduate studies at Indiana and Harvard universities and followed by classical studies of Islam at Al-Azhar. He is considered a “Muslim trailblazer of the twentieth century” for his intellectual combination of Western training with Islamic heritage and pioneering endeavors to explain Islam to non-Muslims, while contributing to contemporary interpretations of Islam for Muslims.²⁴⁸ A major contributor to interfaith dialogue, as a scholar and as an activist, al-Faruqi represents a unique voice in IFD, with an ecumenical focus.

Al-Faruqi’s ecumenical focus is one that often emerges as a concern, hindering IFD efforts. The idea of using dialogue to create a new, synthesized religion troubles potential participants of all religions. Rather than previous efforts of using dialogue as a forum to understand each other’s beliefs, this directs the goal of dialogue at the final stage along Hammer, Wiseman, and Bennett’s adapted model of Intercultural Competence Development. This integration level of religiorelativism is shown in the

²⁴⁷ Badawi, “Muslim and Non-Muslim Relations Reflections on Some Qur’anic Texts,” 18.

²⁴⁸ John L. Esposito, “Foreword,” in *Islam and Other Faiths*, (Ataullah Siddiqui ed, Herndon, VA: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1998): vii.

statement, “We must say it boldly that the end of dialogue is conversion; not conversion to my, your or his religion, culture, mores or political regime, but to *the* truth.”²⁴⁹ Al-Faruqi calls for the ability to criticize and take the ego out of religion so that individuals may engage in dialogue honestly and freely.

Engaging a universalist perspective, al-Faruqi contended “Islam countenances no distinction between humans”²⁵⁰ and “all men are God’s vicegerents on earth.”²⁵¹ He referred to all people and religions as “one family” because, according to the Prophet Muhammad, “All men are born Muslims (in the sense in which Islam is equated with *din al-fitrah*): it is his parents that Christianize or Judaize him.”²⁵² Hence, any religion is actually legitimate, despite its divergence from traditional Islam, with all differences between the religions likened to “domestic family squabbles.”²⁵³

Al-Faruqi was careful to remind Muslims that Christians are fallible and do not always represent the religion and principles of Christianity. He asked Muslims to separate portrayals from the collective consciousness of Christians, and hence Christianity, as untrustworthy and evil from the historic narratives of the Crusades and colonialism. On the basis of Q.3:113, 5:82, and 57:27, he argued that according to Islam, Christians are upright, humble (and closer to Muslims than Jews), with compassion and mercy planted in their hearts. He referred only to the Qur’anic criticisms of Christians in verses 9:31, 4:171, 3:64 and 29:46, reminding Christians that Jesus was a prophet and

²⁴⁹ Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths*, (Ataullah Siddiqui ed, Herndon, VA: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1998): 249.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 84.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 134.

²⁵² al-Faruqi, 139.

²⁵³ Ibid, 154.

that praise must be reserved only for God. Using this as the basis for his argument, Al-Faruqi stated, “From this we may conclude that Islam does not condemn Christianity but reproaches some devotees of it whom it accused of deviating from the true path of Jesus.”²⁵⁴ Because of this, according to al-Faruqi, “It is morally and religiously imperative for Christians and Muslims to work together to lift this Satanic burden from its victims. Christianity is here the Muslims’ true ally and friend.”²⁵⁵

This argument is founded on the idea that no reason is presented to hinder dialogue with Christians under peaceful conditions. Although al-Faruqi engaged in a universal discourse, little of the language contextualizes his calls for dialogue within a situation of conflict. Al-Faruqi was clear when he said religion must not be forced upon anyone, and that using the “sword” to coerce non-Muslims to become Muslims is unIslamic. Instead, “Its aim [use of sword] is no more and no less than stopping the violent action taken by the non-Muslims. It should stop immediately upon the cessation of their violence.”²⁵⁶

A Universal-Particularist Perspective

Mohamed Talbi is another prominent Muslim scholar encouraging dialogue. Talbi earned his doctorate in history from the Sorbonne in 1968. Unlike most other western educated scholars, who primarily resided and engaged with the West, Talbi returned to Tunisia as a professor emeritus and dean of Arts and Sciences at the University of

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 277.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 221.

²⁵⁶ Al-Faruqi, 145.

Tunisia. In his retirement he focused on the freedom of religion and need for interreligious dialogue.

Similar to al-Faruqi's discourse, Talbi also argues for the universality of man, erasing the tension between Muslim and non-Muslim by claiming, "every human is truly the neighbor of every human."²⁵⁷ Talbi's argument that Islam and Christianity are essentially the same religion is not formed on the basis of *din al-fitrah*, but focused on the role of religious liberty in choosing one's religion. It is with this latter part that Talbi differs from the previous universalist perspectives. Whereas the previous intellectuals also contend that Islam and Christianity, as well as other religions, are all fundamentally the same, Talbi also asserts that the basis for this universalism is the ability for people to choose their own religion; each of which is fundamentally different. Hence, he recognizes both the intertwined nature of the religions and their distinctness. This is in contrast to universalists who see the interconnections of religions melding together.

Because people were not created to be solitary, they are then created "for community, relationship, and dialogue. Their fulfillment is in their reconciliation both to God and to people."²⁵⁸ Talbi references Suras 49:13 and 50:16 in support of this universal perspective and Suras 5:51 and 39:46 to remind readers that it is not for us to judge each other, but for God to judge all humans.

With this duty to "bear witness courteously and respectfully for the inner liberty of our neighbors and for their sacredness" coupled with a universal perspective of

²⁵⁷ Talbi, Mohamed, "Religious Liberty," in *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook*, (Charles Kurzman, ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998): 162. Italics not added.

²⁵⁸ Talbi, 164.

humanity, and the need for reconciliation to each other and God, one might expect Talbi to extend these to hostile situations as well.²⁵⁹ Similar to al-Faruqi, however, the situation is only briefly mentioned, with these considerations not applicable to those “who ‘do wrong’ - the unjust and violent, who resort deliberately to fist or argument. In such a case it is better to avoid so-called dialogue.”²⁶⁰ He also reinforces Sura 2:217, stating that “Muslims are urged not to yield, when their conscience is at stake, and to take up arms against “those who will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your faith, if they can.”²⁶¹ Hence, IFD is not seen as a viable option during situations of conflict, but otherwise is permissible because the judgment of non-Muslims is not for Muslims, only for God.

Particularist Perspectives

Tariq Ramadan (1962-) is a Swiss academic and a professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies at Oxford University. The grandson of Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Ramadan also received a western graduate degree, at the University of Geneva, before studying Arabic at Al-Azhar. He advocates study and reinterpretation of Islamic texts, contending that current Islamic understanding of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims are derived from historical orientations. In order to determine the political, social, and cultural factors influencing these traditional interpretations of Muslim/non-Muslim relations, the Qur’an and *hadith* must be

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid, 167.

reexamined to distinguish between previous interpretations influenced by historical contexts and those reflecting fundamental Islamic belief. Ramadan presents two principles underlying methods of textual evaluation: 1) everything is fixed, hindering the use of human reason in interpretation; and 2), everything is permitted, unless it is explicitly forbidden.²⁶² This evaluation must occur because while faithfulness to religious principles are essential, faithfulness to historical models are illogical, “because times change, societies and political and economic systems become more complex, and in every age it is in fact necessary to think of a model appropriate to each social and cultural reality.”²⁶³ *Maslaha*, or the good of the community, *ijtihad*, independent reasoning, and *fatwa*, recommendations of Islamic legal scholars, are three Islamic practices supporting Ramadan’s call for connecting universal principles and social realities.

At various times in history, in very diverse contexts, people of various religions have engaged in interreligious exchanges to try to understand one another better; they have succeeded in gaining one another’s respect and have managed not only to live but also to work together on shared endeavors. Today, we feel the need to engage even more in this process: Western societies’ religious pluralism make mutual knowledge essential.²⁶⁴

The depth of Ramadan’s discourse of support for IFD in terms of analysis and reference of the Qur’an is most similar in structure to Badawi’s. Like Badawi, Ramadan attempts to extract the historical influences from traditional religious interpretations hindering IFD and explain complications such as *jihad* and *kafir*. His argument may be divided into three sections. First Ramadan refers to verses 2:38, 6:35, and 10:99 to show religious

²⁶² Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004): 36.

²⁶³ Ibid, 36.

²⁶⁴ Ramadan, 200.

diversity as God-willed and to be accepted by Muslims since there is no compulsion in Islam. With this acceptance God presents believers with the test, to compete in “doing good.”²⁶⁵ With the understanding that diversity in religion must be tolerated, Ramadan contends that Muslims must then learn how to manage these differences. He presents interfaith dialogue as a tool for handling religious diversity. Like Talbi, Ramadan refers to the implied injunction in 49:13, that diverse “nations and tribes” get to know one another. He says this verse shows the balance of power is not based on tension, but knowledge of each other.²⁶⁶ People must reflect on the concept of *tawhid*, the centrality of God, as a reference point guiding IFD.²⁶⁷ With 3:64²⁶⁸ serving as the call to Christians and Jews, and 3:2-3 opening the way for dialogue, according to Ramadan,

“The Qur’an not only issues a call to dialogue but is also insistent about the form it should take and the way in which it should be conducted. It should not simply be an exchange of information; it should also be a way of being and of speaking, and attitude...”²⁶⁹

²⁶⁵ This acceptance is not of religious pluralism, but God’s will 5:48.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 203.

²⁶⁷ 29:46- do not argue with the followers of earlier revelation otherwise than in a most kindly manner-unless it be such of them as are bent on evildoing-and say: "We believe in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, as well as that which has been bestowed upon you: for our God and your God is one and the same, and it is unto Him that we [all] surrender ourselves., Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Say: "O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall not *ascribe divinity to aught beside Him*, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside God. And if they turn away, then say: "Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves unto Him."

²⁶⁹ 16:125- Call thou [all mankind] unto thy Sustainer's path with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the most kindly manner,

29:46- do not argue with the followers of earlier revelation otherwise than in a most kindly manner-unless it be such of them as are bent on evildoing-and say: "We believe in that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, as well as that which has been bestowed upon you: for our God and your God is one and the same, and it is unto Him that we [all] surrender ourselves.”

Hence, it is not dialogue itself, but the attitude of people and potential partners that is at issue.²⁷⁰ Ramadan finalizes this case for IFD declaring that if dialogue is essential to managing diversity, and an opportunity for Muslims to bear witness through their behavior,²⁷¹ Muslims must establish relations “of generosity and justice,” with all non-Muslims respecting “our freedom of conscious and human dignity.”²⁷²

This recurring focus of IFD to managing religious diversity and promote tolerance is characteristic of the particularist perspective. Ramadan’s argument does not universalize religions, or even refer to a humanist theme. Additionally, the acceptance he presents is not of the different religions, but of God’s will for religious diversity. In order to show acceptance of this will Muslims must then learn to tolerate and manage these differences, reflective of the minimalist transitional period between religiocentric and religiorelative development phases.

Resembling the justifications for IFD of previous scholars, Ramadan also does not attend to the complications of conflict and violence to IFD. He does, however, unlike the previous scholars, address the literalist arguments opposing dialogue noting that to avoid other passages would “not be honest.”²⁷³ These passages encompass the themes of *kafir*, and determined fates of nonbelievers, and mistrust. Ramadan points to the misinterpretation of Arabic words and notions such as *kafir*, which he contends entails more neutral and nuanced meanings than blatant “deniers of the truth.” Rather, the word

²⁷⁰ Q.5:82.

²⁷¹ Q.16:125.

²⁷² Q.60:8- As for such [of the unbelievers] as do not fight against you on account of [your] faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity, 204.

²⁷³ Ramadan, 203.

may be understood in reference to Jews and Christians as those who do not recognize the Qur'an as the last revealed book.²⁷⁴ This removes the offending nonbeliever facet of interpretation. The unfavorable characterization of non-Muslims, hindering literalist acceptance of IFD is also apparent in the argument that these nonbelievers will not be accepted in Paradise.²⁷⁵ Using a more encompassing definition of "believer," Ramadan continues to engage the semantics of literalist opposition, contending that the term does not mandate a restriction to Muslims. Ramadan supports the inclusion of Jews and Christians in this definition of "believer" quoting 2:62,

Certainly those who have believed in God, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans, all those who have believed and in the last day of judgment and who have done good- they will have their reward from God. They will not be afraid and they will not grieve,

Ramadan's semantic argument also addresses passages that convey the need to mistrust non-Muslims. He contends that, "The Jews and Christians will not be pleased with you unless you follow their religion [*milla*]" is not an implication of an inherent Jewish and Christian effort to convert Muslims. Offering a new perspective to Q.2:120 Ramadan argues it simply implies that any person convinced of the truth finds more satisfaction in encounters with others sharing that belief.²⁷⁶ The final two verses, 3:28 and 60:9, which elevate this distrust into a warning against creating alliances with Jews and Christians, bring him closer to addressing possible Muslim-Christian conflict and their ramifications to IFD. Ramadan stresses that these verses are not absolute references to relations with the communities, with the second verse, 60:9 specifying it is only with

²⁷⁴ Ramadan, 206.

²⁷⁵ Q.3:19 and 3:85.

²⁷⁶ Ramadan, 207.

those fighting Muslims with whom Muslims should not “turn toward in friendship [or alliance].”²⁷⁷ Addressing this verse presents an excellent step to facilitate a detailed discussion of what exactly this verse entails, but one that is ignored.

Sayyid Fadlullah (1935-2010) is known for his support of interfaith dialogue in Lebanon. In Najaf, Fadlullah completed a traditional Islamic training before returning to Lebanon and founding “The Islamic Sharia Institute.” Fadlullah has provided several insights pertaining to Muslim-Christian dialogue. In these he focuses on the necessity for social stability through IFD. The resulting “unity of diversity” and coexistence are essential in “building a nation.”²⁷⁸ According to Fadlullah, dialogue is a natural occurrence which occurs within the self, creating the “groundwork of faith,” which has occurred “since the beginning of religion,” and thus is nothing new.²⁷⁹ Fadlullah contends that since the Qur’an did not quell discussion of the sanity of the Prophet or existence of God, there is no “taboo” in dialogue; everything is open to discussion.²⁸⁰ If dialogue with the devil was permitted (2:30), then certainly Muslims may speak with anyone seeking truth.²⁸¹ Actually, he interprets Q.2:159 as a threat to those who possess knowledge and hide it from others.²⁸²

²⁷⁷ Q.60:9, Ramadan, 208.

²⁷⁸ Sayyid Fadlullah, “Diversity among men does not devastate the world,” <http://english.bayynat.org/islamicinsights/amro250922.htm> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

²⁷⁹ Fadlullah, “The Dialogue with the other: No taboos in dialogue,” <http://english.bayynat.org/islamicinsights/tabooos.htm> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 1 Fadullah cites Q.16:103 and 24, Q.34:46, Q.36:77-78.

²⁸¹ Fadlullah, “The Dialogue with the other: No taboos in dialogue,” 2-3 Fadullah cites Q.3:66, Q.2:8, Q.18:56.

²⁸² Ibid, 2.

Fadlullah contends that dialogue involves dispute, which is located in the Qur'an twenty-seven times.²⁸³ Entailing "argument" it implies an element of struggle, exactly what IFD attempts. It is a struggle against the misconception of Islam and the challenges presented by others in these misconceptions.²⁸⁴ Hence, "the rational [*sic*] behind dialogue would be the clarification of positions on life and our mission in it, through discussing certain aspects pertaining to them in either short or long dialogues."²⁸⁵

Fadlullah advocates dialogue restricted to "peaceful disbelievers." It is these disbelievers, who are not fighting Muslims who should receive justice and tolerance.²⁸⁶ Referring to Q.60:9 and 3:75 as justification for this position, Fadlullah distinguishes between those with whom Muslims are coexisting and those they "ought to take up a stand from.. for they have declared enmity with Muslims."²⁸⁷ Ironically though, Fadlullah's humanist theme creates the possibility that in order to transform "enemies into friends," as God has ordered, IFD would be possible during times of conflict, since "we have to treat people with what we would like them to treat us."²⁸⁸

²⁸³ Fadlullah, "Dialogue and Dispute," 1, http://english.bayynat.org/islamicinsights/dialogue_dispute.htm (last accessed 15 July 2010).

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 2.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 3 Fadlullah also stresses that these dialogues must remain flexible, kind, and patient in "The Dialogue with the other: No taboos in dialogue."

²⁸⁶ Fadlullah, "Treatment of the Peaceful disbelievers: Justice and Tolerance" <http://english.bayynat.org/islamicinsights/Justice.htm> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

²⁸⁷ Ibid, 1-2.

²⁸⁸ Fadlullah quotes two hadith in support of this: "God revealed to a Prophet who lived in dictatorship to go to the tyrant ruler and tell him that God appointed him a ruler to address the grieves of the downtrodden, for Allah will not accept any injustice done to them even if they were disbelievers." (from Ahl al-Bayt) and "Make of yourself a balance between yourself and others, so love to others what you love for yourself, and hate to others what you hate to yourself." (uncited.) Fadlullah, "Treatment of the Peaceful disbelievers: Justice and Tolerance," 2-3.

Although Fadlullah's use of the humanist theme is similar to the arguments for IFD by universalists, Fadlullah clearly does not see the many religions as one. His reference to the tolerance of "disbelievers" coupled with respect for those living peacefully with Muslims reveals his advocating respect of people, who are religiously distinct from Muslims. He calls for IFD in Lebanon so that the citizens may all become united in their diversity, likening to the organs that integrate into the body.²⁸⁹ While the organs may work together residing within the body, they are separate and function for different purposes. Unlike Talbi, who referred to Christians also as believers, Fadlullah not only separates Muslims from Christians, but deems individuals who are not Muslim "disbelievers."

This particularism that focuses on social stability is apparent in the discourse of another Islamic scholar involved in IFD efforts, implemented in an area of religious tensions and conflict. The Nigerian imam Muhammad Ashafa coauthored the book *The Pastor and the Imam* with his IFD partner, a Christian pastor. They present IFD as an opportunity for Muslims and Christians to understand each other better and recognize that with such an understanding, fighting may be minimized and even prevented. They explain that violence has been the consequence of misunderstandings and judgments based on intolerant perceptions, stereotyping, and erroneous assumptions. While it is legitimately Islamic to respond to force with force (as reflected in Ashafa's personal experience legitimizing violence with religion), Ashafa contends that for Muslims to practice forgiveness is actually more in line with Muhammad's practice. The only *hadith*

²⁸⁹ Fadlullah, "Diversity Among Men Does Not Devastate the World," <http://english.bayynat.org/islamicinsights/amro250922.htm> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

he uses is the (uncited) story of Muhammed asking God to “forgive my people” after being stoned.²⁹⁰ Ashafa contends that if Muhammed refused to permit Muslims to avenge his stoning, instead calling for forgiveness, this is the higher path Muslims should pursue. This is particularly the case when religion is the motivation, but not the determinant for fighting.

Ashafa cites Q.42:37, 40; 43, and 45:14 declaring he previously “forgot calls for non-retaliation when injustice is done as the best antidote that sincere believers can use.”²⁹¹ Both religious leaders declare a new understanding of “how best to deal with one’s enemies.”²⁹² Rather than seeing the conflict as “a battle between the cross and the crescent,” requiring vengeance, their new perceptions of the manipulation of religion to create such sentiments require forgiveness.²⁹³ IFD provides a forum for people to listen to each other, rather than “assuming things from a far.”²⁹⁴ Understanding the context of the situation, Ashafa cites Q.49:6, 4:83, and 94 as reminders for Muslims to ascertain the accuracy of information and Q.4:148 to correct “evil” talk.

Ashafa and Wuye recognize the power of common ground, particularly in conflict, and “the similarities between parties in the conflict, that can serve as an entry point” and “easily influence positive resolution of conflict between two groups.”²⁹⁵ Thus, they begin in a similar manner to “A Common Word,” with seventy examples of

²⁹⁰ Ashafa shares this story as the turning point in his life that convinces him that rather than contending with Wuye, he must work to “win him over.” *The Imam and the Pastor* DVD.

²⁹¹ Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and James Wuye, *The Pastor and the Imam* (Lagos, Nigeria: Ibrash Publications Centre, 1999):20-21.

²⁹² Ashafa and Wuye, 20.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Chaner, David, *The Imam and Pastor* (Surrey, BC: FLT Films, 2006) DVD.

²⁹⁵ Ashafa and Wuye, 29.

similarities coupled with Biblical and Qur’anic verses. This presents a unique framework for the pool of Muslim scholars, with the argument *for* interfaith dialogue actually serving as an interfaith dialogue itself. With these parallels serving as a catalyst for dialogue, Wuye and Ashafa assert that addressing the theological discord is a crucial component to IFD. It is with an understanding of these differences that a “gateway [opens] to achieving unity in diversity and for building a strong nation in a multi-cultural, multiethnic-religious society like ours.”²⁹⁶

In order to move beyond “sources of controversy,” the list of seventy similarities between Islam and Christianity goes beyond “A Common Word Between Us and You.” The principles of unity of God and love of God and the neighbor are certainly included, but additional similarities include: the conception of Jesus;²⁹⁷ peace;²⁹⁸ angels;²⁹⁹ Satan and demons;³⁰⁰ sin;³⁰¹ forgiveness;³⁰² righteousness and virtue;³⁰³ and the Day of

²⁹⁶ Ibid, 65.

²⁹⁷ Specifically both religions believe in: his immaculate conception (3:42-43); the annunciation (3:45-47); his wisdom (3:48 and 19:31-33); as a prophet (6:85 and 3:49); performing miracles (3:49, 51); as a sign to humanity (19:21 and 23:50); and a messiah (5:75). Christianity and Islam also share the narrative of Israel’s rejection of Jesus (16:14 and 3:56), his cursing of disbelievers (5:78-80), and ascension to heaven (4:158).

²⁹⁸ Both conceive of God as the source of peace (59:23); peace as a symbolic greeting on Earth and in Heaven (24:27-28 and 19:61-62); and peace as a source of guidance (48:26). Peace also should; be made with enemies (8:61); be enforced by believers (49:9); not be said no to (4:94); be in reconciliation and forgiveness (Q.49:10, Q.42:36-37, 40, 43, Q.45:14); and not be prevented because of oaths (2:224). Believers; are in peace with God (36:57-58) and must build inter-religious relationships (5:48) and peace with neighbors (4:36). God loves the peacemaker (25:63 and 6:127) and nothing should affect the quest for peace (2:224-225), with disapproval of retaliation (5:45-46).

²⁹⁹ Angels: exist (2:30); serve as God’s messengers (35:1 and 2); and protect believers (82:10-12).

³⁰⁰ Satan as: God’s creation (7:11); enemy to man (36:60 and 62); and the deceiver (14:22).

Demons as another creation (55:14-16) which may possess humans (72:6).

³⁰¹ Sin: as a symbol of disobedience to God’s law (7:33); which will be punished by God (3:10-12 and 7:40). Adam and Eve are seen as sinners 7:19-23. Each soul must carry its burden (74:38 and 2:186).

Judgment.³⁰⁴ There are also shared beliefs of Abraham as a righteous man;³⁰⁵ equality of man and woman;³⁰⁶ man as the head of the family;³⁰⁷ the importance of modesty,³⁰⁸ marriage and justice,³⁰⁹ respect of parents;³¹⁰ and prayer.³¹¹

Twenty-five major areas of disagreement are also addressed. Again, these do not directly pertain to the legitimacy, or lack of religious legitimacy, of IFD but Ashafa and Wuye consider them grounds for dialogue. These differences provide the need for dialogue so that people may better understand the actual differences, rather than rely on potentially inflammatory interpretations or assumptions, and then determine how to tolerate, even accept or reconcile the discrepancies in theologies. These disagreements are divided into nineteen directly contrasting teachings of the Bible and Qur'an and three doctrines from each Islam and Christianity that are unacceptable to Muslims or Christians and are either addressed or unmentioned in their holy books.

The contrasting teachings primarily focus on contending thoughts about the nature of Jesus, man and their relationships with God.³¹² They also address different ideas

³⁰² Forgiveness is: given to the repentant (39:53-54); assured to believers (33:35); and impossible in cases of blasphemy (4:116) which may receive a penalty of capital punishment (4:116 and 5:33-34).

³⁰³ Scriptures sanction good virtue (29:58-59) which receive special rewards (9:6-8), with Paradise as the abode of virtuous (4:157 and 39:73-75).

³⁰⁴ The day of final judgment is inevitable (51:12-16 and 40:59); whose hour is known only to God (33:63). At this time; the Trumpet shall be blown (50:20-22); and the Book of Records will be revealed (84:1-12); with all who are wicked on the left (56:41-46), destined to Hell (39:71-72); and the righteous on the right (56:27-28) to be rewarded (16:97).

³⁰⁵ Q.16:12-124.

³⁰⁶ Q.33:35.

³⁰⁷ Q.4:34.

³⁰⁸ Q.24:31.

³⁰⁹ Marriage and Justice (30:21 and 4:3), with the discouraging of divorce (4:35 and 2:227-228).

³¹⁰ Q.31:14-15 and 17:23-24.

³¹¹ Prayers must be to God only (13:14-15) and are listened to by God (2:186).

concerning the first miracle and crucifying of Jesus; the last prophet (Jesus or Muhammad); who provides judgments (God or Jesus); who is the comforter after Jesus and his fulfillment; and the path to God. The relationship of man to angels and whether God rested after creation are also topics of disagreement. Finally Ashafa and Wuye each address whether salvation requires good deeds or faith; if there is marriage in Heaven, the inheritance of sin; and whether someone can die for the sin of another. Next, both the pastor and the imam present three items of “discord.”

The specifics of what Pastor Wuye and Imam Ashafa present is interesting, but the manner in which they frame their religious justification for interfaith dialogue is even more intriguing. Their discourse does not talk of universal humanity. There is no reference to the *banu adam* (sons or children of Adam). There is also no direct reference to the Christians and Muslims both as “believers,” although this occurs indirectly when verses of the Bible and Qur’an are provided to indicate shared beliefs. Instead the focus is on forgiveness and restraint from retaliation so that people may find an alternate manner to address their differences, and create social stability. “A Common Word” presents the case for IFD in the similarities of Islam and Christianity by claiming that Muslim-Christian commonalities legitimize dialogue. The discourses of other Muslim scholars contend that this link is even deeper; we are not only similar, but family created for dialogue. Ashafa and Wuye frame their legitimacy of IFD as a tool to manage the actual differences and perceptions of differences in the religious communities. This

³¹² The questions with this theme include: Was man created in the image of God? Can man see God face to face? Is Jesus Christ God or Man? Is Jesus God’s son or God’s servant? Is the concept of the trinity fact or fiction? Are the believers of God servants of God?

framework most closely reflects al-Qaradawi's discourse, also contending that it is the similarities that facilitate dialogue, but the religious differences which necessitate dialogue.

The Islamic Owl: A Humanist Particularist Perspective

Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1926-) is an Al-Azhar graduate living in Qatar. He is a complicated scholar to consider in this discourse. While the western media presents him as an extremist, much of the Muslim world considers his views balanced and moderate. As the host to a popular television program on *al Jazeera*, he often provides *fatwas*, or legal opinions of a qualified Muslim jurist, for the Muslim audience. As a very influential scholar, his perspective is important in the examination of Islamic perspectives.

Before addressing al-Qaradawi's placement along the dove-hawk continuum we must consider the disparate portrayals of the scholar. This necessitated a careful examination of his shifting positions. In his 1990 monograph, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, al-Qaradawi begins his discourse supportive of dialogue between Islamists and rational Westerners and Christians. Over a decade later his support for IFD continued, as evident in his endorsement of the official "A Common Word Between Us" and engagement in several interfaith dialogue efforts. In the monograph he recounts an encounter with a nationalist Christian at a symposium called "The Islamic Awakening and the Woes of the Arab World." This symposium was not an effort at IFD, but engaged a diverse audience including Christians. After presenting, the Christian told al-Qaradawi that after his direct experience with the Islamist Muslim he no

longer considered him a fanatic, but an “extremely flexible and tolerant [man].”³¹³ He stressed the need for dialogue in order to show others that Islamists are “advocates of peace, not callers for war”³¹⁴ and advocated for dialogue on religious, intellectual, and political levels believing that “dialogue is better than fighting or escape.”³¹⁵ Al-Qaradawi’s use of Islam in supporting this perspective does not differ significantly from that of previous scholars. He presents dialogue as an opportunity to “calm down the anxious, and maybe even alleviate the animosity of those with a grudge,” possibly even establishing a friendship with those considered enemies.³¹⁶ He shows a preference for a dialogue format, as opposed to more heated and potentially hostile format of debate, offering the Qur’anic injunction to “invite [all] to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in the ways that are best and most gracious.”³¹⁷ Like Fadlullah, al-Qaradawi reasons that if God would not close the door to dialogue with Iblis, Satan, as revealed in 38:71-85, then “the Qur’an has laid down for us the practice of dialogue with those who differ with us.”³¹⁸ He says the “points of agreements [*sic*]” between the Christians and Muslims facilitate dialogue, as indicated by 29:46, and that “In fact, dialogue was one of the means of promuloogating [*sic*] the Call that the Prophet [peace be upon him] started in his historic letters to Hercules [*sic*], Al

³¹³ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, (Swansea: Awakening Publishing, 2000), accessed online- http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/Q_Priorities/ch4p1-1.htm#The%20Movement%20And%20Dialogue%20With%20Others, 29. (last accessed 15 July 2010).

³¹⁴ Ibid, 33.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 35-36.

³¹⁶ Q.60:7. Al-Qaradawi, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, 29 (accessed online).

³¹⁷ Q.16:125.

³¹⁸ Ibid, 35.

Muqawquis (Chief Copt in Egypt), the Negus (of Abyssinia) and other rulers of People of the Book.”³¹⁹

Al-Qaradawi also engages the humanist theme of previous scholars:

Our mission is to guide the confused humanity to the Way of Allah and link earthly life to the Hereafter, Earth to Heaven and human being to human being, so that a man may like for his fellow man what he likes for himself and hates for him what he hates for himself, and so that mankind may be cured of the illness of all nations: envy and grudge. For this renders humanity bare of religion.³²⁰

This emphasis on teaching confused humanity places this discourse at a religiocentric phase of development because it posits that Muslims are not confused as those adhering to other religions. The emphasis on teaching the “other,” while engaging the humanist theme employed within the universalist discourse, is particularist. Furthermore, its focus is on teaching other religions, not learning from others. Al-Qaradawi also sees dialogue as an opportunity to reestablish relations, and diminish the influence of the historical narratives of the Crusades and imperialism, which continue to foster hostility. All of this would appear to confer upon him a dove position. So, how could he be portrayed as an extreme hawk?

Primarily it is al-Qaradawi’s assertion in the legitimacy of force, *in some situations*, which has led western media to portray him as an extremist. Unlike previous scholars who shy away from fully addressing interfaith dialogue during conflict, his discourse of Christian-Muslim IFD actually does not address it at all. These references condoning force are not connected with IFD or Christian-Muslim relations, but with

³¹⁹ Q.13:64. Ibid, 36.

³²⁰ Ibid, 33.

struggles against Israel and America. According to the definitions established in this thesis, this would preclude him from a categorization of extreme dove, but not moderate dove or owl. Additionally, having written an essay for the purpose of undermining Islamic extremism, in which he chastises Islamic extremists for preventing opportunities for dialogue, al-Qaradawi's discourse would be forced to shift significantly in order to be determined an extreme hawk. So, how has al-Qaradawi's discourse changed?

In a sermon aired on Qatar television October 30, 2009 al-Qaradawi explained his reasoning for advocating a halt to Muslim-Christian dialogue. These reasons are not explained with Qur'anic references or *hadith*, but result from his frustration with Christians. First, he points to the lack of apology directly from the Pope or from the Vatican after the Catholic leader's disparaging Regensburg address, which was considered an affront to Islam. Next he shares his concern that Christian-Muslim dialogue is futile. These frustrations derived from then-recent experiences participating in interfaith dialogue, and a conference, "The Christians of the Middle East" wherein Christians would not recognize Islam, even disapproving of including Muslims in a statement "the people of divine religions."³²¹ Al-Qaradawi did not argue that dialogue should permanently cease, but that in the present circumstances it is not beneficial. This discourse is not calling directly for violence against Christians either, although he does warn "Westerners, Americans, and the Europeans" who remained silent when offensive

³²¹ "Sheikh Al-Qaradawi Explains His Objections to Muslim-Christian Interfaith Dialogue," excerpts from sermon-<http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/3790.htm> Sermon aired on Qatar TV October 30, 2009- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdEcgidzEk> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad were published that such silence “begets violence, generates terrorism.”³²²

6. Evaluating the Islamic Discourse of Scholars

Although the hawk discourse is not present in this thesis, the dove/owl perspectives provide diverse viewpoints from which to articulate the legitimacy of IFD between Christians and Muslims. These included the more extreme portrayal of Islam as equal to all other religions, with all of humanity seeking the same divine God, to Muslims commanded to teach humanity so that they may better understand God’s intent. This range of universalist and particularist themes, coupled with subthemes of IFD supporting humanity, social stability, and a reflection of accepting God’s will, produce a variety of goals for IFD. These goals include: accepting the human race as one family; learning from each other to better serve and understand God; learning to tolerate religious differences; tolerating and bestowing knowledge; accepting religious pluralism and learning from each other; and toleration with some mutual learning and teaching.

The most obvious “hole” which appears in this discourse is the general lack of articulation regarding interreligious dialogue during times of conflict. Clearly, there is no opposition to implementing IFD as a conflict prevention or transformation tool, since fighting would either have not yet emerged or concluded. Talbi and Fadlullah were the only two scholars specifically to oppose dialogue with fighting parties. As indicated,

³²² “Sheikh Al-Qaradawi Responds to Cartoons of Prophet Muhammad: Whoever is Angered and Does not Rage in Anger is a Jackass- We Are Not a Nation of Jackasses,” February 9, 2006- <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/1604.htm> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

however, Fadlullah's argument also could be considered support for IFD under these circumstances since he added the need to transform enemies into friends.

This failure to fully engage with the possible context of dialogue during conflict is representative of the Muslim discourse. References to current or historical situations involving violence between Christians and Muslims are only briefly and vaguely mentioned, and certainly not fully addressed. In all of the cases, the violence is presented in necessary and defensive terms, which will cease with the cessation of Christian offensives. This does not account for possible propaganda encouraging Muslims to perceive Christian actions as attacks, when they may not be actual acts of violence (such as cartoon images of the Prophet Muhammad). These actions may be offensive, and even provocative, but not necessarily hostile actions requiring retaliation under the pretext of defensive measures. This lack of situational engagement also neglects to consider the perpetuation of the cycle of violence at a societal level. Once conflict has become intractable, over long periods, a security consciousness is adopted and generally all the involved parties assume a need to defend themselves, legitimizing ongoing acts of violence as necessary defensive measures. Regardless of which party initiated the conflict, once both parties assume violent "defensive" measures are necessary, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish the offense from the defense. This means that even the initiation of an isolated squirmish is presented in defensive measure for both parties, engaging in a broader context of the situation.

Since these Muslim scholar-activists did not apply IFD to situations of fighting, most of the contentious verses in support of fighting were also unmentioned. It is

interesting that scholars who attempted to address some of the more difficult topics, such as negative portrayals of Christians, did not thoroughly explore the range of contentious verses revealed in the normative section of this section. Additionally, while there were limited *hadith* found in the collection of al-Bukhari, none of the arguments of the legitimacy of Christian-Muslim dialogue based on the Prophet's interactions with non-Muslims were referenced. Actually, very little *hadith* was overtly referenced, with most uncited. Hence, broad attempts to dismiss violent aspects of *jihad* and Muslim/non-Muslim relations are evident, but they fail to adequately reconcile legitimized calls for violence with the themes of patience, forgiveness, and coexistence.

7. IFD as a Peacebuilding Tool in Muslim Societies: Offering Clarification of the Discourse

Our analysis of the Islamic discourse of interfaith dialogue shows a lack of engagement and voiced support for dialogue in environments characterized by Muslim-Christian violence. This does not, however, present a significant obstacle to its implementation as a conflict management and resolution tool. Rather than oppositional demands for IFD efforts to halt as a peacebuilding tool, several Muslim societies have been engaging in IFD for such purposes. Considerations and formulations of an Islamic discourse are incomplete if they only examine what is being said about Muslim-Christian dialogue, neglecting how IFD is implemented within Muslim societies.

Current implementation of interfaith dialogue within conflict zones, including Nigeria, Sudan, and the Philippines contradicts interpretations of the discourse's ambiguity as a lack of support for IFD amongst Muslim scholars in such circumstances.

This apparent contradiction offers clarification of the dialogue. Although the verbal and printed support for dialogue avoids directly addressing hostile situations and contexts for IFD, the exploitation of dialogue during Christian-Muslim hostilities shows implicit support. The growth of and calls for interfaith efforts in areas experiencing interreligious hostilities further points to this support.

Interfaith efforts have increased in Lebanon, with calls for the country to become the “hub for IFD.”³²³ Interfaith networks have also emerged in Indonesia and Malaysia with the former president of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid, and former prime minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim, serving as Muslim activists for IFD initiatives within their respective countries. Clearly there are possible applications of IFD in other countries experiencing simmering tensions or outright violence between the religious groups.³²⁴ Implementation of Muslim-Christian dialogue through both official and grassroots efforts in these require further study and consideration.

³²³ “Lebanon aims to become hub for inter-faith dialogue” Ya Libnan <http://www.yalibnan.com/2010/03/28/lebanon-aims-to-become-hub-for-inter-faith-dialogue/> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

³²⁴ These are not limited to, but include: Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Ghana, Senegal, and Egypt.

CONCLUSION

Western and Christian connections to the initiation of interfaith dialogue force the discourse to be presented as consistent with Islamic principles in order to attain legitimacy with a Muslim audience. This thesis accomplishes this by approaching this Islamic discourse of IFD from two angles. First, a baseline of themes underlying the principles and practices of IFD are identified in order to determine applicable Qur'anic verses and *hadith*. Examination of these sacred primary texts facilitates the consideration of all the possible angles which subsequent interpretation may engage.

This groundwork reveals a profound ambiguity in determining important concepts such as believer. Without a clear definition relayed in the Qur'an or *hadith* of al-Bukhari, both historical narratives and developmental stages of interreligious competency influence this determination. The Islamic scripture also presents a variety of possible complications to IFD, such as less than favorable characterizations of Christians, warnings of non-Muslim intents, and those extolling the merits of *jihad* and those who fight on God's behalf. The Qur'an and *hadith* not only presents complications, but a plethora of references to patience, forgiveness, and treating all people with respect.

While the primary texts are significant, the manner in which they are used to in the Islamic discourse is even more revealing. Scholars and intellectuals must either engage with the traditional discourse, circumventing and avoiding complications, or disentangle the historical influences from that traditional narrative to produce a modern interpretation. The discourses of Muslims reveal both methods at work. Badawi and Ramadan present the most comprehensive attempts to create a modern interpretation of

Islam in English. They attempt to “normalize” the discourse by separating Qur’anic verses from historical factors and explain the reasons for those traditional interpretations. This justifies deviation from traditional explanations that do not state direct objection to the principles of IFD, yet present complications determining the legitimacy of Muslim-Christian dialogue. Al-Faruqi, Talbi, Fadullah, Ashafa, Gülen and al-Qaradawi each primarily engage and maneuver around the more traditional interpretations. Al-Faruqi and Gülen also warn Muslims of separating historical narratives and unfavorable characterizations of Christians from Christianity, most similar to Badawi and Ramadan’s strategy for creating a modern interpretation. Muhaiyaddeen’s discourse did not engage either method of religious interpretation, but is based in a philosophical, rather than religious, universalist framework.

The rationale for IFD is structured differently by each Muslim intellectual, not only in the traditional or modern interpretations, or what is actually said, but in their perspectives of religious pluralism. The four activist-scholars who promote a universalist viewpoint that all religions are equal and members of a single family directed towards the same God also employ a strong humanist message. Muhaiyaddeen, Gülen, Badawi, and al-Faruqi all consider IFD a tool through which participants develop acceptance of each other, furthering a religiorelationist perspective. Al-Faruqi’s ecumenical focus is the apex of universalism, reflecting the utmost final stage of religiorelativism. Muhaiyaddeen further expands calls for acceptance to calls for universal love. Each of these scholars refers to adherents of other religions as “believers,” indicating this universalist equality.

Of the remaining Muslim advocates for IFD, only Talbi combines the universalist and particularist perspectives. This viewpoint stresses the unique dimension of each religion that interrelate to each other through a common humanity. Every individual has the ability and freedom to chose their own religious belief system, hence although they are not the same, people are equal and should not judge one another. Like the previous universalist Muslims, this reflects a religiorelative awareness.

The theme of humanism is not unique to the universalist or universal-particularist point of view. Al-Qaradawi and Fadlullah also stress the importance of the unity of people through a particularist discourse. Their discourse differs from Talbi's universal-particularism in their references to non-Muslims as "disbelievers." Although people must learn to coexist, and IFD serves as an instrument to facilitate religious tolerance, religions are not considered equal. Rather than seeing the religions as intertwined, they are seen as separate and without the equality evident in universalist discourses. Muslims engaging in dialogue with Christians are not seeking to convert Christians, but certainly to teach them the ways of God. This discourse relates to a religiocentric attitude.

Social stability is another theme that underlies all of the discourses. IFD is perceived as a forum through which tolerance, even acceptance may be fostered between religious communities, thus assisting in the creation of social stability. Ashafa frames his interfaith dialogue discourse with stability serving the primary rationale for engagement. He examines both commonalities and divergences between Christianity and Islam and asserts the importance of addressing theological discord within IFD. Although focusing

on tolerance, rather than acceptance, this call for full examination of the religions falls at the beginnings of the religiorelative spectrum.

Ramadan presents a final unique dimension to his particularist discourse. He considers the creation of tolerance between religions acceptance of God's will for religious diversity. Unlike Badawi, who sees all people on the same path to God and engages a humanistic call to accept diversity as a sign of God's mercy and wisdom, Ramadan calls for *toleration* of that diversity resulting from the *acceptance* of God's creation which culminates in social stability. This focus on tolerance is also indicative of the transitional period between religiocentrism and religiorelativism.

The connections between universalism and religiorelativism are strong. The messages of acceptance from universalists and universal-particularists are reflective of this development of a religiorelativist view. The particularists, on the other had, tend to call for religious tolerance, revealing a "transitional" spectrum between "religiocentrism" and "religiorelativism." Those, such as Fadlullah and al-Qaradawi who indicate a difference in equality between religions and Muslims and non-Muslims are closer to the religiocentric view. Ashafa, who calls for a more thorough examination of IFD based on commonalities and differences, places closer to the religiorelative position.

In addition to creating unique structures for Muslim-Christian dialogue advocacy, the Muslim scholars are each unique in the manner they approach the potential barriers of violence to interfaith dialogue. Their advocacy for IFD immediately places them on the dove-owl spectrum. Not one of the Muslims advocated force over cooperation with Christian communities. Instead, the outliers, Muhaiyaddeen, the extreme dove, and al-

Qaradawi, the owl, indicated either no support for any violence whatsoever (Muhaiyaddeen) or balanced opportunities for either force or dialogue depending on the costs and benefits of each (al-Qaradawi). Each of the remaining seven scholars addressed the complication of violence and *jihad* and other possible obstacles to IFD in unique ways. Fadlullah actually deemed interfaith dialogue as a *jihad* against the misconception of Islam, indicating that those peacefully coexisting with Muslim should receive justice and tolerance and are accepted interlocutors for dialogue. This ambiguous limitation of dialogue with “those who are peaceful” is also implicit in “A Common Word” and the discourses of al-Faruqi and Gülen. This fails to then determine the extent of this barrier. Badawi and Ramadan attempt to clarify the dimensions of *jihad* and *kafir*, two terms often indicated as barriers to IFD, but avoid elucidating the role of Christian-Muslim dialogue during hostilities. Talbi notes that IFD is restricted and not applicable to “those who do wrong” and Muslims must fight when doing so is required.

Gülen was the only scholar to directly refer to the Qur’anic characterizations of Christians as evil, spreaders of corruption, impure, liars; with hardened, veiled, sealed, corroded, and diseased hearts. He reminds Muslims not to dwell on these descriptions, but to also recall more gentle verses of a close relationship between Muslims and Christians. Al-Faruqi, Badawi, and Ramadan do not directly address these characterizations, but remind Muslims to separate themselves from the collective memory of the Christians of the Crusades and colonialism and distinguish between the religion of Christianity and its adherents. Interestingly, the theme of patience in lieu of violence does not emerge. Al-Qaradawi was the only one to refer to the theme of

forgiveness with Q.60:7, with Ramadan, Talbi, and Badawi referring to 49:13 and Ramadan and al-Qaradawi noting 29:46 in direct support of dialogue. Additionally, very few *hadith* are included in the discourse.

There were several additional arguments for IFD that emerged. Ramadan contends that God created religious diversity and IFD presents itself as a tool to manage that diversity, as “Muslims and Christians compete in doing good.” He further argues that IFD is simply an attitude, or manner of being. Al-Qaradawi reasons that if God would enter into a dialogue with Satan, then certainly Muslims should be able to enter dialogue with Christians.³²⁵ Talbi contends that religions were created for the benefit of the community, thus dialogue is inherently supported. He also adds that it is not for people to judge, only God, thus, Christians should not be judged as non-believers. Gülen and Muhayaiddeen were closest in their universal call for IFD as a forum for both Muslims and Christians to seek higher understandings of the same God. Badawi and al-Faruqi also shared a universal basis for IFD, yet focus only on the “People of the Book” as participants of this dialogue. Ashafa shares the theme of stability, with the commonalities between Muslims and Christians serving as a catalyst for dialogue regarding the theological differences between the religions. Like Ramadan, Ashafa presents IFD as a mechanism for managing diversity.

A fascinating characteristic of this discourse in its entirety is the lack of references of Islamic scholars to other modern scholars and intellectuals. None of the arguments of these scholars addressed the discourse of advocates, or presented other

³²⁵ Fadlullah engages a similar argument.

alternative perspectives of IFD. This lack of a comprehensive Islamic discourse further accentuates the fragmented nature of portrayals of IFD.

Muslim advocates of IFD include not only individual Muslim scholar-activists, but Muslim states and heads of state, through their sponsorship of IFD conferences and documents including “A Common Word.” Although these efforts may be deemed hollow, even ineffective, they are important in formulating a comprehensive Islamic discourse and facilitating social consideration and acceptance of IFD efforts. Interfaith dialogue is most effective when “official” measures are paired with grassroots action, occurring at a multitude of societal levels.

A final factor in the Islamic discourse of IFD is the manner in which it is actually engaged within Muslim societies. Although the written and verbal discourse creates fairly ambiguous parameters to the role of Muslim-Christian dialogue as a peacebuilding tool, this lack of attention to more clearly establishing these borders has not prevented the application of IFD. This gap remains unexplored and unresolved, even in the discourse of the Nigerian Muslim imam who leads grassroots dialogue efforts after previously pursuing a mission of defeating the Christian enemy. Upon deeper consideration, examining the implementation of IFD offers potential clarification of these limitations.

The discourse is quite clear that in situations without actual violence between Muslim and Christian communities there is no barrier to IFD. This allows for contentions, even the development of antagonism, but not violence. Abu-Nimer, Khoury and Welty also pointed to social factors prompting the hesitation to enter IFD during active hostilities. There is no question of the legitimacy, according to the Islamic

discourse, of applying IFD as a conflict prevention or transformation/reconciliation tool. This indicates that IFD presents itself most legitimate socially and religiously as a preventative and transformative or reconciliation measure. Although segments of both Muslim and Christian populations adhering to dove viewpoints may continue to engage, or initiate IFD efforts during such hostilities, during violence such collaboration may be seen as too risky by others sharing hawkish, even owlsh perspectives. Without the added component of violence, after conflict is resolved and peace treaties are established, IFD would more easily engage such individuals.

The discourse is less clear on the limitations to IFD during conflict, as a mechanism for management or resolution. However, the unchallenged implementation of dialogue within Muslim and Christian communities characterized by interreligious violence reveals implicit legitimization for that process. The implied acceptance in the Muslim community of dialogue as means to manage and assist in the resolution of conflict reflects the aptitude of the Muslim community to recognize the importance of coexistence (*ta'ayush*) and need for favorable outcomes of interfaith dialogue. Hence, opportunities for dialogue are provided without explicit Islamic legitimization. With the number of conferences and centers dedicated to IFD increasing, full considerations of the situational complications posited to IFD may emerge, particularly if opposition to dialogue appears.

In 2006 President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declared “the vestiges of conflict in Mindanao are finally fading away” due to IFD.³²⁶ She further emphasized that dialogue

³²⁶ “Arroyo pushes interfaith dialog to fight terror” 29 January 2006, Arroyo Watch

is the path to peace.³²⁷ This growing attention to IFD as a potential tool to facilitate peacebuilding principles presents several questions warranting further research. First, are there complications to these efforts due to the lack of explicit scholarly approval of IFD during situations of fighting? Are there any voices contending that these efforts are illegitimate according to Islam? How successful are IFD efforts and how are they being implemented? Are official IFD efforts obtaining significant results, or are results most apparent with the application of IFD at a variety of tracks in society, engaging official and grassroots levels of communities? Does the implementation of IFD during violence assist in the resolution of the conflict, or manage the conflict so that it continues with lower levels of violence? Further longitudinal research is needed to determine whether lulls in violence in societies engaging in IFD are actually signs of a resolution and transformation of conflict, or management of tensions. Additional research remains to address the methods of IFD implementation efforts in countries experiencing Christian-Muslim tensions or conflict.

This thesis only commences the articulation and examination of an Islamic discourse. It is evident that future research must continue to assemble and analyze the voices of Muslim leaders and individuals. This includes studying the media, mosques, and international and grassroots organizations. Research examining the manner in which grassroots IFD leaders and participants frame the discourse is also recommended.

<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/blogs/citizenwatch/?p=431> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

³²⁷ “Arroyo pushes interfaith dialog to fight terror” 29 January 2006, Arroyo Watch <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/blogs/citizenwatch/?p=431> (last accessed 15 July 2010).

Interviews and longitudinal studies are warranted to determine the impacts of IFD at individual and communal levels.

Conflict is a natural result of human diversity. Differences in beliefs, thoughts, actions, and desires, will inevitably all lead to misunderstandings. The inherent nature of religion creates divides within populations. Interfaith dialogue cannot, and should not, wipe away the differences. Instead it opens channels of communication and serves as a bridge to cross the chasm of disparity. It promotes acceptance, or at least tolerance of these natural differences, and understanding that the religious differences do not necessitate antagonism, and certainly not violence. Furthermore dialogue thwarts the instinctive dehumanizing “othering” which occurs with conflict. When successful, people come to recognize the commonalities that exist underneath the more apparent differences and are no longer in denial of those differences. Rather than becoming an enemy because of our differences, we see our shared humanity. As at least one Muslim scholar indicates, IFD offers a peaceful forum for this innate struggle which is preferable to the battleground.

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