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Theology of Interfaith Dialogue in Christianity and Islam: A  
Comparative Study of Hans Küng and Fethullah Gülen.

MS Thesis

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

# DEDICATED

TO

My Mother

Who grew me up, taught me, and always prayed for my success.

My Father

Who always supported me, encouraged me, and provided me everything that I  
needed during my life.

My Brothers and Sisters

That always assisted, and encouraged me to pursue my studies.

My Wife

Who encouraged and supported me to complete this thesis.

My Son

Muhammad Abu Bakkar.

## DECLARATION

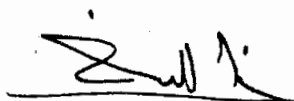
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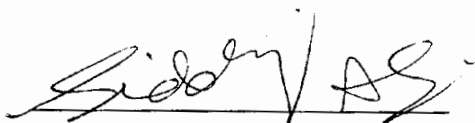
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## APPROVAL

It is certified that **Mr. Abdur Rehman**, Reg. No: **454-FU/MSCR/S12** has successfully defended his MS Thesis entitled "**THEOLOGY OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HANS KÜNG AND FETHULLAH GÜLEN**" in viva voce examination held at the Department of Comparative Religion, Faculty of Usuluddin, International Islamic University Islamabad.



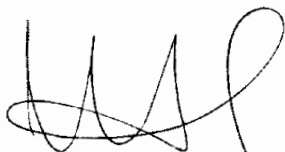
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## Abstract

*Interfaith dialogue is a pressing topic in today's world, as the religious leaders and scholars are now focusing on the subject of interfaith dialogue and view it an essential and urgent process. The theologians and scholars of the world major religions are have become fully aware of the fact that peace of this world is because of the peace among the followers of different religions. World population almost comprise of Muslims and Christians, that's why a dialogue between them is important.*

*This research work identifies and describes the theological foundations of interfaith dialogue in Christianity and Islam, by different research studies of Christian and Muslim scholars in the interfaith dialogue. This research also identifies and describes the arguments, approaches and sources of Hans Küng and Fethullah Gülen in the interfaith dialogue, and compares them to highlight their similarities and differences in the interfaith dialogue.*

*This study indicates that a theology of interfaith dialogue is taking shape both in Christian and Muslim traditions, and the scholars of both religions are now focusing the theological foundations of interfaith dialogue in their work. The selected Christian scholars have focused the subject of truth claimed by different religions, the pluralist view of religions, and the global responsibility for eco-human wellbeing as theological foundations for interfaith dialogue. The selected Muslim scholars have focused the subject of ethics, the relation of Islam with other religions, and working together to build up mutual understanding as theological foundations for interfaith dialogue.*

*Hans Küng views the beginning of a Global Ethic, evaluation of different understanding on truth claims in religions, seeking the feasibility of a global theology in religions, and the dependency of world peace upon the peace among world religions as the most important arguments in the interfaith dialogue. While Fethullah Gülen views saving man from the influence of materialism, demand of dialogue by the very nature of religion, the Qur'an universal call for dialogue, and promotion of positive values through dialogue as major arguments of interfaith dialogue.*

*Hans Küng and Fethullah Gülen, both take deductive, pluralist, and philosophical approaches in the interfaith dialogue. Hans Küng is not specific with Christianity in his sources of interfaith dialogue as he generally refers to common elements among Muslims, Christians, and Jews, and common ethical teachings of the major world religions. While Fethullah Gülen mainly refers to the Quranic verses, Hadith, and mystical sources of Maulana Rumi and Said Nursi.*



## ملخص البحث

يعدّ الحوار بين الأديان من الموضوعات المهمة في عصرنا الحاضر، وقد اهتم به العلماء والباحثون والحركات الدينية والاجتماعية والمنظمات الوطنية والدولية، ونشر هذا الفكر في أبعادها ومجالاتها المختلفة. والحوار بين الأديان له علاقة ذات أهمية عند المسيحيين والمسلمين، حيث نجد الاهتمام الخاص والمساعي الجزيلة في نشر هذه الفكرة والدعوة اليه بطرق الندوات والسيمينارات والبحوث العلمية والأسفار الى أماكن مختلفة وغيرها من الأعمال. هذا الموضوع يحتاج الى دراسة علمية دقيقة ويقتضى من العلماء والباحثين بأن يجتهدوا في مجالاتها المتنوعة لكي يصلوا الى الحق والصواب، ويجب عليهم أن يبرزوا بما فيه من الفوائد والنقائص حتى يستفيد منه الناس.

والبحث الحالي يبحث عن موضوع مهم في الحوار بين الأديان، وهو "الأسس الدينية للحوار بين الأديان في المسيحية والاسلام: دراسة مقارنة بين هانس كونغ و فتح الله كولن". ويشتمل هذا البحث على أربعة أبواب و يتحدث عن الموضوعات التالية:

الباب الأول: يتحدث فيه الباحث عن الأسس الدينية للحوار بين الأديان في المسيحية والاسلام. الباب الثاني: يتحدث فيه مناهج هانس كونغ و مصادره و حججه في الحوار بين الأديان. الباب الثالث: يتحدث فيه مناهج فتح الله كولن و مصادره و حججه في الحوار بين الأديان. الباب الرابع: يشتمل على دراسة مقارنة بين هانس كونغ و فتح الله كولن، و سيتحدد فيه أوجه الشبه و الاختلاف بين فتح الله كولن و هانز كونغ في المناهج والمصادر والحجج للحوار بين الأديان.

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## Introduction

### Background and Literature Review

Christianity and Islam are the major religions which make up about 55% of the total world population. Their mutual relationship, co-existence, and tolerance of each other are important for peace around the world. Without a framework for coexistence of both religions, it is difficult to have an environment of peace in the world. Therefore, the issue of coexistence needs great attention and sincere contributions from the religious leaders, scholars, organizations, and followers of both religions. From the very beginning till modern times, we can find meaningful and sincere contributions from both sides for the peace, harmony, and co-existence with each other.

There are many factors that are considered conducive towards the improvement of Christian-Muslim relations and their peaceful co-existence. *Interfaith Dialogue* is one of the important factors in this regard and is appreciated in both religious circles, to a great extent. Although the term interfaith dialogue looks like a new phenomenon, however, its roots and foundations go several centuries back. The historical background of Christian-Muslim relations indicates that this phenomenon was present from the very beginning one way or the other, and if not always, there had been a situations of peace, harmony, and cooperation between Christians and Muslims either they were in majority or minority.

Better understanding of each other, mutual cooperation, acceptance of each other's reality and peaceful environment between Christians and Muslims are not only the requirements of their existence in the world, but it is equally significant that teachings of peace and mutual respect can be gleaned from their scriptures as well. There are many religious scholars and theologians from both religious traditions who have discussed different dimensions of interfaith dialogue in their scholarly works and promoted this phenomenon in many parts of the world.

We are now living in a period affected by globalization and means of fast travel and communication. These new factors are influencing each and every aspect of human life

either positively or negatively. As modernity and its various products contribute positive changes in the daily life of the people and make life easier and comfortable than ever before, however due to its focus on material benefits and indifference to any reality beyond this physical world, puts constraints on religion and religious people around the world. As a result, tendencies like secularization, atheism, and opposition of religion have emerged in different parts of the world. In spite of all these challenges, the significance and contribution of religion in the world and in the lives of people is still a reality. Even today we see billions of people who follow one or the other religion, and notably the followers of Christianity and Islam are greater in number than other religions.

Globalization spreads out inhabitants, traditions and thoughts around the globe, and makes it possible for different religious communities and groups, who have different beliefs and ideas to come closer to each other and share their ideas and thoughts with each other. Today, multiplicity of religions shapes everyday life in various societies around the world. Advocates of interfaith dialogue argue that in this era of globalization, interfaith dialogue is capable to promote common awareness, admiration for other religions, and a nonviolent environment for the people of diverse religions.<sup>1</sup> In this regard, Christian-Muslim relations and their mutual understanding can help in contributing peace and harmony at a global level. Their good mutual relationship can also serve as a role model for other religious communities around the world.

As interfaith dialogue was needed for better understanding between Christians and Muslims in past, it is equally significant and necessary in the present times. Since the last few decades, interfaith dialogue has obviously grown in urgency and importance than other

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<sup>1</sup>John Esposito & Ihsan Yilmaz, eds., *Preachers of Dialogue: International Relations and Interfaith Theology in Islam and Peace building*, Istanbul: Blue Dome Press, 2007, 147-168.

aspects of Christian-Muslim relations.<sup>2</sup> We find tendency towards the emphasis on interfaith dialogue within the religious as well as academic circles of both religious traditions. A number of theologians, scholars, intellectuals, researchers, and organizations of national and international level are propagating interfaith dialogue throughout the world. There are equal contributions and efforts from both sides in organizing purposeful interfaith dialogue on national and international level. They represent various aspects of dialogue through conferences, seminars, publishing of printed and electronic materials on the principles of interfaith dialogue, its significance, and consequences of the successful dialogues.

The current research takes up an aspect of interfaith dialogue which relates to the theology of interfaith dialogue in both Christianity and Islam. By focusing on the scholarly work of the selected Christian-Muslim theologians about interfaith dialogue, this study ventures to exposit the theological foundations of interfaith dialogue in Christianity and Islam. The main part of this research is a comparative study of the discourses of interfaith dialogue put forward by Muhammad Fethullah Gülen on one hand and by Hans Küng on the other. Both are theologians and religious scholars of their respective faiths, and are well known for their valuable contributions in the meaningful interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Therefore, it is important to know about their sources, approaches and arguments for interfaith dialogue. So, first this study identifies and describes their sources, approaches, and arguments, and then compares them in order to discern similarities and differences in their views.

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<sup>2</sup>*Generous Love: the truth of the Gospel and the call to dialogue*; An Anglican theology of interfaith relations, The Anglican Consultative Council, London, 2008, 2.

## Literature Review

Interfaith dialogue is an important topic and therefore rich literature is available on it. The religious leaders, scholars, researchers and academic writers have elaborated and discussed various aspects of interfaith dialogue. The available literature discusses the necessity of interfaith dialogue and its principles, the role of religious scholars and intellectuals in promoting dialogue, and so on. Still there are some important aspects which need to be studied and elaborated. For Instance, theology of interfaith dialogue in Islam and Christianity needs to be thoroughly studied and explained. Furthermore, the scholars and theologians who have promoted interfaith dialogue in its multiple directions need to be focused on. For this purpose, the present study focuses on the contributions of Muhammad Fethullah Gülen and Hans Küng. Both of these figures are well-known for their contributions to the theology of interfaith dialogue. Keeping in mind this background a brief survey of available literature is presented below:

John A. Colman<sup>3</sup> discusses various theories of religious pluralism and approaches to inter-religious dialogue in relation to the present time. The author proposes that the current world's situation demands an effective dialogue among the followers of different religions. He argues that for a successful dialogue, an adequate theology of inter-religious dialogue must be developed on priority and urgent basis. The author concludes that to be called inter-religious, one must keep positive relationship with the adherents of other religions. The author gives his point of view that no current theology of inter-religious dialogue is adequate yet.

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<sup>3</sup>Colman, John A, "Inter-Religious Dialogue: urgent challenge and theological land-mine", paper first presented as The Slattery Lecture, at the University of Notre Dame Australia, 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2007.

Turan Kayaoglu<sup>4</sup> examines the theology of interfaith dialogue by focusing on the works of three notable religious scholars: Jonathan Sacks, Pope John Paul, and Fethullah Gülen. The author elaborates five main aspects of interfaith dialogue in this paper. These are: variations on the definition of interfaith dialogue, the rationale for the commencement and improvement of interfaith theology, widespread reservations regarding the probability and effectiveness of interfaith dialogue, development of a framework through which one can analyze the support of religious leaders for interfaith dialogue, and the rationales for the interfaith dialogue according to these three religious scholars.

Terry Mathis<sup>5</sup> examines several passages of the Old Testament, New Testament and the Qur'an which give the theme of interfaith dialogue. The author tries to show that the sacred scriptures of Jews, Christians, and Muslims allow for interfaith dialogue. The author also takes the example of Muslim Scholar, Fethullah Gülen and focuses on his work which promotes dialogue between Muslims and the followers of other religions. The author tries to explain Gülen's views about dialogue and peaceful co-existence.

Salih Yucel<sup>6</sup> examines *Nostra Aetate* Declaration and Fethullah Gülen's views about an institution-oriented dialogue. The author argues that *Nostra Aetate* and Gülen's vision have pushed the religious people to have a peaceful dialogue with each other and tolerate each other. The author points out that there are doubts and misconceptions about interfaith dialogue, but the leaders of dialogue on both sides should employ theological reasoning to

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<sup>4</sup>Turan Kayaoglu, "Preachers of Dialogue: International Relations and Interfaith Theology", international conference proceedings, *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement*, Leeds: Metropolitan University Press, 2007.

<sup>5</sup>Terry Mathis, "Sacred Scriptures and Interfaith Dialogue", Paper presented at the *International Conference on Peaceful Coexistence: Fethullah Gülen's Initiatives for Peace in the Contemporary World*, Erasmus University of Rotterdam, Netherlands, 22-23 November 2007.

<sup>6</sup>Salih Yucel, "Muslim-Christian Dialogue: Nostra Aetate and Fethullah Gülen's Philosophy of Dialogue", *Australian e-Journal of Theology*, 20/3, December 2013.



support the enterprise of dialogue. The author gives his point of view that institution-oriented dialogue gives opportunities to the followers of different religions to see the world and each other from different perspectives.

Douglass Pratt<sup>7</sup> analyzes the views of Gülen about inter-religious dialogue. The author concludes that in spite of the opposition from various people; Gülen has a very large audience for his views and ideas. The author also notes that he sustains to observe the theology of dialogue which is grounded in the Islamic principles.

Ahmet Kurucan & Mustafa K. Erol<sup>8</sup> notes various definitions of dialogue as well as interfaith dialogue. They also explain the difference between *Tabligh* and dialogue. The authors quote several verses from the Holy Qur'an along with Hadith of the Prophet (SAW) in order to support dialogue with People of The Book in particular, and also with non-believers in general.

Gerard Hall<sup>9</sup> explains the present call to interfaith dialogue from the Roman Catholic point of view in the Australian locale. The author argues that interfaith dialogue is the necessity of majority, and it is proposed to establish good relations among the people of different religions. The author views that there is a fundamental change in the Church for its relationship with the other religions.

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<sup>7</sup>Pratt, Douglas, "Islamic Prospects for Inter-Religious Dialogue: The Contribution of Fethullah Gülen", in Ihsan Yilmaz et al (eds) *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement*. London: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, 2007, pp. 391-406.

<sup>8</sup>Ahmet Kurucan & Mustafa K. Erol, *Dialogue in Islam: Qur'an, Sunnah, History*, London: Dialogue Society, 2011.

<sup>9</sup>Gerard Hall, "The Call to Interfaith Dialogue", *Australian e-Journal of Theology*, Issue 5, August 2005.

Ihsan Yilmaz et al, ed.,<sup>10</sup> is one of the best publications which comprises several research papers presented at the conference entitled “Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement”. The contributors in the conference focus various dimensions of Gülen and his movement in their papers. These papers study the role of Fethullah Gülen and *Hizmet* movement for peace and harmony among the people of different religions. The authors note that Gülen is succeeded to inspire millions of Muslims through his speeches, sermons, and literature to take active part in dialogue with the followers of different religions.

Ihsan Yilmaz<sup>11</sup> describes the contribution of *Hizmet* movement in promoting peace and harmony among diverse communities by establishing dialogue activities and guiding people through proper education to participate in peace seeking dialogue.

The author also focuses Gülen’s discourse and initiatives of dialogue, tolerance, and acceptance. The author explains his message of dialogue, acceptance, and alliance of civilizations to be applied in sensitive fields such as multi-ethnic societies and global conflict zones.

Zeki Saritoprak & Sidney Griffith<sup>12</sup> elaborate the ideas of Gülen about Interfaith Dialogue in contemporary world situation. The authors focus the main thoughts of Fethullah Gülen about the encounter and relation of Muslims with other religions, especially with Christianity. In conclusion, the authors view that in spite of criticism by some people on

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<sup>10</sup>Ihsan Yilmaz et al (eds) *Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement*. London: Leeds Metropolitan University Press, 2007.

<sup>11</sup>Ihsan Yilmaz, “Civil Society and Islamic NGOs in Secular Turkey and Their Nationwide and Global Initiatives: The Case of the Gülen Movement”, *Journal of Regional Development Studies*, 2010.

<sup>12</sup>Zeki Saritoprak & Sidney Griffith, “Fethullah Gülen and the People of the Book: A voice from Turkey for Interfaith Dialogue”, *Muslim world*, Volume 95, Issue 3, July 2005, pp.329-340.

the views and dialogical activities of Gülen, the Islamic teachings provide support to his ideas and views of dialogue with Christians, Jews, and people of other religions.

Morgan, Richard H<sup>13</sup>, explores Küng's major works related to the subject of dialogue and co-operation among the people of different religions. The author elaborates his concept of *Global Ethic*, which he views a minimum opening point for peace and harmony among the followers of different religions in this era of globalization. The author also describes Hans Küng's investigation of Christianity and Islam and their participation in the subject of Global Ethic for peace in the world.

The available literature about interfaith dialogue has focused some significant aspects of interfaith dialogue. The scholars and researchers have given their own definitions of interfaith dialogue, discussed its principles and guidelines, and described the contributions of different religious leaders and scholars in the interfaith dialogue, and so on. Still there are other aspects which are equally important, and needs to be investigated and thoroughly studied.

Theology of interfaith dialogue in Christianity and Islam, and a comparison of the views of notable Christian and Muslim scholars in the interfaith dialogue are important. Such kind of studies have not been conducted by the scholars and researchers before. So this study focuses both these important aspects of interfaith dialogue; and seeks to identify and describe the basis of interfaith dialogue in Christianity and Islam. The study also identifies, describes, and compares the views of Hans Küng and Fethullah Gülen in the interfaith dialogue. This study might be a new contribution in the subject of interfaith dialogue, and ought to gain consideration in the academic circles.

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<sup>13</sup>Morgan, Richard H, "Peace among religions: Hans Kung's analysis of Christian and Muslim paradigms of social justice in search of a Global Ethic", *Forum on Public Policy: A Journal of the Oxford Round Table*, 2011.

## **Research Questions**

This thesis is intended to answer the following questions:

- 1: What are the theological foundations of interfaith dialogue in Christianity and Islam?
- 2: How do Fethullah Gülen and Hans Küng view interfaith dialogue, and what kind of arguments, approaches, and sources they have in the interfaith dialogue?
- 3: What kind of similarities and differences are found between Fethullah Gülen and Hans Küng in their arguments, approaches, and sources of interfaith dialogue?

## **Research Methodology**

This thesis seeks to identify and describe the arguments, approaches, and sources of Hans Küng and Fethullah Gülen in the interfaith dialogue, and to identify and explain the similarities and differences in their arguments, approaches, and sources of interfaith dialogue. This thesis also seeks to identify and describe the theological foundations of interfaith dialogue in Christianity and Islam.

This study uses the scholarly works of Christian and Muslim scholars in the interfaith dialogue, and identifies and explains the theological foundations of interfaith dialogue in Christianity and Islam. To identify and explain the arguments, sources, and approaches of Küng and Gülen, the study focuses the scholarly works of both scholars. Finally, this study compares the arguments, sources, and approaches of Hans Küng and Gülen in the interfaith dialogue. This study applies the analytical, descriptive, and comparative methods collectively.

This study is based mainly on library and online research, which comprises the collection of relevant books, articles, research papers, periodicals and research journals.

# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1

### **Theological Foundations of Interfaith Dialogue in Christianity and Islam**

This chapter analyzes and discusses the theological foundations of interfaith dialogue in Christianity and Islam by focusing on the writings of Christian and Muslim Scholars about interfaith dialogue.

#### **Foundations of interfaith dialogue in the religious and scholarly work of Christian scholars**

Interfaith dialogue has been discussed and promoted by a large number of Christian scholars and theologians. Those scholars have given reasoning and justification of promoting interfaith dialogue, and also discussed the theoretical basis of interfaith dialogue in their scholarly work. Since this part of the research is related to the foundations of interfaith dialogue in Christianity, therefore, the study focuses the writings of Christian scholars who discussed the foundations and theoretical basis of interfaith dialogue in their scholarly work. The well-known scholars in this regard are: Wolfhart Pannenberg, John Hick, Paul F. Knitter, and Leonard Swidler.

#### **Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-2014)**

Wolfhart Pannenberg was born in Stettin (Germany). He began his university studies of theology and philosophy in 1947 at Berlin University. He also studied at Gottingen and Basil University. His most influential teacher was Karl Barth, who brought him to study the ecumenical problems within Christianity, and convinced him of the necessity of interfaith dialogue. Pannenberg achieved his doctorate degree at the University of Heidelberg.<sup>14</sup>

Pannenberg is a Christian theologian who promoted and addressed the subject of interfaith dialogue through his academic work. He takes an inclusive approach to other religions, and

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<sup>14</sup>Gunther Wenz, *Introduction to Wolfhart Pannenberg's Systematic Theology*, Bristol: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013, p.13.

accepts the truth claimed by other religions. He views that Christians should engage in the meaningful dialogue with the followers of other religions. This dialogue should be open, and the Christians must be ready to accept the truth claimed by other religions. The Christians should learn from other religions, and accept the truth whatever they can accept, in order to integrate those fundamentals of reality into their own perceptive.

Pannenberg also views that accepting the truth claimed by other religions does not mean missing of truth in Christianity, which an individual tries to find in meeting and dialogue with the people of different religions. In fact, this acceptance is only to identify the reality in these religions from their own point of view.<sup>15</sup>

He supports dialogue with people of diverse religions along with certain dedications, and the most remarkable among them is that there is just one common truth for which an individual can explore in order to accept the truth claimed by other religions, interfaith dialogue is to be processed. In his view, the aim of dialogue is not to reduce the diversity; rather it is aimed to give importance to search for a common truth.<sup>16</sup>

He notes that the conflicting truth claims of different religions are essential; therefore a Global Theology must be done in dialogue and communication with the people of different religions and cultures.<sup>17</sup> This Global Theology will study the religious history of mankind in its totality, not just only from Christian presupposition, and also not only empirically and descriptively, but also with reference to the transcendent mystery which is the referent of the religious truth claim.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Religious Pluralism and Conflicting truth claims," in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, G. D'costa, ed. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990, 103.

<sup>16</sup>Kärkkäinen, V. *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2003, 243-44.

<sup>17</sup>Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and Philosophy of Science*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1976, 324.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 358.

He proposes that the Christians should learn something about the divine reality from interfaith dialogue, as he affirms that God is present through revelation in other religions. So he calls for an effective interfaith dialogue.<sup>19</sup> He is also against the tendency in which Christians are only speaking about Christians to Christians. He proposes that interfaith dialogue can contribute to a better understanding for the Christians not only of the other religion, but also of what a Christian believes.<sup>20</sup>

### **John Hick (1922-2012)**

John Hick was born in Scarborough, United Kingdom. In 1940, he began to study philosophy at Edinburg University. He completed his doctorate degree in philosophy of religion at Oriel College, Oxford. His thesis was later published as his first book.<sup>21</sup>

Hick is a Christian theologian and philosopher who supported interfaith dialogue, and addressed this subject in his scholarly work. During his fifteen years at Birmingham University, He developed his theory of religious pluralism. The Birmingham city had many traditions, castes and faiths. This opportunity assisted him to have a tolerant view of other religions, and his encounters with the people of other religions such as Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, and Hindus convinced him to have a pluralistic view of religions.<sup>22</sup>

He affirms that those people who accept the pluralist view of religions can take benefits from the ethics and perception of other religions. This acceptance lets the Christians to pursue the "Truth Seeking Dialogue", in which every associate is aware that the

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<sup>19</sup> Pannenberg, "The Religions from the Perspective of Christian Theology and the Self-Interpretation of Christianity in Relation to the Non-Christian Religions", *Modern Theology* 9:3 (July 1993) 285-297, p. 295.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 297.

<sup>21</sup> Sinkinson, Chris, *John Hick: An Introduction to His Theology*, Leicester: RTSF, 1995, p.5.

<sup>22</sup> Je, Haejong, "A Critical Evaluation of John Hick's Religious Pluralism in Light of His Eschatological Model", Ph.D. Thesis, Andrews University: USA, 2009.



supernatural being is superior to his own narrow description of it.<sup>23</sup> He emphasizes the importance of dialogue among world religions and proposes that the dialogue among those people who accept and value religious diversity is quite different from the older kind of confrontation in which each group was concerned to establish a unique superiority of his own religion.<sup>24</sup>

### **Paul F.Knitter (1939- )**

Paul F.Knitter is a Christian theologian and a leading advocate of interfaith dialogue. His view of other religions is that every religion has the truth of divine and salvation. Therefore, Christians should not declare their faith as superior to all faiths, and they should open a dialogue with other religions and learn from them. He proposes his own model of dialogue which he calls a "co relational model." In a co relational model of dialogue, all religions are viewed not as necessarily being equal or the same in their truth claims but having equal rights.

He argues that co relational is a better adjective than pluralistic to describe an applicable dialogue.<sup>25</sup> According to him, Christians should understand mission not something to harmonize with dialogue but as dialogue. Since proclamation and witness are the heart of mission, which is the integral part of dialogue, it is mission which is included in dialogue. He also argues that a pluralistic point of view on interfaith dialogue is only possible with a new frame and a new shape of truth, which obviously departs from the conventional

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<sup>23</sup>John Hick, *God Has Many Names*, Westminster: John Knox Press, 1982, p. 81.

<sup>24</sup> John Hick and H.Askari ed., *The Experience of Religious Diversity*, Hants, England: Gower, 1985, p.4.

<sup>25</sup>P. F. Knitter, *Can our "One and Only" also Be a "One among Many"? A Response to Responses*, en L. SWIDLER y P. MOJZES (eds.), *The Uniqueness of Jesus, A Dialogue with Paul F. Knitter*, Maryknoll, N.Y., 1997, p.154.

ideas.<sup>26</sup> He proposes that the world religions are being attracted by creative tempt with all facts in debates and negotiation with other. The main motive behind this interactive influence is to verify agreement among the different religions followers.<sup>27</sup>

In his later writings, he argues to have shifted away from the request to the common ground of mutual religious experience as the opening point of interfaith dialogue to a *salvation centered* dialogue, which is founded on the common ground of universal duty for eco-human prosperity.<sup>28</sup>

### **Leonard Swidler (1929- )**

Leonard Swidler is a Christian Theologian and advocate of interfaith dialogue. He wrote several books and articles regarding various aspects of interfaith dialogue. One of his famous works on interfaith dialogue is "The Dialogue Decalogue".<sup>29</sup> In this article he proposes ten principles for Interfaith Dialogue. These principles are:

- 1: Each partner should come to learn from another and should change his perception about the other partner.
- 2: There must be two-way communication channels in interfaith dialogue, especially in the religious communities.
- 3: Honestly every partner must participate in the dialogue.

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<sup>26</sup> Paul Knitter, *No Other name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward The World Religions*, New York: Orbis, 1985, p.205.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility*, New York: Orbis, 1995, 12, 17, (Emphasis by the author).

<sup>29</sup> Leonard Swidler, "Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Inter-Religious, Inter-Ideological Dialogue", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*-Issue Winter, 20/1, 1983.

- 4: The partners must show truthfulness and sincerity towards each other in dealings.
- 5: Every partner must define himself what it means to be a member of his own tradition.
- 6: Every partner must come to the dialogue with no hard assumptions and should not be strict about the points of disagreement.
- 7: Dialogue can be done between two equals, and there will be no dialogue if one views another's religion as inferior.
- 8: Dialogue can take place in the case when there is a common understanding.
- 9: According to each religious tradition each partner should have a bird eye view about his religion.
- 10: By practicing different methods every partner should try to exercise other partner religion.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid, 188-192.

## **Foundations of interfaith dialogue in the religious and scholarly work of Muslim scholars**

The Muslim scholars over the last few decades have made remarkable theoretical and practical contributions to interfaith dialogue. Since interfaith dialogue is regarded an important factor to engage people of different faiths in order to develop mutual understanding and to tolerate each other, therefore the Muslim scholars have realized the urgency and significance of interfaith dialogue in the present time more than the past. Several Muslim intellectuals have focused the subject matter of interfaith dialogue in their books, articles, debates, conferences and other platforms. Here this study focuses the scholarly work of well-known Muslim scholars in the academic circles.

### **Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi (1921-1986)**

Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi was a contemporary Muslim intellectual who is recognized for his study of world religions and contributions to interfaith dialogue. He was engaged in various forms of interfaith study and dialogue and participated in the dialogue with the Vatican, The World Council of Churches and other Christian organizations. He attempted to articulate a theoretical basis for dialogue through his publications and applied his theories in active dialogue and debates.<sup>31</sup>

Al Faruqi proposes six methodologies for interfaith dialogue. These are:

- 1: Every dialogue must be subjected to critique.
- 2: In every communication the laws of internal coherence must be obeyed.
- 3: In every communication the laws of external coherence should be obeyed.
- 4: Communication must obey the laws of correspondence with reality.
- 5: Dialogue must be free from canonical figurization.

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<sup>31</sup> Esposito et al., *Makers of Contemporary Islam*, Oxford University Press, 2001, p.33.

6: Dialogue should be based upon questions of ethics and not theology.<sup>32</sup>

He proposes that dialogue must be conducted in a specific way in order to be succeeded, and thus suggests some guidelines. These guidelines are:

1: Sincerity of intention from both partners of dialogue.

2: Respect for one another's religion. 3: Considering religion and human life.<sup>33</sup>

He calls the modern period as the era of dialogue and proposes three themes for this era of dialogue.

1: The innocent nature of human beings as part of God's creation.

2: The need to recognize the will of God and His command.

3: The moral vocation of the faithful in the world.

He examines the theoretical consequences for the relation of Islam to the other religions and notes that Islam puts all human beings on equal footing. As God has created the whole universe and all the people, hence they are able to hear God's revelation and act according to it. The natural capacity to hear God's will is called *Dīn Al Fitrah* in the Islamic tradition and is identified as "Islam", which means submission to the will of God.

### **Mahmoud Ayoub (1935- )**

Mahmoud Ayoub is a prominent scholar of the Muslim world, and professor of Islamic Studies and comparative religion at Temple University (Philadelphia). He is the author of several books and articles on Islam and interfaith dialogue.

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<sup>32</sup>Al-Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1998, pp. 250- 254.

<sup>33</sup>Ismail Raji Al Faruqi, *Christian Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Analysis of Its Dominant Ideas*, Montreal: McGill University Press, 1967, P.3.

He views that dialogue is not just conversation; rather it involves working together to build up better mutual understanding while maintaining the distinctive characteristics of each religion. He gives the example of a Christian delegation which came from *Najran*, who sought to convince Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to accept their religion or to reach a peace agreement to allow them freedom and social independence. So besides theological differences, both communities showed mutual tolerance and accepted the existence of each other.<sup>34</sup>

He also views that religious pluralism is the acknowledgment of the diversity and multiplicity of religions as a normal or divinely determined fact. If religious pluralism is to deal with the major and prominent dialogue paradigm and among the people of diverse religions and among different religion classes, the theistic one are lawful traditions to the best of absolute reality.

He notes that the Qur'an acknowledges religious diversity and plurality, and also sets principles for interfaith relations.<sup>35</sup> The Qur'an clearly shows us to give respect and protect each other worship places, as Allah says " Had Allah not repelled some people by means of others, Synagogues and Churches, Mosques and Monasteries in which Allah's name is mentioned, would have been demolished"( Qur'an 22:40).

He also notes that The Qur'an sets both the decorum and theology of dialogue. The Qur'an tells the Muslim regarding the softness in conversation with Christians and Jews. He also reminds us that Islam as a whole does not insisting on demanding any religious affinity from Christians and Jews until they themselves select it without any fear and pressure. The Qur'an states "There is no compulsion in religion" (Qur'an 2:256). He further notes that Qur'an and Prophetic tradition instruct all the Muslims to join the

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<sup>34</sup>Mahmoud Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity Between Tolerance and Acceptance", *ICMR*, vol.2, no.2, 1991, p.175.

<sup>35</sup>Weisse, Wolfram et al., eds. *Religions and Dialogue: International Approaches*. Münster: Waxmann, 2014, p.211.

significant dialogue, communion, and compromise on the basic principles. The Qur'an calls it "A Just Word of Common Ascent".<sup>36</sup>

### **Mohamed Talbi (1921- )**

Mohamed Talbi is a Tunisian Muslim scholar, historian, and one of the influential figures in the academic circles. He is a professor of history at the University of Tunis. He affirms that dialogue can help the communities to communicate and show openness to each other.<sup>37</sup> He proposes that the objective of dialogue is simply the service of God on earth, and it is not a tool or strategy towards any other objective. It is obedience to the will of God and should not have any selfish agendas. Dialogue may be carried out for the benefit of all, without any exception and exclusion.<sup>38</sup>

He notes that the followers of the three religions; Islam, Christianity and Judaism have their significance and value, as collectively they make up half of the world's population. Furthermore, these faiths are derived from the same prophetic source and also have certain common features. Therefore, the people of these three religions have more responsibilities, so they should try to build an atmosphere of mutual understanding and interaction with each other. He concludes that if the followers of these three faiths cannot live with harmony and peace among themselves, so what can be expected from the followers of other religions.

He proposes that to re-build the ways of the contact to the world the tool of dialogue is better to tackle the situation and it is more needful in Islam than other religion else.

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid, 212.

<sup>37</sup> Talbi, *Signpost on a Long Road*, p.141-42.

<sup>38</sup> Talbi, *Islam et Dialogue*, p.35.

Furthermore, Islam supports dialogue with other people in general and with the People of the Book in particular.<sup>39</sup>

### **Tariq Ramadan (1962- )**

Tariq Ramadan is a Swiss Muslim scholar, philosopher and writer. In Oxford University he is performing his duties as a professor of Islamic studies. He proposes four basic rules for successful interfaith dialogue:

- 1: Appreciation, love and positive respect about each other perspective.
- 2: Giving more preference to the interpretations of the religious people about their sacred sources.
- 3: Allowing the masses to ask the entire question that are possible.
- 4: The practice of self-criticism.<sup>40</sup>

He argues that there must be a commitment to mutual cooperation, because dialogue is not enough, it is urgent that we commit ourselves to joint action. He also views that interfaith dialogue should make it possible for each partner to better understand the conflicts and differences that are found in other religions.<sup>41</sup>

### **Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1933- )**

Seyyed Hossein Nasr is a distinguished Muslim academic and renowned scholar and professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University. He is actively involved in interfaith dialogue through his academic works and practice. He has participated in various

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<sup>39</sup> Vacques, Waarde, Burg (ed), *Islam and Christianity: Mutual Perceptions since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century*, Leuven: Peeters, 1998, p.246.

<sup>40</sup> Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, p.202.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p.209.



dialogues that have taken place between Muslims and other world's religions, and specially Christianity.

In his academic work, he focuses various aspects of interfaith dialogue and tries to find out solutions to overcome the problems and obstacles that prevent a meaningful dialogue between Muslims and Christians. He notes that Christian-Muslim dialogue has developed with time, and there are round table discussions, conferences, written and oral exchanges on the significance of interfaith dialogue in many countries of the world.<sup>42</sup>He admits that through such kind of gatherings and dialogues, several issues have been solved, while some are still remaining unresolved up to now.

He insists that despite the differences, we can promote mutual respect between Christians and Muslims. He concludes that as the world continues to experience pervasive crises including environmental destruction and life desecration; Christians and Muslims will realize that in fact both have more in common than their differences.<sup>43</sup>He notes that Islam only supports the use of force that would bring peace and justice in the world. Using any other type of force is not in accordance to the teachings of Islam.

The above discussion indicates that a theology of dialogue is taking shape both in Christian and Muslim traditions, and the scholars of both traditions are now focusing the theological perspective of interfaith dialogue in their scholarly work. The selected Christian theologians and scholars in this study have focused various significant aspects to formulate and develop a theology of interfaith dialogue.

The first aspect for the theology of interfaith dialogue is the issue of truth claimed by different religions. The selected Christian scholars propose that a Christian must be ready to accept the truth claimed by other religions. This acceptance is not due to the lack of truth in Christianity, but only to determine the firm conviction in other kinds of faiths from their

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<sup>42</sup>Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. "Islamic-Christian Dialogue: Problems and Obstacles to be Pondered and Overcome", *The Muslim World*, Volume 88, Issue 3-4, July October, 1998, p.218.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, 236.

self-mental position. The second issue for the theology of interfaith dialogue according to them is a pluralist view of the religions. They propose that the pluralist view of the religions will enable the people of different religious traditions to take benefits from the spiritual morals and visions of each other's religious tradition. The pluralist view will also help to eliminate the superiority of a single religion over others. The third issue for the theology of interfaith dialogue is a global responsibility for eco-human well-being.

The selected Muslim scholars in this study also focused various important issues to formulate and develop a theology of interfaith dialogue. The first issue for theology of interfaith dialogue according to them is that dialogue should be based upon the questions of ethics and not on theology. The second issue is the relation of Islam with other religions, as Islam puts all human beings on equal footings. God created the whole universe and the entire creature that in turn make them able to follow the way prescribed and act according to it. The third issue is working together to build up a better mutual understanding, while maintaining the distinctive characteristics of each religion.

# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2

### **Hans Küng view of Interfaith Dialogue**

The main theme of this chapter is to analyze and elaborate the sources, approaches and arguments of Hans Küng in the interfaith dialogue. This chapter starts with a short biography of Küng and his contribution to interfaith dialogue. After this, his sources, approaches and arguments in the interfaith dialogue are analyzed and explained.

#### **Biography**

Hans Küng is a Roman Catholic Theologian, intellectual and philosopher. He was born in Sursee (Switzerland) in 1928. In theology he got a Ph.D. degree from catholic institute at Sorbonne in 1957, The Gregorian University Rome. He also holds numerous honorary degrees from several universities.

Hans Küng has been a Professor of Ecumenical Theology and Director of Ecumenical Research at the University of Tübingen from 1960 until his retirement in 1996. He was appointed as a Theological consultant for the second Vatican Council by Pope John XXII. He is a co-editor of several journals and has written many books and articles which have been translated into different languages. In 1980, he became the director of the Institute for Ecumenical Research at Tübingen. He began to explore the possibilities for ecumenical dialogue and interfaith dialogue. Through his work at the Institute, by dialoging, writing, and lecturing with the representatives of other faiths as well as Western academic experts in the world religions, he developed the insight that world peace depends upon peace among religions.

#### **Hans Küng Contributions to Interfaith Dialogue**

Hans Küng is a famous and known figure amongst the people in search and the study of world religion. In the interfaith dialogue he made many marvelous and striking contributions. In the early years of his career, he became a special advisor to the German Cardinals at the Second Vatican Council. In nineteen eighty he was appointed as director at Tübingen in the Institute of Educational Research and started to inquire the probability

for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. According to his thought the peace of the world relies on the better placement and understanding among the various religions of the world. He summarizes this conviction in the following words: "No peace among the nations without peace among the religions, no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions, no dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundations of the religions".<sup>44</sup>

In 1993, in the first world religions parliament meeting, Kung was given the opportunity as a consultant to attend the parliament held in Chicago, and he initiated to discover the opportunity of a *Global Ethic*. Hans Küng drafted *The Declaration Toward a Global Ethic* of the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1993. He also started a comprehensive study of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam which concluded into three books: *Judaism* (1995), *Christianity* (1995), and *Islam* (1997).

### **Hans Küng Arguments of Interfaith Dialogue**

Hans Küng strongly supports interfaith dialogue and nonviolent co-existence among the people of dissimilar religions. He holds various arguments to support interfaith dialogue. These arguments are analyzed and explained as under:

#### **a. To Seek the Minimum Common Values and Attitudes for All Human Beings by Establishing a Global Ethic**

Hans Küng has spent many years understanding and compiling different religions and cultures to determine their commonalities. His work "Christianity and World Religions" in 1985, and "Christianity and Chinese Religions" in 1986 are good examples of such compilations. In 1993, he prepared a declaration of *Global Ethic* and initiated a petition in the *Parliament of the World's Religions*, and it was signed by more than 6,500 religious representatives. The Global Ethic has one fundamental attitude and four principles. The

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<sup>44</sup> Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New Ethic*, New York: Continuum Publ .co. 1991, p.138.

fundamental attitude is that “every human being must be treated humanely”. The four principles are:

- 1: The responsibility to culture peace and strong admiration for life.
- 2: The responsibility to a culture unity and economic parity.
- 3: The responsibility to a culture execution and pass the times honestly to a life span.
- 4: The obligation and responsibility to a culture that gives equal privileges and equates the gender disparity.

To support and defend his call for a global ethic, Küng argues that only the world religions have commitment to the universality and absoluteness of our moral responsibilities. The steps taken to form a universal code of moral values and to bridged different religious problems and to define common morals, a soft dialogue would require that can do so.

#### **b. To Evaluate Different Understandings on Truth Claims in religion**

Hans Küng focuses the subject of truth claimed by different religions and proposes that we must engage with what is true and good in the world religions, including Christianity, to make the dialogue fruitful. He proposes four basic positions in relation to the truth of religions other than Christianity.

1: Atheistic Position, which means that all religions are equally untrue. This position presents a challenge to all religions, because it claims that all religions are built on illusions, and beyond human life there is nothingness. He argues that Atheism is grounded in the western world; therefore, it is a position of minority.

2: Fundamentalist position, which means that only one religion is true, and all other religions are equally untrue. This position is often adopted and holds an attraction for many people today.

3: Relativist Position, which means that every religion is true, or all religions are equally true. This position is also rejected by Küng as it causes demeaning of all religions, which are clearly not the same and not always of equal value.

4: Generous Tolerant Inclusivism, which means that only one religion is true, and all religions share in the truth of this one religion<sup>45</sup>.

Küng argues that forth position is the real solution, and notes that religions can learn much more from each other in their common search for truth.<sup>46</sup>

### **c. To Seek the Feasibility of a Global Theology in Religions**

Regarding seeking the feasibility of a universal theology in religions, Küng views that the true humanity is the basis of a true religion, and a true religion is the completeness of true humanity. As long as these two premises are met, the world religions have met the above requirements. So in this sense, religion is concealed, and the remaining thing is the truth that these religions have trouble to describe it in the words.<sup>47</sup>

He acknowledges the value of religious pluralism and promotes interfaith dialogue. He calls for a new global theology which may only be developed through interfaith dialogue.

### **d. World's Peace is Related to Peace among World Religions**

In 1980, when Küng became the director of the *Institute for Ecumenical Research* at the University of Tübingen, he began to explore the possibilities for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. Gradually and slowly he started to enhance the manifestations regarding the peace among the different religions.

He argues that “when there will be no peace in the world without peace among the religions, and there will be no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions, and there will be no dialogue among religions without investigation of the foundation of the religions”.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Hans Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium*, N.Y: Doubleday, 1988, p.233-235.

<sup>46</sup>Küng, *On Being a Christian*, New York: Doubleday, 1966, pp.112-113.

<sup>47</sup> Hans Küng, *Christianity and the World Religions: Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism*, London: Collins, 1985, p.194-208.

<sup>48</sup>Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New Ethic*, p.138.

### **e. The Central Role of Interfaith Dialogue in Current International Affairs**

Hans Küng views that the contribution of the world religions in the process of peace is important and necessary. He argues that interfaith dialogue has a central role in the international affairs, and the alternative to dialogue is continuing instability and warfare. He views that religions can make a decisive contribution to peace if they utilize the potential for peace that lies within them. There are motivations in each great religion to contribute towards personal inner peace, and also towards the overcoming of violence in the society. He further views that peace among religions and nations is possible only when there is a basis of trust among them.<sup>49</sup>

### **f. A Part of the Goal of Interfaith Dialogue is Change for Unified Humanity**

Hans Küng argues that one objective of interfaith dialogue is the change for a stronger unified humanity. He clarifies this argument by proposing that it does not mean that one should compromise the foundations of his faith, but there may be a willingness to experience a change in one's prejudice, ignorance, narrow worldview, or religious conviction.

## **Hans Küng Approaches of Interfaith Dialogue**

Hans Küng has various approaches in the study and practice of interfaith dialogue. His main approaches are identified and explained below:

### **a. Deductive Approach**

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<sup>49</sup> Hans Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, Oxford University Press: New York, Oxford, 1998, p.148.



To test a hypothesis bulk of information, arguments, and developing a research concerning the deductive approach.<sup>50</sup> In short form, a deductive approach is concerned with deducting conclusions from premises or propositions. Küng uses a deductive approach to promote interfaith dialogue. This approach is present in his formulation of global ethic which is built on certain values that are deduced from the ethical teachings of the great world's religions. He uses the following common ethical teachings of different religions:

- 1: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Confucianism).
- 2: "What is hateful to you; do not do to your neighbor" (Judaism).
- 3: "As you would that men should do to you, do you also to them likewise" (Christianity).
- 4: "None of you (truly) believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself" (Islam).
- 5: "A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated" (Jainism).
- 6: "A state which is not pleasant or enjoyable for me will also not be so for him" (Buddhism).
- 7: "One should not behave towards others in a way which is unpleasant for oneself; that is the essence of morality" (Hinduism).

Using the above teachings, Hans Küng proposes that each human should be treated humanely. He seeks the minimum common values and attitudes for all human beings,

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<sup>50</sup>Wilson, J. *Essentials of Business Research: A Guide to Doing Your Research Project*, London: SAGE Publications, 2010, p.7.

which will lead the people of different religions to participate in the interfaith dialogue for the sake of world's peace.

### **b. Pluralist Approach**

Hans Küng also uses a pluralist approach to support interfaith dialogue. He accepts that there is also salvation outside Church. He states:

[Salvation outside the Church: why not honestly admit it, if this is in fact what we assert?...If all religions contain truth, why should Christianity in particular be the truth? If there is salvation outside the Church and Christianity, what is the point of the Church and Christianity at all?]<sup>51</sup>

He further views that the salvation of non-Christians is solely on the faith in God and not due to the church. He notes that there is God's proximity to all people of good-natured and God's grace for ceaseless salvation of man.<sup>52</sup> He suggests that it is difficult for a religion to keep its position apart without indulging with other people. Due to cited position Christianity is now brought to the platform in negotiation with other religions.

### **c. Philosophical Approach**

Hans Küng uses philosophical approach to support and promote interfaith dialogue. He proposes that in spite of the differences between the religious doctrines in the world, there is enough agreement on ethics so that religions could agree on a universal standard of conduct, to which even non-religious people could assent.

Küng was allocated to write a *Declaration toward a Global Ethic*. He formulated the Declaration which consists of four obligations:

- 1: The obligation to a culture equality and admiration for life (art.5-6).
- 2: The obligation to a culture unity and economic parity (art.7-9).

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<sup>51</sup>Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian*, trans. Edward Quinn, New York: Doubleday, 1976, 99.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 91-92.

3: The obligation to a culture of acceptance and a life of honesty (art.10-11).

4: The obligation and responsibility to a culture that gives equal privileges and equates the gender disparity. (art.12-13).

### **Hans Küng Sources of Interfaith Dialogue**

Hans Küng refers to different sources in the interfaith dialogue. These sources include the common elements among Muslims, Christians and Jews, the common ethical teachings of the major world religions. These sources are explained below:

#### **a. The Common Elements among Muslims, Christians and Jews**

Hans Küng views that there are shared points among Muslims, Jews and Christians upon which the followers of these three major religions should cooperate and dialogue with each other. These elements are:

1: Belief in one God, who provides meaning and life to all.

2: God can be addressed.

3: God is Merciful and Gracious.<sup>53</sup>

#### **b. The Common Ethical Teachings of the Major World Religions**

Hans Küng uses the common ethical teachings found in major world religions as starting point for the peace and co-operation among the followers of different world religions. He describes these common ethics with the *Golden Rule* on humanity. He uses the common ethics of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

The above study indicates that Hans Küng devotedly promotes interfaith dialogue through his academic work and practical contributions. He emphasizes to give ways to the peace in the whole world especially among the multiple religions of the world. He initiated the

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<sup>53</sup>*Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*, ed. Leonard Swidler, New York: Orbis, 1987, p.202.

concept of a Global Ethic, which indicates that peace among the world religions should begin with an exploration of the shared points that already exist among the religions in the matters of ethics. In his view, this Global Ethic could provide a moral framework and may serve as the least opening point for harmony and interaction among world religions.

Hans Küng focuses the subject matter of truth claimed by different religions in the interfaith dialogue. In his view, religions of the world can learn from each other in their common search for truth. He also admits that religion can play a significant role more effective than science and philosophy, and thus views that peace in the world is dependent on peace among the religions of the world. In his view, this is only possible when there is dialogue and peaceful coexistence among the followers of different religions. Furthermore, this dialogue is possible if the foundations of the religions are investigated.

# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3

### Fethullah Gülen's View of Interfaith Dialogue

The main theme of this chapter is to identify and explain the arguments, approaches and sources of Fethullah Gülen in the interfaith dialogue. Therefore, the study focuses on his scholarly work related to various aspects of interfaith dialogue. This chapter starts with a short biography of Gülen and his contribution to interfaith dialogue. After this, his sources, approaches and arguments are analyzed and discussed.

#### Biography

Fethullah Gülen is well known and prominent Turkish Muslim erudite, scholar, poet, educational activist and founder of worldwide social movement known as *Hizmet Movement*. He was born in Erzurum (Turkey) in 1941 into a humble family. He went to a public elementary school for three years but could not continue, because his father was appointed in another place. Onward than he prefers self-study and got various certificates by passing different levels of examination. Fathullah Gulen got his religious education such as learning Qur'an under the active supervision of educationalist and mystics round his homeland such as Muhammed Lutfi Efendi of Alvar. He also came across the compilations *Risale-i-Nur (Epistles of Light)* written by Said Nursi, and was impressed by the vision of the latter.<sup>54</sup>

Fathullah Gullen passed the directorate of religious affairs examination in 1958. Afterwards he got the preacher license from the government, and started the teaching in (Edirne). He studied multiple fields like social sciences, natural sciences and especially the knowledge related to Islamic tradition also assess the eastern and western philosophy literature. The early Islamic Scholar such as Imam Abu Hanifa (699-767 AD), Imam Ghazali (1058-1111 AD), Maulana Rumi (1207-1273 AD), Yunus Emre (1240-1320 AD),

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<sup>54</sup>Ali Ünal and Alphonse Williams, *Advocate of Dialogue: Fethullah Gülen*, Fairfax: The Foundation, 2000, p.15.

and Said Nursi (1877-1960 AD) had the massive impact on Gülen's life.<sup>55</sup> He became well-groomed and polished due to his great affection for reading and wide interpretations.

He started army services at Ankara in 1961; and afterward transferred to the Iskenderun. He was given the responsibility of teaching to the soldiers about ethics and morality. He was appreciated by commander and gave him to read western classics. After completing the military service in 1963 he starts delivering lectures on Rumi in Erzurum. Among the educated people he was a prominent erudite and was awarded with another post at Edirne in 1964.

He arranged and managed various summer camps activities and in 1969 organized various meeting in coffee-houses. He is also called the founder of *Hizmet Movement* founded in 1960s. And started the hard work in the form of interfaith dialogue and moral teachings in order to enhance local and global peace, patience and respect for everyone, and mutual understanding among the people. This movement is originated in the teachings of Gülen.

In 1994, he pioneered the Foundation of Journalists and Writers which organized multiple meetings that brings in contact various leaders of religious minorities in Turkey; such as Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Chief Rabbi of Turkey, and Vatican's representatives to Turkey.

In 1999, his doctors recommended him to move to the U.S for medical care of his cardiac disease. So he went to the U.S. Upon the recommendations of his doctors, and remained in the U.S to continue receiving medical care and to avoid stress. Currently he lives in Pennsylvania at a retreat facility with a group of academics, students and guests.

### **Fethullah Gülen's Contributions to Interfaith Dialogue**

Gülen has many contributions to interfaith dialogue and promoting peace and tolerance among the followers of world's religions. He is associated with the different aspects of interfaith dialogue through his writings and practice as well. His contributions to interfaith dialogue are briefly noted below:

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<sup>55</sup><http://hizmetmovement.blogspot.com/p/who-is-fethullah-gulen.html>, accessed March 12, 2015.

### **a. Meetings with Religious leaders of different Faiths**

In the early life stage Fathullah Gullen has focused on the interfaith dialogue, and put forward that the only one way that may bring peace globally is dialogue. He met with the Chief Rabbi of Turkey David Pinto, the Armenian Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan, Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomeos in Istanbul, and Vatican Representative Monsignor George Marowich. He also met with Pope John Paul II at Vatican to negotiate various activities between Muslim and Christians through Dialogue.

### **b. Founding the Hizmet Movement**

The most important achievement of Gülen in the service of humanity and interfaith dialogue is the foundation of worldwide movement recognized as the Hizmet Movement. This movement is famous for its recurrent widespread meetings of people, mostly in conversation groups, roundtables and dinners. These meetings are intended to welcome others, accomplish and assist in person communications, and to pursue more chances for unending dialogue.

### **c. Focusing on Interfaith Dialogue in His Writings**

Gülen addresses various aspects of interfaith in his books, articles, interviews, and sermons. Most of his books are in Turkish while some of these books are translated into English as well. He also writes the editorial page for *Yeni Umit* (New Hope), *Yagmur* (Rain), and *The Foundation Magazine*. His article on "The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue" is of vital importance, as it has been offered to the Parliament of World's Religions in Cape Town (South Africa) in 1999. His sermons and discourses have been recorded on thousands of tapes and videocassettes, while many volumes have been compiled from his articles, lectures, and his responses to the questions.



#### **d. Establishing Educational Institutions in Turkey and Abroad**

Gülen highly emphasizes the role of education in man's life, and views that we can control extremism and promote tolerance in the world through quality education. Many people in turkey and abroad inspired by the education philosophy of Gulen, and high number of schools were started by such concept loaded with Islamic tradition and up to date modern science and technology. These schools promote respect for others, tolerance and harmony, strong moral values, and sincerity.\*

#### **Fethullah Gülen's Arguments of Interfaith Dialogue**

Gülen is well known for his support and practice of interfaith dialogue in its various dimensions. He encourages interfaith dialogue and tolerance among the followers of world's religions. He has various arguments to support and practice interfaith dialogue in its all dimensions. The main arguments of are identified and explained as below:

##### **a. Dialogue is Important to Save Man from the Influence of Materialism**

Gülen views interfaith dialogue as a necessary obligation for the adherents of the world's religions, to decrease the influence of materialism in the modern time. Gulen set forward that materialism has disrupt the natural bent of mind and harmonic flow of a man.<sup>56</sup>He argues that materialist world view has limited the influence of religion in the contemporary society, which is the main cause of human problems in the present world. As a result, there is imbalance between humanity and nature, within individual men and women.<sup>57</sup>

He argues that social coherence and harmony with nature, among people, and within individual can be attained when the physical and transcendent kingdom restore friendly relation. Religion can safeguard against any kind of aggression and disruption that

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<sup>56</sup>Ünal and Williams, 241.

<sup>57</sup>Gülen, M. F. "The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue: A Muslim Perspective", The Fountain: Clifton, New Jersey, Issue 31, July– September, 2000, 4-9.

produced by the factors of materialism and gives the science its right place and can vanish all kinds of ups and down among the different nation of the world.

Gülen proposes that the natural sciences, which should act as steps of light leading people to God have become a cause of unbelief. Since the prime base for this non-belief is the West, and that Christianity has been the religion most influenced by it, so dialogue between Muslims and Christians seems to be vital.<sup>58</sup>

### **b. The Very Nature of Religion Demands Dialogue**

According to Gülen the various religions like Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, and all other religions acknowledge and follow the same objectives. That's why the dialogue is the concrete foundation of the religion. In order to oppose scientific materialism and the materialistic world view that has caused destruction in the present society.

He views that it is the religion where one can meet the identity and basic moral values in the form of generosity, pity, freedom, affection, tolerance, solidarity and brotherhood. And we should acknowledge the oneness and basic unity of religion, and the universality of belief in religion. He proposes that in order to take their religion seriously, there are many points for dialogue to discuss among Christians, Jews and Muslims. He goes on further to state that historically and practically, the Muslim world has a good dealing with the Jews. There has been almost no discrimination, Holocaust, and rejection of basic human rights or massacre.<sup>59</sup>

### **c. The Qur'an has a Universal Call for Dialogue**

Fathullah Gülen argues that Qur'an has a universal call for dialogue, and refers to the Qur'anic Verses which call for a dialogue. The Qur'an addresses the People of the Book (Christians and Jews):

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<sup>58</sup>Ünal and Williams, 241-242.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid, 243.

[Say: O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah, that we associate no partners with him, that we take not from among ourselves lords and patrons other than Allah, if then they turned back, say you: Bear witness that we are Muslims (those who have surrendered to Allah's Will)]. (Qur'an 3:64).

Gülen views that this call to dialogue starts with “*Lā*” (no) in the declaration of faith, “*Lāilāhailāllāh*” (There is none worthy of worship but Allah), is more than a command to do something positive; it is a call not to do certain things so that the supporters of the revealed religions could overcome their separation from each other. Gülen states that it entitled the widest consent on the basis of which the people of all the religions come to an agreement.<sup>60</sup> If this call is overrule, so the Muslims should assume the approach conveyed in another verse: “Your religion is for you, my religion is for me” (Qur'an 109:6). The verse implies that we will remain on our path that we have believed, and will leave you to go on your own path.

#### **d. Promoting Positive Values through Dialogue**

Gülen proposes that there are four fundamental values that are sustained by the world's religions, and are therefore to be promoted in the interfaith dialogue. These values are love, compassion, patience, and forgiveness. He calls these four values as the pillars of dialogue. He views that the soft way to get the people perception is to love them. And some accept it while some reject it, if rejected, is then welcomed by many. Once they come and greeted with respect and patience then nothing can stop them from success and obtaining their aims.<sup>61</sup>

Compassion is another important value in the view of Fethullah Gülen. He proposes that a human being must show compassion to all living beings, because it is the need of human beings. Forgiving and tolerance are two other important values acknowledged by him in

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<sup>60</sup>Gülen, M. F. “The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue: A Muslim Perspective”, p.6.

<sup>61</sup>Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, New Jersey: The Light, 2006, p.19.

promoting interfaith dialogue.<sup>62</sup> He views that anyone who does not forgive has no right to expect forgiveness, and those who do not embrace humanity with tolerance will not receive pardon. He suggests that tolerance is the key to provide peace in society, and must be maintained in the interfaith dialogue. He views that one should not condemn another for being a member of a religion, or scold him for being an Atheist.<sup>63</sup>

#### **e. Dialogue is a Must Today**

Gülen emphasizes the importance of interfaith dialogue in the present time, and argues that dialogue is the need of the day. He proposes that the initial step in promoting and developing the interfaith dialogue is to forgive all the events related to past and avoid all the controversial views by giving foremost importance to the common points.<sup>64</sup> He also reminds that Qur'an urges Muslims to respect the followers of other religions, and to accept the former prophets and their Books.

Gülen insists that the attitude of peaceful dialogue is not only required to face modernity, but also needed by the very source of Islam. He notes that Islam is the only religion that can find solution for every problem according to sharia and encourage the dialogue with all other people of other religions.

### **Approaches of Fethullah Gülen in the Interfaith Dialogue**

Gülen has various approaches in the study and practice of interfaith dialogue. His main approaches are identified and explained below:

#### **a. Deductive Approach**

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<sup>62</sup>M. Fethullah Gülen, "Towards the Lost Paradise", London: Truostar, 1996, 40-2.

<sup>63</sup>*The Turkish Daily News*, February 18, 1995.

<sup>64</sup>F. Gülen, *Dialogue Is a Must*, <http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1336/13/>, accessed March 25, 2015.

Gülen holds a deductive approach to support and promote interfaith dialogue. He views that the foundation of all religions lies in brotherhood; patience, pity, forgiveness and love. He states:

[Regardless of how their adherents implement their faith in their daily lives, such generally accepted values as love, respect, tolerance, forgiveness, mercy, human rights, peace, brotherhood, and freedom are exalted by religion. Most of them are accorded the highest precedence in the messages brought by Prophet Moses, Prophet Jesus, and Prophet Muhammad, as well as in the messages of Buddha and even Zarathustra, Lao-Tzu, Confucius, and the Hindu scholars].<sup>65</sup>

### **b. Pluralist Approach**

Gülen holds a pluralist approach that supports interfaith dialogue and peaceful coexistence among the followers of different religions. Gülen views that Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and even Hinduism and other world religions accept the same source for themselves, and including Buddhism, pursue the same goal.<sup>66</sup>

Using a singular and inclusive conceptualization of religion, he relates all major religions to each other via the same divine revelation. Gülen describes that all the religions of the world narrate its universality and unite all its sided followers and races on brotherhood track.<sup>67</sup>

### **c. Philosophical Approach**

Fethullah Gülen also has a philosophical approach to promote interfaith dialogue. Gülen proposes that “Dialogue is a Must Today”. He notes that the”, the foremost act is to setup interfaith dialogue so that fail to remember past events, overlook arguments concerning

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<sup>65</sup>Gülen, M. F. “The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue: A Muslim Perspective”, p.4.

<sup>66</sup>Ünal and Williams, 241-242.

<sup>67</sup>Gülen, M. F, *Essays, Perspectives, Opinions*, Rutherford: New Jersey, The Light, 2002, p.243.

verbal attack and prefer more the common points.<sup>68</sup>Gülen also notes that since Islam is a broad, persevered and patience religion that solves problems of different religion through positive dialogue.

### **Sources of Fethullah Gülen in the Interfaith Dialogue**

Gülen's philosophy of dialogue does not rely upon his own argumentations only, but he also uses the Islamic sources to address the issue of interfaith dialogue properly.

He mainly refers to the Qur'anic verses, *Hadith* of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and mystical teachings of Maulana Rumi and Said Nursi in the interfaith dialogue. The sources of Gülen in the interfaith dialogue are further identified and explained below:

#### **a. References from the Holy Qur'an**

Gülen refers to various Qur'anic verses to support interfaith dialogue and emphasizes on moral values to be maintained in the process of dialogue. Below is a description of the Qur'anic verses which Gülen quotes and interprets in the context of interfaith dialogue. He quotes the following verse of the Qur'an:

[Say: "O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah, that we associate no partners with him, that we take not from among ourselves lords and patrons other than Allah, if then they turned back, say you: Bear witness that we are Muslims (those who have surrendered to Allah's Will)]. (Qur'an 3:64).

Fethullah Gülen takes the concept of "meeting in common word" from this verse, and notes that the common word between Muslims and the *People of the Book* is "belief in one God". From "meeting in common word", Gülen further views the necessity of increasing common

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<sup>68</sup>Fethullah Gülen, "At the Threshold of a New Millennium", *The Fountain*, Clifton, New Jersey, Issue 29, January-March, 2000, p.6.

interests we share with other people in the dialogue.<sup>69</sup> He quotes another verse of the Qur'an:

“And the servants of (God) the All Merciful are those who move on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say *Salam* (peace)”, (Qur'an 25:63).

Similarly, he quotes the verse:

“Those who witness no falsehood, and if they pass by futility, pass by it with honorable avoidance”. (Qur'an 25:72). And the verse: “And when they hear vain talk, they turn away wherefrom and say, to us our deeds, and to you yours”. (Qur'an 28:55).

Quoting these verses, Gülen derives the principle of tolerance and forgiveness in the interfaith dialogue. He proposes that those who spread the truth of Islam ought to possess gentleness and tolerance. He notes that the Qur'an always admits compassion and tolerance as basic values.<sup>70</sup>

He quotes the verse:

“Tell those who believe, to forgive those who do not look forward to the Days of God: it is for Him to recompense each people according to what they have earned”, (Qur'an 45:14).

With reference to this verse he views that those who are true believers are directed to act with mercy and patience, even to those people who do not believe in the Life after death. So the true servants of God, who consider themselves addressed by this verse, need to act with tolerance and patience, and expect nothing from the other party.<sup>71</sup>

Gülen quotes the verse:

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<sup>69</sup>Fethullah Gülen, *Love and the Essence of Being Human*, Istanbul: Journalists and Writers Foundation Publications, 2004, p.135.

<sup>70</sup>Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, p. 69.

<sup>71</sup>Unal and Williams, p.258.

“And argue not with the People of the Book unless it be in (a way) that is better”, (Qur’an 29:46).

Gülen notes that in this verse, the Qur’an defines the way and methodology we should use, and the attitude we should show. He proposes that debate should not be for the sake of ego; rather its purpose should be to enable the truth to be appeared. So for the truth to be emerged in a debate of ideas; mutual understanding, respect, and justice should not be ignored. Gülen views that debate can only take place when there is an environment conducive to dialogue.<sup>72</sup>

He also quotes the verse:

“God does not forbid you, regarding those who did not fight you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes, to show kindness and deal with them justly”, (Qur’an 60:8).

Quoting this verse, Gülen notes that dealing with the People of The Book who are not oppressors; we should not behave them violently and should not think how to destroy them. Such kind of attitude is opposite to Islamic rules and principles.<sup>73</sup>

He notes that hundreds of Qur’anic verses deal with dialogue and tolerance. He views that care should be taken to establish a balance in one’s tolerance.<sup>74</sup>

### **b. Samples from the Hadīth**

Gülen refers to various accounts of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his teachings, and interprets them in the context of interfaith dialogue and interaction with

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<sup>72</sup>Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, p.75.

<sup>73</sup> Fethullah Gülen, “Dialogue with the People of the Book”, 22July, 2004, accessed 10 May, 2015, <http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/toward-a-global-civilization-of-love-and-tolerance/forgiveness-tolerance-and-dialogue/25229-dialogue-with-the-people-of-the-book>.

<sup>74</sup>Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, p. 34.



people of different religions. Below is a description of his quotations and interpretation of the main accounts and teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Gülen quotes the following Hadīth:

[The Prophet (peace be upon him) once stood up out of respect for humanity as the funeral procession of a Jew passed by. When reminded that the deceased was a Jew, the prophet replied: “But he is a human being”], (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1250).

Quoting this *Hadith*, Gülen notes that it shows the value which Islam gives to human beings. He proposes that if we are disciples of the Prophet (peace be upon him) who spoke such words, then it is not possible for us to think any other way. He views that it would be good for those people who oppose the recent activities of dialogue and tolerance, to review their conditions in respect to their carelessness that has permeated their personalities and spirits.<sup>75</sup>

He quotes the following Hadīth:

[When in an assembly of companions where AbūJahl’s son Ikrima was present, the Prophet (peace be upon him) admonished a companion who had been heard insulting AbūJahl: “Do not hurt others by criticizing their fathers”], (Hakim, al-Mustadrak, 3:241)

Gülen quotes this Hadith and notes that it is the definition of tolerance in Islam, that even verbal abuse of unbelievers was prohibited by the Prophet (peace be upon him). Gülen views that some Muslims in the present time have impolite behavior to other people, and they justify it in the name of religion. They do not understand Islam, because Islam has no place for malice and hatred.<sup>76</sup>

He quotes the following Hadīth:

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<sup>75</sup>Unal and Williams, 195-196.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid, 197.

[A companion complained to the Prophet (peace be upon him) that someone has stolen his belongings. But as the punishment was about to be carried out, the companion said: I have changed my mind and do not want to pursue my case, I forgive this individual. The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked: why did you bring this matter to court? Why did not you forgive him from the outset?] (*AbūDā'ūd, Hudūd, 14/4394*)

Gülen views that when such examples of tolerance are studied from their original sources, then it will be cleared that Islam is a religion of love and tolerance. He further notes that those people who act with enmity, hatred, and anger, their method is non-Islamic. Because a Muslim is a person of love and affection, and he has no malice or hatred for anyone.<sup>77</sup>

### **c. Mystical Sources of Fethullah Gülen in the Interfaith Dialogue**

Gülen himself is a mystic and spiritual master, who possesses high value for Islamic mysticism. He is much influenced by the writings and the way of life of two notable figures of Islamic mysticism, namely as Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī and Bediüzzaman Said Nursi. Both of them have influenced the thinking and behavior of Gülen. He usually refers to the writings and practice of these mystics, and interprets them in the context of interfaith dialogue.

Gülen frequently refers to Rūmī in his writings and sermons, and his activities aimed to promote dialogue and tolerance is inspired by the philosophy of Rūmī. Gülen himself notes that if we spread the Islamic understanding of scholars like Niyazī Misrī, Yunus Emre, and Rūmī, and if we propagate the message of affection, patience, and dialogue for negotiating to those who are hungry for this message, then everyone will come and will accept, peace, patience, love and affection that we present.

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<sup>77</sup> Fethullah Gülen, "Islam a religion of tolerance", July 22, 2004, accessed June 08, 2015, <http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/toward-a-global-civilization-of-love-and-tolerance/forgiveness-tolerance-and-dialogue/25225-islam-a-religion-of-tolerance>

Below is a description of his quotations and proper interpretation of the writings of Rūmī in the context of dialogue, tolerance, respect, and love.

**I: Gülen refers to Rūmī:**

[Come, come and join us, as we are the people of love devoted to God!

Come, come through the door of love and join us and sit with us.

Come; let us speak one to another through our hearts.

Let us speak secretly, without ears and eyes.

Let us laugh together without lips or sound, let us laugh like the roses.

Since we are all the same, let us call each other from our hearts,

We won't use our lips or tongue].<sup>78</sup>

Gülen refers to this poem and invites his followers to see the people of love, like Rūmī, who understand Islam as a message of love. Gülen clarifies that the words in this poem seems to be nuisance in line with the Greek or Western philosophy, however it has a sound message. He views that Rūmī persists at this point that the people of love can do just that, and it is the essence of love. Gülen suggests that this old fashioned art of lovers demands to be regained by modern people. He further notes that we must clear our actual position that leads to unity of the masses and its then the way of sole importance in which Allah bless respect and gratitude to the people of this temporary world.<sup>79</sup>

**II: Gülen uses the *Compass Metaphor of Rūmī*:**

“One of my feet is in the center, and the other is in seventy-two realms (people of all nations) like a compass”. Refer this example, Gülen put forward that an adherent must not

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<sup>78</sup>Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, p.18.

<sup>79</sup>M. Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*, Fairfax, Va.: The Fountain, 1999, p. 6.

frail to be in close with any kind of idea and system. Whereas one foot must remain at the center, and the other could be with the other seventy two nations.<sup>80</sup>

**III:** Gülen refers to Rūmī's saying:

[You should be sincere in all your deeds

So that the Majestic Lord may accept them

Sincerity is the wing of the bird of the acts of obedience

Without a wing, how can you fly to the abode of prosperity?]

Gülen comments on these words, and views that if we think a body for an action, then sincerity is its spirit. If an action corresponds to one wing, then sincerity is the other wing. According to him, a body free of soul is of no use, and nothing can fly with only one wing.<sup>81</sup>

Gülen also refers to Said Nursi in his writings as well as in sermons, especially those related to various aspects of interfaith dialogue. Gülen is inspired by the spiritual life of Said Nursi, and his golden rules of serving humanity. A description of the teachings of Said Nursi by him in the context of interfaith dialogue is given below:

**I:** "Believers should now unite, not only with their Muslim-fellow believers, but with truly religious and pious Christians, disregarding questions of dispute and not arguing over them, for absolute disbelief is on the attack".<sup>82</sup> While referring to this saying, Gülen views that Nursi's idea of dialogue and cooperation with true Christians is comparable to Rūmī, who

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<sup>80</sup>Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, p. 199.

<sup>81</sup>Gülen, M. F. "Ikhlas: Sincerity or Purity of Intention", *The Fountain: Clifton, New Jersey*, Issue 73, January–February, 2010, 4-5.

<sup>82</sup>Said Nursi, *Lem'alar* (The Flashes), Trans. SukranVahide, Istanbul: Sozler Publications, 1996, p 204.

described himself as a compass, with one foot fixed in the axis while the other turns in a wide arc to complete a circle.<sup>83</sup>

II: Gülen refers to Said Nursi's *Damascus Sermon*, in which the latter says:

"The thing which is worthiest of love is love, and the most deserving of enmity is enmity. The time for enmity and hostility is finished",<sup>84</sup> Gülen supports Nursi's view that the time for enmity and hostility is over. In a similar way to Nursi's idea, Gülen notes that today is the time of dialogue, scientific argumentation and rational debate. He proposes that there is no severity in Islam; it is a religion of mercy and acceptance.<sup>85</sup>

The above study indicates that Fethullah Gülen's understanding of interfaith dialogue is deeply rooted in Islamic sources, such as Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic mysticism. He views diversity and pluralism as a natural fact, and proposes that these differences should be admitted and clearly professed. He has connected toleration and dialogue in such a manner that gives us a significant message globally, and also offers an alternative to conflict and clash of civilizations. He calls for mutual tolerance and proposes that we should be agreeing to tolerate each other's views and values. He views dialogue as a religious duty encouraged and required by the values and teachings of Islam.

In his view, dialogue initiatives should go beyond just simple expressions and shared wellbeing to actions that carry valid, considerable, and momentous encounters. Gülen's approach of dialogue is based on a human-centric discourse, because his view of dialogue is human-centric. He believes that multiplicity of race, religious conviction, nation, and way of life is intended by God and ought to be accepted and respected as a way to understanding. In his view, the response to this diversity is positive engagement and dialogue.

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<sup>83</sup>Gülen, M. F. *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, p. 199.

<sup>84</sup>Said Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon*, Istanbul: Sozler Publications, 1996, p.49.

<sup>85</sup>Gülen, M. F. *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, p.179.

# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4

### **Comparison between Hans Küng's and Fethullah Gülen's Views of the Interfaith Dialogue**

The main theme of this chapter is a comparative study of Küng and Gülen regarding their views on the interfaith dialogue. The similarities and differences between Küng and Gülen regarding their arguments, approaches and sources of interfaith dialogue are identified and described. The first part of this chapter consists of similarities While the second part of consists of the differences.

#### **Similarities between Hans Küng and Fethullah Gülen in the Interfaith Dialogue**

##### **a. Similarities in the Arguments of Interfaith Dialogue**

Hans Küng and Fethullah Gülen both have arguments to support and promote interfaith dialogue. The similarities in their arguments of interfaith dialogue are identified and described as below:

1: Küng seeks to promote peace and interfaith dialogue by focusing on the common values found in major world religion. This theme is evident in his concept of *Global Ethic* which is built on certain common values shared by the major world religions. These common values are non-violence, respect for life, tolerance, truthfulness, and solidarity.

Similarly, Gülen also tries to support and promote interfaith dialogue and harmony among the supporters of dissimilar faiths by focusing the fundamental values which are sustained by the major world religions. These fundamental values are love, compassion, tolerance, and forgiving.

2: Küng emphasizes that the world peace depends upon the peace among religions. This is only possible when there is dialogue among religions, and dialogue is possible when the foundations of religions are investigated.

In the same way Gülen also emphasizes to establish dialogue among people of different religions for peace and harmony in the world. He notes that the first step to promote

interfaith dialogue is to ignore the past events, deny polemic arguments, and give importance to the common points among religions.

#### **b. Similarities in the Approaches of Interfaith Dialogue**

Though Küng and Gülen both have different approaches in the interfaith dialogue, similarities between their approaches also exist, which are identified and described as below:

1: Küng has a deductive approach in the interfaith dialogue, which is based on the common ethics shared by the major world religions. He views that these common ethics can be reinterpreted so as to become the foundation for a *Global Ethic*. These common ethics are; the pledge to establish a society of pacification and dignity for life, the pledge to establish a society of cohesion and a just financial system, the pledge to establish a society of patience and honesty, the pledge to establish a society of equivalent privileges and joint venture between men and women.

Similarly, Gülen also holds a deductive approach in the interfaith dialogue, which is based on the fundamental universal values found in all major religions. These values are; love, compassion, tolerance, and forgiveness.

2: Küng holds a pluralistic approach in the interfaith dialogue, and accepts that there is also deliverance outside Church. This deliverance is not on the basis of the Church, but it is due to the faith in God. He notes that Christianity is to be brought into contact, discussion, and confrontation with other religions more than ever before.

Gülen also holds a pluralistic approach in the interfaith dialogue. Using a particular and all-inclusive concept of religion, Gülen associates all major religions to one another through the same divine revelation. He proposes that every faith reveals the universality which accepts all races and all beliefs, and bring everyone together in a brotherhood.

He views that major world religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and even Hinduism accept the similar basis for themselves, and including Buddhism, pursue the same purpose.



### **c. Similarities in the Sources of Interfaith Dialogue**

The similarities between Küng and Gülen in their sources of interfaith dialogue are identified and described as below:

1: Küng uses the common elements among Muslims, Jews, and Christians. These elements are; belief in one and only Allah who define the worthy position of life of all, the one and only Allah the most merciful and mighty. He proposes that the followers of these three major religions should cooperate and establish dialogue with each other on the basis of these common elements.

In the same way, Gülen refers to the verse of the Holy Quran, which addresses the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) to come to the common terms. The Holy Quran States:

[Say: "O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship non but Allah, that we associate no partners with him, that we take not from among ourselves lords and patrons other than Allah, if then they turned back, say you: Bear witness that we are Muslims (those who have surrendered to Allah's Will)]. (Qur'an 3:64).

Fethullah Gülen takes the concept of "meeting in common word" from this verse, and notes that the common word between Muslims and the *People of the Book* is "belief in one God". In "meeting in common word", Gülen further views that in dialogue we communicate the common interests with other people.

### **Differences between Küng and Gülen**

#### **a. Differences in the Arguments for Interfaith Dialogue**

Küng and Gülen have various arguments to support and promote interfaith dialogue. The differences in their arguments of interfaith dialogue are identified and described as below:

1: In the arguments of interfaith dialogue, Küng focuses on the subject of truth claimed by different religions. He suggests that we must engage with what is true and good in the world religions, to make the dialogue meaningful. He notes that religions can learn much more from each other in their search for truth.

On the other hand, Gülen does not focus on the subject of truth claimed by different religions in the arguments of interfaith dialogue. Rather he argues that dialogue is important in the present time to save man from the influence of materialism. Because, materialism has limited the influence of religion in the present time, which is the main cause of human problems in the modern world.

2: Küng seeks the feasibility of a universal theology in his arguments of interfaith dialogue. He argues that the true humanity is the basis of a true religion, and a true religion is the completeness of true humanity. Therefore, as long as these two premises are met, religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity have met the above requirements.

Unlike Küng, Gülen argues that the Quran has a universal call for dialogue, and refers to the Quranic verse which addresses to the People of the Book to come to be on the common terms. Gülen proposes that it represents the widest statement on which followers of all religions could agree.

3: Küng notes that interfaith dialogue has a central role in the international affairs, and without dialogue there will be instability and warfare. So he views that religions can make a significant contribution to peace if they utilize the potential that lies within them.

Gülen also admits the significance of interfaith dialogue in the present time, but he suggests that before establishing interfaith dialogue, some necessary steps should be taken. These are; fails to remember the events of the past without keeping in view the disputatious arguments and prefer more the common points.

#### **b. Differences in the Approaches to Interfaith Dialogue**

Küng and Gülen hold various approaches to the interfaith dialogue. The differences in their approaches of interfaith dialogue are identified and described as below:

1: Küng uses a deductive approach in the interfaith dialogue, and refers to the ethical teachings of the major world religions. These ethical teachings are; gives more venerated

and vital position to life, common interest among the individual, economic parity, patience, fact of being true and gender equality. He views that these ethics will lead the people of different religions to participate in the interfaith dialogue for the sake of world peace.

On the other hand, in his deductive approach Gülen refers to the fundamental universal values found in all major religions. But these values are; love, compassion, tolerance, and forgiveness.

2: Küng takes the subject of salvation in his pluralistic approach, and accepts the salvation of non-Christians. He views that there is also deliverance outside church. This deliverance and salvation is just because of the trust in Allah and not on other basis. The good natured people are near to God and God's grace for eternal salvation of mankind.

While Gülen takes recourse to the idea of a shared source in his pluralist approach in the interfaith dialogue. He views that different religions of the whole world are consent to receive the same source for themselves, and pursue the same goal. So he relates all major religions to each other on the basis of same source and goal.

3: In his philosophical approach, Küng notes that in spite of the differences between the religious doctrines in the world, there is enough agreement on ethics. So that the religions of the world could agree on a universal standard of conduct, to which even non-religious people could agree.

While Gülen proposes that dialogue is very necessary today, as in order to set up interfaith dialogue all the events related to past is to be forget without giving any preference to written or spoken attack but keep ahead and above the common points of first importance. Gülen also notes that since Islam is an open and tolerant religion, therefore we must promote dialogue with people of different religions.

### **c. Differences Regarding the Sources of Interfaith Dialogue**

Küng and Gülen refer to various sources in the interfaith dialogue. The differences in their sources of interfaith dialogue are identified and described as below:

1: Kūng mainly refers to the common ethical teachings of the major world religions. These ethical teachings are taken from Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Jainism, and Buddhism.

While Gülen mainly refers to the Qur'anic verses, Hadīth of the Prophet (peace be upon him), mystical teachings of Maulana Rūmī, and Said Nursi in his support of interfaith dialogue.

## Conclusion

This research concludes that Christianity and Islam both support interfaith dialogue, and both have theological foundations for interfaith dialogue. The scholarly work of notable Christian and Muslim scholars provides the theological foundations for interfaith dialogue. Christian scholars like Wolfhart Pannenberg, John Hick, Paul F. Knitter, and Leonard Swidler have formulated theological foundations of interfaith dialogue in their scholarly work.

The Christian theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg proposes that Christians should engage in the meaningful dialogue with the followers of other religions. This dialogue should be open, and the Christians must be ready to accept the truth claimed by other religions.

John Hick emphasizes the importance of dialogue among world religions and proposes that the dialogue among those people who accept and worth religious diversity, is quite different from the older kind of confrontation, in which each group was concerned to establish a unique superiority of his own religion.

Paul Knitter offers his own model of dialogue which he calls a "co relational model". In a co relational model of dialogue, all religions are viewed not as necessarily being equal or the same in their truth claims but having equal rights. Paul Knitter argues that co relational is a better adjective than pluralistic to describe an applicable dialogue.

Leonard Swidler proposes ten principles for Interfaith Dialogue. The important principles among them are: Each partner should come to learn from another and should change his perception about the other partner. Each partner should come to the dialogue with Honesty and sincerity. The honesty and sincerity should equally accept by each partner. Each partner must come to the dialogue with no hard assumptions and should not be strict about the points of disagreement. The participants must be self-critical of themselves and their own religious tradition.

Similarly, the Muslim Scholars over the last few decades have made remarkable theoretical and practical contributions to interfaith dialogue. The contemporary Muslim Scholars like

Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, Mahmoud Ayoub, Mohamed Talbi, Tariq Ramadan, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr have focused the subject of interfaith dialogue in their scholarly work.

Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi proposes six methodologies for interfaith dialogue. These are:

Every dialogue must be subject to critique. In every communication the laws of internal coherence must be obeyed. In every communication the laws of external coherence should be obeyed. Communication must obey the laws of correspondence with reality. Dialogue must be free from canonical figurization. Dialogue should be based upon questions of ethics and not theology.

Mahmoud Ayoub views that dialogue is not just conversation; rather it involves working together to build up better mutual understanding while maintaining the distinctive characteristics of each religion. He notes that religious pluralism is the recognition of the multiplicity and diversity of religions as a natural or divinely willed phenomenon. If religious pluralism is to serve as a meaningful framework of dialogue among the followers of different religions, so all religions or at least Theistic Religions should be recognized as legitimate ways to the Truth or Ultimate Reality.

Mohamed Talbi proposes that dialogue is necessary and vital for Islam to re-establish its contact with the people, and is more essential for Islam as compare to other religion of the world. Furthermore, Islam calls people to dialogue to face the arguments of other people especially with those of people of the book.

Tariq Ramadan proposes four basic rules for successful interfaith dialogue. These rules are: Appreciation and respect for the authority of each other's convictions, listening to what people say about their scriptural sources, the right to ask all possible questions, and the practice of self-criticism. He argues that there must be a commitment to mutual cooperation, because dialogue is not enough, it is urgent that we commit ourselves to joint action.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr insists that despite the differences, we can promote mutual respect between Christians and Muslims. He concludes that as the world continue to experience

pervasive crises including environmental destruction and life desecration; Christians and Muslims will realize that in fact both have more in common than their differences.

The Christian theologian Hans Küng has a great contribution to interfaith dialogue. He is actively involved in the interfaith dialogue through his academic work as well as practical interfaith dialogue gatherings. He has strong arguments, well known approaches, and sources in the interfaith dialogue.

The arguments of Hans Küng in the interfaith dialogue are: to seek the minimum common values and attitudes for all human beings by establishing a Global Ethic, to evaluate different understandings on truth claims in religion, to seek the feasibility of a global theology in religions, the world peace is dependent upon peace among religions, and interfaith dialogue has a central role in the international affairs.

Hans Küng has different approaches in the interfaith dialogue. These include: a deductive approach which is based on the common ethics shared by the major world religions, a pluralistic approach in which he accepts that there is also salvation outside Church, and a philosophical approach which is based on the assumption that in spite of the differences between the religious doctrines in the world, there is enough agreement on ethics so that religions could agree on a universal standard of conduct, to which even non-religious people could assent.

In his sources of interfaith dialogue, Küng mainly refers to the common ethical teachings of the major world religions. These ethical teachings are taken from Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Jainism, and Buddhism.

The Muslim Scholar and Mystic, Muhammad Fethullah Gülen is also notable for his contribution to interfaith dialogue. He addresses the subject of interfaith dialogue through his academic work as well as practical meetings and gatherings. He has strong arguments, well known approaches, and rich sources in the interfaith dialogue.

The arguments of Fethullah Gülen in the interfaith dialogue are: dialogue is important to save man from the influence of materialism, the very nature of religion demands dialogue,

the Qur'an has a universal call for dialogue, promoting positive values through dialogue, and dialogue is a must today.

Gülen holds different approaches in the interfaith dialogue. These include: a deductive approach which is based on the fundamental universal values found in all major religions, a pluralistic approach in which he states that "Dialogue is a must today", the foremost act is to setup interfaith dialogue so that fail to remember past events, overlook arguments concerning verbal attack and prefer more the common points.

The comparison between Küng and Gülen shows that there are some similarities as well as differences in their arguments, approaches, and sources of interfaith dialogue.

The similarities between Küng and Gülen in the arguments of interfaith dialogue are: both of them seek to promote peace and interfaith dialogue by focusing the common values found in all major world religion, and both of them emphasize that the world peace depends upon the peace among religions and it is only possible through interfaith dialogue.

Among the similarities in the approaches of interfaith to dialogue are that both Hans Küng and Fethullah Gülen hold a deductive approach in the interfaith dialogue which is based on the common ethics shared by the major world religions, both of them have a pluralistic approach in the interfaith dialogue. More the same, Küng accepts that there is also salvation outside Church, and Gülen relates all main religions to one another via the same divine intuition.

Among the similarities between them regarding the sources of interfaith dialogue are that both of them refer to the common elements/common terms among Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

The differences between Küng and Gülen in the arguments of interfaith dialogue are as follows: Küng focuses on the subject of truth claimed by different religions, while Gülen does not focuses the subject of truth claimed by different religions; rather he argues that dialogue is important in the present time to save man from the influence of materialism. Küng seeks the feasibility of a universal theology in his argument, while Gülen argues that



the Quran has a universal call for dialogue. Küng argues that interfaith dialogue has a central role in the international affairs, and without dialogue there will be instability and warfare. Gülen also admits the significance of interfaith dialogue in the present time, but he suggests that before establishing interfaith dialogue, some necessary steps should be taken.

The differences between Hans Küng and Fethullah Gülen in the approaches of interfaith dialogue are as follows: In his deductive approach, Küng refers to the ethical teachings of the major world religions like veneration and respect for life, common interest among the individual, economic parity, patience, fact of being true and gender equality. While Gülen in his deductive approach refers to the fundamental universal values found in all major religions like love, compassion, tolerance, and forgiveness. Küng takes the subject of salvation in his pluralistic approach and accepts the salvation of non-Christians, while Gülen takes the subject of the same source or the same goal of the major world religions in his pluralist approach.

The differences between Küng and Gülen regarding their sources of interfaith dialogue are observed to be as follows: Küng mainly refers to the common ethical teachings of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Jainism, and Buddhism to support interfaith dialogue, while Gülen mainly refers to the Qur'anic verses, Hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him), mystical teachings of Maulana Rumi, and Said Nursi to support of interfaith dialogue.

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