(62 :   )

Those who believe (in the Qur'ān), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians – any who believe in *Allāh* and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

<div align="right">(Al-Baqarah: 62)</div>

(125 :   )

Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance.

<div align="right">(Al-Naḥl: 125)</div>

NOSTRA AETATE AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

BY

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The violation and vilification of the cardinal principles of Islam and Christianity, throughout the history have led both, Muslims and Christians to engage themselves in promoting inter-religious conflicts and hostilities instead of encouraging mutual respect and co-operation. Such inter-religious enmity between the Muslim and Christian worlds is seen as the main obstacle for the establishment of a peaceful co-existence and interrelationship between two religious communities living in a society characterized by diversity. This study attempts to examine the concept of inter-religious dialogue promoted by *Nostra Aeate* (The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions, promulgated on October 28, 1965), as the only means to change the attitude of Muslims and Christians from that of hostility to mutual respect and better, objective and unbiased understanding of one another's way of belief. Despite the fact that the concept of inter-religious dialogue has been promoted by *Nostra Aetate*, the spirit of such dialogue is found as well in the religion of *al-Islām*, which by its nature is a homogeneous religion that promotes and encourages openness in dialogue with others in general, and Christians in particular, and not isolation as some might think. *Al-Qur'ān* has spoken fourteen centuries ago as it speaks today about the cardinal principles of amicable Muslim-Christian inter-religious dialogue, like tolerance, esteemed cooperation, freedom of choice, justice, mutual respect and better religious understanding. This study has arrived at the following conclusions: (1) Muslims' sincere intention of participating in amicable inter-religious dialogue with Christians will serve as the main factor to change the distorted image of *al-Islām*, as well to convey its altruistic message to the Christian World, (2) the spirit of Islamic-Christian inter-religious dialogue will help both Muslims and Christians to accept each other as they are, to understand why they are so, and to avoid themselves from the subjective and normative claims in the form of why not so? (3) amicable Islamic-Christian inter-religious dialogue is the only hope to avoid contemporary problems and obstacles that make religious co-existence difficult, and to bring peace and harmony for the Muslim and Christian communities in particular, and humanity in general.

مُلَخَّص البحث

الفكرة المركزية تدور حول إساءة تطبيق المبادئ الأساسية للدين الإسلامي والمسيحي وممارسة عمليات تأويل مجحفة أدت إلى اشتعال النـزاعات والعداوات الدينيـة عبر التـاريخ بدل الاحتـرام المتبادل والتعاون الذي يزيل عوائق التعايش السلمي ويكفل بناء مجتمع متنوع الأديان والثقافات. وتُحاول هذه الدراسـة أن تدرس فكرة الحـوار بين الأديـان كمـا وردت في *Nostra Aetate* (وثيقة العلاقة بين الكنيسة والأديان الأخرى، أكتوبر 28، 1965)، بوصفها وسيلة وحيدة لتغيير موقف المسلمين والنصارى من العداوة الدينية إلى الاحترام المتبادل وتقارب الأهداف والتفاهم المنصف على طريق الإيمان. وعلى الرغم من أن فكرة الحـوار بين الأديان قد عززتها (*Nostra Aetate*) الصـادرة عن المـؤتمر الفاتيكـاني الثـاني (1962-1965)، إلاَّ أن روح هـذا الحـوار موجـودة في الإسلام الذي بطبيعته دين متجانس التكوين يعزز ويشجِّع الانفتاح في الحوار مـع الآخرين عامَّة والنصارى خاصَّة، ولا يشجِّع الانغلاق كما يعتقد البعض. والقرآن الكريم قد ثبَّت منذ نـزوله كما يثبت اليوم المبادئ الرئيسية لحوار يهدف إلى تعزيز أواصر الصداقة والتعاون بين المسلمين والنصارى قوامـه التسـامح، والتعـاون المشترك، وحرية الاختيـار، والعدالـة، والاحترام المتبـادل، والتفاهم الديني. وقد توصلت هذه الدراسة إلى: (1) إخلاص النية في حوار الصـداقة والتعاون مـع النصارى سيهدف بشكل أساسي في تغيير الصـورة المحرَّفـة للإسلام كمـا يُبَلِّغُ روح رسـالته إلى العالم النصراني. (2) الحوار الإسلامي-المسيحي سيساعد الطرفين في فهم بعضهم بعضاً كما هم، ولماذا هم كذلك، وسيجنِّبهم من الدعوات الفردانية والمعيارية التي تتخذ صـورة: لمـاذا ليس هكذا؟ (3) الحوار الإسلامي-المسيحي هو الأمل الوحيد لتجنيب المشاكل والعوائق الحاليـة التي تجعل التعـايش الـديني صـعباً، ويـأتي بالسلم والانسـجام للمجتمـع الإسلامي والنصراني خاصَّة، والبشرية عامَّةً.

APPROVAL PAGE

The dissertation of Fatmir Mehdi Shehu has been approved by the following:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Fatmir Mehdi Shehu

Signature…………………………………. Date…………………….

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

DECLARATION OF COPYRIGHT AND AFFIRMATION OF FAIR USE OF UNPUBLISHED RESEARCH

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.C.	After Christ
a.s.	Peace be upon him
Ac.	Acts
Matt.	Matthew
p.b.u.h	Peace be upon him
Par.	Paragraph
1Tim.	1Timothy

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The global world in which we live today is witnessing an amasing multiplicity of ideologies, cultures and religions. This multiplicity has come into existence as a result of mass migration of people for political, economical and religious reasons. The cultural and religious integrations found in our global city prove that people of different backgrounds must live together peacefully. However, often people have taken their religious differences to build walls of disconnection between themselves and the practitioners of other religions. This has been the main cause of the past and current conflicts and problems in Palestine, Bosnia Herzegovina, Chechnya, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Philippines and elsewhere. What do we need to do to overcome these conflicts and problems? How can we make people realise that religious diversity does not make them different from each other in terms of their origin? From a monotheistic perspective, we all come from God alone, regardless of race, nationality and religious beliefs, and we are descended from one pair of parents: *Ādam* (Adam) and *Ḥawā'* (Eve). The Holy *Qur'ān* reminds us:

$$(13 : \qquad)$$

> O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of *Allāh* is (he who is) the most righteous of you.[1]

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[1] A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān: Text, translation and commentary*, (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1989), Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt: 13.

The Holy Bible conveys the same message:

> And now We will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us; … So God created human beings … male and female, blessed them and said, 'Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control.[2]

Looking at both, the common origin that brings people together and the misunderstandings that keep them apart, scholars and clerics of different religions namely Hans Küng, John Hick, 'Ismā'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, Fazlu Rahman, Leonard Swidler, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, etc., have attempted to find ways out on how to make people transcend the conflicts that have resulted from their religious divergence. They have come up with the idea of inter-religious dialogue, which involves high cooperation with good esteem and mutual respect leading to the understanding of the others' beliefs. It involves a genuine reciprocal process, in which two parties stand on an equal footing of readiness to listen, as well as to be heard,[3] and therefore, implement the two-sided project.[4] All this has to be done without polemics or refutations. In a specific sense, the modern understanding of the concept of inter-religious dialogue is a new phenomenon in world history as well as in the history of world religions. Even though in the Islamic history during the Abbasid time there have been many interfaith dialogues (the Caliph himself has involved in dialogues), yet the concept of inter-religious dialogue only came into existence after the Second Vatican Council, which took place in Rome from 1962 to 1965.

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[2] *Good news Bible: The Bible of today's English version*, (New York: American Bible Society, 1976), Geneses "The Story of Creation": 1.26-1.28.

[3] See Maurice Wiles, *Christian theology and inter-religious dialogue*, (London: SCM Press, 1992) 4-5.

[4] This means that each participant must enter into dialogue not only with his partner across the faith line – the Christian with the Muslim – but also with his co-religionists, with his fellow Muslims, or Christians, to share with them the fruits of this inter-religious dialogue. This is the only way how to learn and change attitudes, and to understand each other's systems of belief. Also, this will open rooms for a mutual respect and better religious understanding for those who participate in such dialogue. See Leonard Swidler, "Religious pluralism and ecumenism from a Christian perspective," in *Religious issues and inter-religious dialogues: An analysis and sourcebook of developments since 1945*, edited by Charles Wei-hsun Fu and Gehard E. Spiegler, (USA: Green Wood Press, 1989), 338.

From an Islamic perspective, there are many *Qur'ānic* verses that speak for an amicable inter-religious conversation and co-existence, or esteemed cooperation between the Muslims and the adherents of the other two revealed religions (Judaism and Christianity) in order to promote mutual respect and better spiritual understanding, which can be achieved only through amicable inter-religious dialogue. The Holy *Qur'ān* prescribes as well the attitude of the Muslims towards Christian fellows. Thus, in Islam the positive relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in general, and Christians in particular, is encouraged, even required. This is shown in the following *Qur'ānic* verses:

$$(125 : \quad)$$

Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them (non-believers) in ways that are best and most gracious. For thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance.[5]

$$(64 : \quad) \quad ...$$

Say: O People of the Book! Come to a noble principle common to both of us: that we worship none but *Allāh*, that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect (take) not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than *Allāh*....[6]

Even though the concept of inter-religious dialogue has not been understood and implemented in a proper way among the world's religions, yet the followers of Islam and Christianity have somehow understood it in a better way and to some extent have succeeded. Since Monotheistic-Abrahamic-Ecumenum religions have so much in common, they could provide the starting point for such a dialogue on a universal

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[5] Translation *al-Qur'ān*, Sūrah al-Naḥl: 125.
[6] Ibid., Sūrah Āl-i-ʿImrān: 64.

scale, which would lead to mutual respect and better understanding among themselves and the adherents of other religious Traditions, be they revealed or not.

The Christian Church seems to share the same view regarding the peaceful co-existence and tolerance among the followers of all religions. This view has been expressed in the Second Vatican Council's Declaration, *Nostra Aetate,*[7] which accredits the concept of inter-religious dialogue. This declaration was a challenge towards the traditional exclusivist stand that had a very narrow scope of understanding towards the Christian religious thought in general, and Catholic Church in particular. Most of the Second Vatican Council's documents[8] in general, and the *Nostra Aetate* in particular, were opposed by the traditionalist exclusivist groups. This was rationalized based on their belief/credo that salvation can be obtained only within the boundaries of the Church, and therefore, no one outside the Church could be granted such salvation. Since this dissertation will examine the inter-religious dialogue between the followers of Islam and Christianity, the effort will be made to cite from the declaration of the Second Vatican Council only the passage regarding the Muslims. This passage states the following:

> Upon the Muslims, too, the Church looks with esteem. They adore one God, living and enduring, merciful and all-powerful, Maker of heaven and earth Speaker to men. They strive to submit wholeheartedly even to His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham did, with whom the Islamic

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[7] The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian religions (*De Ecclesiae habitudine ad religiones non-christianas*) promulgated on October 28, 1965. For the first time, there is recognition of non-Christian religions as entities, which the Church should respect and with which Christians should enter into dialogue. Indeed, this declaration is intended to be a positive tone for the simple reason that the Council introduced a very new atmosphere of respect towards other religions and their adherents.

[8] Another important document promulgated by the Second Vatican Council is Decree *Ad Gentes* on the Mission Activity of the Church. Through the Decree, the sacred synod desires to sketch the principles of missionary activity and to rally the forces of all the faithful in order that the people of God, marching along the narrow way of the Cross, may spread everywhere the reign of Christ, Lord and overseer: of the ages (cf. Ecc. 36:19), and may prepare the way for his coming. Although *Ad Gentes* promotes friendly cooperation and dialogue between Christians and non-Christians, yet its aim is to spread the Gospel to the non-Christians. Such cooperation with non-Christians could be fruitful in the missions in many ways as a sign of complete dedication to the evangelization of the world. See Decree *Ad Gentes* on the Mission Activity of the Church, <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html#top> (accessed on 12 February, 2007).

faith is pleased to associate itself. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God,[9] they revere Him as a prophet. They also honour Mary, His virgin mother; at times, they call on her, too, with devotion. In addition, they await the Day of Judgment when God will give each man his due after raising him up. Consequently, they prize the moral life, and give worship to God especially through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting.

Although in the course of centuries many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims, this most sacred Synod urges all to forget the past, and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding. On behalf of all mankind, let them make common cause of safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom.[10]

The main purpose of this declaration is to promote inter-religious dialogue, mainly by according grants to people of other faiths who wish to study Christianity. A special attention is also paid to the relationship between Christians and Muslims. Here, Muslims are considered as strictly Monotheistic, who worship the same God as Christians do, and therefore, they should be respected and invited to an inter-religious dialogue, which will lead them to a close understanding of Christianity.

It is very clear for both Christians and Muslims that without cooperation there would be no peace. No genuine and effective cooperation can proceed without mutual esteem and respect or without understanding each other in a better way, something that can happen only through inter-religious dialogue. In fact, the truth that each one is searching for cannot be isolated because isolation is neither possible nor desirable. If Muslims and Christians follow the sense of isolation within the boundaries of their religious and theological decrees, without taking into consideration the feelings and emotions of each other towards the existence and worship of the Divine Reality, and

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[9] In fact, many great Christian intellectuals have always challenged this doctrine.

[10] Walter M. Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II*, (New York: American Press, 1966), 663. See also Miikka Ruokanen, *The Catholic Doctrine of Non-Christian Religions According to the Second Vatican Council,* (Leiden / New York / Cologne: E.J. Brill, vol. 7, 1992), 76 passim, 88. And David S. Noss & John B. Noss, *A History of World's Religions*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990), 520. And Declaration *Nostra Aetate* Proclaimed by his Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965, <http://www.vatican.va/archieve/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_1> (accessed on 23 October 2003).

not searching for the establishment of a common platform, there would never be mutual respect and better understanding among them.

In order to create a harmonious and happy atmosphere, both Christians and Muslims must be open to each other by way of amicable inter-religious dialogue. Therefore, it is very important to mention here that only through implementing the inter-religious dialogue between Muslims and Christians can one hope for peace, justice, freedom, trust, mutual respect and better spiritual understanding. When we talk about inter-religious dialogue, we have to bear in mind that this kind of dialogue is more specific than the normal dialogue. It opens vast opportunities for both parties to express themselves in a polite manner and refrain from using the sensitive theological or doctrinal issues related to their religions. Thus, to make it clear enough, the main purpose of inter-religious dialogue is to bring people of different religions and beliefs together in order to pave better ways for the understanding of those beliefs. In addition, such a dialogue does not run in the scale of negotiating for a better relation between two ways of speaking, living, and practicing the religion. It rather sheds light into the communalities between the two parties of the dialogue. Besides, it serves as the main tool in solving contemporary conflicts and problems faced by both Muslims and Christians.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The violation and vilification of the cardinal principles of Islam and Christianity, throughout history have led both the Muslim and Christian religious communities to engage themselves in promoting inter-religious conflicts and hostilities instead of encouraging mutual respect and cooperation. Such inter-religious enmity between the Muslim and Christian worlds is seen as the main obstacle for the establishment of

peaceful co-existence and interrelationship between two religious communities living in a diverse society. This problem has arisen as a result of the abuse of post by many Muslim and Christian political leaders, of the past and present, who have used religion and religious figures not only as tools of oppression, but also to create theological problems and confusions between the adherents of both Islam and Christianity. Therefore, the concept of inter-religious dialogue is considered as the only means to change the attitude of Muslims and Christians from that of hostility to better understanding and friendly cooperation. Inter-religious dialogue will serve as the main linking bridge between Christians and Muslims while cooperating in search for common ways to mutual respect and better objective and unbiased understanding of their beliefs.[11] Despite the fact that the concept of inter-religious dialogue has been promoted by *Nostra Aetate*, the essence of such a dialogue is found as well in *al-Islām*, which by its nature is a homogeneous religion[12] that promotes and encourages openness in dialogue with others. The Holy *Qur'ān* has spoken about the cardinal principles of a genuine Islamic-Christian inter-religious dialogue, like tolerance, esteemed cooperation, freedom of choice, justice, mutual respect and better religious understanding.

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[11] We have to bear in mind that the paradigm shift introduced by this Conciliar Declaration explores the main objectives of the Christian Church towards the modern developments as beneficial to all human beings. The commence of this Council, for the first time in the history of the Church, opened a new era for the Christians in general, and the Catholic Church in particular. This made Christians to forget the past and adapt themselves to the development of the modern world and search for the ways leading to love, peace, justice, freedom, mutual trust and respect, and better understanding of the other Traditions.

[12] "So if they dispute with thee, say: 'I have submitted My whole self to *Allāh* and so have those who follow me.' And say to the People of the Book and to those who are unlearned: 'Do ye (also) submit yourselves?' If they do, they are in right guidance, but if they turn back, Thy duty is to convey the Message; and in *Allāh*'s sight are (all) His servants" Translation *al-Qur'ān*, Sūrah Āl-i-ʿImrān: 20.

.(20 :   )

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the importance and the role of inter-religious dialogue among the Muslims and Christians, with special reference to *Nostra Aetate*, the Second Vatican Council's declaration. By its nature, an inter-religious dialogue demands respect for others as they are, as well as respect for their beliefs and religious convictions. Therefore, it promotes better relations based on mutual respect and better understanding. Ignorance of the beliefs of others invites mutual scepticism and disregard, while knowing them opens the potential for a vast and peaceful co-existence and establishes a harmonious world community. That is why the Holy *Qur'ān* considers knowledge of the cardinal principles of each religion and respect to its followers as a significant obligation to all.

The Declaration of *Nostra Aetate* gave official encouragement and circulation to ideas and ideals that were maturing among Christians who felt religiously close to Muslims and people of other faiths. From this point, there will be emphasis on the main purpose of *Nostra Aetate*, which is to promote inter-religious dialogue, mainly by assuring grants to people of other religions who wish to study Christianity.

Besides, this study aims to make an analytical study on the issue of inter-religious dialogue from an Islamic perspective. The Holy *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) indicate the meaning of such inter-religious conversation. The friendly conversation between Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) and the Christians of *Najrān* reveals the real meaning of inter-religious dialogue, which later on continued to be practiced by the Muslims at large up to our time. In fact, the *Nostra Aetate* document has been welcomed by some Muslim scholars as a marked improvement on previous attitudes, while others have been disappointed by its

failure to adopt a pluralist theological position, rather than a monopolistic apologetic one.[13]

Indeed, today's world situation needs, more than ever, mutual respect, better spiritual understanding and cooperation among people of all faiths in general, and Muslims and Christians in particular. Therefore, the findings and conclusions of this study will be useful to a multi-religious society like Malaysia, in order to strengthen its unity, and will be as well an asset to the exploration of possible cooperation between Muslims and Christians all over the world.

METHOD OF STUDY

Since this dissertation discusses issues related to *Nostra Aetate* and inter-religious dialogue from an Islamic perspective, the method of study was an analytical and philosophical one. In order to grasp and convey the main impact and objective of *Nostra Aetate* on Christian-Muslim relations, the analytical method was used to analyse and elaborate the collected data related to this topic. The researcher referred to different sources and references written by both Muslim and Christian scholars.[14] Then, a philosophical method was used to grasp the main ideas discussed by Muslim and Christian scholars while studying or discussing issues related to the relationship between the adherents of different world religions in general, and Muslims and Christians in particular.

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[13] It is a true fact that *Nostra Aetate* did not mention the main sources of Islam, i.e., the Holy *Qur'ān* and the Traditions of Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.), but for the first time in the Church history there were discussed issues related to better understanding and mutual respect between Christians and Muslims.

[14] For the completion of this study the researcher wished to include insights from contemporary Muslim and Christian scholars especially the Vatican clergies. However, many attempts to contact and correspond with them were unsuccessful. The lack of financial support and the absence of necessary links served as the main setbacks that did not allow the researcher to get in person interviews with experts and people directly related to inter-religious relations and dialogue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A few general works that have been conducted regarding the inter-religious dialogue according to *Nostra Aetate*, were used as a framework for studying some of the aspects of the relationship between the adherents of both, Christianity and Islam. Both Muslim and Christian scholars have worked effortlessly in this area in order to present something worthy to the modern religious society for the benefit of humankind.

Leonard Swidler[15] who has been Professor of Catholic Thought and Inter-religious Dialogue at Temple University since 1966,[16] discussed the issue of the transformation of religion from the age of monologue to the age of global dialogue. He maintains that dialogue between the adherents of different religions is the only way to move forward or to change the mode of religious communication from isolation to openness. In addition, it is a way of thinking, seeing and reflecting on the world and its meaning. A dialogue is defined the conversation between two or more persons with different views, where each participant learns from the other so he or she can change and develop the way of thinking. Moreover, dialogue means an experience of meeting with people of different fundamental convictions in such a way that each one's assumptions come to light, and that one can move ahead in reciprocal learning. Also, dialogue is meant to strengthen and affirm fundamental beliefs and practices as well as to transform them. However, to participate in inter-religious dialogue, we must develop the skills of thinking carefully and critically, which will help us to transform or to seek self-transformation by opening ourselves to those who think differently. The commonalities between the Abrahamic faiths have established the foundations of

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[15] Leonard Swidler, "From the age of monologue to the age of global dialogue," in *Religions in dialogue: from theocracy to democracy*, edited by Alan Race & Ingrid Shafer, (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2002), 7-16.

[16] Since 1964, Leonard Swidler has been the Editor of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies, which he co-founded with his wife Arlene Swidler. He has published over 175 articles and 60 books. Christian-Muslim inter-religious dialogue has been one of the major issues discussed by Swidler.

the inter-religious dialogue. There are many expectations to be made while implementing the inter-religious dialogue between Christians and Muslims. In another article,[17] Swidler discusses the achievements of the Second Vatican Council, which was a major turning point in the history of the Roman Catholic Church and doubtless also in the history of Christianity in general, and perhaps the world at large. This Council moved the Roman Catholic Church a step forward, brought the Christians together, and encouraged them to enter into a dialogue with people of other faiths in general, and Muslims in particular. Therefore, the document of *Nostra Aetate* has major ecumenical importance on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions. Thus, Vatican II has accomplished a radical reversal of the Catholic Church in her attitude toward non-Catholics and non-Christians.

Denise Lardner Carmody[18] has discussed issues related to the Second Vatican Council's Documents and their implementation in a moderate Christian society. He mentioned that most of the Council's documents ended up to the point of being more lenient and respectful towards the faith and beliefs of others. In addition, there was obviously a balance shown to both past convictions about the faith and the freedom to a dialogue with the contemporary world. Also, it is emphasized by the author that how Pope John XXIII [Angelo Roncalli (1881-1963)], by being responsible for convening Vatican II, was able to bring the Roman Catholic Church fully into the Modern world and open a new era in the history of the Church. Although the author has elaborated many of the statements related to the Second Vatican Council II, he has not analyzed one of the main issues regarding inter-religious

[17] Leonard Swidler, "Religious pluralism and ecumenism from a Christian perspective," in *Religious issues and inter-religious dialogues: An analysis and sourcebook of developments since 1945*, edited by Charles Wei-hsun Fu and Gehard E. Spiegler, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 327-348.
[18] Denise Larder Carmody & John Tully Carmody, *Roman Catholicism: An introduction*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990), 95 passim, 96-99.