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INTERFAITH DIALOGUE: APPROACHES, ETHICS, AND ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

The activities of interfaith dialogue are a necessity for acquiring a better and building bridge between different communities and in conveying the truth of Islam. Therefore, from the perspective of Islamic tradition, there have been interfaith discourse activities between Muslims and non-Muslims since the Prophet's period. The article discusses the practice of interfaith dialogue which has been established by the Prophet in increasing mutual understanding among religious people. Among the parties involved are Jews and Christians such as Christian's delegations from Najran, the kings of Rome and the al-Najashi's rulers. The ethics and its approaches in interfaith discourse has been applied of the prophet (PBUH) were discussed. The discourse was conducted on Islamic basis, it delivered in prudent, modest and in highly manners. Research methods used to examine these issues are largely qualitative, and consist of approaches such as historical research and content analyses. As a result, the participation and interaction of Muslims and Non Muslims in interfaith dialogue have brought Non Muslims converted to Islam after having a discourse with them. But, because of ruthless attitude among non-Muslims, particularly Jews towards Muslims, therefore there are some objections vehement and opposing views of the community of Medina.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islam was spread out since the era of Prophet Muhammad –peace be upon him (PBUH) - until it embraced by current millions of people through dialogues. The indictment from Islam’s opponents that it is a coercion religion is incompatible (al-Baqarah, verse 256). There is no single matter hidden in Islam, whether all of it clearly explained within the Qur’an and Hadith. In fact, Islam frequently opens a huge door for humans to understand it through dialogues.

The preaching conducted by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the gentiles in Mecca, and also to the Christians and the Jewish in Medina, all of it was based on the efforts of dialogues. Islamic openness and tolerance made it welcomed by millions of people these days.

The dialogues conducted by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) should be considered as guidance in continuing them with the Non-Muslims today, particularly from the aspect of the talking issues and approaches used during the dialogue and the argumentation.

2. THE DEFINITION OF DIALOGUE

Dialogue is a talk among two persons or more with a purpose of sending announcements or pleasing others by an argumentation or a thought within a peaceful environment away from conflicts (Al-Hammadi, 2008). The word “dialogue” or “*hiwar*” only mentioned three times in the Qur’an in Surah al-Kahfi (18): 34, 37 and Surah al-Mujadalah (58): 1. The meaning of *hiwar* or dialogue in the Quran generally refers to dialogues between Moses and Chider, Abraham and Ismael, Habib al-Najjar and his people and so forth.

On the contrary, debate or “*jidal*” is a talk among two persons or more with an intention to defeat or satisfy others by an argumentation or a thought within conflicts and fanaticism (Al-Hammadi, 2008). The word “*jidal*” is mentioned 29 times in the Qur’an, such as in Surah al-Ghafir (40): 5, Surah al-Nisa (4): 107 and Surah al-A’raf (7): 71.

The meaning of dialogue therefore, is different from the debate. Al-Hammadi (2008) stated that ‘dialogue exists in a peaceful atmosphere and based on the goal to reach the truth, while debate exists in conflicted situation and has an intention to defeat others’. Each debate is a dialogue, however not all dialogues are debatable.

Dialogue has an extensive and comprehensive purpose. Allah gives no compliment to debate, though He ordered us to debate nicely as mentioned in Surah al-Ankabut (29): 46 and Surah al-Nahl (16): 125.

Occasionally, the dialogue is switched to vicious debate, particularly if it is controlled by fanaticism and stubbornness in exposing argumentation. Sometimes, the debate is included within dialogue as the Allah said in Surah Mujadalah (58): 1 and Surah Hud (11): 74-75.

3. THE PRINCIPLE OF DIALOGUE BETWEEN MUSLIM AND NON-MUSLIMS

The talks upon the law of dialogue with Non-Muslims should be based on reality in the Qur’an which most of it is dialogue and debate. The Qur’an is not only the guidance book of life, but also has a role to explain the evidence of truth to the opponents. The necessity of debate and dialogue

upon the priests is a compulsory from *Shariah's* point of view. Its purpose is to prove the truth of Islam in front of them and make them believe upon the teachings brought by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The attention of the ancient preachers toward dialogue and debate was formed by their writing works. Through these works, they tried to defend the Islamic truth and eliminate the misconducts of other religions.

For instance, several of them wrote books such as Ibn Taimiyah with "*Al-Jawab al-Sahih li man baddala Din al-Masih*", Ibn Qayyim with *Hidayah al-Hiyari Fi Ajwibah al-Yahud wa al-Nasara*, Ibn Hazam with *al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Nihal* and Ghazali with *al-Rad al-Jamil li Uluhiyyah Isa bi Sarih al-Injil*. One of prominent preachers, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (1990) in his book *Zad al-Ma'ad* in a chapter entitled *Munazarah Ahli al-Kitab wa Jidalihim*, also highlighted the compulsory of dialogue with Non-Muslims.

He stated: "It is a must to debate and dialogue with them, even it becomes an obligation if it gives advantages", and "It is also necessary to expose strong evidence upon the postulates before their very eyes and not avoiding of debating them, except those who own fainted heart in exposing the evidence of those postulates."

Ibn Taimiyah as quoted by [IbnQayyim al-Jawziyyah Muhammad bin Abu Bakr \(1990\)](#) was also exposed the same argumentation: "Those who afraid to debate with the Atheists and the Heretics with a debate which could weaken their arguments are rejected by Islam upon their rights, knowledge, faith, and their words are meaningless toward their soul"

Beside the given facts about the obligation of dialogue with the Non-Muslims, history also witnessed the debate between the priests and the Muslim preachers, for instance; dialogue between Ibn Taimiyyah and several Christian and Jewish Priests in Egypt was written in his books titled "*Hidayatu al-Hayari fi Ajwibah al Yahudwa al-Nasara*" and "*Zad al-Ma'ad*"; dialogue between Fahkrudin al-Razi with Khawarizmi Priests about the divinity of Isa al-Masih, and it is clearly mentioned in his interpretation; dialogue between Syeikh Rahmat Allah al-Hindi and The Agra Priests and they confessed about the manipulation in the Bible; dialogue between Syeikh Ahmad Deedat and a number of priests upon issue of Isa al-Masih in Islam. What the book of *Muqaddas* said about Muhammad (PBUH)? Was he (Isa/Jesus) a God? Was he (Isa/Jesus) crucified?

4. DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE PROPHET AND THE GENTILES

The Quraisy Gentile was the first community encountered by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when he preached about Islamic teachings. The preaching toward the animists was one of the greatest challenges faced by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Realizing their deviation and stupidity, he was patiently opened a room of dialogue for them. In fact, the dialogue conducted by him was delivered in the highest level of politeness.

He tried to explain them the truth of Islam and showed the doubtfulness toward their statue worshipping. The acceptance of Quraisy toward his teaching was categorized into three conditions. The first ones were those who accepted it as good as they listened to it. The second ones were those who reconsidered it before took it. And the third ones were those who refused it even though they were given numerous logical facts ([Muhammad Zurman, 2007](#)).

The first group which converted to Islam was those who long enough in keeping their patience against the evil and the destruction of their existing religion. However, due to no choice was offered, it made them eternally trapped within their ancestors' darkness although their soul was frequently rebelled. Nobody showed them the right path When the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) came and asked them to convert to Islam, they were fearlessly accepted it.

People such as Khadijah, Abu Bakr, 'Ali, Bilal, and others were the best description about the earliest group who converted to Islam. The second group was those who wait and investigate prior to the decision making in converting themselves to Islam. They were comparing between Islam against their predecessor's religion.

This second group came from people such as Abu Zar Al-Ghifari, Amru bin Abasah al-Sulami, and so forth. And the third group was those who ignored the teachings delivered by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). They did not expect that coming a prophet will change their faith which had already firmly held by them throughout the decades and also he will change their life system although that system was against their common sense.

Numerous ways conducted by the Gentile Quraisy in showing their opposition toward this new religious teaching and instructions such as: torturing the weak and poor people who had faith in Allah; insulting the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH); offering him fortune and wealth, and so on. One of their opposition and rejection was asking him to give evidence about the miracle upon the truth of his prophetic.

This matter is highlighted by Allah in surah al-Isra (17): 90-92. They were hoping that if this request was exposed, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would angry and cursed them, however, he was not angry at all. He patiently explained to them that his coming was not to change the nature; instead he came to deliver the genuine truth.

5. DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH) AND THE JEWISH

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) never conducted dialogue with the priests except when he was in Medina. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) took a dialogue approach with the Jewish due to they were representing one of the biggest groups in Medina and their strong control in economy and fertile lands.

The first case delivered by him to them was about his passion to live with them in peace and harmony without conflict. Ibn Ishaq told the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) once he wrote an agreement letter between *Muhajirin* and *Ansar*, acknowledged and respected the existence of Jewish in conducting their religious practices, and preserved their wealth with a condition that Jewish together with Muslims will defend Medina if it is attacked (Ibn Hisham Abdullah bin Yusuf, 1991).

Besides explaining to the Jewish about the intention and passion of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to live with them peacefully, he also took chance to make dialogue with their priests in clarifying the truth of his prophecy and teaching. However, he received a negative response from them.

The matters that exposed by the Jewish priests (rabbis) to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were generally about mystical things. It was because those mystical things were mentioned within their holy books and they assumed that he had no knowledge upon those things (Ibn Hisham Abdullah bin Yusuf, 1991).

He kept taking opportunities in making dialogue with Jewish in order to deliver the news of the Last Prophet at the end of the era which described in the Torah. One of the chronicles that described the dialogue between the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Jewish Priests was from Thawban. From Thawban, I stood beside the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), when suddenly one of the Jewish priests (rabbi) came close to us and greeted, "Assalamualika Ya Muhammad." I pushed him and almost made him scream and he asked me; "Why did you push me?" I answered: "Why didn't you call him The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)?" That Jewish Priest said: "I called him by the name given by his family." And the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) responded: "The truth is my real name is Muhammad as given by my family." The Jewish Priest continued: "I came here to ask you questions." The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) responded: "Is there benefit if I answer your questions?" And the Jewish Priest said: "I will listen with my two ears."

Then the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) drew a line in the ground with a piece of wood, and he said: "Come on, ask me!" The Jewish asked: "Where is the human in the day of *yawm tubbadalu al-ardu ghayra al-ardu wa al-samawat*?" The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) answered: "At the bridge of *al-sirat*" The Jewish asked: "Who are the first ones walking on it?" The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) answered: "The poor people from Muhajirin." The Jewish asked: "What makes them happy when they are entering the heaven?" The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) answered: "A slice of shark's heart." The Jewish asked: "What is their food?" The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) answered: "A bull slaughtered for them and eaten from its head." The Jewish asked: "What is their drink?" The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) answered: "A spring called *Salsabil*". The Jewish said: "You are right." "I came to you to ask questions which unknown by people on earth except by the Prophet or known by a man or two men." The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) responded: "Is there benefit if I answer your questions?" The Jewish said: "I will listen with my two ears."

The Jewish asked: "What is the process of baby making?" The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) answered: "The sperm color of man is white and the woman is yellow, and if they are united and the man's sperm controlled the woman's, as a result, the baby boy is born by the power of Allah. "If the woman's sperm controlled the man's resulted in baby girl by the power of Allah." The Jewish said: "You are right, and you are truly the Prophet." Then, the Jewish was gone from us. And The Prophet said; "I was asked several questions and I have no idea about them until Allah helped me by sending all the information (Muslim Bin Al-Hajjaj, 2000).

From the abovementioned story, it is clearly shown that the Jewish Priest came to him not for Islam; however, he wanted to test the truth of his prophecy through mystical things. This story is also emphasized the kindness and the nobleness of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who kept answered the Jewish Priest's questions, even though he knew that the Priests would only want to test him not to acknowledge the truth.

Beside the above hadith, there is other hadith told by Jabir bin Abdullah about several Jewish came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s friends and asked a question: "Does your Prophet know about how many angels who guarded the hell?" The Friends responded: "We do not and we need to ask our Prophet about it." One of the men met the Prophet and said to him: "Hey, Muhammad, your friends were defeated today."

He asked: "By what they were defeated?" The man responded: "By a question delivered by the Jewish about how many angels guarded the hell". The Prophet asked: "What was their answer?" The man said: "We do not know and we need to ask our Prophet." The Prophet said: "Is it a shame if a group of people was defeated if they were asked a question that they do not know and they asked that we do not know and we need to ask our Prophet about it?" The Prophet added: "In fact, the Jewish had asked their Prophets about their desire to see the face of Allah!"

This is the attitude of the Jewish who keen to ask upon mystical things with a wish that the Prophet was unable to answer them. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained them that the apocalypses delivered to the Israeli Prophets were equal to those sent to him. The story of Abdullah bin Salaam converted to Islam was able to conquer the arrogance of the Jewish.

They were actually unwilling to embrace or exchange their religion even exposed by the most powerful truth. Dialogue between the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) showed that there were small numbers of Jewish who opened their hearts to accept the truth of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the Messenger of Allah SWT ([Al-Tirmidhi Muhammad bin 'Isa bin Sawrah, 2000](#)).

Narrated by Anas r.a.: the news was sent to Abdullah bin Salam about the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Medina. He came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and asked him. "I want to ask you three questions unknown by the people but the Prophets. "What is the sign of the beginning of the end?" "What is the first food eaten by the people in heaven?" "How is a child resemblance to the father and mother?" The Prophet said: "Gabriel had already told me the answers before he asked me these questions." Anas and Abdullah said that "Gabriel is one of the Jewish' enemies from the angels' sides" The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said; "The early sign of the beginning of the end is the fire which gathers humans from the East to the West". "The first food eaten by the heaven's people is a slice of shark's heart". "If the men's sperm dominance over the women, the resemblance is to the men, if the women's sperm dominance over the men, the resemblance is to the women".

Abdullah bin Salam said that "I confessed that you are the Prophet of Allah". "I would like to say that the Jewish is liars". "If they knew my Islamic Confession before you asked them, they certainly accused me in front of you".

Then, the Jewish came and Abdullah entered the chamber. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said to them: "What is the position of Abdullah bin Salam among you?" The Jewish said: "He is the most intellectual person of the son from the most intellectual figure and also the very best child within our community".

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked: "What is your argumentation if he converted into Islam?" They said: "Hopefully, Allah protects us from that tragedy!" Suddenly, Abdullah came out of the chamber and shouted: "I confessed that there is no God but Allah, and I confessed that

Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah!” The Jewish yelled: “Abdullah is the worst person and a son of the worst man! (Al-Bukhari Muhammad bin Ismail, 2000).

The above story is different with the previous one due to Abdullah bin Salaam came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) merely to seek for the truth. The dialogue between them conducted in openness and harmony. This dialogue was also proved the knowledge and expertise of the Jewish upon mystical things due to they were told within the Torah. This story is also dropping the dignity of Jewish because Abdullah bin Salaam who was one of their prominent figures also converted into Islam. Due to their blindness soul made them hard to accept the Islamic of Abdullah and finally denied it.

The lessons which could be drawn from the dialogue between the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with the Jewish are: (a) Muslim preachers should have sufficient knowledge upon the “Old Testament” which becomes the main reference for the Jewish, particularly toward issues related to the mystical things. (b) Muslim preachers should have willingness to spent time to make dialogue with them although they have bad intention. (c) Muslim preachers must have deep and comprehensive knowledge about mystical things in Islam based on al-Qur’an and al-Hadith.

6. DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH) AND THE CHRISTIANS

History proved that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not only made dialogue with the Jewish, but also with the Christians. Different with the Jewish, the Christians were minority in Medina. They were mostly occupied the Northern Arabian Peninsula such as Syria or along the roads headed to Syria which considered as the center of trade at that time. Most of traders from the Arabian Peninsula went to Syria to purchase goods to be traded later in Mecca. History proved that there was no opposition between Muslims and Christians at the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)’s era. In fact, most of them converted into Islam as the Islamic Confession of several tribes of Arabian Christ.

A number of chronicles exposed the dialogue between the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with the Christians such as the one with Adi bin Hatim al-Ta’i. Al-Tabarani narrated from Mus’ab bin Sa’ad that Adi bin Hatim came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and in his neck there was a golden crucifixion. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) yelled at me: “Hey, Adi, throw that idolatrous away from your neck!” Then, I threw it away, and I came to him while he was reading surah al-Bara’ah, that is *ittakhadhu ahbarahum wa ruhbanahum arbaban min dunillah...* until he had finished it, then I answered him that we do not worship the idolatrous.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said that “Didn’t they proscribe what is justified by Allah and you were proscribed and they were justified what is proscribed by Allah and you were justified it.” I answered: “Yes” The Prophet said that it was their loyalty to Allah (Ahmad bin Hanbal, 1993). What is needed to be notice that the attitude of Adi bin Hatim who sincere to seek for the truth which made him able to obey the order from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to throw away his cross. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was also telling to Adi about the manipulation conducted by the Christians by changing the law and syariat from Allah under their lust.

Other dialogue which involved the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Christians was when the delegation from Najran came to Medina intended to make debate with him. A chronicle told that the Najran's delegation's coming was politely welcomed by him as the honorable guests and he provide them foods, allow them to ring the bell and let them prayed in his mosque. They were staying close to him when he taught them Islam. Dialogue between the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Najrans was about the divinity of Isa (Jesus) and his crucifixion as sacrifice for the mankind and also the issues about the elimination of men's sins. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked them with the highest level of courtesy not to overwhelm upon their religious matters and not to treat Allah with improper natures.

He also asked them not to worship anything but Allah. He also explained them the description of the complicated birth of Isa Al-Masih compared to the making of Adam (Ibn Sa'd Muhammed, 1958). When the dialogue and debate turned into heat with accusations, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stopped it and promised them in the following day when revelation has decision for the malediction.

The first lesson taken from the previous hadith is the good service from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for the Najran Delegation as his guests. He provided them meals, allowed them to ring a bell, and gave them space to pray in his mosque. These services are exposing a good perception about Islam. In addition, there two lessons which could be drawn as guidance for Islamic Preachers from the dialogue conducted by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with the Najran Christian Priests.

Those two additional lessons are: (a) The dialogue makers need to properly deepen and comprehend upon the content of the "New Testament" which becomes the main reference for the Christians; (b) The dialogue makers also need to deepen and comprehend the argumentation from Islam toward the Prophet Isa (Jesus) and the issues related to him based on the Qur'an and Hadith.

7. DIALOGUE WITH FOREIGN LEADERS

Dialogue between the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the foreign leaders occurred when the prosperity and stability applied in Medina. Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) organized the preaching activities for world's foreign leaders at that time by sending ambassadors to them. Two super power nations at that time were Persian and Rome. Those two super power nations were the description of civilization and world's glory at that time.

The contents of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s letter for the two leaders were the polite request to convert into Islam, explanation about Islam brings prosperity to the universe, Islam suggestion to the dialogue, Islamic principle that there is no force in religion, suggestion in peaceful relationship, introducing each other, cooperation, achieving safety and security in togetherness, and finally eliminating conflict and destruction (surah al-Hujurat, verse 13). The following is the example of the content of letter sent by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to some foreign leaders.

7.1. The Letter from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for Hercules, the Roman Emperor

Narrated from Ibnu Abbas r.a, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) wrote a letter to the Roman Emperor asking him to convert into Islam by sending Dihyat al-Kalbi in bringing his letter. When Dihyat arrived, the Emperor asked him to read the letter. The letter written as follows: In the name of Allah the Merciful, from Muhammad a son of Abdullah, the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) to the Honorable Roman Emperor, Hercules.

I ask you to convert into Islam and you are guaranteed to be save and safety for those who follow the truth. I confessed that there is no God, but Allah. There is no one like Allah, and Muhammad is its messenger. I ask you to come to Allah. I am the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who gives warning to the entire humans in the world and have the right to remind the gentiles. Convert yourself into Islam, and you will be saved. And if you refuse it, you will bear the sins of your people.

7.2. The Letter from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for Kisra, the Persian Emperor

The Letter was written as follows: In the name of Allah the Merciful, from Muhammad a son of Abdullah, the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) to the Honorable Persian Emperor. Safety to those who follow the truth and they have faith in Allah and its Prophet. I confessed that there is no God but Allah. There is none like it, and Muhammad is its servant and messenger. I ask you to come to Allah. I am the Prophet of Allah who ordered to warn to the living human beings and I also have the rights to remind the gentiles. Convert to Islam, and you will be saved! If you hesitate, you will bear the sins of the entire magus! (Al-Tabari Muhammad bin Jarir, 1997).

7.3. The Letter from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for An-Najashi the King of Ethiopia

“In the name of Allah the Most Merciful and the Most Compassion substance to those who believe it. This Letter is from Muhammad the son of Abdullah, and also the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for Najashi, the Ethiopian King. I pray that safety will be always with you and your people. I grateful to Allah, which there is no God except Allah, the Greatest King of the Very Sacred One, the Great One who gives Prosperity, the Great One who keeps Security and Safety. I confessed that Isa (Jesus) a son of Maria was Allah’s Spirit and His words blew into her soul who never married and very sacred and purified. Allah made Isa (Jesus) from His spirit and blew it as He made Adam from its hands. I ask you to worship Allah the one and only which there is no God except Allah, obey it and follow me and have faith with my religion and I am Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and I ask you and your people to embrace Allah. I have already informed and gave you advice, therefore, accept it and safety for those who follow the truth” (Al-Tabari Muhammad bin Jarir, 1997).

Those letters sent by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the World’s foreign leaders at that time described that Islam is a safety, harmonious, and peaceful religion which all of them fostered under the suggestion of dialogue and disputations. On today’s context, the Great Iranian leader, Ayatullah Khomeini on January the 3rd 1988 sent a letter to the Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev asked him to convert into Islam. The content of his letter was an exclamation to him

and all the Soviet people to return to religion due to their biggest problem was atheism as the main philosophy held by the communist (www.tebyan.net May 20th 2012).

8. THE ETHICS OF DIALOGUE

The Hadith described several ethics and guidance points in conducting the dialogue with the Non-Muslims. Those points are:

- 1) Sincerity. The planned dialogue should be fostered under the sincerity and preserving the truth. Interfaith dialogue is the one that makes sure the postulant, argumentation, and facts related to Islam are properly conveyed to the non-Muslims. Bring them to have interest in Islam and convert it. It is proved when the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) personally served and answered the questions of the Jewish man even though his attention was merely to test him.
- 2) Clear objective. If the conducted dialogue had unclear objective, it was certain that it brought no results. The real objective of the interfaith dialogue is introducing Islam and eliminating the evil toward Allah.
- 3) Honoring the feeling of the listeners. Dialogue needs no curse and humiliation to others. The most important thing in the dialogue is the ability of the dialogue makers to send opinions with reasonable arguments and valid facts exposed in cheerful and joyful ways. Narrated by Abdullah bin Mas'ud, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: *"if there are three of you, do not whisper only with the two of you without involving the other one due to it will make him upset.* (Al-Tirmidhi Muhammad bin 'Isa bin Sawrah, 2000)
- 4) Manage the dialogue properly. Narrated by al-Bara bin Azib: We met the gentile one day and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) placed troopers from the archery division. Then, Abu Sufyan came and shouted: "Are they Muhammad followers, here?" The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Do not answer it!" Abu Sufyan asked us again: "Are they the followers of Ibnu Abi Quhafah?" The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Do not answer it!" Abu Sufyan asked us again: "Are they the followers of Ibnu Al-Khattab?" Abu Sufyan answered to his own question: "None, because they were killed!". "If they are still alive, they certainly will answer my question". 'Umar was almost lost his temper and he shouted: "You are a liar and the enemy of Allah!" "Allah will make you suffer in eternity!" (Al-Bukhari Muhammad bin Ismail, 2000). Although this Hadith do not describe a direct dialogue, however, it is good to be taken as an example in assuring the best strategy in conducting dialogue with enemies. The questions from Abu Sufyan were the depiction of his arrogance. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was forbidding the friends to answer them in order to avoid the disintegration among the Islamic soldiers (Muslim bin al-Hajjaj, 2000).
- 5) Convincing the listeners about the credibility of the dialogue makers. The successful dialogue makers are those who able to convince the listeners toward their credibility and eligibility as the talkers. This assumption is based on Hadith from Ibnu Abbas when he said while the Allah's verse was sending to them, "Give warning to your closest relatives!" Moreover, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) climbed up to the Safa Hill and shouted: "Hey Clans of Fahar, Adi, and Quraisy!" And then, all of them were surrounded him. There was a man who unable to send a

representative to be a witness in that event. In the following moments came Abu Lahab and Quraisy. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "What do you think, if I say there is a horse in this valley is going to attack you". "Do you believe me?". They answered: "Yes!" "We have no doubt on you." The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) added: "I was here to ask you to convert into Islam and if you refuse it you will be severely punished by Allah in the Judgment Day!" Abu Lahab responded: "Damn you!" "You were asking us to be here only to listen to this non sense!" Furthermore, Allah sent its verse to support the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in surah al-Masad (111):1-2. (Al-Bukhari Muhammad bin Ismail, 2000). One of the benefits which could be taken from this Hadith is how the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) convinced his relatives upon his credibility as an honest man and never lies to anyone. Through their confession, it is hard for them to resist the teaching brought by him.

9. THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DIALOGUE MAKERS

The dialogue makers should have sufficient knowledge. Any dialogue without sufficient knowledge is useless. Opinions and statements conveyed by them must be based on facts and not merely assumptions. One main knowledge need to be mastered by the dialogue makers is the comparison between Religions. The contents within the Old and New Testaments need to be understood properly (Al-Bukhari Muhammad bin Ismail, 2000). The Muslim's dialogue makers must own the current information and valid data about the misconducts and manipulations existed in other religions. Al-'Allamah Sheikh Sa'id 'Abd al-Azim in his book "*Da'wah ahli al-Kitab ila Din Rabb al-Ibad*" explained that: "debate is an art which occasionally needed by men when they are facing the enemy, therefore they must be sincere in their services to Allah".

They also must own low profile and modest attitude. The polite dialogue makers must be down to earth and modest in their behavior. Narrated by Abu Ayyub al-Anshari, one of the Arabian Bedouin prevented the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in continuing his trip. That man took the rope of his camel. He said: "Hey, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)! Tell me, what are the things that make me close to heaven and keep me a distance from hell?" The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) looked into his Friends and said: "This man was opened his heart and soul by Allah!"

They must be polite and not easily angry. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) gave presents to the four representatives from Najran, but gave nothing to the Quraisy, and it made the Quraisy fed up. The Quraisy protested: "Why did you give the presents to them, and you give nothing to us?" The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "I gave them presents in order to attract their attention to Islam".

Then, one man with bushy beard came close to him and shouted: "Be afraid to Allah, Hey, Muhammad!" He responded: "Who is going to obey Allah, if I disobey it? (Al-Bukhari Muhammad bin Ismail, 2000). This Hadith describes the good deeds of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when he was making dialogue with the Quraisy even though they accused him with false accusations.

10. THEMES OF DIALOGUE

Themes of dialogue which are being discussed in this article are based on the chronicles which told stories about dialogue between the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Gentiles, the Priests, and the Ambassadors and Foreign Leaders. Of those three dialogues, the writer kept focus upon the following matters; (a) the reasonableness of dialogue with Jewish today, (b) issues which urgently needed in Interfaith setting, (c) Who is eligible to be an ambassador in representing Islam when conducting dialogue with the Non-Muslims?

10.1. Dialogue with Non-Muslims from Buddhist, Hindis, Sikh, and other Religions Created by Men

The strength and the specialty of Islam are placed on its powerful fact and argumentation. There is no obstacle for Islam to make dialogue with religions originated from statue-worshipping. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was often made dialogue with the gentiles about serving ourselves to the one God and stay away from creating another God.

The best issue which is allowed to be discussed with other believers is about theology and the danger of multiplying Allah SWT. The different thing when the Muslims doing the dialogue with these believers, the postulates should be based on logics and reasonable things. Those logical and reasonable things are frequently utilized more than those with the Christians and the Jewish.

10.2. Dialogue with the Jewish Today

The aforementioned Hadith proved that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was willing to make dialogue with anyone as long as Islamic Mission conveyed. However, nowadays, there is a problem arises about the fairness of making a dialogue with the Jewish due to their barbarian acts and cruelty upon the Palestinian Muslims. One of the Muslim Preachers who disagreed in making dialogue with the Jewish is Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi with an argumentation based on surah al-Ankabut (29): 46: "Do not do the debate with the holy book people with indecent manner, except to those who committed evil among them."

If the Muslims do not make the dialogue with the Jewish, how they are able to deliver the Islamic truth despite the Jewish's stubbornness? Probably, the best way of making dialogue with the Jewish is not paying attention to the mystical things written in the Old Testament and in the Qur'an, rather to the global humanistic issues such as the Baitul-Maqdis and the Palestine.

The statistic issued by two Israel's best-selling media, Yedioth Ahronoth and Ma'arif from Tel Aviv reported that "Hundreds of Jewish converted themselves into Islam". Those two tabloids which also published in Arabic reported that "this phenomenon is existed for the last five years, and tens of Jewish are also converted into Christian".

The data from the last two years described that 360 Jewish who reported to the Ministry of Justice to change their religion, 249 of them converted into Islam and the rest converted themselves into Christian. This data proved that each year approximately 100 Jewish converting themselves into Islam and Christian.

This number is increasing since 2008, and today there are 142 Jewish converting into Islam. Ma'arif reported that since 2009 up to now, there are 32 Jewish requested to change their religion.

This number sends restless atmosphere among the Jewish. According to the latest report, the trigger of the massive waves of Jewish converting themselves into Islam is because of the Israel's cruelty toward Palestinian Muslims, and other factor such as inter-racial marriage between the Jewish with other races.

10.3. Issue of Who Is Eligible to Represent Muslims in Dialogue?

Hadith that describe about the sending of Mu'az to Yemen as the messenger from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the holy book people proved the tight selection conducted by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself of who is eligible to represent him. The same thing was applied when he chose Abu Ubaydah bin Al-Jarrah to accompany the Najran's Delegation in explaining the Islamic Truth. (Al-Bukhari Muhammad bin Ismail, 2000).

On today's context, who is eligible to be one of representative from Muslims in the middle of internal conflict among groups and sects? Because of that conflict, it makes Muslims today establish an Institution called The Union of World's Islamic Preachers lead by Dr. Yusuf Qardawi. One person who is willing to represent Muslims worldwide should have the highest Islamic knowledge and also own sufficient knowledge about other religions. He is also acknowledged by the Islamic Community from *Ahlu Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* and persistence in applying the al-Qur'an and al-Hadith.

10.4. The Editorials and Issues in the dialogue

Editorials and Issues within dialogue need to be approved by Muslims and Non-Muslims before they are being conducted. The dialogue between the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with the Jewish Priests proved his agreement to accept the questioning problems. Islam has no problem in making dialogue in any issues due to it has powerful postulate and facts. The point is, those issues must be approved by both sides.

The best example is the following issues of dialogue between Ahmad Deedat with several Christian priests. Those issues are: (1) *Al-Islam and al-Masihiyah* by Ahmed Deedat and Gary Miller in Cape Town, South Africa in 1985. (2) *Did Jesus (Isa) really crucified?* by Ahmed Deedat and Professor Fluid Clark in Britain in 1985. (3) *Is Jesus (Isa) a God?* by Ahmed Deedat with Dr. Anis Shorosh in Britain in 1985 (4) *Al-Qur'an or Al-Muqaddas as the words of Allah?* By Ahmed Deedat in Birmingham, Britain in 1988 (5) *Does al-Muqaddas treat as the words of Allah?* By Ahmed Deedat and Jimmy Swaggart in USA in 1986 (6) *Cross: between Fact and Fantasy?* By Ahmed Deedat and Robert Douglas in USA (7) *Islam and Al-Masihiyah* by Ahmed Deedat and Professor Fan Rue in South Africa (8) *Is Jesus (Isa) a God?* By Ahmed Deedat and Erci Bock in Denmark in 1991, and (9) *did Jesus (Isa) really crucified?* By Ahmed Deedat and Wachfield in Canada.

11. CONCLUSION

The previous Hadith about a number of dialogues between the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with the Gentiles, the Jewish, the Christians, the Persian and the Roman Emperor, and with the

Ethiopian King are clearly proved that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was always taking opportunities in making dialogues to the Non-Muslims.

In spite of their evil intention and severe rejection toward Islam, he was still keeping the dialogue in informing the Islamic mission to them. However, the Islamic mission will be impossible to be properly delivered if the Muslim's dialogue makers have no sufficient knowledge and lack of preparation, particularly with the Islamic teachings and the comparison between religions which covered other scriptures (i.e. Torah, Bible, Veda, Tripitaka, and so forth). Those hadith are also highlighted the necessity of politeness and have the highest ethics during the dialogue in order to attract the attention of Non-Muslims.

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