Some Practical Realities & Interfaith Dialogue

(A historical, critical & analytical approaches to the interfaith dialogue)

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Abstract:

The paper deals with the study of meaning of interfaith faith-dialogue according to Christianity in its very sense; it is an essential part of Christian mission. There are a lot of examples of dialogue activity between Muslims and Christians. The Inter-faith dialogue has been explained by different scholars in different ways. There are taken many meanings of dialogue and it is also divided into different kinds.

The study further interprets the inter-faith dialogue by Christians in a realistic way i.e. it aims at supporting their mission besides living with harmony. Dialogue has been of central importance for the church. The process of inter-faith dialogue in Pakistan has got a lot of difficulties on the part of both the Muslims and the Christians. Despite that, it is strived for the continuity of dialogical process as it serves many purposes Necessary for co-existence, maintaining, harmony, peace and brotherhood. The paper also points out the conditions for successful inter-faith dialogue.

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The word 'Dialogue' has got such vastness that many Christian scholars have viewed it in their own way. Because of this, there is neither agreed definition of dialogue nor is there found any agreement for its different kinds. Many Christian scholars have continued dialogue with Muslims for centuries. There are many examples of dialogue activity in history.[1]

Dialogue got developed in Christianity as an essential element of their mission. This is argued from biblical references that dialogue is an important part of the Church. The Christian scholars and theologians today lay great stress on having special relations with the people of other religions.[2] To them, the purpose of dialogue is to guide the people to eternal salvation. They try to bring the people closer to Christ to convert them to Christianity as there is no salvation outside Christianity.[3] To achieve these goals, the proper dialogue in Christianity got started in the 20th century. For this, there have been established many regional and international organizations by the church. These proved fruitful through the efforts of Pop John Paul II and Roman Catholic Church.[4] All the Christian missionaries are engaged in dialogue for evangelization process.[5] This is continued throughout the world especially with the Muslims. This will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

a. Meaning of Dialogue:

Dialogue is the combination of two Greek words "Dia" and "Logos". Dia means 'through' and "logos" means word having a variety of meanings. So dialogue is a process of

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[1] See Marie Gaudeul, Jean, Encounters and Clashes (Islam and Christianity), (Rome: Pontifico Istituto Di Studii Arabi e Islamici, 1984), pp.20-30.

[2] Fikro – Nazer, (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, IIU Islamabad, vol.43, no.4, June, 2006), pp.87-8.

[3] Siddiqui, Ataullah, Christian-Muslim Dialogue in 20th century, (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1997), pp.39-40

[4] See Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, (Washington DC: Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding Georgetown University, Vol. 15, Issue No.3, July, 2004), pp.333-5

[5] Ibid, pp.343-44

conversation between the individuals or groups where the views are argued through and hence reaching significant and potentially transformative conclusions. There may or may not be a resulting agreement. It may be challenging and open-ended. Dialogue deals with the important matters to the justified conclusions. Otherwise, there is no use of dialogue. It is just gossip or time-passing activity. If no important issue is discussed properly, then dialogue is of no use. There is a risk on the part of participants as they themselves learn and change. Dialogue does not allow them just to inform and transform others. There is exchange of views supported by arguments. For that, the participants get a chance to look into the matter from different viewpoints. This leads them also to modify or even change their viewpoints about certain issues. They have to speak, to listen to other's opinions and tolerate each other's objections. Another important thing to be noted is that the conclusion may also become subject to change or modification at the end of dialogue.[6]

The meaning of dialogue in "Twentieth Century Dictionary" is a "conversation between two or more persons especially of a formal or imaginary nature, an exchange of views in the hope of ultimately reaching agreement."[7]

The meaning of dialogue in the modern setting is "a conversation between two persons who recognize each other as equal partners and engage in conversation concentrating on theological truth that is the highest reality the truth itself or God."[8]

Many people have defined dialogue in their own ways. It carries out different activities. There can be any level for dialogue. It may be from common man to governmental level.

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[6] K. Zebiri, Muslims and Christians Face to Face, (Oxford : One World, 2000) pp.36-37
See studies In Inter-religious Dialogue, (Belgium: Peeters, vol.10, No.1, 2000), p.34.

[7] A. M. MacDonald, (ed.), Chamber Twentieth Century Dictionary, (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers LTD, 1978), revised edition.

[8] Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, (Washington DC: Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding Georgetown University, Vol.15, Issue No.1, January 2004), p.55

Dialogue is such an activity, which requires openness of mind, mutual respect and extreme tolerance. Dialogue may lead the participants to modify their beliefs to get fruitful consequences. Otherwise, dialogue may become a failure.[9]

b. Kinds of dialogue according to Christian Theologian Scholars:

There are different kinds of dialogue, which are classified according to their aims. These may be temporary and permanent, local and international, religious and non-religious etc. It would be helpful to study E. J. Sharpe who emphasizes on the ways in which dialogue takes place. Sharpe, a famous historian of comparative religions has outlined four ways:

1. Discursive Dialogue: This is when partners come together and exchange information about each other's beliefs. Here Christians are advised to be attentive to their partners, talk less and listen more.
2. Dialogue, which has to do with a common recognition of our humanity.
3. Dialogue that is for the building up of community.
4. Dialogue, which is about the sharing of spiritual experience.[10]

It shows that the Christians take dialogue as a medium for the exchange of their beliefs, for the welfare of humanity, for building up a community and for sharing spiritual experiences. So dialogue has a significant role to play in all walks of life.

Bishop Michael Nazir Ali has also explained clearly the four ways stated by E. J. Sharpe. The very first kind of dialogue takes place for the exchange of information about each other's beliefs where the Christians talk less and listen

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[9] Forward, Martin, Inter-Religious Dialogue, (Oxford: One World, 2001) p.11

[10] Sharpe, E. J, The Goals of Inter-Religious Dialogue, in Truth and Dialogue, (ed.) John Hick, (London: SPCK, 1979), p.77.
See also Explanation of these conditions by Bishop Michael Nazir Ali

more to their partner. Secondly, dialogue is a means to guard the rights of human beings. Thirdly, dialogue is meant for the building of a strong community. Finally, Bishop describes dialogue as a tool for removing misunderstandings and clarifying the matters. While explaining all this, Michael Nazir has become quite subjective in his approach. According to him, dialogue is meant for the welfare of humanity and for the building of a community. But in reality, the Christians carrying dialogue intend just to propagate their own religion.[11]

According to METHAK, GEIJPELS, dialogue does not mean only verbal communication. It has been divided into four different kinds.

1. DIALOGUE OF LIFE: In such kind of dialogue, the people of different religions live together with one another. There is found mutual respect and harmony among the people.
2. SOCIAL DIALOGUE: Here, the people of different cultures co-operate with one another in socio-economic enterprise. They have respect for one another's values.
3. SPIRITUAL DIALOGUE: Every human being has got spiritual side. He belongs to any religion, there is found spiritual experience. Thus, spiritual dialogue is meeting of monks and exchange of spiritual experiences and practices by people of different cultures and religions.
4. THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE: This is the most important kind of dialogue. It takes place at the academic level. The scholars and students of different religions meet to discuss the teachings of their respective religion and faith.[12]

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[11] Michael, Nazir,Ali Mission and Dialogue, (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1995) pp.16-18

[12] Studies In Inter-religious Dialogue, (Belgium: Peeters, vol.10, No.1 2000), pp. 34-35

c. Theological Basis for Religious Dialogue:

There are several reasons, which force Christians towards dialogue. But it is very difficult to convince the people having religious thinking. For that, a sound theological basis is to be found. There are several examples of good relations of Christians with the people of other religions. Christian scholars quote these examples from the Bible. Christ had flexible attitude towards the Jews, Samaritans and people of Canaanite. He treated them very well and had dialogue with them. For that, the followers of Christ are required to promote his teachings through dialogue with the people of other religions. This is also to be propagated. In this regard, Christian scholars prove the dialogue from the Bible. There is the story of Jesus healing the daughter of the Canaanite woman while traveling beyond traditional Jewish territory.[13]

Other gospel accounts relate that Jesus had contact inside his own region with non-Jews, particularly Samaritans. There is also a meeting between Jesus and a Roman Centurion.[14]

In the Middle East, hospitality is a sacred matter. Jesus himself gave hospitality the highest of priorities, to publicans and sinners. There are also parables of the good relations and the royal wedding banquets where all are invited.[15]

In the records of the early church, it is told that having dialogue with non-Jews was difficult for Peter, as in Galatians 2:11-21. But God made clear to Peter that he "was not to call anyone unclean or impure".[16]

Father James Channan has admitted the fact that Christ is the one whose life, teachings, sayings and deeds are the best examples to guide us to dialogue with the people

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[13] Matthew 15:21-28
[14] Matthew 8:5-13
[15] Matthew 22:1-14
[16] Acts 10:28

of other religions. They can have friendship with them and give respect to them. The incidents from the life of Christ regarding relations with other religions are a beacon for the Christians.[17] In Christian traditions, they had not made these verses from the Bible as a base to have a dialogue with the people of other religions. But in 19th and 20th centuries, the Vatican City issued special orders to promote dialogue as a religious activity. Since then, the scholars have made these verses a basis for dialogue. They have worked very hard to achieve their goals. It is to be highlighted here that they have been quite successful in their mission and have developed friendly relations with other religions. They have promoted evangelization throughout the world.

As far as Christian theology is concerned, it solemnly states that there is no salvation outside the church. All those outside the church are excluded from the salvation. This belief has been a great obstacle in the process of dialogue as all the non-Christians are to be converted to Christianity. This is quite difficult rather sometimes impossible. Nostra Aetate of 1985 that brought the required theological shift overcame this problem.[18] This paved the way for dialogue with the people of living faiths by establishing a sub-unit within the WCC. Indian and SriLankan pluralist theologians directed this. Afterwards, activity proliferated. The sub-unit provided some guiding principles on which dialogue could be promoted. These were appreciated by many member churches. The guidelines were as follows:

1. Dialogue begins when people meet.
2. Dialogue depends upon mutual understanding and mutual trust.
3. Dialogue makes it possible to share in service.
4. Dialogue becomes the medium of authentic witness.[19]

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[17] Shalom (monthly), (Rawalpindi, Cant: Bishop House Church road, 1994) p.39

[18] James, L. Frederick, Faith Among Faiths, (Geneva: WCC, 1992), pp.20-22

[19] Forward, Martin, Inter-Religious Dialogue, (Oxford: One World, 2001) p.11

This led the scholars to make the dialogue an institutionalized activity. Thus, they found some theological basis to engage in dialogue. Furthermore, it became a Christian duty that in any way they are bound to go for dialogue. WCC in 1979 stated the following guidelines for dialogue with the people of other faiths.

"Dialogue can be recognized as a welcome of obedience to the commandment of the dialogue; you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."[20]

It explained that dialogue does not mean to degrade the theology of other faiths; rather it is a source to welcome others' ideologies. Through this, the Christians experienced that dialogue is indeed possible on the basis of mutual trust and respect. Then, dialogue became a fundamental part of Christian community. The central point stressed in dialogue on the part of Christians is the command to love God and mankind.

It is the only spirit which can promote dialogue. Therefore, Christians seek to speak truth in the spirit of love. They have recognized dialogue to such an extent that it has been considered a necessary activity in present circumstances.

Therefore, dialogue and its understanding have no contradiction to each other. This clearly shows the nature of dialogue and some of its theological basis. Besides, there are some more foundations as explained by individual dialoguians. These are highlighted as under:

1. Recognition that men and women everywhere are created in the image of God. It is true that this image has to some extent been affected by human sin, both communal and personal, but nevertheless the image survives, it has not been destroyed and we have dialogue with people who are not Christians because we believe this image is there and that image has something of God both in communities and with individuals.

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[20] ibid.

2. Belief that the eternal word, the logos incarnate in Jesus Christ, has illuminated all human beings everywhere. Although, this illumination is obscured by human sin, we can still recognize its presence.

3. Recognition of the presence and the worth of the Holy Spirit in the world and not merely in the church.[21]

Here, Christian dialogue can be carried out when all the people are considered one. They have been created in the image of God. Thus, dialogue can be possible in attribution to God. The Christ illuminates the world and it will remain so forever. The Holy Spirit is present not only in the Church but all over the world. These foundations could make dialogue take place in an atmosphere of understanding.

d. Some Practical Realities and Dialogue:

As far as Muslim thinkers are concerned, they interact with the non-Muslims just to prove the truthfulness of Islam. In other words, in the Muslim world, there is a notion to take religious dialogue as nothing, but a form of Islam challenging Christianity in its theological foundations. In any community, there are people of different religions. This religious problem has led the people to dialogue in different forms. There has been developed mutual respect and religious freedom.

Regarding Muslims and Christians, the latter have tried to get closer to the former. The aim is to promote the mission. On the other hand, as Victor E. H. Hayward points out, "Islam presents a deliberate challenge to the Christian church. Towards this, Christians have passive attitude and fail to take steps for any real approach to Muslims".[22] Another person, James L. Fredrick highlights the aims of Christianity though they do not define themselves and accept the challenge rather they continuously struggle for the promotion of their mission. The aim of Christian missionaries is to transform the non-Christians to

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[21] Michael, Nazir,Ali, Mission and Dialogue, op. cit, pp.75-76

[22] Christians Meeting Muslims, [WCC Papers on ten years of Christian-Muslim dialogue], (Geneva: WCC, 1977), p.12

Christianity and learning how to be skillful in the art of changing their mind.[23]

Dialogue in any way should be practised. There is no harm in it. The participants get a chance to study each other's religions. To Christians, dialogue has a lot of importance. Even the Pope has shown keen interest in this regard. In an address on the occasion of the 375th anniversary of the foundation of the Pontifical Urban College on November 29, 2002, the Pope laid great stress on Christians to be persons of dialogue. He opposed the clash of civilizations. He also urged the people to carefully examine the inter-religious dialogue by having deep study of different religions. At another place, meaning and aim of dialogue was clearly stated when in Kandy of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) on February 27 to March 06, 1967, different sects held a consultation on dialogue. The deceleration stated: "Dialogue means a positive effort to attain a deeper understanding of the truth through mutual awareness of one another's convictions and witness; it involves an expectation of something new happening – the opening of a new dimension of which one was not aware before. Dialogue implies a readiness to be changed as well as to influence others."[24]

Thus, dialogue is a means to study the other religions and reading the truth. There is a positive result of any dialogue through open-minded discussions. The other one in dialogue, especially for Christians, the concern is not to win the arguments, rather it is a process to listen to others in spite of differences. Dialogue also involves speaking for one's own belief. Thus dialogue needs an open-mindedness and tolerance to reach fruitful result.[25]

In dialogue, theological matters are discussed just to go deep into them. It is not for the purpose of critical study in the light of reason and historical and scientific facts. It is through dialogue that in modern era there is a return to the

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[23] Pro-Dialogue Inter-Religions,(Pontific Consilium, Bulletin 112-2003) p.8

[24] Christians Meeting Muslims. WCC papers on 10 years of Christian-Muslim Dialogue (Geneva: WCC, 1977) p.15

[25] Ibid: p.16

transcendent. Dialogue has been further explained in the Zurich statement of May 1970 which says: "The basis of the quality of dialogue is the commitment of all the parties involved to their own faith, their own understanding of that faith and their own living out of that faith. For the Christians, faith involves both relationship to God through Jesus Christ and a way of understanding God, man and the world. The Christian understanding and working out of dialogue will therefore, be the basis of that relationship and that understanding".[26]

The participants should have commitment to their own faith and complete understanding of it. Here, as the above statement is by Christians, it has been shown that Christians are the ones who have got the real meaning of dialogue.

As dialogue is guided by frank witness, mutual respect and religious freedom, it will be easy to understand the Christian attitude towards dialogue and contrast between the Islamic and Christian positions.

e. Dialogue for Mission:

Different theologians and scholars have different views about inter-religious dialogue and relations of Islam with the West. The important thing to be noted is that there is the changing attitude of the church. The Christian scholars have also changed their thoughts about dialogue. To them, dialogue in its very nature is a missionary activity. It is, to Catholic Church a means to expand the mission of Christ and lead the people to eternal salvation by converting them to Christianity. This is not a hidden thing but it is highlighted[27] in several meetings and declarations. The Frankfurt declaration signed by many notable German theologians stated: "The church of Jesus Christ has the sacred privilege and irrevocable obligation to participate in the mission of the triune God, a mission which must expand

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[26] Ibid: p.23

[27] Borge, Schantz, Islam in Europe, [Threat of Challenge to Christianity], (art) Missiology: An International Review, (U.S.A: American Society of Missiology, Vol.21, No.4, October 1993) p.451

into the entire world. Through the churches outreach, His name shall be glorified among all people, mankind shall be saved from His future wrath and led to a new life, and the lordship of His son Jesus Christ shall be established in the expectation of his second coming".[28]

This clearly shows that it is the Christian mission, which has got prime importance to them. It is to be propagated by all means. Dialogue in fact is the part of that chain as decisive. For that, missionary activity retains its full force and necessity. As far as Church is concerned, it initially appreciated Islam as a religion and as a salvation. Later on, it strictly opposed. This view had proclaimed the message of Jesus Christ to be preached to non-Christians.[29]

The church has made the meaning of dialogue very clear. It states: "dialogue can be understood in different ways.[30]

Firstly, at the purely human level, it means reciprocal communication, leading to a common goal or, at a deeper level, to inter-personal communion.

Secondly, dialogue can be taken as an attitude of respect and friendship, which should permeate all those activities constituting the evangelizing mission of the church. This can appropriately be called 'spirit of dialogue'... It is in this sense the present documents uses the term 'dialogue for one of the integral elements of the church evangelizing mission".[31]

It means that Church goes for dialogue with others for many purposes. It may be at human level. Secondly, there may be an environment of friendship and mutual understanding. But above all, the most important and the only purpose of dialogue, which church calls as the spirit of dialogue, is evangelizing mission.

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[28] Christianity today, The Frankfurt declaration, (Geneva: WCC, June 19, 1970) p.4

[29] Encounters, [Journal of inter-cultural perspectives] (London: Islamic Foundation, Leister, Vol.5 No.2, 1999) p.191

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

f) Difficulties and problems for dialogue in Pakistan:

It is a fact that Pakistani Muslims hardly played a role in dialogue whenever and wherever it was organized. There are some misunderstandings regarding dialogue in Pakistan. There is a huge gap between the followers of Islam and others. No proper interaction is found among the people. The followers of every religion have their own ideologies, which obstruct them from mixing with others. Many critics have viewed the situation from different angles. They have highlighted some problems, which create difficulties in carrying out dialogue in Pakistan. In the following discussion, we will discuss these views one by one.

Jan Slomp in an article "problems and possibilities for dialogue in Pakistan" has narrated a brief history of dialogue. He has discussed at length why dialogue does not thrive in Pakistan. To him, there are certain reasons for that.

First of all, the Christian community was not ready for that as it carries with it the Hindu background. Secondly the Muslims had never accepted the non-Muslims in Pakistan as equal partners. There had always been difference in that. Another reason may be that the Christian church had no people for dialogue at academic level. The well-trained ones unusually migrate to Europe or are too busy with their own work to go for extra activities. The arrogance of majority and ghetto mentality of minority is also a hurdle in dialogue.

1. Beside these problems, Jan Slomp has pointed out some other reasons for the failure of dialogue in Pakistan. To him there are deeper religious and political reasons embedded in the Islamic culture. To Muslims, the final book, The Holy Quran has settled all the issues. To revise them would mean that Muslims have doubts in final revelation. In other words, dialogue is dangerous for their faith. The Pakistani scene provides a gloomy picture of conflict among the Muslims themselves. There have been made some fruitless efforts in this regard. Beside this, in

Pakistan, people view the Christian mission as enemy of Islam.[34]

To conclude Jan Slomp's viewpoint, it can be stated that dialogue was difficult to take place because of Muslims' arrogance, as they are a majority. Christian Church had no academic personalities for Dialogue. Christians are also not prepared for dialogue because of their Hindu background. Dialogue is also difficult because of deeper religious and political reasons. All these problems can be overcome only when misunderstandings are removed and there is religious liberty for every sect.

In the editorial of "Focus" the situation of dialogue is discussed in detail. In the same writing, there are highlighted the difficulties and results of dialogue in Pakistan.

Both Muslims and Christians face difficulties. The Muslims think that there may be a hidden agenda behind dialogue. The most notable notion is that this is a mean to convert the others. The government's determination to implement Islamic Laws makes the Christians worry about themselves. Thus they hesitate for dialogue and consider themselves as second-class citizen. Most of the Christians struggle to survive and cannot spare time for dialogue. They often blame Muslims for their problems.

It means that dialogue has been obstructed because of misunderstanding about its very nature. Both Muslims and Christians are afraid of being converted. Christians are worried about their survival so they cannot go for dialogue.[32] These are the views from Christian scholars. As far as Muslims are concerned, they resist dialogue as a part of Christian Mission. To them, dialogue is a platform where the Christians try to explain their own problems and superiority, hence trying to convert the people. Some of the examples to clarify this view can be stated as under:

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[34] Dayanadan Francis (ed.) New Approaches to Inter-Faith Dialogue, (Sweden: The Church Of Sweden Mission, 1972), p.83-88

[32] Focus, (Multan: Pastoral Institute, vol.2, 1988), pp.102-103

Pope John Paul II in Rome on 26th November, 1995 addressing the international commission of Franciscan Priests which consisted of representatives from Europe, East Asia, Middle East and Africa, said about the relationship with the Muslim Community that "I am glad to see the recent participation of Franciscan community in inter-religious dialogue with a new spirit because this dialogue is an important part of the church mission for the universalization of Christianity".[33]

In the first Pakistan conference for Christian education that was held in Multan it was said, "Christian minorities could not survive without meaningful inter-religious dialogue in Pakistan. So it should be the duty of Christian teachings that the Christian children and adults should be prepared for the inter-religious dialogue".[34]

A conference was held in Pakistan with the name of "Asian Journey 1997" by Pastoral Institute, Multan. It continued from 20th to 30th January, 1997. The participants were from ten countries of Asia, Europe and Australia. The participants of the conference were given the chance to visit Pakistan and see the people and know the present situation themselves for two days. After that, these participants gathered in Pastoral Institute Multan and had a sitting for a goal and had a commentary and social analysis according to their experiment and observation.

The conference decided keeping in view their observations that for the Muslim-Christian relationship it is necessary to have more concentration on the Christian preachers towards their education. Especially, the Christians should be encouraged for their treatment towards Muslim neighbors and have a positive voice towards Islam and they should have a critical view towards distinctive governmental policies. The participants of the conference had in their mind that "there is no difference between the inter-religious dialogue and Bible". It is the two in one.[35]

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[33] Alam-e-Islam aor Esayait, (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1995), p.19

[34] Ibid. (July 1997), p.7

[35] Ibid. (May 1997), p.17

For these reasons some Muslim scholars think that dialogue is a secret agenda of Christians through which they are achieving their aims. As Dr. Khalid Alavi says about the inter-religious dialogue, "it is the new tactic which is used to confuse the Muslims in inter-religious dialogue. In diplomatic language it is called "engagement". According to this, a relationship is maintained with the opposition to know their planning, their intentions and psychology and set their own line of setting. According to this, the opposition has no way out".[36] From the last three centuries, Christians shaped themselves in a colonialism whose target was Islam, Muslim and the Muslim world. Church started the dialogue to engage the Muslims and through this they are achieving their different aims. On the one hand, Muslim-Christian relationship is popularized in Muslim societies while on the other hand, they are clearing the way for Christianity through this, and different sects of Christians are holding a dialogue with Muslims. Further, explaining the dialogue Dr. Khalid Alavi says that the church has an advantage that it is an organized religious institute while in Islamic world except the Shi'a; there is no organized religious group. Saudi Arabia and Libya have maintained some organizations that are working under their government and representatives of their government but the Islamic world does not have any organized system. So with whom and for what the dialogue should be and what result we can gain through this. No one knows about this.[37]

Churches choose the Muslim members of their own choice; they are called in for the dialogue and issue their policy statement. In such activities of the dialogue the churches and European States' policies are prepared and enforced. The topics of the dialogue are those which the European countries set to pressurize the Muslim societies, such as freedom of women, human rights, non-Muslim minorities, Islamic states secularization and enforcement of Shariah. In these dialogue meetings, the behavior of the

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[36] Dawah (monthly). (Islamabad: Dawah Academy, International Islamic University, July, 2005). p.47

[37] Ibid. p.48

Christian participant is aggressive and instructive while the Muslims behavior is defensive and apologetic.[38]

Qazi Muiz-ud-Din, who is among the founders of the inter-religious dialogue association of Pakistan and served for ten years as its president and was much active in the inter-religious dialogue, said about these dialogues that Vatican promotes the agenda of Christians and European secular powers who have some aim in front of them in these dialogues. He further said that he himself arranged many conferences and in these gathering he judged them thoroughly. He reached the conclusion that the dialogue is the part of Christian mission and in Pakistan only those churches and Christians are working for their cause and receive funds from foreign countries. He could only say to these people not to make a hole in the boat in which they are traveling.[39]

Khalid Jameel, the director of the department of publications of Karachi University said "we should not have dialogue with these Christians because the western powers are supporting them, and they are well organized in their political, economic and defensive systems.

The dialogue should be based on equality. The dialogue is useless if we do not reach up to their level of growth, advancement and Development.[40]

g) Conditions and Purposes for Dialogue in Pakistan:

The most important thing to keep in mind is that dialogue should never be used as a tool for conversion or as a means for evangelization. This not only prevents dialogue from happening but also causes the participants to approach each other mistrustfully.[41] As Christians struggle hard to promote their mission, the Muslims too want to preach the message of Islam to all mankind. But the important point is

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Taken an interview on 10th October, 2005, at Lahore

[40] Taken an interview on, 25th November, 2005, at Islamabad

[41] Talbi, Muhammad, Islam and Dialogue, (UK, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1997), p.88

that none of them should try to force the others to accept their respective religion. Another condition for dialogue is that the participants should accept each other as they are. Both Muslims and Christians should be aware of similarities and differences.[42] They must be respectful to each other. During dialogue, the parties should learn more about each other. This would guide them to mutual understanding. This is the only way for dialogue.

The controversial issues cannot hold the dialogue to continue. The participants should avoid controversy as much as possible. If Christians and Muslims look for the conflicts between them, they are many. Sorry to say, these do not lead them to dialogue. It means that Muslims and Christians should meet to discuss the issues helpful for the betterment of mankind and for the establishment of a peaceful society.[43]

There are certain common points such as God's will and dignity of human beings. These can only make them come closer to each other.

Beside these conditions, the participants of dialogue should be clear what dialogue is. It is not a debate. Dialogue is a means to learn i.e. change and grow in perception and understanding of reality.[44] S. W. Ariarajah points out that *'dialogue by nature is a two-way traffic; those who insist and behave as though they are the only ones on the road are bound to meet with accidents and the purpose of dialogue will be lost'.*[45]

These are some of the basic conditions for dialogue. If both the sides follow these, then dialogue can be fruitful. Besides, Muslims and Christians should also overcome

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[42] Inter-religious Documents 1, Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Prepared by Maurice Borrmans, (New York: Paulist Press, 1990, pp.31-32

[43] Watt, W. M., Islamic Revelation In The Modern World, (Edinburgh, 1969), p.121

[44] Guidelines On Dialogue, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), pp.8-9

[45] Ariarajah, S. W. The understanding and Practice of Dialogue: Its Nature, Purpose and Variations, in Faith the Midst of Faiths, p. 56

ignorance, bias and misunderstandings. Each community of faith should be encouraged to have an open mind towards other faith. It should also get knowledge about it. The religions must be taught in the right ways. Both quantity and quality must be so that the learner can easily get true picture of that religion. For the Muslims, it is necessary to train the people in all fields of western knowledge. The Christians have highly qualified people who enter into dialogue. They have many Islamologists who are experts in the matters of Islam.[46] On the other hand, Muslims have not only been far away from all religions, but have no single real Muslim christianologist. To have dialogue in its true sense, it is necessary to train the people, as communication necessarily needs to know how and what to communicate.

In the end, it is also to be pointed out that Christians should agree on the salvation of people of other faiths. Only in that way, they can bring the people closer to one another. Otherwise, the gap can never be filled. To conclude, it is to be highlighted that dialogue can only be possible if the participants are open minded. They should not try to convert each other. Both Muslims and Christians should learn about each other's religion as much as possible. They should remain respectful to each other. The controversial issues must be avoided in dialogical discussions. Muslims should train their scholars in all fields of knowledge. The importance of any particular religion for its followers must be accepted. Only these conditions can lead to a fruitful and peaceful dialogue.

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[46] Talbi, Muhammad, Possibilities and Conditions, for a better understanding between Islam and the West, (art) Journal of Ecumenical Studies, vol.25, No.2, spring 1988, p.184

Conclusion:

The detailed study on the interfaith dialogue has peeped into its different meanings and kinds according to the Christian pioneers and theologians. Though it carries many meanings and kinds, yet the basic aims is only to strength the co-existence of the followers of different religions. The problems disturbing the process of dialogue may be overcome if the participants start thinking more positively and broadly. It is only their open-mind ness that can make the inter-faith dialogue possible. The fact that every theologian thinks his religion the best and has got an urge to preach it stands fast. But the very spirit of dialogue remains when at the table of dialogue; the theologians just discuss the issues of common interest and regard each other's belief systems. In the context of Pakistan, the scholars of both sides need to carry out the process more effectively so as to remove religious misunderstandings and to pave the way for a peaceful social setup.

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