

DRAWING A NON-CONFESSIONAL BOUNDARY FOR INTERFAITH DIALOGUE: A FAITH DEVELOPMENT THEORY APPROACH

Uzeyir Ok

L'objectiu d'aquest estudi és avaluar l'enfocament islàmic al pluralisme, el diàleg i la pau entre les diferents fes. Després d'analitzar cada concepte de pluralisme, diàleg i monòleg, l'estudi se centra en els supòsits del diàleg i la seva justificació. Tot seguit, parla de possibles característiques de personalitat que poden obstruir la via cap al diàleg entre diverses espiritualitats. L'estudi desenvolupa la seva pròpia interpretació del concepte de Jihad, Tabligh sota la llum dels versos controvertits de l'Alcorà. L'estudi presenta el supòsit que històricament l'ensenyament de l'islam reconeix la pluralitat i ha convidat altres fes a cooperar per tal d'assolir l'acte de fer el bé a la terra per a la humanitat. Finalment, després d'enumerar els principis del diàleg, acaba amb alguns suggeriments sobre com facilitar el diàleg entre els membres de fes diferents a través de diverses activitats educatives i d'una altra naturalesa.

369

Last year in another interfaith meeting the author referring to the verses of the Qur'an and giving examples from the life of the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) supported the theoretical view that the 'default' position of Islam is basically a peace-loving and not a pro-war religion. However, when certain conditions required, Muslims are encouraged to defend their freedom, faith and lands. The conclusion was that, given the specific nature of the content of the Qur'an and its idiosyncratic method of expression, it can be argued that the Muslim perspective on whether the Islam is a peace-loving religion or not depends on the political, psychological, sociological, cultural and economic conditions in which they live. Some may interpret Islamic references in such a way that they may derive a conclusion to encourage fellow-

believers to resort to fight against 'enemies' of religion when required; others may argue that it is not allowed to declare war in the same or a similar condition. Therefore, it is suggested to check the wider surroundings in which Muslims interpret the teachings of the Qur'an rather than the teachings themselves.

Just to give a brief introduction, the notion of interreligious dialogue was discussed during 1962-1965 sessions and then approved in 1965 (with the document called *Nostra Aetate*) by the Roman Catholics in the 2nd Vatican Council as a general strategy in relations towards non-Christian religions and Muslims in particular (Aydin, 2002, pp. 19-20). The change in the attitude towards other religions can be regarded as a paradigm shift in the Catholic Church history. Since, until then, the salvation was seen in the monopoly of the Church as it is the characteristic of many faiths today.

The motive behind the interfaith dialogue is important. In short, it was apparently seen as part of a Christian mission (Bliese, 1999, p. 176) which will be discussed further below. The justifying conditions for interfaith dialogue were specified by Brown (1984) as follows:

In recent years, several factors have compelled churches and educational institutions to pay greater attention to interreligious dialogue: the growth of the churches in Asia and Africa, renewal of other major religions in reaction to Western imperialism (political, economic and cultural), easier and quicker transport, development of media through radio, television and satellite, labour mobility and the development of world community. Few societies, except in isolated areas, remain homogeneous (p.112).

Folkemer (1976) argues that interfaith dialogue and Christian proclamation should be seen as interwoven with each other (p. 421). He sees dialogue without the Gospel as a mere conversation (p. 429). In a similar way, Schoen (1999) regards dialogue and witness as necessary for the fullness of life of a religious community (p. 109). To him, dialogue becomes a kind of reciprocal testimony, in which a phase of "witnessing" or proclamation alternates with a phase of respectful listening (p. 109). Dialogue is seen as all forms of ecclesial activity, namely presence, evangelization, *enculturation* and witness. In addition, John Paul II sees dialogue as the way to exercise the entire mission in today's world (quoted from Zago, 1999). In another sense, dialogue may be intended, at least initially, as a specific activity or one of the forms of the mission, sometimes the only one, for it is addressed to the members of non-Christian religions (p. 234).

Although the initiative of interfaith dialogue seems originally a confessional activity with these missionary considerations, it should

not prevent us from appreciating the endeavour by the Catholic Church. Since, hardly any other topic of our present age shows more clearly the interrelatedness of universalism and pluralism, an interrelatedness that determines the form of present intercultural and interreligious dialogue (Huber, 1999, p. 193). As in the case of human rights, the core content of interfaith dialogue should include the values of freedom, equality, and participation (Huber, 1999, p. 194). Because the interfaith dialogue is a universal matter, its format needs to be non-confessional.

The conceptual as well as theoretical (at the level of both theological and philosophical) foundations of interfaith dialogue seem to be in need of discussion, revision, and modification perhaps with support from empirical findings.

PROBLEM

In this study, I sought an answer to the following question. Is it possible to design certain principles and contents for possible non-confessional constructive interfaith meetings, which may be common to, and shared by, the majority of the value systems? In this regard, the discussion may go around the issues of method, key elements, assumptions, motivations, aims, challenges and ground rules. I see two main steps in interfaith dialogues: (a) specifying the abovementioned aspects of interfaith meetings ending with a maximum consensus among the participants; (b) starting actively dealing with global problems and emancipation of people with the help of interfaith collaboration in the light of the principles proposed.

Following are two main problematical areas:

(1) At least some groups of the same faith community may naturally claim that their view of the world is the 'truest', their values are the only guidance for all humanity and the salvation of humankind depends on their participation in their system. Nevertheless, when they come face to face with the situation in which they may feel bound to come together with 'outsiders' for the 'peace' of the world and to determine universal ground rules for such a meeting, they may feel in contradiction between being loyal to the teachings of their faith and the opportunity of identifying with the world faiths for the sake of collaboration.

To put it in a question format, then, will we fall in a position in which the theological content of our faith will necessarily be sacrificed for the sake of dialogue? Should the method of the interfaith meetings be loyal to, and determined by, the basics of participating faiths

or should it be non-confessional or what? In other words, should the intended dialogue be grounded on common precepts of various faiths or on more universal secular humane values? The occasion of interfaith dialogue is universal but its participants are bound to a framework of a certain faith whether individual or community, to a geography and to a certain socio-cultural condition.

Alternatively, every participant of the interfaith dialogue may pick the universal or common elements from the repertoire of their faith. However, the quandary is that these elements may not picture the nature of their traditions in their authenticity. Another alternative is theological to which the participants may observe the principles of their traditions and may pose interpretation on the scripture confirming that the interpretation is consistent with the essence of that specific religious tradition which they represent. This approach carries the risk of turning the sharing or communality principle into the mutual monologue and egocentrism.

A third alternative is that they may hold scientific approaches in the sense that they prioritize the scientific findings disregarding the commandments of their faith. The disadvantage of this secular version of faith is that it may not find supporters among religious traditions.

(2) The matter of whether activities of mission, proclamation or evangelization should be included in dialogue meetings is another problem to be discussed.

THE METHOD

The content of this study was specified by a number of factors.

The preparation of this paper is based on subjective reflections of the presenter who is engaged in search of an interfaith identity after joining a number of interfaith meetings in the past. The author, who believes in the power of scientific traditions and being in favour of universalizable values, questions how certain common values, based on solid logical and scientific ground, can be developed to discuss problems relevant to faith, culture and tradition.

The suggestions here were not directly derived from the teachings of Islam. However, whether conscious or unconscious, they may bear some Islamic colours because of the fact that the author was brought in an Islamic culture and trained in Islamic studies. His faith is nurtured by a community in which secularization has not completed its maturity. Hence, it would be no more than a utopia to claim a neutral position, though it is the ideal one.

The author inspired from the findings of the theory of faith development coined by James W. Fowler. The reason for choosing the theory is the fact that when studying 'faith' it was based not on pure religious precepts but on scientific data supported by empirical researches and theories. The theory of faith development has been inspired from several theories including those of social development by Erik Erikson, intellectual development by Jean Piaget, moral development by Lawrence Kohlberg, and other developmental and theological approaches.

There are a number of key concepts to be discussed to ease the argument about the format of interfaith dialogue. Mainly, they are *faith*, *participants*, *dialogue* and *pluralism*

KEY ELEMENTS OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

1. Faith

Findings in current studies encouraged and enabled scholars to develop global and pluralistic definitions of faith and spirituality. These definitions commonly emphasize that, despite the diversity in its content, faith or spirituality has a universal structure and, thus, every human being should be included within the considerations of interfaith dialogue. For instance, to Hull (2002) spirituality "refers to the way we realise the potential of our biological nature by transcending previous levels" (p. 172).

Fowler argued that in every observable content of an individual faith there is a structure, which is deeper and more stable than the content. Thus, it is not the question of *what* people believe but the matter of *how* people believe that should be taken into consideration. The result of extensive longitudinal qualitative studies revealed six consecutive stages which Fowler claimed global to individuals in all traditions. Each stage is ranked according to the way in which one perceives seven characteristics. In other words, an individual's stage of faith is determined by the way s/he responds to these seven characteristics. These include one's ways of (1) logical thinking, (2) seeing social relations, (3) making moral decisions, (4) establishing the boundary of one's social group, (5) selecting the authority, (6) forming of world coherence, and (7) perceiving the symbols.

To Fowler, faith is people's "way of finding coherence in and giving meaning to the multiple forces and relations that make their lives" (Fowler, 1981, p. 4). In other words, it is "people's orientation to the ultimate environment in terms of what they value as being most rele-

vant and important to their entire lives" (Jacobs, 1993, p. 26).

The definitions above have a number of implications for interfaith meetings. Faith is used in this study to denote a meaning similar to "world view", "belief system", "consciousness" and it involves an alignment of the heart or will, a commitment of loyalty and trust. To Tillich, faith involves the whole person, mind, emotion, and will (quoted from Folkemer, 1976, p. 431). Faith is not purely given, it is one's own achievements of getting what may be believed as "given" or not. It is possible to argue that every individual has a common spirituality, which may be nourished by Islam, Christianity, Humanism, Capitalism, Communism, etc. These *-isms* are not an aim in themselves but are the means for a higher purpose, i.e. for humanisation.

The phrase *interfaith* was preferred to interreligious because faith, as may have been noticed, is more inclusive than religion and it is not only religious traditions which are determinative of the collective identities. Another risk of using the word interreligious is that members of the same tradition may not be on the same level of religiosity. Thus, interreligious dialogues may tacitly be imposing a certain cliché or stereotyped religious identity to the participants taking place in the dialogue. In fact, people can be judged according to their achievements but not with things imposed on them.

As an implication of the definition of the key term faith, interfaith dialogues are meetings of 'worldviews', not the faith monopolized by cumulative religious traditions. Therefore, intentional individual or group meetings taking place on the anticipation of more than one perspective can be regarded as the interfaith dialogue, regardless whether it occurs between members of organized religions or not.

2. Dialogicality

Faith, by its very nature, is dynamic, interactive and social. It is an active and conscious attitude taking to the self, others and the world, and deciding on one among many possible. It is an active mode of being and committing, a way of moving into and giving shape to our experiences of life. It is always relational, namely, dialogical (Fowler, 1981, p. 16).

The word dialogue can be defined in two main contexts: (a) Religious studies and (b) Literary studies. Dialogue is "a form of acting and being which refuses excessive individuality, constantly considerate of the other side and believe in advancing power of this relationship" (Borrman, 1987, p. 31). It is a mutual opening of people to each other, arising from the desire to learn from another faith and to be enriched by it (Schoen, 1999, p. 109). Among the main characteristics

of dialogue there is a form of action, which is based on being ready to embrace the other side, listening to them and accepting their plurality. It is opening oneself to the ideas, the culture, and the philosophy of the others' world (Schoen, 1999, p. 111). The differentiation and diversity not as just distinctness and separateness is but a special way of being connected to others (Irving and Young, 2002).

In the social condition of a plural society many languages, genres, discourses and voices resulting from the varieties of faith and ideological groups, coexist within a condition, which Bakhtin termed as *heteroglossia*. These factors remain in interaction and dialogical relations, thus, exposing the members of faith to be in a position of being addressable as well as addressers. Only those who are 'other' to us can call out from us responses we could never call from ourselves (Shotter, 2001, p. 169).

The opposite condition of dialogism can be monologism, namely, an *authoritative faith*, which refuses to engage in dialogue, and to enter mutual constructions, with other faiths. A monologic faith expects people to acknowledge its word and make it their own, without trying to persuade them internally. Authoritative faith can be accepted or rejected but it is impracticable to enter into a conversation with it.

The monologue is oppressive. Everything that was completed, fixed, determined, and too narrowly defined is dogmatic and repressive. On the other hand, the *carnival* sense of the world is one in which the highest values are openness and incompleteness (Irving and Young, 2002, p. 6). Monological faith at its extreme denies the existence outside itself of another faith with equal rights and equal responsibilities. With a monologic approach another person remains wholly and merely an object of faith, and not another faith. No response is expected from it, which could change one's faith (Irving and Young, 2002).

3. The Sociological Context: Pluralism and Multiculturalism

Dialogue may occur in unstructured forms whenever people of different religions meet within a public social environment. In most situations it happens spontaneously, haphazardly and often implicitly (Brown, 1984, p. 112). In the educational system of pluralist societies, dialogue takes place in RE lessons, but also at many points in the curriculum and in the social relationships between groups in the school (Brown, 1984, s. 113).

Pluralism is used to define a social condition in which cultural, religious, ideological differences and geographical origins are distinguishable. In such a condition "two or more sharply contrasting cultural

and religious communities exist within the same political community. It becomes more acute when the political community is, or is perceived to be, dominated by one particular cultural or religious community" (Chaplin, 1993, p. 32).

In opposition to the tendency in modern societies to cultural unification and universalization, multiculturalism both celebrates and seeks to protect cultural variety (Jary and Jary, 1999, p. 429). Co-existence of differing traditional groups may require an attitude of reluctant sufferance of other religions (Wolfinger, 1999, p. 459) and demands fundamental readiness for dialogue, mutual respect, and learning and acceptance (Wolfinger, 1999, p. 461).

ASSUMPTIONS FOR INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

When people accept joining interfaith meetings, they are presumed to be regarded as a group who inevitably agreed on the following assumptions:

(1) In order to respect each other and to live in peace and harmony, the members of the human family do not necessarily need to belong to a single faith.

(2) The spiritual values of each participant's faith are equal in terms of deserving respect and they may have as much potential to lead to truth as others can. Therefore, they do not introduce their faith as the only true or authentic way to God.

(3) They also acknowledge that their faith allows, perhaps encourages, its members to engage in dialogue with others from different faiths for the aim of creating a better world for humanity.

(4) The dialogical social or group condition of dialogue is better than without it. Life without constructive collaboration, sense of respect and sympathy among various cultural communities is potentially closer to destructive spiritual competition, conflict and tension among believers in different faiths than being present at intentional dialogue.

(5) A common ground can be found for tolerance and mutual respect towards 'outsiders' not only in the three monotheistic religions but also in other faiths. Since, humanity has unsolved puzzles to which they invariably search answers: "What is human? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is the upright behaviour? What is the source and aim of suffering? What is the way leading to real happiness? What happens at death? What is the ultimate and mysterious end which surrounds our existence, with which we find our root and to which we move towards?" (Zago 1999, p. 235).

MOTIVATIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Why do people engage in interfaith dialogue? What kind of awareness should the interfaith dialogue provide its participants with?

The proponents of socio-cultural activity theory, such as Vygotsky and Bakhtin among others, suggest that engaging in *dialogue* is more creative and more teaching for humanity than acting in *monologue*.

Schoen (1999, p. 110) mentions several reasons for dialogue:

First, through promoting real understanding, interfaith dialogue gets rid of mutual misunderstandings and stereotyped judgments. Thus, the similarities and differences become clear. Second, dialogue serves to improve relationships between people. It prevents those who misuse religion from justifying their wishes and unmasks those who hide their own motives for conflict behind what they allege to be divine authorization. Third, through dialogue one sees the practicability of working together with those from other faiths in humanitarian, economic, political, intellectual, and spiritual matters. Fourth, dialogue can contribute to the deepening of one's own faith and to refinement of one's perception of God. Dialogue enables people to understand their own beliefs more clearly, but in a way which reflects the wider context of other people's beliefs and practices (Brown, 1984, s. 113).

 377

In parallel with the globalization, the phrase "global consciousness" refers to "receptiveness to [an understanding] of cultures other than one's own" (Bliese, 1999, p. 174). In this regard, Bliese asks the question: "given the crisis in global economy, global ecology, and global politics, can the religions of the world unite to create a global ethic?" (1999, p. 176). The *political model of faith* suggests that the most important task of the faith today is to face the pressing problems of humanity, especially the social questions, peace, disarmament, and preservation of creation (Bettscheider, 1999, p. 157). The present contemporary 'global' problems such as cultural conflicts, deprivations, environmental pollution, international injustice and many others (some of which expect urgent solutions) encourage people to work in co-operation with the members of different cultures around the world.

CHALLENGES TO INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

FEAR Guardians of "pure" faith and "true" doctrine may fear what is strange and become suspicious towards the supporters of interfaith dialogue. To many others, dialogue seems a Trojan horse that threatens to bring in dangerous, relativizing, and secularizing ideas (Scho-

en, 1999, p. 113). "Many people fear that dialogue leads to a loss of confidence in particular religious truths and traditions, and diminish commitment to them" (Brown, 1984, s. 113).

SELF-SUFFICIENCY Some may regard themselves as self-sufficient and consider themselves to be the center of their world. In this respect, every cultural and religious group has some similarities. For instance, whilst some Jews may regard themselves as "the Chosen People", Muslims praise themselves as those who have fully submitted to God. In parallel with this, there is the tendency of each religious tradition to subsume those who follow other traditions under its own belief system's categories, or, what is worse, to relegate them to "outer darkness" (Schoen, 1999, p. 112).

ETHNOCENTRISM If faith transmitted from generation to generation is not understood relatively and in relation to the various historically developed milieus but fixed as historically absolute and normative, then a complex of reflexes and attitudes arises which is called "ethnocentrism." It is characterized by prejudice, racism, feelings of superiority, intolerance, a colonialist mentality, religious arrogance, theological *Eurocentrism*, and refusal to communicate (Friedli, 1999, p. 220).

RELIGIONISM For those who build up their faith identity on/by forming negative descriptions or images of people from other faiths, interfaith dialogue can be seen as disconfirmation of their identity. This and other similar attitudes are described by a variety of negative labels including *religionism* (Hull, 1998, p. 336), *religious prejudice*, *religious intolerance*, *communalism* or *tribalism*, *fundamentalism*, *sectarianism*, and 'identity of totalism'.

DOGMATISM or closed-mindedness, which is briefly defined as the inability to form new cognitive systems of various kinds, designates total rejection of opposing beliefs, a poorly interconnected belief system and discrimination. The intensity in dogmatism is claimed to have related to external authority as opposed to the internal one. Knowledge is a threat to them. They confuse knowledge with faith assuming that knowledge is actually faith (Harre and Lamb, 1986, pp. 79-80). In a closed-minded person the level of rejection of a disbelief system is relatively high, the world is threatening and the authority is absolute (Rokeach, 1960, pp. 55-56).

FUNDAMENTALISM is "the belief that there is one set of religious teaching that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is fundamentally opposed by forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable practices of the past; and that those who

believe and follow these fundamental teachings have a special relationship with the deity" (Altemeyer and Hunsberger, 1992, p. 118). Collective deviations from the constructive notion of faith to "false religious consciousness" have been a problem throughout history which today may be nourished again by uncritical reflection on faith and indoctrinational approaches in educational systems.

CONFLICTS Political difference or relationships that are burdened by past and perhaps present injustice (Schoen, 1999, p. 112) may form prejudice in some people against others. Terrorism and war at various parts of the world in the form of crusades, *jihads*, holy wars etc. in the history and at the present have sometimes caused contradictory feelings about whether God is "Agent or Double-agent" (Batson, 1976). Nipkow (2003, p. 52) articulates that the Council of Europe acknowledges the constructive potentials of the religions, but it is also clear that the European politicians are deeply worried by the destructive powers of religion. Throughout history, religion has been double-faced, witnessing both the powers of reconciliation and of conflict, love and hate, respect and disregard of human dignity, granting and preventing freedom. The feeling of being excluded from the mainstream often ends up with rivalry, intolerance, hatred, hostility and violence.

379

SUSPICION about the other's motives in interfaith meetings can be another barrier (Schoen, 1999, p. 112). The format of interfaith meetings can put question marks whether the occasion is *used* or seen as a kind of mission or a "reconnaissance exercise" on the part of certain faiths (Schoen, 1999, p. 112). Instead of being accorded the dignity of being worthy "others" entering into conversation as equals, followers of these traditions have, for example, been called "anonymous Christians." One doubts that Christians or Hindus would feel complimented if they were called "anonymous Muslims" (Schoen, 1999, p. 112). To many, the invitation to dialogue comes from those who until recently were trying to convert them (Schoen, 1999, p. 113).

The interfaith meeting can be seen by some as a subject for the contextual theology. Taking into account the conditions of faith communities, in the long run and on the foundation of the information gathered, they hope to find the opportunity to express their 'universal' messages in the diversity of languages, thought, and behaviour patterns of the world (Waldenfels, 1999, p. 86).

A NOTE ON THE ISSUE OF PROCLAMATION

Evangelism can be regarded as an ethical activity in interfaith acti-

vities if all members of the meeting are informed beforehand about this and it is carried out openly and not as part of long-term implicit or hidden propaganda. Although *proselytism*, trying to persuade someone to join a faith group in an offensive and intruding way, can be regarded as a rather doubtful act, evangelism may be a perfectly ethical activity. There is no reason why any religious individual or group should not explain and commend its views to others (Hull, 1998, p. 340). Borrmans (1987) asks the question: should a Muslim abandon the right of a fellow Christian to be a Muslim and vice-versa? Giving a negative answer to the question, he argues, would be an unfair condition put against the sharing principle of dialogue. However, the occasion of interfaith dialogue should not be seen as a context for mere proclamation (*tabligh*, *da'va* or *misson*) without an agreement having been reached upon in advance (Hatemi, 1998, pp. 181-182 and Küçük, 1991). If one perceives interfaith dialogue as a potential mission field for proselytism, or as an opportunity to compete with other religions, the real aim of the meeting will be lost.

The proclamation efforts may be appreciated as the sign of the strength of the devotion to God and sharing spirit of the meeting but interfaith dialogues may not always be the proper occasion for such kinds of activities. If it is to be included, then an agreement is to be sought between participants and the point should be made openly and clearly by the organizers before the meetings.

Briefly, any implicit, hidden or explicit intentional intervention to human faith in the long or short term in order to change one's content of faith without letting the participants know about this is not desired and it is against the principle of sincerity (Hatemi, 1998, pp. 181-182).

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES

In interfaith dialogue, participants do not have to fall in a position that forces them to make concessions from the basic principles of their faith. In other words, they do not have to make 'loose' interpretations in the principles of religion for the sake of dialogue. Every religion should be introduced as it is (Küçük, 1991). The discussions need to be realistic. Thus, the topics of the interfaith dialogue should not only emphasize the issues of love and tolerance disregarding diversities. The common and uncommon points should be revealed and the true picture of faith systems be presented (Küçük, 1991).

The most precious thing dialogues have to offer each other in interfaith meetings is their honest, unexaggerated and non-possessive sha-

ring of what they consider as the ultimate concerns for themselves in the particular faith traditions in which they live as committed participants (Fowler, 1981, p. 209).

Participants should acknowledge each other sincerely. Thus, it is important that the participants do not let the rest remain suspicious about whether they seek a way to proselytise and thus using the occasion of interfaith dialogue for this purpose (Borrmans, 1987, p. 6). The format, aim and content of the meeting should be specified before the meetings.

Brown (1984) suggests a couple of guidelines to be observed in dialogue: (1) Every individual represents the beliefs and practices of a particular community and expresses them in a personal and distinctive way. (2) Truth must be told about different religions even-handedly, if possible in terms acceptable to each particular religion. There can be no dialogue unless there is mutual understanding and mutual trust. To tell the truth is to allow each person to speak without fear or embarrassment. (3) Dialogue can only be conducted helpfully if every participant accepts a common loyalty to the well-being of the whole society and recognizes the rights of those who are different in it (s. 113).

Interfaith dialogue is often blamed of being an academic elite activity. If interfaith dialogue is expected to change the attitudes of believers to one another and the way they live together, then it should be brought to the "base" i.e. to those who had no chance of having formal religious or academic education as well. So, interfaith dialogue should not be limited only to academic seminars (Michel, 1998, p. 44).

Conflict between different faith groups is more due to history, social and economic problems, ethnic differentiation and cultural biases rather than theology or religious practices. Thus, the dialogue is rather assigned to do with co-operations on the way to clearing prejudices and improving life conditions rather than pure theological and philosophical thoughts (Michel, 1998, p. 40).

The education of dialogue should neither be limited to formal and theoretical instructions taking place in the schools. Neither books nor lessons can take the valuable place of hospitalities, smiles, intimacies, jokes, and narratives of personal histories, which can be actualised through personal contacts outside classrooms (Michel, 1998, p. 46).

Establishing collaborations to help poor and starving people around the world would be an important activity in which participants find the opportunity of recognizing each other while "competing for good." In addition, co-operations and co-activities between different faith groups such as interfaith prayers and working for envi-

ronmental problems may contribute to the groups understanding each other (Michel, 1998, p. 40).

A Stage Model Approach to the Participants of Interfaith Dialogue

The reflections on the characteristics of people who are regarded at stage 5 and 6 in the theory faith development prompt the question whether they can be accepted as the target qualities of one's faith who engage in interfaith dialogue or could be put as aims to be achieved through interfaith meetings. Following is the adaptation of the characteristics of stage 5 and 6 to the possible interfaith dialogues.

The participants involved in interfaith dialogue are expected to have a dialogical knowing to which the other participants from other faiths are invited to speak their own words in their own language, accent or dialects. The participant should seek to accommodate her or his knowing to the structure of the speaker without imposing her or his own categories upon them.

An individual is assumed to be capable of dialogue and have willingness to let the participants speak their word, regardless of the impact of that word on their security or self-esteem. They sincerely celebrate, reverence and attend to the "wisdom" evolved in other faiths as they are, before seeking to modify, control or order them to fit prior categories.

The participants' willingness to give the dialogue participants the priority of talking or knowing does not merely stem from the knower's self-certainty. They also regard the participants as trustworthy. In this sense, people represent a kind of complementarity of mutuality in relation (p. 185).

The individuals dare to go beyond the explicit ideological or faith system and clear boundaries of identity that they had previously worked so hard to construct and to adhere to. They accept as axiomatic that truth is more multidimensional and organically interdependent than what most theories or accounts of truth can grasp. Religiously, they know that the symbols, stories, doctrines and liturgies offered by their own or other traditions are inevitably partial, limited to a particular people's experience of God and incomplete.

Therefore, they are ready for significant dialogues with other traditions than their own, expecting that truth has disclosed and will disclose itself in those traditions in ways that may complement or correct its own. No interfaith conversation is genuinely ecumenical unless the quality of mutual sharing and receptivity is such that each party makes him- or herself vulnerable to conversation to the other's truth.

Possessing these does not imply any lack of commitment to one's

own truth tradition. Nor does it mean a wishy-washy neutrality or mere fascination with the exotic features of alien cultures. Rather, the participants' radical openness to the truth of the other stems precisely from its confidence in the reality mediated by its own tradition and in the awareness that that reality overflows its mediation (p. 186). The person makes her or his own experience of truth the principle by which other claims to truth are tested. But he or she assumes that each genuine perspective will expand and correct aspects of the other, in a mutual movement towards the real and the true.

The individuals see the breaks and divisions of the human family with vivid pain because they grasp the possibility of an inclusive commonwealth of being (p. 199).

The transition to stage 6 enables participants to overcome certain shortcomings and finalizes the process of maturation. Careless of the threats to the self, to primary groups, and to the institutional arrangements of the present order that are involved, persons at stage 6 turn the imperatives of absolute love and justice into tangible and real with their disciplined activities. They engage in spending and being spent for the transformation of present reality in the direction of a transcendent actuality.

The justice is not tribal or parochial but universal to every member of human family. They are not obsessed with tribal concepts of survival, security, and significance. Their enlarged visions of universal community challenge the tribal partialness. Their strategy for struggle for universal concerns often involves non-violent suffering and ultimate respect for being. Hence, they frequently become martyrs for the visions they possess (p. 200).

Their concerns include all communities, radical commitment to justice and love and of selfless passion for a transformed world, a world made over not in *their* images, but in accordance with intentionality both divine and transcendent. Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Ibn al-Arabi of Enduluse, and Mawlana Celal ad-din al-Rumi can be accounted as the typical examples of this stage (p. 201).

All attachments to centres of value and power that might gratify one's ego or group-ego are abandoned. The sovereign 'God' of these people of faith is an enemy to all idolatrous gods including the gods of nation, self, tribe, family, institutions, success, money, sexuality and so on.

Individuals at stage 6 find a unity in the universe, but this is not a homogenous unity in which differences in particularities are moulded into a monolithic oneness. Rather, the unity envisioned is richly plural and highly variegated. It is a celebration of the diversity and com-

plexity of creation (p. 205).

Although Fowler contends that these qualities do not only belong to academic elites such as professors, theologians etc. (p. 188), as can be seen in the following Table, only 7.5% of his total sample is at stage five and six, and stage five starts at age 31 or above at the earliest and stage 6 after 60.

Stages of faith	Distributions of Stages of Faith by Age								
	Age Groups								% of total sample in each stage
	0-6%	7-12%	13-20%	21-30%	31-40%	41-50%	51-60%	61+%	
6								1.6	0.3
5-6									0.0
5					14.6	12.5	23.5	16.1	7.0
									Total: 7.3% of 100% (n = 359)

CONCLUSION

384

In the midst of intensive interfaith meetings today it is important to determine the problems, concepts, contents and procedures of interfaith meetings and to develop ground rules for it. In this respect, taking the pluralist conditions of modern societies, the author suggests that the meaning of faith should be extended from the ones offered by traditional religious systems. It can be extended on the ground of empirical studies in such a way that it includes those who have been so far regarded 'outsiders' of the cumulative faith traditions.

The energy, rather than wasted in converting people to one's faith, can be re-canalized into sorting the devastating and destructive burden of modern industrial society over human kind. In this way, interfaith participants may focus on liberating, redemptive, or salvific effects of interfaith dialogue.

If proclamation is to take place in interfaith meetings, there should be an exchange and one should not be hesitant either giving or receiving. In any authentic exchange or inter-communication there is a listening, a coming-to-understand, and a humility before and respect for each other. No proclamation is to be fearful or defensive, and certainly not offensive, when it enters into an authentic dialogue with other faiths (Folkemer, 1976, p. 434). The format and content of the inter-

faith meeting should be carefully designed, openly explained and the potential participants are to be informed about the procedures before the invitations.

It becomes apparent that those who are in the position of entering into interfaith dialogue need to prepare themselves with certain 'psycho-structural' qualities such as humility, partialness of their faith, etc. The findings in the theory of faith development may provide guidelines for such desired attributes. The international interfaith dialogue is suggested to be held (at least at ground level) not in the shadow of a certain cumulative faith, but in a platform in which various faiths are discussed at as many universal levels as possible.

Today, the most urgent issue, which breaches the spirit of interfaith meeting, seems to be the way in which international or intercultural disputes are handled. International political confrontations often provoke cultural identities to develop hostile feelings to each other and prompt people to search international justice. I believe that the problems that the interfaith meetings have to be discussing for solution are not only faith-oriented problems but also the problems that occur outside faith considerations, and agitate and challenge the people of faith.

Abstract

385

The aim of this study is to evaluate the Islamic approach to pluralism, dialogue and peace between different faiths. After analysing each concept of pluralism, dialogue and monologue, the study focuses on the assumptions of, and justification for, dialogue. Then it discusses possible personality characteristics, which may obstruct the way to dialogue between various spiritualities. The study develops its own interpretation on the concept of "Jihad", "Tabligh" in the light of related controversial verses of the Qur'an. The study puts forward the assumption that historically Islamic teaching acknowledges plurality, and invited other faiths to co-operation in order to accomplish the act of doing well on earth for humankind. Finally, after enumerating the principles of dialogue, it ends up with some suggestions about how to enhance dialogue between the members of differing faiths through various educational as well as other activities.