

## Islamic Approaches to Multicultural and Interfaith Dialogue

M. Aris Rofiqi<sup>1\*</sup>, Mochamad Ziaul Haq<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Pancasakti, Tegal

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Katolik Parahyangan, Bandung

\* Corresponding Author, Email: [arisrofiqy@upstegal.ac.id](mailto:arisrofiqy@upstegal.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

Humans are created with diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Thus, dialogue experience has become a part of the experiences in daily life. Dialogue expresses an essential aspect of human beings, such as listening and responding sincerely to each other and building bonds between them. It emphasizes different perspectives, attitudes, and openness. Similarly, Interreligious dialogue refers to a positive relationship with reciprocity and cooperation among followers of different religions. This dialogue communicates thoughts and hearts between different faiths people to build a common goal. In building interfaith dialogue, several approaches can be applied where the participants can become open, accept and respect different truths. The purpose of dialogue in Islam is not to change one's beliefs but to open up space and opportunities for others to express their religious beliefs and practices. Islam teaches that every human being has the right to choose and practice his religion. Dialogue can be realized without changing our faith; we can even hold on to our faith. This research applies qualitative methods through contextual analysis.

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### ABSTRAK

Manusia diciptakan dengan latar belakang etnis, agama, dan budaya yang beragam. Dengan demikian, pengalaman dialog telah menjadi bagian dari pengalaman kehidupan sehari-hari. Dialog untuk mengekspresikan aspek penting manusia, yaitu mendengarkan dan menanggapi satu sama lain dengan tulus untuk membangun ikatan di antara mereka. Dialog menekankan pada perbedaan perspektif, sikap, dan keterbukaan. Demikian pula, Dialog antaragama mengacu pada hubungan positif dengan sikap timbal balik dan kooperatif di antara para pengikut agama yang berbeda. Dialog ini mengkomunikasikan pikiran dan hati antara orang-orang yang berbeda agama untuk membangun tujuan bersama. Dalam membangun dialog lintas agama, beberapa pendekatan bisa diterapkan dimana para pelaku dialog bisa menjadi terbuka, menerima dan menghormati kebenaran yang berbeda. Tujuan dialog dalam Islam, bukan untuk mengubah keyakinan seseorang tetapi untuk membuka ruang dan kesempatan bagi orang lain untuk mengekspresikan keyakinan dan praktik keagamaannya. Islam mengajarkan bahwa setiap manusia berhak untuk memilih dan menjalankan agamanya. Dialog bisa dirwujudkan tanpa harus mengganti keyakinan, bahkan kita bisa berpegang teguh terhadap keyakinan kita. Riset ini menerapkan metode kualitatif melalui analisis kontekstual.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A progressively current concern today is dialogue among adherents of various religions. Humans live in varied traditional, spiritual, and ethnic settings. Daily, we intermingle with other faith and people in the shape of neighbors, colleagues, contacts, and classmates. Therefore, Inter-religious experiences have developed into a portion of everyday life experiences (Vineeth, 1994). Inter-religious dialogue is essential to maintain harmonious relations and peaceful coexistence between communities' beliefs. There have been countless awful occasions in world history (Elius, M., Khan & Nor, 2019).

We realize that each religion educates comprehensive affection and proclaims compassion for other human beings. Still, regarding religious conviction, we see numerous dreadful violations resulting in countless innocent people's demises (Defend rights, 2016). We have to figure out the roots of these problems and discover solutions that collectively bring societies from various spiritual and national settings to create significant contributions over interfaith dialogue designed for the better benefit of humankind. Inter-religious dialogue is essential for reducing inter-religious strains that are overcome between peoples worldwide (Haque, 2010).

In a meeting (council) held at the Vatican in 1962-1965, the Catholic Church reviewed its stance and relationship with other religions. Then a document called the *Decretum de Ecclesiae Habitudine and Religiones Non-Christians* was published, more commonly known as *Nostra Aetate*. (*Nostra Aetate*, 1966) The official document states, among other things, that the Catholic Church does not deny the existence of truth and holiness in religions other than Christianity (*Ecclesia Catholica nihil eorum, quae in his religionibus vera et Sancta sunt, reicit*), that these other religions are reflections of the light of the truth that illuminating all of humanity (*haud raro referunt tamen radium illius Veritatis, quae illuminat omnes homines*). However, it is still emphasized that Jesus Christ is the only way [salvation], the only truth, and the only life (*Annuntiat vero et annuntiare tenetur indesinenter Christum, qui est 'via et veritas et vita'* [Gospel Yohannes (John) 14.6] through which only humans can live fully and fully religious life (*in quo homines plenitudinem vitae religiosae inveniunt*). Despite its ambivalence, it appears that the Church wants to give the impression that her attitude has changed from being exclusive to inclusive. However, she still believes that Christians can only achieve salvation.

This study applies qualitative methods through contextual examination. Data were composed of the Qur'an and Sunnah (Prophetic behaviors) and supported by various journal articles and scientific books. In Addition, the perspectives of contemporary thinkers are also used in analyzing and understanding the spirit of interfaith dialogue in Islam.

## 2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 2.1. Dialogue Definition

The term "dialogue" comes from the Greek, *dialogos*. *Dia* implies "thru" and *logo* implies "word." Therefore, dialogue can be understood similarly to somewhat occurring "thru words" (David, 2017). Furthermore, dialogue can be interpreted as conversation, chat, discussion, and meeting amongst two or more people or parties to communicate and understand each other and to attain mutual benefits (Karim & Sali, 2009). Dialogue with this definition emphasizes good communication between people from different cultures and beliefs to reduce misunderstandings and ignorance between people of religions.

The definitions of dialogue diverge for each individual, liable on the perspective and background of each individual and the nature of the encounter they face. For Kimball (1991), a Western theologian, dialogue is described as conversation, a method of communication through discourse. It is a mutual relationship in which two or more parties negotiate and search to accurately express what they want to state and perceive while respecting what the other person has to articulate, even though from different perspectives.

Werblosky and Wigoder (2010) view that dialogue should be held based on complete fairness between partners. This equality is not intended to change individual beliefs to follow other faiths.

Efforts are made to avoid self-righteousness or excessive fanaticism, which has often been a feature of religious attitudes in the past (Rahman, 2018).

According to Martin Buber, an Austrian-Israeli philosopher, "true dialogue expresses an essential aspect of the human spirit when we listen and respond to one another with an authenticity that forges a bond between us." Fundamentally, dialogue emphasizes different perspectives, attitudes, and openness, which are interrelated characteristics. These three characteristics must be present in interfaith dialogue.

## 2.2. Interfaith Dialogue

After the publication of *Nostra Aetate*, the Church has appealed to its people to build and hold dialogues and co-existent relationships with followers of other religions carefully and lovingly. This relationship is built while maintaining his beliefs and life as a Christian, carried out to hold and increase the moral and spiritual goodness contained in these religions along with the values of society and culture ("*Filios suos igitur hortatur, ut cum prudentia et caritate per colloquia et collaborationem cum asseclis aliarum religionum, fidem et vitam christianam testantes, illa bona spiritualia et moralia necnon illos valores socio-culturales, quae apud eos inveniuntur, agnoscant, servent et promoveant.*") From this, it is also clear that dialogue and cooperation should not diminish or invalidate existing beliefs or creeds.

Interfaith dialogue mentions a constructive relationship with reciprocity and cooperation among different inter-religious people. This is an effort of communication and agreement-building between inter-religious people for a mutual goal (Arinze, 1990). Dialogue is very different from a debate. Debate seeks to win or defeat another argument, while dialogue is how to identify with different people (Zia-ul-Haq, 2014).

Interfaith dialogue does not mean that each individual who engages in dialogue imitates the teachings or faith of their opponent. Still, each individual involved in the dialogue tries to understand and respect each other's religion and beliefs. In dialogue, there is no need for a definite settlement. It builds a genuine understanding of conversation to appreciate each other regardless of people's variations, principles, and performances (Kurucan & Erol, 2012). Each individual will linger in their belief and also express honour for other individuals' rights. Each sincerely attempts to appreciate others' points of view, evaluate the perspectives and problems that have arisen previously, and identify common areas of each religion to build mutual understanding between them (Mandour, 2010).

Kung (1992) emphasizes that interfaith dialogue must be distinguished from debate and evangelism. This dialogue process is a series of meetings involving various scientists and experts from several religious communities (Rahman, 2011). The dialogue discussed discourses and issues concerning the critical components of religions that may need clarification for community members. Discussion of religions was included, but conflicting truth claims were not disputed.

In building interfaith dialogue, several approaches can be applied where the dialogue actors can be open to the possibility that a particular truth claim might articulate a specific issue better than a competing truth claim. The *Global Ethical* approach and *Philosophia Perennis* provide space and respect for dealing with truth claims not only from one's religion but also from our partner's religion in dialogue. This will also allow us to see that one truth claim (interpretation) can be true regarding certain issues, another truth claim can be valid regarding other issues, and each truth claim is open to new interpretations.

Inter-religious dialogue alludes to constructive coexistence, reciprocity, and cooperation between adherents of various beliefs. This dialogue communicates thoughts and hearts between persons of different faiths to build a common goal (Arizen & Suhartini, 2020). Concerning Al Biruni's perspective, Senin et al. (2013) stated that in studying and understanding other religions, one should still think positively and hold on to his beliefs. Thus, all participants in dialogue will attempt to appreciate the other's view, evaluate their biases toward the other participant, and

discuss general areas of each religion (Mandour, 2010). This dialogue discusses general or more specific issues to promote peace and mutual understanding (Elius, M., Khan & Nor, 2019)..

According to Hambali (2015), the interfaith dialogue could be characterized as “all positive, constructive inter-religious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment, in obedience to the truth and respect for freedom”.

### 2.3. Between Interfaith Dialogue and Da'wah

There is a slight difference between the definition of interfaith dialogue and the concept of *Da'wah*, which is considered a goal and an essential part of interreligious dialogue. In the view of a Palestinian-American Muslim philosopher, Isma'il Raji al Faruqi, *Da'wah* in an Islamic perspective, is defined as an attempt by Muslims to enable others to share and benefit from the supreme vision of religious truth that he believed. *Da'wah* is rationally needed to reveal other truths that others want to know. This puts pressure on the knower to share his vision of teachings, values, and knowledge of beliefs with his peers." *Da'wah* is further defined as "an invitation to think, discuss, and debate." Therefore, *da'wah* is "a process of critical thinking" (Ibrahim, 2010).

Interfaith dialogue, as defined above, is, to some extent, compatible with the goals and mechanisms of *Da'wah*.

*“Say (Muhammad), “O People of the Scripture, let (we) come to one sentence (handles) in common between us and you, (namely) we do not worship other than Allah, we do not associate Him with anything, and do not (also) some of us take others as gods besides Allah.” If they turn away, say (to them), “Witness that we are Muslims.” (The Qur'an 3:64)*

The important thing to notice from the above verse is the invitation "*let (us) go to the same sentence (handle) or common word between us and you*" and "*If they turn away, say (to them), “Witness that indeed we are the Moslem.”*" According to one narration, the *asbabun nuzul* of verse refers to a delegation of Najran who came to Muhammad, with two opinion goals: to communicate their faith, hoping to invite Muhammad to convert to Christianity, and to set up a harmonious treaty with Muslim communities who could guarantee their religious freedom and social independence (Katsir, 2005). The delegates consisting of religious and political leaders of the Najran tribe, were allowed to carry out their worship at the Prophet's mosque despite protests from certain of Muhammad's Companions (Hisyām, 2007).

The verse shows that the purpose of dialogue in Islam is no different from the goal of dialogue established by Kung and Nasr. According to Philips (2020), the purpose of interfaith dialogue for Kung and Nasr was not to change one's beliefs but to make room for other people's beliefs that were firmly held. Once this space for other people's beliefs is created, the dignity of difference can develop. Furthermore, Kung and Nasr assert that every religion has its truth claims. Followers should know how to live by the religious truths of their religion and in no way deny it when they gain knowledge of other traditions. This position will enable them to enter into the dialogue process with integrity accepting other traditions as spiritually valid means and paths to Allah (Gerardette, 2020).

### 2.4. The Urgency of Interfaith Dialogue

Undoubtedly, entire religions educate love and compassion for fellow human beings. But in reality, but in fact, many people commit crimes and atrocities in the name of religion that causes victims and deaths of many innocent people, including the elderly, women, children, and the disabled (Defend rights, 2016). For this reason, we can support uniting people with different religious and cultural backgrounds, by building inter-religious dialogue to realize the greater interest of humanity (Ziaulhaq, 2020). Interfaith dialogue is essential to reduce and unravel inter-religious strains (Elius et al., 2019).

In Nostra Aetate's appeal, the built dialogue is said to be aimed at eradicating hostility towards Jews and Muslims and fostering mutual understanding (*ad comprehensionem Mutuam*), mutual comprehending, and respect (*Mutuam utriusque cognitionem et aestimationem*). It was also emphasized that this dialogue is non-discriminatory to all nations ("*conversationem... inter gentes habentes bonam*") (1 Peter 2,12) and across religions, while respecting different beliefs (*cum omnibus hominibus pacem habeant*).

Professor Hans Küng from the University of Tübingen stressed interfaith dialogue's significance because living with peace is impossible as long as interfaith conflicts are not resolved. Hans Kung's stated: "No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between religions. No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundations of the religions." (Quoted by Morgan, 2011)

Meanwhile, Professor John Hick from the University of Birmingham launched the idea of *Global Theology* (one theology for all believers) as a consequence of Inter-religious dialogue. From this, it can be seen that there are efforts to dilute religious beliefs with the understanding of inclusiveness, pluralism, and religious relativism.

Karl Rahner is said to be the figure responsible for giving birth to the idea of inclusivism, which teaches that although a certain religion is true and good, followers of other religions can also achieve salvation through the love of Jesus as long as they are good throughout their lives. That's what Karl Rahner meant by 'Anonymous Christians' (Rahner, 1978).

On the other hand, John Hick is the person who most actively broadcasts the idea of religious pluralism as the opposite form of exclusivism and inclusivism. Pluralism teaches that all major religions in this world are equally true and equally good in the sense that all of them can equally lead their followers to God and salvation, regardless of formal differences. What is the difference between pluralism and tolerance? For Diana L. Eck., Pluralism is more than tolerance (Arif, 2010). According to him, tolerance is a willingness and ability to live within various religions in harmony, peace, mutual respect, and appreciation. As for pluralism, it is willing to accept and acknowledge the truth of other religions, believing that one's religion is true, but other religions are also true. Religious pluralism and relativism are in tandem.

Inclusivism and pluralism were born as a reaction to the notion of exclusivism. Exclusivism teaches that only certain religions are true and that is the only way to God and attain salvation. This narrative can be referred to as Jesus' words in the Gospel of John 14:6: "*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*"

Many Muslims are involved in multi- and interfaith dialogue to proclaim Islam, promote Islamic principles, and sometimes safeguard their interests and rights, as minorities, in their countries. This coexistence necessitates mutual visits, attending joint prayers, or even joint participation in activities and developing alliances. For some Muslims, such rituals go against the basic principles of Islam, whereas for the different such actions present a considerable opportunity to present Islam as a lenient religion that promotes coexistence also spreads peace throughout the world. We need to realize that those involved in such activities are not as many as Muslims who refuse to participate.

## 2.5. Islam and Encouragement of Interfaith Dialogue

Undoubtedly, entire religions educate love and compassion for fellow human beings. But in reality, but in fact, many people commit crimes and atrocities in the name of religion that causes victims and deaths of many innocent people, including the elderly, women, children, and the disabled (Defend rights, 2016). for this reason, we can support uniting people with different religious and cultural backgrounds by building inter-religious dialogue to realize the greater interest of humanity. Interfaith dialogue is essential to reduce and unravel inter-religious strains (Elius et al., 2019).



This world was created with a lot of diversity. The Quran explains that this diversity does not happen by itself or is made by humans but because of Allah's will for the more significant benefit of humanity. The Qur'an states, "If Allah had willed, He would have made you one people (only), but Allah wants to test you against His gift to you, so compete in doing good deeds. To Allah will all of you return, Then He will tell you what you have disputed about." (Qur'an 5:48). In any more verse, "And if your Lord had willed, surely everyone on the face of the earth would have believed entirely. So do you (will) force people so that they all become believers?" (Quran 10:99). From these verses of the Qur'an, it can be understood that the diversity that occurs is God's plan and Muslims must accept the reality that some individuals or groups will not accept Islam. However, Muslims must take these differences and form coexistence with love, cooperation, and mutual understanding (Idharoel Haq & Ziaulhaq, 2021).

History has documented numerous interfaith dialogue initiatives, and Muslims have performed a vital mission to promote inter-religious communion since Muhammad's era. One example is fostering harmony and peace, which reflects in the Muslim's greeting, *as salamu 'alaikum* (Al-Tirmidhī & Mūsā, 1975). Muhammad is famous as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (compassion for the whole world) (Qur'an 21:107).

Referring to Islamic teachings, no single system is suitable for all humanity. Therefore, Allah sent His Messenger to every society. Different Messengers for other societies, and He never differentiates between them because their duties are the same (Qur'an 2:285; 22:67). Belief in all Messengers and Prophets is an essential Islamic principle (Qur'an 4: 136; 4: 164). Therefore, Islam regards itself as an extension of wholly formerly released religions. Such as, Noah (Qur'an 10:72) and Ibrahim are considered submissive Muslims in the Qur'an (Qur'an 3: 67). Thus, Islam accepts Messengers and Prophets wholly before Muhammad. As stated in the Quran, Islam is part of the monotheistic prophetic religion and has no different from other monotheistic religions

Christians and Jews are mentioned in the Koran, to have a special place of honor because they are called *ahlul Kitab* (people of the scripture). Muhammad was of similar ancestry to Abraham's descendants by way of his son Isma'il. It is clear that Islamic inclusiveness is realized within the gratitude for religion, rights, and the dignity of others. Islam involves certain earlier sacred laws and selected pre-Islamic traditions and indigenous customs as long as they have no conflict with the Qur'an (Kistemaker, 1990).

Muhammad applied Islamic teachings in his daily life. For example, he visited the sick without mentioning them as devotees, people of different religions, or polytheists (Al-Tirmidhī & Mūsā, 1975). He shows compassion for other believers. He never forced non-Muslims to submit to Islamic law in Medina (Al-Masud & Elius, 2016). As reported by Abū Hurairah that "once a group of Jewish scholars came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and declared that one of them committed adultery and they wanted him to judge. Then Prophet judged the matter according to Jewish scripture" (Al Tabari, 2000).

During his leadership in Medina, he showed a picture of a life full of solidarity, peace, and harmony between religious communities. His colleagues also understood his ethics. History also shows that as a minority, non-Muslims are treated kindly and fairly in the Islamic community (Kurucan & Erol, 2012).

From the historical excerpt above, it seems that coexistence with non-Muslims is not new in the Muslim majority. Muslims have shown kindness, a sense of maturity, and a genuine openness toward their non-Muslim counterparts. During the heyday of Muslims ruling large parts of the world until the fall of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey in 1924, Jews, Christians, and adherents of other religions could feel the incredible openness and concern for them as performed and practiced by Muslims who followed the teachings of the Quran.

Islam was revealed to make the world a peaceable existing home not only for people of scriptures but also for society with various religions and cultural backgrounds willing to encourage reconciliation, coherence, and interfaith coexistence for more considerable humanity's benefit (Wahyudi, 2009).

Abu Munshar cites El Awaisi's argument that Islamic teachings do not hinder the preaching of other religions. From the examples of the interfaith dialogue verses above, Islam appears to support balancing (*tadafu'*) as an instrument to build a harmonious environment rather than hostility. Islamic teachings also encourage the protection and security of religious holy places, both Islamic and other religions. This is stated in the Qur'an: "And if Allah had not restrained (malignity) some people against others, the monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which many were mentioned would have been demolished. The name of Allah. Indeed, Allah will surely help those who help (his religion). Verily, Allah is indeed all-powerful, all-powerful." (Qur'an 22:40).

The tradition of dialogue is as old as human history, not a new concept; history has also recorded many interfaith dialogue initiatives. In the Qur'an, two Arabic terms express the definition of dialogue. The first is *hiwar*, a conversation among two or more individuals to improve errors, present opinions, provide evidence, refute exaggerated ideas, and counter incorrect assertions or arguments. The second is *Jadal*, which has similarities to the common connotation of *hiwar*. However, it is applied to defeat the intention of the other party's claims (Humaid, 2010).

Several Muslim intellectuals describe dialogue as *Da'wah*, including delivering Islam principles, encouraging virtue and preventing evil, inviting towards a better faith and helping them stay obedient, and offering wide-ranging comprehension for recognizing the intention of life (Karim & Saili, 2009). It is not only to endorse the Islamic lifestyle but also to promote human morals, keep people from doing evil, and respect the differences of human beings. In the Qur'an, *da'wah* means inviting people to good and keeping them away from sinful manners (Qur'an 3: 104). Hence, interfaith dialogue aims to encourage virtuousness consisting of collaboration, appreciation, regard, and building agreement between people with different faiths and traditions.

## 2.6. Islamic Approaches in Cross-Cultural and Interfaith Dialogue

Although humans are frequently well-known for their cultural, spiritual, and ethnic personalities, their origins are similar (Shehu, 2008). God demands all people to be receptive to Him and the occurrences of their circling. Thus, dialogue is integral to human nature (Kurucan & Erol, 2012). This type of dialogue should be clearly defined to reach the facts sharp and clearly, steer all of humanity, and dispel misunderstandings. Dialogue should not be polluted by provocative speech or a tune of dominance, either in the substance of the communication or in the transfer process (Ziaulhaq, 2020). A debater should not narrow down the broad practice of Islam.

Islam emphasizes that each people have the right to decide on and perform their beliefs. The Qur'an says: "For you is your religion, and for me is my religion" (Qur'an, 109:6). Thus, Islam should not be forced upon anyone, including adherents of other religions. The Qur'an prompts Muhammad on in what way to address Islam: "upon you is only the [duty of] notification, and upon Us is the account." (Qur'an, 13:40). Further, Allah stated, "But if they turn away, [O Muhammad] - then only upon you is [responsibility for] clear notification." (Qur'an, 16:82). For these verses, Al Qurtubi (1967) emphasizes that Muslims have no permission on enforcing their belief to others. Others should be freed to choose and practice their belief. In different verse explains that, in Islam, freedom of choice is left to individual options: "And say, "The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills - let him believe, and whoever wills - let him disbelieve." (Qur'an, 18:29).

In some instances, Islam has provided a distinctive pattern of patience, compassion, and interfaith coherence. Muhammad applied the guidance of the Qur'an. From him, Islamic history has numerous patterns of diplomatic dealings among Muslims and non-Muslims (Elius, M., Khan & Nor, 2019).

The reality of the absence of coercion in religion, as described in the examples of the verses above, shows that interfaith dialogue that is built must be based on mutual respect, giving freedom, and upholding the rights of each individual without being contested, including in matters of belief. Even the built dialogue must be delivered gently and maintained and guarantee the integrity of

each of the interfaith dialogue actors. This type of dialogue based on a discussion of realities and basic beliefs are further discussed in the three main verses of the Qur'an, namely, Al-Qur'an 5:48; 29:46, and 60:8. The first section recognizes diversity as the norm and positions the Qur'an as the main authentic reference:

"We have sent down the holy book (Al-Qur'an) to you (Muhammad) with (bringing) the truth as a justification for the books that were revealed before and as a guardian (reference of truth against them). So, decide (the case) for them according to the rules revealed by Allah, and do not follow their desires by (leaving) the truth that has come to you. For every nation among you, we have given rules and a clear path. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one person (only). However, Allah wants to test you about the gifts He has bestowed on you. So, compete in doing good. Only to Allah will you all return, then He will tell you what you have been arguing about." (Quran 5:48)

Another part of the Qur'an invites Muslims to communicate with the people of scriptures 'in a very good way:'

"And do not argue with the People of the Book except in a better way, except against those who do wrong among them. Say, "We believe in what (the book) has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to you. Because our God and your God are one. And only to Him we all surrender (in Islam)." (Quran 29:46).

According to Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al Tabari, the word "*billati hiya ahsan*" means "in the best way or the most beautiful words, and it invites them to (subject to anyone but) Allah with His verse (the signs in the universe as well as the revealed parts of the Qur'an) turn their attention to the conclusive proofs established in it by Him (al – Tabari, 2000. p. 46)." The prohibition of dialogue in the above matters is expressed for those "who do wrong (*alladhin zalamu*)."

Abu 'l Fida' Isma'il b. 'Umar Ibn Kathir, mentions, "*illa 'lladhina dzalamu*", inferring, "those who turn away from the truth, turning a blind eye to clear evidence, being stubborn and arrogant (Katsir, 2005)." In this issue, "you should progress from debate to combat, fighting them in such a way as to deter them from committing aggression against you (Katsir, 2005)." Referring to Ibn Kathir, the verse instructed Muhammad to discuss with the people scriptures in the finest promising approach to be more efficient. It is mentioned in this ayah and explained in some verses of the Qur'an by Allah, in the next verses:

"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in the best way. Indeed, your Lord knows most who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowledgeable of who is [rightly] guided." (The Qur'an 16: 125)

Ibn Kathir enhances that Allah also guided Harun and Musa when they were sent to speak to Pharaoh, gently so that he could pay attention:

"Go, both of you, to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed. And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah]." (The Qur'an 20:43–44)

As of the account of numerous verses beyond, we can comprehend that dialogue should be delivered loosely and peacefully.

The Qur'an directs numerous instances of dialogue. God asked Muslims to express their best behaviors and understanding while addressing people of other beliefs. On the Qur'an, 16: 125). Respectful and thoughtful conversation and friendly behavior are essential for strengthening reciprocal relationships. God orders all people to play fair in all features of life. Peaceful life will never exist if there is injustice. Thus, justice is a prerequisite for building a peaceful and wealthy civilization. This is why the Qur'an highlights fairness in reckoning with adherents of different beliefs, cultures, and ethnicities. The Qur'an affirms: "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from



being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is acquainted with what you do." (Qur'an, 5: 8).

Equity, goodness, and courteous dealing can aid reinforce social interactions. Moreover, the Qur'an requests Muslims to represent compassion and fairness once reckoning with other people, regardless of their beliefs. The Qur'an mentions: "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly." (Qur'an, 60:8). Based on this verse, Al Tabari (2000) describes that Muslims should constantly be nondiscriminatory and objective when reckoning with different people and preserve well-balanced interactions except non-Muslims expose straight opposition against Muslims. Ibn Kathir (2005) stated that Islam tightly forbids Muslims from conflict with people who are not their opponents and begin attacking.

After Muhammad passed away, Jews and Christians were never obligated to change to Islam but were permitted to perform their belief without obstruction in the Islamic territory. Likewise, there is also no compulsion for Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs to embrace Islam. It is never difficult for Muslims to harmonize with other people with various beliefs. The Islamic monarchy was able to be the householder of Christians and Jews for periods, but Western Europeans were nearly difficult to accept Muslims and Jews in Christian areas (Armstrong, 2003).

'Umar b. al Khattab refused to pray inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and forbade the Muslim community to do so (Gerardette, 2020). He feared that later some Muslims might insist on building mosques in these places because they thought his actions validated such acts.

From the Quranic verses described above, Islam encourages Muslims to establish coexistence and expand social relations with non-Muslims. Interfaith cooperation to serve global issues is also evidenced in the statements and deeds of the Prophet. Muhammad encouraged resolution with others, as showed by his harmonious contract with the Jewish tribes of Medina (Hisyām, 2007). He also has faith in shared conviction among diverse religious societies, proved by the reality that in 615 AD he delivered a group of persecuted Muslims to seek protection from the Abyssinia Christian king. The latter had a reputation as a just ruler. Muhammad's statement (peace be upon him) is explicit in tolerance and cooperation for peace and reconciliation, "you may go to Abyssinia where a king reigns without injustice; it is the land of righteousness; until Allah guides us to the way out of our troubles (Hisyām, 2007)."

According to the Constitution of Medina (*Mithaq Medina*), all parties will engage in cooperation with one another, provide support to one another, and will remain under the protection of Muhammad. Through this constitutional document, tribal structures previously based on blood and kinship were abolished, and people from different geographical, cultural and ethnic backgrounds came together and formed a new social unity (Gerardette, 2020). The Medina constitution is an excellent example of the peaceful coexistence of a society that adheres to different religious traditions.

Islam thus encourages cooperation to build bridges of coexistence to find solutions for the world or even local problems shared by Muslims and non-Muslims through interfaith dialogue. The kind of dialogue that ensures such cooperation is even considered an act of worship especially if it facilitates securing precious human life and property in a hostile environment. But some participants in inter-religious dialogue may go beyond the limits of trying to turn collaboration and coexistence into a re-establishment of mainstream beliefs that tend to produce patterns of syncretism aimed at the so-called unity of all religions (Philips, 2013).

For this state point, the open integrity approach can be applied. The open integrity approach takes into account the various divergences that lie in each religious tradition. They also recognize that core beliefs are the essence of every religion and do not form, at least in principle although our responses and interpretations of these essences change over time; core beliefs are fixed and unchanging. Global Ethics preserves these core beliefs, and *Philosophia Perennis* approaches. These core beliefs protect the uniqueness of each religion and interpretations of the essence of these core beliefs that keep encounters and dialogues going on among followers of religions. Understandably,

the open integrity approach does not claim that all religions are the same because otherwise, there would be no revelation.

In establishing coexistence and dialogue with non-Muslims, Rasulullah SAW is prohibited from compromising on matters of faith and worship, as emphasized in Surah *al Kafirun*: "Say: "O disbelievers, I will not worship what you worship. And you not a worshiper of the God I worship. And I have never been a worshiper of what you worship. And you have never (also) been a worshiper of the God I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion." These holy verses neither command war nor encourage hostility. What is commanded here is that Muslims must be firm in their beliefs and the truth of their religion.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

Although interfaith dialogue emphasizes good communication between people from different cultures and beliefs to reduce misunderstanding and ignorance between religions, there are still many misunderstandings. Dialogue should be conducted based on full equality between participants. This equality is not intended to convert individual beliefs to follow other beliefs. This effort is made to avoid feeling self-righteous or excessive fanaticism, which has often been a feature of religious attitudes in the past.

Interfaith dialogue does not mean that each individual who engages in dialogue imitates the teachings or faith of their opponent. Still, each individual involved in the dialogue tries to understand and respect each other's religion and beliefs. In dialogue, there is no need for agreement of views, but what is built is an open exchange of views to understand each other regardless of their differences in beliefs and practices. In building interfaith dialogue, several approaches can be applied where the participants involved can be open, providing space and appreciation to face truth claims that come from themselves but also truth claims from the religions of our dialogue partners.

Dialogue has the same goal as *da'wah*. *Da'wah* from an Islamic perspective is defined as an attempt by a Muslim to enable others to share and benefit from the supreme vision of the truth of the religion he or she believes in. *Da'wah* is rationally needed to reveal other truths that others want to know. This puts pressure on the knower to share his vision of the teachings, values, and knowledge of the faith with his peers.

Islam also teaches its adherents to dialogue with people of other religions. The thing that needs to be considered in carrying out this interfaith dialogue is that the dialogue is carried out with "*billati hiya ahsan*" while guaranteeing the freedom of religion and social independence of others. Interfaith dialogue that is built must be based on mutual respect, giving space, and upholding the rights of each individual without being contested, including in matters of belief. Even the built dialogue must be delivered gently and maintained to guarantee the integrity of each interfaith dialogue actor. The purpose of dialogue in Islam is not to change one's beliefs but to provide space for people with different beliefs to express their points of view. The purpose of the built dialogue must be clear to make the truth clear and clear, to guide all of humanity, and to dispel misunderstandings.

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