Common Witness: A Contemporary Approach to Islam

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby acknowledge that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

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15 August 2006
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SUMMARY

This study has shown that today's 21st church of Jesus Christ must abandon the notion that Islam is a formidable foe. Rather, Islam must be viewed as a people group for which Christ made atonement. Christ is waiting for the church of today to rise to the challenges and opportunities that Islam currently presents. This thesis has demonstrated that Christ has opened wide the doors of opportunity for inter-faith dialogue. The time is now.

This research has sought to gain a pellucid grasp of the historical and contemporary missiological approaches and attitudes toward Islam. Implications for understanding and building bridges which form essential steps toward inter-faith dialogue have been demonstrated through missiological research.

The issue of fear and antagonism among Muslims due to the September 11 terrorist activities (which raised the level of awareness of Islamic terrorists on a global scale) was carefully examined. Recommendations were given to demonstrate ways in which Christians can emit a peaceable witness to their Muslim neighbors.

Finally, theological perspectives were compared to doctrinal differences in order to assess additional ways to build bridges between Islam and Christianity. Recommendations were presented to demonstrate ways in which Muslims may positively respond to a biblical understanding of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. The comparative approach as an engagement tool was examined and proposed as an effective way to introduce the use of the Bible as it relates to a sound biblical faith.

Inter-faith dialogue among our Muslim neighbors may be viewed either as an obstacle or an opportunity.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Objective of the Study

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The repeated reports in the global news media on the political repercussions of the Muslim terrorists' attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 in the USA has alerted the global community to the significance of Islam today - with its solid dominance and widespread dispersion and the growing power and extremism of its 'Islamic fundamentalists.' Yet, Islam, a major world religion and the majority faith in more than fifty countries, demands the sympathetic, yet discerning, attention of our global community. Professor James Bill of the University of Texas, USA, posits that within the next forty years, Islam will become the most important ideological force in the world. Missiologists posit that Islam remains a powerful, coherent religion, and its continued global vitality impinges on the effectiveness of ministry workers to find commonality for Christian witness. Yet, only six-percent of current mission workers are focused on ministry to Muslims (Guthrie 2002).

Although it is correct in contending that Islam is a very "coherent religion," it is much more than a religious system. It is a political, social, economic, educational, and judicial system. Islam is both a religion and a world. Thus, the scope of the Islamic world must be probed very carefully and cautiously by Christians who engage Muslims for witness.

Although current Muslim-based research (Jongeneel 2001) indicates that fundamental Muslims confidently contend that a return to Islamic law will completely solve the world's economic and social problems, missiologists,

however, contend that a God-directed, holy-spirit empowered and contemporary approach to Islam is needed.

1.2 Islam's Current Stand Among the Nations

Islam remains a major mission challenge of the Third Millennium (Fry 2005). Reaching and engaging Muslims has been one of the most difficult of mission tasks (Guthrie 2002). In 1900, there were less than 200 million Muslims among the world's 1.6 billion people (12%) (Guthrie 2002).

Today, the total population of the Islamic people group comprises approximately 1.3 billion of the world's population, (20%) or one out of five people living today. However, missiologists are predicting that by the year 2020, Islam will double in size and Muslims may number 1.9 billion or twenty-five percent of humankind. North America's Muslim community comprise more than 4.5 million. Reportedly, if it continues to grow at its current rate, Islam will overtake Judaism as the second largest religion in the USA by the year 2015. Europe and Russia comprise more than 37 million Muslims; Asia more than 900 million; Pacific more than 375 thousand; Africa more than 324 million; Latin America and Carribean more than one million (Guthrie 2006).

1.3 The Current Rise of Islam

Islam, founded by Muhammad in the seventh century, is the world's second great missionary faith, behind Christianity. The key belief is that Allah is the only God and that Muhammad is his prophet (Guthrie 2002).

For centuries Islam was content to stand in the shadows of the dominant world systems – but no longer is that true. Islam's global influence is rising rapidly.

Islam's influence began to grow remarkably in the 1980s. Muslims themselves attribute their spread to a massive conversion campaign in more than 120 countries. In the USA in 1988, their goal was to convert 50-75 million Americans to Islam. They are documented as saying they are willing to invest centuries of time there (USA) to reach their objectives (Halverson 1996). Today, more than one-fifth of the 530,000 international students studying in the United States of America come from forty Islamic countries.

Muslim mission training programmes in Egypt, Iran, and Libya graduate hundreds of Muslim workers who join their more than 10,000 member current force to glean converts to Islam. The World Muslim League conducts seminars on "Islam in Africa." Reportedly, Islam doubles its membership every twenty-five years in Africa.

This leads to a sobering question to ponder: *Why are people joining Islam?* Many factors account for the growth of Islam: In many Christian churches (Church of England particularly) spirituality was replaced by weak liberal intellectualism that belied moral issues. What a grave moral indictment on the 21st century today. This weak liberal intellectualism suggests a second sobering question that stimulates heated debate among Christian ministry workers: *Is there a possibility that Christianity and Islam can co-exist?*   One Arab Christian responds to that question:

> "It is a complete misconception to think that Christianity
> and Islam can co-exist." (Otis 1991:76)

He urges ministry workers to carefully and urgently engage Muslims with courtesy and vigorous witness. He worries whether the church will accept the challenge. One case in point: In the Netherlands , the Muslim community feels less threatened with Christianity. Muslims confidently assert: "Allah is great." While they hear the Dutch proclaim, "The guilder (Dutch currency) is great." Unfortunately, they hear no one speaking about Jesus Christ.

1.4 Missiological Significance

Currently, Muslims comprise the largest segment of unreached people in the 21st century. It is the second largest religion in the world and Islam is the majority faith in more than fifty countries of the world.   Yet, they merited only six percent of Christian ministry workers - giving evidence that Muslims make up the most neglected block of people in the world.   (Guthrie 2002).   Pate Cote concurs when she states:

> It really can be said that Islam is the most studied
>
> and least evangelized religion.   (Guthrie 2002:11)

Followers of Islam are spread primarily over the areas of North Africa, the Middle East, South-Central Asia, and Indonesia.

Islam evidences solid dominance with its sectarian, cultural and theological diversity. As a result, many Christians view Islam as anti-Christian and anti-Christ. Muslims are perceived as a threat in a similar way that Communism was cast in that role for much of the 20th century.   This negative perception leads to an increasing and escalating fear and hostility toward the Muslim community.

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This perception has caused polarity between Muslims and Christians; each mutually exhibiting fear and hostility in their presuppositions of one another. Thus, we see a growing global discord between Islam and Christianity. As a result, to many Christians, talk of sharing their faith with Muslims make them feel spiritually inadequate and nervous. The uninvolved majority of Christians are confused and intimidated with the image that Muslims are "very alien and possibly dangerous creatures." (Mallouhi 2000:12) So, it is through antipathy or *fear* that the chasm between Muslims and Christians grows wider and Christians fail to share their faith. *Why?*

Christine Mallouhi (2000) offers several reasons:

1) Christians are often intolerant of other religious convictions.

2) Christians often do not want to sound intolerant in a pluralistic world.

3) Fear: Seeing Islam as the Enemy.

These presuppositions prompt us to consider the missiological implications: *How to overcome the current antagonism? How to overcome the current fear and mistrust of Muslims? How can a caring Christian engage with Muslims? What are the most effective ministry tools for crossing the Muslim cultural bridge? Is there a common witness or contemporary approach?*

1.5 Objective of the Study:

This thesis comprehensively examines current missiological perspectives in effectively witnessing to the Muslim population group. It will identify and describe ways in which ministry workers can unlock Muslim strongholds to open the

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Muslim world to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Spiritual warfare methodologies will be identified and presented.

1.6 Need for the Study:

This study is needed in order for cross-cultural ministry workers to more effectively and more comprehensively engage the Gospel of Jesus Christ with cultural relevance.

Approximately one out of five people on earth today is a Muslim. Muslims make up the most resistant and most neglected block of people in the world today (Newman 2004).

A thorough understanding of the Muslim culture: social and religious strata, is paramount to bridging the cultural gap with effective mission strategies to unlock Muslim resistance to Christianity.

Muslim opposition to the gospel is proverbial and examples of Christians suffering persecution and death at the hands of Muslim extremists abound from ancient history to the present century. However, it is not the intent of this thesis to present stark examples of Islamic aggression. Rather, the paramount question that seeks an answer is:

Why are Muslims in conflict with Christianity and what can be done about it?
This thesis will offer reasons for Muslim resistance and strategies for positive encounters with Muslims.

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1.7 Research Approach and Methodology:

This thesis will comprise the following five chapters and will be 60-80 pages in length:

Chapter 1:   Introduction and Objective of the Study

1.1   This chapter will include a brief overview of the missiological implications of witness to Muslims.

1.2   The objective and need for the study will be presented.

1.3   Consideration will be given to key questions which will be answered throughout the thesis: *What foundational issues must be examined before cross-cultural workers can enter and engage in Muslim communities? In what effective ways may the cultural gap between Muslims Christians be bridged? Is spiritual warfare at the forefront f Muslim resistance?*

What are the most effective witness tools for crossing the cultural bridge?

1.4 The author's research approach and methodology will be described.

Chapter 2:   Theological Perspectives: Foundational issues, the incarnation, atonement and resurrection.

2.1 Foundational issues: Theology and Jurisprudence

2.1.1 Islam's *Tawhid* (theology)

2.1.2 Doctrine of God

2.1.3 The Person of Jesus Christ

2.1.4 The Death and Resurrection of Jesus

2.1.4.1 Christ's Atonement

2.2 Missiological Implications

1.8 Conclusion

Importantly, it must be noted that much of Islam feels painfully misrepresented and denigrated by global Christians. Today, the world of Islam is laboring under a long and angry sense of Christian misrepresentation of what it sees as Western exploitation and superiority complex. These perceived fears pose grave missiological implications. Woodberry (1990) strongly contends that the first implication for Christian witness from the Muslim's view is the negative *Christian image* that witness bears in the eyes of contemporary Islam.   This stems in large part due to historical confrontations (the Crusades) and theological disparity. The Muslim world sees the Church today as the same group that fought the Crusades. Therefore we see that Muslims often scrutinize Christianity's attempt to engage the Arab regions for any signs of the Crusade mentality of hostility or aggression. As a result, Muslims are greatly misinformed about Christian belief. Lifelong confusion over the tenets of Christianity is not easy nor quick to rectify.

However, may we soberly ponder David's plea from Psalm 69:6 to be every Christian worker's plea in effective witness to our Muslim neighbors:

Let not those who seek Thee be confounded through me.

Perhaps, this is one key in unlocking the deeply rooted Muslim rejectionism toward relationships with Christians. For above all else, including contemporary methodologies, mission to our Muslim brothers must be pursued within the constraints of the gospel of Jesus Christ and Him alone. And, if the Christian church has contributed to the mistrust and rejection by Muslim encounters – then our obligation is to re-examine more carefully the way in which we engage Muslims with the gospel.

The challenge of Islam is immense. As Christian workers scramble to respond creatively to this challenge, global monitoring of Christian organisations are well underway by Saudi intelligence. The Muslim World League has openly declared Islam's worst enemies as: Communism, two quasi-Muslim cults and Christian missions. The risks are real: in many instances this entails death to converts or those who share the gospel with anyone (Guthrie 2002).

The mission call to engage Muslims should bear in mind probing questions: *Is part of Muslim resistance our fault? Is there a common witness with our Muslim brothers?*

Chapter two will describe and expound upon the theological tenets of Islam in order to grasp a thorough understanding of the Muslim mindset and worldview.

Chapter 2:

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Theological Perspectives:

Foundational Issues, the Incarnation, Atonement and Resurrection

2.1 Foundational Issues: Theology and Jurisprudence

If we are to seek to better understand and engage people with differing faiths from our own, it is essential to learn the fundamentals of their religious beliefs and experiences. Therefore, a foundational issue which must be fully comprehended regarding the faith and practice of Islam, refers to the two branches of fundamental Islam with regards to Muslim learning: Theology and jurisprudence or law. These two tenets of Islam are so inexorably intertwined that they cannot be dichotomized from their beliefs and experiences.

While Muslim theology (*Tawhid*) defines all that a man should be, the law *(Shar'ia)* defines everything that a Muslim should do. Islam has no priesthood and offers no sacraments. Rather, Muslims receive instructions from those who consider themselves very learned in either theology or law. Or, grant equal respect to those who are considered by significant others as learned in these two disciplines. Anderson (1990) contends that unlike any other system in the world today, Islamic law embraces every detail of human life: from prohibition of crime to the use of a toothpick, to the most sacred intimacies of family life. Islamic law has been called the 'science of all things, human and divine.'

The law divides all actions into what is obligatory, permitted, or forbidden. A Muslim may consult his lawyer for legal advice as well as spiritual advisor.

For centuries, the whole science of law was the primary study of the pious Muslim and the power and pride of Muslim doctors of law yielded great power.

2.1.1 Islam's *Tawhid* (theology*)*

In Islam, there has never been any official or written articles of faith, although a summary of the ideas of Muhammad have been written on the subject. According to Anderson (1990) Muslims' basic faith must include belief in the following:

- God

- Gods' Angels

- God's books

- God's Messengers

- Belief in the Last Day

- Belief in the decree of both good and evil

2.1.2 Doctrine of God

Muslims attach great importance to their doctrine of God. The fundamental concept is his unity. The Qur'an attests that Muhammad was deeply concerned that men and women not worship objects other than God Himself. He believed it wrong to associate anyone or anything to God. For this reason, Muslims today discredit Christians because of their belief in the Triune Godhead. Muslims mistaken imply that Christians worship three Gods.

Muslims' doctrine of God is combined with their belief in angels; which is paramount to their faith. To the extent that anyone who discredits the doctrine of angels is considered an infidel. Orthodox Islam acknowledges four archangels:

- Gabriel: the Messenger of revelation

- Michael: The guardian of the Jews

- Israfil: The summoner of the resurrection

- Izrail: Messenger of death   (Anderson 1990)

According to Anderson (1990) Muslims also attest to the existence of an indefinite number of ordinary angels. Two recording angels give constant attention to every man: One angel sits on man's right and records his good deeds while an angel on his left records his sins.

Muslims also hold to a view of the devil as a fallen angel or *jinn* who disobeyed God's command; he is now seen as the arch-tempter of mankind and progenitor of all evil in the world today.

Muslims' belief in the Last Day is quite significant and must be noted. While the exact day and hour remains a mystery, proposedly there are twenty-five signs of its approach. At that hour all men will be raised; the books kept by the recording angels will be opened and God will judge each man's deeds. Muslims believe that some people will be admitted to paradise where they will recline on soft couches and be served wine by many virgin women of which they may marry as many as they desire. Others, less fortunate will be confined to the torments of hell. If all Muslims must enter

hell, they will only remain there shortly, because no true Muslim will remain there forever.

Orthodox Muslims posit that everything – good or evil proceeds directly from the will of God and cannot be revoked as recorded on the Preserved Tablet. To become a Muslim, one must recite aloud a simple creed (*Kalima):*

'There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Prophet of God.'

2.1.3 The Person of Jesus Christ

Islam's concept of who Jesus is ranges from the greatest prophet who deserves the highest honor - to denying the deity of Jesus as the revelation of God.   For Muslims the very fount and origin of Islam is the Qur'an. It is their book which is a basic revelation of God. To Christians, however, God's revelation of Himself is not in a book but in the Person of Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son. The advent of the Old Testament pointed to that Person's birth, life, death, resurrection, and future reign.

The Christian doctrine of the incarnation has been and remians a focal point of Christian debate when encountering Muslims who grapple with this crucial theological tenet (Anderson 1990). Therefore, it is essential in Muslim encounters that they seek a clear understanding of the incarnation and His message that:

1) God revealed Himself and His message to us in the Person of Jesus Christ.

2) This truth implies unity of the Godhead.

Christians are in agreement with Muslims in proclaiming the unique

unity of the Godhead, by refusing to recognise or compare Him with any

other god.

The Qur'an gives various names and titles to Jesus under the personal name of *'Isa'* or son of Mary called "*Al-Masih (Messiah)* also referred to as the "word of God," "the Word of Truth is in Him," "the Messenger of God," "the Prophet of God," "the Servant of God." Jesus is described as illustrious..to those nearest to God." (Qur'an 3:45). Although the Qur'an speaks highly of Christ and aspects of His life, it denies the two central truths of the New Testament: Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. One Muslim writer states:

> Christ the Prophet and Envoy of God of "surpassing
>
> Greatness, but only a man and nothing more.
>
> A performer of exceptional miracles, he was
>
> rescued from an untimely end, was raised up
>
> to heaven and will come back to earth again
>
> to die – not the Saviour of the world, and is
>
> certainly not God. (Arab World Ministries 2005).

So, we clearly see that although Muslims demonstrate a great respect for Jesus, they deny that Jesus is divine or the Son of God, which to them, is the highest blasphemy, because the Qur'an says that God is not a man, therefore, he cannot have a son.

Despite their arguable presuppositions, Muslims adhere strongly that they honor Jesus more than Christians do. Their basis for debate stems from their teaching that Jesus was such a great and holy prophet that God could never permit Him to die on a cross. Thus, Muslims revere Jesus more than Christians do.

Christology is the crucial issue that remains pivotal to Muslim-Christian encounters: *Who is the Christ?* The answer to that question can either serve to divide Christian-Muslim dialogues – or be the bridge to reconciliation. However, we must respect the Muslim's search concerning Christ's identity and His role in God's sovereign plan.

Dr. Ayoub of San Diego University, USA, urges Muslims to focus on Christology:

> This can only be achieved through honest and
> sincere efforts by us all to be existentially
> involved in the meaning and purpose of our
> existence in a world of sin and imperfection,
> but a world sanctified by the divine presence
> among and within us (Woodberry 1990: 176).

Is it possible when engaging Muslims with Christology to lead them to higher truth by acknowledging all the truth which they possess? Historically, according to Woodberry (1990) Christian scholars and ministry workers have not always given kind consideration to a Muslim's view of Chistology. Can we seek to develop ecumenical approaches to Islam without compromising the gospel, which is the hope of all mankind? Christians should be moved by a sense of

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fairness and justice in respecting Islam's quest for understanding the Person of Jesus. Surely, the love of Christ compels us to move beyond combative apologetics of the Crusades to recover the witness spirit and style of Jesus Himself in order to engage our Muslim neighbors.

2.1.4 The Death and resurrection of Jesus

The incarnation has implications for how Muslims view Christ's death on the cross. It has been already noted that the Qur'an, although it views Jesus as one of the greatest prophets, denies that He died on a cross. Instead, they attest that another person was crucified by mistake (Anderson 1990, Woodberry 1990, Arab World Ministries 2005). God interceded for Jesus. Islam teaches that if God had allowed Jesus to die in such a cruel and shameful way, God Himself would have failed; this is an impossible thought to a Muslim.   Thus the reason why Muslims do not see the Cross as an expression of God's love for all mankind. Also, one must remember that traditional Muslims are far less concerned with the theme of love and redemption of mankind.   "Unqualified Divine love for mankind is an idea completely alien to the Qur'an." (Woodberry 1990).
Raymond Lull, was the first missionary to the Muslims in Tunisia during the late 13th century; he challenged Islam for its lack of love and described Islam as a loveless religion (Woodberry 1990).

Despite Islam's lack of concern with the theme of love, Woodberry (1990:163) posits that the theme of love can be an important thematic bridge to folk Islam and the key to incarnational witness:

> …Love is part of every religion of the world…man

> acknowledges the need to love and be loved,
>
> both on a human and divine level…love is the
>
> motivation for God's divine plan for the
>
> redemption of sinful man.

 The story of Christ's death serves to reinforce Muslims' belief that the Bible has been corrupted over the years. To Muslims, the Christian's contention that mankind has a need for a "personal saviour" is just an effort of Christianity to bring God down to the human level.

One Muslim scholar sheds further light to contest Muslim thought when he shared his testimony after becoming a Christian:

> Such a man did live on earth nearly two thousand
>
> years ago. His name was Jesus…when I read the
>
> New Testament and discovered how Jesus loved and
>
> forgave His killers from the cross, I could not fail to
>
> recognise that the love He had for men is the only
>
> kind of love worthy of the Eternal God.
>
> …If the innocent Jesus, who forgave and loved His
>
> Crucifiers from the Cross, was not the Creator-God Himself,
>
> then the Creator-God is proven to be inferior to Jesus. And
>
> this cannot be. (Anderson 1990: 221).

In the first century, the Apostle Paul endured constant and vehement opposition to the Cross. Still, for Muslims today, it is a stumbling block to which Paul referred to in I Cor 1:23 (NIV):

…But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling

block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles…

When engaging Muslims, they must be informed that God's honor was established, rather than shunned, by Christ's loyalty to God and His divine will. Using the concept of a mediator will assist Muslim engagement. For example, the concept of mediator in the Arab community involves vulnerability. During a dispute between Islamic villagers, only a few people are qualified to mediate the dispute and the honor of the mediator is always at stake. Similarly, Christ too, had to make Himself vulnerable to serve the purposes of God (Woodberry 1990). Thus, it can be argued, that the cross was the fullest expression of the generosity of God. For Muslims to deny the cross shows a refusal to accept God's generosity and demonstrates a dishonor to Him.

Arab World Ministries concurs with Woodberry (1990) and sheds further light on this important issue. Christian workers sharing the gospel with Muslims in North Africa found that often when speaking of Jesus' crucifixion, Muslims are quick to quote a passage from the Qur'an that strongly contends:

"They did not kill him nor did they crucify him,

But it appeared so to them…But God took him

up to Himself." (*Sura* 4:157-8).

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The phrase for dispute is: "it appeared so to them." Muslims speculate and contend that at the last moment of the cross when confusion was rampant, someone else, Judas, possibly, was placed on the cross in Jesus' place, while God took Jesus to heaven. Muslims assume that the cross would have meant God's defeat, even though the crucifixion is one of the most well attested facts of history; yet Muslims, in order to maintain the truth of Islam, have attempted to re-write history (AWM.gospel.com/site/display.php?article 53.Apr 25,05.) Halverson (1996:116)) sheds further light on this issue when he posits:

> A careful reading of *Surah* 4:157-158…shows that
>
> it does not deny that Jesus was crucified, but instead
>
> *denies that the Jews caused Jesus to be crucified.*

The point for contemplation is, in actual fact, that the Jews did not KILL Jesus; rather the Romans did (Jn 18:31). Halverson (1996) continues to expound on the issue by giving Scriptural proof that God was responsible for Jesus' crucifixion (Rom 8:3-4; I Pet 1:18-20). Halverson directs our attention to the Qur'an which also alludes to that fact in *Surah* 3:54:

> When Allah said: "O Jesus, I will cause thee to die and
>
> exalt thee in My presence and clear thee of those who
>
> disbelieve and make those who follow thee above those
>
> who disbelieve to the day of resurrection.

However, despite the above passage from *Surah,* an Iranian student once remarked that Muslims actually show more honor to Jesus by refusing to believe that God would permit such a holy one to suffer shame and death on a cross.

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As a united whole, it appears the Qur'an offers more ambiguity on the issue of the Cross. For example, although one passage denies vehemently that Jesus was ever crucified, several other texts seemingly indicate otherwise. In Suras 3:55 and 5:117, God is said to have "taken" Jesus (this term can infer the meaning of "cause to die.") In 19:33 Jesus is quoted as saying "Peace be upon me the day I was born and the day I die and the day I shall be raised alive." Muslim interpretation of those texts refer to the Last Day doctrine when they posit that Christ will return, kill the anti-Christ, break the Cross and die a natural death, although the Qur'an does not clearly state such.

Another Muslim writer acknowledges Islam's doctrine of the Cross:

> "The denial of the death of Christ is in perfect
>
> line with the logic of the Qur'an and with the
>
> constant elements of its teaching." (AWM.gospel.com).

This indicates clearly that if Islam were to adhere to the issue of the Cross, they would be in violation of the Qur'an. To Muslims, Christ's death would have meant the triumph of his executioners. However, the Qur'an affirms their failure. Clearly, we learn that the foundational issue of the Muslim's doctrine of the Cross, based on the Qur'an, their holy book, would have unequivocably meant that the one holy God was defeated; this is an impossible thought to orthodox Muslims.

2.1.4.1 Christ's Atonement

In Islam, the concept of "sin" is viewed in terms of rejecting right guidance. Although, it can be forgiven through repentance, no atonement is necessary. Because they believe that salvation is based on human effort: good deeds outweighing bad deeds, atonement for our "sins" is also unnecessary (Halverson 1996).

2.2 Missiological Implications

Given the tenets of Muslim thought on the doctrine of the Cross, it would be wise for Christian ministry workers who engage Muslims, to exercise great caution when proof-texting the Qur'an in support of Christ's crucifixion. Rather, one might kindly affirm the biblical witness to the Cross. Arab World Ministries (2005) offers positive suggestions when engaging Muslims:

- Say as Jesus did with some Jews (Mt 22:29) "You err not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God."

- State what the Qur'an teaches: that the prophets were slain (Suras 2:61,112, 181, ff; 4:155.)

- Explain that the defeat at the Cross was only apparent; it was necessary to win the war with Satan, sin, and death. Jesus had to die to become victorious.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated clarity on two foundational issues of Islamic faith: theology and the law. Importantly, it was shown how these issues impact

and intertwine with Muslims' view of the incarnation of Christ, His atonement and His resurrection.

Research for this chapter has evidenced that Muslims reject the Cross as morally unacceptable (Otis 1991, Halverson 1996, Arab World Ministries 2005). For to our Muslims friends, the crucifixion was not possible because Jesus would not be honored if allowed to die on the Cross. The crucifixion of Christ is abhorrent to orthodox Muslims. It is an incomprehensible thought that the God of the Qur'an would dishonor such a great prophet by allowing him to be crucified. Christ's atonement for the sins of humankind was unnecessary because men are not born with a sinful nature. And certainly, given the above tenets of their faith, they cannot contend to the issue of Christ's resurrection: Christ did not die on the cross. How then, can Christianity claim that he was resurrected?

These fundamental and probing questions pose missiological challenges when engaging Muslims for witness. A thorough grasp and understanding of these issues is imperative before the spiritual gap can be bridged between Christians and Muslims. Missiological strategies to meet this challenge will be discussed more comprehensively in chapters three and four of this thesis.

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Chapter 3:

Understanding the Gospel and Ordinary Muslims

3.1   Muslim Resistance

It is essential that before we embark on the theological perspectives of Muslim encounters with Christianity, that we closely examine factors that impact Muslim resistance.   While a single cause of Muslim resistance to the gospel cannot be clearly identified, Arab World Ministries (2005) offers several presuppositions for consideration: First, Muslims are naturally hardened to resist the gospel due to their deeply imbedded cultural, social and religious mores.

For instance, the very ideological nature of Muslim society (Arab World Ministries 2005; Schlorff 2005) is the belief that the community of individuals exists to bring all of life into "submission" to the will of God; this is Islamic Law. Assuring that all individuals conform to "God's Law" is one of the main functions of the Islamic state. Thus, we learn that Islamic societies differ vastly from pluralistic societies in the West.

A second cause for Muslim resistance is due to their perception that missionaries have imposed Western cultural forms (missionary extractionism) on churches in Arab areas, which in turn caused great resistance to Christianity in general. Too often, Woodberry (1990) contends, that the danger of international involvement compounded alien expressions of the gospel which actually obscured the message and overwhelmed the people because the expatriate missionary was insensitive to the gentle indigenous church.

Schlorff (2000) however, argues against the view that Muslim resistance is due in large part to early missionary extractionism. Although he recognises that some western workers have often imported their cultural practices into a young church and encouraged converts to leave their culture, he posits that the early workers, rather, failed to adequately contextualise by not helping young converts to relate their new faith and life to their own indigenous culture.

Third, it is generally known that Muslims vehemently oppose religious pluralism. Their doctrine that there is only one God - Allah, is opposed to the Christian view of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, which infers to them that Christians worship three gods: God, Mary and Jesus. Ayoub (2004) concurs that although the Qu'ran frequently makes calls for tolerance and respect of the Bible, Muslims in general have often condemned Christians as polytheists.

Woodberry (1990: 45) posits that Muslim resistance can also stem from the phenomenology of folk Islam whereby many Muslims turn to an amalgamation of Muslim and animistic practices.
Folk Islam concerns itself with everyday human problems (felt needs) which they seek to solve with folk science and herbs.
Through these they seek meaning for everyday life and death. Often Christians have ignored these common felt needs when encountering and engaging Muslims.

> Muslims' resistance to the gospel is due not only to their
> creedal simplicity and to historical confrontations, but to
> Christians' failure to deal with the common people's felt needs

Similarly, Musk (1989) asserts that in all Christian mission the aim must constantly be to get beneath the surface and discover the assumptions of ordinary Muslims in their complex, unpredictable world.

On the current world scene since 2001, Al-Massiah (2003) soberly contends that modern Muslim resistance is due in large part to the successive acts of terror and western retaliation against such terrorist attacks thus causing a steady and dangerous decline in western/Muslim relations. If USA military action in the Middle East continues, it could cause a greater loss of civil rights for Muslims living in Christian nations - thus provoking Muslim rage resulting in a dance of death with the Muslim world.

An additional factor in Muslim resistance to Christian dialogue is due in large part to Christians' acceptance of Muslims as people of faith, but their unacceptance of Islam as an authentic post-Christian religious tradition. Muslims, according to Ayoub (2004), are seeking the acceptance of one another's faith (Islam and Christianity) on each other's own terms. In essence, Muslims' goal in interfaith dialogue is for both faith communities to listen to the voice of "God" as it speaks to all through their own faith-tradition. Muslims have acknowledged an Islamized Christianity and Christians have often Christianized Islam; however, Muslims view this as neutralizing the individuality and integrity of the faith of the other in order to find room for it in their own tradition and worldview (Ayoub 2004:318).

Perhaps the most striking and sobering Muslim assumption regarding resistance to Christian-Muslim dialogue lie in Muslims' perception that both

faiths appear unwilling to truly admit that "God's love and providence extend equally to all human beings regardless of religious identity." (Ayoub 2004:318). This should render any humble Christian a shocked response.

Certainly, New Testament scriptures abound with the message of the Cross of Jesus Christ for all humanity. If this is a major obstacle in Muslim-Christian dialogue, then mission workers must closely and carefully examine this issue from several perspectives. First, are Christian workers engaging Muslims first in a biblical lifestyle of simplicity, demonstrated and practical love? In the West, particularly, Islam is no longer seen as the religion of strangers, but it is the religion of your next door neighbor. Christians and Muslims share the neighborhood, schools, workplace, and hospitals. They share all the moral and social problems that modern urban living entail. Jesus once said, "Who is my neighbor?" A major factor in disarming Muslim resistance will be found where Christians are living an incarnational lifestyle of Jesus.

3.2 A Christian Response

Three elements of biblical theology must be considered in the context of this present crisis in Muslim/Christian engagement:

For the Christian, a sense of critical self-examination must be utilised in the sober realisation that Christians are perpetrators as well as victims when it comes to Muslim resistance. The intent of this thesis is not to denigrate Muslim-Christian persecution, although well documented in research.

However, it is important to note that Christians too, have been victims of severe Muslim persecution on a global scale.

Second, in true evangelical tradition, when engaging Muslims in dialogue, Christians must recall that God's prevenient grace is at work in all of humanity – even those who are far removed from God. It is only through the work of the Holy Spirit that God will reach the hearts of our Muslim brothers.

Two agents are at work in the salvation history of any individual: God (through His Holy Spirit) and a willing worker who obeys the voice of the Spirit in spiritual engagement.

Finally, it is essential for ministry workers among Muslims to remember that the Word of God calls us to engagement and reconciliation with our opponents as well as a call to become active peacemakers in the world (Al-Massiah 2003). Through the Spirit of God and by the Word of God will He make known His commandments to all people everywhere.

3.2.1 Spiritual Warfare

It cannot be overlooked that forces of great evil are at work in any Muslim-resistant area of the world. Contemporary missiologist, Otis (1991) systematically and remarkably explored the world of spiritual darkness in an unprecedented global context through what he termed "spiritual mapping."

The purpose of his study was to identify geographic locations where human wickedness and resistance to Christian faith is most virulent.

He connects a nation's penchant toward extreme violence (Iraq) both ancient and modern, to malevolent deities worshipped by ancient Mesopotamians during

biblical times. His fascinating, relevant and comprehensive work concludes that dark, underlying spiritual forces may be at work in resistance to the gospel message. He concludes, therefore, that it is most important to not attack radical Islam as such, but rather seek to understand the force that may be behind their rejectionism and prayerfully develop spiritual warfare

methodologies to further mission to Muslims.

Saal (1991) concurs with Otis regarding the unsatisfactory spiritual progress of Muslim converts and suggest that they have not been successfully informed about the force of folk Islam in their past. Mission workers who engage Muslims in witness, must have a solid biblical foundation in spiritual warfare. One of Satan's chief aims is to blind minds to the truths of Christ's incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension. (II Cor 4:4; Eph 1:19-23: Heb 2:5-9, 14-15; I Jn 3:8). Saal (1991: 54-55)) recommends a four-fold paradigm approach to spiritual warfare and folk Islam:

First, the person afflicted with evil powers must be born again in Christ and discipled in the faith. Moral, physical and psychological issues must be recognised and adequately addressed (Mt 12:43-45; Jn 8:32; Eph 4:22-5:2; Col 3:5-17). Second, Folk Islam shares in traditional occult practices and is essentially animism with an Islamic veneer. Importantly, any mission worker engaging with Muslims, must maintain a stable, Spirit-filled and Spirit-led walk. Authority over the powers of darkness flows from the completed work of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross (Rom 6:1-14; Gal 6:14; Eph 2:5-6; Col 2:15). (Saal 1991:54-55).

3.2.2 Forms of Witness

Approximately seventy-five parachurch and Christian mission groups met in conference in January of 1996. The purpose of the assembly was to chart out effective mission strategies to engage the Muslim global communities.

Bryant Myers, co-organiser of the International Briefing on Islam and Christian Mission, set the tone of the assembly when he asserted:

> We need an attitude that is constructive and Christlike.
>
> We need to have a crucified mind instead of a crusade
>
> mind (Rabey 1996:1).

Patrick Sookhdeo, director of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity in London, England, expressed similar concerns when he also spoke against " a crusade mentality whereby we see Muslims as enemies."

> Of the past we can only repent. In the present we
>
> must ensure that all we do is done in a Christian way.
>
> (Rabey 1996:1).

Although organisers of the conference sought a unified vision for Christian witness to Muslims – unity seemed elusive. For example, one group suggested a satellite television system that would beam Christian entertainment and teaching to millions of homes in countries that prohibit evangelism. Other participants discussed new forms of witness such as prayer walks and various activities organised under the 10/40 window or AD2000. Criticisms of the assembly observed that the proposed

methodologies were outmoded and ineffective paradigms. Given that ninety

percent of Muslims who convert to Christianity return to Islam, one Christian

worker proposed the reason as to Western efforts to promote a distinctly

Western form of "churchianity" rather than a culturally relevant form of

Christianity (Rabey 1996).

Citing similar reasons that Christian witness has failed, Islamic scholar,

Murray Titus, in an article he wrote in 1944 entitled: "Facing the Future,"

he ascertained that in so many places the missionary method and approach

had been ineffectual because mission workers had not appealed to the

Muslim heart and had failed to make friendly and loving contact in simple

human terms. Thus more than fifty years ago, Titus' words are ringing

relevant to today's Muslim/Christian engagement:

> Islam still stands as the supreme challenge to all the
>
> genius, ability, faith, hope, love, devotion and con-
>
> secration that the followers of Christ can mobilize. To
>
> this end it is clear, therefore, that we desperately need
>
> a revitalizing of our entire approach to the Moslem peoples.
>
> (pg. 164: Pickering)

Titus saw the crucial task of Christian mission as both Christians and non-

Christians alike to study critically their own and other religions – in order to

promote honest dialogue between people of different faiths: To seek a

common witness.

3.2.3 Contextualised Witness

William Shellabear, 20th century missiologist devoted his career to understanding the Malay people and their culture. He provides an important contribution to current understanding of the history of Christian witness among Muslims. Shellabear proposed that the essence of Christian witness and engagement is to love and understand the culture in which you wish to proclaim the Gospel. His biographer, Robert Hunt, concludes: "He (Shellabear) could not love the Malays without respecting their religion. Yet this was the very thing he most longed to supplant with Christianity" (Kerr 1998:3). The doctrine of *human love* and responsibility for others should not be thought of as intrinisically offenisive to a Muslim. Sincerity in preaching the doctrines of Christ will naturally flow from advocacy of the lessons of the New Testament (Buckley 2003).

 Below is an example of the Christian doctrine of *human love* which impacted Imam Senad Agic, a Bosnian Muslim, who was interviewed by a western journalist in 2005 regarding his response to the developments in Bosnia:

> Although we are disappointed with Christians, there
> are some signs of support…from some Protestant
> Christians in Britain. They are helping to rebuild a
> mosque in Mostar that Croats destroyed earlier in the war.

Faithfulness in the love of one's neighbor – even one's enemy may be the best form of witness through "a humble, kenotic style of mission, following Christ's vulnerable life in service, not domination. (IBMR Vol 29, No 1).

A mission worker in northern Nigeria concurs with Christ's style of witness when he reports: "We treat their animals, we go to visit their camps…we show them how to use health care."   This mission worker tries to do everything he can to model Christ to them and constantly looks for opportunities to engage in Christian witness among the Muslim community. (Minchakpu, Obed 2004: ___).

The Apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians chapter thirteen that "Love never fails." The love of Christ so constrains us to search and to seek our brothers in spiritual as well as physical need.

Radical contextualisation in twenty-first century mission to Muslims will be affirmed as "mission Christ's way." Christopher Duraisingh posits that such a mission "does not seek the disappearance of another culture or religion" and does not "do away with differences," but rather holds them together in a "community of communities." In the resulting dialogue Christians may give an unequivocal witness to God's love in Jesus Christ." (IBMR, Vol. 29, No 1). The caveat of Duraisingh's theology of mission is that of NOT "doing away with differences." As mission workers seek a common witness among our Muslim brothers, we cannot abandon the foundational issues of Christianity: the deity of Christ, the Cross, His resurrection and return. Caution must be taken when contextualizing worship and witness, that these essential elements of the Christian faith are indeed never compromised. Otherwise, Christianity will become obscured

and blurred into any chosen faith.

Parshall (1980) contends that we must apply the principles of contextualisation with care and sensitivity in regard to God's changeless word, in order to advance witness among Muslims:

> Too long the church has been programmed
>
> to accept the inevitabilities of meager results
>
> in the efforts toward Muslim evangelization…
>
> The church must forsake former pre-suppositions
>
> to become conscious of God speaking in a new
>
> and fresh manner through extra biblical methodology.
>
> (Parshall 1980: 282).

3.2.4 Contempory contextualisation to counteract extractionism

The danger of contemporary mission workers is to counteract extractionism in ways that are counterproductive. For example, in attempt to be an incarnational witness, workers may identify themselves as Muslim rather than Christian through the practice of ritual prayers and fasts in a prescribed Muslim manner. This could cause a slide into syncretism. (Schlorff 2000).

3.2.5 Contextualised Worship

Woodberry (1989) describes Uddin's who has worshipped God both as a Muslim and now as a Christian. As a result he applies new meaning to Islamic forms of worship. He postulates that the New Testament does not advocate any definite form of worship to fit Jew, Gentile or Muslim-Christian. Faith in Christ demands changes aimed more at meaning levels rather than external forms. That God can be praised and honored through the use of various cultural forms is aptly

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demonstrated in the Bible: Ex 20:3; Deut 5:7; Mt 4:10; Lk 4:8; Acts 10:26; Col 2:18; Rev 19:10; 22:8-9. Thus worship is intense communion with God and forms of worship are taught by one's culture by members of one's family from childhood. Therefore, contextualised worship forms are necessary to assure true communion with God. (Woodberry 1989: 268-269).

Uddin, a Muslim-Christian who now works among the Muslim community suggests to the new believers in Christ that they practice prayer five times a day in worship and fast during Ramadan. This practice of contextualising worship among Muslims has been met with a positive response. Thus, Uddin sees the benefit of using Islamic forms of worship by giving Christian meaning to them. Through this, he teaches first generation believers that the worship of God is taught by Jesus Christ and is to be done in spirit and in truth, although different forms may be utilised in the worship of God.

(Uddin 1989 in Woodberry).

3.2.6 Perspectives for Worship and Witness

A Muslim believer in Jesus Christ has three options concerning adopting a style of prayer and worship: First, he may stay within his frame of reference for Islamic worship, but changing the values and meanings to align with his newfound faith in Christ. Second, he may adopt Christian forms of worship and practice, but risks alienating himself from his own society and marring his potential to witness to friends and family. Last, he may create new forms of worship but also risk losing the ability to witness for Christ among his Muslim

community. Although peripheral offenses may be eliminated, he must never eliminate the Cross of Christ in Christian witness. (Woodberry 1989:271).

3.3 CONTEXTUALISED SYMBOLS AND PRACTICE

All cultures use symbols for the purpose of communication. Many signs and symbols are used to communicate within the Muslim society to transmit their beliefs and values to the next generation (ie, gestures, rituals, material objects, and architectural objects). However, it is essential for mission workers to discern and distinguish between the observable *form* of a symbol and the *meaning* associated with that form. For the Muslim, their ritual prayer communicates a definite message of the worshipper's submission to God as Muhammad prescribed as well as a symbol of the person's solidarity with the Muslim community (Saal 1991).

> Woodbery (1989) contends that contextual symbols and practices may sometimes communicate meaning inimical to the Gospel. For instance praying toward Jerusalem, or a regular prayer ritual which communicates a legalism similar to Islam. However, a caveat here is that contextualising symbols may easily lead to syncretism which betray the quintessential Gospel.
>
> Contextualisation may also take the form of modernity among Muslims if they choose to stand for prayer, rather than prostrate; to sit on chairs rather than on the floor; or for men and women to worship together. Their quest for modernity will determine how far they go in contextualising their symbols and practices for worship. (Shenk 1989).

Saal (1991) examines two approaches of contextualisation: synthesizing and analytic.

Synthesizing approaches to contextualisation begin from within Islam by using the Qur'an as a theological starting point by attempting to bring Islamic and Christian perspectives closer together. The danger of this approach is to fall into synthesis and undermine the authority of the Bible. Extreme caution must be taken that its authority is not undercut through the use of the Qur'an. Saal (1991) only recommends this method of contextualisation.

The analytical approach attempts to understand the Qur'an and the Bible on its own terms. This method uses the Qur'an as a cultural starting point rather than as a source of theological truth. This approach does not attempt to bring Islam and Christianity closer in unity. The basic thrust is analysis: to gain an informed understanding of each book respectively in terms of its own categories of thought in relation to the other. Although respect is shown for the Qur'an, the Bible remains the infallible Word of God.

3.4 Conclusion:

This chapter has examined factors which impact Muslim resistance to Christianity. It is well documented that through the centuries Muslims and Christians have interacted in various ways from long periods of co-existence and friendly cooperation to periods of suspicion, rivalry and warfare.

The questions to ponder are: *What is meant by resistance? What is God's role in resistance? What factors have engendered animosity among Muslims? How do people turn from resistance to receptivity?* This chapter examined these reflections by showing that Muslim resistance is due largely to their deeply imbedded cultural, social and religious mores evidencing that Islamic law is one with the Qu'ran. Muslims vehemently oppose religious pluralism and view Christianity as a pluralistic religion because of their Trinitarian view. The practice of folk Islam negatively impacts their receptivity to the Gospel. Often mission workers have ignored the felt needs of Muslims who seek meaning for life and death. Terror and retaliation of the West during post 911 has caused increased resistance to Christianity.

Additionally, a two-fold resistance entails: Muslims see the failure of Christians to accept Islam as a post-Christian religion in its own right. On the other hand, Christianity views Islam's failure to embrace the truth that God's love extends to all people everywhere. What is needed is mutual receptivity.

Receptivity will prevail as walls of resistance crumble. The word of God stands true: God wants all people to repent (Jn 3:16) All people have an innate disposition to receive the Gospel (prevenient grace). Mission workers who engage Muslim neighbors must hold steady to the biblical truth that because of sin and the Adamic fall of humankind, all people resist the gospel.

In his book, *Reaching the Resistant,* Larson posits that God is using martyrdom, prayer, miracles and tentmaking to bring down the walls of resistance in difficult places. The mission worker must remain patient and steadfast and remember: "Be not weary in well doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." (The Bible).

Contextualised worship and witness play a key role in breaking down resistance by allowing Muslim Christians to witness and worship within their own cultural mores without compromising the essentials of Christ-centered worship.

Finally, we must primarily view Muslim resistance attributable mainly to the ideological nature of Islamic society and Islamic Law. Extractionism must be attributable to Islamic Law and not to early mission workers. Rather than blaming early Christian workers, the contemporary ministry worker in the Muslim world should become familiar with the ideological nature of Islamic society and be prepared to counteract its effect on the convert and the church and find creative ways to bridge the cultural gap in a common witness.

The next chapter will examine several current models for Muslim witness and demonstrate ways to bridge the gap to discover a common witness for Muslim encounter in the 21st century.

Chapter 4:

Bridging the Cultural Gap: A Common Witness

4.1 Current Models for Mission

The mission approach to Islam has been experiencing a time of flux and change in recent years. Due to impatience with slow progress and meager results in Muslim encounters, many Christian ministry workers have begun to re-think their assumptions and approaches. As a result, they have cast about for a new model for engaging Muslims in ministry (Schlorff 2000). A major factor that thrust a vision for change has been the influence of the social sciences. A larger number of missionary scholars have been schooled in these disciplines which include cultural anthropology, sociology and the behavioral sciences. These have impacted attitudes toward culture and non-Christian religions.

4.1.1 Translational model (dynamic equivalent)

This chapter will briefly examine two models for Christian–Muslim engagement: translational model or sometimes called the dynamic equivalent model, and the comparative model. Two major comparative studies will also be presented in order to see how these models have been integrated as such.

The TM was proposed by Charles Kraft of Fuller Seminary in California, USA to provide a way of using worldview and cultural forms for both understanding and communication. Gilliland (1997) reviews the basic tenets of this model, which has been on the missiological scene for approximately twenty-five years now, to include: Meeting human needs in the name of Jesus Christ and fostering loving

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relationships. Yet, the approaches to Muslims must be more than verbal, cognitive events which often focus narrowly on religious conversion.

More than forty years ago Kraemer (1960) contended that it was a "sheer tragedy and shame" that the church has the record of arguing the case for Jesus rather than corporately showing who Jesus is.

Another exponent of Gillliand's proposition of this model is that its central tenet means to live as neighbors with Muslims by fostering relationships of love without demanding conversion as the price; because conversion is finally God's work. This model proposes that Christian-Muslim engagement must be relational rather than confrontative.

 The searching question that surfaces is: *Do we use the translational model at the price of forfeiting the message of the cross of Christ?*

Schlorff (2000) posits a balanced critique of the translational (dynamic equivalent) model since its inception twenty-five years ago.

Basic tenets of the translational model include:

- Use of the Qur'an as a bridge over which to lead a Muslim to faith in Christ

- Converts remain within Islam: Converts avoid identifying themselves as Christians. Kraft (1974) asserts: "that we bend every effort toward stimulating a faith renewal within Islam (1974:143).

- A Muslim movement that remains basically Muslim in ethos and culture

- Find a spiritual equivalent of baptism as Muslims oppose this mode of religious expression.

- Muslims continue to participate in their five Acts of Worship

- Continue Islamic forms of worship but give Christian meanings to these forms (Schlorff 2000:305).

Parshall (1998), however, gives four caveats to the translational model:

First, the model allows the unacceptable exaltation of the prophet Muhammad. Second,the model permits the centrality of the mosque to religious expression within Islam. Third, Muslims passively discredit the view of biblical authority and our belief of the deity and atonement of Christ. Finally, converts may continue in the mainstream of Muslim life, without compromising clearly Islamic practices.

If a contemporary model for Muslim engagement is to be adequate for the task, it must be based on an appraisal of Islam that is realistic and biblically-sound. Careful evaluation of this model must be used. TM approaches radical contextualisation. Is it possible for Christians to stray from a biblically-sound methodology, and at *any* cost, (dilution of the gospel) engage Muslims?

4.1.2 Comparative Model

A comparative model for Christian mission to Muslims began in the 1970s when papers were presented by missiologists in the *International Review of Mission* journal. Kerr (2000) offers basic tenets of the model:

- Common Christian-Muslim thinking about mission should be based on the meaning of God's sending and calling. (centrifugal: Christian and centripetal: Muslim).
- Distinguishing between biblical and Qur'anic principles of mission.
- Christian-Muslim relations need to re-think their relationship between religion and culture.

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- Contextualisation in diverse situations of Christian-Muslim encounter for renewed understanding of the biblical and Qur'anic injunctions.

Woodberry (1990) very aptly contends that all of our theological reflection concerning engaging Muslims for witness needs to be informed by the Scriptures and Holy Spirit as well as by Christian encounters among Muslims. Ministry workers must 'listen' to and be informed by the questions which Muslims address to the church.

Why did God send Christ to bridge the gulf between heaven and earth, between divinity and humanity? Because God's love constrained him to do so. That same love should constrain Christians to do likewise. Just as Christ became the bridge between God and man, we have to become bridges to our fellow Muslims. Although the Bible always needs to inform the manner in which we engage Muslims for witness, Christians should also appreciate the Muslim view of the Qur'an and make careful use of Qur'anic passages which point to a high view of Scripture, ie:

> *Dispute not the people of the Book save in the fairer manner*
> *And say, "We believe in what has been sent down to us and*
> *What has been sent down to you; our God and your God is one*
> *And to Him we have surrendered. " (Surah 29:45 pg 131)*

Also Surah 5:72 and Surah 29:45 reflects Muhammad's high view of Biblical authority. (Parshall 1980:131). Exploring the common ground of the Old Testament and Qur'an in regard to the prophets is another useful comparative tool. The Qur'an can be used as a beginning point for introducing Jesus as "The Word of God."

Although Christians must never apologise for being a believer and follower of Jesus Christ, we must seek to understand Muslims and gain their respect which is the beginning of true friendship. A biblical example of this methodology is from the apostle Paul who sought to establish common ground with his listeners. When he spoke to the Corinithians (2 Cor 1:12,23-24) he knew about their idolatries and found one of their altars with the inscription "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD." He used this as a common witness to bridge the gap to the one and true God, when he said to the Athenians - with reference to their altars: "Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. The God (*ho theos*) who made the world…."(vv 23-24).

There appears to be similarities and a point of reference to Paul's words and the teaching of the Qur'an; some ministry workers among Muslims will place verses from the Qur'an alongside phrases from Paul's address:

> The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord
>
> of heaven and earth and does not live in temples made by hands. (I Cor 17:24)
>
> Knowest thou not that it is Allah unto Whom belongeth
>
> the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth; and ye have
>
> not beside Allah, any friend or helper? (Q 2:107).

(Certainly, there is heated debate among missiologists on the issue of whether the Muslim "Allah" is one and the same God the Creator of the universe whom all Christians worship – but this must be left to another debate).

Woodberry (1989) in an attempt to explain these common elements is that Muhammad must have gleaned these ideas from either Jews or from early Christians. Of course, Muslims would vehemently oppose this suggestion.

Clearly we see in other passages of scripture that the apostle Paul, in order to establish a common witness, often quoted from Greek poets (extrabiblical) in order to strengthen his expressions. Paul was willing to recognise any expression of truth. Myrtle Langley concurs:

> Paul has need to enlist the help of Greek
>
> philosophy if he is to clinch his argument…
>
> All wisdom, biblical and Hellenistic, is welcome
>
> if it can be shown how ridiculous it is to maintain
>
> that the creator of living men can be contained
>
> in dead matter. (Woodberry 1989:117).

Would it be possible to challenge the world view of Islam in a similar way? Is there still a place for apologetics in our witness to Muslims? Even though Islam believes in the hiddenness of God and that it is impossible to ever know Him? The best that Muslim teaches is that "believers" know His will which He has revealed to them.

Paul's approach to the Athenians is completely God-centered:

- God creates

- God is one

- God rules

- God reveals

- God loves

- God judges

- God forgives

Woodberry (1989) contends that both Christians and Muslims have a common witness in these statements. Yet, the sobering question is not *whether* God forgives but *how* He forgives. These seven propositions must be carefully explored through Muslim-Christian engagement in establishing a common witness:

1. God creates.

   Although Islam teaches a clear doctrine of creation by one supreme Creator, they do not accept the biblical phrase "created in the image of God." Unless well versed to refute their belief during initial engagement, it is best to rejoice together in our common doctrine of creation.

2. God is one.

   We can agree with the Muslims that "There is no god by God," "The Lord our God is one God." (Deut 6:4). We believe in the oneness of God, but the question is: what kind of oneness? This is a very controversial proposition and several missiological writers heatedly debate the issue of whether Muslim and Christian refer to the same God. (Musk 2004; Saal 1991; Hoskins 2005). The basic caveat of this proposition is that the Islamic portrayal of Allah is inadequate and as well as inaccurate – mainly because it negates the centrality of Christ. However, more than 15 million Arabic-speaking Christians use the word "Allah" for God. Importantly, when engaging Muslims for witness, it is not so much the word for God (Allah) that needs to be changed, rather their

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concept and quintessential understanding of who God is needs to be fully clarified (Hoskins 2005).

3. God rules.

For the Christian, Christ is King and rules in complete control over the world. Those who enter the kingdom of God, enter under the authority of Christ. For the Muslim, who associate the kingdom of God with Islam – entering the kingdom means living according to the law revealed by Muhammad.

4. God reveals.

God has revealed Himself in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. (Jn 1:18). Muslims assert that God does not reveal Himself to anyone in any way.

5. God loves.

John 3:16 sums up the meaning of the incarnation: "God so loved the world….." And in Rom 5:8, "God demonstrates His love for us…." On the other hand, however, the Qur'an never speaks about the love of God although there are many verses that speak about God loving certain kinds of people and those he does not love.

6. God judges.

Both Christian and Muslim believe there will be a Day of Judgment , but on what basis will God judge humanity? Islam does not share that sin is sinfulness and will be judged by God. Muslims see sin as simply weakness or mistakes.

7. God forgives.

   Who does God forgive and how does God forgive? These are questions

   to explore in Muslim witness. Islam teaches that God forgives by a word.

   But, the Old Testament scriptures teach that forgiveness involves suffering

   and sacrifice. For Christians, God invites and commands that all people

   repent and change their wicked ways (Acts 17:30).

4.2 Commonality in bridging the cultural gap

   In order to bridge the gap between Islam and Christianity, a common

   ground must be established. Differences must be realised and carefully

   considered. Dialogue may entail asking the simple question:

   Which of these answers make the most sense of all that we know about

   the universe and mankind? Are we prepared to live with all the

   consequences of what we believe about God?

Mallouhi is an Arab Christian currently living in the middle east. He offers

several suggestions for Muslim witness: Christians should always use a non-

confrontational approach and build on commonalities between Islam and

Christianity. It is essential to assist Muslims by embodying goodwill,

appreciation and sympathy in the spirit of Christ. Offer respect.

(Chandler (2003).

Christ should be presented as a middle-eastern who was born, lived and died

in the middle east. It is essential in engaging Muslims that Christ is stripped

of his western trappings. Muslims perceive Christianity as part of a western

political agenda and see Christ as a westerner with no relationship with

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eastern culture. But, in reality, Christianity is middle eastern in origin – not a western faith. Culturally, Christ was more like today's Arab than a western Christian.

Mallouhi (2003)sees himself as a Syrian Arab follower of Christ.

4.3 Laying a Christian Foundation

Ghandi challenged Christians to make love their working force, adopting it as a total way of life: "love is the centre and soul of Christianity." Ghandi believed that one must show tenderness toward the smallest thing that suffers pain. One should not talk about Christianity, but rather live it: "like a rose that propagates its perfume – it just gives it forth and people are drawn to it." Live Christianity and people will come to see the source of your power. Ghandi espoused that love, service and self-sacrifice will create an atmosphere for understanding the gospel. He believed in the soul-force or power of suffering: "taking suffering on oneself, but never causing suffering." Mallouhi (2003) posits that what missionaries have not been able to do in fifty years, Ghandi – by his life, trial and incarceration had done – namely he turned the eyes of India toward the cross of Christ. (Chandler 2003).

4.4 Peaceable Witness in bridging the gap

Nickel (1999) proposes several ways to bridge the gap in Muslim witness by finding a common witness through friendship and dialogue. He proposes using the Anabaptist peacemaking agenda in communicating the Gospel of peace, servanthood and love of enemy to positively affect Christian-Muslim

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relations. The Anabaptist theology of mission, according to Bevans and Schroeder (2004) posit a rejection of a territorially defined church.

Finding new ways of overcoming the Crusades mentality – Christians need to talk less, listen more and learn more from Muslims. Avoid pseudoevangelism and cultural imperatives in order to celebrate our diversity and appreciate unfamiliar perspectives. Nickel's basic contention to bridge the gap and find a common witness among Muslims, one must involve dialogue, love, reconciliation, and a peaceable witness.

Nickel's paradigm for Muslim engagement concurs with Vogelaar (2004) when he attests that dialogue should be used as a strategy for mission and a tool for the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Vogelaar outlines five effective ways in which ministry workers can engage Muslims:

- Through open doors

- Through open hands

- Through open hearts

- Through open minds

- Through an open creed

An open door represents hospitality. Hospitality in the middle eastern culture is a way of honoring an individual. Interfaith dialogue in a home setting avoids the mindset of "us and them."

Open hands in greeting symbolize honest intention and lets the Muslim know that you have no hidden agenda – no intent of harm or hurt. On the other hand, a closed fist indicates a desire to beat someone – shows an appearance of

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defiance or enmity. Christ calls us to live a life of humility, peace and gentle spirit – not often seen by Muslim neighbors.

An open heart was the apostle Paul's admonition when he wrote to the Corinthians "open wide your hearts." One must be transparent and show no desire but to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ and live in obedience to Him. It is important to let Muslims know your heart's desire is to follow the teachings of Jesus.

An open mind listens to Muslims regarding the ordination of women, gender issues and religious pluralism. Yet, without compromising issues of teaching on the incarnation of Christ and His divinity. The church does not control the mission of God. God does. He uses the church in His mission.

An open creed. The doctrine of the atonement did not begin as a doctrine but as an experience. Without the experience of atonement, we have nothing but an empty creed. The doctrine of original sin did not begin as a doctrine, but as an experience of the insidious nature and destructive power of influence in our lives. If you have not experienced evil in your lives, forget the doctrine.

The doctrine of grace did not begin as a doctrine, but as an experience of being overwhelmed by divine love demonstrated by Jesus' willingness to die on the cross.

Vogelaar (2004) asks and answers the question: *What is needed today?* The meeting of Muslims and Christians who will share names, stories, experiences. To greet one another – learn from one another (not about or with).

"Being mutually open to such knowledge is the essence of true religion." (pg 402).

Kimball (2004) proposes three strategies for Muslim engagement: education, formal and informal dialogue, and collaborative efforts in society. The author observes that Muslims and Christians view one another with detailed ignorance through their ideas, images and sound bite impressions of each other from extensive media attention, primarily. There are several top priorities for overcoming these stereotypes.

4.4.1 Education in witness

Education should take place through focused study and personal encounter. This is done in the form of individual study, college courses on Islam or study programmes in churches and Islamic centres. Essential to Muslim Christian relations is to organize dialogue programmes. Fair-minded educational programmes will help to de-mystify the world's second largest religion.

4.4.2 Dialogue programmes

Dialogue programmes should address common concerns in society such as economic exploitation, poverty, ecological degradation, the AIDS crisis and the rehabilitation of convicted criminals.

4.4.3 Cooperative efforts

Cooperative efforts in society to join with other faiths to address challenges confronting their communities. For example, one community in Ohio, USA 2003, Jews, Christians and Muslims jointly built a Habitat for Humanity house. This fostered a sense of pride in a coop approach within their community. (Kimball

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2004). Chaplains in prison settings could coordinate efforts in sharing resources and ideas in order to help Christians and Muslims increase their chances of success upon release from prison.

Cooperative efforts does not nullify the responsibility of Christians and Muslims feel to bear witness to their respective understanding of God's revelation to humankind. Rather, it can be a powerful form of witness.

4.5 Forgiveness as an engagement tool

Guthrie (2005) offers another vitally important way to bridge the gap for a common witness among Muslims. He posits waging peace on Islam through a Christlike spirit and doing mission in light of the cross or in the shadow of the cross and in a spirit of reconciliation. One Muslim commented to a Christian:

We know the difference between you and us.

We do not forgive our enemies. When there

Is trouble between us Sunnis and Shiites, we

fight and burn one another's shops. But

You have forgiven us.

The Christian responded: *"We are just doing what Jesus taught us to do."* (Guthrie 2005: 46-47).

Strohmer (2005) concurs when he states that |Muslims are seeking healing in their communities (from past hurts of the Crusades). On the current world scene, moderate Muslims are seeking a healing relationship between the

USA and the larger Muslim community. Strohmer also views forgiveness as an engagement tool.

4.6 Two Major Models of Muslim Ministry for the 21ˢᵗ century

Next we want to carefully examine two major models for Muslim ministry that has been demonstrated with efficacy over more than forty years. According to Dixon (2002) the Javanese church model in Indonesia has reached millions of Muslims. Workers among Muslim people should understand what the Holy Spirit has accomplished through the Javanese church. Javanese Muslims in Indonesia show the most significant turning to Christ in the history of Islam. This model for engaging Muslims is fully developed.   Today, more Muslims are converted among Javanese than any other group. All models for Muslim witness must be built on successful existing models and must include the following tenets:

- A theology of the Fatherhood of God

- The person and work of Jesus Christ

- The activity and work of the Holy Spirit in Christian faith and practice

- The true nature of the church

- Christian ethics

4.6.1   A brief history of the Javanese church

In the 19ᵗʰ c. the south central Java blended Christianity with Javanese culture and Islamic practices. They combined patterns of worship, ie. "There is no god but Allah and Jesus Christ is the Spirit of Allah." This was a questionable practice and some missionaries working in the area at

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the time, pulled away from the church. In the 20th century the east and central Java churches emphasised Javanese style and the mission workers worked in the cities with the Dutch style of Christianity. East Java held missionary supervision to mid 20th century and introduced European characteristics. The east Java Christian church and the central Java church developed a unifying model that enabled the church to win many Muslims to Christ.

4.6.2 Major principles of the Javanese church for witness

The gospel is seen in context. This allowed the Javanese to interpret the gospel from an eastern perspective. Key to this process was for westerners to allow the Javanese to lead in the contextualisation process – although the struggle ensued for six decades, in the end, according to Dixon (2002), the Javanese church emerged. Dixon also strongly contends that if missionaries had been successful in imparting their own model and controlling the process, it is unlikely that millions would have come to Christ.

Another factor for success in the Javanese model lies with a clear identity as Javanese. Workers fought against anything that would take away from Javanese characteristics for the new converts. Conflict ensued between European and Javanese models, but stronger leaders prevailed on the side of the indigenous Javanese identity.

Language gained a third positive influence: while the majority of city churches in the Dutch East Indies used Malay or Dutch language as a

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preaching medium, churches among the Javanese used their own language for homiletics and translation of scripture.

Clear identity as a Christian was emphasised. Each new believer was encouraged to have a well-defined Christian identity – converts to Christ were clearly taught - they were no longer Muslims and allegiance to spiritual beings other than the Triune Godhead was unacceptable.

Clear identity as a church: The church as well as Christians hold a high profile identity. The Javanese church has never gone underground despite fiery trials. The church never disguised its existence or retreated from threats. Principles of high profile identity have enabled the gospel to go into the community with each power that millions have come to believe. A clear gospel proclaimed Jesus as Son of God and Savior. Javanese Christians never blurred the status of Jesus as Son of God and Savior. The Javanese Bibles used Greek names for Jesus (Yesus) instead of Arabic terms (Isa Almasih). The gospel stands alone as the revelation of God and is not considered the apex of the other systems.

4.6.3 Participation in society.

Javanese churches urge people to prepare themselves to function as leaders in their local society and are taught the true church functions as a means of extending God's kingdom on earth. Javanese Christians do not change their names at Baptism; they may add a biblical name, but they retain their Javanese name.

4.6.4 Extensive friendship for witness

Engaging Muslims in friendship has been a major key to the growth factor for the church. They share their faith with their neighbors and pray for the sick in their community. Dixon (2002) posits that the growth of Javanese Christianity did not grow from deliberate efforts to spread it; rather it was due to the natural initiative of lay people with no officially organised programme.

Christian witness to Muslims has been demonstrated through the nurturing of friendships.

4.6.5 Influences of family who converted to Christ

A survey by Willis in 1977 reveals that 85% of the respondents affirmed that their families were the most influential in their decision to become Christians. People shared their dreams and visions, (which play a major factor in conversion stories) with their families. Reportedly, these visions, or dreams are of the nature where Christ appears to the Muslim and invites them to believe in Him as the Son of God and savior of the world (Guthrie 2002).

4.7 Missiological implications for 21st century approaches for Muslim Witness.

As evidenced in the Javanese church, a truly indigenous church requires decades. When Christianity comes as a new world view, it has to replace the old worldview, which is a two way process of uprooting and implanting. Third, if viable models of Christianity are already developing – integrate with them for witness. Ministry workers must seek to understand the models of

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witness that are already being used. Because implementing a completely new

model is a long-term and difficult venture, according to Dixon (2002).

Fourth, the teaching must be biblically-based so that the true nature of the

gospel will not be confused. The gospel must be clear to the converts. Some

contextualized Muslim ministry models do not have a biblical text. The gospel

must be interpreted through a clear, biblical worldview: God the Father, God the

Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Dixon (2002) is opposed to bringing a person into the Christian circle

through some social model that relates to their Islamic community.

4.7.1 Gambia, Africa: A mission model for engaging Muslims

Frederiks (2003) conducted a richly detailed and historical study of the small

African country of Gambia over the last 500 years as it pertains to witness

among Muslims. Currently Gambia has a Muslim population of more than

90%.

She comprehensively covered a wide range of familiar themes including:

Vernacular translation, denominational rivalry and cooperation,

overdependence, and the failure of education as a tool for Christian expansion.

She identified the supreme challenge of Gambian Christians as that of

maintaining a meaningful and credible (non-confrontational) witness. Frederiks

comprehensively identified five models used for Christian engagement of

Muslims: expansion (through service; finding commonality through community

concerns, ie: poverty, clean water, improved school systems), presence (as

positive, gentle and peaceful witness) and open dialogue (whereby both Muslim

and Christian can engage issues with mutual respect). She posits a fifth model that she contends is the most effective model: that of incarnation or identifying with the other; one whereby the church develops an identity and witness that is "Islam-sensitive." A truly incarnational witness is one in which there is *kenosis*, which signifies self-emptying.

4.8 Vision for Muslim Mission: Maghreb and the Sahara

A third controversial model for examination and careful scrutiny is that of Henri Marchal and his work among Muslims in the Sahara. Marchal, a Frenchman and Arabic scholar, was appointed in 1905 as a mission worker to the Sahara. He emphasised the need for an open style of witness. He believed the duty of all mission workers was to awaken consciences to the sense of sin, contrition, humility and conversion of heart. He contended that salvific truths could be presented to Muslims in a way that would invite them to a greater confidence in God's mercy that would patiently lead them into the love of God. His model for Muslim engagement entailed influencing the social milieu through kindness, service, and Christian witness. What Marchal failed to propose was a genuine conversion to Christianity through acceptance of Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God, who died on a cross for the sins of mankind. Instead, he saw "salvation" of Muslims as simply a relationship with Christian society as a "covenant of love" between them and the God of Jesus Christ. (Shorter 2004).

4.9 A caveat: Active and high profile witness

Active witness for Christ is often difficult in totalitarian regimes where Islamic

penalty for apostasy (changing religions) is death.   Yet, an active Christian

witness is the primary goal of the church of Jesus Christ.

A high profile witness is when believers live a consistent Christian lifestyle by

giving testimony of that life to others, ie: families, friends, neighbors.

It means Christians who act and speak in ways that are starkly different from

general society.

Today, in India, China and Pakistan, this kind of witness is presently being

conducted, but certainly not without fierce reactions and persecutions. Yet,

the gospel is going forth through the testimony of the church.

4.10 Indigenous leaders for witness

For effective witness and church development, the leader must be an

indigenous leader. The process of planting the gospel in a non-Christian

society must be led by local people. The Javanese church model

demonstrates the importance of conversions of local leaders. While outsiders

may contribute to the process, the church must be led indigenously.

4.11 A unified witness

Finally, an effective model for Muslim witness must take place through

continual fellowship with each other across denominational lines – only

this will develop a strong unified witness to our non-Christian brothers.

Denominations who rival one another and squabble over minor doctrinal differences, often hinder the work among Muslims more than another other factor.

Christian workers must demonstrate a cohesive block of believers.

4.12 Missiological Reflections for 21st century Muslim encounters

Three factors hold future missiological implications for engagement with Muslims: First, as evidenced in the Javanese church, a truly indigenous church requires decades of long and patient endurance before spiritual fruits are evidenced. Because, when Christianity comes as a new world view into a culture, it has to replace the old worldview which becomes a two-way process of uprooting and implanting – this takes considerable time.

Second, If viable models of Christianity are already developing – integrate with them for witness. Ministry workers must seek to understand the models of witness that are already being effectively used in a Muslim culture – these have been patiently tested and tried. Dixon (2002) cautions against using a completely new mission model because the new model can be a long a difficult venture.

Finally, the teaching must be biblically-based so that the true nature of the gospel will not be confused. The gospel must be clear to the converts. Some contextualised Muslim ministry models do not have a clear biblical text. This must be guarded against and the gospel must be interpreted through a clear, biblical worldview: God the Father, God the Son, and

God the Holy Spirit. Dixon (2002) is opposed to bringing a person into the Christian circle through some social model that relates to their Islamic community.

4.13 Conclusion:

This chapter explored several models that are being used to engage Muslims for witness. Bridging a peaceable witness through friendship, hospitality and formal and informal dialogue have been demonstrably effective engagement tools used by many mission workers.

Paramount to any mission model is the need to be informed by the Holy Spirit and the holy Scriptures. Thereafter, a search to find common elements between Islam and Christianity is helpful in bridging the gap between the two faiths. |One common element is that both faiths are monotheistic faiths.

The apostle Paul's approach to the first century Corinthians serves as an example of ways in which Paul found commonality in presenting the person and work of Jesus. The recurring theme among many scholars seemed to be that of seeking a "peaceful witness." Mallouhi (2003); Bevans and Schroeder (2005); Musk (2004).

Bridging the gap between Christianity and Islam means to find a common witness that involves open dialogue, love, reconciliation, and a peaceable witness. The apostle Paul concurs when he wrote to the Corinthians: "Open wide your hearts."

Although it is essential that we posit a peaceable witness among Muslims, Christians cannot and should not compromise issues of teaching on the

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incarnation of Christ or His divinity; these are non-negotiable issues in witness among Muslims.

This chapter also explored two major models of successful Muslim ministry among the Javanese church in Indonesia and the Gambians in Africa. The conversion of many millions of Javanese Muslims in Indonesia is probably the most amazing and significant turning to Christ in the history of Islam. Yet, as Dixon (2002) posits, this movement is essentially being overlooked as mission workers seek to create the "key" to Muslim enagement. This chapter carefully examined the major principles of the Javanese church.

 A second model for engaging Muslims was one from Gambia, Africa involving more than 500 years of work in that area. Frederiks (2003) offered stimulating insight into five effective models of Christian engagement: expansion, service, presence and dialogue and most importantly, incarnational ministry.

Briefly examined was a third controversial model for Muslim engagement that took place in the late 19th century and was conducted primarily by Catholic missionaries. Henri Marchal emphasised the need for an open stye of witness. What Marchal failed to propose was a genuine conversion to Christianity through acceptance of Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God – his death and resurrection through which is the only mean's of the salvation of humankind. Instead, he saw "salvation" of Muslims as simply a relationship with Christian society as a "covenant of

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love" between them and the God of Jesus Christ. (Shorter in IBMR: 2004).

Certainly for evangelical Christians, this model poses grave concerns which dismally fail to present the true gospel message of Jesus Christ: that His death and resurrection was necessary for the forgiveness of sins; Christ calls us from sin to serve Him. Marchal's model serves as a caveat for 21st century mission workers to guard against dilution of the gospel.

Finally, this chapter demonstrated that effective models for Muslim witness must entail working in harmony across denominational lines in order to develop a strong and unified witness to our non-Christian brothers. By shunning denominational rivalry, mission workers can positively display a united front by laying a strong and solid foundation upon which many others have labored long and hard to establish.

This thesis has demonstrated that Muslims comprise more than 1 billion of the global population yet only six percent of Christian ministry workers are involved in mission to Muslims. This has raised a personal concern which has propelled me to evaluate current research on the most effective ways to reach the Islamic community with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

After careful review of more than twenty books and forty professional journal articles, I feel compelled to concur with Dixon (2002) as he posits that instead of seeking a "key" to Muslim evangelism, rather evaluate the current successful major models which evidence the most significant conversion to Christ among Muslims in the world today.

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Perhaps the most effective tool used was that of contextualisation. This tool is proposed and used by most conservative missiologists among other unreached people groups. Giving careful consideration to the Islamic community's strong social bonds and adapting the gospel to be understood in their context – without compromising the foundational issues of Christianity.

I assert that mission workers who live an incarnational life before their Muslim brothers will begin to bridge the cultural gap. We must not say to them, "Go to the cross." Rather we must say, "Come to the cross and see if there was any greater sorrow than Christ's sorrow." Christ's love constrains us to stand before our Muslim brothers with a sense of ourselves as sinners saved by the same amazing grace that we commend to all of humankind. God calls mission workers to evidence the greatest method for reaching the unreached: patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness prayer and absolute reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit who preceeds all our mission endeavors.

An effective model for Muslim witness is one in which we are willing to labor long and patiently in common witness for Christ through warm and open hospitality which will lead to open dialogue.

A biblical model for Muslim witness is to review the Apostle Paul's discourse to the Athenians; he sought to engage them in language

they understood; taking into account their cultural mores' as a starting point for commonality.

The final chapter of this thesis will give an overview of this study and offer recommendations for future continued research in the most effective ways to engage our Muslim brothers in Christian witness for the gory of God.

Chapter 5:

Summary and Recommendations

5.1 Overview of the study

A major thrust of this study was to demonstrate the need to place the Muslim world at the forefront of Christian mission. Islam is the second largest world religion and the majority faith in more than fifty countries. Christian Islamic scholars contend that Islam, within the next forty years will be the most significant ideological force in the world (Otis 1991).

Islam's global influence is rising rapidly and scholars predict that by 2020 Islam will double in size to 1.9 billion or twenty-five percent of the global population. In spite of the rapid rise in the growth of Islam, missiologists concur that Muslims comprise the most neglected people group in the world – meriting only two percent of Christian ministry workers.

Certainly, these statistics illicit the need to strategically place a more vibrant Christian witness among the Muslim populations.

A second objective of this study was to demonstrate strategic spiritual warfare methodologies for reaching resistant Muslims. Factors that impact Muslim resistance were examined and include: deeply imbedded cultural, social, and religious mores, and their disdain for religious pluralism.

Too often mission workers were unprepared to recognise that spiritual forces of great evil are at work in any Muslim-resistant area of the world. Otis (1991) did a comprehensive study of "spiritual mapping" to identify geographical locations where human wickedness and resistance to Christian faith are most

profound. Iraq (ancient and modern) was identified clearly as an example of a source of underlying spiritual forces at work in resistance to the gospel. Mission workers were admonished to seek to understand the force that may be behind Muslim resistance and rejections. Prayerful methods of spiritual warfare must be implemented. Christian workers must endeavor to establish a solid Biblical foundation in spiritual warfare methodology. Satan's chief aim is to blind Muslim minds to the truth of Christ's incarnation, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension.

Saal (1991) recommended a four-fold paradigm approach to spiritual warfare when engaging Muslims. Forms of positive witness among Muslims through contextualisation were considered which include: contextualised witness, contextualised worship and contextualised symbols and practice.

Each of these engagement tools play a key role in breaking down resistance without compromising the essentials of Christianity.

The third key objective of this study was to demonstrate effective cultural keys (or models for mission) in order to bridge the gap to Muslim cultures for demonstrable Christian witness.

Although paramount in Muslim witness is for ministry workers to be informed by the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, workers must also listen and learn from questions posed by Muslims to the church.

Finding commonality as a model for engagement as used by the apostle Paul in the first century church when his approach was completely God-centered on seven critical points.

An additional cultural key is for workers to lay a Christian foundation with a peaceable witness and an open door mode of hospitality with their Muslim brothers. Friendship and hospitality has been used as a key tool in breaking down Muslim resistance.

Many scholars (Otis, Musk, Woodberry, Saal, Mallouhi, Hoskins, and Accad) concur that both formal and informal dialogue along with education (individual study of Islam and the Qu'ran) will propel effective strategies for Muslim engagement.

This study answered key questions such as: *What are the most effective tools for Christian witness? What are the most effective ways of doing mission among Muslims?* Effective engagement tools included forgiveness – seeking healing relationships with the Muslim community and peacable (non-confrontational) witness.   Past pain from the Crusades coupled with current Christian/Muslim animosity stemming in large part from the West's (USA and 911) view of Islam as propagating a terrorist agenda.

Chapter four identified the two major missological models for engaging Muslims: translational or dynamic equivalent model and the comparative model. The advantages and disadvantages of both models were presented. Importantly, chapter four identified two major models for engaging witness to Muslims: The Javanese Church model in Indonesia was carefully examined for its strengths and weaknesses. It poses a current model that is fully developed. Missiologists indicated that currently more Muslims are converted among Javanese than any other group. Tenets of that model include an

indigenous Javanese identity, clear identity as a church (church has never gone underground) a clear gospel preached that Jesus as Son of God and Savior.

A second model for engaging Muslims hails from the small African country of Gambia. Frederiks detailed four modes for Muslim witness to include: expansion, presence, open dialogue and incarnation.

5.2 Recommendations for future study

   What does the future hold for Christian – Muslim relations? Kerr (2000) contends that the future of Christian Muslim relations requires a "decolonization of the mind" and the creation of a new mental map in which Islam and Christianity increasingly co-exist in shared geographical, cultural, social, economic and political space. He further contends:

> "Christian-Muslim relations in the 21st century
>
> will be polycentric and mission…will face
>
> radically new agendas. It is imperative that
>
> this situation is fully recognised in future
>
> Christian-Mulsim dialogue…" (pg 164).

Kerr further contends that the majority of Christians now live in the southern hemisphere. The West can no longer claim exclusivity on religion; there is now considerable growth of independent or indigenous churches within the African cultures that is producing new Christian practices and theologies with rejection of western Christian culture:

> "The challenge of facing traditional forms of
>
> mission is not the diversity of cultures per se,

but the willingness to accept new cultural

expressions of mission….as being an integrity

that commands global respect. " (pg. 164).

Christian-Muslim relations have become a central concern in our

interconnected world community. The way Christians and Muslims engage

and understand one another in the 21st century will have profound global

consequences for each community. There are outstanding problems and

obstacles to overcome:

- Theological issues: the trinity and the incarnation

- Freedom of worship for Christians in Islamic nations

- Dangers of missionary activity among Islamic states

- Attitudes toward modernism and secularism

Although these obstacles are not insurmountable, the problems must be

stated in honesty, goodwill, and love for truth and charity. Most importantly

the spiritual, intellectual and ethical teachings of both traditions must be

respected. Caution must be used in radical contextualisation: viewing

Muslim culture as a bridge to Christianity; new believers in Christ

continuing to meet in Mosques on Fridays. These tools for Muslim

encounter must be carefully examined to avoid a slide into syncretism

whereby the distinctives of the Christian faith cease to be identifiable.

Finally, Christians who engage Muslims in creative witness must never

compromise the foundational pillars of the Christian faith: the incarnation,

death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of

humankind.

Future study for Muslim Christian encounters should include building upon existing effective models in creative ways that will facilitate amiable, yet biblically-sound forms of witness to establish Muslim communities of strong Christian witness.

Additionally, future questions to evaluate are: I*s it altogether appropriate to use extrabiblical agents to establish common witness? As a common witness can Christians use the term "Allah" (in referring to the One true God) when engaging Muslims? Is radical contextualisation an appropriate engagement tool? Is the translational model for Muslim encounter biblically-sound?*

Mission workers who engage the global Muslim community must discover a common witness in a contemporary approach to Christian-Muslim encounters to the glory of God. Christian ministry workers must take our cue from the Incarnation. In the very same way that Christ emptied Himself and lived among us, we must be willing to do likewise as we endeavor to engage our Muslim brothers. In turn, we will surprisingly discover that the Holy Spirit has been at work long before our arrival. Indeed, the Incarnation remains our primary model for contextualising the gospel. As J.D. Jordan once said, "Jesus is God spelled out in language human beings can understand." (Whiteman 1997:4).

Although the need to contextualise our witness to Muslims is obvious, Whiteman (1997) posits that in actual practice this is not an easy task. Often we are blinded by our own ethnocentrism which makes it difficult to

cultivate the art of listening and learning from our Muslim brothers. But in the spirit of humility, this is an essential task that we must cultivate. The great challenge for future Muslim-Christian dialogue encounters will be to present a gospel that is truly Christian in content and culturally significant in form: this is the personal challenge for future research.

ms Ends

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