



# Save the date!

## • *Interreligious Pilgrimage to the Holy Door*

Friday 18 NOVEMBER 2016  
AT 5PM  
(DEPARTURE FROM CASTEL SANT'ANGELO)

## • *SEDOS General Assembly*

Thursday 1<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2016  
FROM 3PM TO 5PM.  
UISG HEADQUARTERS  
(PONTE CASTEL SANT'ANGELO 28)

### SEDOS BULLETIN

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## Editorial

Dear Readers,

The present bulletin carries the theme “Inter-religious Dialogue”. The leading article is by Michael Amaladoss. From his Indian experience he remarks the following: “While religion rises above culture in its meta-cosmic dimension, it remains rooted and integrated with culture in its cosmic dimension. Inter-religious dialogue becomes complex since it is between religions at different levels, namely cosmic and meta-cosmic.” For instance, are Asian practices such as Yoga and Zen cultural practices or religious practices? If they are cultural they can be adapted by Christians. However, the Church tends to look at them as being religious, meta-cosmic. According to the author, we also have to free evangelization from its colonial context, so that it does not become a power game. For instance, is being a sannyasa Hindu or Indian? For Le Saux it was Indian, and so he did not see a problem to dress as a Catholic monk in orange -as sannyasi do. Lastly, Amaladoss makes an appeal to implement the spirit of Second Vatican: namely that the building of the Kingdom -mission/evangelization- can only be done through inculturation, collegiality, and dialogue.

The problem of inculturation relating to inter-religious dialogue we find again in the next article on Islam in Europe by Agustin Arteche Gorostegui. He is of the opinion that side by side with inter-religious dialogue one needs to embrace an open and respectful “inter-culturalism”. In speaking from his own personal relations with Belgian muslims he observes that there is a movement for openness towards other religions. However, the power of money put up by petroleum-dollars blocks this evolution in many countries and creates a tension within Islam itself. The author then goes on to describe the situation of Islam in Europe and sees there the same movement on the rise, but with another tension added: “Surveys show that young people identify with the values of the

country in which they live: democracy, freedom of expression, etc. However, this is somewhat of a contradiction because many of them state that they belong to Islam, although perhaps more in terms of culture than religion. It is difficult to denounce the culture in to which one has been born.” Here, the multi-culturalism has not yet grown into an inter-culturalism.

Opposed to the struggle of the dialogue with Islam in the Belgian-European context, the experience of Egidio Picucci in Antioch among Catholicism, Orthodox Church, and Islam there on the level of the parish is a friendly one. It encourages us in our belief that it is possible to dialogue also on the parish level with other religions inter-cultural as well as inter-religious.

The last article is more on the level of theological dialogue. John O’Brien points out through a thorough study of documents and history that the false belief in Islam, that Jesus did not die on the cross but instead Judas died, comes forth from a misreading of a particular passage in the Koran.

If the five-year old *Document* on how to relate with other religions as a Christian had been written today, the aspect of “forgiveness” in this Holy Year of Mercy would surely have received an important consideration. Dealing with people of other religions is not different as within our own religion. We cannot be perfect as human beings in our love for the religious neighbor. SEDOS has therefore taken the initiative to ask forgiveness to other religions for our wrongdoing –and to forgive their wrongdoing to us- by going through the Holy Door together with them two days before the doors will close... Be there! Or join from a distance in our praying together there at that moment.

We close our bulletin with *News Today* where we ask attention to one of the six saints that were canonized by Pope Francis this month of October: Sister Elisabeth of the Trinity. Her short life and great teachings stick to the heart: to live and experience Christ every moment of our life, for better or worse.

Michael Amaladoss, SJ

## **Gospel-culture encounter as intercultural and interreligious dialogue: an Indian experience**

The Gospel is already an inculturated document: the Aramaic discourses of Jesus as understood and narrated in Greek in their own living context by four different communities. When it encounters a particular community with its own culture it becomes an intercultural encounter. Intercultural encounters also take place in other contexts like migration, commerce and conquest and have their own rules and problems linked to social and cultural power. A more developed culture seeks to dominate a less developed one. In a colonial situation, the subject culture tries to adapt itself to the dominant one. Proclamation of the Gospel will have to take into account such factors. For example, India becomes Anglophone because of British colonialism. At the religious level, for instance, people belonging to a more developed cultural level were ready to follow Jesus as their Guru, while hesitant to join the Christian community seen as socially and culturally foreign. Even at the popular level we have today a group of Kristubhaktas (devotees of Christ), who pray to Christ, but have not become institutionally Christian. On the other hand, socially oppressed groups like the Dalits (untouchables) and Tribals embrace Christianity precisely because of its different and politically dominant culture in order to escape the locally dominant Hindu/Indian culture and religion. The Christian schools may also have mediated a British culture and scientific and technological modernity with it, further strengthened today by the global media. Some missionaries may have promote Christianity as an element of socio-cultural development. The process of conversion to the Gospel then becomes ambiguous. Such processes of inter-cultural encounter have nothing to do with the Gospel as such. But they cannot

be avoided and have to be taken into account. Even today, Christianity would be popularly identified with European dress and customs and organ music. A look at its liturgical rituals will only confirm this impression. The Hindu fundamentalists declare Christianity (and Islam) foreign, not only by origin, but also culturally.

### **Interculturation favoring Cultural Dominance**

Evangelization as intercultural encounter evokes also another problematic perspective. Though today the Gospel comes to a community embodied in a complex of other cultures, Greco-Latin-European, since the Gospel transcends all cultures and seeks to become incarnate in every culture in view of transforming it (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20), the community hearing the Gospel should try to free it from its cultural embodiment through interpretation, interact with it and respond to it, embodying and expressing it in its own culture. This happened in the early Church, giving rise to many ritual traditions. That such a Gospel-culture encounter will take place in the context of an intercultural encounter is inevitable, but secondary, since the local culture keeps its identity and dominance. But such intercultural encounter becomes problematic when the culture in which the Gospel comes embodied is to be considered normative. Today, some think that the encounter of the Gospel with Greek culture is providential. Since this encounter is of the Gospel with human reason and since human reason is universal, the Gospel-Greek culture encounter is consid-

ered universally valid.<sup>1</sup> But John Paul II has also said:

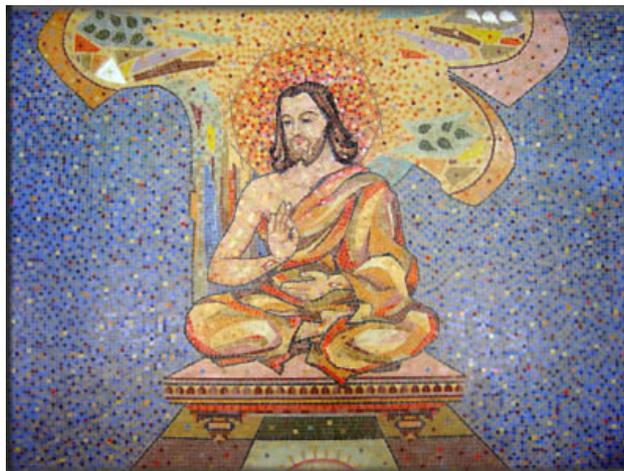
“Simply because the mission of preaching the Gospel came first upon Greek philosophy in its journey, this is not taken to mean that other approaches are excluded... An immense spiritual impulse compels the Indian mind to an acquiring of that experience which would, with a spirit freed from the distractions of time and space, attain to the absolute good. This is the time, above all for Indian Christians, to unlock these treasures from their inheritance.” (John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 72)

It is, however, a fact that the Latin Church has thought of its inculturation of the Gospel as having universal value till the Second Vatican Council and even later in practice. Colonialism which provide the context for mission probably encouraged this approach.

Matteo Ricci and Roberto de Nobili are often held up as pioneers of inculturation. It is true that they defended the possibility that an Asian can become a Christian, while remaining an Asian socio-culturally. But they did not seek to fully inculturate Christianity in the local cultures and transform Asian cultures in the light of the Gospel. De Nobili’s approach to Hinduism was polemical, not dialogical. He and later missionaries like Beschi translated the message of the Gospel in the local language and culture. But they left the cultural structures like the discriminatory and oppressive caste system unchallenged, in order to reach out to the higher castes. That situation continues till today. The liturgy remained and remains Latin, though it is translated into the local language after the Second Vatican Council.

### **Intercultural is also Interreligious**

My aim in this brief presentation, however, is to show that Gospel-culture encounter is not only intercultural, but also interreligious.<sup>2</sup> Every culture is animated by a religion which seeks to answer the more ultimate questions, like the meaning of life, of unmerited suffering, of death and of after-life. Culture as a system of meanings is supplemented by religion, so that it can be considered as the deeper element of culture. In secularized situations ideologies may serve as quasi-religions. So the Gospel encountering a culture is also encountering the religion or religions that are animating it. So it becomes an interreligious encounter. This can be difficult and complex when the religions that the Gospel encounters are developed ones with their own theological and spiritual framework, like Hinduism and Buddhism.



### **The Cosmic Religions**

Talking of religions, Aloysius Pieris distinguishes between cosmic and meta-cosmic ones.<sup>3</sup> Cosmic religions see the world permeated by spirits, good and evil, with which the humans interact, requesting their aid, propitiating their anger and satisfying their needs through various rituals. They may recognize a high God, but not be practically in touch with Him/Her. Meta-cosmic religions seek to rise beyond the cosmos and reach out to the Transcendent. This is often known through a revelation/manifestation to sages and prophets. It can be encountered through various ascetical and spiritual practices that lead us beyond our world, known through our sense experience and reason. Hinduism, Islam, Taoism and Buddhism would be such meta-cosmic reli-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. The conference of Pope Benedict XVI in Regensburg (Sept 12, 2006). Also John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 72.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. M. Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation*. (Delhi: ISPCK, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> For the distinction between cosmic and meta-cosmic religions see Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), pp.71-73.

gions. Pieris suggests that meta-cosmic religions transcend cultures and cosmic religions. But they can function only when they are rooted in a culture, that is, inculturated. In this process, they do not completely do away with cosmic religious elements of the culture, but are superposed on them, integrating and transforming them in the process. For example, the spirits, good and evil, become angels and demons and ancestors become saints. The sacramental system integrates the cosmic dimensions of life. Mother Mary replaces some of the local mother goddesses.

What happens then in the Indian situation (or elsewhere in Asia, Africa, Latin America and even in Europe)? Side by side with the official Latin liturgical practices which are meta-cosmic, there is a flourishing popular religiosity consisting of popular devotions, pilgrimages, penitential practices, healing rituals, rites of passage, seasonal rituals, etc.<sup>4</sup> Of course, these will be suitably Christianized by the replacement and/or addition of symbols (e.g. the sign of the cross or blessed water and oil, the decor) or prayers (the Our Father, Creed, etc.). The minister will be invited to bless some of these. At an extreme level, such practices can become syncretistic, when there is a mixture of symbols and meanings – like the *Candomble* in Brazil. But more often they cater to a more popular and different kind of religiosity consisting of penitential actions, pilgrimages, vows and offerings, though the religious context remains Christian. Most pastors tend to tolerate and even encourage them, since, being need-based, they “bring people to the Church”. Some of these people may be non-Christian, attracted to a holy place reputed for miracles of healing and comfort. Some priests seek to improve it with the introduction of readings from the Bible or a Eucharistic celebration. The adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (exposed) is actively promoted in many parishes in my part of the country. Some of the popular elements like healing, anointing, blessing, exorcism, etc. are taken over by contemporary Pentecostal movements. Some of

the Pentecostal practices are also taken over by the “official” Church.

The Gospel is here encountering popular or cosmic religion. For the Church whose liturgy seems to be shaped largely by monastic practice it may seem superstitious. For people who identify Christianity with European culture and do not know to distinguish between cosmic religion and Hinduism, these practices will appear syncretistic. But the people are often profoundly Christian. Let us not forget that the official Church has been critical even of Asian practices of meditation like Yoga and Zen. It would be interesting to explore whether these practice should be considered cultural or religious. When the liturgy and other spiritual practices are not really inculturated such popular religious practices are not only inevitable, but necessary. Even an inculturated official liturgy will have to take these practices into account, since it does not take into account all the needs of the people. Popular religious practices are not absent in Euro-America either, not to speak of Latin America and Africa. There has not been much theological and spiritual reflection on these, since reflection is the preserve of the religious elite. When secularization spreads, it is this cosmic religiosity that will be hit first, since it seeks to cut away ordinary life in the world, seen as secular and self-sufficient, from the divine. People whose religious practice has remained at a cosmic level, easily give it up.

This more or less successful integration of various cosmic religions with the meta-cosmic dimensions of Christianity is certainly one problem of interreligious dialogue in the process of inculturation that needs attention and discussion. While religion rises above culture in its meta-cosmic dimension, it remains rooted and integrated with culture in its cosmic dimension. Interreligious dialogue becomes complex since it is between religions at different levels, namely cosmic and meta-cosmic. In my remaining reflection, however, I shall limit myself to the meta-cosmic dimension, remembering however that the meta-cosmic is rooted in the cosmic culture and religion, while transcending it. The meacosmic dimension of religion also develops a meta-cosmic level of culture. While cosmic religious cul-

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<sup>4</sup> See Thomas Bamat and Jean-Paul Wiest (eds), *Popular Catholicism in a World Church. Seven Case Studies in Inculturation*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999).

ture will consist of mythical narratives, pilgrimages and rituals, meta-cosmic religious culture will manifest itself in philosophico-theological reflection and spiritual practices like meditation.

Let me now leave aside cosmic religiosity and proceed to explore the dialogue between two meta-cosmic religions in India, namely Hinduism and Christianity. As a case study, I shall take the efforts of two older contemporaries from Europe, Bede Griffiths (British: 1905-1993) and Henri le Saux (French: 1910-1973), and two Indians, Vandana Mataji (1921-2013) and Sebastian Painadath (1942-), to integrate Christian and Indian spiritualities. Let me make it clear from the beginning that their dialogue with Hinduism does not consist in adopting the Hindu images of God. They remain profoundly Christian. But they seek to understand God through Hindu cultural-philosophical and religious categories and to use Hindu/Indian methods of *sadhana* (spiritual practice) to experience God. Let me, first of all, set the spiritual and theological context in which these encounters are taking place.

### Encountering God in Hinduism and Christianity

The traditional Christian understanding objectifies God as the Creator, Father, Master, Judge, etc. God is our Father in heaven. The created world is projected outside God, as the effect of which God is the cause. Jesus, as the incarnate God, is the mediator between God and the world. In and through Jesus, God shares God's life with us. The sacramental celebrations facilitate this divine-human encounter. But the distance between the finite and the infinite is clearly affirmed. The relation between the bride and the bridegroom is used as an image to understand and experience the divine-human relationship.



Mystics like Meister Eckhart and Ignatius of Loyola do speak of a more intimate relationship.

Impressions of a different, more intimate, kind of relationship can be seen in some Johannine texts like “The Father and I are one” (Jn 10:30) or “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us” (Jn 17:21). But they are often interpreted as functional and do not reflect the main stream Christian experience. They do not represent the dominant spiritual tradition. This vision of the relationship between God and the world is seen as dualistic.

In later philosophico-religious Hinduism, called the Vedanta, there are three main streams, represented by Madhava, Ramanuja and Sankara, which explore the God-world relationship.<sup>5</sup> Madhava is dualistic. The other two propose a non-dual or *adual* vision which is called *advaita* (not-two). Sankara is strictly *adual*. He is popularly considered monistic, though some commentators, especially Christian ones, assert that he is not monistic, but *adual*.<sup>6</sup> The world (the humans) is not outside God, but is in God, though totally dependent on God. I do not have the space here to go into the philosophical intricacies of Sankara. Ramanuja defends “qualified aduality” – *vishistadvaita*. He uses the human image of the “spirit-in-body” to understand the relation between God and the world. The world is the body of God. While Sankara proposes our absolute, though dependent, oneness with God, Ramanuja defends the possibility of a relationship of love and surrender between the humans and God.

My reason for evoking this complex philosophico-religious vision of divine-human relationship here is the fact that some Christians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have found this *advaitic* or *adual* vision attractive and have

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Eric Lott, *Vedantic Approaches to God*. (London: Macmillan, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Sara Grant, *Sankarācārya's Concept of Relation*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999).

tried to live it spiritually in an *ashram* setting. I see this as an inter-cultural encounter in the context of an inter-religious dialogue. Let me now briefly focus on the four persons whom I have evoked above as exemplifying this encounter, though there are many others.<sup>7</sup> With regard to Bede Griffiths and Henri Le Saux, whose Indian name was Abhishiktananda, the best is to cite a summary of Cyprian Consiglio:

“In studying the lives and thought of both Bede Griffiths and Abhishiktananda, it is difficult to compare them, *per se*, but one has to point out their distinct different approaches, often to the same topic. A helpful distinction I have found is this: Abhishiktananda often leans on the idea of union by identity; whereas Fr. Bede tends to speak of union by communion. This is evidenced, for example, in Abhishiktananda’s great love for the Upanishads and his introduction to them that accompanies *The Further Shore*; on the other hand, Fr. Bede had a great love for the Bhagavad Gîtâ, so much so that he produced a Christian commentary on it, *The River of Compassion*. When speaking of Jesus, to show another example, for Abhishiktananda the pivotal moment is Jesus Baptism, when he discovered that the *I AM* of God belonged to himself, or to put it the other way around, when —in the brilliant light of his own *I AM* he discovered the true meaning, total and unimaginable, of the name of God. This is how Abhishiktananda interprets Jesus saying, “The Father and I are one”. Fr. Bede instead laid more stress on recognizing that there are distinctions in the Godhead and distinctions between God and creation that do not negate the underlying unity of all reality. The example that he used very often was the same one, that Jesus says, “the Father and I are one”, but he never says, “I am the Father.” In terms of *advaita*–non-duality, Abhishiktananda was a faithful disciple of Ramana Maharshi and Gnanananda, both proponents of pure *advaita*. Fr. Bede on the other hand was a

<sup>7</sup> For example, Sara Grant, *Towards an Alternative Theology. Confessions of a Non-dualist Christian*. (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1991) and Raimon Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994); *The Rhythm of Being*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010).

great admirer of the contemporary philosopher Sri Aurobindo, and like him often pointed out that *advaita* was not the only interpretation of the Vedic revelation. There is also *visist-advaita*, for example, the qualified non-duality of the 11th century philosopher-theologian Ramanuja that drew its language from the philosophical school of *sâmkhya*. One other practical example drawn from their lives: Abhishiktananda lived out his *sannyasa* life as a wandering hermit; Fr. Bede, on the other hand, remained nestled in the community life of the ashram.”<sup>8</sup>

Le Saux was cosmic, transcending while integrating Hinduism and Christianity. He considered *sannyasa* as Indian rather than merely Hindu. He initiated his only disciple Marc into *sannyasa* jointly with a Hindu guru, Swami Chidananda.<sup>9</sup> Bede Griffiths sought to integrate the cosmos, reaching out to science, and the feminine. He was inspired not only by Aurobindo, but also by Teilhard de Chardin.<sup>10</sup> Towards the end of his life he had a mystical experience of God as Mother.

Sister Vandana also sought advaitic oneness with the divine, but was sensitive to the mediation of art and symbols. Her preferred way to realization was music in the form of *bhajans* or repetitive chants leading to deeper concentration and inner silence.<sup>11</sup> Sebastian Painadath has been preaching retreats based on the Bhagavad Gita to Christian groups. He has also been using the meditative practices of Yoga to achieve oneness with the divine.<sup>12</sup>

Interculturation is obviously a two-way street. Hindus like Keshub Chandra Sen, Mahatma Gandhi and others have considered

<sup>8</sup> Cyprian Consiglio, OSBCam, “The Purusha and the Guru: Identity and Communion for Bede Griffiths and Abhishiktananda” in [www.dimmid.org](http://www.dimmid.org).

<sup>9</sup> Swami Abhishiktananda, *Ascent to the Depth of the Heart. The Spiritual Diary (1948-1973) of Swami Abhishiktananda* (Delhi: ISPCK 1998); *The Further Shore*. (Delhi: ISPCK, 1984).

<sup>10</sup> See Bede Griffiths, *Marriage of East and West*. (Springfield: Templegate, 1982); *River of Compassion: A Christian Commentary on the Bhagavad Gita*, (Rockport: Element Books, 1987).

<sup>11</sup> Vandana Mataji, *Nama Japa*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Sebastian Painadath, *The Spiritual Journey. Towards an Indian Christian Spirituality*. (Delhi: ISPCK, 2006).

themselves disciples of Christ, while remaining Hindus. A more organized movement of Hindu disciples of Christ was animated by K. Subba Rao (1912-1981).<sup>13</sup> Many similar examples have been documented.<sup>14</sup>

### **Inculturation and Evangelization**

I began my reflections setting inculturation in the context of evangelization. I have been focusing on the processes and tensions of gospel-culture, inter-cultural and inter-religious encounters. The tensions arise because of a clash of identities of the people who live them. At that level it becomes a game of power in which, often, one group wants to dominate and assimilate the others. The spreading of the gospel linked, historically, to the spreading of colonialism had become a power game. People like Bartolomeo de las Casas, Matteo Ricci and Roberto de Nobili saw through the game and sought to free evangelization from it. But they were not successful. The game continues. The only way of escaping the game is to set the encounter between gospel and culture in the context of building the Kingdom of God which transcends and integrates all cultures and religions. This happens through dialogue which will avoid conflicts and tensions, precisely through transcending them. If the evangelizers had sought to build Kingdom communities of freedom, fellowship and justice through the proclamation of the gospel without seeking to establish Latin Rite communities in their European incarnations in Africa, Asia and Latin America they would have met with less resistance and more success. The problem is that the situation and the tensions still continue. The vision of the Kingdom will be the “utopia” of which Gomez-Muller speaks in his paper. If people are committed to the Kingdom they may not go back to their traditional practices in Africa. In the secular field too, becoming a citizen will be easier for the migrant than becoming culturally French, especially with its “*laïcité*”. But all this sup-

poses that our evangelistic goal is the promotion of the Kingdom of God that embraces all cultures and religions and promotes an active and permanent dialogue between them.

This vision was spelt out in the Second Vatican Council. But fifty years after the Council we have not yet grasped all its implications. We still do not fully realize that we are now in a post-colonial world, at least politically, culturally and religiously, in spite of the globalization of the market.

We have not interiorized the perspectives of inculturation, collegiality and dialogue spelt out by the Council. The “other” has not become a brother/sister for us. The Kingdom of God, transcending and yet integrating all cultures and religions in the power of the risen Jesus and the Spirit, has not become our UTOPIA!

*Simply because the mission of preaching the Gospel came first upon Greek philosophy in its journey, this is not taken to mean that other approaches are excluded... An immense spiritual impulse compels the Indian mind to an acquiring of that experience which would, with a spirit freed from the distractions of time and space, attain to the absolute good. This is the time, above all for Indian Christians, to unlock these treasures from their inheritance. (John Paul II, Fides et Ratio, 72)*

Ref: *Spiritus*, n.219, Juin 2015, pp. 181-194.  
(French version)

<sup>13</sup> Cf. L. Richard, *Exploring the Depths of the Mystery of Christ: K. Subba Rao's Eclectic Praxis of Hindu Discipleship to Jesus*. (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Herbert E. Hoefler, *Churchless Christianity*. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2000).

## Contornos del Islam en Europa

### Introducción

Fermo parte de un equipo de tres Misioneros de África (Padres Blancos), dedicado a un proyecto en Bruselas que lleva el nombre de “Acción para las Relaciones Culturales y Religiosas en Europa” (ARCRE). Se trata de un proyecto novedoso cuyos contornos vamos precisando poco a poco. “Se hace camino al andar”, decía el poeta Antonio Machado. Este artículo trata de describirlo, situándolo en el objetivo de la misión que se nos confía: el diálogo intercultural e interreligioso, sobre todo con el Islam. Para ello necesito situar el tema del Islam en el contexto de Europa. Y prácticamente en la Unión Europea, un terreno para mí, hasta ahora, bastante desconocido.

Me doy cuenta que para tratar de dibujar los contornos del Islam en Europa, hace falta referirse a muchos y variados aspectos: a su historia, su crecimiento y su situación actual dentro del contexto mundial, es decir, en referencia a los acontecimientos recientes en torno a las "primaveras árabes", la violencia, el uso y el abuso de las noticias en los medios de comunicación, el miedo y el rechazo que, con razón y sin razón, provoca el Islam en mucha gente, la sicología y los prejuicios que se esconden detrás de ese rechazo, el fenómeno de la globalización y los cambios que está generando en todas partes.

Vivimos, sin lugar a dudas, un proceso de cambios sin precedentes. Está naciendo un mundo nuevo que genera entusiasmos y decepciones. La crisis económica ha hundido en la más negra miseria a mucha gente. La sociedad necesita ajustes y adaptaciones, pero las soluciones no se producen. Los procesos a los que estamos sometidos no son lineales; tienen altibajos, hay éxitos pero también fracasos. Uno no sabe a qué atenerse. La crisis no es solamente económica. Es también cultural y religiosa. ¿Cómo integrarse en la nueva visión del mundo que aflora? Están en juego valores

como la democracia, los Derechos Humanos, la paz, la fraternidad, la integración mutua de pueblos y personas. Está en juego el futuro de la Iglesia, que después de dominar durante siglos la escena política y cultural, se encuentra confrontada ahora a la pluralidad de convicciones y creencias, al laicismo y a las diferentes religiones, el Islam, el budismo, a la indiferencia religiosa, el agnosticismo y el ateísmo... ¿Conseguirá la Iglesia identificarse en continuidad al diálogo abierto por Jesús en la Encarnación, como una comunidad peregrina y acompañante de toda la humanidad, abierta y dialogante, capaz de integrar en sí misma las diferencias de razas, lenguas religiones y culturas?

Europa es un ejemplo vivo de lo que es y desea ser un mundo plural y globalizado, que trata de ajustar en sus leyes y en sus estructuras la presencia de lo diverso y lo diferente. Europa, que hace 60 años era homogénea cultural y religiosamente, se ha convertido, por los azares de la historia, en un conglomerado de razas, lenguas, culturas y religiones. La inmigración ha traído a Europa gentes de toda raza, religión y cultura. Consideradas como extranjeras en un principio, se han convertido, al paso de los años, en ciudadanos europeos. El problema que se plantea es el de la integración de todas las diferencias en un vivir juntos armonioso, lejos de exclusiones y asimilaciones. ¿Es ello posible? ¿Cómo hacerlo respetando la identidad y los derechos de todos?

\* Misionero de África (Padres Blancos). En la actualidad está trabajando en Bruselas, en “Acción para las Relaciones Culturales y Religiosas en Europa” (ARCRE).

Para terminar este preámbulo contextual, me gustaría transmitir la importancia de este proyecto. Nace sin oropeles. El tema del Islam no goza de las mejores reputaciones entre muchos cristianos. El fenómeno de la multiculturalidad es un hecho que no tiene vuelta de hoja. Lo que importa es pasar de la multiculturalidad factual, fría e indiferente, a la interculturalidad abierta y respetuosa. Pensamos que nuestro proyecto, todavía en ciernes y frágil, es importante para la Iglesia y para el futuro de la misión de los Padres Blancos en Europa y en África. Somos Misioneros de África. Pero, África se encuentra también en Europa.

### Recursos personales

Mi recurso más seguro es el de mi experiencia personal, las vivencias de mi vida misionera. Un refrán africano dice que “nadie reniega de sus canas”. Llevo con orgullo las de mis 4 años pasados en Túnez, los 20 años en Burkina Faso, y los 10 años en Sudán. No puedo renegar de ellas. Tengo que añadir, además, que mi azarosa vida de misión me llevó de manera esporádica, pero fructuosa, a muchos otros países africanos: Senegal, Malí, Togo, Níger, RD del Congo, Ruanda, Uganda, Burundi, Etiopía, Tanzania, Kenia y Argelia. Ahora, como ya he dicho, me encuentro en Bélgica desde hace algo más de un año. Un misionero no se jubila nunca. Ser misionero es una manera de ser. Se puede ser misionero siempre. La misión no está definida ni por el trabajo ni por el lugar, sino más bien por el impulso de un corazón abierto a lo universal. Espero serlo hasta que llegue el momento de mi último suspiro.

No deseo detenerme en conceptos abstractos sobre lo que es el Islam. Me desviaría del propósito de este artículo, que es hablar de mi experiencia relacional con los musulmanes. Esta me muestra por un lado, las diferencias existentes entre el Islam de África del Norte y el de África subsahariana y por otro lado, la capacidad que tenemos las personas de desvirtuar la religión, convirtiéndola en instrumento del mal. “Las religiones han deformado lo sagrado, pero esa deformación se debe al hecho de que las personas, cuando apagan la luz sagrada, apagan al mismo tiempo la dignidad di-

vina del hombre”, decía en la noche de Navidad, el papa Benedicto XVI.

Personalmente he conocido lo mejor y lo peor del Islam. Lo mejor de él en la espiritualidad de los sencillos, gente con un gran sentido de la trascendencia de Dios, en su vida concreta, ritmada por la fidelidad a Dios y a sus mandamientos; musulmanes generosos en la limosna y en el ejercicio de la hospitalidad, piadosos, tolerantes y buenos en su relación con los creyentes de otras religiones. Lo peor, en los excesos cometidos en Sudán por un gobierno islamista que todavía perdura en el poder. Sus dirigentes tenían la boca llena de Dios. Bellas sus invocaciones sobre el Dios Clemente y Misericordioso, pero incapaces de expresar un átomo de misericordia hacia los ciudadanos pertenecientes a otras religiones. La religión se había pervertido en pura ideología. Cuando olvidamos la unidad profunda que existe entre el culto a Dios y el respeto a la persona humana, la religión se convierte en ideología sin corazón. Desgraciadamente las perversiones de lo religioso han existido siempre en la historia de todas las religiones.

Observo una evolución en la percepción que tuve del Islam en los comienzos de mi vida misionera y la que ahora tengo. No hablo desde el punto de vista teórico. Hablo del clima general. Los valores que descubrí, se han desarrollado y enriquecido. Han cambiado las relaciones, tanto en el seno mismo del Islam como en el de sus relaciones hacia los demás. El Islam que conocí en Túnez entre 1960 y 1964 y en los primeros años de mi vida misionera, en los años 70, me parecía más integrado y sereno que el de los 80, años en que empezaban a aparecer los nubarrones del fundamentalismo y de la intolerancia detrás de los cuales se encontraba el dinero de los petrodólares, distribuido a profusión por Arabia Saudí. Las demandas en pro de la instauración de la "charía" comenzaron a sentirse, primero tímidamente en algunos países de África del Oeste y después más abiertamente, *in crescendo*, como es el caso hoy en Nigeria y Malí. En Sudán, se desarrolló la misma dinámica: la obtención, en primer lugar, del poder político para imponer después el poder ideológico y la aplicación de la "charía". Es lo que ha ocurrido en Egipto.

Las recientes convulsiones políticas que tienen lugar en estos momentos en Túnez, Libia y Egipto, y cuya interpretación es muy compleja, tienen mucho que ver con las divisiones internas que atraviesan las sociedades musulmanas entre partidarios de una sociedad democrática, secular y moderna y la de los partidarios de una sociedad basada en la religión. Este debate era impensable hace 20 años.

Hasta hace relativamente poco tiempo, el Islam había vivido en un área protegida, que los musulmanes llamaban "dar el Islam" o ámbito islámico de países de mayoría musulmana. En este ámbito las leyes, la cultura y los modos de vida protegían a los musulmanes del influjo externo, todo lo ajeno al Islam y a sus modos de existencia. El Corán y la "charía" regulaban la vida y la fe de los musulmanes. Ese mundo está a punto de desaparecer.

Hoy, estamos pasando de sociedades bien integradas, religiosa y culturalmente, a sociedades multiculturales y multireligiosas regidas por regímenes democráticos que funcionan con leyes promulgadas por parlamentos civiles totalmente autónomos con respecto a las religiones.

### **Contexto histórico y geográfico europeo**

Situar la presencia del Islam en Europa requiere hacerlo en su larga historia de varios siglos. Sería un error pensar que la implantación del Islam en Europa es solamente producto de la inmigración actual. Hay un pasado. Los primeros escauceos del Islam con el Occidente cristiano remontan muy lejos, en los años cercanos a la muerte de Mahoma, en el año 632 de nuestra era. En la historia de España aprendimos que la invasión de las tropas musulmanas guiadas por Tariq y Musa se efectuó en los albores del siglo VIII, extendiéndose rápidamente por casi toda la geografía española, el sur de Francia, Portugal y Sicilia.

Acaso pueda parecer poco ecuménico decirlo, pero en líneas generales, se trata de una historia de desencuentros y de intolerancias. Si tampoco faltaron en ella momentos cumbres de entendimiento, que propiciaron relaciones abiertas al desarrollo de la ciencia y de la cultura, como el desarrollado por la Escuela de traductores de Toledo, fundada por Alfonso X

el Sabio a finales del siglo XI, esos momentos fueron más bien excepcionales. Los musulmanes retienen en sus mentes las masacres que perpetraron los cruzados, la Reconquista y la expulsión de los moriscos. El esplendor de Al-Andalus permanece en el corazón de muchos musulmanes como una herida abierta y mal curada, que clama venganza. "No olvidamos", decían en el Cairo los eslóganes de los que se oponían a la conmemoración del 521 aniversario de la toma de Granada por los Reyes Católicos.

Hablar del Islam en el continente europeo requiere igualmente pensar en la presencia poco conocida de un Islam de vieja raigambre, cuyos inicios remontan a las incursiones y conquistas del Imperio otomano en Europa. Es el caso de países como Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria y Macedonia...

La relación de Europa con el Islam no puede obviar tampoco el impacto negativo de la colonización. Los países musulmanes la experimentaron como una humillación de la que consiguieron liberarse. Las paradojas de la historia hicieron que la descolonización favoreciera el trasvase de poblaciones, muchas de ellas musulmanas hacia Europa a través de la inmigración: indo-pakistaníes a Inglaterra; argelinos, marroquíes y africanos subsaharianos a Francia y Bélgica, turcos a Alemania, indonesios a los Países Bajos,

Según el escritor y sociólogo, Felice Dassetto, las estadísticas hablan de 12 a 15 millones de musulmanes en Europa Occidental que, sumados a los de vieja raigambre de Europa del este, alcanzarían los 25 millones, sin incluir Turquía, que suma ella sola más de 70 millones de habitantes, un dato a tener muy en cuenta en el caso de que algún día entren en la comunidad Europea. Claro está que, como toda estadística, requiere prudencia para interpretarla. Las cifras no suelen determinar con exactitud el grado de adhesión al Islam. Descubriríamos probablemente que muchos de ellos, que han abandonado la práctica religiosa, continúan identificándose con el Islam en referencia al origen de sus padres o a su cultura. La clasificación por pertenencia religiosa está prohibida en la mayoría de los países europeos. Así mismo, según el mismo sociólogo, sería un error hablar de los musulmanes euro-

peos a partir de la inmigración, porque muchos de ellos están naturalizados en Europa y son por lo tanto ciudadanos europeos.

El tablero estadístico **Musulmán en Europa** daría poco más o menos el siguiente resultado:

### 1. Islam de arraigo reciente

Países	Habitantes	Musulmanes	Porcentajes
Europa	437.261.244	13.922.120	3,18%
Alemania	82.500.000	3.000.000	3,6%
Bélgica	10.300.000	400.000	4%
España	43.100.000	1.000.000	2,3%
Francia	62.300.000	5 o 6.000.000	8 o 9,6%
Inglaterra	59.200.000	1.480.000	2,5%
Italia	58.400.000	825.000	1,4%
Grecia	10.000.000	370.000	3,7%
Holanda	16.300.000	945.000	5,8%

### 2. Islam de vieja raigambre

Países	Habitantes	Musulmanes	Porcentajes
Albania	3.100.000	1.200.000	70%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	3.800.000	1.500.000	40%
Bulgaria	8.487.317	1.026.758	14%
Macedonia	2.100.000	630.000	30%
Serbia y Montenegro	8.100.000	450.000	5%
Kosovo	405.000	1.800.000	90%

Sources: Uk Foreign Office 1999-2005

Una de las características demográficas de la población musulmana en Europa es su juventud. Basta con recorrer los nombres de los niños registrados en los Ayuntamientos de Bélgica, por ejemplo, para percatarse que una buena proporción de ellos lleva nombres musulmanes, como Mohammed, Ahmed, Sara, Fátima, etc., hasta el punto que en Bruselas, algunas escuelas católicas se plantean el tema de la educación islámica, debido al número de musulmanes que asisten a sus aulas. En Bélgica, este es un tema de debate que levanta muchas ampollas.

### La historia reciente

La historia reciente del Islam en el conjunto de la UE tiene sus raíces en el fenómeno de la inmigración. Este es un hecho sociológico y económico incontestable. Su estudio tiene interés, sobre todo, por la manera en que se ha producido, como un proceso *in crescendo* no sólo numéricamente, sino también cualitativamente. Algunos hablan de este proceso en términos de islamización. El término me parece exagerado.

### **La etapa de los inicios, en los albores de los años 60**

Fue la época de la independencia de casi todos los países africanos y del *boom* industrial y económico de los países europeos. Hacía falta mano de obra y Europa no dudó en solicitarla allí donde podía encontrarla. El resultado fue una inmigración masiva de mano de obra extranjera que provenía principalmente de países islámicos. Se trataba de gente que venía a Europa a trabajar, sin intenciones de asentamiento. Su estancia en Europa no requería demasiadas estructuras ni religiosas ni culturales, solo un mínimo de bienestar, un contrato de trabajo justo, una vivienda y, a menudo, una mezquita como lugar de encuentro para satisfacer a sus necesidades espirituales. Venían a Europa y volvían regularmente a sus países de origen.

### **La etapa de afianzamiento**

A esta etapa inicial siguió la de su afianzamiento. Los inmigrantes no se contentaban con ir de vacaciones a sus respectivos países de origen, sino que, al amparo de las políticas favorables a los reagrupamientos familiares, fueron estableciéndose en Europa de manera definitiva. El sociólogo Felice Dassetto pone el ejemplo de Bruselas: “la presencia de las poblaciones de origen musulmán ha dado nacimiento a barrios en los que el espacio público ha cobrado una nueva dimensión. En efecto, desde los comienzos de los años 70, estos lugares han visto la emergencia de un Islam cada vez más visible: salas de oración, carnicerías halal, librerías, tiendas de objetos religiosos, librerías islámicas, etc. En concomitancia, a finales de los años 80, comenzaron a verse expresiones más afirmativas de identidad musulmana en los ámbitos públicos: el uso de la barba y la gandura entre los hombres y el pañuelo (hijab) y a veces el velo (niqab) de color azul fuerte o estrictamente negro, propio de los salafistas, en las mujeres”, que no dejaron de provocar reacciones de rechazo en el resto de la población.

### **La etapa institucional**

Esta visibilidad se hizo cada vez más real no solamente en el espacio público de la ciudad, sino también en las instituciones: escuelas, hospitales, servicios sociales, administraciones públicas, etc. Las organizaciones islámicas, cada vez más numerosas y mejor organizadas, unificaron sus esfuerzos para lograr acuerdos que les permitieran asentar su adecuada ubicación jurídica en los diferentes países europeos. De esta manera, de la implantación cuasi-privada del Islam en Europa, se pasó a una presencia pública jurídicamente adecuada. Ejemplo de ello fue el acuerdo, en 1992, entre el Estado español y las diferentes instituciones musulmanas afincadas en nuestro país. Estos acuerdos alcanzan temas tan delicados como el de las escuelas islámicas, los cementerios, la comida halal, las capellanías en las prisiones y el Ejército, las mezquitas, la formación de los funcionarios religiosos, etc. El objetivo de las organizaciones musulmanas en todos los países de Europa ha sido claro: obtener para la religión musulmana la igualdad de derechos, comparable a la de las demás religiones.

### **Contexto Mundial**

Este proceso no ha sido una empresa fácil. Dos realidades han acompañado de manera concomitante el proceso de afianzamiento del Islam en Europa: la crónica de la violencia islámica y el aumento de la islamofobia; dos procesos de signo contrario, pero que tienen el mismo punto de partida: una sicología inmadura y una mente de corto alcance intelectual.

Recordemos esta crónica de la violencia, a través de los acontecimientos más significativos, producidos en el mundo en relación al Islam, durante estos últimos cuarenta años. Los enumero sin tratar de ser exhaustivo: la crisis del petróleo, la revolución iraní liderada por el imán Jomeini, la *fatua* contra Salman Rusdhi, en 1989, por su libro: "Los Versos Satánicos", las polémicas en torno al porte del velo islámico en los lugares públicos, los cientos de miles de muertos durante la guerra civil de la década de los 90 en Argelia, el nacimiento del movimiento yihadista de Al Qaeda, el atentado a las Torres Gemelas y al Pentágono en septiembre de 2001, y posteriormente los de Madrid (2004) y Londres (julio de 2005), el

asesinato selectivo de Teo Van Gogh en los Países Bajos, las reacciones violentas posteriores a la publicación de las caricaturas de Mahoma en Dinamarca así como las reacciones al discurso del Papa Benedicto XVI en Ratisbona. Y todavía recientemente, la situación generada por las revueltas político-sociales en torno a los países que han protagonizado las mal llamadas "primaveras árabes", la guerra civil en Siria, la interminable saga de Afganistán, el polvorín pakistaní y la ocupación del norte de Malí por parte de una nebulosa de grupos yihadistas e islamistas.

Estos hechos, interpretados muchas veces de manera sesgada por los medios de comunicación social, han contribuido a una progresiva reacción de miedo generalizado hacia el Islam y hacia los musulmanes. El análisis, deliberadamente unilateral y torcido de estos acontecimientos, apoyado en prejuicios nacionales y xenófobos, ha convertido a los extranjeros y, sobre todo, al Islam en una amenaza para Europa, considerada como víctima de una voluntad programada de islamización, que sería ella misma obra de oscuros diseños expansionistas de los dirigentes de las más altas instancias islámicas, como la Organización de los países Islámicos, apoyados por las finanzas de la Arabia Saudí. Esta sensación de amenaza ha dado lugar al desarrollo de partidos políticos y movimientos de extrema derecha hostiles a los extranjeros, sobre todo musulmanes. Entre ellos se encuentran el Vlaams Belang en Bélgica, el Partij voor de Vrijheid de Geert Wilders, la Liga Norte en Italia y el Frente Nacional de Marine le Pen, en Francia, entre otros... En el peor de los casos, se trata de movimientos racistas y xenófobos, cuyo punto de mira es el Islam y el judaísmo, y que desgraciadamente se inspiran del pasado cristiano menos evangélico. Su propaganda circula en la libertad que otorgan los multimedia.



From arabic: "The patience and the Grace"

### Descripción aproximativa del Islam europeo

El Islam, en general, no existe. Existen los musulmanes de carne y hueso, que pertenecen a muchas y variadas tendencias. Existen muchas maneras de ser y de vivir el Islam. Lo mismo que hay muchas maneras de ser y de vivir el Cristianismo. Meter a todos en el mismo saco nos lleva a cometer errores de perspectiva. Los elementos básicos de la fe y de la práctica cultural musulmana son relativamente pocos. La diversidad es una de las notas comunes del Islam. Dentro de lo funda-

mental que es la fe en un Dios Único y en la revelación del Corán, el Islam admite interpretaciones muy variadas, que dependen de la adhesión a las dos grandes ramas mayoritarias del Islam: el chiismo y el sunnismo. Ambos tienen su propio sistema de pensamiento y sus propias escuelas jurídicas. Así ocurre, por ejemplo, dentro del sunnismo, en cuyo

seno se desarrollan cuatro tradiciones jurídicas: el hanefismo, el chafiismo, el hanbalismo y el malekismo.

Hago observar que una de las características del Islam es la enorme permisividad de conciencia, cuando se trata de la práctica de la religión, una libertad garantizada, siempre que no redunde en mal ejemplo para el resto de la comunidad musulmana.

El Islam ha desarrollado en sus seguidores una convicción muy arraigada de pertenencia a la comunidad islámica, pero en la realidad, existen musulmanes de toda clase y condición: practicantes y no practicantes, conformistas, místicos, sabios y pensadores, tradicionalistas, retrógados y violentos. Este paisaje variopinto del Islam es sobre todo realidad en la comunidad europea. La permanencia prolongada de los inmigrantes en Europa, les ha convertido en ciudadanos europeos y ha dejado en ellos una mentalidad peculiar. Hanifa Touag, una joven musulmana que prepara su doctorado en sociología por la Universidad Católica de Lovaina y es miembro del *Centre Interdisciplinaire d'Etudes de l'Islam dans le Monde Contemporain* (CISMOC), afirmaba recientemente que "los jóvenes musulmanes se parecen mu-

cho a los demás jóvenes europeos”. Y añadía que, tanto musulmanes como no musulmanes, son el resultado de una misma formación en la escuela y en la universidad, se bañan en la misma cultura individualista, secularizante, independiente, informatizada, autónoma y alejada de las instituciones oficiales que todos conocemos. Las encuestas muestran que los jóvenes se identifican con los valores de los países en donde viven: la democracia, la libertad de expresión, etc. Pero, en cierta manera, hay una contradicción, porque muchos de ellos confiesan su adhesión al Islam, aunque acaso más como cultura que como religión. Es difícil renunciar a la cultura en que uno ha nacido.

Los musulmanes que desarrollan posturas radicales existen, pero son relativamente poco numerosos. Los sociólogos, que analizan la situación, afirman que los radicalismos nacen sobre todo en contextos de pobreza y marginación social: el hacinamiento de los barrios pobres, la falta de expectativas de trabajo y de futuro personal, familiar y social.

### **Cómo se plantea el tema del Islam en Europa**

Es una pregunta que tiene su importancia. El problema más arduo del encuentro del Islam con Europa se presenta fundamentalmente bajo el signo de una crisis cultural, un malestar profundo, que se deriva de la dificultad concreta que tienen los musulmanes para adaptarse a los cambios de la modernidad. En el fondo es una cuestión de integración y de co-inclusión mutua. Es una afirmación general que necesito explicar.

Hasta hace relativamente poco tiempo, el Islam ha vivido en un área protegida, el “dar el Islam” o ámbito islámico, compuesto por países de mayoría musulmana. En este ámbito, las leyes, la cultura, los modos de vida protegían a los musulmanes del influjo externo, del ámbito que los juristas musulmanes llamaban “dar el harb”, es decir, el ámbito donde se producen hostilidades guerreras. El término “Harb” en árabe significa guerra. En otras palabras, dar el harb se refiere a los países que no son musulmanes. En los países islámicos, todo exteriormente ayudaba a los musulmanes a vivir bien integrados en su propia religión y

cultura. Ese mundo ha desaparecido. En Europa, la mayoría de los juristas musulmanes han abandonado esa terminología y usan otros medios -las fatuas- para responder a problemas concretos de los fieles que quieren ser fieles a los preceptos del Islam en el contexto europeo.

Mohammed Charfi, jurista tunecino, describe muy bien el proceso que sufren las sociedades musulmanas y las dificultades que encuentran para integrarse en los cambios modernos. Charfi dice que este proceso toma su punto de partida en la diferencia existente entre el Estado moderno y el Estado antiguo. Antaño, el Estado musulmán era de tipo religioso; formaban parte de él los musulmanes. Los que no eran musulmanes tenían un estatus especial de extranjeros. El jefe del Estado era califa del profeta y príncipe de los creyentes. Su misión era religiosa y su objetivo la ejecución de la ley de Dios. En cambio, el Estado moderno en Occidente es nacional. Agrupa en su seno a todos los ciudadanos, tanto musulmanes como no. Su misión se confina al ámbito social de organizar la coexistencia de todos, promulgando leyes para todo el mundo. El debate sobre la reforma del Islam dura más de dos siglos. Es un problema interno al Islam, entre musulmanes tradicionalistas y progresistas. Uno de los musulmanes que más lucha por la apertura del Islam a una concepción más adaptada a los tiempos modernos es el filósofo francés, Abdennour Bidar. Se expresa en los siguientes términos: “la mayor parte de los musulmanes rehusan y recusan el derecho a discutir lo que la tradición ha establecido desde hace milenios: ritos, principios, costumbres que no corresponden para nada a las necesidades del tiempo presente”.

En el mundo de hoy, los ámbitos religiosos o culturales no contaminados ya no existen o están a punto de desaparecer. Vivimos en un mundo barajado a saciedad. El turismo, las inmigraciones, las tecnologías modernas, los medios de comunicación social, el Internet, los intercambios económicos, han transformado la faz de la tierra. El mundo se ha convertido en la casa común de todos, la casa de todas las convicciones y de todas las religiones. Vivimos en un mundo globalizado y plural al mismo tiempo. Los acontecimientos más diversos, ocurridos en los lugares más alejados

de la tierra, pueden verse en tiempo real, en cualquier parte del mundo: la peregrinación a la Meca, las ceremonias del Vaticano, los funerales de los políticos, la elección de un jefe de Estado, los Juegos Olímpicos, etc. El mundo ha cambiado. Nos toca aprender a vivir en este mundo diferente en lo social, en lo cultural y en lo religioso. El problema no está en cómo asimilar la tecnología, la informática, el manejo de una lavadora o de un coche. La habilidad en el manejo de la técnica se puede combinar con una fe auténtica. El problema es más profundo. Está en la mentalidad, en el modo de relación que establecemos con las personas, el "otro" diferente, el dinero, el poder, el sexo, las leyes, las religiones.

Antonio Gramsci, político italiano de finales del siglo XIX, declaraba que "cuando lo viejo no muere y lo nuevo no acaba de nacer se produce una crisis". Cuando digo que el Islam está en crisis no quiero decir que se trate de una crisis de identidad de fe. Es importante decirlo. En este sentido no hay crisis. En su mayoría, los musulmanes se muestran seguros en su fe. Mi experiencia de encuentro con el Islam, tanto en Sudán, como en Burkina Faso y en otras partes del mundo, me ha permitido constatar la fuerza y el arraigo de la fe musulmana. La pertenencia a la gran comunidad musulmana, la Umma, es un sentimiento que ha calado muy profundamente en las mentalidades. El Islam es una religión y al mismo tiempo una cultura, una tradición que no se abandona, ni siquiera cuando uno es poco practicante. Lo he constatado muchas veces. Esta es la razón por la que apostatar de la fe y convertirse a otra religión es cosa que ocurre muy raramente entre los musulmanes.

La crisis se refiere a la dificultad que tienen las sociedades musulmanas en general -pero lo mismo ocurre en otro tipo de sociedades- para combinar fe y razón, fe y ciencia. La secularización de las sociedades musulmanas es menos visible exteriormente, pero se produce. La explicación del mundo ya no es monopolio de las religiones. La ciencia ofrece explicaciones que contradicen lo que dicen las religiones. La educación que reciben los jóvenes musulmanes en los colegios y en las universidades europeas y la enseñanza en las mezquitas no se corresponden. Hay temas y explicaciones que

no encajan. Temas como el origen del universo y de la vida, la revelación, los fundamentos de la ética, las relaciones entre la fe y la razón... El sociólogo Felice Dassetto señala igualmente la incapacidad de los musulmanes europeos a producir un discurso independiente con respecto a sus países de origen, la mayoría de los cuales se rigen todavía por criterios vetustos entresacados de la ley islámica.

El referencial de las sociedades modernas no es el dogma religioso ni la moral propuesta por las religiones, sino las leyes elaboradas democráticamente y de manera autónoma en función del bien común de todos los que forman parte del país. Vivimos en sociedades globales, pluralistas, multiculturales y multireligiosas. La visión de la vida social en Europa se construye sobre una visión del hombre y la sociedad basada en la autonomía de lo político respecto a lo religioso.

El Islam ha irrumpido en Europa con su propia visión del mundo. La integración del Islam en Europa no parece cosa fácil, pero es posible. Aprender a vivir juntos, requiere debates, acuerdos y compromisos que hagan justicia a la parte de razón que todos llevamos con nosotros. La integración del Islam en Europa no quiere decir asimilación ni exclusión, sino coinclusión en el respeto de las diferencias. Traducirlo en la práctica requiere sentido del bien común. Es difícil, sobre todo en los casos litigiosos en los que parece que no se respeta la identidad de cada uno. De ahí, los debates en torno al velo islámico, a la laicidad del Estado, la libertad de expresión, la libertad de conciencia, el derecho a la enseñanza religiosa, a los cuidados médicos, a los problemas que plantea la bioética, los tabúes alimenticios, la comida halal, el derecho al trabajo sin discriminación por motivos de sexo o convicción religiosa, tradiciones y ritos religiosos como la circuncisión, la oración en la vía pública, el derecho a la representatividad política, etc. ¿Hasta dónde pueden ir las concesiones? Las soluciones son diferentes según las legislaciones estatales. El Reino Unido admite la jurisdicción de los tribunales islámicos en materias que conciernen el estatuto personal, por ejemplo en temas como el divorcio y el derecho de sucesión.

### **El equipo arcere/pecre**

Deseo añadir otras pocas constataciones. Apenas ha pasado un año desde que nuestro pequeño equipo de Padres Blancos se instaló en la capital de Europa con el encargo de seguir la evolución cultural y religiosa que se está operando en Europa, una evolución de la que forma parte el Islam de manera irreversible. Señalo algunas constataciones que me afectan personalmente.

Mi primera constatación es que Europa ha cambiado mucho desde hace tres o cuatro décadas. La Europa que conocí cuando me marché a África por primera vez ya no es la misma. Me cuesta entender lo que pasa. Constato que Europa es otro mundo. Cuando nos marchamos a África por primera vez, los misioneros éramos respetados, admirados y queridos por la mayoría de la gente, incluso los menos practicantes. Eramos un punto de referencia, un modelo. No lo digo porque tenga nostalgia de ello, sino para subrayar el cambio cultural que se ha operado en Europa. La cultura religiosa ha desaparecido. Nos cuesta admitirlo como un signo de los tiempos.

De esto se deriva otra constatación. En la misión, los misioneros gozábamos de mucho protagonismo. Nuestras relaciones con la gente eran fáciles y cercanas. Lo que decíamos tenía relevancia. Se nos escuchaba. Eramos considerados como los especialistas del diálogo interreligioso. Teníamos la experiencia de los muchos años pasados en África. Esta experiencia es preciosa y sigue siendo válida, por lo menos hasta cierto punto. Pero, en Europa, el debate no es de orden religioso, sino social. Los derechos se refieren no a la religión sino a la persona y al bien común de todos en la sociedad. Deriva en deberes y derechos cuya administración es competencia del Estado.

El debate se sitúa en la ciudad, en la calle, en las instituciones, en la política, en la economía. Los interlocutores más idóneos son los intelectuales, los juristas, los sociólogos, políticos y economistas. La sociedad civil y el Estado. Las religiones son un complemento ético y espiritual, que no siempre es bien recibido. Necesitamos humildad para encontrar nuestro sitio en una sociedad multicultural y multireligiosa.

El dialogo interreligioso pasa por este preámbulo societario. Tenemos que acostumbrarnos a distinguir entre los valores enraizados en el Evangelio y las ideologías o pretensiones de la Iglesia como grupo sociológico. El diálogo con la sociedad requiere atención a los derechos humanos, la justicia, la igualdad y la libertad. Se han acabado los derechos divinos, las prerrogativas, los privilegios y las exenciones. Todas las religiones son iguales ante las leyes. ¿Cuándo lo entenderemos?

En Europa, podemos decir que las leyes garantizan a todos el respeto de los derechos individuales, en la igualdad, sin distinción de sexo, raza, religión o cultura, el derecho a la libertad de conciencia y la libertad de culto y de expresión. No se trata de derechos sino también de deberes. La sociedad europea plural exige de todos, ateos, agnósticos, musulmanes y cristianos asumir sus responsabilidades ciudadanas, promover leyes que tengan en cuenta la identidad de todos los que forman parte de ella y hacerlas operativas para vivir en paz y armonía. En este mundo globalizado que vivimos está claro que no se puede vivir con una mentalidad de conquista, basada en la superioridad de una religión o de una cultura sobre otra, con el deseo de controlar y ejercer cualquier tipo de hegemonía, religiosa, política, cultural o económica. La sociedad es cosa de todos los que la componen.

Andrea Riccardi, fundador de San Egidio y presidente de la Cátedra de los Bernardinos de París, abundaba sobre este tema, diciendo en el discurso inaugural que el problema de Europa no es tanto “la secularización de la sociedad, sino la globalización: La Iglesia ha hablado mucho de la secularización”. Riccardi piensa que nos hemos dejado atormentar por esta idea y que nos gana el pesimismo: “Hoy día, en este mundo globalizado, la gente, los hombres y mujeres viven como si estuvieran fuera de órbita, con el sentimiento de inseguridad metido en el cuerpo... el catolicismo europeo vive atormentado con el sentimiento de fracaso. La idea es que cuanto más nos modernizamos más nos alejamos de la religión. Sería algo así como una ley ineluctable. Pero, el problema, no es tanto la secularización, que convierte al cristianismo en algo privado y lo

conduce a los márgenes de la vida social, sino la globalización". Riccardi piensa igualmente que el fenómeno del pluralismo es una especie de "kayrós", una oportunidad misionera hacia lo universal: "Hoy día, lo lejano se ha convertido en algo cercano. Pero, solo físicamente.

Hace falta que esa cercanía física se convierta en espiritual. La espiritualidad que tenemos que crear es la de abrirnos a todos, responder a los desafíos del hombre planetario de hoy y establecer cercanías entre mundos diferentes. En otros tiempos, las culturas diferían unas de otras porque se desconocían y no hacían nada para conocerse; hoy día, tenemos más contactos y nos conocemos mejor, pero tenemos el peligro de enfrentarnos

Los conflictos existen y existirán siempre. Su solución no es la respuesta airada ni la violencia física, sino el entendimiento, la voluntad de vivir juntos, el aprecio y el respeto mutuo y una adecuada educación a la vida en sociedad. Aprender a vivir juntos en sociedades multiculturales y multireligiosas es una necesidad en el mundo de hoy. Los criterios basados en el predominio de una religión, raza o cultura no sirven. La democracia, la igualdad de derechos, la libertad de religión y de conciencia, sin privilegios y exclusiones, son la garantía y la condición de una vida en paz y armonía. Una buena integración mutua no excluye evidentemente el aprecio de la propia identidad, aquilatada a través de una larga historia. El respeto hacia esa identidad es fundamental para el entendimiento mutuo. La acogida requiere reciprocidad.

Nos encontramos en Bruselas, la capital de la Unión Europea. En Bruselas se juega el futuro de una nueva Europa diversa y plural desde muchos puntos de vista: cultural, religiosa, política, económica y racial; una Europa no excluyente, libre y democrática, de acceso para todos los que se acogen a ella. Europa existe todavía como proceso. El premio Nobel de la paz que han atribuido a Europa es una manera de reconocer que ese proceso es válido y legítimo. En su crisol se construye una nueva visión del mundo, siempre perfectible. Nos queda mucho camino por recorrer. Acompañar este proceso es el trabajo que nos proponemos los miembros de nuestro equipo, aportando

nuestra experiencia misionera, un "plus" de sentido que me parece muy significativo. Sabemos lo que quiere decir el respeto de otras culturas y religiones. Nuestra experiencia es valiosa y la ofrecemos a los que nos la piden. Hay también limitaciones. Acaso en Europa nos faltan los contactos personales que tanto apreciábamos en África. Pero, no trabajamos solos y de manera aislada. Lo hacemos en comunión con la Iglesia local, el clero, las congregaciones religiosas, la sociedad civil y las instituciones tanto católicas como las que no lo son, tratando ser sal y fermento de la sociedad. Como en todas las cosas, en este tema también, nuestro miedo de actuar se refiere a la universalidad profundamente espiritual de Jesús, abierta a Dios y a la fraternidad universal. Desde la atalaya de nuestra página web ([www.arcree.org](http://www.arcree.org)), puede uno darse cuenta de los temas que atraen nuestra atención y preocupan a la sociedad europea en que vivimos.

### **Conclusión**

El biólogo y moralista, Jean Rostand, dice algo muy importante en su libro: "Inquietudes de un biólogo": "No me importa saber cómo será el aspecto de las ciudades el día de mañana, la arquitectura de las casas y la velocidad de los vehículos. Me importa, sobre todo, saber el sabor que tendrá la vida, las razones para amar y actuar. Me pregunto ¿de qué pozo sacaremos el aliento para vivir? Se gana más amando que entendiendo las cosas... prefiero el amor a la inteligencia".

Añado otra referencia que me conforta en mi tarea. Es del fundador de San Egidio, que ya he citado antes. Dice así: "nos encontramos en el umbral de una era por explorar, un momento histórico del mundo que Antonio Gramsci, pensador marxista del siglo pasado, definía como grande, hermoso y terrible". Suerte y gracia de Dios.

Ref: *Misiones Extranjeras*, n.252, Enero-Febrero 2013, pp.45-49.

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## Antiochia, isola felice del dialogo interreligioso

**F**orse è la prima volta che succede in Paesi a prevalenza islamica nel mondo: sulla porta della chiesa cattolica, il parroco ha dovuto esporre l'orario delle visite. Accade ad Antiochia (Turchia), dove il cappuccino P. Domenico Bertogli, per riservarsi almeno lo spazio necessario alla preghiera, ha dovuto notificare ai molti visitatori turchi, e quindi musulmani, che la *Katolik Kilisesi* si può visitare dalle 9 alle 12 e dalle 15 alle 17.

Per chi conosce Antiochia la notizia rientra nella "normalità", perché probabilmente solo qui la pacifica convivenza e il rispetto tra le varie religioni risale ai tempi degli Apostoli Pietro e Paolo, quando la città, miscuglio di culture, di etnie e di religioni, anziché bandire gli ultimi arrivati - i seguaci di Cristo - li chiamò con un nome che ha resistito al tempo: cristiani.

Per chi non conosce Antiochia è, invece, una piccola-grande rivelazione che si aggiunge a tante altre che la Cronaca annuale, preparata da P. Domenico e inviata anche al Papa, riporta con scrupolosa fedeltà, al punto che gli storici di domani non potranno assolutamente ignorarla, pena l'incompletezza della loro esposizione.

Le "rivelazioni" riguardano non solo il movimento intorno alla cappella posta all'interno della missione cattolica, situata in un triangolo ecumenico unico al mondo (chiesa cattolica, moschea e sinagoga sono così vicine che si toccano), ma anche la vita cittadina e nazionale, sulle quali P. Domenico apre finestre che le grandi agenzie ignorano. Chi ha mai parlato, per esempio, del "Coro delle civiltà", che il

sindaco di Antiochia ha voluto con la partecipazione di cantori musulmani, ebrei, ortodossi, cattolici e protestanti per eseguire canti popolari turchi in tutta Europa? O del Presidente degli affari religiosi, Prof. Ali Bardakoğlu, che ha raccomandato agli iman di comportarsi nel loro ufficio come i parroci cattolici, visitando le famiglie, istruendo i giovani e rappacificando eventuali contendenti?

E, tra i cattolici, chi sa che ad Antiochia da una decina d'anni ortodossi e cattolici celebrano la Pasqua nello stesso giorno; che hanno un

unico ufficio della Caritas per aiutare i poveri; che la "missione" si trova, a detta di un gruppo di archeologi francesi, nel nucleo in cui fu fondata la prima comunità cristiana, dove si trovavano le "chiese-famiglia?"

Piccole cose, ma preziosi tasselli di un mosaico in cui si inseriscono la festa ecumenica di S. Pietro

nella "sua" Grotta il 29 giugno; la partecipazione alla preghiera comunitaria di giovani musulmani, ortodossi e cattolici nel cortile della missione; la stima che gode il parroco cattolico presso le autorità, al punto che il Ministro della Giustizia il giorno dei funerali di Mons. Luigi Padovese a Iskenderun, ha dato ordine alla polizia di non fermarlo per eccesso di velocità, dovendo arrivare in tempo alla missione per la celebrazione festiva?

Tasselli più interessanti sono le segnalazioni delle visite di alte personalità dello Stato, di Ministri, di ambasciatori, giornalisti, registi, scrittori, alla cappella ricavata nella missione, un piccolo capolavoro che, rispettando l'antico



Ancient Roman road map, 1624

<http://www.californiamapsociety.org>

stile orientale, indulge a tracce di classicismo in cui si inseriscono bene anche le icone dipinte da un musulmano e che splendono come quelle delle absidi bizantine.

Esse sono silenziose testimoni di incontri ecumenici, di battesimi di neo-convertiti, della visita di decine di giovani che chiedono spiegazioni sul cristianesimo; di pellegrini che arrivano o tornano tra i vicoli della vecchia Antiochia che, “per riconciliarsi con la storia”, sarà riportata non all'età romana, quando i palazzi erano circondati da giardini meravigliosi e una flora da riviera, ma agli inizi dell'800, al tempo in cui nacque il quartiere attuale. Realtà così vive che la TV nazionale ha inserito Antiochia nella serie “*Biryer var*” (C'è un luogo), che presenta le rarità del Paese.

Stupendi i “quadretti” descritti con parole veloci, come quello del dentista ortodosso, morto qualche mese fa, che ogni sabato portava una rosa alla Madonna e caramelle per i bambini che curava gratuitamente; dell'imam che si sente onorato dell'amicizia del prete cattolico; del vecchietto che, avendo bisogno di denaro per un intervento chirurgico, supplica il missionario di comprare un vecchio orologio a pendolo e si asciuga una lacrima mentre si allontana guardandolo per l'ultima volta; della ragazza violentata dal padre che chiede preghiere; della “morte” di Babbo Natale, sostituito dai Magi per restituire al Natale la sua sacralità; del rifugiato marocchino che ruba Bibbie in varie lingue; delle monache trappiste dirette in Siria per aprire un monastero; dei pellegrini che arrivano a piedi attraversando la vasta pianura dell'Athay, ridente di uve e dorati frumenti.

*La Cronaca di P. Domenico risuscita tempi, luoghi e situazioni, facendo di Antiochia un santuario a cielo aperto, un paese dell'anima, il luogo di convegno di quanti vogliono immergersi in un'atmosfera che ha conservato le orme delle scene e dei fatti che vi accaddero e che nessun fanatismo potrà mai sconoscere.*

Le parentesi sulla vita nazionale aperte dalla Cronaca inquadrano notizie introvabili altrove, come: l'abolizione del visto fra Turchia e Siria; la risposta di un giornalista turco all'indignazione per il referendum svizzero sul no alla costruzione dei minareti (“La Svizzera -ha scritto Serkan Ocak - ha agito male, ma in Turchia la Chiesa è davvero libera?”); la nascita di un ennesimo Partito, TDH (Partito del cambiamento); l'aumento dei carcerati, raddoppiati nel giro di cinque anni; la sistemazione dell'Oronte, fiume imperiale e cristiano che s'impaluda e si sfalda in acquitrini malarici; la crisi economica che impone di risparmiare perfino sui montoni sacrificati per il *Kurban Bayram* (Festa del sacrificio); la prima visita di un Presidente turco a una sinagoga (ad Antiochia, naturalmente!), accolto dal suono del shofar; la progressiva perdita di potere dei militari; l'ammissione di una “pluralità dell'identità turca”; il riconoscimento dell'esistenza di un problema armeno e curdo.

Tutti sappiamo che Antiochia è più viva negli “Atti degli Apostoli” che nei luoghi che rimangono: se si toglie la Grotta di S. Pietro, alta fra rocce indolenzite che si sgretolano impedendo l'ingresso, la città è una fotocopia d'un qualsiasi agglomerato turco, dominato da una selva di minareti. La Cronaca di P. Domenico risuscita tempi, luoghi e situazioni, facendo di Antiochia un santuario a cielo aperto, un paese dell'anima, il luogo di convegno di quanti vogliono immergersi in un'atmosfera che ha conservato le orme delle scene e dei fatti che vi accaddero e che nessun fanatismo potrà mai sconoscere.

Ref: *Religioni in Italia*, n.382, gennaio-febbraio 2011, pp. 28-30.

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## Misreading Qur'ân 4:157 as denying Christian belief

Starting in the nineteenth century and continuing up to the present, popularized exegesis of Qur'ân 4:157, forgetting its original context, reads into that verse a denial of Christian doctrine. In the nineteenth century, especially in the Subcontinent, Muslims, so long conquerors and colonizers, experienced themselves as conquered and colonized. As their previous position put other religions under threat, their new position was experienced as threatening to theirs. A new apologetic emerged, its key element, disparaging the Christian scriptures as corrupted and unreliable. This led to a new interpretation of Qur'ân 4:157 as denying a *purportedly false Christian* belief that Jesus had been crucified.

### Medieval exegesis

The innovation of 'Abd al-Jabbar (d.1025) had been to put Judas at the centre of the crucifixion drama, as much for putative, historical reasons as for psychological ones. Pseudo-Barnabas' would do the same in a later fabricated attempt to provide a foundation for what had become commonplace. 'Abd al-Jabbar draws on the apocrypha to achieve this:<sup>15</sup> Judas allegedly identified an innocent man as Jesus; the Romans knew neither Jesus, nor the one they crucified; miraculous intervention is thus eliminated; the duplicate, explicable rationally.

Al-Razi (d.1207) dwells at length on the anthropomorphisms in the traditional reading of Qur'ân 3:55, stressing that God is not located "somewhere". To that extent he moves closer to the Christian affirmation of Christ's real death by crucifixion. His *tafsir* however, had little influence on later Muslim exegesis.

Ibn Kathir (d.1373) avoids reference to Zamakshari even though by then Zamakshari's *tafsir* had acquired wide fame. It is surprising that a scholar as great as Al-Suyuti (d.1505) continues the emphasis on tradition found in Ibn Kathir, with no new interpretation of 4:157. Of eleven Traditions he presents, three are new. The first two describe Jesus' ascension and the third, citing al-Jabbar, holds that Jesus was raised: "In an assembly of truth in the presence of Sovereign Omnipotent" as articulated in 54:55. Al-Suyuti surpasses locomotive ascension but sticks with the traditions which affirm what for him is the most important aspect of the verse: God is ever-ready to protect the righteous and humiliate the disdainful.

Overall, classical and medieval exegesis absolves Christians from spreading false doctrines.<sup>16</sup> Al-Suyuti continues that tradition. Moreover he criticizes the principle of *mutawatir*, continuous attestation where there is no real source; introduces radical criticism of traditions; in some instances seemingly affirms the historicity of the crucifixion; and rejects the supposition of identity transfer. Subsequent commentators will choose to forget much of this.

### Religion of the Heart

Both Catholics and Protestants of the eighteenth century experienced: "a connection between the rise of early modern subjectivity, the religion of the heart, the cultivation of spiritual self-discipline, and the concurrent rise of global Christianity."<sup>17</sup> While Pietism

<sup>15</sup> S. M Stearn, Quotations from Apocryphal Gospels in 'Abd al-Jabbar, "Journal of Theological Studies" NS 18 (1) 1967, 34-57.

<sup>16</sup> Todd Lawson, "The Crucifixion and the Qur'an" pp. 112-142, esp. Pp, 112, 114, 121, 123, 126, 129, 133, 137, 140-1 & 142.

<sup>17</sup> David Hempton, "The Church in the Long Eighteenth Century," (Tauris, London, 2011), p.52.

enlivened Christianity, the Enlightenment challenged it, provoking much rethinking and re-evaluation.

Interaction between the spread of Christianity and secular powers was more complex and nuanced than sometimes portrayed. To describe the rise of Christian missions during this time in terms of complicity with colonialism, is one-sided and stereotyped. *Pace* Edward Said, there was never a unified Orientalist voice; missionaries provide one example of images of India different from colonial constructions.<sup>18</sup>

The interaction of enlightenment with religion of the heart might have found resonance with the great Sufi poet Khwājah Mir “Dard”<sup>19</sup> (d. 1785), one of the foundational pillars of Urdu poetry. Dard embodies initiation into and incorporation of religious philosophy and praxis of multiple lineages, effecting a wider range of acceptable, orthodox practice. One of the overarching principles of Dard’s venture is the essential unity of key methods of self-understanding and access to the divine. Law, *shariat*, the spiritual path, *tariqat* and experiential knowledge, *marafat*, are unified with regard to ultimate reality, *haqiqat*. *Shariat* is the outer level, *tariqat* the inner. *Marifat* is the secret, *sirr*, connected to the essence of each thing, and *haqiqat* is the secret of the secret, *sirr-i sūr*. Their reality and substance are the same.

Deep shifts in South Asian Islamic culture occurred between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Writings by and about Ghulam ‘Ali Azad Bilgrami (d. 1786) and Hajji Imdad Allah Muhajir Makki (d. 1899), illustrate this.<sup>20</sup> The cosmopolitanism of Bilgrami yields to defensiveness in Hajji Imdad Allah, engaged in resistance to British rule. The

breakup of scholarly networks previously supported by Muslim patronage, coincided with the decline of philosophical traditions and interest in Indian culture, along with the rise of scripturalist reformism concentrating on fundamental Islamic texts and addressing a broader Muslim public.

In Bilgrami’s world Arabia is the ritual centre but networks of religious scholarship and humanistic culture are firmly based in India. His wide intellectual formation included the study of authoritative Islamic religious texts, logical and philosophical treatises, humanistic Arabic and Persian poetry, plus the rich resources of non-Muslim Indian literature and aesthetics. It exhibited a pragmatic pluralism soon to go out of fashion. The contrast between Bilgrami and Imdad Allah is suggestive of the changing cultural landscape of Muslims in transition from pre-colonial to colonial India.

The context has changed; miracle stories of pilgrimage ships rescued by saintly intervention now featured European Christian ship captains, a sign of colonial domination turned to legitimate a saint. Imdad Allah was not interested in philosophy, the rational sciences, or the literary traditions of Hindu India. That reflects a significant change of emphasis in the nineteenth century. A splintered intellectual environment cannot bridge the gap between the intellectual and traditional Islamic sciences.

A crystallization of Islamic identity, in opposition to the British and the Hindus, trumped traditional intra-Islamic rivalries. Imdad Allah’s exile in Mecca vaunted Arab sanctuaries as the authentic home of Islam, making India an abode of alienation, and prefiguring the concept of Pakistan. An ironic consequence was the objectification of religion and its instrumentalization for political ends.

### **Mission from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century**

In Punjab, visits from Agra to Lahore in 1648, 1714 and in 1735 had indicated: “numerous Christians at Lahore apart from the

<sup>18</sup> Geoffrey A. Oddie, “Orientalism and British Protestant Missionary Constructions of India in the Nineteenth Century,” *South Asia* 17, 2 (1994): 28, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Hodayra Ziad, “I transcend myself like a melody” Khwājah Mir Dard and Music in Eighteenth-century Delhi,” *The Muslim World*, 97 no 4 Oct 2007, 548-570.

<sup>20</sup> Carl W. Ernst, “Reconfiguring South Asian Islam: From the 18th to the 19th Century,” *Comparative Islamic Studies*, 5 no 2 Nov 2009, 247-272.

army.”<sup>21</sup> They were left unharmed during the Afghan invasion in 1752. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Catholic missionary activity went into decline, caused by the eclipse of Spain, the Enlightenment, the suppression of the Jesuits<sup>22</sup>, and the organizational destruction following the French Revolution. Agra was taken over by the Carmelites in 1784. The last of the Jesuits had the Church there reconstructed in 1769 and later in 1772, and it was enlarged in 1835 under Bishop Pezzoni who in 1832 wrote of the churches in Lahore as: “*uguagliate al suolo o abbandonate*.”<sup>23</sup> A French priest Fr. Cafferel arrived at Lahore from Agra in 1846 and constructed a chapel in Lahore paid for by Catholic soldiers. It was replaced in 1861.

The first half of the 19th century was an age of Protestant mission. By August 1855, the United Presbyterian Church had begun its work in the Punjab.<sup>24</sup> For Catholics, rebuilding the Church within Europe took priority. History normally focuses on Lavigerie (1826-'92) or Comboni (1831-'81) when it turns to Catholic missions in the 19th century. But the crucial point of recovery was earlier, around 1840. Pope Gregory XVI (1831-46) while conservative at home, was a strong supporter

of the missionary cause. Francis Libermann (1802-1852), a convert from Judaism, was the thinker who profoundly integrated the missionary ideal into the spiritual life.<sup>25</sup> If Stephen Neill's "History of Christian Missions", never mentions Libermann, Owen Chadwick's, "The Victorian Church" never mentions missions. That enormous commitment of lives and resources went unnoticed. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church in the Punjab was being restructured. Leo XIII's "Humanae Salus" of 1886<sup>26</sup> finally concluded centuries of contention over the *Padroado*. Lahore became a diocese comprising the whole of the Punjab, the new Bishop Mouard taking up his responsibilities in March 1887. At the same time, the Capuchin order was rearranging its missionary strategy, assigning the Punjab mission to the Antwerp province with the first missionaries arriving shortly after the new bishop.

In the British Protestant case, the relation between missions and governments was one of mutual suspicion. During the missionary revival in the 1790s, most missionaries felt better off without state aid, while the imperial government was suspicious of the missionaries' religious enthusiasm as posing a threat to socio-political order, especially in India. Over time, these attitudes varied considerably from mutually supportive to deeply hostile. This shifting, complex picture belies the simplistic view of missionary enterprise as a tool of imperialism. Four overlapping chronological phases from the 1790s to the 1950s are distinguishable.<sup>27</sup> The first until c.1840 was marked by mutual discomfort, missionaries sometimes

<sup>21</sup> E. Maclagan "The Jesuits at the Court of the Great Moghal" (Dublin, 1938), p 287 n. 149, p.22 n.38.

<sup>22</sup> Two volumes of Documenta Indica, in Monumenta Missionum Societatis Jesu, cover 1540-1549 and Volume 2 (MHSJ, V), 1550-1553. The second volume of 'The Jesuits in Malabar,' narrates activities in southwest India from the mid-seventeenth century to the suspension of the order. R. Pierce Beaver, "Jesuit Missions through the Eighteenth Century", Church History, 22 no 4 Dec 1953, 329-336.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. pp. 30 and 320.n 61. The Afghan invasion of Lahore resulted in the expulsion of its Christian artillery corps to Kabul. J. Tieffenthaler, "Brevis ac succincta narratio expeditionis bellicae" in "Beschreibung von Hindustan" (Berlin, 1785[sic] vol.2, part 2, pp.174-5. Some of their descendents are in Peshawar to this day. J. Rooney, "On Heels of Battles" pp.98-99, gives the references to the Mill Hill Archives.

<sup>24</sup> On the early history of these missions cf. A. Gordon, "Our Indian Mission." (Philadelphia, 1914); J.W. Pickett "Christian Mass Movements in India" (Lucknow, 1933).

<sup>25</sup> Paul Coulon, Paule Brasseur, "Libermann 1802-1852: Une Pensée et une Mystique Missionnaires", (Paris, Cerf, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> "Acta Apostolicae Sedis" 19 (1886), 176-184. In 1784 following the suppression of the Jesuits, and a Carmelite interlude, Propaganda Fide transferred the whole of N. India to the Capuchin mission of Tibet. "Indice dei Decreti della Sacra Congregazione de P.Fide," (1719-1789), 1, 296R.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Porter, "Church History, History of Christianity, Religious History: Some Reflections on British Missionary Enterprise since the Late Eighteenth Century," **Church History**, 71 no 3 Sep 2002, p 555-584.

ridiculed as: “little detachments of maniacs.”<sup>28</sup> More persistent was the ambiguous attitude of missions and colonial governments not least in India. From the 1850s to the 1890s, rap-prochement reflected social realities. Missionaries were now “respectable” their supporters more widely drawn from the middle and upper classes.

Studies of nineteenth-century recruitment and training of Protestant missionaries indicate four clear lines of development: the growing proportion of well-educated, middle-class missionaries; rapid recruitment of single women after 1860; increasing status and professionalization supported by recruitment of university graduates, and by more systematic training from c.1910 onwards; and the mounting conservatism of lay volunteers aspiring to ordination. Missionaries working among Muslims however, were never more than a tiny minority of the total. “To cite only the Protestant record of the last century and a half, everywhere we find that direct work with Mohammedans has been the adventure of only a courageous few...”<sup>29</sup>

Nineteenth century encounter with Islam was often shaped, not by active engagement, but by factors arising from the long past histories of Europe and Asia, and in settings where genuine inter-religious exchange was unthinkable. For much of the century, writers on mission lamented the closed doors of the Ottoman Empire. Turkish exclusion of missions, or their presence on terms that made engagement with Islam at most, indirect, meant that an expanding missionary movement which by the 1830s reached many parts of the globe, had only a very small number closely involved with Muslims on any regular basis. Turkey expelled all missionaries following conversions to Christianity accomplished by Karl Pfander [*v.i.*] in 1864. But western perceptions of Islam continued to be moulded by associations with the Ottoman Empire, long after the political reality had changed.

### **Courteous relations with muslims**

To a remarkable extent, and for a variety of reasons, the nineteenth century was a time of disengagement between Christians and Muslims. One notable exception is Samuel Adjai Crowther and the African missionaries of the Niger.<sup>30</sup> In Sierra Leone, the first Christian settlement knew Muslim neighbours and regular Muslim visitors. Missionaries there and their sponsoring societies, did not think of Muslims as less likely to respond to the Gospel than others. Later disengagement between Christianity and Islam arose, not from avoidance of Muslims as unresponsive, but from new, burgeoning, missionary tasks elsewhere.

Crowther’s experience in Sierra Leone had taught him that confrontation was useless. He sought common ground at the nexus of Qur’ân and Bible. He had courteous relations with Muslim rulers, nourishing a hope of reaching beyond them to their barely Islamized peasantry. He recognized the horror Muslims felt at what they misunderstood Christians to be saying. Often, what Muslims shrank from was not Christian doctrine at all. Crowther and the African missionaries operated in a quite different Islamic context to India and developed a basis for continuing operations, seemingly not followed up.

In India, Henry Martyn (1781-1812) brought a depth of scholarship to the Protestant missionary movement. With Martyn, and Samuel Lee, comes the first literary response to arise out of direct encounter with Muslims since the Jesuit missionaries at Akbar’s court. The nearest Martyn had to a successor in this respect was Karl Gottlieb Pfänder.

In a Europe no longer menaced by Turkey, the depiction of Islam was becoming more benign. Thomas Carlyle’s “Heroes and Hero Worship” (1840) represented Muhammad as a hero. If in areas of engagement, the debate was about the truth of revelation, by 1840, intellectual Europe, suspending that question, was turning to the issue of whether Islam might be good for “other people.” For Re-

<sup>28</sup> Sydney Smith in “The Edinburgh Review,” 12 Apr. 1808, 179-8.

<sup>29</sup> K. D. Wilson Anand, ‘Reorientation of Muslim Work in India and Pakistan,’ *International Review of Mission*, 39 no 153 Jan 1950, p 83-87.

<sup>30</sup> Andrew F. Walls, “Africa as the Theatre of Christian Engagement with Islam in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 29 no 2 1999, 155-174.

ginald Bosworth Smith, responsibilities followed British imperial power. In “Mohammed and Mohammedanism” (1874), he formulates the thesis that all religions are moral rather than theological in origin and exist to meet social and national moral needs.

When with imperial expansion, Britain was ruling more and more peoples under Islamic influence, Smith’s book could be read as a tract for the times: expansion of Islam might improve the lot of “native peoples”. Truth claims were bypassed; administrative convenience held that Islam could be socially elevating. If in the age of imperialism, much of the Muslim world came under the dominance of powers spoken of as Christian, this did not usher in missionary accessibility. The Caliphate kept its doors shut; elsewhere the colonial powers were often more practised gatekeepers.

Protestant missionary conferences considered missions in Muslim lands at Cairo in 1906 and Lucknow in 1911. Fifty years earlier, missionaries had complained that the British administration was maintaining neutrality in India instead of supporting Christianity. At Cairo they complained that the British government did not practise neutrality. Muslim missionaries were allowed to go anywhere under British administration, Christian missionaries were restricted. The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1919, documented such perceived discrimination by Western governments against Christian missions in Islamic contexts, and made an official protest to the British government.

### **Decline & fall**

Muslim political presence in the Indian subcontinent was predicated on rule. Islam was constructed as the apex of universal order, its relationship to power, divinely endorsed. For traditionalists: “It was really very difficult to imagine how a thinking Muslim of the early twentieth century could have looked at the events of the past 200 years as less than a historic catastrophe for the religion and the civilization to which he belonged.”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Abdul Majid Khan, “Western Impact and the Muslim Responses: A Case study of Sir Syed Ah-

When in 1739, Nadir Shah sacked Delhi, in an invasion by other Muslims from which the Mughal Empire never recovered, Muhammad Shāh issued a Royal Order: “All public officers should occupy themselves in the discharge of their ordinary duties, except the historians. These should refrain from recording the events of my reign, for at present the record cannot be a pleasant one”<sup>32</sup>. Although the third battle of Panipat in 1761 was a victory for Muslim arms, it marks the end of the Mughul Empire as a live force, imposing extended reflection on bewildered, orthodox Muslims. For a pious Muslim theologian there seemed only one solution: the government that had marked not the balmy days of the Mughul Empire, but those of the *rashidun* in Arabia.

To secure the diffusion of Islamic ideas outside of the Arabic cultural pattern, Shāh Waliullah (1703-'63) had translated the Qur’ān into Persian, a move that incensed fundamentalist theologians but proved popular.<sup>33</sup> Two of his sons each translated the Qur’ān into Urdu, the language rapidly replacing Persian as Mughul power eclipsed. Waliullah saw that more than high living and absorption of Hindu customs had weakened Muslim society. There was no real unity; it was community divided against itself. The principal Sufi orders paid little attention to each other, and all Sufis faced a running battle with the “orthodox” who in turn, warred on both the Sufis and the Shi’a. Waliullah hoped to achieve unity by emphasizing early Islam, constantly emphasizing the spirit of balance. Ironically, his attempt to unify the Islamic community produced the opposite effect. Increasing reliance on solely scriptural norms to define Islamic identity, mutated

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mad Khan and Jamāl al-Din al-Afghāni,” *Hamdard Islamicus* Vol. XXIII, No. 3, 33-51.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Tarikh-i-Chaghatai of Muhammad Shafi’, in Elliot and Dowson, “The History of India as Told by its own Historians,” vol 19, S. Gupta, Calcutta, 19-20.

<sup>33</sup> Freeland Knight Abbott, “The Decline of the Mughul Empire and Shah Waliullah,” *The Muslim World*, 52 no 2 Apr 1962, 115-123.

into a full-blown, deeply divisive, sectarian, scripturalist movement.<sup>34</sup>

### **Fundamentalists of the book**

William Carey (1761-1834)<sup>35</sup> recorded how his first meeting with Muslims in January 1794, turned into a disputation on the relative merits of Bible and Qur'ân. Muslims argued that Jews and Christians had corrupted the Bible, which was why God revealed the Qur'ân to Muhammad. The ensuing theological impasse was typical of most subsequent encounters. On another occasion, Carey was called before Lord Minto's staff to answer for a tract questioning the wisdom of anyone who followed the "tyrant"<sup>36</sup> Muhammad or subscribed to his religion. The British policy was that printed works which called for people to leave their traditions behind could only breed public strife. Carey eventually discovered that the tract about Muhammad had been altered by a Muslim convert before its publication and was not the work of the missionaries.

Karl Gottlieb Pfander<sup>37</sup> (1803-1865), a pietistic, evangelical Protestant, wrote scholarly works to convince Muslims of what he saw as Christianity's "ineffable superiority". The German manuscript of his *Mizan-al-haqq* (Balance of Truth) was completed in 1829. The Urdu version appeared in 1843. For Pfander, since both Islam and Christianity claim to be God's final revelation, one must be right, one wrong. Muslims soon responded to his arguments with letters, pamphlets, and articles in the Urdu press especially between

January and August 1845. Pfander expressed confidence in "the efficacy of a technologically superior and socially progressive Europe in ensuring the eventual success of the Gospel". Although the East India Company claimed a policy of religious neutrality, support given to some missions by some sympathetic colonial officials seemed part of an effort to undermine India's religious heritage. The bitterly anti-Christian literature that Pfander's books provoked, still colours Muslim polemic today, as in the work of Ahmed Deedat<sup>38</sup>.

In Agra, polemical Christian books against Islam were being published. 'Balance of Truth' was used by generations of Protestant missionaries as a tool to refute Islam, reprinted many times even up to the present. Rahmatullâh Ibn Khalîl al-'Uthmânî al-Kairânawî (1818-91) who had battled against Protestant missionaries in India from the beginning of the 1850s, had by 1855 already written three polemical works against Christianity, often with the help of a Bengali physician Muhammad Wazîr Khân. In 1854, after a decade of antagonistic literary exchange, al-Kairânawî challenged Pfander to a public debate, with Muhammad Wazîr Khân acting as interpreter between the Urdu and English speaking participants. The 1854 Agra debate was a milestone,<sup>39</sup> still recalled in the Muslim world today. Whereas it had been planned to extend the discussion to the Trinity, the Qur'ân as Word of God, and the sending of Muhammad, the debate never got beyond discussing the "deviation" of the Christian Scriptures.<sup>40</sup>

Pfander was unprepared for his opponents' use of European biblical criticism to impugn the historicity of Scripture, especially George Eliot's 1847 translation of D. F. Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* (1835), published when he had al-

<sup>34</sup> David Gilmartin, "Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan," (London: Uni. of CA Press, 1988). 61.

<sup>35</sup> Galen K. Johnson, 'William Carey's Muslim Encounters in India,' Baptist History and Heritage, Spring 2004, 100-108.

<sup>36</sup> Here as elsewhere in this article I am summarizing what various scholars wrote and not offering my own view.

<sup>37</sup> Clinton Bennet, 'The Legacy of Karl Gottlieb Pfander,' International Bulletin of Missionary Research, April 1996, 76-81. Christine Schirrmacher, 'The influence of German Biblical criticism on Muslim apologetics in the 19th century', <http://www.contra-mundum.org/schirrmacher/rationalism.html>

<sup>38</sup> Goolam Vahed, "Ahmad Deedat's theology of religion: apologetics through polemics", Journal for Islamic Studies, 29 2009, 2-32.

<sup>39</sup> Narayani Gupta. 'Delhi, between two Empires 1803-1931,' (Delhi, 1981), 79.

<sup>40</sup> Christine Schirrmacher, "The Influence of European Higher Criticism on Muslim Apologetics in the Nineteenth Century", appendix to [ed. Ruth Baldwin], 'The Islamic View of Major Christian Teachings' (WEA, Global Issues Series Volume 2, Bonn 2008), 119- 139.

ready been ten years abroad, and found it impossible not to admit to disharmonies between the four Gospels explicable by mere copyist error. These books were probably brought from England by Muhammad Wazîr Khân who had studied there.<sup>41</sup> New Testament (NT) textual criticism had developed from the beginning of the eighteenth century<sup>42</sup> but this was not yet the form-criticism of Strauss which confounded Pfander. Against this new attack he was helpless. His writings responded to traditional Muslim charges against Christianity, not to critical *Redaktionsgeschichte* now presented from a Muslim perspective. To his Muslim audience this was taken as evidence that the NT had been abrogated by the Qur'ân.

The debate was a prelude to al-Kairânawî's future impact, especially in his: "Demonstration of the Truth", *Izhâr al-haqq*, composed as a response to Pfander's "Balance of Truth", *Mizân al-haqq*. It is still being reprinted: in 1964 in Morocco; Arabic editions in 1978; in 1989 a short version in English, published in London. The Sunni 19th century "reform-wing" theologian Rashîd Ridâ made extensive use of it. George Anawati wrote that *izhâr al-*

*haqq* is the basic work which continues to function as an arsenal for Muslim apologetics from the nineteenth century down to today.<sup>43</sup>

### Critical redaction history

Al-Kairânawî took advantage of the critical orientation of nineteenth-century European theology which quickly found its way into the Muslim world, its findings enthusiastically taken as proof of the Muslim polemic of a corrupted Bible. During the Agra-debate, he quoted these critical liberals to "show" conservative missionaries that Christian theology had already produced evidence that the Bible is historically unreliable. He was probably the first Muslim apologist to do so. This line of argument has strongly marked Muslim controversy ever since.

Al-Kairânawî mentioned the "Gospel of Barnabas" for the first time in 1854, his Urdu work *I'jâz-i 'Isâwî*, possibly introducing it to the Muslim world, and afterwards in "Demonstration of the Truth," from 1867 onwards, as an old Christian Gospel which foretells the coming of Muhammad. Only a few fragments were known when al-Kairânawî used it as a weapon against the Christian rejection of Muhammad. It was lauded in numerous books and pamphlets by Muslim apologists as the only true Gospel because it "proves that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross"; Judas was transformed into the likeness of Jesus and crucified, while everybody thought he was Jesus; the Qur'ân is thereby constructed as denying the crucifixion of Jesus.

The six volumes of "The Demonstration of the Truth" served as a summary of all charges against Christianity and were used like an encyclopaedia. This stretched Qur'ânic criticism of the "corruption of the Bible" to the novel conclusion that the biblical texts are totally distorted, corrupted and unreliable in *all* their historical, dogmatic and narrative passages. Up to today despite the more nuanced assess-

<sup>41</sup> A repeated allegation - highly unlikely - that al-Kairânawî received these works from Catholic missionaries, is traceable to Eugene Stock, "The History of the Church Missionary Society", (3 vols., London 1899-1916, vol. 2) where it is gratuitously asserted on p. 171.

<sup>42</sup> John Mill had amassed a greater collection of materials. In 1720, Richard Bentley wrote that variant readings indicated only about two hundred minor differences where the true text can be a matter of doubt. In 1730 Johann Jakob Wettstein's designation of manuscripts, made it possible to condense references. In 1742 John Albert Bengel gives textual principles: antiquity of witnesses; diversity and ages from which readings come; number of witnesses; the origin of a corrupt reading must be sought to reconstruct the original; "The native appearance of the genuine reading;" a difficult reading preferred to an easy one. In J. J. Griesbach's study of internal evidence: the shorter reading was to be preferred; the obscure reading was to be chosen; readings supporting controversies to be carefully examined; readings seemingly imported from the Latin to be rejected. Lyle O. Bristol, 'New Testament Textual Criticism in the Eighteenth Century,' *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 69 no 2 Jun 1950, 101-112.

<sup>43</sup> "C'est le grand ouvrage de base qui a servi et continue à servir d'arsenal pour les apologistes musulmans de la fin du 19e siècle jusqu'à nos jours" G. C. Anawati, "Polémique, Apologie et Dialogue Islamo-Chrétiens", *Positions Classiques Médiévales et Positions Contemporaines*, *Euntes Docete*, 22/1969, 420.

ment of Tabari, Qurtubi, Razi, Ibn Taymiyya and Qutb,<sup>44</sup> Muslim polemics generally pursue this attitude: contending that Christian theologians admit that the Bible, as we have it today, is full of errors, contradictions and wilful distortions.

### **Critical study of new testament but not of Qur'ân**

Eager Islamic application of Strauss' deconstructive, historical criticism of the NT seldom grasps that Strauss' method, and its successors, rooted in the rationalistic Deism of Hermann Reimarus (1694-1768), implies a similar historical-critical reading of the Qur'ân as of any religio-historical text. Muslim commentators rejoiced in the results of this method as applied to the NT, but rejected the method itself. Reimarus had demanded that the Bible be read in the same way as other literature, but his examples in the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments* are mostly taken from his study of the Qur'ân where he adopted the criteria of Riccoldo da Monte di Croce's *Confutatio Alcorani* (c.1300), then the most influential work in this field, retranslated as recently as 2010.

Reimarus asserted that the Bible must be read according to those principles with which Western scholars then read the Qur'ân.<sup>45</sup> He directed his criticism of the lack of consistency in biblical writings along the lines of Qur'ân criticism: the real religion behind the Qur'ân must be identical with a natural religion; thus the standard according to which such texts shall be interpreted must be found outside the writings themselves. He follows every rule and criterion Riccoldo uses in his analysis of the Qur'ân, emphasizing that the same criteria must be applied to both Qur'ân and Bible.

Unlike several later commentators on the birth of critical, biblical research, Strauss, in applying Reimarus' principles, still notes the

link between medieval Qur'ân criticism and historical criticism of the Bible. Reference to Islam is no coincidence. He recognizes Reimarus' equivalence of these two fields of investigation. Real biblical history, according to both, is common history loosed from religious superimpositions. Thenceforth NT texts were read with an attitude inherited from medieval, critical reading of the Qur'ân. Strauss' biography of Reimarus confirms that such reading had a crucial influence on the development of biblical criticism. Muslim controversialists accepted the results of Strauss' method but not the method itself, which if true, as embracing its results implied, would be applicable to all religious texts, including their own.

### **Different views of Islam**

Sir William Muir (1819-1905) believed that if missionaries were successfully to "refute" Islam they needed more accurate resources than those available to their predecessors. Christians could use Islam's own "best sources" to prove to Muslims: "that they are deceived and superstitious in many important points".<sup>46</sup> His perspective in "The Mohamadan Controversy"<sup>47</sup> was unreconstructedly colonialist both politically and religiously. "The fourth grand era of the connection of Christianity with Islam arose with the dominion of Europeans in India. And here every circumstance was in our favour." This was Christianity of a conspicuously British Protestant hue: "Now, at least, we might have expected that Christian Europe would early have improved her advantages for evangelising the East; that Britain, the bulwark of religion in the West, would have stepped forth as its champion in the East". He is unselfconsciously jealous that in India, British Protestants were preceded in this task by Portuguese Catholics: "It is certainly not very flattering to our national pride that the Portuguese should

<sup>44</sup> Abdullah Saeed, 'The charge of distortion of Jewish and Christian scriptures,' *The Muslim World*, 92 no 3 - no 4 Fall 2002, 419-436.

<sup>45</sup> Timo Eskola, "Quran criticism, the historical-critical method, and the secularization of biblical theology" *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, 4 no 2 Fall 2010, 229-251.

<sup>46</sup> Clinton Bennett, "Victorian Images of Islam", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 15 no 3 Jul 1991, 115-119.

<sup>47</sup> Full text accessible at <https://archive.org/details/mohammedancontro00mui>

have so long preceded us in the endeavour to place the arguments for our faith before the Mohammedans.”

His attitude was questioned by Charles Forster (1787-1871) in “Mahometanism Unveiled” (1829) which Muir reviewed in an article, later republished in “The Mohammedan Controversy” (1897). In describing the debates between Pfander and the ‘ulema, Muir credited Pfander with victory, suggesting that with better sources at their disposal, the position of Christian missionaries was unassailable.

Different views of Islam adopted by these two were due less to encounter or lack of encounter with Muslims, than to their theological assumptions. Muir, as did William St. Clair-Tisdall (1859-1928) and John Drew Bate (1836-1923), identified strongly with Henry Martyn, Muir’s “champion of England’s honour.” Muir was also influenced by the Apology of Al-Kindi, which he translated into English. Forster was influenced by his awareness of creative exchange that took place in Morisco Spain. In his view, Islam’s origin, success and permanence, no less than Christianity’s, was explicable only by: “the special superintending providence of God.” Forster’s work attracted fierce criticism as well as cautious praise, remaining a debating point throughout the century.

John Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-1872) began with a premise not dissimilar to Forster’s: all religions have their origin in the divine. Each stresses a vital aspect of divine truth while only Christianity holds all aspects together in harmony. All are “in Christ” whether they know it or not. Reginald Bosworth Smith (1839-1909) saw Islam as an ally, attracting the gratitude and appreciation of Muslims who found his picture of Muhammad one they could believe. Those same commentators considered Muir an “avowed enemy of Islam.” Other historians criticized Muir for failing to apply to his own tradition the critical apparatus he applied to Islam. He employed redaction criticism in reading the Qur’ân but wrote of the Pentateuch as the work of one hand. Smith, maligned by the missionary press, was well received by Orientalists who regarded it as axiomatic that the student of an-

other religion should constantly “turn the mirror in upon himself.”

### A muslim translating the Bible

Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) “was impressed by the overall fairness of Muir’s work”<sup>48</sup> if profoundly challenged by it<sup>49</sup> and responded to Pfander’s and Muir’s call for a Muslim study of the Bible. The issue of the Bible’s accuracy had become central after the 1854 Agra debate with form-criticism increasingly exploited by Muslim scholars to contend that it was a corrupt, unreliable text. Sayyid Ahmad Khan also wrote in defence of Islam, but convinced of the genuineness of the present Biblical text, he distinguished *tahrif-i lafsi* – corruption of the text – from *tahrif-i ma’namî* – corruption in the interpretation; and also came to a different understanding of abrogation. He began publishing his commentary, *Tabyin al-kalam*, in 1862,<sup>50</sup> intending to dispel distrust between the two communities heightened by the events of 1857. It was initially conceived as a commentary on the whole Bible, seeking to instruct Muslims regarding the place of Judeo-Christian Scriptures in a Muslim understanding of divine revelation. At the same time, it was intended to assure Christians that Muslims respected the authority of the Bible as divine revelation.

Three volumes were published. The first deals with the authenticity of the Christian scriptures; charges of corruption and the question of abrogation, demonstrating that Muslim scholars in ages past taught that falsification of the scriptural text by Christians had not taken place, only deliberate misinterpretation of the text. The second is a commentary on Genesis 1-2 giving the Hebrew text and an Urdu interlinear translation, followed by an English version. The third is a commentary on Matthew 1-5, extant only in Urdu. The language

<sup>48</sup> A Series of Essays on the Life of Muhammad,’ (London, 1870).

<sup>49</sup> William Muir, “The Life of Mohamet and the History of Islam to the Fall of Belgrade”, (London, 1861; repr. Osnabrück, 1988).

<sup>50</sup> Alan M. Guenther, “Christian responses to Ahmad Khan’s Commentary on the Bible” *Comparative Islamic Studies*, 6.1-2 (2010) 67-100.

of his commentary is Qur'anic, not that of Christian exegesis. He holds that the Bible contains the original text: "except that there remain a few passages that...have not been brought back into correspondence with the original texts and others that are still obscure (*mustabih*)..."<sup>51</sup>

Accepting the integrity of the Christian scriptures raised the question of where they stand *vis-a-vis* the Qur'ân. He appealed to the distinction between *wahy matlu* – verbal revelation – and *wahy ghair matlu* – the term usually applied to Hadith; and further distinguished passages that are *khas matn* or merely *riwayat*: only the former considered *wahy matlu*. This view of "the heavenly books" having a common origin in God but a different revelatory character, posed for Muslims the problem of belief both in the superiority of the Qur'ân and in the revealed character of other scriptures. Here he adopts Shah Wali Ullah's distinction between one *din* and many *shar'iahs*, but differs from him regarding *naskh* and therefore argues the permanent significance of pre-Qur'anic scripture. *Naskh* for Sayyid Ahmad Khan was "the passing of the period for an appointed *hukm*." He illustrates this in detail in his commentary on Matthew 5:17-20.<sup>52</sup> Thus Islam must assess the present Jewish and Christian scriptures positively. In assessing the NT apostolic writings, he somewhat downplays differences, but insists that the Qur'ân's use of *tahirf* does not warrant the view that the NT Scriptures are totally corrupted and must be entirely rejected. By applying proper exegetical methods, he argues, the genuine *injil* can be discerned within the four gospels of the NT.

Christians who responded, lauded his clarification from writings of medieval Muslim scholars that the Judeo-Christian Scriptures had not been corrupted, a charge voiced with

increasing frequency by Muslim contemporaries. But respondents generally interpreted the commentary in the light of their own efforts to bring Christianity to India. Their response to the uniqueness of a Muslim commentary on the Bible fell short of Sayyid Khan's expectations. They saw his efforts as a development in Muslim thought, bringing it closer to the truth of Christianity and felt that he had little to offer in explaining the biblical text: a sign that Muslim prejudices against Christianity were weakening; that the conversion of India was progressing.

### Representations of Muhammad

The life of Muhammad best known in eighteenth century Britain was that of Humphrey Prideaux (1679). Prideaux's Muhammad was above all an imposter.<sup>53</sup> George Sale's "Koran" with massive notes, was the standard English version for a century and a half. Unlike Sale who never left England, E.W. Lane went to Egypt to study Arabic and published "Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians" (1836). Later editions of Pfander's *Mizan-al-haqq* included unhappy references to the work of Gustav Weil (1808-89) whose unseemly portrayal of Muhammad was followed in some nineteenth-century books. By then flexibility in theological thinking was modifying the attitude of some missionaries in India. The assumption that the missionary image of Muhammad was merely a continuation of medieval polemics, fails to take into account new access to primary sources Europeans had by the mid-nineteenth century. A. Sprenger and Muir utilized MSS from libraries in northern India to prepare new biographies of Muhammad, applying Western historiographical methods.<sup>54</sup>

A comparison of Thomas Patrick Hughes (1838-1911) and Elwood Morris Wherry

<sup>51</sup> 'Tayim al kalam' vol. 1 p.150 as cited by C.Troll, 'Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) and the Nineteenth Century Renewal of *ilm al-Kalam*,' in ID.' Aspects of Religious Thought in Modern Muslim India,' (Sang-e Meel, Lahore, 2025) 6-35, pp. 14-15.

<sup>52</sup> C. Troll, 'Sayyid Ahmad Khan on Matthew 5:17,' in 'Aspects of Religious Thought in Modern Muslim India,' 112-117.

<sup>53</sup> Here as elsewhere in this article I am summarizing what various scholars wrote and not offering my own view. Prideaux's views as well as many others have long been surpassed.

<sup>54</sup> Alan M. Guenther, "The Image of the Prophet as Found in Missionary Writings of the Late Nineteenth Century", *Muslim World*, Vol. 90, Spr., 2000, 43-70.

(1843-1927) indicates how theological pre-suppositions pre-determined one's view of Muhammad. Hughes published his "Dictionary of Islam" in 1895 but his first major statement on Islam was a review of Bosworth Smith's "Mohammad and Mohammadanism" (1874). That book was more "conciliatory" towards Islam, in contrast to the "confrontational" approach of Muir. Hughes recognized that the reason biographies by Sprenger and Muir differed from those by Ahmad Khan and Amir 'Ali was their different sources. The former two looked to al-Waqidi (d. 822) and his Kattb, Ibn Sa'd (d. 845). Ahmad Khan and Amir 'Ali preferred Ibn Hishām (d. 834) as did most Muslims. For Hughes: "Mohammad was one of the greatest men the world has produced." Not only did Muhammad genuinely believe he was inspired by God, the graphic account of his first revelation compels the unprejudiced: "to admit that it bears evidence of truth."

He distinguished clear developments in Muhammad's stance. Chronological arrangement of the *surahs* of the Qur'ān disclosed how Muhammad began as an earnest religious reformer, but in Medina became a legislator and warrior, subjecting: "conscience, reason, appetite and affection to ambition, love of power and sensuality."<sup>55</sup> This was reflected in changes in the Qur'ān's style: "poetry often gives way to prose, and obedience to God is then coupled with obedience to God's Apostle."

Elwood Morris Wherry a missionary with the American Presbyterian Mission in the Punjab (1868-1922), addressed the Prophet's assumed sinlessness. From the Qur'ān, he demonstrated that Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses had either sinned, or requested God's forgiveness - thereby illustrating the centrality of "sin" in his theology. Sin, requiring divine forgiveness, disqualified from being an intercessor on behalf of other sinners. Reliance on quotations from the Qur'ān to determine normative Islam is indicative of his Biblicist theology.

Both Hughes and Wherry distanced themselves from earlier writing by researching original Muslim sources, in a continuous dia-

logue with Muslims of various, sectarian backgrounds. While their image of Muhammad was similar, difference in approach resulted in diverging conclusions. Hughes attributed misunderstandings of Christianity among Muslims, to the methods peculiar to Protestant Evangelical missionary work. Wherry remained rooted in evangelical pre-suppositions. He had "everything to teach and nothing of importance to learn."

### New movements

The Deoband Seminary, established 1867, also contributed to a climate of polemic. Deoband initially pursued: "a strategy of turning within, eschewing for the time being, all concern with the organization of the state and relations with other communities."<sup>56</sup> By the end of the century, Deoband had spun off some two-dozen other seminaries across the sub-continent. The *ulema* who founded this school, by employing *fatwas*, increasingly disseminated through print, responded to inquiries from followers with advisory opinions. The emergence of a professionalized *ulema* class belonging to a new Islamic school within a decade of 1857, holding public debates with Hindus and Christians, dents the thesis that Deoband continuously emphasized the personal over the public.<sup>57</sup>

The polemical tone of nineteenth century exchanges was not softened by the rise of the Ahmadiyya.<sup>58</sup> The earliest reactions against Ghulām Ahmad came from fellow Muslims but by the middle of 1895, Ahmad had also engaged in controversies with Christians and Aryas, reaching their apex during 1898-'9. Ahmed's frequent use of the printed word was in line with other contemporary religious and political leaders in a development partly influenced by the Christian missionary move-

<sup>56</sup> Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 11-12, cf. 5-6.

<sup>57</sup> Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 'The 'Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change,' (Princeton: Princeton Uni. Press, 2002), 12-13.

<sup>58</sup> Spencer Lavan, "Polemics and Conflict in Ahmadiyya History: The 'Ulama, The Missionaries, and the British (1898)", *The Muslim World*, vol. LXII October, 1972 No. 4, 283 -303.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. notes 22 & 39.

ment.<sup>59</sup> Ahmad held his first debates with Christian missionaries at Sialkot. Through the pages of *Nūr-i-Afshān*, published since 1873 several Indian Christians, connected both with the American Presbyterian Mission and the CMS in the Punjab, had already spoken of the growing influence of Ahmad.

At Batāla, Ahmad began a prophesying debate with Fath Masih a *protege* of H. U. Weitbrecht-Stanton. Believing he had bested Fath Masih because the latter could not admit to having received direct revelations, Ahmad remained in Batāla with the aim of challenging any European Christian to debate. Henry Martyn Clark accepted, the date set for May-June 1893. Ahmad would represent the Muslims and 'Abd-Allāh 'Āsim, the Christians. Ahmad would explain his claim that "every religion should prove its truth with living signs" and would question the divinity of Jesus. 'Āsim would question Ahmad on the claim of the Qur'an being the Word of God and of Muhammad being a messenger of God.

As the debate progressed, relations became acrimonious. Ahmad told of a "sign" received from God, that of the two parties to the debate the one who was deliberately following a falsehood would within fifteen months, each month corresponding to a day of this debate, be severely disgraced if he did not turn to the "truth" On the night that Ahmad's prophecy expired, 'Abd-Allah 'Āsim was in better health than he had been for a long time. The most contentious issue followed publication of a tract entitled 'Ummahāt al-Muminīn' apparently written by an Indian Christian, Ahmad Shāh Shaykh, in the style of an earlier banned pamphlet of 1892. Muslims condemned it for "abusing the Prophet ... and circulating this work among the Muhammadans," to wound their religious feelings. *Nūr-i-Afshān* gloatingly replied that so many orders had been received for the pamphlet that it was now out of stock.

### Modern tafsir and Christian beliefs

Modern *tafsir* is robustly critical of Christian beliefs. Al-Alusi (d. 1854) departs from classical exegesis to offer criticism of Jacobite and Orthodox Christologies. He dismisses the formula that Jesus' "*nasut*" was crucified but his "*lasut*" was not,' as if targeting Isma'ilism. In his view, both Jews and Christians are "full of doubt" regarding the crucifixion. There may be a link here to Al-Suyuti's anachronistic attempt to trace the origin of Christian sects to Ibn "Abbas" legend that when Jesus asked for volunteers to be crucified in his place, three stepped forward: these were the originators of Nestorians, Jacobites and Muslims.

Al-Alusi (d.1854) includes Zamakshari's analysis of Qur'an 4:157 without crediting Zamakshari, but does not dwell on it, though the same could be said of al-Razi [v.i] – giving it only as one statement among many. Yet he is clear that *wa lekin shubbiha lahum* is God's counter-assertion against the Jews' perfidious claims. He writes that both Christians and Jews were full of doubts and clearly prefers Substitution, making no reference to the work of al-Razi and avoiding subjects and scholars he prefers not to discuss. As with much contemporary polemics on this question, "Selective and superficial treatment of the earlier exegetes depends for its success upon a lack of familiarity among al-Alusi's readership."<sup>60</sup>

Modern *tafsir* refrains from citing *Hadith*, reflecting contemporary scholarship regarding their historicity. Overall it seeks to be rational, reflecting the episteme of the period. The trend was to minimize the value of Traditions especially those dependent on Isra'iliyyat. Several versions of the Substitution legend fall into this category since they are related on the authority of Jews and Christians. For Bint al-Shafi: 'to be avoided are all sectarian interpretations and all intrusive Isra'iliyyat (Jewish or Christian materials) that were forced on the

<sup>59</sup> Some have speculated that the Ahmadīya-standpoint originated in the rationalism of Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus (1761-1851) who maintained that Christ 'has shown himself to his disciples as somebody being revived from the dead'.

<sup>60</sup> Todd Lawson, "The Crucifixion and the Qur'an", p. 122.

books of *tafsir*'. "Only what agrees with the text may be accepted"<sup>61</sup>.

Substitutionism is based on traditions demonized by al-Katir as *Ira'iliyyat*. Thus Wahb ibn Munabbil (d.732) known for his knowledge of Judaism and Christianity, is the source of many traditions dealing with biblical subjects, in modern times anathemized. Ironically, most influential traditions denying that Jesus was crucified are traceable to his authority. Al-Tabari gives two accounts of the crucifixion which differ in crucial areas. In the first and preferred account, a disciple volunteered to take the place of Jesus after God changed all the disciples into the likeness of Jesus. In the second – which has the most "Christian," read "apocryphal," information – Judas is changed into the likeness of Jesus. This contains the longest Hadith. While Wahb certainly had a detailed knowledge of Biblical tradition, his books are questionable as to authorship. They were used by ibn Ishaq regarding the origins of Christianity but avoided as a source in the *Sirat Rasul Allah*.

### Nineteenth-century modernists

The views of nineteenth-century modernists such as Muhammad 'Abduh were adopted in significant measure by several later thinkers. This approach demythologizes by interpreting tradition metaphorically. Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghī, offers a rationalistic view: what is meant by Christ's return to the earth and his rule over it is: "the domination of his spirit and the mystery of his message over humanity in order that men may live by the inner meaning of the law (sharia) without being bound by its outer shell."

Rashīd Rida (d.1935) is cautious about taking the traditions regarding the ascension and return of Jesus, metaphorically.<sup>62</sup> His *tafsir*

displays critical concern buttressed by polemical argument. His commentary on 4:157 has two sections: the first, along the lines of traditional interlinear exegesis; the second, a polemical *tafsir* which while lacking the grammatical analysis of the rationalists, criticises the Christian creed in detail. He eschews Muslim tradition which reads "messenger of God" in 4: 157, as Jewish insolence, stating that it is a Qur'ānic affirmation of Jesus' apostleship and thereby a rejection of his divinity as ascribed by Christian faith.<sup>63</sup>

He holds that "they" did not kill Jesus but a double, *al-shabah*.' Thus far, Rida merely repeats the Traditions, even if polemically, while allowing that it is not possible to say what really happened. For Rida doubt was complete. None of the witnesses were free of it. Those who followed conjecture glazed over what happened with disagreement or fancy. This doubt surrounding the crucifixion is indecision, *taraddad*, as to whether Jesus or another was killed. Despite repeatedly questioning the reliability of the NT he quotes Matt 26:31 "You will all fall away [doubt] from me this night. His Arabic translation gives "*kullikun tashakuna fiya fi hadhihi al-layla*."<sup>64</sup> Though it is not impossible that a case of mistaken identity occurred, the whole story is based on an imperfectly transmitted account.

On this point he argues, the *musaffirun bi'l-ma'thur* are in disagreement because their information came from Jews and Christians neither of whom had certain knowledge. Curiously he then turns to a literalist interpretation of the *mi'raj* and reliance on pseudo-Barnabas, the first exegete to do so.<sup>65</sup> He breaks with the

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to support unlikely arguments. Later Rida actively promoted Wahhabism in contrast to 'Abduh's denunciation of it for coarse literalism. Rida was much less tolerant than 'Abduh of the 'Other,' making vicious accusations against oriental Christians. Ana Belén Soage, 'Rashid Rida's Legacy,' *The Muslim World*, Vol. 98, Jan. 2008, 1-23.

<sup>63</sup> Lawson, op cit., 123-128.

<sup>64</sup> The text.

is: Πάντες ὑμεῖς σκανδαλισθήσεσθε ἐν ἐμοὶ ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ταύτῃ: it reads 'scandalized' so arguably 'doubt' in that sense, but not in the sense of mistaken identity.

<sup>65</sup> To be studied in another paper.

<sup>61</sup> Issa J. Boulata, "Modern Qur'an Exegesis, A Study of Bint al-Shati's Method," *Muslim World*, 64, 2, 1974, 103-113, 105.

<sup>62</sup> Some consider Rashid Rida as 'Abduh's successor, Assad N. Busool, "Shaykh Muhammad Rashid Rida's Relations With Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh," *The Muslim World*, 66 no 4 Oct 1976, 272-296. Rida's biography of 'Abduh contains several instances where he designates himself as successor even invoking 'Abduh's authority

legends of the *mufassarin* with their Jewish and Christian provenance, yet asserts the non-crucifixion of Jesus solely on the basis of pseudo-Barnabas. Nonetheless he concedes that the Qur'ân is not definitive on this question. Rida even uses the Ahmadiyyan argument that Jesus' tomb is in Kashmir. Earlier Sayyed Ahmad Khan had written: "it is certain that at that moment he was still alive" i.e., after 3-4 hours of crucifixion when Jesus was taken down from the cross<sup>66</sup>.

In Rida's championing of pseudo-Barnabas, as exemplified in the translations he commissioned, he dispenses with evidence undermining its reliability, in particular omitting the 76-page critical, scholarly introduction of the first English translation.<sup>67</sup> A tendency developed among succeeding writers to shortcut exegetical discussion by appealing to pseudo-Barnabas, though without applying to that text the rigorous historical criticism they enjoyed seeing applied to the canonical Gospels. Rida inconsistently postulates the NT as unreliable but affirms pseudo-Barnabas as authentic and acceptable. In a second discussion he repudiates the crucifixion – though seemingly to attack the Christian doctrine of redemption, repeating his view that the NT is untrustworthy.

This combination of philology and traditionalism lacks grammatical analysis as well as reference to the rationalists' discussion of the irrationality of identity transfer. Rida actually argues for Substitution citing past judicial errors regarding mistaken identity. He affirms al-Radi's argument that Jesus was not raised to a "place." Yet by contrast with al-Radi's demythologization of locomotive ascension, Rida in referring to 3:55 *re* 4:157, argues that Jesus was raised in body and spirit. The basis of his argument is that Muhammad saw Jesus during the *mi'raj* – though he "saw" all the other prophets too.<sup>68</sup> Rida ends his discussion

on these two verses by admitting that the Qur'ân itself is not firm, *lam yabath*, on the question.

### Twentieth century

Sayyid Qutb was executed by the Nasser regime in 1966. His complete *tafsir* of the Qur'ân is in the nature of an enormous collection of sermons still very influential. Qutb's conceptual framework was the aesthetic appreciation of the Qur'ân, focused on its capacity to move individual sensibilities through the beauty of its imagery. He is explicit about the novelty of his approach: the early commentators were too preoccupied with "wording" and "meaning" and the internal ordering of the Qur'ân to notice "the comprehensive rule" which governed its disparate components. Qutb "aestheticizes" Islamist assertion: *tafsir* holds the individual in "beautiful accord, implementing within his consciousness a radical transformation of belief and religious sensibility."<sup>69</sup>

He sees 4:157-8 as a divine reprimand to the Jews but reads these verses as also singling out Christians for their conjecture about the crucifixion. Contrary to Rida, he holds "messenger of God"; was spoken in ridicule, adding that no one has spoken of the crucifixion with certainty – it being very difficult to determine exactly what happened. For Qutb the environment of the NT is one of fear and the texts, especially the fourth gospel, and not above suspicion, *al-shababat*. He dismisses the Gospel of John's account of the crucifixion as disgusting, *qabih*. Qutb also accepts pseudo-Barnabas' version that the image and voice of Jesus were cast upon Judas. While he argues that we cannot be certain about these events, since the Qur'ân does not offer any details about Jesus being raised to God, he still holds to substitution: *pace* Ayoub, it is the details in the fables that he discounts.

Engaging in speculative *tafsir* was contrary to the philosophy of *fi Zilâl il-Qur'ân*. Com-

<sup>66</sup> J.M.S. Baljon, "Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation 1880-1960," (Brill, Leiden, 1975), 13 as cited by Todd Lawson op. cit., p.115.

<sup>67</sup> Lonsdale & Laura Ragg, *The Gospel of Barnabas*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1907).

<sup>68</sup> Mahmoud Shaltut, in discussing the issue of the Night Ascent and Muhammad's meeting with the earlier prophets, insisted that the meeting was spiritual, not physical. Khaleel Mohammed, 'The Case

of the Overlooked Fatwa,' *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 46, 3, Summer 2011.

<sup>69</sup> John Qutb, "Qur'anic Aesthetics in the Thought of Sayyid Qutb," *Religious Studies and Theology*, 15 no 2 - no 3 Dec 1996, p 61-76.

menting on the narrative on Zakariyya and Maryam, Qutb refused to follow commentators who filled pages of *tafsir* with speculation: “We are not going to involve in probing into the nature of sustenance which Maryam was getting through the divine source. All we know through the Qur’anic text is that she was being taken care of by the special grace of Allah”. Similarly, he refused to engage with various divergent views about the true position of Jesus, whether he is dead, alive; with God, in the grave and whether or not he would come back to this world.<sup>70</sup>

He insists that we have no Qur’anic details as to who the substitute was. All we have is Qur’an 3:55 but this gives no details about the death. In his view, we cannot be certain about these events nor can we ascertain who disagreed about them, so rather than resort to untrustworthy fables, *asatir*, he will take refuge “in the shadow of the Qur’an.” He specifies that: “as for the manner of his death and assumption, these are matters belonging to the unseen, *ghaybiyya*, and they fall in the category of obscure, *mutashabbihäf*, verses, whose exegetical meaning, *ta’wil*, is known to God alone.”

Al-Faruqi (1921-1986), surpasses “Supercessionists” and “Revisionists” in an ecumenical position endorsing religious pluralism in principle.<sup>71</sup> He sought to derive from the Qur’an an ethical system adequate for today’s Muslim. Every seeming contradiction or variant, including what is understood as *naskh*, is one of differentiation at the level of meaning, to be superseded in: “a systematic restatement of the Holy Qur’an’s valuation content”.<sup>72</sup> In relation to discussions of Qur’an 4:157, he identifies as a shortcoming that Qur’anic verses dealing with death are rarely cited. The resultant restatement of the Qur’an’s “valuation-

al content” would have epistemological and theological implications especially in relation to substitution by divine rescue, identity transfer, locomotive ascension and second physical advent.

Al-Tabataba’i (1903-1981) asserts that it was the Romans, not the Jews who were responsible for killing Jesus, a point of view taken up by some Christian commentators. Consequently he confronts neither Jews nor Christians. His highly conjectural speculations, replete with conditional statements, that the stories relating to Jesus refer to two men called Christ who lived five hundred years apart - the earlier was the true Messiah, neither killed nor crucified; the later, false Messiah, was crucified - leaves his contribution difficult to assess. He adds the get-out clause, “and God knows best.”

### Confrontation of two scriptural fundamentalism

In the nineteenth-century Muslim-Christian encounter, especially in the Subcontinent, a possible engagement of two religions of the heart, each in dialogue with the Enlightenment, was eclipsed by the confrontation of two scriptural fundamentalisms. Dard's fluid path, keenly aware of the unique nature of individual experience, stressed a universality of purpose that encourages unity and disassociates itself from ideas of reform and revivalism. Of the three dynamics shaping the British Protestant missionary enterprise one was “high church” in inspiration. Selective in what it brought from the West, it sought to respect indigenous customary life. A second was a “settled modernization”. Economic development and religious transformation would go hand in hand. The third emphasised the experience of conversion in the “sinner's” response to evangelistic preaching. It was often the latter that encountered an Islam itself increasingly in the grip of scripturalist reformism.

Evangelical Protestant Christianity overlooked the extensive theological history developed by Catholic theologians<sup>73</sup> by relying

<sup>70</sup> Badmas ‘Lanre Yusuf, ‘A History of Fi Zilâl al-Qur’an,’ Hamdard Islamicus vol. XXV, No. 2 pp. 17-27.

<sup>71</sup> David A. Kerr, “Islamic Da’wa And Christian Mission: Towards A Comparative Analysis”, International Review Of Mission, Vol. Lxxxix, 2000, No. 353 Pp 150 – 171.

<sup>72</sup> Ishma’il R. al-Faruqi, “Towards a new Methodology for Qur’anic exegesis”, Islamic Studies 1, (1), 1962, 35-52.

<sup>73</sup> Initially Catholicism felt as threatened by *Redaktionsgeschichte* as Protestantism but whereas it deconstructed the literalist biblicism of evangelical

exclusively on a literal appeal to Scripture<sup>74</sup> and found a similar bias among Muslims who recast their historic engagement with Sufism, in a reformist mould, sited within anticolonial resistance. Some Sufi-oriented cultural trends continued to embrace the wider, spiritual legacy of India but to a great degree, the reformist movements defined themselves in opposition to these as to the rational sciences.

Following the eighteenth century liberalization of European theology, Muslim apologetics reorientated itself towards utilizing the results of western critical scholarship regarding the historicity of NT texts with a view to disproving central Christian tenets. The induction of pseudo-Barnabas and the rise of the Ahmaddiyya further complicated the traditional discussion. Despite this transformation of the dogma of tahrîf, nonetheless the work of Sayyid Ahmd Khan endorsed the ancient arguments from Qur'ân and Hadith as to the reliability of the Christian Scriptures.<sup>75</sup> His commentary on the Bible did not go unnoticed, but was ungenerously hailed as evidence that the missionary project was finally yielding fruit. The contribution of Crowther's group of African colleges likewise deserves a higher place in the history of the debate alongside exponents such as Pfander and Muir in India.



From the first decade of the twentieth century, the issues debated at Agra seemed dormant. From the 1960s onwards they began being debated again: “to the dismay of those on both sides who are in search of “dialogue” rather than “controversy”.”<sup>76</sup> Often the outright denial of the crucifixion and the shape of the discourse seemed rooted in a rejection of Christian soteriology rather than in dispassionate exegesis. In the event, a clash of fundamentalisms regrettably led to a quite new and contextually insupportable angle of interpretation of Qur'ân 4:157 as denying a putatively, false Christian belief that Jesus had been crucified.

*We thank the author who sent this article to be published in the SEDOS bulletin.*

Protestantism, ultimately it endorsed the Catholic emphasis on ecclesiology and tradition, as well as on Christ rather than the NT text, as the primary revelation.

<sup>74</sup> Already in *De rationibus fidei contra Saracenos, Graecos et Armenos ad Cantorem Antiochenum*, (1264), accessible at <http://www.catholicapologetics.info/apologetics/islam/rationes.htm>. Thomas Aquinas had written that;

‘it would be useless to quote passages of Scripture against those who do not accept this authority.

<sup>75</sup> Christine Schirrmacher: “Mit den Waffen des Gegners”, (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1992).

<sup>76</sup> Avril Ann Powell, “Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India” (Press, London, 1993) (London Studies on South Asia No. 7), p. 298. Cf. Christian W. Troll, “New Light on the Christian-Muslim Controversy of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century” *Die Welt des Islams* 34 (1994), 85-88.

## DOCUMENTS

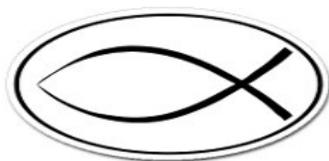
# Christian witness in a multi-religious world: recommendations for conduct

### **Preamble**

Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.

Aware of the tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and the varied interpretations of Christian witness, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and, at the invitation of the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), met during a period of 5 years to reflect and produce this document to serve as a set of recommendations for conduct on Christian witness around the world. This document does not intend to be a theological statement on mission but to address practical issues associated with Christian witness in a multi-religious world.

The purpose of this document is to encourage churches, church councils and mission agencies to reflect on their current practices and to use the recommendations in this document to prepare, where appropriate, their own guidelines for their witness and mission among those of different religions and among those who do not profess any particular religion. It is hoped that Christians across the world will study this document in the light of their own practices in witnessing to their faith in Christ, both by word and deed.



### **A basis for Christian witness**

1. For Christians it is a privilege and joy to give an accounting for the hope that is within them and to do so with gentleness and respect (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).

2. Jesus Christ is the supreme witness (cf. John 18:37). Christian witness is always a sharing in his witness, which takes the form of proclamation of the kingdom, service to neighbor and the total gift of self even if that act of giving leads to the cross. Just as the Father sent the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, so believers are sent in mission to witness in word and action to the love of the triune God.

3. The example and teaching of Jesus Christ and of the early church must be the guides for Christian mission. For two millennia Christians have sought to follow Christ's way by sharing the good news of God's kingdom (cf. Luke 4:16-20).

4. Christian witness in a pluralistic world includes engaging in dialogue with people of different religions and cultures (cf. Acts 17:22-28).

5. In some contexts, living and proclaiming the gospel is difficult, hindered or even prohibited, yet Christians are commissioned by Christ to continue faithfully in solidarity with one another in their witness to him (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).

6. If Christians engage in inappropriate methods of exercising mission by resorting to deception and coercive means, they betray the gospel and may cause suffering to others. Such departures call for repentance and re-

mind us of our need for God's continuing grace (cf. Romans 3:23).

7. Christians affirm that while it is their responsibility to witness to Christ, conversion is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:7-9; Acts 10:44-47). They recognize that the Spirit blows where the Spirit wills in ways over which no human being has control (cf. John 3:8).

### **Principle**

Christians are called to adhere to the following principles as they seek to fulfill Christ's commission in an appropriate manner, particularly within interreligious contexts.

1. **Acting in God's love.** Christians believe that God is the source of all love and, accordingly, in their witness they are called to live lives of love and to love their neighbor as themselves (cf. Matthew 22:34-40; John 14:15).

2. **Imitating Jesus Christ.** In all aspects of life, and especially in their witness, Christians are called to follow the example and teachings of Jesus Christ, sharing his love, giving glory and honour to God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 20:21-23).

3. **Christian virtues.** Christians are called to conduct themselves with integrity, charity, compassion and humility, and to overcome all arrogance, condescension and disparagement (cf. Galatians 5:22).

4. **Acts of service and justice.** Christians are called to act justly and to love tenderly (cf. Micah 6:8). They are further called to serve others and in so doing to recognize Christ in the least of their sisters and brothers (cf. Matthew 25:45). Acts of service, such as providing education, health care, relief services and acts of justice and advocacy are an integral part of witnessing to the gospel. The exploitation of situations of poverty and need has no place in Christian outreach. Christians should denounce and refrain from offering all forms of allurements, including financial incentives and rewards, in their acts of service.

5. **Discernment in ministries of healing.** As an integral part of their witness to the gospel, Christians exercise ministries of healing. They are called to exercise discernment as they carry out these ministries, fully respecting human dignity and ensuring that the vulnerability of people and their need for healing are not exploited.

6. **Rejection of violence.** Christians are called to reject all forms of violence, even psychological or social, including the abuse of power in their witness. They also reject violence, unjust discrimination or repression by any religious or secular authority, including the violation or destruction of places of worship, sacred symbols or texts.

7. **Freedom of religion and belief.** Religious freedom including the right to publicly profess, practice, propagate and change one's religion flows from the very dignity of the human person which is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26). Thus, all human beings have equal rights and responsibilities. Where any religion is instrumentalized for political ends, or where religious persecution occurs, Christians are called to engage in a prophetic witness denouncing such actions.

8. **Mutual respect and solidarity.** Christians are called to commit themselves to work with all people in mutual respect, promoting together justice, peace and the common good. Interreligious cooperation is an essential dimension of such commitment.

9. **Respect for all people.** Christians recognize that the gospel both challenges and enriches cultures. Even when the gospel challenges certain aspects of cultures, Christians are called to respect all people. Christians are also called to discern elements in their own cultures that are challenged by the gospel.

10. **Renouncing false witness.** Christians are to speak sincerely and respectfully; they are to listen in order to learn about and understand others' beliefs and practices, and are encouraged to acknowledge and appreciate what

is true and good in them. Any comment or critical approach should be made in a spirit of mutual respect, making sure not to bear false witness concerning other religions.

**11. Ensuring personal discernment.** Christians are to acknowledge that changing one's religion is a decisive step that must be accompanied by sufficient time for adequate reflection and preparation, through a process ensuring full personal freedom.

**12. Building inter-religious relationships.** Christians should continue to build relationships of respect and trust with people of different religions so as to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.

### Recommendations

The Third Consultation organized by the World Council of Churches and the PCID of the Holy See in collaboration with the WEA and with participation from the largest Christian families of faith (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal), having acted in a spirit of ecumenical cooperation to prepare this document for consideration by churches, national and regional confessional bodies and mission organizations, and especially those working in interreligious contexts, recommends that these bodies:

1. **study** the issues set out in this document and where appropriate formulate guidelines for conduct regarding Christian witness applicable to their particular contexts. Where possible this should be done ecumenically, and in consultation with representatives of other religions.

Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.

2. **build** relationships of respect and trust with people of all religions, in particular at institutional levels between churches and other religious communities, engaging in on-going interreligious dialogue as part of their Christian commitment. In certain contexts, where years of tension and conflict have created deep suspicions and breaches of trust between and among communities, interreligious dialogue can provide new opportunities for resolving conflicts, restoring justice, healing of memories, reconciliation and peace-building.

3. **encourage** Christians to strengthen their own religious identity and faith while deepening their knowledge and understanding of different religions, and to do so also taking into account the perspectives of the adherents of those religions. Christians should avoid misrepresenting the beliefs and practices of people of different religions.

4. **cooperate** with other religious communities engaging in interreligious advocacy towards justice and the common good and, wherever possible, standing together in solidarity with people who are in situations of conflict.

5. **call** on their governments to ensure that freedom of religion is properly and comprehensively respected, recognizing that in many countries religious institutions and persons are inhibited from exercising their mission.

6. **pray** for their neighbors and their wellbeing, recognizing that prayer is integral to who we are and what we do, as well as to Christ's mission.

## Appendix – Background to the document

1. In today's world there is increasing collaboration among Christians and between Christians and followers of different religions. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) of the Holy See and the World Council of Churches' Program on Interreligious Dialogue and Co-operation (WCC-IRDC) have a history of such collaboration. Examples of themes on which the PCID/IRDC have collaborated in the past are: Interreligious Marriage (1994-1997), Interreligious Prayer (1997-1998) and African Religiosity (2000-2004). This document is a result of their work together.

2. There are increasing interreligious tensions in the world today, including violence and the loss of human life. Politics, economics and other factors play a role in these tensions. Christians too are sometimes involved in these conflicts, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, either as those who are persecuted or as those participating in violence. In response to this the PCID and IRDC decided to address the issues involved in a joint process towards producing shared recommendations for conduct on Christian witness. The WCC-IRDC invited the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) to participate in this process, and they have gladly done so.

3. Initially two consultations were held: the first, in Lariano, Italy, from 12 to 18 May 2006, was entitled "Assessing the Reality" where representatives of different religions shared their views and experiences on the question of conversion. A statement from the consultation reads in part: "We affirm that, while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of their faith, it should not be exercised by violating others' rights and religious sensibilities. Freedom of religion enjoins upon all of us the equally non-negotiable responsibility to respect faiths other than our own, and never to denigrate, vilify or misrepresent them for the purpose of affirming superiority of our faith."

4. The second, an inter-Christian consultation, was held in Toulouse, France, from 8 to 12 August 2007, to reflect on these same issues. Questions on Family and Community, Respect for Others, Economy, Marketing and Competition, and Violence and Politics were thoroughly discussed. The pastoral and missionary issues around these topics became the background for theological reflection and for the principles developed in this document. Each issue is important in its own right and deserves more attention that can be given in these recommendations.

5. The participants of the third (inter-Christian) consultation met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 25 to 28 January 2011 and finalized this document.



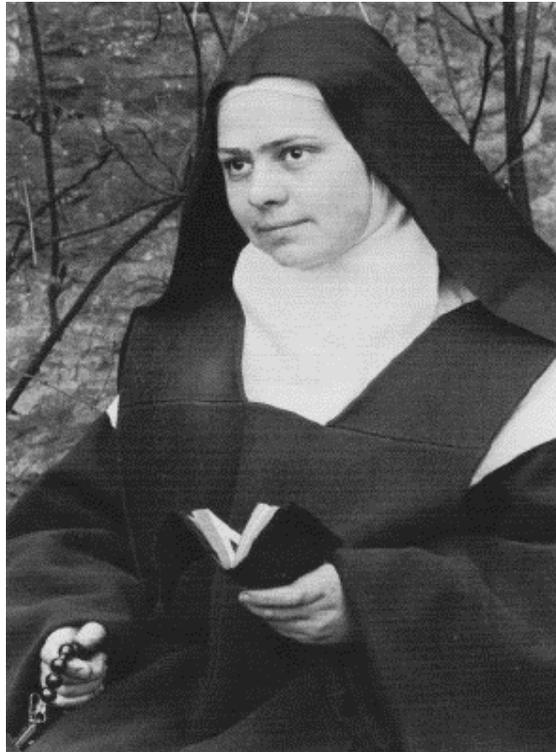
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## One of the new Saints of the Church

**Elisabeth of the Trinity** (born: Elizabeth Catez) was a French professed nun of the Order of Discalced Carmelites, a mystic and spiritual writer, and has been described as the sister in the spirit of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. She was born on 18 July 1880 in the military base at Avord, near Bourges in France, and was baptized four days later. In 1887, a short time after the family moved to Dijon, her father died. On 19 April 1891, she received her first Holy Communion: that day Elisabeth began a difficult struggle to “overcome herself for love”, learning to control her willful, fiery and impetuous temperament.

Increasingly drawn to Christ, Elisabeth made a private vow of virginity in 1894. Believing that she was called to religious life, she asked her mother for permission to enter the Carmel of Dijon. Obedient to her mother, who had prohibited her from visiting the monastery, Elisabeth did not enter until 2 August 1901. Before entering Carmel, Elisabeth received several offers of marriage but declined them to fulfill her desire to give herself wholly to God as a cloistered contemplative religious. A capable and prize-winning pianist, and joyful and active in the parish and social life of her city, she passed the time before her entrance into the monastery learning how to discover Christ in all things, giving her heart to him alone, even though she was busy with many activities, participating in dances and spending time with friends. After entering the monastery she said: “I find Him everywhere, while doing the wash as well as while praying.”

On 8 December 1901 she was clothed with the religious habit and given the name Elisabeth of the Trinity. In the monastery she grew in her union with the Most Holy Trinity in the depths of her soul. Gazing upon the Blessed Mother, she learned to safeguard ever more the presence of the living God and each day to do the Lord’s will with generosity, as she contemplated the “excessive great love” manifested in Jesus Crucified. A short time after her religious profession on 11 January 1903, Sister Elisabeth displayed the first symptoms of



Addison’s disease, which led to her death following extreme suffering. She accepted everything peacefully and abandoned herself with confidence to the mercy of God, seeing in her illness a propitious occasion to conform herself to her Crucified Spouse, as she ardently desired to pass over into the Trinitarian joy of the communion of saints. Sister Elisabeth of the Trinity died on 9 November 1906 at the age of 26.

Her last words were: “I am going to Light, to Love, to Life!” She also said before her death: “I

think that in heaven my mission will be to draw souls by helping them to go out of themselves in order to cling to God by a wholly simple and loving movement, and to keep them in this great silence within which will allow God to communicate Himself to them and to transform them into Himself.” A true contemplative, she once wrote: “We shall not be purified by looking at our miseries, but by gazing on Him who is all purity and holiness.”