OPEN ACCESS
Journal of Islamic & Religious Studies
ISSN (Online):2519-7118
ISSN (Print): 2518-5330
www.uoh.edu.pk/jirs

JIRS, Vol. 5, Issue. 2, July - Dec 2020
DOI: 10.36476/JIRS.5:2.12.2020.17, PP: 55-69

Interfaith Dialogue in the Twentieth Century: A Study of the Contribution of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and Seyyed Hossein Nasr

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Version of Record Online/Print: 01-12-2020
Accepted: 01-11-2020
Received: 31-07-2020

Abstract

Interfaith dialogue has been initiated in the nineteenth century as an ecumenical discourse that was transformed and adapted by almost all religions as a means of building interfaith harmony. However, in the case of Islam Muslim scholars had to respond in a variant geopolitical panorama of the post-colonial world, struggling to place themselves between strong notions of Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité and safeguarding the traditional fabric of Islam. The present paper expounds on the approaches of two Muslim scholars in the twentieth century are Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1876-1960), an eminent Turkish spiritual leader, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1933-), an Iranian origin, contemporary Muslim philosopher in the United States. Both of them are well-known for their contribution to interfaith dialogue with their unique methodologies. The main research question is; to study the contribution of Nursi and Nasr in the field of interfaith dialogue which is presumably led by Protestants as well as Catholics. The methodology includes comparative and historical analysis which has been applied to explore the academic as well as the social contribution of both the scholars focusing on their enterprise of interfaith dialogue in a pluralistic society. The article ends up concluding that both Nursi and Nasr agreed on the importance of dialogue for a co-existing means while differed in their methods to initiate it.

Keywords: *interfaith dialogue, Islam and West, religious pluralism, Dawah in the twentieth century*

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Introduction:

Interfaith relationship has been a multifaceted arena of socio-religious world which has entered in a dynamic dialogic imposition in the twentieth century after passing through long and versatile periods of religious accords, denominational wars and intervals of mutual peace. Dialogue is a "two way communication between persons who hold significantly differing views on a subject"[1]which has been exercised with the purpose of "learning more truth about the subject from one another"[2]. There are various kinds of dialogue such as intra-religious[3], inter-religious[4], interfaith[5], inner dialogue[6], thematic dialogue[7], dialogue of hands[8] and dialogue of hearts[9]. The case of Islam is peculiar in pioneering interfaith co-existence in a multi-religious society. There are numerous events in the history of Islam, exercising the peaceful interaction between Muslims and Non-Muslims of various periods residing in different regions. The two way meaningful communication has been exercised between Islam and other faiths since its beginning. However, the approach of early Muslim scholarship was not dialogic but polemical, inevitably serving the purpose of *dawah* focusing on the refutation of the other faiths while proving the truth of Islam.

The paramount early encounters include Muslims migration to Abyssinia and the speech of Ja'far Ben Abi Talib in the court of Negus, the Pact of Medina, which ensured safeguarding the rights of distinct religious communities, and the conversation between the delegation of Najran and Muhammad (SAW). Subsequently the age of Caliphs portrayed many treaties and conversations when Muslim troops conquered the factions of Eastern Byzantium. The Abbasid caliphs generally and Mamun al- Rashīd significantly engaged in interfaith debates by calling the dignitaries of different faith communities in his court. Historical records mention his debates with the Melkite (Greek Orthodox) leader Theodore Abu Qurra, the Nestorian Christian Abd al-Masih al-Kindi as well as Manicheans representatives[10]. During the medieval period Muslims in Spain and the Indian subcontinent illustrated the versatile pattern of interfaith relationship. However, the modern period had dawned with the rise of Ottoman Turks, their expansion in Eastern Europe and on the other hand Western colonial empires setting voyages which crossed through the Atlantic and the Pacific to reach the distant lands of Asia, expanded their rule to almost all the Muslim world which bitterly influenced the interfaith relations between Christians and Muslims.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, geo-political panorama of the world has been reshaped with the defeat of Ottoman in the First World War (1914-1919), emergence of various Muslim nation states and rise of United States as a torch bearer of liberty, equality and fraternity a home to

marginalized exploited communities. The genesis of movements of Ramakrishna (1834-1886), Sri Sarada Devi(1853-1920) and Swami Viveknanada (1862-1902) in India and then in the United States were marked significant interfaith endeavors. The World's Parliament of Religions (1893) in Chicago was a landmark to seriously addressing the issue of interfaith harmony. It continued its momentous fervor in Vatican declarations on interfaith relationships (*Nostra Eatate*). The present study explores the thought of two eminent twentieth century Muslim thinkers; Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who theorized dialogue as a meaningful way towards building interfaith relationships in multi-religious societies.

Literature Review

In addition to a good number of literatures produced to encapsulate the meaning of dialogue, its history and Muslim-non Muslim coexistence, we have particularly analysed the approaches of both of Nursi and Nasr and found some of their aspects have been highlighted where the others needed to be explored.

Suleman Dangor has investigated Said Nursi's approach to interfaith dialogue in his article[11] which commences with an outline of the established trends in dialogue between faiths (exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism). He also identified major factors that contributed to Nursi's thinking and his approach for promoting interfaith dialogue, while discussed necessary conditions and objectives for dialogue in detail. The author analysed the time and place settings which had shaped particular foundation for Nursi's thought. However the impact and worth of Nursi's approach is not dealt in this article, but has been portrayed by I.S. Markham who presented Nursi as a model of interfaith dialogue in his book[12] and mentioned his actual involvement in deep conversation with a Christian theologian. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1877–1960) was born at the end of the Ottoman Empire and lived through the emergence of an aggressive secular state. In the first eight chapters of this book, the thought of Nursi and his insights are discussed which can become a worthwhile foundation of interfaith initiatives. Having established the method, the second section of the book examines the precise implications for the interfaith movement. The problem with the interfaith movement is that it is an act of western cultural imperialism – they are taking the individualist assumptions of modern America and imposing them on the conversation.

Sayyed Hussain Nasr has extensively engaged in many interfaith initiatives, however less has been written on expounding his approach. We largely dealt with his interviews, speeches as well as his writings portraying his stance towards 'other' religious traditions. One interesting published dialogue between Cobb and Nasr[13] attempted to bring religious moral

foundations in discourses of environmental issues. Cobb tried to address the ecological crisis in connection with the Christian faith while Nasr attempted to deal with the issue from an Islamic understanding of nature. Now, a general question follows: Are their eco-religious thoughts complementary to the present formation of environmental ethics? This paper makes a comparative analysis of their eco-religious views of the environment and their suggestions for ecological sustainability, thus served a real data of Nasr's involvement in the dialogic activity. In another paper, Liana Trafus[14] has compared the approaches of John Hick as well as Nasr in the perspective of religious diversity. She also discussed the stance on religious diversity in Christian and Islamic fundamental texts providing solutions to the problems of intolerance.

The authors of this article have contributed in analyzing and comparing the thoughts of both Nursi and Nasr; where Nursi has been selected as a paramount illustration of Muslim thought in the beginning of twentieth century Turkey and Nasr taking part in the actual dialogue in the late decades of twentieth century when the dialogic method has been matured enough among Muslims.

Research Questions

The present study aspired to evaluate the approaches and impact of two Muslim scholars in the field of interfaith dialogue in the twentieth century focusing on the following questions:

1. What was the approach of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and Seyyed Hossein Nasr in interfaith dialogue?
2. What was the historical development occurred since beginning of the twentieth century to its final wrap up in the dealing of interfaith initiatives?

Research Methodology

It has been a qualitative study where the printed as well as audio archives containing the thought of both of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and Seyyed Hossein Nasr have been accessed and further their content has been analysed by applying the mixed method approach. The historical method helped us finding the developmental factors of their thought while comparative method has been used to reach to certain conclusions.

Approach of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi to Interfaith Dialogue

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi[15] has a significant impact on twentieth century Muslim thought developed in Turkey which stood on the verge of falling Ottoman Empire and rising secular democracy of Ataturk.Nursisuggested dialogue and cooperation of Muslims and Christians in spite of living through the suffering, pain, and destruction because of the

two World Wars where Turkey had lost against the Allied forces, thus forced to pay heavy ransoms in addition to bear the war damages. The strength of Nursi's ideology was based on his deepanalysis of the Christian European history and modern secular thought prevailed in the West. Nursi remained a staunch proponent of dialogical approach when the Ottoman Empire had collapsed after a turbulent conflict between the Empire and Europe.

Said Nursideclared in one of his speeches in front of anaudience of over 10,000 Muslims, including hundred prominent religious scholars, in the Umayyad Mosque, Damascus city that the primary cause of global unrest resulting in conflict of nations and religious communities wasnot Eastern vs. Western or Christian vs. Muslim, but the material philosophy which is "the evil of civilization". He said:

> *"There are two types of Europe. One follows the sciences which serve justice and right and the industries beneficial for the life of society through the inspiration it has received from true Christianity; this first Europe I am not addressing. I am rather addressing the second, corrupt Europe which, through the darkness of the philosophy of naturalism, supposing the evils of civilization to be its virtues, has driven mankind to vice and misguidance. This philosophy drives people to greed, which then causes major conflicts from individual to global levels".* [16]

This was the basic reason and motivation behind his call for harmony and collaboration between people of the two major religions, Muslims and Christians who have same enemies, such as the difficulties of poverty, illiteracy, and enmity. One of the aims of Christian-Muslim dialogue is to join hands against atheism, materialism and communism jeopardizing religion all over the world, as he illustrated,

"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."[17]

> *He approached Christian leadersat least twice during his life. Firstly in 1950, when he sent a collection of his works to Pope Pius XII and then in 1953 when he paid a visit to the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in Istanbul to request cooperation between Muslims and Christians against atheism.*[18]

Conditions for Dialogue

There are some rules proposed by Said Nursifor a successful interfaith dialogue which are following:

1. The fundamental principles of all religions must be considered and

none of the faith should be forceful towards others to impose their teachings or beliefs.

2. The purpose of the dialoguemust not for the worldly benefits and it should beyond the personal interest of any person.
3. Establishing dialogue with the responsibility and bearing in mind that all human beings are vicegerents of Allah
4. The issues and problems of the modernity and global age should be in concern. Moreover importance of religion in solving human problems and contemporary issues must be highlighted through dialogue.
5. Avoiding disputes on questions of belief.[19]

Bases for Dialogue

Nursi however believed that the dialogue must be rooted in Islamic civilization because the Western civilization has following issues.

- It depends on using power or force to communicate its message.
- It is more inclined toward self-interest and prejudice
- The basic principle of life is based upon conflict and skepticism.
- The western civilization is consisted upon racism and harmful nationalism to grasp the attention of masses
- It contained the worldly temptations, materialism and satisfying desires"[20].

Nursi declared the Western civilization has gone far-away from the real essence of Christianity and following an anthropocentric Greco-Roman philosophywhich pushed God to the margins and limitations and glorified human so much to make it the center of the universe rather God. He further maintained that:, "The European societies have changed the religious standards with the logicalvalues of the Enlightenment, which is concentrating merely on the independence of the person, and hasterminating the rights of society, while making religious faith restrictive to a individual commitment with no share in the domains of society, politics, economics, and social relations". [21]

However, he has not abducted Western civilization as total valueless but admired itsprogress in technology and scientific fields. He advised Muslims to followwestern nations in their educational advancements. It is also known that Nursi taught chemistry and physics along with the other disciplines. Moreover, he invigorated the assimilation of modern and Islamic education.[22]

Nursi suggested that the Islamic civilizationhas unique characteristics which are very appropriate to provide a basis for founding a fair and nonviolent world. The Islamic civilization prefers truth to legitimate the matters rather than merely power. The virtue and righteousness is the basic

incentives for humans not the materialistic things. Moreover the social relations and the whole society is based upon equality and mutual assistance. Above all the divine guidance and revelation is the standard or criteria of ethical behavior and morality. [23]

He also views that success of dialoguebetween Christians and Muslims lies on refraining both of themfrom mutual clashes and disagreements while keeping their identity and religions intact. Nursi elaborated that : "Focusingcompulsively on these differences can blind both of them to the even more important common task which they share, that of offering the modern world a vision of human life and society in which God is central and God's will is the norm of moral values".[24]

Thus, Muslims and Christians should strive together for this divine common task of leading humanity.

Function of Dialogue

The objectives of interfaith dialogue according to Nursi can be described in three notions.

1- Propagation of Divine Principles or Values:

Nursi viewed atheism the biggest threat brought forth by the modernitywhich far outweighed any other threat. Thus the only way of establishment of the divine values in the world is interfaith dialogue, which is always overlooked or ignored because of secularization of societies. As he believed that the Meanwhile the modernity and the Western civilization is against the ultimate laws of the divine guidance andrevealed religions, therefore the negative or the evil side of it has overshadowed itspositive and bright aspects, and the good as well as the beneficial features are surpassed by its errors and harmful things.

Hence, it can be assumed that Nursiwas not "exclusivist" in his approach as he does not refer the divine mission of establishment the divine values of Islam exclusively, nevertheless to all revealed religions. Rather his approach was more "universalist" for the reason that he wasanxious about the prevailing good in altogether religions.Furthermorehis thought of the restoration of divine guidance and laws as fundamental to the pursuit for a fair and nonviolent world.

2- Achievement of Human Dignity, Righteousness, and Companionship

Nursi called on achieving uprightness of human character worldwide through a religious dialogical exchange, saying that the both faiths, Muslims and Christianscan together construct a civilization in which mutual respect, equality, human dignity, fairness, and companionship will be the standard. This is only imaginable if they pursue to build their mutual relationships on

affection and love. [25]

This shows the impact of Sufism on him as he was in contact with sufishaykhs and fond of studying Sufism. And certainlylove and affection for humanity is an important theme in Sufism. In his Sermon of Damascus, he suggested "love" as the solution for the problem of hate and enmity.[26]

3- Perseverance of Global Tranquility and Harmony

After witnessing the calamities of two world wars,Nursistarted focusing on need of establishing world peace through love and brotherhood and to end up enmity and hostility among nations. He proclaimed:

> *"O unjust man nurturing rancor and enmity against a believer! Let us suppose that you were on a ship, or in a house, with nine innocent people and one criminal. If someone were to try to make the ship sink, or to set the house on fire, because of that criminal, you know how great a sinner he would be. You would cry out to the heavens against his sinfulness. Even if there were one innocent man and nine criminals aboard the ship, it would be against all rules of justice to sink it.So too, if there are in the person of a believer, who may be compared to a dominical dwelling, a Divine ship, not nine, but as many as twenty innocent attributes such as belief, Islam, and neighborliness; and if you then nurture rancor and enmity against him on account of one criminalattribute that harms and displeases you, attempting or desiring the sinking of his being, the burning of his house, then you too will be a criminalguilty of a great atrocity".*[27]

The passion of Nursi is evident in his propositions to establish dialogue with other faith communities in spite of the geo-political turmoil in the early decades of the twentieth century. His profound engagement with Armenian and Orthodox Christians resided in Turkey has significantly transformed in his followers resulting in the development of better understanding, mutual respect and tolerance of each other.

SeyyedHossein Nasr[28] on Dialogue

Seyyed Hossein Nasr has been a key representative for a better understanding ofIslam and for Muslim-Christian dialogue in America since leaving his nativeIran at the time of the Revolution in 1979. He is considered a profound author trained in the Islamic sciences, philosophy, theologyand esoteric Sufism. He is equally well versed inChristian theology, philosophy, and ethics. Nasr calls himself a traditional Muslim-the one who is quite convinced that modernity has led people of faith, bothMuslims and Christians, away from a realization of the role of the sacred inhuman lives. Nasr is uninterested in dialogue for the sake of mere conversationand insists that the successful dialogue is only possible when the participantsare well trained in their own faith as well as got familiar with the other religious

tradition. Nasr is a scholar of genuine theological and philosophical curiosity wishing to engage with those who are serious about the pursuit of truth. The truth is not summarized in the ethical teachings of Islam, but is to bediscovered by pursuing an epistemology in which a single reality, primarily the oneness of God, might be seen in several different ways, or from differentperspectives. Nasr thus reveals himself an advocate of the perennial philosophy[29]pioneered by the twentieth century philosophers like *René*-Jean-Marie-Joseph *Guénon*[30] and FrithjofSchuon[31].

Nasr identified the primary focus of dialogue lies in"the nature of God,finality of truth, scripture, sacred language, sacred law, Christ, and modernism. To saythat these are "a few" issues is understating the casewhile they are only sevenin number, they provide the stuff for long-term and deeply challenging conversation"[32].

He repeatedly mentioned the fundamental theological exchange is inevitable to the common pursuit of an extensive understanding of the realmof the sacred in its fullest dimensions. The major issues including Christian notions of incarnation, trinity, salvation, sacred law, and eschatologywould serve as fundamentals in nurturing Christian-Muslim dialogue where freedom of worship, missionary activity, and differing attitudes toward modernism are a few obstacles.[33]

However, he viewed that theQur'anic rejection of both of the Christian doctrines of the trinity and the incarnation would be considered momentous in any dialogic claim. An emphasisupon a particular manifestation of the One in the direction of the many "is seen by Islam as a veil cast upon the plenary reality of DivineUnity"[34]. The crucifixion as the irreducible 'fact' separating Christianity and Islam, is next in hiseffort to move the dialogue from the superficial level of cordiality to thehard issues of theological difference.[35]Nasr manifested his pursuit of transcendent unity in spite of the apparently irreconcilable doctrines such as the nature of Christ, the trinity and crucifixionby proposing their interpretation in a metaphysical perspective of non-conflicting harmony. For him crucifixion is ''a fact which in reality wasplaced there providentially to prevent a mingling of the two religions"[36]. In fact his unwillingness to stop in front of ''what seems to be an insurmountable obstacle"[37] is the signal contribution to the theological exchange between Christians and Muslims.Nasr was confident enough to propose after a conversation with Catholic theologian Hans Küng (1928-)that both of the views about occurrence of crucifixion and non-occurrence could be correct on the same plane of understanding if one accepts the possibilitythat a single event might be seen and known in more than one ways. He mentioned while replying to the question, "[If] it isimportant for Muslims and Christians together to discuss the question of who,ultimately, is saved" that each faith

communitymust clarify the matter first within its own confines before discussing it inthe background of interfaith dialogue. He said, ''The members of the two communities who are common in thefaith that salvation is notlimited to their own faith thus I believe that only they can carry on fruitful dialogue with each other"[38].

Islam and Interfaith Dialogue:

Nasr advocated that the finality of truth claimed by Islam as well as the diversity of basic tenets of Islamic creed turns it viable for initiating the interfaith dialogue. In an interview Nasr said that the definition of word Islam is submission and peace. He further elaborated that the Arabic word *al-islām* means "surrender" to the Will of God and the peace which is in the result of submission and surrender to Him. He said: "In fact, Islam is the only major religion, along with Buddhism (if we consider the name of the religion to come from Budd, the Divine Intellect, and not the Buddha), whose name is not related to a person or ethnic group, but to the central idea of the religion. Moreover, considers all authentic religions to be based on this surrender, so that *al-islām* means not only the religion revealed through the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad, but all authentic religions as such. That is why in the Quran the prophets Abraham and Jesus are also called *muslim*, that is, one who is in the state of *al-islām*. Islam means also gaining peace (*salām*) by virtue of this very act of surrender or *taslīm*. Islam is in essence, living according to the Will of Allah in order to gain peace in this world and felicity in the world to come. From the point of view of Islam, since the goal of all authentic religions is to reach God Who is Peace and the Source of all peace, Islam, the final plenar revelation in the history of present humanity, also aims to lead its followers to the "Abode of Peace" and to create peace to the degree possible in a world full of disequilibrium, tension, and affliction". Thus this theme can be helpful and pioneer of interfaith dialogue.

He presented Islam as the final plenary revelation for the wholehumanity and finality always implies integration. He said:

> *"I believe that Muslims have a providential roleto play in bringing out the significanceof interreligious dialogue, of acceptingthe books, prophets and messengers ofGod who preceded Islam, whether theyare Christians or Jews or anybody else.The 124,000 prophets mentioned in Ahādith are also our prophets and messengers".*[39]

He further reinforced the universality of Islam which provides the ultimate guidance about acceptance of all other revealed faith possible. The Qur'an among all sacred books is one of the most religiously universal and least exclusive as it talks about the other religions recurrently. The core of faith (*īmānbi'llah*) includes faith in Allah, His all books and in His all messengers, and not in the single book and the only one prophet. So the

acceptance ofall prophets and other sacred scriptures along with Quran is part and parcel of Islam's definition of itself which is extremely meaningful in a dialogic process.

The Structure of the Dialogue

Nasr reinforced a fervor religious zeal to engage in a dialogical framework while declaring it a serious activity on part of religious clerics as well as scholars those who are engaging in interreligious dialogue. It should be done so religiously, and not simply as secular scholars in a university, so that they can validate to their fellows that this act is not making them less pious, whether they are belong to any faith. [40]

Empathetic treatment of one another is a prerequisite of dialogue because the realaim of interfaith alliance and dialogue is unity, rather than consistency"[41]. According to him unity is a condition or prerequisite of dialogue, that preserves the distinguish ability of different religious methods. He stated : "Metaphysically speaking, unity lies at the opposite pole of uniformity, and the reduction of religions to a least common denominator in the name of the religious unity of mankind is no more than a parody of the 'transcendent unity of religions' which characterizes the traditional point of view". [42].

Unity can be multifaceted, manifested in various religious traditions is not contradictory to claims of sole truth lies in a single religious tradition.

Nasr declared that the aim of dialogue is not to win converts toreligion but to develop acceptance and respect of another's understanding of another world of sacred and divine form and meaning while remain intact with one's own belief"[43]. Hence it is foremost important to balance the aims of harmony, cooperation and maintaining the integrity of each religious tradition.

Pursuit of common grounds in various religious traditions is a validated pragmatic component of interfaith dialogue spreading from ethics to spirituality, from environmental concerns to actualization of the sacred and so forth. Nasr opined in an interview that : " There is also a common ground as far as many ethical teachings are concerned; attitudes towards good and evil, towards nature, towards a vision of a spiritual reality that transcends the material, the possibility of spiritual wayfaring, spiritual realization, the sense of the sacred and many, many other elements". [44]

In his visit to Vatican in 1977,Nasr spotted out five capacitiesin which Christianity and Islam can work together. These are: "Dangers of modern technocracy and ecological ruin, energy crises, youth problems and decadence of morality and faith". [45].

However he is not unaware of intra-faith dissent being taken place in

almost all the religions of modernity which poses a dire need of dialogue. He declared the future's challenge would not be the clash between Islam and the West rather it would be a suspected strikebetween tradition and modernism/postmodernism within the factions of every religion throughout the world. [46]

Conclusion

At the dawn of twenty-first century and specially the post-September 11, a casual glance at world affairs would suggest that religion is at the core of much of the strife around the globe. The world is detained with the dangers of religious extremism and violence between different religious communities.Therefore, over the last couple of decades there has been an intensified interest in developing a thorough theological framework for how religions can serve in establishing peace and harmony in the world. The increase in militant extremism in recent years has resulted in reactionary responses on a global scale. On the other hand it has spiked fears and distrust, leading to violent outbursts. Hence a need to develop a framework for building mutual co-existence has been increased as well.

Every major religion of the world has expressed at some point, through its teachings or role of its leaders and thinkers, a commitment to the value of peace, both in classical texts and modem reformulations. In case of Islam, apart from its early meaningful encounters with people of other communities, it still has the momentum to engage in interfaith Dialogue. In this Article we focused on the views and methodology of two eminent scholars of twentieth century who contributed to develop thematic as well as academic dialogue in spite of their different time and space settings.

Badiuzzaman Said Nursi, who has a wide following in Turkey, had witnessed the aftermath of both of the World Wars. He had influenced a significant number of Turkish people and encouragedconstructive interfaith dialogue for the elimination of violence and extremism from the world. Nursi is committed that the ultimate truth is confined to Islam alone. Since he accepted that all other faiths also have a fractionalconsiderate and realization of the ultimate truth, Therefore he will not called an exclusivist; rather he can be described as an inclusivist in his approach. His approach can well be adapted to develop the interfaith initiatives between Muslim-Christian communities.

Similarly, the views of SeyyedHossein Nasr on the nature of Islam and the structure of dialogue reinforce its universal and comprehensive character which is a profound foundation for interfaith dialogue. His definition of Islam as a generic term "peace & submission" gives an understanding of Common ground vividly. His Universalist perennial approach has made him an

eminent theorist in the field. Both of Nursi and Nasr had emphasized on better understanding of each other's stance, to begin from the common postulates of faith and deal their crucial variances with openness. They agreed on finality and universality of Islam to provide a room for a meaningful dialogue. However their treatment of the prerequisite of dialogue and its structure are quite different.

To conclude, both of them have provided a sound framework to launch and engage the dialogue in a multi religion society and it is helpful to highlight the contributions of Muslim scholarship in the field of inter-religious dialogue.

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[2]Swidler, "What is Dialogue", 7.

[3] Intra-religious dialogue carries on between the sects of a single religion.

[4] Inter-religious dialogue is the official dialogue between high ranked authoritative persons from two distinct religions as between Vatican and the leaders of any Jewish group.

[5] Interfaith dialogue is usually named when neighboring clergy or laypersons are involved but in this paper it is applied to correspond to the communication between Islam and other religions.

[6] Self-contemplated inner communication with God is inner dialogue.

[7] Thematic dialogue is a scholarly exchange of thought on some pertinent subject.

[8] Cooperation between social and communal projects is sometimes labeled as dialogue of hands.

[9] Dialogue of hearts symbolizes worship and communion between man and the Divine.

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[24]Berghout, 28

[25] Michel, 96

[26] Michel, 96

[27]Nursi, "The Letters," in *Risale-i Nur* 1.0 CD, 312

[28]One of the world's leading experts on Islamic thought and spirituality, SeyyedHossein Nasr is university professor of Islamic Studies at The George Washington University. He has authored more than fifty books. Born in Tehran in 1933, raised in the United States, graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of

Technology (MIT) and Harvard, Professor Nasr is a well-known and highly respected intellectual figure in both the West and the Islamic world. He lives in Washington, D.C

[29]Perennial philosophy is a perspective in modern spirituality that views each of the world's religious traditions as sharing a single, metaphysical truth or origin from which all esoteric and exoteric knowledge and doctrine has grown.

[30] French philosopher also known as ʿAbd al-WāḥidYaḥya(1886-1951) after his conversion to Islam . Retrieved from: https://www.livingislam.org/trg.html

[31]He was a German origin perennial philosopher who was named ʿĪsāNūr ad-Dīnʾ Aḥmad (1907-1998) after his conversion to Islam. See: https://muslimheritage.com/people/scholars/

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[33]Nasr, SeyyedHossein. "Islamic-Christian Dialogue: Problems and Obstacles to be Pondered and Overcome" The Muslim World 87/3–4 (July-October 1998): 218–237; repr., Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations 11/2 (July 2000): 213

[34]Nasr, SeyyedHossein. "The Islamic View of Christianity." KATHA- The Official Journal of the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, 4/1 (Jan. 2018): 128, Jan. 2018. ISSN 2636-9265. Available at: https://ejournal.um.edu.my, Date accessed: 28 June 2020

[35] Nasr, SeyyedHossein. Islamic Life and Thought.(Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981),

[36]Nasr, "Islamic Life and Thought" 210

[37] Nasr, "Comments on A Few Theological Issues,"464

[38] Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*

[39] Nasr, Extended Interview, http://ftp.iza.org/dp7976.pdf

[40] Nasr, Extended Interview

[41]Nasr, Knowledge and the Sacred, 288

[42]Nasr, Knowledge and the Sacred, 288

[43]Nasr, Knowledge and the Sacred, 288

[44] Nasr Extended Interview

[45]Kot, Z. 2009. "Muslim-Christian relations: The traditionalist interfaith dialogue" (Unpublished master thesis) George Washington University, Washington, DC

[46] Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*