

28th May 2020

HPPD7006: Christianity: Texts and Traditions

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We discussed the fact that the Abrahamic religions share some common commitments on the nature of the doctrine of creation. How might these commitments about creation provide the basis for fruitful inter-faith discourse? and what are its limitations for interfaith discourse?

Introduction:

“Creatio ex nihilo” was the result of a conflux of Hellenistic Judaism and biblical teachings. The theologians of the early Church understood and spoke of their God as living, loving, and active as described in this scripture. This ideology is also affirmed by both the Jewish and medieval Islamic philosophers and was later sharpened by Aquinas. It accepts that God created all things out of nothing and is the final cause of everything. It also asserts that all creations are ontologically dependent on their creator for their existence.¹

Medieval philosophers questioned theological, philosophical, and methodical aspects of creation as through Aristotle they too believed that to know something completely it is significant to know its origin and cause. Thus, it is not possible to understand the world completely, without knowing the creator and his cause. This brought about the paradox of creation. As we would know God through his creation, we would also be encouraged to know the world through God.²

Several theological understanding and debates emerge from the reading of scriptures. It brings the ideology that the narrative of creation is not only a primary explanation of *how* of creation, but there are other philosophical elements positioned in the scripture concerning the *why* of creation leading to faith, specifically in wisdom literature. The narratives in Genesis 1-2 and Quranic scriptures are explanations as well as declarations. Their implication to creation reminds us of other theological concepts that structure our perception of the world concerning God. All three faiths affirm the understanding that links the creation history to salvation history which asserts that the creator of the world is also its redeemer. It furthers the understanding that the creation is only the initial of God’s acts, it brings in play the relationship that man shares with God. The relationship between God and a human being

¹ Burrell, D.B., C. Cogliati, J.M. Soskice, &, and W.R. Stoeger (eds.). 2010. *Creation and the God of Abraham*. (Cambridge.: Cambridge University Press.)P. 7.

² Kalin, I. 2011. ‘*Will, necessity and creation as monistic theophany in the Islamic philosophical tradition*’, in David B Burrell, Carlo Cogliati, Janet M Soskice, & and William R Stoeger (ed.) *Creation and the God of Abraham* (Cambridge.: Cambridge University Press.)p. 107.

can be characterized through the common commitments shared by creation doctrine with all three faiths.³

This essay shall discuss a few common commitments shared by three Abrahamic faith through the creation doctrine. They are; love and friendship, trust (stewardship), and return (eschatology) which will include the role of forgiveness (redemption), faith, adherence to practices, and interpretation of scripture in orbiting back towards the creator. As they are shared in all the three faith scriptures, they open a common ground for a fruitful interfaith discourse. The essay shall discuss each of these commitments in detail. However, as each of the Abrahamic religions has emerged in different time eras, culture, and differing in their worldviews, some of the commitments are also seen as opposing to the faith philosophies of the other. Thus, towards the end, the essay will state these few limitations which currently limit dialogue and require further considerations to overcome its challenges.

First, the essay shall discuss love and friendship.

Love and friendship:

Human beings are considered one of the intentional creatures of God. There is yet a debate on the belief that God ascribes “free-agency” to humankind. However, it is known that God interacts with his intentional creatures in ways that establish and sustains an interpersonal relationship. This relationship due to its existence is transformational. It is known by various names, Jews call it the ‘covenant’, Christians call it ‘grace’, and Muslims know it ‘by proximity to God’. Each tradition explains the original act of creation through the intentional relating with evident similarities and differences.⁴

The Jews do not concern themselves in analyzing or understanding their God whose ways they believe are not possible to be investigated. Thus, they only concern themselves to the relationship between God and human beings. They believe that he initially considered them as free, but later they connected with him by reciprocating through the covenant. According to Vajda Deuteronomy expresses love from both sides “the love God has for Israel, manifested in the gratuity of the election, and the love elicited thereby from Israel for God” (p. 17). So, Moses: “if [the Lord] set his heart on you and chose you ... it was for the love of you; ... you are therefore to keep and observe the commandments ... that I lay down for you today” (Deut. 7:7, 8, 11). Hosea illustrates divine enterprise as a result of infinite love which is reiterated in

³ Fergusson, D. 2009. ‘Creation’, in Tanner, K., J. Webster, and I. Torrance (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (: Oxford handbooks Online; Scholarly Research Reviews.)

⁴ Burrell, D.B. 2011. *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology* (: Wiley-Blackwell)p.51.

God's affirmation through Jeremiah: " I have loved you with an everlasting love, so I am constant in my affection for you " (Jer. 31:3). Jeremiah also progresses to state that the God's Love is not responded through by his people, however, Jewish worship continues to emphasize the passionate connection of " the election and love for Israel, with obedience to the commandments the privileged path taken by Israel in its love for God " (p. 33). Maimonides in later traditions speaks of this love as one that is "an excess of love, so that no thought remains that is directed towards anything other than the Beloved" (Guide 3.51). He elaborates that it is a bond between God and human beings, the intellect that flows from God which guides our life and our acts so that those who have been touched by this love could never be overcome by any evil as God is with them and they are in God. (Guide 3.51). He further elaborates that observing the Torah leads adherents' to "love through the opinions (it teaches)" while fear is achieved by means of all the actions prescribed" (Guide 3.52). However, fearing God and following tradition to achieve the salvation of the creation is the overall portrayal of God-human relationship in the final chapters of the Guide given by Maimonides rather than an intellectual relationship that could be more attributed to him.⁵

Among Muslims, Ibn Taymiyya differentiates 'love' from 'will'. He explains that God 'wills' everything, however, love is reserved for God's wisdom where sometimes even evil may serve as good which is beyond human discernment. The gift of creation cannot stem from a need in God, but rather it is the implication of attributes of love in God. Thus, the human response to love should also be selfless. It should not be for God's acts of kindness only but primarily love for God himself. Marie - Louise Siauve while translating Ghazali 's *Kitâb al - Hubb* (Book of Love) from the *Ihya' Ulum ad-Din* comments on Ghazali's complete philosophy being based on a relationship of love between God as the creator and his creation of human beings. Ghazali expresses that as God creates without a reason, the creatures too seek to respond to their creator. Ghazali uses the term 'passionate love' of the creator which transforms his faithful servants, the creatures, and brings about a union, he terms an 'intercourse' between the two.⁶

Christianity echoes of love contending "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16) through Jesus's person and actions as proof of promises made to Jeremiah that he would make a new covenant with the house of Israel (31:31). Thomas Aquinas identified the new covenant as the grace of the holy spirit bestowed from God through which love is poured into their hearts of the believers of Christ. Jesus conferred the title 'friends' which Hebrew and Quranic scriptures had bestowed

⁵ Ibid, p. 54-55.

⁶ Ibid, p.55-56.

on Moses and Abraham (Jn 15:15). Now the entire atmosphere of the New Testament breathes the fact that the love for all human beings was brought to effect through Jesus, who was the word of God made as a human form. The new here was the renewal of the original. Aquinas reminds us how the new brought to light the original as well, he states that the fact God made all the things through his Word excludes the error of the ones who suggest that God made things due to necessity (ST 1.32.1.3).⁷

Webster conveys Aquinas and Augustine's ideology explaining that God is abundant "unoriginated love" in himself. God does not require anything other than himself, yet there is an origination of the unoriginated love. He suggests that human beings are incapable of understanding the reason for this, but as human beings, our created intelligence is stunned by this fact of "outward movement of God's love" which is a distinctive feature of God's infinite creativity. This love emanates out of his generosity. God's creative love is seen by his bringing an object into existence, the "ex-nihilo generosity by which life is given". Divine love has made possible the "infinite distance which 'cannot be crossed' between being and nothing" to be crossed. The love of God thus is basically in himself but secondarily in "other than what is God" and is distinguished by the "love for fellowship with him".⁸

The essay shall now discuss return (eschatology) which is a common commitment in the nature of the doctrine of creation through scriptures of all three Abrahamic religions. All three Abrahamic religions speak of return indisputably. The essay below discourses on the ways each religion specifies the requirements, the religious practice that facilitates their return, the role of repentance and belief, trust as steward and faith which guides them to walk through an undiscovered goal of union with God. It also recognizes the mystical path through literature which the enlightened few have been able to identify for the believers which symbolize the motifs of creation pointing towards a door towards enlightening salvation.

[Return to the creator:](#)

The element of return or emanation can be found in each of the Abrahamic traditions. It is observed by Aquinas in 'Summa Theologiae, al- Gazali, and Mulla Sadra's Islamic theology as well as in prose and poetic verses of Maimonides.

⁷ Ibid, p.56-57.

⁸ Webster, J. 2016. *God Without Measure; Working Papers in Christian Theology. Vol 1: God and Works of God.* (London.: Bloomsbury T & T Clark.) p.92-93.

Christian eschatology centres mainly on repentance, seeking forgiveness and Christ's 'second coming' which will bring in final judgment leading to the eschaton. Jewish philosophy focuses on the 'Messianic era' other than the last judgment while Islam believes in the resurrection in connection with the final judgment which would finally decide on all destinies.⁹

The essay discusses the modalities they each propose:

Islamic scriptures suggest that if creation was not made in vain, then the point would be to move towards a kind of consummation. What would be the reason for emanation from the One without having the inspiration to return to the same One? There is also a question that on how would the return of man as an intentional creature be different from all the other creation? The Quran responds by assigning man the role of a 'vicegerent' (representative) as the steward or protector of all creation, thus playing a role of directing all creations to its rightful end. This is of trust bestowed on mankind.¹⁰

Humankind is supposed to take his bearings and travel to an undiscovered country from what he is told of the settings and import of creation. However, as the destination is only to be 'known' by faith, man is journeying on in hope. Hope also stems from God's freely creating the universe and indicating its culmination through its end resurrection. An alluring parallel can found in the verse of light (24: 35-38)¹¹ in the Quran and Peter's reference to the enlightening power of scripture in the New Testament; "You will do well to pay attention to it because it is like a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the light of the morning star rises in your hearts" (1 Pet. 1:18).

These texts have been an inspiration for the believers in each of this tradition to allow the scriptures to inspire their minds and their hearts such that they transform them to journey on the path which leads to proximity to God.

The following eschatological themes can be identified reflecting free creation. In Islam, the 'Primordial Covenant, the transformation of the order of creation as specified in Sura 81¹² and a 'second creation' through the resurrection and final judgment. Mulla Sadra cites Ibn Arabi who insists that every being in its existence is orbiting and orienting towards the creator as they "they abide in the primordial disposition concerning the unity of God. This is worship by

⁹ Burrell, D.B. 2011. *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology* (: Wiley-Blackwell) p. 88.

¹⁰ Burrell, D.B. 2011. *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology* (: Wiley-Blackwell) p. 88-89.

¹¹ Ibid, p.88-89.

¹² Anonymous *Surah At-Takwir* 81 ()

(one's) essence: all the natural movements and transferences in the essences of the natures of souls are towards God, by God, and in the way of God. Man, by his innate disposition travels towards Him.” As human beings are vicegerents of God's creation, they are able to articulate what all other creation ‘say’ by their very activity. However, the vicegerents cannot hear what the creation ‘says’ until he lets the words of the Quran disclose the intrinsic orientation to their creator of the existence that surrounds him. Thus, by rising to his role as a vicegerent and fulfilling the trust placed on him, through faith and hope the believer needs to journey his return, unraveling the mystical scripture to acquire proximity to his creator.¹³

In Christianity, the words ‘the crucified one’ or the crucifixion’ are the ways that God has mercifully given to his free creatures to return the gift of creation and their existence to God through whom they received it. Through Jesus's way and repentance (teshuva), they can receive forgiveness and be empowered to return to him. Jewish high holydays of Yom Kippur include ceaseless imprecations seeking God's forgiveness. It is repetitive and suggests that though they have been attentive throughout the year, how can they dare to expect divine forgiveness, however they implore God again. Christians believe that Jesus pleads with God of Israel whom he addresses as ‘Father’ of all the people believing in God (Jn 12:24), thus they do not find the need to implore God. The ones who have tasted Jesus and through him felt the need to confess to their sins and seek forgiveness, they are granted so by God. Thus, crucifixion serves two needs. One is for the human to make them attentive and the other is directed towards God (the Father) to forgive them in their repentance.¹⁴

Meister Eckhart in his understanding of Aquinas asserts that scripture endeavours to demonstrate philosophical categories. But it is only possible to comprehend the completeness of their truth when it is perceived concerning the ascent of the soul and its merging (union) with God. It is only then that the soul will be able to recognize the categories in their perfect origin which is God.¹⁵

Maimonides presents an excellent example in the discussion of Mishneh Torah of the messianic era which adopting a rationalist position. Popularly he teaches that no one should assume that in Messianic days natural laws will not be followed or any innovation would be introduced in creation. A normal course will be followed by the world. He further conveys the words of Isaiah; “And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid” (11:6).

¹³ Burrell, D.B. 2011. *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology* (: Wiley-Blackwell) p.89.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 96.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 111.

These statements are to be comprehended figuratively. They bring the understanding that Israel shall survive in a secured manner among the wicked people who are allegorized as wolves and leopards. He further explains the scripture; “A wolf of the desert does spoil them, a leopard watches over their cities” (Jer 5:6). This suggests that the true religion will be accepted by all, they will not resort to plundering or destroying, rather together with Israel, they will all revel in a comfortable living lawfully. Further, he cites; “And the lion shall eat straw like the ox” (Isa. 11:7). As stated, all the analogous statements expressed here related to the Messianic age are symbolical. The complete meaning of these symbols and their connotations will be revealed to all in the messianic age. It can be perceived that by denying the “ laws of nature will be set aside” Maimonides comes across as rationalist such that one may not expect any obvious miracles, however, he insists that “all will accept true religion and will neither plunder nor destroy and together with Israel earn a comfortable living in a legitimate way”. However, this cannot be accepted as “natural” behavior in this material world. Thus, the appearance of “King Messiah” will openly bring about impressive changes that may not be possible to be predicted by a contemporary rationalist. This understanding is a characteristic of Maimonides which he terms as “the imagination” to think about the “supernatural” in an undisguised miraculous term. However, he has also reminded people that this unlikely change which is possible to be brought about in indomitable times through “ those who have obtained a share of that emanation which is granted to all who make an effort to obtain it ... it will never be possible for any evil of any kind to befall them, because they are with God and God is with them ” (3.51). The understanding of the Messianic age which possible to be brought about is available to only those believers who have taken an effort to obtain a share of the emanation, it suggests that then these adherents’ are beyond all evil as God is with them.¹⁶

Thus, as seen all three religions speak of a return to their originator through various beliefs in philosophies, adherence of practices, and interpretations of mystical scripture.

Earlier the essay outlined the Islamic understanding of the title of vicegerent assigned to the human being through which playing the role of stewardship assists creation to its rightful end, which in turn supports him in gaining proximity to god. Further, the essay explores the religious scripture for Christians and Jews which explores the similar role of stewardship in the story of the creation of other creatures existing alongside man. This discourse also would be an attempt to enhance interfaith bonding which could catalyze the solution of global challenges.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 120-121.

Role of human beings as stewards in the community of creation:

Genesis presents the story of the creation of human beings existing alongside animals and sharing the same physical existence. However, this perception of the community of creation is overruled by the concept of the divine image and the theory of salvation. The significance of possessing nonphysical components like the mind, consciousness, and soul has attributed human beings a higher status in contrast with other creatures. This can be attributed to the Greek traditional philosophy of Plato, Descartes as well as in the writings of Augustine and other Christian authors. Thomas Aquinas determined the moral status of animals based on the three considerations: their lack of reasoning capacity, their potential to serve human beings and become a part of the human property (*ST 2a2ae. 64, 1*). However, this is in contrast to the ideology of wisdom literature which suggests that God's creation of animals was for their own sake and he values them as his creation and not only for their role in serving human beings. A recent study on theology has recollected the existence of animals in scripture and opined that historical attitudes towards animals needed improvement. With the increasing ethical awareness of animals as an intended community of God's creation has brought ethical debates to the fore-front which discourses on conditions of housing and slaughtering animals as well as the threat of extinction that is posed towards many of their species.¹⁷

A similar charge is levied against Judaeo- Christian attitudes towards the natural environment. It is considered domineering, plundering, and hierarchical. The perception acquired through Gen. 1:26 over command to gain domination over the world has brought about an entitlement to not only utilize but led to unethical exploitation of its natural resources. The Hebrew verb suggests connotation of mastery but commentators have debated that in reference to its primary pastoral setting it needs to be perceived as benevolent stewardship which subscribes human beings with the divinely authorized duty to care for the earth and all the creations. Thus, instead of an undermining attitude Genesis, 1 can now be perceived as assigning man as an entity representing responsibility. While it brings positivity to the text, caution is advised by the critics that this should not lead human beings to the assumption that he is managing the creation on God's behalf. Discourses on theology and anthropocentric notion have also acknowledged that some areas of nature should be left as wilderness. The notion is derived through the understanding of scripture that the world is endowed with beauty and value under the providence of God's natural order and thus are not dependent on human beings for their

¹⁷ Fergusson, D. 2009. 'Creation', in Tanner, K., J. Webster, and I. Torrance (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (: Oxford handbooks Online; Scholarly Research Reviews.)

survival. Further, it is also recognized through scientific innovation that animals were the inhabitants of the earth much before the emergence of man as hominids. Human welfare itself is dependent on the nature and harmony of other life forms, climatic systems, and ecological balance. The theological discourse thus calls on an application of greater wisdom which recognizes and articulates human beings as dependant creatures while authorized as stewards within God's community of creations.¹⁸

Limitations:

The necessity of belief in one God (tawhid) by the Muslims and the issue over the role of Christ assumed as a mediator by Muslims leads to challenges between Christian and Muslims:

The Christian understanding of the Trinity:

Webster explains the concept of Trinity as; God's life in himself is the perfect, still and eternal movement in which the Father generates the Son and together with the Son breathes the Spirit". Accordingly, the "generation and spiration" can be seen as the two "emanations" or "processions" through which "personal modes of one God" can be distinguished. He explains that the creation sees the presence of God as the maker, reconciler, and perfecter through this original and infinite depth of triune God.¹⁹

According to Shema, Christians place Christ as 'being alongside God' which is considered as committing the sin of 'Shirk' in Islam:

This limitation stems from the consequence of human-divine relations ascribed to people who are distinct from the ordinary ones whom we describe as persons. It deals with the mediating role of Jesus Christ and its effecting relationship with God. Muslims assert that though the Prophet is the messenger of God who carries his word to human beings, it is our response to the message of God which brings us in a relationship with God. The Shi'i tradition in Islam accepts the Prophet Isa (Jesus Christ)²⁰, Prophet Muhammad and after him, his nephew and son-in-law Imam Ali as the mediator²¹, so it is acceptable to them, however, the Sunni tradition of Islam believes that as God has bestowed man with his word, thus there is no requirement for a mediator and one should not think of Prophet Muhammad as one. Diversely, in many ways, Christian theology and scripture identifies Jesus as a mediator between human beings and God. The word 'between' suggests Jesus operating between the creature and creator, but in the Arian

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Webster, J. 2016. *God Without Measure; Working Papers in Christian Theology. Vol 1: God and Works of God.* (London.: Bloomsbury T & T Clark.) p.89.

²⁰ McGee, M. 2011. 'Surprised by Love;The Heart of Christian- Muslim dialogue', JStore, 62p. 685.

²¹ Haider Najam. 2014. *Shi'i Islam; An Introduction* (: Cambridge University Press)

perception, this view is rejected in the early councils from Nicaea to Chalcedon. So, while the relation of Jesus to God as his Father is accepted, Jesus is not seen as a ‘go-between’ mediator between the two. Thus, the characteristic of mediation which the Sunni tradition denies to the Prophet assuming it to be similar to Jesus’ aspect of mediating, in reality, presents a distortion of Christian ideology, though it is an ideology proposed by some Christians too. In the sixteenth century, in controversy between Protestants and Catholics, the more classical meaning of ‘mediation’ was distorted in a polemical edge. Thus, for Catholics, the “mediator” could include ecclesial personages or structures that would mediate the salvation power of God to the believers. But due to the ‘Shema’ which means “being alongside God” Jesus could not be bracketed in that list. However, “being alongside God” refers to Muslims as committing the sin of “shirk” which is attributing something at par with God.²²

The belief in trinity is unacceptable in Islam as it is equalled to polytheism:

Islam believes that all creation was intended to be brought back to its essential original purpose, to where it all began, i.e. to God. The proof of creation is established through witnessing faith in the unity or oneness of God. God cites in Surah Al-Baqara (2:21–22): O People! Worship your Lord who has created you and those before you so that you may be God-fearing. (He) who has made the earth a resting place for you and the sky a canopy and sent down water from the sky and thereby brought forth fruits for your sustenance. Do not then set up rivals for God when you know (that He is the only one to be worshipped). Al-Baqara 2:28 further continues in the same context: “How can you deny God seeing that you were dead and He gave you life and that He will cause you to die and then will bring you to life again, whereupon you will be brought back to Him?”. A link is established between belief in the creation of a believer’s faith in his oneness which leads to the worship of God. The way to prove God as exalted is through faith in his oneness and his worship.²³

The Quran confronts the Meccans on their polytheistic practices. “How can you acknowledge God as creator and still worship other deities? Quran, (Luqman 25, al Mau’minun 86-87). Many verses of the Quran point out the deception in early Meccan people’s reasoning. The issue cited is not disbelief in God, but while they do believe in God’s existence, their practices ascribed partners to him. Polytheism makes God one of the agents or partners in the creation of the

²² Burrell, D.B. 2011. *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology* (: Wiley-Blackwell) p. 174-175.

²³ Kalin, I. 2011. ‘Will, necessity and creation as monistic theophany in the Islamic philosophical tradition’, in David B Burrell, Carlo Cogliati, Janet M Soskice, & William R Stoeger (ed.) *Creation and the God of Abraham* (Cambridge.: Cambridge University Press.) p. 110.

universe which is unacceptable. The essence of faith requires faith in the unity of God or oneness of God and without this faith, worship is not accepted by God.²⁴

The above verses suggest that to reach back to origin who is the creator, the core practices of worship must include faith in one God. Christian belief in trinity is considered blasphemous and contrary to Islamic belief. Islam accepts Jesus Christ as a prophet emanating from the same God, however the Christian understanding of the Shema disallows Christ to be a mediator between human beings and God. This leads to challenges between Islamic and Christian understanding of God, and Jesus Christ.

Conclusion:

The world has been a place for war as well as peace. Human beings have always been battling an “other” a role fulfilled earlier by the Jews, Soviet communism, and for now, the candidate is served by Islam. In building peace, many practices like, “Scriptural reasoning”,²⁵ open letters like the “The common word between us and you” (2006- 07) between Pope Benedict and 138 Muslim scholars from 48 nations²⁶ , building of “Global centre for pluralism” in 2017 (Canada), etc, have been working to bring religions together. In a small way, this essay too is an attempt to understand the worldviews of the ‘other’ religion by identifying the common commitments on the theme of creation between the three religions. It can be observed that the essay discusses themes from the scriptures of the three religions which share similar positive convictions. They are; 1) Love and friendship which is commonly perceived as the objective of creation by the creator. 2) Return of the soul to the creator is facilitated through adherence to practices like Yom Kippur of seeking forgiveness in all three religions. Forgiveness also allows for the love of the divine to be poured in the hearts of man facilitating his ultimate salvation. 3) Fulfilling the trust as a vicegerent or representative (stewardship) ascribed to human beings is a noble task assigned by all three religions, this enables human beings to be the representative and protector of other living beings and natural environment which supports the faith and worship of the creator in Islamic theology. 4) Keeping in hope and through the interpretation of mystical literature in all three religions assist human beings to traverse across an undiscovered goal of achieving union with God. At the heart of teachings of religions is recognizing the differences and respecting each other as brothers as creations of God, as stated in much-celebrated Quranic verse “If God had so willed, He would have made you one

²⁴ Ibid, p. 111.

²⁵ Moyaert, M. 2013. ‘Scriptural reasoning in inter-religious dialogue’, in Cornille, C. (ed.) *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*. (West Sussex, UK: Wiley- Blackwell), pp. 64-86

²⁶ McGee, M. 2011. ‘Surprised by Love;The Heart of Christian- Muslim dialogue’, JStore, 62

community, but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you. So, emulate each other in doing good, and God will judge about your differences.” (5:48). Differences have led to manipulations of religions through political entities giving rise to prejudice, violence, and hatred. Dialogue has brought about empathy, appreciation of diversity, and building of communities. Towards the end, the essay outlines a few limitations which need further considerations and dialogue to overcome the differences between religions. Interfaith discourses need to promote celebration of plurality which builds bridges between religions and supports resolution of global humanitarian issues.

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