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Significance and Risks of Interreligious Dialogue in South Sudan

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Abstract:

The objective of interreligious dialogue is peace, and it seeks to increase mutual understanding and good relations, identify causes of tension in Christian-Muslim relations and build understanding and confidence to overcome or prevent tensions. Interreligious dialogue has given birth to Dialogue of life, which encourages neighborliness, sharing of joys and troubles. This paper described the concept of dialogue and the dialogue of life in Sudan and South Sudan. It also presented the phenomena of dialogue, its significance and conditions that can lead to a successful outcome. Muslims and Christians could share many institutions that represent the people nationwide, for example, youth and sports clubs, health services and schools. It also viewed the risks involved in interreligious dialogue, the levels of an encounter with non-Christians. The paper established that Muslims and Christians still have great challenges that are possible threats to the dialogue of life and interreligious dialogue and these include the fear of religious coercion, proselytism, and syncretism, lack of knowledge of the other, discretion, violence and terrorism. The paper recommended mutual knowledge, respect, and collaboration between Muslims and Christians. It urged leaders to bring about unity, encourage and coordinate the study of the other's religion and promote training of people destined for interreligious dialogue.

Keywords: Dialogue of life, Significance, Risks, Christians-Muslims, Sudan and South Sudan

1. Introduction: Interreligious Dialogue

Interreligious dialogue is an important approach that places the practice of dialogue at the heart of peace building. It fosters the (re)building of trust relations and enhances social cohesion. It increases awareness about how to improve human interactions, both locally and globally, by recognizing the importance of integrating religious identities into inter-group dialogue

Interreligious dialogue is about people of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate with each other in spite of their differences. The term refers to the cooperative and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions, (i.e. "faiths") at both the individual and institutional level. Each party remains true to their own beliefs while respecting the right of the other to practice their faith freely (Pratt, 2010)

1.1. Concept of Dialogue of Life

This refers to the efforts that people make to live together in a genuine spirit of togetherness and carry on their day to day work with love and concern for each other. They embrace harmony and peace among different communities despite differences in religious and cultural backgrounds. There should a whole hearted urge to come out and reach others, listen to them, understand and overcome the barriers that might contribute to biases, stereotypes, and suspicions, bear with one another regardless of individuals ups and downs for the good of all.

It includes human interaction and relationships that can take place between individuals and communities and on many levels. For example, between neighbors, in schools and in places of work – it can take place in both formal and informal settings. In Sudan and South Sudan Muslims and Christians live on the same streets; use the same shops, public buses, and schools. Normal life means that we come into daily contact with each other. Dialogue, therefore, is not just something that takes place on an official or academic level only – it is part of daily life during which different cultural and religious groups interact with each other directly, and where tensions between them are the most tangible (Horstjard, 2013).

Interreligious harmony is an important way, indeed a necessity, to facilitate rather than hinder the deepest need of every human heart, that is, the need of having the joy and love of God brought to all people. You must strive to cultivate a dialogue with "the other" such that you can help bring about a culture where the pursuit of God is celebrated, and not hindered, because of the differences in religious expression, and beliefs amongst us.

According to the new world Encyclopedia (2014), interreligious dialogue refers to the efforts made to bring about peaceful understanding, friendship among religious communities, respect and build bridges that link different religious groups or communities. There are many forms of interreligious dialogue in the world and for the purpose of this paper; we shall focus more on one of its dimensions, which are the dialogue of life.

The New World Encyclopedia categorizes dialogue of life as the third trend of inter-religious dialogue for the modern world. It recognizes that the first trend of interreligious dialogue is the continuing and developing institutionalization of inter-religious dialogue. However, there are also some national organizations that encourage members of the mainstream religions such as interfaith communications, though with little success as compared with the Inter-Faith Network for the United Kingdom founded in 1987. The second trend in the same line is the academic institutions whose task is to monitor and display the demography of religious pluralism (Tyagananda, 2011). He further added that dialogue of life in an inclusive form of dialogue that encompasses most of the informal relationship between people of different religious groups or traditions.

The unstructured form of dialogue takes place as people converge together in market places, during community activities like humanitarian projects of time of crises. In most cases, this informal dialogue takes place when people group together for a common purpose, brainstorm together about environmental effects, violence, displacement as the result of the current civil war and the migration from place to place looking for a safe place. In times of insecurity, people come together to share their views and try to find a common solution. Unfortunately, these spontaneous dialogues are rarely recognized and celebrated for their value, and organized community dialogues are more often precipitated by a problem or crisis.

According to Pratt (2010), citing Cardinal Arinze that there are four forms of interreligious dialogue namely; the dialogue of life, dialogue of collaboration, the dialogue of theological discourse, and dialogue of religious experience. He identifies dialogue of life as a structure of inter-religious dialogue that is within the reach of anyone who lives or interacts with believers in a different religion. Dialogue of life does not necessarily need religious people to relate, but rather a relationship at the level of the ordinary relational situations of daily life that includes: family, school, place of social or cultural contact, village meetings, workplace, politics, trade or commerce. Humanly, when good neighbors relate freely among themselves, they share their projects and hopes, concerns and sorrows, and all that pertain to the human relationship; they are engaging in a dialogue of life. They do not necessarily discuss religion, but they draw on the values of their different beliefs and traditions. This kind of dialogue implies concern, respect, and hospitality towards one another.

According to Maiese (2003) who cited Archbishop Zago, the dialogue of life refers to five different forms of dialogue namely; living dialogue or dialogue of life, the dialogue of cooperation, the dialogue of religious experience, theological dialogue and official dialogue are among religious authorities. The Sudan Bishop's Conference and the Sudan Council of Churches have their annual plenary meetings, which normally conclude with a pastoral letter that invites all Christians to work together with Muslims adherents especially during their fasting periods. They also affirmed that the most common form of interfaith dialogue is that practiced by ordinary people in the everyday marketplace situations. On the other hand, Walters (2007) describes that in practice, the dialogue of life or living dialogue consists of respecting people as believers on a neighborly basis and establishes constructive and positive relations. Certainly, because of the religious diversity that marks most urban communities, people of different faith traditions interact in ways that may encourage a deeper understanding of other people's experiences and the way they live their lives.

According to Pratt (2010), this type of dialogue is an informal one, where people express their views, share their joys and sorrows and discuss their problems freely. They do this to learn from one another as well as to establish a loving relationship with one another. Whereas Sintang (2012) argues that Christians and Muslims should be people of dialogue for whom the first priority is the dialogue of life where he explained as 'a positive acceptance, interaction, and cooperation by which we bear active witness, as believers, to the ideals to which God has called us'. In order to live in peace and harmony, to remove discrimination and to build up their societies together, it is necessary for Christians and Muslims to meet each other in a climate of deep mutual respect and esteem. In this respect, Arinze (2009) defines dialogue of life as wherein participants live and work together and enrich one another through the faithful practice of the values of religion, without the necessity of formal discussion (Pratt,2010).

The concept of dialogue of life differ from other forms of dialogue because it is more practical in the sense that is unearthed, recognized, acknowledged rather than constructed since it is about how people live alongside with each other or against each other. The dialogue of life can be misunderstood or disordered because it does not easily fit into any discussion, for it just happens automatically. Dialogue of life is a way of getting rid of cultural biases and partialities. People of different religions get to know themselves and live together what pertains to the dignity of the human person. People of diverse religions engage and collaborate in order to promote human development, for example in Sudan and South Sudan most Muslims are business men, hence one need not avoid buying or selling because of difference in Faith. Sudan and South Sudan has not experienced the God given peace since the colonial period and it is still undergoing the trauma of execution and extermination of people. And in order to foster peaceful coexistence, or with help of the international community initiate projects that foster justice and peace that would eventually bring about meaningful coexistence (Badri, 2004).

1.1.1. Dialogue of Life and Common Action

Dialogue of life and the dialogue of common Action require no special expertise, but they do require an openness to interact with the other in a spirit of respect and cooperation. These kinds of dialogue are important because they have a direct bearing on our daily lives and on how Muslims and Christians live together in the now multicultural and multi-religious. The Dialogue of Life and of Common Action can take place in both formal and informal settings. Informally, involvement in residents' associations, parent-teacher meetings, youth groups and sports clubs. It can happen between individuals, neighbors, friends, and people we work with. All of these are occasions where mutual understanding and an appreciation of the other can grow. Faith may not even be discussed in these situations, but it can be witnessed to through action, respect, and mutual support. Individually our involvement in the Dialogue of Life is very much about our attitude to each other and our disposition towards engaging with each other (Maiese, 2003).

1.2. What Dialogue of Life aims to achieve

Dialogue seeks to: promote and increase mutual understanding, good relations, identify the factors that can lead to tension between the Christian Muslim relations, and this includes economic, social or political rather than religious. Dialogue also aims at building some understanding and confidence to overcome or prevent tensions, it breaks down the barriers and stereotypes which lead to distrust, suspicion, and bigotry. Sudan and South Sudan could emulate such ethical and cardinal virtues in order to restore a commendable and meaningful coexistence.

Sudan and Southern Sudan composed the largest country in Africa and is situated in the North Eastern part of Africa. Due to the political, social economic and religious factors Sudan voted for cessation in July 2011 and gave birth to the new country known as South Sudan. Despite the cessation, the two countries still remain under the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) and the Sudan Catholic Bishop's n (SCBC) as far as pastoral and spiritual care is concerned.

Sudan and South Sudan are well known of their religious and cultural diversities, and the dominant religions are Islam and Christianity followed by the African Traditional Religion among others. The dominant groups reflect more the pastoralist who comprises both the Arab nomads who are predominantly Muslims and the South Sudanese who are predominantly Christians. South Sudan has more than 60 ethnic groups and the official language for communication is English which was introduced during the colonial era and the second is Arabic (Wiki, 2014).

In this gifted country with several diverse religions, the mainstream religions are Islam and Christianity, and according to Sintang (2012), in a multi-religious country, the best way to live together is an interreligious dialogue which aims at learning from the others. Knowing from the other is one of the healthy ways that promote integral human development, and this development brings peaceful coexistence and harmony that can be experienced by all (Yoshihara, 2008).

Dialogue brings people of other religions to relate in their day to day activities regardless of their religious affiliation and promotes an amicable relationship. The walls that had existed between the two nations have become a barrier to social interaction, which could create involvement of non-elite participants in the inter-religious dialogue at the grass roots level. The non-elite involvement or participation in interreligious dialogue is necessary to accommodate the challenge of pluralistic society. And without the process of social interaction in everyday activity, it would be difficult to arrive at what we call a dialogue of life. Activities that engage people together can be seen in the life experience of living together with members of religious groups celebrating festivals and wedding ceremony as well as operating an (engaging) business with other religious communities. Even in a time of community felt needs like praying for rain in the event of drought and calling for security for the good of all (Sandi, 2014).

1.3. Dialogue of Life in Sudan and South Sudan

For the purposes of attaining peaceful living, Pope Benedict XVI (2006) remarked that "Inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims cannot be reduced to an optional extra. It is, in fact, a vital necessity, on which in large measure our future depends." And in response 137 Muslim scholars added that "Muslims and Christians together make up over half the world's population. Without peace and justice between these two religious communities, there can be no meaningful peace in the world. The future of the world depends on peace between Muslims and Christians" (Coistine, 2006).

Christianity existed in Sudan and South Sudan as early as the 2nd century and the Arabs invaded Sudan in the 8th century and mostly completed in the 16th century through military conquest and religious conversion (wiki, 2014). Hence, interreligious dialogue shows the accommodation and acceptance of Sudan and South Sudanese Muslims towards the non-Sudanese communities as part of the Sudanese population. Humanly speaking one cannot forget to acknowledge the readiness of living together with people of different religions- such as South Sudan Muslims, Chinese-Buddhist, and Indian-Hindus. There are also other dominant indigenous communities of African traditional religions.

To maintain peaceful coexistence in Sudan has remained a great challenge to date especially the two main religions, which could have set a better example. The international community is aware of the issues in Sudan and South Sudan, but it has become so complex that dealing with inter-religious issues because the inter-religious issues are no longer dealing with theological problems; rather it is related more to the problem of living together and social interaction. Shahrn (2008) as cited by Sintang (2012) pointed out that inter-religious issues pertaining to the problem of living together have dealt with the issue of religious worship, conversion to either enter or leave any particular religion.

According to Walters (2007), one of the burning issues affecting Christian-Muslim relation is when the government sides with the dominant religion, which has become the ruling party, in terms of control of land to build; on Muslim places of worship and the allocation of land for non-Muslim for the construction of Churches. The Sudan government has made it clear that it would no longer issue licenses for building Churches and some of the Christian Churches have been turned into schools, bakeries and health centers in favor of the Muslim community. The government maintains that Islam is the official religion of the country and the religion of the majority, but this statement does not suggest where the minority could live since they are part and partial of the same nation.

According to Chandra (2010), as cited by Sintang (2012), if a particular government fails to ensure easy and harmonious relations among the diverse religions in a nation, it is unlikely that the same government would guarantee peace and harmony for its citizens. Sudan and South Sudan has other minority religions, which include African traditional religion, the Hindu, and animist, but their presence and freedom to practice their beliefs are not much recognized. And if only they could be allowed to practice freely, there could be dialogue at the grass root level that can be a step to reach the goal because dialogue of life plays a major role in building bridges between people from diverse religious backgrounds. Maiese (2003) affirms that dialogue of life is a real dialogue, which encourages communities to participants through daily life interactions and activities whether at various levels of individual, family, neighborhood, friendship.

1.4. *The Phenomena of Dialogue of life in Sudan and South Sudan*

In South Sudan, the experience or usage of the word dialogue of life is not yet common, though there are continues efforts made by the international communities to restore peace and harmony among the Sudanese people. However, the day to day interaction between Muslims and Christians is still there on the basis of business and social matters in terms of marriage and what have you. Sudan and South Sudan were under the leadership of the British regime and after the independence in 1956; Muslims and Christians could meet frequently and meet in shared activities to the grass root level in an informal manner. Although the coexistence of Sudan and South Sudanese religions especially Islam, African traditional religion and others began several centuries ago, it was an informal dialogue among the different groups of people within the various communities and they did not yet recognize the religious meaning of dialogue of life.

Because of intermarriage, the Muslim converts were not allowed to associate with their relatives openly. On the contrary, Christian converts were freer to live either in the North or the South especially those who are soldiers. They are willing to live together unlike the Muslims who believe that they cannot marry non-Muslims unless they convert to Islam.

The long life experience of Christian converts living together with their family of origin shows that the dialogue of life can be a mechanism to clarify any misunderstanding that could arise after converting to Islam. However, most of such relationship is all based on mixed marriage, which Christians are conditioned because of the war situation (Badri, 2004).

2. Significance of I Dialogue of Life

Dialogue of life is significant to Sudan and South Sudan because the citizens could share many institutions that are neutral to any religious affiliation and represent the people nationwide, for example, parent-teacher associations in schools, youth groups and sport clubs, health services, residential associations, cultural heritage, birth and marriage rights just to mention but a few. According to Masiese (2003), the dialogue of life is significance in the sense that Christians and Muslims living together could take the advantage to celebrate what they have in common as well as understanding their differences. Muslims and Christians could promote a dialogue of life as a mechanism for social interaction in daily life activities in the diverse Sudanese and South Sudanese communities; it would gradually enhance mutual understanding and encourage people to be more graceful in their relations with others. This is affirmed by Osman (2008) as cited by Sintang (2012), who noted that it is through the process of dialogue of life, that people will be equipped with the ability of cultural literacy, develop their ability to appreciate and manage religious diversity in multicultural society. He further added that this new cultural literacy is concerned with our capacity to learn about spiritual traditions other than our own, to know commonalities that bind all religions together and differences that set them apart. Sudan is blessed with several ethnic groups and this could serve as an added advantage for people to interact and appreciate cultural diversity and have the right attitudes toward both commonalities and differences.

2.1. *Motives for Dialogue of Life*

The main motive of dialogue is the attainment of a lasting peace, but it is a two-way process involving at least two individuals, two groups, two ideologies, or two whatever. It is a way of engaging “the other.” The purpose of an interreligious dialogue and the goal that is sought depend on how the persons concerned view religion their own and others. Dialogue should not be used for coercion purposes or a hidden agenda and many approaches to religious diversity are possible; four models are perhaps most common: replacement, fulfillment, mutuality, and acceptance (Tyagananda, 2011).

- The replacement model: This refers to one side of thinking, the mentality that there is only one true religion and all others are a corrupted part of religion or false. The motives behind this are to replace the false religions with the one true religion, for example in Sudan, Muslims regard Christians as pagans or Qufar (idol worshippers) and they must convert to their own.
- The fulfillment model: This refers to those people who believe that other religions have some little truth but seeking a specified purpose. The understanding is that the followers of other religions are vulnerable and can eventually be forced to give up and join the dominant group otherwise they will be deprived of God's abundant blessing.
- The mutuality model acknowledges other religions with the hope that they can share what binds them together as equal partners. This model encourages the dialogic approach though with diverse agendas or shades. Most of the shades may not necessarily address religious issues, but it refers to the social or intellectual level of engagement.
- The acceptance model acknowledges other religions and therefore gives room for dialogue. It allows the freedom of religious practices and paves the way to spiritual unity without reducing the position of the other as per as diversity is concerned. It also encourages the growth of all and the opportunity to grow.

2.2. *Dialogue in Daily Life*

According to Tyagananda (2011), religious multiplicity has been in existence throughout humanity and dialogue of life can only have an impact when people of different religions come together and interact in terms of social encounter. Muslims are well known in Sudan for being business men and it was through that interaction that they experienced their religiously, and socially, politically, or sexually—come together; it is natural for them to talk about and share their interests, outlooks, and beliefs with others. That is how dialogue in its most basic form occurs in daily life. When the people involved belong to different religions, the dialogue becomes interreligious.

Besides the personal contacts of individuals, dialogue can also take place through letters and emails, for example, essays and books, then followed by responses and counter-responses. That is how dialogue can occur both in real time and spread over days, years, even centuries. Dialogue is more central through the exchange of ideas; it can also be a religious activity when done by those who take

religion seriously. However, it is of paramount importance to examine the various motives for dialogue, the conditions for a genuine dialogue, and its benefits.

In most of the secondary schools, colleges and universities in both Sudan and South Sudan, students participate in a writing competition and are encouraged to win scholarships. In addition, in such programs, students share their talents and learn from the cultures of the other: both Muslims and Christian orientation and backgrounds. Hence, I agree with Yoshihara (2008:5), who noted that "dialogue empower students by the relationship of trust and sense of autonomy that develops with their teachers through dialogue journal." Such initiatives are important in bringing people of different religious backgrounds together, hence dialogue of life (Badri, 2004).

2.3. Conditions for a Meaningful Dialogue of Life

According to Tyyagananda (2011), dialogue that reflects reality and accepts others as equal partners are categorized into four main conditions namely; the partners involved should be able to have something new and accept to learn from one another without looking into the negative parts of the other. Secondly, those involved should not expect something in return but demonstrate the spirit of respect, care, attention, and understanding. The third condition has no room for premeditated conditions, rather choose to come to the open either to agree or disagree provided that the truth is exposed without prejudice. All issues must be taken seriously and at all levels. The fourth and final condition looks for the cause of tension and what can be shared in common. It does not encourage any monopoly of ideas, be it religious symbols or rituals. It also encourages freedom of expression and respect for opinions that bring meaningful solution.

2.4. Benefits of a Successful Dialogue of Life

Any dialogue that is considered successful is a result of mutual understanding: it removes mistrust, brings collaboration, unity, social harmony and genuine peace. Another benefit is the recognition of the uniqueness of the other religion, its norms that promote religious values and enrichment of the other's religious consciousness. Interreligious dialogue gives a deeper and better understanding of the other's religion of our own religion. It provides the avenues to education and encourages spiritual discernment to understand the experience of God's love for humanity (Tyagananda, 2011).

2.4.1. Urgency of Dialogue of Life

According to Knestout (2012), dialogue should be taken as important urgent because the dialogue is an obvious fact of modern life. It must be a priority and be focused on the building and maintaining of relationships before any serious conversation. good interpersonal relations amongst leaders produces tangible fruits not only among those in a formal dialogue, but also for ordinary faithful Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists and Jews.

Among human beings as agents engaging in an exchange of truth that will shape their understanding of the other and, perhaps, determine our actions. Dialogue requires, therefore, the preparedness to present oneself as defenseless to another. One must choose to disclose oneself, one's "truth," to another in the hope that what is shared will be received with welcome, with care, with the feeling of safety (Sandi, 2014).

Engaging in dialogue is in fact commanded by God. Therefore, we struggle to build a space for authentic dialogue in our families and in our friendships, but also, and especially, in the public square with the other, the stranger and the person of a different faith tradition. Dialogue is the key not only to bringing people from our own traditions closer to one another and to those "outside" our particular group, but also, and especially, to opening up the realm of grace, which alone brings healing and understanding, creativity and fruitfulness (Tauran, 2008).

Our choice to engage in genuine dialogue is a sign of our collaboration with God's grace to bring about such restorative, and so the dialogue is, to be sure, the key to making a space for God to bring about ever greater healing in the world.

The concept of mindfulness and thoughtfulness is that they make possible a kind of "authentic recognition" of the, they manifest in me, the listener, a real commitment to the other, a commitment to providing an avenue in which one can unveil oneself. In disclosing oneself, you are therefore showing that your innate self-respect or worth, which Christians believe is an expression of the existence of God and therefore commands esteem and dedication from me.

2.4.2. Understanding Differences

According to Knestout (2012), the dialogue in many ways presupposes difference (personal, spiritual, etc.) and these differences become the occasion for dialogue as well as the source of the matters addressed in dialogue. Recognition of difference is tied to our own identity and integrity as a distinct human person. What carries weight in any process for genuine dialogue is the aptitude to comprehend our variances, which entails the prior personality of being responsive. One cannot understand difference without listening and listening well. Listening, therefore, has the prospective to produce wonderful fruits in dialogue – not least of which is the fruit of trust.

Willingness to listen is a sacred gift that leads to the goal of dialogue, namely, a deeper communion that has the potential to emerge in a space of trust. When one listens well to another, that is, listens with real compassion and attentiveness, then there is the possibility of trust. When there is trust, there is the potential for friendship. When there is friendship, there can be an honest discussion of differences. And, frankly, it should be our goal to reach this point of the dialogue. Each of us holds his or her faith tradition to be the trustworthy revelation of God and truth for all humanity.

True dialogue, as I have tried to describe it from my own faith tradition, involves the prior disposition of listening, which leads to trust, which develops in a relationship. This process makes possible, an understanding of differences that does not lead to contention and disharmony.

3. Risks in Interreligious Dialogue

The followers of Christ have ever witnessed some challenges that made others to commit the sin of apostasy, especially in a radically secularized world. Christians are obliged to watch and evaluate the immediate enemies that are giving them some threats. Much as the teaching of the Catholic churches emphasizes on dialogue, Christians need to have some knowledge of whom they are dealing with and understand the stand of the other who are not ready for dialogue (Szabolcs, 2014)

3.1. Aims and levels of Encounter with non-Christians

Pope Paul VI in his encyclical entitled *Ecclesiam Suam* (ES, issued in 1964) regards dialogue as a method that exercises the mission of the Church in the modern world. The main purpose of dialogue is to fill all the various forms of the Church's activities especially the presence of the pastoral agents, Dialogue permeates and characterizes all the different forms of ecclesial activity: presence, proclamation, inculturation and the witness of life. It involves the strengthening of the Christians in an effort to get rid of sin and try to contribute to solving the practical problems that affect the relationship with non-Christians in order to bring about cooperation in promoting the consciousness and perfection of the mission (Szabolcs, 2014)

3.2. What is at Stake?

In dealing with interreligious dialogue, the approach of initiating a dialogue may vary from place to place, hence putting life at a stake. There were many theories that were developed by the ecumenical movements and others were not all that practical and in some other places, it was effective in as far as human thought is concerned. The theory of dialogue developed in the ecumenical movement has reached a unique effectiveness, which can also be meaningful for other fields of human thought. The methodology of interreligious dialogue seems to have been more explained than the theory of interdenominational dialogue. The literature in the field of science goes deeper in interreligious dialogue than the ecumenical dialogue (Sandi, 2014).

Sudan and South Sudan is predominantly Muslims right from the social setting to the government body itself. All key positions in the government are occupied by Muslims in order to propagate Islam in the country. The first fear is the danger that is the minority in the system; some may compromise the distinctiveness of the Christian religion and borrow some elements that can easily water down the Christian values. For example, women in Muslim countries are not given the freedom to express themselves in public and play any role in decision making, and Sudan being an Islamic country is not exceptional. They lose the importance of engaging in dialogue because they are reduced to be in charge of domestic issues other than their religion. Decisions are made by men on behalf of all and in most cases in favor of men. Thus, the role of dialogue in as far as gender is concerned is limited and bias in both Sudan and South Sudan. The risk here is that Christian minority may easily be absorbed into the Muslim culture and spirituality where they are conditioned to be in seclusion or isolation (Badri, 2004).

3.3. Classical Fears in General

Muslims have some general objectives that tend to ignore interreligious dialogue and four of them are as follows;

- i) According to the Islamic culture, interreligious dialogue is not appropriate to the adherents of Islam to dialogue with Christians because it has some hidden agendas: hence Muslims must not listen to pagans.
- ii) They may not accept any dialogue with non-Muslims because it would bring about controversies and remind them of the disagreements for them to defend Islam against attack.
- iii) There may be some Muslim fundamentalists who normally see dialogue as a way of compromising and betraying the truth.
- vi) The fourth is that others may see dialogue as a way of evangelizing them since they believe that the only genuine religion is Islam. Thus in terms of engaging in dialogue, it is very important to be transparent and has clear motives that may not render other suspicious. However, both Christians and Muslims blame each other; Christians are "obstructed by the false claim that the ecumenical movement promote syncretism by means of dialogue, and on the Muslim side, by the base assertion that the Christians of today do not follow the simple religion of Jesus, but a corrupt version of it" (Slop, 1976:69 as cited by Pratt, 2010:8).

3.4. Proselytism vs Evangelization

These are two main contesting issues that both Christians and Muslims accuse themselves of. Muslims in Sudan and South Sudan take advantage of the poverty and vulnerability of the Christians by operating on charitable activities that attract the neediest and compromise their faith. On the other hand Christians also, especially the missionaries use material things, as a means of evangelization through their means was not to justify the end. In addition, not long ago the Vatican has to respond to such as allegation and noted that; the Church "grows by attracting others" and what does this is our witness, that "we lead others to Jesus with our words and our lives." Moreover, although he stresses the importance of witnessing with our lives, he notes that "words come"—the gospel must be preached by word *and not just* by action. So, he's not unconcerned with Church growth. He wants it to happen, but he says that proselytization is not the way this is to be accomplished (Pratt, 2010).

3.4.1. Risk in our Ministry

There are many risks that Christians as individuals or as groups can encounter and we need to distinguish among three eminent dangers, which have been often cited by persons opposing or questioning the process or theory of dialogue and some of these includes three classical fears namely; syncretism, seeking the truth and the third is language and communication (Tauran, 2008).

3.4.2. Syncretism

Syncretism is the combination of different systems or religious beliefs and practices; hence it is one of the fears that could easily contribute to specific obstacles in interreligious dialogue. Syncretism is a conscious or unconscious human attempt to create a new religion, composed of practices that are taken from other religions. The conscious acceptance of other practices to one's faith whether it is worthy and profound from the official teaching of other religions. The amalgamation under the label of a new religion, the meta-religion or global spirituality would be interrogative aims for interreligious dialogue.

The two extremes of harmony-thinking and conflict-thinking are both syncretism and the act of fundamentalism. Fundamentalism in a pre-modern way severely shortens the interpretation of texts and facts, and judges negatively everything that does not enter into one's own narrow frame of set values and ideas; thus it is at the same time remorseful and hostile (Tauran, 2008).

3.4.3. Seeking the Truth is a Dialogue of Life

The truth is God himself and as Christians, we may discover the face and faith of God in others when we engage and encounter face-to-face their spirituality, their way of thinking, morality, and quality of life. Our faith tells us that the wholeness of life and the well-being of a person are intimately related to the well-being of all. Truth is understood as a mystery, transcending all that humans can grasp. In addition, since there is practically no end to what can be learned, there can be no meaningful claim to the exclusive possession of truth (Sandi, 2014).

According to Samartha (1988), *phrased beautifully his insight on exclusivity: "An exclusive claim is like a bit of rock in a handful of peanuts: it may break a few teeth, but will never provide nourishment to the body". Religion is all a way of life, and not an argumentative system. Attitudes and conduct in this respect are more important than beliefs. True religion or religious truth should be defined in terms of compassion, nonviolence, self-giving, universal love and the rejection of material acquisition since peace in the inner self and peace in the universe are closely interrelated goals* (Griffiths, 1994 as cited by Szabolcs, 2014).

3.4.4. Language and Communication

According to Horstjord (2013:4), most act theory assumes or concludes that conventions are at the heart of interaction through language. Therefore "the flouting of conventions is a central part of communication, and much power is played out in manipulating and even seeking to change conventions. This understanding, I suggest, is useful for the analysis of religious language as well as the language of interreligious dialogue." Language plays a big role in culture and society, and both Sudan and South Sudan are predominantly Arabic speaking and Arabic is being spoken by all, including the illiterate. Hence the risk factor here could come from the basis of communication that influences and manipulate a situation at the interest of the other. Most religious programs are in Arabic and Islamic cultural activities dominate the local media.

3.5. Other Forms of Risks

According to Mvumbi (2009), there is a risk of conversion. Participants may find themselves transformed by the interfaith encounter. He added that people should take care of the possibility of falling to a risk or get an opportunity while engaging into interreligious dialogue.

They can pervert religion by putting it at the service of evil designs. Religious fanaticism, for example, is a perversion of religion, as is the justification of terrorism in the name of religious values. Religious leaders must have the courage to condemn and to excise; these "rumors" and some of the risks that Christians may encounter include the following:

- The lack of knowledge or content of other religions,
- Avoidance of encounter with members of other religions
- Discretion of other believers
- The acts of violence or terrorism perpetrated in the name of a religion

4. Recommendations

Freedom of religion means much more than to have a Church or a Mosque at their disposal. Spiritual identity: to know in whom and in what one believes. Consider the other not as a rival, but as a seeker of God; agree to speak of what separates us and of the values that unite us. Avoid doctrinal debates, strive to have knowledge of the other; vigilance to avoid symbols considered "sacred" from being made the object of public derision. Take part in public dialogue through culture (of schools, universities) and through political and social responsibilities in which believers must be models. Christian and Muslims must not hesitate to defend the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the family, and they must be peacemakers and teach the pedagogy of peace in the family, in the church and mosque, at school and at the university. The principle of freedom of conscience and of religion; reciprocity with regard to places of worship.

Political leaders need to protect and encourage the road towards interreligious dialogue, both leaders in Sudan and South Sudan need to take the lead in uniting both Christians and Muslims in terms of education and charitable activities in order to break the walls of intolerance. Both Muslims and Christians should cultivate mutual knowledge, respect, and collaboration with one another. They

should encourage, coordinate, reciprocate the study of both religions, and promote training of people destined for interreligious dialogue.

5. Conclusion

Dialogue of life is not optional because it is the basis for the genuine recognition of human right, dignity and integral development. In the side of faith, the overall goal of interreligious dialogue is to achieve peace and harmony in society; and dialogue involves people's healthy relationship. In addition, at the process of involving into such dialogue, both advantages and risks can hardly be avoided. It is therefore paramount to take into account that in any situation where a human being is involved and especially in Sudan and South Sudan in terms of religion, there are dangers that must not be taken for granted. Much as the world and the church encourage dialogue, others see it negatively as a process of evangelization or conversion into other religion. Each religion has its own identity, but this identity should enable the members of each religious group to take the religion of the other into consideration because all those in search of God have equal dignity. Syncretism, coercion, fundamentalism, terrorism, violence, and discretion of Christians by Muslims are very high in Sudan and South Sudan.

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