

Constructing a relevant dialogue between Sunni Muslims and
Pentecostal Christians in Ekurhuleni (1970-2018)

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DILIPRAJ CHETTY

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SUPERVISOR: Prof M S KGATLE

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DECLARATION

Name: **Dilipraj Chetty**

Student number: **307 92 878**

Degree: **Doctor of Philosophy (MISSIOLOGY)**

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ABSTRACT

Muslim Christian relations in South Africa have undergone many changes. This thesis firstly traces these changes by using four categories described by Lochhead (1988) in relation to hostility, isolation, partnership, and competitiveness.

Prior to the rise of the Apartheid era, the Dutch Reformed church played a crucial role in instigating hostility towards the Muslim community. During the Apartheid era, the Group areas Act contributed to the isolation of Christians and Muslims, as each group was geographically separated. At the height of the Apartheid era, many Muslims and Christians stood together as partners, to fight against this oppressive regime that stripped away their dignity. At the advent of democracy and the introduction of the Religious Freedom Charter, Christians and Muslims saw an opportunity to compete and exert their influence on government policies. However, while changes were taking place socially and politically, the theological arena remained stuck in the realm of debating. Public debates started becoming more frequent from the 1970s until today.

This thesis examines the lives and theology of the two giants (Ahmed Deedat and John Gilchrist), who defined and shaped public debating between these two faiths. Both the Bible and the Quran will also be investigated to ascertain what these sacred scriptures have to say about debating, religious tolerance, and dialogue. Sunni Muslims and Pentecostal Christians were selected as interlocutors in this debate. Their views, feelings, and objections to the current affair in debating, was analysed and examined by Pentecostals, who were given an opportunity to present a way forward, from debating to dialoguing.

Pentecostal leaders reviewed the three current theologies of religion: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. The exclusivist model was seen to be too rigid and left no room for religious dialogue. The pluralist model was totally rejected, while the inclusivist model was a viable model that would promote dialogue, while maintaining their Pentecostal convictions.

Finally, the researcher presented a way forward for dialogue between Sunni Muslims and Pentecostal Christians, that would promote tolerance and respect, while still upholding Pentecostal integrity.

Key Words: Pentecostal, Sunni, Muslim, Dialogue, Interfaith, Quran, Bible, Religions, Exclusivism, Inclusivism.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement

From the early 1970s until today, the only form of contact between the Christians and Muslims in South Africa has occurred during public debating. Over the past five years, public debates have become more frequent, extensive, and hostile. The topics debated at these events range from the place of Christ in the Quran or Mohammad in the Bible to the authenticity of the Bible and the reliability of the Quran. The problem in these encounters is that public debating does not promote or enhance authentic dialogue. These public debates display an attitude of competitiveness between Muslims and Christians. This competitiveness and triumphalism are based on each of these faiths, claiming the exclusivity of their religion as the only authentic way to salvation. We live in a democratic country that promotes the rights and equality of all religions. In this thesis, the researcher grapples with the question, “can Pentecostal Christians still hold on to the exclusivist ideas of Christ as the only way to salvation in this democratic, pluralistic South Africa, which promotes the equality of all religions?”

1.2 Hypothesis

Pentecostal Christians in Ekurhuleni’s adherence to an exclusivist theology about Jesus as the only saviour constitutes a hindrance to an engagement in dialogue with Sunni Muslims.

The researcher endeavors to investigate whether the Pentecostal church can hold on to its “exclusivist” theology of religions and still be an authentic dialogical partner with Sunni Muslims living in Ekurhuleni. The research will be conducted within the three mainline Pentecostal churches in South Africa to test this hypothesis. If this hypothesis is confirmed, the research will present creative and relevant ways for the Pentecostal church to become an authentic dialogical partner with Muslims without denying its exclusivist theology of religion.

1.3 The Context of the Dissertation

The Group Areas Act of 1950 was implemented in South Africa by the National Party. This “separateness” policy divided people into different cultural groups by the ruling party, who forced them onto land demarcated for them.¹ These 44 years of official forced separation saw different communities develop in isolation from each other. This had a significant negative impact on intercultural relationships within the country. However, the separation also negatively impacted the interreligious relations between South African communities, and this bears relevance to our study the isolation was not just geographical but also affected each person’s understanding and perception of the other’s culture and religion. The Pentecostal Christian population was dispersed all over the country, but it was strictly kept within its ethnic boundaries. White (European) Christians lived in “white areas,” while Black Christians lived in the so called “Black townships.” The Coloured and Indian Christians lived in smaller townships between the Black and White communities.²

The “White” communities were predominantly Christian, while the Black communities had a mixture of Christians and adherents of the African Traditional Religions (ATR). The Coloured communities had a significant presence of Christians, but also a growing number of Muslims. The Indian communities were made up of Christians, Hindus, and Muslims. The population of Muslims was the largest within the Indian community, while the Christians represented the smallest group amongst the Indian population. As a culture and a religion, Islam was kept in isolation from the White and the Black communities. If there was any authentic dialogue between Muslims and Christians, it took place among the Indian Muslims and the Indian Christians and amongst the Coloured Muslims and the Coloured Christians. This was because they were all “gathered” together under the Group Areas Act of 1950. This thesis investigates the results of this period of isolation on Muslim Christian dialogue in the past and its effects today from a missiological perspective.

Since the abolishment of the Group Areas Act in 1994, and after the first democratic general elections in South Africa, there have been no geographical boundaries to keep us apart. The “Rainbow Nation” has now become a multicultural, multi-religious

¹ Henochsberg, E. (1950). *An explanation of the Group Areas Act, 1950*. Durban: Butterworth.

² Summary of the group areas act, 1950. (1950). Pretoria: Govt. Pr.

community. However, there are cultural and religious boundaries that now keep us apart. This cultural and religious “separateness” has kept us from having an authentic interreligious dialogue.

This thesis will investigate how a ‘theology of religions’ was developed by Sunni Muslims and Pentecostal Christians. The researcher will investigate how both apartheid and democracy influenced and affected these developments. Did the liberation struggle create opportunities for dialogue, and does democracy offer any better opportunities for dialogue?

1.4 Background of the Study

In the early 1970s, two men, Ahmed Deedat and John Gilchrist, began to shape the theology of religions between Muslims and Christians. They provided these two communities with a “model for interaction.” Driven by a spirit of competitiveness, these two ideological giants shaped how Muslims and Christians would interact with each other in the future. Open public debates would set the stage for a new kind of religious encounter, one that would assert itself as being right while proving the other wrong. Their “exclusivist” mentality would be the driving force behind this ideology. Their books, pamphlets, and videos became the propaganda tools that began to shape the minds of their respective adherents.

From the “Muslim camp,” Ahmed Hoosen Deedat (1918-2005) would become the driving force that promoted religious competitiveness. From the abstract of his article, “Ahmed Deedat’s theology of religion,” Westerlund (2003:263) points out that Ahmed Deedat was, and still is, one of the most influential voices of Islam in South Africa. He asserts that Deedat’s polemics against Christianity was developed as a defense for the Muslim minority in South Africa against the onslaughts of radical Christian missionaries. He also argues that Deedat’s main task was to provide Muslims with theological tools for defending themselves against the intense missionary strivings of Christian churches. His writings were easy to understand and written in the language of “common people” Deedat’s books, articles, and pamphlets flooded the Muslim communities. A Muslim theology of religions, as taught by Mr. Deedat, was now beginning to formulate. An exhaustive list of his publications will be analyzed in chapter three.

Today, his books are printed in the thousands, his videos are on Y-tube, and a new breed of young Muslim apologists are emulating his 'apologetics style,' driven by the ideology of 'exclusivism.' Ahmed Deedat was challenged by John Gilchrist, an Evangelical, representing the exclusivist 'Christian camp.' From the 1970s to the 2000s, Gilchrist "was hard at work devising ways to respond to the challenge" (Muhammed, H 2006:444). While Deedat established the Islamic Propagation Centre³ in Durban, John Gilchrist established the "Jesus to the Muslims" ministry in Benoni. His first publication in 1977 was entitled "*The challenge of Islam in South Africa.*" Commenting on this publication, Muhammed (2006:44) said, "it provides an overview of the position of Islam and Muslims with the aid of arming his "Jesus to the Muslims" society, and others regarding Muslim beliefs and practices." In his article, "The dynamics of Christian-Muslim relations in South Africa (1960-2000)", Muhammad Haron lists Gilchrist's initial publication, which dominated the scene during the 1970s and the 1980s. This list will be analyzed in chapter four of the thesis.

Between the 1970s and the 2000s, Deedat and Gilchrist were not the only two figures involved in Muslim Christian encounters. From the Christian camp, there were scholars like Jacobus A Naude, with other prominent academics like W.D Jonker and Adrian van Selms, wrote numerous articles on Christian Muslim encounters. Chris Greying was another scholar who worked with Coloured theological students in Stellenbosch in Muslim evangelism. Gerhard Nehls also worked among the Muslims in the Western Cape and produced some significant apologetic material. It is important to note that no known academic or apologetic material was written by Christians in the Black, Coloured, and Indian churches. Currently, some pamphlets are being published as a reaction to Muslims who undermine the authenticity and inspiration of the Bible.

Besides Ahmed Deedat, there were also contemporaries in the Muslim camp, including C.S "Whitey" Vanker, G.H Agjee, and A.K Salajee. Vahed Goolam (2012:68), in his thesis, "Ahmed Deedat. The man and his mission," pointed out that "the IPC was the vehicle through which Deedat, Vanker, Salajee, and others hoped to combat missionary activities while conducting da'wah." However, none of the above Muslim

³ The name will change to Islamic Propagation Centre International as his influence becomes more international.

leaders had as much influence as Ahmed Deedat in influencing and shaping dialogue between Muslims and Christians in South Africa.

Today, Deedat's famous "open public debate" style continues in people like South African Muslim apologists Bashir Vania and Mohammed Coovadia. In the Christian camp, John Gilchrist continues to defend the Christian faith, now debating the proteges of Deedat. In addition, Gilchrist continues to give public lectures on apologetics and the "Challenges of Islam in South Africa."

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This is a thesis in the field of missiology, emphasizing the missiological discipline of "Interreligious Encounters." The focus of interreligious encounters in missiology, as Kritzinger (1991:3) points out, is not to "focus on systematic or doctrinal issues, but primarily on communicatory ones." The communicatory praxis of interfaith dialogue is, therefore, an integral part of Christian missions. In agreement with Kritzinger, Schmidt (2009) also explains that interreligious dialogue is not so much about getting a deeper understanding of the other's faith but more about learning from them in personal encounters. The relationship, he argues, should be reciprocal. Interreligious encounters should change us and reform our thinking and redefine our approach to adherents of other faith.

The purpose of missions is not only the proclamation of Christ in various ways, but it is also to enter dialogue with people of other faiths. These people should not be viewed as objects of missions but rather as dialogue partners. In this way, even if some of them remain unconvinced by our arguments and proclamation, we will not feel like failures. Instead, we continue to walk with them as friends as we display the love of Christ to them. On the other hand, Knitter (1985) warns Christians that they should open themselves to the possibilities of learning something new about God from the revelation that they share with us.

This discipline focuses on developing ways of relating to people of other faiths, and in this case, the focus is on Muslim Christian relations. Archbishop Zago (2000) explains that the world is becoming increasingly globalized and pluralistic. He argues that interreligious dialogue should not be seen as a challenge in missions but an

opportunity to live out our Christian faith in a religiously changing climate. South Africa is a melting pot of religions and cultures. There is a constant change in the religious landscape of our country as we witness large-scale migrations of people. Therefore, we must embrace religious encounters with our non-Christian neighbours and see it as an opportunity to display God's glory.

This discipline also compares different models of religious encounters, with the three common praxis being 'Pluralism,' 'Inclusivism,' and 'Exclusivism.' The Bible is engaged, and history is reviewed as newer models of dialogue emerge. This dissertation aims at contributing to the discipline of 'Interreligious Encounters' by adding the unique views presented by the South African Pentecostal community.

However, while this thesis is in missiology, the researcher will use material and ideas found in the social sciences to give credibility to his research design and methodology.

1.6 The Aim of this dissertation

There are several reasons why the researcher believes that this study could be a valuable contribution to the discipline of Christian Muslim dialogue in South Africa. Firstly, this study aims to trace the history of Muslim Christian encounters for the past 48 years: 24 years during the Apartheid era and 24 years after that era. The reason behind this is to trace the development of a theology of religions within these two faiths. It is their theology of religions that would give insight into the way they encounter each other. A positive, more inclusivist theology of religions would naturally enhance their encounters. A negative, more dogmatic, exclusivist theology of religions would then drive a wedge between them. For this section, the researcher's framework model is described by Lochhead in his book, "The Dialogical Imperative."⁴ The four encounters that Christians have had with people of other faith over the centuries can broadly be described as:

- Isolation
- Hostility
- Competition
- Partnership

⁴ 1988 The Dialogical Imperative, Obis Books, Maryknoll

These four encounters will be used to describe the development of Muslim Christian encounters in South Africa. They fit almost perfectly within the framework of the South African history of encounters between Muslims and Christians, except for points 3 and 4, which need to be inverted.

Secondly, this study aims to use the above 4 descriptions of interfaith encounters as a framework and investigate where the different communities would place themselves in their daily encounters with each other. The Researcher will use qualitative, quantitative, and Participatory Action Research. Employing interviews, surveys, and Participatory Action Research (PAR), the researcher aims at finding who and what shaped their understanding of interfaith dialogue.

1.7 Rationale / Relevance

While there are thousands of articles written about Muslim Christian dialogue, these articles are written within the context of a country, culture, and history because the context shapes both the arena of dialogue and one's theology of religions.

Firstly, this thesis covers two eras of South African history, which is a unique history considering the era of Apartheid and the era of Democracy, both being in direct contrast to each other. This thesis will trace how Muslim Christian dialogue and their theology of religions evolved up to this point.

Secondly, being written by a Pentecostal, this thesis will evaluate the "exclusivist" theology of religions held by Pentecostals in South Africa and recommend a more dialogical model that will be embraced in our pluralistic society.

1.8 The Research Question

Can Pentecostal Christians hold on to the "Exclusivist" ideas of Christ as the only way to salvation in this new democratic, pluralist South Africa, which promotes the equality of all religions?

The following sub-questions will feed into and unpack the main research question.

1. Can Pentecostal Christians remain faithful to their exclusivist convictions about Christ as the only way to salvation and become authentic dialogical partners with Muslims?

2. Can both exclusivist religions (Pentecostal Christianity and Sunni Islam) live in harmony and promote peace in a pluralist society?

1.9 Definition of terms

Three terms will recur throughout the thesis. The terms exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism will be used to describe the respondents' views towards interreligious dialogue.

1.9.1 Exclusivism

This term will be used in this thesis to describe those who subscribe to the idea that their religion is the only way to salvation and God. All other religions are seen as false or demonic. Adherents of this view hold on to a dualist approach to life. Life is divided into good and evil, right and wrong, and God and Satan. Hence if one religion is good, then all the others are bad.

1.9.2 Inclusivism

Inclusivism is much more complexed and broader than inclusivism. Many different streams of thought make up this idea. However, in this thesis, the term would be used for those who believe that God is not confined to one religion. His presence is found in other religions too. For example, Pentecostals who subscribe to this view argue that the Spirit of God is active in other religions; however, salvation is only found in Christ. All other religions are seen as an incomplete revelation of God. They hold on to the supremacy of Christ but are open to the belief that He extends His grace to people of other religions

1.9.3 Pluralism

In direct opposition to exclusivism, pluralism subscribes to the idea that all religions lead to God. Thus, unlike exclusivism which is ecclisocentric, and inclusivism which is Christocentric, pluralism is theocentric. Adherents believe that God is equally present in all religions; hence no religion can claim exclusive access to God. This definition of pluralism will be used in this thesis.

1.10 The Scope and limit of the Dissertation

1.10.1 Geography

The study focuses on the geographical area of Ekurhuleni. The City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality is a municipality that forms the local government of the East Rand region of Gauteng, South Africa. The name *Ekurhuleni* means *place of peace* in Xitsonga.

The rationale for choosing Ekurhuleni as an area of interest is twofold. Firstly, the researcher was born and bred in this region. He has also been engaged in Muslim evangelism in the area for three decades. Secondly, it is a growing, multi-cultural, multi-religious community of people, representing all the primary cultures, languages, and religions of South Africa. One would not be overstating the fact by saying that Ekurhuleni may be called a “miniature South Africa.” It has the largest airport in Africa, making it a gateway for travel and tourism and an ideal way to meet international people of different faiths.

Figure. 1: Map of Ekurhuleni



This study will aim to promote peace among Sunni Muslims and Pentecostal Christians in Ekurhuleni and hope that this metropolitan city lives up to its name and sets an example to the rest of the nation as a leading religious tolerant city.

Ekurhuleni is one of the five districts of the Gauteng province and one of the eight metropolitan municipalities of South Africa. The administrative ‘capital’ of Ekurhuleni is Germiston, with a population of 3.17 million people, as of the 2001 Census.

In 2016 3,379,104 people lived in Ekurhuleni, 22.7% were under 15 years old, 71.2% were between the ages of 15-64, and 6.1% were older than 65 years. Ekurhuleni had 1,299,490 households with an average of three people per household.

Projecting population growth for 2020

There has not been any census done in Ekuruleni since 2016. The researcher projects a 10% growth of the population in Ekuruleni from 2016 to 2020. This would bring the population growth from 3, 379, 104 in 2016 to 3, 717, 014 in 2020.

The following statistics are from the 2014 census.

| Language | Population | % |
|---------------|------------|-------|
| IsiZulu | 908 002 | 28.81 |
| English | 377 935 | 11.99 |
| Afrikaans | 375 611 | 11.8 |
| Sepedi | 359 245 | 11.40 |
| Sesotho | 315 806 | 10.02 |
| isiXhosa | 252 757 | 8.02 |
| Xitsonga | 208 865 | 6.63 |
| Setswana | 90 307 | 2.87 |
| Other | 81 878 | 2.60 |
| IsiNdebele | 75 150 | 2.38 |
| Tshivenda | 48 227 | 1.53 |
| siSwati | 44 967 | 1.43 |
| Sign Language | | 0.4 |

Figure 2: Language and population

| Gender | Population | % |
|--------|------------|--------|
| Male | 1 627 724 | 51.21% |
| Female | 1 550 747 | 48.79% |

Figure 3: Gender and population

| Ethnic Group | Population | % |
|---------------|------------|--------|
| Black African | 2 502 769 | 78.74% |
| White | 502 439 | 15.81% |
| Coloured | 85 910 | 2.70% |
| Indian/Asian | 68 058 | 2.14% |

Figure 4: Ethnic group population

1.10.2 Demographic of Pentecostal Christians and Sunni Muslims

The two groups took no official census of the people under investigation. So the researcher had to speak personally to the regional secretaries of the three Pentecostal churches to get an estimated figure of members in their churches in Ekuruleni. These were the figures given (and the date of the telephonic conversation).

AFM Church estimate - 40 000 members (Thursday 6th February 2020)

AOG Church estimate - 25 000 members (Thursday 6th February 2020)

FGC Church estimate - 18 000 members (Monday 10th February 2020)

Total number of Pentecostal Christians = 83 000 (this figure excludes the African independent Pentecostal Churches, the Independent break-away Pentecostal churches, and the Chrismatic Churches.)

The Muslim Jamat in Benoni also lacked official numbers but was willing to estimate members within the Sunni ummah.

Sunni Muslims – 25 000 – 30 000 (Tuesday 11th February 2020).

The ethnic demographic and gender population were not available.

1.10.3 Historic Period (1970 – 2018)

The period 1970 to 2018 is significant since it represents 24 years before democracy and 24 years after democracy in South Africa. The central date is 27 April 1994, the birth of our democratic South Africa. 1970 to 1994 represents 24 years of Muslim Christian relationships under the Apartheid regime. 1994 to 2018 represents 24 years of Muslim Christian relations under the new democratic South Africa. These periods were explicitly chosen to evaluate Muslim Christian attitudes and the relationship between these two 24-year periods. The two 24-year periods represent two ideological periods, vastly different socially, politically, economically, and religiously.

This dissertation deals with the following questions concerning these 48 years:

- How did a Pentecostal theology of religions develop over the past 48 years?
- How did a Sunni Muslim theology of religions develop over the past 48 years?
- Did the liberation struggle create opportunities for dialogue?
- Does our democratic, pluralistic society create opportunities for authentic dialogue?

1.10.4 Interlocutors for this study:

1.10.4.1 Sunni Muslims

South African Muslims appear to belong to either two camps, Sunni or Shia Muslims. The vast majority of South African Muslims are Sunni. This has become the more popular religious affiliation among Muslims in Ekurhuleni – the scope of area in our study. In this study, Sunni Muslims are referred to as those Muslims who believe that the caliph Abu Bakr was the rightful successor to Muhammad after his death. The rationale for choosing Sunni Muslims is that they make up the largest group of Muslims in Ekurhuleni. They are also involved in many debates, while Shia Muslims are a closed community and do not involve themselves in debating. While Sunni mosques are spread throughout the region, there are only 12 known Shia houses of faith in Ekurhuleni. Therefore, the chances of Pentecostals interacting with Shia Muslims are slim, while meeting Sunni Muslims in the marketplace is greater.

1.10.4.2 Pentecostal Christians

The term Pentecost Christians will be confined to those churches known as “mainline historical Pentecost Churches.”⁵ These will include the Apostolic Faith Mission (hereafter referred to as AFM), The Assemblies of God (hereafter referred to as AOG), and The Full Gospel Church (hereafter referred to as FGC).

The rationale for choosing these churches is first because of their age. All three churches were established between 1910 and 1930, with the AFM being the first and the AOG being the last. They are also seen as holding to the classical doctrines of Pentecostalism, with their divisions based mainly on how they administer the sacraments. They were also chosen above the Zion Christian Church and other

⁵ A detailed description is found in the researcher’s master’s Thesis. Chetty, D 2002 MTh thesis (Unisa) pages 22-42

African indigenous Pentecostal churches because they possessed formulated an official doctrinal statement of faith. These statements of faith were crucial in this research because they could be better compared to the official statements of faith held by Sunni Muslims. The Zion churches and the significant number of Charismatic churches deliberately do not form part of this research. Separate research must be done with them in mind because the variables are many, making this thesis far too broad if they were added to the study.

1.11 Research Design

The Pastoral Cycle (Holland and Henriot: 1982)

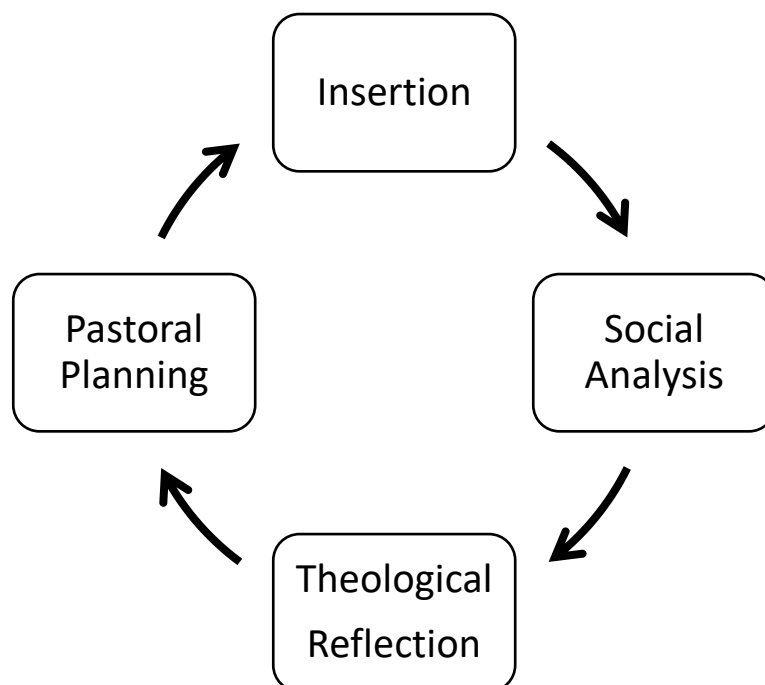


Figure 5: The Pastoral Cycle

The Research Design followed the pattern set out by Holland and Henriot (1983)⁶.

The researcher chose this research design because it is seen as a strategic framework that connects the research question to the actual implementation of the research. It affords the researcher to use the tools in the social sciences while keeping the research missiological. It makes room to include the social sciences while engaging in

⁶ Holland Joe and Henriot Peters, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*, New York: Orbis Books, 1983.

theological reflection and pastoral planning. The researcher will use the pastoral cycle as the framework for this thesis.

This model is designed to help communities apply their faith to social issues. With its four-step design, this model can assist any researcher, fieldworker, or missiologist move from theory to praxis. More than a four-step static cycle, it is an ongoing spiral of continuous interaction between theory, practice, evaluation, and reflection. This is what makes this Pastoral Cycle an ideal tool for this thesis. The Pastoral cycle will help to continuously reflect on the ongoing relationship between Muslims and Christians in Ekurhuleni by asking four crucial questions:

- What is happening in this Community?
- Why is this happening?
- How do we evaluate what is happening through the lenses of our Faith?
- How do we respond to what is happening?

1.12 Research Methodology

To answer the research questions outlined in this thesis and find answers to the bigger picture of Christian Muslim relationships in Ekurhuleni, the researcher has chosen Blanche's (2006:34) three-step research methodology.

Blanche (2006:34) explains that a research methodology "should provide a plan that specifies how the research is going to be executed in such a way that it answers the research question."

This research methodology aligns with the Pastoral Praxis Cycle, which the researcher has chosen as the Research Design. The pastoral cycle will keep the research missiological while using tools that are available in the social science. In addition, the research method is known as "triangulation" was used to be faithful to the research questions and discipline. Triangulation⁷ is the use of more than one method of research to collect data on the same topic. In this way, the researcher ensured the validity of the research using various methods to collect data on the same topic, which involves different types of samples and methods of data collection.

No researcher enters and investigates a community, being completely neutral. There will be a certain amount of bias, especially in the topic under research, "Christian and

⁷ www.researchgate.net (excessed 4/04/2019).

Muslim encounters,” since the researcher is a staunch Pentecostal Christian. Hence, the necessity for “triangulation” in the research methodology is needed since it curbs the researcher's bias and helps him maintain the integrity of the research.

Three research methods were employed within the scope of ‘Triangulation’: qualitative research, quantitative research, and document analysis. These three methods helped answer the questions concerning the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Ekurhuleni.

This research methodology was chosen because of the right tools that will help the researcher immerse into the two communities under investigation and understand their frustration. It will also help develop strategies for dialogue that are based on authentic research findings.

1.12.1 Data Collection

Methods included population, sampling, coding, and analysis. The formats used for population, sampling, and coding will be the same for qualitative and quantitative research.

1.12.2 Population

Painter (2006:133) explains, “the population is the larger pool from which sampling elements are drawn, and to which we want to generalize our findings.” By ‘population,’ the researcher refers to Sunni Muslims and Pentecostal Christians living in Ekurhuleni, across the racial lines. They include males and females, both clergy and the laity.

1.12.3 Sampling

In this thesis, all samples are linked to either the Sunni Muslim faith or the Pentecostal Church. The samples include both males and females across racial lines, clergy, laity, and specialists (apologists) from both faiths. These samples were selected from the general public in the marketplace, debating events, and visiting churches and mosques. The method of sampling used was ‘Random Sampling,’ as outlined by Vyhmeister (2014:35) and Painter (2006:134). Painter also refers to random sampling as ‘probability sampling.’ Vyhmeister explains the reason for this choice of sampling as a technique used to ensure, as far as possible, that an unbiased representation of the population is selected. The researcher visited each of the cities in Ekurhuleni to

engage with the people concerned, handing out questionnaires and receiving them back personally when completed.

1.12.4 Analysis of Data

Data gathering is not a mindless technical exercise, but rather, as argued by Blanche (2006:323), “it involves a development of ideas, theories, and themes about the phenomenon being studied.” Firstly, the data was analyzed to deduce what bearing it had on the research question. Secondly, the data were analyzed to see whether the researcher’s hypothesis was correct. Finally, the data was analyzed, categorized, and used in the thesis. “The research project,” according to Smith (2016:177), “must lead to results.”

1.13 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is defined as studies that focus on why and how things happen and do not use numerical data as their primary fact. Blanche (2006:273) describes it as a “paradigm that involves taking peoples subjective experiences seriously as the essence of what is real to them (ontology), making sense of people’s experiences by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they tell us (epistemology).” In this research concerning Muslim Christian encounters, the researcher investigated how these communities feel about each other. The research specifically endeavored to discover how these two communities feel before, during, and after public debates. In addition, it related to how they feel after reading local publications, which undermined their beliefs, sacred writings, and interpretation of who God is. Thus, the question of “Why” they feel this way was also unraveled. Only when these feelings are brought out publicly and these questions dealt with honestly can the Church respond positively in a missiologically to build bridges of authentic dialogue.

1.13.1 Qualitative research Data collection

Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, and group discussions to cover the most extensive sample spectrum possible amongst the two faiths.

1.13.2 Document Analysis

Document Analysis is a form of qualitative research that Blanche (2006:316) describes as easier to capture than interviews or participatory observation. While not discarding the importance of any of the other methods of research, both Blanche and Bowen (2009:86) agrees that a combination of methodologies like qualitative research, quantitative research, and document analysis are helpful for academic research. Document analysis, therefore, formed an integral part of the process of triangulation. Both published and unpublished public documents were analyzed in this thesis while strictly observing all ethical and confidentiality restrictions.

The publications of Ahmed Deedat and John Gilchrist form a crucial part of the thesis, and therefore their material will be discussed and analyzed extensively.

Careful consideration is also given to the criteria for documents to be analyzed and included in the thesis, concerning the following:

- Who wrote/created the document?
- What biases and assumptions may have come from the writer?
- Why was it written, and what was its original purpose?
- Who was the original audience?
- During which dispensation in South Africa's history was it written (pre/post-democracy)?

Two significant issues concerning document analysis were also carefully considered. Firstly, the issue of bias in the author/creator of the document and secondly in the bias of the researcher, who is a Pentecostal Christian. The researcher considered the author's subjectivity and his personal bias that he might bring to the research.

1.13.3 Interviews

Interviews are a more natural way of interacting with people (Blanche, 2006:297). Blanche explains that interviews “allows us to get to know people quite intimately so that we can understand how they think and feel.” The purpose of this research was to understand both Muslims and Christians as they encounter each other in dialogue. Both structured and unstructured interviews were conducted with three groups of people. In proportion, representative sampling was used to select these three groups, since they represent and include all the different types of people within the research scope. Firstly, it included those directly involved in public debating (the apologists and

organizers), secondly, with religious leaders (Pastors and Imams), and finally with local people living among each other in the communities of Ekurhuleni.

Interviews are imperative in this type of research since “they permit a deeper and fuller understanding of the attitudes of the respondents” (Smith, 2016:173). With the expressed permission of the persons being interviewed, the researcher used written notes. The context, atmosphere, and environment in which the interview took place were also recorded. Interviews were conducted at public debate events, in mosques, churches, and in the streets of the communities within Ekurhuleni. The phenomenon of ‘bracketing’ was also observed during the interviews. Blanche (2006) describes this term as “temporarily forgetting about everything we know and feel about the phenomenon and simply listening to what the phenomenon is telling us now.” This has helped rid the thesis of much bias and prejudices.

There was one challenge that the interviews posed. Because of ethical considerations, it is not good practice for males to interview Muslim women. While some women did fill in the questionnaires, none of them were willing to be interviewed. The researcher respected these traditions, and therefore all interviews were only done with Muslim males.

1.13.4 Observation and fieldwork

Data were collected during observations in the field. In public debates, it was essential to observe the emotions and reactions of the crowds when specific questions were being asked and answered. An observer could tell whether the questions or answers were offensive, inflammatory, unfair, or simply intriguing. After a public debate, the personal contact and emotions between Muslims and Christians led the researcher to conclude whether it was informative and carried out in a spirit of respect and learning, or if it was offensive and led to antagonism and criticism of each other. Written notes were taken during and after these debates, observing all the people's emotions, words, and interactions. These documented notes were being recorded, analyzed, and interpreted in this dissertation.

1.13.5 Participatory Action Research

Participants in the PAR groups were personally invited by telephone from the researcher. The religious leaders in the community provided names and numbers.

Only a tiny percentage of people that were contacted came to the meetings. In most cases, it was as little as three people for every ten calls that were made. This trend was seen in Muslim and Christian communities alike. Three dates were set for three meetings in January and February 2020. The first meeting (Monday evening 13th Jan) had 23 respondents attend (14 Muslims and 9 Christians)

The second meeting (Wednesday evening 5th February) had 18 respondents attend (7 Muslims and 11 Christians)

The third meeting (Monday evening 24th February) had 21 respondents attend (12 Muslims and 9 Christians)

The research design of this dissertation followed the pattern of Holland and Heriot's (1982) "Pastoral Cycle," which purposed theological reflection to produce some concrete Pastoral planning and action. It was, therefore, necessary for the research methodology to do the same. "Participatory Action Research" accomplishes this. the information gathered became a catalyst that benefited the community through "PAR." "PAR" was undertaken among Pentecostal Pastors in Ekurhuleni. The discussions were recorded, transcribed, analyzed, interpreted, and used in the final chapter of the thesis to produce an authentic pathway for dialogue between Muslims and Christians within the community. The PAR meetings will give the participants a chance to voice their opinion.

1.14 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research focuses on the number of things – how many are there? Quantitative research does not always shed light on the full complexity of human experience and perception, and the researcher included qualitative research to enhance the findings in the quantitative research process.

To test the hypothesis, "*Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni find it difficult, almost impossible, to hold on to their exclusivist theology about Jesus Christ as the only savior while also trying to dialogue with people of other faiths, especially Muslims*" the researcher embarked on quantitative research. The data collection instrument employed to gather the statistics took the form of a structured questionnaire. Information gathered from the questionnaires was evaluated, and conclusions were drawn appropriately in the final chapter. The structured and closed-ended questions that appeared in the questionnaire were guided by the outline described by Vyhmeister (2014:37-38). She

warns, "While the information obtained from a questionnaire is extensive, it can also become shallow if not prepared well" (2014:37-38). Her advice is to develop a well-prepared questionnaire that can obtain data that describes the reality. The questionnaire must "elicit precise, factual data rather than impressions and opinion." Therefore, the questions must be clear, straightforward and must not have any ambiguity. For precise factual data, Vyhmeister (2014:38-39) asserts that all questions fall under the classification of 'close-ended questions.' In a closed-ended question, selected answers are given; from these, the respondent must choose. Example:

Do you relate to Sunni Muslims in your community?

- () friends
- () partners on a journey to spiritual truth
- () enemies that must be avoided
- () as part of the mission field, which must be converted

The researcher employed "the scale" format of questions, which reduced the answers to a numerical value. Example:

Can there be salvation outside of Jesus Christ?

1= Yes

2= Maybe

3= Not at all

Two hundred fifty questionnaires were distributed personally to participants by the researcher. This was done for both Muslims and Christians. Only 200 were collected, cataloged, and analyzed. The remainder of the questionnaires were not handed back to the researcher at debate venues. Because the questionnaire was handed out and collected personally by the researcher, the response rate was almost immediate. Each questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes to fill out, and they were handed back immediately to the researcher.

1.15 Challenges faced in the data collection process

1.15.1 Interviews

There is still a significant amount of skepticism between Muslims and Christians. When Christians organize a meeting, Muslims always wonder what the motives are for the meeting. The researcher sensed this in the interviews with Muslim apologists,

Immama, and some of the ordinary folks. As a result, the first few minutes are very awkward and filled with rules before the interview starts.

None of the respondents wanted the names, race, or gender to be recorded. Therefore, an audio recording was forbidden. The names of the organizations and mosques were also withheld. This made it difficult to do empirical research, which would include race and gender demographics. In addition, women were not allowed by their imams or community leaders to participate in any of the interviews.

Interviews with Christians were much more welcoming because the researcher is a Pastor in the Pentecostal church. However, even they preferred not to have their names, genders, and their churches' names included in the research.

1.15.2 Questionnaires

Two hundred fifty questionnaires were prepared, 200 were collected and processed. The first set of questionnaires included a tick box for gender and race. This became offensive to the first few Muslim and Christian respondents. So in the reviewed Questionnaire, these tick boxes were removed.

1.15.3 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

It was challenging to get Sunni Muslims to sit together in a dialogue meeting with Pentecostal Pastors. However, surprisingly, most of the Muslim respondents were excited to meet. On the other hand, Pentecostal respondents were skeptical about the meetings. Most did not want their friends or leaders to know that they were participating in the meetings. Somehow, these meetings carried the stigma of being compromisers.

1.16 Chapter Outline

1.16.1 Chapter One

An Analysis of the historical context in Muslim Christian Relations.

The main idea in this chapter is to trace the history of Muslim Christian relations in Ekurhuleni between 1970 and 2018. This period will cover 24 years under the Apartheid regime and 24 years in the new democratic South Africa using Lochhead's four ideologies: 1. Isolation 2. Hostility 3. Competition 4. Partnership. The researcher

hopes to trace the development or decline in the relationship between Sunni Muslims and Pentecostal Christians.

1.16.2 Chapter Two

Chapter two comprises a literature review. Key sources are listed and analyzed according to the main themes discussed in the thesis. Particular preference is given to material published by Ahmed Deedat, the man who shaped the Muslim attitude towards Christians in South Africa. The publications of John Gilchrist, the Christian apologist who challenged Deedat, are also given preference. Key authors who contributed to the dialogue between Christians and Muslims are listed and discussed.

1.16.3 Chapter Three

Analyzing the impact and influence of Ahmed Deedat on Muslim Christian relations: Ideologies are developed by social structures but are taught and propagated by people. The most famous person in the Muslim community in South Africa that shaped the Muslim theology of religions in Ekurhuleni was Ahmed Deedat. His public debates with national and international Christian leaders led him to become a popular voice on apologetics in our country. Firstly, the researcher will investigate Deedat's theology of religions as related to the South African community. Secondly, his books will be evaluated in the light of Muslim Christian dialogue.

1.16.4 Chapter Four

Analyzing the impact and influence of John Gilchrist on Muslim Christian relations. Deedat was not left unchallenged. Christian Lawyer and Apologist John Gilchrist stood up in the Christian camp, challenging the claims made by Deedat concerning the Christian faith. Like Deedat, Gilchrist also used Public debates, public lectures, and publications to voice his opinions. As a result, most Christian churches accepted him as their spokesperson and adopted his Christian theology of religion. Firstly, Gilchrist's theology of religions as related to the South African community will be investigated. Secondly, his publication will be evaluated in the light of Muslim Christian relations – whether these publications advance or damage interreligious dialogue.

1.16.5 Chapter Five

A critical appraisal of the Sunni Muslim community, the Quran, and interfaith dialogue:

In this chapter, the researcher will engage with the sacred source of Islam, the Quran. With over 890 000⁸ Muslims that hold to the authority of the Holy Quran, this chapter will investigate what the Quran teaches on interreligious dialogue. The researcher will engage with the different Muslim hermeneutical schools of thought concerning dialogue.

1.16.6 Chapter Six

A critical appraisal of the Pentecostals, the Bible, and interfaith dialogue.

By analyzing the data collected from empirical research, this chapter will investigate the attitudes and views of the Pentecostal Church in Ekurhuleni concerning interreligious dialogue and their attitudes towards Sunni Muslims. The Constitutions and Statements of Faith of the AFM, AOG, and FGC Churches will also be analyzed to reflect their stance concerning interreligious dialogue.

1.16.7 Chapter Seven

In search of a Pentecostal theology of religions:

Much has been written on the different approaches to interreligious dialogue, with Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism being the three more popular models. Each of these models will be investigated in this chapter considering Pentecostal interpretations of the scripture. Most Pentecostals follow the school of Exclusivism, while others have recently adopted the Inclusivist model, and all reject the Pluralist model. This chapter will evaluate whether the only option from Exclusivism is the move towards Inclusion or whether a possibility for Pentecostals to introduce a new model in interreligious dialogue exists.

1.16.8 Chapter Eight

Paradigm shifts in Pentecostal thinking.

Chapter seven examines six major paradigm shifts that must take place in the Pentecostal church in Ekurhuleni. These shifts are based on the negative attitude that Pentecostals have towards Sunni Muslims. There must be a change in attitude from hostility to tolerance, the way Pentecostals interpret scripture, and most importantly, the major shift from debating to dialogue. Only when these shifts occur will there be a chance for authentic dialogue between these two groups.

⁸ The latest figures recorded by the Religious affiliations of South Africans as given in the national survey 2016, places the Muslim population at 892 685 and Christians at 43.4 million.

1.16.9 Chapter Nine

Conclusion: Towards a Pentecostal praxis orientation position:

Chapter eight uses the Pastoral Cycle by Holland and Henriot to transition the Pentecostal church from theory to practice. Seven practical recommendations are made for the Pentecostal church in Ekurhuleni to consider as they move towards interreligious dialogue. The inclusivist view is recommended as a viable theology of religions, while love, tolerance, and faithful evangelism are also considered.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 From the international scene to the South African context

Muslim Christian dialogue has been practiced since the advent of Islam. Most material deals with the subject during specific time in history. Sirry (2005: 361-376) deal with the first four centuries of dialogue while Roberts (2017) deal with dialogue during the 13th-14 century. Coffy (2003) in his PhD thesis mentions certain key incidents in dialogue that during the past 1400 years but focuses his attention on dialogue between Muslims and Christians during the 19th century. In agreement with Becht (2014) both these scholars argue that the process of dialogue has been extremely slow and rare in the 19th century. They argue that there are pockets of dialogical encounters but not systematic and progressive development in this area. It was only after the terror attack on the twin towers in New York, USA that the church began a more systematic approach to dialogue. Tamney (2004:599-630) argues in his article "American view of Islam, post 9/11" that Americans should reconsider whether Islam should be seen as the enemy of as dialogical partners in the bigger scheme of things.

However, in Africa the subject of dialogue has been relegated to just a few countries. Nigeria in specific is a nation divided on religious line. Muslims in the north and Christians in the south. Akinade (2014) explores the churches response to Islam and conclude that dialogue must be place first on the agenda of the Nigerian church. In his article, "The threats of radical Islam in Somalia" Menkhawls (2002:109-120) as agrees with Akinade that the Church in Africa must embark in serious with their Muslim counterparts. He states that it is important for the survival of the church n Africa. These same sentiments were echoed by Hassan Kukah (2010: 155-164) in his article "Christian-Muslim relations in Sub-Saharan Africa."

Much was written in South Africa about Islam, its growth under colonialism (Danger 2003), it's progress (Baderoon 2005) and general surveys of its movements and population (Naude 1985). However, very little research and material has been dedicated to dialogue between Muslims and Christians in south Africa.

2.2 A history of Christian / Muslim relations in South Africa

Since this is a missiological thesis, the history of Muslim / Christian encounters will be seen in the light of the development of their relationship. The outline of their history will guide the four ideologies discussed by Lochhead (1988) in his book, "*The Dialogical Imperative*," Isolation, Hostility, Competition, and Partnership.

Engaging with the thesis of Rashid Omar (2006:275-292) as my starting point, I will trace the history of the Christian / Muslim relations as they engaged in resistance against apartheid until the advent of democracy when reconstruction became a challenge between these two religions. The challenges are more specifically documented by Dr. Abdur Rahman Madidi (2003:20-33), showing how politics in the new government added stress to Muslim / Christian relations. While these documents describe the dynamics between Muslims and Christians, it does not challenge either of these faiths to consider dialogue as an option for interaction. Goolam Vahed (2000:43-72) deals with the social-cultural and political changes that posed challenges for both Muslims and Christians to form a new identity in the new South Africa. He also does not present an option for interaction between these two faiths. Manfred Jung⁹ and Naude¹⁰ (1985:21-33) do not deal specifically with social and cultural issues between these two religions. However, they become a good source detailing statistical data of growth among them. Lubbe (1986:24:330) gives an overview of leaders who stood against the Apartheid regime and documented their partnership with Christian. While working together, both religions had to deal with the issues of Proselytism.

2.3 Ahmed Deedat, the man, and his mission

Vahed Goolam's (2012) thesis, "*Ahmed Deedat. The man and his mission*," is one of the primary sources which discuss the rise, the challenges, and the theology of Ahmed Deedat. Together with Vahed Goolam, Muhammed Haron (2006:423-468), Ephraim Mandivenga (2000:347-352), Zubair Usman (2007), Suleman Dangor (2004:243268), and Shafa'at Khan's biography, the mission and message of Deedat are adequately covered. However, they do not deal with his theology of religions or the effects his debating had on Christian Muslim relations. His controversial theology of religion is reviewed by David Westerlund (2003: 263-278), while the development of this theology is outlined by Chapman Colin (2007:236-246), who discusses at length the

⁹ Statistical tables of growth are found in his book, *Muslim Expansion in South Africa* (Manfred 2013:15-18).

influence of the writing of Ibn Hazam (994-1064) on Deedat. In his book, *Muslims and Christians face to face*, Zebiri (2014) examines the Deedat's attitude towards Christians. Olawale (2021:2-32) examines Deedat's impact on Islamic da'wah and how it impacted Christian Muslim relations Nigeria. Larkin (2008:101-121) examines his debates between the 1970s and 1980s while Sadouni (2013) discusses his rise to the international stage.

All the available official publications of Deedat are evaluated and analyzed. Firstly, to trace his theology of religion and then ascertain whether his writings caused a schism or built a bridge for authentic interreligious dialogue.

1976, *What the Bible says about Muhammad*

1977, *Who moved the stone?*

1978, *Resurrection or Resuscitation?*

The combat kit: Against Bible thumpers.

The People of the Book

The Crucifixion or the Cruci-Fiction?

1981, *What is in a name?*

1983, *The God who never was*

1990, *Muhammad: Natural successor of Christ*

2000, *Is the Bible God's Word?*

2000, *Christ in Islam*

2.4 John Gilchrist, The Christian Apologist

The writings and influence of Deedat challenge popular Christian theology, and defense were made. The man that took up the challenge and became the loudest voice of the opposition was John Gilchrist. While Gilchrist did not challenge each of the publications of Deedat, he did publish many books calling attention to the errors found in the Quran and Islamic history. He adopted this approach to mirror the challenges that Deedat posed to Christians. His first publication in 1977 was entitled "*The challenge of Islam in South Africa.*" Commenting on this publication, Muhammed (2006:44) mentions that "it provides an overview of the position of Islam and Muslims with the aid of arming his "Jesus to the Muslims" society and others regarding Muslim beliefs and practices."

In his article, "The dynamics of Christian-Muslim relations in South Africa (1960-2000)", Muhammad Haron lists Gilchrist's initial publication that dominated the scene during the 1970s and the 1980s while discussing the adverse effects of these publications had on Muslims. As done with Deedat, the publications of Gilchrist will also be evaluated to test his "theology of religions" and assess whether he contributed positively or negatively toward interreligious dialogue.

The Gospel Series (The Good Shepherd)

The General Series (Al-Masih: The Messiah)

The Controversy Series (Was Christ crucified?)

The Slide series (The Way of Islam)

The Gospel Booklets (The Way, The Truth, The Life).

The researcher will scrutinize his remaining books.

(1994) *Muhammad, the prophet of Islam*

(1995) *The Quran: The Scriptures of Islam*

(1999) *Facing the Muslim Challenge*

(2003) *Sharing the Gospel with Muslims*

(2015) *The Quran and the Historical Jesus*

Most of these books are written to defend the Gospel; however, in Gilchrist's latest book, we see a turning point in his views concerning Muslim / Christian relations. A more positive outlook to dialogue is the message of his publication, "*Our approach to Muslims*" (2017). This publication is admired as the turning point in Gilchrist's views of Christian Muslim relations, but it must be noted that it is only one publication among several others which were polemic in style.

2.5 Islam, the Quran, and Interfaith dialogue

The researcher now turns to the source of Islamic practice, the Quran. Two areas must be dealt with: how the Quran views interreligious dialogue, and secondly, how Muslim Scholars view interreligious dialogue. From the South African Muslim community, there are not many books that deal directly with dialogue issues. This lack of scholarly material on dialogue became the gap which this thesis aims at filling. Many books like those written by Coovadia (2018), Waheeda (2015), Bismilla (2013), and Abu Ameenah (2001) make mention of the importance of dialogue with other religions in either the first or last paragraphs of their books. Most of the time just a "one-liner."

Two books, however, that appeared on tables at the public debates should be noted. "*Muslim Christian Dialogue*" by Dr. Baagil (1984) documents a Muslim and a Christian's response to questions put to them. However, no theology of religion or the need for interreligious dialogue is ever discussed. The book is one-sided in that it only discusses issues raised by Muslims that the Christian interlocutor answers. The second book by Jamal Badawi, "*Muslim / Non-Muslim Relations: Reflections on some Quranic Texts*" (2015), tackles the issue of interreligious dialogue head-on, using texts from the Quran to affirm the need for religious interaction. The fact that this book was found on a display table at a debate leads us to hope that the era for dialogue is closer than we think. Al-Huda is the most prominent Islamic bookshop in Johannesburg, used by many religious leaders and scholars, stocks devotion and Islamic academic material. The six books on religious dialogue kept in stock could give us some idea of an Islamic concept of interfaith dialogue. Three books use the Quran as a Text that favors interreligious dialogue and calls the Muslim community to find "common ideas" in other faiths as a starting point for dialogue. (1. *Islam Muslims and Non-Muslims*. 2. *Da'wah through dialogue*. 3. *Muslim Understanding of other religions*). One of the books, *A comparative study of Christianity and Islam* (2007), addressed the issues of difference between the two faiths and ended with a call to find common ground on which to develop authentic dialogue. One book dealt with the future of Islam and its survival and saw interfaith dialogue as a path towards the future (*The vision of Islam*). The final book, "*The clear distinction between Iman and Kufr*" (1995), dealt with the extent to which Muslims should go in interreligious dialogue and called for caution in this endeavour.

From the Muslim international scene, the future looks much brighter. There is an influx of material that reviews the Quran, looking for texts that would affirm the need for interreligious dialogue, and many articles challenging Muslim scholars to look at the urgent need for interreligious interaction. From this stance, the primary text would be Ahmet Kurucan's book "*Dialogue in Islam*" (2012), since he produced an extensive study from the Quran, the Sunnah, and history concerning the need and the practice of interreligious dialogue in Islam. Other scholars that write in the same vein and affirms Kurucan's theology of religions are Dr. Abbas Al-Jirari¹¹, Imam Khalifa Ezzat, and Dr. Muhammad Khan. Sanaullah (2014:86-91) calls for caution in dialogue. He

¹¹ Dialogue from the Islamic point of view (2000)

argues that guidelines must be put in place before dialogue can take place so that dialoguers are protected.

2.6 Pentecostals, the Bibles, and Interfaith Dialogue

An essential part of the thesis is to develop a relevant South African Pentecostal theology of Religions. A theology of religions that will hopefully embrace the call to interfaith dialogue with Muslims in Ekurhuleni. To achieve this, an understanding of Pentecostals and their views on religious dialogue must be outlined. The problem (which also becomes the Gap in the thesis) is the lack or almost non-existence of a theology of religions among Pentecostals in South Africa. As part of the primary sources, the researcher will evaluate the "Statement of Faith" found in the constitutions of the three mainline Pentecostal Churches.

- a. Constitution and By-Laws of the General Council of the International Assemblies of God. (20th October 2007).
- b. Constitution of the Apostolic Faith Mission in South Africa (2000)
- c. The Constitution of The Full Gospel Church (Revised October 2009)

The only formal Systematic Theology textbook used by the Pentecostal Churches in South Africa is the "*Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*" (1983). One of the significant challenges in the Pentecostal church that has led to the absence of a "theology of religions" as pointed out by Marius Nel (2016:1-14) is anti-intellectualism and scholarship. Maria Frahm-Arp (2018:1-16) also points out the preoccupation within the Pentecostal church on issues of prosperity which left them uninterested in interreligious dialogue. One of the reasons they would not be interested in interreligious dialogue is their "dualist worldview," anything not from the God of the Bible is deemed demonic (Maria Frahm-Arp 2018:1-16). Kritzinger (1991:139) mentions this, "there is a fringe in the evangelical view that all other religions are demonic, from the devil. It is especially in the Pentecostal and Charismatic branches." Professor Conradie points out that it is an "acrimonious task" to get the Pentecostal church to even talk about becoming a part of the Ecumenical Movement – when those in the movement are Christians. How much more challenging to get them involved in serious, authentic dialogue with other religions. Racial divisions have plagued the three Pentecostal churches under discussion. There have been some attempts to work together, but no official strategy for this unity was ever adopted. The challenge that

Muslim Christian dialogue poses to the Christian faith could be the catalyst that could strengthen the bond of unity between these churches.

However, the tide changes on the international Pentecostal scene, and its influence will soon be seen on the South African Pentecostal landscape. International Pentecostal academic/scholars like Amos Yong, Tony Richie, and Veli-Matti Kárkkäinen are now taking up the challenge to produce an authentic Pentecostal model for a theology of religions that will fit the ethos of the Pentecostal Church.

Amos Yong (2007:35) challenges the Pentecostal church to move away from its stereotypical clichés and reductionist explanations of other faiths and take the challenge for dialogue seriously. Like Kárkkäinen, Yong (2003:2) also labels himself as an "inclusivist," calling the current "exclusivist" theology of Pentecostals too narrow and weak. In his article "Not knowing where the wind blows," Yong (1999:81-112) spells out the need for a scholarly discussion between Pentecostals to present a theology of religion for the movement so that it can meet the challenges of a pluralistic society. Veli-Matti Kárkkäinen also labels himself an "inclusivist" and argues that the Pentecostal Church, which holds on "exclusivism," needs to open itself to the ministry of the Spirit, acknowledging that the Spirit moves in other religions. Tony Richie assures Pentecostals that one can be faithful to the supremacy and deity of Christ, the Person of the Holy Spirit, and the authority of the Bible while engaging in interreligious dialogue. In his article, "Translating Pentecostal testimony into religious dialogue" he discusses how the Holy Spirit can lead a Christian to use their testimony as a starting point for dialogue with people of other faiths.

This is accomplished while still being honest and authentic in their dialogue with other faiths. These thoughts are developed further in his articles, 'Eschatological inclusivism and approaching the problem of religious truth in a pluralistic world.'¹²

While Obadare (2006) discussion the encounter of Pentecostalism and Islam in

2.7 Towards a theology of religions

Ekurhuleni is a pluralistic society that has transitioned from isolation between religions to a place where these diverse religions have become the very fabric that makes up the tapestry of this community. As Sunni Muslims and Pentecostal Christians¹³ rub shoulders each day, Pentecostals must develop a theology of religions to promote

¹² Journal of Ecumenical Studies, 43:3. Summer 2008.

¹³ Miller (2006:427)

peace and harmony while not compromising on fundamental Biblical truths (Baatsen 2017:33; Byers 2017:1-3; Pinnock 1995:98). Not only are most Pentecostals in South Africa "dualist" in their approach to theology, but they align themselves with "exclusivist" when challenged to take a stance. While Amos Yong, Tony Richie, and Veli-Matti Kárkkäinen are challenging the norm in American Pentecostal circles, it is time for Pentecostal Scholars who belong to the mainline Pentecostal churches in South Africa also to take up the challenge. It is essential to remember, as Heilbron (2012:18) points out, that the approach adopted by the Pentecostal church will influence their approach to people of other faiths. We are reminded by Kritzinger (1991:217-231) that any model which is chosen that shows marginalization or hostility to others cannot be called 'Christian.'

Therefore, it is imperative that before we write up a theology of religions, we read, reflect, and challenge current theologies already being discussed by Evangelicals, Protestants, Catholics, and those within the Ecumenical movement. Pentecostals in South Africa have not yet developed a formal or academic thesis on a theology of religions. The researcher investigated and saw a research gap that needed to be filled by Pentecostal. This gap contributed significantly to the development of this thesis.

The three models introduced by Alan Race that will be evaluated and discussed are Exclusivism¹⁴, Inclusivism, and Pluralism. From the Exclusivist camp, the articles, and books by Roland Nash, Hendrik Kraemer, and Lesslie Newbigin will be evaluated and compared to the current thoughts of John Hick and Clark Pinnock, who represent the Pluralist and the Inclusivist view respectively.

Pinnock's and Gavin D'Costa's theology of Inclusivism and Karl Rahner's¹⁵ "anonymous Christian" view might entice the South African Pentecostal church since its American counterparts lean towards this direction. On the other hand, the Pluralist theology of John Hick and his introduction of a "Copernican revolution" in the theology of religions might not sit well with the Pentecostal heritage and its fervency for missions (Marbaniang 2007:1-3). It would be interesting for Pentecostals, however, to trace the journey of Hick from being a fundamentalist to becoming a Pluralist (Gundry 1995:29-30). For a South African Pentecostal theology of religions to be authentic and relevant to the South African context, there must be much dialogue between overseas Pentecostals tackling the issues and between both inclusivist and pluralist theologians.

¹⁴ Daniel Strange, "Indeed their rock is not like our Rock" (2008)

¹⁵ Karl Rahner, "Christianity and the none Christian religions (1966:121-131).

Therefore, International Pentecostal academics/scholars like Amos Yong, Tony Richie, and Veli-Matti Kárkkäinen must meet in dialogue with Ernest Troeltsch, Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, Paul Tillich, Raymond Panikkar, Stanley Samartha, and John Hick, but this time around the South African table.

Chapter 3

ANALYSING THE IMPACT AND INFLUENCE OF AHMED DEEDAT ON MUSLIM CHRISTIAN RELATIONS.

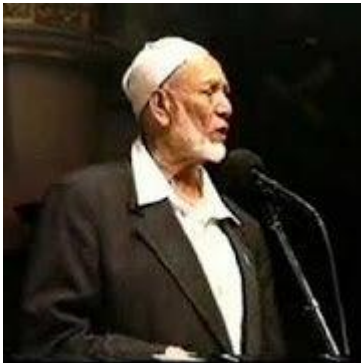


Figure 6: Ahmed Deedat

3.1 Introduction

Ideologies are developed by social structures, but they are taught and propagated by people. The most popular person in the Muslim community in South Africa that shaped the Muslim Theology of Religions in Ekurhuleni, was Ahmed Deedat. His public debates with both national and international Christian leaders, led him to becoming a popular voice on apologetics in our country. His views were published, and books were distributed freely in the tens of thousands across the country.

In this chapter, the researcher will first investigate the context in which Deedat began to rise in popularity. His personal, religious, and political context will be explored. Secondly, it will be considered whether his approach to other religions changed after the dismantling of the Apartheid regime in 1994. The researcher will also examine his style of debating and polemics, to see whether it contributed to authentic dialogue or not, both nationally and internationally. His approach to the Biblical analysis of Christology will also be examined since the content of this topic makes up much of his publications and debates. Finally, Deedat's theology of religions will be examined, investigating both his attitude and his approach to other religions, and specifically to Christianity.

3.2 The Personal Context

Ahmed Deedat was an international speaker, the first South African recipient of the prestigious 1986 King Faisal International Prize for Service to Islam. He debated the most influential Christian leaders around the globe, including leaders like Jimmy Swaggart and Josh McDowell. He became the revivalist of Islamic polemics and

resurrected the lost art of debating. His books were translated in over ten languages and could be found on every continent. His funeral was attended by dignitaries' from both the Arab world and his own country. He was known as a "man with a mission," and followed his calling to Muslim apologetics with much fervour and zeal. Yet he started with humble beginnings and was almost forced, by default, into becoming a stalwart in the Muslim community around the world.

Ahmad Hussain Deedat was born in India in the Surat district in 1918. By this time, his father had already left India to start a small tailoring business in Durban, South Africa. Deedat joined his father in Durban in 1927 and was enrolled the following year at the Anjuman Primary school in central Durban. He was diligent in his studies, though it was a struggle to learn English. Because of financial constraints, he had to leave school in standard six and help with the family business. In 1936, Deedat began to work at a Muslim-owned furniture store. As fate would have it, this was the beginning of Deedat's life-long mission. It all started here!

The shop that was situated on the Natal south coast was located near Adam's Mission, a Christian Bible school that trained Pastors and missionaries. Since the store was close to the Bible school and run by Muslims, it became the ideal training spot for the zealous Bible students. They utilized their spare time at the shop, practicing their apologetic skills on the shop attendants. Deedat was one of those attendants who did not appreciate their approach, their methods, or motives. According to Deedat, these students took pleasure in harassing him with questions that he could not answer.

Deedat himself explains,

"These missionaries would come and question us if we knew how many wives our Prophet (PBUH) had. I did not know a thing about that. We were like sitting ducks and targets for these missionaries, who were well trained while we, even being Muslim, did not know much about our religion. It was harassment, constant harassment for us, and pleasure for those missionaries."

This will become one of the reasons Deedat will study the Bible and the Quran and get engaged in polemics and debating.

While cleaning the store he worked in, Deedat found a book titled *Izhaar-ul-Haqq*. The book consisted of a debate between a Muslim Imam and a Christian Priest. Relating this, Ebi Lockhat writes:

"This book recorded the techniques and enormous success of the efforts of Muslims in India, in turning the tables against Christian missionary harassment

during the British subjugation and rule of India. In particular the idea of holding debates had a profound effect on Ahmed Deedat.”¹⁶

This book was so inspiring that it became the primary force that launched Deedat into his calling for public debate. Due to this book, Deedat was introduced to the techniques of debating, and learnt how to “turn the tables on Christian missionaries.”

Deedat purchased his first Bible, read it completely and then embarked on a comparison between the Bible and the Quran. Soon he was able to counter the argument of the Adams Mission Bible School students. The tables had truly been turned. This time Deedat used the students as his training ground and practiced his art of apologetics on them. The “hunted became the Hunter”, this was seen when the Bible students called on their lecturer to debate with Deedat. It was during these small private encounters that Deedat became more proficient in the art of debating and bolder in his approach to Christians. These private encounters would one day lead Deedat to the public platform. Goolam Vahed (2013) published his article on Deedat, calling him “Man with a Mission”. This was the beginning of this relentless mission of Deedat, that would change the landscape of Muslim Christian relations in South Africa. In a tribute to Deedat by “Islam 4 the world,” the website posts, “Although some Christians and Muslims criticize him for his blunt style, some people did convert to Islam because of his books and lectures”. Both Christian and Muslim Scholars have debated Deedat’s style of polemics. Some Christians have accused him of being too aggressive and blunt. Certain Muslim organizations have distanced themselves from his approach because it had a negative impact on Muslim Christian relations. Chapman (2007:236-247), in his historical analysis on the history of Christian Muslim polemics and debating, compares Deedat’s style to that of Ibn Hazam (994-1064). He argues that both of them violently and systematically attempts to discredit Christianity by propagating the message that the Bible is corrupt (2007:240). In concluding his analysis on Ibn Hazam, he writes, “Ibn Hazam does not try to enter into dialogue with Christians. He simply tries to crush and destroy his opponents’ (2007:241). He levels the same accusation at Deedat.

It is easy to read about the comments made, concerning Deedat’s aggressive approach and make him out to be the villain. However, each man is the product of his

¹⁶ Written as a tribute to Deedat from the preface of Deedat’s book, “The Choice: Islam and Christianity” (April 1993).

society and his experiences. It is therefore imperative to interpret his style of polemics within the framework of his personal experiences – his personal encounters with early missionaries. Deedat's love for his religion and his folk, led him to a place of anger when he saw them being harassed by Christian missionaries. He therefore saw himself as a defender of the Muslim faith. It is no wonder that the titles to his books are provocative, for instance his book, "Combat Kid: Against Bible thumpers who harass Muslims in their own homes".

His field of study was focuses on four main ideas.

1. A comparison between the Bible and the Quran. This was used in order to highlight the so called "errors found in the Bible" and show the inerrancy and superiority of the Quran. Books that he published concerning this subject includes:
 - "Is all of the Bible God's Word?" (2000: IPCI, Durban).
 - "Al-Quran: The miracle of miracles" (1991: IPCI, Durban).
2. The denial of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This was one of his favourite subjects and several books were written to this effect.
 - "Who moved the stone?" (1977: IPCI, Durban).
 - "Resurrection or Resuscitation?" (1978: IPCI, Durban).
 - "Christ in Islam" (1983: IPCI, Durban).
3. The denial of the doctrine of the Trinity. He always argued in both books and debate that the doctrine of the Trinity was a fabrication of the early church council, and that it was never a teaching found in the Bible.
 - "What is His name?" (1981: IPCI, Durban).
4. Mohammad is mentioned in the Bible. Using scriptures in both the Old and New Testament, Deedat argues that the birth and ministry of Mohammad was prophesied in the Bible.
 - "Christ in Islam" (1983: IPCI, Durban).
 - "Muhammad: Natural successor of Christ" (1990: IPCI, Durban).

Deedat had also developed his own methodology for both defending the faith and propagating the faith of Islam. In paying tribute to Deedat, The Young Muslim Digest¹⁷ gives an outline of his methodology of training and propagation. Despite many thinking

¹⁷ <https://www.youngmuslimdigest.com/profile/09/2005ahmed-deedat> (Accessed on 30/03/2020)

that Deedat started his public speaking by debating, he started it by giving lectures. He first gave lectures on Islam and the Quran to Muslim audiences around Natal and the Cape. Later, he gave lectures on Christianity and Islam, explaining to his Muslim audiences that the Bible was corrupt, that Jesus did not die, and neither was He resurrected. This was the beginning of his training in speaking in front of crowds.

Later he invited Christians to his lectures and gave them a chance to ask questions. As he developed the art of answering theological questions, he took the next step of organizing public debates. Both his public lectures and his debates were always advertised elaborately using large billboards, electronic media, and largescale pamphlet distributions.

Deedat also saw the need to equip the next generation of apologist. He targeted the younger generation, who were eager to follow in the steps of such a seasoned orator and debater.

“Thus, to his credit also went the establishment of ‘Al-Salam’ in Braemer, where he trained thousands of young, dynamic preachers who were enabled in effectively defending the false propaganda of Christian missionaries against Islam in the light of the Quran. This young band of Muslim preachers could thus invalidate the illogical arguments of Christianity as a religion altogether. Deedat went on to erect a building complex for Al-Salam which also house a Mosque”.

Deedat was ahead of his time in many ways. His use of the media and his methods of advertising was far more effective and far reaching than that of his Christian counterparts. His training of a young constituency of Muslims to dissect the Bible and study its contents, were methods not thought about by the Christian Bible schools in South Africa. The Pentecost Bible schools relegated the study of Islam to a 4-5-week course, that covered the very basics of Islamic beliefs. The Quran was never consulted, nor was there a copy of the Quran in the Bible School libraries. Deedat, however, made the Bible a textbook for his students at Al-Salam. He explains, “I make my students open the inside front cover of the Bible in their hand and make them glue

their copy of “Combat Kit” for permanency into the Bible.”¹⁸ This was a time when Pentecostals saw the Quran as “demonic” and not to be physically touched by Christians, nor should it be brought into their homes. While Christians distanced themselves from the reading of the Quran, Deedat and his students were studying the Bible and getting themselves prepared ‘for war’.

Within the Muslim community, Deedat was hailed as a champion in apologetics, since his knowledge of the Bible was so vast. In a tribute to him made by the IPCI¹⁹ it was written:

“Sheikh Deedat was more a scholar of the Bible than the Quran and was more familiar with and adroit with its teachings. He had an insight and perspective of the Bible which made many Christians he came into contact with rethink and re-examine their faith, particularly those aspects of the Bible and the Quran that deal with the divine mission and life of Prophet Jesus”.

Today, as the influence of Islam increases in South Africa, some Pentecostals are talking about using the Quran as a ‘point of contact’ when doing Muslim evangelism. Deedat did this many years ago, using the Bible, not as a contact point for da’wa (evangelism), but as debating points in apologetics.

Deedat also spread his teaching and methodologies through literature, a method that is still effectively used by the IPCI.

“Over the years Deedat published over twenty of his own books and distributed millions of copies of pamphlets and literature throughout the world. Many of his publications have been translated into Russian, Urdu, Arabic, Bengali, French, Amharic, Chinese, Japanese, Malay, Indonesian, Zulu, Afrikaans and Dutch.”²⁰

Deedat’s “formal schooling did not destroy his creative prowess, his tenacity, ambition, drive and sheer daring to swim upstream.” This statement describes the personal dedication of Deedat to his mission. However, his actions, literature and

¹⁸ Deedat, A. (2003 ed) People of the book. IPCI: Durban.

¹⁹ <https://www.ipci.co.za/about-us/ahmad-deedat> (Accessed on 30/03/2020)

²⁰ <https://www.youngmuslimdigest.com/profile/09/2005ahmed-deedat> (Accessed on 30/03/2020)

methodologies must also be studied in the light of the religious and political context in which he found himself.

3.3 The Religious Context

There is always a context in which a person is brought up into, which would shape both his worldview and the way he engages with problems that he encounters. Deedat's involvement in apologetics was shaped by the religious environment in which he found himself. While he started his campaign in the late 1950's and established the Islamic Propagation Centre in Durban in 1957, his worldview had already started to develop while he was an ordinary retail assistant in the mid 1930's.

However, the environment of hostility towards Islam had been brewing since early 1900. This modern attack was started by the world renowned 'missionary to Muslims' Samuel Zwemer, whose writings and views concerning Islam was highly respected. In his article "The Moslem menace in South Africa," he outlines the threats of Islam in South Africa and calls for vigorous missionary work to curb the growth of Islam. His next article, "A survey of Islam in South Africa" became a critical analysis of the linguistic, cultural, social, and religious dimensions of Islam.

In the same vein, the Anglican Church and the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (hereafter known as the NGK Church) also began their systemic attack on Islam via booklets, pamphlets and other publications in journals and periodicals. One of the first publications came from a parishioner in the Anglican Church titled, "An outpost of Islam" (1927). The article outlines the growth of the Muslim community and saw its advance as a threat to the Church. This article followed by Anglican Canon R.H Brit challenged the church to 'aggressively' evangelize Muslims and advance the Gospel. From the NGK, Ds. A.J. Liebenberg published the following three articles between 1925 -1927, which complimented both the works of Zwemer and Balaxall. They were respectively, "Mohammedanisme in Zuid-Afrika"²¹, "Die Slams"²² and "Mohammedane en Mohammedanisme"²³.

²¹ English translation from Afrikaans, 'Muhamedism in South Africa'. The term 'Muhamedism' was the incorrect labelling of Islam, by those who thought that Islam was a religion about Muhamad.

²² 'Die Slams' translated 'The Muslims' was a derogatory term used by White South Africans to describe 'Muslims'.

²³ English translations, 'Muhammad and Muhamedism'.

“In gesprek met Islam oor Moslem Belydenis”²⁴ was an NGK Publication (1974) compiled by J.A.Naude, Adrianus van Selms and W.D.Jonker. Its purpose was to compare God to Allah and evaluate the Christ of the Bible with the Jesus of the Quran. While the publication was not aggressively polemical, it did outline the inferiority of the Islamic confessions of faith.

In 1986, two articles by the NGK openly described Islam as a “false religion”. “Die Islam as uitdaging in kerklike end staatkundige perspektief”²⁵ and “Die Islam as uitdaging in kerklike end staatkundige perspektief”²⁶. However, this came as no surprise, since the 1986 NGK General Synod officially declared Islam as a false religion, and Muslims as the target for aggressive evangelism.

3.4 The Political Context

The political climate around the 70’s and 80’s was tense. The Apartheid government did everything in their power to keep the “black”²⁷ communities under subjugation. The black communities, however, were even more determined to break the yoke of white supremacy and apartheid oppression. With the advent of Liberation theology and Black theology, the church began to become a stronger voice against the Apartheid regime.

In the midst of all this darkness, there was light that began to shine. A new unity was being forged in this fire. It was unity between Christians and Muslims, greatly solidified when Imam Abdullah Haron was arrested in May 1969 and was subsequently killed by the Apartheid police’s Security Branch on September 27th, 1969. Friend and fellow freedom fighter, Reverend Bernard Wrankmore embarked on a public protest by means of a fast that lasted 40 days. Within this time, he requested that Prime Minister B.J Voster to officially re-open the case that had been sinisterly and permanently closed for “unknown reasons of death”. This “event of the decade” brought a strong bond of unity between Muslims and Christians.

²⁴ “In dialogue with Islam about Muslim confessions”

²⁵ “Islam as a challenge to the church and state” (Skrif en Kerk 7 (2) 158-172, 1986. This article is of interest since it openly describes Islam as a “false religion”.

²⁶ ‘Islam as a challenge to the Church from a political perspective’

²⁷ The Apartheid Government classified Africans, Indians, and Coloureds under the term “Black”.

Christian leader and theologian, Rev Lubbe, called this event a “beacon of hope” in the journey towards religious dialogue. This event cannot be underestimated since it showed public unity between Islam and Christianity. Its influence will be seen as both Christians and Muslims would rally together in public marches led by Imams and Priests holding hands defiantly against riot police.

Within this context, this research is interested in the attitude of Mr Ahmed Deedat towards interreligious dialogue. The questions that will be investigated is whether he contributed to unity and dialogue, or whether his speeches and literature created animosity between these two communities of faith?

It was in March 1961, that some Muslim clerics produced the “Call to Islam” pamphlet, in which the signatories condemned the Apartheid policies. This document was welcomed by churches that fought against the regime. This was the year that Deedat published his provocative booklet, “The Cruci-fixion or Cruci-fiction”. In subsequent years, while the unity between Muslims and Christians were begin consolidated in the political arena and specifically on the streets of the country, Deedat continued to publish more provocative literature:

- 1977, Who moved the stone?
- 1978, Resurrection or Resuscitation?
The combat kit: Against Bible thumpers.
The People of the Book
- 1981, What is in a name?
- 1983, The God who never was.
- 1990, Muhammad: Natural successor of Christ
- 1989, Is the Bible God’s Word?

The title of Vahed Goolam’s bibliography of Deedat, “The man and his mission” is appropriately labelled as such. Deedat had his own personal mission. He would not fall in line with the countries need for unity and its fight against apartheid. Esack (1997:18) makes mention that there “is no record of Deedat or his organization ever having pronounced a word against apartheid other than within the context of Muslim – Christian polemics”. Deedat had his “personal mission”, to demolish the authenticity of the Christian faith and “strike it at the core of its belief”. Was Deedat aware of the

political climate? Haron gives a logical response, “Deedat seems to have been oblivious of or rather overlooked the cordial relationships that existed in these areas” (Haron 2006:437).

Deedat always saw Islam as being “under attack from Christians” and hence perceived the Christians as enemies. To the common Muslims that attended his debates and lectures, Deedat’s uncompromising stance and ‘magic’ with words, evoked in many of them the urgency to join the fight against Christianity and apartheid which as seen as the “terrible twins.”

However, despite the negative influence of Ahmed Deedat and the emotional uprising of many common Muslims that were sympathetic towards his cause, there was still hope in the broader political spectrum for unity. Rashied Omar²⁸ explains this as he points out the “important role that Muslims assumed in the anti-apartheid movement which led to the development of a unique interfaith dialogue and camaraderie between anti-apartheid Muslims, liberation theologians and other Christian denominations and ecumenical institutions”.

In June 1984, key Muslim activists joined the United Democratic Front (UDF), and in turn, the UDF supported the “Call of Islam” document that called for the abolishment of Apartheid. In the same year, South Africa saw the launching of the South African chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP). The period between 1984 and 1994 saw more cooperation between Muslims and Christians; however, it would be incorrect to say that the influence of Deedat did not put a strain on that relationship. These two communities were pulled in opposite directions. Interreligious organizations were calling for unity, while Deedat and his organization continued to widen the gap between Muslims and Christian.

It was for such reason that other Muslim organizations like “the Muslim Judicial Council would consistently distance itself from Deedat” (Vahed 2009:22). It was Muslim leaders like Shaykh Muhammed who were seeking interreligious commitment that was outspoken enough to tell ‘*The Argus*’ newspaper that the “Muslim Judicial Council

²⁸ Omar, AR. From resistance to reconstruction: Challenges facing Muslim-Christian relations in Post-Apartheid South Africa (pg 281).

disagrees with Deedat's use of the Bible, to prove that Islam was correct" (Vahed 2009:22). He went as far as calling on Muslims to boycott the lectures and debates of Deedat, labelling it as un-Islamic. Deedat, however, continued with much zealousness, because he had Muslims on the other side of the divide that vindicated him. Shaykh Abdulkarrim Toffar of the Institution of Islamic Studies was one of them that reject the criticism of the MJC. He defended Deedat's style of polemics stating, "Mr. Deedat is undoubtedly an authority on the Bible, and we can virtually state without contradiction that he is the only Muslim in the world that can speak authoritatively on the Bible" (Vahed 2009:22). The claim to Deedat being an authority on the Bible will be analysed later in the chapter.

3.5 Post-Apartheid: New era, old methods

The fall of the Apartheid regime saw the first democratic elections being introduced to South Africa. It was a victory to all the freedom fighters. Both Christian and Muslim activists celebrated together in the historic event, which would usher in a new dispensation of equality. Under the leadership of our newly elected President, Nelson Mandela, inter-religious relations flourished. President Mandela initiated the National Forum of Religious Leaders (NFRL) with the WCRP(SA) serving as its secretariat. Muslim and Christian leaders who were part of the freedom fighters sat once again side-by-side, ushering in this new dispensation. The new Constitution made place for Religious Freedom and paved the way towards a new dialogue for a New South Africa. No longer would one religion dominate public policies. Each religious community would have the privilege to be a part of the formulation of public policies and charter the way forward towards a more formalized inter religious community. President Mandela promoted all this as he continually called on religious leaders to lead the moral reconstruction of this emerging democratic nation.

In 2003 under the leadership of President Thabo Mbeki, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) established the Independent Forum for Religious Broadcasting Panel (RBP). Here again Muslims and Christians sat side-by-side drawing out a balanced policy that would favour all religious groups equally. The newly elected Minister of Education, Minister Kader Asmal in September 2003, favoured this move towards interreligious co-operation. He introduced a new

policy “recognizing religious diversity while protecting students from discrimination and coercion” (Omar 2006:285).

However, the “man on a mission”, Ahmed Deedat, was relentless in his pursuit of Islamic Da’wa. He continued with his lectures, debates and writing of literature. Just between July 1993 and May 1994, he compiled his first hardcover 242-page book titled “The Choice: Islam and Christianity”. A compilation of all of his previous writings put into one book. 220 000 copies were printed within the July 1993 and May 1994 period. Deedat would continue his public lectures and debates up until May 1996 when he had a stroke and was bed-ridden. However, up until his last public appearance in May 1996 in Australia, his lectures and debates were deemed “provocative and highly controversial” (Vehad 2013:14-15).

While some saw post 1994 as an opportunity for greater unity between Christians and Muslims, Deedat saw this as an opportunity to raise up more boldly in his lectures and his debate. His booklets were reaching record highs both in South Africa and abroad. The old methods would not stop, even in the face of a new democratic South Africa. After his death in August 2005, his legacy continued to live on in aggressive apologists, like the South Africa Attorney Mohammed Coovadia and the International apologist Shabir Ally, who authored the book, “Is Jesus God? The Bible says no!”. “Many Muslims all over the world continue to use Deedat’s material and copy his style.” (Chapman. 2007:246).

In his biography on Deedat, Shafa’at Ahmed Khan writes,

“between the efforts of the jamaat and the comparative perspectives of Deedat we realized how lacking we were, as an ummah, and how much we still had to learn. Deedat had instilled in us the desire that we owed it to the *deen*²⁹ to defend it and to spread it. “Ahmed Deedat had revved us up and we were keen to spread the *deen* to whoever crossed our path”.

3.6 Deedat’s style of debating and polemics.

Deedat did rise to a place of prominence and caught the attention of the international audience. It was not because he was a defender of the Muslim faith in a Christian

²⁹ The ‘deen’ refers to the message of the Muslim community, sometimes also referred to as the ‘ummah’.

majority country, though this was a contributing factor. What caught the attention of the public was Deedat's style of polemics, and the way in which he debated.

Deedat was extremely comfortable on the public stage, a man with the "gift of the gab," and one that did not shy away from a public challenge. A biographer and protégé of Deedat argues, "Deedat said that we should arm ourselves to the teeth and strike fear into the hearts of the enemies. To Deedat, Christians were always seen as enemies, and he refers to the latter many times. Such reference was also made in his book 'Is the Bible God's word?' He states, "The Bible should be kept under lock and key, but we need this weapon to meet the Christian challenge. The prophet of Islam said, 'War is strategy' and strategy demands that we use the weapons of our enemies"³⁰

However, it was via the medium of his debating system that the Sheikh, a humble, hardworking, unknown immigrant from India, etching out a living in South Africa, "became world renowned and a hero of the Arab world as well as the International Muslim Ummah" (pg.101).

Chapman (2007:236-247) in his historical analysis of Christian Muslim polemics and debating traces a line of apologist from the Najran Christians who met with Mohammed (632ce) to modern apologist Jay Smith. In this line of apologist and style of debating, Chapman places Ahmad Deedat next to Ibn Hazm (994-1064). He describes Ibn Hazm as one who represents "probably the most violent and systematic attempt to discredit Christianity in the whole history of Christian-Muslim confrontation". He adds that Ibn Hazm has also been recognized as the 'undisputed master in the field of anti-Christian polemics' (2007:240). Ibn Hazm propagated the message that 'the Bible was corrupt' and the 'Trinity was an invention of Christianity' and that the Gospels were "fabricated by human authors."

In his comparison of Ibn Hazm and Ahmad Deedat, Chapman makes it clear that "Deedat's approach had much in common with Ibn Hazm. His style tended to be aggressive and polemical, and he frequently mocked Christian beliefs to make them look ridiculous."

³⁰ Deedat, A. (2013ed) Is the Bible God's word? IPCI: Durban.

In the preface to Deedat's book, *The Choice*, Ebi Lockhat describes the impacts the book *Izharul-Haq* had on Deedat. He writes, "This book recorded the techniques and enormous success of the efforts of Muslims in India in turning the tables against Christian missionary harassment during the British subjugation and rule of India. In particular the holding of debates had a profound effect on Ahmad Deedat."

The "mother of all debates" that took Deedat from the national to the international stage was his March 1986 debate with Pentecostal Evangelist Jimmy Swaggart. It is noteworthy that the debate features on YouTube (March 2020) has 347 000 views! Describing the unprecedented impact of this debate in Deedat's life, Khan writes, "It was the internationally acclaimed debate between Sheikh³¹ and the popular American evangelist Jimmy Swaggart, that initiated an unprecedented awareness of Islam." So effective was the debate that Khan emphasises,

"through the medium of this debate, Sheikh gave Swaggart and the Christian audience more to think about than they ever had since their Sunday School classes. So successful was the debate with Swaggart that Saudi Princes, Sheikhs, Diplomats and Scholars alike, stood in line and waited in queues to shake Deedat's hand."

In the same year (1986), the King Faisal Foundation awarded the King Faisal International Prize for Service to Islam to Ahmad Deedat. This was the first time that this award was given to a South African. Deedat was not influenced by the Middle East, on the contrary he influenced the passive Arabs and challenged them to become more vocal in their fight against Christian evangelism.



Figure 7: King Faisal International Prize for Service to Islam

³¹ 'Sheikh' is the Arabic word for 'teacher' it was a term that was used many times to address Deedat.

This particular debate endorsed Ahmad Deedat's style of polemics. A style of aggression and open antagonism towards "the enemy". Backed by Saudi Princes, Deedat returned to South Africa endorsing his method and style of da'wah.

After this debate, "the red carpet was rolled out for him when he flew in on private Royal Saudi jets. He had *swept one opponent under the carpet after the other*, He regenerated a long-lost sense of motivation in certain fraternities among the Arabs for the deen, nurtured on their own soil. They backed Deedat on a mammoth scale, to the extent that his debates held international appeal and he assumed global recognition." Far from dialogue, Deedat's method of debating was "war-like". He met his 'opponents,' (as he calls them) with much aggression, viewing each debate as a battle that must be won at all cost.

The 'Deedat Chronicles' was a local radio show that featured Deedat as he explained his reasons and methods of debating. Khan gives a preview of the type of advertising used for this talk show,

"Ahmad Deedat calls on the Ummah to 'arm' themselves. But he is not talking about arming the Ummah with AK47's or tanks, he's talking about arming the Ummah with knowledge."

Concerning the matter of debating, Khan concludes by stating that Deedat "made an indelible mark to the world of Comparative Religion by his debate system." The mould had been set in concrete; this was the style of debating that would be emulated by his followers. In describing Deedat's methods of debating, Parshall (2002:77) writes,

"Deedat has debated biblical theology with a number of Christian leaders. He tried, unsuccessfully, thus far, to persuade the Pope to debate him. Though Deedat is not academically credible, he is an orator par excellence. Where he lacks content, he utilizes emotion and ridicule."

Brother Mark, in his book, *A perfect Quran?* also accuses Deedat of being insensitive in describing the authenticity of the Gospels. He records, Deedat mockingly asserting that the gospel stories all "have a 'Once Upon a Time' introduction". Haron (2006:434) compares Deedat's approach with another contemporary of his, Mr. Vanker. While one engages the Christians on an intellectual level, Haron disagrees with Deedat's approach. In his comparison of the two, he deduces, "Vanker's approach differed

markedly from that of Deedat. The former adopted a more argumentative and intellectual approach, steering clear from a debating and 'mudslinging' style that came to characterize the latter's approach." Supporters of Deedat, however, argued that this confrontational approach had to be adopted in order to stop the 'menacing Christian missionaries.' His supporters hailed him as a hero, and his methods of debating as relevant and dynamic. Shafa'at Khan is one of those that applauded Deedat's style. In his biography of Deedat, he writes, "No one has fine-tuned the art of debate as effectively as the legendary Sheikh and no one has streamlined the process of debate as effectively as the 'Master of Debates' himself. The content of his international debates remains evergreen and as current today as it was in its original time and place. He became the millennium 'stamp of approval' for the ongoing works and projects in the field of propagation".

Others accuse him of blatantly using the race card whenever the crowd was made up of a mixed audience (especially here in South Africa). One such person who made such an accusation is Peter Hammond (2005:216-217) who debated Deedat. He makes this accusation in his book, *Slavery, Terrorism, and Islam*,

"Several years when I debated Ahmad Deedat, he tried to change the subject to get out of a sticky corner he had painted himself into. "Kafir!" Deedat shouted, 'that is what the White Christians called the Black people when they came here to South Africa, 'Kafirs'³². For some time Deedat continued to try to shout this refrain and change the subject, injecting some kind of racial animosity in the mixed group which was listening to this debate. So, I asked him the question: 'but isn't 'Kafir' and Arabic word? From the Quran? Isn't 'Kafir' the Arabic word for infidel? Wasn't it the Muslim slave traders who gave the people of Africa the term, 'Kafir'? Ahmed Deedat promptly changed the subject and never answered the question."

Deedat's public debates did stir annoyance among Christians, but it also became a concern among both Muslim Scholars and Muslim leaders that were involved in the liberation struggle. The Christian, Muslim and Hindu communities lived in relative peace for many decades, celebrating their diversities. However, in just one publication

³² A derogatory term used during the apartheid era by the White people to insult the African people of the country.

(out of 20) for instance, Deedat calls Christians, hot-gospellers (pg4, 27), Bible-thumpers (pg4, 27, 43), gullible (14), enemies (65), propagandist (pg. 27), jugglers (pg. 30), incorrigible cult (pg. 34), plagiarists (pg. 40), and Zombies (pg. 65). In the same publication, he makes a blanket, unsubstantiated accusation against Christianity for all the woes in the world: “there’s a recent fugus growth in Christianity, in which ex-Christians worship the Devil. Christianity has been most prolific of spawning ‘isms’, Atheism, Communism, Fascism, Totalitarianism, Nazism, Mormonism, Moonism, Christian Scientism and now Satanism. What else will Christianity give birth to next?” (Deedat 2013:15).

Vahed (2000:91) states that Deedat’s approach to Muslim da’wah through the form of public debates caused a rift not just between Christians and Muslims, but also between Hindus and Muslims. He contends that, “this period was also witness to cracks in the relationship between Hindus and Muslims as a result of the activities of Ahmad Deedat and the IPCI.”

3.7 Ahmed Deedat on the International Scene

The “mother of all debates” that took Deedat from the national to the international stage was his 1986 debate with Pentecostal Evangelist Jimmy Swaggart in New York City (USA).

Ahmad Deedat was no longer a national voice fighting against Christian propagation of the gospel; he was now on the world stage. He approached his International adversaries with the same daunting polemics. Deedat became an international whirlwind on the debating platform in terms of both public debates and public lectures. In his debates, he was not targeting any ordinary priest or clerical person but had mustered courage to tackle the most prominent Christian leaders – trying to work himself up to reach and debate the Pope.

To Deedat and his loyal international followers, the debate between him and Jimmy Swaggart was a win for the Muslim world. He saw himself as the victor in this battle, and so did his followers. One giant had been slayed, and Deedat was a “man on a mission” a “David” (Dawood) ready to tackle the next giant.

As the years progressed from this momentous year, 1986, Deedat moved systematically across the globe debating and giving public lectures. The following is a list of International Debates and Public interviews:

- Deedat vs Jimmy Swaggart “Quran or the Bible, which is God’s word” New York, USA.
- Deedat vs Jimmy Swaggart “Is the Bible God’s word” University of Louisiana USA
- Deedat vs Robert Douglas “Is Jesus God” USA
- Deedat vs Anis Sherrosh “Is Jesus God” Israel
- Deedat vs Eric B. Bock “Is Jesus God” Denmark
- Deedat vs Stanley Sjoberg “Is Jesus God” Stockholm
- Deedat vs Stanley Sjoberg “Is the Bible the true word of God” Stockholm.
- Deedat vs Floyed Clark “Was Christ crucified” London.
- Deedat vs Robert Douglas “Crucifixion, fact or fiction?” USA
- Deedat vs Bishop Wakefield “Was Christ really crucified?” Canada

Deedat’s also took his public lectures internationally.

- Al -Quran Miracles of all miracles. Abu Dhabi
- Al -Quran Miracles of all miracles. United Kingdom
- Christ in Islam. Qatar
- Christ in Islam. Sydney
- Combat Kit Course. Nairobi
- Combat Kit Course. Mombasa
- Muhammad the greatest. Abu Dhabi
- Is the Bible God’s word? Denmark
- Islam and Christianity. Pakistan
- The meaning of Easter. Australia

Will Deedat’s international mission mirrors the same attitude as in South Africa? Was Deedat sensitive to the Relationship that existed between Muslims and Christians on the international scene? Will he use the international political climate to the advantage of his message? These questions will be dealt with next.

In a brief description of Deedat's life on the IPCI website³³ it is noted that Deedat's "career in the field of Comparative Religion took him across all five continents. So fearless was his strand in defending the truth that Sheikh Deedat was refused entry into France and Nigeria on the pretext that he would cause a civil unrest."

The books that Deedat wrote in a South African context was shipped unchanged internationally. Many Muslims and Christians in South Africa criticized these books as blunt and arrogant. They did not contribute to dialogue, but rather became ammunition in the hands of Muslims in their retaliation against Christians. The same uneasiness that his books, lectures, and debates caused in South Africa, was conveyed internationally. Although Muslims and Christians lived in relative peace as neighbours in countries like Canada, India and Australia, the books, and debates of Deedat brought about an uneasiness. The demeaning of the Bible and the place of Jesus Christ in the Godhead brought about much antagonism and anger, especially in Christian dominated Countries.

In South Africa Deedat used the opportunity created by the apartheid government to paint Christianity as a "white man's religion" and the Bible as the "Book of the oppressors." He moved the emotions of the mixed crowds in his public debates and lectures in South Africa with this technique. He used the same technique when he took the stage in the Arab nations. This time the enemy was "Zionist Israel". In the opening remarks of his book "Arabs and Israel", he writes:

The title of this book 'Arabs and Israel' was the title of a debate between me and Dr. E.Lottem in 1982. However, before reading on, have a look at the cover of this book – there is nothing contrived about it. The first, a Muslim woman has just retrieved her 'little David' from the clutches of the Israeli soldiers. The second, a Jewish lad, perhaps the grandson of one who escaped the Nazi incinerators in Germany during the Holocaust. His mission in life – with the prophetic words written on his helmet – 'Born to kill'. The only thing missing is the swastika on his armband.

³³ <https://www.ipci.co.za/about-us/ahmad-deedat>. (Accessed on 30/03/2020)

In a later paragraph on the same page he writes, “Our Jewish cousins, they are God’s ‘guineapigs’ for mankind.” However, Deedat quickly changes his view concerning the Jews when debating Josh McDowell, in Durban, in front of a Christian and Jewish crowd. In his opening lines, he accuses the Christians of blaming the Jews for killing Jesus. He then affirms, “I am given the mandate by the holy Quran to defend the Jews against the Christian charge. I am going to defend the Jews this afternoon, not because they are my cousins, but simply because justice must be done. This afternoon, I will try my absolute best to do justice to my cousins, the Jews.”

Just as in South Africa, Deedat knew the political climate of the country. He was an avid reader, and an educated man that understood the times. Yet he continued on his mission, despite the fact that it caused tension between Muslims and Christians. The same was done on the international field. He understood the political climate. He admits to knowing what was happening on the international scene when he comments, “Generally Muslims go into battle with their eyes closed. The numerous United Nations resolutions, the Camp David Accord, and various cease fire agreements are testimonies to their ineptitude” (1989:13). On the local scene, Deedat played Black against White, and on the international scene, he played Arabs against Israel and America.

On the international scene, war was raging in the Middle East between Arabs and Jews. In Nigeria wars raged between Christians and Muslims. Religious leaders around the world sought for interreligious dialogues that would ease the hate and antagonism. In his book, ‘A history of Christian Muslim relations’³⁴ Hugh Goddard describes the efforts made by various interreligious organizations to foster a spirit of dialogue between Christians and Muslims worldwide. As an international speaker dealing with the subjects of Islam and Christianity, it would be assumed that Deedat would be aware of international conferences, symposiums or conventions that dealt with the issues that were so close to his heart. Hugh lists a few of these conferences that took place during the time of Deedat’s ministry. One of the most successful was, “the consultation arranged by the WCC in Broumana; Lebanon in 1972, which brought twenty-five Christians and twenty-two Muslims together from all the regions of the

³⁴ Goddard, H. 2000. A history of Christian Muslim relations. New Amsterdam Books: Chicago.

world” to discuss the need for tolerance and dialogue between these two communities of faith. In 1976, a similar consultation took place in Libya, initiated by the Arab Socialist Union dealing with guidelines in mission and da’wa. In many parts of the world, Muslims initiated dialogue. Africa was no stranger to seeking and participating with the world in looking for solution for interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Christians. In describing Cameroon’s first Christian Muslim Colloquium in 1981, Ndam Njoya (ed. 1985) writes: “the Christian-Islamic Colloquium represents a further link in the chain formed by the many encounters between Christians and Muslims, which have taken place in Africa, Asia and Europe.”

The 1982 Sri Lanka conference, organized by the World Muslim Congress (Mu’tamar al-alam al-islam), in collaboration with the WCC, was one of many of these initiatives. The conference focused on a way to stimulate dialogue between Muslims and Christians. To curb religious instigated violence in Lebanon during the civil war (1975-1991), groups of Muslim and Christian religious leaders had conferences around the country, calling for a radical rethinking of dialogical necessity. It was at a time like this that Moroccan jurist, Muhammad Lyazghi, spoke out at one of the conferences, stating, “Muslims are in a period of transition where they first have to dialogue with each other, but this will lead to a time when people allow Muslims and Christians to be together” (Hugh 2000:182).

Was Deedat aware of all these conferences? The polemic style of his writing, lectures, and debates, sadly does not reflect any changes that would contribute positively to honest dialogue between Muslims and Christians. As Deedat rose up to prominence in the field of debating, he even wrote to the Vatican and called to Pope to a debate. It seemed that Deedat was not aware of the Vatican’s stance on positive dialogical endeavours. It was not that the Pope was scared of a debate – but this was not a platform that he wanted to share. He did, however, share other platforms with Muslims, such as the time he accepted the invitation of King Hassan II of Morocco in 1985. “When King Hassan II of Morocco (1962-1999) invited Pope John Paul II to address 80, 000 young Moroccans in a sports stadium in Casablanca, on the theme of the common fellowship and the shared responsibilities of Christians and Muslims...” (Hugh 2000:183).

It was already established that Deedat was an avid reader. One wonders if he read the numerous international bulletins written and authorized by Muslims governments and institutions that called for Dialogue and tolerance between Muslims and Christians such as the numerous bulletins produced by 'The Royal Institute for interfaith studies' from Jordan, which was set up by Prince Hasan in 1994.

Deedat may have not shown interest in the international affairs (in Muslim Christian dialogue and tolerance), but his message was echoed everywhere, and it succeeded in catching the attention of those that were promoting dialogue. Hugh (2000:191), a promoter of Muslim Christian dialogue, for instance, commented on Deedat's books and videos, stating "the polemical pamphlets and videos of Ahmad Deedat with its eye-catching titles such as 'Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction? Or 'Resurrection or Resuscitation?' are extremely antagonistic towards Christianity." In agreement with Hugh, Kate Zebiri (senior lecturer of Arabic and Islamic studies in London), compared the negative approach of Deedat to the more dialogical approach of Farid Esack: "the extensive popularity and influence of his works are unquestionable ... even though they are undeniably inauspicious for Christian – Muslim relations. On the other hand, we have the writings of Farid Esack, which demonstrates how, in the context of South Africa, Muslims in South Africa were perfectly happy to co-operate with members of other religious communities in the struggle against Apartheid. Esack observed rather tetchily that in Deedat's works, the only reference to Apartheid is in a polemical context, where it is simply asserted that Christianity is the cause of it and Islam is the solution to it. Esack thus seeks to work out an Islamic theology of liberation."

In conclusion, Deedat showed no interest in the political climate in which he did his work. However, he used it to his advantage if it benefited his message and popularity. He also showed no interest in the broader religious climate, either nationally or internationally.

3.8 Deedat's Approach to the Bible

It has been established that Deedat's polemics is aggressive. In much of his literature, he calls Christians the 'enemy', the adversary, Bible-thumpers, and hot-gospellers that

the Muslims should arm themselves against.³⁵ With this approach, his aim had always been to strike the enemy in its heart. At the heart of the Christian faith lies the Inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of the Bible. The deity and the atoning work of Jesus Christ is also at the heart of Christianity. This section will deal with Deedat's view of, and approach to, the Bible. The researcher will look at this from a Pentecostal perspective.

While Deedat used every opportunity, he had to defame the authenticity of the Bible; he dedicated three books to bring the Bible into question. The first booklet is entitled, "Is the Bible God's Word?", the second, "People of the Book", and the third, "Al-Quran: The miracle of miracles".

Let me begin with the booklet, 'Is the Bible God's Word? This topic sparked a 'great debate' between him and a Pentecostal evangelist, Jimmy Swaggart of New York City (USA) in 1986. He debated on this topic over 20 times both nationally and internationally. His arguments have always been centred on this same booklet. It was this book and this topic, that gave Deedat the title of "Greatest Muslim Bible Scholar of the time" (Vahed 2009:22).

In the book, he displays his apparent knowledge of the Bible. It cannot be argued that he did not read the Bible; he had some biblical knowledge. However, this was not sufficient within Pentecostal circles to give him the title of 'Biblical Scholar'.

The inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible is a serious and central part of the Pentecostal doctrine, which establishes both their preaching and their impetus for missionary work. In one of the earliest official Pentecost theology textbooks, 'Foundations for Pentecostal Theology,' the subject of Bibliology is given preference by being the first chapter. In his book, Deedat argues that 'the Bible is not what it is claimed to be by the protagonist of Christianity' (pg. 79). He goes on attacking the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible by stating that, "the Jews and the Christians have been editing their 'Book of God' from its very inception" (pg. 28). In his booklet he also inserts a photocopy from the 'Awake' Jehovah's Witness magazine with the headline,

³⁵ Deedat, A. (1978) People of the book. IPCI: Durban. (pg 7-9)

'50 000 mistake in the Bible'. He uses this pamphlet extensively throughout his book to prove Biblical errancy.

In defence of the inerrancy of scripture, Duffield (1983:15) states that 'the inerrancy of Scripture means that in its original autographs, the Bible contains no mistakes. In the original language it was written, it is absolutely infallible – without error whatsoever.' In agreement with Duffield, Geisler (2002:171) writes, "The Bible is a Book from God, a message with Divine authority. Indeed, the Biblical writers say they were moved by the Holy Spirit to utter His very words. Their message came by revelation so that what they wrote was breathed (inspired) by God Himself."

Deedat argues that Christians think they are in the possession of the Taurat, the Zaboor and the Injeel. The Taurat is commonly known as the Torah: the five books Moses, the Zaboor is all the Psalms of David, and the Injeel is the Gospels in the New Testament. Deedat states categorically, "The Taurat we Muslims believe in is not the Torah of the Jews and the Christians. The Zaboor, the Psalms of David, is not the Psalms of the Bible. The Injeel, the words of Jesus are not the Gospels record in the Bible." He ascertains that what is in the Bible are corrupt versions of the Taurat, Zaboor and Injeel, and they are not the Words of God! Many Christians around the World who dialogue with Muslims use the Taurat, Zaboor and Injeel as points of contact. By Deedat calling these writings false, he closes doors for dialogue with Muslims based on the commonality of scripture. He removes from the Christian the one tool he has to use as a point of contact with Muslims.

Duffield (1983:19-20) explains the 'Inspiration of scripture':

"all scripture is God-breathed' this does not mean that the writers were 'breathed into by God' but that the Word was produced by the creative breath of God. In a word, what is declared by this fundamental passage is simply that the scriptures are a Divine product."

In his arguments against the Inspiration and Inerrancy of the Bible, Deedat lays down the following arguments:

1. The ascension of Jesus should be central to the Christian faith; therefore, its appearance should be document in all four Gospel. However, it is only recorded in two Gospels, Mark 16:19 and Luke 24:51. However, the least important event

he calls “The Donkey Circus” (pg. 27), Jesus’ riding into Jerusalem on a donkey is recorded in all four Gospels (Matt. 21:7, Mark 11:7, Luke 19:35, John 12:14). How can God inspire such an unbalance book?

2. The five so called books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) cannot be inspired by God, nor was it written by Moses. His argument is found in Deut. 34:5-10, “so Moses died, and he was buried ...” he argues, “how could Moses contribute to his own obituary?”
3. He accuses the Bible writers of ‘wholesale plagiarism’ since there are similar passages, like 2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 27. He mentions, “It is much ado about nothing, and rank blasphemy against God Almighty for authorizing such an embarrassing hotchpotch.” The Bible therefore cannot be the inspired word of God.
4. He then spends the next half of the book maliciously calling the Bible a pornographic book, stating that, “it should be kept under lock and key, it should be banned” (pg. 64). Regarding Genesis 19 and 30, he argues that “reading the Bible stories to children can also open up all sorts of opportunities to discuss the morality of sex. An unexpurgated Bible might get an X rating from some censors” (pg. 64-65). Addressing preachers, he states, “at times these zombies pretend to see the filth for the first time.”

None of his arguments are backed by theological exercises in hermeneutics or exegeses. What one sees is only unfounded accusations and malicious comments. Deedat does not consult the original Greek or Hebrew text to substantiate his arguments.

He mentions that his Muslim audience should study A.S.K Joomal’s book, “The Bible: Word of God or word of man?” (pg. 55). Joomal, a South African Muslim apologist does an extensive 195-page thesis on the errancy of the Bible. While Joomal’s work may be considered ‘academic; he also uses the malicious language of Deedat. He remarks, “Christianity, as we all know, is founded on blind belief, where rational thinking plays no part whatsoever ... this book will not benefit them because, having closed minds, they are beyond all human help” (1976:10-11). Neither Joomal nor Deedat advocates any kind of open dialogue. Joomal was not a debater, but he left no room for dialogue and discussion.

In his next booklet, “The People of the Book”, Deedat continues on his pathway of attacking the Bible. The book opens with the Quranic verse 3:110 (Sura Imraan), “Ye are the best of people, evolved for mankind”. This booklet begins by looking at Muslims as Superior beings, while Christians are inferior. He states, “Allah assures us that among the Jews and the Christians are few who are sincere, but the majority of them are perverted transgressors” (pp 2-3)., He comments on the way that Christians should be approached: “this is a positive approach. Treat them with kindness; however, if they demonstrate their animosity, and pour out their venom against the Holy Prophet, the Holy Quran and Islam, we are entitled to change our approach (pp 6). Deedat also spells out his mission clearly, “the purpose of my tour was to arm my Muslim brothers against the Christian missionaries” he adds, “The enemy is well-trained and armed. He has studied his clients well” (pp 7). The rest of the booklet is divided into two parts: Incest in the Bible and Pornography in the Bible.

The other half of the booklet, entitled “Pornography” describes the same stories found in the previous chapter. He adds as concluding remarks, “This manual will enable you to convert the Christian scud into a ‘Patriot Missile’. Memorize the definition of ‘Incest’- “incest is sexual intercourse between two persons who are too closely related” ... ‘ask the missionary, when approached, the definition of ‘incest’. Then ask them to take their own Bible and make them read the verses.”

Like the previous booklets his publication, “The People of the Book”, also does not engage with hermeneutics or exegesis. It is no wonder that every hermeneutical principle has been broken by Deedat in his interpretation of scripture, which is hardly the trait of a ‘Bible Scholar’. According to the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,³⁶

“the interpretation of the Bible is an explanation of what is not immediately plain in the Bible. Because of the multifaceted character of the Bible, its interpretation takes a variety of forms. The Biblical documents are ancient, reflecting different historical and cultural settings. A basic requirement for understanding of these documents is their grammatico-historical interpretation

³⁶ Elwell, A.W ed. (2001) Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. Baker Academic: Michigan

or exegesis – bring out of the text the meaning the writers intended to convey to their readers.”

Deedat does not take into consideration the historical and cultural setting of each of the stories he conveys or the scriptures, that he uses to corroborate his argument. The cultural, historical, and language gaps are bypassed by Deedat. He takes scripture and directly applies it to a given situation, without considering its context. While exegesis means “taking out” the meaning from text, eisegesis means the opposite, “putting’ your own prejudice and bias into the text. Deedat employs ‘eisegesis’ while thinking that he is engaging with the text in an exegesis exercise.

His third booklet, called Al-Quran: ‘The Miracle of Miracles,’ deals with the Bible to some extent. This is not an academic comparison, because Deedat promotes the miraculous origins of the Quran, while he still maintains that the Bible is falsified and cannot be trusted as the Word of God. Written a few years before his booklet, Duffield (1987:19) writes the following, concerning the miraculous nature of the Bible:

“The Bible was written by more than forty (40) different men, who lived over a span of more than 1500 years; and many of them never saw or conversed with each other, yet their writings in no way disagree. Only a Miracle, and that a long-extended Miracle, could bring this to pass. How could such a thing be possible? Through the mystery and Miracle of Divine Inspiration.”

Years later Deedat would title his book on the Quran as ‘Miracle of Miracles’ and make the argument that the Quran is the last Testament, the Book of perfection that came from the hand of God. In the first page of this booklet, he describes the Quran with words like miracle, exciting, admiring, powerful and an impossibility. These positive attributes of the Quran only lasted for half of this booklet. Again, the next half of the book was an attack on the Bible. One wonders if the Bible must be lambasted for the Quran to be authenticated. Fortunately, Muslim leaders like Shaykh Muhammed and Farid Esack were dedicated Muslims with uncompromising commitment to the Islamic faith, who did not believe that Islam should be exalted at the expense of the defamation of Christianity. Nor did they advocate that the Bible be degraded while the Quran is being exalted.

This was not the same sentiment shared by Deedat. In this booklet Deedat continues his attack, this time concerning the literary style of the Bible, as follows: “it is a wearisome confused jumble crude incondite insupportable stupidity.” He added, in comparison that: we must not “fail to recognise the brilliance of Muhammad, in dictating direct facts” (pp 46). However, there are times when he needed assistance from the Bible, then he was sympathetic towards the Bible. For instance, when he wanted to show how powerful the Quran is, he said: “Next to the Bible the Quran is the most esteemed and most powerful religious book in the world” (pp 15). Now the Bible is placed next to the Quran. In another instance in the same book, when he needed to explain the miraculous acts of Allah, he writes: “the Holy Bible is full of supernatural events accredited to Prophets from their Lord. In reality all those ‘signs’ and ‘wonders’ were acts of God” (pp 3). Deedat uses the Bible when it benefits him and discard it whenever he feels like.

The Bible and the Quran can be used in dialogical discourse when one looks at the similarities and points of contacts rather than the differences. These two religious books can be the foundation for dialogue, if we do not allow false motivated people to hijack it for their own selfish reasons. Books like those of Abdur Shad, “From Adam to Muhammad”, Allama Kathir’, ‘Stories of the Prophets’ and Sheikh A.Najaar, ‘77 selected stories from the Quran’ can be used as links between the Bible and the Quran. There are many similarities in Bible stories that are also found in the Quran.

These stories about Moses, Jonah, David, and Jesus appear in both books. These are points of discussion. Nazir Ali (1987:127) adds, “The Quran is full of terminology which is common to Christian usage. This can be used as an aid to dialogue”. Using the Eucharist as an example he says, “there is also a version of the institution of the Eucharist in the Quran (Quran 5:115f.). The account is somewhat unclear, but the idea that it is a gift from God survives. A Christian teacher can use this verse as a point of departure in explaining the sacrament of the Holy Communion similarly, Baptism is mentioned in (Quran 2:138). The Bible and the Quran can be used to either unity or divide a community. Religious leaders are influential; their influence can be used to foster a spirit of co-operation, tolerance, and dialogue.

3.9 Deedat's Christology

This section will deal with Deedat's view of, and approach to, the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The reason for Deedat's aggressive attack on the authenticity of the Bible is made clear when one studies Deedat's Christology. He had to discredit the authenticity of the Gospels in order to discredit the deity, and the death and resurrection of Jesus. Deedat had to dismantle the Biblical source of Jesus' life so that he could introduce the Quranic alternative. He used the same modus operandi as Ulfat Aziz-Us-Samad. In his introductory chapter on Jesus, he began by stating categorically, "For our information about Jesus, we depend almost exclusively on the Gospels and these as we have already shown, are far from reliable" (1986:18). This is the reason that Deedat always approaches Biblical Christology with the presupposition of the falsification of the Bible.

Deedat has written more booklets and pamphlets and had more debates on this subject than any other. This section will focus on his following publications that deals with his Christology:

- 1977, Who moved the stone?
- 1978, Resurrection or Resuscitation?
- 1979, What was the sign of Jonah?
- 1983, The God who never was.
- 1984, Crucifixion or Cruci – fiction?
- 1990, Muhammad: Natural successor of Christ
- 2000, Christ in Islam

3.9.1 The honour of Jesus

It must be noted that Deedat does not deny the existence of the historical Christ; neither does he deny the validity of the ministry of Jesus. In all of his books and his debates, he makes it clear that Jesus Christ is honoured in both the Quran and in the Muslim world. In one of his earliest publication of Christ in the Quran³⁷, he affirms,

³⁷ Deedat, A. (1983) Christ in the Quran. IPCI: Durban.

“We Muslims believe that Jesus was one of the mightiest messengers of God, that he was Christ, which was born miraculously without any male intervention” (Deedat, 1983:2). He continues to affirm the ministry of Jesus acknowledging that his ministry was accompanied by miracles, “that he gives life to the dead by God’s permission, and that he healed those born blind, as well as the lepers, by God’s permission. In fact, no Muslim is a Muslim if he does not believe in Jesus” (Deedat, 1983:2). Deedat did, however, argue that the miracles Jesus performed does not prove his Divinity, nor elevate him above any other prophet. He also supports the fact that Jesus is mentioned by name in the Quran, even more than Muhammad. “The Christian does not know that in the Holy Quran Jesus (pbuh)ⁱ is mentioned by name five times more than the number of times the prophet of Islam is mentioned in the Book of God and to be exact – twenty-five times as against five” (Deedat, 1983:2). he quotes a number of passages from the Quran to affirm his statement. I will quote just one from those he mentioned:

We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of messengers; we gave Jesus the son of Mary clear (signs) and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit. (Sura 2: 87, Yusuf Ali).

3.9.2 The Titles of Jesus

Deedat acknowledges the ‘uniqueness of Jesus’ compared to any other prophet in the Quran when describing the titles of Jesus.

“Though Jesus is mentioned by name twenty-five times in the Holy Quran, he is also addressed with respect. He is spoken of as ‘Masih (Hebrew) Messiah, as Word of God, as Sign of God. The Holy Quran honours this mighty messenger of God, and the Muslims have not fallen short over the past fourteen hundred years in doing the same” (Deedat, 1983:2).

In this same publication, where Deedat spends half a page giving honour to the unique titles of Jesus, he goes on to spend another two pages arguing that these three unique titles do not make Jesus any more special or unique than any other prophet of the Quran. An example would be his deconstruction of the title ‘Messiah’ that is unique to Jesus. In a painstaking effort he contends, “Although, every prophet of God is Anointed of God – a Messiah, the title ‘Masih’ or Messiah’ or its translation ‘Christ’ is exclusively used for Jesus, the son of Mary, in both the Quran and the

Bible. This is normal in religion. Certain other honorific titles may be applied to more than one prophet yet being made exclusive to one by usage. Like 'Rassul-lullah', meaning 'Messenger of God', which title is applied to both Moses (19:51) and Jesus (16:6) in the Holy Quran. Yet 'Rassul-lullah' has become synonymous only with the Prophet of Islam among Muslims." In response to Deedat, Gilchrist, in his publication, 'The titles of Jesus in the Quran and the Bible' refutes Deedat argument and presents a Biblical understanding of the three unique title of Jesus.

3.9.3 Absolutely Unique, unquestionably Exclusive but nothing Special.

The above trend summarizes the Christological approach of Deedat, building on the uniqueness and exclusivity of Jesus, then in the same breath, shooting down any special relevance to the facts he just pointed out.

3.9.4 The Virgin Birth of Jesus:

Deedat writes, "At the present moment a billion Muslims throughout the world accept the Immaculate Conception of Jesus on the authority of Muhammad alone" (1990:64). He spends much time describing the birth of Jesus and describes it as a 'miracle'. Soon he contends that even Adam was created without a father or mother. He argues, "Does the miraculous birth of Jesus make him a God or a 'begotten' son of God? No!" (1983:25). He argues his point by referring to the creation of Adam: "The logic of that, if being born without a male parent entitles Jesus to be equated with God, then, Adam would have a greater right to such honour, and this no Christian would readily concede" (1983:26).

3.9.5 The Miracles of Jesus:

Deedat acknowledges that the ministry of Jesus was accompanied by miracles, "that he gives life to the dead by God's permission, and that he healed those born blind and the lepers by God's permission. In fact, no Muslim is a Muslim if he does not believe in Jesus" (Deedat, 1983:2). However, he makes two arguments concerning these miracles. Firstly, he did these miracles with 'borrowed power' (1983:25), he had no authority of his own. He uses Sura 5:110 in his defence,

Then will Allah say: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount my favour to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the Holy Spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught thee the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel and behold! thou make out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and thou breathes into it and it becometh a bird by My leave, and thou heals those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave. And behold! thou bring forth the dead by My leave."

(Yusuf Ali).

Secondly, he argues that miracles may be a sign of prophethood, but nothing else. In this way, he deducts that since Moses parted the sea and Elijah raise the dead boy and called down fire from heaven, then both Moses and Elijah are greater than Jesus (1983:44).

3.9.6 The Ascension and return of Jesus.

Like many orthodox Muslims, Deedat also believes in the ascension of Jesus. He was not killed, but he evaded death and was taken up to heaven by God. This was unique among prophets, but to Deedat this event does not prove anything other, than Jesus being favoured by God. He does not write extensively on this subject. The return of Jesus to earth is seen by Deedat as unique and exclusive to the ministry of Jesus, however, in his book 'Muhammed: The natural Successor of Christ'³⁸, he argues that the return of Jesus was primarily to establish the Religion of Islam and bring judgement to Jew, Christians and all polytheists. He also makes mention that none of the gospel writers record the Ascension event, yet each of them recorded the event of Jesus riding a donkey, labelling the event 'the donkey circus'.

3.9.7 The Death and Resurrection of Jesus

This is Deedat's focal point and greatest contention with Christians and the Bible. He openly and outrightly condemns Christians for believing and holding on to this doctrine (resurrection). His strong condemnation is felt in his words and the

³⁸ Deedat, A. (1990) Muhammed: The natural Successor of Christ. IPCI: Durban.

illustration he uses. Calling the death and resurrection of Jesus a blatant lie, he mentions, "Did not Hitler's Minister of propagation – Goebbels – say 'The bigger the lie the more likely it is to be believed'" (1983:27). He also accuses the Church of 'brainwashing' its adherents and adds, "this is what the Christian is made to repeat from childhood in his catechism, again and again" (1983:27). He calls the Professors in Theology and the Doctor of Divinity who defend this doctrine as, 'programmed zombies' (1983:35) who has 'mentally blocked himself' from understanding (1983:44). Those who preach this message are labelled "hot-gospellers and Bible thumpers" (1983:32).

While his book 'Christ in the Quran' has a chapter that deals with the doctrine of the death and resurrection of Jesus, Deedat dedicates three other books to deal directly with what he calls the untruthful, incorrect, blasphemous doctrine of the death and resurrection of Jesus. His books, "Resurrection or Resuscitation", "Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction" and "What was the message of Jonah" are direct attacks on this doctrine.

"That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah"; - but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not" (Surah 4:157, Yusuf Ali).

This is the text that the Muslim World and Deedat uses to outrightly deny the death and resurrection of Jesus. Using the above text as his starting point he writes, "Could anyone have been more explicit, more dogmatic, more un-compromising in rejecting the dogma of a faith than this?". Scheppers, in his analysis of Deedat's Christology concerning this statement, comments, "This cuts to the heart of his approach, and indeed that of the classical Islamic approach to the crucifixion. Christians are expected to submit to a single sentence written hundreds of years later as the final word of the crucifixion." Deedat attempts to use this one Quranic verse to challenge the eight Chapters of Matthew's gospel, the three chapters of Mark's gospel, the three chapters in Luke's gospel and the nine chapters of John's gospel, which gives a detailed description of Jesus' death by crucifixion and his resurrection. Deedat outlines his own understanding of the biblical events. The events that are not described in the Quran. He gives his audience his version. In his book Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction, he makes the following argument:

- Jesus was not a Messianic leader; rather, he was a political leader.
- He planned a coup against the Roman government.
- His coup failed because he miscalculated the power of his enemies.
- This led to his untimely and embarrassing arrest in the garden of Gethsemane.
- He went on trial and was found guilty.
- He was crucified but did not die on the cross. “God works in mysterious ways. He inspires the soldiers to think that the victim is already dead, so as not to break his legs” (Deedat, 1984:191). On the cross Jesus found it difficult to breath, when the soldier pierced his side with a spear, this helped Jesus to breath” (Deedat, 1984:191).
- Pilate granted permission for the body to be taken off to quickly, so His disciples took him off the cross and nursed him back to health (Deedat, 1984:194).

In his book, Resurrection or Resuscitation? The following arguments are presented:

- The four gospel writers did not write as eyewitnesses, because they were not present at the crucifixion or the resurrection of Jesus. He comes to this conclusion because of his interpretation of Mark 14:50 “they all forsook him and fled”. Therefore, their gospel accounts are unauthentic and should not be used as a source for the crucifixion of Jesus. (1978:11).
- Jesus could not have resurrected from the dead, because a resurrected person will have a resurrected body, he uses Luke 20:36. He argues that a resurrected body does not need to eat or drink, but after the resurrection Jesus eat fish with his disciple (Luke 24:41-43). (1978:13).
- If he had a resurrected body, he would not have to have moved the stone. He could just walk right through the wall. (1978:14-15)

Finally, in his book, “What was the sign of Jonah” he embarks on an exposition of Matthew 12:39-40.

Mat 12:39 “But He answered and said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. And there shall be no sign given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.”

Mat 12:40 “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the huge fish, so the Son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Deedat argues that the sign of Jonah does not depict the death and the resurrection of Jesus. He comments that Jesus did not fulfil the ‘sign of Jonah’. His argument rests on the following points:

- Jonah was alive during the three days in the belly of the whale. Christians believe that Jesus was dead for three days.
- Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three nights; Jesus was in the grave for just two nights.

In this exceedingly small booklet, just eleven pages, Deedat makes the following deduction: “the question arises, who deceived the millions of Christians for the past two thousand years. God or the devil?” (1979:11).

3.9.8 Deedat’s deviation on the crucifixion.

“That they said (in boast), “We killed Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah”; - but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not” (Surah 4:157, Yusuf Ali).

To the majority of Muslims worldwide, the above Quranic verse states emphatically that Jesus was not crucified, “... but they killed him not, nor crucified him”. There are debates about who was crucified in his place. While there is no definite consensus as to who was crucified, there is consensus that Jesus was not crucified. Muslim scholar Kausar Naizi³⁹ comments on this issue, “All our commentators are agreed that the Jews were deceived, and they crucified another person mistaking him for Christ. But who was this person? How did they fall into deception, no answer to this question is given either in the Quran or by an authentic Hadith?” He reiterates his argument by stating, “The truth remains that he could not be crucified by the Jews who failed in their efforts, while Christ was successful” (1975:50). In agreement with

³⁹ Niazi, K. (1975). *Mirror of Trinity*. Ashraf Press: Lahore

Naizi, Muhammad Aatur Rahim⁴⁰ concedes, “Jesus was not crucified, but another in his place, and therefore he laughed at those who believed that they had crucified him. Thus, although it is known that Jesus was not crucified, sources either differ or are not specific as to who was crucified in his place” (1976:35). The identity of the person on the cross who took Jesus’ place may be contentious, but the fact that it was not Jesus is agreed and accepted internationally, by most Muslims.

There is a heretical sect in the Muslim world that arose in the 19th century in northern India called the Ahmadiyya. Both Sunni and Shi’a Muslims labelled it a heretical sect. The Ahmadiyya recognized and followed another prophet after Muhammad, called Mizra Ghulam Ahmad. Within the teachings of this sect, they believe that Jesus was crucified. He was nailed to the cross. His side was pierced with a spear. He was later taken down from the cross, gravely wounded but not dead. His disciples rescued him and nursed him to back to health. This doctrine of the Ahmadiyya is not in line with the Quran, the Hadith, or the teaching of Orthodox Islam.

Yet Ahmed Deedat promotes this doctrine of the Ahmadiyya. Scheepers (2016:11) make mention of this, “Several Muslim scholars have pointed to direct links between Deedat’s view and Ahmadi writings that claim that he merely ‘swooned’ on the cross.” Gilchrist, made a similar argument concerning Deedat’s views on the crucifixion, “We have never ceased to wonder why Ahmed Deedat continues to promote the theory that Jesus was indeed crucified but came down alive from the cross. This idea is held only by the heretical Ahmadiyya sect in Islam and is denounced by all true Christians and Muslims” (1985:16). Deedat’s stance on the crucifixion was criticised by both Muslims and Christians. His booklet, “Resurrection or Resuscitation”, was written as his defence, however, in eleven pages, he was unable to make his defence.

3.9.9 An overview of Deedat’s Christological analysis

Westerlund makes a correct deduction when he asserts, “Deedat’s way of writing is characterised by clearness and simplicity. It lacks academic complexity and jargon”

⁴⁰ Rahim, M.A. (1976). Jesus a prophet of Islam. Millat Books: New Delhi.

(2003:275). It would not be fair, therefore, to analyse his publications as academic literature and put it through a rigorous hermeneutical and exegetical investigation. However, certain shortfalls in his publications and debates need to be highlighted.

- Ignoring standard exegetical tools: According to Scheppers, Deedat shows extraordinarily little evidence of careful exegesis in his work. He does not have the standard level of knowledge in Hebrew or Greek for an analytical exegesis to be done on scripture. He also fails to take into consideration the literary, historical, political, and cultural context of the verses he uses as 'proof texts.
- Exegesis vs. Eisegesis: Deedat approaches the Bible with the 'Quranic Christ' presupposition. He therefore does not allow the scripture to 'speak for itself' but rather imposes his interpretation into the text. This is especially seen in his treatment of the crucifixion and resurrection events in the Gospel.
- Mixing schools of thought: In interpreting the death and resurrection of Jesus, Deedat quotes from sources that are lined up with different and opposing schools of thought. He quotes from Jehovah's Witnesses, the Seventh Day Adventist, the Church of the Mormons, Catholic Theology and Liberal Theology. He uses any one of schools of thought at any time to support his claims.

3.9.10 Diagram of Deedat's Christology

Deedat has a Christology, and he has a reason for formulating his Christology in a certain way. To discredit the Biblical Jesus and introduce the Quranic Christ. The diagram below is descriptive of Deedat's plan.

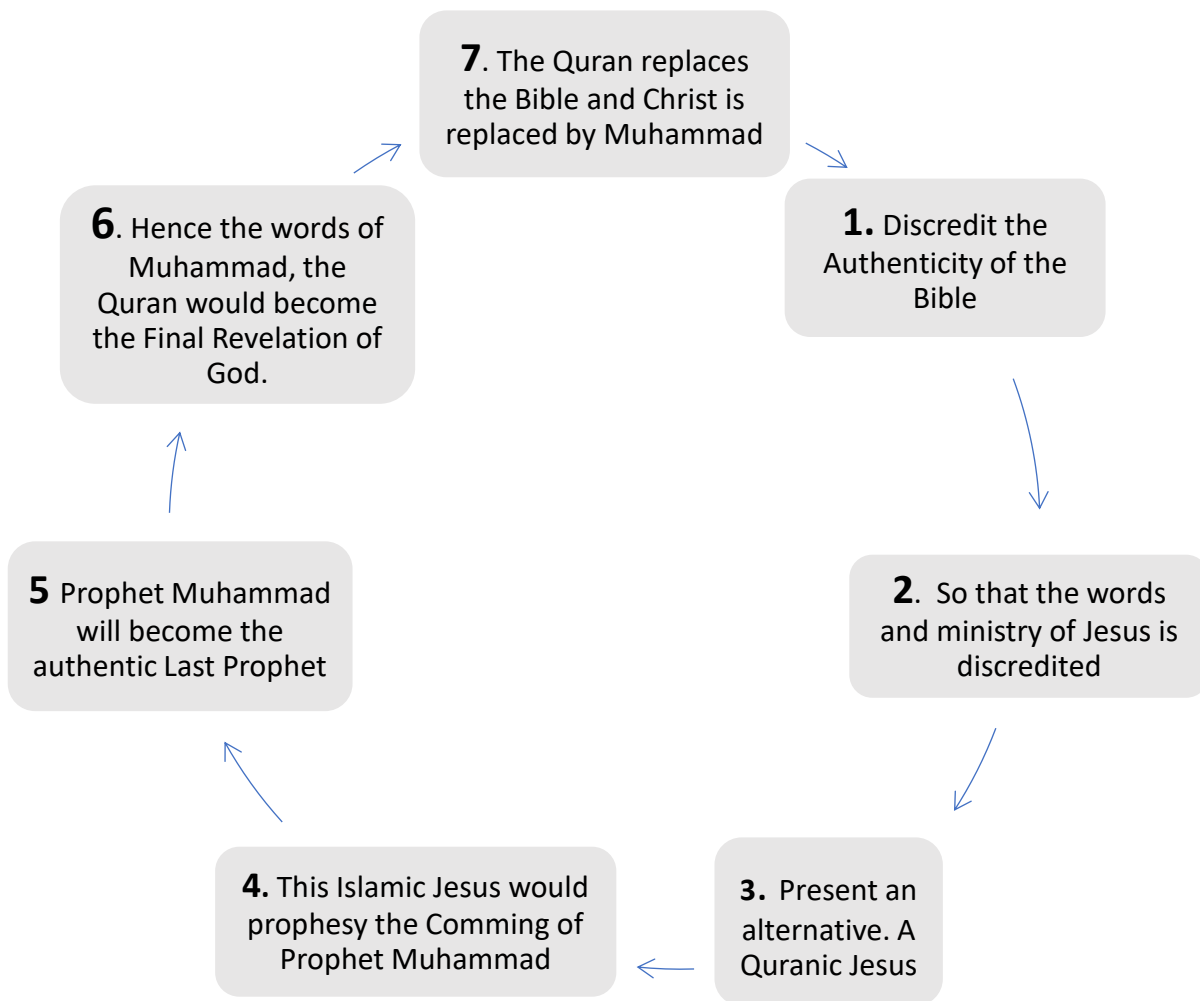


Figure 8: Deedat’s Christology: Plan and Purpose

3.10 Deedat’s Theology of Religions

In his survey on religious encounters, Paul Knitter comments, “All theology, we are told, is rooted in biography.” This is definitely applicable to Deedat’s theology of religions. Deedat’s early encounters with Christian missionaries left him humiliated, angry and helpless. In order to defend himself, he developed his own unique style of polemics. Today, his style of polemics and debating has given us a fair insight into his theology of religions. Before investigating Deedat’s theology of religions, let me first explain its meaning. Westerlund, describes this term as, “the way in which people within a certain religion view other religions” (2003:264). David Bosch adds that this

discipline evolved only since 1960, and asked the questions, ‘Who are these people of different faiths?’, and ‘What should our attitude be towards them?’ (1993:474).

These two sections will be categorized under two headings.

- What was Deedat’s Attitude towards other religion? Under this heading David Lochhead’s four different classification will be used: Isolation. Hostility. Competition. Partnership.
- What was Deedat’s theological approach towards other religions? Under this heading the three most commonly used approaches are adopted: Exclusivism. Inclusivism. Pluralism.

3.10.1 Deedat’s Attitude towards other religions

“All theology, we are told, is rooted in biography” (Knitter, 1995: xiii). In analysing Deedat’s biographies, one can easily deduct his attitude towards other religions and specifically towards Christianity. Lochhead⁴¹, in his book ‘Dialogical imperative’, lays out four scenarios, four attitudes towards other religions within certain periods in history. These four scenarios also depict four attitudes towards people of other religions. They are labelled as: Isolation, Hostility, Competition, and Partnership. Each scenario and attempt to place Deedat’s attitude within the appropriate bracket will be examined.

- Isolation: In this scenario, Lochhead describes the distancing of religious groups, either geographically, culturally, or politically. Within the South African context, there was a time when the scenario of ‘Isolation’ would have applied. It would be within the context of Group Areas Act of 1950. However, it was during this period that Deedat interacted with many Christians across the cultural divide. The scenario of ‘Isolation would not apply to Deedat.
- Hostility: Lochhead describes this scenario as a period of hostility between religious groups. This hostility could range from verbal attacks to physical violence. While physical violence would not describe the relations between Christians and Muslims in South Africa, we cannot rule the scenario of hostility

⁴¹ Lochhead, D. (1988) The dialogical imperative. Orbis Books: Maryknoll.

out. It was during this time of hostility that Deedat began his mission. Deedat saw the Christian missionary as hostile.

To Deedat, Christians were always seen as enemies, and he refers to this many times. Such reference was also made in his book 'Is the Bible God's word?'⁴² Considering the context in which Deedat did his ministry, the researcher conclude that his attitude towards Christians was one of Competition.

- Competition: Lochhead describes this scenario as religious communities offering their religious experiences as better, more logical, or accessible than the other.

Deedat fits well in this scenario also. When reading his books there are many stories that relates Deedat's encounters with Christians in an informal setting. Each time he describes how he was able to win them over either to Islam or at least win the argument. He relates one such event in his book, Resurrection or Resuscitation? He writes, "With the head of the Bible Society, I won the debate but lost the discount! No more discounts for me at the Bible society. But let my lose be your gain" (1978:14). Since the death of Deedat no Muslim in South Africa has so openly attacked the Christian faith, however, the attitude of competitiveness between Muslims and Christian are on a rapid increase.

- Partnership: Partnership between Muslims and Christians had its golden age during the Apartheid era, when both religious communities saw the oppressive regime as the common enemy.

However, Deedat was never a part of this movement. Deedat made too many enemies among the Christians to try and foster any type of partnership with them. He shows no attempt in fostering any type of partnership in social/political endeavours or in cultural/religious endeavours.

Now that it has been established that Deedat displayed both hostility and competitiveness towards Christianity, it will be easier to see whether he adopts an exclusivist, inclusivist or pluralist approach towards other religions including Christianity.

⁴² Deedat, A. (2013ed) Is the Bible God's word? IPCI: Durban.

3.10.2 Deedat's theological approach towards other religions

The three most common approaches towards other religions have been classified as Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Pluralism. In this section, each of the approaches will be briefly explained. Deedat's approach will then be analysed to see in which category he fits.

- Exclusivism: Westerlund describes exclusivism as “the idea that only one religion or religious denomination is true and that beliefs and practices in other religions therefore are false to the extent that they are in conflict with this religion” (2003:263).

In analysing Deedat's approach, Westerlund argues that he “leans towards an exclusivist theology of religions” (2003:268). The titles of Deedat's books already highlights his theology of religion. Not only are they provocative, but they leave no room for dialogue. The contents of his publication give the reader only two choice Islam or falsehood. He makes it clear in his book 'Is the Bible God's Word? “a greater reward would be if even one sincere disciple of Jesus (Christian) were to be led to the truth and be removed from fabrications and falsehood” (1989:83).

Hence, the only hope for any Christian is to forsake Christianity and embrace Islam. Deedat follows the classical Islamic theology of religions, which is exclusivism. Deedat is therefore and Exclusivist in every way.

- Inclusivism: Inclusivism promotes the idea that there is a possibility of revelation beyond one's own religion. There is a possibility of some salvific presence of God in other religions.

The Quran acknowledges previous revelation of God outside Islam. It acknowledges the Jewish Torah and the Christian Gospels (Injeel).

“It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgment between right and wrong)” (3:3 Yusuf Ali).

“And in their footsteps, we sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and

confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah” (5:46 Yusuf Ali).

Deedat, however, leaves no room for ‘inclusivism’ and the idea that God has left some of His revelation outside the Quran. As stated earlier in this paper, he makes this clear as he argues, “The Taurat we Muslims believe in is not the Torah of the Christians and the Jews. Likewise, we believe that the Zaboor was the revelation of God to Hazrat Dawood, but the present Psalms associated with his name is not that revelation. Neither is the Injeel the same Gospels of the Christians.” (1989:11-12). Deedat adopts the Islamic orthodox position which purports that Muhammad is the last Prophet and the Quran is the last and only authentic revelation for God.

- Pluralism: “Pluralism maintains that all major religions are legitimate expressions of humankind’s response to the divine. When understood in this way, religious pluralism is the view that not only is it a verifiable fact that there are many religions in the world, but each of the major religions should be understood as acceptable and sufficient systems of worship” (Cooper, 2013:158).

On the South African religious scene Islam stood side by side with Christianity and Hinduism, and Deedat attacked both Christianity and Hinduism. Vahed (2000:91) states that Deedat’s approach to Muslim da’wah through the form of public debates caused a rift not just between Christians and Muslims, but also between Hindus⁴³ and Muslims. He contends that, “this period was also witness to cracks in the relationship between Hindus and Muslims as a result of the activities of Ahmad Deedat and the IPCI.” For all intent and purpose, Deedat could never adopt the pluralistic theology of religions stance.

3.11 Conclusion

Deedat will always remain South Africa’s most controversial apologist. Loved by some and hated by others. However, he will always be remembered as an innovator, one that showed Muslims that they needed to study the Bible and not just the Quran. He

⁴³ The Hindu community always stood together with the Muslim community in their fight against a common enemy, ‘white missionaries’. Deedat disregarded this relation when he began to attack the religious beliefs of the Hindus, calling them ‘idol worshippers.’

will be remembered as a challenger to passive Christians to begin to think about why they believe, and not just what they believe. His methods of dawah through propagation continues in many continents around the world. My hope is that his publications will lead to dialogue instead of hostility and competitiveness.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSING THE IMPACT AND INFLUENCE OF JOHN GILCHRIST ON MUSLIM CHRISTIAN RELATIONS.



Figure 9: John Gilchrist

4.1 Introduction

Ideologies are not only developed by social structures but are also taught and propagated by people. The most acknowledged person in the Christian community in South Africa who has and is still shaping a Christian Theology of Religions in Ekurhuleni is John Gilchrist. Before Gilchrist came onto the scene, Ahmed Deedat had already begun his polemic defense on the Christian faith. As discussed in the previous chapter, Deedat propagated the unreliability and unauthenticity of the Bible as the Word of God and ultimately denied the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Deedat's major books were already published and distributed. He had already made a name for himself on the debating platform and became an international figure. However, in South Africa, Deedat's claim did not remain unchallenged. Christian Lawyer and Apologist John Gilchrist stood up in the Christian camp. He challenged the claims made by Deedat concerning the Christian faith. Like Deedat, Gilchrist also used public debates, public lectures, and publications to voice his opinions. Most of the Evangelical Christian churches accepted him as their spokesperson.

Moreover, they adopted his Christian theology of religions. In an interview⁴⁴ with him, he mentions all the invitations received for lectures in all the major denominations in South Africa. He was invited to speak seminars hosted by Orthodox churches, Reformed churches, Pentecostal churches, and many independent ministries. He

⁴⁴ A telephonic interview 22 April 2020

explained that the study of Islam is a non-denominational subject. It is a teaching that the entire Church in South Africa needs.

The first section of this chapter deals with the personal, religious, and socio-political context in which Gilchrist found himself. The second section deals with all his publications, from 1979 to 2017. These publications give us an understanding of Gilchrist's approach to Muslims, discussed further in the third section of the chapter. The final section deals with a critical analysis of his approach to a 'theology of religions.'

4.2 Personal Context

Like Deedat, Gilchrist's encounters with Muslims led him to defend the Christian faith. Deedat's early encounters with Christian missionaries left him humiliated, angry, and helpless. To defend himself and the Muslim community, he developed his unique style of polemics.

Gilchrist's encounters started in a small Indian community in Ekurhuleni located in the East Rand. Actonville (also the birthplace of the researcher) was a small Indian community comprising of Muslims, Christians, and Hindus. The three religious groups enjoyed a spirit of tolerance and unity, as they lived next to each other, and their children attended the two primary and two high schools together.⁴⁵ During 1973, Gilchrist, with a small band of Christian missionaries, no more than five, began their door-to-door evangelism. The easiest accessible places were the few high-raised building apartments called 'the Flats'⁴⁶. It was home to over 300 families of different religious persuasions. What started as a general door-to-door campaign to spread the Gospel eventually turned into an extremely specific ministry. In an interview with Gilchrist⁴⁷, he explained how this transition took place. He related an event that took place in one of the apartments in these "flats." He sat in an apartment with his team and four Muslim elders as they discussed the Bible. Gilchrist, at that time, did not know the Islamic faith. So he was surprised when the Muslim elders agreed with his team's explanations of Jesus. They responded, "We believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, we

⁴⁵ All three religious' groups attended Actonville Primary, Benoni Primary, William Hills High and Liverpool High School. The teachers and Principals were representative of three groups.

⁴⁶ The two largest 'flats' (high raised buildings) Delhi Court and Karachi court each accommodates 160 families. The people consist of Christians, Hindus, and Muslims. It has always been a target for door-to-door evangelism.

⁴⁷ A telephonic interview on 22 April 2020 at 9am – 10am

believe in the miracles of Jesus, we believe that Jesus ascended into heaven, and we even believe that He is coming back again.” This caught the attention of Gilchrist. However, they continued, “The only thing we do not believe is that He was crucified and that he rose from the dead, and we do not believe that he is the son of God.”

Gilchrist and his team returned home to investigate these claims and find scriptures that refute their argument while proving his claims. At the next meeting, the Muslim elders waited, armed with all the arguments they had learned in Deedat’s “Combat Kit.” Their second meeting left Gilchrist and his team feeling incompetent since the Muslims answered all of their arguments. These events are similar to those that led Deedat to his mission in polemics. He, too, was confronted with questions that led him to feel incompetent.

Just like Deedat, Gilchrist made it his life’s mission to reach out to the Muslim community. By 1975, Gilchrist launched his mission’s ministry called “Jesus to the Muslims.” Gilchrist started systematically targeting every Muslim home in Actonville. In the beginning, he published small, 1-2-page pamphlets, which were distributed during each visit. This type of “door-to-door” evangelism sparked Deedat’s ministry to defend the Muslim faith. Deedat describes this “door-to-door” method of Christian missions as a menace.

What Gilchrist saw as a God-given mission to Muslims, Deedat saw as a menace to the defenseless Muslims. His influence had reached the Actonville community in the early ’70s, and some people were equipped enough to give Gilchrist and his team a difficult time. This was the first time that Gilchrist would encounter Deedat through his literature. Actonville became swamped with Deedat’s literature and video cassettes, and so did other areas in the old Transvaal. The Muslim Indian communities were armed with Deedat’s material and were propagating his teaching. The denial of Jesus as the Son of God and the rejection of the Bible as the Word of God became increasingly dominant in these Indian communities. Gilchrist saw his mission as defending the deity of Jesus and the authenticity of the Bible as God’s final revelation.

4.3 Religious Context

Ahmed Deedat founded his Da’wa organization, “Islamic Propagation Centre,” in 1957. John Gilchrist founded his organization, ‘Jesus to the Muslims’ in 1975. Calculations show that Deedat was in the field of polemics 18 years before Gilchrist. When Gilchrist entered this field of study, Deedat had already published and distributed over a million

pieces of literature. He had numerous debates and already established himself as an astute lecturer in comparative religions. Thousands of Muslims were propagating his message. For the first time in the Indian community, Muslims began to challenge Christians about their faith. This time around, Gilchrist “came to the rescue” of the church, defending the faith. Gilchrist saw his ministry expand beyond the small town of Actonville to the larger Transvaal region and eventually into KwaZulu Natal. He became the defender of the Christian faith, specifically against the onslaughts of Ahmed Deedat’s material. The ministry of Gilchrist was similar to Deedat, and he also wrote material “for the people.” His writing career started in the late ’70s.

During this time, the work and publications of Gilchrist became food for ordinary people. However, Gilchrist was not alone; Gerhard Nehls was doing similar work outside the Greater Cape Town area, with a group known as Life Challenge (est. 1976).⁴⁸ Nehls wrote the material in a similar vein as Gilchrist, addressing the “issues about the Bible being corrupt and the allegations that there are prophecies in the Bible pointing to Muhammad” (Haron, 2006:444). Like Gilchrist, Nehls was also dealing with the influence and literature of Ahmed Deedat. Thus, it came as no surprise that one of his earlier “publications was the forty-six-page *Dear Abdullah ...*, which contained ten fictitious letters from Theophilus to Abdullah intending to disarm Islamic arguments and adopt an offensive but persuasive style” (Haron, 2006:444).

On the international scene, Nehls developed a DVD Course on Islamic, Apologetics, and Pragmatics, titled “*Battle for the hearts.*” Gilchrist and a few international apologists feature on this teaching. The relationship between Nehls and Gilchrist was positive, and the two were even co-founders of an organization called Christian Concern for Muslims (CCM)⁴⁹.

While Nehls worked in the Cape, Gilchrist spread his ministry reach from Transvaal to Natal and later to Barberton, Nelspruit, and Zeerust.

4.3.1 Encounters with Deedat

The two religious’ figures, Deedat and Gilchrist, had to cross paths one day. They became familiar with each other’s ministries and material. Deedat, from the office of

⁴⁸ Haron, M. (2006). The dynamics of Christian-Muslim Relations in South Africa (1960-2000): From Exclusivism to Pluralism. *The Muslim World*, 96 no3 July 2006, (p.444).

⁴⁹ Both Nehls and Gilchrist have later distanced themselves from CCM. CCM has since had different leadership. Manfred Jung, took over, then later Allan Wainwright, and currently Fred Nel.

IPC, invited Gilchrist to a debate in 1974. It is interesting to note that both these leaders had no formal training in their respective religions. Gilchrist did not hold a bachelor's degree in theology, nor did Deedat hold a bachelor's degree in Islamic Studies. However, both were naturally talented in their fields of ministry. They showed clear command of theological terms in their respective fields and the opposing religion. The debate took place in February 1975 in Gilchrist's hometown, Benoni. The topic, "Was Christ crucified?" was debated at the Benoni Town Hall, which was packed to capacity as almost 3000 people attended. The attendees were mainly from the Indian Muslim Community. Deedat was a "crowd puller." Andreas Maurer commented about this event as follows:

"Deedat and Gilchrist had a number of public and personal encounters. Some of these meetings were friendly in nature. But a public meeting in February 1975 ended in a court case. This and other events caused considerable amounts of ill-feeling between the two religious' communities".

Eight years later, the two giants met again. On 5th June 1983, on national television (SABC – TV), John Gilchrist sat on a panel on the Bill Chambers talk show, "Cross Questions." Ahmed Deedat, Maulana Soofie, John Gilchrist, and Catholic priest Father Hinwood discussed the topic, "Similarities and differences in Christianity and Islam." By this time, both leaders had already published their literature extensively. The panel discussion that reached the entire nation caused an uneasiness between Christians and Muslims. The divinity of Jesus was denied, and Deedat misquoted many scriptures containing the words of Jesus. Gilchrist also alluded that Muslims should not depend on good works for their salvation and that Muhammad's coming was not prophesied in the Bible. The arguments that were presented were like pages taken out of each other's books. The nation felt the widening gap between Christianity and Islam. Deedat continued to spread his literature and give public lectures. Gilchrist felt it incumbent on himself to systematically write a rebuttal against Deedat's literature. Gilchrist would eventually publish more than 35 pieces of literature, including complete books. The most comprehensive book printed in 1987, "*The Christian witness to the Muslim world*," would display 397 pages of apologetics. With no other personal encounters with Deedat, Gilchrist went on a full-scale defense of the Christian faith by publishing extensively. Haron (2006:443) recorded one of his earlier works:

"In 1977, Gilchrist, a lawyer, produced his work, *The Challenge of Islam in South Africa*, in which he provided an overview of the position of Islam

and Muslims with the aim of arming his 'Jesus to the Muslims' society and others regarding Muslim beliefs and practices".

4.3.2 The literature War

From 1979 to 2017, Gilchrist would defend the Christian faith with a barrage of publications. Some would be defensive, while others were rebuttals against the works of Deedat; however, his final four publications would be more dialogical.

4.3.2.1 1979 Publications

The defense of Christianity against the onslaughts of Deedat's propagation would be in the form of publications. In 1979, Gilchrist published his first official rebuttals against Deedat's books. *The uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the Quran and the Bible*⁵⁰ was one of the first publications. It was a rebuttal against Deedat's publication, *Christ in the Quran*⁵¹. In his debates, lectures, and books, Deedat always acknowledged the honour given to Jesus in the Quran. He is often quoted as saying, "No Muslim can be a true Muslim if he does not believe in Jesus Christ." He publicly attested to the virgin birth, the miracles, the ascension, and the second coming of Jesus Christ. However, he did not see any special significance in these events. While admitting that they were unique, Deedat argued that they did not attest to Jesus as the Son or the incarnation of God. Jesus was merely a prophet that had an extraordinary life. In his rebuttal, Gilchrist reflected on these four unique characteristics surrounding the life of Jesus: Firstly, they were unique because Jesus was the only person in scripture to have these miraculous events surrounding him. Secondly, their uniqueness lay in the fact that these four miraculous characteristics of Jesus were found in both the Quran and the Bible; and accepted as facts in both religions. He (1979:3) reiterated as follows,

It can safely be assumed that where the Quran and the Bible agree in any matter, that matter can henceforth be accepted as true without further ado by Christians and Muslims alike.

After establishing this fact, Gilchrist argued that these unique characteristics made Jesus much more than a mere prophet. He argued that signs prophesied in the Old Testament established Jesus Christ as the Son of God. In contrast with Deedat's book,

⁵⁰ Gilchrist, J. (1975). *The uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the Quran and the Bible*. Eternal Life Outreach: Pretoria.

⁵¹ Deedat, A. (1983) *Christ in the Quran*. IPCI: Durban.

Gilchrist calls for mutual respect and honest dialogue between similarities in both faiths. He (1979:3) argued,

For too long, Christians and Muslims have debated their difference of belief about Jesus. The time has come for Christians and Muslims to analyze these points of agreement, ... seriously reflecting on them.

4.3.2.2 1980 Publications

In 1980 Gilchrist published another three crucial booklets. The first is labeled, *A comparative study of the Quran and the Bible* (1980). This book was defensive, as Gilchrist describes on the first page, "This book is primarily defensive in origin and purpose. We seek to remove the false conclusions that have been drawn about the Bible from the one-sided tactics of the Muslim writers and lecturers" (1980:4). This was a defense against Deedat's publications, *Is the Bible God's Word?* (1983). *People of the Book* (1978). *Al-Quran: The miracle of miracles* (1991), and Ali Khan Joommal's publication, *The Bible: Word of God or Word of man? Which were in circulation at that time.* In his publication, Gilchrist presents three arguments. Firstly, that there are parallels between the Bible and the Quran. Secondly, just as there are some changes in the English translations of the Bible, there are also changes in the English transliteration of the Quran. Minor errors in translations should not become a major contention since, as the old saying goes, "people living in glass houses should not throw stones." Thirdly, he makes a strong case arguing that while the Quran itself confirms the Bible as the Word of God, it is surprising that Muslims deny its reliability as God's Word. In the interview with Gilchrist, he explained that it was improper for Muslims to deny the Bible's reliability when the Quran explicitly calls it the Word of God.

In his second publication, "*The love of God in the Quran and the Bible,*" he argues that the Biblical concept of love is one of reciprocity. The love that God has for His people is much greater than the love His people can reciprocate. While the Quran views the Muslim individual as a servant of Allah, the Bible views Christians as children of God. The concept of God as Father, which is absent in Islam, is a central doctrine in the Bible. Gilchrist focuses on the doctrine of the nature of God as Father and explains that the fullness of a revelation of God can only be understood within the context of Fatherhood.

4.3.2.3 1985 Publications

Two publications in this year are of importance. Both are defensive and are direct assaults on Deedat's publications concerning the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The first publication, *The crucifixion of Christ: A fact, not fiction*, is an open reply to Deedat's publication, *Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction?* (Deedat, 1984). The general orthodox Muslims disagree that Jesus was crucified. However, Deedat, influenced by Ahmadiyya theology⁵² (which was labeled a heretical sect by Sunni and Shi'a Muslims), believed that Jesus was crucified. Therefore, he argued that Jesus did not die on the cross. Because Deedat put himself in this corner, he had to manipulate scripture, breaking every hermeneutical and exegetical principle to prove his argument. Gilchrist used this publication to expose Deedat's unconventional methods of interpreting the Bible.

While exposing Deedat's manipulation of Scripture, Gilchrist attacked Deedat's subsequent publication, "*What is the sign of Jonah*" (Deedat, 1979). Deedat based his argument on Matthew 12:40 "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the huge fish, so the Son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (NIV Bible). He argued that this passage of scripture does not imply that Jesus would spend three days and three nights in the grave before being resurrected. Gilchrist responded to the challenge, and in his book, he did an exegetical dissection of this passage of scripture and placed it within its context. He called on the Muslim public not to listen to Deedat's interpretations of Bible stories but rather to read the Bible for themselves. Gilchrist (1985:35) asserted the following:

We urge all Muslims to read the Bible itself and to discover its wonderful truths instead of reading Deedat's booklets, which so obviously pervert its teaching and promote alternatives that are full of absurdities, as this booklet has constantly shown.

4.3.2.4 1986 Publications

Four books stand out in his 1986 publications. The first three deals with Jesus and the

⁵² Swanepoel, J. (2005). Communicating the Gospel in the Muslims in Fouad Ellias Accad: A Reformed perspective. Submitted to the University of Potchefstroom for the MTh. (pg. 41-42).

fourth with the "*Faith of Abraham*." His first publication was *An analytical study of the Cross and the Hijrah*. The Hijrah is the flight of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to the city of Medina (then known as Yathrib). Gilchrist compared the Prophet Muhammad and Jesus Christ. He first explained the similarities between their vocations. Both had a mission from God. Both became preachers/prophets of their people. The message of both was offensive to their people because of their hard-heartedness. Both experienced intense persecutions. Both found out about the plot to kill them. Up to this point, their ministries ran parallel to each other. However, the most significant difference would be how each one responded to the threat of being killed. This would become the irreconcilable difference between Christ and Muhammad and between Christianity and Islam. While the Prophet Muhammad decided to run away from death and to run to safety, Jesus did quite the opposite. Jesus ran towards death, not as a martyr, but as a Saviour who would give His life a ransom for others. He died a substitutionary death, in the place of every sinner. Gilchrist traces this theology of "substitution" from the Old to the New Testament.

In his study, he shows that Jesus understood the purpose of His death, and therefore walked boldly towards Jerusalem to fulfill His God-given purpose: being the saviour for the world. He concludes the book with the remarks, "What striking parallels and contrasts there are between the events that led to the Hijrah, which Muhammad chose, and the cross, to which Jesus submitted himself" (1986:25).

In his second book, *Nuzul-i-Isa: The second coming of Jesus Christ*, Gilchrist compared the Quran's interpretation and the Biblical event of the second coming of Jesus Christ. This publication was not defensive; it was instead to call to dialogue by searching the scriptures together. Gilchrist (1986:3) commented as follows:

It is universally believed, in both Christian and Muslim worlds, that Jesus will come again to this world at the end of the age. It is surely incumbent, therefore, on every Christians and Muslim to analyze this greatly anticipated event and to discover the real meaning and purpose of this advent.

Few scriptures in the Quran and some passages in the Hadith points to this event. However, the Bible speaks about this coming in all four gospels and dedicates the entire book of Revelation to this occurrence. The Old Testament also refers to the coming of the Son of man. Gilchrist called on the Muslim community to study the vast

amount of Biblical evidence of the event, stating that it will lead them “to know the true identity and character of the central figure of this great event” (Gilchrist, 1986:3).

4.4 From defensiveness to dialogue: A paradigm shift

From 1970 to the end of 1990, the publications of Gilchrist were generally defensive. Most of the literature produced was in some way or the other rebuttals to Deedat’s publications. It was debated by using literature. 1994 would become a historic moment in South Africa, preceding the fall of Apartheid and the institution of Democracy. From 1990, leading up to 1994, the country’s masses stood in solidarity for human rights and the abolishment of racial oppression. From 1990 onwards, Gilchrist’s publications began to change in tone, purpose, and content. Whether the atmosphere of the country had an impact on him or whether his spiritual conviction drove him is not clear. However, in later interviews with him, it was established that this change in attitude had nothing to do with the political climate of the time. He tributes this change of heart to the work and the move of the Holy Spirit in his life and ministry.

His writing would focus on dialogue. The defensive approach changed to what he called the “third alternative,”⁵³ which was love. It is noteworthy that Deedat’s name would barely appear in his writing, nor the bibliographies of his publications. 30 – 40-page booklets would now be outdated; Gilchrist began to write more extensively, producing more extensive publications with an average of 150-pages.

However, it must be understood that while Gilchrist’s tone began to change, his Evangelical convictions remained as strong as ever. The Bible remained the ultimate and final revelation of God, and Jesus Christ remained the only way to salvation. Gilchrist persisted in ending his books with a Gospel invitation.

4.4.1 Our Approach to Islam

In 1990, Gilchrist published *Our Approach to Islam: Charity or Militancy?*⁵⁴ It was a book that was instrumental in ushering in a dispensation of dialogue within Evangelical

⁵³ The ‘Third Alternative’ would become Gilchrist’s model of evangelism and dialogue with Muslims. He will continue to develop this idea in the further publications.

⁵⁴ Gilchrist, J. (1990). *Our Approach to Islam: Charity or Militancy*. Jesus to the Muslims: Benoni

circles in South Africa. However, for various reasons discussed later, the Pentecostal Church approached this publication with much skepticism. In the first chapter, Gilchrist described the “inherent nature” of militancy prevalent in Islam's religion. In other chapters, he laid out this pertinent question to the church: “How should we as Christian approach Muslims, even though Islam is inherently militant?” His answer would be, “Tolerance and Respect.”

He offered two extreme approaches to Islam. The first was a militant retaliation against Islam in the fashion of the early Crusaders, while the second approach is that of “apathy,” ignoring the religion altogether. Gilchrist would denounce both approaches and call for “a third approach” (pp 11). Describing this approach, he wrote, “There is no need for a militant approach towards such a people when the majority of them will warmly respond to love, kindness and compassion” (pp 13). Using the Apostle Paul's account in Acts 17:22-23, he establishes a biblical base for inter-religious dialogue that shows tolerance and love without compromising one's Evangelical convictions.

The following four chapters would be the most contentious. The Pentecost church would perceive it as a compromise. In the first section titled, “*Allah – The Supreme Being or a False God?*” Gilchrist would lay out his argument that Allah is given the attributes of the God of the Bible. He argued that the Arabic word for God, which is used in the Arabic Bibles, is the title “Allah.” He cautioned that Christians should not wrongly identify Allah with the worship of the Black Stone in the Ka'ba. In the book, he says Christians should not be militant.

In the second section titled, “*Yahweh or Allah – An appropriate comparison?*” Gilchrist argued that the latter is not a fair comparison. In his defense, he contended that,

Militant Christian writers say Allah cannot be a representation of the true God because, according to the Quran, He is not triune, he has no son, etc. well then, the Yahweh of the Jews today cannot be the true God either, because they maintain that he too is not triune, and also has no son. At least Islam acknowledges Jesus as a man sent from God, but the Jews say Yahweh did not send Jesus at all (pp 25).

On this subject, he concluded as follows “Our Gospel is not about God's identity, it is about the revelation of His love and kindness towards us in the gift of His Son Jesus

Christ” (pp 27).

The third section is titled, “Reviling Islam as a religion of idolatry.” Here, he rebuked the Church’s constant, unguided, non-evidenced reviling of Islam as “idolatrous, demonic and occultic” (pp 29). He warned that “This is extremely dangerous and will destroy our witness to the Muslims people of the world and will result in a backlash rather than a positive receptiveness” (pp 29). He called for selfless love and compassion and advised that,

Instead of seeking causes to revile Islam, we would do well to spend time studying its heritage and endeavour to relate more to Muslims where they are. Some have suggested that we should love the Muslims and hate Islam. On the contrary, I think we are far more likely to succeed in genuinely loving the Muslim and trying to understand Islam (pp 31).

In his concluding chapter, he encouraged the Church not to be afraid of the “Muslim Threat” and concluded as follows:

Today there is nothing Islam can do to stop the Lord Jesus from drawing out whoever He wishes from the Muslim ranks to become His disciples. And there is nothing Islam can do to thwart the predetermined progress of the Church. So, there is nothing to fear, nothing to protect. We are free to love the Muslims without having to worry about any of their aims or objectives (pp 40).

This publication was met with antagonism in Pentecostal circles. The three traditional Pentecostal church and their Pastors hold firmly to Pentecostal convictions. There is no grey area within these churches when it comes to a “theology of religions.” There is a rigid dichotomy between good and evil, Godly and demonic. Allah cannot be a “Supreme Being” if Yahweh of the Bible already filled that position. Therefore, Allah had to be a “false god.” Yahweh and Allah could not be the same God or even share the exact attributes. According to Pastors that were interviewed concerning this publication, any association between the name Allah and Yahweh would be a compromise. There remains division in this camp concerning the Halaal sign found on foods. Some have an attitude of apathy towards this subject, while this remains a sensitive issue to others. A detailed Pentecostal approach to the theology of religion, especially concerning Islam, will be discussed in Chapter seven of this thesis.

Interestingly enough, when his same book was handed to a Muslim Sheik by the researcher, he responded via “WhatsApp” with the following comment: (transcribed in exact WhatsApp language),

My brother in Christ, I trust that you are well God willing. I read through the booklet you forwarded me, and I must admit that this author is the first I have ever come across from the Christian community to ever speak so eloquently about the moderate approach to Islam. I agree with him fully that his proposed approach will have more impact in us than the usual one. I like the fact that he is not afraid to criticize his own while acknowledging the good in others. Extremism is a huge problem for all of us who are engaged in evangelical work of God. Thank you for sharing this material.

This book brought about a paradigm shift in Christian Muslim dialogue. The Muslim community welcomed the publication as a fair approach to interreligious dialogue.

4.4.2. Gilchrist’s Insertion into the Muslim Community.

Missions is not about sitting in a high tower writing academic material. Missions is “insertion” into the community you wish to reach. Insertion is an integral part of the Pastoral Cycle (Holland & Henriot: 1982). It is only when a researcher “inserts” himself into the context of the community that he can make an informed social analyses of its people and practices. The proper social analysis leads to an informed theological reflection. Pastoral planning may lead to physical action or the publication of material that would positively influence the community.

Gilchrist’s book “*Sufi Muslim Saints of India and South Africa*” is a reflection of adherence to the principles laid out in the Pastoral Cycle. After almost 18 years⁵⁵ of writing, he spent three years in Durban (1989-1991) and some time in India (1987) studying the lives and history of Sufi Muslims in India and South Africa, inserting himself into this community both nationally and internationally. His experience and accumulated knowledge would culminate in the writing of this book. Unlike his previous books, this publication was not about Muslim evangelism or dialogue.

⁵⁵ His first publication was printed in 1979, while this book was published in 1997, a period of 18 years had already lapsed.

The book is not an Evangelical analysis of Sufi Muslim Saints, nor does Gilchrist express his opinions about their practices. It is merely a documented historical account of the most prominent saints and their legacies. He explains, “No attempt has been made to express an opinion on this heritage, from either an Orthodox Muslim or Evangelical Christian perspective” (pp ii).

Gilchrist’s publication has been a unique contribution to the Islamic community in South Africa. There was no official publication covering the lives of Sufi Muslim Saints in South Africa before this one. For the first time in South Africa, an Evangelical could write a book for Muslims about Muslims without an opinion, analysis, or any type of criticism.

However, more than the book’s content, this publication reflects Gilchrist’s love, passion, and commitment to the Muslim Community. To him, the Muslim community was not merely a “target for evangelism”; it became a group of people that he had fallen in love with. In his publication on the prophet Muhammad,⁵⁶ he wrote, “It took a man of unique character and conviction to start a religion which today has almost a billion adherents.” In his Analysis of the Quran⁵⁷, he remarked, “I also came to respect it very highly, as a work honoured and revered as Holy Scripture by the Muslims of the world.” As the country began a transition towards democracy and a new dispensation, Gilchrist also began to take Muslim evangelism into a new dispensation, one of love, tolerance, and respect. His “Third Approach” became solidified in his ongoing publications.

4.5 Post- Apartheid Era: A New Dispensation with New Voices

In 1996, Ahmed Deedat suffered a severe stroke. He lost his voice and was bed-ridden for nine long years before he died in 2005. These were silent years for Deedat, but they were also years that tested Deedat’s influence. Did he inspire other Muslims who would continue his legacy of debating?

Deedat was a household name in South Africa, and his methods of polemics became effective tools in the Muslim community. His protégés would rise, and Gilchrist would have to deal with new voices and new challenges in the Muslim community in a Post -Apartheid era.

⁵⁶ Gilchrist, J. (1994). Muhammad: The prophet of Islam. Life Challenge Africa: Claremont

⁵⁷ Gilchrist, J. (1995). The Quran: The scripture of Islam. Life Challenge Africa: Claremont

Under the leadership of our newly elected President, Nelson Mandela, in 1994, inter-religious relations flourished. President Mandela initiated the National Forum of Religious Leaders (NFRL) with the WCRP (SA) serving as its secretariat. In 2003, under the leadership of President Thabo Mbeki, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) established the Independent Forum for Religious Broadcasting Panel (RBP). The new democratic era was an era of religious freedom. New voices in Muslim polemics were on the rise. The legacy of Deedat continued in a new breed of apologists. This new generation would now raise the same questions and arguments raised by Deedat. Once again, Gilchrist would have to stand up to give a defense. Called numerous times to debates, Gilchrist once again took the stage with two aspiring Muslim apologists, Bashir Vania and Mohammed Coovadia. Over the next few years, Vania and Coovadia raised the same topics as Deedat once again. The Deity of Jesus as the Son of God and the validity of the Bible as the Word of God came into question once again.

In an interview with Gilchrist,⁵⁸ he described the two apologists as “better to debate with than Deedat.” According to Gilchrist, Deedat was too aggressive in his debates, and sometimes, when cornered, he would attack his opponents personally. Gilchrist did not appreciate Deedat’s hostility and mockery, openly displaced in the debates. According to Gilchrist, while both Vania and Coovadia used the same arguments as Deedat, their approach was “civil” and, at times, dialogical. “Mud-slinging” mockery was not a part of their polemic artillery. This era also witnessed more international Muslim apologists’ coming to South Africa, and again Gilchrist was called to defend the faith. One such frequent Muslim apologist was Shabir Ally from Canada, the author of *Is Jesus God? The Bible says No!* It must be acknowledged that at this time, Gilchrist had published extensively and participated in debates locally and abroad. It is for this reason that he became the most recognized Christian apologist in Southern Africa. Every visiting Muslim apologist wanted to debate with Him; he was now busier debating than any other time in his career.

Gilchrist knew that the debates would not stop. This led to his 1999 publication of the book, *Facing the Muslim Challenge*. The book was written because he was frustrated with the short time allocated in each debate in which one could not make a proper detailed defense for the faith. He began noticing that while debating was becoming

⁵⁸ A telephonic interview held on Tuesday 21 April 2020 from 9:00am to 10:30am.

more frequent, they were also becoming more unproductive. In his book, he argued as follows,

What I have often discovered in lively debates with Muslims is certain attitudes on their part that are calculated to hinder profitable discussions. At best, Christians and Muslims should argue their positions with a common goal to discover God's ultimate truths. What often happens, however, is that Muslims seek only to frustrate Christian witness, putting forward their arguments as a smokescreen rather than as a platform for healthy interaction. Objections are repeatedly stated without any opportunity given for a Christian reply (pp 8).

While discouraged by the current way in which debates were held, Gilchrist indicated in the interview that debates had their place in society since they gave Christians an opportunity to stand in front of a Muslim audience and defend the best way possible faith. In this book, Gilchrist proposed the six most common arguments that Muslim apologists give to Christians. He investigated each objection and defended them all. The six Chapters of his book covers the most popular arguments presented during debates:

1. The integrity of the Bible as God's Word
2. The Doctrine of the Trinity
3. Jesus the Son of the Living God
4. The crucifixion and the atonement
5. Muhammad in the Bible?
6. The Gospel of Barnabas

In the interviews, he pointed out that these defenses were not another piece of the arsenal in the assault against Muslims but were a tool for authentic dialogue. He cautioned that "Christians need to show much patience when reasoning with Muslims in such cases" (pp 8). He challenged Christians to put aside the "Spirit of triumphalism" and adopt a spirit of love.

"In various seminars, I have repeatedly urged Christians to memorize the following proverb – if necessary, to write it out one thousand times until it sinks in:

I-S-L-A-M stands for **I Shall Love All Muslims**" (pp 11).

4.5.1 Sharing the Gospel with Muslims: Establishing common ground.

In 2003, Gilchrist published his Book, *Sharing the Gospel with Muslims*. Unlike his previous publication, *Facing the Muslim Challenge*, this book was not polemical in nature. Gilchrist presented three ideas pertinent to sharing the Gospel with Muslims. Firstly, he argued in favor of the Sovereignty of God in missions.

Are they going to trust God to do His own renewing work in calling out the sons of Ishmael to faith in Jesus Christ, or are they going to force the issue by finding human ways of persuading Muslims to become believers, often through methodologies, which seem to dilute the cost of true discipleship (pp 5)?

He defended his convictions that God can and will bring Muslims to salvation in His time, in His way. While Christians were called to share their faith with Muslims, they should not fabricate ways of enticing Muslims to faith in Christ. In presenting his case, he points out,

Primarily the Christian witness is not an attempt to persuade people to believe in the truth of the Gospel; it is, first and foremost, a call to men and women everywhere to be reconciled to God (pp 8).

Secondly, love must be the basis of sharing our faith with Muslims. Love must be genuine because pretense love will be easily exposed. Sharing your faith with Muslims may sometimes be a difficult task; it is only genuine love that would persist. “With a love for Muslims and the power of God’s Word in your hands, you too can be God’s own messenger to bring many of them to salvation” (pp 9).

His third idea is to use familiar stories found in both the Quran and the Bible as contact points that could lead to genuine dialogue. This became the main thrust of the book. In the same way that the Apostle Paul⁵⁹ used the writings of the people of Athens to relate the message of God to them, Christians should also be knowledgeable about the Quran; and use it as a tool for dialogue. He advised that “the most constructive way of using the Bible in witnessing to Muslims is to base our witness on the points of belief that we share in common with them” (pp 6).

The concept of establishing common ground with Muslims, and finding points of contact, is the main idea presented in the book. Ten Biblical and Quranic figures are

⁵⁹ The account of Paul at Athens, (Acts 17:22-23) seems to be his favourite passage of scripture that supports his idea of finding ‘common ground’ in Muslim Evangelism. Two of his previous books use this passage in this same context. This idea of ‘common ground’ will be explored in more details under the heading, ‘Gilchrist’s theology of religion’.

discussed in his first ten chapters. First, he uses Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, and Isaiah as the ten common prophets in both religious books. Then, using the Bible, he indicated how each of these ten figures portrayed or prophesied the coming of Jesus the Messiah. In the second part of his book, he analyzed the uniqueness of Christ in the Quran and the Bible. Finally, Gilchrist presented the case for the Divinity of Christ as the Son of God from His birth to His second coming.

In a sequel printed in 2009, titled *Knowing God personally*,⁶⁰ Gilchrist again analyzed figures found in the Quran and the Bible. Cain and Abel, Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah, and Jesus are analyzed. The researcher terms this study of Gilchrist as a “fulfillment theology of religion.” While he examined each of these key figures in the Quran, he showed how each one of them fell short of having a personal relationship with God. In the Quran, they were mere servants of Allah, submitted totally to His will for their lives. He termed the latter as “formal monotheism,” arguing that while God is being served, it is done in a “cold, formal” way without a “warm personal relationship.” However, when he described the exact figures from a biblical view, he depicted them as having a “personal relationship” with God and not viewed as servants (as in the Quran) but as Children of God.

He developed the theme of “salvation by faith” from the Book of Hebrews. Abel made his sacrifice by faith, Abraham left his home by faith, and Moses lived by faith (Hebrews 11:1-28). Christianity is depicted as a religion based on faith in God, while Islam is held as a religion based on “formalism” and works. While there are good traits in the Muslim religion, it fell short of becoming a “true religion” because it refused to see the fulfillment of faith found in the Bible.

While the 99 names (pp 15) of Allah depict His great attributes, yet again, Gilchrist viewed this as falling short of understanding the fullness of God’s attributes. Gilchrist argued that the title “Father” portrays the fullness of the Godhead. As a loving Father, He loves His Children and expects that love to be reciprocated. Using David as a prototype, he quoted extensively from the Psalms, showing David’s poetry of love towards the Father (Psalms 42:1-2).

In His final chapter, entitled, “The Holy Spirit: God’s indwelling presence” (pp 22-25), Gilchrist argued that no person could have a personal relationship with God without

⁶⁰ Gilchrist, J. (2009). *Knowing God Personally*. Christian Resource Ministries: Benoni

the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. He argued that the Holy Spirit is the only One that could take “formal monotheism” and change it into a living relationship with the God of the Bible. He purported that there could be no true religion or true relationship with God without the presence of the Holy Spirit.

4.5.2. The Quran and the Historical Jesus

In 2015, Gilchrist brought together all his material concerning Christ in the Quran, including his rebuttals into one publication, *The Quran and the Historical Jesus*⁶¹. The material was systematically compiled with some newer material added. More recent arguments concerning the death and the resurrection of Jesus, in detail. Gilchrist makes a bold statement right at the beginning of this publication, arguing:

There is no such thing as a Muslim Christology, only a denial of any uniqueness to Jesus as it packs Him into the catalogue of simple messengers of God who preceded Him like Abraham, Moses, and David (pp 11).

His introductory chapter argues that there is no Muslim Christology, just a reinvention of Christ in the Quran. He argues that the Agnostics of the second century reinvented Jesus, and so did Muhammad in the seventh century. In his analysis of the historical Jesus, he maintained that 19th-century German writers of the Enlightenment era stripped Jesus of His Divinity and reinvented a Jesus detached from anything supernatural. In later years, the American philosophers like N.T Wright, Marcus Borg, and Burton Mack, influenced by 2nd century Gnostics, continued to reinvent Jesus into either a social Reformer or a cynic sage. It is all these influences, says Gilchrist, that have influenced modern Muslim apologetics.

In this 155-page analysis of Jesus in the Quran, he traced the life of Jesus as presented by Muhammad, from His birth to His second coming. He systematically dissected what is written about Jesus, separating what was taken from the synoptic Gospels and what was copied from the Apocryphal Gospels. In this analysis, he sought to discover not only “why the Quran concedes so much to Jesus that testifies to his uniqueness but denigrates his heritage and makes historically false statements” (pp 11).

⁶¹ Gilchrist, J. (2015). *The Quran and the Historical Jesus*. Christian Resource Ministries: Benoni

While the Quran acknowledges the virgin birth and the sinless nature of Jesus, it fails to see its significance, nor does it even attempt to explain the reason for its uniqueness. Again, while the Quran attests to the uniqueness of the miracles Jesus performed, it fails to see or explain the implications of these phenomena. While the crucifixion is detailed in all the synoptic gospels, the Quran allocates one verse to this event, and in that same verse, it denies His crucifixion: without qualification. Gilchrist argued that while the Quran acknowledges the miraculous birth, miracles, ascension, and return of Jesus, it denies the natural death of Jesus. Why accept the miraculous and reject the natural?

In the second part of the book, Gilchrist dealt with the titles of Jesus from both a Biblical and Quranic perspective. Jesus as the “Son of God” is denied in the Quran while accepted as a central doctrine in the Bible. He traces 4th-century Arian teaching that denies the sonship of Jesus and shows how this heresy was accepted into the Quran. The Title of Jesus as Al-Masih (The Messiah) seems to be one of Gilchrist’s favorite topics. He traced this title of Jesus from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Once again, he showed how the Quran makes statements without qualifying the account. He concluded the book by analyzing the title, “Word from Allah,” which again is given to Jesus without any clarifications to its significance.

Gilchrist understands Christ in the Quran as a “reinvented figure,” which can best be described in the following diagram, illustrating the Quran’s mixing of information to reinvent a Christ that will suit the purposes of Muhammad.

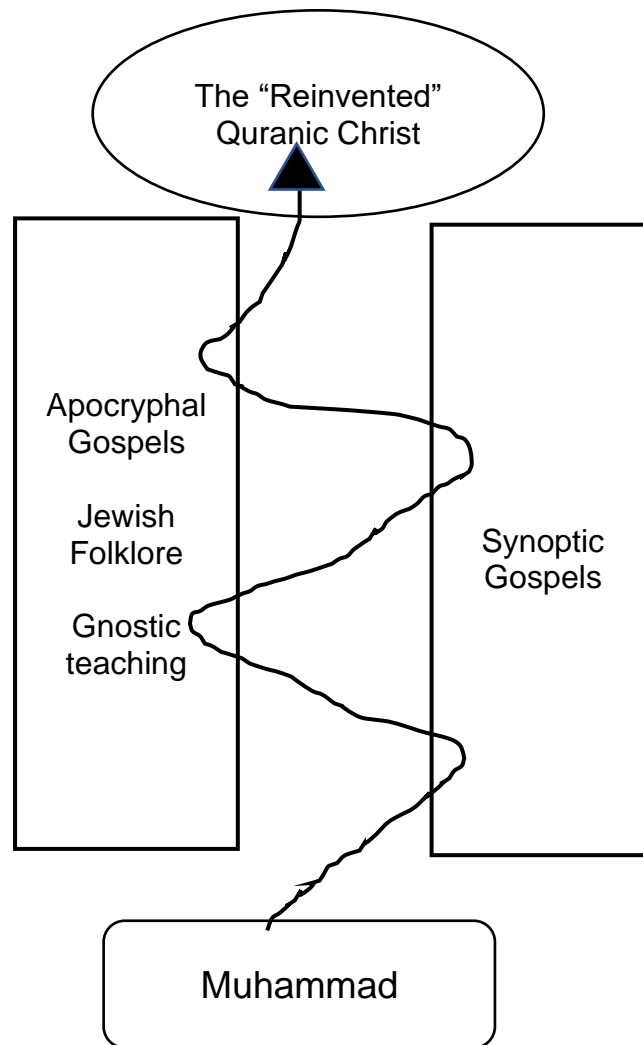


Figure 10: The Reinvented Quranic Christ

4.6 Gilchrist's Approach to the Prophet Muhammad

In the previous chapter on Ahmed Deedat, a section on his approach to Jesus as the founder of the Christian faith was discussed. It would be fair to do the same with Gilchrist and devote a section on his approach to the Prophet Muhammad, the founder of the Muslim faith.

The Prophet Muhammad has been a controversial figure over the centuries, loved by some and hated by others. Not much has changed recently. Before analyzing Gilchrist's approach to Muhammad, a survey of the arena of other publications that came out recently will be done. It would be more appropriate to evaluate Gilchrist within this context.

Most of the Christian world, including South Africa, has treated the Prophet Muhammad in a disparaging manner. Often, out of ignorance and sometimes out of “Christian conviction” that has already been marred by “Militant Christian crusading” preachers. Ulfat Azizus Samad concurs with this analysis. He adds,

Nothing brings out the contrast between Islam and Christianity so much as a comparison between the Islamic attitude towards Jesus and the Christian attitude towards Muhammad. For, while Muslims believe in Jesus as a great Prophet of God and love and respect him as they love and respect the Prophet Muhammad, the Christians not only reject Muhammad but are never tired of speaking about him in the most disparaging manner possible (p.28).

Many modern Christian writers have done precisely what Ulfat Azizus Samad has projected. Peter Hammond, who once also debated Deedat, authored *Slavery, terrorism, and Islam*. Hammond dedicated a chapter in his book to the life and works of Muhammad, and like many during his time,⁶² filled those pages with negativity and antagonism towards the Prophet. He views the Prophet as the architect of jihad in its violent form and the organizer of assassinations and mass murders.⁶³ He chose to make mention of many events in the life of the Prophet that would unfairly paint him as nothing but a villain. On one occasion, he wrote,

Muhammad ordered the men to convert to Islam or face death. When they refused, up to 900 were decapitated at the ditch, in front of their wives and children. The widows were subsequently raped and sold into slavery. Muhammad himself chose one Raihana Bint Amr as his concubine (pp 103).

Missiologist Don Richardson continued in the same vein and argued that,

Muslim apologists insist that Mohammad urged his followers to perpetuate violence only in self-defense. This is a false claim. There is no evidence that the three Jewish clans Mohammad purged from Medina ever drove Muslims from their homes or physically assaulted them (pp 53).

In addition, he dedicated another chapter in his book, titled “Polygamy and Islam’s Prophet,” to question the moral principles of the prophet.

Dr. Richard Booker, in his chapter on Muhammad, writes,

⁶² Those who wrote about Muhammad after the terrorist bombing of the Twin Towers in the U.S.A on 11th September 2001.

⁶³ Page 97-133 entitled, “Muhammad, the Caliph and Jihad.

From the very beginning, Mohammed established Jihad as the way to spread Islam. You either accepted his message, or you were beheaded. Modern Islamic terrorists are following Mohammed's example when they behead their enemies (pp 63).

In the introductory chapter of his book, *Jesus and the Jihadis*, Craig Evans asked, "Would Muhammad join ISIS?". The rest of the book answers the question with a unanimous, Yes. Suffice to say that the rest of the book would justify his answer by pulling out historical data and selectively quoting Quranic verses that would vilify Muhammad. The same type of vilifying continued in the publication of Nabeel Qureshi, who commented, in his chapter on Muhammad,

There are many intractable problems that arise when studying Muhammad's life, including questions about the historical reliability of the sources, discrepant archaeological findings, the ages of Quranic manuscripts, inconsistencies in the geographic reports, foreign accounts of early Islam, and problematic merchant records (pp 41).

Concerning the authenticity of Muhammad's revelation, Anees Zaka argued that the, Underlying physiological source of Muhammad's experience was the combined effect of hydrocephalus and epilepsy. These episodes of sharp sensory hallucinations, recurrent dreams, and distorted perceptions of reality impaired his memory (pp 34).

She also argued that these episodes led Muhammad to mix pre-Islamic legends, Biblical narratives, and fanciful tales into what he called "revelation."

Finally, the apologist James White, in his chapter on Mohammad, argued the point that Mohammad is not mentioned in the Bible, and there are absolutely no prophecies concerning him. Unlike the others, White stuck to his Evangelical convictions but did not vilify the Prophet.

On the other end of the spectrum, Muslim authors exalt and honour the Prophet as the greatest of all the other Prophets since he is the final Messenger of God. No vices can be seen in his character, decision, or actions; hence his life can and should be imitated by all Muslims. In his biography of the Prophet, Dr. Husam Deed began by quoting some of the greatest non-Muslim historians and philosophers as they comment on the character of Muhammad. He quoted Thomas Carlyle as saying, "How one man single handily, could weld warring tribes and wandering Bedouins into the most powerful civilized nation in less than two decades" (pp 15).

Describing the Prophet's moral purity, Safiur-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri, argued that "Allah's guidance and care, no doubt, detached him from all repulsive or evil practices. Even when he tried to obey his instincts to enjoy some of life's pleasures" (pp 81). Yusuf Islam⁶⁴ agrees and adds, "Endless are the words which have been spoken to describe his noble life. No one can fail to be moved or inspired by the magnificence of his radiant character" (pp iii).

While the enemies of Muhammad would call him a harsh dictator, John Adair argued that he was one of the humblest persons. However, as a leader called by Allah, he could not be a compromiser. Adair explained as follows, "In his role as Prophet, Muhammad was not a reasonable man, not even by the standards of his day. But reasonable men do not change the world" (pp 80). Muslims gave great honour to the Prophet; to be obedient and submissive to Muhammad, is like being obedient and submissive to Allah Himself. Hence, any attack on the Prophet would be interpreted as an attack on Allah Himself. To surrender one's life to Muhammad is to surrender one's life to Allah. Maulana Manzoor Naumani⁶⁵ made this fact clear when he asserts,

In the light of Allah and the Prophet, a true and committed Muslim is a person whose devotion to Allah and His Apostle is greater than anything else. Islam really, is nothing besides surrender and submission to Allah and the Prophet (p.67).

4.6.1 The Third Approach

Gilchrist mentioned many times in different publications about the "third approach," which he advocated as an approach to Muslim Christian dialogue. This section aimed to test this "third approach"; and see how Gilchrist navigates through all the antagonism against the Prophet and still holds on to his evangelical convictions.

To analyze Gilchrist's approach to the Prophet, the researcher will analyze his essential publication concerning the Prophet, *Muhammad: The Prophet of Islam*. In this 143-page book, he attempts to objectively outline the life and the times of the Prophet. He begins by acknowledging the South African churches' antagonism towards Muhammad, explaining, "Muhammad has been variously regarded in Christian writings and historically his image has hardly been a positive one" (pp ii).

⁶⁴ Islam, Y. (1995). The life of the last Prophet Muhammad. Islamic Trust: Lahore.

⁶⁵ Manzoor, M. (2008). Do you know what Islam is? Adam Publishers: New Delhi.

Gilchrist then introduces his 'Third Approach,' "There remains a third approach which the Church could adopt" (pp i). He outlined his approach by stating,

"The purpose here is not to reverse this image but rather to present him as impartially as possible, not glossing over aspects of his life that appear to be justifiably censurable but also not failing to give credit where it is due" (pp ii).

His third approach was an objective analysis of the life of Muhammad without failing to give the necessary credit. Unlike the previous authors listed earlier, Gilchrist did not search for all the negative historical events and fables concerning the life of Muhammad or turn him into a villain. Nor did he attempt to focus only on the words of Muhammad concerning war and turn him into a militant dictator that advocates nothing else but violence. Taking part in this type of exercise is unethical because it advocates distortion and deformation of character. No person is made up of absolute evil, and to paint any person in such a light would be unbalanced and unfair. Gilchrist was not a part of this type of mudslinging and slander.

Instead, he first called on Christians to understand the high honour that Muhammad holds in the heart of every Muslim.

Muhammad becomes absolutely central to the hopes, desires, convictions and yearning of the average Muslim. Over the many centuries of Islam this image has taken on messianic proportions and, while all Muslims will boldly state that they worship Allah alone and that their prophet was only a faithful messenger, it is obvious that his status in the world of Islam is such as to place him almost as an essential mediator between Allah and his people (pp 121).

Without a balanced understanding of Muhammad, no Christian can effectively have an authentic dialogue with Muslims. In agreement with Gilchrist, Ron George⁶⁶ also argued that "A duty imposes itself upon every Christian who desires to engage in brotherly dialogue with Muslims to study the life of the Prophet Muhammad" (pp 117). Gilchrist reiterates this sentiment, adding that without respect for Muhammad, "it is not likely that a Christian seeking to reach out to Muslims will easily gain a response from them" (pp ii).

⁶⁶ George, R. (2007). *Newer paths in Muslims-Christian understanding*. Xulon Press: USA.

His “third approach” firstly fosters a spirit of respect for the Prophet. Respect must first be based on knowledge about the Prophet, so he called on Christians to at least read about the life of the Prophet so that they could understand his historical context, personality, experiences, and place he had in the heart of every Muslim. When studying the Prophet's life, it would be advantageous to the Christian to begin with a Muslim perspective. Muslim authors should be consulted so that one can read history while also experiencing the love and devotion with which it is written. Reading about his life, experiences, and teaching does not mean that the Christian should accept everything. Christians are not asked to compromise on his/her Christian conviction. A study of the prophet's life is to gain knowledge, which would lead to some amount of respect for his person. It would also help to make a balanced verdict and informed decisions.

In discussing his character, Gilchrist admitted that,

No one can study the life of Muhammad without being impressed with his rise from a mere citizen of Mecca to the undisputed role of the leader of the Arabs throughout the Arabian Peninsula (pp 56).

Gilchrist appreciated that the prophet was single-minded in what he believed was his call from Allah. Nevertheless, with much opposition from his people, accusing him of madness, he was relentless in his mission and did not give up in the face of ridicule and persecution.

His mission was to turn a nation away from idol worship and point them to a monotheistic understanding of God. He did this wholeheartedly, sacrificially, and unwaveringly; this should account for some credit, even among his enemies. In a strictly historical sense, he was a leader par excellence. Gilchrist argues that “those Christians who seek to degrade the Prophet of Islam and demonize him in every possible way have never seriously tried to evaluate him in the light of his generation” (pp 58). George Ron again concurred with Gilchrist by adding,

To achieve an objective evaluation of the true greatness of Muhammad's religious personality and his mission, we have to bear in mind at all times the historical, geographical, and human conditions in which his mission was born and developed (pp 117)

The “third approach” that Gilchrist purports is one of respect to Muhammad, but also one that is true to Evangelical Christian convictions. While not degrading and mocking Muhammad, Gilchrist stood firm in his convictions. In the introduction of his book, he

was adamant that he did not believe that Muhammad was the final recipient of divine revelation: "On such occasions, the Muslim reader, in particular, should not presume that the writer is sympathetic with or agrees with the Muslim perspective" (p. ii). Wherever Gilchrist opposes the Muslims' perspective, it is never done in arrogance, disrespect, or mockery. This is the key to the "third approach."

In line with his "third approach," Gilchrist has the utmost respect for the Prophet but does not agree that he is without fault or vices. He argued that while Muhammad views Jesus as "sinless," he saw the need to seek forgiveness from Allah for his sins. Gilchrist did not believe that Mohammed was the last and final prophet sent by God or that "it is improper to critically evaluate him against the background of standards in the traditional Christian world" (pp 60), especially since the Prophet claimed that he is the final universal messenger to the whole of humankind, the seal of all the prophets.

Gilchrist argued, "When Muhammad not only claims to match Jesus Christ but even to displace him at some points, he again invited history to judge him by the most precise standards" (pp 61). In order to evaluate Muhammad's claim as the final universal prophet, he opened the door to the public to scrutinize his words, decisions, and actions. He invited the Christian public to investigate his relationships with Jews and Christians, his treatment of his enemies, his instruction concerning warfare, and more specifically, his marriages.

Muhammad's claim that he holds the final revelation of God, the Quran, calls on the public to investigate these claims. His entire religious experience in the cave, his visions of heaven, and his episodes of falling into a trance are now left wide open for investigation. Furthermore, he underscores the authenticity of the Bible (Injeel), and the Torah would now call for a stricter analysis and dissection of the Quran, which he claims as infallible, inspired, and inerrant.

By setting himself up as the standard of submission to God, he has invited the public to evaluate his actions in times of peace and in times of war. Gilchrist points out the severe contradictions in his call and his actions as the universal Prophet:

For all his greatness, Muhammad's character is very seriously compromised by the stories in the earliest works of Islamic traditions, which disclose, in simple narrative form, how he deviously sanctioned the slaughter of his enemies, especially those who did him no other harm than to irk him with their poetic satires (p.69).

Gilchrist disagrees with the Muslims writers who “often argue that such action was typical of those practiced by most military leaders in wartime” since Muhammad was no typical leader; he claimed to be the final Prophet of God to humankind.

Gilchrist’s “third approach” abhors disrespect and mockery but promotes objective criticism. Gilchrist has the utmost respect for Muhammad as a historical leader par excellence, which displays courage, tenacity, and commitment in the face of insurmountable challenges. However, Gilchrist also believes that Muhammad was not and could never be the final Prophet with the final revelation of God to humankind.

4.7 Gilchrist’s Approach to the Quran

Gilchrist first began reading the Quran in 1972. Disturbed by the fact that the Quran denies the crucifixion and the deity of Jesus as the Son of God, he began to read it with the sole purpose of finding faults that would discredit its authenticity (1995: i). His attitude would change later, but his antagonism was fuelled by the blatant attack of Deedat on the Bible. Deedat dedicated an entire book⁶⁷ (which was distributed internationally) to discredit the authenticity of the Bible as the Word of God. In his publication on the miracle of the Quran⁶⁸, Deedat glorified the Quran as a “miracle from God” while discrediting the Bible as a book full of plagiarism. Brother Mark responds to Deedat’s (83 pages) allegation with a 389-page book titled, “A perfect Quran or so it was made to appear to them?” In his opening statement, he quoted, “the Quran challenges men to test it.⁶⁹ It declares itself to be able to stand the most rigorous test that could be produced on earth” (2000:9-10). Like many during his time, the burning of the copies of the Quran by Uthman the second Caliph⁷⁰ featured frequently. In his book *The cross and the crescent*, Phil Parshall also defended the Bible against Deedat’s attacks. He writes, “The problem area relates to what Deedat describes as the obvious errors and contradictions which are found in the Bible” (2002:81). He also spent much time deliberating on the burning of the copies of the Quran under Uthman. It appeared that Deedat’s attack on the Bible led to others

⁶⁷ Deedat’s book, “Is all of the Bible God’s Word?” was distributed freely, internationally. His blatant accusations and tone of mockery led to many international Bible scholars publishing material to defend the Bible from his onslaughts.

⁶⁸ Deedat’s 1991 publication on the supremacy of the Quran and the errors in the Bible was another publication that was freely distributed by the thousands. His publications caused much animosity between the Christian and Muslim community in South Africa.

⁶⁹ He quotes from Surah 15:9; 17:88; 11:13; and 10:38.

⁷⁰ Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 6 #510. p. 479.

responding with similar attacks on the Quran. Christian authors like Andreas Maurer (2008:43), Anees Zaka (2004:77), James White (2013:55), John Azumah (2008:47), and Colin Chapman (2007:91) all wrote extensively on the event of the burning of copies of the Quran and the re-writing of a new copy by Uthman. Gilchrist would write on this subject, but purely from a historical perspective.

Unlike the authors mentioned above, Gilchrist (1995: i) records his “change of heart” towards approaching the Quran:

My attitude soon changed and, while I believe to this day that the book invites critical analysis like any other, I also came to respect it very highly as a work honoured and revered as holy scripture by the Muslims of the world.

Gilchrist asked that Christians involved in Muslim evangelism and apologetics to approach the Quran with respect, even when they believed that it was not the last revelation of God.

In the interview, he called for openness and respect when Christians approach the Quran. He rejected the presupposition of viewing the Quran as a “book of war” as Don Richardson (2003:21-29) did or as a “book of terrorism” as Peter Hammond (2005:67-76) does. Antagonistic presuppositions would not lead to an honest analysis of the Quran. He believed, “When the Bible and the Quran are approached openly and objectively, God will surely grant to the sincere enquirer proven knowledge of that which is genuinely His Word and truth” (1980:5).

Respect and openness must be accompanied by a third ingredient, which is understanding. Many times, Muslims argue that the English Bible has “changed” over the years, and therefore cannot be reliable as the Word of God. Gilchrist (1980:14-15) asked for understanding concerning this issue. Using Surah 43:61 as his case in point.

“And Jesus shall be a sign for the coming of the hour of judgment.”

(surah 43:61, Yusuf Ali).

“And lo! Verily there is a knowledge of the hour”.

(surah 43:61, Muhammad Pickhall).

Concerning the above translations, Gilchrist (1980:14-15) argued that:

Each of these sentences purports to be a translation of the same Arabic text 43:61. The difference between them are glaring obvious. The first is from the widely accepted translation of Yusuf Ali and the second from equally accepted translator Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall. Now

Yusuf Ali's translations was first published in 1934 while Pickthall's was published in 1930. What would be the response if we were to suggest that the Quran was changed in 1934 from what it was in 1930? We would immediately be politely informed that the original Quran is in Arabic and that these passages are only different interpretations in the English translations of the original Arabic. So, we also plead with you, the Muslim reader, to understand that slightly different interpretations in the English translations of the Bible are not in any way proofs of 'changes' in the Bible.

Gilchrist approached the Quran with respect, openness, and a call for understanding. This approach does not water down his evangelical conviction that the Bible alone is the final Revelation of God's Word to humankind. In agreement with Brother Mark, Gilchrist also pointed out that the Quran challenges humankind to test it. Gilchrist would take up this challenge to test the validity and the authenticity of the Quran. However, this he did with great care and reverence, considering the high esteem it holds within the Muslim Community. The 1977 Muslim Christian Research group, "Groupe de Recherches Islamo-Chretien⁷¹" set out three rules for anyone going into dialogue with Muslims concerning the Quran and the Bible.

- Firstly, know your Bible as a professional.
- Secondly, have adequate knowledge of the Quran, including some knowledge of Arabic.
- Thirdly, to conduct all encounters in a friendly manner.

Gilchrist (1995: ii) practiced this approach. He is not just a theologian, but he has taken the time to study Arabic, the language of the Quran.

Fourteen years ago, I learnt how to read Arabic for the first time and since then have obtained an extremely limited knowledge of the Arabic language. In the first three chapters of his book, *The Quran: Scripture of Islam*, he allowed the Quran to "speak for itself" as he explains all the practices and doctrines of Islam which flow from the Quran.

However, in chapter four, titled "The origin and sources of the Quran," Gilchrist critically analyzed the origin and the sources of the Quran, arguing that there were

⁷¹ The finding of the research group was published by Maryknoll in a book titled, "The challenge of the Scriptures: The Bible and the Quran" (1989).

many non-Arabic words in the Quran. He maintained that the word “Quran” was not even an Arabic word but was taken from Syriac Christians during that time. It meant ‘reading’ in the Syriac dialect.

Gilchrist continued that there were also concepts found in the Quran that had already been used previously by other religions. One such concept pertains to the “balance” on which each person’s sins and good deeds would be weighed on judgment day⁷². This concept, he contended, was borrowed from an old Persian Pahlavi book predating the Quran, known as the “Rashnu.” A similar theme, he argued, is also found in both the apocryphal book known as the “Testament of Abraham” and the famous Egyptian book known as the “Book of the dead,” also predated the writing of the Quran. The Genesis account of Cain digging a hole in the ground to bury Abel, because he saw a raven digging a hole to bury its partner, is also viewed as borrowed material, but from the Jewish folklore, from a fable known as “Pirke Rabbi Eliezer” which is contained in the Talmudic writings.

Gilchrist argued that the story of the palm trees that bowed low for Mary to take some of its fruits, and the stream that miraculously began to flow from its roots to give Mary water⁷³, was taken from the Buddhist Pali Canon. It is the same story that is repeated at the birth of Gautama Buddha. When Buddha was born, the same event occurred as his mother Maya sat under a palm tree.

Finally, Gilchrist analyzed the “wide-eyed maidens” mentioned in the Quran for the benefits of all Muslim males that would be found faithful and enter Heaven⁷⁴. Again, he found striking parallels in each Zoroastrian works and earlier Arabian tale. Gilchrist (1995:98) added, “Zoroastrians believed these maidens to be female spirits, living in the air and connected with the stars and the light.”

Based on these findings and his analysis, while still respecting the Quran, Gilchrist concluded that it could not be a divinely inspired book. Therefore, it was not God’s last testament for humankind.

In the final chapter of his book titled, “The Compilation of the Text of the Quran,” Gilchrist analyzed the compilation and transmission of the Quran historically’ in fragments from after the death of the Prophet Muhammad to the canonizing of the Quran under Uthman the second Caliph of Islam. The first Caliph Abu Baker, the

⁷² The ‘Mizan’ Surah 42:17, Surah 7:8-9.

⁷³ Found in Surah 19:22-26

⁷⁴ Found Surah 52:20, 55, 72-74, known in the Quran as ‘houris or huwri’.

successor of the Prophet, realized that many who could recite the Quran were killed in the battle of Yamama⁷⁵. Therefore, he called on Zaid ibn Thabit, who knew how to recite the Quran since the time of the Prophet, to compile a written codex of the text.⁷⁶ Zaid did this from both memory and fragments written on stone, wood, and leaves. During the time of the second Caliph, Uthman, other close companions of Mohammad, compiled other written codices in use. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud and Ubayy ibn Ka'b⁷⁷ had written unofficial codices. Disputes arose as to which was the official Quran. Uthman used Zaid's codex as the official codex to avoid political tension, with the possibility of division within the Muslim community. He did this for the sake of standardizing one text for the whole Muslim community. All other Qurans, including those of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud and Ubayy ibn Ka'b, were then collected and burnt. This event is recorded by Al-Bukhari (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol6, p.479).

Uthman sent to every Muslim province one copy of what they had copied and ordered that all the other Quranic materials, whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, be burnt.

Based on this historical analysis of the compilation and transmission of the Quran, Gilchrist concluded that the Quran was not infallible, inerrant, or inspired.

However, he motivated Christians not to discard the Quran completely, as it could be used as a tool to reach Muslims. He found that there were points of contact in the Quran that could be used in dialogue, as well as all the Biblical events recorded in the Quran. He dedicated an entire book, "Sharing the Gospel with Muslims" to advocate this method of using the Quran as a dialogical tool. Others like Ron George, Sammy Tanagho, and even Hans Kung subscribed to this method of using the Quran as a starting point for dialogue.

4.8 Gilchrist's Theology of Religions

Gilchrist found himself caught up in the storm that Deedat started. He stood up in defense against all Deedat's accusations against the deity of Jesus and the authenticity of the Bible. Responding with debates and small booklets to the publication of a series of books, Gilchrist became the voice of Evangelical Christians

⁷⁵ Recorded in the Hadith: Ibn Abi Dawud, Kitab al-Masahif, p.83.

⁷⁶ Recorded in the Hadith: Sahih al Bukhari, Vol. 6, p. 477.

⁷⁷ The Codex of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud held sway at Kufa while the codex of Ubayy ibn Ka'b became the standard text in Damascus.

in South Africa. He did not write specifically on the “*theology of religions*.” However, through his books, debates, and interviews, his approaches to other religions, specifically Islam, can be analyzed.

Before investigating Gilchrist’s “theology of religions,” the term must first be explained. Westerlund (2003:264) describes this term as “the way in which people within a certain religion view other religions.” With over 30 publications and numerous debates and lectures to glean through, it would not be difficult to analyze his views towards Islam. David Bosch (1993:474) adds that this discipline evolved only since 1960 and asked the questions, “Who are these people of different faiths?” and “What should our attitude be towards them?” These questions will be answered by personal interviews with Gilchrist and in analyzing his publications. This section will be categorized under two headings.

- What is Gilchrist’s Attitude towards other religions? David Lochhead’s four different classifications will be used: isolation, hostility, competition, and partnership.
- What is Gilchrist’s theological approach towards other religions? Under this heading, the three most commonly used approaches will be analyzed: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism.

4.8.1 Gilchrist’s Attitude towards other religions.

In his book ‘Dialogical imperative,’ Lochhead lays out four scenarios, four attitudes towards other religions within specific periods in history. These four scenarios also depict four attitudes towards people of other religions. They are labeled as isolation, hostility, competition, and partnership. I will briefly discuss each scenario and attempt to place Gilchrist within the appropriate bracket. Then, the same methodology used to place Deedat in an appropriate bracket will be used for Gilchrist in the applicable bracket.

- Isolation: In this scenario, Lochhead describes the distancing of religious groups, either geographically, culturally, or politically.

Within the South African context, there was a time when the scenario of “isolation” would have applied. It would be within the context of the Group Areas Act of 1950. However, this Apartheid policy did not keep Gilchrist isolated from the Indian community. He did the work of Muslim evangelism in every Indian community in the “Transvaal” and spent three years in Durban working among the Muslim Indians. He was one of the very few “white” evangelists’ in the Indian communities. In the introduction of most of his publications, he writes about his pleasant (and some unpleasant) experiences in the homes of many Indian Muslims. He was the primary catalyst in the training of Indian Pastors for the work of evangelism among the Muslims.

- Hostility: Lochhead describes this scenario as a period of hostility between religious groups. This hostility could range from verbal attacks to physical violence.

While physical violence would not describe the relations between Christians and Muslims in South Africa, we cannot rule the scenario of hostility out. There was more hostility from the Church against Islam than there was from Islam against the Church. South Africa is a “Christian Country” that had all the resources and backing from Government to sponsor its attack against Islam. Deedat is viewed as a hero within the Muslim community because he “hit back” forcefully against this attack. Hostility was seen in the publications of material by both religions. Gilchrist would not get involved in the hostility, but he would stand to defend the Christian faith against the attacks of Deedat. Gilchrist avoids using hostile, offensive, or derogatory language in his publications. Mockery and ridicule are not found in his publications. He steered clear from any form of hostility in his writing since he continued to visit homes of Indian Muslims across the country.

- Competition: Lochhead describes this scenario as religious communities offering their religious experiences as better, more logical, or accessible than the other.

Like Deedat, Gilchrist would also fit well in this scenario. While Deedat tries to prove that the Quran was a superior book, Gilchrist would object and present the Bible as Superior. Most of the publications of Gilchrist would carry a competitive element,

always showing the Christian way as more logical, more accessible, and more superior. Every publication would end with an invitation to Muslims to follow this “better way.” Today the same spirit of competitiveness pervades within Muslim Christian relations. Debates have become one way of keeping this competitive attitude alive and vibrant. Gilchrist continues in debates, and lectures worldwide, always presenting Christianity as the “better way.”

- Partnership: The Apartheid era was the golden age of partnership between the liberal Christians and the Muslim community, as they fought side by side against the oppressive regime.

There was only one enemy, and it was the Apartheid Government. However, both Deedat and Gilchrist were single-minded in their mission. To fight a spiritual battle, not a political one. They stayed clear from getting involved in the political situation of the day. Neither their lectures nor their publication addressed the evils of Apartheid. They saw no need for Muslims and Christians to work together in the fight against this evil. There was a great schism between the two religions, and the only bridge between them was the bridge of ‘conversion.’

4.8.2 Gilchrist’s Theological approach towards other religions.

Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism are the three most common approaches towards other religions. Deedat’s theology of religions was analyzed, and he was positioned in the “exclusivist” group. Gilchrist’s theology of religion will be analysed, and he will also be placed within an appropriate category.

- Exclusivism: “Exclusivism is the idea that only one religion or religious denomination is true and that beliefs and practices in other religions, therefore, are false to the extent that they conflict with this religion” (Westerlund. 2003:263). Salvation is only in Christ; one must respond to the Gospel to be saved (Knitter. 1985:12).

Firstly, Gilchrist is placed in this category because he boldly stated that he was an “exclusivist” in no uncertain terms in a telephonic interview had with him⁷⁸. While he subscribes to this school of theology, Gilchrist still advocates tolerance and respect for the Muslim religion. Secondly, he displays this belief system in all his books. His books always end with a call to accept Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation. In his book, “Knowing God personally,” he pleads with Muslims to embrace Jesus as their Saviour. He pleads, as Jesus puts it, “I am the door; if anyone enters, he will be saved.” (John 10:9). “That door remains open until he returns. It remains open for you” (2009:25). In his book, “A comparative study of the Quran and the Bible,” he boldly declares, “Accordingly to the religion of God is that which is contained in the revelations of God in the Bible and therefore Christianity, and not Islam, is the world’s true religion and revelation” (1980:33). Other exclusivist statements are found in several of his publications:

- “Will you not receive forgiveness of your sins in His name?” (1979:27)
- “Will you not rather turn to Him who can save your soul?” (1980:31)
- “Will you not bow to Him as your Lord and Saviour?” (1986:31)

- Inclusivism: Inclusivism holds to the idea that there is a possibility of revelation beyond one’s religion. There is a possibility of some salvific presence of God in other religions. “Salvation is only in Christ, but its benefits go beyond the church and the hearing of the Gospel” (Knitter, 1985:13).

Gilchrist would not associate himself with the above definition of inclusivism. However, he saw a salvific presence in the titles that are given to Jesus in the Quran. Therefore, he spends much time in some of his publications showing how these titles could lead Muslims to a complete understanding of the Biblical Jesus. He focuses primarily on the title of “Al-Masih-Isa” (Jesus the Messiah). Four publications⁷⁹ focused on this title as Gilchrist tries to lead Muslims into seeing Jesus as the long-anticipated Messiah, the One who is Saviour of the world.

⁷⁸ A telephonic interview on 22 April 2020 at 9am – 10am

⁷⁹ The Uniqueness of Jesus in the Quran and the Bible (1979), The Titles of Jesus in the Quran and the Bible (1979), Al-Masih-Isa: The glory of Jesus the Messiah (1986) and The Quran and the Historical Jesus (2015).

Gilchrist sees Christianity as the fulfillment of God’s revelation within the school of thought in inclusivism, while Islam only has some Biblical truths. However, these biblical truths in the Quran are insufficient for salvation, and therefore Muslims must embrace Christianity to find fulfillment in God’s revelation. David Bosch (1981) describes the rise and the crux of the theology of fulfillment.

The rise of liberal theology and the birth of the new discipline of comparative religion set the stage for an approach according to which religions could be compared and graded on an ascending scale. In the Western world, there was no doubt, however, about which religion stood at the pinnacle. In almost every respect, every other religion was deficient when compared with Christianity (pp 479).

Gilchrist hopes that the message of Jesus Christ, specifically in His title, can play a preparatory role in leading a Muslim to the complete revelation of Christ as the Son of God.

His school of thought can be diagrammed as follows:

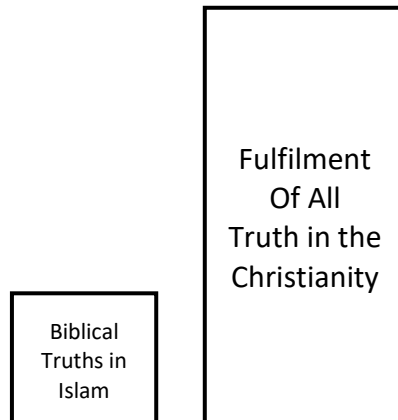


Figure 11: Christianity, the Fulfilment of all Truth.

- Pluralism (Cooper 2013):

Pluralism maintains that all major religions are legitimate expressions of humankind’s response to the divine. When understood in this way, religious pluralism is the view that not only is it a verifiable fact that there

are many religions in the world, but each of the major religions should be understood as acceptable and sufficient systems of worship (p158).

The chief teacher of this view is John Hick of Claremont Graduate School in California, who first advocated it in his book "God and the universe of faiths."

In the researcher's interview with Gilchrist, he stated categorically that he does not subscribe to this worldview⁸⁰. As an Evangelical, he could not see all religions as legitimate. He believed that the church's missionary zeal is found in its exclusivist worldview, and that the church's missionary zeal will be destroyed if it has to ever succumb to pluralism.

4.9 Conclusion

From the early years, Gilchrist proposed the "third approach." Not hostility towards Islam, nor apathy towards Muslims. He called for mutual respect between Muslims and Christians. Respect that should be extended to the Bible and the Quran, and the Prophet Muhammad and Jesus. However, he also asks that Christians uphold their Evangelical convictions that honor Jesus as the third person of the Trinity and the Bible as God's final revelation to humankind.

CHAPTER 5

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE SUNNI MUSLIM COMMUNITY, THE QURAN AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE.

5.1 Introduction

Fundamentalism, terrorism, human rights violations, and rejection of interfaith dialogue have been put into a basket and labeled as popular Islam. The media have

⁸⁰ A telephonic interview on 22 April 2020 at 9am – 10am

propagated this view. More people in South Africa have access to the internet and are constantly on social media networks that portray a negative picture of Islam. Many Christians in South Africa fell into the trap of accepting this popular opinion. They judge Islam by the actions and attitudes of a few radical Muslims. This only leads to a misunderstanding of the religion of Islam, particularly by Pentecostals.

Yusuf Alqarzavi (2010:1) argues that this type of labeling is erroneous and biased:

We can do no justice to a faith by the faulty practice of its believers and from an opinion regarding the faith on that basis, of course its merits and demerits can only be determined by a fair analysis of the faith itself, by examining its various aspects.

He argued that it is not the fault of the religion that some of its members misbehave or even neglect to adhere to its values and principles. Some members may be attracted to the religion for selfish motives but do not share its values and guidelines. Therefore, no faith should be judged by the behavior and actions of its followers. In the same way, Muslims should not judge the Christian faith by the behavior of Christians. For instance, Kgatle (2021) discusses the many Pentecostal leaders involved in sexual misconduct. He (2019) also writes about Pentecostal leaders who only preach about money and some who were indicted for fraud. This is not an accurate depiction of the Pentecostal church. Just as we would not want Muslims to judge us by these standards, Alqarzavi and Badawi also call upon Christians not to judge Islam by the standards portrayed on social media.

He argued that some followers might even violate the teaching of the faith to further their agenda. Not all who label themselves as Muslims seek to promote the morality of Islam. He claimed that this behavior is the scourge of all religions, not just Islam. Hence, only judging Islam by these standards would be biased and inequitable.

This is precisely the aim of this chapter. It is to analyze the attitude of Muslims towards interfaith dialogue by examining its history and its sacred scriptures. In this chapter, the researcher will first analyze the meaning of the term “dialogue” used by Muslim scholars. Secondly, the history of Christian Muslim dialogue will be examined. The third area of investigation will focus on the Quranic understanding of interfaith dialogue, with references also made regarding the Hadith. Finally, these findings will be compared to the data collected in questionnaires, interviews, and participatory

action research groups (PAR). This exercise aims to investigate how Sunni Muslims in Ekurhuleni balance Quranic teaching concerning dialogue and actual interaction with Christians in their communities.

5.2 A brief history of Muslim Christian dialogue

There has been a resurgence in Muslim Christian dialogue over the past 50 years. This became noticeable since the election of Pope John XXIII (1958) and the convening of the second Vatican council (1962). Every year after that witnessed deliberate correspondence and discussions between Catholic Christians and Muslims. In Geneva, the World Council of Churches (WCC) pursued the same path, and in 1977 they published "*Christians meeting Muslims – WCC papers on ten years of Christian-Muslim dialogue.*" The last ten years have witnessed the emergence of dialogue groups within social networks. On Facebook, ordinary people initiate dialogue forums like Conversation with Muslims, Meaningful Christian Muslim dialogue, Christian Muslim unity foundation, and Christian Muslims encounters.

However, Muslim Christian dialogue is not a modern phenomenon. It is as old as Islam itself. It started 1400 years ago when the first Najran Christians met with Mohammad, the Prophet of Islam (628/7). This dialogue has continued around the world for over 1400 years in different forms. During this time, there were many encounters. Some led to mutual understanding, others to conflict and bloodshed, and most, to a relationship of tolerance, with certain conditions attached. This relationship swung like a pendulum from one extreme to another. Each had its glorious age of power and its failed state of subjugation. Goddard (2000:2) described this unstable relationship as follows:

Over the course of the centuries, what might be called the balance of power between the two communities has swung backward and forwards. Sometimes the initiative seems to have lain with the Muslim community, with the Christian world simply being compelled to react to developments outside itself, and sometimes the situation seems to have been reversed, with the initiative laying with the Christian world and the Muslim world finding itself in the position of responding.

Goddard also argued that these encounters were filled with mutual misunderstanding. He, therefore, proposed that historical material of this nature should be available to both communities to study and find new ways of fostering dialogue and mutual understanding. Goddard (2000:3) explained that this history must be studied by anyone who wishes to dialogue with Muslims. He clarified,

In Christian Muslim relations, memories are long, and thus the Crusades, for example, still exercise a powerful influence, many centuries later, in some parts of both the Christian and Muslim worlds.

One cannot move forward successfully without examining and learning from the past. Therefore, it is imperative to start with the Prophet Muhammad's encounters with Christians to grasp the different attitudes that Muslims had towards Christians through the ages.

5.3 Muhammad's encounters with Christians

Muhammad's encounters with Christians evolved over time. They were influenced by attitudes displayed by Christians towards him. Positive encounters led him to write positively about them in the Quran. However, when they challenged his message and prophethood, he turned hostile towards them and accordingly painted them as the enemy in the Quran. As political turmoil simmered down, Muhammad became more tolerant towards Christians, but not without strict conditions that had to be put into place.

5.3.1 Muhammad's positive encounters with Christians

The Muslim community emulates the life of the Prophet Muhammad. To follow the ways of Muhammad is equal to following the ways of Allah. Mostly, the attitudes that Muslims display towards Christians and dialogue flows from the attitude and history of Muhammad.

One of the earliest biographies of Muhammad, which captured his relations towards Jews and Christians, is penned by Muhammad ibn Ishaq (767/150). In his work, "*Sirat Rasul Allah*" (The life of the Prophet of God), he recorded five critical positive encounters Muhammad had with Christians. While these five encounters were not the only encounters Muhammad had with Christians, they proved to be vital in developing his relations with them.

The first took place before Muhammad's call to prophethood. It was during one of the trips he made with the merchant caravans of his uncle Abu Talib. He was about twelve years old on this trip to Syria when he encountered a Christian monk. Ibn Ishaq describes how the monk saw a cloud overshadow Muhammad as they traveled. When the caravan stopped, the monk was astonished when he noticed the branches of a nearby palm tree bend, and its leaves gave shade to the child. The monk invited the occupants of the caravan to dine with him. He noticed a physical mark on Muhammad's shoulder and confirmed "the seal of prophethood." He instructed the uncle to guard Muhammad and keep him from any harm. A Christian monk recognized the seal of prophethood on Muhammad, even before his people recognized it.

The second instance was at the beginning of his office as a prophet. This was during the initial times when Muhammad received revelations and visions from the angel Gabriel. Not knowing what these traumatic experiences were, Muhammad sought the advice of his wife, Khadija. She, in turn, introduced him to her cousin, Waraqa ibn Nawfal. Ibn Nawfal was a Christian who was apparently well versed in the Christian faith. He consoled Muhammad by telling him that Allah had chosen him as a prophet to the Arabs. However, his confirmation spurred Muhammad on to accept his call to the office of a prophet to the Arabs.

While the third encounter did not involve Muhammad himself, it did make an impact on his view of Christians at that time. At his command, he sent a group of Muslims from Mecca to the kingdom of Axum (Abyssinia) for their protection. The Kingdom of Axum was already a Christian land. The title of the king was the "Negus." Even when the Meccans tried compelling him to hand them over for treason, he protected these first Muslims. This group of Muslims took this opportunity to explain their beliefs to the Negus. When he heard that they believed in the virgin birth of Jesus and the unity of God, he accepted them readily as part of his community. These events were articulated to Muhammad, who was pleased with the treatment displayed by the Christians.

The fourth event is a well-known story and a model for dialogue. It took place near the end of his career and concerned the delegation of Christians from the town of Najran. As the message and influence of Islam continued to spread, nearby towns and cities were concerned about this new message and their prophet. For both political and religious reasons, the delegation from Najran secured a meeting with the prophet Muhammad. The meeting quickly turned into a religious discourse with a lengthy

Christological discussion. Muhammad did try convincing the Christian delegation to embrace Islam, to no avail. The meeting ended in Muhammad calling for a contest by invoking a curse on the religion that was false. The Najran Christian did not want to participate in this contest. Goddard (2000:20) described the outcome as follows, "After some deliberation, the Christians declined and returned home, preferring to agree to differ peacefully and to be permitted to continue to practice their faith."

This fourth encounter could be seen as a model for dialogue because it displays at least three features of dialogical etiquette. Firstly, if you are concerned about the teaching and influence of any religion, approach its leaders. Second, do not attack a religion without meeting with its leaders first and getting first-hand knowledge of the religion.

Secondly, sit around the dialogical table and discuss the issues openly. Difficult questions and critical objections must be dealt with amicably. Finally, if there is no point of agreement, which will be the case sometimes, each party should leave peacefully and be allowed to practice their religion. Doors for further dialogue must be left open. This leads us to the fifth encounter Muhammad had with Christians simply because the door of dialogue was left open after the previous meeting.

One of the last encounters that Muhammad had with Christians was during the final years of his ministry. As his prophethood evolved from being a messenger to the Arabs to become a messenger to humankind, Muhammad found it incumbent on himself to invite all the nations around Mecca to submit to Islam as the final revelation of God. His letters were sent to both Christian and non-Christian states. These letters found themselves in the courts of Heraclius, the emperor of the Byzantine kingdom, and even in the place of the Negus of Axum.

Up until then, these encounters were non-violent, and no Christian was forced to submit to Islam. Instead, the doors of dialogue were open, and the founder of Islam himself was ready to engage with Christians. It is also a historical fact that Muhammad took a Coptic Christian girl as his concubine. She became significant since she bore him a son in his later years. Unfortunately, however, the boy child died before his second birthday.

The encounters mentioned above led Muhammad to write favorably about Christians in the Quran. I list six such Quranic scriptures depicting Muhammad's positive attitude towards Christians.

- Surah 2:62, 3:55, 3:199, 5:66, 57:27, 28:52-55

5.3.2 Muhammad's negative encounters with Christians

Not all Muhammad's encounters with Christians were positive. There were different stages in his encounters that were dictated by different events. As his influence increased, his message and prophethood were challenged by his Arab countrymen and Jews and Christians living in Arabia.

Convinced about his divinely appointed prophethood and his universal and final message, Muhammad became hostile to those who rejected his message. The Christians in Arabia rejected him as a prophet in the line of Jesus, and they rejected his denial of the death and resurrection of Jesus. For this reason, Muhammad labeled them as "kufr" (unbelievers).

He also accused Christians of "shirk"⁸¹ (polytheism/idolatry). Since Christians believed that Jesus was the son of God, Muhammad considered them polytheists. At this stage of his life, he depicted them, in the Quran, as idolaters and warned Muslims not to trust them. The following Quranic verses emanated from this period in his life.

- Surah 5:72, 5:73, 9:30, 5:116.

Muslims were warned not to take Christians as their friends (Surah 5:51) It is important to remember that any critical analysis of the Quran demands that the interpreter consider the context of the verse. Therefore, it would be untrue for a Christian to propogate that the Quran prohibits Muslims from being friends with Christians. We would therefore be unfaithful to Quranic exegesis. Instead, we would demand that the same courtesy be extended to Muslims who interpret and read the Bible. The same principle applies to the next Quranic verse.

Muslims were ordered to fight against them:

(Surah 2:190, Yusuf Ali) "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah does not love transgressors.

(Surah 2:191, Yusuf Ali) And slay them wherever you catch them ..."

5.3.3 Muhammad and tolerance

A third epoch in the career of Muhammad is marked by conditional tolerance towards Christians and those of other religions. As Islam exerted its dominance across the

⁸¹ "Shirk" is considered blasphemy in Islam, since it means ascribing a partner to God. It is equivalent to polytheism and idolatry. Believing that God has a son, is considered shirk.

Arabian Peninsula, certain states were incorporated into the Muslim world. Those who resisted were met with military action leading to death. However, those who submitted to the new Islamic regime were granted immunity with certain conditions attached. All defeated citizens had to pay the Jizya tax⁸² to ensure their protection and the protection of their places of worship (Surah 9:29).

Those who submitted were shown mercy (Surah 2:192).

During this time, there was no compulsion to accept Islam; no forced conversions were allowed.

(Surah 2:256, Yusuf Ali) "Let there be no compulsion in religion..."

Muhammad put together a crucial document concerning tolerance when he presided over Medina. Medina, at that time, was home to various religious fraternities. The document, now known as the "constitution of Medina," consisted of fifty clauses that recognized religious diversity in Medina and regulated relations between the different groups. Goddard (2000:28) claims that this document was the most liberal document of its time:

Here we have what might even in modern terms be described as quite a liberal document, in the sense that it seems broadly tolerant of diversity even in matters of religion.

The document affirms the religious rights and practices of all religions in Madinah. While each group had the right to practice its religion, the document clarified that they also had specific responsibilities. Negating these responsibilities would declare the pact null and void. There was nothing sinister about the document, and it merely served as a pact between Islam and other religions. Pentecostals must understand the history of Islam. Without this history, Christians may stand guilty of making unsubstantiated claims that Islam has been a violent and intolerant religion from its inception.

⁸² A tax imposed on all non-Muslims living in Muslim lands. This was payment made for their protection and for their permission trade in the land.

5.3.4 Contextualizing Muhammad's encounters with Christians

Mohammad's encounters with Christians were not static but somewhat fluctuated as different scenarios presented themselves. Friendliness towards Islam and the prophet was reciprocated with acceptance and friendliness. Hostility was met with military action or expulsion from the land, and surrender was met with mercy and tolerance. Our modern human rights standards should not judge Muhammad; he must be interpreted as a man of his times dealing with political issues in the manner it was dealt with during those times. As each scenario presented itself, Muhammad dictated into the Quran his reactions and orders for the rest of the Muslim community to follow. There was no "one" system, approach, or method that would be applied to all situations. Each situation had to be dealt with according to its own merits.

Therefore, it is essential to know the context of the verses in the Quran that deal with acceptance and friendliness towards Christians and those that are tolerant and hostile. The history of Muslims in South Africa also went through different stages, and Muslims reacted differently to Christians at different times. For example, during the sixties and seventies, the Dutch Reformed Church launched an attack on Islam, labeling it a false religion⁸³. Therefore, they were met with hostility by Muslims like Ahmad Deedat (as discussed previously), Anwar Joommal, and even the Muslim Judicial Council of South Africa. A paragraph in the preface of Joommal's (1975:7) book, "*The Bible: Word of God or word of man?*" shows the impact of Islam's defense.

The commotion created by it in the South African church circles may be gauged by a bold headline in the "Transvaaler," a morning Afrikaans daily based in Johannesburg, which said: "Hierdie Mohammedaan slaan 'n seer hou" – (This Muslim strikes a painful blow).

However, in the eighties and nineties, the church reached out to the Muslim community to stand in solidarity with them in the fight against the Apartheid regime. The church was met with friendliness, as many Muslim clergymen and Muslim communities stood side-by-side with Christians.

In both above scenarios, the actions of Muslims were in line with the Quran. They could justify both their hostility towards the church and their friendliness towards them from the Quran. Today, after more than 20 years of democracy, there remains a spirit

⁸³ Chapter 2 (2.3) discusses the defence of Muslim scholars and apologist against the attacks of the DRC (NGK) and in particular the article that labelled Islam as a false religion.

of tolerance between Muslims and Christians, and the Quran can justify even this attitude. The Muslim approach to Christians depends much on the attitude of Christians towards Muslims. In most cases, Christians will receive what they give.

The same would apply to dialogue between the two faiths. For Muslims to dialogue, there had to be a willingness on the part of Christians to initiate such dialogue with a spirit of mutual respect. There also had to be a mutual understanding of what interreligious dialogue entails.

5.4 Towards an understanding of interfaith dialogue.

South African Muslims and Christians have a long history of debating. Ahmed Deedat and John Gilchrist laid the foundation and prepared the material for these debates. It is therefore imperative that a clear distinction is made between dialogue and debate. Unfortunately, the term dialogue has been used loosely on pamphlets advertising debates. This mistake must be rectified since there is a distinct difference between the two encounters. Their motives, arguments, and outcomes are entirely different.

In his paper on "Interfaith dialogue in Islam," Sanallah (2014:86) describes interfaith dialogue as "any effort initiated to awakening mutual understanding among the people of different faiths since common grounds. It is a symbol of fraternity." He also argued that Allah calls on all Muslims to engage in this type of dialogue. He (2014:87) added, "Interfaith dialogue refers to cooperative interaction among people of different religious traditions." I agree with him that this interaction must be practiced at both individual and institutional levels. The aim should be to understand each other's values and belief systems so that dialogue could be more fruitful.

In agreement with Sanallah, Cardinal Francis Arinze⁸⁴ added, "Interreligious dialogue is a meeting of heart and mind between followers of various religions."

These meetings should lead to mutual respect and joint ventures in projects that would break the bondage of oppression imposed on the poor and the vulnerable in our communities. A common concern for the well-being of the poor and the vulnerable must be the uniting force between Islam and Christianity. This could be the case in South Africa. Our local communities are plagued by poverty and the abuse of the vulnerable, while Christians and Muslims are a part of these communities.

⁸⁴ Cardinal Francis Arinze, *The Church in dialogue: Walking with other believers*. 1990. Pg.162

In agreement with Cardinal Arinze, Kurucan (1999:11) also adds that dialogue should lead to conversation or shared activities. He maintains that “Dialogue is meaningful interaction through various kinds of conversations or activities with the view to increase understanding.”

From this definition, there is a distinct difference between dialogue and debating. While dialogue seeks common ground and mutual understanding, debating is competitive and divides the interlocutors into two opposing groups. Dr. Muhammad Khan (2017:203) also agreed, adding, “Dialogue is different from a debate where the aim is to win an argument or persuade others to accept one’s viewpoint.” Dr. Khan continues to advocate dialogue over debating when he explains:

All examples from history, the Holy Quran, and Sunnah teachings require Muslims to engage positively with their fellow human beings from diverse cultural and religious groups.

In his article “Dialogue or confrontation,” Goddard (2000:177) showed the distinct difference between debating and dialogue. While debating involves polemics and apologetics, he argued that dialogue is more sophisticated since “It involves both a greater philosophical sophistication and a greater willingness to listen.”

I agree with Goddard that while dialogue focuses on listening, debating focuses on speaking, defending, and arguing. However, Imam Khalifa Ezzat (2009:1) argues that one should not choose dialogue or debate since both approaches are advocated in the Quran. He explains that “The Quran distinguishes between what is required for giving admonition and advice and what is required when one argues or debates.” He argued that the Quran does not reject the idea of debating. On the contrary, he noted that the Quran is positive towards debating, though it must be done in an atmosphere of mutual respect. He, therefore, gave strict warnings concerning debates, explaining that “The Quran forbids useless dialogue, destructive dispute or argument for its wastes time and effort and leads to hate, rancor, and enmity.” If there is a dispute, it must be constructive, and it must lead to acquiring more knowledge rather than lead to hostile arguments. He (pg. 2) outlined several practical guidelines for engaging in debates:

- Enter debates with sincerity (the motive to learn).
- Lower one’s voice when speaking.
- Avoid insulting the other person.

- Use comprehensive words.
- Do not interrupt the other speaker.
- Refrain from lying.
- Avoid useless disputes and arguments.

In agreement with Imam Ezzat, Dr. Abbas Al-Jirari (2000:31) argued that the Arabic word for dialogue leaves room for debating. He (2000:39) also laid down strict guidelines for debating:

- Debating should not lead to vain arguments.
- Speak with knowledge, not with ignorance.
- Do not mock and ridicule others.

He adds, “When al-jidal (dispute/debate) aims to establish falsehood, it becomes negative since its outcome can only lead to a quarrel” (pp 32). Nevertheless, he concluded by choosing mutual dialogue over and above debating. “In the light of the Quranic point of view, it is clear that Islam is a religion of dialogue” (pp 61). He argues that “dialogue condemns intolerance whatever it may be. He opts for co-existence and cohabitation and calls for the exchange of service” (pp 62).

There are many guidelines for debates that promote mutual respect. However, most debates in South Africa were marked by mockery, ridicule, and vain arguments over the years. Ahmed Deedat’s debates were filled with these characteristics, and many modern Muslim apologists continue in this manner. Winning an argument at all costs has become the norm in South African debating forums.

Dialogue presents itself as a better alternative. Imam Ezzat explained that “Dialogue is when two individuals or groups explain their viewpoint to each other regarding an issue in order to reach common ground, an agreement, or understanding.”

Chris Shuaibu Abashiya (1991: vii) also agreed that dialogue leads to understanding. Without dialogue, there is a misunderstanding, and misunderstanding leads to hostility.

The lack of understanding the differences between the two faiths - Christianity and Islam – has resulted in a situation where Muslims have vowed to annihilate Christians by all means.

Abashiya views dialogue as a catalyst for unity and peace-building. He argued that constant debating might lead to a resurgence of enmity between the two faiths. Given the South African story, debating led to this resurgence of enmity

between Christians and Muslims. Debating continues to be the most prominent means of interaction between these two groups. They may continue for the next decade. It is therefore imperative for the organizers of such events to lay down strict guidelines for debates. These guidelines should be adhered to by members of the public who are given a chance to ask questions after the debate. During this time of the debates, inflammatory comments are made, and volatile emotions are raised by most of the attendees. Dialogue is therefore presented as a better alternative for peaceful interaction between Muslims and Christians.

I agree with Khan (2017:203), who views dialogue as an emblem of peace. He argues that “Interfaith dialogue has surfaced as an emblem of peace becoming a voice for peaceful relations amongst the adherents of different religions.”

He believes that dialogue may offer peace-building tools in a world entangled in wars instigated by religious intolerance. It is for this reason that Hammudah Abdalati (1975:35) advocates for the seriousness of dialogue, stating that “it is an article of faith which the Muslims takes seriously and to which he must adhere to sincerely.” The foundation of dialogue, he argues, is based on the shared equality of all human beings. Sanuallah (2014:86) agrees that interfaith dialogue is a necessity for world peace and also a Quranic mandate. “Interfaith dialogue is a symbol of fraternity and a harbinger of world peace and harmony.” He proposed that religionist strives towards putting an end to religious intolerance by promoting dialogue, which will encourage reciprocal respect. I agree with his idea that it is the prerogative of all religious people to explore creative ways to participate in formal and informal dialogue.

Based on the Quran, Khan (2017:204) also agrees that Muslims must participate in interfaith dialogue.

All examples from Islamic history, the Holy Quran, and Sunnah teachings require Muslims to engage positively with their fellow human beings from diverse cultural and religious groups.

The Quran, the Sunnah, and history stand as examples for the Muslim community to continue promoting both religious freedom and religious tolerance.

Iranian philosopher Gholamreza Aavani (n.d) concurs with Sanuallah and Dr. Khan, contending that, “The Quran calls forth all the people of the Book, or the adherents of religions, to a word which is common among all of them.”

I agree with Advani's call for all dialogue partners to stand on an equal basis to promote religious tolerance. Unlike debating, dialogue calls on both parties to

come to a common understanding concerning their faith and responsibility to humankind. Using surah 3:64, he urges Muslims and Christians to pause for a moment and reflect on the commonalities of their faith.

Attention must now be turned to the Quran, which the above authors have quoted to advocate their point of view concerning interfaith dialogue. Therefore, the Quran will be allowed to speak for itself.

5.5 The Quran and Dialogue

The Quran is accepted as Allah's verbatim word, and therefore must be adhered to by all Muslims. It is therefore imperative to search the Quran for evidence concerning interfaith dialogue. Kurucan (1999:28), however, pointed out that "The Qurans position on interfaith dialogue is not immediately clear."

Therefore, he urges Muslims to carefully study the Quran, the Sunnah, and history in their quest to formulate a philosophy of religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

However, Dr. Jilali (2000:61) states that the "Quranic point of view is patently clear that Islam is the religion of dialogue." This statement will be investigated in this section.

Imam Ezzat (2009:1) also affirms the above statement and writes, "The Quran gives great attention to dialogue and discussions." Sanaullah (2014:86) argues that the Quran is the propelling force behind interfaith dialogue. "Propelled by the Quranic injunctions, the Muslims today have been conducting many programs of interfaith dialogue throughout the world."

Dr. Khan argues that the Quran provides the most substantial rationale for dialogue. He quotes from the Quran in his defense:

People we created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should get to know one another (Surah 49:13)

This verse, he argues, "clearly articulates Islam's call for embracing diversity and understanding each other."

Sanaullah (2014:87) also expresses the same sentiments, this time using Surah 29:46 in his defense. He states, "The Holy Quran echoes interfaith dialogue." Like Khan, he also believes that the Quran is obvious in its mandate on interfaith dialogue. Both quotes extensively from the Quran to collaborate their observations.

Ahmet Kurucan (1999:12) quotes four verses from the Quran that he believes encapsulates the Quran's challenge to its followers to accept religious and cultural diversities and respond to them with justice and kindness:

Say, 'now the truth has come from your Lord: let those who wish to believe in it do so and let those who wish to reject it do so.' (al-Kahf, 18:29)

There is no compulsion in religion. (al-Baqarah, 2:256).

Had your Lord willed, all the people on the earth would have believed. So, can you (O Prophet) compel people to believe? (Yunus, 10:99).

If God so willed, He would have made you all one people. (al-Nahl, 16:93).

The lessons from these verses teach Allah's intentions for diversity in humans. He also argues that the Quran can be used as a manual for peace-building, and he rejects the western notion that the Quran is a book of war.

The Quran necessitates dialogue and peaceful coexistence. Based on these verses, Kurucan (1999:12) believes that Muslims are compelled and encouraged to seek opportunities to dialogue with people of other faiths. Again, he quotes three Quran verses that encourage Muslims to engage in honest dialogue (Surah 49:13, 5:48 and 11:18-19).

Within the context of Sunni Muslim's interpretation of the Quran, these verses (Surah 49:13, 5:48 and 11:18-19) teach the fundamental oneness of all human beings. Their linguistic plurality and cultural multiplicity add to the colorful tapestry of humanity and should not be used to promote the superiority of one culture over another. Humankind, therefore, has only one purpose, and that is to worship Allah.

"I created jinn and mankind only to worship Me" (al-Dhariyat, 51:56).

Kurucan (1999:19) goes further and identifies dialogue as a form of worship. "Worship itself is a form of dialogue with God. As such, we are made for dialogue with God as well as with each other." He explains that worship necessitates dialogue between Allah and Muslims. Similarly, he argues that dialogue between Muslims and adherents of other faiths can also be considered worship to Allah since He is the creator of all humankind.

Jamal Badawi (2015:16-17) agrees with Kurucan's argument concerning the oneness and unity of humanity as the basis of dialogue. He continues to lay out three Quranic principles that form a basis for interfaith dialogue.

Firstly, he agrees with Kurucan (1999) and Sanaullah (2014) that the unity of humankind forms the basis for interfaith dialogue (Hud, 11:18-19).

Secondly, he maintains that the belief in the singleness of God also forms a foundational pillar for dialogue. It must be agreed that God is one, that he alone is the universal creator and sustainer of life (Yusuf Ali, 46:33).

Finally, the universality and teachings of all the prophets must be accepted. (Yusuf Ali, 4:163).

These three Quranic pillars for dialogue, proposed by Jamal Badawi (2015:16-17), would generally include Jews and Christians as prospective dialogue partners. Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe in the unity of humanity, the unity of God, and the authenticity of the prophets. The way the Quran deals with these two faiths (Jews and Christians) will be discussed next.

5.5.1 The people of the book.

The Quran gives special attention to dialogue between Muslims and the “people of the book.” Sunni Muslims generally considers both Christians and Jews as “people of the book” (ahl al-kitab)⁸⁵. However, the Quran commonly differentiates between three groups of people: the believers (Muslims), the unbelievers (mushriqs or kufr), and the people of the book (Christians and Jews). The “people of the book” refers to those who follow the prophets and their writings, from Moses and David to Jesus. Within this context, Muslims are placed next to Christians and Jews in the Quran.

The (Muslim) believers, the Jews, the Christians (people of the book) will have their rewards with the Lord. (al-Baqara, 2:62 and al-Ma’ida, 5:69).

Because of this position, the Quran looks favorably upon Christians as dialogue partners. Hence the Quran calls on Muslims to invite Christians to come to what is common between them (al-Imran, 3:64).

Commenting on this verse, Ahmet Kurucan (1999:34) explained, “the Quran particularly encouraged Muslims to engage in dialogue with those closest to them in belief, the “people of the book.” He argued that this type of dialogue was based on commonality. He insisted that this verse is an imperative, not a negotiable. All Muslims are commanded to pursue the pathway of dialogue with Christians. Another verse frequently used to give more credibility to the previous verse is al-Ankabut, 29:46.

⁸⁵ There are radical Muslims like Muhammad Hamdi Yazir (1878-1947) a Turkish Muslim scholar that place Christians in the “Kufr” group, labelling them as unbelievers because of the belief in the Trinity.

Muslims argue only in the best way with the People of the Book; we believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you; our God and your God is one; we are devoted to Him.

It must be observed that the Prophet spoke these positive Quranic utterances during a time of peace with the Christians of Arabia. However, this relationship was not always maintained. When the relationship came under duress, Muhammad would change his tone and his approach to Christians. However, these Quranic verses that promote dialogue must not be snuffed out by Christians who only search the Quran to find scripture concerning violence and intolerance. For a balanced view of the Quran, Pentecostals must weigh all of the evidence found in the Quran; this is the same advice we would give Muslims studying the Bible.

5.5.2 Warnings against the people of the book.

The Quran was written over 23 years.⁸⁶ Relations between Muhammad and the Christians went through some turbulent times during these years. There were times of peace (when the above positive scriptures were written), and there were times of betrayal and hostility towards Islam and the prophet. In these times, when Muhammad was threatened, he reacted with caution and hostility towards Christians.

Both positive and negative views of Christians in the Quran must be interpreted within the context of historical settings. Kasim (1999:39) explained the importance of proper contextual exegesis when dealing with these sensitive verses in the Quran. "The first step towards an answer is to consider the circumstances in which the verses were sent down to the Prophet and the occasions of their revelations."

Both Kasim and Kurucan maintain that the negative scriptures towards Christians, calling for caution and animosity, were revealed to the Prophet during times of war and when Christians either provoked Muslims or betrayed an alliance with them.

Three frequently used verses that caution Muslims when befriending Christians are found in Surah 5:51, 2:120, and 5:82.

Believers do not take Jews and Christians as partners: (al-Ma'ida, 5:51).

The context of this verse is found in the historical events that led the Jews and the Christians to conspire against Muslims living in Mecca. It was also a political alliance with the Arabs of Mecca to expel Muslims from the city. Commenting on the verse,

⁸⁶ The revelation to Muhammad started on the 22 December 609 CE, when the prophet was 40, and continued until 632, the year of his death.

Mohammad Shafi (1999:187) explained that while Muslims were friendly towards Christians, they were warned not to have indiscriminate intimate friendships. He used the Arabic term “Tark al-Muwalat” to describe the “act of refraining from deep friendships.”

The Jews and the Christians will never be pleased with you unless you follow their ways. (al-Baqara, 2:120).

This scripture warned Muslims from listening to Jews and Christians, who were persuading them to leave Islam and form an alliance with them to harm the Prophet. Muslims were urged to be aware of the tricks and snares of the Christians as they tried to lure them from their faith. These scriptures became important in the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Ekurhuleni. Dialogue between these two faiths should be approached with much caution, as Muslims take heed to this Quranic advice very seriously.

However, it is noticeable that Muhammad does not “paint all Christians with the same brush.” Among the conspirators and allies of the idolatrous Meccans, there were peaceful, hospitable, and friendly Christians towards Muslims.

You are sure to find that the closest in affection towards the believers are those who say, “We are Christians,” for there are among them people devoted to learning and ascetics. (al-Ma’ida, 5:82).

In fact, Muhammad clarifies that while some Christians were antagonistic towards Islam, others were peaceful and righteous. Therefore, he did not treat all Christians indiscriminately.

But they are not all alike. There are some among the People of the Book who are upright (al-Imran, 3:113-114).

Commenting on this verse, commentator Shabbir Ahmad Usmani (1992:241) comments, “All the people of the book are not wicked.” He explained that some were allies of Muslims, courteous and well mannered. He urged Muslims to reciprocate this courteousness to them. These Christians were seen as candidates for dialogue and partnership programs that could impact their communities.

It is incumbent on any Christian who wishes to enter authentic dialogue with Muslims to understand the context of Quranic scriptures concerning Christians. Christian scholars who wrote about Islam, Muhammad, and the Quran, should use proper Quranic interpretations, engaging with the text and the historical events surrounding it. Sound exegesis (tafsir) must consider the internal consistency in the Quran. Such

an approach will eradicate a biased attitude and undue prejudice towards the religion of Islam.

Today we are dealing with similar issues in Ekurhuleni. There are unscrupulous Christians who see Muslims as nothing else but objects/targets of missions. Each conversion is seen as a trophy, so any means are used to convert a Muslim to Christianity. This approach is both unethical and unbiblical. The purpose of evangelism is to display the glory of God to all people and to sow seeds of God's word. The Holy Spirit will lead people to conversion. Alternatively, the Holy Spirit may even lead Christians into open and honest dialogue with Muslims. So, should Muslims be cautious of Christians? The researcher believes that both Muslims and Christians should be cautious of any overzealous person who aims at nothing else but the conversion of the other. One who would use any means, ethical or questionable, to win the other to their side.

5.6 Current approaches to dialogue

This section of the thesis will comprise of discussions held during several "Participatory Action Research" (PAR) sessions. These sessions were held with Sunni Muslim and Pentecostal Christian leaders and members of the laity.⁸⁷ In addition, information from the questionnaires that were completed by Muslim respondents will also be included in this section.

History has recorded many instances from the time of Mohammad to our present day, where Muslims and Christians engaged in authentic dialogue. The Quran has also been presented as a book that promotes dialogue, especially between Muslims and Christians. The prophet Muhammad promoted dialogue between Muslims and Christians during times of peace.

The question now remains whether Sunni Muslims in Ekurhuleni adhere to their sacred scriptures and their rich history of dialogue. Are they willing to pursue dialogue with Christians? What are their fears and reservations, if any? Would they navigate a new path from debating to mutual understanding and honest dialogue?

In the PAR sessions, there were mixed emotions about Muslim Christian dialogue, with some that were utterly opposed to it while others were entirely positive to the idea

⁸⁷ These sessions were held at different venues in Ekurhuleni between March 2019 and Feb 2020. Some were chaired by the researcher while others were chaired by Fazale Rehan from Fazale Rab Ministry (Alberton).

of dialogue. Some warned Muslims to tread carefully, with much caution, before committing to dialogue between the two faiths. However, other Muslims still saw da’wah as the primary motivation for dialogue and called for a balance between da’wah and dialogue.

With all these different viewpoints and ideas, the researcher categorized the respondents into four groups. These four groups would also characterize the four different views on dialogue that are currently dominant in Ekurhuleni. The total number of Muslim participants who attended the PAR was fifty (50). The researcher used this number to arrive at a percentage that would categorize each group. Each person would be equivalent to 2%.⁸⁸

- Rejection to any form of dialogue. (6%)
- Dialogue must be approached with much caution. (40%)
- There must be a balance between da’wah and dialogue. (44%)
- Dialogue is a primary task. (10%)

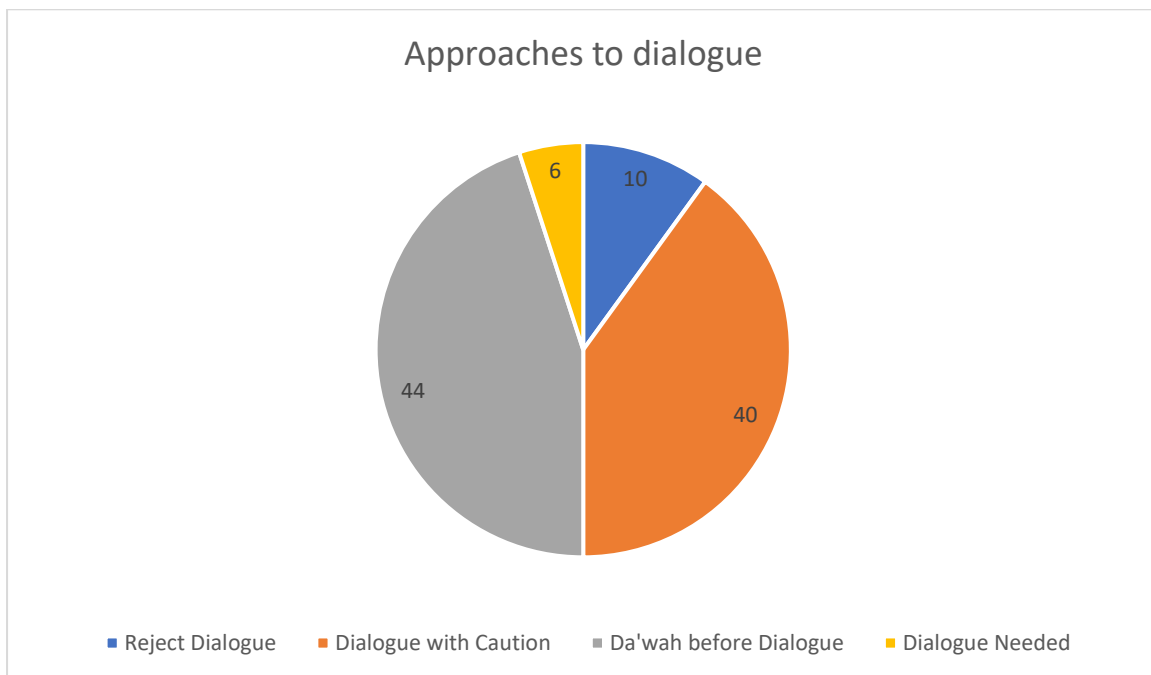


Figure 12: Sunni Muslim approaches to dialogue

These four views outline the four approaches of Sunni Muslims towards dialogue with Pentecostal Christians in Ekurhuleni. Integrated into the information gathered from the PAR, the researcher will also add information retrieved from 200 questionnaires

⁸⁸ $percentage = \frac{people}{50} \times 100$

completed by Muslim participants. Figures recorded represent percentages, and each person represents 0.5%.⁸⁹

1. Is the Holy Quran Allah's final message to humankind?

Yes No

2. Is Muhammad Allah's final Prophet?

Yes No

3. Is Islam the only way to Salvation?

Yes No

4. Can there be Salvation outside of Islam?

Yes No

5. Does Allah reveal Himself in other religions?

Yes No

6. Do you see Christians as:

Friends

Enemies

Partners in the quest for Truth

People that must be converted to Islam.

7. Does the Quran promote dialogue with people of other faiths?

Yes No

8. Is the Relationship between Christians and Muslims in Ekurhuleni getting closer or going further apart?

Closer Further Not Sure

⁸⁹ $percentage = \frac{people}{200} \times 100$

9. Have you read the Bible?

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Yes | 36 % |
| No | 28 % |
| Only a portion | 36 % |

Integrating the information from both the PAR and the interviews, the researcher will outline the four approaches to dialogue that Sunni Muslims in Ekurhuleni hold.

5.6.1 Rejection to any form of dialogue

While 94 % of Sunni Muslims in Ekurhuleni agree that the Quran promotes dialogue, a small percentage (6%) still oppose this idea. This 6% that disagrees with this teaching of the Quran concerning dialogue are significant since they are scattered through the community and their views disseminated within the Ummah.

Muslims belonging to this group view Islam and Christianity as missionary religions, seeing them as irreconcilable competitors. With this dichotomised worldview of religions, they perceive everything in “black or white” terms. Thus, if Islam is true, then Christianity is false, and if Islam is a religion that emanates from God, then Christianity must be a heresy.

They would make up the 28% of those Muslims who did not read the Bible, since they consider it corrupt and have no divine origin. They comprise the 40% who do not see salvation outside of Islam and the 24% of those that do not believe that Allah can reveal Himself to anyone outside the fold of Islam. While 0% of Muslims in Ekurhuleni view Christians as enemies, this group of Muslims would be a part of the 20% of Muslims who believe Christians must be converted to Islam. They are a small group, but they are significant in their influence. The influence of Ahmad Deedat can be noticeable in this group since many of Deedat’s clichés were used in PAR discussions. Listening to those that rejected dialogue, the researcher further classified them into three groups: the orthodox, the dualist, and the skeptics.

The group labeled “orthodox” was given this title because they only quoted the Quran as their defense for rejecting dialogue. No explanations were given. They argued that the scripture was sufficient and did not need further explanation. The first respondent argued: “The Quran is the words of Allah; all we are doing is submitting to the words of Allah without changing anything.” He quoted Surah 5:51 and 5:82). The second responded explained: “Our reasoning is in line with the Quran, the Prophet

Muhammad (peace be upon him) instructed us not to associate with polytheists. Association is as good as participation. We do not want to be guilty of that.” A third respondent reiterated what the other two said and added, “We are in no obligation to participate in dialogue, we are only obligated to submit to the teachings of the Quran, and the Quran is very clear about whom we should associate with.”

When asked why they responded to the invitation to discussions, one respondent answered. “We need to set the record straight; we are not obligated to participate in any form of Muslim Christian dialogue.”

The second group is labeled dualists because they subscribe to this ideology. Their argument was based on the assumption that only one religion can be true and the other false. Therefore, if Islam is true, then all other religions, including Christianity, are false. The respondent explained, “Islam is the final revelation of Allah through His Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Those who reject Islam as Allah’s final revelation stand in direct opposition to the Quran. Therefore, we cannot build any friendship with those who reject the revelation of Allah.” Another respondent explained that “the Bible is corrupt, what discussions can we have with people who refuse to accept this fact that is so clearly spelled out in the glorious Quran?”

The third group labeled the “skeptics” argued that dialogue is a smokescreen. The respondent made this very clear by explaining, “This thing about dialogue is just another smokescreen engineered by Christian missionaries to lure weak Muslims to Christianity.” Another asked, “If this dialogue is true and real, are you willing to turn to Islam if we convince you that Allah is the Only Creator and the Quran is the final revelation from Him?” All the Pentecostals at the PAR meet responded in the negative. He then replied, “What kind of dialogue is this if you are not will to listen, reflect and convert when the truth is laid bare in front of you?”

This is a small group of Muslims (6%); nevertheless, it is a group that has made up its mind, and they are adamant that dialogue has no place in Islam. Pentecostals must come to terms with this fact because Christians in their camp have the same attitude towards dialogue. However, all is not bleak; others embrace dialogue and see a great future in Muslim Christian dialogue in Ekuruleni.

5.6.2 Dialogue must be approached with much caution.

The second approach to interfaith dialogue is marked with caution. In the PAR groups, 40% of the participants advocated this approach. However, while admitting that dialogue is a necessity in a democratic South Africa, they also warned that caution must be taken by any Muslim who wishes to enter into dialogue with Christians (in particular, Pentecostal Christians).

Muslim participants warned that while dialogue should be pursued, it should not be done at the cost of compromising one's faith. The first participant that spoke argued, "No Muslim must jump into dialogue without first evaluating the cost at which these activities come with, including this gathering."

A second respondent echoed his sentiments by explaining, "Muslims should participate in these activities. This does not imply that Muslims will be "nodding their heads" to all the activities presented to them. On the contrary, we must be intelligent, cautious, and also committed to our faith."

The call for caution by Muslims is based on their fears that Christians may have ulterior motives for dialogue. Since Christianity is a "missionary religion" driven by evangelical conviction, Muslims fear hidden agendas lurking behind dialogical activities. Several respondents shared this sentiment in the PAR groups. Another participant gave Quranic scripture that called for caution when working with Christians. (Surah 3:118, Yusuf Ali) "O Believer, take not into your intimacy those outside your ranks." He explained, "the Quran is open to dialogue, but dialogue can also be open to manipulation from people with ulterior motives and hidden agenda. We must be open to discussion but also very aware of techniques of proselytizing."

While most participants (94%) in the PAR groups agree that dialogue is necessary, they also stressed the importance of caution. They argued that every formal dialogue meeting must have its motives tested. This attitude has cast much suspicion on PAR meetings. Moreover, it has hindered the spirit of openness and honesty.

Ahmet Kurucan (1999:24) advocates for interfaith dialogue, but he also cautioned Muslims to be aware of deviant dialogue activities.

There are suspicions that others involved in dialogue have an ulterior motive and are using it as a cover for proselytism.

Dialogue meetings should not be used as opportunities for evangelism. It is fair to agree that discussions in these meetings will equip a Christian to better witness to Muslims, but the meeting place itself is not a "mission field." Mission strategies and

evangelistic methodologies should not be a part of the dialogical process. Dialogue must maintain its sovereignty as an exercise in mutual learning and reciprocated respect for each other.

This is why some Muslims call for clear guidelines to be drawn between both religions before entering into dialogue. In the PAR groups, this idea was welcomed by both parties. The guidelines would not eradicate all the suspicions accumulated over the centuries, but it would start a new era in interfaith dialogue. The participants agreed that these guidelines would help differentiate between dialogue and proselytism.

These guidelines were shared in the PAR groups, concerning dialogue done with caution.

- Dialogue is necessary.
- Dialogue must be approached with caution.
- Proselytism should be rejected at all meetings.
- Honestly and respect must guide the discussion.
- Guidelines for dialogue can ease the tension between the two faiths and lead to more productive dialogical activities.
- Dialogue must continue beyond the formal meetings.
- Honest friendships must be nurtured.

5.6.3 There must be a balance between da'wah and dialogue.

Most Muslim (44 %) respondents in the PAR groups grappled with the balance between dialogue and da'wah. Authentic dialogue could not advance if this crucial issue were not dealt with effectively. Islam is a missionary religion and therefore obligated to spread the message of Islam as the hope for humankind. However, the Qur'anic injunction to interfaith dialogue also holds an important place in Islam. Therefore, there must be a balance between dialogue and da'wah. Some claim that both are equally important, while most argue that da'wah is a primary task for Muslims and dialogue a secondary task. The researcher only found three Muslim respondents who argued for dialogue and da'wah's equal status in all the PAR meetings conducted. One of the respondents explained, "Dialogue and da'wah should be treated with the same importance since our Prophet (peace be upon him) spent his life engaged in both of these important tasks. If they were important to Muhammad (PBUH), then they must be important to any person who calls themselves a Muslim."

However, the vast majority argued that da'wah was the primary task of the Muslim, while interfaith dialogue was the secondary task of the Muslim.

What missions and evangelism are to the Christian, da'wah is to the Muslim. It is an obligation, a command, and a duty for every Muslim to preach the message of Islam. Its aim and objectives are precise, and it is the propagating of the message of Islam. Da'wah is both a command and a responsibility for every devout Muslim. A Muslim's time, talent, and money cannot be put into a more noble task than da'wah. In his book, "The emergence of Islam," Muhammad Hamidullah (1993:263) argued that da'wah was one of the most significant pillars in the Muslim faith. He explained that it was the Prophet Muhammad himself who set the example for this task. He concluded that Muhammad was more successful in this task than Jesus. In examining the life of the prophet Muhammad, he argued that while the Prophet was a political leader, a military commander, and a family man, he did not neglect the noblest task of da'wah. Muslims emulate the example of the prophet Muhammad and therefore view da'wah as a primary task in Islam.

An occurring point that was made during the PAR groups was the asserting of the superiority of Muslims and the religion of Islam. Driven by this dogma, many in the PAR group discussions saw the work of da'wah as paramount to the Muslim's vocation. Therefore, they were superior, and they had a superior message to give to the world.

The most interesting and honest discussion in the PAR group concerned dialogue as da'wah. One respondent explained, "When we are engaging in dialogue, we are also engaging in da'wah at the same time. This is because dialogue meetings are giving us a wonderful opportunity to explain our faith to a Christian audience in a peaceful setting."

Another respondent argued that "Dialogue is a part of da'wah because we learn about the Christian religion during these sessions. This knowledge can be used to do more effective da'wah work among Christians." Then he went on to explain, "Even you Christians will use what you learn from us to better further your mission work among Muslims, all because of the knowledge you gain in these meetings."

After this enlightening discussion, participants in the group agreed that while the information shared in the group can be used for da'wah and evangelism, the meeting themselves will only be used for dialogue. They agreed that the dialogue meetings would not be a place of proselytizing.

5.6.4 Dialogue is a primary task.

The fourth approach to interfaith dialogue is incredibly positive. Few Muslims (10 %) in the PAR groups subscribe to this approach. They see dialogue as an imperative for the religious community, especially in a time when there is so much misunderstanding between Islam and Christianity. Looking backward, they acknowledge the violent clashes between these two religious groups because of misunderstanding, suspicion, and religious prejudices. Looking forward, they hope to see an era of peaceful coexistence, mutual understanding, and respect for each other's faith in Ekurhuleni and the rest of South Africa. This, they argue, can be attained by starting now with authentic dialogue programs.

A respondent in the group reiterated that "There is much mistrust between Muslims and Christians in Ekurhuleni because of misunderstandings and a lack of dialogue." He stated that this misunderstanding is because of the lack of reading each other's sacred scriptures. He argued that authentic dialogue is essential, but participants should first read the others' sacred scripture before entering into any serious dialogue.

Another respondent agreed and added, "We all make assumptions about each other's faith and practices; maybe the reading of each other's sacred books will help defuse this ignorance and arrogance that many of us have."

Tracing the history of Muslim Christian debates in South Africa has led adherents of this fourth approach to call for dialogue between these groups. They agree that debates have not fostered mutual respect between these religions but widened the communication gap. They believe that decades of debates have not contributed to constructive relation-building but have caused corrosion between Muslims and Christians. They argue that dialogue must start today so that South Africa would not have to experience religious intolerance in the future.

The discussion on interfaith dialogue led the PAR group to implement a program for more effective dialogical encounters. One of the ideas was to promote dialogue at

every level of society. This would begin religious scholars to religious leaders and down to the youth who were seen as the leaders of tomorrow.

They proposed a fourfold plan that should be implemented starting in Ekurhuleni and eventually the rest of South Africa.

1. *Dialogue between religious scholars.*
2. *Dialogue between religious leaders.*
3. *Dialogue between the youth.*
4. *Dialogue between ordinary believers.*

While this group only represented 10% of the leaders presented in the PAR groups, they were an important voice. They were a relevant voice and a much-needed voice in a country plagued by debates that caused a rift in relations between Muslims and Christians.

5.7 Conclusion

The researcher's statistics show that 6% of Muslims in Ekurhuleni reject any form of dialogue. While this is a small group, their influence should not be underestimated since they can be detrimental to effective dialogue. Debating is their acceptable way of encountering Christians, and they spend much time, effort, and finances promoting debates. They believe that debates give Muslims an opportunity to defend their faith in front of a Christian audience. They also view debates as an opportunity to expose the "errors" of the Christian faith. At every venue where debates are held, this group distributes polemic material and seizes any opportunity for proselyting.

Statistics show that 40% of Muslims in Ekurhuleni are open to dialogue but warn that Muslims must approach dialogue with caution. While there is much suspicion within this group, the doors remain open for dialogue. It is, therefore, important for Christian involved in dialogue to be open and honest in dialogues. Ulterior motives and cunning behavior must be abhorred at all cost, or this group will be lost to the cause of dialogue. For this reason, guidelines for dialogue must be drawn by both groups and adhered to with strictness. Honesty, mutual respect, and openness will enhance the dialogical process and lay a foundation for further joint activities.

The 44% of Muslims in Ekurhuleni who see da'wah work as more important than dialogue should be respected for their views. Islam is a missionary religion, with a

deep commitment to da'wah activities, and so are Pentecostals. This group does not reject dialogue. They merely see it as a secondary task for Muslims. They can, therefore, still become a catalyst for dialogue between Muslims and Christians. Patience is a necessity for any Christian who wishes to enter this field of ministry since our aim is not proselyting but instead sharing our faith with Muslims and learning from them. This group represents the largest company of Muslims, and they are not opposed to dialogue.

On the contrary, they represent hope for dialogue activities in Ekurhuleni. Authentic friendship and mutual respect are the two keys to fostering a deeper relationship between them and Pentecostals. Friendships must extend beyond the dialogue meetings so that friends may encounter each other within their religious settings.

Though only 10% of Muslims in Ekurhuleni agree that dialogue is an integral part of the Muslim faith, this is nevertheless most encouraging. While the other three groups should not be neglected, this group, however, should be prioritized. They can influence the younger generation and help instill an atmosphere of tolerance within Ekurhuleni. They form part of both the religious leadership and the laity in the PAR groups. While they believe that more discussions must be held between Muslims and Christians, they also advocate social upliftment. The reason for their openness towards dialogue is based on their concern for the plight of humanity. Their belief is founded on the Quranic teaching of the oneness of humanity and Allah's command to do justice and show mercy. Within this group, there is a rich possibility for both da'wah and Christian missions to meet to alleviate the plight of the poor and the vulnerable.

The road towards largescale dialogue and joint ventures in social upliftment might be long and tedious, but one must walk this path to see a diverse Ekurhuleni, where religious diversity is celebrated instead of just being tolerated.

CHAPTER 6

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH, THE BIBLE AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

6.1 Introduction

The Pentecostal movement has always been an “exclusivist” movement. From its inception in the first decade of the 20th century, it claimed exclusivity because of its unique experience in the Holy Spirit. Glossolalia (speaking in tongues) made them claim exclusivity, and hence they broke away from the mainline Protestant churches (Ware, 2005:80).

During that same period, the ecumenical movement became established in many countries. The Catholic Church and many mainline protestant churches joined the movement, calling for unity in the body of Christ. Here again, the Pentecostal Church maintained its “exclusivity” and shunned the movement based on its unique understanding and special relationship with the Holy Spirit. It claimed to be “led by the Holy Spirit” and could not go back into traditionalism (Burgess & McGee. 1988:415). However, it was also pride that contributed to these decisions since the Pentecostal church was becoming the fastest growing church globally (Elwell. 2011:889).

Around the sixties and seventies, the Interfaith movements became prominent and shared the ideals of the unity of humanity in the face of oppression and injustice. The movement called for dialogue between the different religious groups, which would lead to mutual respect and the rectification of ages of misrepresentation. The American Pentecostal Movement spurned the movement based on the “exclusivity” of salvation in Christ.

In South Africa, the Pentecostal Church followed the same international Pentecostal trend. The three mainline Pentecostal denominations under discussion are the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), Assemblies of God (AOG), and the Full Gospel Church (FGC). These churches followed the trend of the American Pentecostal movement without question since all of them started as mission churches funded by the American denomination. This paternalistic relationship between the three denominations and their American sponsors led them to accept and adopt the American Pentecostal movement’s understanding of Pentecostalism.

Many Pentecostal leaders may reject the notion of paternalism within the Pentecostal church. However, the researcher had been a member of the FGC for more than 20

years and lectured at various other Pentecostal theological colleges, and experienced the influence of paternalism. The researcher was often forced to lecture from theological training material for the USA-sponsored training institutes. Lectures were told not to deviate from the curriculum.

The church's relationship concerning other religions started around the same time the Pentecostal movement was birthed. The first decade of the twentieth century saw the rise of the Pentecostal church, but also at this time, European theologians, and specifically, Ernest Troeltsch (1865-1923), was already challenging the church's stance on religious encounters. He called on the Church to take a stance on its views and relations with other religions by reviewing its long-held exclusivist position. Unfortunately, during this time, the Pentecostal church was caught up in its struggles of dogmatizing its teaching on the Holy Spirit. It, therefore, ignored any interaction with other religions and disregarded any ideas of interacting with them.

During the late fifties, the idea of the church interacting with other religions began to become a bit more structured. Hendrik Kraemer (1958:28) began categorizing different religious groups and comparing them to Christianity. He concluded that Christianity was the only true religion, based on the finished work of Christ on the cross. All other religions were viewed as false and idolatrous. While this stance was in line with the current teachings of the Pentecostal church, none of their theologians contributed theologically to these discussions. This period of history in the Pentecostal church was characterized by sporadic church growth and church planting, and again theologies of interreligious encounters were ignored.

Vatican II (1965-1967) became a ground-breaking consultation on the church's stance towards other religions in a post-modern era. Inclusivism was presented to the worldwide church as a modern model of encounters with other religions. Exclusivism was rejected in the light of this more accommodating, cooperative, and modern model. During this period in the history of the Pentecostal church, the church was caught up in the affairs of its new rival, the Charismatic Movement. With an emphasis on the gifts of physical healing and casting out demons, the Charismatic movement posed a challenge to the traditional Pentecostal church. They were losing members to this new movement, and they were also challenged to present a more detailed theology of the working of the Holy Spirit.

At the close of the twentieth century, the Catholic Church and the mainline protestant churches moved towards a more detailed analysis of religious encounters. As a result,

the interfaith movement gained momentum, and interreligious dialogue became the buzzword in theological circles. As a result, numerous interreligious conferences were taking place worldwide, where podiums were shared between Christian leaders and leaders of various faiths.

Some of the most ground-breaking books on the subject were being published. During this era, Owen Thomas (1969) identified ten positions the church could take regarding interreligious encounters. He listed them as rationalism, romanticism, relativism, exclusivism, dialectics, preconception, tolerance, dialogue, Catholicism, and presence. Knitter (1985) identified three of the most leading positions as exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Kung (1987) presented four approaches: (1) no religion is true, (2) one religion is true, (3) all religions are true, and (4) one religion is true, and the rest of the religious community shared partly in this truth. Finally, Dupuis (1997) described his three models as ecclesiocentrism, Christocentrism, and theocentrism. While essential strides were being made in theology regarding the church's encounters with other religions, the Pentecostal Church was focused on something completely different. The Pentecostal church threw its support completely behind the third world evangelical movement, "A.D 2000 and beyond".⁹⁰ This third-world American-funded initiative focused on the evangelization of the world at any cost. The motto of this initiative was, "A church for every people and the gospel for every person by the year 2000." The world was divided into two groups, the saved (all Christians) and the unsaved (the rest of the "heathen" world). People of other faiths were not seen as "partners in dialogue" but as "objects of missions." Exclusivism was the only theological model in missions. There was no salvation outside Christ. The church must zealously evangelize the rest of the world, and interreligious dialogue would hinder this mission.

The three Pentecostal denominations in South Africa followed their American counterparts every step of the way during each era. This paternalistic relationship led the South African Pentecostal Church to accept the models presented to them by their American colleagues. Without being sarcastic, it would be true, as the saying goes. to say, "Whenever the American Pentecostal church sneezes, the South African Pentecostal church catches a cold." This is how the paternalistic church model functions.

⁹⁰ J.J Kritzinger, P.G.J Meiring, & W.A Saayman (Eds.). (1994). On being witnesses. Orion Publishers: Halfway House (pg.125-127).

6.2 Pentecostalism in South Africa

The AFM, FGC, and AOG Church are the three mainline Pentecostal Churches in South Africa. Kritzinger (1994:11) explained that they started as mission churches, focusing on preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ through South Africa. Later, however, indigenous Pentecostal pastors were trained and found adequate to take up leadership positions in the church. Eventually, the leadership of the church was placed in the hands of local South Africans. This concept of indigenous leadership was proposed in the sixties by Pentecostal missiologist Melvin Hodges. Hodges outlined his model in his publication, "The indigenous church." However, the American churches enforced the paternalism model, and the South African leadership submitted to this model. Because of the continuous financial injections from abroad, the South African church accepted this model of paternalism.

However, with financial injections, there were also theological injections. Official funding came from wealthy Pentecostal business people through the American-based Pentecostal Mission in South and Central Africa (PMSCA). The theology of American Pentecostalism was transferred to the South African church. This was through means of theological training that was formulated by the American church.⁹¹

An example could be found in the FGC with their Bible school curriculum directly from Cleveland, Tennessee. American Pentecostal theology made no room for political involvement. The church stayed away from politics because the preaching of the gospel became its only and ultimate mission. The South African Pentecostal church pursued that same agenda. It did not oppose the Apartheid regime's oppression of people based on the color of their skin. Instead, it called on its members to submit to the oppressive Government. The Full Gospel Church constitution approved on the 4th of April 1979 reads:

It is incumbent on us as a church, to be subject to the higher powers, which have been ordained by God (Rom. 13:1) and to the existing government policies of the Republic of South Africa, and the laws relating thereof. We deem it incumbent upon us to comply with governments policies, which are enforced.

⁹¹ Currently (2020) the Full Gospel Church has adopted the American (Lee University, Cleveland) curriculum in their Bible School in Irene. They do not have a South African written curriculum, though they have a handful of university Ph.D. graduates as lecturers.

This may be because the Pentecostal Church in South Africa did not want to jeopardize their favor with the ruling government. The white (European / Afrikaans) leadership supported the status quo because they benefited from it. They supported the system by implementing the same model in the church, by introducing Black, White, Indian, and Coloured sections in the three Pentecostal churches.

The state church, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), saw Islam as demonic and called it a false religion. The 1986 Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK),⁹² General Synod officially declared Islam as a false religion and Muslims as the target for aggressive evangelism.

As the Pentecostal Church followed the Dutch Reformed Church's policies on politics, so did they follow the state church's policies concerning other faiths, in particular, Islam. As a result, the interreligious dialogue was rejected, and all religions were seen as false. Kalu (2004:256) mentioned this in his analysis of the Pentecostal Church's reaction to Islam. "it should be emphasized that the Pentecostal groups demonized Islam in their theology and practices." The same sentiments were shared by Pentecostal theologian Karkkainen (2009:189). "Pentecostals tend to point out the demonic elements in other religions, rather than the common denominators." Kritzinger (1991:139-140) placed Pentecostals in the conservative Evangelical circle and reached the same conclusion as Kalu and Karkkainen.

There is a view that all religions are demonic "of the devil." It is a widespread and growing conviction. It is especially in the Pentecostal and Charismatic branches of evangelical theology.

This dualist approach by Pentecostals defined their theology of religions. Everything was divided into black and white, God and the devil, Christian and non-Christian. Frahm (2018:298) therefore correctly affirmed that "Pentecostals see the world as dualist, divided between good and evil, Satan and God." In this dualist approach, Islam stood in direct opposition to Christianity and was labeled a false religion by Pentecostals. This approach towards Islam would most certainly affect the Pentecostal understanding of missions.

6.3 A Pentecostal missiology

⁹² The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) is the Afrikaans equivalent of the English "Dutch Reformed Church".

The researcher will not present an exhaustive Pentecostal missiology. He will only discuss the topic in as far as its impacts on the subject of interreligious dialogue. Considering the Pentecostal dualist approach to world religions, it would not be surprising to find this dualism in their understanding of missions. Pentecostals define missions as a dual system: on one side, the “mission field” and the “mission force”. The Pentecostal Church represents the mission force, while all other religions (specifically Islam) represent the mission field, with Non-Christians seen as “objects of missions.” Within this description of missions, there is no room for interreligious dialogue. Instead, missions is seen as the primary task of the Church. Evangelism, discipleship, and church planting fall within this scope of missions.

In the constitution of the AFM⁹³ (section 5, article 5.1.1 and 5.1.2), the mission of the church is defined as:

Article 5.1.1 To glorify God.

Article 5.1.2 To proclaim the Kingdom of God by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The FGC Church⁹⁴ outlined its understanding of missions in the mission statement of its constitution.

The mission of the FGC is to perpetuate the full gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19, 20), in the Spirit and power of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 6, 13-18), through specific attention to and emphasis upon the centrality of God's Word, world evangelization, ministerial development, Christian discipling, lay ministry, Biblical stewardship, church growth, church planting, family enrichment, and servant leadership.

The AOG Church⁹⁵ defined missions in its constitution, Article 13, as:

A divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for a two-fold purpose: The evangelization of the world (Mark 16:15-20) and the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13).

The description of missions portrayed by these three churches would fit well in Kritzinger's (1994:1-3) description of “the threefold goal of mission.” 1. To manifest the glory of God. 2. The immediate aim of missions is the conversion of the “Gentiles.” 3.

⁹³ <https://afm-ags.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Assembly-Policy.pdf>. Accessed on 10/07/2020.

⁹⁴ <https://www.worldcat.org/title/constitution-and-bylaws-of-the-full-gospel-church-of-god-in-southern-africa/oclc/316509848>. Accessed on 10/07/2020.

⁹⁵ file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/2007%20Constitution%20and%20Bylaws.pdf. Accessed on 10/07/2020.

To plant churches. This description of missions became popular during the Second Reformation⁹⁶. Bosch (1991:256) commented on this formulation of missions and described it as unparalleled. Thus, one can see the influence of evangelical theology in the formulation of Pentecostal missiology. The Pentecostal Church took ideas and formulas from many other Christian traditions and adapted them to their way of ministry. Pentecostal missiology was described by Burgess, M. and McGee, G (1988:607) as an “urgent missiology,” one that is constantly on the move as follows:

Pentecostal mission theology has tended to be a “theology on the move,” its character often having been more experimental and cognitive, more active than reflective.”

For this reason, Pentecostals of the past did not stop to reflect and write analytically and academically about their theology of missions. However, certain themes were inherent in their writings that seemed to play a pivotal role in understanding their theology of missions. Four themes were inherent in the theology of missions in the three mainline Pentecostal Churches in South Africa, namely Evangelism, spontaneous church planting, the uniqueness of Christ, and the development of theological training are common themes found in their theology of missions. These four themes would have a direct impact on their understanding of interreligious dialogue. In addition, it would affect the way they encountered their Muslim neighbors

6.3.1 Evangelism

Because of their literal interpretation of scripture,⁹⁷ their conviction of the inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility, supremacy, and authority of scripture, Pentecostals felt it incumbent upon themselves to take the great commission (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 1:8) literally and seriously. Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ was the primary task of evangelism. Burgess (1988:608) described the primacy of this task.

The clearly stated primary goal of this convocation was to bring the majority of the human race to Jesus Christ.

For Pentecostals, the preaching of the gospel was not an end in itself but a means to the end; the ultimate goal was the persuasion of sinners to accept Jesus Christ as

⁹⁶ This was the Evangelical campaign that started in the 1820' and was organised by theological conservatives in the Church of Ireland and the Church of England.

⁹⁷ Burgess (1988) calls it “literal Biblicism” and explains that Pentecostals have a strong conviction regarding the authority of Scripture.

their savior. Thus, there was always a persuasiveness and an aggressiveness, accompanied by a sense of urgency, and their evangelism characterized that. Burgess (1988:608) pointed out that they rejected any form of liberalism in their evangelistic endeavors.

Pentecostal evangelism would reject the liberal tenets of universalism that say the work of evangelism is simply to inform people that they are already saved. Neither do Pentecostals believe that proclaiming only for the sake of giving objective information is sufficient?

Evangelism led to the sinner deciding to turn from their former religions and accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour. The biblical passage, Acts. 4:2 is interpreted literally, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

Evangelism was not a "dry proclamation" of words alone and had to be accompanied by "signs and wonders." Healings and miracles had to accompany the preaching of the Word. Pentecostal missiological tradition had placed great emphasis on its members, being led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit accompanied them as they preached the gospel. The Holy Spirit empowered them on their mission and equipped them for the works of healings, miracles, and the power to perform exorcisms. Anderson (2005:89) explained the importance of this phenomenon in Pentecostal missiology.

The role of "signs and wonders," particularly that of healing and miracles, is prominent in Pentecostal mission praxis. They believe that the coming of the Spirit brings an ability to do "signs and wonders" in the name of Jesus Christ to accompany and authenticate the gospel message.

Pentecostal literal biblicism had led them to do evangelism aggressively, as they depended on the Holy Spirit to endow them with power, as stated in Acts 1:8.

You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and in the uttermost parts of the world.

Pentecostals interpreted this biblical mandate literally, who regarded it as mandatory for them to receive that "power" before launching any evangelistic endeavors.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the AOG implemented an evangelistic program called the "20/20 vision". The concept was taken from Acts 20:20. This program outlined the methodology of the Pentecostal church's evangelistic strategy.

Act 20:20 “how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public and from house to house.” (emphasis made by the researcher).

Evangelism in Pentecostal churches comprised two levels: publicly and going from door to door. The public method included evangelistic crusades and mass meetings. The second method was door-to-door evangelism, the same type that Ahmed Deedat referred to as “a menace” in Muslim communities (1978:36). This type of evangelism was equivalent to the methods used by the Muslim Tabligh movement. Both public and door-to-door evangelism are done with one goal in mind, and that is the conversion of “sinners.” Christ is presented as the world's savior, and accepting Him would secure your salvation, whereas rejecting Him and you perish in hell.

These aggressive forms of evangelism leave the non-Christian with two choices only; accept Christ or perish. Moreover, this approach poses a problem for interfaith dialogue since it does not leave room for conversation or discourse with people of other faiths.

6.3.2 Church planting (spontaneous / saturated)

The Pentecostal church has been applauded for its extraordinary numerical growth around the world. The ability to plant churches spontaneously is a part of the Pentecost mission praxis. Preaching must lead to the planting of new churches. The “Back to God Crusades” of AOG, initiated by Nicolas Bhengu, and the “Back to the Bible Crusades” of FGC introduced by J.F Rowlands was marked by extensive evangelism that culminated in the planning of thousands of churches across the nation. The Muslim community always wondered why many communities would have one central mosque, while Christians had several churches in one local community. The answer is due to the church planting efforts by Pentecostals. Most communities in South Africa would have no less than three Pentecostal churches.

This deduction is made because each of the mainline Pentecostal churches aims at having a church in every community in South Africa. As the AFM states, wherever there are people, there is an AFM. The “Dawn 2000” movement introduced the concept that these churches adopted. The movement implemented a strategy called “Saturated Church Planting” (SCP), which saw each denomination saturate the country with “daughter” churches. Patterson (1981:595) explained the rationale behind

the “spontaneous multiplication of Churches” reminiscent of the Pentecostal mission praxis.

We fulfill the evangelistic Biblical mandate of the church by planting churches that grow and reproduce spontaneously. Spontaneous reproduction of churches means the Holy Spirit moves a church to reproduce daughter churches independently, without outsiders pushing it.

Unlike the Muslim community that gathers around one central mosque in each community, the Pentecostal church meets in multiple sites within one community. Each site tends to either expand in size or if the community is too big, or they reproduce and start new “site churches” within the same community. Much of the practical guidelines on how to plant churches are outlined in two books that are accepted unanimously by all three Pentecostal churches in the country: Hodges publication, “The Indigenous Church” (1953) and Allen’s work, “Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?” (1962).

6.3.3 Uniqueness of Christ

The uniqueness of Christ will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, as it relates to the Pentecostal theology of religions. Finally, this short section will be related to its missiological implication and the position it holds in evangelism.

The uniqueness of Christ as the only mediator between humankind and God is a foundational doctrine in the Pentecostal church. Moreover, they pride themselves as champions of this doctrine in a pluralistic society. Therefore, the uniqueness of Christ in the salvation process within the Pentecostal church holds a high place in its constitution.

In the constitution of the AFM, the uniqueness of Christ as the savior of the world is outlined in section 3, article 3.3.

We Believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God the Father, true God who for the sake of humanity and its salvation, descended from heaven and became flesh; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was born by the virgin Mary; who lived on earth and was crucified, died, and was buried, who rose from the dead and ascended to heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

The FGC constitution views the uniqueness of Christ in His office as the only reconciler between humankind and God and as the only redeemer in the salvation process.

Section 8 – Reconciliation: We believe that reconciliation is the bringing together of God and man on the grounds of Christ's redemptive work, into the state of fellowship and communion as children of God: 11 Corinthians 5:18,19; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:21; 1 John 1:3 and Romans 5:11 (where a correct translation of "atonement" in A V is the word "reconciliation.")

Section 9 – Redemption: We believe that redemption is an act of God whereby through the death of His Son, He paid that price which His own holiness demanded the release of the sinner: Luke 1:69; Romans 3:25; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18,19; Revelation 5:9,10.

In the constitution of the AOG (Section 7 article A), Jesus Christ is described as the only hope of redemption.

Man's only hope of redemption is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Salvation is received through repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pentecostal churches uphold the uniqueness of Christ in their constitution, preaching, and practices. The question that will be put forward in the next section is whether Pentecostals can uphold this uniqueness while still being open to interreligious dialogue? Also, can the Pentecostals dialogue with Muslims while still maintaining the uniqueness of Christ as a savior?

6.3.4 Theological training

At the inception of the Pentecostal movement, theological training was not seen as a priority. The fast growth of the church and the dependence on the Holy Spirit led many leaders to do ministry work without adequate theological training. The theology of the "priesthood of every believer" released many unqualified candidates into the mission field. Based on the literal interpretation of Luke 12:11-12,⁹⁸ early Pentecostals were

⁹⁸ Luke 12:11 When you are brought to trial in the Jewish meeting places or before rulers or officials, don't worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say.

Luke 12:12 At that time the Holy Spirit will tell you what to say. (NIV)

under the impression that they needed to open their mouths and the Holy Spirit would fill them with the right words to speak.

In later years, the Pentecostal church established Bible schools that would help train its pastors, evangelists, and missionaries. Today each of the mainline Pentecostal churches has a Bible school, offering a Diploma in theology. However, there is not much academic material that is produced by Pentecostals in South Africa. In his article, Marius Nel (2016) attested that “*Rather spirit-filled than learned! Pentecostalism’s tradition of anti-intellectualism and Pentecostal scholarship*” is an indictment to the Pentecostal church. He argues that Pentecostal leaders are too preoccupied with things in the realm of the spirit and have neglected the academic fields. His assessment is not altogether correct since some outstanding Pentecostal academics in the country made contributions to the international theological community. However, they are not enough since many theological subjects (like the theology of religions) have been left untouched.

Religious studies and, specifically, the theology of religions, is uncharted territory in Pentecostal Bible schools. While the emphasis is placed on Pneumatology, Christology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology, extraordinarily little attention is given to the subject of world religions. Interreligious dialogue is wholly ignored in the curriculum since the uniqueness of Christ in Pentecostalism is unchallenged.

We are living in a multi-cultural, multi-religious society. A country that celebrates religious freedom as communities of faith lives next to each other. We live interdependent lives and coexist with each other. However, at a time like this, Pentecostal theological institutions do not see the necessity of studying the essence of other religions, even if it were just to become better evangelists. Understanding other religions are the first step to interreligious dialogue. If the Pentecostal church fails at training this generation in the aspects of other religions, then we will not progress to a place of dialogue. Without dialogue, the misunderstanding and suspicions between religions in South African will continue. Mutual respect for each other’s faith will not grow, and mutual understanding will be eradicated.

The study of the theology of religions is presently at the cutting edge of theological

discussions. Interreligious dialogue is the new frontier in this world, plagued by religious intolerance and violence. If the Pentecostal church misses this opportunity to speak and interact with other theologians and people of different faiths, we will lose another chance to become a prophetic voice in our nation. Therefore, crucial, relevant, and cutting-edge theological issues must become a part of the theological schools' curriculum. Failure to implement such academic studies will see the Pentecostal church produce "irrelevant leaders" that will not affect their multi-cultural and religiously diverse communities.

However, since 2018, Auckland Park Seminary and South African Theological Seminary (SATS) had people like Akheem Waqar (a Pakistani Christian) and Rudolph Boshoff (a Christian apologist) join their ranks. Both are involved in Muslim Christian debates, and they have contributed considerably to the development of apologetic material aimed at Muslim evangelism. However, while these seminaries train many AFM leaders, the AOG and FGC pastors are still left with good training material which deals with Islam, or any other world religion, for that matter.

6.4 The Bible and Dialogue

Kurucan (1999:28) points out that "The Quran's position on interfaith dialogue is not immediately clear." However, he urges Muslims to carefully study the Quran, the Sunnah, and history, in their quest to formulate a philosophy of religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

On the other hand, Imam Ezzat (2009:1) asserts that "The Quran gives great attention to dialogue and discussions." In agreement with Ezzat, Sanaullah (2014: 86) argues that the Quran is the propelling force behind interfaith dialogue. "Propelled by this Quranic injunctions, the Muslims today have been conducting many programs of interfaith dialogue throughout the world."

Iranian philosopher Gholamreza Aavani (n.d) concurs with Sanaullah and Ezzat, contending that,

The Quran calls forth all the people of the Book, or the adherents of religions, to a word that is common among all of them.

Considering what Muslim scholars argue concerning the positiveness of the Quranic injunction for dialogue, it raises the question: where does the Bible stand? Do Christian scholars agree with Kurucan's (1999:28) statement of the Quran, and

do they make the same deductions of the Bible? “The Bible’s position on interfaith dialogue is not immediately apparent. Or do they agree with Sanaullah and Ezzat concerning the Quran's positiveness towards dialogue and contend that the Bible is just as positive towards interfaith dialogues? In this section of the thesis, the researcher will investigate and discuss, from a Pentecostal perspective, whether the Bible is positive, negative, or neutral towards dialogue with other faiths.

6.4.1 A negative dualistic approach

The Pentecostal church has adopted a dualistic worldview. As stated in previous sections, everything is divided into good or evil, God or Satan, and right or wrong. This polarized approach has caused them to develop a hermeneutic methodology, which interprets the Bible as a book that draws straight lines between right and wrong. There is no middle ground. Since the “middle-ground” is seen as a compromise. This approach interprets the Bible literally and uses New Testament nuances that depict the world in a dualistic paradigm. Scriptures that present the broad way and the narrow way (Matt. 7:13), the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46), the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30), and light and darkness (2 Cor. 6:14) are seen as evidence of dualism. A dualistic approach to the Bible has led Pentecostals to develop a “selective hermeneutics” approach to scripture.

6.4.1.1 Selective hermeneutics – Old Testament

There is a tendency in Pentecostalism⁹⁹ to interpret the scriptures in a naïve, dualistic way. The Old Testament is regarded as distinguishing between two groups, Israel and the pagan nations. Israel is always seen as good and as the children of God, while the pagan nations are seen as evil, wicked, and therefore children of Satan. This interpretation of the scriptures is based on the “selective hermeneutics” approach prevalent in Pentecostal and conservative Evangelical circles. The term “selective” hermeneutics presupposes the idea that this approach only “selects” narratives in the Bible that support their view and ignores any scripture that might challenge it. This approach is known to select scripture passages, events, and narratives in the Old Testament, which allude to God

⁹⁹ The same tendency is found in conservative Evangelical circles, promoting the “exclusivist” approach, and was adopted by Pentecostals.

fighting against the pagan nations and always saving Israel, presenting them as His chosen race.

The approach stems from Genesis 3:15: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Right at the beginning of the Bible, this verse establishes two groups of people that will dwell on the earth. They are labeled as the offspring of the Women (the Jewish nation and ultimately the Christians) and the offspring of the serpent, the devil (the rest of humanity). This scripture becomes the lens through which Pentecostal scholars interpret the rest of the Bible. The approach which the researcher labels as the "selective hermeneutic approach" to the theology of religions views the Old Testament as a historical account of God destroying the pagan and rescuing His chosen people.

The Torah sets the precedence for this dualistic approach, while the rest of the Old Testament becomes an enactment of the approach. This is seen in the account of Noah and the flood, as God's destruction falls on the pagan nations while He saves Noah and his family. The same is seen in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the favor of God on Abraham and Lot.¹⁰⁰ The Exodus account plays a prominent part in this approach as the dichotomy between the Children of God and the pagan Egyptian nation are set against each other. You are either on the side of the Egyptians or on the side of the Israelites, which would place you either on God's side or on the side of God's enemies. The parting of the Red Sea solidifies this dualist approach since it separates the good from the evil, and the children of God, from the pagan Egyptians.

In the book of Deuteronomy, Israel becomes the "covenant people," those who enjoy a special relationship with Yahweh. They are constantly reminded about their deliverance from Egypt, which was brought about by the hand of God (Deuteronomy 5:6). Unlike the rest of the idolatrous nations around them, Israel was seen as God's chosen people, as stated in Deuteronomy 7:6.

The Israelites themselves adopted this dualist approach towards the surrounding nations. The first post-exodus figure to enact this approach was Joshua. His words in Joshua 24:14 solidified this approach and set the precedence for the rest of the

¹⁰⁰ Genesis chapters 18-19

Judges and kings that proceeded him. The choice was simple, either choose Yahweh, the true God or serve the false gods of the surrounding nations.

Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt and serve the LORD.

This approach is seen in the way the kings approach the nations around them. Fighting against these pagan nations was considered fighting on behalf of God. The prophets are regarded as agents of God to pronounce judgment on the pagan nations. The most vivid event is recorded in 1 Kings 18; it recounts the Prophet Elijah's encounter with the 450 prophets of Baal. It was a "showdown" between Yahweh, the one true God, and Baal, who represented the false gods of Canaan. Through this episode, Yahweh would prove Himself as the only true God by exposing Baal as a false god in 1Kings 18:24.

A selective hermeneutic of Old Testament texts can be used to substantiate a dualist and exclusivist theology of religions. This approach would have to deliberately ignore or dishonestly deny Old Testament passages that represent Yahweh as a God of the nations of the earth. Furthermore, it would have to either contradict or negate God's mercy and grace to pagan nations and his patience towards rebellious pagan leaders. However, then, this is the reason this approach is branded as "selective hermeneutics."

6.4.1.2 Selective hermeneutics – New Testament

Within this approach, the New Testament is also seen from a dualist perspective. The New Testament is also perceived as dividing humanity into two groups: the Jews and the Gentiles. At the advent of Jesus Christ, humanity was divided into those who accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour of humanity and those who rejected Him as Saviour.

Selective hermeneutics exhibits itself more candidly in the New Testament since the adherents of this approach have enough "proof texts" to support their philosophy. Much of what the New Testament reveals about Jesus would place Him in the position of exclusiveness. He is depicted as the "only mediator" between humanity and God (1 Tim. 2:5), and he is seen as the only way to salvation (Acts 4:12). He is quoted as saying that there is no access to God without Him since He

is the only way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). He is the only begotten son of God (John 3:16) and the only one that can secure eternal redemption for those who follow Him (Heb. 9:12).

While Knitter (1995:182) subscribes to the pluralistic approach of the theology of religions, he nevertheless argues that these “proof texts” exhibited by the exclusivists, be taken seriously.

To close one’s eyes to such proclamations is either psychologically to repress or dishonestly to deny what one does not wish to face.

He argues that it would be naive and misleading to suggest that the New Testament authors did not mean or understand what they were writing. While these statements concerning Jesus are exclusive, they are not the only statements concerning the ministry of Jesus. Jesus was brought up in a pluralistic society, ruled by the Roman Empire and made up of a multiplicity of cultures.

At the birth of Jesus, three wise men from the East brought gifts to him and paid homage to him (Matt. 2:1-10). These “Gentiles” became central figures in the nativity narrative. It was within this pluralistic society that Jesus began his ministry. He praised a Roman centurion’s faith amid a Jewish crowd (Matt. 8:10). He healed a Canaanite woman’s daughter and acknowledged her faith in Him (Matt. 15:28). In the account of Luke’s gospel, Jesus healed a group of 10 lepers from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Moreover, he praised the one Gentile that returned to Him to give thanks (Luke 17:11).

Against his Jewish cultural norms, Jesus lived in a Samaritan city for two days, enjoying their hospitality (John 4:1-42). John records the incident where Greeks went looking for Jesus to speak to him (John 12:20-22). There is no record that Jesus refused their company because there is no reason that Jesus would not welcome such an endeavor.

Pentecostal selective hermeneutics celebrate the miracles performed by Jesus in the lives of the Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman, but it neglects to see it in the context of Jesus’ openness to ministry among the Gentiles. The political, cultural, and social dynamics that play out in each narrative are overlooked, while the story’s message, which deals with faith, healing, and deliverance, is disproportionately inflated. Selective hermeneutic will harm interreligious dialogue.

6.4.1.3 The negative impact of selective hermeneutics

While selective hermeneutics make good Pentecostal evangelistic sermons, they negatively impact the realms of dialogue. All other religions are perceived as false, and Christianity is seen as the only true religion. Therefore, sitting down in dialogue with adherents of other religions is seen as compromising their faith. This polarized paradigm views members of other religions as a mission field and not as partners in dialogue. However, some theologians within the Pentecostal movement subscribe to a more all-inclusive approach towards the Bible when it concerns relations with people of other faiths.

6.4.2 A Positive, all-inclusive approach

Kipsigei (2015:49) argued that,

Dialogue is deeply enshrined in the Bible. Both the Old and the New Testaments contain passages that support dialogue.

He began with the Old Testament, outlining the various passages that relate to God, using the children of Israel to shine as a light to the Gentiles. While he believed that the Bible warned the Israelites not to follow the ways of idolatry perpetuated by them, he also argued that the Bible did not prohibit the Israelites from interacting and dialogue with their non-Jewish neighbors. He contended that being neighborly was never forbidden in the Bible since neighborliness is essential for dialogical encounters.

6.4.2.1 An all-inclusive approach in the Old Testament

In his article "God at War," Gregory Boyd (1983:67) argued that the Old Testament presents God as a God of War, the one who annihilates His enemies. While this is an essential theme in the Old Testament, he argued that this is not its central theme. However, this theme is what many Pentecostals have latched on to and hence developed theology of dualism. However, the Old Testament is a book with a more significant theme, and veteran missiologists like John Stott, Johannes Verkuyl, and David Bosch argue that God is presented in the Old Testament as a God of the nations. These themes must be investigated and developed by

Pentecostal missiologists, as they present an all-inclusive missiological approach to the Old Testament to the world.

Stott (1979:3-9) developed the Old Testament theme of God being a “missionary God.” He called Israel a missionary people so that they might become a centripetal force and attract people to Yahweh, the God that they served. He developed this theme from Genesis 12: 1-4, describing the Abrahamic covenant as a covenant made to the entire world through Abraham.

Verkuyle (1978:27-33) further developed this theme of Israel being a centripetal force. He explained how Israel enjoyed this privileged position but became a selfish, self-centered people who failed in their missionary obligation. God, however, did not give up on the nations of the world but used the prophets to call the nations to Mt. Zion, the place of fellowship with God (Isa. 2:1-4, Micah 4:1-4, Jer. 3:17, Zech. 8:20).

Both Verkuyle and Howthorne (1981:34-48) also developed the more significant themes found in the Psalms and presented them as the church’s missionary motif for reaching the nations. Howthorne developed the theme of God’s glory. He argued that the Psalms displays God’s glory for the nations to see and acknowledge from this perspective. He reasoned that God did not leave the nations without a witness; his glory was displayed in His people, His temple, and His statutes (Psalms 66:1-4, 138:4-5).

Piper (1980:49-54) would develop this same theme (Glory of God) in his article “Let the nations be glad.” Focusing on Psalms 67, 96, and 97, he showed God’s intention to bring salvation to the nation of the world, resulting in them being glad and joyous. He argued that it had always been the intention of God to see His salvation reach the ends of the earth so that every tribe and every nation should behold His glory.

Bosch (1992:59-60), in his book “Transforming Missions,” went a step further and developed the theme “missio dei” as God’s plan for the nations and explained as follows; Everything that God does is within the redemptive plan of God, He moves the nations into the position He desires. The church is a part of His mission, and He leads them to the nations to display His glory. He claims that the church does not have any mission outside the one mission of God, which is to lead the nations to Him.

The Old Testament is as missionary orientated as the New Testament, and a careful examination of its themes will reveal a God who has compassion for the world's nations. A hermeneutic that upholds the integrity of the complete message of the Old Testament will not fail to see God's love, mercy, and compassion for every nation outside the fold of Israel.

When Israel, as a nation, exited Egypt with several Egyptians and slaves of other cultures among them, called the "mixed crowd," they enjoyed the protection and provisions of God. They, too, were on their way to the promised land that God provided for His children in Israel. Indeed, they did not walk with Israel for 40 years in complete silence; they had to dialogue. Israel dialogued with the mixed crowd, teaching them the ways of Yahweh as they journeyed. The mixed crowd became their dialogue partners, and together they witnessed the provision and protection of God.

Pentecostals must investigate passages like these, and assessments must be made, contributing to the discussions on interfaith dialogue. The Old Testament has many other texts that are favorable towards the nations, inviting them to become a part of the children of Yahweh. The Old Testament promotes dialogue and preserves its teaching in the Torah, the Psalms, and the Prophets. To ignore these themes is to be unfaithful to the message of the Old Testament.

6.4.2.2. An all-inclusive approach in the New Testament

At face value, the New Testament seems to have the most radical statements that would support an exclusivist approach to the theology of religions. Selective scriptures paint Jesus as a narrow exclusivist who only saw the need to reach out to the Gentiles at the end of His ministry (John 14:6, 3:16, 3:18, Acts 4:12, Rom. 10:9).

However, a closer look at the New Testament reveals that the ministry of Jesus and the early church took every opportunity to reach the Gentile nations. The New Testament was written within the context of a pluralistic society. Jesus and the early church did not miss an opportunity to dialogue with the Gentiles and share the gospel of God's kingdom. In chapter 6 of this thesis, the researcher will

examine Pentecostal scholars¹⁰¹ who argue for a paradigm shift in Pentecostal theology. They argue that the Pentecostal church should consider moving from exclusivism to inclusivism. They, too, will use the New Testament as the basis of their argument, showing that the New Testament is open to interfaith dialogue.

For Pentecostal to have a theologically sound and missiologically sensitive approach to a theology of religions, it must reinterpret the New Testament without bias and prejudice. Kipsigei (2015:3) argued that “God’s dialogue with humanity which started in the Old Testament continued in the New Testament.” In agreement with Kipsigei (a Kenyan theologian), Togarasei (a theologian from Botswana) also argued that the New Testament provided a basis for interreligious dialogue. He (2003:154) also challenged the African church, asserting, “Contemporary Christian mission calls for interreligious dialogue.”

Kipsigei, Togarasei, and Peters (1984:48-50) supported this argument by listing Jesus's six encounters with Gentiles, describing them as “dialogical encounters.”

- The Samaritan woman and the Samaritan town (John 4:1-42).
- The Syrophenician woman and her sick daughter (Matt. 15:21-28).
- The Centurion at Capernaum (Matt. 8:5-13).
- The nobleman whose son was sick (John 4:43-54).
- The Gadarene who was delivered from demon possession (Mark 5:1-20).
- The deaf man from Decapolis (Mark 7:31-37).

In Pentecost circles, these six encounters Jesus had with Gentiles were stripped of its religious-cultural context and interpreted solely based on the miraculous healing power that is available in Jesus Christ. This is why the Pentecostal church must be called to account to reinterpret scripture in the light of the pluralist society we are engaged with.

The saying of Jesus must not be reduced to the selective few verses which support an exclusive worldview’ His message must be interpreted in its entirety. There are several passages in the Gospels that attest to Jesus’ universal mandate.

- You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16)

¹⁰¹ Amos Young, Steven Bevan, and Johnathan Olson are western Pentecostal scholars, while Geomon George, Ivan Satyavrata and Wesley Lukose are Pentecostals of Indian descent. Their argument for a paradigm shift in Pentecostal theology will be discussed in chapter 6.

- The Kingdom of God will be taken from you (Jews) and be given to the nations (Matt 21:43)
- They will come from the east and the west, and the north and the south, and will recline in the kingdom of God. And behold, the last ones will be first, and the first ones will be last. (Luke 13:29-30).
- He was the true Light; He enlightened every man coming into the world. (John 1:9)
- Then Jesus spoke again to them, saying, I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)
- The next day John sees Jesus coming to him and says, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! (John 1:29)

Other passages to investigate can be found through the New Testament (Matt. 6:10, 21:28-32, Luke 10:29-37, 14:10-24, John 3:17, 11:17, 3:19).

Pentecostal theologians have also interpreted Paul in the same narrow exclusivist way. As in the case of Jesus, they selected Pauline passages that supported their worldview. The following passages are part and parcel of their exclusivist arsenal (Rom. 10:13, 10:9, Heb. 1:3, 2 Tim. 1:9-10).

Other Pauline passages to investigate can be found through his Epistles (Rom. 1:16, 5:7-8, 1 Cor. 15:22, 2 Cor. 5:19, Eph. 2:8-9, 1 Thess. 4:16-17).

However, like Jesus, Paul, the Apostle, did ministry within a pluralistic society. Paul's encounter with the citizens of Athens and his speech at the Areopagus (Acts 17:16-34) is seen as his "Magnus opus" of interfaith dialogue. His encounter with the people on the island of Malta (Acts 28:1-10) is a prototype for Pentecostals to use their "gifts of healing" to further the cause of dialogue and show hospitality to those outside the fold of Christianity. Paul saw his imprisonment in Rome (Phil. 1: 12-14) as another opportunity to dialogue with the Roman guards concerning the gospel of Christ, and he recorded his success in his letter to the Philippians.

Finally, the New Testament closes with the book of Revelations, which envisions the different nations, tribes, and tongues of the world gathered around the throne of God (Rev. 7:9).

The question that needs to be examined in Pentecostal circles is, how do Pentecostals engage with adherents of other faiths? What impact do their dualist interpretation and t selective hermeneutic approach to scripture have on their relations with Muslims in particular? These questions will be answered in the next section.

6.5 Current approaches to dialogue

This section of the thesis will comprise of discussions held during several “Participatory Action Research” (PAR) sessions that the researcher conducted at Ekurhuleni, South Africa. These sessions were held with Sunni Muslim and Pentecostal Christian leaders and members of the laity.¹⁰² In addition, information from the questionnaires that were completed by Pentecostal respondents will also be included in this section.

When the Bible is studied in its entirety, the message of interreligious dialogue cannot be disputed or ignored. God is the creator of humankind, and His desire for the nations is recorded in 2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness, but is long-suffering toward us, not purposing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (emphasis made by the researcher). The ministries of the patriarchs, the kings, the prophets, Jesus the Messiah, and the Apostle Paul all attest to God’s involvement in the world’s nations. Dialogue with the nations was always God’s plan for disseminating His word to the nations.

The challenge is to investigate whether Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni adhere to the sacred scriptures when it comes to dialogue with people of other faiths. For example, are they willing to pursue dialogue with Muslims? What are their fears and reservations, if any? Would they navigate a new path from debating to mutual understanding and honest dialogue?

In the PAR sessions, there were mixed emotions about Muslim Christian dialogue, with some that were utterly opposed to it, while others were entirely positive to the idea of dialogue. Some Pentecostal leaders warned their brothers to tread carefully, with much caution, before committing to dialogue between the two faiths. Others saw world

¹⁰² These sessions were held at different venues in Ekurhuleni between March 2019 and Feb 2020. Some were chaired by the researcher while others were chaired by Fazale Rehan from Fazale Rab Ministry (Alberton).

evangelism as the primary motivation for dialogue and called for a balance between evangelism and dialogue.

With all these different viewpoints and ideas, the researcher categorized the respondents into four groups. These four groups would also characterize the four different views on dialogue that are currently dominant in Ekurhuleni. The total number of Pentecostal participants who attended the PAR meetings was fifty (50). The researcher used this number to arrive at a percentage that would categorize each group. Each person would be equivalent to 2%.¹⁰³

- Rejection to any form of dialogue. (12%)
- Dialogue must be approached with much caution. (20%)
- There must be a balance between dialogue and evangelism. (62%)
- Dialogue is a primary task. (6%)

The results are further illustrated by the chart below.

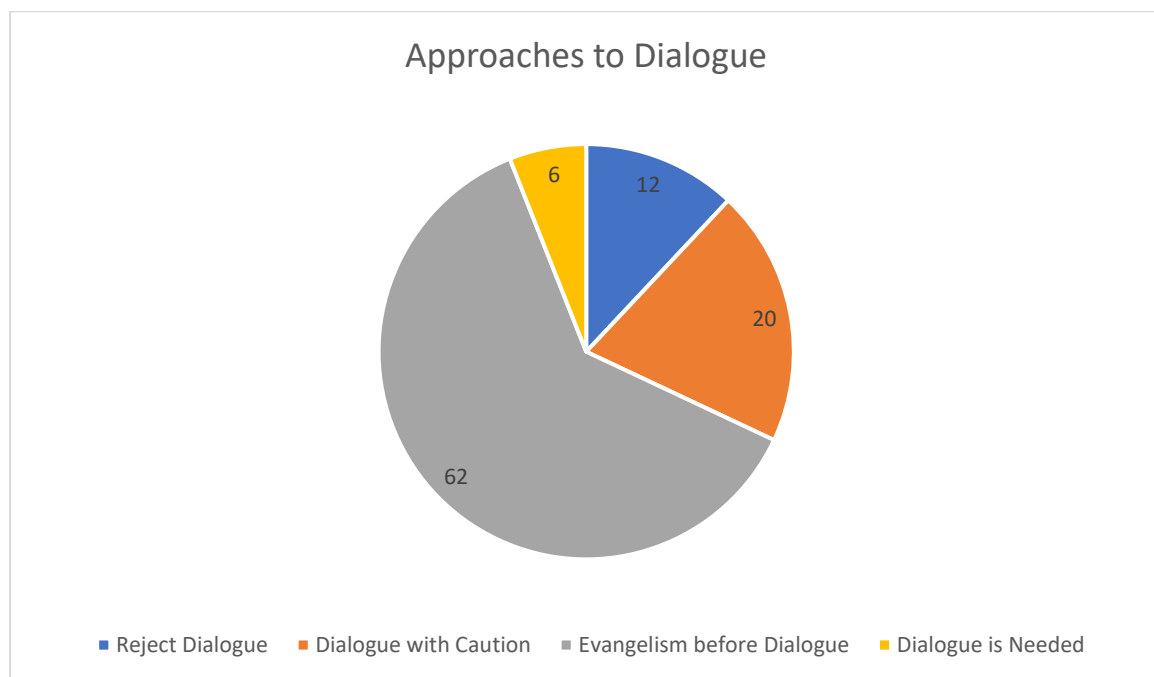


Figure 16: Pentecostal Christian approaches to dialogue.

These four views will outline the four approaches of Pentecostal Christians towards dialogue with Sunni Muslims in Ekurhuleni. Integrated into the information gathered from the PAR groups, the researcher will also add information retrieved from 200

¹⁰³ $percentage = \frac{people}{50} \times 100$

questionnaires that Pentecostal participants completed. The figures recorded represent percentages. Therefore, each person will represent 0.5%.¹⁰⁴

10. Is the Holy Bible God's final message to humankind?

Yes No

11. Is Jesus God's final Prophet?

Yes No

12. Is Christianity the only way to Salvation?

Yes No

13. Can there be Salvation outside of Christianity?

Yes No

14. Does God reveal Himself in other religions?

Yes No

15. Do you see Muslims as?

Friends

Enemies

Partners in the quest for Truth

People that must be converted to Christianity.

16. Does the Bible promote dialogue with people of other faiths?

Yes No Not Sure

17. Is the Relationship between Christians and Muslims in Ekurhuleni getting closer or going further apart?

Closer Further Not Sure

¹⁰⁴ $percentage = \frac{people}{200} \times 100$

18. Have you read the Quran?

| | |
|----------------|------|
| Yes | 12 % |
| No | 56 % |
| Only a portion | 32 % |

Integrating the information from the PAR groups and the interviews, the researcher will outline the four approaches to dialogue that Pentecostal Christians hold in Ekurhuleni.

6.5.1 Rejection to any form of dialogue (12%)

Only 6% of Sunni Muslims reject any form of dialogue, while twice as many Pentecostals (12%) reject dialogue. Also, 20% of Sunni Muslims believe Christians should be converted, while 56% (more than half) of Pentecostals argue that Muslims are objects of missions. While 36% of Muslims interviewed claimed to have read the Bible, only 12% of Christians claim to have read the Quran. In addition, while 32% of Sunni Muslims see Christians as friends, only 20% of Pentecostals view Muslims as friends. These percentages are overwhelming since they demonstrate the Pentecostal church's stubbornness to participate in interreligious dialogue. The exponential growth of the Pentecostal church in South Africa, coupled with its increasing financial strength, has led the Pentecostal Church to a place of pride and arrogance. This percentage may also depict the aggressive evangelism in which Pentecostals are engaged. This attitude, displayed in the PAR meetings, led some Pentecostal leaders to display a sense of superiority. This mindset becomes detrimental to the task of promoting interreligious dialogue.

A Pentecostal leader in the Par group argued, "We cannot learn anything from Islam, since their belief systems were on the opposite ends of the spectrum." Once again, the dualist approach to other religions reared its head in some of the PAR meetings, when another Pentecostal leader argued that "Islam is a false religion and Christianity only holds all the answers for a lost humanity." Selective scriptures were used to support their views. These scriptures painted everyone outside the Christian fold as those who were enemies of Yahweh. Muslims were mere objects of mission and could never be seen as partners in dialogue.

Describing the negative attitude of Evangelical Christians (including Pentecostals) towards dialogue, Nembhard (2014: ii) argued persuasively,

Dark specters of bigotry, intolerance, and arrogance have merged in sections of the Christian community, making any possibility of dialogue difficult. Some Christian ministers would not be caught in the same room with their Muslim counterparts.

Nembhard's analysis was correct. The researcher can concur with him. Many of the Pentecostal Pastors invited to the PAR meeting declined the invitation and were honest enough to state that they would not sit in the same room with Muslims.

His words seem to be directed to the South African Pentecostal church, especially to the particular group under discussion. Much work is still needed in Pentecostal circles to change their perception of Muslims as enemies to dialogical partners.

This group had no problem labeling themselves as exclusivist. The superiority of the Bible and the pre-eminence of Christ's atoning work were seen as the most significant unreconcilable difference between Christianity and Islam. Another Pentecostal leader in the meeting explained that "the Bible is superior a superior book. It is inerrant, infallible, inspired, and all-sufficient. Based on this fact, it is futile to compare the Bible to the Quran or even to look for any so-called commonalities between the Bible and the Quran."

Any work among Muslims other than evangelism was conceived as a compromise of the Pentecostal faith. While these Pentecostal leaders saw themselves as stalwarts of the faith, Nembhard (2014: 58) accused them of limiting the immensity of God's grace.

It is incredible the extent to which we have allowed our religious traditions and prejudices to limit our view of the immensity of God or the extent to which we think we can skillfully manipulate or domesticate Him to do our bidding.

6.5.1.1 American Influence through literature

In the modern era, with social networks and social interaction at one's fingertips, it is possible to be bombarded with an overload of information. Christians are bombarded with information about Islam. Each time there is a terrorist bombing anywhere around the world. Islam becomes the enemy, and the Quran is quickly seen as a book of war and Muslims as propagators of violence. America alone is not to be held responsible for the dissemination of this information. However, the researcher deals with books found in Pentecostal Churches' book rooms and sold at their conferences in this

section. These are some of the titles found in Bible school libraries and recommended at prescribed reading at mission seminars.

Since the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers (9/11), American Evangelicals have written extensively on the religion of Islam. While some wrote intending to build dialogue bridges between the two faiths, most wrote from an antagonistic perspective. Many of the books written from this negative perspective found their way to the shores of South Africa. Secular bookshops, Christian bookshops, and bookshops housed in major Evangelical churches showcased these books, premiering its authors.

The publication *Slavery, Terrorism, and Islam* written by Peter Hammond and *Secrets of the Koran* written by missiologist Don Richards; both labeled the Quran as a 'book of war.' Furthermore, in his publication *Countdown to the Apocalypse* author, Robert Jeffress painted the Muslim nations as the followers of the Ant-Christ referred to in the book of Revelation 13. Not only was the book antagonistic towards Muslims, but it instilled fear and panic within the Christian community because it painted Muslims as bloodthirsty enemies of the church. The dissemination of this fear in the Pentecostal communities has led to much of its hostility towards all Muslims.

"Mohammad is the founder of Isis, His teachings feed its ideology, and His actions are emulated in their murderous acts" - this is the summary of Craig Evans' publication, *Jesus and the Jihadis: Rage of Isis*. Richard Booker backs his views in *Radical Islam's war against Israel, Christianity, and the West*. Most of these popular publications evade the theology of love and dispense the ideology of hatred, animosity, and fear. Instead, they present all Muslims as enemies. Therefore, it is not surprising that more Christians in the survey saw Muslims as enemies compared to Muslims viewing Christians as enemies.

Writing from an Evangelical perspective, David Zeidan, in his book *Sword of Allah: Islamic fundamentalism from an Evangelical perspective*, argued that Islamic fundamentalism was not just found on the fringes of the Muslim community. However, it was the very heart of Islamic teaching. Another Evangelical, Erwin Lutzer, author of "The cross in the shadow of the crescent, noted that: an informed response to Islam's war with Christianity" systematically outlined violent acts committed by Muslim fundamentalists over the past one hundred years. He summarized the number of churches and Bibles burnt by Muslim radicals, such as Jeffress (2015), who instilled fear into the Christian communities.

These ideologies presented themselves in publications marketed by the Evangelical churches, leading to an antagonistic view towards Muslims. It broke the bridges of dialogue and erected walls of defenses within Pentecostal Christianity. These attitudes were reflective in the PAR group meetings. Some of the authors mentioned above were quoted verbatim by Pentecostal leaders to authenticate the argument of violence within the Islamic worldview. A Pentecostal leader stood up in a meeting making accusations about Islam and terrorism, holding one of these publications in his hand, arguing, “Is is written in black and white, here is all the proof you need.” One of the difficulties in the first PAR meeting was stopping two Pentecostal Pastors from distributing some of these publications at the meetings.

Unless leaders in the Pentecostal church are presented with a balanced view of Islam and Christianity, they will continue to see Islam as the enemy and dialogue as a menace.

6.5.2 Dialogue must be approached with much caution.

Only 20% of Pentecostal leaders who took part in the research agreed that dialogue with Muslims had to be approached with caution. Years of isolation and antagonism bred a spirit of suspicion between Muslims and Christians. To Pentecostal leaders, dialogue presented itself as a new frontier in missions, one that may prove to be either beneficial or detrimental to the Pentecostal church. For this reason, the ministry of dialogue is seen as necessary, but it must be done with much wisdom and prudence. Caution is the buzzword in Pentecostal circles when interfaith dialogue is presented on the table.

A respondent in the PAR meetings argued that “The motives of these meetings must be tested. Is this just for dialogue, or are we here either to expose ourselves or to supply our Muslim brothers with more information that will be against us later?”

However, the researcher noticed that is question was only asked by Pentecostals whenever these meetings are initiated by Muslims and not when they are initiated by Christians. Pentecostals are very protective of their doctrines and would not leave any doors open for influence from outsiders. Even Christian churches outside the Pentecostal movement are treated the same way, but with Islam, the protective walls are built unnecessarily higher.

The purpose of dialogue was discussed extensively in the PAR group meetings. While Muslims argued that the primary purpose of such meetings was to find common ground between the two faiths, most Pentecostal leaders rejected this idea. Another Pentecostal leader argued that “These meetings should be social gathering to get to know each other, I have no problem with that. However, it should not be a meeting to discuss theological issues because we do not really share anything in common.”

Pentecostal leaders argued that the primary purpose of such encounters should be to establish respect between the two communities, leading to peaceful coexistence. They argued that caution must be taken so that Muslims would not circumvent this primary purpose. Pentecostal leaders presented three key points which they argued should not be on the agenda of dialogue meetings.

- There should not be any need to disseminate too much information concerning the Pentecostal faith.
- There is no theological “common ground” between Christianity and Islam.
- There is no journey towards shared truths between Muslims and Christians.

Their concern for caution around these three key points is as follows:

- There should not be any need to disseminate too much information concerning the Pentecostal faith. South Africa has been plagued by Muslim Christian debates, where mockery and insults became the norm. Muslims gathered any information about Christianity and used it as a bombardment against Christians during debates. Christians were guilty of the same techniques; it was the weapon of choice over the past three decades. For this reason, Pentecostals are overly cautious of disseminating too much information concerning their traditions, beliefs, and practices in front of a Muslim audience. A respondent explained, “It is not easy for us to explain our faith and open up ourselves to our Muslim brothers because it is very risky. They could use this information as ammunition against Christians in upcoming debates.”
- There is no theological “common ground” between Christianity and Islam. However, most Christians who advocate for dialogue believe that finding common ground between Islam and Christianity would lead to authentic dialogue. Bruce McDonald (1999) , in his book *Muslims and Christians at the table*, explains that finding common ground on theological issues between

Muslims and Christians would lead to mutual respect towards each other's sacred scriptures and reciprocate trust between dialoguers. In his book, *My neighbors' faith* John Azumah (2008) challenged Christians to use similar stories found in the Quran and the Bible as bridges for dialogue. Ron George (2007) shared the same ideas, who recommended the Old Testament's stories as a key to building bridges, while Carl Medearis (2008) proposed using the Quranic Christ as the cement that would solidify the fellowship between the two faiths.

However, Pentecostals do not share the same sentiments. Pentecostal leaders reject this type of common ground comparison. While they acknowledge the record of Biblical stories in the Quran, they do not accept them as authentic. They argue that these are distortions of the Biblical narratives, and no authentic relationship can be built on distortions. Once again, they caution Christian dialoguers not to participate in common ground theories. A Pastor in the meetings argued, "When we move to the realm of this so-called 'common ground comparison,' then we are moving extremely close to compromise or unhealthy accommodation."

- There is no journey towards shared truths between Muslims and Christians. Iprgrave (2002) explained that if Christian Muslim relations in this century wanted to last, it had to be based on adherents of both faiths walking together on a quest for truth. This same paradigm was shared by David Greelee (2005) in his book, "From the straight path to the narrow way." However, the Pentecostal Church refused to journey with any other religious fraternity. Over the past few decades, the rigorous debates between Muslims and Christians led these communities into frustrations, suspicions, and distrust. Debaters systematically undermined the other religion while upholding theirs as the ultimate truth. They displayed the differences and ignored the similarities. Because of this conditioning, Christians and Muslims saw their walk of faith as opposed to each other.

Today Pentecostal leaders continue in this trend, arguing that Muslims and Christians were walking in opposite directions, conflicting with each other's worldviews, traditions, and beliefs. Therefore, they could not journey together towards any common truth. They cautioned Christian dialoguers not to

compromise their Pentecostal heritage by agreeing to walk together with Muslims in the quest for truth. The only truth was found within the Christian faith. Another Pastor in the Meeting commented, “We as Christians are called to walk on the narrow path. On this narrow path, there is no space for any other religion. When we start walking together with people of other faiths, we might just find ourselves walking on the broad path, and we know where that leads to, don’t we.”

6.5.3 There must be a balance between dialogue and evangelism. (62%)

Most Pentecostals (62%) who participated in the research agreed that there should be a balance between dialogue and evangelism. Like their Muslim counterparts, Pentecostals also believed that evangelism was the primary task of the Christian, while interfaith dialogue played a secondary role. This group was not closed to the idea of interfaith dialogue but was cautious in its approach. They were much more open than the two previous groups discussed.

Since the Pentecostal church is part of the bigger Evangelical body, they subscribe to the evangelical fervency of soul winning. Missions and evangelism are solely directed towards the non-Christians and are seen as the duty of every believer. Evangelism is not relegated to the position of a program in the Pentecostal church, but it is the very heartbeat of the Pentecostal church. This fervency in evangelism and missions contributed to the exponential growth of the church and its ability to plant daughter churches around the world. Pentecostal scholar Stanley Burgess (1989:284) reiterated this fact,

Evangelism has been a priority among Pentecostals throughout their history. The historical self-image of the major Pentecostal church bodies is that they were raised to be instruments of evangelism in the world.

Evangelism is a primary task in Pentecostal circles, one that both re-energizes it and determines its purpose. The Pentecostal church would not survive without evangelism. Pentecostal leaders in the PAR group continuously referred to evangelism as “the supreme task of the Church” and the “heartbeat of the Church.” Therefore, they presented the following model as their motivation for missions and evangelism. The

model is illustrated by the diagram below. The diagram was designed by the researcher in collaboration with Pentecostal leaders at the PAR meeting.

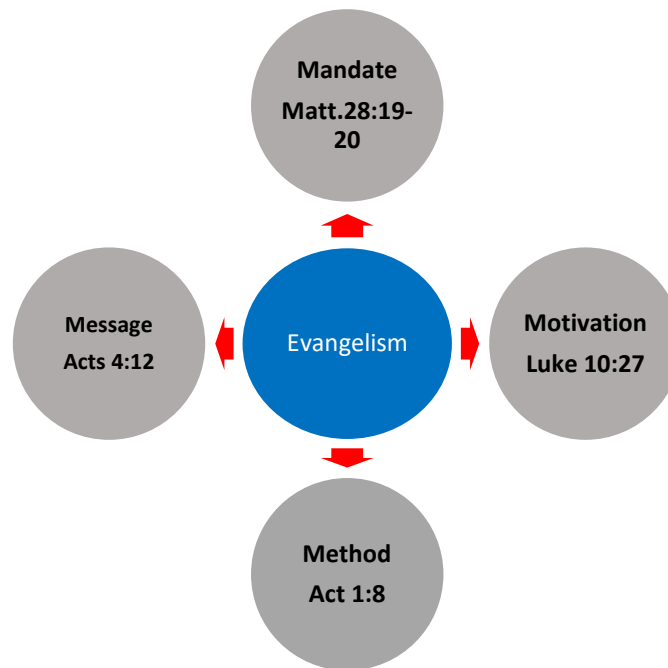


Figure 14: Evangelism Heartbeat

- The mandate in evangelism.

Matthew 28:19-20

The mandate of the Church is outlined in the last words that Jesus spoke to His disciples before His ascension to heaven. The Pentecostal church interpreted this as an imperative and not a suggestion or a proposition. Part of being a “born again” believer was to be committed with complete resolution to this last command of Jesus. One of the respondents explained that “ The last command of Jesus must be the first task of the church. The great commission is our greatest responsibility and our greatest privilege.”

- The motivation of evangelism.

Luke 10:27

The motivation of the Church towards evangelism was taken directly from the teaching of Jesus - the command to love one’s neighbor. Pentecostals interpret this verse as a command to love one’s neighbor despite their color, culture, or religious affiliation. Love would mean to keep one’s neighbor out of the flames of hell, and the only way to do this was to introduce them the Jesus Christ, the Saviour of humankind. It is this motivation that gave impetus to the Pentecostal movement. Another respondent

argues that “ the blood of every sinner is on the hands of the believer who does not take the opportunity to introduce a sinner to Jesus. This should be motivation enough to push us into the work of evangelism.”

- The method of evangelism.

Act 1:8

The method of evangelism is drawn from the Book of Acts, mainly Acts 1:8. This centrifugal movement was the inspiration of the Pentecostal church planting movement over the last century. The movement of the early church was from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and eventually to the uttermost parts of the world. Pentecostals interpreted the model as the need for each local church to expand beyond local borders and eventually beyond its nation's borders. The ultimate goal was to see the Pentecostal church as a global movement.

While this task seemed mammoth, it was possible because of the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, which was promised to those who were “born again.” The Holy Spirit would be the initiator of this movement, the drive behind the movement, and the power to propel the movement in the face of any difficulties. A respondent in the meeting commented that “The task may be big. But we are not called to do it on our own. We must do what is possible. We must preach. God will do what is impossible. He will convict the heart of the sinner.”

- The message of evangelism.

Act 4:12

The message of the evangelist is given without any hesitation and uncertainty in Acts 4:12. The supremacy of Jesus Christ as the savior of humankind goes without hesitation or reluctance. There is no other savior than Jesus, and there certainly is no other avenue of salvation outside His grace and mercy. Evangelism is unfulfilled if this message is not made clear in any dialogical encounter with any person.

This group of Pentecostals argued that while interfaith dialogue is essential, one should not compromise the centrality and supremacy of Jesus as the world's only savior.

This exclusivist view was held and vehemently protected by Pentecostals in South Africa. Pentecostal leaders in the PAR groups had no hesitation in labeling themselves as “exclusivists.”

Pentecostal participants in the PAR group acknowledged that there was some good in all religions, particularly in Islam. It is for this reason that this group was open to dialogue while still upholding their exclusivist worldview. Based on the moral goodness found in the religion of Islam, these Pentecostal leaders opened themselves up to dialogue with Muslims. Three reasons were given for participation in the dialogue.

The first reason that necessitated dialogue concerned the clarification of misunderstandings between the two religions. A Pentecostal admitted, “We spoke about Islam from an arrogant perspective, simply because they were ignorant of the scriptures and history of Islam. Hopefully, these dialogues will inform us.” Dialogue would help clarify certain misunderstandings concerning the nature and character of Allah, the prophethood of Mohammad, and the inspiration of the Holy Quran.

The second reason for dialogue was to understand the Muslim worldview, namely their practice of morality, commitment to religious ideas, and dedication to total obedience to the Quran and the Sunnah. This first-hand understanding of the Muslim worldview would ratify the incorrect perception Pentecostals developed over the years by reading western opinions about Islam. Another respondent added, “These dialogue meetings will afford us the opportunity to hear what Muslims themselves have to say about their religion. Let them speak for themselves and explain in their terms what Islam stands for.”

The third reason that compelled Pentecostals to enter into dialogue was to be more adequately equipped to evangelize Muslims without offending. There was a consensus in the PAR meeting in its initial stages that evangelism and dawah would not occur within the meeting. Instead, these meetings aimed to enhance dialogue and not succumb to a “mission field” for winning converts. However, it was also agreed that information shared within the group could be used by its participants in their evangelism endeavors and dawah outreaches. An evangelist in the meeting commented, “When we begin our evangelism by offending people, we have already shut the door for further conversations. With these dialogue sessions, we can learn what is offensive to our Muslim brothers and try our best to keep the door of communication open.”

A smaller group of Pentecostals (6%) were uncomfortable with this idea and opted to encourage dialogue without any intention of using the information for evangelism or dawah work. Instead, they advocated dialogue as a journey between Muslims and Christians in their quest to better people's lives within their communities.

6.5.4 Dialogue is a primary task. (6%)

This group consisted of the smallest number of Pentecostal leaders in the PAR meetings, a mere 6%. They argued that dialogue should open up participants' eyes to the bigger picture within the community of Ekurhuleni. They pointed out the moral ills which plague Ekurhuleni. General crime, crime against women, drug abuse among the youth, and racism, which displayed itself openly in some communities, were viewed as areas of concern that should be addressed by religious leaders collectively. They argued that there should be a greater agenda within interfaith dialogue, which should not be circumvented because of evangelism or dawah¹⁰⁵. They reasoned that religious leaders should stand together to address these social ills. Addressing these social ills and making Ekurhuleni a better place to live in would attract people to God. One of the respondents argue, "Religion is only effective when its followers are seen in the community living out their conviction, helping the poor and feeding the hungry. Therefore, all of us, both Christians and Muslims, must work together for the greater good of Ekurhuleni. If this can not be achieved in these meetings, then our gatherings are of no use."

As people were attracted to God and chose to join a religious fraternity, Christians should then not be ashamed to introduce Christ as the Saviour of the world. While this group remained loyal to their exclusivist Pentecostal worldview, they also embraced the challenge of working together with other faiths to address the social ills of their communities.

The uplifting of humanity from the mire of social degradation was seen as the greatest act of Christian virtue. This group used the parable of Jesus concerning the "good Samaritan" as a model for Christian ministry and interfaith dialogue. The lesson learned in this parable teaches Christians to love and help people despite their color, culture, or religious affiliation. This model is also echoed by Bishop Nazir Ali (1987:11), who referred to it as engaging in dialogue "from below." He argued that interfaith dialogue should begin with addressing the problems that plague the communities in which both Christians and Muslims reside:

¹⁰⁵ "dawah" is the Arabic equivalent of the English term "missions".

In Christian and Islamic contexts, dialogue should address issues such as the importance of human dignity and human rights by our respective traditions. Dialogue must begin “from below,” with the actual situation affecting the Christian and the interlocutor.

Many Pentecostal leaders in the PAR meeting interpreted this view as radical and found it a bit uncomfortable. However, the advocates of this paradigm presented it as the “new way forward”. For example, one of the respondents explained, “If we want to see new things done in Ekurulen, then we must attempt new methods of doing things. These meetings are the beginning of moving forward in a new way.” They argued that there was a pragmatic necessity to practice camaraderie and formulate a paradigm that will launch joint ventures between Muslims and Christians. These joint ventures should seek to enhance the living quality of marginalized people in our community. Ipgrave (2002:113) commented on this type of paradigm, arguing that if it were implemented now, it could pave the way to better cooperation between Islam and Christianity in the future.

Ipgrave voiced the opinion of this group of Pentecostals who were concerned about the next generation of Muslims and Christians in South Africa. The next generation would be products of this present generation, and the challenge, therefore, was to produce a generation of openness to dialogue, cooperation, and partnership in social upliftment and social justice. Another respondent argued, “If we do ministry for this generation only, then we are very short-sighted. We must be doing ministry for the next generation. What better way than to start today with dialogue that can change and transform the future.”

6.6 The Nabeel Qureshi influence

One name came up more often than any other in the Christian defence against Islam in the PAR group meetings. Nabeel Qureshi was quoted most often by Pentecostal leaders as they encountered questions concerning their faith. Author of three books, and an Evangelical Christian convert from Islam (in 2005), Qureshi seemed to be the most widely read author by Pentecostal leaders concerning Islam. His influence was seen in these leaders as they quoted verbatim from his books each time theological questions arose. The same questions that Qureshi asked in his books were those that Pentecostal leaders asked their Muslim dialogue interlocutors in the PAR meetings.

Qureshi is the author of the New York Times bestseller, “*Seeking Allah Finding Jesus*.” This was the only book ever to win the Christian Book Awards for “Best new author” and “Best nonfiction.” His books flooded the Christian market over the last six years, finding themselves in Christian book shops and other book retailers. His was the first publication that most Christians read concerning the religion of Islam. In addition, the views of most Pentecostals had been shaped by Qureshi’s books and YouTube seminars. His YouTube seminar on “*Seeking Allah Finding Jesus*” had over one million views (1 054 081 views), while his YouTube lectures at Biola University on “Islam through the eyes of Muslims” had 309 583 views¹⁰⁶. His influence over the Evangelical church worldwide is staggering, while his influence on South African Pentecostals was incredible.

Qureshi wrote from a polemic point of view and discarded any form of authentic dialogue with Muslims. While he came to salvation through a long authentic dialogue with a Christian friend, Qureshi did not develop this approach in any of his books. Instead, his books are argumentative and defensive, pointing to all the errors in the Quran while refusing to use the Quran as a bridge to build respectful relations between Muslims and Christians. At the end of each of his books, he called on Christians to love their Muslim neighbors, but the rest of the book did not display this kind of love. However, it instead demonstrated cold and callous polemics.

Qureshi acknowledged that the Quran played a central role in the Muslim community. Qureshi (2014:228).

The Quran is the closest thing to the incarnation of Allah, and it is the very proof they provide to demonstrate the truth of Islam.

While he understood the central place that the Quran held in the life of the Muslim, he failed to show any respect for its content or compilation. In his book *Answering Jihad*, he stated, “I found the pages of Islamic history dripping with violence.” Again he (2016:31) argued that the Quran “had an elaborate practice or doctrine of war.”

He approached the Prophet Mohammad in the same manner by firstly acknowledging his place in the Islamic community.

Close to the Muslim heart, Mohammad is the man that embodies Islam, a symbol for the whole of Islamic civilization. Muslim culture and religion find their identity in the person of Mohammad.

¹⁰⁶Retrieved on 9/09/2020 <https://youtu.be/P10rHuAb4MU> - Islam through the eyes of Muslims.

He then spent many chapters in his three books discrediting Mohammad in every conceivable way, labeling him as a man of war and a commander of violence. In each of his three books, he did not neglect to add a chapter on violence and jihad in Islam. The contents of his books do not promote dialogue but rather instills fear for Islam at the least and hate for Islam at its most. It is the same attitude that permeated the theology of religions in Pentecostal circles. Qureshi's influence on the Pentecostal church in South Africa placed a wedge between Muslim and Christian relations. Qureshi viewed Muslims as objects of evangelism and not as dialogical partners that could sit together and respectfully search the scriptures.

There is a dire need within the Pentecostal church in South Africa to reflect on Islam locally. South African Pentecostals have allowed the American Pentecostal culture to influence its theology, worldview, and attitude towards Muslims. They need to set the American influence aside and investigate the authenticity of Islam within the South African context. A democratic, multicultural society that has never experienced a "Muslim terror attack" should re-evaluate its attitude towards its Muslim neighbor. Muslims and Christians have lived peacefully in South Africa, and they fought together to bring down the apartheid regime and worked side-by-side to reconstruct a democratic society, so the least that Pentecostals can do is stretch forward a hand of hospitality mutual respect.

6.7 A paradigm shift in Pentecostal attitude.

Research indicates that more Muslims (32%) view Christians as friends than Christians (20%) view Muslims as friends. This finding is intriguing since one would think that Christians should display the love of Christ more generously than people of other faiths. However, this also presents an excellent opportunity for the church to engage with Muslims in Ekuruleni. Also, 6% of Christians view dialogue as an imperative, 10% of Muslims see dialogue as a crucial part of nation-building. All this information should be encouraging and push Christians forward in interfaith dialogue with Muslims.

More Muslims (36%) have made an effort to read the Bible than Christians (12%) have taken the time to read the Quran. This should spurn Christians to start reading the Quran so that their encounters with Muslims can be more fruitful and dialogical. For

Pentecostals, this presents an opportunity to pray that the Holy Spirit would reveal Jesus Christ to those Muslims who have taken their time to read the Bible.

Only 6% of Muslims reject interfaith dialogue completely, while twice that number of Christians (12%) reject interfaith dialogue. One can deduct that Muslims are more open to dialogue and more ready to engage with Christians than Christians are with Muslims. The Bible is a dialogical book. The Old Testament promotes dialogue; Jesus engaged in dialogue, and the Apostles encouraged dialogue in the early church. While the Pentecostal church prides itself in “sola scriptura” and its literal interpretation of the scripture, it has failed to give an authentic account of its theology of religions. The Pentecostal church has deprived itself of engaging with scripture and working out its own paradigm for Muslim Christian relations by neglecting this branch of theology.

Interfaith dialogue and mainly Muslim Christian relations have taken center stage in missiological circles. The Pentecostal church can no longer stand on the periphery in the pious judgment of the movement. If the Pentecostal church in Ekurhuleni wants to be relevant, it must engage with the ecumenical body and contribute to the worldwide discussions on interfaith dialogue. The South African Pentecostal church needs to engage with the National Interfaith Council of South Africa and even with the South African chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace. Their engagements in these discussions should never be misunderstood as a compromising of their evangelical convictions. The Pentecostal church should not stigmatize the Pentecostal leaders who wish to contribute to the discussions held in these organizations.

Pentecostal pneumatology is unique because it gives precedence to the working of the Holy Spirit in the personal lives of people. The Holy Spirit moves in “mysterious ways,” calling people to salvation. In his discourse with Nicodemus, Jesus explained the mysterious movements of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people:¹⁰⁷ The church did not have a monopoly on the Holy Spirit; the Spirit engages with any person in any way that he wishes. To become a part of the “missio dei,” one must follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and it may not be surprising that the Spirit leads us into dialogue with people of other faiths. The Holy Spirit himself prepares the heart of the non-Christian to be responsive to the message of Christ. In the same way, the Holy Spirit brings conviction and leads non-Christians to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as

¹⁰⁷ John 3:8 “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the spirit.”

their Lord and Saviour. Pentecostal scholar Matti (2002:500) challenges the church on this issue,

Why is it that a spiritual and theological movement, enthusiastic about the freedom of the Spirit and the all-embracing power of the Spirit has not, at least yet, developed a theology of religions that would release the Spirit to work in the world and among the religions and people of religious convictions?

There is a clarion call from some Pentecostal scholars worldwide¹⁰⁸, challenging the Pentecostal church to revisit its theology of the Holy Spirit in the light of interfaith dialogue. Thus, the winds of change are blowing, and the Pentecostal church in Ekurhuleni will have to face the task of developing a relevant Pentecostal theology of religions that will contribute to nation-building and global peace.

6.8 Conclusion

While Sunni Muslims and Pentecostal Christians in South Africa did not enjoy a positive relationship, they also did not engage in any violent protests against each other. Instead, their hostility towards each other was played out in the debating and theological fields in South Africa. The same debates and theological disputes can be turned into a more dialogical framework. Religious leaders need to find innovative ways of navigating through the maze of debates and disputes, presenting a more dialogical approach towards religious encounters.

In a democratic nation that upholds the sovereignty and freedom of each religion, the Pentecostal church in Ekurhuleni church can no longer stay aloof from dialogical initiatives. The church must engage healthily with adherents of other religions, presenting the case of the Gospel in a relevant, none-offensive, and creative way. The Bible should be the textbook on dialogical encounters with people of other faiths, and the Holy Spirit should continue to be the initiator of the dialogical process.

¹⁰⁸ Particularly from the USA, Amos Young, Tony Richie, and Veli-Matti are challenging the Pentecostal church to produce a relevant pneumatology which will tackle the task of interfaith dialogue.

CHAPTER 7

IN SEARCH OF A PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS.

7.1 Introduction

A theology of religions presupposes the question of whether all religions are in some way related to the divine. If so, how are they related to each other, and how should adherents of these different faiths engage each other? This is a dilemma that plagues the Pentecostal church, and specifically the church in South Africa. The three mainline Pentecostal churches have not yet presented a formal academic response to the debates on the theology of religions. This raised a challenge in the thesis since no previous research was done on this subject by Pentecostals. It has also become the gap that this thesis aims at filling. In addition, the South African Pentecostal churches did not research the specific subject dealing with Muslim Christian relations. Again this is a gap from a Pentecostal perspective that will be filled in this thesis.

Statistics gathered by the researcher show that 96% of Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni believe that Jesus is God's final messenger, while 100% believe that there is no salvation outside of Christianity. Then there is who 72% do not believe that God reveals Himself outside the Christian faith, while 56% believe that adherents of other faith are mere objects of missions and must come to the church for salvation. This belief system has shaped the Pentecostal church's attitude towards other religions. Kritzinger. (1991:139) explains how Pentecostals have adopted the attitude of triumphalism over other religions, seeing them as enemies of the cross at best and demonic at worst. In some circles, pentecostal attitudes to other religions in Ekurhuleni ran from ignorance to arrogance and from competitiveness to open hostility in others. Already two decades ago, these attitudes have been challenged in academic circles (Anderson. 2003:2-3). The Pentecostal church is being called to account to present a theology of religions in line with the constitution of a democratic South Africa (Van Rensburg. 2017:91-94), a South Africa that upholds the rights and dignity of each religious community. For the sake of nation-building and the promotion of peace, the Pentecostal church needs to define its theology of religions, one that is not offensive, yet one that does not deny their Pentecostal convictions and evangelical heritage. There are currently many young emerging Pentecostal scholars in South Africa who

have written extensively about the role of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the church¹⁰⁹. Some of them will be cited in this chapter; however, more space will be given to international scholars like Yong, Karkkainnein, and McGee, only because they write directly on the subject of the Holy Spirit and His relation to other religions. The subject of religious dialogue (especially between Christianity and Islam) still needs to be explored and investigated by Pentecostal academics in South Africa.

The Pentecostal church has a Christian duty to present to the world an authentic Pentecostal theology of religions that is in line with Pentecostal beliefs. They need to state, define, and even argue their claims for exclusivity as their current model for a theology of religions. They owe it to their followers, who are in constant contact daily with adherents of other faiths. Marius Nel (2016) comments that a tradition of anti-intellectualism characterised pentecostal leadership in the past. However, he argues that there has been a rise in Pentecostal academics over the past decade, some even taking up positions as Doctors and Professors at some of the largest universities in the country.

Collium Banda (2016:223) further challenges Pentecostal scholars to publish their theology in academic journals so that their voices can be heard. Pentecostal leaders like these will have to charter a way forward for a new relevant Pentecostal theology of religions.

Ekurhuleni is an economic beehive in the Gauteng province, which has attracted over a million people of different faiths as they all seek better economic prospects. Religious people live next to each other, work with each other, and share the same transport system. We cannot avoid each other; we live in a global village that is becoming smaller and more intimate. Pentecostals can no longer ignore their religious neighbours; they must move away from focusing on diversity and begin to focus on relations and dialogue.

It is time for the Pentecostal church to sit around the theological table and make their voices heard by contributing to the ongoing discussion in the theology of religions. They can present new insights to the ongoing discussions and bring a fresh understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit concerning people of other faiths. Their contributions can assist their followers in tolerating and co-existing with members of other religions while still maintaining their ability to witness to them about their

¹⁰⁹ Professor M.S. Kagatle, Moses Hobe, Collium Banda and Marius Nel are just a few emerging Pentecostal scholars that have written numerous articles on the subject of Pentecostalism in South Africa.

Christian convictions without compromise. A creative theology of religions can only enhance the witness and the growth of the Pentecostal church in South Africa while remaining true to their Pentecostal uniqueness (Heilbron. 2012:6-7). Evangelism and proclamation do not have to stand in direct opposition to dialogue, but creative dialogue can lead to newer ways in evangelism and proclamation. This will mean that the Pentecostal church must seriously consider formulating a relevant theology of religions.

Yong (2007:35) calls on fellow Pentecostals to initiate what he calls “a renewal theology of religions.” He also argues that this must begin by first evaluating current trends in missiology that pertain to the theology of religions. He labels three basic positions currently being debated by Christian theologians: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. He (1999:82) calls on Pentecostals to evaluate and dialogue with these models while forging a new way forward. The researcher will evaluate these models from a South African Pentecostal perspective while asserting which is more acceptable to the Pentecostal movement. These models will not be evaluated from a systematic theology perspective but rather from a missiological perspective emphasizing Muslim Christian dialogue. The three models are described by different names, as indicated in the table below.

| | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Exclusivism Model | Inclusivism Model | Pluralism Model |
| Ecclesiocentric Model | Christocentric Model | Theocentric Model |
| Conservative Evangelical Model | Catholic Model | Liberal Model |

Figure 15: Models of a theology of religions.

Each of the three models is identified by at least three different labels, depending on the various author’s preferences. The researcher will use the three most commonly used labels: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism.

7.2 The Exclusivist model.

7.2.1 Defining Exclusivism.

From the three above models, the exclusivist model seems to be the simplest to explain. This is a model that upholds the uniqueness of Christ as the only saviour of the world. There is no other way to obtain salvation outside the redemptive work of

Christ. However, since the advent of the search for a biblical theology of religions, the exclusivists were forced to give a more detailed explanation of this model and the various avenues in which it could approach. What was once a simple, non-negotiable fact within Pentecostal circles has now come under the scrutiny of other religious fraternities, and from within its ranks (Nash 2004:1).

This challenge has forced both Evangelical and Pentecostal scholars to give a detailed analysis of the term exclusivism. For example, Mikael Stenmark (2006:100-108) explains that exclusivism should be viewed from three lenses, namely naïve exclusivism, broad exclusivism, and limited exclusivism. He describes naïve exclusivism as believing “that only my religion contains truth, and therefore all other religions are false.” Broad exclusivism is the belief that “my religion is true and where my religion is incompatible with other religions, those religions are deemed false.” On the other hand, limited exclusivism acknowledges that there are some religious truths within other religions, but that does not mean that they are not ultimately false.

Scholars that subscribe to this mode sometimes vacillate between the three models presented by Stenmark. Louw , on the other hand, argues that most exclusivists oscillate between conservative exclusivism and liberal exclusivism. He labels Karl Barth as the father of conservative exclusivism and Henrik Kraemer and Emil Brunner as advocates of liberal exclusivism.

However, the ultimate worldview that they propagate is a dualist approach to religion. Marbaniang (2007:6) explains this from a philosophical perspective, labeling it the “Aristotelian concept of truth.” The idea claims that if there is truth, then there must be an equal balance of false. Therefore, if Christianity’s claim to salvation is valid, then all other religious claims are false. Marbaniang himself subscribes to the “broad exclusivist” model explaining that the “naïve model” is an extremist model that labels all other religions as demonic.

In a similar vein, Van Rensburg (2017:91-101) also distinguishes two schools of thought with the exclusivist camp. The “extreme” view and the “moderate” view. He also argues that exclusivism cannot be one generic definition that fits all evangelical schools of thought. He explains that the “extreme” view of exclusivism views all religions as false and demonic and cannot be conducive to religious dialogue within the South African context. He suggests that the “moderate” view, which upholds the uniqueness of Christ in salvation but also acknowledges central truth in other religions, should be more favorable in the South African context.

The exclusivist model is the generally accepted model within Pentecostal circles internationally (Karkkainen. 2002:501-4). The South African Pentecostal church is no exception. However, as seen in the constitutions and the statements of faith of the AFM, AOG, and FGC churches, there is one generic explanation of exclusivism. A summary of these churches' statements of faith would prove their generic understanding of exclusivism.

Exclusivism within these Pentecostal churches is described as the belief in Christ as the one and only Saviour of the world. The belief that only explicit faith in Jesus Christ can lead to salvation, is the key doctrine of the church. All other religions that do not subscribe to this central belief, are impartial, flawed, and inadequate to offer salvation to any person. They appeal to many biblical passages to defend their view; hence, they believe their exclusivist view is the only biblically faithful position and approach to other religions. While advocates of the exclusivist model present many scriptures to support their views, the above churches focused on three New Testament scriptures that supported their conviction (John 3:16-18, 14:6, Acts 4:12).

Using these scriptures as their defense for the exclusivist model, the Pentecostal leaders in the PAR groups argued that the two remaining models were not biblically faithful but a compromise in a multi-religious society.

Roland Nash has been one of the foremost advocates of this position, and his influence has reinforced the Pentecostal church's exclusivist views around the world. In line with the Pentecostal understanding of general revelation and special revelation, Nash argues that God reveals Himself to all people in a general way. This general revelation of God is seen in the handiwork of God's created world. However, this general revelation of God is available to all religious people and is insufficient to lead anyone to salvation. Salvation only comes to those who have received and accepted God's special revelation. This special revelation is only found in the redemptive work of God in Jesus Christ. Within this realm of special revelation, only the Word of God and the Holy Spirit can reveal Christ as Lord and Saviour of the world. Outside of Christ, outside of this special revelation, there is no salvation.

This form of exclusivism held by Pentecostals in South Africa can therefore be labeled as naïve exclusivism (Stenmark 2006:100-108), conservative exclusivism (Louw 2006), and extreme exclusivism (Marbaniang 2007:6). Nash (2004:1) also labels it restrictive exclusivism (restrictivism), explaining its teaching as restricting salvation only to those who have explicitly confessed to Jesus Christ as their saviour.

This approach to other religions can be traced back to Karl Barth. Barth (1956:297-303) is known for explaining his theology of religion by making two seemingly contradictory statements. Firstly, he claims that all religions are false. However, secondly, he explains that Christianity is not a religion as described by the religious communities. He argues that Christianity is the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ; Christianity is, therefore, a personal encounter with this Christ. However, he also argues that if Christianity must be put into the realm of “religions,” Christianity would be the only true religion, while all other religions are false. Barth (1956:325-327) explains that by the mercy of God, He revealed Himself in Christ alone. Hence all revelation of God can only be found in Christ. Therefore the Christian religion is the only custodian of this self-revelation of God. Being the only custodians of this self-revelation of God makes the Christian religion the only true religion, while all other religions are considered false.

Pentecostal leaders shared the same sentiments in Ekurhuleni during the PAR meetings. A respondent in the meeting stated very emphatically, “Christianity is not a religion, but rather a relationship with Jesus Christ, the visible image of the invisible God.” Like Barth, they also argued that if Christianity has to be labeled as a religion, it should be considered the only true religion. While they did not explicitly say that Islam was false on e leaders did mention that “The Quranic Christ cannot be compared to the Biblical Christ, simply because the Quranic Christ falls short of revealing the fulness of the Glory of God. Islam, therefore, falls short of the full revelation of God as revealed in Christ.” Naïve, extreme, restrictive exclusivism could be detected in how these Pentecostal leaders approached the subject of salvation.

7.2.2 Conservative evangelical influence

While the Holiness movement shaped the theology of the Pentecostal church, it was the Evangelical movement that shaped its attitude towards other religions. For example, Kgatle (2020:7) explained how the Holiness Movement emphasized the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the ‘second blessing’ from God. However, the Evangelical movement shaped its antagonism towards other religions by declaring exclusivity to salvation through Christ alone.

When the Pentecostal church was birthed (Azusa Street revival) in the early 1900s, the conservative evangelical movement in America had already mapped a way forward in dealing with the issues of religious plurality. However, the conservative

Evangelical movement was shaped by the climate of its time. It was a climate that was isolated and ignorant of the religious beliefs of the world religions. With the bit of knowledge it was exposed to; the movement launched an attack on any religious idea that seemed contrary to the basic tenets of the Christian faith.

Knitter (1985:73) argued that the conservative Evangelical model is outdated, yet it must not be ignored. Though extreme and outdated, as Knitter alludes to, this model has influenced the American Pentecostal movement. The rapidly growing Pentecostal movement has now become the foremost bearer of this theological view, exporting it worldwide (Karkkainen 2002:500). Karkkainen argued that from its inception, the Pentecostal church aligned itself with the fundamentalist conservative Evangelical wing of the church. He calls it a courtship that was entered into without sufficient scrutiny. The Pentecostal church adopted the conservative Evangelical movement's seven fundamental doctrines: the inerrant verbal inspiration of the Bible, the virgin birth, the miracles of Jesus, His physical resurrection, the total depravity of the human being, the substitutionary atonement in Christ, and the premillennial second coming of Christ. This doctrinal view led the church to demonize all other religions' central doctrines and label them as false religions. The study of comparative religions was reduced to outlining other religions' false teachings and practices while presenting the Christian faith as the only true religion. This rigid dualist theology sees every other religion representing everything wrong, demonic, and corrupt.

Religious books like the Muslims Quran and the Hindu Bhagavad Gita were seen as objects of evil that should not be allowed in the house of the Christian. Therefore, studying these texts was not even a consideration within the Pentecostal church.

Triumphalism and superiority became the attitude that the Pentecostal church adopted. Adherents of other faiths were seen as enemies of the cross who needed to be subdued and defeated. This attitude was entrenched in the evangelistic outreaches and the mission methodologies of the church. Aggressive evangelism was seen as the only way to deal with other faiths. Both Karkkainen (2002:500-504) and Clark Pinnock (1995:60-65) challenged the Pentecostal churches' courtship with conservative Evangelical theology, calling on a reevaluation of this relationship. They, therefore, challenged the Pentecostal church to seek its theology of religions without the influence of both conservative Evangelicals and Evangelical liberals.

The same challenge must be posed to the Pentecostal church in South Africa since they too are guilty of aligning themselves to American conservative Evangelical theology and American Pentecostal theology without scrutinizing either of them critically. Therefore, the South African Pentecostal church must develop an authentic Pentecostal theology of religions that is freed from western influence and relevant in a democratic, multicultural, and religiously plural society. However, they must engage with the international Pentecostal community to provide the world with a relevant theology in a pluralistic society.

7.2.4 Exclusivism, fundamentalism, and religious intolerance

Knitter (1985:73) argued that the conservative Evangelical model adopted by Pentecostals was extreme and outdated. Elwell (2001:231), an evangelical theologian, also admitted that the exclusivist model connoted prejudice, arrogance, and close-mindedness. Amos Yong (1999:105), a Pentecostal theologian, also conferred with these authors and added that the exclusivist model is superficial in its interpretation of other religions and promotes triumphalism within the Pentecostal church. The world has become a global village where people of different cultures and religions co-exist. Peace and tolerance were high on its agenda. World leaders are trying their best to get rid of terrorism, intolerance, and fanaticism. Any ideology that posed a threat to this peace must be critically evaluated and discarded from volatile communities.

One such ideology that poses a threat to peace and tolerance globally and at local levels is exclusivism, especially religious exclusivism. Religious exclusivism has led to the formation of religious bigotry and, ultimately, religious fundamentalism. Over the past few decades, hundreds of thousands of people have been killed in religious clashes, while millions have been displaced worldwide. Religious fundamentalists, driven by religious exclusiveness, have perpetrated the most horrendous acts of violence against fellow humans in the name of religion. Religious exclusivism is criticized because it has fuelled the flames of religious fundamentalism (Rensburg 2017:112).

Rensburg (2017:112-115), explains that fundamentalism and exclusivism are intricately linked. He describes how they share the same characteristics and have the same theological and ideological points of departure. Both have a dualist worldview, gauging everything in terms of truth and lies. Both are also completely devoted to

sacred writing, either written by their leader or writings that were written about their leader. This description fits both Sunni Islam and Pentecostal Christianity well; the two religious' fraternities are under discussion in this thesis.

Since this thesis deals with the relationship between Sunni Muslims and Pentecostal Christians, the researcher will examine how exclusivism and fundamentalism play out in their respective faiths.

Fundamentalism can be described as a perceived or real response to a threat. Christianity was threatened by the expansion of Islam, and Islam was threatened by the hostile response it received from Christendom. Both moved to the opposite sides of the pendulum, claiming exclusivity to their message, their beliefs, and their practices. They ran parallel to each other, fighting, competing, criticizing, and trying to undermine each other. Exclusivism evolved into fundamentalism and the schism continues to widen.

Concerning the relationship between Sunni Muslims and Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni, one cannot deny the tension between these two groups. Both claim exclusivity to their religion. Over the past 50 years (the period investigated in this thesis) their relationship has been marked by hostility, threats, and competitiveness. Each saw themselves as more superior than the other, and therefore adopted an attitude of triumphalism each time they gathered for a debate. Both saw the other as a threat and therefore both developed strategies of defence and attack. These attacks were generally not violent and did not amount to any form of "terrorism" over the decades. It was a war of words fought in publications, debates, and symposiums. In these debates and publications, one could sense the amount of hate, anger, and frustrations that were being vented. On numerous occasions the researcher observed how people would stand up in the meetings screaming at the debaters and storming out of the venue. In each case, one believed that they were defending the truth while exposing the lies of the other, they rejected anything from the others' religion that would seem contrary to their own beliefs, due to a superiority complex. Both based their antagonist attitude towards each other on three common claims:

- They believed that only what they are teaching is based on sacred writings that are inerrant and God-inspired (Almond et al. 2003:93).
- They believed that they are justified in fighting with the other since they were defending their faith and their God.

- They claimed that they were the true children of God, while the other was deceived by the Devil.

It can be concluded that the exclusivist views that both Sunni Muslims and Pentecostal Christians held in Ekurhuleni has led to fundamentalist tendencies that are evident in both their religions. This has led to intolerance, mistrust, and suspicion between them. The question that still needs to be answered by both these groups is whether they can hold on to their exclusivist views while still having the ability to respectfully dialogue with each other.

7.2.5 Exclusivism and encounters with Muslims.

Chapter three of the thesis outlines the exclusivist model promoted by Ahmed Deedat, and his influence on the Sunni Muslim community in South Africa. Chapter four outlines the exclusivist model advocated by John Gilchrist and his influence on the Pentecostal church in South Africa. The researcher has demonstrated how most Pentecostal leaders in Ekurhuleni subscribes to this exclusivist model. They believe that it is the only model that is true to the Evangelical conviction of scripture and biblical evangelism. The other two models are a compromise to biblical evangelical conviction. However, the question that must be answered is how does this exclusivist conviction works itself out, when Pentecostals are faced with their Muslim neighbours daily?

Built on a dualist paradigm, exclusivists see the world divided in good and bad, light and darkness, God, and Satan, and Islam and Christianity. One has to choose between these two options. Opting for Christianity, means discarding Islam completely, with any truths that may be found in its philosophy. This attitude already has a built-in mechanism that promotes building up walls of defence instead of building bridges to dialogue. It is an attitude that deliberately invokes hostility between the two faiths developing a crusading ethos. Ghanaian researcher in Pentecostal studies, Asamoah Gyadu (2007) explained that Pentecostals see themselves as overcoming, conquering, dominating, and defeating evil powers. These evil powers are seen many times in other religions that oppose Christianity. With this mindset, it easy to see why Pentecostals would have an attitude of hostility towards Islam. Exclusivism is also inclined to focus on the difference between the two groups rather than on their similarities. This attitude leads to the competitiveness which is built on a

superiority complex. In the case of Islam and Christianity, exclusivist Pentecostals would view themselves as more superior than Muslims. With this mindset of triumphalism, they would aim at exposing all the errors of Islam (true or perceived) while presenting the Christian faith as flawless and inerrant. This attitude was observed in the writings of both Ahmed Deedat and John Gilchrist and is currently noticed in Muslims and Christians in Ekurhuleni. Dialogue would therefore have only one objective, and that would be to prove one's religion is better than the other.

Over the past fifty years (1970-2020) this attitude of exclusivism has been displayed in both Islam and Christianity in the country. It is precisely this attitude that has led to the formation of Christian Muslim debates. It has initiated this pattern and fuelled its ongoing model. The purpose of all these debates, held around the country is to outsmart each other by revealing errors in the other's faith. The atmosphere in these debates is tense since each debater tries to smear the other religion, while proving his own to be a much more superior option. Thus far these debates have led to more animosity among Muslims and Christians rather than building bridges of dialogue. Christian Muslim encounter is therefore always approached with suspicion.

It is for this very reason that Muslims, as neighbours in our community and acquaintances in our workplaces, feel uneasy and uncomfortable talking about religion with Christians. They are always under the assumption that dialogue would either smear their religion or turn into a heated debate. Religious dialogue presupposes a sustained conversation between two religious' people, recognizing each other's differences while respecting each other. It is an openness to learn from the other. Within this setting, the exclusivist would find themselves uncomfortable and either resort to defend themselves or stop the dialogue process. Dialogue entails honest openness to the other faith while not compromising the integrity of one's conviction. Can the exclusivist who holds on to a dualist philosophy succumb to such a paradigm?

The exclusivist model promoted by Pentecostal churches in South Africa and in Ekurhuleni, has not worked in the past to promote dialogue as it is not working currently, and the researcher has no hope for it in the future. It is time to search for another model that would maintain its evangelical integrity and uphold its biblical convictions, while still being open to promoting dialogue in a multi-religious community.

7.2.6 Testing the Hypothesis

“Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni find it difficult, almost impossible, to hold on to their exclusivist theology about Jesus Christ as the only savior while also trying to dialogue with people of other faiths, especially Muslims.”

This hypothesis has been tested using empirical research and the missionary praxis cycle (Pastoral cycle). It was found that 6% of Sunni Muslims are not in favour of interreligious dialogue. However, 12%, (twice as much) of Pentecostals are not in favour of interreligious dialogue. Also,, while 6% of Pentecostals are favourable to dialogue, research shows that a more significant 10% of Muslims are favourable to dialogue.

Also, 0% of the Muslims interviewed or participated in the PAR groups see Christians as their enemies. While 20% of Muslims agree that Christians need to be converted the figures are vastly different in the Pentecostal camp. 4% of Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni see Muslims as the enemy 56% percent of them believe that Muslims need to be converted. The Pentecostal fervency and zeal for missions has contributed to this attitude. It could also be attributed to the triumphal spirit that is prominent in Pentecostalism in Ekurhuleni.

Dialogue is not a once of event, it is a journey between tow persons or groups of person that walk together on a quest for truth. When this statement was presented to the two groups, 48% of Muslims agreed with the statement. Only 20% (less than half) of the Pentecostal participants agreed with this statement. Pentecostals have argued that these two reliogions are walking on different paths. Pentecostal in Ekurhuleni believe tat they are walking on the ‘narrow path’ (Matt. 7:13) while Mulsims are walking on the ‘broad path’ which leads to destruction. This view is also held by the more conservative 6% of Muslims that do not believe interfaith dialogue dialogue.

To engage in serious dialogue with people of others faith it is imperative for one to at least read the sacred scripture of the other faith. Not will will this mad one more knowledgeable but its displays an attitude of humility and learning. The research indicate that 36% of Muslims have read the bible, and another 36% read portions of the Bible. Among the Pentecostals however, only 12% have read the Quran, while 32% claim to have read portions of the Quran. This is because many Pentecostals in

Ekuruleni believe that the Quran is not the word of God and attached some kind of demonic aura around it. It is for this reason that many of them do not touch it, take it into their homes for even open it to read it. It was interesting to note that none of the Pnetecoastal Bible schools had a copy of the Quran in their library's.

All of these above observation has lead the researcher to agree with the hypothesis of the thesis. Pentecostals in Ekuruleni do find it very difficult and sometimes even impossible to engage in dialogue with Sunni Muslims. A key to understanding the reason for this difficulty is found in their theology of religions. Their firm stance in adopting the exclusivist theology of religions has hampered them in becoming dialogical partners with Sunni Muslims in Ekuruleni

7.2.7 Answering the Research Question

“Can Pentecostal Christians hold on to the “Exclusivist” ideas of Christ as the only way to salvation in this new democratic, pluralist South Africa, which promotes the equality of all religions?”

The research provided by the researcher can aly lead to a negative answer. Pentecostals cannot hold on to their exclusivist theology of religions and also be effective dialogical partners with Sunni Muslims in Ekuruleni. The theology of exclusivism is imbedded and enshrined in the constitutions of the Pentecosatl church and hence it has shaped the worldview of many Pnetecostals living in Ekuruleni.

They are driven by the ideals that Christianity is a superior religion and therefore cannot see themselves sharing a dialogical platform with any other religion. The equality of religions is an inconceivable idea while the thought of acceptingspiritual truths in any other religion is unimaginable.

If Pentecostals in Ekuruleni want to become effective dialogical partners in interfaith dialogue than they need to review their theology of religions. This does not mean that they have to compromise on the convictions concerning the supremacy of Jesus Christ or the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. They can hold on to their evangelical convictions while becoming effective dialogical partners. The inclusivist model of interfaith dialogue could be a viable option.

7.3 The Inclusivist model.

7.3.1 Defining Inclusivism.

Between the three models studied under the theology of religions, inclusivism seems to be the most complex to explain since there is no single line of development. Pinnock (in Gundry. 1995:95) who subscribes to this model explained the complexity.

Inclusivism is not a single, tightly defined position. There is a spectrum of opinions within inclusivism about the activity of the Spirit in other religions and their precise salvific status.

This spectrum that Pinnock writes about spreads itself wide, with views from Protestants like Wolfhart Pannenberg to Catholic scholars like Karl Rahner. Then there are also the Pentecostal theologians like Amos Young and Tony Richie, are newcomers to these discussions, approaching it from a more active pneumatological perspective. There is, however, some consensus among inclusivists. Most, if not all, agreed that the greatest move away from exclusivism, which promotes a restrictive ecclesiocentric perspective, is the move towards a broader Christocentric model. This newer model would reject the idea that salvation cannot be found outside the church. It embraces the philosophy that salvation can be found outside the church, but not outside the Christ event. Rahner (in Coleman. 2007:8) argues this point,

God's saving grace is at work outside the church in other religions, even if they are not aware of it themselves.

In agreement with Rahner, Fredericks (1999:15) also argued that salvation outside the institutional borders of Christianity is a distinct possibility, working from the premise the inclusivist can argue for the extended grace of God and the move of the Holy Spirit beyond the church. The Christ event becomes the central idea in this school of thought, while the church is seen merely as a vehicle of salvation and not the ultimate explicit expression of salvation.

The other ideal rejected by the exclusivist but championed by the inclusivist is that of a limited acceptance of other religions. Medonsa (2006:58) explains the axiom attached to this idea.

Inclusivism is both an acceptance and a rejection of the faith. This is to say, it aims to hold together two equally binding convictions: the operation of the grace of God

in all the great religions of the world working for salvation, and the uniqueness of the manifestation of the grace of God in Christ.

In other words, the saving grace of Christ can manifest itself in other religions, even if it is manifested imperfectly and incomplete. However, the fulness and the complete saving presence of God can only be found explicitly in the person of Jesus Christ.

Inclusivists made a move from restrictive exclusivism to a more tolerant and embracing inclusion that made some space to accommodate certain aspects of other religions. Copper (2013:152) points this out clearly when he asserted,

Inclusivist differs from exclusivist in their belief that Jesus Christ is at work in the lives of non-Christians, including non-Christian religions.

In his famous publication "*Mere Christianity*" C.S Lewis made this same deduction as he explained,

There are people in other religions who are being led by God's secret influence to concentrate on those parts of their religion which agree with Christianity, and who thus belong to Christ without knowing it.

Rahner would label these religious people from other religions who belong to Christ without knowing it as "anonymous Christians". This thought was developed more explicitly by Rahner during the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) conveyed by Pope John XXIII (1881-1963). Rahner's thought became the keystone in the Roman Catholic theology of religions. What makes Rahner an inclusivist is his conviction that while God is at work in other religions and some of them have salvific elements, Christianity remains the "absolute religion" because it manifests the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Other Roman Catholic scholars like Panikkar (1964: ix) and Kung (1967:51) also believed that there is a living presence of Jesus Christ in other religions pushing them to full disclosure of the reality of His salvific grace. World religions are merely the starting point, while full disclosure can only be found in Christ.

While Rahner, Pannikar, and Kung believe that there are salvific elements in other religions the Protestant school of thought is a bit cautious. Pinnock (1995:98) cautions the Protestant movement not to be too quick to glorify the religions since there is still great depths of darkness, deceptions, and bondage in them. Because of this he does not believe or recognize that there are salvific elements in other religions. However, he does acknowledge "truth claims" in other religions. These claims may concern the attributes of God as sovereign, creator, and sustainer of the universe. In Islam for

example, the truth claims concerning the virgin birth of Jesus and His second coming, cannot be denied by Christians. These truth claims are elements that would lead to a fuller and explicit revelation of God found in Christ. They prepare the way for a full revelation of God and remind us that God's presence was active in advance in the religions of the world. No religion was left without revelation of the manifestation of the presence of God, no matter how dark or sinister it may appear to be.

7.3.2 The attraction to inclusivism

In a world that has quickly become a global village, where isolated communities have become hives of interreligious encounters, inclusivism has presented itself as a timely model that appeals to the modern person. This is not because inclusivism presents itself as the middle ground (between the two extremes of exclusivism and pluralism) making the modern person choose for the sake of easiness and convenience.

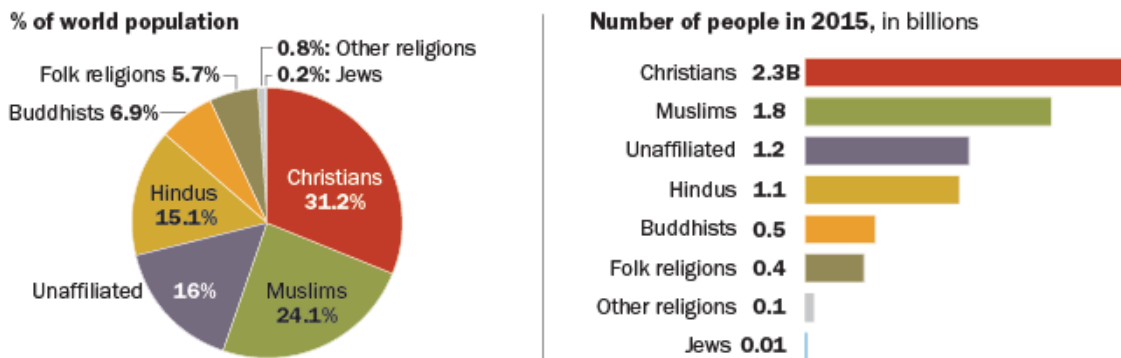
Firstly, in inclusivism, there are elements of hope for humanity. Hope keeps humanity alive and thriving, while exclusivism damned most of humanity to hell since the majority of humanity belongs to other faiths. According to the PEW research centre the world population this year 2020 stands at 7.8 billion¹¹⁰ while the Christian population makes up 2.4 billion. If every Christian on the planet was destined to heaven, then a cold Mathematical calculation devoid of God's grace would condemn 5.4 billion people to hell. The major religions of the world¹¹¹ are depicted in the chart below. By way of calculations, 1.8 Billion Muslims have no hope for salvation and 1.1 billion Hindus, half a billion Buddhists, and approximately 4.4 billion people of other faiths.

¹¹⁰ <http://www.prb.org/2020-world-population-data-sheet/#:~:text=The%20world%20population%20is%20projected,as%20in%20the%20United%20States>. (accessed 14/11/2020).

¹¹¹ (accessed 14/11.2020).

Figure 16: Global Religious landscape.

Christians are the largest religious group in 2015



Source: Pew Research Center demographic projections. See Methodology for details.
"The Changing Global Religious Landscape"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

It is these statistics coupled with the revelation of God’s extended grace and the work of the Holy Spirit beyond the borders of Christendom that makes the inclusivist model appealing. Within this model, there is hope that the presence of God is among the 1.8 Billion Muslims, the 1.1 billion Hindus, half a billion Buddhists, and approximately 4.4 billion people of other faiths.

Secondly, the inclusivist model is attractive because it displays the greatest attribute of God, which is His love for humanity. God’s universal grace precedes from His universal incomprehensible love for humanity.

Inclusivists argue that God can never be accused of showing partiality, nor can He be viewed as a tribal god interested only in a remnant. They offer a more coherent version of God’s universal salvific offer to sinners across the globe. The premise of this school of thought is couched in the fact that God loves people. In His nature to love, He releases His Spirit to be active in every religious community, freely showering His prevenient grace on all people. This love of God ultimately finds its fullness in the incarnate Christ, which sinners will experience whether they know Him explicitly or not. Pinnock (1995:103) describes this love of God as a “mystery of love” which streams from the Son and the Holy Spirit to every Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and all other people of different faiths. Jesus is the revelation of God’s love towards humanity and the Spirit is the dispenser of this love that works in the heart of each individual universally.

Finally, the inclusivist model is attractive because in it there are elements that lead to greater opportunities for interfaith dialogue. Unlike the dualist view held by the exclusivist, which has already condemned other religions to falsehood, the inclusivist sees some truth claims presented in these religions. While the exclusivist views the other religions as devoid of God's presence, it can see the Spirit of God working actively among them. In a sense, the religions of the world can be viewed as "praeparatio evangelica," a preparation for the presentation of the gospel. With this attitude, the inclusivist is ready and willing to begin a dialogue with people of other faiths since God is already working among them.

Truth claims in the other religions are seen as areas of commonality which can become bridges of dialogue. Yong (2007:35) states that while there are many untruths in other religions, there are also many truths in them that can be used as instruments of God to educate Christians. The virgin birth of Jesus and His second coming is no longer a contention between the Quran and the Bible, it is rather seen as an opportunity to lead to a deeper discussion about Christ.

With the acknowledgment of the work of the Spirit in other religions, inclusivists can partake in the "missio dei". Bosch (1993:389) explains that the concept "missio dei" (mission of God) is a shift in mission theology that held to the old "missio ecclesia" (mission of the Church) school of thought. Missions, he argues, have always been God's mission, and the church has joined God in His mission to the world. To the inclusivist, all missions are initiated and carried out by God. He is already at work in the nations and the religions of the world. He is already present and at work in the hearts of Muslims, Hindus, and the rest of the religions of the world. Our task is simply to join Him and participate in His already established mission to the nations.

God's mission is a mission of love that reaches the whole of humanity desiring "that none should perish". With this concept in mind, Pinnock (1995:112-113) argues that inclusivism presents a new dialogical relationship between Christians and people of other faiths. A relationship that sees the prevenient grace of God and His Spirits presents works among the nations. He concludes by adding that the inclusivist is more biblically congruent in this respect than both the exclusivist and pluralist models.

7.3.3 Biblical support for Inclusivism

7.3.3.1 Old Testament

Inclusivists argue that this model is biblically congruent and upholds the integrity of scripture. They also argue that biblical support for inclusivism does not depend on “proof texts” but rather is seen as the theme of the entire Bible as God works within the realms of the religions that surrounded Israel. Inclusivists are not hesitant to start their defence from the book of Genesis, beginning with Adam. The argument pertains to God creating Adam and Eve, two humans, and he had an intimate relationship with them. They were created before the advent of religion, and before the institution of Judaism and Christianity. Before God worked with people through religious institutions like Judaism and Christianity, He worked with people as individual human entities. God is always involved in the lives of humans and works continuously outside the realms of the church. While Pinnock (1995:105) would argue that “Christians do not have a monopoly on the Spirit”, the same could be said concerning God, as no single institution has a monopoly on Him.

Beginning with Adam and before the formation of the nation of Israel, Jean Danielou (in Duplis. 2001:34) calls all the saints “pagan saints”. People who did not have an explicit encounter with Jesus yet put their trust in God by faith. Rahner would label these “pagan saints,” who belong to Christ without knowing it, “anonymous Christians”. These were the saints who live outside the dispensation of God’s chosen people but not out of the grace and the presence of God. Saving faith was possible even outside the Jewish dispensation. This would prove that God is not at the mercy of a particular religious institution to dispense His grace.

While there are many instances of God working through non-Jewish people in the Old Testament¹¹², there is one event that merits attention. The Book of Daniel records the many encounters that a pagan king, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, had with Jehovah, God of the Bible. The Babylonians were steep in idolatry and witchcraft and were viewed by the Jews as the seat of paganism in the east. Yet God chose to reveal His triune identity to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy, revealed to a pagan king.

After an encounter with God through dreams, he declared the attributes of God to all the nations under his dominion.

Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all

¹¹² Many inclusivists make mention of non-Jews who had positive encounters with God. Their list includes Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings 5:15), Balaam the pagan prophet (Numbers 22:18), Rahab the prostitute (Joshua 2:8-13), and the grace shown to the Ninevites in the book of Jonah.

the earth: Peace be multiplied to you.

It seemed good before me to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done with me.

How great *are* His signs! And how mighty *are* His wonders! His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and His rule *is* from generation to generation. (Daniel 4:1-3 KJV).

He was the only pagan king who had a revelation of Jesus the Son of God, while many of the Jewish prophets longed for this manifestation of Christ and did not have the opportunity to see it. He acknowledged the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Daniel.

While Israel, God's chosen people, could not fathom the universal message of salvation and God's plans for the nation, it was King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon that received and understood this revelation (Daniel 4:34-35).

The prophets of Israel also had a revelation of God's salvific plan for the nations of the earth. Many saw God transcend the religious boundaries of Judaism and work in the nation of the earth to reveal Himself to them. The prophets Malachi, Zechariah, Micah, and Isaiah understood the universal salvific plan of God.

7.3.3.2 New Testament

Using 1 Timothy 2:3-4 as his premise and 1 John 2:2 as his, Pinnock (1999:95) constructed an argument presenting the New Testament as an all-embracing, comprehensive, and inclusive gospel that reaches beyond the boundaries of the Church. He argued that God's generosity in Christ's atoning work expresses both universality and inclusion. Therefore, having faith in Christ as Saviour of the whole world should leave room for believers to be open and generous to other religious traditions. In agreement with Pinnock's thoughts Kipsigei (2015:3) also argued that "God's dialogue with humanity which started in the Old Testament continued in the New Testament." Togarasei (2003:154) also contributed to the debate by adding that the New Testament provided a basis for both interreligious dialogue and an inclusive model that could be relevant to the African Church.

The New Testament opens with the birth of Jesus which firstly attracts three pagan astrologists (the three wise men Matthew 2:1-12). It ends with the nations gathered together in the Heavenly city around the throne of God (Revelation 22:2 KJV).

The ministry of Jesus embraces inclusion. The New Testament was written within the context of a pluralistic society. Jesus and the early church did not miss an opportunity to dialogue with the Gentiles and share the gospel of God's kingdom.

These encounters were seen as Jesus' move towards including the nations of the world as recipients of God's Kingdom through His salvific work.

- The Samaritan woman and the Samaritan town (John 4:1-42).
- The Syrophenician woman and her sick daughter (Matt. 15:21-28).
- The Centurion at Capernaum (Matt. 8:5-13).
- The nobleman whose son was sick (John 4:43-54).
- The Gadarene delivered from demon possession (Mark 5:1-20).
- The deaf man from Decapolis (Mark 7:31-37).

There are several statements in the Gospels that attest to Jesus' universal mandate and support the inclusivism idea.

- You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16)
- The Kingdom of God will be taken from you (Jews) and be given to the nations (Matt 21:43)
- He was the true Light; *He* enlightens every man coming into the world. (John 1:9)
- Then Jesus spoke again to them, saying, I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk-in darkness but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)
- The next day John sees Jesus coming to him and says, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! (John 1:29)

Beyond the Gospels, there are also many other passages of scripture that support the inclusivist model. One incident in particular that has caught the attention of Pentecostal missiologist¹¹³ is the account of the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48). In this event God revealed Himself to a godly Gentile, presupposing that God listened to the prayer

¹¹³ Amos Yong, Tony Richie and Karkkainen have all done exhaustive expositions of this event and holds it up as one of the foremost arguments for an inclusivist theology of religions. Their arguments will be discussed later in this chapter.

of the godly, though they may belong to a different religious group. There was a distinct presence of God in the religious sphere of his life. He represented millions of “religious” people outside the fold of Christianity who gripped the attention of an all-merciful and compassionate God. He affirmed the truth that God does not leave Himself without a witness (Acts 10:34-35).

God will use the little light that is found in other religions to lead people to the greater light that is explicitly revealed in Christ. Peter also admitted that there are righteous and good people in the realms of other religions, that are close to the heart of God.

7.3.4 Inclusivism and encounters with Muslims.

In theory, the inclusivist model presented many opportunities for dialogue with people of other faiths. This section of the thesis will focus on how it relates practically to Muslim Christian dialogue in South Africa. The exclusivist model led to antagonism which was acted out on the debating stages across the country. These debates had one purpose, to expose the weakness of one religion while presenting the other as more superior. This was as far as Muslim Christian dialogue went.

As stated before, exclusivism focused on the differences in religions, but the inclusivist model focused on religious commonalities. This is because the inclusivist believed that there are revealed truths in each religion. While exclusivism has been accused of demonizing other religions, inclusivism acknowledges the dark, idolatrous side of religions but also recognizes that there is some good in all religions.

This attitude makes entering into dialogue more reachable and profitable. There are many commonalities between Islam and Christianity. Certain elements in Islam can be used as bridges for dialogue. Nazir Ali (1987:108) maintained that these elements and faith systems in Islam are responses to God’s self-disclosure. He argued that these elements should not be shunned by Christians, but rather used as essentials for dialogue. Katteregga (1980:82-89) identified the figure of Allah as a self-disclosure of the Biblical Jehovah. He compared the oneness of Allah (Quran 28:88, 39:3,16:51 & 38:66) to the oneness of Jehovah (Deut. 6:6-9, Mark 12:28-30). He also compared Allah as creator (Quran 6:73, 7:54 & 59:24) to Jehovah as creator (Gen. 1:1, Isa, 40:28 & Rom. 1:28). He reasoned that these elements could be points of contact, instead of

areas of contention. God revealed Himself in other religions, and this may be Jehovah revealing Himself in the Quran.

While the full disclosure of God is seen in Jesus Christ, the Quranic Allah should be seen as a starting point for dialogue.

Without denying some of the erroneous details concerning certain biblical characters in the Quran, inclusivists would view the fact that these characters appear in the Quran as divine providence from God that could lead to dialogue. Again, the full disclosure of these characters would be revealed in the Bible, but their appearance in the Quran would serve as a bridge for discussions.

Rahman Shad's publications "From Adam to Muhammad" would serve as catalyst for such a study. He gave a list of several biblical characters found in the Quran. Adam (Quran 32:7-9), Noah (Quran 7:59-60), Abraham (Quran 16:121-122), Ishmael (Quran 37:100), Isaac (Quran 37:112), Jacob (Quran 19:49), David (Quran 38:26) Solomon (Quran 27:15), Elijah (Quran 38:48) Moses (Quran 28:4-5) and John the Baptist (Quran 19-7-15).

The full disclosure of Christ is always found in the Bible. One of the most exhaustive comparisons of the life of Christ in the Bible and the Quran was done by Carl Medearis (2008:70-77) in his book "Muslims, Christians, and Jesus". He outlined 93 Quranic surahs concerning Jesus and compared them to the 93 verses in the Bible which substantiate its claims. He claimed that these should not be 93 points of contention but rather 93 opportunities to build bridges for genuine dialogue with Muslim neighbours.

Inclusivists agree that God would use the incomplete information in the Quran concerning Christ to lead sincere Muslims to a fuller and more complete understanding of Christ. In the closed Muslim countries where there was no Christian influence, it is possible, as Karl Rahner believes there are "anonymous Christians" who had an authentic encounter with Christ. Pentecostals who claim to be more sensitive to the move of the Holy Spirit should have no contention in believing that the Holy Spirit can move among Muslims and lead them to greater knowledge of Jesus through the little information provided in the Quran.

However, over the past 50 years in South Africa, Muslims and Christians have been debating rigorously with each other. Based on these debates which belittled one faith and exalted the other, books were published, and seminars were convened which

fostered an attitude of antagonism. The latter sowed seeds of contention between the adherents of the two faiths. South African Pentecostals began to see debating as the only way to reach Muslims with the Gospel. Knitter (2008:33) also argued that these forms of debates are detrimental to the dialogue process.

The exclusivist approach is not open to dialogue, other than to debate and try to convince the partner to conversion.

Based on the exclusivist model, this method of evangelism by debating had not had any success over the years.

Another model should be explored, and within this context of exploration, the inclusivist model should at least be considered by Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni. There are practical reasons for the inclusivist model to be considered. Firstly, inclusivism would acknowledge the work of God in the religion of Islam, as His Spirit moves within the hearts of Muslims. Secondly, this model would acknowledge the fingerprints of God within some of the divinely planted statements in the Quran which acknowledges the ministry of Christ. And finally, the inclusivist model does not seek to find a method to reach Muslims, but rather seek to flow within the "missio dei" which God has already begun among Muslims since the inception of Islam.

7.3.5 A viable option

The inclusivist model could be a viable model for the Pentecostal Church in South Africa. The quest one may ask is if this model has worked anywhere else in the country? The answer is no, simple because it has never been presented as an option to the Pentecostal church in South Africa. However, the researcher has seen shown that the exclusivist model has been prone to problems that hindered interreligious dialogue. It has contributed to widening the schism between Muslims and Christians. The reason the inclusivist model could be seen as a viable model is because it promotes the fundamental tenets of Pentecostalism. The supremacy of Jesus as the only saviour of the world is upheld. The inerrancy and infallibility of the scripture still remains enshrined in this model and the missionary zeal and witness of the church is not diminished.

All this is kept intact while road towards interreligious dialogue is left opened and filled with many possibilities.

While Islam is the second largest religion in the world it is also the only religion in the world to acknowledge the historicity and prophethood of Jesus. This again presents an opportunity to Pentecostals to dialogue with Muslims as they allow God to reveal the fullness of Christ to their Muslim dialogue partners. All of this can be accomplished with the Pentecostal believer compromising their conviction or diminishing their evangelistic fervency.

However, this inclusivist model will have to be adjusted by Pentecostals to fit their spirit-centered theology. Currently the inclusivist model is built on a theocentric platform. The Pentecostal church would have to present a more spirit-centered inclusivist model. This model will be examined in the part of the chapter.

7.4 The Pluralist Model

7.4.1 Defining Pluralism.

The Pendulum swings to the other end of the spectrum, from elitist exclusivism to open pluralism. As extreme as the views of exclusivism might seem, pluralism offers the same challenge to the seeker of religious truth. While exclusivists hold steadfastly to the idea that there is no salvation found outside their particular faith, the pluralist argued that all religions are equal, and all are authentic pathways to salvation. Pluralists maintain that all religions should be accepted as sufficient forms of worship that ascend to the one and same God. Indian theologian, Marbaniang (2007:1) quoted from the Bhagavad-Gita to capsule the concept of pluralism from the sayings of Lord Krishna.

By whatsoever way men worship Me, even so, do I accept them, O Partha,
men walk in My path.

This Hindu concept of religions promotes the idea that all religions are authentic paths to God, hence all religions are reliable avenues to salvation. Within the context of pluralism, Christianity is merely seen as one of the avenues to salvation and therefore cannot claim exclusivity to salvation or God.

Pluralism maintains that all humans have an innate desire to respond to the divine, and each human, therefore, responds differently to God. Each religion is then a different response to the very same God. Hinduism, Islam, the African traditional religions, and the other forms of religion can be seen as a different response to God, all of which are accepted by Him. In this framework. Allah, Krishna, or Jehovah are names given to the

same God. Copper (2013:158) argued that this theology in pluralism has become the most contentious view that differs vastly from the other two models.

Pluralists differ decidedly from the other two positions in their conviction that Jesus is only one saviour among many. In this regard, Krishna, and Allah, for instance, are also saviours.

Pluralists, however, argued that each name is merely an expression of that one God which could be known as the “Divine” the “Ultimate”, or even the “Supreme Being”. The names were superficial. To the pluralist, all religions are superficially different, but fundamentally the same. To the exclusivist Pentecostal, all religions may look superficially the same, but they are fundamentally different. These differences are irreconcilable.

Pluralists, however, maintain that all religions are valid portrayals of the same universal God, howbeit they all express their faith in different forms. These different forms of worship arise from the cultural climate in which the particular religion arose. Their cultural and historical setting led to the formation of codes of ethics, forms of worship, and different displays of the liturgy. While their forms of worship differ, their universal desire to please God is what drives their faith. Dupuis (1997:191) argued for pluralism and explained that the difference in the religious forms of worship should not be seen as contrary to each other, but rather as supplementary since each religion has a small piece of the greater truth. These truths were observed in the ethics and morals displayed in each religion.

Elwell (1984:233) explained that pluralists go a step further by arguing that pluralism is key to enhancing human justice, fighting oppression, and promoting religious dialogue.

Attacking exclusivism and inclusivism as oppressive towards other cultures, some argue that only pluralism can establish an interreligious dialogue that brings justice for the oppressed.

While any effort for world peace must be applauded, Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni should be asking the question, “at what cost?” While pluralism seems to give to be the answer, it also presents us with a great challenge. Pluralism aims at deconstructing the fundamental claims of the Christian faith to make way for a new religious construct. In the deconstructing process Jesus Christ is stripped of His deity and His incarnation is seen as a myth, while the Bible is unvarnished and presented as the work of men.

Leading in this school of thought and constructing a modern pluralism, is British theologian and philosopher John Hick.

7.4.2 John Hick and his Copernican Revolution theory.

John Hick has come to be known as both the father of modern pluralism and the most formidable antagonist towards exclusivism and inclusivism. The formation of his theological thoughts has given many scholars of pluralism a launching pad for the advancement of liberalism. A prolific writer and a convert from conservative theology to liberal theology, Hick is quite knowledgeable in both schools of thought. This gives him the added advantage to show first-hand the inadequacies of conservative theology and the need for a more liberal approach to the theology of religions. After many visits to different religious institutions around Birmingham, Hick underwent a time of deep personal soul searching which led to his “conversion” to pluralism. He (2001:177) described this journey in his book, “God has many names”.

Occasionally attending worship in mosques and synagogues, temples, and (Sikh) gurdwara, it was evident to me that essentially the same kind of thing is taking place in them as in a Christian church – namely, human beings opening their minds to a higher divine.

These episodes experienced during long deep religious dialogues with people of other faiths led Hick to question the authenticity of the classical heritage of his Christian faith. This experience became the bedrock of the formation of his theology of religions. It was moved from a Christocentric theology to a theocentric theology, where Christianity was relegated to the periphery of divine encounters with the rest of the world religions. It was this theocentric theology that gave rise to his “Copernican revolution” theory of religions.

Just as Copernicus came to the deduction that the earth was not the centre of the universe, but the sun was the centre; Hick came to his conclusion that Christianity and Christ were not the centre of the religious universe with all the other religions spanned on the outskirts of utter darkness. But he deduced that it was God (the Supreme Being, the Real, the Divine) at the centre of all religious activities and all religions including Christianity revolved around God.

7.4.3 Pluralism and encounters with Muslims.

Muslim Christian violence is on the increase around the globe. Boko Haram has intensified its attacks on Christians in the north of Nigeria. Pockets of the terrorist group Isis are now (2020) found in the northern parts of Mozambique causing havoc within the Christian community. Egypt, Pakistan, and Syria have seen violent tempers flare up in recent years between Muslims and Christians.

Those religious conflicts which have claimed tens of thousands of lives and left many more fleeing their homes, have been caused by fundamentalist groups that hold on adamantly to exclusivism. They view their religion as superior and therefore feel the need to either subjugate or eradicate any other religious group that stands in opposition to their system of beliefs. World leaders, philanthropists, and advocates are calling for peace between the religions. Within a context like this religious pluralism seems to be the answer. All religions are equal, and all are adequate pathways to God. It is a dream for a Utopia, which proponents of pluralism hope to present to the world.

However, we live in a diverse world, where exclusivism is built into the fibre of religion and society. None seem to back down, accommodate, and is willing to compromise on the fundamentals of their beliefs. In South Africa, both Sunni Muslims and Pentecostal Christians are avid advocates of the exclusivist model. Both view their religions as superior to the other, both believe that their religions represent the only true way to salvation, and both hold steadfastly to the idea that anyone who rejects their religion would end up in eternal hell. This has been the basis and impetus for all of their debates over the past decades. Ahmed Deedat has fought forcefully to maintain these exclusivist deals within the Muslim community in South Africa, while John Gilchrist has done the same within the Christian communities.

While there are many disagreements between Sunni Muslims and Pentecostal Christians in Ekurhuleni, they do agree on the one fact that pluralism is not an option for either of them. Pluralism was rejected as a religious model by both groups during the PAR group meetings.

7.5 Presenting a pneuma-centric model

7.5.1 Defining a Spirit centred model.

Having examined the three above models presented for a theology of religions,

Pentecostals would have to either formulate a fourth model, accept one of the already examined models or revamp one of the models which are closest to their conviction.

American Pentecostal scholars such as Yong, Karkkainen, and Richie all identify themselves as scholars following the inclusivist model. They invite the rest of the Pentecostal community to analyse this model and see its merits. However, they also call on Pentecostal scholars to find creative ways to integrate Pentecostal pneumatology into this model and present a unique spirit-centred inclusivist model to the wider Christian community. South African Pentecostal theologians like Nel (2015) has made significant contributions by calling Pentecostals to develop a 'Pentecostal hermeneutic' which is unique and spirit centred., Nel (2016) contends that this Pentecostal development in hermeneutics must begin at theological training level, developing young Pentecostals to think differently and relevantly.

The attraction to the inclusivist model centres around the supremacy of salvation in Christ. The fact that there is biblical evidence for the existence of such a model has made this model attractive to Pentecostals. However, the most convincing idea in this model is the impression that it leaves much room open for the operation of the Holy Spirit in the lives of every person in the world. While this inclusivist model seems closest to the hearts of many Pentecostals, it cannot be adopted by them without some major adjustments. This was the view that was put forward by Pentecostal pastors in the PAR groups. Pentecostal pastors in Ekurhuleni who attended the PAR group sessions argued that while the inclusivist model was attractive, it lacked the impetus of the involvement of the Holy Spirit. They suggested that the Pentecostal church should look for creative ways of including the working of the Holy Spirit beyond the parameters of this model.

Yong believed that from this vantage point the Pentecostal church would be able to contribute to the wider church's discussion on a theology of religions. He (1999:84) emphasized that:

I believe that the Pentecostal experience of and orientation towards the Holy Spirit gives rise to unique insights that inform a pneumatological theology of religions.

Richie (2013:15) also added that the inclusivist model was attractive, but when approaching it Pentecostals should remain faithful to their traditions concerning the

placement of the Holy Spirit. He argued that theological integrity must be maintained as Pentecostals develop a spirit-centred inclusive theology of religions.

7.5.2 A spirit centred, trinitarian sensitive approach.

Pentecostals placed much emphasis on the person and working of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, any approach made by Pentecostal on any theological topic would be subjected to scrutiny under the microscope of Pentecostal pneumatology. Because of this approach, the Pentecostal church has been accused of placing too much emphasis on the Holy Spirit while neglecting the place of God and Christ in the process.

The exclusivist model is viewed as a Christocentric model, with emphasis on the supremacy of Christ as the only way to salvation. The Theocentric model is seen as a model that emphasizes the greater work of God among the nations/religions of the world. It is generally accepted by those in the pluralist theological camp. Pentecostals are accused of turning the inclusivist model into a Spirit centred model that restrains the role of God and Jesus in their theology of religions.

While Pentecostals emphasized the working of the Holy Spirit, scholars like Yong (2003:36-42) argued that a Pentecostal theology of religions was more trinitarian in essence than merely spirit-centred. Young established his proposal on the omnipresence of God and His dynamic interaction with people throughout history. He also argued that what God had done through Christ was equally accomplished in the Spirit (pg. 73). He, therefore, maintained that while a Pentecostal theology of religions emphasized the working of the Holy Spirit, it did not minimize the centrality of Jesus Christ or God the Father. The Holy Spirit's connection to God the Father is paramount to the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit proceeds from the Father (2 Cor. 5:5, Acts 5:32).

The Holy Spirit is also related directly to Jesus Christ. Yong (1999:99) added,

There is an undeniable fact that the Pentecostal experience of the Spirit is nothing less than the experience of Jesus Christ.

The Bible recorded that the Holy Spirit was also called the Spirit of Christ (1Peter 1:11).

The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to testify about Christ (John 15:26).

The relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit is eternally intertwined and inseparable. Dupuis (1991:240) alludes to this fact when he asserted that “the Spirit is present at the heart of the Father and the Son.” There can therefore not be Spirit centred theology of religions outside the scope of the person and work of Jesus Christ. While many Pentecostals argue that a Pentecostal theology of religion should place an emphasis on the person and the work of the Holy Spirit, it must be restated that they do not minimized or neglect the role of Jesus and God the Father.

7.5.3 The role of the Holy Spirit

The role of the Holy Spirit has been a contentious issue within the Pentecostal church. The abuse of the Holy Spirit in the realm of healing and miracles has brought the Pentecostal church into much disrepute. Professor Kgatle (2021:2-8) wrote extensively on this subject, arguing that the Pentecostal church misrepresented this third person of the Trinity.

By definition, a Spirit-centred theology of religions is one that would highlight the person and work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Father and the Son, without diminishing any of their attributes. Newer insights into the working of the Spirit can be explored and creative avenues to dialogue could be experimented.

While a few Pentecostal leaders saw the work of the Spirit as leading the church into dialogue with people of other faiths, most leaders relegated the role of the Holy Spirit to that of convicting sinners, bringing them to repentance. This role of the Holy Spirit was seen through the lens of the great commission given by Jesus in Matthew 20:19-20.

7.5.3.1 The work of the Holy Spirit in the Church

Ghanaian Scholar Gyadu (2015:223-226) argued that Pentecostals, specifically in Africa, relegated the work of the Holy Spirit to healing and miracles, rather than to dialogue with people of different faiths. Kgatle (2020:6) also argued that Pentecostals place an emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, arguing that the work of the Spirit is experiential rather than an academic exercise. These was the also the thoughts shared by Pastors in the PAR groups.

However, the Pentecostal leaders in the PAR groups did draw a distinction between the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the world. When discussing the role of the Spirit in the church they went further, to distinguish the role of the Spirit in empowering the believer and also in the Spirit releasing the believer for the work of dialogue.

The Spirit also exposed the “works of the flesh” in the believer (Galatians 5:19-21, Romans 6:6, Colossians 3:5). Also, the Spirit was instrumental in helping the believer produce “fruits of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Romans 8:29).

Pentecostals believed that this particular work of the Spirit is essential for all believers since no believer can enter into any kind of ministry, including interreligious dialogue, if they did not submit to this process. It was only after this introspective work of the Spirit in the life of the believer that they could launch out into any ministry around the world.

Secondly, the Pentecostals leaders believed that the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer equipped them to launch out into ministry among the nations of the world. The scripture quoted most often to support this thought is found in the book of Acts 1:8.

According to Pentecostals, this scripture supported the idea that believers must first be empowered by the Holy Spirit before they could venture into any ministry among the different cultures of the world. They believed that they would not even have the ability to speak and defend the gospel without the empowering of the Spirit (Luke 12:12).

The Spirit also brought back scripture to remembrance, as they witnessed about Christ to people of different faiths (John 14:26).

This premise must be interpreted within the Muslim Christian context in Ekurhuleni. One must remember that Muslim Christian relations have been built on debates. Debating was and still is a major phenomenon between these two groups. This attitude of debating has spilled over from the structured stage debates to the everyday attitude that Pentecostals have towards Muslims. Every Muslim is seen as a person that must be debated. Therefore, when a Pentecostal encounters a Muslim, he/she must be certain that they are filled with the Spirit, who will fill their mouths with knowledge and bring to remembrance any scripture that they could use in their defence of Christ. Any Pentecostal leader is convinced that there can be no Muslim Christian relation if the Holy Spirit is absent. Any attempt towards any form of dialogue would be a disaster

without the accompanying and indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Pentecostal leaders in the PAR groups agreed that while the Spirit was the dispenser of power, He also endowed the believer with love, patience, and tolerance towards people of other faiths.

7.5.3.2 The work of the Holy Spirit in the World

After emphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, Pentecostal leaders also acknowledged that the Spirit moved in the affairs of the world. Miller (1976:168), a missionary to Muslims in Iran (1919-1962), urged Christians who wished to work among Muslims to first realize that God had always been at work among the religions of the world and in particular among the Muslims.

The Spirit is present everywhere, the Holy Spirit is operating in power in and through the lives of man and woman.

These same sentiments were shared by both R.A Torrey (1957:244) and Billy Graham (1979:33), who contended that the same Spirit that created the earth is also active in the lives of the people dwelling on the earth. This is what Jesus Himself tried to explain to Nicodemus as He described the moving of the Holy Spirit (John 3:8).

The same scripture is used by Pentecostal theologians, Yong (1999:81-112), Richie (2014:297-350), and Karkkainnein (2002:500-504) to describe the move of the Holy Spirit among the nations of the world who adhered to different forms of religion. Bosch (1993:484) merely summarized this move of the Spirit by commenting, "His Spirit is constantly at work in ways that pass human understanding." He argued that the ways of the Spirit were mysterious and that theologians should not try to force His works into a neatly packed theological box.

Pentecostal leaders in the PAR groups agreed that the Spirit was at work in the nations of the world. They identified two ways in which the Holy Spirit was active in the world and in the lives of all religious people. Firstly, they believed that the purpose of the Spirit in the world was to bring conviction on men and women. It was to convict them of their sins, especially their moral apathy. Despite a person's religious affiliation, the Spirit brought conviction to men and women who violated the moral code set out by God.

According to Pentecostals, it was only during these times of conviction, that the Gospel message was easily accepted. No person could accept Christ as their Saviour, until the Spirit started His convicting work in their lives. They believed that missionaries should only move to a place where the Holy Spirit was moving. Where there was no deliberate move of the convicting Spirit, there, the missionary would face insurmountable barriers and open hostility. While the Holy Spirit convicted the world of sin, he also revealed Christ to the nations.

The second purpose of the Holy Spirit's work in the world was that He revealed Christ to the religious people of the world. According to Pentecostal leaders, no Muslim could come to salvation in Christ unless the Holy Spirit revealed Christ to them. Apostle to the Muslims, Samuel Zwemer (2002:32-33), maintained that his success among the Muslims could only be tributed to the work of the Spirit as He revealed Christ to Muslims even before he could do any work of evangelism among them. This same conviction was held with much tenacity by the Pentecostal leaders in the PAR group. They believed wholeheartedly that the work of the Spirit was to reveal Christ to the Muslims. This type of theology which is prevalent among Pentecostals stems from their acceptance of "fulfilment theology". Bosch (1993:479) described this theology as the idea that Christianity is the fulfilment of other religions. This theology flourished especially within the context of Muslim Christian relations; Pentecostals believe that the Bible has the full revelation of Christ. While the Quran mentions Christ, Pentecostals do not believe that it is sufficient knowledge of Him. They, therefore, believe that only the Holy Spirit can take the insufficient knowledge of Christ in the Quran and bring Muslims to a full knowledge of Christ which is found in the Bible. The same could also be said about the Holy Spirit which is also mentioned briefly in the Quran.

It is only by necessity that Pentecostals are convinced that a major work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal the true Jesus of the Bible to Muslims. Debates, evangelism books, and seminars on Islam which are promoted by Pentecostal are all driven by the idea that the Holy Spirit will reveal Christ to the Muslim.

7.6 Conclusion

In 1988 Pentecostal historians Burgess and McGee (1988:410), wrote,

Over a major part of the history of the Church, the Holy Spirit has been the neglected member of the Trinity.

Today (2021) the same is said about the work of the Holy Spirit in the formation of a theology of religions. Pentecostals are charged with the responsibility of rightfully positioning the work of the Holy Spirit and His influence in their development of a Pentecostal theology of religions. Some have adopted the inclusivist model, but not without renovating its ideas. They have reinvented an inclusivist theology of religions that is Spirit-centred yet still trinitarian in every aspect.

However, most Pentecostals remain sitting on the side-line, either evaluating the scene or criticizing those that have launched out to navigate a new path for Pentecostals. The Pentecostal Churches in South Africa have not yet formulated an official theology of religions. They have continued to adopt the classical 1904 Azusa Street, American model. The AFM, AOG, and FGC churches started as American mission churches (Chetty. 2002:22-23). They readily adopted classical American Pentecostal theology and should not be judged for that.

However, as we embark on a new journey into the twenty-first century, the South African Pentecostal church must be challenged to produce a theology of religions that upholds their Pentecostal conviction, yet also keep in mind that the world has become a global village where people of different religions are rubbing shoulders every day. Within this new context, they must produce a theology of religions that would promote religious dialogue, foster peace among the religions but without compromising their Pentecostal heritage.

They could choose from the three common models (Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism), they could revamp any of them to suit their Pentecostal conviction, or they could navigate a new path and offer the Christian world a better alternative.

CHAPTER 8

PARADIGM SHIFTS IN PENTECOSTAL THINKING.

8.1 Introduction

The research question of this dissertation is summed up in chapter one:

Can Pentecostal Christians hold on to the “Exclusivist” ideas of Christ as the only way to salvation, in this new democratic, pluralist South Africa, which promotes the equality of all religions?

This research question was used as the starting point for the researcher. The conclusion of the research, based on a qualitative and quantitative investigation, and document analysis evidence, points to the fact that Pentecostal Christians in Ekurhuleni hold on to an unwavering theology of exclusivism. This theological stance is not compatible for interreligious dialogue, specifically with the interlocutors under investigation, which is the Sunni Muslim community.

The main research question dealt with the issue of debating as a form of interaction between Sunni Muslims and Pentecostals as opposed to dialoguing. The exclusivist views held by Pentecostals and Sunni Muslims in Ekurhuleni are the catalyst for debates, since debates focus on the differences between the religions, proving one as inferior and the other as superior. To move from debating to dialoguing would need a major paradigm shift in Pentecostal thinking.

Using Lochhead’s four models of religious encounters the researcher traced the relationship between Pentecostal Christians and Sunni Muslims in South Africa, and their impact in Ekurhuleni. Chapter one describes how this relationship evolved over the years, from an era of Apartheid to the dawning of democracy. This relationship moved from isolation to hostility during the Apartheid era. Almost two decades before the advent of democracy, the relationship moved towards partnership, as religious leaders from both sides united in their fight against this oppressive regime. After the fall of Apartheid and the beginning of the democratic era, these two religions once again witnessed a change in relations. Because the new constitution of the country upheld the freedom of religions, these two communities of faith began to move towards competitiveness.

Presently, this is where the relationship between Pentecostal Christians and Sunni Muslims stands. However, this is not a static relationship. It is evolving into a stage of

triumphalism with arrogance and intolerance once again rearing its ugly head. The present theological stance and the attitude of exclusivism that is displayed by the Pentecostal Christians and Sunni Muslims have fuelled the flames of distrust, intolerance, and triumphalism. This stance poses a great problem in a democratic, pluralist South Africa, which promotes the equality of all religions.

There needs to be a paradigm shift in Pentecostal theology and attitude towards other religions in South Africa, and especially towards Sunni Muslims. This paradigm shift should not be seen as a liberal attack on Pentecostal theology, nor as a call to undermine the supremacy of Christ in salvation. It is a call for Pentecostals to re-evaluate their attitude towards other religions in the light of a democratic pluralist South Africa. It is not a call to deny their Pentecostal traditions and convictions, but rather a call to tolerance and respect towards other religions in a spirit of love. It is not a call to deny their evangelistic fervency and a commitment to missions, but rather to evangelize the nations while living together in a spirit of tolerance and respect.

8.2 A call for a paradigm shift.

The Apostle Paul (Rom. 12:2) calls on Christians who want to be effective in their communities to change their mindset and the way they think and perceive the world around them. He believes that no change can take place in a person's attitude or their community if there is no paradigm shift in their thinking.

This paradigm shift is needed in the Pentecostal community if they are to be serious about their evangelistic mandate and their relevance in a democratic pluralist society. This has to take place on two levels.

8.2.1 A shift in Pentecostal theological thinking

There should be a new hermeneutical approach to scripture in the light of interreligious dialogue. The exclusivist theological approach to religions must be re-evaluated. There needs to be an openness to other theologies of religions, especially the inclusivist model, which seems to be closest to Pentecostal thinking. Chapter seven of this dissertation makes some recommendations to the Pentecostal community, offering the

inclusivist model as a viable model that leaves room for interreligious dialogue, while upholding the supremacy of salvation in Christ alone.

The three mainline Pentecostal churches are also challenged to produce an official document that outlines their theology of religions. They could go further by consulting with each other and producing one Pentecostal document that outlines their theology of religions. The theology of religions should be included in their Bible college curriculums so that they can adequately develop the next generation of theologians, who should be readily prepared to take up the challenge of interfaith dialogue. A new breed of leaders needs to emerge from the Pentecostal community, leaders that see the need for interreligious dialogue in the future. Ipgrave (2002:133) describes them as futuristic leaders.

Leadership for the well-being of people in the future depends on making decisions now that do not close off options for the leaders yet to come.

However, a shift in theological thinking must not stop short of merely being an intellectual exercise. It should lead to a shift in attitude. Dialogue is a journey, and the attitudes of the participants will determine the success of that journey.

8.2.2 A shift in attitude

At grassroots level, there must be a shift in attitude in how Pentecostals perceive people of other faiths. In his book *Transforming missions: A paradigm shift in theology of mission*, Bosch (1993:483) asserts this idea,

The first perspective called for – and this is already a decision from the heart rather than the intellect – is to accept the coexistence of different faiths and to do so not grudgingly but willingly.

Dialogue can never take place with Sunni Muslims if they are resented by Pentecostals. The same applies to Sunni Muslims. A change in attitude presupposes any ideal for a move towards dialogue. The post-Apartheid attitude of competitiveness mutated and continues to mutate into aggression towards people of other faiths. Pentecostal theology thrives in this environment because they view themselves as spirit-filled and spirit-empowered believers in the one true God. Islam and all other religions are seen as inferior or demonic. This attitude of triumphalism is prevalent in Ekurhuleni and is displayed by both Christians and Muslims.

The attitude of competitiveness has led to an attitude of arrogance. Christianity is perceived as superior; all other religions are inferior. Christianity cannot learn anything of value from other religious traditions since they alone possess the full revelation of God. This attitude has led them to look down on other religions, and therefore any form of dialogue would be approached from a superior complex held by Pentecostals. The dialogue process would be dominated by them, while listening to the other would be difficult, since Pentecostals believe to have all the answers.

This attitude of competitiveness has also led to an attitude of triumphalism that is displayed by Pentecostals. It is primarily this attitude that has given rise to the formation of public debates. Each debate is seen as a chance to obliterate the Muslim opponents' arguments, publicly displaying its faults and shortcomings, thereafter presenting Christianity as the perfect religion.

Competitiveness leads to hostility, disrespect, and intolerance, that is openly displayed in mockery seen at the debating venues. This is seen at many of the venues where public debates are held. Antagonism instead of learning from the other has been the dominant attitude displayed at public debates, and it all stems from the attitude of competitiveness. Competitiveness is not altogether bad. Good competition is always healthy. It leads the competitors to become more innovation and creative. However, when competitiveness leads to hostility and disrespect it becomes toxic.

“There has to be a better way”, this was the title of the first chapter of Malloughi's (2000) book, *Waging peace on Islam*, In which she traces the history of Christian Muslim relations and outlines the wars, violence, and intolerance by both religions against each other. Looking at the present situation she writes,

Antagonism is insidiously growing again between Christianity and Islam and is in danger of escalating.

The rest of the chapters in her book are a challenge to the church to change its ways. She proposes a change in attitude, from one of antagonism and triumphalism to one of respect, tolerance, and peace. She argues that the old ways must change, they are yesterday's methods. Kung (2007:485) agrees with Malloughi's assertions and labels chapter one of his book “*Yesterday's methods*”. He also uses this chapter to challenge

the church's hostile attitude towards Islam. He labels public debating, defensive evangelist strategies, and offensive polemic literature as a part of yesterday's methods. He too, calls for paradigm shifts in the churches attitude towards Islam, arguing,

Some church people who call for critical dialogue have little idea about other religions. Yet only on a solid, scholarly, theological basis will progress be made in mutual understanding.

He (2007: 535) urges the church to change their attitude, to move away from hostility and embrace tolerance and respect for Islam, and concludes, "The way into the future must not once again be the way of war".

Samartha (1972:10) anticipates the future relations between Muslims and Christians and concludes that something new is emerging.

There are signs which point to a new attitude on the part of people of one religion towards the adherents to others.

He agrees that fanaticism, suspicions, and fear are still prevalent, but he argues that there is a greater openness towards other religions. Like Kung and Malloughi, he too stresses the need for a change in attitude.

Jesus sets many examples for Christian attitudes towards people of different faiths. The Gospels include examples of Jesus dialoguing with the outcast Samaritans (Jn. 4:1-26) and the despised Greeks (Jn. 12:20-26). In the discourse of Jesus dialoguing with the religious Jewish leaders of his day, one can glean and learn from His attitude. Luke's discourse (Luke 2:46-47) teaches three lessons on attitudes towards people of different faiths.

The first lesson is that he was found sitting among them. You cannot reach people if you do not want to be in their company, or even enjoy their hospitality. The second lesson is that Jesus listened to them speak and explain their belief system. Listening is the key to opening up the door for dialogue. To listen would imply respect, interest, and the desire to learn. Thirdly, Jesus asked questions. As the saying goes, "listen first, ask questions later". The questions of Jesus were not offensive, derogative, or questions that led to hostility. However, they were thought-provoking questions, because it had an impact on those that were in the meeting. It would be wise for Pentecostal leaders in Ekurhuleni to heed this example of Jesus in their quest for dialogue with Muslims.

8.2.3 A shift from methods and models to correct attitudes.

This third paradigm shift in Pentecostal thinking should be the shift from methods and models of dialogue and evangelism to developing a correct attitude towards Islam.

Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni are not aware of the presence of Islam, nor are they aware of their call to dialogue. However, their main interest is the evangelization of the Muslim community. Their seminars are filled with ideas, methods, and models on how to either meet Muslims or how to engage with Muslims in their community.

These methods and models find their roots in Evangelical movements like AD 2000, or Evangelism Explosion 101. These movements pride themselves on developing methods and models to evangelize the world. They, therefore, approach the subject of Muslim Christian relations with the same attitude and promote the same agenda in their strategy meetings. These methods are adopted by the Pentecostal Churches in Ekurhuleni with amending them. These unamended models and strategies are not working.

Pastors in the PAR groups attested to the failure of these methods and models of evangelism. One of the participants argued that “these methods are impersonal, ridged, and void of a spirit of love and passion for Muslims. Muslims can see right through these methods and they immediately close themselves up to further conversations.” Nevertheless, pressured by a commitment to the cause of world evangelization, Pentecostals continue to employ yesterday’s methods.

There is therefore a need for a paradigm shift, one that will see Muslims as real living beings with passions, convictions, and emotions, rather than objects of missions caught up in an impenetrable religious system. Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni need to see Muslims as God sees them, as His children, created in His image.

God loved the world, including Muslims. This is seen in the redemptive work of Christ. When the church have a love for Christ, when it is filled with the spirit of love, it will begin to love those that are created in God’s image. When the church is driven by love for people, it will seek to relate to them, know them and engage in dialogue with them. People are not mere objects but living beings that live to have fellowship with each other. Methods that employ stages of first greeting a person, introducing yourself,

smiling, and engaging in small talk, are all mechanical, false, and void of any passion, love, and concern. These artificial forms of communication that are fabricated at mission seminars and Pentecostal bible schools are ineffective today, just as it was a hundred years ago.

The key to reaching out to Muslims in any form of dialogue is to have real love for them. As an Evangelical apologist John Gilchrist would always start his seminars on Islam by writing out the word ISLAM on a whiteboard. He then explained the acronym for the word I.S.L.A.M as an abbreviation for, "I Still Love All Muslims." Already at the very beginning of the seminars, he hoped to change the attitude of Christians towards Muslims, an attitude of love and not of antagonism.

Pentecostal pastors at the PAR group meeting identified a further four attitudes' Christians have towards Muslims.

1. Christians ignore Islam.
2. Christians accept the existence of Islam, and merely co-exist with it as any other religion.
3. Christians engage in dialogue with Islam, which leads to mutual respect towards each other's religious systems.
4. Christians work together in partnership with Muslims, challenging the issue of social injustice but remaining true to one religious' convictions.

A respondent in the meeting commented, "We cannot ignore Muslims in our community, they are here to stay, in fact their influence is growing. We are obligated to dialogue with them. How else will we become a witness to them."

8.2.4 A shift from antagonism towards tolerance.

A changed attitude is not merely an intellectual exercise, it must be demonstrated in one's actions and speech. This is the fourth paradigm shift that is needed in the Pentecostal community in Ekurhuleni. Gilchrist relates a story that took place at of his earlier debates where a group of Christians stood outside the hall singing the song, "let God arise and the enemies are scattered". The debate was cancelled because Muslims retaliated, using physical force to remove the singers from the premises. The song already painted the Muslims as enemies even before the debate could begin or the venue doors could be opened.

While this was one incident, the attitude of many Pentecostals remains one of antagonism. As late as 2014 Nembhard (2014:3) continued to urge the church to move away from antagonism and intolerance, because it closes doors to dialogue.

The dark spectres of bigotry, intolerance, and arrogance that have emerged in sections of the Christian community make any possibility of dialogue difficult. He explains that this antagonism is so deeply entrenched in the church that some pastors would not want to be caught in the room with their Muslim counterparts. The researcher has experienced this first-hand. The most difficult part of this research was to get Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni to attend the PAR group meetings. While some local pastors were eager, none of the district, regional, or provincial leaders wanted to be a part of this research. There can be no dialogue or moving forward if the church does not deal with its antagonism and intolerance towards Islam.

As pastors dealt with this issue in the PAR meetings, they recognized that the fear of Islam in the Pentecostal community in Ekurhuleni has led to this antagonism. It was an offensive technique developed over time that supposedly prevented them from being victims of any kind of onslaught launched by the Muslim community.

This attitude in the Pentecostal community is also fuelled by the increasing number of publications coming into the country. Polemic material written by Evangelical and Pentecostal authors is brimming with hate-speech, which induces fear in the readers. Fear breeds antagonism and cultivates an attitude of intolerance against Islam.

The information in these books contributes to the formation of the Pentecostal attitude towards Islam. The information is used in seminars on Islam, quoted in sermons by pastors, and fed to theological students at Pentecostal Bible Colleges. These books are not designed to guide us into a relationship of love towards Muslims, but rather to drag us into the arena of hatred, antagonism, and intolerance.

Therefore, there must also be a paradigm shift in the way we select our information on Islam. The suggestion that the Pastors in the PAR group made, was that Pentecostals begin to read books about Islam that are written by Muslims themselves. A respondent in the meetings suggested, "We must visit some of the Muslims book shops in Ekuruleni and get out material directly from them. And maybe invite our Muslim friends to visit our

book shops. This could be one of the ways in which we engage with each other, they could recommend book to us and we could do the same for them.”

8.2.5 A shift from debates to dialogue.

Over the past five decades, the primary interaction between Pentecostals and Muslims was through public debates. Deedat and Gilchrist were giants in the field of public debates in South Africa. They left a legacy of debating techniques and argumentative skills for their proteges to follow. Presently these debates are still taking place in Ekurhuleni.

Debating is so ingrained in the culture of South African interreligious interaction, that even in the face of the Corona Virus pandemic, Muslims and Christians have turned to social media to continue the legacy of debating. Zoom platforms, Facebook, and Google Team meetings have become the new platform on which to stage public debates. Yet it is this same model of interaction that has polarized these communities in the past.

Debates have one purpose, and that is to degrade, ridicule the faith of the other while upholding one’s faith as truth. Public debates have left many in the audiences angered, frustrated, and filled with antagonism rather than with a spirit of love, comrade, or respect. Correct in her analysis of the debating scene, Mallouhi (2000:27) explains the purpose of each debater. “Each tries to score points in debates drawing worldwide attention. The object is not to build bridges of understanding, but to conquer the opponent.”

She continues to argue that debaters exploit stereotypes, misquote scriptures, and undermine the integrity of the revelation of scripture. She contends that this only leads to mistrust, hostility, and fear between Muslims and Christians.

Obsessed with winning, these apologists may run rampage on the stage without any regard to the truth seeker in the audience. There is an old African proverb that reads, “when two elephants fight only the grass at the bottom of their feet is destroyed”. One only wonders how many religious people have lost their faith while listening to the experts demolish their religious heritage. This type of interaction in Ekurhuleni stands

opposed to thoughts shared by Bosch (1993:484) who describes any meeting with people of other faiths as a sacred event.

We thus approach every other faith and its adherents reverently, taking off our shoes as the place we are approaching is sacred. Humility means respect for our forebearers in the faith.

A veteran in Muslim Christian dialogue, Nazir Ali (1987:8) argues that no debate has ever won a Muslim to Christ or built a respectful bridge towards authentic dialogue.

Despite more than a decade in Asia and the Middle East I have yet to meet a Muslim who has been convinced and persuaded by the quality of our arguments or by the extent of our knowledge to follow the Jesus of the Gospels.

He explains that it is only love that flows from a Christian life that can witness effectively to any Muslim. This love that Nazir Ali speaks about is not displayed at the public debates. Many adherents of both faiths attend these debates to gather more ammunition to be used against each other, instead of coming to the debates to learn from each other. There is plenty of selective hearing, and less humility and honesty. At each debate venue, a book table is placed at opposite ends of the venues for the two parties to display their books. These are polemic materials, pointing out the flaws and faults of the other religion while extending an invitation to others to accept their faith. Both Deedat and Gilchrist's books have become shrines on each of these book tables at every debate venue.

DVDs of former debates are freely distributed at the debates. Each would only distribute a recording of a debate when they thought that they won the debate. Whenever they "performed badly" no recording would be on display on their table. That debate would be found on the table of the opposing party. McDowell (1999:177) explains that some of these recordings are manipulated. While he speaks from a Christian perspective, this by no means vindicates the Christians from carrying out similar plots.

Often the debates are videotaped, edited in the Muslim's favour, and distributed in the Muslim community to motivate Islamic da'wah.

Debates are left open to many forms of manipulation, from manipulating the other speakers' words to manipulating the sacred text of the faith. Over the year's debates in Ekurhuleni have done more harm between Muslims and Christians than any other form of interaction. It is time to move from this model of building walls towards a model of dialogue which would build bridges.

Kung (2004:535) calls for such a transition from aggressiveness towards dialogue, arguing that this is the way for the future of both religions. He calls for a "transition from the challenges of the past to the possibilities of the future

Firstly, and importantly, dialogue should not be seen as something taking place between two religious systems or institutions, but rather between two living persons. We should not talk about dialogue between Islam and Christianity, but rather between Muslims and Christians as living beings. Dialogue takes place between two persons with passions, dreams, and their own spirituality. When it comes to dialogue with Muslims, Pentecostals should see them as individual persons and not merely as representatives of a religious ideology with a blemished past. We dialogue with living people, and not with ideologies.

Only when Pentecostals get this right, will they begin to love those that they dialogue with. It is the starting point, the place where fear and mistrust can be dismantled, and true friendship can be initiated. Muslims are people just like us, with dreams and hopes, fears and disappointments, and a desire to interact with others. This is the reason why models and methods do not work, because it is mechanical and superficial, and does not work on passionate, critical, and living people. Dialogue must flow from a love of God towards His people created in His image. Without love as a foundation in dialogue, there will not be honesty, respect, and openness.

A friendship that is born out of love will lead to a willingness to listen respectfully as the other explains the tenets of their faith and the reason for their commitment to these ideals. Dialogue abhors mockery and cynicism and promotes friendship and openness without the fear of being attacked.

Debates have highlighted the differences between the two religions, however, purpose of dialogue is to focus on the commonality between the two. However, it will be unwise to completely ignore the differences. They must be discussed honestly and respectfully, knowing that some of these differences will never be reconciled. Dialogue must highlight the commonalities since they become the building blocks of the relationship. Genuine dialogue recognizes these commonalities and sees them as starting points towards a deeper understanding of each other's faith.

In the past Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni viewed the Quran as demonic. Some would not even allow it in their homes, or even handle it. Today many realize that they would be handicapped if they enter into dialogue without reading the sacred text of their Muslim friends. Both McDowell (1999:232) and Bediako (2008:110) agree that Christians can only be better dialogue partners by reading the Quran before they enter into dialogue. This presents an opportunity for Christians to ask questions on subjects in the Quran which they do not understand. Together, as dialogical partners, Muslims and Christians can walk with each other through their respective sacred texts.

Dialogue creates the opportunity for the Pentecostal to explain their faith in an atmosphere that is not hostile. It also allows them an opportunity to rectify the misconceptions that many Muslims have about Christ, or even about the doctrine of the trinity. In simple terms, dialogue creates a variety of opportunities that debates could not. The paper on "Christians in dialogue" produced by the Zurich Consultation (1970:21) began with this quotation: "Dialogue is inevitable, urgent and full of opportunities." Pentecostals should see the urgency and also take advantage of all the possibilities that are presented.

The exclusivist views held by Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni is a catalyst for debates. To move from debating to dialoguing would need a major paradigm shift in the Pentecostal theology of religions. Either they opt for reconstructing the inclusivist model to suit their preferences or develop their homebred theology of religions. If this is not done, then the shift from debating to dialogue would never become a possibility.

Gilchrist made a radical change from debating to dialogue in his last book on Islam, *Our approach to Muslims* (2017). This publication became his most contentious book, especially among Pentecostal leaders. It was a book that promoted dialogue. He

argued that real relationships with Muslims should precede any form of witness (pg. 55). Respect, patience, and love for Muslims should be sought for more than just the conversion of the Muslim and bragging about it as a trophy. He (pg. 56) asked Christians to stop demonizing the Quran, but to rather use it as a vehicle for dialogue.

Dialogue assumes that we have a willingness to learn. Before entering into dialogue about spiritual matters you should have an obligation to learn as much as possible about the Quran.

While Gilchrist still held on to his evangelical conviction concerning the evangelization of the world, he argued that Christian charity and love should be the forerunner of evangelism. He contended that if we do not have real love for Muslims then we have no business evangelizing Muslims.

8.2.6 A shift from difference orientation to commonality alignment.

While debating focuses on the differences, dialogue focuses on the commonalities. This does not mean that Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni would have to compromise their convictions. Nor does it imply that both religions should use their commonalities to form a third hybrid religion. It simply means that discussion between the two religions should centre around the similarities in their belief systems.

There is a distinct and irreconcilable difference between the two faiths, and they should not be ignored, but neither should they become the focal point of every meeting. Dialoguing over commonalities and building mutual respect can later lead to dealing with differences in the same spirit of kindness.

8.2.6.1 A shared history

Firstly, it must be acknowledged that both Christianity and Islam have a shared history. Islam and Christianity are not two separate circles, rather their circumferences overlap.

Islam and Christianity are not two completely disconnected religions, like Christianity and Buddhism or Hinduism. Both religions share a common heritage which is found in the Biblical patriarch Abraham. Islam would claim allegiance to Abraham's firstborn son, Ishmael while Christians claimed allegiance to Abraham's second-born son, Isaac.

Islam also claimed to accept the prophets honoured by Christians. Shad (2015), in his book 'Adam to Mohammad,' listed 20 prophets that are found in both the Quran and the Bible.

This shared history should not go unseen or wasted, or even trampled underfoot in the arena of debates. Pentecostals should use these commonalities to construct a serious dialogue between the two faiths. Dialogue between these faiths does not have to happen in a vacuum, as there are too many commonalities between them that beg for an opportunity to be heard.

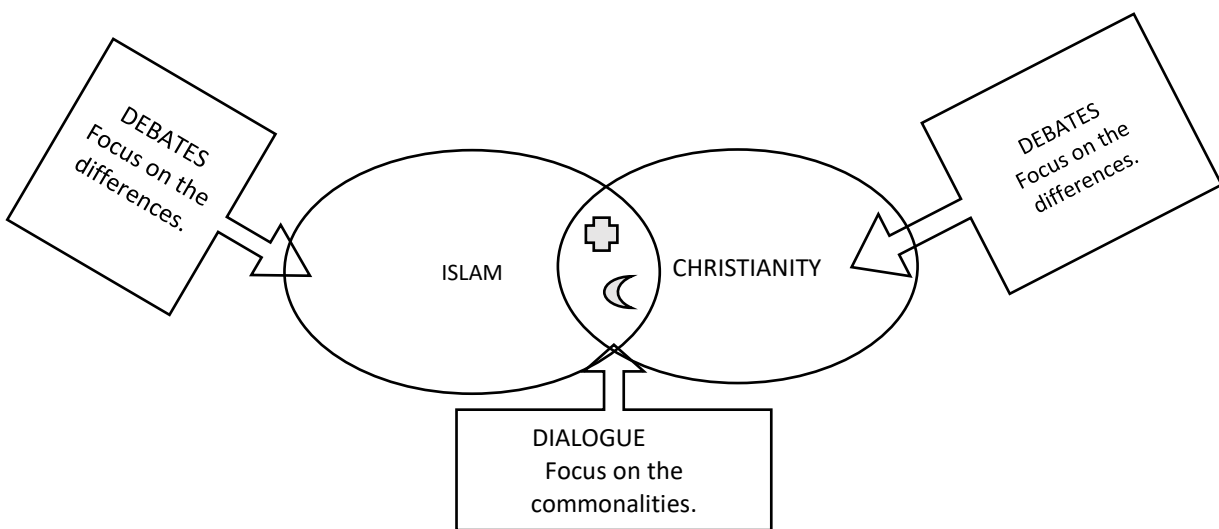


Figure 17: Islam and Christianity have commonalities.

Dialogue considers that both religions have a shared history and shared convictions, so it focuses on these commonalities. Debates on the other hand highlight the differences and uses it to their advantage to discredit the other.

8.2.6.2 A shared conviction

Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni would need to navigate a new path for polemic and aggressive, debate towards a new way of looking at Islamic theology. When they begin to understand Islamic theology, they would find that both have similar convictions that could become points of discussion. In his doctoral thesis on dialogue with Muslims in Africa, Namikoa (1998) made this same assertion twenty-two years ago. He challenged Christian leaders to consider the attributes of God in comparison to those of Allah. He

concluded that both the God of the Bible and Allah are seen in their respective religions as Merciful, All-powerful, All-knowing, and Eternal. He argued that these attributes of the Divine that are shared by both Muslims and Christians should be the basis of dialogue.

This same argument is made by Chapman (2007:252-2567) who called on Christians to focus on the commonalities, rather than argue about the irreconcilable differences. Presently, all debates between these religions are focused on the irreconcilable differences, in particular the Trinitarian nature of Yahweh and the impersonal nature of Allah. During the writing of this thesis (19/02/2021), there was a debate that took place on Facebook on Sunday, 28th 2021 between South African apologist Rudolf Boshoff and Nigerian Muslim apologist Korede Olawayim, with the focus on the difference between Allah and Yahweh. The topic of the debate was '*Allah or Yahweh? What are the differences?*'.¹¹⁴ The same topic was debated between Boshoff and Bashir in 2019 (21st June).¹¹⁵ Boshoff is a Pentecostal pastor and also a Bible college lecturer who argued that debating gives Christians a chance to explain their faith to a Muslim audience. This has become the trend, focusing on the differences, and neglecting the commonalities, which call for dialogue, while differences always lead to debates and polemics. This is the reason that a paradigm shift is needed in Pentecostal thinking in Ekurhuleni; one that moves away from searching out the differences and rather appreciate the commonalities which become points of contact for authentic dialogue.

8.2.7 A shift from competitiveness to a partnership.

Debating breeds competitiveness. This trend is noticeable in the South African scenario. Since the advent of democracy and the implementation of the charter on religious freedom in South Africa, both these religions saw the opportunity to either outweigh or outsmart each other. The field was now levelled; all religions had equal rights and opportunities, and it was now up to the best man to win. This competitive

¹¹⁴*Allah or Yahweh? What are the differences?* (accessed 19 February 2021). [https://www.facebook.com/adlucem.co/photos/a.491154974344253/3512497245543329/?_cft__\[0\]=AZWcxgtZNoUdGjhgUvUZuOr7jh5](https://www.facebook.com/adlucem.co/photos/a.491154974344253/3512497245543329/?_cft__[0]=AZWcxgtZNoUdGjhgUvUZuOr7jh5)

¹¹⁵ *Allah or Yahweh?* (accessed 19 February 2021). https://scontent.fcpt5-1.fna.fbcdn.net/v/t1.0-9/59320235_2012074092252326_4303252966518816768_n.jpg?nc_cat=111&ccb=3&nc_sid=e3f864&nc_eui2=AeH_snOzuXsEFcQFTS2dqC3Ju-

race played out in public debates, publishing, and distribution of polemic material. Competition was evident in the number of radio and television broadcast networks that were made accessible to the general public. Currently, it is being played out on social media, as each religion seeks to discredit the other.

The Pentecostal Church has entered this race of competitiveness ready to defend itself. Seminars and conferences on Islam have filled church halls, as speakers from South Africa and abroad discredited the prophethood of Mohammad and the authenticity of the Quran. Polemic material increased dramatically, and YouTube videos have gone viral as Pentecostal pastors once again demonize Islam, while presenting Christianity as an infallible religion.

There has been a call in the past for these two religions to look beyond their religious affiliations and see the needs of the broader communities in which they live. There was unity during the Apartheid era, where both Muslims and many Christians stood together against the greater evil of that oppressive regime. Both saw the need to liberate their people from the shackles of discrimination and tyranny. But can they walk as partners once again?

South Africa is facing a financial meltdown, which is contributing to the high rate of unemployment.¹¹⁶ Poverty is on the increase, while we are still fighting the rising number of people being infected with HIV. Crime is rampant¹¹⁷ and corruption in government is becoming the norm as politicians behave as if they have impunity. These challenges coupled, with the current corona virus pandemic, calls for the unity of religious bodies to assist government in fighting adversities. These challenges should not be seen as great obstacles in social development but rather as opportunities for the co-operation of religious bodies.

This week (15th February 2021) the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation¹¹⁸ and the Desmond Tutu Legacy Foundation¹¹⁹, independently called on the government to deal with

¹¹⁶Moodys downgrade South Africa's ratings (accessed 20 February 2021).

https://www.moodys.com/research/Moodys-downgrades-South-Africas-ratings-to-Ba2-maintains-negative-outlook--PR_436182.

¹¹⁷ While crime increases, fear rise and trust in the criminal justice system drops (accessed 20 February 2021)

<http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=11627>.

¹¹⁸ We refuse to allow corruption to destroy South Africa (accessed 20 February 2021)

<https://www.kathradafoundation.org/2020/08/07/>.

¹¹⁹ Tutu Foundation: Corruption cannot be allowed to destroy South Africa. (accessed 20 February 2021).

<https://ewn.co.za/2020/08/09/tutu-foundation-corruption-cannot-be-allowed-to-destroy-sa>.

corruption and the increasing levels of poverty. These two foundations were founded in the names of a Muslim and a Christian leader, who at one time in their lives stood side by side against the evils of the Apartheid regime. They are reminders that these two great religions can once again work together as partners to deal with the scourge of corruption, crime, and poverty in South Africa. But this can only happen when churches like the Pentecostal Church have a radical change in mindset - a change that will see Muslims as partners rather than competitors.

A partnership is by no means a call to compromise. It is a call to respect the others' religious convictions and spiritual heritage. It is a call to share reciprocal respect and admiration for each other.

Partnership in this sense seeks to uphold and champion human dignity as a sacred task. This sense of human dignity is upheld in both the scriptures of Islam and Christianity, it calls on Muslims to be better Muslims, and Christians to be more Christlike.

Presently South Africa is experiencing the third wave of the Corona Virus pandemic. Muslim charity organizations and Christian welfare organizations are working tirelessly and independently to distribute food parcels to needy households. While the work is admirable, would it not have been much more effective if they worked together to save lives? There must be a paradigm shift in Pentecostal thinking in Ekurhuleni, and we must see the bigger picture, one that is bigger than our denominational affiliations, one that is National and even global.

This is possible when we see the Muslim community as partners in this fight against social inequality. It is an opportunity to live out the Christlike life in front of Muslims as a testimony of our faith. As the hands and feet of Christ, we can demonstrate His love, mercy, and compassion as we put the needs of others in front of our own. In this way, partnership becomes a testimony of our faith rather than a compromise. It opens up the doors for Pentecostals to display their lives as an open Bible, becoming the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16).

8.2.8 Evangelization: A shift from fear to opportunity

Dialogue offers an opportunity to systematically lay out the gospel of salvation, explaining the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Since Pentecostals believe in the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, they should allow Him to do His work in the life of Muslims. The 1970 Zurich Consultation understood that the work of the Holy Spirit in dialogue would be valuable for Pentecostals:

We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to lead men into all truth. This faith enables us to enter into dialogue with full openness to the truth.

In this way, the Holy Spirit becomes the silent partner in the dialogical process. When Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni acknowledge this dynamic, they would also understand that dialogue does not stand in opposition to missions and evangelism, nor does it erase the need for evangelism. On the contrary, dialogue enhances the missionary enterprise by connecting more Christians to more Muslims. While debates polarized two groups of people, dialogue brings individuals together to share their faith.

One of the greatest fears in Pentecostalism in Ekurhuleni is that interreligious dialogue would replace evangelism, or that it is a betrayal of the Great Commission (Matt.28:19-20). Rather than looking at interreligious dialogue through the lenses of fear, Pentecostals should see it through the lenses of opportunity, to meet with Muslims and live out your faith close to Muslims. It is an opportunity for them to testify about their own search for truth, and how they found it in Jesus Christ.

Dialogue should be seen as part of the 'missio dei' (God's mission). It could be interpreted as God leading one out of their comfort zone, into an area of opportunity for witness. Since Pentecostals believe in the sovereign will of God, it would be conceivable that this same God is leading you towards authentic friendship with Muslims for His sake. God is a God of love, and his mission to humankind is saturated with this love. Is it not possible that God wants this same love to be extended to the rest of the world, including Muslims? Pentecostals need to reconstruct a missiology that includes the love of God for the nations. 1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear (KJV 2007).

When mission and evangelism are driven by love, there will not be a need to fear. Fear causes panic and makes us defensive. Fear, panic, and defensiveness should not play any part in the dialogical process with Muslims. Only when Pentecostals overcome fear, will they see the greater opportunities that dialogue presents.

8.3 Understanding the dynamics of dialogue.

8.3.1 Types of dialogue

Since interreligious dialogue is fairly new in Pentecostal circles (more especially in Ekurhuleni), it would be appropriate to discuss the dynamics of dialogue. Nazir Ali (1987:106) identified two broader types of dialogue, which he labels as formal structured and informal forms of dialogue. Structured formal dialogue takes place between religious scholars and religious leaders, with a structured agenda for the discussions. Topics are prepared in advance and the groups stay within the parameters of the agenda. Informal dialogue, which Ali terms as neighbourliness, generally takes place at grassroots level. This dialogue takes place daily as members of different faiths rub shoulders with each other at work or during leisure. It takes place between people who are already co-workers, colleagues, friends, or neighbours.

Both these types of dialogue are important since they are intertwined to make up the society in which we live. Both will only flourish in an atmosphere of respect, humility, and friendliness. The people with a pivotal role are the religious leaders since they can contribute to scholarly discussions and at the same time influence the general population in public gatherings. Pentecostal leaders in Ekurhuleni, therefore, have a great responsibility and wonderful opportunity to both contribute to an interreligious dialogue on a scholarly level, but also to influence their members to show neighbourliness and respect to Muslims in their community.

8.3.2 Levels of dialogue

There are levels of dialogical encounters, which are attractive to different people.

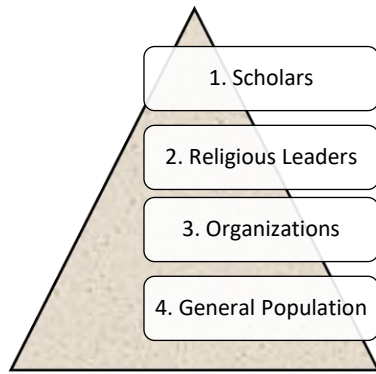


Figure 18: Levels of dialogue.

Level one takes place at the University level, with people who are experts in religious jurisprudence, sacred writings, and the original languages of their religious affiliations. Much of their findings are published in journals, which do not filter down to the general population. Religious leaders on the second level play an important part in this hierarchy since they can influence both those above and those below them. Their findings can easily be filtered down to the general public while also giving scholars some food for thought. The third level involves community leaders and members of religious social organizations. These are para-church organizations and the welfare arm of Muslim religious organizations. In Benoni (East Ekurhuleni) the Benoni Muslim Charity has good relations with Benoni Pastors fraternity, and both work closely with each other on feeding scheme programs. Instead of competitiveness, the religious leaders in Benoni came to a consensus that each religious group feeds the poor through soup kitchens only one day a week. This gave the Muslims, the Christians, the Tamils, and the Hindus an equal opportunity to feed the poor in the Benoni area. The agreements between these religious groups led to a more authentic dialogue between the workers in each organization.

The fourth level is where most of the dialogue takes place. This is where meaningful, authentic dialogue flourishes. Neighbours mourn together at funerals and celebrate together at weddings. Ekurhuleni has seen a spike in the rate of car hi-jacking and housebreaking. Most of the suburbs in Ekurhuleni have formed 'Community Policing

Forums' (CPF)¹²⁰ made up of people of different faiths. All work together towards one common goal: the eradication of violent crimes in their communities.

However, what is preached from both the Pulpits of the Pentecostal churches and the podiums of the Mosques are especially important. They influence the masses by either contributing to the polarization of the community or their unity. Pastors participating in the PAR group sessions, agreed that the pulpit can influence the masses at a local level. They also realized that they need to be the first persons that should be educated in the systems of beliefs in Islam so that they could speak truthfully from their pulpits. A respondent agree, explaining that, "The Pulpit is a powerful tool for transformation. If we use the pulpit to teach about religious dialogue the pulpit can become the single most transformative tool in the fight against intolerance."

Here is where Pentecostal leaders in Ekurhuleni can make the greatest difference. At this level, dialogue goes beyond talking but rather becomes a living relationship between people. Joys and tears are shared, and openness and compassion flow from heart to heart, as Muslims and Christians live above their religious boundaries. It is at this level, where Pentecostals can live out their testimony, and become the hands and the feet of Jesus. The opportunities at this level are overwhelming and just waiting for creative ideas from Pentecostal leaders in Ekurhuleni.

8.3.3 Opportunities for dialogue

South Africa remains a complex and diverse community. While the Group Areas Act of 1966 was abolished in 1991, many people still live an ethnically divided community. We now use the politically correct word 'predominant' to describe this new phenomenon. People speak about living in an either predominantly White, Black, Coloured, or Indian areas. In more multicultural areas, interreligious dialogue takes place more easily as discussed in the above paragraph. However, there are still large parts in Ekurhuleni where certain areas are still predominantly White, Black, Coloured, or Indian. In these areas, formal interactions are not possible because of the ethnic divide. Pentecostal

¹²⁰ This forum was established in 1995 by the South African Police Service under the (SAPS) Act of 68 of 1995. Other forums that also fall under this Act is The Community Safety forum and the Community Watchdogs. They are all governed by the same constitution and by-laws as stipulated in the 1995 Act.

leaders, therefore, have to engineer creative ways of blending their people with people of other faiths.

Some suggestions were listed by Pastors in the PAR group sessions. Structured visits to the Mosques could be conducted, with reciprocal visits by Muslims to the churches. There was reservation when a member of the group ask if a Muslim Imam could stand behind the pulpit on a Sunday. A Pastor responded, "That would be taking dialogue a bit too far. The pulpit is a sacred place and must only be used for the proclamation of the gospel, and nothing else." However, he did agree that Imam's could be guest speakers at Bible classes and smaller gatherings to help clear up some misconceptions held by both religions. Invitations to special religious events, to observe the spirituality of the other, was also suggested. While these were more structured forms of dialogue, other Pentecostal leaders suggested that Christians should start by developing real relations with Muslims who provide service in the community. Shopkeepers, businesspeople, hair salon workers, and restaurant owners were some of the suggestions. Other leaders suggested that Christians extend a hand of friendship to Muslims who work with them in the Community Policing Forums, or the Teacher / Parent Associations had at their schools. The ideas are endless when Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni begin to think in terms of friendship first, rather than on evangelism and trying to convert the first Muslim you meet.

Anyabwile (2010:93-95) also suggested some of the above ideas but concludes that all Christians should firstly be led by the Holy Spirit into any relationship with Muslims. He argued that the Holy Spirit prepares the heart of the Muslims before a Christian encounters them. This would be appealing to Pentecostals since their evangelism strategies are always Holy Spirit orientated. Pastors in the PAR sessions agreed with Anyabwile and reiterated the need to have structure, but most importantly was to be led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is seen as the One who directs the believers, gives them the words to speak, and finally, He alone brings conviction in the heart of those who hear the Word of God.

There were still other leaders in the PAR groups who went a bit further and suggested that this moment in history should be a challenge to the Pentecostal church to develop

a theological framework for interreligious dialogue. The framework would need to start with a biblical analysis of interreligious dialogue. Then it must also include a Pentecostal theology of Islam, one that will be reflective of the Pentecostal view on the religion of Islam. Guideline for dialogical etiquette between the two faiths must also be drafted and distributed to the greater population of Pentecostals (beyond Ekurhuleni). A practical way of building bridges and removing walls was also outlined in the PAR discussions. In the discussions that led to the formation of a theological framework for dialogue, participants suggested that biblical analogies on dialogue be analysed.

8.4 A Biblical analogy for dialogue

Pentecostals have a special love for the New Testament book, Acts. The Book of Acts is the beginning of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the 120 disciples on the day of Pentecost. A pastor at the meeting explained that “the book of Acts is basically the Acts of the Holy Spirit.” It is also a book that follows the move of God as He uses the early church to evangelize the then known Roman Empire. The pages of this book contain many principles, models, methods of reaching the lost and building the church. However, a close look at the narratives in the book would reveal how God used the church to engage in interreligious dialogue, which in many cases led to the conversion. The narrative of Cornelius (Acts 10-11) is used by many Pentecostal theologians to depict the work of God among the heathens. The story of Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-24), is also a Pentecostal favourite that displays the power of God over the forces of witchcraft and sorcery. The Pentecostal church has taken many ideas and models that they implement in their ministries from the book of Acts.

The narrative of Phillip, the disciple of Jesus and his encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-29), led to an interesting discussion within the PAR group sessions. This story was discussed within the group as a possible Biblical model in Christian Muslim dialogue. The following contributions were made by the group as they dissected the passage and interpreted it from a Pentecostal hermeneutic.

The first deduction can be made in the opening line of this narrative. Philip is given a Divine commission by God to go on a journey. Muslim- Christian dialogue can best be described as a journey of two people traveling on the same road, looking for answers to the truth. Muslim- Christian relations is not a conflict or two people walking in

opposite directions; it is a journey between two genuine seekers of truth.

The second deduction is that this mission falls within the parameters of “mission dei” (mission of God). All missions are orchestrated and directed by God. Muslim Christian dialogue is a divine obligation placed on a Christian to proclaim the gospel of Jesus to the children of Ishmael. Participating in dialogue is to participate in the mission of God.

In verse 28, the Ethiopian Eunuch is sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah. Because this is God’s mission, He had already planned every detail. The Eunuch is not reading this particular chapter in this particular book by coincidence. In His Sovereignty, God plans all things. Greater than methods and models is the need to be sensitive to the leading of God’s voice. Beyond our schemes and plans, God will connect Muslims and Christians at the right time, in the right place.

In verse 29, Luke introduces his readers to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will speak and direct Phillip. Implied in this passage is the Trinitarian character of the ‘missio dei’. At the beginning we are introduced to God, now we are introduced to the Holy Spirit, and Phillip will explain who Christ is. God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ are working together towards the conversion of this Eunuch. This mission, like all missions, is Trinitarian in nature. Muslim- Christian dialogue should also be seen as a Trinitarian mission that intends to reveal the biblical Jesus to the Muslim.

Secondly, Phillip, the human agent, is merely an instrument in the hand of God, as all Christians are. When a Muslim comes to salvation it is not a trophy in the hand of the Christian, but the glory is given to God alone. The third aspect of the verse is that the Spirit instructs Phillip to go near the chariot, near enough to hear the Eunuch read. Muslim- Christian dialogue cannot be done from a distance, it is a journey of closeness between individuals walking in humility with each other.

Phillip started this encounter by listening first. This is where dialogue in humility starts. Christians become listeners first before they are given the privilege to speak. Listening implies respect for the other, and it shows interest in what the other has to say. Only after listening does Phillip ask a question. The question is honest. It is not asked to trick the Eunuch, belittle him, or

question the integrity of his faith. These types of insensitive questions are part of the debating process and not the dialogue process. Dialoguers ask honest questions that leads to a greater openness towards learning.

In the next part of this journey, Phillip is invited to come up and explain. This is an important step in the dialogical process. Wait to be invited to speak and to share your opinion. Dialogue is not one person imposing themselves onto another, it is a reciprocal invitation to speak about greater spiritual matters. Only now Phillip is given this opportunity to share his understanding and interpretation of the sacred scriptures. Phillip does not approach the Eunuch with his own copy of the Torah, or any of the earliest copies of the gospels. Rather he begins his explanation starting with the book that is in the hands of the Eunuch. From there he leads him to an understanding of who Christ is. The reason this discourse is so appropriate for Muslim- Christian dialogue, in particular, is because of this verse. Phillip started with the book that was in the hands of the Eunuch and opened his eyes to the revelation of Christ in that very book.

Today millions of Muslims are reading the Quran and are trying to understand the Christ in the Quran. Is he a prophet, a saviour or is he the son of God? Similar to the Eunuch they too are in a place of uncertainty concerning the person of Christ. In the same manner, in which Phillip addressed the issue, Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni should address these issues. Pentecostals must begin with the Quran that is in the hands of the Muslims. From the Quranic Christ the Christian can lead the Muslim to a fuller revelation of the Biblical Jesus. That is why it is imperative for Christians to read and understand the Quran. The Quran is the greatest point of contact between Muslims and Christians and should be used as a tool for dialogue.

The important phrase in this passage is, 'as they travelled'. We find that the Eunuch wishes to be baptised, and he comes to a place of conversion. But this was a journey that was travelled by both the Eunuch and Phillip. Some journeys may be longer while others may be shorter; they are all journeys, nevertheless.

The lesson gleaned from this discourse is that Muslim- Christian dialogue is a journey between two living beings. It is a journey filled with honest questions and truthful answers. It is a journey of humility, respect, and friendship. It is a journey that is a part of the mission Dei, and we as Christians are merely instruments in the hands of God.

this narrative is not a five or six-step method to reach Muslims; it is a lesson about a journey of life, love, and friendship.

8.5 A defining moment

Greenlee (2005:23) points out to Church leaders that they should take cognisance of the developments in Muslim Christian relations. He asserts,

Christian ministry among Muslims has moved to centre stage and these encounters have raised important missiological questions.

Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni are not immune to the developments that are taking place between Muslims and Christians around the world, and also in our own country. As Catholic and Protestant missiologists and theologians continue to debate these issues, it is also time for the Pentecostal church to contribute to these discussions. The Pentecostal Church in Ekurhuleni can no longer stand on the outskirts of these great missiological debates. Muslim-Christian relations are becoming more tolerant in some parts of the world, while in other nations the relationship is marked by increasing violence and hostility. Nembhard (2014:3) is correct when he states that Muslim-Christian relations are at a defining moment. "In the often-fractious relationship between Christians and Muslims, we are at a defining moment in history."

At this defining moment in history, the voice of the Pentecostal Church must be heard. However, sadly, the Pentecostal in Ekurhuleni Church lags behind in their prophetic voice concerning Muslim Christian relations in our communities, and in the wider South African context. Muslims have always been seen as the enemy that must be conquered with the sword of radical evangelism. Their exclusivist theology has added to their attitude of competitiveness and triumphalism. Within this context there seemed to be no need to develop any theology of religions.

However, times are changing. Muslims and Christians rub shoulders every day, not as enemies but as colleagues' neighbours and friends. In this context, the Pentecostal Church must develop a theology of religions that promotes tolerance,

while still upholding their evangelical conviction. There needs to be a radical mind-change, or a paradigm shift in Pentecostal thinking when it comes to interreligious dialogue, especially in the case of Muslims. The road ahead is filled with new opportunities for both friendship and evangelism, and the call is for Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni to develop creative ways to interact with other religions.

The time for promoting intolerance and triumphalism has passed, and so has the period of demonizing Islam and the Quran. There is a better way forward, a way that will not diminish Pentecostal convictions, but one that will lead towards more creative ways of testifying about our faith among the Muslim community. But there must be a paradigm shift in our thinking; we must look for newer ways of doing missions in a multireligious society. We must develop a theology of religions that is prophetic yet not offensive, one that promotes respect for others, yet uphold the supremacy of Christ.

Encounters with Muslims can be a beautiful journey, a journey of life and friendship, and one that is absent of fear and intimidation. Baatsen (2017:89) calls this 'the will to embrace'. He challenges the South African church to create room for dialogue with Islam so that reciprocal embrace may ensue. It is not just a politically correct move to make, but a biblical injunction that was displayed in the life of Christ as He witnessed to the Gentile nations.

The Quran (3:64) calls on Christians specifically to come to a common agreement between themselves and Muslims. In the same spirit, the Bible (1 Pet. 3:15) calls on Christians to be ready to explain their faith in a spirit of humility and love. To neglect interfaith dialogue for the promotion of peace would be both unbiblical for Pentecostal Christians and un-Quranic for Sunni Muslims.

8.6 Towards A Pentecostal Praxis Orientation Position.

8.6.1 A Pentecostal praxis orientation position.

In chapter one, the research design follows the pattern set out by Holland and Henriot (1983). It is known as the 'Pastoral cycle,' but has been adopted in missiological circles under the term 'Cycle of missionary praxis'. For this thesis, the researcher prefers the term 'Cycle of missionary praxis' for three reasons. Firstly, by using the term cycle, the

research design depicts a continuous process, which is relevant in the case of Muslim Christian dialogue. Secondly, by using the term 'missionary,' the theological framework or discipline of the thesis is described. Finally, the term praxis is especially important. Far from merely being a synonym for the term 'practice', the term praxis refers to theory, analysis, and action, working together to produce creative ideas.

Praxis is what turns theology into missiology, as it engages with, and applies theology to concrete situations that plagues society, producing creative ideas as solutions. It is an ongoing cycle, and in the case of Muslim Christian relations, the cycle will continue as long as there are Muslims and Christians. As the relationship changes, the cycle of missionary praxis will have to be engaged and adapt to help resolve problems and present workable solutions. In the case of the Pentecostal church and their relations with Sunni Muslims, this cycle allows them the opportunity to reconcile their theory of religions with concrete action.

Four questions will be used to summarize the 4 interactive movements of the cycle.

- Insertion: What is happening in this Community?
- Social Analysis: Why is this happening?
- Theological Reflection: How do we evaluate what is happening through the lenses of our Faith?
- Pastoral Planning: How do we respond to what is happening?

8.6.2 Insertion

What is happening in this Community?

The first step always presupposes a personal encounter with the community in question. The encounter may be sparked by one event or a series of events, that leaves a researcher with many questions. These encounters may affect both the researcher and others in the community, leading them to voice their feelings, frustrations, or experiences. In the case of this research, the researcher was, and still is, affected by the results of public debates that are continuously going on between Muslims and Christians in Ekurhuleni. Rather than creating avenues of dialogue and learning, each public debate stirs more strife among the adherents of these two faiths. This leads to a religiously divided community that is already grappling with racial tension.

Each debate drives a bigger wedge between these two faiths, as each tries to prove its 'exclusivity' over the other. To claim 'exclusivity' to God and salvation, each group attacks, downgrades, or simply embarrasses the other faith. None of the South African apologists involved in these debates leave room for any questions, imaginations, or re-evaluations within their own faith.

Therefore, instead of fostering a spirit of unity, respect, and dialogue among each other, these public debates, driven by a theology of exclusivism, continue to leave the community frustrated and divided. Debates have polarized these two communities, giving rise to increasing tension among them. These tensions have led to each religion trying to solve the social issues of poverty, child abuse, and crime, on their own. Their divisiveness is seen and felt in the lack of religious contributions to the greater evils that plague South African communities.

8.6.3 Social Analysis

Why is this happening?

The next step is to explore the existence of these conditions.

As discussed in the previous chapters, Deedat and Gilchrist shaped the theology of religions of their respective faith communities. They provided these two communities with a "model of interaction" based on exclusivism. Driven by a spirit of competitiveness, these two ideological giants shaped the way Muslims and Christians would interact with each other in the future. Deedat and Gilchrist were the agents who shaped the ideologies of these two communities. Open public debates would set the stage for a new kind of religious encounter, one that would prove itself right, and the other wrong. Their exclusivist mentality would be the driving force behind this ideology. Their books, pamphlets, and videos, became the propaganda tools that shaped the minds of their respective followers.

During the Apartheid era, many Muslims and Christians stood together as partners to fight this regime. This was a milestone in the development of Muslim Christian relations. However, this relationship did not last for long. The advent of democracy in 1994 saw the introduction of the charter for religious freedom. Each religion began to race for prominence in the new South Africa, forgetting about the spirit of partnership, and

moved towards competitiveness. Heilbron (2012:4) describes this departure from partnership to competitiveness in South Africa, as follows:

Where Christian Muslim relationships were once largely marked by harmonious living, today these groups have lost much of the momentum of respecting each other's space.

While ideologies and methodologies were rapidly changing, Deedat and Gilchrist were stuck in their ideological frame of exclusivism. Debating was carried over from pre-1994 to post 1994, without any analysis of what was happening in the new South Africa. Currently, many of their books written before 1994, have never been reviewed or revised, it is just being reprinted and handed out at every public debate. The ideologies of debating, exclusivism, and competition continues to separate the Muslim and Christian communities in Ekurhuleni. The problem is exasperated by the attitude of intolerance and triumphalism displayed by both parties, and this is seen in the increase of polemic writings that are being published each year.

8.6.4 Theological Reflection

How do we evaluate what is happening through the lenses of our Faith?

The Pentecostal church must reflect on what is happening in Ekurhuleni between these two communities of faith. The church must not ignore these challenges but rather understand them and see the opportunities that are opened for constructive dialogue. It is here, however, that the Pentecostal church in Ekurhuleni has the greatest challenge. The Pentecostal church has enjoyed itself in its small corner of exclusivism, barricading itself with a few proof texts depicting the exclusivity of Christ. This attitude may have worked in the Apartheid era, but now it is irrelevant, outdated, and biblically unacceptable.

The Pentecostal church in Ekurhuleni must stay true to its conviction. However, it must also open itself up to dialogue within the greater theological spectrum – developing its own theology of religions. Pentecostal scholars in Ekurhuleni are challenged to consider the opportunities that multicultural and religiously diverse communities present. There is a need to develop a theology of religions that is truly Pentecostal, yet not offensive towards other religions. Other religions do not have to be ridiculed and scorned for Christianity to be elevated. The truth of the gospel can shine without

Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni having to belittle the belief systems that others hold dear to their heart. It must be a theology that embraces religious tolerance and respect for the beliefs of others.

A theological framework for interpreting scripture in the light of Muslim Christian relations must be developed. A theology of religions formulated by Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni should embrace a hermeneutic of love as they interpret the scripture. Scripture must be interpreted through the lens of God's love for the nations, and His desire that none should perish. Fear, however, breeds defensiveness, intolerance, and suspicion. A theology of love should be the starting point in developing a theology of religions.

Both the ministry of Jesus and the early Church took place in pluralistic communities. Jesus engaged with people of different cultures and religions. He worked great miracles among them (the Syrophenician widow or the Centurion whose servant was sick and so forth), which was a display of His love and grace extended towards people of other faiths. Jesus met with Greeks and Samaritans. Today His followers should not feel uncomfortable meeting with Muslims and Hindus. They should always be asking the Christological question, 'what would Jesus do?'

The researcher makes two recommendations to the Pentecostal church in Ekurhuleni concerning the miracles Jesus worked among the people of different faiths. Firstly, the Pentecostal church in Ekurhuleni must follow the example set by Jesus. The encounters of Jesus with people of other faiths must be revisited and interpreted within the context of modern-day interreligious dialogue.

Secondly, all Pentecostal leaders are familiar with all the miracles of Jesus. They have been preached numerous times on Pentecostal pulpits. However, the error made was that all these miracles were preached without taking into account the religio-cultural context of the miracle. The miracles are isolated and elevated by Pentecostal Pastors, to showcase the power of Jesus. The act of the miracle overshadowed the fact that Jesus worked it for the benefit of a non-Jewish person, a person belonging to another religion. Pentecostals may have overlooked the fact that the grace of Jesus displayed in His miracles was extended to people of other faiths. The scripture must be analysed

for newer revelation and deeper theological insights, concerning interreligious encounters in the light of Jesus' ministry.

The Pentecostal church in Ekurhuleni stands in a position to re-evaluate its mission among Muslims. Difficult questions must be asked: What does it mean to be Christian in a multi-religious community, for it church to carry out the "Mission Dei" (mission of God) and be true to its calling? Honest critical questions must be found. Evangelism must not be neglected, but it does not have to be aggressive and hostile to be effective and efficient. The researcher recommend that evangelism be driven by the willingness to listen to the other and share reciprocal respect for one another. Effective evangelism can be done in a spirit of friendship. However, it will need Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni to switch from an aggressive mode of evangelism, and embrace a willingness to walk on a friendly, honest journey with their Muslim counterparts.

Finally, the Pentecostal church in Ekurhuleni focuses much on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. To become a prophetic voice in a multi-religious community, the church must scrutinize the "signs of the time", and ask, what is Spirit saying in a multi-religious community? Is the Holy Spirit active in the lives of non-Christians, and does the Holy Spirit reveal Christ to them? How does the Spirit lead a believer into an encounter with people of other faiths? Pentecostal leaders will need to reevaluate the role of the Holy Spirit in missions, and how He operates in Muslim Christian encounters.

8.7 Pastoral Planning and Recommendations

How do we respond to what is happening?

Finally, insertion into a community, analysis of its social fabric, and theological reflection concerning the pertinent issues must lead to action. The action, starts with Pastoral Planning – how does the church respond to the lack of authentic dialogue between Muslims and Christians in Ekurhuleni? The research question must be attended to: 'Can Pentecostal Christians hold on to the exclusivist ideas of Christ as the only way to salvation, in this new democratic, pluralist South Africa, which promotes the equality of all religions?' Creative, relevant, and honest ways of dialogue must be explored.

8.7.1 A move towards an inclusivist theology of religions.

The exclusivist model that forms the foundation of Pentecostal missiology and shapes its attitude towards people of other religions, must be re-evaluated in the light of new developments in Muslim Christian relations. The thesis has shown that the model of exclusivism is not conducive for any form of interreligious dialogue. This research shows that while 32% of Muslims view Christians as friends, only 20% of Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni see Muslims as friends. This is related to the exclusivist theology in Pentecostalism, it is a theology of war (against all foreign gods) and not a theology of peace and tolerance. Only 28% of Pentecostals believe that God reveals Himself in other religions, while 76% of Sunni Muslims believe that Allah reveals Himself in other religions. Pentecostals have a stereo-type view of God, almost reducing Him to a Christian tribal God, instead of a Sovereign God that is in control of all of creation. Here again, we see the influence of the exclusivist Pentecostal theology which sets boundaries on the revelatory work of God.

The researcher, therefore, propose that the Pentecostal church in Ekurhuleni adopt a more open model for dialogue which is found in inclusivism. If the inclusivist model is not suitable, then the Pentecostal church should develop a model that upholds the integrity of Pentecostalism but is also faithful to dialogue with people of other faiths. It should be a theology of religions that is both Christocentric in faith, Spirit-filled in application and God-driven. It should have a built-in willingness to embrace people of other faiths. In finding a suitable theology of religions, Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni will need to meet in consultation with the wider ecumenical body of Christ. In addition, they should be open to learn from other Protestant denominations, and humble enough to hear what Roman Catholics and other Protestants have to say concerning interreligious dialogue.

8.7.2 The influence of the Pulpit

The Pentecostal community in Ekurhuleni is influenced by the pulpit; the way the pulpit goes so does the people. For a change in attitude to take place in the Pentecostal community, change must begin in the pulpits. A new hermeneutic of love must be developed, one that fosters respect and tolerance towards Muslims. God loves Muslims

and desires that none of them should perish. If the Pentecostal church in Ekurhuleni is serious about the commands of God, they will begin by loving their Muslim neighbour, instead of debating the question about, 'who is my neighbour? This research shows that 56% of Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni believe that Muslims are not friends of Christians, but merely objects of missions and must be converted by any means.

As people of different religions interact, three steps would encourage any person to leave their religion and embrace Christianity. The first step is friendship, then conversion, and finally discipleship. Pentecostals have neglected the first step of friendship, and headed straight to conversion, with the perception that Muslims do not need to be befriended, just converted. However, the pulpit has the power to influence the greater Pentecostal community in Ekurhuleni and to walk in love, which is the first step in evangelism.

8.7.3 From debating to dialogue.

Public debating must be replaced by dialogue forums between Muslims and Christians. However, the researcher is not arguing that debating is evil and must be eradicated from society. Debating has its place. It gives one the opportunity to speak to an opposing audience and explain one's philosophies or arguments. It also enhances one's grasp of knowledge on the subject being debated. However, debating in South Africa has too often become a tool for ridiculing the faith of others. Over the last fifty years, public debating did not see a flood of Muslims coming to embrace the Christian faith, rather, it saw many Muslims become cynical, annoyed, and angered by these debates. There must be a deliberate move towards dialogue. Dialogue begins with a willingness to listen to others while creating a conducive atmosphere of friendship. Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni can open up their churches as venues for dialogical encounters, where hospitality, friendship, and respect can be displayed as our obligated Christian virtue.

8.8 Using the Quran as a starting point.

The Quran should not be demonized by Pentecostals, but rather read to understand its teachings. This will help in dialogue. When we begin to show interest in the religion of

Islam, Muslims will reciprocate this kindness by also taking time to read the Bible. This exercise will open up new doors of understanding each other's faith and will lead to greater respect of each other's traditions. This research has shown that 36% of Sunni Muslims in Ekurhuleni have read the Bible completely while another 36% read portions of the bible. This is in comparison to 12% of Christians have read the Quran. Pentecostals should show more interest in the Quran because this is a bridge for authentic dialogue. Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni are not called on to embrace the theology of the Quran, but to read it to gain a better understanding of the Muslim faith.

8.8.1 Evangelism of love

Evangelism must maintain its high priority in the Pentecostal church, but its approach to Muslims can be reevaluated. Compromise is not an option, and the Christian witness must not be denied. However, evangelism can be done in a spirit of respect and love, instead of aggression and triumphalism. New and more creative ways for evangelism that are Spirit-led, should be desired by the Pentecostal church. The research shows that 32% of Muslims in Ekurhuleni already see Christians as friends, while 48% of them see Christians as fellow seekers of the truth. This attitude displayed by Muslims should be used to the advantage of Christians to extend a hand of friendship.

8.8.2 A faithful witness

Pentecostals can become faithful witnesses of Christ in a multi-religious community. With a willingness to embrace the other, Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni can share the love and grace of Christ in word and action. A change in attitude from ignorance to a willingness to learn, and from fear of Islam to loving the Muslims, can lead to the beginning of a new spiritual journey. We become the voice, the hands, and the feet of Christ, and our lifestyle should reflect the compassion and the humility of Christ. The willingness to listen plays a crucial part in the dialogical process since listening is indicative in any process of learning. This research shows that 96% of Sunni Muslims in Ekurhuleni believe that the Quran promotes dialogue, which means that many Muslims are ready to enter in dialogue with Christians. We should use this opportunity

to embrace them in a spirit of friendship and let our lives become a witness to them, pointing them to Christ.

8.8.3 Embracing research.

Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni are no longer anti-intellectuals. South Africa has seen many Pentecostal scholars rise, with more Pentecostal leaders today with Doctorates and PhDs than at any other time in history. Today Pentecostal scholars even hold positions of Professorship at some of the most esteemed Universities in South Africa. Much research is being done today on embracing a relevant missiology. It would be wise for Pentecostal leaders in Ekurhuleni to consult with these scholars and collaborate with them to learn from their research or join them in their research on prevalent topics. In this case, Muslim Christian dialogue would be an ideal research endeavour for Pentecostal evangelists and missionaries.

The researcher recommend that the 'Missionary Praxis Cycle' be used as a research model for Pentecostals in Ekurhuleni to deal with the challenges of interreligious encounters. It is not merely a single cycle but a spiral of continuous interaction between the four elements of insertion, social analysis, theological reflection, and pastoral planning. The Pentecostal church has the capacity, and now even the scholars take their seats at the ecumenical table of interreligious dialogue. They also have the ability to become a prophetic voice of reconciliation in South Africa, one that would lead to religious tolerance and respect for all humanity. Pentecostals are able to achieve this without compromising their Pentecostal zeal nor dampening their evangelistic feverancy.

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Statement of Faith: Full Gospel Church

The full unabridged constitution of the Full Gospel church can be accessed on the internet:

<https://www.worldcat.org/title/constitution-and-bylaws-of-the-full-gospel-church-of-god-in-southern-africa/oclc/316509848>

FULL GOSPEL CHRISTIAN CHURCH Statement of Faith

We believe:

1. The Bible is the only inspired, infallible and authoritative Word of God and is the rule for life and conduct of the believer.
2. There is one true God, eternally existent in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
3. Man was created good and upright, but man, by voluntary transgression, fell and the only hope for redemption is in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who was virgin born and who lived a sinless life.
4. It is the grace of God that brings Salvation. Man is saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, and by being justified by grace through faith. The evidence of this "New Birth" is a witness of the Holy Spirit inwardly, and a changed life both inwardly and subsequently outwardly.
5. In the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is evidenced by the sign of speaking with other tongues as the spirit leads, and by subsequent manifestations of spiritual power in public testimony and service.
6. Gifts have been given to the church by the Holy Spirit in order for the church to be equipped and be used to encourage and build up one another. These gifts are for today and are active within a healthy church.
7. That entire sanctification and holiness is the will of God and should be pursued by walking in obedience to God's Word.
8. Deliverance from sickness is provided for all in the atonement and is the privilege of all believers.
9. In the return of Jesus Christ, to consummate His Kingdom, in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; those who are saved unto the resurrection of life, and those who are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
10. In water baptism which is the outward expression of the inward work of Christ, which acknowledges the work of the cross in our lives.

Statement of Faith: Assemblies of God

The full unabridged constitution of the AOG church can be accessed on the internet:

<https://sandtonaog.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/the-constitution-of-the-assemblies-of-god1.pdf>

Sixteen Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God

This assembly accepts the Holy Scriptures as the revealed will of God, the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice, and for the purpose of maintaining general unity, adopts the Statement of Fundamental Truths of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, to wit:

1. The Scriptures Inspired The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man - the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct (2 Timothy 3:15-17; I Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:21).
2. The One True God The one true God has revealed Himself as the eternally self-existent "I AM", the Creator of heaven and earth and the Redeemer of mankind. He has further revealed himself as embodying the principles of relationship and association as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10,11; Matthew 28:19).
3. The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ The Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. The Scriptures declare: (a) His virgin birth (Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:31,35) (b) His sinless life (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22) (c) His miracles (Acts 2:22; 10:38) (d) His substitutionary work on the cross (1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21) (e) His bodily resurrection from the dead (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:39; 1 Corinthians 15:4) (f) His exaltation to the right hand of God (Acts 1:9,11; 2:33; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:3)
4. The Fall of Man Man was created good and upright; for God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." However, man by voluntary transgression fell and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God (Genesis 1:26,27; 2:17; 3:6; Romans 5:12-19).
5. The Salvation of Man The only hope of redemption for man is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God. (a) Conditions to Salvation Salvation is received through repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, being justified by grace

through faith, man becomes an heir of God according to the hope of eternal life (Luke 24:47; John 3:3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 2:8; Titus 2:11; 3:5-7). (b) The Evidences of Salvation The inward evidence of salvation is the direct witness of the Spirit (Romans 8:16). The outward evidence to all men is a life of righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24; Titus 2:12).

6. The Ordinances of the Church (a) Baptism in Water The ordinance of baptism by immersion is commanded in the Scriptures. All who repent and believe on Christ as Saviour and Lord are to be baptized. Thus they declare to the world that they have died with Christ and that they also have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life. (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:47,48; Romans 6:4). (b) Holy Communion The Lord's Supper, consisting of the elements – bread, and the fruit of the vine – are the symbols expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4); a memorial of His suffering and death (1 Corinthians 11:26); and a prophecy of His second coming (1 Corinthians 11:26); and is enjoined on all believers “till He come!”

7. The Baptism in the Holy Ghost All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the Baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian Church. With it comes the endowment of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts and their uses in the work of the ministry (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8; 1 Corinthians 12:1- 31). This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth (Acts 8:12-17; 10:44- 46; 11:14-16; 15:7-9). With the Baptism in the Holy Ghost come such experiences as an overflowing fullness of the Spirit (John 7:37-39; Acts 4:8), a deepened reverence for God (Acts 2:43; Hebrews 12:28), an intensified consecration to God and dedication to His work (Acts 2:42), and a more active love for Christ, for His Word and for the lost (Mark 16:20).

8. The Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Ghost The baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4). The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4-10, 28), but different in purpose and use.

9. Sanctification Sanctification is an act of separation from that which is evil, and of dedication unto God (Romans 12: 1,2; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:12). The

Scriptures teach a life of “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). By the power of the Holy Ghost we are able to obey the command, “Be ye holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:5). Sanctification is realized in the believer by recognizing his identification with Christ in His death and resurrection, and by faith reckoning daily upon the fact of that union and by offering every faculty continually to the dominion of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:1-11; 8:1,2,13; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:12,13; 1 Peter 1:5)

10. The Church and Its Mission The Church is the Body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit, with divine appointments for the fulfillment of her great commission. Each believer, born of the Spirit, is an integral part of the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven (Ephesians 1:22,23; Hebrews 12:23). Since God’s purpose concerning man is to save that which is lost, to be worshipped by man, and to build a body of believers in the image of His Son, the primary reason-for-being of the Assemblies of God as part of the Church is: (a) To be an agency of God for evangelizing the world (Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16). (b) To be a corporate body in which man may worship God (1 Corinthians 12:13). (c) To be a channel of God’s purpose to build a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Corinthians 14:12). The Assemblies of God exists expressly to give continuing emphasis to this reason-for-being in the New Testament apostolic pattern by teaching and encouraging believers to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. This experience: (a) Enables them to evangelize in the power of the Spirit with accompanying supernatural signs (Mark 16:15-20; Acts 4:29-31; Hebrews 2:3,4). (b) Adds a necessary dimension to the worshipful relationship with God (1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 1 Corinthians 12:13,14). (c) Enables them to respond to the full working of the Holy Spirit in expression of fruit and gifts and ministries as in New Testament times for the edifying of the body of Christ (Galatians 5:22-26; 1 Corinthians 14:12; Ephesians 4:11,12; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Colossians 1:29).

11. The Ministry A divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for the threefold purpose of leading the Church in: (1) Evangelization of the world (Mark 16:15-20); (2) Worship of God (John 4:23,24); (3) Building a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son (Ephesians 4:11-16).

12. Divine Healing Divine healing is an integral part of the gospel. Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement, and is the privilege of all believers (Isaiah 53:4,5; Matthew 8:16,17; James 5:14-16).

13. The Blessed Hope The resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ and their translation together with those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord is the imminent and blessed hope of the Christian (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Romans 8:23; Titus 2:13; 1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

14. The Millennial Reign of Christ The second coming of Christ includes the rapture of the saints, which is our blessed hope, followed by the visible return of Christ with His saints to reign on the earth for one thousand years (Zechariah 14:5; Matthew 24:27,30; Revelations 1:7; 19:11-14; 20:1-6). This millennial reign will bring the salvation of national Israel (Ezekiel 37:21,22; Zephaniah 3:19,20; Romans 11:26,27) and the establishment of universal peace (Isaiah 11:6-9; Psalm 72:3-8; Micah 4:3,4).

15. The Final Judgment There will be a final judgment in which the wicked dead will be raised and judged according to their works. Whosoever is not found in the Book of Life, together with the devil and his angels, the beast and the false prophet, will be consigned to everlasting punishment in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43-48; Revelations 19:20; 20:11-15; 21:8).

16. The New Heavens and the New Earth "We, according to His promise, look for the new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13; Revelations 21,22).

Statement of Faith: Apostolic Faith Mission

The full unabridged constitution of the AFM church can be accessed on the internet:

<https://afm-ags.org/constitution/>

The assembly believes and humbly professes that: 2.1 it has its origin, continued existence and destiny from God; 2.2 it is a revelation of the Church of Jesus Christ, governed by Him as Head, according to the enunciation of the Holy Scriptures, the working of the Holy Spirit and the ministrations instituted by Him. 3.

CONFESSION OF FAITH The assembly prescribes to the Confession of Faith as declared by the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa in terms of section P.3 (Preamble) to the constitution of the church, which reads as follows:

3.1 WE BELIEVE in God eternal, triune, almighty creator, sustainer and ruler of all creation.

3.2 WE BELIEVE in God the Father, the author of creation and salvation.

3.3 WE BELIEVE in Jesus Christ the only Son of God the Father, true God who for the sake of humanity and its salvation, descended from heaven and became flesh; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was born by the virgin Mary; who lived on earth and was crucified, died and was buried, who rose from the dead and ascended to heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

3.4 WE BELIEVE in the Holy Spirit, true God proceeding from the Father and the Son, who convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgement and leads in all truth.

3.5 WE BELIEVE that the Bible is the word of God, written by men as the Holy Spirit inspired them. We believe that it authoritatively proclaims the will of God and teaches us all that is necessary for salvation.

3.6 WE BELIEVE that all human beings are created in the image of God; due to their sinful rebellion, this image is marred, that all have sinned before God and it is the will of God that all people should receive salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

3.7 WE BELIEVE in the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues as promised to all believers. We believe in the manifestation of the gifts and fruit of the Spirit in the life of a Christian. We believe that a Christian should be a disciple of Jesus Christ living a consecrated and holy life.

3.8 WE BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church which is constituted by the Holy Spirit and consists of born again believers. The Church is responsible for the

proclamation and demonstration of the gospel and God's will to all people. As a charismatic community they fellowship with and edify one another.

3.9 WE BELIEVE that the believer's baptism, by immersion and the Lord's Supper are instituted by Jesus Christ to be observed by the Church.

3.10 WE BELIEVE that at the time appointed by God, Jesus Christ will come to take away his Church.

3.11 WE BELIEVE in a day of judgement when Jesus Christ will judge the living and the dead. We believe in the resurrection of the body and eternal life for the righteous and eternal punishment for the wicked. We believe in the new heaven and the new earth where God will reign in glory.

4. VISION To lead people to life fulfillment in Christ Jesus.

5. MISSION

5.1 The assembly prescribes to the Mission of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa in terms of section P.4 (Preamble) to the constitution of the church, which reads as follows:

The mission of the church is:

5.1.1 to glorify God;

5.1.2 to proclaim the Kingdom of God by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit;

5.1.3 to minister to the needs of the total person;

5.1.4 to develop, equip and release believers into ministry;

5.1.5 to extend the influence of the church beyond its boundaries and abroad;

5.1.6 to promote the fellowship of the believers and to network ministries.

Curriculum Vitae



Profile

My name is Pastor Dilipraj Chetty, my one passion and desire is the training and development of Christian leaders. Over the past 25 years I have devoted my life to training and developing Pastors and Church leaders all over Africa and in Asian countries like Nepal.

Contact

PHONE:

082 781 4559

WEBSITE:

Impact church Dawn Park

EMAIL:

dilipphd21@gmail.com

dilipraj chetty

Lecturer / Pastor

EDUCATION

Bethesda Bible College

Diploma in Divinity

UNISA

B. Th – Theology

Hons B. Th -Missiology

M.Th – Missiology

Current – P. hD. Missiology

WORK EXPERIENCE

Senior Pastor

Impact Church (25 years)

Chairman

Ignite School of Ministry (15 years)

SKILLS

teaching

curriculum...

administration

leadership

people skills