

Muslim-Christian Dialogue from Pakistani Perspective: Evaluation of the Contribution of Christian Study Center

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Abstract

The twentieth century is considered as the most notable era for interfaith dialogue and other interreligious activities among the followers of different faiths across the globe. A number of interfaith activities were launched to bring closer, especially, the adherents of the Abrahamic faiths: Jews, Christians and Muslims. Many Christian institutes and organizations are actively involved in such activities. We cannot ignore the role of Christian Study Centers situated across the globe, which are rendering considerable services in the field of interfaith dialogue. One of them is the Christian Study Center Rawalpindi (CSC), Pakistan, which is the focal subject of this research paper. The CSC has a long journey in the course of interfaith dialogue and harmony, as it was its objective since its commencement. The CSC was established in 1967 as an extension of HMI (Henry Martyn Institute, Hyderabad India) to promote interfaith dialogue, harmony, and good relationships among the followers of different faiths in Pakistan. It is conceded the Christian Study Center Rawalpindi has provided great services and contributed a lot to interfaith dialogue, harmony and peace in Pakistan. In this study the efforts were made to evaluate the 50 years dialogical activities of the Christian Study Center (CSC), Rawalpindi.

Keywords: *Interfaith dialogue, Dialogue evaluation, Pakistani perspective. CSC.*

INTRODUCTION:

The Twentieth century is considered as the most notable one for interfaith dialogue and other interreligious activities among different religious communities. Many interfaith activities were launched to bring closer different faiths, specially, the adherents of the Abrahamic faiths: Jews, Christians and Muslims. For this purpose, the foremost initiative was taken by the Christians on the behalf of Vatican City with the collaboration of Muslim scholars on the behalf of al-Azhar University, Egypt, in 1950s. According to Esposito views;

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“The (modern interfaith) dialogue movement began during the 1950s when the WCC (World Council of Churches) and the Vatican (City) organized a number of meetings between Christian leaders and representatives of other religious traditions (especially, with Muslim and Buddhist communities)”¹

This is also an overlooked fact that Muslims have a long history of interacting with Christians. The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic world states: “Muslim-Christian dialogue dates back to the rise of Islam in the seventh century. The History of Muslim-Christian interactions includes periods of great tension, hostility and open war and a time of uneasiness, and also, peaceful co-existence and cooperation.”²Therefore, many Christian’s as well as Muslims institutes, organizations and movements have been actively involved in such activities. The key role of these Christians Study Centers cannot be ignored in promotion of interfaith dialogue.

These Christian Centers are known as prominent ecumenical centers, working which in over the globe for Muslim-Christian best relations, interreligious dialogue, social harmony, and projection of the Christian community in the Muslim Countries. Therefore, a prominent Christian researcher Karen J.D. counts them in the journal, *al-Mushir* by way of:

“1-Christian Study Center Rawalpindi, Pakistan, 2-Henry Martyn Institute Hyderabad, India, 3-The Center *d’Etudes Dioce’sain*, Algier, 4-The Institute des Belles Letters Arabasm, Tunis,5-The Institute Dominicaind ‘Etudes Orientals, Cairo,(Egypt), 6-An Institute *de’AtudesIslamochrestiens*, Beirut, (Lebanon) and 7-Universite’ *Pontificale: Vidyajyot*, Delhi, India.”³

They are well equipped and interlinked with one another. An interesting thing is, all CSCs are situated in the Muslim Countries except for India (in India, Muslim population is also more than 2 billions) and they work without any obstacle and hurdle. These centers have a long history to promote Muslim Christian relations, dialogue, harmony and Christian mission around the world. Therefore, Dr. Jacques Levrat (A French Christian Scholar) writes about status of these Christian study centers in his doctoral study likewise, “The study Centers are institutions which are established in Muslim Countries by a Christian community for pursuing studies which prepare that community for cultural and religious dialogue with Muslims”⁴

The CSC is prominent ‘ecumenical’⁵ Christian institute in Pakistan and known as an extension of HMI (Henry Martyn Institute) established in 1930 in the British India at Lahore (Punjab). After the Partition of Subcontinent in 1947, it was shifted to Indian Hyderabad. Therefore, in Pakistan the CSC is known as a continuation of HMI as its Pakistani chapter. It is said; when HMI was shifted from Pakistan to India it was considered that CSC would replace the HMI dialogical activities in

Pakistan. The CSC was established in 1967. The CSC has very rich infrastructure and programs in various academic fields but Interfaith Dialogue is its basic objective. Moreover, it is not only working for interfaith dialogue and peace building in Pakistan but also it also represents the Christian institutes, churches, missions and address all Christian problems. It is also perceived the CSC is promoting misandry activities and Christian cause in Pakistan with slow pace. This important study evaluates the 50 years contribution of the CSC in the field of interreligious dialogue, harmony and interreligious relations from the Pakistani perspective.

CSC UNDERSTANDINGS TOWARDS INTERFAITH DIALOGUE:

Categorically, the CSC is an interreligious dialogue based institute. Therefore it have been tried to promote interreligious dialogue, socio-religious harmony and interfaith peaceful coexistence from its foundations since 1967 continuously. As we are informed from its publications and reports; "The basic purpose to establish the Christian study Center Rawalpindi was to promote the interfaith dialogue for a peaceful society where the people feel respect and freedom."⁶ We have many other proofs of this activity. Here one thing is bale to know that the CSC has its own understanding and definition of interfaith dialogue. Therefore, a prominent scholar and renowned ex director of the CSC, Dr. Charles defines interreligious dialogue in this way, "Dialogue is a process of discourse in which the involved communities go through their own respective logos to come to some common understanding of certain social and political problems."⁷ According to *Mehbûb Sadā* views, "Interreligious dialogue does not mean change of religion or sect but the purpose of dialogue is meeting between the followers of different religions and faiths, for the welfare of human being and to accept the existence of the followers of other faiths."⁸ Almost every Christian scholar defines the interfaith dialogue in its socio-political context. According to scholars of the CSC views, interfaith dialogue is not meagerly a faith based activity, but it is also a socio-political.

It is observed various times from academically and practically, they discuss social issues on the forum of interfaith dialogue. So we can observe that for CSC the dialogue stands for discussions, interfaith respect, social harmony, and peaceful relations with special reference to the socio-political perspective of Pakistan. Keeping in view, Muslim key objective of this dialogue contribution is due to Islamic Da'wah and interfaith understanding. Here, a leading Muslim scholar Dr. Atāullah Siddīquī writes, "Muslim participation in dialogue needs to be seen first in a theological perspective and secondly as an encounter with Christianity in the contemporary situation."⁹ Even Quran recommends us; "*Invite them to the Way of Allah with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them*

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in the best and gracious ways".¹⁰ Here, the kind Prophet ﷺ says; "Convey the message from me even if it is only one verse."¹¹ Categorically, this dialogue has lack of these core objectives. So for that purpose majority of Muslim scholars avoid or ignore this kind of interfaith dialogue, although they know its importance socially and theologically in Pakistan. Therefore, it seems necessary to discuss social as well as theological issues in this dialogue. This step will make this activity more dynamic, important and fruitful for other faiths of Pakistan.

DIFFERENT ERAS OF DIALOGUE IN PAKISTAN:

The CSC has its own partition of interfaith dialogue through various eras of the dialogical history. If we analytically discuss the dialogical history of CSC, it consists of three various eras and divisions. For example ex-Director of the CSC *Dominic Mughal* divides dialogue in different types and phases;

Dialogue of the Minds from (1967–1985): The center from first day of its founding has been trying to bring closer Muslims - Christians communities to practice tolerance, peace and socio-religious harmony. Consequently, this activity is called dialogue of minds and this dialogue era is counted to be from 1967 to 1985. A research paper of the CSC from WCC states;

"At the time when the Center started its ministry, it was not a fashion to talk about interfaith harmony and Muslim-Christian relations. It was not even easy to accept denominational differences. Therefore, the first challenge for the Center was to promote ecumenism among various Christian denominations and at the same time, create an environment where one could talk for developing a positive attitude towards Muslims."¹²

Dialogue of the Life from (1985-1998): The second important era and division of this dialogue is called the dialogue of the life, because it revolved around the practical life of the people of Pakistan. According to Mr. Dominic statement;

"With the arrival of Dr. Charles *Amjad* Ali and Madam Christine *Amjad* Ali in 1985, a new approach towards dialogue and Christian-Muslim relations was developed. Although the basic purpose of the Center remained somewhat the same, a new comprehensive and relevant approach was developed for the center's Ministry. (In this approach) The focus was shifted from library/ Ivory Tower Research¹³ to people centered research'."¹⁴

Dialogue of the Hearts from 1998 to onward: The third most important period of the CSC dialogue is known as dialogue of the hearts. *Dominic Mughal* describes articulates, "At present the Center very faithfully involves its ministry and still continues with approaches of dialogue of mind and life. However, it has also started taking the third option

seriously which we term as dialogue of Hearts.”¹⁵ Another well-known director of the CSC also describes these three types of dialogue as, “The work of interfaith dialogue is done in different shapes. The interfaith dialogue has reached on dialogue of hearts, passing over the dialogue of minds”.¹⁶

The contemporary era of dialogue is called the Dialogue of hearts. These eras and division of dialogue show that the concentration of the CSC has been shifted from interfaith dialogue to social harmony and political issues due to its need and importance. Here it is again added the Muslim concern towards modern interfaith dialogue. Muslim scholars do not agree towards the direction and dimension of modern interfaith dialogue due to these reasons. Therefore they do not like to participate in this kind of activity on the name of interfaith dialogue. So it is humbly suggested there should a real effort to remove Muslim concern towards this dialogue.

THE CSC APPROACHES TO MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE:

The Christian Study Center has its specific approaches and issues towards interreligious dialogue. As well as the CSC is a multidimensional Christian institute so its approaches have been different for various fields of life throughout its dialogical history.

Theological Approaches: one of the most important approaches of the Center to interfaith dialogue was a theological approach. The dialogical activities of this era revolve around the theological issues of Islam and Christianity. An *al-Mushīr's* article describes likewise;

“Our devotional practice, our theological and our socio-economic concerns need this spiritual basis and eschatological dimension of worship and prayer. Worship and prayer demand of more than definition, for they are the experience of witnessing to God and confronting the World.”¹⁷

Historical Approaches: The second most significant approach in the first era of dialogue of the Center was a historical one approach. In this approach they strained to find out the historical foundations of interreligious dialogue. As we recite it in the research article of John Slomp;

“The meeting (of the prophet of Islam) with representatives of the Christian Community in *Najrān* was an event of major importance in the universal Church because of the vast consequences which this meeting had for the relationship between Muslims and Christians in later centuries and even the present Muslim-Christian dialogue.”¹⁸

Anthropological and Cultural Approaches: According to the study another most vital approach of the dialogue which they use is the cultural and anthropological based approach. According to the officials of the CSC our thoughts and faiths are more different but our culture has same

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foundations. Thus they give much prominence to culture in interreligious dialogue rather than theology. A Book of the CSC's scholar reveals, "The social scientists say that in the human societies the culture has great role to bring the people closer to each other and to transfer the traditions and values to others. Apparently we belong to different faiths but the unity of culture brings us closer to each other."¹⁹ It is very significant approach in dialogue and harmony due to their special focus on social and cultural dialogue. The cultural approach is also described in their division of dialogue as life.

Consequently, the major approaches of the Center show a kind of development in its dialogical activities. It also shows the modification of interfaith dialogue strategy which is moved from theology to sociology. Another imperative issue is that if we try to compare the Christian approaches of dialogue with Muslim approaches of dialogue, they are entirely different. For instance in Muslim perspective, the eras and approaches emphasis on theology, better communication and mutual understanding, but in the Christian side, the focus have kept on sociology, peace and harmony. Furthermore, these approaches also tell about Muslim and Christian priorities towards dialogue in Pakistani society and definitely Muslims priorities differ from the Christians.

CORE ISSUES OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE FROM THE CSC:

A number of imperative topics and issues are discussed in this kind of dialogue which is conducted from the Center. Some most important and core topics of the Christian Study Center's dialogues are given here. Director of the CSC *Mehbûb Sadâ* commented on issues likewise, "The basic issues of the interfaith dialogue of Christian Study Center are: culture, education, economic, history, sociology, politics, and theology."²⁰ According to the documents, writings and interviews the general topics of the dialogue are: Monotheism, Prophet-hood, Jesus-Christ, Mother Merry, the Revelation, and Peace bounding and promotion of Peaceful relations, mutual understanding, religion and social based tolerance, religious pluralism. The new trends in issues and topics are social and interfaith harmony. As we read in dialogue journey: "To bring the people closer, despite their religious, ethics, sectarian, and linguistic difference, Christian Study Center initiated its project of social harmony at grassroots level in 1998."²¹ All conferences basically have same issues and topics. Mr. *Shâhid Habîb* reported in his study; "All reports show that all conferences and seminars hold the same issues. It aimed at developing peace, (Interfaith and social) harmony, (mutual) cooperation etc. Furthermore, the issues like identity and problem of minorities, human (and women) rights etc. were also taken into consideration".²²

The study reveals that the nature of this dialogue is socio-political rather than religious and theological, focusing the special objectives in the

Muslim-Christian relations and harmony perspective of Pakistan. The issues and topic of dialogue tell us about its objectivity and direction. Thus we can observe these kinds of topics are not more interest to Muslim scholars and may have no interest towards public as well. Therefore, here is shared an excellent suggestion from a renowned scholar of comparative religion. Dr. Modassir Ali;

“If we want to establish a fruitful dialogue between Muslims and Christians Communities of Pakistan, we should completely revise the present direction and strategy and approach of the dialogue because it does not match with the temperament and interests of Pakistani Muslim society.”²³

MAJOR OBJECTIVES OF THE CSC’S DIALOGUE:

Christian Study Center has some crucial goals and devotions in the dialogical activities. As we have already known, the primary objective of the Center is interreligious dialogue of Muslims and Christians and social harmony. As it is stated in the CSC’s Constitution, “To develop the participatory studies to encourage dialogue, foster mutual understanding and cooperation between the Muslim and Christian Communities.”²⁴ In 1985, Charles *Amjad* Ali completely revised the objectives of the Center, especially in Muslim- Christian dialogue field;

“With the arrival of Dr. Charles & Christine in 1985, a new approach towards dialogue and Christian-Muslim relations was developed. Although the basic purpose of the Center remained somewhat the same, a new comprehensive and relevant approach was developed for the center’s Ministry. The focus was shifted from ‘library/Ivory Tower Research to people centered research’. Even the purpose was slightly revised and altered.”²⁵

They promote Interfaith and especially Muslim-Christian dialogue in Pakistan at prior basis. According to the official website of the CSC, “To encourage dialogue, between Christian and Muslim (communities) to foster mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence and promote cooperation in various spheres of nation-building”.²⁶ Here, there are shared the revised objectives of the Center in his interreligious dialogue area.

Peace and peaceful coexistence: The main objective of the CSC dialogue is to promote socio-religious peace and peaceful relations and existence at every level among local religious and social communities of Pakistan. Keeping in view, you may differ but the Christian community gives special attention to interfaith peace because the war is completely forbidden in their theology. The Bible declares: “Put your sword back in its place, Jesus said to him, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.”²⁷ A renowned Christian figure, Cecil *Choûdarî* once said: “The message of love, reconciliation and peace is found in the Holy Bible from

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the beginning (The Book of Genesis) to the end (The Book of Revelation)."²⁸

One of the prominent CSC's resource people, *Hamīd Henry* speaks, "The peace is the great ideal of the people, where the research is carried on different topics of the peace. The Christian Study Center, Rawalpindi is committed to the mission that the peace is not itself a goal but this is a continuous journey."²⁹ The Christian study Center, Rawalpindi also promotes the social justice for peace and peaceful co-existence for its special objectives. Therefore, we may say the Center is working on the peace process, peaceful relations among minorities as a task and mission according to its own strategy and style in the Pakistani perspective.

Interreligious and social harmony: Another most important objective of the CSC's dialogue is interfaith and social harmony. The main focus of the center after peace is on religious and social harmony. For that purpose, CSC launches special social harmony projects. The project coordinator, *Ms. Romāna Bashīr* evaluates, "Interfaith harmony is a project which is running under the supervision of the Christian Study Center and this project is adopted for social and religious harmony among different communities of Pakistan."³⁰ According to resource person of the CSC on the question, what should be the purpose of a dialogue; "The purpose of interfaith dialogue is not to bring the faiths into harmony; rather it is to bring the followers of the faith into harmony."³¹ The Christian study Center has been involved in this activity for the past 50 years. The socio-religious harmony is much significant to them that they have published special training manual for that objectives. According to CSC officials this manual analyses the social, political, educational, religious cultural and economic events of the past 70 years which were basic cause in Pakistan for disunity, sectarianism, intolerance, abhorrence and dispersion.

Interfaith Unity and Religious Unification: Try to generate humanistic and religious harmony and sometimes interfaith unity and unification among different communities of Pakistani society is one of the dominant activities of the Center. The program manager of the CSC believes, "Apparently we believe in different philosophy of life and understand their salvation in several religions, because of this we belong to one generation, we have one root, we are created by One Creator and we all are the children of Adam & *Hawwā*."³²

To promote unification of religion (*Wahdat-al-Adyān*) among different faiths and religions of Pakistani society is another important but controversial purpose of the CSC's dialogue. According to Muslim scholarly point of view it seems a controversial activity in a Muslim society of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Even the basic text Quran also oppose it strictly; "*The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will)*".³³ And other place it said: "*If anyone desires a religion other than*

Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him".³⁴ Muslim Scholars have showed their extreme concerns on this controversial activity and objectives. It does not meet to Muslims objectives of interfaith dialogue as well it cannot be allowed in a Muslim majority based society.

Religious Diversity: Religious diversity is another imperative objective of the CSC dialogue. It is also said in the CSC training program manual likewise;

"How can we promote the diversity in ideas in a society so that the people may accept each other and accept this thing that diversity is not a bad thing and we learn that not in uniformity but in diversity also we can be united?"³⁵ It is also said: "The beauty and charm of the world is in diversity not in uniformity, it means the base of peace is in '*Unity in Diversity*'".³⁶

The formation of a most pluralistic society in Pakistani perspective is a vital purpose of the Center because according to the administration of the CSC, a pluralistic thought is most necessary for a nonviolent society. They cannot get notable success in this pitch, but this is a good idea to move society forward.

These are the most important aims and objectives of the CSC in interreligious dialogue on which they focus in every forum and activity of the Center. The CSC constantly runs campaign, launch projects and publish literature, hold seminars; conferences about their objectives at local and global levels. Moreover, some objectives of the CSC dialogue are hidden do not match with the atmosphere of Pakistan. For example the Christian study center is not merely a dialogue intuition but as well as it works like a Christian missionary and is trying to make society liberal and secular one with slow but steadily. May be someone considers as a perception. But study shows there are some evidence against them. An academic research study elaborates;

"Christian Study Centre is an ecumenical research Centre and has multidimensional approach in Pakistani society. At a time it has social, religious, educational and missionary activities".³⁷

Furthermore, they are working against Islamic laws especially to eliminate the blasphemy laws in Pakistan. For that purpose they have a big alliance of international NGOs and local secular and atheist lobby. For that purpose they are running a huge campaign against blasphemy laws in Pakistan. As well as they protest against Islamic indemnity of Pakistan and opposes any kind of Islamization in Pakistan. Here the research concludes, although we appreciate their struggle in the field of dialogue but at the time we cannot ignore their efforts to change the Islamic identity of Pakistan.

PRACTICAL WORK OF THE CSC IN INTERFAITH DIALOGUE:

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The Christian Study Center, Rawalpindi has a good deal of practical works in interfaith dialogue field. They contain seminars, conferences, various lecturers, technical workshops and courses etc. The important practical work of the CSC in dialogue is as follows: These are main area of the CSC dialogue. Numerous vital seminars have been conducted in the CSC history.

Christian-Muslim Relations in East and the West: This most significant discussion based seminar was accompanied in 1998 in the premises of the Center. A CSC annual report reported it in this way;

“The very first seminar of the year of 1998 was ‘Christian-Muslim Relations in East and the West: A Dialogue of Perspectives’. The speakers of this seminar were the famous lecturers of the field of dialogue among the two communities. They were Rev. Goren Gunner Stockholm School of theology, John Hankinson, Church of Sweden, Fr. Mathew Geigibels of Holland, Dr. *Zafar Ishāq Ansārī*.”³⁸

More than 40 people attended this significant seminar from Muslims and Christians participants. Most important topics were discoursed in the seminar from the Muslim-Christian perspective of dialogue and interfaith relations.

Interfaith Harmony is a Prerequisite for Development: Under the arrangements of “Social Harmony Project” this most important seminar was directed by the CSC in Faisalabad (Punjab) region in 2002. *Al-Mushir* Reported, “Coordination council organized a one day seminar on Inter-Faith Harmony is a Prerequisite for Development on the 17th November 2002 at Faisalabad. This seminar was attended by the local Christians and Muslims.”³⁹ On another day an important seminar on Peace and Religion was held by the Christian study Center on January, 2004 at Peshawar. According to the annual report of the CSC, “A one day peace seminar on ‘Peace and Religion’ was organized in the Islamic Center, Peshawar on 28th January, 2004. More than 200 participants attended this seminar. The majority of the participants were teachers and students of Islam and social sciences. *Mehbûb Sadā* presided over it and it was for the first time in history that a non-Muslim presided over an Inter-Faith gathering.”⁴⁰

Role of Religion in the Present Context of Pakistan: An important two day seminar was held in 1996 at Islamabad in Muslim-Christian dialogue context under the invigilation of the Center. An important research report of the CSC tells about this seminar;

“The seminar on the *Role of Religion in the Present Pakistani Context* was held from November 25-26(1996) at the Shalimar Hotel Rawalpindi. The scholars from both Muslims and Christian community participated and listened to each other with a great spirit of acceptance in spite of very fundamental differences. This was the very first time such kind of seminar was held. We hope the others too will follow suit. There were twelve

presenters.”⁴¹

These are some significant examples of CSCs seminars on religious, theological, social and political and rights human issues, while the CSC has round about 150 seminars since its start. Sometimes the Center also conducts special Islamic courses, lectures and projects for international students to promote Islamic understanding and dialogue. As well as they launch social harmony projects on grassroots level which enhance their capacity in interfaith dialogue and social harmony and give opportunities to interaction with public.

These programs tell us about the practical work of the CSC, they also demonstrate the nature of this dialogue. From the initial titles of the programs we may observe the main focus of these activities is on social problems, minority and woman rights, promotion of Christian community, peace and peaceful relations, religious and social harmony, projection of liberal and secular society, secular education system, Christian values, interfaith diversity, religious unity etc. These issues are also known as the objectives of the Christian study Center, Rawalpindi in Pakistan. Moreover, you can observe that there is lack of academic international seminars and conferences on interfaith dialogue. Basically the CSC is known as research ecumenical institute but there is lack of academic and issues based research and discussion. However, there are available some seminars on different issues but there is no single one national or international academic conference on interfaith dialogue under supervision of the CSC till now.

IMPORTANT DIALOGUE BASED LITERATURE FROM THE CSC:

The CSC has a great deal of literature on Muslim-Christian relations, religious and social harmony and interfaith dialogue in the form of books, reports, seminar proceedings and articles in *al-Mushīr*, training manuals, projects publications, annual reports, newsletters etc. The Center, besides publishing a quarterly theological journal, *al-Mushīr*, contributes through its staff to other Christian and Muslim journals in Pakistan, and publishes books and monographs in Urdu and English. At this point we would like to introduce some most imperative publications of the Christian Study Center in the field of dialogue and social harmony.

Religious Fundamentalism and Its Impact on Minorities: This is a significant publication of the Center. This book is a joint work of CSC Staff (*Mehbûb Sadā, Romāna Basher and Hārûn Nāsir* et.al) and Visiting faculty of CSC with special contribution of Ahmad Salīm the Research Coordinator of the South Asia Research and Resource Center (SARRC). This significant book is considered as a religious history in Pakistan from 1947 to date (since 2008). According to the writers, how the minorities especially, Christian Community were affected from the religious fundamentalism of Pakistan. This book consists of 5 Chapters: The Histories of Religious

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Fundamentalism, How Minorities are Affected from Fundamentalism in Pakistan, Impact of Fundamentalism: Social, Economic, Cultural Jihadist Activities and Political Aspects of Islamic Fundamentalism etc.”⁴² This book criticizes religious fundamentalism, fundamentalist movements, jihadist movements and jihadist role of Pakistan in Afghan War and Islamic amendments in the Pakistani Constitution. This book highlights the special objectives of Center.

A Quest for Peace: Weaving Communities of Hope: This important book is a report of a project “A Quest for Peace; Weaving Communities of Hope: Interfaith harmony among Grassroots Level” organized by the Christian study Center in 1998 to 2005. This project was consisted over a period of 8 years. In these 8 years different seminars, conferences, workshops, special courses and sessions were held. So this book is a compilation of these activities. This book is compiled by Mr. *Rizwān* Ali Khan who was the coordinator of the project. This important book on dialogue was published by the Christian Study Center; Rawalpindi in 2006. The book consists of three chapters and conclusions. The main topic of the book is how to promote peace, social and religious harmony among different communities of the society.

A Journey from Dialogue to Practice: This important publication “A Journey from Dialogue to Practice” is also a report of a pilot project of the Center. This project started in 2005 and completed in 2008. This book was compiled by Mrs. *Uzmā Tāhīr* and Mr. *Ashir Jāvīd* and published by the Christian Study Center in 2009. The purpose and topic of the dialogue is to promote interfaith harmony and tolerance at grassroots level. This book describes the four year activities of the project: A Journey from Dialogue to Practice. This book is compiled by Madam *Romāna Bashīr* and published by the Christian Study Center, Rawalpindi in 2006. This book consists of two parts and 12 chapters: Part.1. Discuss the Role of dialogue Facilitator and the second part concludes the practical activities of the dialogue and harmony projection. This interesting book provides some important guidelines to resource facilitator for interfaith dialogue and social harmony project.

These are some models of most important books published by the Center on Interreligious dialogue and social harmony. Although the CSC, has good deal of literature on interreligious dialogue but there is still need of good academic and scholarly contribution to dialogue in the socio-religious and socio-political context of Pakistan. Moreover, most of the projects are related to social harmony rather than religious harmony. As well as, when we critically analyze publications of the CSC, we find many good books but some do not meet the criteria of academic excellence which are contributed during this era from the Muslim and Christian scholars of Pakistan on platform of the CSC for interfaith dialogue and

harmony.

The Research Journal *al-Mushīr*: *Al-Mushīr* is a representative research and theological journal of the Center. It has a vital role and excellent history to promote interreligious dialogue in Pakistani perspective. It is quarterly published by Christian Study Center; in winter, spring, fall and autumn regularly. *Al-Mushīr* is being published on regular basis since 1967 since its foundation. *Al-Mushīr* has an intensive role in the history of the Center to promote interreligious relations, interfaith dialogue and social harmony from its commencement. The major objectives of *al-Mushīr* are described as, "Articles should be written with an inter-religious and ecumenical reading public in mind and should reflect an awareness of the religious and cultural context of Pakistan."⁴³ Another scholar of the CSC M Gejibles articulates;

"Dialogue, strictly speaking, may be described as the encounter of persons of different faiths on the level of conversation in which the partners acknowledging their confessional stand points try to reach a deeper understanding of each other faith and culture with the object of attaining a deeper awareness of the presence of God in human experiences."⁴⁴

A research scholar of the CSC JJ Mangalam writes, "The religious dialogue speaks both a vertical dimension and horizontal dimension of interpersonal affirmation and communication of one with one's own Creator and of other with one's fellow creatures."⁴⁵ Therefore, we study a good number of articles on interreligious dialogue, social harmony and mutual relations in that journal. The main focus of *al-Mushīr* is on interreligious dialogue related articles on the issues of religious and social harmony, Muslim-Christian relations and other relevant issues of dialogue, for example: peace building, justice, human rights, minorities rights, education and social problems, *Shari'ah and Islamic law* laws, Pakistani laws and their effects on the minorities etc.

Here, we can observe that the Center has vast network and excessive infrastructure for interreligious dialogue and socio-religious harmony. Furthermore, these written activities have an inclusive role in the promotion of dialogue, harmony and interfaith relations in Pakistani context. From this approach the CSC delivers its message, point of view and demands. Here one thing is very notable they collect data of different incidents against minorities and compile them and present it on international level. Sometime this is used against Pakistan as charge sheet. The CSC has more than 100 publications but there is lack of academic work on interfaith dialogue and harmony. Most of the books are collective work or reports of different seminars and projects.

THE SCHOLARSHIP (CONTRIBUTORS) OF THE CSC DIALOGUE:

The Christian Study Center has good number of scholarships

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(Contributors) in the field of dialogue. We can divide the scholarship of the CSC in different phases. In different times different scholars and contributors has been part of the Christian Study Center.

The Scholars of Dialogue in the first Era (1967-1985): The first era of interreligious dialogue in the CSC consists of 18 years, from 1967 to 1985. This era is known as the era of the dialogue of minds (or religious dialogue). This important basically was a preparation of the scholars for interreligious dialogue. As well as it leads to create sympathy for minorities in Pakistani society and scholars spheres. Most prominent Christian scholars of this era are as follows; Fr. R. A. Butler, Dr. M. A. Q. *Daskavī*, Mathew Gejibles and John Slomp etc. Although many significant Christian scholars was part of this era of interreligious dialogue but the Most shocking and surprising thing of this foundation era of interfaith dialogue is that it empty from Muslim scholars in the field of the CSC interfaith dialogical activities. According to the researcher observation this era is also tells about the lack of interest and serious reservation for interfaith dialogue from Muslim scholars.

Second eras Scholars of the CSC's Dialogue (1985-1998): This most important era of the interreligious dialogue under supervision of the CSC starts from 1985 and ends in 1998. This is most vital era of interfaith dialogue because the new multidimensional strategy of interreligious dialogue was introduced in this era from the Center. This era of interfaith dialogue which is named as the dialogue of life from the CSC consists of 13 years. This era is also called era of the social dialogue because in this era the focus of the Center was shifted from theology to sociology of life and theory to practice in Muslim-Christian dialogue perspective. This era has a good number of scholarship, valuable practical work and rich infrastructure on interreligious dialogue. Much important scholarship of this era in the field of interfaith dialogue are as follows; Fr. James Chanan, Fr. Archie De Souza, Dr. Charles Amjad Ali, Dr. Zafar Ishaq Ansari, Dr. Imtiaz Zafar, Madam Christine *Amjad* Ali, Dr. Khalid *Masūd*, Qāzī Abdul Qadīr, Javid Kāzī, Dominic J. Mughal, Cecil *Choûdarī Mehbûb Sadā* and Romāna Bashir etc. We may observe in this era of interreligious dialogue some Muslim scholars also take to part in this activity. The CSC officials consider it a good success on their favor.

The third era Scholarship of the CSC's Dialogue (1998 to present): This most vital era of interfaith dialogue is started from 1998 to date. This is also called game changer era of interreligious dialogue from the Christian Study Centre (CSC) because the direction of interfaith dialogue was completely changed religious to social harmony in this most significant era. The interreligious dialogue was replaced by interfaith and social harmony. According to director of the CSC *Mehbûb Sadā* views, "Interfaith dialogue at grassroots level is one of the (very important) steps

taken by the CSC to bring Harmony, acceptance and love in the society.”⁴⁶ This era has a large number of practical and social work and very rich infrastructure. The important Christian and Muslim scholars of this era of the dialogue are as follows: Madam Christine Amjad Ali, Dr. Khalid *Masūd*, Dr. Aslam Khaki, Dr. *Hafīz-ur-Rehmān*, Mr. *Hamīd* Henry, Dr. *Mohsin* Naqvi, Mr. Ahmad *Salīm* Khwāja, Javid Kāzī, Bishop Samuel ‘Azrāih, Bishop Andrew Frances, Dr. Faroq Kkan, Ms. Fehmīda Salīm, Ms. *Samīna ‘Imtīāz*, Madam Jennifer *Jīvan* etc.

This is perceived from the discussion that interfaith dialogue activities of the third era of the Center are carried out by the modern scholars and social activists rather than theologians and Muslim-Christian scholars. The most important and interesting thing of the 3rd era of the interreligious dialogue is that the women are very active participation in the dialogical activities of the Center. Moreover, this era of interfaith dialogue consists on a variety of co-scholar from Muslims and Christian’s community both and it is measured as an important success of the Christian Study Center.

Here one thing which is observed from the CSC dialogue is that majority of their scholarship belong to socio-political sphere of Pakistan rather than religious and Islamic scholar. In other words, their scholarship represents the socio-political community of Pakistan rather than Islamic and religious one. Therefore, here it is humbly suggested that the CSC should begin an effort to contact top Muslim scholarship of Pakistan and try to include them in this important interfaith activity. In this way, this important activity can be proved more fruitful and beneficial for Muslim and Christian communities of Pakistan. There is also need of time to expand this activity from academia to the public because public should be the basic focus and concentration in interfaith dialogue and harmony for moderate, welfare, tolerate and developed society.

CONCLUSION:

This study concludes that Christian Study Centre, Rawalpindi, Pakistan has practical interfaith, socio-religious and socio-political contribution and impacts on Muslim-Christian community with special reference to interfaith dialogue, peace building and social harmony in Pakistan. Some objectives are positive and acceptable but some are negative and do not match with Muslim thought. Therefore, it is important need to improve and revise the objectives and dialogue issues to make it more beneficial and acceptable for Muslim community of Pakistan. As well as, there is a dire need of time to remove reservation of Muslim scholars on modern interfaith dialogue movement. Here as a point of objection it is stated that there is no found a single Muslim scholar from Peshawar to Karachi who opposes this core interfaith activity but they show their concerns and reservations on its direction, dimension, issues

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and objectives due to some misunderstandings and somewhere on the base of facts. So we should try to remove these hurdles for the benefits of future of interfaith dialogue. It is assumed that it has become our national need in the age of conflicts and clash and we cannot deserve any late or laziness.

As for as, the study tells us that the CSC is doing reasonable work to promote interfaith dialogue, social harmony and interreligious relations in Pakistani society much in academic and less in public sphere. Therefore, side by side it is an imperative need to expand this significant work to every domain of society, specially the religious people and main stream Islamic scholarship. Here, especially it is observed that the main stream of Muslim scholarship has some distance from these activities due to some reservations and concerns. This study stress whether they are right or wrong this is another discussion but we should try to remove their misconceptions and reservations. It is stated that if we able to succeed to remove them, hopefully this effort will open new horizon of interfaith dialogue, harmony and peaceful relations with other communities of Pakistan especially with Christians. Here it is also suggested; if we try to begin this dialogue as a national need and requirement then the CSC may play a role of bridge for Muslim and Christian relations in Pakistan. For that purpose we should think beyond the local and community benefits. We must think about peace and stability of Pakistan.

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