

# Questioning the Promotion of Friendship in Interfaith Dialogue: Interfaith Friendship in Light of the Emphasis on Particularity in Scriptural Reasoning

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the Faculty of Divinity Degree Committee.

# ABSTRACT

## Questioning the Promotion of Friendship in Interfaith Dialogue: Interfaith Friendship in Light of the Emphasis on Particularity in Scriptural Reasoning

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'Friendship' is among the buzzwords such as 'peace', 'tolerance', and 'understanding', that are part of a shared vocabulary in the interfaith world. In discussions of the goals and benefits of interfaith dialogue, buzzwords such as 'friendship' are often implicitly presented as a common currency, and there is little attempt to explore how people within each religious tradition might define, shape, and describe them differently. How might, for example, Christians and Muslims differ in their opinions on the nature, possibilities, and limits of interfaith friendship? Looking at general interfaith dialogue material and at material for a specific type of interfaith dialogue, 'Scriptural Reasoning', I consider Christian and Muslim discourse, including promotional material for charities, speeches by religious leaders, religious documents, non-academic material (e.g. online forums, magazines), and academic material. I also look at discussions regarding the Qur'ānic verses about friendship with the religious other, which are one source of a specifically Muslim approach to the idea of interfaith friendship. My data shows that Christians tend to depict friendship as an obvious goal or benefit of interfaith dialogue, typically without explaining what interfaith friendship entails. Muslims tend to use friendship language much more sparingly in the context of interfaith dialogue, and when they do use it, it is with caveats. I note how the generic use of friendship language creates tension with the efforts to pay 'attention to the particularities of the traditions and scriptures' that the founders and practitioners of Scriptural Reasoning, among others, advocate. What questions does this analysis raise about how we frame and promote interfaith dialogue, and what other approaches to naming the goals or benefits of dialogue may be available, once attention to the particularities has made the appeal to friendship more complex?

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Prior to the start of my third and final year at the University of Cambridge, I was in a horrific car accident, which sadly resulted in the death of The Rev. Dr. John Hughes, Dean of Jesus College Chapel. I was left with numerous critical injuries – some of which have left me with chronic pain – and I have since had sixteen major surgeries and many hospital stays. I mention this only to provide a backdrop for the extraordinary circumstances through which my supervisors, Prof. Mike Higon and Prof. David Ford, supported me, guided me, and encouraged me. I am extremely fortunate to have supervisors who are so patient, caring, empathetic, and kind. They cheered me on even when I did not have the confidence in myself or my work. Prof. Higon in particular spent countless hours coaching and mentoring me via Skype, and providing thorough and constructive feedback on my work. Thank you, Mike and David, for everything you have done over the past seven years!

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*in memory of The Rev. Dr. John Hughes*

## NOTE REGARDING ARABIC TERMS & *THE QUR'ĀN*

When I refer to Arabic terms, I will follow the system of transliteration as presented in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, with slight modifications: I do not underline *th*, *kh*, *dh*, *sh*, or *gh*. When quoting from *The Qur'ān*, I will primarily use A.J. Arberry's English translation. However, for the sake of comparing the interpretation of specific Arabic terminology, I have selected four works from among the most widely used English translations of the Qur'ān: the translations by Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Abdel Haleem, Muhammad M. Pickthall, as well as the translation jointly authored by Muhammad Taqi al-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan. I will refer only to the authors' last names in the footnotes, though the full citations are available in the Bibliography.

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# INTRODUCTION

Before beginning the research for this thesis, I had often informally observed Christian, Jewish, and Muslim participants of and advocates for Scriptural Reasoning, and recognised variations in their declared motivations for participating in the practice. There are certain recurrent themes that come up in descriptions of the practice, such as: 1) building friendships with the religious other, 2) improving the quality of disagreement, 3) exercising mutual hospitality, 4) learning about the scriptures and traditions of the religious other, and 5) learning about one's own scripture and tradition through questions asked by the religious other. I had also noticed that, especially in conversations about the practice of Scriptural Reasoning, people would use what appeared to be shared terminology and would assume that everyone was in agreement about the meaning of this terminology. However, as the conversation progressed it would become clear that they were not using the terms in the same way. My observations prompted me to consider how people's motivations shape their *goals for participation* and their *perspectives on the benefits of participating* in Scriptural Reasoning – and interfaith dialogue more broadly – and how their motivations shape their *usage of* and *definitions of* shared terminology.

There are numerous academic and non-academic approaches to the question, 'What is interfaith dialogue?', which typically include indicating the goals and benefits of the practice. Within much of the discourse addressing this question (including Scriptural Reasoning discourse), there are buzzwords – such as 'peace', 'tolerance', 'understanding', 'friendship', and 'disagreement' – that are often implicitly presented as a common currency. There is little attempt, however, to explore how people within each religious tradition might define, shape, and describe these buzzwords differently in the context of interfaith dialogue, which is what I hope to address with this study.

My initial hypothesis was that there was a disparity between what were being identified as goals and/or benefits of Scriptural Reasoning (specifically: creating friendships with the religious other, improving the quality of disagreement, exercising mutual hospitality, learning about the scripture of the religious other, and learning about one's own scripture) and the goals or benefits according to the people attending these events. I wondered if this disparity between organisers' goals and participants' goals was also a larger problem with other types of interfaith dialogue. I was also curious if there were any major differences in the ways that Jews, Christians, and Muslims identified their goals or benefits for participating in interfaith dialogue.

## Methodology

I began by examining Scriptural Reasoning academic and non-academic discourse for any commentary about the practice itself. I gathered all available printed and online literature that directly discussed the practice of Scriptural Reasoning, and I reflected on my informal discussions with practitioners. I catalogued key words and phrases (e.g. words or phrases used when describing goals or benefits of the practice) and recorded any patterns (e.g. the repeated usage of specific phrases by different individuals, such as ‘improving the quality of disagreement’). As I noted the religious tradition of each author I started to see even more patterns that appeared to be specific to their affiliations. I broadened my search to include types of interfaith dialogue other than Scriptural Reasoning, looking both at non-Muslim and Muslim sources. I searched online for ‘interfaith’ and ‘interreligious’ organisations, and examined the website for each charity organisation that appeared to be involved in any type of interfaith work. In order to discern each organisation’s goals and benefits for dialogue, I combed through mission statements, vision statements, constitutions, program descriptions, and event descriptions, cataloguing key words and phrases from their promotional material. I expanded my search to include Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and secular organisations that had any type of interfaith or interreligious components (e.g. an interfaith program or event), and I catalogued key words and phrases from their promotional material. Similar to what I noticed in the Scriptural Reasoning material, I began to see patterns specific to religious tradition affiliations. For example, Christians tended to emphasise friendship and hospitality, whereas Muslims tended to emphasise the need for mutual understanding and mutual respect. I wondered if these patterns would exist in other types of material, so I expanded my search to include speeches delivered at interfaith events or to interfaith audiences, as well as widely distributed religious documents that are either meant for an interfaith audience or that somehow consider the topic of interfaith dialogue (e.g. *Nostra Aetate*, *A Common Word*, missionary training material). Finally, I searched online via Google and other search engines provided by the University Library, using the terms ‘interfaith’ and ‘interreligious’ to uncover both non-academic works (e.g. magazines, interviews, online forums) and academic works about interfaith dialogue. With all of these types of material, I categorised key words and phrases and noted patterns. I aimed to be as comprehensive as possible by casting my net widely and examining everything that was captured by my net.

After compiling all of my data, it became clear that I had enough material for a thesis just about the presence (and absence) of friendship language in the context of

interfaith dialogue. When writing up the material, I organised it according to the various patterns that I observed in my material, and I chose to feature organisations and other sources that exhibit those various patterns.

I recognise various limitations of my methodology. One limitation is that I only looked at English sources. For instance, although I did include sources from Jordan, I did not seek out sources in Arabic. Another limitation is that I did not identify any nuances of the regions and cultures represented in my material; there could be interesting differences in the ways friendship language is used within various regions or cultures. Nevertheless, I was able to gather a massive amount of material, and I was able to identify patterns of language that appear to be particular to the different religious traditions.

In this thesis, I will demonstrate – by using friendship as an example – that the assumption that everyone holds the same understanding of the various buzzwords is a fundamental problem that could have wide-reaching effects. For example, if a charity organisation's advertisement for an interfaith event highlights 'friendship' as a goal, certain people may not attend because if they don't even feel understood or respected by the religious other, friendship may seem a goal too far removed from their needs or desires. Similarly, if a Christian religious leader delivers a speech to a Muslim audience and he indicates his intention to develop interfaith friendships, this may not sit well with an audience of people who feel marginalised, largely misunderstood, and even unsafe.

My aim is to determine whether or not there is a shared understanding of the role of friendship in interfaith dialogue. In order to achieve this aim, I will survey material from general interfaith discourse and Scriptural Reasoning discourse to gain a better understanding of how friendship language is used by people who represent different religious traditions. I will include a wide variety of material, such as material published by charity organisations, speeches of religious leaders, and the language of religious documents (e.g. *A Common Word* or training material from a missionary organisation), as well as non-academic and academic discussions of interfaith dialogue. I will primarily focus on material authored by Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and by scholars of those religious traditions. I will note 1) whether friendship language turns up, and if so, where, 2) how interfaith friendship is defined or described, if at all. For example, it may be identified as a goal for participants of interfaith dialogue, and it may be described as something that requires other foundational attributes, such as trust. (My original plan also included ethnographic fieldwork of Scriptural Reasoning groups and Qur'ānic reading groups, however my medical circumstances ultimately thwarted those plans.) After surveying and classifying the claims about friendship in general interfaith discourse, as well as in

Scriptural Reasoning discourse, I will scrutinise this data by measuring it against the commitment to pay attention to the particularities of the traditions and scriptures, which is a commitment shared by more than just advocates of Scriptural Reasoning.

The material that I have surveyed is quite diverse, and when friendship language turns up, it is rarely accompanied by any explanation or at-length discussion. Therefore, I have attempted to build an understanding of what the authors may have intended, based on any sparse clues provided. Overall, I have not found any comprehensive theories of interfaith friendship, or material that could contribute to an extended theoretical discussion. Alternatively, I have endeavoured to identify broad tendencies, each of which can be illustrated by multiple similar instances. Much of the material I surveyed was in the form of hints, gestures, and vague claims – precisely because I am examining one of the ‘buzzwords’ of interfaith dialogue. I did my best to analyse and categorise the material – sometimes even at the risk of over-interpreting specific texts – but I believe that my broad conclusions will stand, even if my readers disagree with particular instances.

Nevertheless, I will show that 1) in all this material, there are variations in the declared motivations driving people to participate in interfaith dialogue (e.g. to meet new people, to develop friendships, to proselytise, to correct misperceptions, to correct misinterpretations of scripture), and 2) that participants’ motivations may shape their goals for participation or prompt them to notice different positive (or negative) byproducts of interfaith dialogue. I will ask whether the claims frequently made about interfaith friendship are appropriate for all of the participants in interfaith dialogue. Since people vary in their motivations for participating in interfaith dialogue, they will also likely vary in their definitions of, descriptions of, and responses to buzzwords such as ‘friendship’. For example, if a Christian is participating in interfaith dialogue with the hopes of converting others to Christianity, then she may see interfaith friendship as a necessary tool to achieve her goal. Alternatively, if a Muslim is participating in interfaith dialogue with the hopes of changing misperceptions of Muslims, then interfaith friendship may not even be on her mind.

What I have discovered is that the language surrounding interfaith friendship is *not* necessarily shared between those of different traditions. For example, Christians tend to talk about friendship *much more* frequently, and typically without concise definitions or descriptions of what interfaith friendship entails. Furthermore, they tend to use friendship language as if its meaning were obvious and widely shared. In contrast, friendship language in Muslim sources tends to be rare, and although I will provide examples of Muslims using friendship language in the interfaith context, these are the exceptions.

When statements about interfaith friendship do turn up in Muslim sources, it is normally with caveats – for example, it may be muted or ambivalent, or it may be borrowed from Christians. In combing through the Muslim material – the material that does contain friendship language and the material where friendship language is absent – a number of reasons become apparent as to why there are disparities between how Muslims and Christians approach interfaith friendship. For example, among Muslims, there is a marked preference for identifying mutual understanding and mutual respect as a main goal of interfaith dialogue. This appears to be due to the widespread perception that Islam is misunderstood, caricatured, despised, and even under threat – in non-Muslim contexts and globally. This results in Muslims being much more cautious in their usage of friendship language in the interfaith context. Although it is difficult to identify reasons for an absence, in my conclusion I will suggest some other reasons why friendship may be much less common in Muslim descriptions of interfaith dialogue.

This thesis does not contain an exhaustive catalogue of all claims about interfaith friendship, nor will it result in a universally acceptable definition of interfaith friendship. I am not suggesting that there exists a neutral interfaith lexicon that would be acceptable to everyone from every religious tradition, nor do I think such a thing *should* exist. What I am suggesting is that those who participate in and write about interfaith dialogue should pay better attention to the language they use when speaking to or writing about the religious other, in order to do more justice to the divergent meanings that their terms have for participants in different traditions. This is especially necessary for those participating in or writing about Scriptural Reasoning, since they have made such an explicit commitment to pay attention to the particularities of the traditions and the scriptures.

## Layout of Thesis

In Part 1, I will survey discourse on interfaith dialogue to determine how friendship is discussed. In Chapter 1.1, I will begin by surveying general interfaith dialogue material, meaning, not from the perspective of any specific religious tradition or from the perspective of any specific type of interfaith dialogue. I will look at material published by charity organisations, speeches of religious leaders, and the language of religious documents (e.g. *Nostra Aetate* or training material from a missionary organisation), as well as non-academic and academic discourse. I will illustrate how friendship language turns up in this material, noting if friendship is classified in a particular way (e.g. as a goal) or if it is described at all (e.g. as something that requires trust). In Chapter 1.2, I will focus on discourse on interfaith dialogue that is authored by Muslims or by scholars of Islam. As I

did in my survey of general interfaith dialogue material, I will look at charity organisations, speeches of religious leaders, religious documents (including *A Common Word*), as well as non-academic and academic discourse. I will illustrate how friendship language turns up in this material – if it turns up at all – in ways that are different from the general interfaith material. I will demonstrate that friendship language is noticeably absent from this material, and that other terminology tends to be highlighted instead (e.g. ‘mutual understanding’ and ‘mutual respect’). I will briefly turn to discourse on friendship in literature authored by Muslims or scholars of Islam but not related to interfaith dialogue (e.g. exegetical discussions about the Qur’ānic verses on friendship), in an effort to gain a better understanding of the potential reasons for the relative absence of friendship language in the context of interfaith dialogue.

In Part 2, I will focus on Scriptural Reasoning, since it is one type of interfaith dialogue within which especially strong claims are made about sensitivity to the particularity of each tradition and each scripture. In Chapter 2.1, I describe Scriptural Reasoning, and I highlight the commitment to particularity that is made by the founders of and many advocates for the practice. In addition to presenting textual examples from Scriptural Reasoning discourse, I will also draw from my many years of experience with the practice of Scriptural Reasoning. In Chapter 2.2, I present examples of friendship language in Scriptural Reasoning discourse, in which friendship is highlighted as a goal and byproduct of the practice, and I illustrate how it is described in a variety of ways. Finally, in the Conclusion, I will analyse of all of the data presented in Parts 1 and 2 in light of the attention to particularity in Scriptural Reasoning. I will begin by scrutinising the claims about friendship in the Scriptural Reasoning material, and then I will use the same focus – that of the commitment to particularity – as I scrutinise the general interfaith material presented in Part 1.

## **PART 1: FRIENDSHIP IN GENERAL INTERFAITH DIALOGUE**

## 1.1 FRIENDSHIP IN GENERAL INTERFAITH MATERIAL

Friendship language is not unique to writings about Scriptural Reasoning; the term ‘friendship’ is among the buzzwords such as ‘peace’, ‘tolerance’, and ‘understanding’, that are part of a widely shared vocabulary in the interfaith world. In this chapter I will demonstrate this claim by surveying promotional material from charity organisations, speeches from religious leaders, and widely distributed religious documents, as well as non-academic and academic discourse about interfaith dialogue. I will demonstrate that friendship language appears to be much more prominent in Christian sources than in sources from other religious backgrounds.

### Friendship Language in Charity Organisations

Advertisements are meant to grab people’s attention and to appeal to them in a way that affects their choices about what they want, what they need, and what they think they are missing in their lives.<sup>1</sup> Provocative buzzwords, repetitive headlines, and eye-catching illustrations are just a few examples of effective advertising techniques designed to generate an emotional response or to stimulate the intellect, and these techniques are not reserved for the world of commerce; charity organisations benefit from them, as well. The mission and vision statements of charity organisations advertise the purpose, objectives, and values of the organisation, and development officers are responsible for promoting the organisation with the texts and images that will have the most impact. For instance, the mission statement for the Interfaith Youth in Action organisation in Pakistan – a secular organisation that was founded by a Catholic – promotes engaging youth in friendly relationships. This mission is reflected in the organisation’s short term goals: “To develop a network of young people belonging to various religions in order to set an example of interfaith friendship and relationship in Pakistani society.”<sup>2</sup> The organisation’s marketing team suggests that the target audience wants, needs, or is missing ‘new friends’, and it shows the audience how to make a difference: by serving as a role models in Pakistani society.

Such language has a long history, and it has been used globally. For example, World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches<sup>3</sup> is an organisation that was formed in 1919. One of the Alliance’s pamphlets – published in 1943 – cites the

<sup>1</sup> Pajnik, Mojca and Petra Lesjak-Tüsek. “Observing Discourses of Advertising: Mobitel’s Interpellation of Potential Consumers.” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 26 (2002), 277-299, 278.

<sup>2</sup> “IYA-Pakistan.” *Interfaith Youth in Action*. Online. <http://www.iyapk.org/about-us.html>. Accessed 28 Jan 2014.

<sup>3</sup> I will refer to this organisation as “the Alliance” from now on.



purpose, a portion of which reads, “the promotion of international friendship and peace.”<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere in the pamphlet the members boast that the Alliance has “constantly brought together the religious leaders” and contributed “in no small degree to the Pact of Eternal Friendship between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.”<sup>5</sup>

Buzzwords such as ‘friendship’ in promotional material for charity organisations not only serve as a means to advocate ideals, but also as “passwords to funding and influence.”<sup>6</sup> As demonstrated in the Alliance’s pamphlet, generally buzzwords are vague in meaning and it is left up to the reader to identify context and conjure up connotations, though many times complementary images gesture towards meaning for the audience. Although this is not obviously the case for the Alliance’s pamphlet, it is for one of the other organisations I mentioned: Interfaith Youth in Action. The marketing team underscores its message by an image that connotes friendship: photographs of young and diverse people cheerfully engaged in dialogue. Another organisation, the Interfaith Dialogue Association in Michigan, aims to “promote friendship and trust among people of diverse religions and ideologies,” a mission emphasised by the display of different religious symbols alongside one another.<sup>7</sup>

There are numerous examples of charity organisations that indicate ‘friendship’ in promotional material other than mission and vision statements – for instance, in membership requirements or in the descriptions of specific programs. The Jerusalem Rainbow Group for Interreligious Study and Dialogue is a members-only organisation for Jewish and Christian academics and religious leaders. Members meet eight times per year to discuss theology and philosophy within the context of “religious life” and interfaith relations.<sup>8</sup> The organisation’s Steering Committee selects members that will maintain “respectful and friendly relationship[s]” and engage in “an open and honest exchange of ideas.”<sup>9</sup> As another older example, in 1942, the Chief Rabbi and the Archbishop of Canterbury in the U.K. founded The Council of Christians and Jews. They did not list

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<sup>4</sup> American Council. “World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches.” *War Information Center Pamphlets*. 705 (1943), 1-6, 1. Online. <https://utdr.utoledo.edu/islandora/object/utoledo%3A5162/datastream/OBJ/view>. Accessed 18 Jan 2017.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Cornwall, Andrea. “Buzzwords and Fuzzwords: deconstructing development discourse.” *Development in Practice* 17:4-5 (Aug 2007), 471-484, 471-472.

<sup>7</sup> “Goals of the IDA.” *Interfaith Dialogue Association*. Michigan, U.S.A. Online. <http://www.interfaithdialogueassociation.org/Goals.htm>. Accessed 27 Jan 2014.

<sup>8</sup> “About.” *The Jerusalem Rainbow Group: Interreligious Study & Dialogue*. Online. <https://rainbow-jerusalem.org/about/>. Accessed 4 July 2019.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

friendship in the core values<sup>10</sup>, nor in the constitution<sup>11</sup> for the organisation. Instead, they mentioned friendship within the descriptions of one of their three main programs: “Dialogue,” “Education,” and “Social Action.” They describe their Social Action program as one that builds “a network of support between our two communities, developing solidarity and sustaining friendships.”<sup>12</sup>

Friendship is also commonly identified as a goal for interfaith events. For instance, the Campus Ministry Association aims for event attendees to “develop friendships with students from other backgrounds,” and their advertisement is illustrated with silhouettes of people praying and religious symbols representing Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Shintoism, and Buddhism.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, an interfaith dialogue dinner at the Northern Ireland Dialogue Society is advertised with the sole goal of cultivating friendship, and the advertisement is embellished with a cross, a crescent moon, and the Star of David.<sup>14</sup> Alternatively, some interfaith dialogue event advertisements present friendship as a byproduct, such as with the poster for the event titled, “People of the book – the place of sacred scriptures in faith,” in which the specified goal is to gain a better understanding of others’ beliefs – which, according to the author(s), paves the way for friendships to develop.<sup>15</sup>

To indicate ‘friendship’ as an interfaith buzzword means that it is: 1) used on the assumption that it will have wide appeal to those who engage with interfaith organisations, 2) left vague, or filled out only by means of similarly vague words and images, and 3) capable of being interpreted in divergent ways.<sup>16</sup> It seems as if there must be *some* shared understanding of the meaning of this specific buzzword, though when there are gestures

<sup>10</sup> The core values are “promoting understanding, valuing difference, demonstrating empathy and respect, challenging prejudices.” “Our Vision.” *Council of Christians and Jews*. Online. <http://www.ccj.org.uk/about-us/our-vision/>. Accessed 4 July 2019.

<sup>11</sup> The Constitution includes the following phrases: “promote religious and cultural understanding,” “advance the elimination of religious and racial prejudice, hatred, and discrimination with particular reference to antisemitism,” and “promote religious and racial harmony.” *ibid*. “Our Constitution.” <http://www.ccj.org.uk/about-us/our-constitution/>.

<sup>12</sup> In their description of the Dialogue program, they mention “educate and respect,” and they describe the Education program as one that “foster[s] respect and understanding.” *ibid*. See the following pages from their website: “Social Action.” <http://www.ccj.org.uk/our-work/social-action/>. “Dialogue.” <http://www.ccj.org.uk/our-work/dialogue-2/>. “Education.” <http://www.ccj.org.uk/our-work/education/>.

<sup>13</sup> Campus Ministry Association. “Interfaith Dialogue.” *Christian Campus Fellowship*. Montana, U.S.A. Online. <http://www.rollaccf.org/interfaithdialogue>. Accessed 27 Jan 2014.

<sup>14</sup> “Forthcoming Events.” *Northern Ireland Dialogue Society*. 2 Mar 2012. Online. <http://nids.org.uk>. Accessed 28 Jan 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Cross, Simon. “Interfaith Dialogue Event.” *Voluntary Action North East Lincolnshire, England*. 15 Jan 2013. Online. <http://vanel.org.uk/va/2013/01/interfaith-dialogue-event>. Accessed 28 Jan 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Another important consideration is how these buzzwords influence the audience’s motivations or goals for attending interfaith dialogue events. Research on consumer behaviour suggests that advertisements can shape the consumer’s attitude about and goal(s) for using the product or service being sold. Thus, if for example friendship is highlighted on the advertisement for an interfaith dialogue event, is the reader potentially motivated toward – or even expecting – new friendships? In what ways could this motivation/expectation of friendship shape the way the participant interacts with others in the event? Alternatively, could the emphasis on friendship in the advertisement actually deter some of the audience from attending the event? These questions would be better addressed through ethnographic fieldwork.

towards a broader understanding of friendship, it is not clear if those, too, are shared.<sup>17</sup> For instance, the Dialogue Institute of the Southwest has a mission statement that includes several buzzwords (“mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation”), and it has an Annual Dialogue and Friendship dinner.<sup>18</sup> The organisation’s vision statement states that the founders envision a society in which people treat each other with dignity and “come around shared values to promote the common good.”<sup>19</sup> In this vision statement, the “shared values” are neither identified nor defined, and the promotional material for the interfaith dinner does not have any further elaboration about ‘friendship’. Another organisation, the Center for Interfaith Projects in North Dakota, maintains an organisational vision to build a community “in which religious strangers become – through respectful dialogue – religious friends.”<sup>20</sup> The following statement appears on the same page as the vision.

We agree with St Olaf Professor Anantanand Rambachan (Hindu) that people from different religions can “learn to trust one another and to accept the 'otherness' of the other...and see religious diversity not as a problem to be solved or as a threat to defend oneself against but as an opportunity for mutual enrichment, self-understanding, and friendship.”<sup>21</sup>

The quote identifies the professor as a Hindu, however it is not clear whether the ideas conveyed in the statement are particular to the Hindu tradition, and there don’t appear to be any other references that associate the organisation specifically with the Hindu tradition. Regardless, the Center’s vision touches on three buzzwords – community, respect, and friendship – and though the professor’s statement does not define the terms, it suggests that his idea of friendship, for example, involves trust and acceptance. As we saw, the Interfaith Dialogue Association in Michigan also pairs friendship and trust together, however from the very nature of vague buzzwords like this it is not clear whether these two organisations would share the same understanding of the two terms.

An Australian organisation, the Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission, has friendship language throughout its promotional material. Although the mission statement includes toned-down language about “interfaith relations,” there is more explicit friendship language in the description of how members of the organisation intend to carry out that

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<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, it would be odd to see detailed descriptions or in-depth discussions of the term friendship – or any other buzzword – in the context of these organisational and event advertisements.

<sup>18</sup> “About Us.” *Dialogue Institute of the Southwest*. Online. <http://www.thedialogueinstitute.org/about-us/>. Accessed 11 July 2019.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> “Home Page: Our Vision.” *Center for Interfaith Projects, North Dakota, U.S.A.* Online. <http://www.centerforinterfaithprojects.org/home.html>. Accessed 27 Jan 2014.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

mission.<sup>22</sup> Surprisingly, the friendship language appears in the ecumenical portion of the explanation, but not in the interfaith portion. For instance, the ecumenical portion states that members “promote joint witness to Christian faith” and “friendliness and charity between Catholics and other Christians with whom full ecclesial communion does not yet exist.”<sup>23</sup> The interfaith portion of the mission statement mentions that members “foster a spirituality which welcomes and appreciates what is positive in others as a gift from God” and “maintain relations through” various Vatican-based interfaith commissions.<sup>24</sup> Members of one of the organisation’s committees, the Catholic Interfaith Committee, wrote their own mission statement, which includes several other ‘buzzwords’ in the interfaith world, but ‘friendship’ is not among them. The committee members state that they are “committed to deepening dialogue and mutual respect between the Church and members of other religious traditions” and they seek to “contribute to a climate of peace in the world”<sup>25</sup> It is in the organisation’s program descriptions that we see more friendship language. The program to promote interfaith relations involves “[d]ialogue of everyday life where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations, developing individual friendships based on mutual trust which can lead to sharing their religious beliefs and experiences.” Within the guidelines for promoting interfaith relations is a page of testimonials from the organisation’s Christian members. Of the nine testimonials, four of them mentioned friendship.<sup>26</sup> The organisation also holds an annual “Catholic Jewish Friendship Dinner.”<sup>27</sup>

The organisation’s program for interfaith education at schools includes a declaration that mentions friendship. In a section entitled, “Principles of dialogue based on the official documents of the Church,” the author includes many quotes from *Nostra Aetate* that have to do with interreligious dialogue, and then makes the following comment.<sup>28</sup>

This exhortation has far-reaching consequences. It replaces ancient rivalries with friendship; it recognises the importance of culture and custom; it promotes honesty and transparency; it leads to mutual support; and it bears fruit in spreading peace in the world. It calls for active involvement.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> “Mission and Vision.” *Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission*. 2019. Online. <https://www.cam.org.au/eic/About-Us/Mission-and-Vision>. Accessed 5 July 2019.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> It is worth noting that throughout the promotional material for this organisation, members point to the work of the Second Vatican Council – both as work that they appreciate and as guidelines for the work they hope to accomplish. *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* “Catholic Interfaith Committee Mission Statement.” <https://www.cam.org.au/eic/About-Us/Interfaith-committee>.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* “Appendix III: Some stories from the dialogue of life.” <https://www.cam.org.au/eic/PropInterfaithRelations/6/>.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* “Interreligious Dialogue.” <https://www.cam.org.au/eic/PropInterfaithRelations/3/#zoom=z>.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* “Principles of dialogue based on the official documents of the Church.” <https://www.cam.org.au/eic/welcoming/index.html>.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

In the same program material, there is an explanation of “the dialogue of life,” which also contains friendship language. The author encourages students to show “consideration” toward the religious other in their school, which “could take the form of consciously befriending a neighbour of another religion or simply encouraging one’s children to play with their children.”<sup>30</sup> In a list of guidelines entitled, “Ten dispositions for interfaith dialogue,” the tenth reads: “Prepare to have doors opened to you: new understandings, new information, new friends.”<sup>31</sup> Finally, similar to other organisations, the Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission uses images to help promote their agenda. In this program material, we find images such as Buddhist children studying scripture, a Jewish child wearing a yarmulke and standing behind a menorah, and female Muslims kneeling during prayer.<sup>32</sup>

I have demonstrated that charity organisations frequently use ‘friendship’ as a buzzword in their promotional materials and mission statements. I have also illustrated that as a buzzword, ‘friendship’ is presented in a positive light, and it is largely vague in meaning and context. Finally, although it is not always possible to be precise about what background these organisations come from, most of them have strong Christian involvement or emerge from Christian backgrounds. Now I will turn to speeches at interfaith events to see whether or not the tendency to use friendship language can be extended to religious leaders.

## Religious Leaders Using Friendship Language

Another context in which friendship language is commonly deployed is in speeches at interfaith events. For over twenty years, Georg Evers has provided an annual report in *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* on the various interfaith activities around the world, which has been a gold mine of sorts for relevant examples. For example, Evers recalls a visit by Pope Benedict XVI to a synagogue in Cologne, Germany on World Youth Day 2005, his first interfaith effort as pope.<sup>33</sup> The Pope emphasised to the Jewish representatives the commitment of the Catholic Church to “continue with great vigor on the path towards improved relations and friendship with the Jewish People, following the decisive lead given by Pope John Paul II.”<sup>34</sup> The Pope also reaffirmed the Church’s

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* “Considerations for the care of students from other faiths who are in Catholic schools.” Promoting Interfaith Relations. <https://www.cam.org.au/eic/welcoming/index.html>.

<sup>32</sup> “Promoting Interfaith Relations.” *Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission*. 2019. Online. <https://www.cam.org.au/eic/welcoming/9/#zoom=z>. Accessed 5 July 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Evers, Georg. “Trends and Developments in the Field of Interreligious Dialogue.” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 15:2 (2005), 244-256, 253.

<sup>34</sup> His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. “Apostolic Journey to Cologne on the Occasion of the XX World Youth Day: Visit to the Synagogue of Cologne.” Vatican: The Holy See, 19 Aug 2005. Online. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2005/august/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20050819\\_cologne-synagogue\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/august/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20050819_cologne-synagogue_en.html). Accessed 27 Jan 2014.

commitment “to tolerance, respect, friendship, and peace between all peoples, cultures and religions.”<sup>35</sup> During this same visit to Cologne, the Pope met with representatives of Muslim communities and affirmed to them that “the Church wants to continue building bridges of friendship with the followers of all religions, in order to seek the true good of every person and of society as a whole.”<sup>36</sup> In these two examples the Pope frames friendship as a goal of interfaith dialogue. Rather than trying to attract donors, volunteers, or event attendees, he is promoting an agenda – the Church’s commitment – and in doing so he pulls from the same vocabulary bank used by the interfaith organisations, using buzzwords such as ‘friendship’. One might have expected a more in-depth presentation about how he or the Church envision this interfaith friendship (e.g. what are the conditions, boundaries, etc.) – especially considering the religiously diverse audience – though that level of detail may not have been appropriate for these particular events. Nevertheless, the fact that he uses the term ‘friendship’ in this way – without a fuller discussion – suggests that it is regarded as a term that does not require clarification.

Another Christian leader, His All Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Christian Church, utilises this same common word stock. At the 2008 Interreligious Meeting at the Day of Prayer for Peace, he assured the crowd that the members of the Ecumenical Patriarchate will continue in their efforts to be peacemakers and he supported his commitment by citing biblical passages, one of which he used as a basis for interfaith friendship: “We believe that ‘God is love’ (1 Jn. 4:16), which is why we are not afraid to extend our hand in friendship and our heart in love.”<sup>37</sup> By pointing to scripture Bartholomew gives us a glimpse into his understanding of this shared term. It appears that for him, friendship is an echo of God’s love. He hints at a richer interpretation of interfaith friendship by connecting it to his tradition’s theology, but he does not say enough to piece together a precise meaning. Of course, this type of clarification is not expected given that the objective for the Day of Prayer was not to explore differences, but to come together in solidarity to commit to world peace.

In 2009, Bartholomew met with leaders and laity in a New York Jewish Community. During this particular meeting he claimed, “We owe it – as Jews and Christians – to our common heritage, to imitate our forefather Abraham who received the unexpected visit of

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. “Address of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at the Day of Prayer For Peace on the Island of Cyprus.” *The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople*. 2009. Online. <http://www.patriarchate.org/documents/day-of-prayer-for-peace>. Accessed 27 Jan 2014.

the three strangers...[and] spontaneously shared with them his friendship.”<sup>38</sup> Here Bartholomew seems to suggest that the story of Abraham provides a scriptural imperative for interfaith friendship. Similar to the previous speech, he gestures to a fuller interpretation of interfaith friendship, but his comments are too brief and vague to allow for an in-depth analysis. Though this particular scriptural narrative is shared among the Jews and Christians, we are likely to find varied interpretations within and between the two traditions – for instance, we might find different ideas of how to emulate Abraham’s example. Even so, Bartholomew engages scripture in a way that clearly identifies ‘friendship’ as part of a shared language between these traditions, and he does so in a way that more explicitly supports the notion of interfaith friendship – more so than his previous statement about God’s love.

In his apparently final instalment of “Trends and Developments in Interreligious Dialogue,” Georg Evers reported on Pope Francis’s early efforts to make interreligious dialogue a priority. In his address to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 2013, Pope Francis mentioned friendship.<sup>39</sup>

The Catholic Church is aware of the value of promoting friendship and respect among men and women of different religious traditions cultures and religions. It is a challenge for the understanding of the faith and for the concrete life of the local Churches, parishes and very many believers. We do not impose anything, we do not use any deceitful strategy to attract faithful. As disciples of Jesus we must make an effort to overcome fear, ready always to take the first step, without letting ourselves discouraged in face of difficulties and misunderstandings.<sup>40</sup>

In his address, the Pope acknowledges the Church’s awareness of the “*value* of promoting friendship,” and in the context of the rest of his statement, it almost seems as if he is distancing the Church from using friendship as a tool of interreligious dialogue.<sup>41</sup> He also acknowledges that friendship is a tool for dialogue, but then he iterates that Catholics “do not impose anything” and “do not use any deceitful strategy.”<sup>42</sup> As I will demonstrate later in discussions of the relationship between friendship and evangelism, this kind of caveat is an important one. Nevertheless, the friendship language is present in the Pope’s speech and the topic of his speech is interreligious dialogue; this is an affirmation – albeit an unusually cautious one for a Christian source – of the importance of friendship in an interfaith context.

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<sup>38</sup> Patriarch Bartholomew, “Meeting with Jewish Community.”

<sup>39</sup> Pope Francis delivered this address on 28 Nov 2013. Evers, Georg. “Trends and Developments in Interreligious Dialogue.” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 24:2 (2014), 237-252, 242.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Emphasis of ‘*value*’ is my own. *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

As an illustration of collaborative claims about friendship among those of diverse traditions, the Russian Mufti Council erected a Ramadan tent in a Moscow park that is surrounded by a mosque, an Orthodox church, and a synagogue. The surrounding religious communities shared *Iftar* meals, an action that was deemed by the Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Jewish religious leaders as an “important contribution to interreligious dialogue and friendship.”<sup>43</sup> A Russian Orthodox leader commented that the Ramadan tent symbolised “a positive contribution to...and cooperation among the religions in addressing and solving common problems in society in a spirit of friendship and mutual respect.”<sup>44</sup>

A final example of religious leaders using friendship language concerns American Muslim leader, Imam W.D. Mohammed, who was a prominent figure among national and international interfaith dialogue efforts. In response to Imam Mohammed’s death in 2008, the Reverend James Massa, Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs in the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, stated: “The passing of W. D. Mohammed is a moment of sadness for all those who pursue the dialogue of friendship and mutual understanding between Islam and Christianity.”<sup>45</sup> In his statement, Rev. Massa portrays friendship as a foundational goal of interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Christians, as he announces interfaith dialogue as a “*dialogue of friendship*”.<sup>46</sup>

These examples illustrate the widespread use of friendship language by religious leaders in interfaith contexts. This type of language seems to be used most prominently and regularly by Christians, and it is seldom given much more content than what I found in the promotional materials for charity organisations. However, one main difference between the two categories of material is that the speeches tend to at least hint to richer interpretations, though they are not fully developed.

## Friendship Language in Religious Documents

There are many widely distributed religious documents, by which I mean, documents that are produced by or for some religious organisation, distributed through some official channel, and intended for a wide audience.<sup>47</sup> There are many religious documents that address interfaith dialogue, and quite a few of them contain friendship

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<sup>43</sup> Evers, Georg. “Trends and Developments in Interreligious Dialogue.” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 23:2 (2013), 234-250, 246.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Haney, Marsha Snulligan. “Envisioning Islam: Imam Mohammed and Interfaith Dialogue.” *The Muslim World* 99 (Oct 2009), 608-634, 611.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> There are different types of documents that could fit into this category (e.g. training material) and various ‘distribution channels’ (e.g. missionary organisation).



language. Two such documents in this category that are considerably influential are *Nostra Aetate* and *A Common Word*.<sup>48</sup>

*Nostra Aetate*, otherwise known as the “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions,” was passed by the Second Vatican Council<sup>49</sup> on 28 October 1965. This document expresses the Catholic Church’s commitment to engage in interfaith dialogue and to appreciate all faith traditions. It is frequently referred to as the origin of modern interfaith friendship efforts, therefore, so presumably one or more statements in this document have been interpreted as advocating interfaith friendship.<sup>50</sup> However, although a number of terms express the *notion* of friendship, friendship language is *not present anywhere* in either the original Latin document or its English translation. Most notably, there are not any derivatives of the word *amicitia* in the original Latin document, and the terms ‘interfaith friendship’ and ‘interreligious friendship’ do not appear in the official English translation, nor does the term ‘friendship’.<sup>51</sup> Typically when advocates for interfaith friendship reference *Nostra Aetate*, they do not reference specific quotes, so it is unclear as to which words or phrases they interpret as calls for interfaith friendship. I found that friendship, fellowship, ‘love thy neighbour’, and ‘God is Love’ seem to have become mutually interpreted in *Nostra Aetate* and in the discussion surrounding it.<sup>52</sup> After conducting a thorough investigation<sup>53</sup> of the development of *Nostra Aetate* – and of other related documents out of Vatican II – I found that friendship language *was used* by at least one Jewish source who met with the Pope prior to the document’s inception, and who is thought to have sparked the idea of the document’s creation. However, the Council chose *not* to use friendship language directly in *Nostra Aetate*, although there are other terms in the document that express the *notion* of friendship. The Council does express a close relationship or relationship building in the document, so it makes sense why people perceive friendship as a prominent idea. There are other Vatican documents – mainly internal documents intended for Catholic bishops – where friendship language does exist. However, it is still curious why when some people reflect on *Nostra Aetate*, they seemingly view it as being about interreligious friendship, despite the absence of direct calls for interreligious friendship in the document. The story of the rise to prominence of friendship

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<sup>48</sup> I will discuss *A Common Word* in the chapter of this thesis entitled, “Friendship in Muslim Interfaith Material.”

<sup>49</sup> From this point forward I will refer to the Second Vatican Council as ‘the Council’.

<sup>50</sup> In a previous section, I illustrated one example of someone imposing friendship language on this document, and I will provide more examples of this tactic throughout this chapter.

<sup>51</sup> These are just a couple of examples. *amicitia* is the Latin term for friendship.

<sup>52</sup> I am not suggesting that *Nostra Aetate* is the first document in which this happened, but there does appear to be a lot of material in which friendship, fellowship, love of neighbour, and love of God seem to be interchangeable.

<sup>53</sup> I had a 10,000 word excursus on *Nostra Aetate* and related documents, which I sadly had to cut to meet the final thesis word count limit.

language in Christian interfaith circles is complex, and I have discovered that *Nostra Aetate*, which has been identified by many as the origin of this movement, is not quite the direct call for interreligious friendship that later commentators have sometimes suggested. I have not been able to identify any similar document or source that could count as the main origin of friendship language in Christian interfaith contexts, though it is clear that the language has largely risen to prominence in the period since *Nostra Aetate*. It appears to be a more general cultural shift, rather than something with an easily traceable genealogy.<sup>54</sup>

Another example in this category is the document, “Decalogue of Assisi for Peace.”<sup>55</sup> The 2002 Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi culminated in this document of collaborative reflection, which was authored by 200 faith representatives of various religious traditions, cultures, and societies. The ten propositions begin with the words, “We commit,” and the ninth statement is a commitment to promote interfaith friendship.<sup>56</sup>

We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, for we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes the world to a growing risk of destruction and death.<sup>57</sup>

The Pope published the Decalogue in a letter sent to all heads of state and government, with the hopes of inspiring political and social action in their governments. It appears that the representatives agreed there is a link between friendship and solidarity and understanding, however that’s about all we can glean of their collective idea of friendship.<sup>58</sup>

In 2005, there was another interfaith gathering, this time involving 360 religious leaders, who represented fifty countries and various religious, political, and civic positions.

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<sup>54</sup> Google offers a handy tool, the Google Books Ngram Viewer, which allows users to search for terms or phrases and specify a date range to see how the terms or phrases have occurred in a digitised collection of books and periodicals over a specified date range. The examples come in the form of ‘snippets’, which are excerpts from the book or periodical that contain the term or phrase of the initial search on Google. Not all printed material has been digitised – and the digitised material is not always fully accessible – so this tool does not provide comprehensive results. However, this tool *does* provide a glimpse into the frequency and means of usage of phrases. I used this tool to search for ‘interreligious friendship’ and ‘interfaith friendship’ between the years 1800 and 2017, to see how many times these phrases appear in Christian-authored or Christian-influenced periodicals, and whether these phrases were used more after the release of *Nostra Aetate* in 1965. The phrase ‘interreligious friendship’ peaked as a hyphenated phrase in the early 1950s and the late 1970s, and without a hyphen in early to mid 1960s, late 1970s, and again around 2007. There was a spike in usage of the phrase ‘interfaith friendship’ around the mid to late 1940s and early 1950s, followed by another spike in the mid to late 1960s. At least according to this particular graphing of digitised records, the popularity of these phrases does not necessarily correlate with the release of *Nostra Aetate*.

<sup>55</sup> Hereafter I will call this ‘the Decalogue’.

<sup>56</sup> His Holiness Pope John Paul II. “Letter of John Paul II to all the Heads of State and Government of the World and Decalogue of Assisi for Peace.” Vatican: The Holy See, 24 Feb 2002. Online. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/letters/2002/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_20020304\\_capi-stato\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_20020304_capi-stato_en.html). Accessed 28 Jan 2014.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

The event was organised by a Catholic organisation in Rome that is run by laypeople and the Archdiocese of Lyon. Organisers chose ‘peace’ as the theme of the event.<sup>59</sup> Similar to the gathering in Assisi, the participants produced a document, which they titled, “Appeal for Peace.” First, the participants were divided into twenty-five groups for the purpose of three days of roundtable discussions. There were various topics, such as Muslim-Christian dialogue, John Paul II’s legacy, and interreligious dialogue after the events of September 11th in America. On the last day of the meeting, participants were put into groups according to their religion, where they prayed for peace. When everyone reunited for the finale, the participants “adopted an appeal for peace, which incorporated the results of the roundtable discussions.”<sup>60</sup> Within their appeal, the participants state the following: “Dialogue transforms strangers into friends and enables people to work together and fight against poverty and evil.”<sup>61</sup> I was unable to locate any breakdown of which religious groups authored each statement. However, it is perhaps worth noting that in the entire appeal – which is approximately 600 words in length – friendship is only mentioned once.

An intra-religious document in this category was authored by three hundred Christian delegates representing over sixty nations and a variety of denominations. They convened in 2010, to celebrate the World Missionary Conference.<sup>62</sup> In their final declaration, the participants alluded to the Gospel.

Remembering Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross and his resurrection for the world’s salvation, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called to authentic dialogue, respectful engagement and humble witness among people of other faiths – and no faith – to the uniqueness of Christ. Our approach is marked with bold confidence in the gospel message; it builds friendship, seeks reconciliation and practices hospitality.<sup>63</sup>

This statement involves people that represent different Christian denominations identifying friendship as one of the byproducts of interfaith dialogue, a result of their particular approach to ‘authentic dialogue’. This statement on its own does not clarify how the delegates apply the Gospel to their understanding of interfaith friendship, however there is

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<sup>59</sup> This event is the International Meeting on Men and Religions, which took place 11-13 Sept, 2005. The Sant'Egidio Community in Rome, Italy, and the Archdiocese of Lyon organised the event. The full official theme is: The courage to forge a spiritual humanism of peace.

<sup>60</sup> “News Archive 2005.” *Rissho Kosei-kai*. Online. [https://rk-world.org/newsarchive\\_2005.aspx#article28](https://rk-world.org/newsarchive_2005.aspx#article28). Accessed 3 Aug 2019.

<sup>61</sup> ZENIT Staff. “At Lyon, Religious Leaders Appeal for Peace.” *ZENIT*. 13 Sept 2005. Online. <https://zenit.org/articles/at-lyon-religious-leaders-appeal-for-peace/>. Accessed 3 Aug 2019. This particular source does provide the entire “Appeal for Peace.”

<sup>62</sup> Evers, Georg. “Trends and Developments in Interreligious Dialogue.” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 20:2 (2010), 229-244, 238.

<sup>63</sup> “Edinburgh 2010: Common Call.” *Centenary of the 1910 World Missionary Conference*. World Council of Churches, 2010. Online. [http://www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/Edinburgh\\_2010\\_Common\\_Call\\_with\\_explanation.pdf](http://www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/Edinburgh_2010_Common_Call_with_explanation.pdf). Accessed 2 Feb 2014.

published material that outlines the process by which the delegates arrived at this declaration, and it is in this material that we can glean a better understanding of how they understand interfaith friendship.

The World Missionary Conference actually marked the culmination of over two years of collaboration among this diverse group of Christians. Prior to the meeting, the delegates participated in smaller study groups in which they prepared material that was set to be discussed, debated, and refined at the conference.<sup>64</sup> They were given a guidebook outlining the study process, and this material shows that they see dialogue as part of the Christian mission, a way to serve as a witness to Jesus Christ, a witness to others about the Gospel: “dialogue is not an alternative to mission, but a specific way of being in mission.”<sup>65</sup> The guidebook explains that God has already been at work in people who have other convictions and their task therefore is “not to bring God along, but to witness to the God who is already there,” a statement that the authors indicate is inspired by Acts 17.<sup>66</sup> The guidebook also contains a directive to enter into interfaith dialogue “with an attitude of sharing and listening” in order to get to know others and create friendships.<sup>67</sup> Their foundational understanding of dialogue as mission – a foundation from which the interfaith friendship would emerge – is a uniquely Christian understanding and may not necessarily be shared by Jews and Muslims. I suspect, however, that there would be some overlap in their techniques. For example, I will demonstrate in another chapter that Muslims commonly seek to achieve mutual understanding and mutual respect through interfaith dialogue – goals that would require participants to share and listen.<sup>68</sup> In summary, although the guidebook clarifies the tradition-specific ground for the approach to interfaith dialogue, it does not provide any more detail about the expectation that friendship will emerge as one of the byproducts.

Thus far I have provided examples of friendship language in interfaith religious documents and an intra-faith Christian religious document. The next document in this category is interfaith, but limited to Jewish-Christian-Muslim. The Abrahamic Faiths Peacemaking Initiative is an interfaith collaborative that includes Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious leaders. The members of this organisation commissioned a Jew, a

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<sup>64</sup> *ibid.* “Edinburgh 2010 Study Process.” <http://www.edinburgh2010.org/en/study-themes.html>.

<sup>65</sup> Balia, Daryl and Kirsteen Kim, eds. *Edinburgh 2010 Volume II: Witnessing to Christ Today*. Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010, 46-47. Accessed via web: Edinburgh 2010 Study Process. Centenary of the 1910 World Missionary Conference. *World Council of Churches*, 2010. Online. [http://www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/Study\\_Process/reports/E2010%20II-whole-final.pdf](http://www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/Study_Process/reports/E2010%20II-whole-final.pdf). Accessed 3 Mar 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Acts 17 gives accounts of Paul and his companions using scripture to reason with Jews and Greeks about Jesus being the Messiah. *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> For examples of this language, see the chapter in this thesis entitled, “Friendship in Muslim Interfaith Material.”

Christian, and a Muslim – each of whom is a learned practitioner of her tradition – to write an interfaith study guide that could be adapted into any community (not just ‘Abrahamic’ communities) that seeks interfaith peace. In this interfaith study guide, the authors survey the Abrahamic traditions, looking specifically for resources that could be used to establish peace between members of these three religious traditions. Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, a Christian, uses friendship language throughout the guidebook. In the third chapter, which addresses interfaith hospitality, she describes – using buzzwords such as ‘understanding’ and ‘friendship’ – the various connections that can result from interfaith dialogue.

Specifically, she states that interfaith dialogue opens “new circles of friendship.”<sup>69</sup>

Immediately after this statement she quotes a Muslim, saying that he “affirms the value of interfaith encounters,” which seems to insinuate that he agrees with her description.<sup>70</sup>

However, it appears that instead of validating Kujawa-Holbrook’s statement about friendship, S. Asif Razvi cites goals of correcting incorrect interpretations and perceptions of Islam, as seen in the excerpt below.

In this way, S. Asif Razvi of the Islamic Center of Boston affirms the value of interfaith encounters: “Islam is a continuation of the other two Abrahamic faiths and it is every practicing Muslim’s obligation to inform others about our faith,” he says. “We find dialogue to be the best approach to inform non-Muslims and to correct the widespread misconceptions about Islam.”<sup>71</sup>

Although like Kujawa-Holbrook, Razvi expresses a desire for understanding (though not necessarily ‘mutual’ understanding, as he is more concerned about Muslims and their religion being understood) through interfaith dialogue, he says nothing about friendship.

In the same chapter on interfaith hospitality, Kujawa-Holbrook describes various paradigms of interfaith dialogue. One type that she introduces is the “Dialogue of Life,” which she says involves the daily natural encounters we have with the religious other, for example, through our work, school, and neighbourhood.<sup>72</sup> It is through this less-structured type of interfaith dialogue that we have “the capacity to form friendships across religious difference,” which she says “is integral to building interfaith communities.”<sup>73</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook offers suggestions on ways to cultivate the dialogue of life, such as hosting open houses in each other’s houses of worship, and hosting smaller, monthly interfaith “supper

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<sup>69</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook, Sheryl A, Olga Bluman, and Aziza Hasan. *For One Great Peace: An Interfaith Study Guide*. Los Angeles, CA: Abrahamic Faiths Peacemaking Initiative, 2000, 10. Online. <http://abrahamicfaithspeacemaking.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/For-One-Great-Peace-Study-Guide.pdf>. Accessed 5 Mar 2014.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, 10.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, 10.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, 13.

club[s],” during which attendees share a meal and conversation in each other’s houses “and build friendships.”<sup>74</sup>

In the section that covers peacemaking in Christianity, Kujawa-Holbrook provides excerpts from the New Testament that she says will help Jews, Christians, and Muslims develop peace and understanding with each other. Two of the nine excerpts that she selects contain friendship language. One comes from Matthew 26, when Judas – accompanied by some Jewish leaders – appears in front of Jesus and the disciples, revealing himself as the one who betrays Jesus. Jesus addresses Judas as ‘friend’.<sup>75</sup> The second excerpt comes from Galatians 5, the apostle Paul addresses the Christians of Galatia as ‘my friends’ when explaining that they should be gentle with those who transgress.<sup>76</sup> Whilst neither scriptural excerpt directly links friendship and interfaith dialogue, they implicitly suggest such a link. In the first excerpt, Jesus calls Judas – who has betrayed him to the Jews, and as I said, who is standing with Jewish leaders – a friend. Given Judas’s story, this is perhaps a strange narrative to use to illustrate interfaith friendship. In the second scriptural excerpt that Kujawa-Holbrook chose, Paul tells the Christians to be gentle with those who transgress, and he cautions them against transgressing. Since she chose these excerpts for the topic of interfaith peacemaking, it appears that she is suggesting that Christians, Jews, and Muslims ought to follow Jesus’s and Paul’s examples.

The Jewish author of the study guide, Olga Bluman, uses friendship language only once in the section that covers peacemaking in Judaism, where she provides five different Jewish prayers for peace. One of the prayers is excerpted from *Mishkan Tefilah, a Reform Siddur*, which is a prayer book used in Reform Jewish congregations. A line in the prayer reads, “Strengthen the bonds of friendship and fellowship among all the inhabitants of our world.”<sup>77</sup> Interestingly, Bluman does not use friendship language in her own writing in any of her three lessons, which cover the topics of biblical laws that dictate how to interact with the religious outsider, war and peace, and kindness.<sup>78</sup>

The Muslim author, Aziza Hasan, uses friendship language three times in her section of the guidebook, all of which appear in her third lesson on the topic of conflict resolution. This is one of the few examples I have found amongst these religious

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<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>75</sup> She quotes Matthew 26: 47-56. *ibid.*, 40.

<sup>76</sup> She quotes Galatians 5:22-6:5. *ibid.*, 41.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>78</sup> In another chapter I will discuss Muslim usage of friendship language in interfaith material, and then in the conclusion of the thesis I will briefly address what I observed in Jewish interfaith material. When I do so, I will discuss Bluman’s language in this particular document. See the chapter in this thesis entitled, “Friendship in Muslim Interfaith Material.”

documents where a Muslim author has used friendship language directly – and actually, I will demonstrate that she uses it more indirectly. She does not use friendship language in the first two lessons, which cover how to respect Divine will and the practice of peacemaking. In her introduction to conflict resolution, Hasan acknowledges that it is tempting to avoid conflict all together. She declares that “[h]onest conversations are essential in relationship and peace building.”<sup>79</sup> After again recognising the tendency for people to avoid confrontation, she quotes Emerson, who says that it is “better to be a thorn in the side of your friend than his echo.”<sup>80</sup> Hasan then reiterates that we should be honest with each other if we “care about the relationship.”<sup>81</sup> Notice that she does not use the friendship language herself, rather, she uses Emerson’s quote. In her own language, she is more vague about the relationship status, and chooses not to name it.

Hasan’s second use of friendship language comes after she introduces a small group activity. She instructs group members to read through and discuss various excerpts from the Qur’ān that somehow speak to the topic of conflict resolution.

But [since] good and evil cannot be equal, repel thou [evil] with something that is better and lo! he between whom and thyself was enmity [may then become] as though he had [always] been close [unto thee], a true friend! And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint, - none but persons of the greatest good fortune.” (Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 41:34-35)<sup>82</sup>

Immediately following the scriptural excerpts, Hasan suggests several discussion questions that the group members may ask of each other. One of her questions contains friendship language.

Turning the other cheek is something that one does when they have power, not because they are weak. We become stronger when we win our enemies into being our friends. How does the Quran advocate this? How easy do you think this will be to implement in your life?

In her question, Hasan seems to reflect the verse from the Qur’ān, rather than making a personal statement about friendship. In the next chapter I will cover friendship language in Muslim interfaith material, but here I will briefly say that Hasan chose a verse from the Qur’ān that does not specifically address friendship with non-Muslims, or even with Jews and Christians – rather, it addresses conflict in general. There are a number of verses in the Qur’ān that do specifically address relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims –

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<sup>79</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook, Bluman, and Hasan, 58.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, 58.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, 58.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, 60.

and several that specifically address the relationships between Muslims, Jews, and Christians – and friendship is not really advocated in these verses. So, Hasan’s verse selection is noteworthy, something I will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter.<sup>83</sup>

Overall in this interfaith study guide, Kujawa-Holbrook appears to be the only one that points to friendship as something foundational to interfaith dialogue. It is worth noting that she wrote a large majority of the guidebook, so she may have had some influence on the ways in which friendship language appeared in Bluman’s and Hasan’s chapters. Bluman and Hasan each employed friendship language in seemingly cautious and almost detached manners – through quotes from other authors, prayers, and scriptural excerpts.

Friendship language appears in a lot of religious documents, though primarily in cases where the document comes from Christian sources or from an interfaith group with a significant Christian membership. Similar to what I illustrated in the previously examined sources, friendship is presented in vague ways, though there seems to be a clearer variety in how it is used. Of the documents I have discussed in this section, we’ve seen friendship classified as a goal of interfaith dialogue, as a byproduct, and as both goal and a byproduct. The authors of the interfaith document, Decalogue of Assisi, underline friendship as a goal of interfaith dialogue – a goal that somehow involves solidarity and understanding. The authors of the “Appeal for Peace,” created by participants of the 2005 meeting in Lyon, proclaim that through dialogue, strangers will be transformed into friends. They do not provide any detail about what the friendship entails. In the Christian intra-faith document produced by members of the World Missionary Conference, the members declare that interfaith dialogue is part of the Christian mission, and they present friendship as a byproduct of interfaith dialogue. They claim that the acts of sharing and listening both lead to friendship. Similar to the members of the World Missionary Conference, the Methodist authors highlight sharing and listening as actions required to build friendships. In the final document – the ‘Abrahamic’ interfaith study guide – the Christian author recognises friendship as a byproduct of interfaith dialogue in listing it as one of the various ways people can connect through dialogue. She also classifies friendship a goal of interfaith dialogue when she suggests that building friendships with the religious other is an integral part to forming interfaith communities.

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<sup>83</sup> See the chapter in this thesis entitled, “Friendship in Muslim Interfaith Material.”



## Friendship Language in Non-Academic Material

There are plenty of non-academic books and articles that cover the topic of interfaith dialogue. This type of material contains more friendship language, and compared to the spatial limitations of mission statements and event descriptions, there is more room to elaborate on interreligious friendship. For instance, in an article in *The Interfaith Observer*, Vern Barnet, a former event planner, reflects on the success of an interfaith event that occurred shortly after September 11th. He points to three key features that made the event “valuable and worthy of imitation by interfaith leaders,” and the first involves the selection of speakers at the event: rather than bringing in a well-known speaker, select one from the local community.<sup>84</sup> Barnet attests that local speakers “enlarge a circle of friendships before, during and after” an event.<sup>85</sup> He reports that “interfaith authorities” claim that “information is important,” but “building relationships is primary.”<sup>86</sup> One of Barnet’s other noted features entails guiding the questions asked in small group sessions. Instead of having session participants recite creeds at this particular event, a local priest facilitated more personal discussions about their individual experiences with their faiths. Barnet maintains that these personal questions “lead not to theological arguments but to friendships,” and to him, friendship is the best “context for understanding others’ faiths.”<sup>87</sup> In Barnet’s article we get more of a sense of how he understands interreligious friendship: it is the foundation upon which we understand the religious other, and it involves sharing personal experiences of faith and sharing a sense of community (i.e. opting for the local speaker instead of someone from the outside).

In another article from the same publication, Paul Knitter<sup>88</sup> discusses his understanding of and experience with interreligious friendship. Whereas Barnet identifies ‘building relationships’ as the primary need for interreligious dialogue, Knitter calls interreligious friendship “necessary and possible” for dialogue.<sup>89</sup> Similar to Barnet, Knitter asserts that by grounding interreligious dialogue in interreligious friendship, people share a deeper understanding of one another. He takes the explanation further than Barnet by claiming that interreligious friendship results in people sharing a deeper respect. This

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<sup>84</sup> Barnet, Vern. "Three Tips for Grassroots Interfaith Organizers." *The Interfaith Observer*. 10 Nov 2011. Online. <http://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2011/11/10/three-tips-for-grassroots-interfaith-organizers.html>. Accessed 23 Apr 2014.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Paul Knitter is an academic author, as well, but here he writes in a non-academic context.

<sup>89</sup> Knitter, Paul F. "Wedded to Dialogue: Building Interfaith Bridges with Your Spouse." *The Interfaith Observer*. 15 Feb 2014. Online. <http://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2014/2/15/wedded-to-dialogue.html?rq=building%20interfaith%20bridges%20with%20your%20spouse>. Accessed 23 Apr 2014.

respect is not solely due to the concerns they have in common, it is also because they care about each other.<sup>90</sup> He acknowledges that while this claim cannot “be proven,” “it can be experienced.”<sup>91</sup> In relating his story about his interreligious friendship with his wife, Knitter explains how interreligious friendship requires people to engage in each other’s “otherness,” asking one another questions such as, *what is moving and satisfying about our religious experiences*, and *what aspects of our religions bring us joy?*<sup>92</sup>

For Barnet and Knitter, friendship is a tool to get to know the religious other. There is another way in which friendship is presented as a tool in interfaith literature: in discussions of ‘friendship evangelism’. In an article on the website for the *Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry*, Tony Miano describes the widespread Christian practice of friendship evangelism. He identifies the “overarching principle” of the practice as befriending non-Christians “with the hope of one day having the opportunity to share” the Gospel with them.<sup>93</sup> He maintains that it is quite common to dedicate as much time as necessary (years, if needed) to “develop a relationship with an unsaved person,” and this time investment is seen as an honour for the Christian that will hopefully result in the “right” to present the Gospel.<sup>94</sup> Miano cites five passages from the Bible “to support the practice of friendship evangelism,” noting that these are not the only such passages.<sup>95</sup> None of the scriptural excerpts appear to explicitly instruct Christians to employ friendship as an instrument to convert non-Christians.

In another article for the same organisation, Miano addresses a friend’s specific question about how she should approach ‘friendship evangelism’ with the friends she had prior to her commitment to Christianity. Surprisingly, he begins his answer with an admittance and explanation that contradict what he said in his previous article. He states: “there is no biblical support for this methodology and/or philosophy for ministry.”<sup>96</sup> Labelling the practice as a “tradition,” Miano critiques the various approaches to friendship evangelism that can result in failure. He explains that many times Christians prioritise the friendship above the goal of evangelising. For example, a Christian might be worried that proselytising – or even bringing up the topic of Jesus – may jeopardise the friendship.<sup>97</sup> He quotes John 15:13 in an effort to support his criticism of the Christians who put the

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Miano, Tony. "What is Friendship Evangelism." Slick, Matt, ed. *Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry*. Online. <https://carm.org/what-is-friendship-evangelism>. Accessed 13 July 2019.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> The five excerpts he references are Matthew 5:16, Luke 7:34, John 4:1-42, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, 1 Peter 3:15. *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Miano, Tony. "Friendship Evangelism Is Neither Friendship Nor Evangelism." *Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry*. Online. <https://carm.org/friendship-evangelism>. Accessed 13 July 2019.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*

friendship ahead of the souls of their “lost friends.”<sup>98</sup> He concludes his argument with the following statement.

God, by His grace, chooses to use His children to communicate the life-saving gospel to a lost and dying world. No one goes to Heaven because we've made friends with them, and no one goes to Hell because we've failed to establish relationships with them.<sup>99</sup>

Miano's statement appears to say that friendship evangelism is not necessary. Taken together, his two articles shed light on the widespread practice of friendship evangelism, including the potential pitfalls for the Christians who participate in it.

There is another religious document that strikes a similar – albeit gentler – note to Miano.<sup>100</sup> The United Methodist Volunteers in Mission released a training guide for potential missionaries in which the authors constantly emphasise that missionary volunteers should be friendly.<sup>101</sup> For instance, missionary applicants must obtain a letter of recommendation from a pastor, and the pastor *must* mention that the applicant is “friendly.”<sup>102</sup> When missionaries arrive at their project site, they must be “warm, friendly, and personable” during the initial greetings, which is “an important time for building relationships.”<sup>103</sup> In order to be “effective,” they must be willing “to serve in friendship and mutuality with the host and the host church”<sup>104</sup>

The authors also emphasise that missionaries should be prepared to make a lot of new friends through their work, because friendship is instrumental in sharing the Gospel. The authors outline the goals of the missionary trip, one being to build “friendships and intercultural understanding,” which they deem “more important than the work (physical and other) at the project site.”<sup>105</sup> When outlining the evangelistic goals of the trip, the authors inform missionaries that they must “[l]isten to and learn from” their “new friends in Christ.”<sup>106</sup>

The authors describe the various roles and duties available to missionaries, and they include in their descriptions the ways in which friendship plays a part. For example, missionaries may decide to lead the kitchen patrol, which entails developing a rota for

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<sup>98</sup> “...‘Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends’ (John 15:13).” *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Although there is a section above where I cover religious documents, it made more sense to include this example here, since it relates to Miano's comments about friendship evangelism.

<sup>101</sup> See for example, United Methodist Church Global Board of Global Ministries. *United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Training Manual for Mission Volunteers*. New York, NY: General Board of Global Ministries, 2002, 23.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, 86.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, 24.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, 31.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, 18.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*, 44.

kitchen duties and ensuring that there is a “good mixture of team members.”<sup>107</sup> Team members should assist even if the local hosts are preparing and serving the food, for doing so “creates a feeling of oneness with the host group and goes a long way toward exhibiting true friendship.”<sup>108</sup> Another role available to missionaries is “scrapbook keeper,” which involves creating a scrapbook that showcases various aspects of the missionaries’ home life. By sharing these scrapbooks with the local people, the missionaries are offering a “small gesture” that “has proven to be very successful in creating and extending friendships.”<sup>109</sup>

Through friendship evangelism, friendship is instrumentalised for the service of mission. Another example of friendship being used as an instrument is illustrated with David Shenk’s book that supports his “conviction that every Muslim should have a Christian friend and every Christian should have a Muslim friend.”<sup>110</sup> He aims to teach his audience – either those who wish to live and serve among Muslims or those who feel a prompt from God to engage with Muslims – how to cultivate a “real relationship” with Muslims.<sup>111</sup> Shenk writes from the perspective of a lifelong Mennonite missionary: his parents were missionaries in Tanzania and as an adult he was a missionary in Somalia (ten years) and Kenya (six years), along with his wife and children.

Shenk explains that there are “seven commitments” that distinguish the Mennonite Church, one of which is a commitment to bring “all of life under the authority of God.”<sup>112</sup> He likens this commitment to that of *tawḥīd*, which he understands as the Muslim commitment to bring every area of life under God’s authority. He notes that what makes these two commitments different is that Jesus is the centre for Anabaptists, whereas for Muslims, “it is the Qur’an that reveals the nature of the will of God.”<sup>113</sup> Shenk acknowledges that he is aware of verses in the Qur’an that warn Muslims against forming friendships with Christians – and he even provides an example of a verse that specifically warns Muslims that Christians may potentially have ulterior motives – yet he pursues friendship for the purpose of witnessing and eventually converting. In a chapter entitled, “Live with integrity,” Shenk highlights Qur’ān 58:14-19, a passage he says warns Muslims against duplicity and against friendships with Christians that “might be a facade with ulterior motives lurking

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<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*, 137.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, 138.

<sup>110</sup> Shenk, David W. *Christian. Muslim. Friend: Twelve Paths to Real Relationship*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2014, 19.

<sup>111</sup> Shenk uses this terminology, ‘real relationship’, throughout the book. *ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*, 20.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*, 20.

beneath the surface.”<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, he acknowledges that he is aware of *dar al Islam*, which he believes exists to protect the integrity of the Muslim community, including protecting Muslims from leaving the community.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, he and his mission strive to coax Muslims into the Christian community by offering things that the Muslim community needs, such as medical or educational facilities. He acknowledges that he is aware of the Somalian rules against proselytising, yet he and his mission enter into the country with the intent of doing just that. He justifies their actions by claiming that 1) they are there to share the Gospel, and 2) actually only God can convert people. Shenk detects a distinction between proselytising and invitation/witnessing/mission. He admits to “using discretion” in explaining who he is (pastor, teacher, scholar, professor, tourist, businessman), and to avoid deception he completes a task according to whatever role he is playing that day (eg. go sightseeing when playing the role of a tourist).<sup>116</sup>

Some of the material I have explored in this section confirms the picture I have been painting – that of fairly vague, positive claims about friendship that are sometimes tied to other buzzwords such as ‘understanding’ and ‘respect’. However, I introduced one significant new factor in the non-academic material: a more fully and clearly articulated account of interfaith friendship, in which friendship is used as an instrument for the sake of evangelism. This is a significant part of the overall picture, and it is one I will return to later.

## Friendship Language in Academic Discourse

When encountering friendship language in academic discourse about interfaith dialogue, one might expect to find more detailed explanations about what exactly this type of friendship entails. However, although some of the academic discussions are more detailed, there still appears to be a large amount of vagueness, similar to what we have seen from charity organisations, and in the speeches of religious leaders, religious documents, and non-academic discourse. Academics have just as much of a tendency to use ‘friendship’ as a common currency, without elaborating on its meaning or parameters. In this section I will survey academic material on interfaith dialogue<sup>117</sup> in search of the

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<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, 31.

<sup>115</sup> In a footnote, Shenk briefly describes his understanding of *dar al-Islam*, and introduces his readers to another term, *umma*, which he defines as Muslim community. He informs his readers that he will use the two terms interchangeably. However, it is not really appropriate to consider *dar al-Islam* and *umma* as synonyms, and given the ways in which Shenk employs the terms, *umma* is the more accurate term to use. In modern usage, *umma* refers to the Muslim community as a whole, and it can be further specified regionally (*Umma* of Somalia). The geographically and politically defined concept of *dar al-Islam* was dissociated from the more universalistic term ‘*umma*’ following Western colonial rule, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and the abolishment of the caliphate. *ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, 39.

<sup>117</sup> In this section, I will not include any academic material on interfaith dialogue that is specifically about Scriptural Reasoning. For that particular material, see the chapter in this thesis entitled, “Friendship in Scriptural Reasoning Material.”

various ways in which friendship language appears. Whilst classifying this data, three categories in particular emerged – two of which share similarities with categories I have noted in other sections of this chapter. The first category is the tendency to prioritise interreligious friendship ahead of other goals, and the second is the tendency to see interreligious friendship as an instrument. The third category I identify is of discussions in which interreligious friendship is said to involve a transcendent third party. In this third category there are examples that provide a somewhat richer exploration of both the definition of interfaith friendship and what it involves. Of course, there are numerous other examples of friendship language that do not neatly fit into a category, and I will discuss some of these at the end of this section.

### **Prioritising Interreligious Friendship**

A recurrent theme in academic discourse on interfaith dialogue is to suggest that interreligious friendships should be formed *before* working towards understanding, respect, or similar attributes with the religious other. Such a theme appears in one of Perry Schmidt-Leukel's works on interfaith dialogue, in which he mentions the 2005 interfaith event in Lyon, an event I discussed in a previous section.<sup>118</sup> He recalls one of the statements in the "Appeal for Peace," authored by the event's participants, which happens to be the one statement with friendship language.

A major inter-faith gathering, which took place in Lyon (11-13 September 2005) and which brought together 360 leaders from 10 different faith communities, expressed the transformation that may happen through inter-faith encounter with the appropriate words: 'Dialogue transforms strangers into friends'.<sup>119</sup>

Schmidt-Leukel sets up this particular quote by saying it includes the "appropriate words," and he offers an interpretation, "that partners in dialogue progressively acquire a better mutual understanding."<sup>120</sup> Notably, in his commentary on the event, he does not mention friendship, rather, he describes the terms and benefits of mutual understanding.<sup>121</sup> However, further along in Schmidt-Leukel's discussion, it begins to become apparent that in the context of interfaith dialogue, he seems to put friendship *before* understanding, as illustrated in the following quote.

When strangers are really transformed into genuine friends – across the borders of religious communities – it is quite evident that we cannot be friends with a religious

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<sup>118</sup> See the section in this chapter entitled, "Friendship Language in Religious Documents."

<sup>119</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, Perry. *Transformation by integration: how interfaith encounter changes Christianity*. London: SCM, 2009, 43.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

stereotype... We can only be friends with a concrete person and then – perhaps, hopefully – learn how our friend in his or her life is nourished, sustained, guided and comforted by certain features of a complex religious tradition.<sup>122</sup>

Here he appears to indicate that we form the interreligious friendship first, then we form an understanding of the religious other.<sup>123</sup>

Schmidt-Leukel cautions against seeing the religious other through the lens of a particular stereotype, which, according to him, distorts the view of the individual and ultimately thwarts interreligious friendship. He specifically calls out interfaith organisations for tempting people to view the religious other not as an individual, but as “the Buddhist, the Hindu, the Muslim,” and so on.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, he urges people to acknowledge their history of extreme prejudice against the religious other. Schmidt-Leukel again demonstrates that friendship comes before understanding when he declares that “inter-religious learning and friendship” will not only challenge prejudices, but will also lead to understanding of the religious other.<sup>125</sup> In an effort to combat these stereotypes and prejudices, he suggests an anthropological approach to interfaith friendship, by which people seek to understand other religions through the eyes of those who practice them, as well as to understand their own religions through the eyes of the religious other. He attests that by doing so one will achieve “a more realistic perception and understanding.”<sup>126</sup> He takes a similar approach to “inter-religious criticism,” offering what he deems an ideal version of criticism, which ought to be articulated “as friends do,” slowly, honestly, and without hypocrisy – and he encourages people to listen when “our friends in the other traditions” offer criticism.<sup>127</sup>

Paul Knitter offers a similar explanation about interreligious friendship and ‘interreligious criticism’. He remarks that it is only upon the foundation of interreligious friendship that people “learn from their differences” and “live with differences that cannot be learned from.”<sup>128</sup> He maintains that these interreligious friendships “can teach us things that can be taught in no other way” and that this mutual learning sets the stage for disagreements, which creates more opportunities for learning.<sup>129</sup> Knitter’s description of

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<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, 44.

<sup>123</sup> Of course, one could argue that this is a natural progression for a friendship: we become friends with someone based on commonality (things in common, mutual friends, etc.), and over time we get to know the person better. However, interreligious friendships can be a bit more delicate, in that we have fundamental differences and a complicated history of religious relations, thus there is a greater requirement for vulnerability – and greater risk – in the formation of these friendships.

<sup>124</sup> Schmidt-Leukel, 44.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*, 45.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*, 43.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*, 45.

<sup>128</sup> Knitter, Paul F. *Introducing theologies of religions*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002, 210.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, 223.

interreligious friendship is analogous to that of Schmidt-Leukel: Knitter describes a process of sorts, in which people become interreligious friends first, and then they accept – and learn to “live with” – the beliefs and practices from the other religions that they once saw as contradictory to the ones they “hold to be to be true and urgent.”<sup>130</sup> This acceptance is due to the respect and care that they have for their interreligious friends; they respect that their friends hold the ‘contradictory’ beliefs and practices as “true and urgent”.<sup>131</sup> For Knitter, it is not necessary that the interreligious friends resolve these particular contradictions, although, he says that as interreligious friends continue to study and converse together, they may realise how, for example, “the two contradicting claims between the uniqueness of Jesus and the uniqueness of knowledge of Brahman might be resolved.”<sup>132</sup> Knitter calls this type of dialogue “ethical” and “globally responsible,” and claims that the interreligious friendships that are formed will be stronger “in the shared experience of truly loving and acting for the well-being” of the religious other.<sup>133</sup> According to him, Christians will gain much from these friendships – with the religious other they will get practice in exercising respect and patience, and they will benefit from knowledge and enrichment. Knitter is convinced that Christians will also “be able to clarify, confirm, even correct the theologies that they bring to the dialogue.”<sup>134</sup>

### **Interreligious Friendship as an Instrument**

Another common trope in academic discourse on interfaith dialogue is to situate interreligious friendship as an instrument that can be used for some type of gain, similar to what I demonstrated in a previous section.<sup>135</sup> For example, Knitter characterises friendship as an instrument, however, rather than using friendship as an instrument for proselytising, he employs it in an effort to improve Christian *intra-religious* friendships. He does not signify that this is the only purpose for interreligious friendship, however, he asserts that “*inter-Christian* dialogue needs the help of *interreligious* dialogue.”<sup>136</sup> He describes the chain reaction that happens when Christians become friends with non-Christians: their interreligious dialogue nurtures and clarifies theology and allows Christians the opportunity to practice sharing and learning, which in turn nurtures and animates the intra-religious

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<sup>130</sup> *ibid.*, 210.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, 224.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> See in this chapter the section entitled, “Friendship in Non-Academic Material.”

<sup>136</sup> Knitter is responsible for the emphasis on ‘inter-Christian’ and ‘interreligious’. *ibid.*, 246.



friendships. He argues that Christians' "shared ethical dialogue" with the religious other enlivens and guides the intra-religious "shared theological dialogue."<sup>137</sup>

Similar to Knitter – who uses interreligious friendship as an instrument to clarify theology – James L. Fredericks uses interreligious friendship as an instrument for comparative theology. Fredericks suggests that Christians who are interested in comparative theology – perhaps as a response to religious diversity – should "cultivate friendships" with the religious other, and he attests that these interreligious friendships will "bear fruit in ways we do not fully anticipate today."<sup>138</sup> Specifically, he instructs that in order to do comparative theology, "Christians will do well to develop deep and abiding friendships with the religious other as a useful way to disagree with honesty and depth."<sup>139</sup> In an effort to provide insight into interreligious friendship, Fredericks makes a distinction between *agapē* and *philia*. *Agapē*, he says, is the unconditional love that Jesus commands Christians to show to friends and enemies, thus, he says, Christians ought to view the religious other in light of this command.<sup>140</sup> *Philia* is preferential, reciprocal, and according to Fredericks, the type of love that aids Christians in doing comparative theology.<sup>141</sup> Whereas *agapē* is a mandate for Christians to love the religious other, Fredericks sees *philia* as a call for Christians to become friends with the religious other, which is "based on the innate attractiveness of their actual beliefs and religious practices."<sup>142</sup> He believes that if Christians only exercise *agapē* with the religious other they will find it difficult to do comparative theology. On the other hand, if Christians cultivate interreligious friendships that involve both *agapē* and *philia* will make comparative theology less challenging.<sup>143</sup> Fredericks insists that interreligious friendships help Christians overcome fear of the stranger, which is essential if they wish to do comparative theology.<sup>144</sup>

### **Interreligious Friendship Involves a Transcendent Third Party**

A third category that I observed in academic writings on interfaith dialogue involves authors somehow associating a transcendent third party with interreligious friendship. In one of Knitter's works on pluralism, he describes interreligious friendship in a way that appears to assume every such relationship encompasses the same specific attributes. For

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<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Fredericks, James L. *Faith Among Faiths: Christian Theology and Non-Christian Religions*. New York: Paulist Press, 1999, 173.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*, 177.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, 174.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*, 174-175.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, 175.

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, 176.

instance, he claims that interreligious friends discern and “affirm” their differences, yet regardless of the differences, they are able to connect with each other.<sup>145</sup> He maintains that an interreligious friend finds it necessary to share deep “religious convictions” with the religious other in an effort to achieve understanding and “affirm the beauty or the value of such a belief;” however, interreligious friends do not proselytise.<sup>146</sup> Knitter insists that interreligious friends develop a special language that they can use to translate the particulars of their religious beliefs and practices.<sup>147</sup>

In an attempt to substantiate his claims about interreligious friendship, Knitter relates a personal story about his friendship with a Buddhist man. He respects that his friend is a “non-theist,” yet he wishes to be fully understood and applauded, in a way.<sup>148</sup> Knitter wants his Buddhist friend to “be glad” that he embraces theism; furthermore, he wants his friend to see how theism is “good for the world.”<sup>149</sup> Knitter’s goal of wanting not just his friend’s approval, but his credence, is very similar to an idea that Wilfred Cantwell Smith discusses in one of his works on faith and belief, in which he calls for a world – or pluralistic – theology.<sup>150</sup> Smith aims for mutual agreement between people of different religions with regard to their faith, but not their religious belief, a concept he explains with a personal account.

I personally tend to feel that there is probably no statement about my faith that I would wish to make that I could not on principle hope to explain so that he would understand, and yes, in the end, would accept. Nor should I expect him to turn to ‘believe’ anything, if he were intelligent, that I should not find both intelligible and intelligent.<sup>151</sup>

Knitter seems to take Smith’s idea a bit further: he wants his interreligious friend to *not only be happy for his belief, but he also wants his friend to admit* that what Knitter believes is good for the world. However, it appears that Knitter has created a paradox of sorts, because in his conversations with his Buddhist friend, he aims to employ language that will “respect and not denigrate differences,” for example, by respecting his friend’s preference

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<sup>145</sup> Knitter, Paul F. “Is the Pluralist Model a Western Imposition? A Response in Five Voices.” in Knitter, Paul F., ed., *The Myth of Religious Superiority: A Multifaith exploration*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005, 28-42, 38.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> See Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *Faith and Belief: The Difference Between Them*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, 12.

<sup>151</sup> James Lee Fredericks also uses this particular quote of Smith’s, among others, in his discussion about the various pluralist approaches to religion. Fredericks points out the lack of clarity with Smith’s passage. He asks “...whether or not Muslims and Christians are allowed to disagree about the Qur’an as the final revelation of God as a belief, provided they do agree with one another regarding their common ‘faith’, since this particular Muslim belief is also “an expression of the Muslim’s faith.” Fredericks proposes an answer: “Christians will be required to revise how they understand their beliefs;” for example, the Christian “doctrine of the incarnation cannot be a literal historical fact.” See Fredericks, *Faith Among Faiths*, 86-87. *ibid.*

to avoid using terms that suggest the existence of an “Ultimate Being or Reality.”<sup>152</sup> If Knitter wants his interreligious friend to be glad that he believes certain things *and* wants him to see how his beliefs are globally good, then what is the point of changing his language? He illustrates how he and his friend have developed a special language.

In trying to communicate to Michael why it is good for me and for the world that I believe in God, I’ve had to use new words, new combinations of words, new images. And in so doing, not only does he understand me more clearly, I understand myself—and my tradition—more appropriately and engagingly.<sup>153</sup>

Knitter is confident that there is a specific “transcendent-immanent reality” – which “exists between them or among them” – that allows interreligious friends to communicate.<sup>154</sup> He advises people to set aside notions of exclusivity and to “cooperate and communicate between their differences,” which he thinks will create new interreligious friendships and deepen existing ones.<sup>155</sup> He has already witnessed interreligious friends becoming “interreligious activists.”<sup>156</sup>

Knitter proposes, on behalf of “interreligious friends,” an alteration to the pluralist paradigm “that religions are pursuing different ultimate ends.”<sup>157</sup> He claims that interreligious friends may wish to make room for the possibility that the ultimate ends may not be independent, rather, they are “interrelatedly ultimate,” which maintains the difference between people of different religions, and allows for and creates a need for connection with one another.<sup>158</sup> Knitter admits that this proposal “implies there is something within and beyond them that functions as the ground or matrix of their connection,” and he acknowledges the hesitation to label the connection as “universal,” or a “common essence” or “common ground” of religions.<sup>159</sup> However, he maintains that “interreligious friends know that there is something common, something universal, something more than just our differences.”<sup>160</sup> He believes that they can “affirm and then bridge the gulf of incommensurability.”<sup>161</sup>

Similar to Knitter – who indicates a “transcendent-immanent reality” as the conduit for interreligious communications – Andrew Wingate specifically identifies the Holy Spirit

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<sup>152</sup> Knitter, “Is the Pluralist,” 38.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*, 39.

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, 40.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *ibid.*, 39.

<sup>158</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*

as the third-party enabler of interreligious relationships.<sup>162</sup> Wingate mentions two attributes of interreligious friendships: mutual respect and “unity in the love of God.”<sup>163</sup> James L. Fredericks also believes that there is a transcendent third party at work. Although he does not specifically indicate the Holy Spirit as part of the interreligious friendship – as Wingate did, and as Knitter more vaguely suggested – Fredericks insists that Christians must acknowledge the Holy Spirit working in other religions.<sup>164</sup>

So far in this section I have presented discussions of interfaith friendship that set them in the context of a more explicit theological or philosophical account of the relationship between religions. These accounts draw both on specifically Christian sources, and on accounts of religious pluralism presented in apparently more generic or neutral terms. Friendship appears as a form of relationship or communication that makes sense in the light of these accounts – having to do with deep mutual understanding. I have also noted the tension between the insistence that these relationships depend on the respect of each participants’ particularity, and yet prioritise certain kinds of agreement or mutual approval.

### **Other Examples**

Finally, there are numerous examples of friendship language in academic discourse about interfaith dialogue that do not necessarily neatly fit into a category. In contrast to Schmidt-Leukel and Knitter – who, in the sequence of events, seem to indicate that interreligious friendship comes *before* understanding and respect of the religious other – Alex Hughes observes a different progression in encounters with the religious other. In his article about interreligious friendship, Hughes – a Christian – describes the transition from “theological stalemate” to interreligious friendship with a Muslim who resides in his parish.<sup>165</sup> The Muslim, whose name is Mohammed, contacted Hughes because he sought answers to specific questions about Christianity. According to Hughes, Mohammed was steadfast in his contention that Hughes would submit to the authority of the Qur’ān if he treated Mohammed’s “claims for the finality of the Qur’an without prejudice.”<sup>166</sup> The first three meetings between Hughes and Mohammed involved “dialectical exchange,” but Hughes persisted and eventually attempted to turn the conversations to a “less abstract”

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<sup>162</sup> *ibid.* and Wingate, Andrew. *Encounter in the spirit: Muslim-Christian meetings in Birmingham*. Geneva, WCC Publications, 1988, 2.

<sup>163</sup> Wingate, 17.

<sup>164</sup> Fredericks, *Faith Among Faiths*, 174.

<sup>165</sup> Hughes, Alex. “Fear and Friendship: Conversation or Conversion?” in *Fear and Friendship: Anglicans Engaging with Islam*. Ward, Frances and Sarah Coakley. London: Continuum, 2012, 3-15, 3.

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.*, 5.

tone.<sup>167</sup> During their third meeting, he asked Mohammed to describe his path to becoming a Muslim. Hughes points to this particular discussion as the one that helped them shift to deeper topics about religious faith, such as the roles of “will, desire and aesthetic sensibility,” and the influence of “history, culture, and upbringing.”<sup>168</sup> Hughes identifies this transition – from the abstract to the personal – as “the start of [their] journey towards a friendship of sorts.”<sup>169</sup> At another meeting, they discovered common ground in their views on the relationship between faith and purpose, at which point Hughes noticed that they had bonded based on their faith, despite their faith being different in “substance.”<sup>170</sup>

Hughes acknowledges that he is able to speak more freely about faith with Mohammad than with his fellow Christians, and this is something he classifies as a ‘gift’.<sup>171</sup> He explains that even though “the awkward question of conversion, or ‘reversion’, remains steadfastly ‘on the table’,” the two of them do not “ignore” or “fear” that particular question.<sup>172</sup> He describes their relationship as “frank and honest, especially when it comes to matters of faith.”<sup>173</sup>

Hughes does not appear to advocate using friendship as an instrument. In fact, he explicitly shuns such an idea, stating that “...surely at the very moment my friendship becomes ensnared in a web of utility,” his friend is transformed into an instrument of his “selfish will or desire.”<sup>174</sup> In contrast to utilising friendship as an instrument, he likens interreligious friendship to worship, saying that it “is not for use, but for joy.”<sup>175</sup> He comments that his prolonged interaction with a different Muslim was not successful because they did not exercise the level of candidness about their differences that he and Mohammed did. In his analysis of his relationship with the other Muslim, Hughes says that they prioritised the friendship above faith, which “militated against building the kind of quality relationship” that he has with Mohammed.<sup>176</sup> His statement is reminiscent of one of Miano’s concerns about friendship evangelism – prioritising the friendship *above* the goal of evangelising – except in this case, Hughes was not aiming to convert the religious other.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>172</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>175</sup> *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>176</sup> *ibid.*, 7.

<sup>177</sup> For Miano’s comments, see the section in this chapter entitled, “Friendship Language in Non-Academic Material.”

Friendship language also appears in academic discourse on interfaith dialogue alongside other benefits of dialogue and guidelines for dialogue. Walter Harrelson, in a discussion about his interactions with Jews, admits that it was through his “encounter with Judaism and friendship with Jews” that he gained a deeper understanding of his own faith.<sup>178</sup> Harrelson presents a very common idea, that it is possible to learn more about one’s own faith by engaging with the religious other, however, he specifically identifies the Jews as friends. Andrew Wingate makes a similar statement in his writings about Muslims and Christians meeting together in Birmingham. He acknowledges the importance of holding “out a welcoming hand to those of other faiths who wish for friendship with the Christian community.”<sup>179</sup> Here Wingate assumes that the religious other shares a goal of interreligious friendship. He encourages Christians to see the value of “deepening and enriching a more open Christian faith” when interacting with the religious other, regardless of “whatever may happen to the Muslim or Hindu friend in the meeting,” which seems to be an implicit statement about using interreligious friendship (because he still calls the religious other a ‘friend’) as an instrument to deepen the Christians’ faith.<sup>180</sup>

James L. Fredericks offers several suggestions for Christians who wish to enter into an interreligious friendship: “make room” for the unknown, get out of the comfort zone, and welcome unpredictability.<sup>181</sup> He also lists quite a few benefits of interreligious friendships. For instance, he claims that the religious other will provide exposure to new ideas, experiences, stories, questions, customs; and friendship with the religious other may have a destabilising effect, but may also provide empowerment.<sup>182</sup> Fredericks maintains that interreligious friendships help Christians expand their knowledge beyond what they read in books. He explains that in witnessing the lives of the religious other, Christians have the potential to not only confront the fear of the religious other, but to shape their own beliefs, and broaden their own perspectives based on what they observe through their interreligious friends. Fredericks remarks, “sometimes the *stranger* is the only one who rescues us from our stubborn preoccupation with ourselves and our overly settled lives.”<sup>183</sup> Similar to what Hughes mentions about the benefits of moving from the abstract to the personal, Fredericks highlights the “achievement” of honestly disagreeing with the religious

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<sup>178</sup> Harrelson, Walter. “What I Have Learned about Christian Faith from Jews and Judaism.” in *Faith Transformed: Christian Encounters with Jews and Judaism*. Merkle, John C., ed. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2003, 1-16, 15.

<sup>179</sup> Wingate, 5-6.

<sup>180</sup> Wingate, 5-6.

<sup>181</sup> Fredericks, *Faith Among Faiths*, 175.

<sup>182</sup> *ibid.*, 176.

<sup>183</sup> *ibid.*, 175.

other “on matters of ultimate importance,” and he says the achievement is more impressive if friendship is involved.<sup>184</sup>

In a different article, Fredericks classifies interreligious friendship as a Christian virtue.<sup>185</sup> He acknowledges that the religious other may not classify interreligious friendship in the same way, and that not all Christians may see the virtue in interreligious friendship. Nevertheless, he outlines all of the attributes of interreligious friendship that result in it being virtuous. For example, Christians with interreligious friends gain an understanding of other traditions through means other than text, such as through “speech and action.”<sup>186</sup> Interreligious friendships “offer practical ways to embody the value of tolerance,” a value that Fredericks sees as necessary in preventing Christians from hating or demonising the religious other.<sup>187</sup> Another value that he claims is cultivated through interreligious friendships involves being vulnerable to truth, which entails seeing the truths of the religious other as potentially theologically formative – for the Christian’s own “religious self-understanding.”<sup>188</sup> In fact, Fredericks maintains that interreligious friendships cease to be “healthy” if the Christian stops viewing the religious others’ differences as “possible resources” for their own theological gain.<sup>189</sup> He does admit that “friendship is impossible if it is not mutual,” so it will be interesting to learn how Muslims, for example, view friendship in light of interfaith dialogue.<sup>190</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated that friendship language is present to some degree in the various aspects of the interfaith world. I have shown that it is largely used in a vague way, without any acknowledgement of its mostly Christian provenance, and without any attempt to ask whether it might mean different things within the different religious traditions involved. For these reasons, it is difficult to speak compellingly about this collection of material, or to provide incisive analyses of the meanings of friendship that are provided.

In the charity organisations that have some type of interfaith agenda, ‘friendship’ is a buzzword that appears in mission statements, vision statements, interfaith events, program descriptions, etc. – it exists in the text and it is depicted in images. Friendship is

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<sup>184</sup> *ibid.*, 177.

<sup>185</sup> Fredericks, James L. "Interreligious Friendship: A New Theological Virtue." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 35:2 (Spring 1998), 159-174, 160.

<sup>186</sup> *ibid.*, 167.

<sup>187</sup> *ibid.*, 168.

<sup>188</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> *ibid.*, 172.

<sup>190</sup> *ibid.*, 169.

identified sometimes as a goal and other times as a benefit or byproduct. When friendship terminology turns up, it is typically vague in meaning; these organisations do not appear to have any shared understanding of what interfaith friendship entails. Similarly, religious leaders commonly employ friendship language in speeches when addressing the topic of the religious other, regardless of whether or not the speeches are directed towards a religiously diverse audience. Though in some cases there are vague connections made between interreligious friendships and God's love, in general, religious leaders do not provide an in-depth explanation about what interreligious friendship involves.

Friendship language shows up in religious documents that address interactions with the religious other, and many of these documents are the result of a collaborative effort with representatives of different religions. Nevertheless, they, too, tend to lack clarity on interreligious friendship. Some religious documents appear to draw correlations between interreligious friendship and other attributes, such as understanding, solidarity, sharing, and listening. Other documents seem to identify friendship as a goal or byproduct of interreligious dialogue. It is worth noting, however, that there are quite a few widely distributed documents that appear to suggest that friendship is an instrument that should be used for Christian mission – and this is one of the few contexts in which I found a more detailed, tradition-specific discussion of the nature of the friendships involved. Where there are religious documents that involve Jewish and Muslim authors alongside Christian authors, the Jews and Muslims seem to use friendship language in a cautious and detached way – if they use it at all. In non-academic discourse on interfaith dialogue, friendship language turns up in similar ways to what we have seen in the other categories: as a goal, as a benefit, and as an instrument. In this type of discourse, there is sometimes more of an explanation of interreligious friendship, for instance, that it is necessary for dialogue, it is an instrument that should be used to learn about the religious other, and it is an instrument for mission – but the discussions remain vague.

Finally, 'friendship' is used as common currency by academics, and surprisingly, the surrounding discussion is largely vague with regard to what is involved, such as the parameters and the potential pitfalls. A few categories emerge in the academic discourse, though the examples are not always a perfect fit and many do not fit at all. Some academics seem to prioritise interreligious friendship before learning about, respecting, or understanding the religious other. Others appear to think it is necessary to become friends with the religious other before criticising their beliefs or practices, or before disagreeing with them. Some academics seem to use interreligious friendship as an instrument for achieving other means, such as improving intra-Christian friendships, practicing



comparative theology, or achieving Christian mission. Others appear to associate some type of transcendent third party that makes interreligious friendships possible and aids in communication with the religious other. Then, of course, there are the myriad of academic strategies applied to friendship language that are more difficult to categorise.

There is more discussion of the nature of interfaith friendship in these academic sources, but what becomes apparent is that even here, the friendship language is largely utilised by Christians, and it is largely filled out with a mixture of Christian-specific and generic content, with no questions asked about whether friendship might mean something different, or have a different value, for the non-Christian partners. It is because I regard these unasked questions as urgent that, in the next chapter, I will take a closer look at Muslim interfaith material to see if and how friendship language appears.

## 1.2 FRIENDSHIP IN MUSLIM INTERFAITH MATERIAL

In this chapter I will focus on the work of Muslims and scholars of Islam. I will survey promotional material from charity organisations, speeches from Muslim leaders, widely distributed religious documents, as well as non-academic and academic discourse about interfaith dialogue. I will look for examples of friendship language in this material. In the previous chapter I demonstrated that ‘friendship’ is among the buzzwords that are part of a shared vocabulary in the interfaith world, and that it is especially widely used in Christian material.<sup>191</sup> In stark contrast to the liberal use of friendship language in the Christian material, what emerges from the Muslim material is much more limited – Muslim authors rarely make reference to friendship in an interfaith context, and when they do, their references are in some way qualified or restrained. I will show that, instead, terms such as ‘mutual understanding’ and ‘mutual respect’ are the more extensively used buzzwords in Muslim interfaith discourse.

However, it is important to note that these examples are the exception: there was a lot of material in which friendship was not mentioned *at all*.<sup>192</sup> This is a long chapter, because in order to demonstrate my negative claim – that friendship language is very rare in Muslim discussions of interfaith matters – I have searched as widely as possible for that language. I have searched in a wide variety of sources and within a variety of contexts in order to demonstrate that my claim is not restricted to one type of source. My search has produced a number of exceptions where friendship language is used – and I do give attention to these exceptions – but it is important to note that these examples really are the exceptions. There was a lot of material in which friendship was not mentioned at all. I have attempted to analyse these exceptions to determine if the descriptions suggest different accounts of interfaith friendship. However, as was the case in the last chapter, I did not, on the whole, find large-scale theories of friendship, or material that lends itself to extended theoretical discussion. Instead, I have sought to identify broad tendencies, each of which can be illustrated by multiple similar instances. I have looked at the caveats and cautions

<sup>191</sup> See the chapter in this thesis entitled, “Friendship in General Interfaith Material.”

<sup>192</sup> For a few examples, there was no friendship language in any of the following sources. Arkoun, Mohammed. “New Perspectives for a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialogue,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26 (1989), 523-529. van Ess, Josef. “Islamic Perspectives.” in *Christianity and the World Religions: Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. (Christentum und Weltreligionen)*, Küng, Hans, et. al., eds. Heinegg, Peter, trans. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1986, 97-108. Schachter, Zalman M. “Bases and Boundaries of Jewish, Christian, and Moslem Dialogue.” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 14 (Summer 1977): 407-418. Siddiqui, Ataullah, ed. *Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, Islam, and Other Faiths*. Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1998. Singh, David Emmanuel. “The Prophet and the Saint: Exploring Tensions and Possibilities for Dialogue Between Faiths.” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 45:1 (Winter 2010), 61-78. Yamani, Mohammed Abdou. “Islam and the West: The Need for Mutual Understanding.” *The American Journal of Islamic Social Scientists* 14:1 (Spring 1997), 87-98.

offered by those who do use this language, for hints as to why friendship language might more generally be deprecated or avoided. The main finding remains, however: there is an absence of friendship language across wide swathes of this terrain, and there is a lack of discussion or explanation of this absence.

## Friendship Language in Muslim Charity Organisations

In the previous chapter I explained that the mission and vision statements of charity organisations advertise the purpose, objectives, and values of the organisation, and that development officers are responsible for promoting the organisations with the texts and images that will have the most impact. The development officers for Muslim charity organisations are just as likely as those for Christian organisations to employ provocative buzzwords, repetitive headlines, and eye-catching illustrations to promote the agenda for their organisations. It is noteworthy that ‘friendship’ is not a buzzword that is commonly used in the promotional material for Muslim charity organisations, contrary to what I demonstrated in the last chapter regarding Christian charities – and when friendship language does appear, it is with caveats. For instance, there is no friendship language present in any of the promotional material for The Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Islamic Networks Group, Muslim World League, Bridges: Muslim-Jewish Dialogue at New York University, Islamic Society of North America, National Muslim-Christian Initiative, Children of Abraham: Jews and Muslims in Conversation, Midwest Muslim-Catholic Dialogue, and National Muslim-Catholic Dialogue, among many others.<sup>193</sup> As I will demonstrate in this section, ‘respect’ and ‘understanding’ are two of the buzzwords that *are* more commonly used in the literature for Muslim charities. Similar to the Christian charities, however, there are sometimes images on Muslim charity websites that may to some connote interfaith friendship while to others just symbolise something much less intimate, such as cooperation, coexistence, or tolerance.<sup>194</sup>

Friendship language does *sometimes* show up in the promotional material for Muslim charity organisations, but as I mentioned, it does so with caveats. For instance, Muslim Jewish Conference is an Austrian charity organisation that brings together approximately one hundred Muslim and Jewish participants annually “to discuss topics of

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<sup>193</sup> The Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding is an interfaith institution based at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Washington, D.C. <https://acmcu.georgetown.edu>. Accessed 19 Aug 2019. I will discuss all of the other organisations listed here in the current section.

<sup>194</sup> I will provide examples throughout this section.

concern for Muslim and Jewish youth.”<sup>195</sup> In contrast to the many websites of Christian organisations where friendship is identified as a goal of interfaith dialogue, friendship language only appears once on the Muslim Jewish Conference website, in a description of the organisational strategy.

With the help of personal interaction and evolving friendships the MJC and more importantly its attendees are developing a common language and creating a vision of a peaceful future based on openness, dialogue, and exchange. Furthermore the MJC is paying close attention to their lives and struggles as young adults and fills the gap of missing opportunities for Muslim and Jewish youth to meet and build individual connections.<sup>196</sup>

Here, the authors refer to friendship, but it seems to be less of a focus than in most of the Christian material – it is one of the ingredients that goes into building openness, dialogue, and exchange. When the authors do come to describe the relationships that are built by all of this activity, they use the less intimate language of ‘individual connections’.<sup>197</sup> I do not want or need to build too much on this one instance, but it does suggest a slight wariness about focusing on friendship as a goal, or a central feature of their strategy.

Friendship language is not present anywhere else in the informational and promotional text of this organisation’s website – neither in the goals or purpose of the organisation nor in the event descriptions. For instance, the primary goals of the organisation are “to provide the next generation with a learning experience for life and a positive outlook for establishing intercultural relations and sustaining Muslim-Jewish partnerships.”<sup>198</sup> The Muslim and Jewish youth who run this grassroots organisation – with the guidance and financial backing from esteemed colleagues and established organisations – aim to achieve these goals by exchanging “knowledge, ideas, and experiences” for the purposes of deepening “interest in” and evoking “curiosity for intercultural communication and interfaith issues, in particular Muslim-Jewish relations.”<sup>199</sup> They strive to make “long-term change” in intercultural communication, and they hope to cultivate “mutual appreciation” by offering a fresh method of mutual consideration, which will generate “genuine intercultural understanding.”<sup>200</sup> The authors constantly use the phrase, “interfaith cooperation” in the description for the 2018 Muslim Jewish Conference,

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<sup>195</sup> “What is the MJC?” *Muslim Jewish Conference*. <http://www.mjconference.org/about/muslim-jewish-conference/>. Accessed 16 Aug 2019.

<sup>196</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> The ‘esteemed colleagues’ are religious leaders, scholars, politicians, and civil servants, and the list of ‘established organisations’ include foundations, charities, for-profit organisations, among others. See the following page on their website, entitled “Supporters,” for a complete list. <http://www.mjconference.org/about/support/>. *ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> *ibid.*

and they say this type of cooperation is something that they wish to “take to the next level.”<sup>201</sup> The conference organisers proclaim that they aim to “foster collaborative relationships,” so that Muslims and Jews “will enable and create impact, local coalition building, sharing of best practices and the safe space needed to create sustainable solutions, exchange and lasting change.”<sup>202</sup> In relaying their goals and aims, the authors’ selection of terminology – ‘partnerships’, ‘relations’, and ‘collaborative relationships’ – is more reserved, and comes across as more conservative when compared to ‘friendship’. It is clear that they intend for Muslims and Jews to form relationships. Based on the one instance when they did mention friendship, they do not appear to be opposed to the idea of interreligious friendship, and they perhaps view it as an ancillary tool that can help move them towards their goals.

In the promotional material for a different organisation, Muslim Jewish Interfaith Coalition, friendship language appears in the lengthy description for the organisation’s inaugural event. The authors of the event’s promotional material set the expectations for potential participants by listing the various means of interfaith engagement, and it is in this particular section that the friendship language appears. First, the authors explain that participants can expect to connect with each other intellectually, creatively, and spiritually.<sup>203</sup> With the following statement, they paint a picture of the setting in which participants can anticipate making these connections.

...[participants] will have space to ‘hang out and get real’ with new friends. In fact, the most meaningful conversations might happen at midnight, around a dinner table, in between laughing, sharing stories, and discussing ideas sparked by [that day’s] learning.<sup>204</sup>

The event coordinators give the impression that participants can expect to make new friends during their event. The authors express their aim for Jewish and Muslim participants to emerge from the event with mutual “theological, cultural, and deeply personal” understanding, a better grasp on the complexities of their differences, and mutual appreciation for their shared “values and experiences.”<sup>205</sup> Notably, they do not mention friendship among the attributes they wish the participants to have once they emerge from their event. They also hope to motivate the participants to utilise their newfound knowledge in a way that cultivates “tolerance, understanding, compassion, and

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<sup>201</sup> *ibid.* “Muslim Jewish Conference 2018.” <http://www.mjconference.org/mjc-2018/>.

<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> “The Inaugural Muslim Jewish Interfaith Coalition forum, Aug 28th – Sep 1st 2018 in Essaouira, Morocco.” *Muslim Jewish Interfaith Coalition*. <https://www.themjic.org/programs/>. Accessed 19 Aug 2019.

<sup>204</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *ibid.*

peace” in their home communities.<sup>206</sup> Here, again, they do not mention friendship. Perhaps, then, it is possible that they see interreligious friendship as something that matters *on the way towards* tolerance, understanding, compassion, and peace.

Friendship language does not turn up anywhere else in the promotional material for this organisation. Instead, throughout their website are themes of mutual understanding, mutual trust, and the desire to build relationships – though not necessarily friendships. For example, the founders have a motto that includes ‘understanding’ and ‘cooperation’: “Promoting understanding and cooperation between Muslims and Jews globally.”<sup>207</sup> In their narrative about what they hope to achieve, the authors remark that they are “all working towards the same goal of healing mistrust between people of our two faiths communities” through multiple approaches, including dialogue and “relationship building exercises.”<sup>208</sup> On a different page, the authors indicate that their members make collaborative efforts to “heal the fractured relationship between Muslims and Jews globally by challenging notions of the perceived ‘other’ through personal connection, religious education, and skill building.”<sup>209</sup> They envision creating lasting Jewish-Muslim partnerships that will result in “a more coexistent, less violent world” in which they understand “and respect each other’s differences” and “love each other for them.”<sup>210</sup> The authors paint a picture of deeply damaged interreligious relationships, so it is perhaps not surprising that they refrain from highlighting interreligious friendship as a goal. However, despite obvious absence of friendship language in the various explanations about the organisation, it is notable that the authors seemed to be expressing hope that the Jews and Muslims attending their inaugural event would be ‘new friends’.

Islam & Dialogue Student Association (IDSA) is a student-led charity organisation at North Carolina State University. Although friendship language is not present in the goals, vision, or purpose of the organisation, it does appear in several places: the organisation’s motto, its constitution, and the home page for its website. The student founders indicate that their organisation “supports and advances” “harmony and cooperation,” and they see interfaith dialogue and “respect to religious plurality” as the keys to global peace.<sup>211</sup> In the promotional brochure for the organisation, the student founders identify the lack of mutual understanding as the source of conflict between Jews, Christians, and Muslims.<sup>212</sup> Also in

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<sup>206</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> *ibid.* “The Muslim Jewish Interfaith Coalition.” <https://www.themjic.org/>.

<sup>208</sup> *ibid.* “FAQ.” <https://www.themjic.org/faq/>.

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.* “Who We Are.” <https://www.themjic.org/who-we-are/>.

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> “About IDSA.” *Islam & Dialogue Student Association*. <https://clubs.ncsu.edu/islam/about.htm>. Accessed 16 Apr 2014.

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.* “IDSA Brochure.” <https://clubs.ncsu.edu/islam/documents/brochure09.pdf>.

the brochure, they highlight the verse used in *A Common Word*, Qur'ān 3:64, and they comment that “religions are meant to unite people.”<sup>213</sup> Throughout the promotional material there are images of the symbols that represent peace and that are associated with Islam, Christianity, and Judaism: a crescent, a white dove carrying an olive branch, and an olive branch.

As I mentioned, friendship language is not present in any of the promotional material for IDSA, however, there is what appears to be a motto on the home page of the website underneath the organisation's title. It is difficult to read because it is on top of a logo, but the motto reads, “dialogue...friendship...peace.”<sup>214</sup> Furthermore, IDSA has a constitution – accessible via a link on the “About IDSA” page – and it is within this document that friendship language appears.<sup>215</sup> The purpose of IDSA, as outlined in the constitution, is to bridge the “dialogue gap” and to create an atmosphere that is conducive to the mutual exchange of ideas between Muslims and the religious other.<sup>216</sup> There are four principles: the first emphasises dialogue as the key to coexistence; the second identifies “love, respect, tolerance, and peace” as the pillars of dialogue; the third highlights the link between diversity and dialogue, which is necessary for peace and truth; and the fourth principle reads, “Friendship is key for dialogue.”<sup>217</sup> There is no further explanation of the fourth principle, and as I pointed out, none of the other promotional material for IDSA contains friendship language. The only other reference to friendship is on the organisation's home page, where there is a link entitled, ‘Friendship’.<sup>218</sup> This link opens a page that lists quotes about friendship. The quotes are not cited, but I found that the quotes derive from a short book of quotations by Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish Muslim who is a strong advocate for interfaith dialogue.<sup>219</sup> None of the quotes in this book, *Pearls of Wisdom*, say anything about specifically interfaith friendship, rather, they appear to be general quotes about friendship. In fact, Gülen only mentions interreligious dialogue once in *Pearls of Wisdom*: “our joint efforts directed at inter-religious dialogue can do much to improve understanding and tolerance among people.”<sup>220</sup>

The students who founded this particular organisation do seem to have a greater willingness to use friendship language in the context of interfaith dialogue than I have

<sup>213</sup> The English translation they use reads: “Come, let's unite on a common word, worshipping God, not assign Him any partners. Abandoning Him, some of us should not make Lords some among us over others.” *ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *ibid.* “Islam & Dialogue Student Association.” <https://clubs.ncsu.edu/islam/index.html>.

<sup>215</sup> *ibid.* “About IDSA.”

<sup>216</sup> *ibid.* “Constitution of Islam & Dialogue Student Association (ISDA) North Carolina State University.” [https://clubs.ncsu.edu/islam/documents/IDSA\\_constitution.pdf](https://clubs.ncsu.edu/islam/documents/IDSA_constitution.pdf).

<sup>217</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> *ibid.* “Friendship.” <https://clubs.ncsu.edu/islam/selections/friendship.htm>.

<sup>219</sup> Gülen, M. Fethullah. *Pearls of Wisdom*. New Jersey: The Light, Inc., 2006, 80-81.

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.*, xii.

found more generally in Muslim organisations – albeit not as assertively as we have seen with Christian organisations. That may stem from their interest in or connection to Gülen’s work. Alongside the excerpts already mentioned from his book, they provide a link to a magazine – *Fountain Magazine* – that is part of ‘The Gülen Movement’, along with a related promotion for members of the organisation.<sup>221</sup>

Similarly, the members of the Dialogue Institute of the Southwest – which was founded by Turkish-Americans – exhibit an association with Gülen. The founders are “inspired by the discourse and pioneering dialogue initiatives” of Gülen.<sup>222</sup> They aim “to promote respect and mutual understanding among all cultures and faiths.”<sup>223</sup> Similar to two of the three organisations that have links with Gülen, this organisation hosts an ‘Annual Dialogue and Friendship Dinner’, but aside from the name of the event, there is not any other friendship language in the organisation’s promotional material.

Intercultural Dialogue Institute is an additional organisation that appears to have a link between the use of friendship language and Fethulla Gülen, similar to both IDSA and Dialogue Institute of the Southwest. Though it is not a religious organisation, it was founded by Turkish Canadians who were inspired by Gülen’s teachings. Friendship language appears twice in the promotional material for this organisation: in the list of principles and in an event title. In the list of the eleven principles for this organisation, the authors mention friendship in one: “Our members are entirely free to disagree on matters of belief, but join together to act in a common spirit of friendship and mutual respect.”<sup>224</sup> The remainder of the principles say nothing about friendship, and instead heavily emphasise respect for and tolerance of differences. The organisation hosts an ‘Annual Dialogue and Friendship Dinner’, though the event description does not mention anything about friendship.<sup>225</sup> Instead, the event description echoes the themes of respecting diversity, tolerance, peace, and harmony that are prevalent in the organisation’s principles.<sup>226</sup>

The founders for the Intercultural Dialogue Institute do not mention friendship in their organisation’s mission or vision. Instead, they highlight understanding and respect. Their organisation’s mission is “to promote respect and mutual understanding among all

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<sup>221</sup> *ibid.* “Islam & Dialogue”

<sup>222</sup> “About Dialogue Institute of the Southwest.” *Dialogue Institute of the Southwest*. [http://interfaithdialog.org/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=296&Itemid=255](http://interfaithdialog.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=296&Itemid=255). Accessed 16 Apr 2014.

<sup>223</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.* “Annual Friendship Dinners.” <https://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/activities/annual-friendship-dinner/>.

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*



cultures and faiths.”<sup>227</sup> The founders’ vision is for “religious and cultural fears and hatred” to be “replaced with understanding and respect.”<sup>228</sup> Similar to what was evident in the literature for the Muslim Jewish Interfaith Coalition, the founders of this organisation see a damaged interreligious relationship – one that is presently plagued by fear and hatred – and they aim to rebuild this relationship with understanding and respect. These two organisations share another similarity: despite the obvious absence of friendship language in the various explanations about the organisation, the authors appear to be expressing hope that interreligious friendship is possible.

For another organisation, Islamic Society of Santa Barbara (ISSB), friendship language is present in two places on its website. The first instance occurs on the interfaith projects page, and on this particular page there are pictures of people of different faiths engaging with each other at an interfaith event. The text begins with a general statement about the ISSB members’ gratitude for being part of the community in Santa Barbara. One sentence in particular explains that members, “engage in a variety of outreach programs and are dedicated to building strong ties of friendship with all the people of Santa Barbara.”<sup>229</sup> The second paragraph is specifically about ISSB’s interfaith program. ISSB is part of the Interfaith Initiative of Santa Barbara County, which is “a group dedicated to fostering mutual understanding and appreciation among all faith communities.”<sup>230</sup> The authors list the various other charities they work with, and when they mention a Jewish charity by name, they indicate that the members of that particular charity “work towards building bridges between Muslims and Jews.”<sup>231</sup> It is noteworthy that when the topic shifted to interfaith relations in particular, the authors chose to mention “mutual understanding and appreciation” instead of friendship.<sup>232</sup>

The second instance of friendship language on the ISSB website is on the Events page, on which the following statement appears.

ISSB hosts regular social activities as opportunities to build friendships among community members as we relax and enjoy each other’s company. We welcome everyone at these activities, so regardless of your religious or cultural background, please come join us for potlucks or picnics.<sup>233</sup>

Although the authors make special mention of religious background, the social activities listed on their Events page are not specifically interfaith activities. There is not any

<sup>227</sup> *ibid.* “About.” and “Mission & Vision.” <https://toronto.interculturaldialog.com/about-us-2/about-idi-toronto/>.

<sup>228</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> “Interfaith.” *Islamic Society of Santa Barbara*. <http://www.islamsb.org/project/interfaith/>. Accessed 1 Feb 2018.

<sup>230</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>233</sup> *ibid.* “Events.” <http://www.islamsb.org/events/>.

friendship language present in the mission statement, nor in the “ideological commitments” for ISSB.<sup>234</sup> The authors instead highlight mutual understanding. For instance, the ‘About Us’ section on its website states that viewers can “discover opportunities for interfaith understanding.”<sup>235</sup> A related phrase – “foster interfaith understanding” – appears in the organisation’s mission statement.<sup>236</sup> Although friendship language is present in the literature for this organisation, it appears to be in a subordinate position, behind mutual understanding.

I have shown that friendship language is used by very few of these charities. There are some exceptions, but even those tend to be more muted in their descriptions of friendship than the examples I discussed in Chapter 1.1. In some of the examples, the authors behind the promotional material seem willing to use friendship language in describing the organisations’ general social activities, but they reach for different language when describing specific interfaith initiatives. Where friendship language is more clearly tied to interfaith initiatives, it tends not to be a focus or a clearly articulated goal. Finally, I have also noted that several of the examples in which friendship language appears share a link to Gülen – and although I have not been able to trace his influence in more detail, it may be that this indicates one particular Muslim network within which the language is becoming more prominent.

Friendship language may be rare in these examples, but there are other key terms that turn up repeatedly. For instance, I have demonstrated that ‘understanding’ and ‘respect’ are repeatedly used in the literature for Muslim organisations. ‘Trust’ and ‘cooperation’ also commonly appear in this material. There are several other recurrent themes in the promotional material for Muslim charity organisations, such as defensiveness, outrage, and a desire to build or repair interreligious relationships. In the following sub-sections I will demonstrate how these themes are prevalent within discourse about interfaith dialogue within Muslim charity organisations.

## **Understanding and Respect**

‘Mutual understanding’ and ‘mutual respect’ are two key phrases that consistently appear in literature for Muslim interfaith organisations, such as in mission and vision statements and event advertisements. For instance, Islamic Networks Group exists to build “relationships, understanding, and peaceful communities,”<sup>237</sup> and its motto reads,

<sup>234</sup> *ibid.* “Mission Statement.” <http://www.islamsb.org/mission-statement/>.

<sup>235</sup> Rather than having a dedicated page, the “About Us” statement appears at the bottom of every page on ISSB’s website. *ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> “About ING.” *Islamic Networks Group*. <https://ing.org/about-ing/>. Accessed 19 Aug 2019.

“educating for religious and cultural literacy and mutual respect.”<sup>238</sup> One of this organisation’s programs is the Interfaith Speakers Bureau, through which Muslims model “interfaith understanding.”<sup>239</sup> The leaders for a different charity, Muslim World League, initiate “constructive” interfaith dialogue session in the United Kingdom “focusing on points of agreement,” and they strive to build “bridges of understanding,” which is their way of showing respect to the religious other.<sup>240</sup> Another organisation, Bridges, is a Muslim-Jewish Interfaith Dialogue organisation at New York University that exists for the goal of achieving “a mutual understanding and sense of shared purpose.”<sup>241</sup> Likewise, the Muslim and Christian co-founders of The Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center aim for “Muslim-Christian mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.”<sup>242</sup>

There is a massive Muslim organisation in North America, Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), and the founders explain that their interfaith dialogue program aims to “connect Muslims and people of other faiths with one another in order to build mutual respect and understanding.”<sup>243</sup> ISNA’s leaders frequently form partnerships with other religious organisations for the purpose of interfaith dialogue, and it is worth noting that friendship language is not present in the mission or vision statements for any of the partnerships. Instead, all of the partnerships involving ISNA are designed to promote understanding and respect through dialogue. For example, one of the partnerships, National Muslim-Catholic Dialogue, involves Baptist and Muslim religious leaders and laypeople who teach each other about their “beliefs and traditions;” they observe each other’s services and they participate in discussions during which they share their experiences.<sup>244</sup> Another partnership, Midwest Muslim-Catholic Dialogue, has a similar description that emphasises mutual understanding.<sup>245</sup> Two other partnerships – National Muslim-Christian Initiative and Children of Abraham: Jews and Muslims in Conversation – both specifically use the terms ‘mutual understanding’ and ‘mutual respect’.<sup>246</sup> These are just a few examples of how the language of ‘understanding’ and ‘respect’ is pervasive.

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<sup>238</sup> *ibid.* “Home.” <http://www.ing.org>. Accessed 29 May 2014.

<sup>239</sup> *ibid.* “Programs.” <https://ing.org/programs/>. Accessed 19 Aug 2019.

<sup>240</sup> “About Us Vision and Mission.” *Muslim World League*. <http://www.mwlo.org.uk/about/vision-mission/>. Accessed 29 May 2014.

<sup>241</sup> “Welcome to Bridges.” *Bridges Muslim Jewish Interfaith Dialogue @ NYU*. Bridges. <http://bridgesnyu.weebly.com>. Accessed 16 Apr 2014.

<sup>242</sup> “Mission.” *The Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center*. <http://www.coexistencejordan.org/en-us/whoweare.aspx>. Accessed 29 May 2014.

<sup>243</sup> “Interfaith Dialogue.” *Islamic Society of North America*. <http://www.isna.net/interfaith-dialogue.html>. Accessed 3 Mar 2014.

<sup>244</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>245</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>246</sup> *ibid.*

## **Trust and Cooperation**

Some Muslim interfaith organisations also emphasise trust and cooperation, such as United Muslims of America Interfaith Alliance, which “promotes understanding and cooperation among world religions through interfaith dialogue,”<sup>247</sup> and Coexistence Trust, which aims to build “networks of trust and understanding among British Muslim and Jewish students on university campuses.”<sup>248</sup> Throughout the promotional material for Cordoba House, a Muslim organisation in New York, the phrase, “build trust” is constantly underscored as a goal of interfaith engagement – along with a similar phrase, “build bridges.”<sup>249</sup> As another example, the event description for Midwest Muslim-Catholic Dialogue’s 2011 event mentions that the event coordinators aim to build “trust and solidarity across the spectrum of belief.”<sup>250</sup> A British charity, Joseph Interfaith Foundation, highlights interfaith cooperation – in addition to respect, truth, and understanding – in the organisation’s literature.<sup>251</sup> The founder for Interfaith Youth Core envisions “interfaith cooperation” being a norm in society.<sup>252</sup> On the organisation’s website there is a list of what interfaith cooperation entails, which includes building “mutually inspiring relationships across difference,” respecting “different religious identities,” and engaging in “common action.”<sup>253</sup> To complement these statements, throughout the Interfaith Youth Core’s website there are pictures of people of different faiths smiling whilst engaged in conversation.

Muslims for Peace has an interfaith initiative, and the leaders of this organisation mention interfaith cooperation, in addition to using other buzzwords such as ‘respect’ and ‘understanding’. They appear to justify Muslim participation in interfaith dialogue by highlighting a number of Qur’ānic verses that support interfaith dialogue in some way. For example, they say the following in a section entitled, “Inter-Religious Cooperation:” “Muslims are also taught to invite the People of the Book and to cooperate with them in spreading the Message of the Unity of God,” which is the authors indicate is a belief they share.<sup>254</sup> They corroborate this statement with the verse from the Qur’ān that was also used in *A Common Word*, Qur’ān 3:64.<sup>255</sup> The full verse, as quoted on their website:

<sup>247</sup> “Mission Statement.” *United Muslims of America Interfaith Alliance*. <http://www.umaia.net>. Accessed 16 Apr 2014.

<sup>248</sup> “What We Did.” *Coexistence Trust*. <http://www.coexistencetrust.org/what>. Accessed 29 May 2014.

<sup>249</sup> See for example the Founder’s Vision, the Mission and Vision, and the About Us pages on the organisation’s website. *Cordoba House*. <http://cordobahouse.com/>. Accessed 19 Aug 2019.

<sup>250</sup> “Midwest Muslim-Catholic Dialogue Completes Latest Round, Muslims And Catholics In The Public Square, And Looks Ahead To 2012 National Plenary.” *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*. 1 Nov 2011. <http://usccb.org/news/2011/11-209.cfm>. Accessed 3 Mar 2014.

<sup>251</sup> “Home Page.” *Joseph Interfaith Foundation*. <https://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/>. Accessed 19 Aug 2019.

<sup>252</sup> “Eboo Patel.” *Interfaith Youth Core*. <https://www.ifyc.org/eboo>. Accessed 8 Apr 2019.

<sup>253</sup> *ibid.* “Meet IFYC.” <https://www.ifyc.org/about>.

<sup>254</sup> “Interfaith.” *Muslims for Peace*. <https://www.muslimsforpeace.org/topics/interfaith/>. Accessed 19 Aug 2019.

<sup>255</sup> *ibid.*

Say, 'O People of the Book! Come to a word equal between us and you-that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partner with Him, and that some of us take not others for Lords besides Allah' But if they turn away, then say, 'Bear witness that we have submitted to God.

Though it is not quite as popular as the language of 'understanding' and 'respect', the language of 'trust' and 'cooperation' is widespread.

### **Defensiveness, Outrage, and Building Relationships**

On the websites for many of the Muslim organisations I have mentioned, there are allusions to the negative ways in which Muslims are portrayed in the media, as well as references to the increase in distrust and misunderstanding of Muslims since the events on September 11, 2001, among other violent events. There is a constant barrage of press releases from numerous Muslim organisations around the world in response to the various acts of violence – defending against accusations made about Muslims, defending against generalisations made about Islam, expressing sympathy towards the Muslims who have been victims of violence or discrimination, or outrage towards those who are violent and discriminatory against Muslims. It is perhaps not surprising that friendship language is absent in the list of interfaith goals for the Muslims behind these organisations. Some Muslim organisations include in their mission and vision statements declarations against violence and assertions that Islam does not condone violence. In some of these messages, there are also allusions to an inclination towards building *some type of relationship* with people of other faiths – one free from misunderstanding, discrimination, and violence – but friendship language is not typically present in this discourse.

One organisation that was specifically designed to counteract the negative perceptions of Muslims and Islam is The Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign, a coalition of faith-based organisations “that are committed to ending discrimination and violence against Muslims in the United States.”<sup>256</sup> The founding members agree that one problem is that a majority of “Americans lack the relationships with Muslims and the knowledge about Islam to dispel false claims,” which sometimes leads to “[d]iscrimination, violence, and bias against Muslims.”<sup>257</sup> Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, the National director of ISNA's Office of Interfaith and Community Alliances, made a statement to the press about The Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign. He said that the organisation serves as “an excellent example of an

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<sup>256</sup> “Mission.” *The Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign*. <https://www.shouldertoshouldercampaign.org/mission-1?rq=joint%20statement>. Accessed 28 May 2014.

<sup>257</sup> *ibid*.

interreligious network of leaders committed to working together to end Islamophobia and threats to religious freedom everywhere.”<sup>258</sup>

Another organisation, Muslim Association of Britain, focuses on interfaith dialogue projects because the founders and members believe interfaith dialogue to be the “most effective” method of “reducing tension between religious denominations.”<sup>259</sup> The members of Joseph Interfaith Foundation convey that during interfaith dialogue they “do not shy away from directly addressing the thorny issues that divide” them and cause “tension and at times confrontation between” them.<sup>260</sup> Similarly, a British Jewish-Muslim organisation called Stand for Peace “provides a platform for rational discussion of the topics that drives the Muslim and Jewish community apart.”<sup>261</sup> The leaders for this organisation also proclaim that they “condemn bigotry, tyranny and human rights abuses,” and “advocate liberty and moral clarity.”<sup>262</sup>

As another illustration, one of the Muslim members of Sulha Peace Project – a charity organisation catering to Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Israel and Palestine – declares that because of his involvement with this organisation, he likes “to build relationships” and “work together on changing each side’s hostile perception of the other side.”<sup>263</sup> Throughout the Sulha Peace Project’s website there are pictures of people of different faiths hugging each other, holding hands, and smiling at each other. These pictures represent the hopes of the founders and members of this organisation, yet the images are a stark contrast to the language used to describe the current situation. For instance, the members express a desire to “reach beyond arguments and political posturing,” to “end conflict and hostility,” and to return to “decency and compassion.”<sup>264</sup>

Several of the organisations I previously introduced have content on their websites that fits into this particular category – of taking a defensive stance, expressing outrage, or an inclination towards building honest and peaceful interfaith relationships: Muslims for Peace, Muslim Jewish Interfaith Coalition, Islam & Dialogue Student Association, NewGround, and Cordoba House. The founders of Muslims for Peace proclaim that their religion does not promote violence against non-Muslims. On their website, in a section entitled, “Inter-Religious Cooperation,” the authors make a statement about non-

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<sup>258</sup> “Midwest,” *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*.

<sup>259</sup> “What is MAB’s position on interfaith dialogue?” *Muslim Association of Britain*. <https://www.mabonline.net/faq-items/what-is-mabs-position-on-interfaith-dialogue/>. Accessed 19 Aug 2019.

<sup>260</sup> “Aim and Objectives.” *Joseph Interfaith Foundation*. <https://www.josephinterfaithfoundation.org/aimAndObjective.php>. Accessed 19 Aug 2019.

<sup>261</sup> “About Us.” *Stand for Peace*. <http://standforpeace.org.uk/about/>. Accessed 19 Aug 2019.

<sup>262</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> “What is Sulha?” *Sulha Peace Project*. [http://www.sulha.com/what\\_is\\_sulha](http://www.sulha.com/what_is_sulha). Accessed 7 Feb 2017.

<sup>264</sup> *ibid.*

believers, “Referring to those non-believers who were not known to have taken any active part in hostilities against Muslims,” which they support with scripture, Qur’ān 5:3.<sup>265</sup> The authors also warn Muslims that according to the Qur’ān, they are not “to treat with injustice even such enemies as had committed aggression against them due to religious enmity,” a statement they supplement with Qur’ān 60:9.<sup>266</sup>

Another organisation I previously discussed – Muslim Jewish Interfaith Coalition – has a webpage dedicated to answering frequently asked questions. The organisation’s staff members remark that they are “all working towards the same goal of healing mistrust between people of our two faiths communities” through multiple approaches, including dialogue and “relationship building exercises.”<sup>267</sup> In another page, the authors maintain that their members make collaborative efforts to “heal the fractured relationship between Muslims and Jews globally by challenging notions of the perceived ‘other’ through personal connection, religious education, and skill building.”<sup>268</sup> They envision creating lasting Jewish-Muslim partnership that will result in “a more coexistent, less violent world” in which they understand “and respect each other’s differences” and “love each other for them.”<sup>269</sup>

Islam & Dialogue Student Association’s website has a “Tragic Events” page, which serves as a plea to readers to stop associating Islam with terrorism, and as a gesture towards solidarity, specifically with Jews and Christians. After condemning the attack on September 11, 2001, the authors appeal to the Jewish and Christian readers, indicating that Muslims are united with the People of the Book, as they believe in their respective scriptures, prophets, and narratives. They end their appeal with Qur’ān 3:64, the verse quoted above.<sup>270</sup> A similar page exists on the United Muslims of America Interfaith Alliance website, where an “Insights” page addresses two “frequently asked questions:” “Why is there so much fighting in the Muslim world?” and “Does the Koran tell Muslims to kill Jews and Christians?”<sup>271</sup> In the answer to the first question, the authors attempt to deflect attention from Islam, suggesting that as a result of globalisation, political groups

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<sup>265</sup> The full excerpt, as quoted on their website: “...And let not the enmity of a people that they hindered you from access to the Sacred Mosque, incite you to treat them with inequity. Instead help each other in good things of life and in all such things as are based on the fear of Allah. Do not, however, help one another in the sinful things and transgression...” “Interfaith,” *Muslims for Peace*.

<sup>266</sup> The verse, as quoted on their website: “Allah forbids you not, respecting those who have not fought against you on account of your religion; and who have not driven you out of your homes, that you be kind to them and deal equitably with them; surely, Allah loves those who are equitable.” *ibid*.

<sup>267</sup> “FAQ,” *Muslim Jewish Interfaith Coalition*.

<sup>268</sup> *ibid.*, “Who.”

<sup>269</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>270</sup> “Tragic Events.” *Islam & Dialogue Student Association North Carolina State University*. <http://society.ncsu.edu/islam/selections/tragic.htm>. Accessed 16 Apr 2014.

<sup>271</sup> “Insights.” *United Muslims of America Interfaith Alliance*. <http://www.umaia.net/insights.html>. Accessed 16 Apr 2014.

misappropriate religious themes to justify murder, whereas rather than being a religious cause, the “cause is often economic.”<sup>272</sup> The authors address the second question using a variety of approaches. They highlight the interconnectivity among the three Abrahamic religions, proclaiming that Islam is a continuity of the Jewish and Christian faiths and that Muslims believe the Jewish and Christian scriptures to be revelations.<sup>273</sup> They also explain that there are various sects of Islam, some of which are modernised and progressive, and some of which are “narrow minded.”<sup>274</sup> The latter groups of Muslims, according to the authors, are guilty of branding Jews and Christians as non-believers, even though the Qur’ān labels Jews and Christians “People of the Book.”<sup>275</sup> Finally, the authors point out that there are extremists in every religion, but they should not be looked at as representatives.

The founders for a different organisation, NewGround, envision achieving “mutual cooperation” between Muslims and Jews throughout America.<sup>276</sup> They also envisage Muslims and Jews engaging “in authentic communication.”<sup>277</sup> Although there is no explanation about the attributes of or parameters of ‘authentic communication’, the founders offer specific guidelines for interfaith dialogue that appear to be efforts to avoid conflict. For instance, they strive to “foster an atmosphere in which fellows learn to ask questions rather than jump to conclusions, and among the values listed for the organisation, they include “curiosity over assumptions.”<sup>278</sup> The founders hope to empower Muslims and Jews to “create lasting partnerships,” and transform “Muslim-Jewish relations.”<sup>279</sup> Rather than using friendship language, they use other loosely defined relationship terminology, such as “personal relationships” and “communal relations,” stating that they hope to utilise these relationships “as a critical tool for withstanding international events and remaining committed to local results.”<sup>280</sup> It is worth mentioning that on this particular page, there are multiple pictures of Muslims and Jews smiling and standing next to each other or embracing each other, which to some viewers could connote friendship.

As a final example, in August of 2011, the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI) hosted an interfaith Ramadan dinner event. Post-event interviews revealed

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<sup>272</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>275</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>276</sup> “Vision & Mission.” *NewGround*. <http://mjnewground.org/vision-mission-values/>. Accessed 5 July 2019.

<sup>277</sup> *ibid.* “Values.” <http://mjnewground.org/values-based-work/#Relationships%20Before%20Politics>.

<sup>278</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>279</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*



how participants differed in their understandings of the goal of the event and in their motivations for attending. The director of ICCI, a Rabbi, cited the point of the meeting as “honoring Muslims and giving them a chance to share their culture and religion with others.”<sup>281</sup> To support this goal of learning about the religion of the other, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders took turns teaching about and sharing their views about their respective religious texts.<sup>282</sup> One Muslim participant clearly had a different goal in attending the interfaith event, that of changing the other’s perspective. He explained, “Muslims are told they can be fair and benevolent and connected to those who are not coreligionists, as long as those don’t fight our religion or remove us from our homes.”<sup>283</sup> He went on to say the following:

We can’t have a dialogue just for the sake of dialogue. It must have clear definitions. One of the most important such goals is to know the others. To know that Muslims aren’t blindly murderous people, to realize that Islam is a religion of tolerance, of belief in one god, cooperation, mutual respect, that doesn’t want to take anything by force or coerce anyone into being Muslim. Islam calls for understanding, and unity between the people.<sup>284</sup>

This statement highlights the complexity of interfaith dialogue. For this participant, interfaith dialogue cannot be reduced to two people of different religious traditions just chatting. The dialogue must take place within defined parameters that for him include knowing the others, and more importantly include subscribing to his portrayal of Muslims as people who are not murderers.

What I have demonstrated in the last three sub-sections is that Muslims – at least in the context of Muslim charity organisations – tend to offer quite a different perspective on interfaith dialogue. When compared to what we saw in the material for Christian organisations – in which ‘friendship’ is common currency – the approaches taken by Muslims are much more cautious and conservative, especially when it comes to building relationships. Another difference between the material for the Muslim organisations and Christian organisations is that the Muslim material tends to contain more explanations about their aims and purposes in interfaith dialogue. They acknowledge that there is tension and distrust, for example, and they identify the ways they intend to change these to more positive associations. I have shown that, instead of friendship, Muslim sources tend to talk about understanding and respect, and sometimes trust and cooperation – and I

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<sup>281</sup> Mandel, Jonah. “Muslims Join in Interfaith Ramadan Dinner.” *The Jerusalem Post*. 05 Aug 2011. Online. <http://www.breuerpress.com/2011/08/05/muslims-join-in-interfaith-ramadan-dinner/>. Accessed 29 Nov 2011.

<sup>282</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>283</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> *ibid.*

have shown that there is a very noticeable desire to overcome misunderstanding and discrimination. That perhaps suggests one explanation for the relative absence of friendship language: focusing on the growth in intimacy may seem like a luxury or a fantasy when what is needed is primarily an overcoming of animosity. In the next section, I will turn to speeches delivered by Muslim leaders, to see if and how friendship language turns up, along with the other themes I have identified.

## Muslim Leaders Using Friendship Language

I demonstrated in the last chapter that friendship language is commonly deployed by Christians in speeches at interfaith events.<sup>285</sup> In Muslim speeches, however, friendship language is not as common, and when it is used, it tends to be with caveats. Instead, Muslim addresses at interfaith events illustrate many of the same tropes that I illustrated from the promotional material for Muslim charity organisations. In some of the speeches, Muslims emphasise mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation, while others focus on defending their religion, or expressing the desire to build interfaith relationships that are not described as friendships.

Two of the predominant tropes are mutual understanding and cooperation, which are both present in one Muslim's speech during the fifth Muslim-Christian Consultation in 1988, though this is a speech that does also mention friendship. Prince Hassan of Jordan is a dedicated Sufi Muslim who proclaims that Sufi spiritual values form the foundation for "a global humanitarian perspective that respects the truth inherent in all religions."<sup>286</sup> He identifies beauty, harmony, and love as underlying principles of this "inner, esoteric dimension of Islam," which is demonstrated by the Sufi poets who "celebrate moral values above politics."<sup>287</sup> In his speech about interfaith dialogue, he begins by acknowledging that the session topics were chosen with the intent of promoting consensus and minimising "the chances of discord."<sup>288</sup> He then seeks to clear up a couple of misunderstandings about interfaith dialogue, arguing that interfaith dialogue cannot have a "purpose of missionary work or conversion," a position he scripturally defends with Qur'ān 109:6: "You

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<sup>285</sup> See the section entitled, "Religious Leaders Using Friendship Language" in the previous chapter.

<sup>286</sup> In the last section I mentioned several examples of Muslims using friendship language where there was either a reference to Sufism or to Fethullah Gülen when Muslims. Borealis, Aurora. "Spirit of Fes at the British House of Commons." *The View from Fez*. 30 Nov 2009. <http://riadzany.blogspot.co.uk/2009/11/spirit-of-fes-at-british-house-of.html>. Accessed 23 Apr 2014.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> Muslim-Christian Consultation 1988: Chambesy, Switzerland. *Peace and justice: proceedings of the Muslim-Christian Consultation held in collaboration with the Orthodox Centre (Chambesy, Switzerland), Chambesy-Switzerland, December 12-15, 1988, Volume 1*. Amman, Jordan: Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research, Aal al-Bayt Foundation, 1988, 27.

have your religion and I have mine.”<sup>289</sup> Furthermore, he addresses a methodological misconception that interfaith dialogue is not a dialectical exercise that results in a synthesis acceptable to all religions.<sup>290</sup>

We avoid the discussion of hot issues because we fear, and justifiably so, that we shall exacerbate still further our turbulent history with present day attitudes and emotions. We therefore prefer the moral high-ground to the violence and constituencies who expect us to act and react within certain constraints.<sup>291</sup>

Instead, he asserts that the primary aims for dialogue are mutual understanding and tolerance: “There is nothing better than learning about each other, promoting understanding and tolerance so that we can deal with each other in cooperation, collaboration and friendship.”<sup>292</sup> He chooses to mention friendship – along with collaboration and cooperation – as something that *can result from* achieving mutual understanding and tolerance through interfaith dialogue.<sup>293</sup> Therefore, although friendship is not a dominant note in his speech, it seems to be one aspect of relationships that he hopes for between people of different faiths.

At the same event, another Muslim speaker addressed interfaith friendship. In his speech, Sheikh Ez-el-Din el-Khateeb el-Tameemi first establishes that the Qur’ān guides Muslims in their relationships “with the Creator, with themselves, and with each other.”<sup>294</sup> In preparation for his statements about the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims, he quotes Qur’ān 60:8.

Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for your faith, nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them; for Allah loveth the just.<sup>295</sup>

He interprets this verse as a pathway “for the establishment of friendly relations between Muslims” and non-Muslims.<sup>296</sup> He issues a warning that the relationships with non-Muslims can only continue if the non-Muslims “show good intentions, no aggressive inclinations and no treachery.” As long as Muslims maintain the relationships in this way, Sheikh el-

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<sup>289</sup> *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>290</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> *ibid.*, 31.

<sup>292</sup> *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>293</sup> Italics are my own, not the author’s. Borealis, “Spirit.”

<sup>294</sup> el-Tameemi, Sheikh Ez-el-Din el-Khateeb. “Concept of Peace and Justice in the Quran.” in *Peace and justice: proceedings of the Muslim-Christian Consultation held in collaboration with the Orthodox Centre (Chambesy, Switzerland), Chambesy-Switzerland, December 12-15, 1988, Volume 2*. Muslim-Christian Consultation 1988: Chambesy, Switzerland. Amman, Jordan: Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research, Aal al-Bayt Foundation, 1988, 7.

<sup>295</sup> *ibid.*, 12.

<sup>296</sup> *ibid.*, 7.

Tameemi claims there will be peace among them.<sup>297</sup> If, however, the non-Muslims “fight Muslims, or if they side with those who fight them, or if they uproot Muslims from their land, or help in doing such things,” he insists that Muslims should not befriend them.<sup>298</sup> In support of this advice, he quotes Qur’ān 60:9, along with Yusuf Ali’s parenthetical commentary.

Allah only forbids you with regard to those who fight you for your faith and drive you out of your homes, and support others in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). Those who turn to them (in these circumstances) are wrong-doing.<sup>299</sup>

el-Tameemi’s opinion on interreligious friendship appears to be solely based on his interpretation of the Qur’ān, thus he advocates it only if the conditions outlined in Qur’ān 60:8-9 are met.

At an interfaith dinner hosted by Dialogue Foundation in Canada, Fahri Karakas delivered a speech.<sup>300</sup> In his address, Karakas – a Muslim and an academic specialising in international business management and leadership – uses the familiar terminology that is typical of Muslims when the topic is interfaith dialogue: mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation. In one statement he lists quite a few values that he believes religious people should prioritise – such as love, compassion, dialogue, respect, and tolerance.<sup>301</sup> He calls for the affirmation of interconnectivity and, by the same token, he recognises that Muslims and those of other religions should have “closer relationship[s].”<sup>302</sup>

There are several additional instances when Karakas speaks about relationships, and in only one occasion does he use friendship language. He explains that Muslims believe “Jesus will return during the last days,” at which time specific values will take precedence – and here he mentions love again, among other values – and Muslims, Christians, and Jews will be closer in their relationships and cooperation.<sup>303</sup> He stresses the importance of Christians and Muslims focusing on their commonalities, which he thinks will “contribute positively to relations between communities.”<sup>304</sup> He believes that if they draw on their faith they will foster “reconciliation and understanding.”<sup>305</sup> Through mutual respect, and “listening to each other in love, tolerance, compassion, and mercy,” he says,

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<sup>297</sup> *ibid.*, 12.

<sup>298</sup> *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>299</sup> el-Tameemi used Yusuf Ali’s English translation of the Qur’ān, and as I mentioned, the parenthetical commentary also belongs to Yusuf Ali. *ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> Karakas, Fahri. “A Global Agenda for Interfaith Dialogue.” *Vital Speeches of the Day* 71:12 (1 Apr 2005), 373-376.

<sup>301</sup> *ibid.*, 374.

<sup>302</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>303</sup> *ibid.*, 375.

<sup>304</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> *ibid.*

“it is possible to build a community of peace.”<sup>306</sup> Towards the end of his article, and just prior to a quote from Rumi, Karakas uses friendship language.

Owing to the principles of diversity, love and dialogue, people from different backgrounds, ideologies, nations, classes, races and faiths can come together based on a model of: spiritual partnership and friendship and shared passion and idealism.<sup>307</sup>

Friendship appears to be one aspect of the relationships he hopes for between people of different religious traditions. Interreligious friendship is not necessarily a dominant note in his presentation – especially considering the vague and conservative language that he used throughout his speech when discussing interreligious relations – but he does make a point to mention it. Immediately after his remark about friendship, Karakas includes a quote from Rumi – one which encourages Muslims to stay rooted in their religion with one foot and with the other foot, to interact with people who have other backgrounds, beliefs, etc. The excerpt from Rumi’s work also encourages Muslims to be tolerant and loving, and to recognise and embrace our interconnectivity.<sup>308</sup>

As another example of a Muslim using friendship language in a speech, I will discuss an address given by the executive director for Islamic Networks Group at the Women’s Interfaith Dialogue event.<sup>309</sup> As I mentioned in the previous section, this particular organisation has an interfaith program, and exhibits terminology like ‘mutual respect’ and ‘mutual understanding’ throughout its advertising, whereas friendship language is absent. However, in Maha Elgenaidi’s speech she highlights a verse from the Qur’ān that uses friendship language.

This particular event was developed around the publication of a book, *The Faith Club*, which is about three women – Christian, Jewish, and Muslim – who joined together for interfaith dialogue in New York immediately following the events of September 11, 2001. In the book, the authors share the process behind their extended dialogue, which did eventually result in friendship. Elgenaidi praises the authors of *The Faith Club*, commending them for releasing a “groundbreaking work on interfaith conversation and cooperation,” and she announces that this event – which is centred around “talking through issues of life and faith” – is the third annual.<sup>310</sup> Elgenaidi mentions two other events, one being the Third Catholic-Muslim Forum, about which she says the following.

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<sup>306</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> *ibid.*, 376.

<sup>308</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> Elgenaidi, Maha. “ING Speech at Women’s Interfaith Dialogue.” *Islamic Networks Group*. 15 Nov 2014. Online. <https://ing.org/speech-women-interfaith-dialogue/>. Accessed 19 Aug 2019.

<sup>310</sup> *ibid.*

Among the many points the participants agreed on were the importance of the culture of interreligious dialogue for deepening mutual understanding; the necessity of coming together, as at this meeting, to overcome prejudice, distortions, suspicions, and inappropriate generalizations, all of which damage the peaceful relationships we all seek; and the insistence that dialogue among religions should lead to action.<sup>311</sup>

In this statement, she draws a correlation between the attendees at another event and the attendees of the present event, and in doing so she makes an assumption that all of the attendees at her event are seeking to accomplish the same goals: “deepening mutual understanding” and overcoming the various negative opinions they have about each other.<sup>312</sup> Elgenaidi also mentions a Friday prayer service at the Washington National Cathedral. She says little about the event, but she does quote a Muslim Ambassador to South Africa, who demonstrates the recurring themes we’ve seen so far in Muslim discourse. This Muslim politician at the event declared, “the more bridges that are built, the less room there is for fear and prejudice between us.”<sup>313</sup>

The remainder of Elgenaidi’s speech follows the pattern of 1) affirming the value(s) that should be worked towards in interfaith dialogue, 2) explaining how people can accomplish the value(s) and 3) substantiating her claims with excerpts from the Qur’ān. First, she highlights the value of understanding, which she says can be accomplished if Jews, Christians, and Muslims join to do the following: doing “good” things, praying, and finding “common ground.”<sup>314</sup> According to her, Qur’ān 41:34 provides the inspiration for this particular path, and it is in this verse that we find the one and only reference to friendship in her speech.

And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel by that which is better; and thereupon the one between whom and you is enmity becomes a devoted friend.<sup>315</sup>

Elgenaidi does not indicate which translation of the Qur’ān she quotes, but in the major English translations of this verse, all of the authors somehow incorporate the term ‘friend’ in their translations of the Arabic phrase, *waliyyu ḥamimu*.<sup>316</sup> Significantly, though friendship language is present in the quoted verse, she does not say anything about it, but rather she highlights the value of ‘understanding’.

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<sup>311</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>312</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>313</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>316</sup> Arberry translates *waliyyu ḥamimu* as ‘loyal friend’, Pickthall translates it as ‘bosom friend’, Yusuf Ali translates it as ‘friend and intimate’, al-Hilali and Khan translate it as ‘close friend’, and Muhammad Abdel Haleem translates the last part of the verse as ‘will become as close as an old and valued friend’.

In the next instance of Elgenaidi's pattern, she highlights mutual understanding and respect. She expounds the Qur'ān's advocacy for this: Muslims have the "duty" to engage with the religious others "with fairness and respect" in order to "get to know" them and to "draw closer to God through acts of righteousness."<sup>317</sup> If she *were* advocating interreligious friendship, this would no doubt be a good place to say so. Instead, she focuses on understanding and respect. She justifies her assertion about duty by alluding to Qur'ān 42:15.

So then give the call, and be upright as you have been commanded, not following the wishes of the disrupters. And say, 'I believe in any scripture that God has revealed. And I have been commanded to treat you all fairly. God is our Lord, and your Lord too. We are responsible for our acts, and you are responsible for your acts.' Let there be no argument between us. God will unite us, and the journey for all is to God.<sup>318</sup>

She recognises that Muslims will likely be confronted by those who see interfaith engagement as unfavourable, as well as those who may "seek to divide and separate people of different faiths" – motivations that she contends are rooted in "fear" and "ignorance."<sup>319</sup> To those who will persevere with interfaith activities, she offers further encouragement by reciting two more verses from the Qur'ān. The first is Qur'ān 5:48.

For each of them, We have established a law, and a revealed way. And if God wished, God would have made you a single nation; but the intent is to test you in what God has given you. So let your goals be everything good. Your destiny, everyone, is to God, Who will tell you about that wherein you differed.<sup>320</sup>

Elgenaidi comments that this particular verse identifies "religious diversity and pluralism as part of God's divine plan."<sup>321</sup> The second verse she uses as support for interfaith engagement is Qur'ān 2:148.

...For every community faces a direction of its own, of which God is the focal point. Compete, therefore, with one another in doing good works. Wherever you may be, God will gather you all unto Himself: for, verily, God has the power to will anything.<sup>322</sup>

According to her, this verse serves as a directive for Muslims to compete with the religious other in "doing good works," not in "power or wealth."<sup>323</sup>

In the final occurrence of Elgenaidi's paradigm, she endorses mutual understanding and appreciation, which she insists Muslims can accomplish by gathering with people from

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<sup>317</sup> Elgenaidi, "ING."

<sup>318</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>319</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>320</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>321</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>322</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>323</sup> *ibid.*

other religious traditions. She notes that the ways in which Muslims differ from the religious other serve as reasons “to engage with one another.”<sup>324</sup> She supports this sentiment with Qur’ān 49:13.

God tells us (49:13), “O humankind, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into races and tribes for you to get to know each other. The noblest of you in the sight of God are those of you who are most conscientious. And God is all-knowing, fully aware.”<sup>325</sup>

In summary, despite the one instance of friendship language in Elgenaidi’s speech – which came from the Qur’ān – she did not appear to recommend or even support interfaith friendship, rather, she emphatically endorsed mutual understanding, respect, and appreciation.

Similar to Elgenaidi, Imam Jamal Rahman refers to Qur’ān 41:34 in his speech with Pastor Don Mackenzie, and Rabbi Ted Falcon. These three men call themselves ‘The Interfaith Amigos’, and they travel around the world with the hopes to inspire others to engage in interfaith dialogue. Their presentation typically begins with the story of how they met. Shortly after September 11, 2001, they came together as three of the religious leaders in the community and they “shared with each other from the wisdom of [their] spiritual traditions.”<sup>326</sup> At this point in their presentation they each quote a verse from their respective scriptures, and they do so in a humorous fashion, loudly talking over each other. Imam Jamal Rahman quotes Qur’ān 41:34, which he translates as, “Repel evil with something which is better so that your enemy becomes your intimate friend.”<sup>327</sup> In this particular verse, Imam Rahman is translating the Arabic phrase *waliyyu ḥamimu* as intimate friend.<sup>328</sup> Whereas Elgenaidi highlights the inspiration in this verse for developing mutual understanding – which she says can be achieved if Jews, Christians, and Muslims join to do good, pray, and find common ground – Rahman does not explain why he chose to use Qur’ān 41:34.<sup>329</sup> However, this verse does speak to the particular context he and his colleagues describe: the resulting tension between Muslims and non-Muslims in America immediately following September 11, 2001. Unfortunately, many Americans thereafter labeled Muslims ‘the enemy’, thus an appeal about turning enemies to friends

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<sup>324</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>325</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>326</sup> TedxDU. “The Interfaith Amigos -- Breaking the taboos of interfaith dialogue.” *TedxTalks*. Online. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPnZArtsG\\_c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPnZArtsG_c). Accessed 1 Feb 2014.

<sup>327</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>328</sup> As I mentioned, Arberry translates *waliyyu ḥamimu* as ‘loyal friend’, Pickthall translates it as ‘bosom friend’, Yusuf Ali translates it as ‘friend and intimate’, al-Hilali and Khan translate it as ‘close friend’, and Muhammad Abdel Haleem translates the last part of the verse as ‘will become as close as an old and valued friend’.

<sup>329</sup> Elgenaidi, “ING.”



makes sense. Other than the friendship language in this verse – and, of course, the fact that the group name is ‘The Interfaith Amigos’ (*amigos* is a Spanish term meaning ‘friends’) – Rahman does not say anything else about interfaith friendship.

Although I have explored some exceptions, friendship language is not as common in Muslim speeches about interfaith dialogue as it is in the material I examined in Chapter 1.1. Instead, similar to the material I surveyed from Muslim charity organisations, there are some themes that are more prominent, such as mutual understanding, mutual respect, and the desire to build relationships. All three of these themes are present in a speech by Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad, the Dean of Cambridge Muslim College. The forum was formed as a direct result of the publication of *A Common Word* a year prior, and it is worth mentioning that Shaykh Murad is a signatory of this important document. He delivered this particular address at the First Catholic-Muslim Forum in Rome, employing terms such as ‘understanding’, ‘respect’, and ‘cooperation’. He points to misunderstanding as the catalyst for past interreligious conflict, and he calls for a collaborative effort to find ways to “overcome” the “misunderstandings and those errors of intention.”<sup>330</sup> He aims to root mutual respect in “the practice of shared rational confrontation of Europe’s disease,” and he expresses his confidence that “cooperation and mutual respect will” win the battle against “barbarism.”<sup>331</sup> His hope is that the attendees will “carry the message of truth and reconciliation” back to their home communities.<sup>332</sup> He refers to the relationship between Muslims and Catholics, but he calls it just that – a relationship – and says only that in some ways the relationship is improving and in others it is “suffering from an intractable deficiency.”<sup>333</sup>

Sheikh Ali Gomaa, a scholar of Islam and the former Grand Mufti of Egypt, delivered a speech entitled, “Building Bridges of Understanding.” In his speech he exhibits three of the tropes we saw elsewhere: mutual understanding, defensiveness, and outrage. He declares his purpose “to try to clear up some of the confusion that exists as to the reality of Islam, the current situation of Muslims in the world, and what the vast majority of Muslims hold to be true.”<sup>334</sup> Similar to one of the tropes we saw in the previous section, Sheikh Gomaa takes a very defensive stance, professing that Islam is a religion of peace,

<sup>330</sup> Murad, Abdal Hakim. “Human Dignity and Mutual Respect.” *First Catholic-Muslim Forum, Rome*. 5 Nov 2008. Online. <http://www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk/en/resources/papers/human-dignity-and-mutual-respect>. Accessed 25 Mar 2014.

<sup>331</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>332</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>333</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>334</sup> This speech is published on the website for Cambridge Inter-faith Programme, but there is no indication of when or where Sheikh Ali Gomaa delivered this speech. All other references to this speech point back to the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme website. Gomaa, Sheikh Ali, Grand Mufti of Egypt. “Building Bridges of Understanding.” Speech. Event, date, and venue unknown. Online. <http://www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk/en/resources/papers/building-bridges-of-understanding>. Accessed 25 Mar 2014.

despite the violence from extremists who claim their actions are validated by the Qur'ān. He also conveys his outrage at the negative and limited manner in which members of the media portray Muslims and Islam. He yearns for Islam “to be presented in a deeper and more complete way” and seeks to “build bridges of understanding between the Muslim world and the West.”<sup>335</sup>

In 2010, His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi bin Mohammed delivered a speech to the United Nations on the topic of interfaith dialogue, and in it we see several of the frequently used tropes: mutual understanding, cooperation, and defensiveness. His speech was actually a presentation of His Majesty King Abdullah II's initiative to establish an annual “World Interfaith Harmony Week” each February.<sup>336</sup> In his introduction he articulates the “reasoning behind” the initiative – which is “specifically about peace between religions.”<sup>337</sup> He exhibits a defensive posture at the start and then he speaks of interreligious understanding and cooperation, as well as interfaith harmony and peace. He credits the Second Vatican Council for stimulating representatives of various religions to work towards peace.<sup>338</sup> Unlike the typical discourse on interfaith dialogue, Prince Ghazi actually defines some of the ‘buzzwords’ – such as tolerance, acceptance, peace and harmony – so that the members of the United Nations will have a fuller understanding of the proposal. He explains that ‘tolerance’ can be perceived as a negative term, in that it suggests there is something bad that needs to be endured. ‘Acceptance’, according to him, assumes that people of different religions must “accept each other’s doctrines, and ‘peace’ suggests “the absence of war, and not necessarily the absence of hatred.”<sup>339</sup> For ‘harmony’, he draws from Confucianism, since in that particular context, harmony means peace and “beautiful and dynamic interaction between different elements within a whole.”<sup>340</sup>

The resolution proposal also includes “Love of God and Love of the Neighbor,” as well as “Love of the Good and Love of the Neighbor,” complemented by the corresponding Muslim, Jewish, and Christian scriptures.<sup>341</sup> HRH Prince Ghazi defends the presence of this scriptural language in the initiative, claiming that the religiously devout would consider

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<sup>335</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>336</sup> I will discuss the actual language of the final United Nations Resolution in the next section, “Friendship Language in Muslim Religious Documents.” “H.R.H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad delivers H.M. King Abdullah II's World Interfaith Harmony Week proposal at UN.” *World Interfaith Harmony Week*. 21 Oct 2010. Online. <http://worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com/newspost/h-r-h-prince-ghazi-bin-muhammad-delivers-kings-world-interfaith-harmony-week-proposal-at-un/>. Accessed 17 Apr 2014.

<sup>337</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>338</sup> He did not correlate *Nostra Aetate* with interreligious friendship, as many Christians have done.

<sup>339</sup> “Ghazi,” *World Interfaith Harmony Week*.

<sup>340</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>341</sup> *ibid.*

“a secular call for an interfaith harmony week a feckless platitude that they cannot fully or sincerely support.”<sup>342</sup> By adding the “Love of the Good,” the initiative is all-inclusive of those with and without faith. Furthermore, he notes, the language in the initiative leaves room for the various ways in which people may interpret these specific types of love.

As a final example, the Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo, Ahmed Al-Tayeb, delivered a speech at a World Council of Churches Conference in 2016, and in his speech he takes a defensive stance, which is a theme we have seen elsewhere.<sup>343</sup> In his address, he pleads with the religious others in the audience not to believe terrorists when they link their acts with Islam. He declares that these terrorists betray “their religions and their souls” by associating their violence with religion.<sup>344</sup> Al-Tayeb urges people to look beyond the “Qur’ān and the precepts of Islam” to locate the “real roots of terrorism,” because “all these forms of terrorism with their different names and slogans are rejected by Islam.”<sup>345</sup>

In summary, then, friendship language is even less common in Muslim speeches about interfaith dialogue, compared to the instances of friendship language we saw in the Muslim charity material. Instead, these speeches were saturated with much of the same terminology evident in the charity literature, such as ‘mutual understanding’, ‘respect’, and ‘cooperation’, and several speakers exhibited the theme of defensiveness. Most of them did express a desire to build interfaith relationships, but only three mentioned friendship. For one of the speakers, friendship only came up in a Qur’ānic verse, which she used as support for her claim about mutual understanding. For another, interreligious friendship was contingent on the non-Muslims showing good intentions, not showing aggressive inclinations, not being treacherous, and not having any hand in uprooting Muslims from their land – and the speaker based this list on two verses from the Qur’ān. The other two speakers who mentioned friendship listed it as a potential hope for the future, as a result of the mutual understanding, cooperation, and respect that are fostered through interfaith dialogue. They seem to have done so on the basis of their experience of particular interfaith friendships of their own. It is difficult to see any pattern emerging from those few examples where friendship language is used, except that it is often qualified or muted. The main fact remains that it is rare. Now I will turn to religious documents authored by Muslims, to see if friendship language is more common in them, compared to what we have seen thus far.

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<sup>342</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>343</sup> al-Tayyeb, Ahmed. “Speech by Ahmed al-Tayyeb, Grand Imam of Al-Alzhar, 1 October 2016.” Bossey: Ecumenical Institute. 1 Oct 2016. *World Council of Churches*. Online. <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programme...peech-by-ahmed-al-tayyeb-grand-imam-of-al-azhar-1-october-2016>. Accessed 27 Aug 2019.

<sup>344</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>345</sup> *ibid.*

## Friendship Language in Muslim Religious Documents

There are quite a few widely distributed religious documents<sup>346</sup> authored by Muslims that address interfaith dialogue, and in this section I will illustrate how friendship language is not used as widely in them as it is in Christian documents, nor is it used in the same way when it does appear. For instance, one considerably influential document in this category is *A Common Word Between Us and You*,<sup>347</sup> which, similar to *Nostra Aetate*,<sup>348</sup> is cited in many articles, books, speeches, lectures, and charity promotional material – by Muslims and by Christians, among others.<sup>349</sup> *A Common Word* was actually sparked by a lecture that Pope Benedict XVI delivered at Regensburg University in 2006, in which he included a particular anecdote that stirred up controversy among Muslims throughout the world.<sup>350</sup> In his response to the adverse reactions from the Muslim community, he gathered Muslim ambassadors and representatives from around the globe with the intent “to strengthen the bonds of friendship and solidarity between the Holy See and the Muslim communities throughout the world.”<sup>351</sup> Despite his conciliatory efforts, within one month of his lecture at Regensburg, the Pope received an open letter produced by thirty-eight Muslim scholars and leaders.<sup>352</sup> The authors indicated the errors in the ways in which the Pope engaged with the Qur’ān, challenged his notion of “experts” on Islam, and educated him about the various subjects in his lecture (reason, holy war, forced conversion, etc.).<sup>353</sup> The authors did, however, reciprocate the Pope’s gesture towards establishing friendships, stating, “we hope to continue to build peaceful and friendly relationships based upon mutual respect, justice, and what is common in essence in our shared Abrahamic tradition.”

Upon the one-year anniversary of this open letter, the same thirty-eight Muslim authors joined forces with one hundred more authors and produced *A Common Word*. In the beginning of the document, the authors call for peace and understanding, declaring

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<sup>346</sup> As I explained in the previous chapter, ‘religious documents’ is my own label for category that contains a wide variety of material that is distributed through some official channel, intended for some or all of the audience of a particular religion or religions. There are different types of documents that could fit into this category (e.g. training material) and various ‘distribution channels’ (e.g. charity organisation).

<sup>347</sup> I will refer to this document as “*A Common Word*.” I had a lengthy *excursus* on this document and related responses, which I sadly had to cut to meet the thesis word limit.

<sup>348</sup> For examples, see the chapter in this thesis entitled, “Friendship in General Interfaith Material.”

<sup>349</sup> I have already mentioned a couple of examples in prior sections of this chapter.

<sup>350</sup> Evers, Georg. “Trends and Developments in Interreligious Dialogue.” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 17:2 (2007), 244-256, 244.

<sup>351</sup> His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. “Address of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the Ambassadors of Countries with a Muslim Majority and to the Representatives of Muslim Communities in Italy.” Vatican: The Holy See, 25 Sept 2006. Online. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20060925\\_ambasciatori-paesi-arabi.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060925_ambasciatori-paesi-arabi.html). Accessed 28 Jan 2014.

<sup>352</sup> Barnes, Michael S.J. *Interreligious Learning: Dialogue, Spirituality and the Christian Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 184.

<sup>353</sup> “Open Letter to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.” *Islamica Magazine*, 12 Oct 2006.

that the common ground between the Muslim and Christian traditions – the unity of God and the necessity for the love of God and neighbour – is the basis for this collaborative goal.<sup>354</sup> The discussion surrounding love of the neighbour is minimal compared to the discourse on the unity and love of God. As in the first open letter, in this document they quote the “two great commandments” from the Gospels, and they provide a similar quote from the Prophet Muhammad (though this particular quote was not included in the first open letter): “None of you has faith until you love for your neighbour what you love for yourself.”<sup>355</sup> They list various characteristics that they envision will be present in their relationships with Christians, such as respect, fairness, justness, kindness, “peace, harmony, and mutual goodwill”.<sup>356</sup> They claim that “justice and freedom of religion are a crucial part of” loving thy neighbour,<sup>357</sup> and they suggest that they should only compete with Christians “in righteousness and good works.”<sup>358</sup> Notably, there is *no mention of ‘friendship’* anywhere in *A Common Word*, which is quite puzzling, considering that it was present in the first open letter. Bearing in mind that there is overlap between the authors of the first open letter and the authors of this document, it seems that there was a conscious decision *not* to use the term ‘friendship’.

The introduction to the five-year anniversary edition of *A Common Word* does however declare that the original document was “an extended global handshake of interreligious goodwill, friendship and fellowship and consequently of world peace.”<sup>359</sup> The five-year anniversary edition also includes examples of the impact made by the release of its predecessor, as well as responses by Muslim and Christian leaders and scholars. For instance, there is friendship language in a report about a collaboration between two charities (one Muslim and one Christian). Friendship language also exists in two response letters authored by Muslims. Perhaps due to the popularity of *A Common Word* over its first five years in distribution, there may have been an effort to adapt the shared language of the interfaith world, hence the use of ‘friendship’ in the introduction and in a couple of the Muslim responses.

Another document in this category – *Children of Abraham: Jews and Muslims in Conversation* – is a curriculum for interfaith dialogue, created through the partnership of

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<sup>354</sup> *A Common Word Between Us and You, 5-Year Anniversary Edition*. Amman, Jordan: The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2012, 53.

<sup>355</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>356</sup> *ibid.*, 73.

<sup>357</sup> *ibid.*, 54.

<sup>358</sup> *ibid.*, 73.

<sup>359</sup> *ibid.*, 7.

Union for Reform Judaism and Islamic Society of North America.<sup>360</sup> The purpose of this project is to educate Jews and Muslims about each other; the topics range from basics about scriptures and traditions, to contemporary tensions between and among the groups. Throughout the material there is a constant effort to highlight commonalities between the two faiths. Though the authors' primary effort is to lay the foundation for mutual understanding, there are several instances of friendship language throughout their document. It begins with a joint statement from the directors for each partnership organisation: "We hope that the spirit of collaboration and friendship that characterized our work on this guide will mark its use as well."<sup>361</sup> This statement sets the tone for the Jewish and Muslim readers, and it seems to be an endorsement of interreligious friendship.

Friendship is also mentioned in a section entitled, "What Makes Dialogue Different," in which Rabbi Jan Katzew differentiates dialogue from debate and dispute: in dialogue, participants aim to share and be receptive to all perspectives, identify commonalities, and acknowledge differences, whereas in debates and disputes, participants aim to win.<sup>362</sup> He indicates having "rules of engagement" as a requisite for dialogue – the first two rules being listening and asking further questions in an effort to understand – so that participants do not slip into debate or dispute.<sup>363</sup> In the context of Jewish-Muslim dialogue, he does not segregate based on religion – participants are not made up of Jews and the religious other – rather, he sees them as "brothers and sisters" with a shared "ancestral heritage and rich history."<sup>364</sup> Katzew credits *Nostra Aetate* with creating "opportunities for Christian-Jewish interaction that could be mutually respectful, affirming and coalition building," and he considers this success as one that paves the way for Jewish-Muslim dialogue.<sup>365</sup>

Katzew hypothesises that Jews and Muslims will not only be ignorant of each other's faiths, but will also likely be afraid of each other. He again emphasises that it is essential to "clarify the goals of dialogue" for participants, and he highlights several goals in addition to listening to and asking questions of one another: learning, exploring, and searching "for a common language and perhaps a shared vision."<sup>366</sup> He is optimistic that if interfaith dialogue is successful, participants can emerge as changed people. He affirms that "dialogue can build bridges between people and communities, and have a humanizing

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<sup>360</sup> Union for Reform Judaism and Islamic Society of North America. *Children of Abraham: Jews and Muslims in Conversation*. Washington, D.C: Commission on Interreligious Affairs of Reform Judaism, 2008.

<sup>361</sup> *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>362</sup> *ibid.*, 9.

<sup>363</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>364</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>365</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>366</sup> *ibid.*

effect that can yield healthy relationships, including friendships.”<sup>367</sup> When considering Katzew’s admission that fear may exist between Jews and Muslims – and his emphasis on the distinction between dialogue and debate or dispute (as if he *anticipates* debate or dispute) – his statement about the potential outcome of dialogue is perhaps an *introduction to the possibility of* interreligious friendship, rather than an outright guarantee that dialogue will lead to such a relationship. Further, regarding his choice of words about dialogue having “a humanizing effect,” this presupposes that the Jews and Muslims entering into dialogue may not consider or treat each other in a humanising way, which makes the idea of friendship come across as quite an ambitious goal.

The only other place where language about interreligious friendship turns up in this document is in a list of “passages from the Qur’an that speak to the use of force in dealing with non-Muslims.”<sup>368</sup> This particular verse (Qur’ān 4:89) at first blush gives the impression that Muslims are instructed not to be friends with “disbelievers.”<sup>369</sup>

They wish you to become disbelievers as they are, so that you should become like them. Therefore hold them not as friends until they go out of their homes in the way of God. If they do not, seize them wherever they are and do away with them. Do not make them your allies.<sup>370</sup>

This is one of five verses that at face value appear to encourage Muslims to attack non-Muslims in certain circumstances. In an effort to guide the conversation, the authors suggest four questions, two of which address relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims. In the first question they ask participants about “the implications of these passages for how Muslims treat non-believers,” and in the second question they ask participants to consider the reasons that the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims are characterised in this way in the Qur’ān.<sup>371</sup> Following these questions, the authors suggest the most appropriate way to read and interpret the Qur’ān, which is based on what they claim is the primary methodology of the classical exegetes: to derive the meaning of each verse from other Qur’ānic verses that address the same topic or issue, and to consider the context in which the verse was revealed.<sup>372</sup> For example, the authors aver that by consulting all other Qur’ānic verses that address the same topic as the verse above, “it becomes clear that the Qur’an sets out a policy of justice, fairness, and mercy

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<sup>367</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>368</sup> *ibid.*, 63.

<sup>369</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>370</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>371</sup> *ibid.*, 64.

<sup>372</sup> In the section entitled, “Friendship Language in Muslim Academic Discourse,” I will discuss other approaches to interpreting the verses about Muslim-non-Muslim relations. *ibid.*

toward non-Muslims.”<sup>373</sup> They emphatically defend the Qur’ān’s characterisation of Muslim relationships with non-Muslims, spotlighting two verses in particular – Qur’ān 60:8 and 2:190 – each of which authorises Muslims to be “kind and equitable” and peaceful towards non-Muslims, as long as they are peaceful towards Muslims and “have not made war on” Islam or forced Muslims out of their homes.<sup>374</sup> They acknowledge that there are Muslims who hold different opinions of the Qur’ānic position on interreligious relations – mainly, that these verses advocate attacks on non-Muslims – though they firmly state that “most religious scholars” reject that interpretation and instead “find a peaceful meaning.”<sup>375</sup>

Friendship language shows up in the Appendix, although there is no related discussion. In a lesson on religious tolerance, the authors recognise the need to learn about and “appreciate the religious practices and traditions of others.” After providing a general definition of tolerance according to the United Nations, they present various Jewish and Muslim perspectives on religious tolerance and intolerance, from scripture and other material from their traditions. In the Muslim material, the authors mention the Constitution of Madīna – an agreement between the clans of Madīna and the Prophet Muhammad, following his and his followers’ emigration to the city – and they encourage participants to consult the Appendix and read their English translation of five of the sixty-seven rules that specifically dealt with how Muslims were to treat Jews.<sup>376</sup> Four of the five rules they highlight refer to Jews who “follow” Muslims: Muslims should not treat Jews unjustly because they are Jewish; Muslims should treat allies of the Jews the same way that they treat the Jews; Muslims should not help those who are “enemies of the Jews who follow [them];” Muslims should help and treat “with equality” the Jews who follow them.<sup>377</sup> The other rule they spotlight is about a specific group, the “Jews of Bani Awf,” who Muslims are to treat “as one community with the Believers.”<sup>378</sup> This particular rule goes on to say the following in their translation.

The Jews have their religion. This will also apply to their freedmen. The exception will be those who act unjustly and sinfully. By so doing they wrong themselves and their families.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>374</sup> Qur’ān 60:8, as quoted by the authors: “God does not forbid from being kind and equitable to those who have not made war on your religion nor driven you from your homes. God loves those who are equitable.” and Qur’ān 2:190: “If they [enemy forces] incline toward peace, then you should so incline and place your trust in God.” *ibid.*

<sup>375</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>376</sup> *ibid.*, 77.

<sup>377</sup> *ibid.*, 96-97.

<sup>378</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>379</sup> *ibid.*



Significantly, however, the authors do not call attention to their translation of one of the other rules – the one that contains friendship language – number fifteen,<sup>380</sup> which says: “Believers are all friends to each other to the exclusion of all others.”<sup>381</sup> Perhaps since this is a Jewish-Muslim document, they focussed only on the rules that specified Jews.

The other instances of friendship language in this document are ancillary, as they do not pertain to interreligious relations and are, rather, prayers or scriptural excerpts that happen to contain the term ‘friend’ or ‘friends’. There are, however, portions of this text where the authors attempt to unify Jews and Muslims based on commonalities. For instance, in one section the authors draw correlations between the experiences of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in an attempt to forge a bond based on mutual understanding of the racial prejudice and discrimination that each group has both historically suffered and contemporarily endures. The authors urge them to “combat” hatred and “fight against” anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, aligning them more as teammates or a military task force, rather than as friends.<sup>382</sup> However, they also encourage them to “create a more open and accepting atmosphere,” which, in their joint effort to create this atmosphere for those other than Jews and Muslims, they will likely perceive a softening in their attitudes towards each other.<sup>383</sup>

Furthermore, the authors continually emphasise the necessity of mutual respect and understanding in the relationships between Jews and Muslims. For instance, the president of The Islamic Society of North America – Ingrid Mattson – includes a statement at the start of the document, in which she discusses the inspiration for and the goals of the project. She asserts that faith carries with it the responsibility to imagine “productive relationships” between Jews and Muslims that are characterised by mutual respect.<sup>384</sup> She insists that with a foundation of mutual respect, it is possible to maintain differences and eventually “move beyond mutual respect to play a positive collective role in society.”<sup>385</sup> She warns against Jews and Muslims perpetuating stereotypes about each other and

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<sup>380</sup> They are translating the Arabic term ‘*mawālī*’ as ‘friends’. In Ibn Ishāq’s version of the Constitution of Madīna, it is number seventeen (not fifteen, as these authors claim) that says, “the *mu’minūn* [believers] are each other’s allies to the exclusion of other people.” The Arabic term translated into ‘allies’ is *mawālī*. Given the broader context of the Constitution – that it was meant to establish ground rules for the interactions between the various groups in Madīna, including which groups would be protected – ‘allies’ is the more widely accepted translation instead of ‘friends’. Regarding the content of the Constitution of Madīna, some scholars argue that the text is actually a culmination of several sources, put together by one or more redactor. Michael Lecker offers a comprehensive look at the different versions of and interpretations of the Constitution of Madīna: Lecker, Michael. *The Constitution of Medina: Muḥammad’s First Legal Document*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin, 2004. See page 34 for the above quote from Ibn Ishāq’s version.

<sup>381</sup> Union for Reform Judaism and Islamic Society of North America, 96.

<sup>382</sup> *ibid.*, 83, 89.

<sup>383</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>384</sup> *ibid.*, 7.

<sup>385</sup> *ibid.*

justifying discrimination against each other, actions that she claims will lead to their “destruction.”<sup>386</sup> Instead, she says, Muslims and Jews ought to “speak the truth about each other,” and they should learn this truth *from one another*.<sup>387</sup> She expresses optimism in Jews and Muslims either beginning or continuing “in the important work of mutual understanding, and, hopefully, productive engagement.”<sup>388</sup>

A second document in which friendship is mentioned is the product of the Interfaith Dialogue Forum in 2016. The King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Intelligence and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) and the African Union Commission (AUC) jointly organised this event, and the delegates in attendance produced the “Interfaith Dialogue Forum Declaration,” which summarises their views and outlines their plan to implement “peace, security, dialogue, and development in Africa.”<sup>389</sup> They organised their plan of action into categories, one being ‘Education’, and it is in this category that we find friendship language. The second point in the ‘Education’ section reads, “Introduce peace education as part of the school curriculum, university programmes and theological institutions to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among human beings in all their diversity of religion, belief, culture and language.”<sup>390</sup> The delegates acknowledge “the need to build partnerships between the African Union, interfaith, faith-based groups, organisations and religious leaders.”<sup>391</sup> These two statements taken together show that this particular initiative is a collaboration between faith leaders and other types of leaders (political, civil, and charities), thus the friendship language is extended well beyond interreligious friendship. Nevertheless, since this document resulted from an interfaith event, the authors seem to be advocating interreligious friendship.

Alternatively, there is *no friendship language present* in another KAICIID document entitled, “Nostra Aetate In Our Time: Interreligious Relations 50 Years After the Second Vatican Council.” Instead, the phrase ‘mutual understanding’ and the term ‘respect’ appears numerous times in commentary about *Nostra Aetate* in this one hundred and fifteen page document.<sup>392</sup> This is quite different from a lot of the Christian discourse about

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<sup>386</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>387</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>388</sup> *ibid.*, 8.

<sup>389</sup> KAICIID. “The 2nd AU-Interfaith Dialogue Forum Declaration.” Written at the 2nd AU Interfaith Dialogue Forum on 11 Nov 2016 in Abuja, Nigeria. *King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Intelligence and Intercultural Dialogue*. Online. <https://www.kaiciid.org/2nd-au-interfaith-dialogue-forum-declaration>. Accessed 3 Aug 2019.

<sup>390</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>391</sup> Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities. “2nd KAICIID-CIDO Interfaith Dialogue Forum.” *Joint Learning Initiative*. Online. <https://jliflc.com/2016/11/2nd-kaiciid-cido-interfaith-dialogue-forum/>. Accessed 4 Sept 2019.

<sup>392</sup> King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for Intelligence and Intercultural Dialogue. *Nostra Aetate In Our Time: Interreligious relations 50 years after the Second Vatican Council*. Leicester: Tudor Rose, 2016. Online. <https://www.kaiciid.org/file/64936/download?token=6ecjCGTz>. Accessed 3 Aug 2019.

*Nostra Aetate*, where friendship language is frequently attributed to and associated with the document.

There are instances of friendship language throughout a document authored by the Midwest Dialogue of Catholics & Muslims, and co-sponsored by the Islamic Society of North America and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Eight years of dialogue between Muslim and Catholic religious leaders and scholars of religion culminated in *Revelation: Catholic and Muslim Perspectives*, which is intended for Catholics and Muslims who wish to participate in interfaith dialogue, or others who are interested in the subject.<sup>393</sup> The Muslims and Catholics who engaged in the eight years of dialogue were already involved in interfaith dialogue in their various local communities. The authors suggest that people utilise their book to gain a cursory understanding of ‘revelation’ in each tradition, and it is within one of the explanations about the document that we find a question about interreligious friendship.

Both Christians and Muslims identify themselves as followers of God because of their faith in God’s revelation. What is ‘revelation’ for believers of both faiths? Is it a source of division or a means of forming lasting bonds and friendships?<sup>394</sup>

This excerpt, which appears on the back cover, suggests to the reader that perhaps the authors will answer the question of whether or not revelation can lead to interreligious friendship. The question also plants the seed of interreligious friendship as a tentative idea that the reader can consider whilst reading through the material.

Bishop Kevin M. Britt and Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed mention friendship a couple of times in the Preface of this document. They convey their hope that the Christians and Muslims who study and discuss this book will be led “towards greater mutual understanding and respect.”<sup>395</sup> They describe the creative process behind the book, which involved Catholics and Muslims gathering for annual meetings to discuss the topic of ‘revelation’, and to share their “experiences” and listen “to one another’s views and reflections on Christian-Muslim relations in [their] communities and in [the] contemporary world.”<sup>396</sup> Their experiences together resulted in them becoming friends, according to Britt and Syeed. For their sixth meeting, the group met shortly after the events of September 11, 2001, and had their “most satisfying meeting up to that point,” because they were more determined “to bring [their] communities closer together.”<sup>397</sup> This particular meeting also helped them

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<sup>393</sup> Midwest Dialogue of Catholics and Muslims. *Revelation: Catholic and Muslim Perspectives*. Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005, back cover.

<sup>394</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>395</sup> *ibid.*, xi.

<sup>396</sup> *ibid.*, xii.

<sup>397</sup> *ibid.*

grow “even more committed to [their] friendship,” and they consider their “eight years of dialogue” as “a remarkable period of spiritual friendship.”<sup>398</sup> In the prologue, the Most Reverend Tod D. Brown, who is chairman of the “Subcommittee on Interreligious Dialogue,” echoes the sentiment conveyed by Britt and Syeed.<sup>399</sup>

After years of dialogue in a climate of deeply felt friendship and hospitality, Muslims and Catholics have produced a common document on a central theme of faith: God’s revelation to humanity.<sup>400</sup>

The comments about interreligious friendship made by Britt, Syeed, and Brown all appear to be exclusive to the Catholics and Muslims in their particular dialogue group. From their statements, we cannot necessarily glean their positions on friendship in interfaith dialogue outside of their group.

Friendship language appears in two more places in the document, in the introduction and in a section on Muslim perspectives. In the introduction, the Catholic and Muslim authors<sup>401</sup> indicate mutual respect as the foundation for interreligious friendship and cooperation.<sup>402</sup> Here, as we have seen elsewhere, mutual respect is identified as a necessity for friendship to be possible through interfaith dialogue. These same authors refer to the participants of their dialogue as “friends” on two separate occasions.<sup>403</sup> Friendship also turns up in the conclusion to the section entitled, “Islamic Perspectives on Revelation.”<sup>404</sup> The Muslim authors express their hope that readers will feel encouraged to engage in dialogue with the religious other, and they recognise “that all questions that their Christian friends may have about Islamic perspectives on revelation and other related themes raised in this chapter are not fully answered.”<sup>405</sup> This statement appears to be addressed not only to the Christians in their own interreligious dialogue group, but also to the wider audience of the book – perhaps it can be perceived as a gesture towards interreligious friendship, or perhaps it is just a polite greeting.

The Catholic and Muslim authors define interreligious dialogue in the introduction, and they use a common technique by listing the aspects and methods that they *do not* consider to be acceptable in interreligious dialogue. For instance, they do not approve of

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<sup>398</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>399</sup> *ibid.*, ix.

<sup>400</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>401</sup> There is no indication as to who actually authored the Introduction to this document. There was prior agreement that the Muslims and Christians would share responsibility in creating this document, as evident in the following excerpt. “In 1999, participants broadened their study of scripture by discussing two papers, one on the major themes in the Qur’ān and the other on the major themes in the New Testament section of the Bible. They then concluded that they could prepare a resource together, with some sections drafted by each side and other sections drafted jointly.” *ibid.*, 5.

<sup>402</sup> *ibid.*, 1.

<sup>403</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>404</sup> *ibid.*, 39.

<sup>405</sup> *ibid.*

participants from the various traditions having to compromise in order “to reach a point that is mutually beneficial.”<sup>406</sup> They do not agree with the notion that participants must distill their differing belief systems to a singular belief, nor should they be forced to harmonise conflicting views. They do not equate dialogue with debate or argument, though they accept that participants may engage in debate during dialogue.

After their list of *unacceptable* attributes of interreligious dialogue, the authors describe their *acceptable* version. They begin with their own concise definition, whereby interreligious dialogue “refers to a religious attitude that includes both commitment to truth and respect for freedom of conscience.”<sup>407</sup> They recognise the various forms of dialogue, and name the type that their group engages in: “dialogue of scholars and religiously trained specialists.”<sup>408</sup> Regardless of the type of interreligious dialogue, the authors insist that participants should speak what they hold as truth, while respecting the other participants and listening closely to their truths – and they mention that participants typically listen more than they speak. The authors explain that interreligious dialogue “is distinguished by the topics discussed because this kind of dialogue includes both the witness of one’s faith to others and the mutual exploration of religious convictions.”<sup>409</sup> They suggest that interreligious dialogue should be held in a “retreat environment” that “serves holiness” and fosters prayer and other tradition-specific practices.<sup>410</sup>

The authors identify “several goals of interreligious dialogue:” mutual respect, mutual understanding, mutual appreciation, mutual cooperation, “spiritual growth,” and “a deeper understanding of one’s beliefs.”<sup>411</sup> They attest that “Catholic Christians and Muslims can agree that God calls them to interreligious dialogue and that it is under God’s guidance that they come together to do the will of God.”<sup>412</sup> The participants of their particular Muslim-Catholic dialogue report that through their dialogue, they learn about their own faith and about the faith of the religious other.

The instances of friendship language in this document appear to be largely confined to the Catholics and Muslims who, after eight years of dialogue together, produced this book. In one of the two instances where this does not appear to be the case – in the Muslims’ statement to their “Christian friends” about the unanswered questions – it is debatable as to whether this was a statement about interreligious friendship in general or if

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<sup>406</sup> *ibid.*, 2.

<sup>407</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>408</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>409</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>410</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>411</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>412</sup> *ibid.*, 2-3.

it was just a polite greeting. The other instance where the friendship language is not necessarily exclusive to the participants of their dialogue is when the authors indicate mutual respect as the foundation for interreligious friendship and cooperation.<sup>413</sup> Notably, they did not include friendship in their goals of interreligious dialogue – rather, they listed mutual respect, among others. Furthermore, in the conclusion to the entire document, the authors said the following.

Through dialogue and improved cooperation, Muslims and Catholics can develop a just and peaceful society in the spirit of the teachings of the Gospel and the Qur'ān.

If they were officially advocating interreligious friendship, or if they thought of it as an official goal or benefit of interfaith dialogue, it seems as if their final statement would have been a perfect place to say so. However, friendship was absent from their list of the aspects and methods that they consider to be unacceptable in interreligious dialogue, so it is safe to assume they are not against interreligious friendship. By mentioning that mutual respect can lead to friendship, they appear to be open to the idea of interreligious friendship for people outside of their own dialogue group. Furthermore, their reference to friendship on the back cover is an indication that they are open to the people outside of their group forming friendships through interfaith dialogue.

For the final religious document, I turn to the document, "Initiative for Interfaith Dialogue," which serves as a tribute to King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz's interfaith dialogue initiative.<sup>414</sup> I will first consider the background before discussing the friendship language present in this document. In 2007, King Abdullah – who was the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in Saudi Arabia at the time – met with Pope Benedict XVI to discuss their mutual enthusiasm for interfaith dialogue. In June of the following year, the First International Conference on Dialogue was held in Saudi Arabia, which involved 500 Muslim scholars who discussed the Muslim perspectives on interfaith dialogue and determined the necessary parameters for dialogue with the religious other. One month later at the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid, 300 people representing different religious traditions convened to discuss human values that can unite people. The conference concluded with a call for a special United Nations session on interfaith dialogue. In November, those present at the United Nations General Assembly affirmed that interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding are significant aspects of intercultural engagement and world peace. By September of 2009, King Abdullah's initiative for interfaith dialogue was supported by

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<sup>413</sup> *ibid.*, 1.

<sup>414</sup> "Initiative for Interfaith Dialogue." *The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. Jan 2011. Online. [https://saudiembassy.net/sites/default/files/Interfaith\\_Magazine\\_Jan\\_2011.pdf](https://saudiembassy.net/sites/default/files/Interfaith_Magazine_Jan_2011.pdf). Accessed 15 Apr 2014.

the Geneva Interfaith Conference. The resulting document includes many of the addresses at these key conferences, and quite a few of the speakers outline goals for interfaith dialogue.

Friendship language appears in an exchange between King Abdullah and King Juan Carlos of Spain (now the former king), in their addresses at the World Conference on Dialogue. At the beginning of King Abdullah's address, he twice called King Carlos his "friend," and throughout his speech he used the phrases "Distinguished Friends" and "Dear Friends."<sup>415</sup> Given that this particular conference had an interfaith audience, his choice of terminology could either be considered a gesture towards interreligious friendship, or it could be considered a polite greeting that is commonly used in public addresses. At the same conference, King Carlos, a Roman Catholic, began his speech by reminiscing about King Abdullah's first visit to Spain in 2007. He recalled the visit as being "particularly fruitful, in deepening the close and fraternal Spanish-Saudi friendship."<sup>416</sup> Although their meeting was also political in nature, they focussed on the topic of interfaith dialogue, thus his statement could be interpreted as a gesture towards interreligious friendship, as well. At the 2008 United Nations High-Level Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue<sup>417</sup>, King Abdullah's speech repeated the format he used at the World Conference on Dialogue, whereby he continually used the phrase, "Dear Friends."<sup>418</sup> He also showed gratitude towards his "friends, the world's leaders from the East and West" for their attendance, and he said that he takes "pride in their friendship and participation."<sup>419</sup> In contrast to his greeting of 'Dear Friends', his use of friendship language in this particular statement leaves no doubt that he is classifying his audience members as friends.

There are quite a few other interfaith buzzwords that were constantly employed throughout the various addresses. During the First International Conference on Dialogue King Abdullah constantly emphasised the importance of being civil in disagreements with the religious other, and he supplemented his statements with verses from the Qur'ān.<sup>420</sup> This particular conference concluded with an appeal, called "The Makkah Appeal for Interfaith Dialogue," which included summaries of the addresses at the conference, as well as key points for moving forward with the interfaith initiatives.<sup>421</sup> For instance, similar to

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<sup>415</sup> Throughout his address at the First International Conference on Dialogue, he constantly said "Dear Brothers." *ibid.*, 24-25.

<sup>416</sup> *ibid.* 26.

<sup>417</sup> Although this is the name used in the Initiative for Interfaith Dialogue document, the full name of this meeting is "General Assembly High-Level Meeting on the Promotion of Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue, Understanding and Cooperation for Peace."

<sup>418</sup> *ibid.*, 43.

<sup>419</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>420</sup> He quoted the following verses from the Qur'ān: 16:125, 49:13, 3:159, and 109:6. *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>421</sup> *ibid.*, 12-21.

King Abdullah, Dr. Muhammad Sayed Tantawi (now former Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar) encouraged Muslims to exercise civility during interreligious disagreements. He said that dialogue should be based on tolerance and “good intentions,” and that participants in dialogue should honour the objectives so that they can reach “the truth” and lessen disputes.<sup>422</sup> Likewise, Dr. Abdullah bin Abdulmohsin Al-Turki (now former Secretary-General of the Muslim World League) encouraged Muslims to cooperate with the religious other on the things they hold in agreement, such as the “ethical principles that help diffuse world conflicts and restore the social status of the family and enhance the values of justice, cooperation, tolerance and moderation.”<sup>423</sup>

Also in the appeal was an outline of the four main discussion points at the conference, the first being “The Islamic Legitimacy for Dialogue,” in which the conference attendees name dialogue as a means of proselytising.<sup>424</sup>

Therefore, dialogue is one of the most important mediums of spreading Islam throughout the world.<sup>425</sup>

They also refer to Qur’ān 5:48 as support for dialogue – which describes God’s will to create all of the differences between people – stating that everyone must get to know each other and learn to cooperate so that they can “solve their problems.”<sup>426</sup> Furthermore, they look to the Prophet Muhammad’s dialogue with the “Christians of Najran” as a paradigm for contemporary interfaith dialogue.<sup>427</sup>

As part of their mission to legitimise dialogue for Muslims, they present nine “Objectives of Dialogue:” 1) To present Islam as an effective, principled, and humane contribution to the world; 2) To change the public opinion by correcting misinterpretations of the Qur’ān and misperceptions of Islam; 3) To confront challenges and offer solutions “to problems that face humankind as a result of their abandoning religion and departing from its principles and values;” 4) To advocate “just causes pertaining to human rights violations;” 5) To defend Islam from those who contribute to “Islamophobia;” 6) To “[a]cquaint” with the religious and cultural other, work towards “peaceful coexistence,” cooperate with them “in spreading ethical values, truth, benevolence and peace,” and

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<sup>422</sup> *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>423</sup> *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>424</sup> *ibid.*, 15.

<sup>425</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>426</sup> Yusuf Ali’s translation of Qur’ān 5:48 reads, “To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety; so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee. To each among you have We prescribed a Law and an Open Way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute.” *ibid.*

<sup>427</sup> *ibid.*



together challenge evils and injustice; 7) To “[s]olve problems and disputes” between Muslims and others in an effort towards coexistence; 8) To achieve mutual understanding with everyone so to achieve world peace; 9) To work with “the followers of Islamic schools of thought” in an effort to unify Muslims and “lessen fanaticism and antagonism.”<sup>428</sup>

Interreligious friendship is not among their goals of dialogue – nor is it mentioned under any of the other three main topics they covered – and the only instance of language that has to do with relationships with the religious other is their goal to “[a]cquaint” themselves with the religious other.<sup>429</sup> Peace, cooperation, and understanding appear to be the dominant values expressed in their nine goals, and in their appeal as a whole. In fact, they reiterate this in a declaration they make: “Use dialogue as a means to achieve understanding, cooperation and world peace.”<sup>430</sup>

The remainder of “Initiative for Interfaith Dialogue” document is saturated with statements about striving for mutual understanding and struggling to change public opinion by correcting the misinterpretations of the Qur’ān and misperceptions about Muslims.<sup>431</sup> ‘Tolerance’, ‘cooperation’, and ‘peace’ are the other terms that constantly appear throughout the document.<sup>432</sup> Friendship language appears again at the very end of the document, where there is a list of other events that have stemmed from the Initiative for Interfaith Dialogue. One event, held in 2010, involved students from the schools of Divinity and Law at Yale University, as well as members of the World Christianity Initiative at Yale University. They convened with representatives from the Institute of Diplomatic Studies to discuss “early Islam and Saudi-U.S. relations.”<sup>433</sup> Then they “travelled to Saudi Arabia to forge relationships and friendships with Saudis in an effort to bridge any cultural divides.”<sup>434</sup> A second event, also held in 2010, involved Arab-European young leaders and professionals meeting in Vienna to “promote responsible leadership, mutual understanding, and friendship.”<sup>435</sup> While King Abdullah may have inspired these two events, he did not organise or attend them. For the various events that King Abdullah attended and/or organised, friendship is not listed among the goals for dialogue, whereas it is a goal according to the people who organised these two events that *stemmed from* King

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<sup>428</sup> *ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>429</sup> The second theme is “Methodology, Rules, Regulations and Means of Dialogue,” the third concerned the acceptable partners in interfaith dialogue, and the fourth is “Basis and Themes of Dialogue.” *ibid.*

<sup>430</sup> *ibid.*, 20.

<sup>431</sup> For some examples of these particular themes, see *ibid.* 29-30, 33-34, 38-39, 45, 48-49.

<sup>432</sup> For some examples of these particular terms in context, see *ibid.* 17-18, 20, 33-34, 39, 42, 45-46, 48-49.

<sup>433</sup> *ibid.*, 49.

<sup>434</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>435</sup> *ibid.*

Abdullah's initiative. However, it is not clear from the brief descriptions if these two particular events specifically involve interreligious dialogue.

To summarise, while the "Initiative for Interfaith Dialogue" does include a few instances of friendship language, friendship is not identified as a goal – aside from the event descriptions I discussed in the previous paragraph – or even as a benefit of dialogue. Rather, King Abdullah and King Carlos call each other 'a friend' in their respective speeches, and King Abdullah greets the audience as 'dear or distinguished friends' and proclaims that he is proud of their friendship and partnership. It is significant that friendship language is absent throughout the four main discussion points of the document, which includes a list of nine objectives for dialogue. Instead, as we have consistently seen so far, the Muslim authors highlight mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation.

What I have demonstrated in this section is that while friendship language does sometimes turn up in Muslim religious documents, the meaning behind it is not always clear. For example, when authors use the term 'friends' as a greeting at a meeting, are they endorsing interreligious friendship or extending friendship beyond their own dialogue group? In the documents I discussed, friendship was only highlighted as a result of or benefit of interfaith dialogue in one document, and it was indicated as a goal of interfaith dialogue in one document (although in this particular document friendship was listed as part of a description for peace education curriculum). Friendship language was noticeably absent in a lengthy document about the influence of *Nostra Aetate* on interreligious relations. As with the previous sections of this chapter, we have seen that friendship language is much less common than in equivalent Christian sources, and that when it does turn up it is often peripheral or qualified. As we have consistently seen with other Muslim material, 'mutual respect' and 'mutual understanding' are heavily emphasised in all of the documents, and cooperation is also a common theme. Now I will turn to non-academic discourse on interfaith dialogue that is authored by Muslims, to see if friendship language is more prominent.

## **Friendship Language in Muslim Non-Academic Material**

In this section I survey non-academic sources in which Muslims discuss interfaith dialogue to determine if and how they mention friendship. I consider articles on websites and in magazines, posts in blogs and in forums, and interviews on radio shows. In these particular sources, friendship does sometimes come up in discussions about interfaith dialogue, but as I have demonstrated in other contexts, Muslims do not tend to highlight it

as often or as strongly as Christians. They instead have a propensity to emphasise the need for mutual understanding and respect, among other needs.

In a 2016 article for the Muslim periodical, *Islamic Horizons*, Dr. Sayyid Syeed quotes a Qur'ānic verse that contains the term 'friends'.<sup>436</sup> In this article, the author, Ramadan Alig, details the anti-Muslim sentiments expressed all over the U.S., especially during the Republican primaries leading up to that year's presidential election.<sup>437</sup> Alig outlines the examples of 'Islamophobia' perpetuated by political figures, news media, and social media, including massive efforts to organise anti-Muslim protests across the country. In an endeavour to illustrate how Muslims feel about the way they are being portrayed and treated, Alig quotes two Muslims leaders of different Muslim charities – one of them commenting that "there is so much misunderstanding" about Muslims, and both of them saying that it is difficult in this context to "be a Muslim."<sup>438</sup> Due to the interfaith partnerships they have formed – for example, through organisations like ISNA, among others – there are people of other faiths rallying to support Muslims through counter-protests, lectures, and online campaigns. Dr. Sayyid Syeed – who, as I introduced in another section, is a director of ISNA – acknowledges that because of these partnerships, Muslims feel "more reassured and more encouraged" because they can count on their allies "to denounce this kind of Islam-bashing and intention to attack Islamic places."<sup>439</sup> Similar to the speeches of Elgenaidi and Rahman, which I covered in the previous section, Syeed then quotes Qur'an 41:34:

...respond to evil with utmost goodness. There is a possibility that those who show animosity to you may be transformed into your warmest friends.<sup>440</sup>

Syeed does not comment on the mention of friendship in the verse, and instead expresses pride in the interfaith allies, whom he calls "partners in dialogue," that have stood with Muslims "against fear and hate."<sup>441</sup> Alig also does not say anything about the verse or about interfaith friendship, rather, he provides more examples of protests and the interfaith people who countered the protests with their support of Muslims. Bearing in mind the topic of the article, and considering the observations shared by Syeed in the context of the anti-Muslim sentiments and the support from interfaith partnerships, it seems that the main message that Syeed is highlighting via Qur'an 41:34 is that Muslims should not stoop to

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<sup>436</sup> Alig, Ramadan. "Interfaith Begins to Pay Dividends." *Islamic Horizons* (Jan/Feb 2016), 51-53. Online. [https://issuu.com/isnacreative/docs/ih\\_jan-feb\\_16](https://issuu.com/isnacreative/docs/ih_jan-feb_16). Accessed 27 Jan 2017.

<sup>437</sup> *ibid.*, 51-53.

<sup>438</sup> *ibid.*, 52.

<sup>439</sup> *ibid.*, 53.

<sup>440</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>441</sup> *ibid.*

the level of those who protest and discriminate against Muslims, rather, they should “respond to evil with utmost goodness.” While the term ‘friends’ is present in the article, it is mostly used to describe the actions or attitudes of particular people who are already showing support for Muslims in this difficult context. When speaking about goals or hopes, the author, along with the Muslims he quotes, focuses more on the need for understanding and cooperation (i.e. in defending Muslims against Islamophobia) in the context of interfaith dialogue.

Friendship comes up again, and this time more prominently, within the same issue of *Islamic Horizons*. In an inset on another page, an unidentified author summarises an interfaith seminar hosted by an Evangelical pastor and the president of ISNA, reflecting that the event “inaugurated dialogue and friendship between the two groups, sought to provide a platform for learning how to relate to each other and build bridges of understanding and respect.”<sup>442</sup> The participants of this event focused on requirements for interfaith dialogue: to exercise mutual honesty and coexistence, to “think before they act and to shake hands,” “to accept the ‘Beyond Tolerance’ pledge, to build bridges “so that imams and pastors can become friends,” and for members of the majority religion “to look out for religious minorities.”<sup>443</sup> One of the attendees, Dr. Sayyid Syeed, comments on the critical need to “learn [how] to relate to each other and build bridges of understanding and respect, or an uncertain and uneasy future of conflict awaits us all.”<sup>444</sup> He also remarks that the ways that Christians treat Muslims in the U.S. directly impacts the ways that Muslims treat Christians in the countries where Muslims make up the majority. The use of the term ‘inaugurated’ in the first reference to friendship in this particular article is striking, in that it suggests the Christians and Muslims are initiating or laying the foundation of friendship. This theory is supported by the next mention of friendship, in which friendship is identified as the result of other actions, such as building bridges. This article is an inset in the magazine, so it is not very long, and therefore it is significant that phrases such as “building bridges of understanding and respect” and “learn how to relate to each other” are each raised three separate times, and there are two instances of the call for members of the majority religion to look after members of the minority religion. It appears that for this author, and for the participants of this event, friendship is possible *only* after these criteria are met. Nevertheless, this is one of the few examples where friendship is clearly presented as a goal of interfaith dialogue for Muslims.

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<sup>442</sup> "ISNA Participates in Interfaith Seminar." *Islamic Horizons* (Jan/Feb 2016), 9. Online. [https://issuu.com/isnacreative/docs/ih\\_jan-feb\\_16](https://issuu.com/isnacreative/docs/ih_jan-feb_16). Accessed 27 Jan 2017.

<sup>443</sup> *ibid.*, 9.

<sup>444</sup> *ibid.*

An article from a 2013 issue of *Islamic Horizons* – an issue commemorating the fifty years of ISNA – applauds the interfaith ‘partnerships’ formed throughout the fifty years of ISNA’s existence.<sup>445</sup> The Muslim authors do not say anything about friendship, but the Christian and Jewish leaders that are quoted both bring up friendship. Anthony Cirelli, an executive in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, expresses his pride about the “long-standing relationship and collaborative work” between his organisation and ISNA.<sup>446</sup> He qualifies this relationship as one “grounded in mutual esteem and trust, friendship and passionate commitment to interreligious harmony and dialogue.”<sup>447</sup> He applauds the “progress” they have “made in forging strong bonds of friendship” through the Midwest Muslim-Catholic Dialogue.<sup>448</sup> Rabbi Burton Visotzky, an executive at the Jewish Theological Seminary, also mentions friendship. He reminisces about his first meeting with members of ISNA, remarking that it was “the beginning of a beautiful friendship.”<sup>449</sup> His summary of the progress made between the Jewish and Muslim communities highlights their efforts in achieving mutual understanding. In his concluding remarks, he congratulates their “friends at ISNA” on their anniversary.<sup>450</sup>

Significantly, the Muslim authors choose not to return the sentiments of friendship offered by the Christian and Jewish leaders. Instead, the authors spotlight interfaith cooperation and understanding. They underline the Jewish-Muslim endeavours to resist Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, acknowledging their cooperation as mutually beneficial for their communities and neighbouring nations.<sup>451</sup> They commend the members of ISNA for “consistently advanc[ing] interfaith partnerships, forming coalitions on major issues of concern, and sharing and caring for each other.”<sup>452</sup> Additionally, they pose a rhetorical question about the possibility of Muslims, through their ISNA partnerships, “tak[ing] interfaith understanding to new realms.”<sup>453</sup> As I illustrated with the previous two articles from this magazine, the Muslim authors have a proclivity for focusing on understanding and cooperation when they discuss their progress through interfaith partnerships. In their

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<sup>445</sup> Islamic Horizons Staff. "Interfaith Partnerships." *Islamic Horizons* (Sept/Oct 2013), 48-49. Online. [https://issuu.com/isnacreative/docs/ih\\_sep-oct\\_13](https://issuu.com/isnacreative/docs/ih_sep-oct_13). Accessed 25 Jan 2017.

<sup>446</sup> *ibid.*, 48.

<sup>447</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>448</sup> As I mentioned earlier, Midwest Muslim-Catholic Dialogue is a partnership formed through ISNA, and in the description of the partnership on the ISNA website, there is not any friendship language. There are, however, instances of friendship language in the document created by the Catholics and Muslims in this particular group, which I discussed in the previous section, though many of the references to friendship appear to be largely addressed to the members of their dialogue group. The authors identify mutual respect as the foundation for interreligious friendship and cooperation, but friendship is noticeably absent from their detailed goals of interreligious dialogue. *ibid.*

<sup>449</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>450</sup> *ibid.*, 49.

<sup>451</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>452</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>453</sup> *ibid.*, 48.

final commendation, the authors use terms like ‘partnerships’ and ‘coalitions’; so while they are not using ‘friendship’, they are indicating *some type* of interfaith relationships. This is the case in all three of the articles from *Islamic Horizons*: the Muslim authors, along with the Muslim leaders who are quoted, all express a desire to form some type of relationships with the religious other, and all interfaith relationships they seek seem to require understanding and cooperation, among other attributes.

In an article for a different website, a Muslim woman identifies mutual understanding as a necessary foundational quality for interfaith friendship, though she gives the impression that she was not expecting friendship when she attended an interfaith event. In 2014, an event for the Muslim Jewish Conference – an organisation I discussed in a previous section – was held in Vienna, where the participants attended lectures about Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, identity, conflict resolution, and the religious aspects of gender and power.<sup>454</sup> Eilaf FarajAllah writes about her experience at the conference, and she ends her article with a remark about friendship. She first expresses her frustration with the religious labels that are constantly applied to people, consequently she entered the conference venue hesitantly.<sup>455</sup> However, after a few hours, she was not thinking in terms of religious labels, rather, she was eager to find out what music or television programs the other participants preferred.

FarajAllah struggles with anxiety about how she wants to be perceived versus the stereotypes and labels that others use to judge and classify her. She views the members of the Muslim Jewish Conference as a group of people who “are taking a stand” and “telling the world who [they] are.”<sup>456</sup> During the week of the conference, she “learned from” others, “accepted” others, and in a comment about the conclusion of the conference, she mentions friendship.<sup>457</sup>

...when we parted ways we had a better understanding of the other side, the best understanding I would go so far as to say: we had a friendship.<sup>458</sup>

It is interesting how she phrases her remark about friendship, saying that she “would go so far as to say;” this suggests that perhaps interfaith friendship was not something she was expecting, so she was surprised by it.<sup>459</sup> Based on her statement, for FarajAllah – along

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<sup>454</sup> “MJC 2014 - Vienna.” *Muslim Jewish Conference*. 21 Apr 2015. Online. <http://www.mjconference.org/2015/04/mjc-2014-vienna/>. Accessed 15 Aug 2017.

<sup>455</sup> FarajAllah, Eilaf. “Peeling Off the Labels at MJC.” *Muslim Jewish Conference*. 8 Dec 2014. Online. <http://www.mjconference.org/2014/12/peeling-off-the-labels-at-mjc-by-eilaf-farajallah/>. Accessed 15 Aug 2019.

<sup>456</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>457</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>458</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>459</sup> *ibid.*

with the other Muslims covered in this section – a foundation of understanding makes interfaith friendship a possibility.

In an article about a 2016 Muslim Jewish Conference event, a Muslim articulates her interfaith experience, and she, too, singles out mutual understanding, along with respect, as necessary foundational qualities for friendship. Aleena Khan attended an interfaith event in Germany, where she, along with other Muslim and Jewish attendees, visited the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp.<sup>460</sup> She absorbed various aspects of the Jews' horrendous experiences at that particular concentration camp, and she assimilated one of the Jewish customs, whereby Jews place stones (instead of flowers) at graves to symbolise "permanence of memory."<sup>461</sup> When she discovered that Jews were divided "into mixed barracks" to prevent them from organising "an uprising," she immediately recognised the contemporary significance of people currently being divided in an effort to prevent them from rebelling "against systems of injustice and inequalities."<sup>462</sup> She envisions the progress that people could make if they "were united and worked together towards common goals," and in her opinion, the Muslim Jewish Conference fosters this type of environment.<sup>463</sup> She admits that she has not had the opportunity before to "have open and honest discussions" with the religious other, or to "make lasting friendships with them based on mutual respect and understanding."<sup>464</sup> Her experience with the Jews at the concentration camp encouraged her towards a future that involves everyone working together "in constructive dialogue" to spread peace globally.<sup>465</sup>

The setting for Khan's interfaith experience seems to be fertile ground that makes friendship possible, and her experience is quite distinct from other interfaith events I have introduced. First, this was her first "open and honest" dialogue with Jews, and it lasted an entire week. Second, she learned about a harrowing event in Jewish history – and she learned this alongside Jews, whose ancestors lived through this event. Third, as a religious minority who experiences injustice and inequality, she was able to relate personally to the Jewish experience – she was able to empathise. Considering these three points – her first open and honest dialogue that lasted one week, her shared experience learning about a traumatic Jewish history, and her empathy towards Jews based on their shared experience as religious minorities – it seems likely that she would be able to form

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<sup>460</sup> Khan, Aleena. "Lest We Forget." *Muslim Jewish Conference*. 23 Jul 2017. Online. <http://www.mjconference.org/2017/07/lest-we-forget-by-aleena-khan/>. Accessed 14 Aug 2019.

<sup>461</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>462</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>463</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>464</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>465</sup> *ibid.*

a bond with the religious other. Khan, like the other Muslims I have discussed in this section, also identifies mutual respect and understanding as required foundational attributes for interfaith friendship. By the end of her week-long experience, she must have felt that those foundational attributes had been established, making friendship possible.

A similar paradigm seems to appear in Akbar Ahmed's report for the World Economic Forum about Islam and dialogue. Ahmed – an Islamic Studies scholar – contributes a brief article about interfaith dialogue, entitled, "Friendship Across the Great Divide," where he discusses his "most challenging" interfaith dialogue with Judea Pearl, circa 2006.<sup>466</sup> Pearl's son had been killed in Pakistan whilst reporting on Muslim extremists. Ahmed's and Pearl's dialogue was so powerful that they were invited to repeat it in various venues around the world. Although Ahmed was no stranger to interfaith dialogue, he admits that he learned from his dialogue with Pearl that Muslims, Jews, and Christians need to move beyond the "conferences and seminars" in order to build bridges.<sup>467</sup> He asserts that the next step should involve "a genuine attempt to understand the other position," which includes learning the "history, traditions, and customs" of the religious other and visiting their places of worship.<sup>468</sup> He acknowledges that engaging in "dialogue and understanding" are steps towards building bridges, but they also comprise the foundation for one more step: "the possibility of forming friendships."<sup>469</sup> When a Muslim, Christian, or Jew forms a friendship with the religious other, Ahmed attests that it becomes more "difficult to think of hatred or violence."<sup>470</sup> He cites several areas in the world where there are problems, noting that although the people involved in these problems are neighbours, they are "strangers to each other."<sup>471</sup> Pearl led by example, teaching Ahmed about having "the courage and moral strength" to build bridges with someone who represents the group of people who have wronged him.<sup>472</sup> Ahmed strongly believes that people need to be "vigorously encouraged" to engage in interfaith dialogue, which will lay the foundation for mutual understanding, which then lays the foundation "for the possibility of friendship."<sup>473</sup> He is convinced that "[w]ithout friendship the 21st century will be a time of conflict, tension and violence."<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Ahmed, Akbar. "Friendship Across the Great Divide." in *Islam and the West*. Tranchet, Nancy and Dianna Rienstra, eds. Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2008, 64.

<sup>467</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>468</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>469</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>470</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>471</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>472</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>473</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>474</sup> *ibid.*



Ahmed's report is quite short, so I continued to search non-academic sources in an effort to learn more about his ongoing dialogue with Pearl and to discover more about his position about interfaith friendship. In an interview with Terry Gross on an episode of *Fresh Air*, Judea Pearl and Akbar Ahmed discuss the genesis of their dialogue and how it has developed.<sup>475</sup> Although Ahmed does not speak about friendship during this interview, his explanations paint a broader picture of how friendship became possible between him and Pearl, and they provide insight into the defensive posture demonstrated by many of the Muslims I have discussed thus far. Pearl's son was beheaded by Muslim extremists, consequently Judea Pearl sought to initiate dialogue with "a Muslim partner" to "exchange ideas" and "air grievances" in order to establish "common ground."<sup>476</sup> As for Pearl's specific grievances, he claims that the Jews "do not hear the voice of the moderate Muslims" speaking against suicide bombers and terrorist acts, rather, "anti-Zionist rhetoric" is more prominent in the speeches and writings of Muslim leaders.<sup>477</sup> Ahmed retorts in a way that exhibits another pattern I pointed out in other sections, defensiveness, declaring that there are "many Muslims" (he rejects the "meaningless" labels of 'fundamentalist' and 'moderate') who speak out against extremist groups – and they have been doing so since long before September 11, 2001 – yet the people in the West have not been listening.<sup>478</sup> He blames "the Western media" 1) for giving a voice to the extremists and for leading people to believe that these extremists have more power and larger numbers than they actually do and 2) potentially influencing an uneducated and illiterate Muslim to grasp onto these messages of hatred and to be moved to act on them through violence.<sup>479</sup> He insists that it is necessary for people in the West – especially in the media – to popularise this debate between the group that Pearl calls 'moderate Muslims' and extremist Muslims, rather than just shedding light on the extremists. Furthermore, Ahmed accuses the people of the West of Orientalism<sup>480</sup> (i.e. looking at Muslims as just some exotic, uncivilised group from Asia). He identifies a problematic change in the way that religions, particularly Islam, are being represented: instead of focussing on the beauty, compassion, and balance in religions, hatred, intolerance, and hostility are promoted. He tries, during his lectures and dialogues, to convince extremist Muslims that they are not preaching or practicing what the

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<sup>475</sup> Gross, Terry. "Judea Pearl and Akbar Ahmed's Interfaith Dialogues." *Fresh Air*. National Public Radio (NPR). 10 Oct 2006. Online. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6230947>. Accessed 14 Sept 2019.

<sup>476</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>477</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>478</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>479</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>480</sup> 'Orientalism' is a term coined by Edward W. Said, who wrote a book that criticised the 'West' of viewing Arab culture through a distorted lens, seeing it as exotic, behind the times, and even uncivilised. See Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Qur'ān teaches. Pearl argues that while moderate Muslims may verbally reject the violence of extremists, they fail to reject the “incitement;” consequently they send dangerous “mixed messages” by validating Muslims’ anger on the one hand and condemning violence on the other.<sup>481</sup>

When Gross asks what they have learned from each other through their dialogue, Pearl describes his understanding of what he calls the “mindset of Muslim society,” which to him is encapsulated in “the religious metaphors” and “religious terminology.”<sup>482</sup> He criticises the “West” for belittling this type of language, and he insists that if non-Muslims learn how to “be sensitive to” and learn to utilise this language, they can better communicate with Muslims.<sup>483</sup> Pearl is confident that the solution lies in moderate Muslims issuing “*fatwā[s]*”<sup>484</sup> to fight terrorism, because although the Muslims “dismiss secular language,” he believes they are more likely to listen to *fatwās*.<sup>485</sup> Ahmed agrees with Pearl that *fatwās* are a necessary means for Muslim leaders to speak out against terrorism, because Muslims must deliver these messages “within the context” of the culture from which the terrorism originates.<sup>486</sup> The Muslims who speak against terrorism in the West, in Ahmed’s view, have become secular and thus “are not taken seriously” by other Muslims.<sup>487</sup> He admits that “there is a crisis taking place in Muslim societies,” broadly, “a crisis of education, of politics, of morality, of direction,” and “the lack of understanding of what is happening in the Muslim world” does not help this crisis.<sup>488</sup>

Ahmed – who, in addition to being an Anthropologist, is Pakistan’s former ambassador to the United Kingdom (U.K.) and Ireland – saw the first signs of radical Islam circa 1990 in the U.K., when he was invited to give addresses at a synagogue in London and a chapel in Cambridge. In a lot of the Muslim press, he was vilified as a sell-out who should be punished and excommunicated.<sup>489</sup> However, many Muslim supporters,

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<sup>481</sup> Gross, “Judea Pearl.”

<sup>482</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>483</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>484</sup> A ‘*fatwā*’ is a legal opinion on how to interpret an Islamic law regarding either a civil or a religious issue, and the opinion is given by one or more *muftīs*, or ‘jurisprudents’. A person may seek a *fatwā* for guidance on personal conduct or relationships (e.g. divorce when there is infidelity involved), and groups of people may seek a *fatwā* for broader matters that are political in nature (e.g. Muslim participation in U.S. Military action in Muslim country). For a detailed look at the historical development of *fatwās* and how they have been used in various historical contexts, see Khalid, Muhammad, Brinkley Messick, and David S. Powers, eds. *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and Their Fatwas*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996. Consulted: Tyan, E. and Walsh, J.R. “Fatwā.” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. eds, P. Bearman et al. Brill Reference Online. Online. [https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/search?s.f.s2\\_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&search-go=&s.q=fatwa](https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/search?s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&search-go=&s.q=fatwa). Accessed 18 Sept 2019.

<sup>485</sup> Gross, “Judea Pearl.”

<sup>486</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>487</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>488</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>489</sup> He admits that scholars like himself are many times censored, beaten, or even murdered in Muslim countries when political and religious leaders disagree with what they are teaching, researching, and writing. *ibid.*

“including imams,” applauded his interfaith dialogue efforts because he was promoting understanding and compassion, and he was trying to build bridges, which are all promoted in the Qur’ān.<sup>490</sup> Ahmed acknowledges that the West is demonised in the Arab media, but he holds the Western media to a higher standard because those people are aware of their global impact on mass opinion. He hopes for more sensitivity and understanding towards Muslims. He did not mention friendship at all during this very thorough interview, rather, he constantly emphasised the need for mutual understanding and respect – and for the negative opinion of Muslims in the West to be changed – which will all lead to “compassion” and “love.”<sup>491</sup> He did allude to his tendency, over the years, towards a more Sufi understanding of Islam, especially in the writings of Rumi.

When I first introduced Ahmed’s use of friendship in his World Economic Forum report, I hinted that he seems to exhibit a similar paradigm to what I found in Khan’s article – that the circumstances surrounding the interfaith dialogue were fertile ground for friendship. Based on Ahmed’s dialogue experience with Pearl – which involved Pearl sharing a very painful experience caused by Muslims and admitting his outrage and fears about Muslims – it seemed as if Ahmed and Pearl had formed a bond, and as they repeated their dialogue at numerous locations around the globe, friendship is a product of a natural progression. However, although this may be the case with their particular relationship, Ahmed has actually been talking about friendship since at least 1990. I located an article by Ahmed, published in 1990, in which he offers one potential solution to widespread misunderstanding about Muslims and Islam, especially the Western media’s negative portrayal of Muslims: “personal relationships which cut across cultural and religious barriers.”<sup>492</sup> He provides examples of “many long-lasting and fruitful friendships between people from the West and Muslims.”<sup>493</sup> Although he is not specifically talking about interfaith dialogue, his words here offer a glimpse into how he ultimately began to promote interfaith friendship. In all of his comments about friendship that I have discussed, he makes it clear that *mutual understanding must precede interfaith friendship*, and even in the interview – during which he did not mention friendship – he focuses on explaining and promoting the need for mutual understanding between Muslims and people of other faiths.

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<sup>490</sup> Gross, “Judea Pearl.”

<sup>491</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>492</sup> Ahmed, Akbar. “The concepts of Muslim religion.” *The Guardian*. London, England. 5 July 1990, 21. Online. [https://global.factiva.com/ha/default.aspx#!?&\\_suid=156924102421807104303757187971](https://global.factiva.com/ha/default.aspx#!?&_suid=156924102421807104303757187971). Accessed 23 Sept 2019.

<sup>493</sup> *ibid.*

Muhammad Shafiq and Mohammad Abu-Nimer are two other scholars who frequently emphasise the need for mutual understanding between Muslims and people of other faiths. They co-authored an article about interfaith dialogue for a popular Muslim magazine, and while they do not mention friendship, they do exhibit several of the paradigms common in Muslim discourse on interfaith dialogue, in addition to highlighting mutual understanding.<sup>494</sup> Shafiq and Abu-Nimer preface their article with a statement about “American Muslims” being “opposed to interfaith dialogue” prior to September 11, 2001, on the grounds that they thought their participation would “compromise their faith.”<sup>495</sup> They witnessed this reluctance first-hand in 1985, when Muslims hesitated to partake in their interfaith initiatives. Post 2001, however, they have seen an increase in Muslims participating in interfaith dialogue, an effort that has now grown to include interfaith *Iftar* meals<sup>496</sup> hosted all over America by Muslims in their mosques, by non-Muslims in their houses of worship, by neighbours in community centres, and by politicians at various locales, including the White House. Shafiq and Abu-Nimer advocate Muslim participation in interfaith dialogue for the primary reason of “dispel[ling] myths and misunderstandings about Islam,” a reason they repeat multiple times.<sup>497</sup> They also refer to the Qur’ānic support for interfaith dialogue, and in particular, dialogue with Jews and Christians. The first verse they quote is Qur’ān 16:125: “Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and engage with them in ways that are best and most gracious.”<sup>498</sup> This verse appears to be encouraging proselytisation rather than interfaith dialogue, nevertheless, Shafiq and Abu-Nimer refer to it as a verse that promotes interfaith dialogue. They list various benefits for Muslims that engage in dialogue with Jews and Christians: “build understanding, find commonalities of belief and social responsibility, and encourage one another in faith and good works.”<sup>499</sup> Two additional Qur’ānic verses that they say specifically advocate dialogue with Jews and Christians: the verse used in *A Common Word* (3:64), as well as 5:82, which is a story about the various Christian leaders who supported and protected Muslims.<sup>500</sup> They also relate a narrative about the Prophet Muhammad showing “respect and tolerance” to a Christian community.<sup>501</sup> They conclude

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<sup>494</sup> Shafiq, Dr. Muhammad and Dr. Mohammad Abu-Nimer. "The Qur'anic Perspective on Interfaith Dialogue." *The Message International Magazine*. ICNA. 30 Jan 2014. Online. <https://messageinternational.org/the-quranic-perspective-on-interfaith-dialogue/>. Accessed 17 Sept 2019.

<sup>495</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>496</sup> *Iftar* is an Arabic term that means ‘to break a fast’, and it signifies the breaking of fast at the end of each day during the month of Ramaḍān.

<sup>497</sup> Shafiq and Abu-Nimer. "The Qur'anic Perspective."

<sup>498</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>499</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>500</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>501</sup> *ibid.*

with a set of guidelines for being “mindful of presenting [them]selves and [their] arguments” according to Qur’ān 16:125, which include familiar terminology, such as ‘respect’, ‘tolerate’, ‘common ground’, and ‘cooperate’.<sup>502</sup> Additionally, they again mention the need to “remove prevailing misconceptions about Islam and Muslims,” which they also mention in the introduction to their guidelines as something Muslims should do “whenever [they] have the opportunity.”<sup>503</sup> Perhaps as a response to the Muslims who are worried that participation in interfaith dialogue will “compromise their faith,” Shafiq and Abu-Nimer discourage Muslims from trying to “win points” by “skewing, diluting, or distorting” their faith.<sup>504</sup>

Another academic, Meraj Ahmad Meraj, authored an article about interfaith dialogue for *Morocco World News*, and he echoes much of what was articulated by Shafiq and Abu-Nimer.<sup>505</sup> For instance, he uses the same terminology, such as understanding, respect, cooperation, and tolerance, all of which, for him, comprise the goals of interfaith dialogue. Meraj also calls attention to various narratives from the Qur’ān and the life of the Prophet Muhammad to demonstrate the long history of interfaith engagement by Muslims. He indicates interfaith dialogue as an exercise that fosters principles that “lay the foundation for peaceful coexistence, harmony, and brotherhood.”<sup>506</sup> Similar to other Muslims I have mentioned, he presents scriptural support for interfaith dialogue, and although he quotes the verse used for the basis of *A Common Word*, he incorrectly indicates verse 2:256 as the source, which happens to be another verse commonly cited by Muslims regarding dialogue (‘Let there be no compulsion in religion...’).<sup>507</sup> The topic of interfaith friendship does not come up in Meraj’s non-academic article, but he does mention friendship in an academic article about interfaith dialogue, which I will discuss in the next section of this chapter.

An additional article for the same website discusses the interfaith efforts in Morocco, in which King Mohammed VI echoes much of what Shafiq and Abu-Nimer said about managing misperceptions. Although he does not identify any goals of interfaith dialogue, King Mohammed VI makes the following statement about responding to misinterpretations of the Qur’ān.

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<sup>502</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>503</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>504</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>505</sup> Meraj, Meraj Ahmad. “The Quranic Calls for Inter-faith Dialogue.” *Morocco World News*. 18 May 2019. Online. <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/05/273296/quranic-interfaith-dialogue-islam/>. Accessed 16 Sept 2019.

<sup>506</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>507</sup> *ibid.*

...our management of the religious domain in Morocco focuses on preventing any distorted interpretation of the revealed texts, particularly what relates to jihad...<sup>508</sup>

His statement reiterates what Ahmed, Shafiq, and Abu-Nimer articulated about the need to address the widespread misunderstandings of Islam and misinterpretations of the Qur'ān. The King's statement also correlates to the remarks made in two of the *Islamic Horizons* articles about confronting Islamophobia.

King Mohammed echoes sentiments expressed by several Muslim authors I have discussed in this section regarding a hope that Muslims' history of treating Jews hospitably will be reciprocated. He claims that Morocco has played a "leading role" in interfaith dialogue, particularly in his country's hospitality towards the Muslims and Jews that emigrated from Andalusia.<sup>509</sup> He insists that Jews and Christians have not been treated like religious minorities, and he vows to continue to safeguard "the rights of Muslims and non-Muslims alike."<sup>510</sup> Two of the *Islamic Horizons* authors, along with Shafiq and Abu-Nimer, all make similar statements, indicating that the members of the majority religion should look out for members of the minority religions, and calling for support and cooperation from Jews and Christians.

Similarly, in a Muslim's blog post about interfaith dialogue on the website for the Al-Madina Institute, the author, Sara Ager, reminds her Muslim audience that the Qur'ān advocates interfaith dialogue and that Qur'ān 22:40 in particular calls on Muslims to protect the Christian and Jewish houses of worship.<sup>511</sup> She also draws attention to the narrative of the Prophet Muhammad forming a peace treaty with the Christians of Najran, which specifies that the Christians would not be pressured to convert to Islam.<sup>512</sup> She quotes another Muslim, who claims that the Prophet Muhammad inculcated in the Muslim community the need to establish "strong communities" and to provide for and protect those in the community, including the religious other.<sup>513</sup> Ager sites several contemporary examples of Muslims, Jews, and Christians protecting and supporting each other during times of crisis.

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<sup>508</sup> Morocco World News. "King Mohammed VI: Morocco Plays a Leading Role in Interfaith Dialogue." *Morocco World News*. 25 Jan 2016. Online. <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2016/01/178180/king-mohammed-vi-morocco-plays-a-leading-role-in-interfaith-dialogue/>. Accessed 17 Sept 2019.

<sup>509</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>510</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>511</sup> She quotes the following excerpt: "cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of God is oft commemorated." Ager, Sarah. "Learning from Interfaith Dialogue." *Al-Madina Institute*. 21 Apr 2014. Online. <https://almadinainstitute.org/blog/interfaith-dialogue/>. Accessed 24 Apr 2014.

<sup>512</sup> The treaty also includes several statements forbidding Muslims from harming the Christians' places of worship, and it indicates that Christians could "worship freely." *ibid.*

<sup>513</sup> *ibid.*

Ager asserts that through interfaith dialogue, Muslims can learn how to speak to the religious other in a way that “respects differences and brings people together based on shared values.”<sup>514</sup> She cautions against using interfaith dialogue as a means for proselytising – a tactic that she believes can compromise trust. Instead, she views interfaith dialogue as a way to identify “similarities, change stereotypes, and build relationships based on constructive communication.”<sup>515</sup> While Ager does not mention friendship, she does talk about building relationships of some type, and she highlights mutual understanding and respect.<sup>516</sup> Ager presents respect as a level above “merely tolerating” the religious other, and reaching this level necessitates mutual understanding.<sup>517</sup> To achieve mutual understanding, she recommends “open and constructive communication,” which she deems the “foundation of all positive relationships.”<sup>518</sup>

Whilst I was able to provide some examples of non-academic articles in which Muslims talk about interfaith friendship, I had to hunt for those examples. In the vast majority of Muslim non-academic articles on websites and in magazines, posts in blogs and in forums, and interviews on radio shows that I consulted, terminology such as ‘mutual understanding’, ‘respect’, and ‘cooperation’, are more prominent when Muslims discuss interfaith dialogue. One Muslim’s website in particular serves as a good representation of the ratio of friendship language to terminology such as ‘understanding’ and ‘respect’. Mohammad Amin<sup>519</sup> has a personal blog on which he discusses a variety of topics and responds to questions and comments posted by visitors to his blog.<sup>520</sup> Of the approximately thirty articles on his website that directly address the topic of ‘interfaith dialogue’, interfaith friendship only comes up in two. He writes a lot about interfaith dialogue, and three recurring themes in his writings are mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation. In one of the articles where he mentions friendship, there is a panel on the side of the page that has a bulleted list of summarised points, and one of the points reads, “The forum has led to new friendships.”<sup>521</sup> However, within the article it becomes apparent that he does not intend for this summary point to be a blanket statement about interfaith friendship, rather, it refers to his personal experience in developing relationships with

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<sup>514</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>515</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>516</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>517</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>518</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>519</sup> He is the co-chair of Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester, however, this is his personal blog.

<sup>520</sup> Amin, Mohammed. “Conference address on the Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester.” *MohammedAmin.com*. 25 Oct 2010. Online. [https://www.mohammedamin.com/Community\\_issues/Conference-address-regarding-MJF.html](https://www.mohammedamin.com/Community_issues/Conference-address-regarding-MJF.html). Accessed 28 Sept 2019.

<sup>521</sup> *ibid.*

Jews. He admits that before establishing the charity, he did not have any Jewish friends. He says that he “now [has] a number of Jewish friends,” but he explains that these friendships did not immediately form when they began engaging in interfaith dialogue.<sup>522</sup> Instead, they slowly transitioned from strangers to “acquaintances” to colleagues to friends.<sup>523</sup> They gradually developed trust, which eventually enabled them to confront controversial subjects, instead of avoiding them out of fear of offence. He also mentions that after they had established a foundation of trust, he and his colleagues were able to introduce humour into their discussions.

In one section, Amin offers his readers realistic expectations about interfaith dialogue. He remarks that through his charity, “We had the capacity to build connections between some members of the Muslim and Jewish community...,” which gives the impression that this achievement was perhaps a challenge to attain.<sup>524</sup> As further support of my interpretation, he notes that it was only ‘some’ within the two communities that have these connections.<sup>525</sup> It is also quite telling that he chooses not to say ‘friendships’ and instead says “connections,” which suggests that he chose to set the bar lower, rather than setting the goal of friendship for everyone.<sup>526</sup>

In the second article that includes a statement about interfaith friendship – an article that is a partial transcript of a question and answer session at the conclusion of Amin’s 2019 lecture about his background – he says something similar to what he said in the first article I discussed. In another statement about the forum, he says the following.

The wonderful thing that the forum has achieved is that as initial strangers have got to know each other, we have moved beyond instrumental goals to developing personal friendships. You know that you have achieved something when Muslims and Jews are able to tell each other somewhat *edgy* jokes knowing that it will not harm their friendship.<sup>527</sup>

Here, he seems to be describing what would be a normal progression through the stages of stranger, acquaintance, colleague, and friend. Given that much of the material in his second article is a repeat of what was in the first article, it is possible that his statement about friendship applies primarily to the friends *he* has made. Throughout this article, Amin highlights the need to build respect and understanding, although this particular statement does not necessarily reflect that.

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<sup>522</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>523</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>524</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>525</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>526</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>527</sup> Amin says this article is about his presentation on 27 Feb 2019. *ibid.* “My international Manchester.” 14 July 2019. [https://www.mohammedamin.com/Community\\_issues/Manchester-International-City-MMU.html](https://www.mohammedamin.com/Community_issues/Manchester-International-City-MMU.html).



After reading through Amin's blog, I visited the website for The Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester, and I discovered that friendship language actually appears in one of the two purposes for this organisation's mission. The mission statement designates mutual understanding as one of the founders' goals, which reinforces what I have been demonstrating in Muslim material – that interfaith friendship, when it is discussed in Muslim material, typically requires at least a foundation of mutual understanding.<sup>528</sup> The founders also explain why they created the forum in the first place, indicating that it would be more feasible to focus their efforts only on the Muslim and Jewish communities in Manchester.<sup>529</sup> They list "two main reasons" for their mission: 1) the "common interests" of Jews and Muslims, which they can better achieve by "act[ing] together," and 2) "Learning more about each other, and making new friendships, enriches us as individuals as well as making our city a better place."<sup>530</sup> As Amin described, the friendships he formed through the forum took years to develop, and they only came after establishing mutual understanding and trust. The mention of interfaith friendship on his organisation's website makes it all the more compelling that Amin only brought up interfaith friendship in two of his approximately thirty articles on interfaith dialogue.

Among the examples I have presented in this section, friendship language appears in seven of the twelve articles (not including the articles from Amin's personal website, which I just discussed) – although in one of the articles it is only voiced by a Jewish leader and a Christian leader, and in another it is in the context of intercultural dialogue, not interfaith dialogue. In one of the five remaining articles, friendship is part of the Muslims' overall vision for interfaith dialogue, but a foundation of understanding and respect must first be established. In two of the articles, friendship results from a week-long interfaith experience: the Muslim in one of these articles appears to be surprised by the interfaith friendships at the end of the week, and the other Muslim spent a week in an intense setting, which seemed to be fertile ground that allowed her to establish the foundational attributes of understanding and respect, making interfaith friendship possible. In another

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<sup>528</sup> The mission statement reads: "The objects for which the Forum is established are to develop the cultural and social ties between the Muslim and Jewish Communities of Greater Manchester; to educate members of the Muslim and Jewish Communities in relation to their shared values and common Abrahamic tradition, heritage, history and culture; and to promote better understanding within the wider community of the interests and values that are common to the Muslim and Jewish Communities." "Home Page." *The Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester*. Online. <https://www.muslimjewish.org.uk/index.html>. Accessed 28 Sept 2019.

<sup>529</sup> The founders explain why they created the forum: "Islam and Judaism are closer to each other than any other two religions. However many Muslims and Jews grow up in Britain knowing little about the other community. In 2004 a group of us decided that, even if we couldn't change the world, we could do something to bring the two communities together locally, and set up the Muslim Jewish Forum of Greater Manchester." *ibid*.

<sup>530</sup> The authors list "two main reasons for doing this:" 1. "Muslims and Jews have many common interests which are better pursued if we act together." 2. "Learning more about each other, and making new friendships, enriches us as individuals as well as making our city a better place." *ibid*.

article, a Muslim leader quotes a verse from the Qur'ān that contains the term, 'friends', but he appears to be using the verse as commentary about how to respond to Islamophobia, as the first part of the verse says to address evil with good – furthermore, he does not make any comment about friendship. The final article in which interfaith friendship appears is a direct call for friendship between Muslims, Jews, and Christians, but only after they establish mutual understanding.

All of the Muslim authors identify mutual understanding as an absolute necessity for interfaith dialogue, and many of them mention cooperation, respect, and tolerance. In six of the articles, the Muslims see interfaith dialogue as a means to combat anti-Muslim sentiments and Islamophobia and to dispel misinterpretations of the Qur'ān and misperceptions about Muslims. Several Muslims note the Qur'ānic support for interfaith dialogue and the Prophet Muhammad's engagement with Jews and Christians. Similarly, several authors indicate that the members of the majority religion should protect members of the minority religions and call for support and cooperation from Jews and Christians. A handful of Muslims express the desire to build *some type of relationships* with the religious other, using terms such as partnerships and coalitions.

I have demonstrated in this section that friendship still does not play a central role in interfaith dialogue, similar to what I illustrated in the previous sections of this chapter. What we *have* seen in this section is friendship language used with more context, making it easier to discern when and how friendship is deemed possible or necessary for Muslims in interfaith dialogue. However, friendship language is rarely being used to name directly the goal of or nature of interfaith dialogue itself, nor is it typically named in the process of interfaith dialogue, as we found in Christian sources. With rare exceptions, when friendship language does appear, it is used in a variety of other ways. Perhaps most frequently, it is used to name particular relationships that have already arisen – whether specific long-term relationships (as between Ahmed and Pearl), or relationships emerging from specific intense gatherings (as with Aleena Khan's experience) – or, as with Sayyid Syeed, to describe the actions of non-Muslims who have already defended and supported Muslims who are under attack. Next, I will turn to Muslim academic discourse on interfaith dialogue to see if and how friendship language turns up and if the same types of patterns appear in the reasons for dialogue.

## Friendship Language in Muslim Academic Discourse

Now I will focus on Muslim academic discourse, by which I mean academic discourse authored by Muslims and/or scholars of Islam.<sup>531</sup> All authors mentioned in this section are both Muslims *and* scholars of Islam, unless I specify otherwise. On the whole, there are not as many Muslim academic works on interfaith dialogue compared to the massive amount of Christian discourse on the subject. For instance, the inaugural issue of the journal, *Studies in Islam*, was published in 1964; significantly, there were not *any* articles about interfaith dialogue published in the journal until 1978. Ziaul Hasan Faruqi penned the first article about interfaith dialogue for the journal, in which he outlines three steps towards achieving interreligious harmony, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence. The first step involves “studying” about the other religions, which for Faruqi requires a “sincere desire to understand.”<sup>532</sup> He cautions against selfish motivations, such as “gaining information to serve the interests of one’s own community” and “getting to know the rival’s camp for better argumentation.”<sup>533</sup> According to Faruqi’s second step, it is necessary to shed the exclusive attitude, to let go of the belief that only you and those within your tradition are “on the right path and others are holding totally false beliefs.”<sup>534</sup> It is in his elaboration on this second step that Faruqi unfolds the type of interreligious relationship he envisions.

Unless we regard another person as human as ourselves and are ready to treat him as ‘thou’ in the true sense, it is, perhaps not possible for us to have relationship of respect and love with him. And it is precisely this kind of relationship which is needed for a true fellowship of world religions.<sup>535</sup>

He clearly envisages a relationship that involves mutual understanding and mutual respect – and even love – but he does not say anything about friendship. In this context, his idea of a ‘true fellowship’ of the religious traditions implies something less intimate than friendship, especially when considered alongside his third step. Faruqi’s third step is interreligious dialogue, a practice that “originated in the West” and has been “generally

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<sup>531</sup> Though it is a wordy phrase, I will intentionally continue to use ‘scholar of Islam’ instead of ‘Islamic scholar’ or even ‘Islamic Studies scholar’. This may seem pedantic, however, even among Muslims, there is disagreement about what qualifies something or someone as ‘Islamic’. I have spoken with quite a few Muslims that have made this distinction, and, more importantly, there is quite a bit of scholarly commentary about when it is appropriate to use the label ‘Islamic’. For instance, scholars have argued against the labels ‘Islamic art’, ‘Islamic philosophy’, ‘Islamic law’, and even ‘Islamic civilisation’, to name a few. For a comprehensive look at various scholarship on the argument about whether or not it is appropriate to call something or someone ‘Islamic’, see the following source, particularly the first chapter (5-110). Ahmed, Shahb. *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

<sup>532</sup> Faruqi, Ziaul Hasan. “Ways and Means of Inter-Religious Harmony and Reconciliation.” *Studies in Islam* 15:4 (Oct 1978), 235-242, 236.

<sup>533</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>534</sup> *ibid.*, 237.

<sup>535</sup> *ibid.*

conducted on the Christian platform.”<sup>536</sup> He seeks to improve the quality of dialogue by encouraging practitioners to move beyond listening to actually experiencing “another man’s reality as ‘thou’,” and eventually forming “a religious relationship with a person of another faith.”<sup>537</sup> Faruqi does not say anything *against* interreligious friendships, and seems to either be exercising caution or leaving it up to the practitioner to define the interreligious relationship beyond his very general label of ‘religious relationship’.

Similar to Faruqi, Mohamed Talbi does not mention friendship in his discourse on the object and purpose of interfaith dialogue. However, unlike Faruqi, Talbi does not even touch on the topic of building relationships in interfaith dialogue.<sup>538</sup> Instead, he specifically highlights challenging one’s own beliefs and convictions, listening to others describe their beliefs, and learning to communicate, which appear to be steps towards achieving mutual understanding.<sup>539</sup>

Mohammed Abdou Yamani, like Faruqi, discusses building relationships through interfaith dialogue, and he deems it imperative for Muslims to engage in interfaith dialogue, especially in the West.<sup>540</sup> In the previous chapter I mentioned S. Asif Razvi, who cites goals of proselytising and correcting incorrect interpretations and perceptions of Islam.<sup>541</sup> This is a common tactic within Muslim academic discourse, as well. Yamani identifies Islam as the most misunderstood religion, a religion that those in the Western media assault with negative images, misperceptions, and misinterpretations.<sup>542</sup> He specifically addresses Muslim-Christian-Jewish dialogue, noting that “religion is the cornerstone of the evolving Muslim-Christian-Jewish relationship.”<sup>543</sup> He gives a brief account of relations between Muslims, Jews, and Christians during the first century of Islamic history, concluding that “these are but a few glimpses of tolerance in Islam and Muslim history, the best testimony being the coexistence of Christians and Jews with Muslims in the Muslim world” to date.<sup>544</sup> He notes the impact of highlighting “these positive relations between Muslims and Christians,” and he suggests building “a new harmonious relationship”

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<sup>536</sup> *ibid.*, 239.

<sup>537</sup> *ibid.*, 240.

<sup>538</sup> Talbi, Mohamed. “Islam and Dialogue—Some Reflections on a Current Topic.” in *Christianity through Non-Christian Eyes*. Griffiths, Paul J., ed. MaryKnoll: Orbis Books, 1989, 82-101.

<sup>539</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>540</sup> Yamani, Mohammed Abdou. “Islam and the West: The Need for Mutual Understanding.” *The American Journal of Islamic Social Scientists* 14:1 (Spring 1997), 87-98.

<sup>541</sup> Kujawa-Holbrook, Sheryl A, Olga Bluman, and Aziza Hasan. *For One Great Peace: An Interfaith Study Guide*. Los Angeles, CA: Abrahamic Faiths Peacemaking Initiative, 2000, 10. Online. <http://abrahamicfaithspeacemaking.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/For-One-Great-Peace-Study-Guide.pdf>. Accessed 5 Mar 2014.

<sup>542</sup> Yamani, 87.

<sup>543</sup> *ibid.*, 88.

<sup>544</sup> *ibid.*, 90.

instead of focusing “on the negative aspects of [their] common history.”<sup>545</sup> In addition to gesturing towards common ground, he spotlights the need for mutual tolerance, trust, cooperation, and respect – which he notes should be exercised “sincerely and with good will.”<sup>546</sup> Furthermore, he provides Qur’ānic justification for engaging in interreligious dialogue with Jews and Christians, quoting Qur’ān 29:46, 3:64, and 2:136 as proof of the “special status” that has been granted to the “People of the Book” and of instructions to deal “gently and respectfully with them.”<sup>547</sup>

My first three examples illustrate what is typical in Muslim discourse on interfaith dialogue for a number of reasons. First, friendship is rarely specified in lists of Muslims’ goals for and purposes of interfaith dialogue, and is seldom acknowledged as a byproduct. Discussions of friendship in Muslim academic discourse on interfaith dialogue are rare – especially when compared to Christian discourse – though there are some exceptions, as I will demonstrate in this section. Second, Faruqi, Talbi, and Yamani touch on several tropes that exist throughout the material I will cover in this section. They use terminology we have seen throughout the Muslim material presented in this chapter, such as mutual understanding, mutual respect, tolerance, cooperation, and interfaith harmony. Faruqi and Yamani gesture towards *some* type of relationship with Jews and Christians, using terms such as ‘fellowship’ and ‘positive relationships’, which is also a tactic we have seen in other material. Yamani exhibits several themes we have already seen, such as appealing to Muslims’ historical engagement with Jews and Christians in the early days of Islam, referring to the special status granted to Jews and Christians in the Qur’ān, and expressing frustration or outrage with the negative portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the Western media. Even though these three scholars did not mention friendship, the themes present in their discourse are ones that are commonly used when Muslims and/or scholars of Islam address interfaith friendship. Two additional themes common to discussions on interfaith friendship are 1) to bring up the salvation of non-Muslims, and 2) to compare the scriptures and/or traditions and to focus on commonalities.

One of the things I will establish in this section is that the academics that do want to talk about interfaith friendship often have to negotiate around the Qur’ān. There are at least twelve verses in the Qur’ān that directly address relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>548</sup> One verse in particular, Qur’ān 5:51, at least in the major English translations of the Qur’ān, appears to forbid friendship between Muslims, Jews, and

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<sup>545</sup> *ibid.*, 91.

<sup>546</sup> *ibid.*, 98.

<sup>547</sup> *ibid.*, 88.

<sup>548</sup> Qur’ān 5:51, 5:55-56, 5:57, 9:71, 3:28, 3:118, 4:139, 4:144, 58:14, 60:1, and 60:13.

Christians. At first glance, the other verses also don't appear to favour relationships with non-Muslims, so it is not surprising that friendship is a sensitive topic and is likewise approached carefully by Muslims and scholars of Islam. I will illustrate various strategies that scholars use whilst negotiating the contemporary challenges posed by these particular Qur'ānic verses about friendship. Despite these challenges, when friendship language does turn up in academic discussions about interfaith dialogue it is typically in relation to the Qur'ān, and where this is the case, I have observed four common approaches. The first is the censorial approach, whereby the Qur'ānic verses about friendship are either not brought up at all or are briefly acknowledged, but in a dismissive fashion. The second is the etymological approach, by which the translation of the Arabic term, *awliyā'* – a term used in many of the Qur'ānic verses about Muslim and non-Muslim relationships – is disputed as one that does not actually signify friendship. The third is an apologetic approach, which involves an appeal to the historical context of the revealed verses. The final is an associable approach, whereby the 'problematic verses' are thrown into the mix of similar ones from other scriptures, thus distributing guilt or responsibility among all of the religious traditions. Of course, not all examples fit neatly into any one category and actually, as I will show, some Muslims and scholars of Islam use a variety of these approaches to discuss interfaith friendship. I will also illustrate the few examples of discussions of interfaith friendship language in which the Qur'ān is not brought up at all. I am not attempting to offer my own interpretation of these Qur'ānic verses, or explore their reception history in any detail. I am not making any strong claims about the right or wrong ways to interpret these verses. Rather, I am trying to show that there are signs, in many of the texts I explore below, that the authors are negotiating difficult territory when they speak about interfaith friendship in relation to the Qur'ān.

In his article about pluralism and Islam, Murad Wilfried Hofmann primarily discusses his interpretation of the Qur'ānic position on religious pluralism, but before moving to that topic, he first paints a picture of the Muslim experience.<sup>549</sup> Similar to what I illustrated with other material in this chapter, Hofmann exhibits defensiveness and outrage throughout the beginning of his article, alluding to the negative ways in which Muslims are portrayed in the media, and referencing the increase in distrust and misunderstanding of Muslims since the events on September 11, 2001, among other violent events. He references the constant barrage of violence and discrimination towards Muslims, of accusations towards Muslims,

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<sup>549</sup> Hofmann, Murad Wilfried. "Religious Pluralism and Islam in a Polarised World." in *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*. Boase, Roger, ed. Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate Publishing, 2005, 235-245.

and of generalisations about Islam.<sup>550</sup> He uses this backdrop not to argue *against* religious pluralism, but as a necessary means to highlight the long history of interreligious engagement in Islam, beginning with support for pluralism in the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*.<sup>551</sup> He comments that the Qur'ān indicates 1) admission into heaven is available to anyone who believes in and obeys God, not just Muslims, 2) the Muslims' God and the God worshipped by others are the same God, and 3) it is God's will that multiple religions exist, thus Muslims must tolerate and respect the religious other.<sup>552</sup> He criticises the scripture-based arguments against religious pluralism – made both by Muslims and non-Muslims – “that Islam alone is God's religion” and that Islam will “be ‘victorious’ over all others.”<sup>553</sup> He takes an etymological approach, arguing that in the verses about Islam being the only religion (3:19 and 3:85), the term ‘Islam’ should be taken to mean ‘submission’ or ‘self-surrender’; and in the verses about Islam being victorious over other religions (5:48 and 48:28), the verb (*zahara* ‘ala) should be interpreted as “to outshine” rather than ‘to be victorious’.<sup>554</sup> By reinterpreting these particular verses in the way he suggests, he asserts that they can no longer be used to argue against religious pluralism.

It is at the tale-end of his arguments against those who deny Qur'ānic support for religious pluralism that Hofmann makes a statement about Muslim friendships with non-Muslims:

the Qur'an mainly encourages friendship between Muslims, not between Muslims and non-Muslims (3:118 ff.; 2:120). This is only natural - there is simply more affinity between people who consider themselves as brothers and sisters (49:10; 3:103). Religious pluralism does not imply wishy-washy social uniformity.<sup>555</sup>

Here he seems to be dismissing the Qur'ān's tendency to encourage Muslim friendships with other Muslims since to him, friendship is not required for religious pluralism, it is not relevant. He makes no other statements about friendship or about the verses about friendship, rather, he moves on to the theoretical and practical aspects of religious pluralism. Hofmann uses the censorial approach by briefly and dismissively mentioning several of the Qur'ānic verses about Muslim friendships with non-Muslims, although of the

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<sup>550</sup> *ibid.*, 235-238.

<sup>551</sup> The *Sunnah* is “a body of established customs and beliefs that make up a tradition,” though in “Muslim legal and religious thought,” it is more often associated with the “actions and sayings” of the Prophet Muhammad. “Sunnah.” in *The Islamic World: Past and Present*. Esposito, John L., ed. Oxford Islamic Studies Online. Online. <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t243/e332>. Accessed 12 Nov 2019.

<sup>552</sup> Hofmann, 238-239.

<sup>553</sup> *ibid.*, 239.

<sup>554</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>555</sup> *ibid.*, 240.

four verses he mentions in his statement about friendship, only Qur'ān 3:118 explicitly addresses friendship between Muslims and non-Muslims, as seen below.

O believers, take not for your intimates outside yourselves; such men spare nothing to ruin you; they yearn for you to suffer. Hatred has already shown itself of their mouths, and what their breasts conceal is yet greater. Now We have made clear to you the signs, if you understand.<sup>556</sup>

This verse uses the Arabic term, *biṭānatan*, which can be defined as one's particular or special intimates, familiar friends, or associates, to whom one is open, or unreserved, in conversation, and who know the inward state or circumstances of one's case, affair, or family.<sup>557</sup> Qur'ān 3:118 is the only verse in which *biṭānatan* is used with the sense of friendship. Lexicologically speaking, the term *biṭānatan* conveys a stronger sense of intimacy than does *awliyā'*, and this stronger sense is signified in many English translations of Qur'ān 3:118 in which 'intimate associates' or 'intimates' appears instead of 'friends', as with the above translation.<sup>558</sup> It is interesting that Hofmann did not take the etymological approach with this verse, given that he took such an approach with the verses that others used to reproach religious pluralism.

In his article comparing missionary activity to interfaith dialogue, Asghar Ali Engineer professes that in order to achieve peace and interreligious harmony, the focus should be on interfaith dialogue rather than missionary activity (which for Muslims is called *da'wah*).<sup>559</sup> He explains that in the early days of Islam, Muslims respected and accommodated Jews and Christians, and "tried to have dialogue with them on the basis of what was common between them."<sup>560</sup> It is here he mentions friendship, in quoting Qur'ān 5:82.

Thou wilt certainly find the most violent of people in enmity against the believers to be the Jews and the idolaters; and thou wilt find the nearest in friendship to the believers to be those who say, We are Christians. That is because there are priests and monks among them and because they are not proud.<sup>561</sup>

The Arabic term he translates as 'friendship' is *mawada*, and it is worth noting that none of the major English translations of the Qur'ān use the term 'friendship' in this verse –

<sup>556</sup> Arberry, 88.

<sup>557</sup> *biṭānatan*, a feminine noun in the accusative case, derives from the root *baṭana*, which means "to be within, to be inward, or that which is hidden, that which is inward." In the Qur'ān, *baṭana* is employed in phrases about inward and outer sins or indecencies, or in the form *baṭn* which means belly or hollow. It is also used to express a divine attribute, Inward. Lane, Edward William. *Arabic-English Lexicon*. London: Williams & Norgate, 1863, Book 1, 221.

<sup>558</sup> Arberry, Pickthall, and Muhammad Abdel Haleem translate *biṭānatan* as 'intimates', and Yusuf Ali translates the term as 'intimacy'. Alternatively, al-Hilali and Khan use the transliteration of the Arabic term and followed by a selection of possible definitions in parenthesis: "(advisors, consultants, protectors, helpers, friends, etc.)."

<sup>559</sup> Engineer, Asghar Ali. "Da'wah or dialogue?" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 39:1-2 (Winter-Spring 2002), 26-31.

<sup>560</sup> *ibid.*, 27.

<sup>561</sup> *ibid.*



rather, they use terms such as ‘love’ and ‘affection’.<sup>562</sup> Engineer claims that this verse “speaks of people, not faiths.”<sup>563</sup> He goes on to explain – using an apologetic approach, meaning he appeals to the historical context of the revealed verses – that although the Qur’ān says that Jews and Muslims had conflict and that Jews were “violent toward Muslims and Christians as friends,” their conflict was based on power, rather than faith.<sup>564</sup> He insists that there was not conflict between Muslims and Christians at the time, and that the Prophet Muhammad encountered “priests and monks who had no ambition for power,” which he indicates as the reason for the statement in Qur’ān 5:82 about Christians being “nearest in friendship.”<sup>565</sup> He claims that the Prophet Muhammad also “extended a hand of friendship” towards those of other faiths.<sup>566</sup> Engineer’s use of friendship language beginning with his own translation of Qur’ān 5:82 is an example of the censorial approach, in that he does not mention the surrounding verses – such as 5:51, 5:57, and 5:77-5:81, among others – that more directly address friendship between Muslims, Jews, and Christians. (He also takes an apologetic approach since he brings up the historical context, though he does not explicitly use the historical context as a reason to dismiss the verses and then encourage contemporary Muslims to be friends with Jews and Christians.)

Engineer later outlines requirements for dialogue, beginning with mutual understanding, mutual trust, and listening.<sup>567</sup> He also emphasises the importance of not only being self-aware, but also engaging in intra-religious dialogue, in order to bring awareness to the diversity within one’s own tradition.<sup>568</sup> He suggests that within interfaith dialogue, participants first focus on commonalities before diving into differences – he cautions participants to avoid differences until they have developed mutual trust.<sup>569</sup> Although in his explanation of dialogue, he exhibits themes of inclusiveness, peace, tolerance, and harmony, he does not mention friendship, which makes it even more curious why he chose to translate *mawada* as ‘friendship’.

Thomas Michel, S.J. – who is both a Christian and a scholar of Islam – uses the censorial approach in one of his articles about Christian-Muslim dialogue. He refers to Christians as the “natural allies” and “natural co-workers” that Muslims turn to when they

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<sup>562</sup> Arberry, Yusuf Ali, and al-Hilali and Khan all translate *mawada* as “nearest in love,” Pickthall translates it as “nearest of them in affection,” and Abdel Haleem translates it as “closest in affection.”

<sup>563</sup> Engineer, 27.

<sup>564</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>565</sup> *ibid.*, 27-28.

<sup>566</sup> *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>567</sup> *ibid.*, 29.

<sup>568</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>569</sup> *ibid.*

are in need of “affirming” or “upholding” the “divine values in the modern world.”<sup>570</sup> Similar to Engineer, Michel points to Qur’ān 5:82, but he claims that this verse is the origin of “this natural affinity” between Christians and Muslims.<sup>571</sup> Notably, he does not include the first part of the verse, which indicates the Jews and idolators as the most violent people in hostility against the believers; perhaps this is because he is focusing on the topic of Christian-Muslim dialogue. Unlike Engineer, Michel does not translate *mawada* as ‘friendship’ in this particular verse, rather, he translates it as “closest in affection” – which is more in line with the major English translations of the Qur’ān.<sup>572</sup> However, he does attribute friendship to this verse in his commentary.

This perception of divinely willed friendship and cooperation between Muslims and Christians was expressed on the Christian side when the Catholic Church, in the Second Vatican Council decree *Nostra Aetate*, pleaded with the Christians and Muslims to move beyond the suspicions and conflicts of the past in order to work together to carry out a common mandate from the one God whom both groups worship.<sup>573</sup>

In his statement, not only does Michel incorrectly attribute mention of friendship to Qur’ān 5:82, he also incorrectly attributes it to *Nostra Aetate*.<sup>574</sup> Michel’s manoeuvre qualifies as a censorial approach since he gleans friendship from Qur’ān 5:82, but he does not mention the numerous other verses – including the surrounding verses, such as 5:51, 5:57, and 5:77-5:81 – that appear to specifically condemn friendship with Christians and Jews, and/or non-believers.

In his article about interfaith dialogue, John Azumah – who, like Michel, is both a Christian and a scholar of Islam – expresses concern about the ‘mistrust’ that many people have developed towards the religious other, despite the progress made “through dialogue in promoting better understanding.”<sup>575</sup> Some people see interfaith dialogue as a venue through which the religious other will try to convert them, while others see it as an environment in which they must compromise their own beliefs for the sake of ‘interfaith harmony’. Azumah identifies “five main issues that need critical re-examination.”<sup>576</sup> He

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<sup>570</sup> Michel, Thomas, S.J. *A Christian View of Islam: essays on dialogue*. Omar, Irfan A., ed. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2010, 153.

<sup>571</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>572</sup> His translation of Qur’ān 5:82: “The closest in affection to [Muslims] are those who say: ‘We are Christians’, for among them are priests and monks and they are not arrogant.” He inserted ‘Muslims’ in brackets where other English translators said ‘the believers’. *ibid.*

<sup>573</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>574</sup> See the chapter in this thesis entitled, ‘Friendship in General Interfaith Material’, where I explain the absence of friendship language in *Nostra Aetate* and the tendency of mainly Christians to incorrectly attribute interfaith friendship to the document.

<sup>575</sup> Azumah, John. “The Integrity of Interfaith Dialogue.” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 13:3 (2002), 269-280, 269.

<sup>576</sup> *ibid.*

begins by pointing out positive impacts made by interfaith dialogue efforts, and it is in this part of his discussion that he first mentions friendship.

The first positive impact he lists is “the meeting of people of different faiths and the building of friendship, confidence and trust amongst people who hitherto had negative and hostile views of one another” – thus, he is identifying friendship as a positive byproduct of interfaith dialogue.<sup>577</sup> Here he refers to a specific event in 1994, during which the Pope gathered with representatives of various religions, some of whom “enthusiastically shook and kissed [his] hand.”<sup>578</sup> He does not cite a specific event here, though he may be talking about the 1994 World Conference on Religion and Peace. Significantly, Azumah – who, as I mentioned, is a Christian – is the one saying that what happened at this conference is ‘building of friendship’; he is not quoting any Muslim attendees. His second example of the positive impact of interfaith dialogue is the expansion of the academic study of Islam in the West, and his third example is the various committees and the like that have been established in the World Council of Churches and the Vatican, among others.<sup>579</sup>

Azumah suggests that among his five issues, theological issues should be re-examined in the context of interfaith dialogue. He notes that Muslims often mention that in the Qur’ān, Jesus is revered as a prophet of God, associated with miracles, and is expected to return. (I have many times heard Muslims mention these things in interfaith settings.) Azumah points out that usually when Muslims mention Jesus’s place in the Qur’ān, they follow up their comments by questioning Christians on their willingness to acknowledge Muhammad not only as a prophet of God, but the final prophet who brought God’s final message (which is another tactic I have witnessed). He claims that some Muslims have:

stated very categorically that unless and until there is reciprocity on the Christian side on the status of Muhammad and other truth claims in Islam, there can be no genuine dialogue!<sup>580</sup>

He brings up suggestions from various scholars on how Christians could get around this issue, then concludes that for Muslims to insist that Christians accept Muhammad as a prophet is like Christians insisting that Muslims “accept Jesus as Son of God and God incarnate,” which he says is “too great a price to pay for interfaith dialogue.”<sup>581</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>578</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>579</sup> *ibid.*, 269-270.

<sup>580</sup> *ibid.*, 272.

<sup>581</sup> *ibid.*, 273.

Another of Azumah's five issues regards the particulars of the "inherited traditions" – such as scriptures and/or practices that permit past, present, and future "discrimination, exclusion, and violence against" the religious other.<sup>582</sup> It is in this section that he mentions friendship for the second time and where he uses the associable approach. After listing examples of Christians persecuting Jews, he presents the Qur'ānic verses about Jews and Christians being eligible for salvation (2:62, 3:199, 5:69) – which are verses we have seen used by Muslims in the interfaith context – and contrasts these verses with other Qur'ānic verses that appear to shun Jews and Christians. Among these particular verses, he mentions Qur'ān 5:51, saying, "Muslims are warned against taking Christians as friends."<sup>583</sup> By mentioning this 'problematic verse' against the backdrop of Christian persecution of the religious other, Azumah is using the associable approach, which entails throwing the 'problematic verses' into the mix of similar ones from other scriptures, thus distributing guilt or responsibility among all of the religious traditions (or in his case, just Islam and Christianity). He doesn't mention friendship again in this section, and instead deems it necessary for Christians and Muslims to acknowledge and re-examine their traditions to stop "the use and abuse of revelation to perpetuate hatred and violence."<sup>584</sup>

Similarly, another of Azumah's concerns is the failure of contemporary Muslims to acknowledge and be critical of – and avoid perpetuating – the historical hostility towards Christians. He highlights the tendency of "Western scholars of Islam" to use the censorial approach to "critical aspects of [Muslim] history," and to instead "take a very critical and sometimes hostile view of the Christian past."<sup>585</sup> He claims that Muslims idealise and romanticise Muslim history, "while seeing the Christian past mainly, if not solely, in terms of the Crusades."<sup>586</sup> He calls for honesty and a willingness to "be critical of the past," which he says is the only way to have "authentic dialogue and good relations."<sup>587</sup>

Finally, similar to Michel, Azumah makes reference to *Nostra Aetate* and incorrectly attributes a discussion of friendship to the document. He brings up concerns of the existential kind, and it is here that we find his third use of friendship language. He incorrectly quotes the first line of *Nostra Aetate*, attributing friendship language where there is none.

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<sup>582</sup> *ibid.*, 274.

<sup>583</sup> *ibid.*, 275.

<sup>584</sup> *ibid.*, 275-276.

<sup>585</sup> *ibid.*, 276.

<sup>586</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>587</sup> *ibid.*

In this age of ours, when men are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples are being strengthened, the Church examines with greater care the relation which she has to non-Christian religions.<sup>588</sup>

He does not make any further comment about friendship, and instead makes reference to a Muslim scholar, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, saying that he agrees with Nasr's notion that mutual understanding is imperative in interfaith dialogue. Azumah adds that mutual trust is also important, especially considering the concerns of his that I previously discussed.

Shi'a Muslim Mahmoud Ayoub, a religious historian who writes about Islam and interfaith dialogue, addresses the topic of interfaith friendship in one of his works about Muslim perspectives on Christianity. He outlines several goals of interfaith dialogue, and it is in his description of the second goal that he mentions friendship. The first goal is "mutual acceptance of the legitimacy and authenticity" of the religious other's tradition as "a divinely inspired faith."<sup>589</sup> The second is mutual respect, which he insists must be sincere and must involve respecting "the beliefs, ethical principles, social values, and political aspirations of the religious other."<sup>590</sup> He emphasises that complying with these first two goals should be an exercise repeated with every interfaith engagement so that Muslims and Christians move beyond seeing each other as neighbours, and instead "accept each other as friends and partners in the quest for social and political justice, theological harmony, and spiritual progress on the way to God, who is their ultimate goal."<sup>591</sup> Ayoub does not say anything more about friendship here, though it does appear to be limited to certain parameters based on the way he presents it alongside "partners in the quest for social and political justice, theological harmony, and spiritual progress on the way to God." This makes friendship appear as more a means to an end, rather than something personal and intimate. Elsewhere he advocates unity, harmony, mutual recognition, and fair dialogue, and he indicates understanding, respect, and cooperation as necessary attributes in interfaith relationships – all of these conditions could be achieved without friendship. His third goal is "acceptance of the religious other as an equal partner and not

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<sup>588</sup> Actually, he is quoting from the following source. Flannery, Austin, ed. *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post-conciliar Documents*. Bombay: St Paul Publication, 1975, 667. According to the Vatican's English version of *Nostra Aetate*, the first line reads: "In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions." Vatican Council II. "Declaration on the relations of the Church to Non-Christian religions: *Nostra Aetate*." Vatican: The Holy See, 28 Oct 1965. Online. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html). Accessed 7 Jan 2014.

<sup>589</sup> Ayoub, Mahmoud. *A Muslim View of Christianity: essays on dialogue*. Omar, Irfan A., ed. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2007, 66.

<sup>590</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>591</sup> *ibid.*

an opponent in dialogue.”<sup>592</sup> He identifies two aspects of this type of equality: in human dignity and in the claim for religious authenticity.

Ayoub highlights mutual understanding, stressing that Muslims and Christians should shed any preconceived notions of the religious other – even setting aside ideas of the religious other as portrayed by their own scriptures and traditions – and truly listen to and learn from each other. He warns against judging one tradition’s scriptures and traditions by the scriptures and traditions of the other tradition, and he cautions them to follow strict guidelines when comparing their religious traditions. For example, he says to avoid contrasting ‘bad’ things from one tradition with ‘good’ things from another in an effort to rate one tradition over another, rather, compare only ‘good’ things with good and ‘bad’ things with bad.<sup>593</sup> Moreover, in a similar way to Azumah, Ayoub says not to cover up, excuse, or dismiss the wrongdoings of those from any tradition, either by incorrectly attributing similar behaviours to the religious other in order to level the playing field, or by blaming such behaviours on “human sinfulness or frailty.”<sup>594</sup>

Surprisingly, in a later chapter entitled, “Nearest in Amity,” Ayoub begins with commentary (his and others) about the salvation of Jews and Christians, and then points to Qur’ānic calls for interfaith dialogue. He does not discuss friendship in a way that conveys his explicit support of it,<sup>595</sup> and he admits that he intentionally avoids discussing the verses in the Qur’ān that would “foster disunity and discord” and that would potentially discourage amicable relations among Muslims, Jews, and Christians.<sup>596</sup> This tactic qualifies as a censorial approach since Ayoub briefly acknowledges and then dismisses the Qur’ānic verses about friendship. He quotes two verses as examples of the verses he is bypassing: Qur’ān 5:51, which he translates as “O you who have faith, do not take the Jews and Christians as friends or allies,” and Qur’ān 2:120, “Neither the Jews nor the Christians would be pleased with you [Muhammad] unless you follow their religion.”<sup>597</sup> In this particular chapter, he also takes an apologetic approach to friendship – in appealing to the historical context – by claiming that these verses and others like them are particular to the political problems at the time of their revelation and should therefore not “be used to

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<sup>592</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>593</sup> *ibid.*, 67.

<sup>594</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>595</sup> Although his title, “Nearest in Amity,” may appear to suggest his openness to interfaith friendship, he is actually quoting from Qur’ān 5:82, which Engineer quoted above (though Engineer chose to translate *mawada* as ‘friendship’ instead of ‘amity’, which, as I explained, is a departure from other major English translations). The definition of amity is ‘friendly relations’, and friendship is a synonym for the term. However, I argue that one can be *friendly* with someone without *being friends* with someone. As I have demonstrated throughout this chapter, other synonyms of amity are more often used in Muslim discourse on interfaith dialogue, such as harmony and peace, instead of friendship language.

<sup>596</sup> Ayoub, *A Muslim View*, 208.

<sup>597</sup> *ibid.*

negate the positive verses,” which are, according to him, “more numerous and more emphatic in their insistence on mutual recognition and fair dialogue between Muslims and the People of the Book.”<sup>598</sup>

Ayoub’s argument – which is a direct contradiction to his previously stated guidelines for Muslims and Christians in dialogue – is curious for a number of reasons. First of all, arguably the ‘positive verses’ are also specific to particular historical circumstances at the time of their revelation, though Ayoub approves of using them as long as they are not somehow used to negate other positive verses. Daniel Madigan – who is a Christian and a scholar of Islam – made a similar argument about what he labeled “historicised readings” at a conference at Georgetown University.<sup>599</sup> In his response to other conference papers, he said that historicised readings – which I label the ‘apologetic approach’ – cause “ambiguity” and are potentially dangerous.<sup>600</sup> He notes that although reading scripture in this way can provide ways to “leave statements of difference back in history” – which is what Ayoub prefers – this approach is dangerous since one could argue that “positive statements about Jews and Christians could also be classified as historical views” that are no longer relevant.<sup>601</sup> He suggests that one way around this problem is for the reader to take “ethical responsibility” for what the text says, rather than pretending that the reader has no say in the meaning of the text.<sup>602</sup>

A second reason for questioning Ayoub’s argument is that the positive verses he gestures to are not about *relationships between* Muslims and non-Muslims, instead they are about *dialogue with* Jews and Christians, given that he categorises them as ones that demand “mutual recognition and fair dialogue.”<sup>603</sup> Thirdly, using these potentially discouraging verses to ‘negate’ the ‘positive verses’ is a different manoeuvre than completely eliminating them from the discussion, which is what he is doing – the former manoeuvre could lead to a fruitful discussion of exegetical works and abrogation, whereas the latter manoeuvre stifles the conversation, a manoeuvre that seems to contradict Ayoub’s advocacy of interfaith dialogue. In defence of his choice to be “highly selective in his use of Islamic sources,” he insinuates that if we fail to give preference to the portions of our religious texts that “encourage greater understanding and cooperation among the people of different faiths and ideologies” then we could destroy the pluralistic world in

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<sup>598</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>599</sup> Madigan, Daniel. Response to Conference Papers for *Contemplating the Qur’ān* Conference at Howard University School of Divinity. Howard University School of Divinity, Georgetown University, George Mason University, and Institute of Islamic Thought, Sponsors. 26 Mar 2013. Web. <http://vimeo.com/66160303>. Accessed 20 Mar 2014.

<sup>600</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>601</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>602</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>603</sup> Ayoub, *A Muslim View*, 208.

which we live.<sup>604</sup> He echoed this sentiment in a series of lectures he delivered at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, stating that “it is better that we just take the [verses] that we can live by.”<sup>605</sup> As for the problematic verses, in a bold apologetic move, he makes an appeal to the divine: “leave the others [verses] to God to worry about. They are God’s words, and God is responsible, not me.”<sup>606</sup>

Ayoub is certainly not the first nor the last scholar (or practitioner) to exercise censorship when deciding which parts of a religious text should be highlighted and which should be downplayed or even outright ignored. Jane McAuliffe – who is a Christian, as well as a leading scholar of Islam and an advocate for Christian-Muslim dialogue – notes that “positive allusions to the Christians are scattered throughout the Qur’ān and a number have been persistently extracted to serve as proof-texts of Muslim religious tolerance.”<sup>607</sup> We can see another example of this tactic in a lecture delivered by Tariq Hamid, who uses a variety of approaches to the topic of friendship: censorial, etymological, apologetic, and associable. At a conference held at Georgetown University, Hamid delivered a lecture entitled, “Christians, Jews, Muslims: Friends or Foes,” in which he seeks to correct what he regards as common misinterpretations of the Qur’ān and “incorrect perceptions” of Muslims, specifically regarding the *salvation of* and *friendships with* non-Muslims.<sup>608</sup> On the topic of friendship, Hamid acknowledges that “there are many Muslims [even those involved in interfaith dialogue] who believe that Muslims cannot be friends with non-Muslims,” a perception that is shaped by the “misinterpretation of several Qur’ānic verses.”<sup>609</sup> Interestingly, his first approach to correct this misperception is to find Qur’ānic support for the *salvation of* non-Muslims, which perhaps suggests that for some Muslims salvation and friendship are intertwined. For Hamid, Qur’ān 62:2 and 4:122 prove that “Islam is not an exclusive religion” and that “salvation is not restricted to any particular religion, community, or group of people.”<sup>610</sup> At first blush, Qur’ān 62:2 does not appear to have a particularly inclusive quality, especially as compared to the other verse Hamid references:

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<sup>604</sup> *ibid.*, 209.

<sup>605</sup> Ayoub, Mahmoud M., “Trinity Days Lectures.” *Trinity Seminary Review* 32:1 (Winter/Spring 2011), 18.

<sup>606</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>607</sup> McAuliffe, Jane Dammen. *Qur’ānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 4.

<sup>608</sup> Hamid, Tariq. “Christians, Jews, Muslims: Friends or Foes? What the Qur’ān Says.” Conference paper. *Contemplating the Qur’ān* conference at Howard University School of Divinity. Howard University School of Divinity, Georgetown University, George Mason University, and Institute of Islamic Thought, Sponsors. 26 Mar 2013. Online. <http://vimeo.com/66160303>. Accessed 20 Mar 2014.

<sup>609</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>610</sup> *ibid.*



It is He who has raised up from among the common people a Messenger from among them, to recite His signs to them and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and the Wisdom, though before that they were in manifest error.<sup>611</sup>

Hamid appears to interpret the reference to the ‘common people’ as one supporting inclusivism, meaning that the revelation is accessible to *all* of the common people, not just Muslims. Qur’ān 4:122, on the other hand, seems to more clearly extend salvation, indicating its accessibility to “those that believe, and do deeds of righteousness.”<sup>612</sup> According to these two verses, Hamid concludes, “the perception that salvation is restricted to any group or religion is not correct.”<sup>613</sup> It is worth noting that Hamid selected from outside the normal pool of Qur’ānic verses that Muslims cite in support of inclusivism; more often Qur’ān 2:62 is cited when the speaker’s initiative is to make salvation more accessible.<sup>614</sup>

After establishing that salvation is open to all, Hamid moves on to the topic of interfaith friendship. He says, “in my opinion interfaith dialogue and interfaith friendship are the two sides of the same coin,” and goes on to explain that through interfaith dialogue and interfaith relationships it becomes possible for people of different religious traditions to “learn to love and respect each other,” something he claims was commanded by the prophets Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad.<sup>615</sup> He acknowledges that there are many Muslims who believe that Muslims and non-Muslims are forbidden to form friendships, and he suggests consulting the Qur’ān to see what it has to say about the matter.

Hamid draws from several verses to support his argument, beginning with Qur’ān 5:57-58. However, although he claims he is quoting Qur’ān 5:57-58, he uses the censorial approach by only quoting a portion of Qur’ān 5:57: “all you who believe do not take those who have taken your faith in jest and fun.”<sup>616</sup> He uses this scriptural excerpt as the basis for his argument that the Qur’ānic explanation about friendship “is not based on faith,” claiming that the criterion is applicable not only to the People of the Book, but to all people regardless of their religious beliefs – including Muslims.<sup>617</sup> Depending on which English translation he is using, he might have complicated his argument had he quoted Qur’ān 5:57 in its entirety. In consulting five of the major English translations, it becomes apparent

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<sup>611</sup> Arberry, 277.

<sup>612</sup> *ibid.*, 118.

<sup>613</sup> Hamid, “Christians, Jews, Muslims.”

<sup>614</sup> Qur’ān 2:62 reads, “Surely they that believe, and the Jewry, and the Christians, and those Sabaeans, whoso believes in God and the Last Day, and works righteousness -- their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall be on them; neither shall they sorrow.” *ibid.*, 24.

<sup>615</sup> Hamid, “Christians, Jews, Muslims.”

<sup>616</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>617</sup> *ibid.*

that the translators struggled with how to translate according to the order of the Arabic words. For instance, Arberry translates the verse in the following manner.

O believers, take not as your friends those of them, who were given the Book before you, and the unbelievers, who take your religion in mockery and as a sport—and fear God, if you are believers.<sup>618</sup> Q. 5:57

Arberry orders the words differently from the Arabic, and does so in a way that, in my opinion, changes the meaning of the verse.<sup>619</sup> Arberry's translation could mislead the reader to think that the introductory phrase, "who take your religion in mockery and as a sport" only applies to the unbelievers, whereas in the original language, the phrase introduces both "those who were given the book" and the unbelievers. I offer another way to translate the verse, which is closer to the Arabic.

O ye who believe do not take those who have taken your religion mockingly and jokingly, those who were given the Book from before you, and the unbelievers as friends, and fear God if you are believers.<sup>620</sup>

This translation identifies three separate categories of people that are not suitable friends for Muslims, and it does make room for Hamid's claim that even Muslims can be among those who mock or joke about Islam. Alternatively, Yusuf Ali, Abdel Haleem, and al-Hilali and Khan all specify the jokers and mockers as the main category and then introduce two subcategories – previous recipients of scripture (or in the case of al-Hilali and Khan, 'Jews and Christians') and disbelievers – using terminology such as 'whether from'. I have quoted them below, respectively.

O ye who believe! Take not for friends and protectors those who take your religion for a mockery or sport,— whether among those who received the Scripture before you, or among those who reject Faith; but fear ye Allah if ye have Faith (indeed).<sup>621</sup>

You who believe, do not take as allies those who ridicule your religion and make fun of it – whether people who were given the Scripture before you, or disbelievers – and be mindful of God if you are true believers.<sup>622</sup>

O you who believe! Take not for *Auliya'* [*a.k.a. awliyā'*] (protectors and helpers) those who take your religion for a mockery and fun from among those who received the Scripture (Jews and Christians) before you, nor from among the disbelievers; and fear Allah if you indeed are true believers.<sup>623</sup>

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<sup>618</sup> Arberry, 137.

<sup>619</sup> The original Arabic for Qur'ān 5:57 reads *yā ayyuhā al-ladhāna āmanū lā tattakhadhā al-ladhīna attakhadhū dīnakum huzuwan wa-l'aiban man al-ladhīna ūtū al-kitāba min qablikum wa-al-kuffāra awliyā' wa-attaqū allāh in kuntum mu'minīna*.

<sup>620</sup> This is my own translation of Qur'ān 5:57.

<sup>621</sup> Qur'ān 5:57, Yusuf Ali.

<sup>622</sup> Qur'ān 5:57, Abdel Haleem.

<sup>623</sup> Qur'ān 5:57, al-Hilali and Khan.

Pickthall, on the other hand, flips the order and indicates previous recipients of scripture, disbelievers, and then mockers and jokers, leaving it unclear as to whether the mockers and jokers are in both groups or just among the disbelievers.

O Ye who believe! Choose not for friend such of those who received the Scripture before you, and of the disbelievers, as make a jest and sport of your religion. But keep your duty to Allah if ye are true believers.<sup>624</sup>

An initial impression of this verse seems to put the Jews and Christians in the same group as the unbelievers and to charge all three groups with mocking and joking about the Muslim religion. These major English translations of the Qur'ān convey the ambiguity as to whether or not friendships with the People of the Book and the unbelievers are forbidden *outright* or *only if the people mock or joke about Islam*. Furthermore, the translators varied in their rendering of *awliyā'*, with three of them translating the term as 'friend(s)', and the others using a mixture of 'protectors', 'allies', and 'helpers'. In choosing to cite only a portion of this verse, Hamid avoided a text that – at least in its English translations – has been surrounded by ambiguity. Qur'ān 5:58 – the verse to which Hamid gestures but does not quote – explains that the Jews, Christians, and unbelievers mock and joke when the Muslims call to prayer, and they do so “because they are a people who have no understanding.”<sup>625</sup> It is possible that Hamid chose not to quote or discuss Qur'ān 5:58 because it would go against his argument that the Qur'ānic position on friendship has nothing to do with faith.

To put this verse in historical context: first the Muslims had in common with Jews and Christians certain customs, such as fasting on the Day of Atonement and facing Jerusalem during prayer. However, Allah's revelations to the Prophet Muḥammad quickly helped establish a religious identity that was recognisably different from the others. For example, Qur'ān 2:124-127 and 2:142-150 identify Abraham's place of worship and instruct the Muslims to turn towards this location, the Ka'bah, during prayer. Consequently, if the Jews and Christians did not look to the Ka'bah during prayer, then according to Qur'ān 5:55 they would not be considered believers.

Hamid also recites Qur'ān 3:199 in support of his argument: “Surely among the People of the Book there are those who believe in Allāh and in what has been sent down to you and what has been sent down to them, humbling themselves before Allāh.”<sup>626</sup> Immediately after quoting this verse, Hamid concludes that “the Qur'ān encourages

<sup>624</sup> Qur'ān 5:57, Pickthall.

<sup>625</sup> Arberry, 137.

<sup>626</sup> Hamid, “Christians, Jews, Muslims.”

Muslims to be friends with non-Muslims.” First of all, it is interesting that Hamid chose this passage of the Qur’ān, given that he began his lecture by stating that the Qur’ānic criteria for friendship has nothing to do with faith. This verse seems to be reassuring Muslims that there are at least *some* Jews and Christians who are humble and who believe in God. Why would this matter if Muslims can – according to Hamid’s understanding – become friends with believers or non-believers as long as those people are not mocking or joking about Islam? Secondly, Qur’ān 3:199 does not appear to be useful as a proof-text for scriptural advocacy of friendships with non-Muslims since this verse does not say anything about establishing relationships.

Hamid then reassures the audience that there will always be differences between the religious traditions, and while these differences cannot be completely resolved, “they can be reduced significantly.”<sup>627</sup> This is a curious manoeuvre since he seems to be blurring the lines of distinction between people of different faiths. He goes on to explain that Muslims should focus on the character of people when deciding whether or not they should become friends, pointing to (but not reciting) Qur’ān 3:75 and 3:113 for support, which I have provided below.

And of the People of the Book is he who, if thou trust him with a hundredweight, will restore it thee; and of them is he who, if thou trust him with one pound, will not restore it thee, unless ever thou standest over him. That, because they say, ‘There is no way over us as to the common people’. They speak falsehood against God and that wittingly.<sup>628</sup> Qur’ān 3:75

Yet they are all not alike; some of the People of the Book are a nation upstanding, that recite God’s signs in the watches of the night, bowing themselves.<sup>629</sup> Qur’ān 3:113

Hamid does not elaborate on the specific character traits that are preferable for a friend, but from these two verses we can glean trustworthiness and piety. So again Hamid provides an example that seems to go *against* his argument that faith does not need to be considered when choosing friends, insinuating that *it is* preferable to have friends that believe in and worship God.

Hamid concludes his lecture with two points: 1) It is only when we correct our misinterpretations and misperceptions that “we can accomplish constructive interfaith dialogue,” and 2) “Based on [his] understanding of these verses, Christians, Jews, and Muslims are friends.”<sup>630</sup> Hamid does not seem to make a clear distinction between forming

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<sup>627</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>628</sup> Arberry, 84.

<sup>629</sup> *ibid.*, 88.

<sup>630</sup> Hamid, “Christians, Jews, Muslims.”

interreligious friendships within the context of interfaith dialogue as opposed to forming them outside of that context. Therefore, one conclusion might be that since he requires a foundation of understanding for ‘constructive dialogue’ to occur, then understanding is also required for the foundation of interreligious friendship. Furthermore, as I noted in the last paragraph, based on Hamid’s selection of verses as proof texts for his argument about interreligious friendship, these friendships also require a foundation of trustworthiness and piety. Although Hamid demonstrates one of the patterns we have continuously seen – that interreligious friendship requires a foundation of understanding – he deviates from this pattern by saying that this foundation of understanding is needed *before* constructive interfaith dialogue can happen, as the other Muslim authors I have discussed have indicated dialogue as *a tool to achieve* this foundation of understanding.

Another Muslim academic, Zafar Ishaq Ansari uses both the censorial and apologetic approaches when addressing the appearance of friendship language in both the Qur’ān and the Constitution of Madīna.<sup>631</sup> In his article – which addresses the “Islamic basis” for Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue – the only times he uses friendship language is when he is quoting from the Qur’ān or from the Constitution of Madīna, and when he discusses the hypothetical situation had the vision set forth in the Constitution of Madīna been fully realised. Outside of those topics, Ansari uses terminology such as ‘love of neighbour’, ‘fellowship’, ‘cordiality’, ‘relationship’, and ‘cooperation’. Furthermore, he adds a disclaimer regarding fellowship and cordiality: these are only possible if Muslims can achieve them “without compromising, of course, their duty to strive to make the Word of God prevail.”<sup>632</sup> In support of this disclaimer, he draws attention to Qur’ān 60:8-9, which says to avoid being friends with people who fight Muslims for religion, or who drive Muslims from their homes, or who help others to do either of these things.<sup>633</sup> He does not provide any further commentary about these verses – thus, using a censorial approach – rather, he moves to a discussion of the historical context, thus using an apologetic approach.

After quoting Qur’ān 60:8-9, Ansari describes the Prophet Muhammad’s “initiative” to deem non-Muslims as “protected people” following his instalment as Madīna’s “head of

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<sup>631</sup> As I mentioned in a previous section, the Constitution of Madīna is an agreement between the clans of Madīna and the Prophet Muhammad, following his and his followers’ emigration to the city. Ansari, Zafar Ishaq. “Some Reflections on Islamic Basis for Dialogue with Jews and Christians.” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 14 (Summer 1977): 433-446.

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.*, 441.

<sup>633</sup> He quotes these verses as the following, but does not indicate which English translation he uses. “God forbids not respecting those who fight you not for religion, nor drive you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly. Surely God loves the doers of justice. God forbids you only respecting those who fight you for religion, and drive you forth from your homes and help [others] in your expulsion, that you make friends of them; and whoever makes friends of them are the wrongdoers.” *Ibid.*, 441.

state.”<sup>634</sup> He claims that in addition to the contractual element of these relationships, the Prophet “attempted to develop fellowship with the Jews” in Madīna, an act Ansari says was motivated by “the spirit.”<sup>635</sup> He goes on to quote excerpts from the Constitution of Madīna, none of which discuss interfaith friendship. In Ansari’s commentary about the Constitution, he appears to be trying to counteract Qur’ān 60:8-9 by emphasising the Prophet’s “readiness to welcome fellowship and friendly co-existence” with the religious other.<sup>636</sup> He acknowledges the failure of the Constitution, but rather than suggesting friendship between Muslims, Jews, and Christians in contemporary times, he suggests “we draw any inspiration from” the underlying “spirit” of the Constitution.<sup>637</sup>

Ansari continues his commentary on contemporary interfaith relations, suggesting that while “[t]he theological basis for this fellowship seems to be that Muslims are not only required to communicate the Word of God, but also to live it,” Muslims should keep in mind the surrounding pluralistic world when trying to achieve this vision, which could include cooperating with the religious other in their goals to realise “common ideals and values.”<sup>638</sup> Several times he hints that Muslims, Jews, and Christians might find points of agreement. He identifies loving the neighbour as a duty shared by Muslims, Jews, and Christians, though he is aware that this duty that may be defined differently within each tradition.<sup>639</sup>

Similar to Ansari, Meraj Ahmad Meraj brings up interfaith friendship in reference to the Constitution of Madīna in his article about interfaith dialogue.<sup>640</sup> In his comments on the Constitution of Madīna, Meraj claims that it “states that between the Jews and Muslims is sincere friendship...,” and although he does not indicate upon which part of the Constitution he bases his comment, he is likely referring to number seventeen. As I mentioned in a previous section, in Ibn Ishāq’s version of the Constitution of Madīna, number seventeen says, “the *mu’minūn* [believers] are each other’s allies to the exclusion of other people.”<sup>641</sup> The Arabic term translated into ‘allies’ is *mawālī*, which Meraj appears to be reading as ‘friends’. As I explained before, given the broader context of the Constitution – that it was meant to establish ground rules for the interactions between the various groups in Madīna, including which groups would be protected – ‘allies’ is the more

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<sup>634</sup> *Ibid.*, 443.

<sup>635</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>636</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>637</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>638</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>639</sup> *Ibid.*, 444.

<sup>640</sup> Meraj, Ahmad Meraj. "Islamic Directives of Interfaith Dialogue." *The Scholar-Islamic Academic Research Journal* 3:1 (Jan-June 2017), 20-35. Online. Research Gateway Society. <http://siarj.com/index.php/Siarj/article/view/58/187>. Accessed 25 Sept 2019.

<sup>641</sup> See the related footnote on the *Children of Abraham* document in the Religious Documents section of this chapter. Lecker, Michael. *The Constitution of Medina: Muḥammad’s First Legal Document*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin, 2004, 34.

widely accepted translation, instead of ‘friends’. Regardless, Meraj reads this as interfaith friendship.

The other instance of friendship language in Meraj’s article appears in his commentary on what interfaith dialogue ‘involves’: listening, arguing “reasonably,” agreeing to disagree, negotiating, being open-minded, and “moving from being in hostility to be friendly.”<sup>642</sup> Significantly, he does not list friendship among his goals of interfaith dialogue, which are “communal harmony” and “peace;” nor does he list friendship as his objective for interfaith dialogue – instead, he brings up “mutual understanding” (which he repeats three times) and “respect” (which he repeats four times).<sup>643</sup> He uses other terminology that we have seen in Muslim material to indicate some type of desired interfaith relationship, such as “cooperative relationships” based on “commonalities” and a desire for “building relationships.” Although he does not mention any verses from the Qur’ān regarding interfaith friendship, he does indicate an “Islamic directive” to engage in interfaith dialogue, and among the verses he mentions are the verse used in *A Common Word* (3:64) and the verse that indicates there is ‘no compulsion in religion’ (2:256), which, as we have seen, are frequently used verses in Muslim discourse on interfaith dialogue.<sup>644</sup> Furthermore, he employs a common tactic by referring to the Prophet Muḥammad’s engagement with Jews and Christians. While it is not clear how Meraj classifies friendship – as a goal, purpose, byproduct, etc. of interfaith dialogue – the two instances of friendship language in his article appear to suggest that he is open to friendship being a part of interfaith dialogue.

### **Friendship Without Mention of Qur’ān**

As I said at the beginning of this section, there are a few instances of Muslims or scholars of Islam discussing interfaith friendship without mentioning the Qur’ān in academic contexts. For instance, Liyakatali Takim authored an article about American Muslim participation in interfaith dialogue following the events on September 11, 2001.<sup>645</sup> He reinforces some of the themes that I noted in the material from Muslim charities, such as outrage and defensiveness regarding the incorrect perceptions of Muslims and the negative portrayal of Muslims in media and among certain groups of people, such as Christian fundamentalists. He explains that after 2001, many Muslims in America saw a need to be more intentional in their engagement with the religious other so that they could begin to change the narrative. Takim’s first use of friendship language comes in his

<sup>642</sup> This is a direct quote, thus the grammatical error is Meraj’s. Meraj, “Islamic Directives,” 22.

<sup>643</sup> *ibid.*, 20-22.

<sup>644</sup> *ibid.*, 23-25.

<sup>645</sup> Takim, Liyakatali. “From Conversion to Conversation: Interfaith Dialogue in Post 9-11 America.” *The Muslim World* 94 (July 2004), 343-355.

description of how some mosques in America had open houses in order to appear more “people friendly” to non-Muslims.<sup>646</sup> Being ‘people friendly’ certainly is not the same as forming friendships, but it is friendship language nonetheless. He lists other ways that Muslims reacted, such as being more patriotic and becoming more involved in domestic policy (rather than focusing on issues abroad). As for interfaith dialogue, Takim notes a “shift from attempts at ‘conversion of’ to those of ‘conversation with’ the other.”<sup>647</sup> He signifies the novelty of Muslim dialogue with the religious other, as in Muslim countries “Muslims did not, generally speaking, feel the need to” engage in dialogue with the religious other, except for the purpose of “preaching Islam” or “refuting the beliefs of the other.”<sup>648</sup> However, in the example he provides, interfaith dialogue seems to entail the Muslims ‘preaching Islam’. He refers to a particular mosque in Michigan; the imam remarked that non-Muslims in the community “...need to be educated to the truth and beauty of Islam in order that the Muslim community be effectively integrated into American life.” The imam goes on to say that Muslims must not isolate themselves because they “have a responsibility to propagate [their] faith.”<sup>649</sup> It is interesting that Takim chose this particular quote, because later in a section detailing challenges that people may face in dialogue, he reveals that Muslims may be skeptical of dialogue as a means towards “reconciliation or expressing their beliefs” due to the history of Christian missionaries using dialogue as a means for proselytising.<sup>650</sup>

Takim moves on to talk about what he thinks dialogue should entail and how it should work in a community, and he touches on many of the same themes seen in other Muslims descriptions of interfaith dialogue, such as mutual understanding and mutual respect. Earlier I mentioned Mahmoud Ayoub’s recommendation to avoid contrasting ‘bad’ things from one tradition with ‘good’ things from another in an effort to rate one tradition over another, and to instead compare only ‘good’ things with good and ‘bad’ things with bad.<sup>651</sup> Takim says something similar in his comments on mutual understanding and respect, specifically calling out the tendency to contrast violence from one tradition with “ideals of peace and love” from another tradition.<sup>652</sup> He also mentions mutual trust, as well as mutual sensitivity, which he describes as an alternative to “reach[ing] doctrinal agreement.”<sup>653</sup>

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<sup>646</sup> *ibid.*, 344.

<sup>647</sup> *ibid.*, 345.

<sup>648</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>649</sup> *ibid.*, 345-346.

<sup>650</sup> *ibid.*, 349.

<sup>651</sup> Ayoub, *A Muslim View*, 67.

<sup>652</sup> Takim, 349.

<sup>653</sup> *ibid.*, 347.



Takim's second use of friendship language appears when he shifts to discussing dialogue within the community.

When refreshments are served after the dialogue, Muslims and Christians build bonds of friendship that are often renewed at various times during the year. Those who attend the dialogue get to know members from another community in a deep and personal way; they become real people and not simply representatives of certain other religious traditions.<sup>654</sup>

His phrasing suggests that friendship is built *after* the dialogue takes place. Perhaps, then, for him friendship is a byproduct of interfaith dialogue. He brings up friendship two more times in a section about what he calls "action-oriented dialogue."<sup>655</sup> He sees dialogue as more fruitful when Muslims work with "their non-Muslim friends" towards a mutual concern in their communities.<sup>656</sup> Since he used friendship language in a more general sense here, at first blush it is not clear whether or not these would be existing friends that the Muslims made through other means, or whether they are friends made through interfaith dialogue efforts. However, he later makes a statement that indicates the friendships would be formed *through* the 'action-oriented dialogue'.

Action-oriented dialogue that is constructed on the basis of kinship and collaborative works increases communal friendship and instills a sense of shared responsibility with others.<sup>657</sup>

In summary, although Takim does not outright identify friendship as a goal of interfaith dialogue, he seems to be highlighting it as a positive byproduct of the practice.

In her article about interfaith dialogue in Syria, Edith Szanto Ali-Dib, at first blush seems to present friendship as a byproduct of interfaith dialogue, but a closer reading makes it unclear as to whether it is a *byproduct of* dialogue or an *alternative to* dialogue.<sup>658</sup> Szanto references a 2006 interfaith conference at a monastery during which participants debated about whether or not they deemed it appropriate to call what they were doing '*hiwār*', which is the Arabic word typically used for 'dialogue', because rather than signifying conversation for the purpose of achieving mutual understanding, mutual respect, and brotherhood, *hiwār* has a negative association with Christian missionaries.<sup>659</sup> (This is contrary to Meraj's understanding of *hiwār* as a means to "seek peaceful solutions to

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<sup>654</sup> *ibid.*, 348.

<sup>655</sup> *ibid.*, 351.

<sup>656</sup> *ibid.*, 352.

<sup>657</sup> *ibid.*, 353.

<sup>658</sup> Szanto Ali-Dib, Edith. "Inter-religious Dialogue in Syria: Politics, Ethics, and Miscommunication." *Political Theology* 9:1 (2008), 93-113.

<sup>659</sup> *ibid.*, 103.

problems of humanity.”)<sup>660</sup> The participants thought of other terms, including ‘coexistence’, and ‘friendship’, as well as the term ‘*ta’aruf*’ (i.e. “getting to know each other”), but all terms were ultimately voted down, and they departed without coming to an agreement on terminology.<sup>661</sup>

The two Muslim leaders that Szanto interviewed both have a long history of interfaith engagement. They stray from one of the main goals that we have repeatedly seen in Muslim discourse on interfaith dialogue: mutual understanding. Compared to the two Christian leaders she interviewed, she notes the divergence in the Muslims’ *goals of* and *views of* interfaith dialogue, as well as in their concepts of what is considered moral. She claims that the Muslim leaders see dialogue as a means to “rectify the image of Islam’ and to call for a joint fight against immorality,” as well as atheism and fanaticism – which are themes that we have seen elsewhere in this chapter.<sup>662</sup> Despite their calls on Jews and Christians to learn about Islam, Szanto recognises that the two Muslim leaders have an admittedly “superficial understanding of Christianity.”<sup>663</sup>

One of the leaders, al-Habash, said that interfaith conferences in Syria “are aimed at strengthening domestic ties of brotherhood, demonstrating Syrian unity, rather than at achieving mutual understanding.”<sup>664</sup> The other leader, Kuftārū, remarked that “interfaith dialogue is unnecessary because co-existence is a well-ingrained Syrian tradition.”<sup>665</sup> Kuftārū also admitted to avoiding “theological discussions” with European and American Christians.<sup>666</sup> Ironically (given the fact that they were shunning the use of a term for dialogue because it was associated with Christian missionaries) the leaders’ focus instead seems to be on conversion. Both al-Habash and Kuftārū related stories to Szanto about how the Prophet Muhammad and his companions were hospitable and generous to Christians and Jews, behaviours which both men claim paved the way for present-day coexistence among Muslims and Christians. Numerous times, al-Habash and Kuftārū refer to the Qur’ān regarding salvation for Christians and Jews. Regarding a particular interfaith conference in Syria, al-Habash commented:

we will not convince and convert each other, so there is no point in dialogue. Instead, we renew our friendship with others.<sup>667</sup>

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<sup>660</sup> Meraḡ, 22.

<sup>661</sup> Szanto Ali-Dib, 94 & 103.

<sup>662</sup> *ibid.*, 95.

<sup>663</sup> *ibid.*, 102.

<sup>664</sup> *ibid.*, 98.

<sup>665</sup> *ibid.*, 95.

<sup>666</sup> *ibid.*, 99.

<sup>667</sup> *ibid.*, 102.

This is a unique use of friendship language, in that instead of being a *goal of* or a *byproduct of* dialogue, friendship appears to be completely separate from interfaith dialogue – an alternative to it. Szanto later remarks that “friendship, mutual respect, and ignorance of each other’s beliefs do not constitute mutually exclusive or contradictory concepts for many Syrians.”<sup>668</sup> She explains that Kuftārū, on the other hand, views friendship as Christians and Muslims joining in the “common battle against immorality and fanaticism,” but his view of friendship does not include “in-depth theological discussions nor intellectual or experiential knowledge of one another.”<sup>669</sup> She goes on to explain the following.

In other words, Kuftārū is calling upon clerics to reach out and educate people, rather than wait for potential followers to ask for a religious education. It is in this active “shared recognition and pursuit of a good” that clerics from different religions can be friends according to Kuftārū. Also, his argument that “[t]he solution to man’s problems lies in his return to a rational spirituality, which is the essence of the teaching of all the divine missions,” does not mean that people must understand each other’s religions in order to attain “happiness of body and soul.”<sup>670</sup>

Therefore, these Muslim leaders’ view of not only friendship, but also interfaith dialogue and mutual understanding, greatly differ from the Muslims perspectives we have seen thus far.

As a final example, Akbar Ahmed – whom I mentioned in the non-academic examples – authored an article in which he describes a “three-step process” that culminates in friendship.<sup>671</sup> Similar to what Takim – among others – mentioned about the changes in interfaith dialogue following September 11, 2001, Ahmed explains that while he was already involved in “bridge-building and interfaith dialogue,” he felt “compelled” to do more.<sup>672</sup> He recognised the significance for Muslims of the tendency in the U.S. media for people to ask, “Why do they hate us?” – a question that was typically answered with generalisations, such as that Muslims hate the West.<sup>673</sup> Ahmed insists that despite the narrative in the media, there had been – and continued to be – efforts by Muslims to engage in interfaith dialogue, though he calls it “dialogue of civilizations.”<sup>674</sup> Through this type of dialogue, Muslims form “relationships based in trust and dignity,” and they aim for

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<sup>668</sup> *ibid.*, 103.

<sup>669</sup> *ibid.*, 104.

<sup>670</sup> *ibid.*, 105.

<sup>671</sup> Ahmed, Akbar. “Afterword: A Reflection on the Crucial Importance of Interfaith Dialogue.” *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 16:3 (2018), 114-118, 114.

<sup>672</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>673</sup> *ibid.*, 115.

<sup>674</sup> *ibid.*

“harmony and coexistence” by building bridges and “build[ing] on commonalities.”<sup>675</sup>

Ahmed notes that unfortunately when it comes to the topics of Muslims or Islam, the media coverage tends to focus on the negative instead of highlighting the positive.

Ahmed strongly believes that interfaith dialogue is necessary, and he has devised a strategy for maximum effectiveness. The first step is ‘dialogue’. In this stage, participants must be open to listening to the religious other’s ‘views’ and to sharing ‘views’ with the religious other.<sup>676</sup> He identifies an objective of this step, knowledge, which he says “is predicated on promoting better understanding.”<sup>677</sup> The second step is ‘understanding’. The participants deepen their understanding by better educating themselves about each other through reading and through visiting the “houses of worship” of the religious others.<sup>678</sup>

Ahmed illustrates how this stage can lead to collaborations on writing projects or community efforts, and he offers the example of his tour with Judea Pearl, which I described in the non-academic section of this chapter. The final step is ‘friendship’, which he says would be the ideal result of the first two steps – though he acknowledges that it may not be possible for some. He sees this step as one “that can often make the most difference and have the most impact.”<sup>679</sup> He again points to his tour with Judea Pearl: since the two of them did become friends, they were able to demonstrate to audiences that not only could Jews and Muslims have civilised and productive conversations, they could also be friends.

Though he does not specify any verses, Ahmed justifies Muslim participation in interfaith dialogue (*his* version of interfaith dialogue) as a means to adhere to “a Muslim’s duty,” that of “accumulating knowledge and learning.”<sup>680</sup> Similarly, he, like other Muslims I have discussed, points to examples of the Prophet Muhammad being tolerant of the religious other. (He does not, however, mention anything about Qur’ānic positions on Muslim friendships with non-Muslims.) He cautions that most interfaith dialogue efforts fail at the first stage, and he stresses the importance of moving on to the second step so that there can be a lasting relationship. The first two steps of Ahmed’s process could result in mutual understanding, which is the dominant goal throughout Muslim discourse on interfaith dialogue. Thus, he appears to fall in line with many of the examples of Muslims who indicate mutual understanding as the necessary foundation for interfaith friendship.

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<sup>675</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>676</sup> *ibid.*, 116.

<sup>677</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>678</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>679</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>680</sup> *ibid.*

With the Muslim academic material, I have illustrated several patterns. The most striking pattern is the one that I have been describing all along: reference to interfaith friendship is rare in this material, and I have only found a handful of examples in which it is discussed. In this material, we get more of a sense of what the authors make of the idea of interfaith friendship. We see attempts to root it in the Islamic tradition, with seven of the authors appealing to Muslims' historical engagement with Jews and Christians – whether in reference to the Qur'ān, the *Sunnah*, or the Constitution of Madīna. We see an attempt to make sense of it in relation to what we might call Islamic theological concerns, with six of the authors using friendship language when discussing the salvation of non-Muslims, as outlined in the Qur'ān. We also see these authors advocating the same kinds of goals for interfaith dialogue that we have seen dominating the other material, with five of the authors expressing defensiveness and/or outrage, and identifying the necessity to change the narrative about Islam and Muslims, or to rectify the image of Islam and Muslims by correcting misinterpretations and changing misperceptions. Finally, I also demonstrated that most of the academics who talk about interfaith friendship related their discussion to the Qur'ān, and that in many of those discussions there were signs that the authors were negotiating awkward or difficult material. I illustrated the censorial, apologetic, associable, and etymological approaches taken by these authors. Finally, I highlighted some examples of discussions of interfaith friendship language in which the Qur'ān is not brought up at all.

It is worth noting that if we look *outside* the context of interfaith dialogue, however, there is a lot more discourse – by Muslims and scholars of Islam – about friendship with regard to the Qur'ānic verses on the topic, especially on the question of whether or not Muslims should be friends with non-Muslims. This particular question is widely-considered by Muslims in interviews and in lectures, in forums and blogs, and in non-academic articles and books.<sup>681</sup> In this material, there are lengthier explanations about Muslim views on interreligious friendship, and many explanations include references to the Qur'ān. In non-academic sources, it seems to be the case that at first blush, Muslims are either *for or against* interreligious friendship – though when considering the various ways they interpret the Qur'ān in defence of their arguments, it is apparent that friendship with non-Muslims is not a black and white issue. Although there are some differences in the way the non-academic authors cover the material compared to those *within* the context of interfaith dialogue, they tend to use the same paradigm as academics when addressing the topic of friendship with regard to the Qur'ān – mainly, the censorial, etymological, apologetic, and

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<sup>681</sup> I had another chapter dedicated to surveying this material, which sadly I had to cut in order to stay within the thesis word limit.

associable approaches. In the academic sources, in addition to a tendency to use one of these four approaches, there is a more thorough analysis of the various Qur'ānic verses about friendship – for instance, analysis through the lens of the related exegetical works. Of course, as we saw with the material in this chapter, not all examples fit neatly into any one category, and some Muslims use a variety of these approaches to discuss friendship outside the context of interfaith dialogue.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided examples of how friendship language appears, when it appears at all, in material authored by Muslims or scholars of Islam. It is important to note that these examples were very much the exception: there was a great deal of material in which friendship was not mentioned at all. I demonstrated that Muslim charity organisations approach interfaith dialogue cautiously and conservatively, especially when it comes to building relationships. Their material tends to contain explanations about the goals and purposes of interfaith dialogue, and is most likely to contain terminology such as 'mutual understanding', 'mutual respect', 'trust', and 'cooperation'. The material also many times exhibits defensiveness, outrage, and a desire to build or repair interreligious 'relationships'. Friendship language is even less common in Muslim leaders' speeches about interfaith dialogue, and when friendship does come up, it is usually contingent on non-Muslims meeting certain criteria. Furthermore, their speeches tend to be saturated with much of the same themes as those used by charity organisations, such as mutual understanding, mutual respect, and cooperation, and some also exhibit defensiveness. On the rare occasions that friendship language is present in Muslim religious documents it is often little more than a generic greeting. When interfaith friendship does come up, it is often with caveats or qualifications. Mutual understanding, mutual respect, and cooperation are recurrent themes in the religious documents, similar to the material for charity organisations and speeches.

In the non-academic sources, friendship does not play a central role, but when it does appear, it tends to appear with a little more context. Friendship rarely comes up as a goal or purpose of interfaith dialogue, instead it is used in peripheral ways. For example, many authors indicate mutual understanding and mutual respect as a required foundation for interfaith friendship. The authors who acknowledge experiencing interfaith friendship tend to be surprised by it, and the circumstances tend to be special (e.g. week-long interfaith event). In this material there is, even more clearly than in the materials discussed above, a recurrent theme of defensiveness, by which Muslims yearn to change their

dominant narrative by correcting misinterpretations of their scriptures and traditions and by dispelling misperceptions. It is also in this material that we begin to see more efforts to show Qur'ānic support for interfaith dialogue, as well as evidence of Muslims' historical engagement with Jews and Christians – though I did not find any non-academic interfaith materials discussing the verses in the Qur'ān that address Muslim friendships with non-Muslims.

Finally, in the academic material, we see many of the same themes as the non-academic material, such as a defensive posture, the desire to correct misinterpretations and dispel misperceptions, and the efforts to show Qur'ānic support of interfaith dialogue as well as evidence of historical interfaith engagement. In the academic material there are also examples of Muslims being suspicious of Christian motives for interfaith dialogue, although there are also quite a few examples of Muslims admitting they have similar motives (i.e. a desire to seek the conversion of people of other faiths) themselves. Furthermore, in the academic material we begin to see the challenge that Muslims face if they bring up the Qur'ān in discussions of interfaith dialogue, especially if they bring up the topic of interfaith friendship. They have to negotiate around the difficult verses about Muslim friendships with non-Muslims. I identified four dominant approaches used in these particular discussions, whereby authors censor the difficult verses, contextualise them in history, relate them to similar scriptures from other traditions, or challenge the translations of the Arabic terminology.

What emerges from all of the Muslim material is that references to interfaith friendship are rare, and that most of them are in some way qualified or restrained. This is a stark contrast to the liberal use of friendship we saw in the Christian material.

In Part 2, I will turn to Scriptural Reasoning material to see how friendship language is used there, and how that compares to what we have seen in the general and Muslim interfaith material.

## **PART 2 FRIENDSHIP IN SCRIPTURAL REASONING**



## 2.1 PARTICULARITY IN SCRIPTURAL REASONING MATERIAL

In this chapter, I will focus on one specific type of interfaith dialogue: Scriptural Reasoning. I chose this type of dialogue because, according to its founders, it involves maintaining attention to the particularities of the scriptures and traditions of each religion. This is not the only type of dialogue that involves such a commitment, however – there are other examples throughout Part 1 of people expressing a desire to pay attention to the specifics of the scriptures and traditions. As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, there is quite a lot of discussion in Scriptural Reasoning circles about what this attention to particularity actually entails, which is one reason I chose to highlight this practice. I will be able to utilise these descriptions of particularity as tools to measure statements about friendship that exist in Scriptural Reasoning discourse and in discussions of interfaith dialogue, more broadly. I will ask if the proponents of these practices do justice to their own commitment to particularity in this area.

There is not one concise definition of or description of Scriptural Reasoning – even the founders of the practice differ in their explanations – therefore I will begin with my own description.<sup>682</sup> After describing Scriptural Reasoning, I will highlight claims about the attention to particularities in Scriptural Reasoning discourse, and by drawing from other descriptions of Scriptural Reasoning for comparison I will indicate the ways in which they could be construed as problematic. Then, in Chapter 2.2 I will survey Scriptural Reasoning discourse for claims about interfaith friendship.

### Description of Scriptural Reasoning

Scriptural Reasoning involves Jews, Christians, and Muslims discussing short passages from their respective scriptures together.<sup>683</sup> Whereas Scriptural Reasoning was initially practiced by a few academics who represented various sub-fields of Philosophy

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<sup>682</sup> This is my own description of Scriptural Reasoning. For some of the many other descriptions see any of the following sources: Ford, David. “An Interfaith Wisdom.” in *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning*. Ford, David F. and C.C. Pecknold, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 1-22. Ochs, Peter and William Stacy Johnson “Introduction: Crisis and the Call to Leadership in the Abrahamic Traditions.” in *Crisis, Call, and Leadership in the Abrahamic Traditions*. Ochs, Peter and William Stacy Johnson, eds. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 1-8. See the Introduction and Part Two in Higton, Mike and Rachel Muers. *The Text in Play*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2012. Adams, Nicholas. *Habermas and Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006. “Scriptural Reasoning.” Bob Abernathy Interview with David Ford, Peter Ochs, and Rume Ahmed. PBS. 12 October 2007. Online. <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/october-12-2007/scriptural-reasoning/3118/>. See also *Modern Theology* 29:4 (Oct 2013). Ochs, Peter. *Religion Without Violence: The Philosophy and Practice of Scriptural Reasoning*. Publishing Location Unknown: Wipf & Stock Press/Cascade, expected 2019-2020. There is another forthcoming work on the same subject, edited by Tom Greggs and Steven Kepnes.

<sup>683</sup> Although over the last decade there have been Scriptural Reasoning sessions involving Buddhist, Confucian, Hindu, and Taoist practitioners, for the purpose of this thesis I will focus on the three traditions that have been represented since the inception of Scriptural Reasoning.

and Religious Studies, it is now practiced by academics, non-academics, religious leaders, and laity, who collectively represent a heterogeneity of academic disciplines, religious traditions, ethnicities, cultures, generations, and social classes. Inevitably, practitioners of Scriptural Reasoning are exposed to difference by means of encountering individuals within and outside of their tradition who have diverse relationships with the scripture as a material object, who have varying levels of familiarity with the text, and who offer interpretations of the text that differ from their own. Consequently, this practice is as much an *intra*-faith experience as it is an *inter*-faith experience, which is an aspect of the practice that is likely magnified when within any given group there is more than one Jewish, Christian, or Muslim community represented.

Scriptural Reasoning sessions can take place anywhere. Some groups prefer not to gather in places that are specifically designated for any one tradition (e.g. synagogue, mosque, church), while others take turns meeting at such locales. Prior to a typical gathering, either the facilitator or the group members identify a topic (e.g. land), person (e.g. Moses), story (e.g. creation), or theme (e.g. God's mercy). After this has been identified, representatives from each tradition select a corresponding excerpt from their respective scriptures – usually between three and ten verses – and decide on a translation into the common language of the group. The group members decide whether or not to include the source language (e.g. Hebrew, Arabic, Greek) alongside the excerpts, and then they print the excerpts and distribute them among the group. The only materials required for a Scriptural Reasoning session are these printed excerpts of the texts, however sometimes practitioners bring their scriptures with them for reference purposes.<sup>684</sup>

Each of the scriptures is held as sacred to someone in the group and therefore ought to be treated with respect. The meaning of sacred and the criteria for respect likely vary within each group; the handling and disposal of sacred texts could be something that the members of each Scriptural Reasoning group decide together, especially if within the group there are multiple Christian, Jewish, or Muslim communities represented. For example, some Jewish practitioners may prefer the printed excerpts to show 'G-d' instead of the full printed name. There may be Muslim practitioners who prefer that the Qur'ān is not covered by other books or paper or who prefer not to make notations on the printed documents. For each practitioner the guiding principles of respect may apply only to the entire scripture (i.e. the entire Bible or the entire Qur'ān), they may be extended to printed

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<sup>684</sup> Some more seasoned groups may choose to include scriptural commentary or other materials, though there should be prior discussion regarding what material is acceptable and how it should be used. The focus of the discussion should centre around the scriptural excerpts, unless the practitioners have previously agreed to also include commentary in the discussion.

excerpts of scripture, or they may only be extended to printed excerpts if the source language is included. During Scriptural Reasoning introductory sessions, practitioners may be advised to handle the texts with care (both the printed excerpts and the full books), as evident in the following statement from The Cambridge Interfaith Programme's "Guidelines for Scriptural Reasoning."

Be respectful when handling the texts: Remember that the different traditions have different views on how the scriptures should be treated and some faiths consider their scriptures to be sacred. This means that care should be taken when handling them; for example, don't place them on the floor or put drinks on them. If you're in doubt about how to treat or dispose of the texts, speak to a fellow group member.<sup>685</sup>

Some practitioners may wish to properly dispose of the texts after the Scriptural Reasoning session and what is deemed appropriate for the disposal process depends on the individual practitioners. Within the Jewish tradition, there are varied disposal tactics for any printed material that includes God's name, a quoted verse from the Tanakh, or anything printed from the Torah. For example, within some Jewish communities these texts might be buried, burned, burned then the ashes buried, or even recycled. Similarly, in some Muslim communities these texts might be first wiped of their sacred names (e.g. names of God, angels, prophets) and then drowned in flowing water, buried, or burned (though burning is not as common).<sup>686</sup>

Usually a Scriptural Reasoning session will begin with a reading of the text and a brief presentation of the 'plain sense' of the text given by a representative of the tradition. 'Plain sense' is a slippery term: it can be interpreted differently by individuals within each tradition and some practitioners may think it means presenting a 'literal' interpretation of the text. In the context of Scriptural Reasoning, presenting the 'plain sense' involves orienting the practitioners to the context of the scriptural excerpt. This may be the first time that some participants have read this specific excerpt or perhaps this is their first exposure to the sacred text of the religious other. The initial presentation could include for instance the time, place, and circumstances of the revelation, a description of the surrounding events or themes in the text, or an explanation of how the excerpt appears in a greater narrative. For example, if the topic was law and the scriptural excerpt from the Tanakh was the verses that contained the Ten Commandments, a Jewish participant might describe the event of Moses ascending Mount Sinai in order to receive the commandments from God. If

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<sup>685</sup> Cambridge Inter-faith Programme. "Guidelines for Scriptural Reasoning." <http://www.scripturalreasoning.org/guidelines-scriptural-reasoning>. Accessed 28 May 2015.

<sup>686</sup> For a comprehensive overview of various disposal tactics see Myrvold, Kristina, ed. *The Death of Sacred Texts: Ritual Disposal and Renovation of Texts in the World Religions*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2010.

the theme was poetry and music and the scriptural excerpt from the Qur'ān was the last four verses of *sūra ash-shu'arā'* (The Poets), a Muslim participant might explain that the name of this *sūra* derives from the last four verses about poets, that this *sūra* was revealed in Mecca, that it is the second longest *sūra*, and that it also contains some narratives about seven of the prophets.

After the plain sense is presented, practitioners discuss each of the texts in turn, sharing what comes to their minds about the excerpts in front of them. Practitioners are encouraged to comment on and interpret texts from their own traditions and from traditions other than their own. There is a standard within Scriptural Reasoning by which practitioners do not discuss a particular scripture if there is not anyone present who is from the tradition from which that scripture comes – meaning, for example, if a Muslim is not present then the Jewish and Christian practitioners do not discuss the Qur'ānic text. Ideally, practitioners do not speak on behalf others within their tradition (e.g. 'Muslims interpret this text in this way') or on behalf of others within or outside of the Scriptural Reasoning group (e.g. 'Judy would interpret this text in this way' or 'Jews would interpret this text in this way'). Likewise, ideally, a practitioner would not ask another practitioner to speak on behalf of others (e.g. 'How do Christians interpret this verse?'). This may prove to be challenging if for one particular tradition there is only one person present. In such a scenario it is easy for that person to slip into the role of 'representative' and speak on behalf of others in the tradition. It is in scenarios such as these that the facilitator can be helpful in warning people away from this habit.

Each Scriptural Reasoning session should have one facilitator. If a group meets more than once, practitioners may choose to rotate the roles of selecting the texts, presenting the plain sense, and serving as facilitators. Each person's style of facilitation is unique and what each Scriptural Reasoning session requires of a facilitator will vary. The role of the facilitator is to keep the conversation going in a fair, constructive, and respectful manner. An equal amount of time should be spent on each of the texts – including the time spent reading the text aloud and presenting the 'plain sense' – and the facilitator may act as the timekeeper for the group. Some participants may talk more than others and it is up to the facilitator to discourage any one participant from dominating the conversation and to encourage the quiet participants to contribute to the discussion. There may be lulls in the conversation; the facilitator can discern when to keep the conversation going (e.g. by asking questions or offering another perspective in order to encourage reflection) and when to allow for moments of silent reflection. Some communication tactics can derail or even shut down a conversation. For example, a participant may go off on a tangent or

several participants may start to discuss a different text or topic, and in such cases it is the facilitator's role to direct the discussion back to the text. It is easy to slip into the role of speaking on behalf of others in your tradition, especially if you are the only representative present. Thus, the facilitator may also need to encourage practitioners to make 'I statements' instead of speaking on behalf of others and to ask practitioners to direct questions to individuals rather than seeking generalisations about those within a particular tradition. In some Scriptural Reasoning sessions the facilitator may first ask each practitioner to identify one word or phrase that stood out for them in the text or to share one question that came to mind upon first reading the excerpt. After each person has shared, the discussion can commence. This facilitation technique can help get the conversation started, especially within a newly-formed group. Other facilitators may prefer to let the comments emerge naturally, with one person identifying something specific about the text and others building off of his or her comment.

Scriptural Reasoning does not involve a mission to prove that the scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are saying the same thing. Although there may be instances of consensus, practitioners are not directed to come to agreement about what may appear to be commonalities among the scriptures. Rather, they are encouraged to interrogate the text, interrogate the opinions or beliefs they have held about the text, and interrogate the other Scriptural Reasoning practitioners about their interpretations of the text. This tactic of interrogation is meant to be performed respectfully: practitioners respectfully query each other and each other's sacred texts. If an argument erupts in the session, the facilitator can make note of and recite the various perspectives represented in the argument.

By nature this practice is comparative, but in a way that is different than the more traditional model of comparative scriptural studies. A traditional approach to comparative scriptural studies involves placing emphasis on intellectual authority and expertise, seeking out the dominant authorities and experts in each of the traditions, and consulting the methods of text-historical and traditional commentary of each tradition for the foundation of comparison. Although practitioners may draw from their knowledge of what the text means, for example according to a specific rabbi or theologian, Scriptural Reasoning does not involve a mission to identify a *correct* interpretation of any text. In fact, regardless of a practitioner's status outside of the Scriptural Reasoning circle (e.g. priest, rabbi, imam, professor) authority is not to be used to shut down a conversation or to 'win' a debate or an argument. One participant may tell another participant that her interpretation is 'wrong' or a participant may give a 'definite' interpretation of a text, and in these cases it

is helpful for the facilitator to invite challenges from the other participants. Practitioners are asked to make use of what Aref Nayed calls an ‘internal library’ – meaning, that they utilise in their interpretation of the scriptures the various kinds of learning that they have internalised – and as a result comments derive from any number of aspects (grammatical, theological, philosophical, literary, linguistic, pragmatic, personal, etc.).<sup>687</sup>

Scriptural Reasoning is practiced in a variety of contexts, such as hospices, prisons, medical institutions, and schools. The theme or topic of the Scriptural Reasoning sessions might reflect the needs of the particular group: in a hospice the practitioners may focus on texts about death or mourning and in a prison the theme might be forgiveness. Even outside of specific contexts like hospices and prisons, the theme of a Scriptural Reasoning group might revolve around specific circumstances or needs of a community, such as poverty, homelessness, crime, clean water, or education. When Scriptural Reasoning sessions centre around the specific needs of a place (e.g. hospice) or community, the goal is not to come up with the ‘right’ way to address these needs. Rather, the experience of Scriptural Reasoning provides exposure to the unique ways in which each individual sees the world and interprets it through his or her scripture. Practitioners can build off of the foundation laid by their Scriptural Reasoning experience and work together on their collective needs.

## **Attention to the Particularities in Scriptural Reasoning Discourse**

As I demonstrated in the Part 1 of this thesis, a common manoeuvre in certain types of interfaith dialogue is for participants to focus on identifying commonalities among their religious traditions and/or the scriptures of their traditions. While this tactic may generate positive results, it may also encourage participants to fit their unique understandings of their traditions and scriptures into categories that are not native to their own traditions. Therefore there is a risk that certain aspects of one’s unique religious identity are being overshadowed by the need to find common ground. By focussing on the need to find common ground, participants in interfaith dialogue also potentially risk developing or losing their awareness of the particularities of the traditions and their scriptures.

Especially when being contrasted with other forms of interfaith dialogue, Scriptural Reasoning is commonly promoted as a practice that attends to the particularities of each of the religious traditions and their respective scriptures.<sup>688</sup> For instance, Ben Quash

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<sup>687</sup> For a thorough example of a Scriptural Reasoning session, see Part Two, Chapter 9 in the following source. Higton, Mike and Rachel Muers. *The Text in Play*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2012.

<sup>688</sup> As I mentioned elsewhere, Scriptural Reasoning is not the only type of interfaith dialogue through which practitioners are encouraged to pay attention to the particularities of the traditions and scriptures.

highlights particularity as one of the “four key marks of Scriptural Reasoning,” boldly stating, “As far as SR is concerned, there is no reason to apologise for speaking from a particular place; there is every reason to acknowledge it.”<sup>689</sup> Steven Kepnes disassociates from the tendency to dissolve the scriptures and traditions into universal concepts, principles, and essences – a tendency that he observes within “much liberal interfaith dialogue.”<sup>690</sup> In his testimonial about Scriptural Reasoning, Tom Greggs presents the practice as one that offers a “genuine opportunity for committed religious people to engage in inter-faith practice without undermining particularity.”<sup>691</sup> In another article, Greggs insists that the attention to the particularities is not just welcomed and needed, but required “for dialogue and conversation” in Scriptural Reasoning.<sup>692</sup> David Cheetham explains that those in Scriptural Reasoning hope “to facilitate post-liberal attentiveness to the particular world of the Abrahamic traditions and thereby generate a dialogue between them that is based on starting points that are acknowledged or understood by them.”<sup>693</sup>

In this section I will begin by providing some examples that demonstrate the emphasis on the particularities in Scriptural Reasoning, though this is not an exhaustive catalog of where and how language about particularity appears. The specific term ‘particularity’ does not really matter in this case; what matters is the claim to do justice to the different traditions and their scriptures. After surveying the claims about particularity, I will carefully consider the description of the practice in light of these claims – interrogating my own description of Scriptural Reasoning as well as others’ descriptions – by highlighting terminology used to describe the practice that could be problematic (e.g. the problems with using tradition-specific terms such as *chevruta* to label an interfaith conversation style). I will also highlight tendencies of the practice itself that could be problematic – for example, ones that suppress the practice from one tradition in order to prevent potential offence of the religious others. Finally, I will set the stage for Chapter 2.2, where I will take a more critical look at the writings about Scriptural Reasoning, focusing on the language of friendship. I intend to establish how challenging it is to consistently and diligently maintain attention to the particularities in a way that complies with the standards prescribed in Scriptural Reasoning discourse.

<sup>689</sup> Quash, Ben. “Heavenly Semantics.” in *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning*. Ford, David F. and C.C. Pecknold, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 59-76, 59-60.

<sup>690</sup> Kepnes, Steven. “A Handbook for Scriptural Reasoning” in *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning*. Ford, David F. and C.C. Pecknold, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 23-39, 28.

<sup>691</sup> “Testimonials.” Scriptural Reasoning Online. <http://www.scripturalreasoning.org/content/prof-tom-greggs>. Accessed 16 June 2014.

<sup>692</sup> Greggs, Tom. “Inter-faith Pedagogy for Muslims and Christians.” *Discourse: Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and Religious Studies* 9:2 (Sept 2010), 201-226, 205.

<sup>693</sup> Cheetham, David. “Scriptural reasoning: texts or/and tents?” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 21:4 (Oct 2010), 343-356, 343.

Just as with the general description of Scriptural Reasoning, there are divergent opinions about how the attention to the particularities materialises in Scriptural Reasoning. The discussions of particularity and Scriptural Reasoning tend to be framed around one or more of the following three aspects: traditions, scripture, and individuals.<sup>694</sup>

### **Attention to the Particularities of the Traditions**

As I mentioned, Ben Quash labels particularity a key mark of Scriptural Reasoning, one that serves as a new paradigm that sets the practice apart from other types of interfaith dialogue.<sup>695</sup> Practitioners are concerned with the “‘internals’ or the particularities of the Abrahamic religious traditions”, including their “irreducibly particular liturgies, art-forms, histories, polities,” etc.<sup>696</sup> They resist the temptation to generalise across the traditions, to reduce the traditions to their common ethical or metaphysical concepts, or to succumb to a “tradition-free rationality.”<sup>697</sup> Quash states: “Because they all read scripture, the resources for dialogue thus open up from *within* each of the traditions, as the participants pursue an activity native to those traditions (this is the mark of *particularity*).”<sup>698</sup>

Similar to Quash, C.C. Pecknold acknowledges a “strong emphasis” on the particularity of traditions in Scriptural Reasoning.<sup>699</sup> Ford, who echoes this emphasis, maintains that this in-depth understanding stems from the practitioners having the freedom to draw from their own traditions’ ‘native categories’ and from learning some of the ‘native categories’ employed by practitioners of other traditions.<sup>700</sup> Nicholas Adams has a corresponding understanding of the attention to the particularity in Scriptural Reasoning, stating that it “models a practice of learning traditions’ languages.”<sup>701</sup> Kathy Ehrensperger also associates the attention to particularity with traditions, specifically highlighting the “return to one’s own” tradition, which for her is not an exercise in isolation, but an act

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<sup>694</sup> There are other categories to consider: particularity with regards to ‘Scriptural Reasoning in action’— practitioners representing different traditions joining to address a specific problem in a specific location, and particularity with regards to ‘Scriptural Reasoning theory’.

<sup>695</sup> Quash, “Heavenly,” 74.

<sup>696</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>697</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>698</sup> *ibid.*, 73.

<sup>699</sup> Pecknold, C.C. “Editorial Preface: The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning.” in *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning*.

Ford, David F. and C.C. Pecknold, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, vii-xi, vii.

<sup>700</sup> Ford, David F. “Scriptural Reasoning and the Legacy of Vatican II: Their Mutual Engagement and Significance.” *Modern Theology* 29:4 (Oct 2013), 93-119, 111.

<sup>701</sup> Adams, Nicholas. “Making Deep Reasonings Public” in *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning*. Ford, David F. and C.C. Pecknold, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 41-57, 42.



“embedded in the context of cultural and religious pluralism” that helps practitioners develop respect for and a “positive relation” with one another.<sup>702</sup>

Steven Kepnes observes a tendency in the types of interfaith dialogue that involve both conceptual and doctrinal analytical categories by which the Christian terminology serves as the central vocabulary.<sup>703</sup> He suggests that the reason behind this tendency is the “highly developed tradition of theology” within Christianity.<sup>704</sup> To Kepnes, Scriptural Reasoning practitioners resist this tendency by articulating and preserving “the separate identities” of the three traditions.<sup>705</sup> Similar to Quash, Kepnes claims that in Scriptural Reasoning practitioners are cautious not to create an amalgamation of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions. He is especially cautious about the terminology used in a Scriptural Reasoning setting. Terms such as ‘liturgy’ that are used in all three traditions are semantically different, and it is these unique, tradition-specific interpretations that Kepnes seeks to protect in Scriptural Reasoning.<sup>706</sup>

Daniel Hardy also frames his discussion of particularity around tradition, stating that Scriptural Reasoning involves “the primary discourse of God in the particularities of the Abrahamic traditions, as seen through their particular interpretation of their particular scriptures, not in order to compare them and derive what is thought to be common to them, but in order to allow them to disagree or agree and by doing so illuminate the others.”<sup>707</sup> Hardy admits that he was shocked to hear a participant say that practitioners must only “agree that they worship the same God;” he adamantly maintains that participants are not required to make any such prior agreements.<sup>708</sup>

### **Attention to the Particularities of the Scriptures**

As I previously mentioned, Ford notes that the attention to the particularities of traditions in Scriptural Reasoning occurs when practitioners employ the ‘native’ categories of one’s own tradition and learn the ‘foreign’ categories of others’ traditions.<sup>709</sup> In his other writings on the practice of Scriptural Reasoning, he highlights the scriptures as being a place “where the particularity of each is evident ‘warts and all’.”<sup>710</sup> He credits the practice

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<sup>702</sup> Ehrensperger, Kathy. “Scriptural Reasoning: The Dynamic that Informed Paul’s Theologizing.” *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* 5:3 (Oct 2005). <http://jsr.lib.virginia.edu/vol-5-no-3-october-2005-teaching-and-scriptural-reasoning/scriptural-reasoning-the-dynamic-that-informed-pauls-theologizing/>. Accessed 25 June 2014.

<sup>703</sup> Kepnes, “Handbook,” 29.

<sup>704</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>705</sup> *ibid.*, 28-29.

<sup>706</sup> *ibid.*, 28-29, 37.

<sup>707</sup> Hardy, Daniel W. “The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning” in *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning*. Ford, David F. and C.C. Pecknold, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 185-207, 186.

<sup>708</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>709</sup> Ford, “SR & Vatican,” 111.

<sup>710</sup> Ford, “Editorial Preface,” 2.

as one of the only avenues by which Jews, Christians, and Muslims can study, dispute, and converse about scripture, and in the process establish “long term collegiality” with each other.<sup>711</sup>

Earlier I explained that Ben Quash identifies traditions as the focus of the attention to the particularity in Scriptural Reasoning. In the passage I quoted, Quash gestures to the scriptures as the cause for the dialogue opening up within each tradition (which he labels “the mark of *particularity*”).<sup>712</sup> In another section of the same article, Quash more firmly places the attention to the particularity on *scriptures*, stating that practitioners “view their scriptures in the expectation that the particularity of those scriptures can...mediate the divine presence and purpose.”<sup>713</sup>

In some discussions of particularity, the distinction is not as clear between the attention to the particularities of the traditions and the particularities of the scriptures. For instance, Willie Young explains that practitioners gather “under the holy texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,” and “mutually welcome one another in the particularity of our traditions...,” which could be understood in a couple of ways.<sup>714</sup> In one way Young is grouping the scriptures together as one umbrella, under which exists the particularities of the traditions. One could also take his statement as a two-tiered particularity, with scriptures as the highest level and traditions as the second level. Mike Higton implements a similar paradigm in one of his descriptions of the attention to the particularities.

When members of one faith read its scriptures devoutly, ruminatively, and prayerfully in company with members of other faiths reading their own scriptures in similar ways, a sustainable conversation becomes possible in which the scriptures and reading practices of each faith are thrown into relief, questioned, tested, and explored. Such conversation is impelled rather than impeded by attention to the animating particularity of each faith.<sup>715</sup>

For Higton, the attention to the particularity of each tradition – in the form of scriptures and scriptural reading practices – drives the conversation. As with Young, one could understand Higton’s paradigm of particularity as two-tiered, with scriptures and scriptural reading practices as the top level and traditions underneath. Alternatively, the particularity could rest solely with the traditions, and the practitioners are gathered under the umbrella of the scriptures and reading practices.

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<sup>711</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>712</sup> The emphasis on the term ‘particularity’ is Quash’s. Quash, “Heavenly,” 73.

<sup>713</sup> *ibid.*, 62.

<sup>714</sup> Young, Willie. “‘Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Minds’: Scriptural Reasoning and the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.” Presented to the Canton Interfaith Association, Canton, Massachusetts, January 2004. *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning Forum*. Online. <http://jsrforum.lib.virginia.edu/writings/YouTran.html>. Accessed 2 January 2014

<sup>715</sup> Higton, Mike. “Scriptural Reasoning and the Discipline of Christian Doctrine.” *Modern Theology* 29:4 (Oct 2013), 120-137, 123.

As a final example, in the previous section I presented Kepnes's claims that practitioners of Scriptural Reasoning preserve the traditions' unique identities, especially the tradition-specific terminology.<sup>716</sup> In the same article, Kepnes fits in with the paradigms presented by Young and Higton, by identifying scriptures and the scriptural reading practices as the means for practitioners to preserve "forms of religious expression that are unique to each" tradition.<sup>717</sup> He lists various forms of analysis that Scriptural Reasoning practitioners employ ("historical, philological, and documentary"), which for him lay the groundwork to "move beyond them" so that practitioners can engage with the scriptures and the traditions of religious exegesis.<sup>718</sup>

### **Attention to the Particularities of the Individuals**

In a Scriptural Reasoning session involving Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Confucians, Taoists, and Jewish participants, as well as participants who did not claim a faith tradition, David Ford witnessed first-hand how inadequate 'foreign categories' (a term he uses to describe categories not native to one's own tradition) can be when attempting to form an in-depth understanding of another tradition.<sup>719</sup> Likewise, in a Jewish-Christian-Muslim-Hindu Scriptural Reasoning session, I observed Christian participants attempting to understand Hindu deities by drawing correlations between the three main manifestations of Brahman and the Holy Trinity. In the latter example, the facilitator acknowledged that whilst this may seem like a productive way to understand the nomenclature of the religious other it is actually unhelpful, as each term carries with it a history of complex meanings within the particular religious tradition. At first blush, these two examples appear to demonstrate the necessity for attention to the particularities of the traditions. However, in each case the particularity actually lies in the hands of the individual. Looking at the latter example again, each term not only carries with it a history within the particular religious tradition, but each religious practitioner has a unique understanding of each term. The individuals give rise to the particularities of the traditions and the scriptures by engaging with them.

In combing through discussions of particularity, I found many examples of authors presenting it in a way that suggests they are – at the very least – implicitly advocating attention to the particularity of the individuals. For instance, Ben Quash identifies particularity as a vehicle with which practitioners can express their distinct viewpoints,

<sup>716</sup> Kepnes, "Handbook," 28-29, 37.

<sup>717</sup> *ibid.*, 29.

<sup>718</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>719</sup> This particular Scriptural Reasoning session took place at a university in China where religious traditions had been studied using 'foreign' categories that derived from social sciences, philosophy, and Marxism. Ford, "SR & Vatican," 111.

“finding in the specificity of their traditions, their scriptural texts and their convictions the energy that directs them into one another’s company.”<sup>720</sup> In his quote about particularity, Quash points to traditions and scriptures, however he does so in the context of participants expressing “their distinct viewpoints,” which actually points the attention to the particularity of the *individuals*. Quash’s vehicular metaphor can be slightly altered to say that particularity is a vehicle with which individuals can express their viewpoints about their traditions and their scriptures. In another passage Quash is more direct regarding the attention to the particularity of the individuals. He asserts that Scriptural Reasoning practitioners – in their unique ways – “all view their scriptures” with “the expectation that the particularity of those scriptures (and the particularity of the groups gathered around them as listeners and readers) can in some profound way mediate the divine presence and purpose.”<sup>721</sup>

David Ford also points to individuals – at times vaguely, and at other times more explicitly – in his descriptions of the attention to the particularities in Scriptural Reasoning. He cites one of the features of the practice as allowing “for self-description by religious people and for the use of ‘native’ categories.”<sup>722</sup> Whilst Ford does gesture towards individuals here, he does not explicitly say that practitioners pay attention to the particularity of the individuals. In another passage he observes varying levels of “God-centredness” in his comparison of the Vatican II Council meetings and a Scriptural Reasoning session at Princeton University. The Vatican II Council expressed “God-centredness” in their worship together, whereas the Princeton group – unable to experience common worship in the same sense – identified God “in very different ways.”<sup>723</sup> Here Ford gestures towards the particularity of the individuals in that the practitioners had unique ways of identifying God. In a final example of Ford’s, he links particularity and individuals more explicitly, saying that practitioners

must speak from a particular place, from their own distinctive viewpoint, from the specificity of their traditions and with a heightened pitch of attention to their particular texts in relation to others. This particularity enables attentiveness to texts, time, contingency, and the provisionality of the practice, as well as the sociality it enables when particularity is so valued.<sup>724</sup>

Ford’s statement can be viewed at least two ways: 1) although he mentions traditions and scriptures, the particularity manifests in the individuals who are expressing their distinct

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<sup>720</sup> Quash, “Heavenly,” 59-60.

<sup>721</sup> *ibid.*, 62.

<sup>722</sup> Ford, “SR & Vatican,” 111.

<sup>723</sup> *ibid.*, 99.

<sup>724</sup> Ford, “Editorial Preface,” viii.

viewpoints, and 2) the particularity involves individuals, traditions, and scriptures.

William Taylor offers the most obvious link between individuals and particularity in his article about Scriptural Reasoning, a practice that he says is “all about particularity.”<sup>725</sup> He identifies different facets of the particularity, for example, it begins with the individuals’ motivation for participating: “each faith and each person generates his or her own reasons for continuing this conversation. That is part of the particularity of Scriptural Reasoning.”<sup>726</sup> For Taylor, the attention to the particularity of individuals is necessary when entering into dialogue and for establishing interfaith communities.

As we begin to relate to each other in new ways, we also need to retain our particularity. It’s our particularity that makes us strong, that gives us depth and, as a hyphenated community (or ‘community of communities’) means that we can learn the art of solidarity and be strong together.<sup>727</sup>

Here Taylor does not mention scriptures or traditions, rather the sole focus of particularity is on the individual.

Whether the emphasis is on tradition, scripture, individuals, or any combination of the three, I have demonstrated that the founders and advocates of Scriptural Reasoning mentioned above agree that the attention to the particularities is paramount to the practice, and see this as a fundamental difference between this practice and other types of interfaith dialogue. Paradoxically, however, there are many examples within descriptions of and the practice of Scriptural Reasoning that do not meet the standards of maintaining attention to the particularities, proving that the practical application of these standards is quite challenging. In this next section, I will focus on the descriptions of Scriptural Reasoning and then in the following section I will shift to the practice itself.

### **Attention to the Particularities in Descriptions of Scriptural Reasoning**

As I mentioned in my introduction to Scriptural Reasoning, there are numerous descriptions of the practice – which all vary in some way – and in many of these descriptions there exist terminology and statements that challenge the commitment to pay attention to the particularities. There are examples of using terminology that is rooted in all three traditions, and although it carries different meanings within each of the traditions it is presented as if it means the same across the board. For instance, David Ford states, “The Abrahamic scriptures are siblings, and Scriptural Reasoning has been developed so far

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<sup>725</sup> Taylor, William. *How to Pitch a Tent: A Beginner’s Guide to Scriptural Reasoning*. London: St. Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, 2008, 18.

<sup>726</sup> *ibid.*, 6.

<sup>727</sup> *ibid.*, 4.

with close attention to their particularity,”<sup>728</sup> and he claims that the “Abrahamic traditions of learning, teaching and inquiry” have been “united by Scriptural Reasoning.”<sup>729</sup> Of course, Ford is not alone in employing this ‘Abrahamic’ terminology, as it is widely used throughout many academic disciplines and within both academic and non-academic discourse on interfaith dialogue. However, nomenclature that is common in discourse on interfaith dialogue, such as ‘Abrahamic scriptures’ or ‘Abrahamic traditions’ seems out of place in discussions surrounding Scriptural Reasoning, an interfaith practice in which practitioners are encouraged to disagree, to explore alternate interpretations, and to pay attention to the particularities of the traditions and scriptures. The Abraham narratives in each scripture differ, and where there are similarities, there are divergent interpretations both within and outside of each tradition. Using terminology such as ‘Abrahamic traditions’ in the context of Scriptural Reasoning is especially problematic because it creates an illusion of shared terminology, which has the potential to result in a dilution of particularities. In one of the books that features Scriptural Reasoning in action – an edited collection that ironically has “Abrahamic Traditions” in the title – R. Kendall Soulen argues that

it would be a mistake to think that Abraham therefore represents a simple common denominator among the three traditions, a ready point of convergence and common ground, as it were. Each tradition conceives of Abraham in its own image, making the patriarch it remembers and honors as irreducibly particular as the traditions themselves.<sup>730</sup>

David Cheetham echoes this point, stating that Scriptural Reasoning is an “not an attempt to reach a global systematic theological picture of the religious landscape or to arrive at an Abrahamic synthesis.”<sup>731</sup> Similar to Daniel Hardy’s statement – that practitioners need not agree that they worship the same God – practitioners also do not have to agree that they are talking about the same Abraham.<sup>732</sup> Furthermore, there can be variation in what Abraham represents for each person.

In addition to potentially bastardising terminology that is rooted in all three traditions, there are also examples of borrowing tradition-specific terminology and expanding the definition of that terminology by using language from the other traditions. For example, ‘*chevruta*’ is a term that is used in ways that seem to disregard the attention to the

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<sup>728</sup> Ford, “SR & Vatican,” 118.

<sup>729</sup> Ford, David F. “The Responsibilities of Universities in a Religious and Secular World.” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 17:22 (2004), 22-37, 37.

<sup>730</sup> Soulen, R. Kendall. “The Sign of Jonah: A Christian Perspective on the Relation of the Abrahamic Faiths.” in *Crisis, Call, and Leadership in the Abrahamic Traditions*. Ochs, Peter and William Stacy Johnson, eds. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 15-30, 16.

<sup>731</sup> Cheetham, David. “Scriptural Reasoning as a ‘Classic’: The Aesthetics of Interreligious Politics.” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 24:3 (2013), 299–312, 300.

<sup>732</sup> Hardy, “Promise,” 186.

particularities: it has roots in the Jewish tradition, but it is treated by some as if it is part of a shared vocabulary across all three traditions.<sup>733</sup> Ford, a Christian, feels empowered to use '*chevruta*' to describe the conversation style used in Scriptural Reasoning – which is quite different than what transpires when Jews study together during *chevruta* – rather than reserving *chevruta* for the tradition-specific term that it is.<sup>734</sup> To be fair to Ford, the concept of Scriptural Reasoning was the corollary of Ford's and Hardy's experience with an already established Jewish Textual Reasoning group.<sup>735</sup> Notably, however, Peter Ochs, one of the founders of Scriptural Reasoning and a Jew, does *not* use the term *chevruta* to describe the conversation style of Scriptural Reasoning. Ford implicitly justifies his use of the term by asserting that Scriptural Reasoning practitioners have "sought to learn from [the] reading practices" of each tradition.<sup>736</sup> He cites their adaptation of the Christian practice of *lectio divina* and he seeks a "distinctively Muslim contribution (perhaps to do with recitation)" as well as other Abrahamic "practices around scripture" that practitioners can "contribute to Scriptural Reasoning."<sup>737</sup>

In their work on interfaith relations David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt, and David Thomas warn against the temptation to "quarry" practices from other traditions and to instead "humbly" await "what is offered by the other and from the other's perspective."<sup>738</sup> Ochs illustrates this in his discussion of how "inter-Abrahamic study fellowships" such as Scriptural Reasoning "stimulate habit-changes."

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<sup>733</sup> The transliteration of this term varies: *chavruta*, *hevvruta*, *havvruta*. For the sake of consistency I will use '*chevruta*' unless I directly quote from an author who uses a different transliteration. I chose to use this specific transliteration because it is the one most used amongst those who write about Scriptural Reasoning.

<sup>734</sup> I will later expand on the experiences of *chevruta* in the Jewish context and how they differ from those in a Scriptural Reasoning context. See the following sources for some examples of Ford using the term '*chevruta*': Ford, David F. "An Interfaith Wisdom: Scriptural Reasoning Between Jews, Christians, and Muslims." *Modern Theology* 22:3 (Jul 2006), 345-366, 365. Ford, David F. "The Responsibilities of Universities in a Religious and Secular World." *Studies in Christian Ethics* 17:22 (2004), 22-37, 37. Ford, David. F. "The Theological and Educational Promise of Scriptural Reasoning" in *Schools of Faith: Essays on Theology, Ethics and Education in Honour of Iain R. Torrance*. Fergusson, David and Bruce McCormack, eds. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019, 235-248, 236.

<sup>735</sup> Scriptural Reasoning began under the label 'Textual Reasoning', and involved Jewish text scholars, philosophers, and theologians who met to discuss Jewish and Christian scriptures and Western philosophy. Jewish Textual Reasoning began in the 1980s, and involves people representing a variety of Jewish denominations and academic fields who gather to study the Talmud and related biblical commentaries. Peter Ochs maintains that Jewish Textual Reasoning is tradition-based, whereas Scriptural Reasoning is scripture-based and *not* tradition-based. Both Textual Reasoning and Scriptural Reasoning were designed to be *occasionally* practiced in addition to (as opposed to *instead of*) each person's own tradition-based scriptural studies. Both practices originated with specific purposes in mind, although as I will demonstrate later, the purposes are expressed differently by each of the founders and advocates, and the purposes have evolved over time for various reasons. See Ochs, Peter. "Re-Socializing Scholars of Religious, Theological, and Theo-Philosophical Inquiry." *Modern Theology* 29:4 (Oct 2013), 201-219, 206. See also Ochs, Peter and Nancy Levene, eds. *Textual Reasonings: Jewish Philosophy and Text Study at the End of the Twentieth Century*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002.

<sup>736</sup> Ford, "SR & Vatican," 116.

<sup>737</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>738</sup> Cheetham, David, Douglas Pratt, and David Thomas. "The Future of Engagement: Emerging Contexts and Trends." in *Understanding Interreligious Relations*. Cheetham, David, Douglas Pratt, and David Thomas, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 390-401, 401.

One who was accustomed only to rabbinic practices (habits) of scriptural interpretation came to appreciate parallels in Muslim interpretive practices while, at the same time, deepening his or her sense of what is distinctive in rabbinic midrash.<sup>739</sup>

Similar to the process of “humbly” awaiting that Cheetham et al. are advocating above, Ochs describes the process in Scriptural Reasoning by which a person from one tradition can teach his or her “practice of dialogue” to the religious others and as a result stimulate “habit-changes” in the religious others’ communities.<sup>740</sup> In this context, the Scriptural Reasoning practitioners make changes to their tradition-specific habits in their own houses (as opposed to within the tent of Scriptural Reasoning) for the purpose of “repairing” their modes of engaging with scripture that have been affected by modernity. This is not the same as what Ford is suggesting; Ford wishes to take on the scriptural reading practices of the religious other in order to practice them alongside others in Scriptural Reasoning. Ochs, on the other hand seeks to observe the scriptural reading practices of the religious other and to mine those observations for ideas of how he can alter his own reading practices to better engage with his own scripture in his own house.

Mike Higton and Rachel Muers say something similar to Ochs and Cheetham et al. – though they do not point to *repair* as the purpose as Ochs does – regarding the “engagement” in Scriptural Reasoning: that it has the capacity to “prompt” practitioners “to read their own scriptures differently,” potentially serving as “a *driver* of faithfulness to their own traditions.”<sup>741</sup> In a different work, Higton discusses “forms of reading practised in Scriptural Reasoning,” explaining that reading practices are not “independent of any specific religious tradition,” rather they “are formed in the overlap and interaction between the practices of religious readings (and the accounts of those practices) brought to the process by the participants.”<sup>742</sup> Higton acknowledges that participants may form reading habits that are specific to Scriptural Reasoning that may be informed by or inspired by the reading habits of others in the group who have shared them in a gesture of hospitality.<sup>743</sup> In summary, Ford is *looking to take on* new scriptural reading practices, whereas Ochs, Higton and Muers, and Cheetham et al. are *open to receiving* new scriptural reading practices.

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<sup>739</sup> Ochs does not provide any data sources for his claims about the reports from “scriptural reasoners.” Ochs, Peter. “Reparative Reasoning: From Peirce’s Pragmatism to Augustine’s Scriptural Semiotic.” *Modern Theology* 25:2 (Apr 2009), 187-215, 192.

<sup>740</sup> Ochs does not provide any data sources for his claims about the reports from “scriptural reasoners.” *ibid.*, 196-197.

<sup>741</sup> Higton, Mike and Rachel Muers. *The Text in Play*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2012, 186.

<sup>742</sup> Higton, Mike. “Scriptural Reasoning and the Discipline of Christian Doctrine.” *Modern Theology* 29:4 (Oct 2013), 120-137, 133.

<sup>743</sup> Higton, “SR & Christian Doctrine,” 133.



David Cheetham refers to the heavy influence of “this midrashic style of hermeneutics” on Scriptural Reasoning, although he acknowledges that it is not necessarily a style of textual engagement that lends itself “equally to all traditions” and that it may instead seem “undisciplined” to those outside of the Jewish tradition.<sup>744</sup> Tim Winter – an Islamic scholar and a Muslim – raises such a concern, averring that the practice of Scriptural Reasoning does not involve a singular method of studying texts, rather, it involves “a promiscuous openness to methods of a kind of unfamiliar to Islamic conventions of reading.”<sup>745</sup> By creating this interfaith buffet of sorts, Ford and others risk religious homogenisation, moving away from their mission to pay attention to the particularities. An example of this homogenisation: Ford uses *chevruta* interchangeably with fellowship, collegiality, and friendship.<sup>746</sup> Nicholas Adams, who is also a Christian, refers to Scriptural Reasoning sessions as “‘*chevruta*’ study sessions” and immediately clarifies that *chevruta* “just means a group of friends.”<sup>747</sup>

When we introduce a tradition-specific reading practice into Scriptural Reasoning sessions, we instantly change that practice to adapt to the setting outside of the tradition from which it originated, and we mark it with what Cheetham, Pratt, and Thomas call our “internal perspectives,” thus it is no longer the same tradition-specific practice.<sup>748</sup> Using *chevruta* as an example, *chevruta* traditionally only involves two people<sup>749</sup>, and the relationship is most often that of more learned to less learned. The person in the role of more-learned not only teaches but also corrects the other if he or she mispronounces or misinterprets the text. The *chevruta* learning partnership is distinctly Jewish; for instance, in her discussion of *chevruta*, Aliza Segal highlights the “appeal to heritage, in which we aspire to behave as our ancestors did.” Segal says that students are “encouraged to sit and learn in dialogue with a partner, in the popular model of Abbaye and Rava.”<sup>750</sup> Among

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<sup>744</sup> Cheetham, Pratt, & Thomas, “Future,” 400.

<sup>745</sup> Winter, Tim. “Qur’anic Reasoning as an Academic Practice.” in *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning*. Ford, David F. and C.C. Pecknold, eds. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006, 105-119, 109.

<sup>746</sup> See for example Ford, David F. “An Interfaith Wisdom: Scriptural Reasoning Between Jews, Christians, and Muslims.” *Modern Theology* 22:3 (Jul 2006), 348, 365.

<sup>747</sup> Adams, Nicholas. “Making Deep Reasonings Public.” *Modern Theology* 22:3 (Jul 2006), 385-401, 397.

<sup>748</sup> Cheetham, Pratt, & Thomas, “Future,” 401.

<sup>749</sup> Cook and Kent define *chevruta* as “studying text in pairs” and a “partnership.” In Lee Shulman’s article on Jewish education, he classifies *chevruta* as dyadic; for any group study that involves more than two people he labels *the shiur*, or “seminar/study group.” Elie Holzer briefly defines *chevruta* as “two people studying a text together.” Cook, Alison and Orit Kent. “Intentional Chevruta Learning: Cultivating Ethical and Spiritual Growth in Learners.” *Think*, The Lola Stein Institute Journal 14 (Fall 2013), 22-23. Online. Accessed 22 April 2019. <https://www.brandeis.edu/mandel/pdfs/Thinkmag.pdf>, 22. Shulman, Lee S. “Pedagogies of Interpretation, Argumentation, and Formation: From Understanding to Identity in Jewish Education.” *Journal of Jewish Education* 74:sup1 (2008), 5-15, 11. Holzer, Elie. “What Connects ‘Good’ Teaching, Text Study, and *Havruta* Learning? A Conceptual Argument.” *Journal of Jewish Education* 72 (2006), 183-204, 183.

<sup>750</sup> Segal, Aliza. *Havruta Study: History, Benefits, and Enhancements. Notes from ATID*. Jerusalem: Academy for Torah Initiatives and Directions, 2003, 7.

their definitions of *chevruta*, Steven Brown and Mitchel Malkus include a “traditional mode of Talmud study,” and “a distinct Jewish learning strategy.”<sup>751</sup> Elie Holzer – who has performed extensive research on *chevruta* – maintains that *chevruta* “represents a traditional learning mode that should be part of teachers’ general Jewish education.”<sup>752</sup>

Ford and Adams each give *chevruta* a much wider and more Christian-appropriate definition compared to its usage in Jewish contexts. For instance, Alison Cook’s and Orit Kent’s empirical research of *chevruta* reveals that students describe the *chevruta* partnership with the following phrases: “decoding a text,” “taking turns talking,” “seeking to understand,” and “being understood.”<sup>753</sup> Cook and Kent report that the *chevruta* partners’ “*intent* ‘to seek understanding’ remains a focal point alongside the teaching of standard text study skills.”<sup>754</sup> They identify the “essential and ethical underpinning” of the partnership: *chevruta* partners “are responsible to and for one another and through this mini-universe of obligation” they “gain new knowledge, interpretations, and insights.”<sup>755</sup> Cook and Kent also discuss the social skills developed through *chevruta* – such as listening, understanding, and responding to each other’s ideas and developing “new understandings and interpretations” – and they do not mention friendship.<sup>756</sup> In her work on *chevruta*, Segal outlines the cognitive, affective, and social benefits of *chevruta*, and she, too, does not mention friendship.<sup>757</sup>

Brown’s and Malkus’s fieldwork shows that for the students, a “near unanimous positive reaction” to *chevruta* is that the learning partnership is *kodesh*, or holy.<sup>758</sup> The authors note that *chevruta* learning “creates a positive bond between students and connects students personally to the texts they study.”<sup>759</sup> Only one student in one of their focus groups mentioned friendship, identifying “the most important quality” as “the ability to make a friendship happen out of the learning.”<sup>760</sup> The student acknowledged that other students may not be in agreement, but admitted that it would be difficult “to learn with someone” without “genuinely” liking the *chevruta* partner.<sup>761</sup> In a footnote, Elie Holzer

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<sup>751</sup> Over one academic year they conducted a study on *chevruta* learning at the Rabbinical School of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. They also define *chevruta* as “paired study” and “paired peer learning.” Brown, Steven M. and Mitchel Malkus. “*Hevruta* as a Form of Cooperative Learning.” *Journal of Jewish Education* 73:3 (2007), 209-226, 211.

<sup>752</sup> Holzer, 185.

<sup>753</sup> Cook & Kent, 22.

<sup>754</sup> Emphasis on the word ‘intent’ is that of the original authors. *ibid.*

<sup>755</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>756</sup> *ibid.*, 23.

<sup>757</sup> Segal, 9-14.

<sup>758</sup> Brown & Malkus, 216.

<sup>759</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>760</sup> *ibid.*, 217.

<sup>761</sup> *ibid.*, 217.

claims that an early Talmudic source mentions friendship: “Early Talmudic sources reflect an awareness of various interpersonal characteristics that take place during *chevruta* study, for example: ‘Rabbi Hiya bar Abba said: even a parent and a child, or a teacher and his student who are studying Torah together...at first become enemies of one another, but they do not move from there until they become devoted friends of one another,’ Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Kiddushin, 30b.”<sup>762</sup> However, upon further investigation it appears that Holzer’s interpretation of the original Aramaic is quite different than the more widely used and respected English translations, which show “until they love each other” instead of Holzer’s translation, “until they become devoted friends of one another.”<sup>763</sup>

I just demonstrated that in the Jewish tradition, *chevruta* 1) involves two people studying text together and 2) is not synonymous with ‘friendship’. I have provided examples of the ways in which the standards of particularity are not met in descriptions of Scriptural Reasoning. In these examples, a term is being used in Scriptural Reasoning in a way that is significantly different from the way it is used in the specific tradition from which it comes. Even if there are some interesting analogies between the use of the term in the two settings, there are also several crucial dissimilarities – and yet when the term is used in Scriptural Reasoning contexts, attention is drawn to the commonalities and not at all to the differences.

In the next section I will consider the actual practice of Scriptural Reasoning in light of the standards of particularity. I will highlight some tendencies of the practice that could be problematic, which will include another look at the Jewish practice of *chevruta*.

### **Attention to the Particularities in the Practice of Scriptural Reasoning**

Scriptural Reasoning is a shared practice, one that was primarily shared amongst Jews, Christians, and Muslims, but over time has expanded to include people of other traditions. As I have mentioned, the practice is commonly promoted as one that attends to the particularities of each of the religious traditions and their respective scriptures. Within the descriptions Scriptural Reasoning practitioners give of this attention to particularity, there are often examples given of what is meant to be avoided in the shared practice: tradition-free rationality, generalising across traditions, synthesising particularities, syncretism. By nature of being a *shared* practice, however, there are inevitable compromises on *which* particulars from each tradition, scripture, and individual can and should be included. In this section I will consider three aspects of the practice in light of the

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<sup>762</sup> Holzer, 183.

<sup>763</sup> See for example the Steinsaltz English Talmud as well as Artscroll’s English Talmud.

standards of particularity: rules/guidelines for Scriptural Reasoning sessions, the location of Scriptural Reasoning sessions, and the ritual of Scriptural Reasoning. I will demonstrate some of the challenges that arise – in terms of maintaining attention to the particularities – when constructing and participating in a practice that is shared by representatives of different religious traditions.

### ***Rules/Guidelines for Scriptural Reasoning Sessions***

Although some advocates for Scriptural Reasoning repeatedly state that there are not official ‘rules’ for the practice, there are in fact various forms of rules and guidelines that have been published in books and journals, related at the beginning of sessions, presented in lectures about the practice, and distributed via organisations like the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme. For instance, the website [ScripturalReasoning.org](http://www.scripturalreasoning.org) lists eight “guidelines” for those new to the practice of Scriptural Reasoning. The following passage is number eight in the list, titled, “Be respectful when handling the texts.”<sup>764</sup>

Remember that the different traditions have different views on how the scriptures should be treated and some faiths consider their scriptures to be sacred. This means that care should be taken when handling them; for example, don’t place them on the floor or put drinks on them. If you’re in doubt about how to treat or dispose of the texts, speak to a fellow group member.<sup>765</sup>

I have heard this particular guideline mentioned at numerous Scriptural Reasoning sessions in a variety of settings, including the Cambridge Interfaith Programme’s summer school. While the authors of this guideline do acknowledge that tradition-specific customs surrounding the handling of scripture vary, they nevertheless instruct practitioners to handle texts in a way that is more at home in certain traditions than in others. Consider a Christian (let’s call her Jane) who was not conditioned through her upbringing to place emphasis on the Bible as a respected material object. Jane writes notes in her Bible, places her Bible on the floor, and places various objects such as food or beverages on top of her Bible. When she gathers with other Christians she is not cognisant of what others are doing with their Bibles. In a Scriptural Reasoning group Jane may encounter Jews or Muslims that might be offended if they see her place her Bible on the floor. Likewise, she may encounter other Christians that treat their Bibles as sacred objects, and they might be upset if they witness her treatment of the Bible. For instance, I once observed a Muslim participant express horror that a Christian participant had placed a Bible on the floor.

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<sup>764</sup> “Guidelines for Scriptural Reasoning.” *ScripturalReasoning.org*, Rose Castle Foundation and Cambridge Inter-faith Programme, Guideline No. 8, <http://www.scripturalreasoning.org/guidelines-for-scriptural-reasoning.html>. Accessed 26 Mar 2019.

<sup>765</sup> *ibid.*

Another time I observed a Muslim participant describe dismay after witnessing the ways in which other practitioners treated scripture as a material object: copies of the Qur'ān were on the floor and a dog was roaming about the room. As it was this participant's first Scriptural Reasoning session, this Muslim chose not to say anything because as a guest and a newcomer, it did not feel right to dictate how participants should handle the Qur'ān. In this Muslim's opinion, the Qur'ān was de-sacralised or secularised, therefore, the only way to participate is to think of it as an academic session – if it was religious session, the Qur'ān would have to be treated as sacred.

As with the two Muslim participants above, participants' experiences within their own religious traditions shape their understanding of what is right and wrong, proper and improper, reverent and irreverent. These experiences also shape their perceptions of other people's words and actions. Consequently, the way one person handles scripture, for example, may genuinely upset another person or at the least the person may have a difficult time witnessing a certain behaviour. Is it possible to adhere to the standards of attention to the particularities whilst asking practitioners to change their tradition-specific and/or personal habits, routines, or customs, or rituals? By asking Jane the Christian to avoid placing her Bible on the floor, placing various objects on top of her Bible, or making notes in her Bible, we are essentially asking her to change the way that she would normally interact with scripture as a material object just in case her tendencies *might* offend others within or outside her tradition. This is not an example of attention to the particularities; rather, this is an example of steering clear of – and assuming that it is acceptable to omit – particularities that could *potentially* offend the religious other, thus, going against the standards of particularity in Scriptural Reasoning. Furthermore, what offends one person may offend another when the problem is “corrected.”

What, then, is an acceptable method of dealing with sacred texts since the range of acceptability likely varies with each person? It is impossible to follow everyone's rules or honour everyone's habits, so where do we draw the line? Do we rank levels of sacred for each person? Should we narrow it down by religion or religious communities represented? Admittedly, it may be necessary to alter particularity for the sake of a shared practice with representatives of different religious traditions in an effort to pre-empt potential offence, but should these alterations happen at the highest level – as official ‘rules’ or ‘guidelines’ – applying to all Scriptural Reasoning groups, or should they be left up to each individual group to decide what is appropriate for them? We use these terms and guidelines in order to develop a shared practice, and as a result we may suppress one person's practice or adopt someone else's practice in an effort to prevent offence and to allow people to feel

more comfortable. Some advocates for the practice have found a loophole of sorts: they justify the foregoing of or altering of tradition-specific rituals by saying that Scriptural Reasoning takes place in a newly created space that is a type of neutral ground, which leads to my next consideration: the location of Scriptural Reasoning sessions.

### ***Location of Scriptural Reasoning Sessions***

In my description of Scriptural Reasoning I mentioned that the location of the sessions is ultimately determined by the group members and/or organiser. Some groups prefer not to gather in places that are specifically designated for any one tradition (e.g. synagogue, mosque, church), while others take turns meeting at such locales. The founders of Scriptural Reasoning, along with others who write about the practice, have offered alternative titles for this neutral meeting ground such as ‘tent’, ‘third space’, and ‘laboratory’.<sup>766</sup> For instance, Ford, among others, refers to the space as a ‘tent’. He explains that the tent can even be erected within a place that is designated for one tradition – such as a mosque or a church – but only if the group members ensure that they are “wary of becoming too much at home there” because “the obvious danger is of the host inhibiting full mutuality between the three as hosts and guests, since the ground is ‘owned’ by one party.”<sup>767</sup> Nicholas Adams employs the ‘experiment in a laboratory’ metaphor – a metaphor I have heard used numerous times in presentations about Scriptural Reasoning and by facilitators introducing the practice to a new group – inferring that Scriptural Reasoning is “a laboratory in which various experiments can be pursued.”<sup>768</sup> Higton and Muers also opt for the term ‘laboratory’, stating, “Scriptural Reasoning is a laboratory for experiments in faithfulness,” though elsewhere they, too, employ the ‘tent’ analogy.<sup>769</sup> The laboratory metaphor has been criticised by some Scriptural Reasoning advocates for its insinuation that the practice has to take place in a sterile environment.<sup>770</sup>

Regardless of the actual location or the metaphor used to describe it, many

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<sup>766</sup> For example, David Cheetham refers to the Scriptural Reasoning meeting places as “tents of meeting;” Ford also employs the tent analogy; alternatively, Peter Ochs uses “third space” in his upcoming published work on Scriptural Reasoning. Cheetham, “SR texts/tents,” 345. Ford, “Interfaith” *Modern Theology*, 351. Ochs, Peter. *Religion Without Violence: The Philosophy and Practice of Scriptural Reasoning*. Publishing Location Unknown: Wipf & Stock Press/Cascade, expected 2019-2020.

<sup>767</sup> Ford, “Interfaith Wisdom,” *The Promise*, 13.

<sup>768</sup> Adams, Nicholas. “Reparative Reasoning.” *Modern Theology* 24:3 (Jul 2008), 447-457, 450.

<sup>769</sup> For examples of their use of the ‘tent’ analogy see page 148. Higton & Muers. *The Text in Play*, 186.

<sup>770</sup> For instance, in a meeting I attended with academics and non-academics who are all advocates of Scriptural Reasoning, the attendees discussed the topics of Scriptural Reasoning terminology and methodology. A Jewish academic explained that he prefers to think of the Scriptural Reasoning environment as a laboratory, which for him is a safe place where he will not be held responsible for trying things. A Christian academic was not comfortable with this particular metaphor, because she views a laboratory as a sterile place where there are procedures. She argued that Scriptural Reasoning does not have to happen in a sterile environment, and the practice does not require strict procedures as a scientific experiment would.

participants maintain that Scriptural Reasoning takes place in this 'metaphorical neutral space', which offers an excuse of sorts for what would normally be required or expected when studying scripture in our religious houses. Ford voices concern about this particular geographical loophole:

How should commentaries and other documents from the various traditions be treated in interreligious reading together? Their presence implies that each participant brings their whole tradition to the table, and remains fully embedded within it; but some in Scriptural Reasoning argue that the reading group is more like a separate space, a laboratory, where one can bracket out aspects of one's allegiance in order to 'experiment' or 'play' with a small set of 'bare' texts.<sup>771</sup>

Ford's concern leads me to my next consideration: what happens in Scriptural Reasoning sessions that could be going against the standards of particularity?

### ***The Ritual of Scriptural Reasoning***

In one of Ben Quash's discussions of particularity, he states the following: "Because they all read scripture, the resources for dialogue thus open up from *within* each of the traditions, as the participants pursue an activity native to those traditions (this is the mark of *particularity*)."<sup>772</sup> Similarly, Mike Higton describes what happens in Scriptural Reasoning sessions, saying that "scriptures and reading practices of each faith are thrown into relief, questioned, tested, and explored."<sup>773</sup> As I will soon illustrate, the reading practice that occurs in Scriptural Reasoning sessions is *not* native to all three traditions. There is one dominant reading practice that is more at home in one tradition (though it has been tailored to meet certain needs), and participants are encouraged to fall in line with that practice (e.g. practitioners do not read the scripture alongside commentary), thus going against the standards of particularity. In this section on the ritual of Scriptural Reasoning, I will first discuss the process of selecting scriptural excerpts, then I will move on to the reading practices, and finally I will address the ways in which practitioners discuss and interpret scripture (including language and words used and methodology). As promised, I will return to the topic of *chevruta*, looking for differences between the ways people practice *chevruta* in a Jewish context compared to a Scriptural Reasoning context.

Starting with the process of selecting scriptural excerpts: it can be particularly challenging to find a group of four to eight verses in the Qur'ān that address the specific topic or theme chosen for a Scriptural Reasoning session. Many times Muslim participants are pressured (in the sense that they are asked to present four to ten verses about the

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<sup>771</sup> Ford, "SR & Vatican," 118.

<sup>772</sup> Quash, "Heavenly," 73.

<sup>773</sup> Higton, "SR & Christian Doctrine," 123.

selected topic or theme) to select one verse from one *sūra*, another from a different *sūra*, and perhaps two more verses from yet another *sūra*. This approach poses several challenges, one being that each *sūra* may have been revealed in a different place and under different circumstances, thus taking the verses completely out of context, which confuses the interpretation of the *sūras*. A Christian or Jewish participant may look at these four strung-together verses and think of them as a whole.

Moving on to the reading practices in Scriptural Reasoning: there are certain tradition-specific rituals associated with reading and studying scripture that have not been assimilated into the practice of Scriptural Reasoning, and that are actually *discouraged* in many groups that I have observed. For example, there is a Christian tradition to begin Bible study with prayer. There is a Muslim practice to say *Isti'aathah* (reciting Qur'ān 16:98 to seek refuge in Allah from Satan), the *bismillah* (in the name of Allah, the most merciful, the most compassionate), or to recite the *fatiha* (first surah) before reciting any other verses in the Qur'ān. There is another Muslim custom to say something after reading the Qur'ān (Almighty God has spoken truth) and a Jewish custom to say something after reading Torah (*Torat emet*). One reason that none of these customs have been incorporated into the practice of Scriptural Reasoning and would likely be discouraged in many groups is for fear of favouring one practice over another.

There are other tradition-specific rituals that people may forgo because they are in the presence of the religious other. For example, Muslims may say God instead of Allah when in the presence of Jews or Christians, and they may forego the tendency to say 'peace be upon him' or the Arabic equivalent after saying the name of the Prophet Muhammad or the name of any other prophet. Muslims may also avoid calling Jesus a prophet when in the presence of Christians. Jews may forego the tendency to rock back and forth when studying the Torah or may not choose to wear the prayer shawl when studying the Torah in front of the religious other.<sup>774</sup> In these cases, the teachers and facilitators of Scriptural Reasoning are not necessarily at fault since they are not directing practitioners to forego these individual practices. These cases are, however, examples of the ways in which the particularities are sacrificed in the context of Scriptural Reasoning.

Turning now to the ways in which we discuss and interpret scripture in Scriptural Reasoning (and again putting the spotlight on *chevruta*): there is a specific style of dialogue sometimes encouraged in Scriptural Reasoning, which as I explained above, was

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<sup>774</sup> I have observed all of these examples in various Scriptural Reasoning groups, and have informally spoken with Muslim and Jewish practitioners who have admitted that they are hesitant to do these things in fear that they may offend the religious other.



*influenced by* the more argumentative approaches common in the Jewish tradition – specifically, *chevruta*. *Chevruta* partners study together collectively, collaboratively, and often combatively, engaging in what Lee Shulman describes as “creative battles of interpretation and analysis.”<sup>775</sup> Upon closer investigation, however, what goes on in *chevruta* in a Jewish context is quite different from what happens in Scriptural Reasoning sessions, making it clear that it is inappropriate to claim the two practices are synonymous. Elie Holzer briefly defines *chevruta* as “two people studying a text together,” and he provides the following description:

the learner is involved in a slow, meticulous open investigation and deciphering of the text, helping his study partner, weighing alternative interpretations, arguing with his study partner about possible interpretations and “arguing with” the content of the text. For centuries, this activity has served not only as a method of acquiring knowledge, but also as a devotional activity believed to have a transformative impact on its practitioners in terms of religious practice, beliefs and values learners were to take away from the content of these texts.<sup>776</sup>

Holzer provides a list of likely observations of *chevruta* in “most educational institutions,” and his description of *chevruta* does share similarities with descriptions of Scriptural Reasoning: the participants in each read the text aloud before discussion, they discuss the text in light of its broader context, and they draw from their internal libraries to develop and defend their interpretations of the text.<sup>777</sup>

In his study of *chevruta*, Orit Kent describes a session that he observed, and what he reports resembles my own observations of Scriptural Reasoning sessions. In particular, his “structural analysis” of the *chevruta* session offered a similar agenda for Scriptural Reasoning sessions: “1) Negotiate how to work, 2) Read text, 3) Engage in interpretive discussion, 4) Discuss interpretive problems with teacher, 5) Check time and assignment, 6) Continue reading text, 7) Engage in interpretive discussion, 8) Continue reading text, 9) Engage in interpretive discussion.”<sup>778</sup> Kent saw the students negotiate how exactly they would read and discuss the text, agreeing that they would read portions of the text and then stop to discuss before reading further portions of the text. They took turns offering interpretations and explaining how they came to their conclusions, and they hypothesised what the author of the text was trying to convey and accomplish. Kent explains that the students “move in and out of *being in* the text and *being in* their discussion and making comments *about* what they and the text do,” which is a process similar to what I have

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<sup>775</sup> Shulman, 11.

<sup>776</sup> Holzer, 183-184.

<sup>777</sup> Holzer, 195-196.

<sup>778</sup> Kent, Orit. “Interactive Text Study: A Case of *Havruta* Learning.” *Journal of Jewish Education* 72:3 (2006), 205-232, 213.

experienced in past Scriptural Reasoning sessions.<sup>779</sup> However, contrary to what the various experts say about *chevruta*, whilst the participants will likely learn something in Scriptural Reasoning – either about their own scripture or about the scriptures of the religious other – the relationships are not formally teacher-student or even more learned-less learned, and there are not right or wrong interpretations of the scriptures. Furthermore, unlike Scriptural Reasoning – which was, as I mentioned in a previous footnote, designed to be *occasionally* practiced in addition to (as opposed to *instead of*) each person’s own tradition-based scriptural studies – Shulman says that *chevruta* is “regular” and “routine” and each role is “well-defined.”<sup>780</sup>

## Conclusion

In Scriptural Reasoning, there is a strong focus on doing justice to particularity. That is sometimes discussed with reference to the different scriptures present in the room, and the different religious traditions represented. It is also, however, a fact about each individual participant. Each practitioner has a unique understanding of the tradition with which he or she identifies, a unique set of viewpoints and convictions using the categories that are native to his or her tradition, a unique set of habits for handling, reading, and interpreting the text that he or she holds as scripture, and a unique comprehension of the meaning of that scripture. Scriptural Reasoning is, in principle, meant to be a space in which attention can be kept focused on these particularities. That is why no practitioner can speak on behalf of another, nor ask anyone else to speak on behalf of others. Scriptural Reasoning practitioners sometimes talk about being guests in one another’s traditions, or in one another’s scriptures, but there is also a sense in which we are simply guests to one another as individual people. Maintaining this kind of space for attention to particularity is, however, difficult; it involves a delicate and complex balancing act – and, in this chapter, I have shown that this balance is not always (and perhaps cannot always be) maintained.

In this chapter, I provided a detailed description of Scriptural Reasoning, and I presented various claims made by the founders and advocates of the practice about the importance of attention to the particularities of each tradition. I began my criticism by pointing out instances where there was a significant lack of attention to these particularities in the descriptions of and the practice of Scriptural Reasoning. I have demonstrated how challenging it is to maintain the standards of particularity when using terminology such as

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<sup>779</sup> Kent, 213.

<sup>780</sup> Shulman, 11.

*chevruta*, that is specific to one tradition, or words like ‘Abraham’ that are found in all three traditions. Does it make sense to extend this pledge to diligently maintain attentiveness to particularity when *discussing* Scriptural Reasoning in academic discourse? A description of Scriptural Reasoning for a mixed religious audience has to use some specific words – and yet there are problems with using tradition-specific words, problems with using words that appear to be shared across traditions but that have different connotations in each one, and problems with using words that appear to be neutral in relation to all the traditions but which are seldom as neutral as they appear. Doing justice to particularities is clearly important to Scriptural Reasoning, but is it necessary or possible to do such justice consistently when describing the practice? Is it necessary to be attentive to one’s own particularities and to the particularities of others when describing the practice?

The negative and positive constraints that I have described above seem sometimes to be genuinely demanded by the need to create a practice in which the specific people present can participate: one person cannot do what they would normally do, because it would interfere with another’s participation; a third person has to do something they would normally not do, because it enables a fourth to take part. These constraints sometimes, however, seem to be generated by more generalised projections of the sensitivities that belong to particular traditions: practitioners are urged to avoid some action not because of the sensitivities of a particular person in the room, but because of an idea about what that person’s tradition says about that action. The complexity of these negotiations, the compromises involved in them, and the possibilities of projection inherent in them, are not acknowledged in the descriptions offered by most commentators on Scriptural Reasoning, and are not allowed to qualify their insistence that Scriptural Reasoning respects particularity.

The challenge to maintain attention to the particularities is amplified when using common words – such as ‘friendship’ and ‘disagreement’ – that aren’t seen as tradition-specific and that do not have precise definitions within each tradition, but that may be understood very differently within each of the traditions. In the next chapter, I will turn to the language of friendship, analysing the ways in which this language is used in Scriptural Reasoning discourse.

## 2.2 FRIENDSHIP IN SCRIPTURAL REASONING MATERIAL

In the last chapter, I illustrated how the proponents of Scriptural Reasoning repeatedly highlight the importance of doing justice to particularity. I demonstrated that they specifically caution against 1) flattening out the difference between traditions, and 2) presuming commonality where there is none. I have illustrated that, in both small and large-scale ways, it becomes difficult for them to hold themselves to that commitment. There are times when the negotiation of a common practice requires compromises, but those compromises are seldom noticed or discussed. There are times when, to establish the parameters for the practice, proponents of Scriptural Reasoning appear to trade in generalisations about each tradition. There are also times when, in describing the practice and explaining its value, they use language in ways which appears precisely to flatten out the difference between traditions, or to presume commonality where there is none. So far, I have given only brief examples of these problems, but now I will turn to a major example – the one that drives this whole thesis – a term which, I will show, plays a central role in many descriptions of Scriptural Reasoning: friendship. I will show that, to a great extent, the proponents of Scriptural Reasoning use friendship language as if it were common currency between the traditions, equally acceptable in each – an assumption that the first half of my thesis has shown to be highly questionable.

Just as with other forms of interfaith dialogue, claims about friendship appear in both Scriptural Reasoning literature *and* practice: in descriptions of, guidance through, and advocacy for the practice of Scriptural Reasoning. Some claims indicate that friendship plays a central role, for instance, as the “true ground of Scriptural Reasoning”<sup>781</sup> or as “a long-term goal”<sup>782</sup> of the practice. In other claims friendship is classified as a byproduct or a “fruit” that is fostered through the practice.<sup>783</sup> Similar to what I demonstrated in the general literature on interfaith dialogue, many times these claims appear devoid of any definition or description and without any discussion about how friendship might be understood differently within each of the Abrahamic traditions. For instance, Nicholas Adams grants friendship a special role in Scriptural Reasoning, but appears to admit defeat when it comes to explaining that role: “Friendship is nonetheless the true ground of

<sup>781</sup> Adams, Nicholas. *Habermas and Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006, 243.

<sup>782</sup> Cohen, Aryeh. “Hearing the Cry of the Poor.” in *Crisis, Call, and Leadership in the Abrahamic Traditions*. Ochs, Peter and William Stacy Johnson, eds. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 109-121, 109.

<sup>783</sup> See, for example: “The Fruits of Scriptural Reasoning.” *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* 9:1 (Dec 2010).

Scriptural Reasoning, and who can give a good overview of that?”<sup>784</sup> David Ford *gestures towards* the different traditions with his statement that “each tradition values friendship,” but he does not elaborate, making it unclear whether he is claiming that each tradition values friendship in the same way or he is acknowledging the possibility of varied interpretations of friendship in each of the traditions.<sup>785</sup> Adams recognises that “traditions have different understandings of friendship with God, with members of one’s own family, with members of one’s own tradition, and with strangers,” but he does not interrogate his own broad claims about interfaith friendship.<sup>786</sup>

I can empathise with Adams’s reluctance to describe the complicated and multifaceted correlation between friendship and Scriptural Reasoning. In Scriptural Reasoning discourse, there are informal, fragmented, and varied accounts of the role of friendship: friendship may emerge in conjunction with trust or it may arise from hospitality, participants in Scriptural Reasoning might aim for friendship as opposed to consensus, or perhaps suggest that participants don’t have to work to build friendships, as friendship just naturally occurs as a result of the practice. Many of the discussions of friendship in this literature are presented as reflections upon experience, grounded in observations within multiple Scriptural Reasoning groups over a long period of time. The broad claims about interfaith friendship have not yet been analysed and tested from the perspective of each of the Abrahamic traditions. In this chapter, I will survey the claims about friendship that appear in Scriptural Reasoning literature. I will present the initial framing of friendship: how it is framed as a goal, as a means to achieve other goals, and as a byproduct. I will also demonstrate how friendship is mentioned alongside terms such as trust, hospitality, and consensus. My objective here is not to discredit the statements or call out contradictions, but to present the variety of ways in which friendship turns up in this literature.

## Initial Framing of Friendship

As I said, within Scriptural Reasoning discourse friendship is presented in multiple ways: as a goal, as a means to achieve other goals, and as a byproduct. For instance, a phrase commonly employed in Scriptural Reasoning literature is ‘promise of scriptural reasoning’, as in the following statement from Ford.

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<sup>784</sup> Despite making this statement, Adams does vaguely elaborate on friendship in other texts that I will highlight. Adams, *Habermas*, 243.

<sup>785</sup> Ford, David F. “An Interfaith Wisdom.” in *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning*. Ford, David F. and C.C. Pecknold, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 1-22, 6.

<sup>786</sup> Adams, *Habermas*, 243.

So one promise of scriptural reasoning is the formation of people through collegial study, wise interpretation and friendship who might be exemplary citizens of the twenty-first century, seeking the public good for the sake of God and God's peaceful purposes.<sup>787</sup>

If a *promise* indicates a goal, then Ford presents friendship as a goal – alongside the goals of collegial study and wise interpretation – that makes other goals possible (i.e. formation of people). Alternatively, Tom Greggs explicitly indicates friendship as a byproduct of Scriptural Reasoning.

It is hoped that a by-product of scriptural reasoning is the building of sociality between members, with friendships and relationships arising from the shared study and dialogue.<sup>788</sup>

His statement appears to leave room for the possibility of something other than friendship, since he mentions 'relationships' alongside 'friendships'. Similarly, in Willie Young's description of the "practice of reading together" in Scriptural Reasoning, he highlights "cultivating friendship," as a byproduct of Scriptural Reasoning, which he later repackages as fellowship – "share fellowship with one another" – and then as a form of replenishment, "to replenish our souls in friendship."<sup>789</sup> Similar to Young, Peter Ochs and William Stacy Johnson appear to use 'friendship' and 'fellowship' interchangeably, as in the following excerpt, in which they, too, appear to classify friendship as a byproduct of Scriptural Reasoning.

The importance of friendship cannot be overemphasized. Participants discovered ways in which the scriptural traditions called them to fellowship as a dimension of study itself. They were instructed, for example, by the rabbinic tradition of *chevruta*, or 'fellowships of study', in which the scripture and commentary texts were discussed back-and-forth by study partners.<sup>790</sup>

Ochs and Johnson also observe that friendship in Scriptural Reasoning involves a particular way of speaking, listening, and collective reasoning.<sup>791</sup>

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<sup>787</sup> Ford, David F. "An Interfaith Wisdom: Scriptural Reasoning Between Jews, Christians, and Muslims." *Modern Theology* 22:3 (Jul 2006), 345-366, 364.

<sup>788</sup> Greggs, Tom. "Inter-faith Pedagogy for Muslims and Christians: Scriptural Reasoning and Christian and Muslim Youth Work." *Discourse: Learning and Teaching in Philosophical and Religious Studies* 9:2 (2010), 6.

<sup>789</sup> Young, Willie. "'Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Minds': Scriptural Reasoning and the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." Presented to the Canton Interfaith Association, Canton, Massachusetts, January 2004. Accessed via the *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning Forum* on 2 January 2014: <http://jsrforum.lib.virginia.edu/writings/YouTran.html>.

<sup>790</sup> See the chapter in this thesis entitled, "Particularity in Scriptural Reasoning Material," for a discussion about the problems with drawing correlations between the practice of *chevruta* and Scriptural Reasoning. Ochs, Peter and William Stacy Johnson. "Introduction: Crisis and the Call to Leadership in the Abrahamic Traditions." in *Crisis, Call, and Leadership in the Abrahamic Traditions*. Ochs, Peter and William Stacy Johnson, eds. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 1-8, 6.

<sup>791</sup> Ochs & Johnson, "Introduction," 5.

Alternatively, Adams claims that this particular way of thinking and communicating makes friendships possible, and that, once friendships are formed, participants will learn “each other’s history of wisdom.”<sup>792</sup> He adds that “repairing the past” and “being open to the future” also make friendship in Scriptural Reasoning possible.<sup>793</sup> Elsewhere he asserts that Scriptural Reasoning fosters an “unsentimental,” public friendship that may or may not be accompanied by the attributes of “private” friendships, and it is in this particular assertion that Adams acknowledges that the types of friendships that develop in Scriptural Reasoning may not be the same as friendships we maintain in other contexts.

It is tempting to think of friendship as a private matter. Friends are those we welcome into our homes late at night, accompany on adventures (even minor adventures like shopping), invite to weddings. We do not necessarily study with friends; we study with colleagues. With this kind of taxonomy it is very difficult to produce a good account of more public kinds of friendship, and it is significant that in the Christian tradition such discussions struggle badly with the narrowness of English and often seek to recover Greek distinctions between *eros*, *philia* and *agape*. Scriptural reasoning displays the characteristic of a society of friends, in the public sense. It fosters friendships of an unsentimental kind between participants, and if for some it has been accompanied by adventures, meeting late at night in people’s homes and going to weddings, this is not primarily because it has generated private friendships but because it has called into question the privacy of certain kinds of religious practices.<sup>794</sup>

His distinction between different types of friendship here is important. As I mentioned in another chapter, there appears to be a natural progression for a friendship: we become friends with someone based on commonality (things in common, mutual friends, etc.), and over time we get to know the person better, and share more of our lives with them. However, interreligious friendships can be a bit more delicate, in that we have fundamental differences and a complicated history of religious relations, thus there is a greater requirement for vulnerability – and greater risk – in the formation of these friendships. Adams is right to indicate that there is something specific about the relationships that can arise within or be fostered by interfaith dialogues like Scriptural Reasoning, and that there are, therefore, questions – questions that his argument suggests, but which he does not pursue – about how appropriate the word ‘friendship’ is for those relationships.

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<sup>792</sup> Adams, Nicholas. “Making Deep Reasonings Public.” in *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning*. Ford, David F. and C.C. Pecknold, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 50.

<sup>793</sup> Adams, “Making,” *The Promise*, 49.

<sup>794</sup> Adams, “Making,” *The Promise*, 53.

## **Friendship and Trust**

Trust is often cited as a necessity for successful relationships, so it is not surprising to find friendship and trust paired together in discussions of friendship within Scriptural Reasoning literature. Steven Kepnes, Kristin Lindbeck, and Young use the terms ‘friendship’ and ‘trust’ to describe the process in Scriptural Reasoning by which participants dive deeper in their conversations.<sup>795</sup> In his evaluation of interpersonal trust in groups, Kurt Dirks, a scholar of applied psychology, provides an operational definition of trust: “a belief about whether a partner is dependable, cares for your interests, is competent, and/or will act with integrity,”<sup>796</sup> which are characteristics that would be helpful when having deep, meaningful conversations touching on sensitive topics. The language of ‘deepening’ comes up a lot in discussions of Scriptural Reasoning,<sup>797</sup> as many participants see themselves going beneath surface-level conversations to explore the texts, their traditions, each other, and themselves – they challenge, explore, and question their own religious texts in front of others, and they listen and respond to the challenges and questions from others about their scriptures and the scripture of others. This process of deepening many times results in practitioners feeling vulnerable, in which case trust within the group is crucial. This concept is supported by psychological research, which suggests that when members of a group trust each other, their group performance – such as their ability to cooperate – increases.<sup>798</sup> On that same note, for Kepnes, trust and friendship *make the deepening possible* in Scriptural Reasoning: only when the participants have established trust and formed friendships can they ask questions of politics and share stories of injustice.<sup>799</sup> He singles out friendship as essential for the participants’ ability to hear these questions and stories on a deeper level and to offer healing responses.<sup>800</sup>

Lindbeck and Aryeh Cohen both indicate trust as a necessary foundation for friendship in Scriptural Reasoning. Lindbeck identifies *trust* as a necessity for diving

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<sup>795</sup> Kepnes, Steven. *The Future of Jewish Theology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, 227. Lindbeck, Kristen. “Reading Together.” *Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University*, 2005, 70. Online. Baylor University, The Center for Christian Ethics, Ethics Library. <http://www.baylor.edu/christianethics/index.php?id=14714>. Accessed 3 Sept 2013. Young, “Transformed.”

<sup>796</sup> Dirks, Kurt T. “The Effects of Interpersonal Trust on Work Group Performance.” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 84 (1999), 445-455, 446.

<sup>797</sup> For instance, Adams says that Scriptural Reasoning “is less about the transmission of information contained in texts and more about the establishment and deepening of relations between persons with respect to texts.” This language is also used on the website for the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme: “Scriptural Reasoning deepens relationships. You spend time with people of other religions, talking about scriptural texts they really care about – texts that are central to their lives. You share with them scriptural texts that you really care about, too.” Adams, “Making,” *The Promise*, 50. Cambridge Inter-faith Programme. “What is Scriptural Reasoning?” <http://www.scripturalreasoning.org/what-scriptural-reasoning>. Accessed 17 March 2013.

<sup>798</sup> Dirks, 445.

<sup>799</sup> Kepnes, 227.

<sup>800</sup> *ibid.*



deeper and *friendship* as the type of atmosphere in which participants can “broach even the hard issues between and within their faiths.”<sup>801</sup> Likewise, Cohen notes that friendship emerges from an atmosphere of trust.<sup>802</sup> Alternatively, for Young, friendship and trust *emerge from the deepening*, a deepening he describes as an “intimate, intense form of study” in which participants share their “relations to these most cherished of texts.”<sup>803</sup>

In addition to the various accounts of how trust and friendship emerge, there are also different takes on how to classify each of them. Kepnes sees friendship as “the first goal of Scriptural Reasoning,”<sup>804</sup> Cohen classifies friendship as a long-term goal of the practice,<sup>805</sup> and Young deems friendship and trust as byproducts of the practice.<sup>806</sup> Kepnes, Lindbeck and Cohen observe that it takes time for trust and friendships to develop – which makes it worth considering whether friendship is just a *natural occurrence after practicing Scriptural Reasoning for a period of time*, or if it is actually a *goal that participants must work towards*. It seems only natural that after a group of people spend time together that they eventually trust each other and develop friendships, especially when having deep conversations. However, research shows that friendship and trust are *not guaranteed to develop* even after people have worked together in a group for a significant amount of time.<sup>807</sup>

### **Friendship, Trust, and Disagreement**

Similar to Kepnes and Lindbeck – who see friendship as necessary in order to share stories of injustice and to broach hard issues – Daniel Hardy indicates the necessity of friendship and trust in the presence of disagreement. Hardy lists what he calls “seeds” in group reading, and then he points to friendship and trust as the tools needed to make the seeds “germinate and flower.”<sup>808</sup> Hardy acknowledges this link in his description of the type of sociality needed in Scriptural Reasoning:

There would need to be an ease with each other, and a high level of personal relationship, even in the presence of difference and disagreement. These are often spoken of as ‘friendship’ and ‘trust’...<sup>809</sup>

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<sup>801</sup> Lindbeck, 70.

<sup>802</sup> Cohen, 109.

<sup>803</sup> Young, “SR & MLK, Jr.”

<sup>804</sup> Kepnes, 227.

<sup>805</sup> Cohen, 109.

<sup>806</sup> Young, “Transformed.”

<sup>807</sup> Dirks, 446.

<sup>808</sup> Hardy, Daniel W. “The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning.” in *The Promise of Scriptural Reasoning*. Ford, David F. and C.C. Pecknold, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 185-207, 202.

<sup>809</sup> *ibid.*

Thus, it appears that for Hardy, friendship and trust are foundational requirements for Scriptural Reasoning.

Although it is worth fully examining disagreement in Scriptural Reasoning – and in interfaith discourse, more broadly – here I will briefly address the correlation between disagreement and friendship, a topic that Nicholas Adams highlights:

One might suggest that the handling of disagreements is one of the important ways participants in scriptural reasoning establish and acknowledge friendship. In a context which values friendship, disagreement is a gift to be treasured.<sup>810</sup>

Adams elaborates on the types of disagreement that can occur in Scriptural Reasoning, identifying two types: inter-tradition and intra-tradition. He defines the intra-tradition or “in house” disagreements as those “between members of the same tradition” that are “normally shielded” from those outside of the tradition.<sup>811</sup> He claims that there must be “a significant level of trust between participants” before it is safe for these in-house disagreements to be “voiced in the company of other traditions,” and he classifies this trust as a goal of Scriptural Reasoning.<sup>812</sup> He actually singles out Muslims, saying, “There needs to be a significant level of trust between participants before it is safe for Muslims to voice their internal disagreements in the presence of their fellow Jews or Christians.”<sup>813</sup> Adams states that once this trust is established and these in-house disagreements erupt, these factors signify two things – 1) that there is “a kind of friendship between members of different traditions” and 2) “that agreement is not the motor of scriptural reasoning” – and he even claims that this friendship is “tacitly acknowledged.”<sup>814</sup> Thus, Adams asserts that first Scriptural Reasoning participants establish trust, then this enables them to explore disagreements, and this demonstrates that a kind of friendship has emerged; participants may or may not explicitly acknowledge this, but will be aware of it.

In another work of his, Adams frames friendship – along with conversation and mutual understanding – as a byproduct of the deep reasoning that happens in Scriptural Reasoning:

Scriptural reasoning makes deep reasonings public. It sees them not as particularistic obstacles to debate, but as conditions for conversation, friendship and mutual understanding.<sup>815</sup>

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<sup>810</sup> Adams, “Making,” *The Promise*, 54.

<sup>811</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>812</sup> *ibid.*, 53-54.

<sup>813</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>814</sup> *ibid.*, 54.

<sup>815</sup> Adams, *Habermas*, 242.

To recap, Kepnes considers friendship and trust as foundational requirements for deepening, Lindbeck sees trust as a foundational requirement and friendship as an atmospheric requirement for deepening, and Adams views trust as a foundational requirement for deepening, and *the deepening* leads to friendship (along with conversation and mutual understanding).

### **Friendship and Hospitality**

Hospitality frequently comes up in Scriptural Reasoning discourse, and in some cases it is somehow associated with friendship – whether as a foundation for friendship, a byproduct of friendship, something that happens in tandem with friendship, or a second aspect of Scriptural Reasoning alongside friendship that is separate, but related. For instance, Ford credits *mutual hospitality as the basis for friendship*.<sup>816</sup> He states that Scriptural Reasoning “does often lead to friendship,” framing friendship as a byproduct of the practice. He follows up his statement with a claim that “The mutual hospitality of each being both host and guest in relation to the others is at the heart of this collegiality.”<sup>817</sup> Thus, for Ford, mutual hospitality gives rise to friendship.

Micheal O’Siadhail presents an alternative relationship between friendship and hospitality in Scriptural Reasoning:

At its core [SR] is face-to-face friendship where participants of different traditions are both hosts and guests in a ‘tent of meeting’.<sup>818</sup>

One interpretation of O’Siadhail’s statement is that if Scriptural Reasoning is friendship, *friendship is the foundation for hospitality*, while another interpretation is that friendship and hospitality are on equal footing as foundational characteristics of Scriptural Reasoning. Similarly, Willie Young appears to see multiple ways that friendship and hospitality can work together in Scriptural Reasoning. In one sense, he sees *friendship and hospitality alongside each other*, stating that “participants mutually welcome one another in hospitality and friendship.”<sup>819</sup> It is not clear if Young is implying that hospitality and friendship are foundational goals of Scriptural Reasoning, meaning that they need to be present from the outset of the practice. In the same paragraph, Young claims that the

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<sup>816</sup> Ford, David F. “An Interfaith Wisdom.” *Modern Theology* 22:3, (July 2006), 350.

<sup>817</sup> Excerpted from David F. Ford, “Faith in the Third Millennium: Reading Scriptures Together.” *Address at the Inauguration of Dr Iain Torrance as President of Princeton Theological Seminary and Professor of Patristics*. 10 March 2005. Online. Journal of Scriptural Reasoning Forum. <http://jsrforum.lib.virginia.edu/writings/ForScri.html>. Accessed 2 Jan 2014.

<sup>818</sup> O’Siadhail, Micheal. “Facing Each Other: Friendship, Meaning, and Shaping a World.” in *The Vocation of Theology Today: A Festschrift for David Ford*. Greggs, Tom, Rachel Muers, and Simeon Zahl, eds. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013, 359-373, 369.

<sup>819</sup> Young, “Transformed.”

practice of Scriptural Reasoning cultivates friendships, indicating that regardless of whether or not friendship is a foundational goal, it is something that is cultivated throughout the practice, in which case it is a byproduct.<sup>820</sup>

Adams also mentions hospitality in one of his remarks about friendship, though he does not necessarily draw a correlation between the two terms.

Somehow, the recognition that each worships the one true God moves scriptural reasoning beyond an interaction determined by conventions for showing strangers hospitality. Showing strangers hospitality is a significant enough miracle. Yet scriptural reasoning does not quite reproduce this context: when members of three traditions meet together to study shared scripture, who is the guest and who is the host? In a way that is difficult to be clear about, the participants in scriptural reasoning all find themselves invited, not by each other, but by an agency that is not theirs to command or shape. There is an “other” to the three traditions, and that seems in an obscure way to make friendships possible.<sup>821</sup>

Unlike Ford – who claims that mutual hospitality among participants gives rise to friendship – Adams credits the ‘other’ for facilitating hospitality, which gives rise to friendship. It is not clear what Adams is asserting in his statement. Is hospitality a foundational requirement for friendship, or is the ‘other’ a foundational requirement for friendship? Is friendship a byproduct of hospitality, or is friendship a result of the ‘other’, since the ‘other’ is the vessel that facilitates hospitality, which results in friendship?

Jim Fodor also offers an explanation of the relationship between friendship and hospitality:

the peculiar three-way mode of hospitality practiced in ‘the tent of meeting’ tended to stress common causes and shared responsibilities. Because each tradition is engaged in a mutual hosting of the other two on territory not exactly its own, the goal strangely enough became less about reaching consensus on scriptures’ meaning and more about establishing and maintaining friendships through and because of these scripture texts.<sup>822</sup>

In one sense, Fodor appears to indicate friendship as a goal of Scriptural Reasoning. In another sense, he identifies hospitality as a foundational goal of Scriptural Reasoning, and friendship as a byproduct of hospitality.

## **Friendship and Consensus**

Friendship is often mentioned alongside ‘consensus’ or ‘agreement’. For instance, the website for the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme explains Scriptural Reasoning under

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<sup>820</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>821</sup> Adams, *Habermas*, 243.

<sup>822</sup> Fodor, Jim. “Scriptural Reasoning as a Desert Practice: Learning to Read in Uncharted Territory.” *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* 9:1 “The Fruits of Scriptural Reasoning,” (Dec 2010). Online. <http://jsr.lib.virginia.edu/vol-9-no-1-december-2010-the-fruits-of-scriptural-reasoning/>. Accessed 2 Jan 2014.

three headings: 1) “Not consensus,” 2) “...but understanding,” 3) “...and friendship.” One statement attempts to explain the relationship between the three headings.

You don’t have to politely agree about everything – you can wade in deep, and talk about issues at the heart of your faith. This doesn’t lead to agreement, but we find that it does lead to friendship.<sup>823</sup>

The three headings – read together as a sentence, as they are meant to be – seem to indicate friendship and understanding as goals of Scriptural Reasoning. However, the statement above appears to highlight friendship as a byproduct of the ‘deepening’ that is mentioned elsewhere in Scriptural Reasoning discourse.

Adams presents an alternative view, in that he characterises friendship as a higher priority than consensus: “scriptural reasoning values and promotes friendship above consensus and agreement.”<sup>824</sup> Here, Adams appears to frame friendship as a goal, rather than as a byproduct of Scriptural Reasoning, as he has elsewhere. One could interpret his statement to mean that consensus and agreement *are* valued and promoted in Scriptural Reasoning, just not as much as friendship. However, I suspect that he is actually trying to distinguish Scriptural Reasoning from other interfaith practices that use more pluralistic approaches to dialogue by pointing out that disagreement – rather than agreement – is actually encouraged in Scriptural Reasoning. In a different publication, Adams proclaims, “The most striking thing about the context of scriptural reasoning is not consensus but friendship.”<sup>825</sup> It is not clear if Adams means that it is striking that consensus occurs in Scriptural Reasoning, but just not *as* striking as the occurrence of friendship. It is also not clear if his statement indicates friendship as a goal or byproduct of Scriptural Reasoning.

Ford presents yet another view, indicating friendship as an opposition to consensus. He makes a statement about the practice in a title: “An Abrahamic Collegiality: Not Consensus but Friendship.”<sup>826</sup> One way to interpret this statement is that the collegiality present in the context of Scriptural Reasoning is a result of friendship, not consensus (i.e. collegiality is a byproduct of friendship). Another meaning could be that collegiality and friendship are the same. However, Ford’s statement is a section heading, and in the first sentence of the section he identifies reading and interpreting texts as being central to the collegiality.<sup>827</sup> Later in the same section, Ford credits mutual hospitality, rather than reading and interpreting texts, as the basis for friendship: “Be open to mutual hospitality turning

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<sup>823</sup> Cambridge Inter-faith Programme. “What.”

<sup>824</sup> Adams, “Making,” *The Promise*, 41.

<sup>825</sup> Adams, *Habermas*, 243.

<sup>826</sup> Ford, “Interfaith Wisdom,” *Modern Theology*, 348.

<sup>827</sup> *ibid.*

into friendship.”<sup>828</sup> If we consider that mutual hospitality is reading and interpreting texts with the religious other, then mutual hospitality is a necessary foundation for friendship – or, friendship is a byproduct of mutual hospitality.

Hardy draws together consensus, friendship, and trust: “Likewise, the premium is not on consensus so much as friendship, and trust built through in-house or inter-traditional disagreements.”<sup>829</sup> Contrary to what Adams stated – that *trust* is a prerequisite for the in-house disagreements and *friendship* is a product of trust and disagreement – Hardy claims that the trust is built *through* these disagreements. However, it is not clear in Hardy’s statement whether friendship is also built through the disagreements or if, like Adams, he means that friendship is a product of trust and disagreement.

When Micheal O’Siadhail mentions friendship alongside consensus, he makes it clear that consensus is not a goal, and he reveals a bit more information towards his understanding of friendship.

There is no seeking after ‘consensus’ but rather an attempt to learn openly and honestly from others in a way that increases self-awareness. At its core this is face-to-face friendship where participants of different traditions are both hosts and guests in a ‘tent of meeting’.<sup>830</sup>

O’Siadhail appears to equate Scriptural Reasoning with friendship, then he explains that friendship involves attempting to learn openly and honestly, and requires each participant to play the roles of host and guest.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have illustrated the variety of claims about friendship that exist in Scriptural Reasoning discourse. Friendship sometimes plays a central role, as a goal or byproduct. It is sometimes listed alongside other required characteristics of Scriptural Reasoning, such as trust, disagreement, and hospitality. I have shown the lack of consistency among the advocates of Scriptural Reasoning, when it comes to defining or describing friendship. I have even highlighted how some authors are not consistent in their own statements about friendship in Scriptural Reasoning. It is clear that these proponents of Scriptural Reasoning place a high value on friendship, and see it as in some way a key component of or accompaniment of the practice. Even in the most detailed discussions, the content of friendship remains rather vague, except that it has something to do with trust, with hospitality, and with the ability to explore disagreements. There is not a single

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<sup>828</sup> *ibid.*, 350.

<sup>829</sup> Hardy, “The Promise,” 191-192.

<sup>830</sup> O’Siadhail, 369.

theory of friendship in this material, rather, there is a variety of overlapping accounts that have many points of commonality, but also have subtle differences and inconsistencies. These various accounts are not expressions of an agreed theory that has subsequently been put into practice in Scriptural Reasoning groups, but a set of mobile and exploratory reflections upon a practice that the authors have experienced.

Notably, however, I was not able to locate any examples of Muslim authors highlighting friendship as a goal or byproduct of Scriptural Reasoning; in fact, I could not find any who mention friendship at all in discussions about the practice. No other Scriptural Reasoning author draws attention to this fact, or discusses it, or even hints that it might be a possibility. Nobody appears to have noticed that not everyone in the Scriptural Reasoning world was joining in with this strand of reflection on the practice.

In the Conclusion to this thesis I will address the questions that this analysis raises about how we frame and promote Scriptural Reasoning – and interfaith dialogue more broadly – and what other approaches to naming the goals or benefits of dialogue may be available, once attention to the particularities has made the appeal to friendship more complex.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, I demonstrated that ‘friendship’ is among the buzzwords that are part of a shared vocabulary in the interfaith world, and that it is widely presented as a common currency for all religious traditions. It is very often portrayed as an obvious, unproblematic, and primary goal or byproduct of interfaith dialogue, and it is predominantly used vaguely – meaning, it is used in a way that does not have to be explained, justified, or nuanced. I illustrated the extensive usage of friendship language in multiple contexts: promotional material for charity organisations, speeches of religious leaders, and major religious documents, as well as non-academic and academic discourse. Taking all of this material into account, I did not discover any comprehensive theories of friendship, nor did I find any material that lends itself to extended theoretical discussion.

I illustrated the *marked rarity* of friendship language in Muslim material compared to Christian material – Christians talk about friendship in relation to interfaith dialogue much more frequently than Muslims. I showed that this is true across a variety of material, from the popular to the academic. It was a challenge to demonstrate this relative absence of friendship language, but I cast my net far and wide, and I found very little that contradicts my claim. I devoted a lot of space to exploring the exceptions, in a way that may have distracted from how uncommon friendship language really is in Muslim discussions of interfaith dialogue. However, I established, with a few exceptions, that when friendship language does come up in Muslims’ discussions, it tends to be muted, ambivalent, or borrowed from Christians. There are some deviations from this tendency – cases where Muslims more explicitly discuss interfaith friendship, and they say positive things about it – but I established that they are not the norm. I showed that when Muslims do discuss interfaith friendship, their comments are significantly varied and – similar to the non-Muslim material – they do not add up to a comprehensive Muslim theory of interfaith friendship. I observed some commonalities – for instance, there are several references to Gülen’s work, there are some narratives about Muslims forming specific interfaith relationships (as opposed to broader claims about friendships formed through interfaith dialogue), and so on – but on the whole, the material I found on friendship is scrappy and inconclusive.

I illustrated how among the Muslims who mentioned friendship and who did not mention friendship, there is a *marked preference* for pointing to mutual understanding and mutual respect – and to some extent trust and cooperation – as the primary goals or



byproducts of interfaith dialogue. Though this terminology was widely used, it, too, was just as scrappy and inconclusive as the friendship language I explored in Chapter 1.1. I have suggested various reasons for this relative absence of friendship language. For one, it may be because of a widespread perception that Islam is misunderstood, caricatured, and despised in non-Muslim contexts – Islam is seemingly under threat. Consequently, Muslims have a proclivity towards overcoming this pressing problem before considering any other goals or byproducts for interfaith dialogue. They have an imperative need to be understood and to be respected as Muslims. Another reason for this absence could be that there are verses in the Qur’ān that may pose a challenge for discussions of interfaith friendship. It appears to be the case that the Qur’ānic verses on friendship may make it difficult for Muslims to use friendship language in the context of interfaith dialogue – the Muslims who refer to the Qur’ān in discussions of interfaith friendship have to somehow negotiate this material. A third reason could be that some Muslims are sceptical of Christians’ motivations in interfaith dialogue, in that they suspect Christians will proselytise. Furthermore, the history of Christians using friendship as a tool for evangelism may raise suspicions among Muslims about the implications of pursuing interfaith friendship.

There is a tension created between 1) the widespread use of friendship language by Christians (and sometimes others), which they predominantly present as an obvious, unproblematic goal or byproduct of interfaith dialogue for anyone from any religious tradition, and 2) the relative absence of friendship language in Muslim interfaith discourse, and the suggestions that it may be, in fact, problematic for many Muslims. Scriptural Reasoning is a context in which this tension is particularly sharp. On the one hand, Scriptural Reasoning proponents repeatedly indicate a commitment to pay attention to the particularities of the traditions, the scriptures, and even the individuals. On the other hand, I have shown that proponents of Scriptural Reasoning – excluding Muslims – are just as likely as those in the wider interfaith world to use friendship language as an obvious, unproblematic goal or byproduct of dialogue.

I illustrated how there are various aspects of this commitment to particularity. For one, it requires attention to the various categories that are native to each tradition. I noted in Chapter 2.1 that individuals give rise to the particularities of the traditions and scriptures by engaging with them. Each person has a unique understanding of the terms and practices associated with his or her scripture and tradition. Therefore, the commitment to particularity also requires attention to the various categories that are used by each participant. Furthermore, it requires participants to refrain from imposing shared categories on others. As another aspect, this commitment requires attention to the variety of

meanings that one term may carry in the different traditions, or by different participants – and it requires participants to avoid making assumptions about the purposes people have for pursuing Scriptural Reasoning. An additional aspect of this commitment is the proclivity towards disagreement, as opposed to constantly striving for consensus or focusing on commonalities. By constantly seeking out commonalities among traditions and scriptures, participants may fall into the trap of trying to fit their unique understandings of their traditions and scriptures into ‘foreign’ categories, for the sake of finding common ground.

I demonstrated how proponents of Scriptural Reasoning extensively make claims about particularity, despite facing many challenges. It can be difficult to honour this commitment to particularity. Some proponents of Scriptural Reasoning have noticeably failed to uphold their commitment, and others find that they have to make compromises – for example, when they have to negotiate a common practice.

Despite the commitment to particularity, I have shown that friendship language in Scriptural Reasoning contexts displays the very same pattern that I found in the wider interfaith world. On the one hand, claims about friendship in this milieu are largely made by Christians, though there are some Jews who have made claims about it, too. For example, in the material I presented in Chapter 2.2, I mentioned seven Christian authors and three Jewish authors, all of whom somehow indicate friendship as a goal, byproduct, or key component of Scriptural Reasoning. Even in the most comprehensive discussions, the comments about friendship are vague, except that sometimes the authors list it alongside other required attributes, such as trust, disagreement, and hospitality – terms that they also present without consistent definitions or descriptions, if they are defined or described at all. There is a lack of consistency when it comes to defining or describing friendship; some authors are not even consistent with their own definitions of and descriptions of friendship. Therefore, there is not an over-arching theory of friendship in Scriptural Reasoning material, rather, there is an assortment of overlapping accounts – some share similarities, and others vary and are inconsistent. There is not evidence to show that these different accounts are just various versions of the same ‘theory of friendship’ in Scriptural Reasoning. On the contrary, these different accounts are dynamic and exploratory reflections of practitioners’ experiences of Scriptural Reasoning.

On the other hand, I was not able to find any examples of Muslims indicating friendship as a goal or byproduct of Scriptural Reasoning, nor was I able to locate any Muslim discussions of friendships formed through Scriptural Reasoning. No one has remarked on or discussed this absence, and there is no indication that the Christians and Jewish proponents of Scriptural Reasoning who mention friendship are aware of this

disparity in Scriptural Reasoning discourse or in the wider interfaith world. These statements about friendship are made without any consideration of how they may be interpreted differently by people of various religious traditions. No one has seriously considered these claims about friendship in light of the commitment to particularity. This is quite a shocking revelation: so many proponents of Scriptural Reasoning claim this strong commitment to maintain attention to the particularities, yet they fail to exercise consideration and sensitivity towards others when it comes to people's perspectives on interfaith friendship. In this sense, there appears to be here a significant betrayal – inadvertent, but deep – of the commitment to particularity.

Overall, I am *not* saying that this is a case where upon close inspection there is a clash between different specific meanings when friendship is used by people who represent different religious traditions; rather, there is a vague, flexible, and multifaceted usage on the Christian side, and a relative absence on the Muslim side. I illustrated that in the Muslim material, there is a limited, complex, and nuanced approach to interfaith friendship, which is a stark contrast to the liberal, yet vague, use of friendship in the Christian material. I have proven that this discrepancy even exists – in fact, very prominently – in Scriptural Reasoning discourse. Moreover, this discrepancy exists in Scriptural Reasoning discourse *despite* the commitment to particularity, and *despite* the proclivity for exploring difference and disagreement.

This outcome suggests that if participants (especially Christian participants) in interfaith endeavours like Scriptural Reasoning want to do justice to particularity – and want to avoid pushing participants into frameworks that don't do justice to their traditions – they will need to be cautious about their use of friendship language. When considering all of the material I presented in light of the commitment to particularity, it becomes apparent that there is a delicate and complex balancing act that occurs when *writing about* and *participating in* Scriptural Reasoning – and interfaith dialogue more broadly. In order to maintain the commitment to particularity, people are required to have a heightened sensitivity to the language they use in the context of interfaith dialogue. More generally, all of this material illustrates how much more difficult it is to do justice to particularity than is sometimes imagined. The commitment to particularity requires people to maintain ongoing 1) attention to the language they speak, 2) attention to the speaker of the language, and 3) attention to what difficulties they encounter. This commitment also calls for attentiveness to those terms that people use to frame their endeavours – to name the foundations, goals, or general quality of dialogue. I am *not* suggesting that there exists a completely neutral or

safe language that is appropriate for all. Rather, I am illustrating the kind of ongoing attentiveness that is needed in order to do justice to the standards of particularity.

I have provided a thorough survey of interfaith discourse to reveal some pitfalls in communication between the various players in interfaith dialogue. My hope is that this analysis can be utilised in charity organisations, by religious leaders who intend to speak publicly, by people who intend to distribute religious documents, and by non-academics and academics who write about interfaith dialogue. With this analysis, people can learn 1) how to be more articulate when they discuss interfaith dialogue, 2) how to listen more closely to the religious others' statements about interfaith dialogue – especially their motivations for participating and the personal goals they hope to accomplish by participating, and 3) how to consider the ways in which their words can affect the religious other.

I am definitely *not* denying that there are Muslims who have made friends with the religious other through interfaith dialogue. I am certainly *not* making a sweeping generalisation that Muslims *intentionally avoid* interreligious friendships, nor am I suggesting that Muslims *should avoid having* interreligious friends. What I am trying to illustrate is that there appears to be a tendency for Muslims and Christians to talk past each other, to fail to listen carefully to what the other is expressing as goals for interfaith dialogue. I have presented a massive amount of material wherein Muslims continually express a desire for mutual understanding and mutual respect, and wherein Christians continually express a desire for friendship. A cursory survey of Jewish discourse on interfaith dialogue also suggests a similar trend to that of Muslims, in that Jews tend to aim for mutual understanding and respect. Surely the foundation of a friendship of any kind would be comprised of basic values, such as understanding and respect; therefore, if a majority of Muslim voices – and potentially Jewish voices – in the interfaith world are asking for understanding and respect, it seems a bit premature for Christians, for example, to be calling for friendship instead. I am not saying that it is *impossible* for Christians to achieve their goal of friendship with Muslims, but it seems appropriate that they first take a few steps back to really listen when Muslims – and Jews – express their goals for interfaith dialogue, and then work together towards achieving the mutual understanding and mutual respect that they seek.

## Questions for Further Research

Of course, there are ways to expand the present study, for example, by adding an ethnographic component. Research on consumer behaviour suggests that advertisements

can shape the consumer's attitude about and goal(s) for using the product or service being sold. Thus, if, for example, 'friendship' is highlighted on the advertisement for an interfaith dialogue event, is the reader potentially motivated toward – or even expecting – new friendships? In what ways could this motivation/expectation of friendship shape the way the participant interacts with others in the event? Alternatively, could the emphasis on friendship in the advertisement actually *deter* some of the audience from attending the event? These questions would be better addressed through ethnographic fieldwork. As I mentioned in the Introduction, my original plan also included ethnographic fieldwork of Scriptural Reasoning groups and Qur'ānic reading groups, however my medical circumstances ultimately thwarted those plans. Ethnographic fieldwork could reveal participants' motivations for attending, their goals upon entering, and the benefits or byproducts they notice after participating in interfaith dialogue. I mentioned how buzzwords influence people's motivations or goals for attending interfaith dialogue events.

Ethnographic fieldwork could also help expand the parameters for friendship that individuals have. Perhaps this work would reveal that some people have different categories of friends, such as 'work friends' and 'church friends' and 'friends I made through interfaith engagement' – and perhaps each category of friends would have different parameters. For example, for some people, perhaps the friends made through interfaith engagement would require a higher level of established trust – which is a recurring theme present in interfaith discourse, especially by Muslims.

Another way to expand this study is to consider other buzzwords, which I was unable to do within the confines of this thesis. For example, I had originally hoped to survey all of the same general interfaith material and Scriptural Reasoning material for statements about two other buzzwords – 'disagreement' and 'hospitality' – which are both commonly used terms in Scriptural Reasoning, as well as in the broader interfaith milieu. For instance, I encountered quite a few Muslim sources in which Muslims cautioned against arguing with Jews and Christians, which is something they backed up with Qur'ānic verses that appear to issue a similar warning. Since one of the commonly touted aspects of Scriptural Reasoning is to 'improve the quality of disagreement', this could pose a problem with Muslim participants of Scriptural Reasoning.

There are many other ways to expand this research, all of which would likely make the commitment to particularity even more complicated.

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