The Problem of Christianity in Muslim Perspective: Implications for Christian Mission

David A. Kerr

Introduction

Even a cursory reading of the voluminous Christian missionary literature dealing with evangelism among Muslims is sufficient to reveal how the subject—whether it be Muslims as individuals, their religious doctrines and practice, or their societies and cultures—is generally perceived in terms of “problem,” and notoriously one of the most difficult problems besetting Christian evangelism. The problem has been analyzed under a variety of categories including sociological, anthropological, cultural, ideological, and less frequently theological, as may be deduced from Lyle Vander Werff’s well-documented *Christian Mission to Muslims: The Record.* This valuable study does not claim to be fully comprehensive, since, as its subtitle clarifies, its concern is with “Anglican and Reformed Approaches in India and the Near East, 1800–1938,” and the author himself states in conclusion that “discussion surely shall continue as long as the church’s task remains unfinished.”

Any summary of developments over the past four decades would have to include, from Western Protestant circles, the critical debate between Hendrik Kraemer and Kenneth Cragg over their theological understandings of Christian evangelism in general and evangelical attitudes toward Islam in particular. They can be seen broadly to delineate the lines of approach in which, with some qualification, we could locate respectively the recent North American Conference on the Evangelization of Muslims (Colorado Springs, 1978) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) conference on “Christian Presence and Witness in Relation to Muslim Neighbours” (Mombasa, 1979). Both these conferences tried to take serious account of the views of Christians from churches that are situated within what could be described as “the traditional world of Islam” where opinions are no less diverse than in the West. Attention would have to be given to the ways the Catholic church has absorbed something of the thought of Louis Massignon as distilled by his scholar-priest disciples whose influence in Vatican Council II helped to produce the watershed declarations about Islam in *Nostra Aetate* and its sequels. The voices of the Orthodox churches in the Middle East, indigenous to areas commonly identified as the “heartland” of the Muslim world, have begun to be heard in Western missionary circles, particularly through the WCC, and most interestingly in this writer’s opinion through the writings of Bishop Georges Khodr of Mount Lebanon. Moreover, we would have to grapple with the mass of dialogue literature published over the last ten years, seeking to penetrate through the frequent generalization to appreciate, by an exercise of the imagination, the existential reality of Christian–Muslim debate that lies behind.

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The list of references to individual writers and conference statements could be increased, but in nearly all of them the "problematic" casting of Islam remains, explicitly or implicitly, and it is then used either as the basis of an appeal for Christian confrontation or as the stimulus for a hopeful attempt to transmute "problem,” negatively construed, into "challenge" creatively experienced in human terms. Elements of both frequently intermingle as demonstrated most clearly in the "problem" and to develop a critique of Christianity/Christendom in relation to their ongoing critique of Islam, with the intellectual rigor and humility of spirit that such an exercise demands. This is not to ignore the searching criticisms in recent years by Christians of the Western acculturation of Christianity and attendant problems in terms of world Christianity, but to emphasize that it is a different, though certainly related, issue. To express it another way by extending Pauline language, it is the challenge "to be a Muslim to Muslims" for the sake of Christ, with all that that implies of seeing Christianity through Muslim eyes, not impetuously dismissing the image as mistaken or doctrinaire, but seriously wrestling with it as historically the longest-sustained critique of Christianity (excepting Jewish critique on a narrower and more discreet front), which has become more, not less important in the latter part of the twentieth century.

The need for such perspective is not unrecognized in contemporary Christian writing, particularly in the statements issuing from dialogue conferences that repeatedly call for Christians to manifest a spirit of repentance in their relations with Muslims. What is lacking, however, are well-researched studies of how modern Muslims view Christianity and Christians, and analysis of how this bears upon Christian understanding of evangelism in the context of Islam as we move toward the twenty-first century.

This essay is a faltering attempt to initiate such discussion by looking at "the problem of Christianity in Muslim perspective," though under the inevitable handicap of the fact that the author is not himself Muslim, but Christian. Problematical as this is in itself (as most Muslims would be quick to point out), it is not a total disqualification, since the paper is written against the background of the author's several years of discussion of this and related issues with Muslims in the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, England—the Study Centre being unique as a place where Christians and Muslims work together in the study of Islam and Christianity in obedience to their respective faiths ... in preparation for their varied vocations." Moreover, the Study Centre has, through one of its students, conducted some reasonably scientific research on the image of Christian life among a cross-section of the approximately 40,000 to 50,000 Muslims resident in Birmingham since the 1950s, and another is currently analyzing the perception of Christianity as evidenced in the writings of contemporary Egyptian Muslim authors since 1950. Some of the tentative findings of these pieces of unpublished research will be included in this paper, not as a basis for generalizations but as concrete illustrations of the main points that the author feels bound to make as a result of his own discussions with Muslims in and from different parts of the world.

Image of Christian Life among Muslim Residents in Birmingham

The Birmingham survey makes it abundantly clear that the Muslim population has relatively little understanding of Christianity as the faith of contemporary Christians, as distinct from their inherited notion of Christian beliefs on the basis of what is said in the Qur'an and Muslim tradition. Fifteen percent of the sample of 100 persons admitted to knowing nothing at all. Relatively the best informed were the adolescents and young adults up to the age of thirty (ca. 48 percent). Most of the "young generation" in this age bracket would either have been born in Birmingham or have been brought to the city by immigrant parents at an early enough age for them to have had sufficient time and experience to feel themselves reasonably "at home" in, and familiar with, British society. Their answers indicate that they have a rather general acquaintance with Christianity, principally through personal contact with Christians and Christian ideas in the situation of school (in the United Kingdom religious instruction is a statutory part of school curricula), college, or at work. Very few of them have ever read any part of the Bible, though a considerable number (more males than females) admitted to having attended a church service or having seen some form of Christian worship broadcast on television. They were not questioned closely on their knowledge of Christian doctrine, though it emerged that most were of the opinion that Christians worship the One God through Jesus Christ (as distinct from worshiping Jesus as God) and that there is a lot to share as religions between Christianity and Islam. The older their age, however, the greater their apparent disillusionment with Christians, whom many regarded as extremely lax in the practice of their religion, to the point of its having no appreciable influence on their lives. Most saw little evidence of positive goodwill toward them from the Christian population, though a minority registered good experiences; and not surprisingly therefore those with young families saw no reason to encourage their children to look for personal contacts with Christians.

The bracket of early-middle-aged people (ages thirty to forty), mainly parents of reasonable educational background, also showed no more than a vague knowledge of Christianity, but included an approximate balance between those who felt that contact with Christians is desirable and those who did not. A narrow majority of this age group reckoned that few Christians in Birmingham take their religion seriously, and since most of them seemed to think that there is no evidence of an increase of Christian goodwill toward them, they were not keen to encourage their children to entertain personal relations with Christians. However, an almost equal number admitted to having attended or seen some form of Christian worship, and based their understanding of Christianity as much on their experience of meeting individual Christians as upon what the Qur'an and Muslim tradition have to say. More than half of this age group expressed the view that since Christians, like Muslims, worship the One God, there is a large measure of common ground between the two religions, but against this must be balanced the fact that just less than half tended to think that, though this should be the case, it is not so in reality. This reflects the opinion that Christianity can be known in its authentic character only from the Qur'an, not from the devout practice of Christians, particularly when they live in a society in which scant regard is given to fidelity to religious creed and practice.

This last opinion was broadly held by the "older generation" (aged fifty-plus) who showed clear evidence of retaining the traditional attitudes of their places of origin in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India (whence most of the Muslim immigrants in Birmingham have come), and for whom Christianity as represented in the West is far removed from what they believe it ought to be on the basis...
of what they read in the Qur'an. None of those questioned had ever read the Bible and their contact with Christians was far less than we have seen to be the case with the younger age groups—and presumably it was nonexistent in their home countries. Nor did most of them see any point in encouraging their children to develop contacts with Christians.

Impossible as it is to generalize from the statistical evidence of the Birmingham survey, because of the limited size of the sample and because they are living as a Muslim minority in the West, the foregoing remarks provide us with a concrete illustration of what several missionary writers have deplored—namely, the neglect of the churches in extending friendship to Muslims and making the Christian faith known to them, accessible at least to their comprehension if not necessarily accepted by many in personal confession. The criticism often made to the author by Muslim friends is that most Western Christians seem to care little for their own faith, and therefore can have little care for the faiths of others—an argument that often seems to express their negative evaluation of “secularism” with which contemporary Western Christianity, as they see it, is closely related.

We shall return to this point, but for the time being let us see how the Birmingham survey also illustrates an observation made by Wilfred Cantwell Smith that “Muslims have religious convictions for genuinely imagining that they know real Christianity better than do Christians themselves and therefore are not intellectually interested in what appears to them to be pseudo Christ-

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Quranic Patterns of “Affirmation/Rejection” of Christianity

It is beyond the scope of this paper to engage in a comprehensive discussion of the complex and controversial factors of Quranic affirmation/rejection of Christian beliefs, but the following tabulation is offered as a rough guide, the usefulness of which lies not in its scholarly accuracy but in the fact that it is based substantially upon a scheme devised by a Muslim member of the Study Centre in Birmingham.

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To state that Muslims have an inherited view of Christianity derived from the Qur’an, embodying a critical pattern of affirmation and rejection, is not to suggest that Muslim attitudes to Christianity are monolithic, or that all Muslims would express them schematically as in the tabulation above. The latter is no more than an approximate guide to some of the Quranic data, and suggests the reason why there are many more Muslims who claim to know Christianity than there are Christians who would claim to know Islam. The “pattern of affirmation” indicates why, for example, as many as 79 percent of the Muslims in the Birmingham survey expressed the view that Islam and Christianity share much in common. The Birmingham survey also shows how effectively the “pattern of rejection” operates at the same time, particularly among adult Muslims whose firsthand encounter with Christians in the city has not apparently been such as to cause them seriously to question the Quranic data. This generally corroborates Irene West’s observation in her address to the 1969 Asmara conference on “The Christian Faith and the Contemporary Middle Eastern World” that “Muslims [can] say on the one hand, as did Khuda Baksh, that there is no essential difference between Islam and Christianity and take no intellectual interest in Christian doctrines, and on the other . . . refute on every occasion what they consider to be pseudo-Christianity.”

These two suggested patterns of Muslims’ inherited attitudes...
toward Christianity need to be considered in relation to the variables of the historical, sociocultural, and moral contexts of Muslim encounter with existential Christianity in order that their complex interaction be properly understood. Before doing so, however, we may conclude this part of the paper by observing that “the problem of Christianity in Muslim perspective” lies essentially in the Quranic view that historical Christianity has deviated in its doctrines and religious practices from what the Qur’an attests to have been the authentic preaching of Jesus. To put the point more bluntly, there are Quranic reasons why Muslims have traditionally held that Christians, originally entrusted with the true gospel (injil), which reaffirmed the Torah (with certain legal amendments, Q. 3. 44), no longer possess it authentically.

This is usually explained in terms of “corruption” (tahrif) on the basis of several verses of the Qur’an which allege either willful or unwitting abuse of the original gospel by early generations of Christians, either by literal falsification of the text (tahrif lafzī) or by mistaken exegesis (tahrif ma’anawi). Historical “proofs” of such corruption, mentioned by the Qur’an itself, are the disunity of Christians “who forgot part of that whereof they were admonished” (Q. 112), and Christian rejection of Muhammad as the Messenger of God and Seal of the Prophets (Q. 33. 40), despite the alleged testimony to him in the original gospel from which the Qur’an quotes Jesus as saying: “O Children of Israel, I am the Messenger of God to you, confirming that which was revealed before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a Messenger who cometh after me, whose name is Ahmad” (Q. 61. 6)—the word “Ahmad” (‘āhmād) being derived from the same Arabic root as the word “Muhammad,” meaning “praised one” (h-m-d). Both these points have regularly been put to the present author by Muslim acquaintances in criticism of contemporary Christianity, usually in the form of questions such as: Why do Christians disagree so much? and, Why can’t Christians accept the prophethood of Jesus who foretold his mission? These questions could be said to be “loaded” in the sense that they often represent a subtle transition from the pattern of affirmation to the pattern of rejection, and convey an underlying concern for the correction of what are seen to be the errors of historical Christianity due to its alleged deviation from the teaching of Jesus.

Mention should be made at this point of the controversial Gospel of Barnabas, which Muslims of polemical disposition frequently maintain to be the most accurate extant record of the original gospel. Needless to say, the document that such Muslims produce (which is completely different from the apocryphal epistle attributed to Barnabas in the Christian tradition) coheres closely to the Quranic data, so much so that its Christian critics argue that it must be a post-Quranic forgery which, for reasons fully explained by Jan Slomp in his critical study, should be attributed to a sixteenth-century Spanish convert to Islam. Discussing the importance of this book, Jan Slomp writes elsewhere:

For almost four centuries the dispute or dialogue between Muslims and Christians has been based on . . . convictions about the Bible and the Holy Qur’an respectively. For some, since 1908, the date of the first Arabic and Urdu translations of the Gospel of Barnabas, this position seems to have changed. Several Muslim writers . . . keep insisting that Christians should take this so-called gospel seriously. Here lies my dilemma. Taking it seriously would mean for me not taking our Christian tradition seriously . . . . Secondly, my hesitation to take it seriously is prompted by the experience that this so-called gospel has proved to be more a hindrance than a help in Muslim-Christian relations. Thirdly, in my opinion, scholarly research has proved absolutely that this “gospel” is a fake. This opinion is also held by a number of Muslim scholars.

Variables

Muslim arguments about the alleged deviation of historical Christianity from its origins draw upon much more than a few verses of the Qur’an. These form the basis of the criticism, but the Quranic data need to be explicated in terms of history, moral, and ethical behavior, and the doctrinal developments of Christian creeds. These represent, in the author’s opinion, the most important variables in the interaction of the affirmation/rejection factors of the Quranic data, and can be early documented from the traditions of Muslim writing about Christianity.

a) History

In terms of historical explanation, the alleged deviation of Christianity is closely related in Muslim argumentation to its Western acculturation. This is clearly reflected in the researches of one of the doctoral students at the Study Centre in Birmingham who is analyzing the views of Egyptian Muslim writers on Christianity since 1950.21 Common to most of the books he examines is their authors’ assumption that historical Christianity is a Western religion; most of them make no more than scant reference to Christianity in its Egyptian form as represented by the approximately 5 million Coptic Christians living in Egypt, despite the fact that Coptic roots in that country long predate the arrival of Islam. Another Study Centre research student has discovered that a major modern Egyptian commentary on the Qur’an (Tafsir al-maniir by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridâ) contains but one reference to the Copts, the Quranic verses dealing with Christians otherwise being interpreted entirely by reference to Western Christianity, usually as explained in the writings of Protestant missionaries resident in Egypt.22

This observation is in no way intended to confirm the negative evaluation of the impact of the Oriental churches on Middle Eastern society, as is often made in the writings of Western missionaries, nor to reopen the debate about the strategy of Western missions in relation to the indigenous churches of the Middle East.23 For if we set these modern Egyptian Muslim writers within the broader historical sweep of Muslim writing about Christianity, it becomes clear that they are not simply overlooking Christianity on their own doorstep by concentrating on its Western form. Their assumption seems to be, rather, that since mainstream historical Christianity in its Pauline and conciliar forms embarked upon a Hellenistic development in the Greco-Roman (Gentile) world from the New Testament times, all that Christians accept as the canonically scriptural bases of their faith represents a departure from the Semitic culture of Jesus’ teaching. In this sense the word “Western” is not being used with its modern connotation of Euro-American, but in historical reference to the Greco-Roman world of the entire Mediterranean basin at the time of Christ. Jesus himself is seen to have taught in an Aramaic-Semitic context, but as a result of the missionary journeys of Paul and other apostles his simple teaching is seen to have been adulterated through compromise with the “metropolitan” Hellenistic culture with its admixture of mystery religions, paganism, and so forth.

The argument is succinctly expressed by the late-twentieth-century Muslim theologian ‘Abd al-Jabbâr (d. 1025), who wrote: “It was not the Romans who became Christian but Christianity which was Romanized.”24 Christianity is seen, therefore, in its biblical form to have adapted itself in creed and institution to the Hellenistic culture of the Greco-Roman empire. The process was consummated during the Constantinian era, but, with the later decline of the empire, mainstream Christianity itself retreated from the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean to become a “European” religion. The small pockets of Christianity that remained in

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the Middle East differ in that they are clearly not Western in the “European” sense, but are seen to be comparable in that their religion is Hellenistic in character as distinct from Islam, which represents, as it were, the “re-Semitism” of the Middle East. This was emphasized historically in the fact that the Middle Eastern Christian communities regarded themselves, and were treated, as separate entities under the provisions of the dhimmī laws and subsequently the millet systems; it is still evidenced by differences of cultural, social, and political orientations to which their Christian faith is held to have given rise.

The present writer fully appreciates that this line of argument, in the tradition of ‘Abd al-Jabbār, is dangerously oversimplified and raises as many questions as it purports to settle. To summarize it is not, of course, to endorse it uncritically, least of all in its cavalier treatment of the Eastern churches, but neither can it be impatiently dismissed, since in rather general terms it anticipates the modern scholarship of many Christian historians themselves. The point is that this is how Muslims usually do explain the history of Christianity, and why therefore they tend to treat it as “Western” religion in toto, from its biblical foundations (already considered in some sense to be a deviation from the teaching of Jesus), through its regional histories, up to the twentieth century. A modern expression of the classical argument may be found in the apologetic writing of the late-nineteenth-, early-twentieth-century Indian Muslim modernist Sayyid Ameer Ali.25

It should be emphasized at this juncture that, until relatively recently, Muslim interpretations of Christian history were essentially part of their apologetic tradition. Their purpose was to elucidate the Qur’ān for Muslims, in this case by providing a historical explanation of tahrīf—how they saw Christianity to have gone astray from the original teaching of Jesus. They seem not to have been at all concerned to convince Christians themselves of the allegedly deviant history of their religion; they wrote in Arabic and only rarely addressed themselves to Arabic-speaking Christians. Much of their writing reflects the medieval Muslim confidence that history had proved Islam to be in all matters superior to Christianity, thus vindicating the Quranic assertion that “You [Muslims] are the best community that hath been raised up for humankind. You enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency, and you believe in God. And if the People of the Book [i.e., Jews and Christians] had believed, it would have been better for them. Some of them are believers but most of them are evil-livers” (Q. 3, 110). Possessed of such confidence during the “golden age” of Islam, Muslims felt little need to upbraid Christianity in harsh terms, since they encountered it less in the form of a threat (even during the Crusades) and more as a curious deviation from the mean of Islam; it needed correction and would be corrected in God’s good time by the guidance of the Qur’ān, patiently demonstrated in civilization by Muslims who would “call unto the way of the Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way” (Q. 16, 125).

However, the line between apologetics and polemics is thinly drawn. In the sense of “attack,” polemical content and intent is never entirely absent from Muslim apologetic writing on Christianity, but it is noticeable that during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in particular the polemical type of Muslim approach to Christianity became more heavily pronounced, and more vitriolic in temper. The reasons for this lie in what Muslims experienced as the reversal of the proper course of history with the rise of European colonialism, which subjected nearly the entirety of European Christianity, which was seen to be part of the aberration of Western power. Particular anger was expressed against missionary Christianity, which was seen to be the religious wing of imperialism.

This is an oft-rehearsed criticism of modern Christianity over which Muslims have no monopoly, but it is this writer’s impression that it is frequently Muslims who have been and continue to be more outspokenly angry about this than people of other religious traditions whose societies were subject to Western colonial rule. This can perhaps be explained in terms of the community character of Islam—a religion that is very seriously committed to creating a righteous order for society as a whole, as well as in the lives of individual Muslims. “Muslim society” (for some, “Muslim statehood”) is a concrete concept for most Muslims, who trace it back to the Qur’ān and search for its “blueprint” in the shari‘ah (Quranically derived law), even though they admit that more often than not it has been elusive in practice. That the human control of Muslim destiny was snatched by the “Christian” West in the age of imperialism was, from a Muslim point of view, much more serious than simply an alien intrusion into individual matters of religion. Hence, for example, the British government’s colonial policy of noninterference in what it understood as religious matters, while often irritating to British missionary societies, assuaged Muslim indignation not one iota! European colonialism represented in their eyes a subversion of the foundations of society as a whole, which, through reform movements already underway in the late seventeenth century, was seeking to renew itself from within. The consequent resentment persuaded Muslim society in its totality and produced an anger at popular as well as intellectual levels to fuel polemical fires that have not yet burnt themselves out.

Within this general sense of indignation, two specific points are frequently mentioned by Muslims in criticism of Western Christianity as a focus of their resentment of the West in general. First, the misrepresentation of Islam in Christian writing and in popular Christian thinking. It is perhaps this point that wounds Muslims more acutely than any other, and it is most sharply felt over Christian attitudes to Muhammad. Given the love for the Prophet among the devout, and pride in his achievement among those for whom spiritual concerns may have less of a hold, it is not surprising that all Muslims feel insulted by the manner in which Christians over the centuries have defamed Muhammad in their own tradition of anti-Islamic polemical writing. Among this author’s Muslim acquaintances are some who, with difficulty, understand why Christians in general, given what they believe of Jesus Christ, do not accept Muhammad as “the Seal of the Prophets”; but none of them can understand—and why should they?—why Christians have indulged in rank slander of Muhammad as a person. This is but one example taken from the armory of Western Christian polemic writing against Islam, which began in Spain under Muslim rule, provided a religious propaganda for the Crusades, fueled popular Western stereotypes of Muslims, and up to the present time serves conveniently to create an image of Islam that can then be easily demolished by Christian invective.

Polemics breed polemics, and all who bear false witness should expect false witness to be borne unto them. This can be illustrated in the unhappy case of Karl Pfander’s polemical book entitled Mizān al-Haqq (The Balance of Truth), in which his attempts to refute Islam first create an image that Muslims themselves reject. Not surprisingly the book was answered in similar vein by an Indian Muslim, Sheikh Rahmatullah al-Hindi, under the title Izhār al-Haqq (The Demonstration of Truth), and this book in Arabic translation is still used as a reference work by
It is the view of this author that polemics reveal more about the person/society which produces them than about the object of the polemical attack. If readers of this paper feel that this observation is borne out in terms of Muslim polemical writing about Christianity, then we shall be the better disposed to take seriously the Muslim view that Christian polemical writing against Islam is part of the wider complex of the Western discipline of "Orientalism"—recently analyzed in a fascinating book of that name by Edward Said, who defines it as "a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient." As such it is the intellectual cement of imperialism, and since several Christian missionaries in the Muslim world have also been distinguished Orientalists, it is understandable that Muslims who have read their writings should see them to have been implicated, as missionaries, in the imperial adventure of the West.

This brings us to the second point of specific Muslim criticism of Western Christianity in connection with the imperial age: the charge of missions being a willing or unwilling vehicle of imperialism. Once again Muslims have written a great deal about this, usually in polemical style, which, true to type, prefers angry condemnation to documented analysis, and it is not the purpose of this paper to rehearse the arguments in their tedium. The point is to realize that this is how Western missions and missionary-created churches in Africa and Asia are seen by the majority of Muslims, as is made abundantly clear in the published record of the 1976 consultation of Muslims and Christians on the subject of "Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wah," organized by the International Review of Mission in Switzerland (Chambesy). While the Muslim participants in this consultation accepted that mission, in the sense of witnessing to Christ in word and action, is a fundamental duty for Christians, they heaped negative criticism upon what they termed the "abuses" of missionary practice, which were identified with colonialism in its historical and contemporary forms. Particularly grievous to the international group of Muslims present was the widespread Western Christian support of Israel (to quote an African Muslim participant: "In my view the most imperialistic radio programme in the world is the Radio Voice of the Gospel. It has a long history of pro-Zionism and has only moderated its view in light of recent political events in Africa"), and Christian activities in Indonesia (a Christian participant from Indonesia was told that his "Church in Indonesia may not be in league with the old imperial powers, but there is no doubt that it is being wholly and on a very large scale financed by funds which came from former colonial countries"). Christian participants several times protested that the issues of mission and colonialism/imperialism are being widely discussed throughout the Christian world today, often with radical conclusions that more than meet the criticisms Muslims themselves are making. But the Muslim convenor of the conference replied:

Let it be noted in passing that such Muslim criticisms of mission extend also to many of the contemporary efforts to promote Christian-Muslim dialogue, upon which the Muslim critic quoted above made the following comments:

I feel bound to say that the Roman Catholic statement is frank, forthright and clear, while the references in the WCC documents seem to be couched in a language which has little relevance to past and present realities and rather concentrates on hopes for the future. Furthermore, my worry is that the feedback from these documents to the Christian constituencies is very limited. The third thing that worries me is that the political dimensions of missionary involvement, of which we Muslims are very conscious—possibly over-conscious, I admit—is not sufficiently clear in these statements.

History as a variable factor influencing Muslim attitudes to Christianity could thus be said to have had a broadly negative impact over the last two centuries, and continues to do so. If this should be thought to be a somewhat academic point, let us not forget that it is often suggested that history is perceived to be a much more influential factor in traditional societies than may be the case in the West. New histories are, of course, in the making between Muslims and Christians in Africa and Asia, but there seems to be a good deal of evidence indicating that these are themselves effected by the larger and continually complex history of the encounter of Muslims in these regions with Christianity as a "Western religion."

b) Morality

The survey of Muslim attitudes toward Christianity in Birmingham demonstrates, as we have already seen, the degree to which Muslims tend to be skeptical of Christians' commitment to their faith. Insofar as this is so, it seems to confirm Muslims in their view of Christian deviancy and brings into operation the "pattern of rejection" in the Quranic data. Significant exceptions were registered in the survey where some Muslims spoke of their admiration of individual Christians, but 59 percent of the sample thought that "very few Christians practise their faith."

The use of the verb "practise" is here very important, for "praxis" in the sense of moral and ethical behavior is for Muslims the traditional criterion of faith. "Faith" (imān) in the Qur'ān is an active concept, which expresses itself through "good works" (sālihāt) or not at all, and for this reason Islamic religious thought has always preferred to concentrate upon the systematization of moral guidance through the šari'ah rather than upon "theology" in a more abstract sense. It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss how Muslims apply this criterion to themselves or to speculate as to their conclusions, though we may note in passing that at least two modern Christian missionary writers, Jens Christensen and Arne Rudvin, emphasize the degree of piety that they have encountered in Muslim acquaintances, considerably in excess of that normally encountered in Western Christians. Our point, rather, is to realize that it is from the application of this criterion to Christianity in the West that Muslims tend to draw their most negative conclusions.

Their criticism is straightforward and, though inclined to be overgeneralized, is not without its strength. Western society claims itself to be secular, and modern Christianity, in Muslim eyes, has acquiesced in the distinction between "church" and "state" on the basis of the scriptural command: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21, etc.). This passage is one of several frequently quoted by Muslim writers who charge Christians with having neglected the Torah, thereby transmuting their religion into an otherworldly panacea and subordinating the church in the temporal...
realm to human rather than divine law. Hence Western industrial and technological advance in modern times has produced a social development over which Christianity is seen to have had little if any influence. In this sense it has failed to provide moral tutelage in the interests of a just and balanced society, built upon divine revelation as exemplified in the lives of the prophets.

In the vacuum two abberations have arisen: *capitalism*, identified with egotistical greed, exploitation, and oppression by the individual; and *communism*, identified with atheistic greed, exploitation, and oppression by the state. Several modern Muslim writers, including Colonel Qadhafi, have expressed their critique along these lines, and recently it has figured in the propaganda behind the Iranian revolution where the emphasis has been upon the exploitative intrusion of Western power through vested interests in the Muslim world itself.

Evidence of the failure of Christianity in the West is further adduced from what many Muslims see to be the rampant moral permissiveness, which, they argue, is the inevitable consequence of secularism. The multitude of criticisms made on this issue can be grouped under three interrelated categories: the devaluation of the dignity of women through commercial exploitation of sex, resulting in the disintegration of the family of which the mother is the traditional pivot, resulting in juvenile delinquency (drugs, alcohol, etc.). These are all matters that gravely concern Muslims living in Britain, and the author remembers the occasion of a large day-conference of Muslims and Christians in the Midlands of England when, at the end of discussions on ‘the family,” the Muslim chairman concluded with words to this effect: "We look to the churches as allies in the struggle against secularism, but find only indecision.”

Similar concerns were expressed by Muslim participants at the 1976 Chambes (Switzerland) consultation on mission and *da’wah*, referred to above. They were generally of the mind that Christian missionaries have more than enough to do in their own countries without turning to the Muslim world where, given their Western upbringing, they are liable to do more harm than good. The point was lucidly made as follows:

One finds Christians ... to be more in sympathy with the situation where a Muslim can become secular or even communist rather than remain a practising Muslim. ... This makes the vast range of Christian mission in the Muslim world acquire a negative image. The Church is seen not as inviting people to the teaching of Jesus (the peace and blessings of God be upon him), but trying to subvert or seduce Muslims from practising Islam.

Continuing this same line of argument, another Muslim participant criticized Christian missions for being, in his view, instruments in the process of implanting secularist values into Muslim societies, particularly through their involvement in education, which he held specifically responsible for leading the Muslim educated elite away from their religious traditions, with the result that the new leadership which has emerged in the Muslim world during and after the colonial period lacks moral and religious commitment. Christian missions in the Muslim world have failed to convert Muslims to Christianity, but have succeeded in driving quite an important number of Muslims away from Islam towards secularism. The net result has been the loss of religious commitment and a decline in moral values and of a moral approach to life.

Once again these criticisms reveal at least as much about the Muslims who make them as they do about their attitudes to Christianity. The severest Muslim critics of the moral failure of Christianity in Western society are those who are sharply critical also of what they regard equally to be the ethical laxity of most modern Muslim societies where the *sharī'ah* is only partially applied (e.g., only in matters of personal/family law), and who aspire to the creation of *sharī'ah*-constituted Muslim states, if necessary by revolution. They see secularism in entirely negative terms as a Western fabrication, and compound within it the view, expressed by many Western Christians, that religion is essentially an individualistic issue, concerned with individual salvation rather than, or more than, with the destiny of society as a whole. This criticism is implicit at least in one of the Muslim comments during the Chambes consultation:

Personally I do appreciate the Christian desire to "save" the Muslim soul in accordance with their understanding of the Divine Truth, but the question we face is whether the Muslim has the right to an Islamic society until it is possible to convince him otherwise. Unfortunately there is no unequivocal answer to this question and one is led to suspect that perhaps some people see the path of conversion beginning in the subversion of Muslim values and social fibre.

For such Muslims considerations of moral and ethical behavior, at societal as well as personal levels, significantly influence the ways they interpret the Quranic passages dealing with Christians and, insofar as they judge Christianity as failing effectively to provide authoritative moral guidance, they tend to emphasize the pattern of rejection. "Oriental” Muslims are often confirmed in this attitude, particularly in Western Europe today, by the small number of articulate Christian converts to Islam who tend to explain their conversion against the background of their disillusionment with Christian moral teaching, arguing either that it is impracticable (in the sense of being idealist), or that the churches lack the authority to put it into practice.

In concluding this section of the paper, however, we should note that the morality variable often favors the Quranic pattern of affirmation at the level of personal encounter between Muslim and Christian. Where Christians as individuals demonstrate a sincere effort to conform personal lifestyle to the ethical norms of the New Testament, it is the author’s experience that this invariably elicits Muslim approval, for in their judgment it confirms well-known Quranic verses like: “Lo! Those who believe, and those who are Jews and Sabeans and Christians—whosoever believeth in God and the Last Day and doeth right—there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve” (Q. 5, 69), and “Thou wilt find the nearest of them in affection to those who believe [to be] those who say: Lo! We are Christians. That is because there are among them priests and monks, and because they are not proud” (Q. 5, 82). It will be noticed that the first of these two verses links belief in God with righteous living, which reminds us of the point made at the beginning of this section about the ethical priority in...
Muslim religious criteria, their emphasis being upon “orthopraxis.”

c) Doctrine

This subject has purposely been relegated to third place among the variables considered in this paper, since, notwithstanding the oft-stated Christian opinion that it is precisely at this point that the differences between Christianity and Islam are at their most profound or complex, Muslims themselves tend to see the issues in a more straightforward manner. As has been suggested already, “theology” in the sense of doctrinal discussion is not of widespread appeal among Muslims, who incline toward a more practical emphasis in their religious thought. This is not necessarily to judge Muslim religious thought as less sophisticated in method or poorer in content than Christian theology, but simply to note a difference of approach in which the primary Muslim question seems to be: How is humankind, individually and communally, to be obedient to the revealed will of God?

An illustration of this emphasis is to be seen in the structure of many of the Muslim “creedal” and catechetical statements, which begin with the assertion of God’s unity and uniqueness, with mention of his principal attributes (sifat), but which then pass quickly to much more extensive treatment of the doctrines of prophethood (nubuwwah) with particular reference to the prophethood of Muhammad in whom there is “a good example for him who looketh unto God and the Last Day, and remembereth God much” (Q. 3, 64). This emphasis, important in itself as providing a model of obedience for “those who believe and do good works,” leads directly into the sphere of ethics upon which we commented in the previous section.

This approach to matters of doctrine reflects itself also in the shape of Muslim criticism of Christian theology. It is interested less in metaphysical arguments about the nature of God than in questions of Christology, for in what Christians say about Jesus Christ, Muslims detect a compromise of the divine unity and uniqueness, beside God” (Q. 3, 64). For such Muslims the Quranic pattern of rejection must always be balanced by the pattern of affirmation, and vice-versa, for only thus can the Quranic critique of Christianity be positively maintained. This view is nowhere better expressed than by one of the author’s Muslim colleagues at the Study Centre in Birmingham, Professor Hasan Askari, who writes:

O People of the Book! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught of God save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a Messenger of God and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His Messengers, and say not “Three”—Cease! It is better for you—God is only One God. Far removed is it from His transcendent majesty that He should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. God is sufficient as Defender (Q. 4, 171).

For Muslims of polemic inclination such a Quranic verse invokes the pattern of rejection of Christian beliefs, and arguments of this type abound in much modern Muslim writing on Christianity. An example of this is the influential Egyptian Muslim writer Muhammad Abū Zahra, whose study of Christianity is rated by the present director of the Azhar University’s Department of Da’wah as “the basis of every other book on the subject published since” its first printing in 1942. The book intends to be objective but depends heavily upon earlier polemic writers, including al-Hindi’s Izhār al-Flaqq, which we have already mentioned. Belief in Jesus’ divine Sonship is caricatured as crude anthropomorphism, and the Trinity as tri-theism, but rarely does he attempt to pursue his discussion at a “theological” level. He concentrates, rather, upon explaining the alleged deviations of Christianity by historical reference, attributing the errors to a mixture of pagan and Greco-Roman philosophical influences, which, in his view like that of his medieval predecessors, undermined the original tawhīd of Jesus’ gospel. Cultural differences between the Hellenistic and Semitic worlds are often suggested as the reason why later Christians mistook the meaning of Jesus’ statements about himself, the poetry of his Semitic parlance being misinterpreted through the categories of Greek philosophy. Particularly popular also is the argument of reason, that the central doctrines of Christianity are self-evidently irrational, and in their irrationality demeaning of human dignity, humankind being necessarily and hopelessly fallen (“peccatism”), and God having to save them by suffering death as the price of their fallenness (“saviourism”). To quote an Arab Muslim professor in the United States, “it destroys God’s transcendence . . . it denigrates man, flouts his moral responsibility, and renders . . . religion itself meaningless.” Christians are often portrayed as being uncertain of their beliefs or naively open to exploitation by their clergy and ecclesiastical hierarchies. Not surprisingly this argument is used against Catholics and Orthodox in particular, but Protestants are criticized on grounds of sectarian tendencies resulting in a confusion of imprecise doctrinal positions.

This must suffice to indicate the type of polemical argument with which Christians must reckon in terms of Muslim rejection of Christian beliefs. Harshly as these views are often expressed today, there are fortunately more thoughtful Muslims who find such polemical temper discordant with the attitude of the Qur’an itself, which, while critical of Christian beliefs, nevertheless calls Christians (and Jews) to “Come to an agreed word between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God” (Q. 3, 64). For such Muslims the Quranic pattern of rejection must always be balanced by the pattern of affirmation, and vice-versa, for only thus can the Quranic critique of Christianity be positively maintained. This view is nowhere better expressed than by one of the author’s Muslim colleagues at the Study Centre in Birmingham, Professor Hasan Askari, who writes:

The kind of relationship laid down in the Qur’an between Christians and Muslims is fundamentally a dialogical relationship. From chapter to chapter the Qur’an engages the Christians in discussion, and all the time insists that Jesus is an integral part of the Muslim faith. The Qur’an thus involves Christians in the new faith of Islam, and reminds Muslims that Christians have a special relationship with them. The real dialogue between religions was, however, started by the Qur’an. Its recognition of the People of the Book—the Christians and Jews—was a dialogical recognition. In all such Quranic discourses it is difficult to miss the deep feeling of Christianity and Islam being present to each other. . . . One is aware of strong disagreements. One is aware [also] of deep sharing. What else could signify this sharing more than the fact that Jesus is the common centre between Christians and Muslims? He is the word, speech, meaning and occasion of the dialogical relationship between them. He is the common "sign." 48

Conclusion

This last view is not included as a candy to sweeten the bitter diet offered in the major part of this paper—though, to change the metaphor, we may see it as a contemporary ray of light which pierces the gloom of a centuries-old tradition of negative Muslim evaluation of Christianity. Fortunately there are other Muslim thinkers who approach Christianity in comparable spirit, and it behooves us, as contemporary Christians, to avoid a clumsiness of
The discipline calls as much upon our faculties of hearing as upon sight, for the implication of this paper is that we should not only see that there is a sustained Muslim critique of Christianity, but listen to it patiently and with understanding, for despite its frequent exaggeration there clearly is substance in much of what it has to say. The art of listening has never come easily to Christians, who feel constrained themselves to communicate a message. But is not another reason for our difficulty in hearing Muslims the fact that our ears are ringing with the cacophony of our own centuries-old tradition of polemical abuse of Islam? This author is of the opinion that, by honest and objective analysis of the Christian polemical tradition against Islam, we have no alternative but to admit that it is older, more fabulous, and certainly more thoroughly hostile than its Islamic counterpart.

From the beginning—and its origins go back to seventh-century Arabia—Christian rejoinder to Islam did not have the inner scriptural mechanism of self-restraint equivalent to what this paper has described as the Quranic pattern of affirmation and rejection of Christianity. As a consequence Islam was viewed either as an erroneous derivation from Christianity (e.g., St. John of Damascus's view of Islam as a "Christian heresy") or as something opposed to Christianity, challenging and threatening it doctrinally and by physical expansion. Preoccupied by the physical threat, it was the latter view that prevailed in the West within medieval Latin Christendom, and eventually in Eastern Christianity as well. Not surprisingly, therefore, we find that the biblical passage most frequently cited by Christians seeking to explain Islam—from the tenth-century Spanish martyrs to sixteenth-century Martin Luther and onwards—was Daniel 7:24 ff.; Mhammad, the Saracens, and the Turks were identified as the eleventh king "who shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings; he shall speak out words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law and they shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and half a time...." By such exegesis it was concluded that Islam was an eschatological omen, anti-Christian in essence, violent in character, ethically corrupt, and in its worldliness born of Satan; a threat to be confronted by Christ's soldiers (the Crusaders), or later to be subjugated in an age of European colonialism when the rising self-confidence of Western technological power dismissed Islam as a religion of backwardness, superstition, and fanaticism.

What does all this mean, then, for our Christian understanding of evangelism as we meet with Muslims in the world today? Before offering any answers by way of conclusion to this paper, the author would make it clear that he intends to deal only with the thesis that he has propounded: the "problem" of Islam from the point of view of Christian evangelism has every bit as much to do with the "problem" of historical Christianity, or Christendom, as seen and experienced by Muslims, as it has to do with the character of Islamic religion itself. Second, by "evangelism" he understands the Christian imperative to share the gospel by representing, through Christian witness, the acts of God in history as they are recounted in the Bible. This is closely related to, but needs to be distinguished from, "conversion," which is concerned with human response through the working of the Holy Spirit.49

The specific problem with which this paper deals calls to mind Paul's understanding of evangelism: "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Christ's sake" (2 Cor. 4:5). Clearly, if there is any value in this paper in terms of its implications for a critique of Christian evangelism in relation to Islam, it must be that Christians have failed to realize this Pauline principle. Muslims continue in the majority to identify Christianity with the West, and Christian evangelism therefore with the extension of Western culture and Western values. The reasons for this we have seen to be rooted in traditional Muslim explanations of the Quranic allegation of corruption (tahrir) in respect of Christians and, for this, modern generations of Christians can hardly be held responsible. But the history of the last 200 years of Western domination of the Muslim world—and the history of Christian mission in Muslim lands in particular—has confirmed most Muslims in this historical view. For this we cannot escape responsibility, however differently we may like to see the matter. In order that it should not be ourselves we preach, we must learn the often painful discipline of seeing ourselves as Muslims see us, acknowledging that their image of us is existentially important to our understanding of how, for Christ's sake, we may aspire to be their servants. The first challenge therefore is to remove the log from our own eye (cf. Matt. 7:3).

The discipline calls as much upon our faculties of hearing as upon sight, for the implication of this paper is that we should not only see that there is a sustained Muslim critique of Christianity, but listen to it patiently and with understanding, for despite its frequent exaggeration there clearly is substance in much of what it has to say. The art of listening has never come easily to Christians, who feel constrained themselves to communicate a message. But is not another reason for our difficulty in hearing Muslims the fact that our ears are ringing with the cacophony of our own centuries-old tradition of polemical abuse of Islam? This author is of the opinion that, by honest and objective analysis of the Christian polemical tradition against Islam, we have no alternative but to admit that it is older, more fabulous, and certainly more thoroughly hostile than its Islamic counterpart.

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The echoes of this polemical tradition still ring loudly in the mansions of Western establishment—among politicians, economists, press barons, and in the popular reaction to, for example, contemporary events in Iran, the coverage of which in many Western newspapers illustrates the vigor with which the polemical tradition survives. As Christians we cannot dissociate ourselves from this mood, and herein lies our difficulty. So easily we fail to hear Muslims because of the accusations we heap upon them. Tragic as this is from a human point of view, it is yet more tragically a blatant infringement of the commandment "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Deut. 5:20) in a world where, we believe, all God's human creatures—however perverse their nature—are held within the fraternity of his love.

How, then, are we to break out of this vicious circle of polemics, which, as partially reviewed and explained in this paper, has been the hallmark of the religious encounter of Christians and Muslims over fourteen centuries, producing such dreadful mutual misrepresentations? The imperative for asking this question out of concern of evangelism, and the problem inherent in our answering it, are both contained within Paul's assurance to the Corinthians: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, ... entrusting us with the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors of Christ, God making his appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:19–20). Evangelism is ultimately our representation of God's acts in history as a work of reconciliation with Christ at its center. In relation to our Christian meeting with Muslims this truth is not to be compromised by crying, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14). But neither is it to be abused by allowing the gospel of reconciliation to be compromised, distorted, and corrupted by association with Western power or by our own inherited and thus deeply ingrained prejudices. If, as Christians, we have been entrusted with God's "message of reconciliation," it is not for the sake of historical Christianity but because "grace has been given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph. 4:7) that we might therefore be "imitators of God," walking in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us" (Eph. 5:1). It is of this that we should be mindful as we discipline ourselves to silence our protests and listen to the Quranic and Islamic critiques of Christianity.

For Paul the grace given to him meant nothing less than to "bear on my own body the marks of Christ" (Gal. 6:17)—the marks wrought at the price of self-sacrifice; "When reviled, we bless; when persecuted we endure; when slandered, we try to conciliate" (1 Cor. 4:12–13). It was by this costly road that the apostle sought to identify himself with God's "message of reconciliation," not by virtue of his intellectual ability to bring an argument to victory, nor yet by what some modern apostles have identified as his methods of cross-cultural communication, but by his readiness to be reviled, persecuted, slandered—as was Christ, and indeed many prophetic figures in the earlier history of Israel. The readiness thus
to suffer is, alone, that which liberates the apostle from the restrictive nature of culture, to become a witness by participation in the truth of the message of "God in Christ reconciling the world to himself."

In a remarkable paper entitled "What Makes a Missionary?" the Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama develops these same ideas in his inimitable style, with conclusions that are apposite to the concerns of this paper. In answer to his question, Koyama delineates three principles, which the present writer would relate to evangelism in relation to Muslims.

First, "the missionary must live in the complexity of living man and living history." No missionary can nor responsibly should wish to escape the complexities of the history of Christian-Muslim relations with its heavy burden of negative connotations for Muslim and Christian alike. The temptation that faces us all, however, is to conceal ourselves behind the stereotype pictures we create: of "us" as the misrepresented, and of "them" as the misrepresented; Christianity as Western imperialism, Islam as anti-Christian; and so the polemical spiral continues. Praying that we might be delivered from this evil, it is the missionary's duty to displace dehumanizing stereotypes by an acceptance of Muslims as people loved by God, through whose lives his omnipotent Will must be at work in some manner that it is important, albeit difficult, for Christians to understand—as in times past Israel was challenged by God to learn the significance of, for example, the Ethiopians, the Philistines, and the Syrians in his eyes (Amos 9:7–8). This sort of learning is not to be pursued in libraries, seminars, study centers, and the like—useful as these most certainly are—but in experiential encounter with Muslims as men and women, where they are and as they are. Learning thus of them, and of ourselves as they see us, we may be deepened in our understanding of what the gospel requires of us as their "servants for Christ's sake" (cf. 2 Cor. 4:5).

Koyama's second principle is that "the missionary's missionary quality will be nurtured by his life participation in the apostolic witness of reviled-bless/persecuted-endure/slandered-conciliate." This learning-presence among Muslims is a missionary duty, and for some it may command the fullest concentration of their talents, but evangelism requires the missionary to represent the biblical story of God's salvific acts in history—summarized by Koyama in his verbal compound based upon Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 4:12–13. To this end theological discussion has its place, and in the spirit of dialogue is a useful way to clarify what we mean when we speak to one another of matters of faith. But as this paper has tried to show, theology in the sense of doctrinal discussion is of limited interest to most Muslims, whose religious concerns lie much more in the field of ethics. Faith (imān) is demonstrated in good works (ṣāliḥāt). To instance one of the traditional issues of Christian-Muslim debate: the Crucifixion. If what Christians believe of it has found so little comprehension among Muslims, it is perhaps because Muslims have rarely been challenged to consider it seriously by the quality of Christian ṣāliḥāt. The quality of Paul's apostolate was plain in that he bore upon his body "the marks of Christ," and this is what Koyama means when he speaks of the missionary as a person with a "crucified mind." The present author is convinced that in such mind must Christians hear and bear Muslim criticisms of historical Christianity. He has argued that the polemical temper of such criticism in recent times is a function of Muslim responses to their complex but often humiliating experience of the West. Since Christianity is suspected as the religious wing of Western imperialism, or neo-imperialism, the missionaries and missionary-created churches in Muslim countries become convenient scapegoats upon which frustrations may be vented. A concrete example of this is to be seen in the plight of the Anglican church in Iran amid the anti-Western Islamic revolution. Precisely because of the exemplary way in which many of the members of that church faced persecution, loving rather than reviling their assailants, and finding their own faith immensely strengthened thereby, this writer is moved to conclude that acceptance of the role of scapegoat is the most creative expression of evangelism for the Christian missionary in the Muslim world today. The circumstances need not be as dramatic as those of Iran for the church in the Muslim world to conform itself to the model of the Suffering Servant (cf. Isa. 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12), and therefore it is in accepting this role in spirit, and as occasion demands in practice, that the missionary can live the message of reconciliation in fellowship with Muslims. This applies particularly to missionaries from the West, for we, by taking upon ourselves as Westerners the anger of Muslim criticisms of Western power, may hope as Christians to be channels through which the reconciling power of God can heal the wounds of history.

These thoughts bring us finally to Koyama's third principle of missionary vocation: "The missionary's missionary quality will be nurtured as he travels in the direction of the unity of message and messenger." An authentic missionary, he propounds, is always "becoming missionary," growing through continuous participation in the saving drama of God's acts in history; it involves the missionary in "spiritual exercise ... in the direction of unity of message and messenger." The challenge to Christian evangelism in relation to Muslims could not be more clearly expressed. This paper has tried to show that the kernel of Muslim critique of Christianity is the charge that it has become removed from the original teaching of Jesus. The discrepancy is variously explained, but the conclusion reached by most Muslims is that historical Christianity has forfeited its credibility. Christians ultimately differ from Muslims in their perception of the authentic teaching and ministry of Jesus, and the difference is, in the real sense of the word, crucial—to do with the cross. That this discrepancy may be bridged, and that the meaning of the cross may be made credible to Muslims, Christians must place themselves under its judgment and search, by God's grace, to represent the gospel among Muslims with "the crucified mind, not the crusading mind." If this is the hallmark of the missionary, the present writer dares to suggest that mission in the context of Islam has hardly yet begun.

Notes


16. Khuda Bakhsh, an Indian Muslim writer in the first quarter of this century who advocated a bourgeois form of Islamic modernism; frequently praised Christianity for its spirit of human clarity.


20. Qur'an 2, 75–9; 2, 174–76; 2, 159; 3, 69–78; 4, 46; 5, 13; 5, 41, and passim.

21. H. Goddard, "Egyptian Muslim Writings.",


27. K. Pfander, Mizān al-Haqq (The Balance of Truth), originally published 1867 in London; thoroughly revised and edited by W. S. Tisdall (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1910); republished in Lebanon without indication of date or publisher; for summary, see L. Vander Werff, Christian Mission, pp. 271–72.


31. Ibid., p. 443.

32. Ibid., p. 445.

33. Ibid., p. 446.


41. Ibid., p. 443.

42. Ibid., p. 444.

43. Islam Our Choice (Mecca: Muslim World League, no date), passim; a collection of "confessions" by Western converts to Islam.


46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.


53. See R. Southern, Western Views.


56. Ibid., p. 129.

57. Ibid.

58. Koyama subtitles his paper with the proposition "Toward Crucified Mind, Not Crusading Mind."


60. K. Koyama, "What Makes a Missionary?" p. 130.
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