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By

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Christian Mission and Islamic Studies: beyond antithesis

Introduction

The title of this lecture embraces two apparently dissimilar phenomena: Christian mission, and Islamic studies. It links them with that most innocuous of conjunctions “and” that embraces any gamut of relationships one may wish to infer. The subtitle, however, acknowledges that for the past century or more the two phenomena have existed in tension, even contradiction.

One of the pioneers of modern Islamic studies, the Hungarian Jewish scholar, Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921), disparaged the Protestant Christian missionaries and their Syrian converts whom he met when visiting Beirut and Damascus in 1873/74; how, he asked, could “the teaching of Luther in Anglo-Saxon dressing” find credible home in the Semitic mind which he thought so well-suited to Islam?1 Goldziher’s scepticism was echoed in a remark of his Christian contemporary and first professor of Islamic studies in the United States, Duncan Black Macdonald (1863-1943). Ironically, given Macdonald’s responsibility for the “Muslim Lands’ Department” of the Kennedy School of Missions in the Hartford Seminary Foundation, he felt that his academic and personal interest in Islam disqualified his credentials as a missionary scholar. A third contemporary, Samuel Zwemer (1867-1952), had no such intellectual qualms. As co-founder of the Arabian Mission of the Reformed Church of America, he was a dedicated advocate of mission to Muslims, and in his own extensive writings he took frequent exception to the emerging patterns of European Islamic studies, arguing that their preference for a textual knowledge of Islam lacked the sobering perspective of real engagement with Muslim societies, of which missionaries had first-hand experience.

1 Ignaz Goldziher, Tagebuch, (ed. A Schiber), Sheiber: Budapest, 1977, p.56
These preliminary evidences suggest that Christian missionaries and Islamic scholars make at best carping colleagues. They suggest, as a preliminary generalisation, that the professional disciplines of Islamic studies -- i.e. the scientific exploration of Islam in its broad civilizational manifestations\(^2\) -- do not readily accommodate the missionary scholars’ commitment to religiously-inspired scholarship of Islam.

The two approaches have largely proceeded in discrete ways. Scholars interested in Islamic studies find their home in the university, while missionary scholars of Islam have inhabited religious foundations from the monastery to the seminary, only rarely entering the institutional “grove of Academe”. This justifies the shorthand nomenclature of “university scholar” and “missionary scholar” which will be used in this paper. The generalization is borne out, however, in the recent literature. Azim Nanji’s recently-published study entitled *Mapping Islamic Studies: Genealogy, Continuity and Change*\(^3\) provides a comprehensive survey of the historical development of the university discipline of Islamic studies in Europe, Russia and North America, but makes scarcely any reference to missionary contributions. Where, in other works, missionary scholars are acknowledged, it is usually to question the legitimacy of their métier.

For example, Marshall Hodgson’s magisterial work *The Venture of Islam* (1974) begins with detailed discussion of conceptual approaches to the study of Islamic civilization. He allows for the possibility of one religious tradition being fairly studied by adherents of another, but is more sanguine of this being achieved if we “take advantage of our immediate humanness to reach any direct appreciation of major cultural traditions we do not share.” Religious pre-commitments are, he contends, private and limiting by nature, while the human


\(^{3}\) A Nanji (ed), Mouton de Gruyter: Berlin & New York, 1997
concerns, of which he sees religion to be an important manifestation, are of universal relevance and can be shared across the lines of creed.\(^4\)

In this paper I shall argue that missionary scholarship of Islam deserves serious attention in at least three perspectives. Historically, it was "missionaries" -- a term that needs careful definition -- who played the pioneering role of studying Islamic texts, and of equipping themselves with the necessary linguistic skills, in order to make a knowledge of Islam accessible to Christians. Contextually, it was missionaries who first studied Islam as a cultural reality in the context of Muslim societies, and thus gave the West its early notions of Muslim culture. Ideationally, in the sense of the outworking of a theological vision, it was missionary scholars who first explored the possibility of an ecumenical relationship between Christianity and Islam, bequeathing a more varied legacy of inter-religious concern than is generally credited by those who assume that missionaries' only interest in studying Islam was to convert Muslims. In terms of contemporary missionary scholarship, a fourth dimension will be added: that of socio-political commitment to the transformation of unjust social contexts where Christians and Muslim engage one another, and together confront a world in which they witness the justice and mercy of God.

Here, then, are several dimensions of missionary scholarship which merit scholarly attention in their own right. In the light of Edward Said's critical assault upon the Western intellectual history of Orientalism, university scholarship of Islam cannot be assumed as the norm by which missionary scholarship is to be judged. Said is no admirer of missionaries, but the force of his intellectual critique of western scholarship of Islam challenges both university and missionary scholars to re-assess their scholarly traditions and the principles by which they approach their different tasks. This paper will argue in conclusion, therefore, that scholarship of Islam, in both its university and missionary manifestations, needs to move beyond parochial antithesis and develop new concepts and methods that

befit the oikoumene of the one world in which Christianity and Islam live increasingly in shared space.

**Historical perspectives**

**a. Eastern Christian scholarship**

The beginnings of Christian scholarship of Islam beckons us to the region where Christians and Muslims first found common space: Palestine in the 7th century AD. Jerusalem was “opened” to Islam in 638. Our story begins a few miles further east, in the Judean hills beyond Bethlehem, at the monastery of Mar Saba, clamped to the cliffs of the upper Cedron Valley (wadi al-nahr). Originally a Greek laura, Mar Saba was the place where Arabic replaced Greek as the language of Palestinian Christian theology from the second half of the 8th century. This paralleled the linguistic transition from Greek to Arabic as the administrative life of the Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus. When John of Damascus (675-749) resigned his position as financial secretary to the early Umayyad Caliphs in Damascus, he moved to Mar Saba and devoted his remaining years to writing. He was a bilingual theologian. The references in his theological writing to “the heresy of the Ishmaelites” evidence his command of Arabic, but he still wrote his *Fount of Knowledge* in Greek. His chief successor, Theodore Abu Qurra (c750-c820), hailed from lower Mesopotamia, but he also joined the monks of Mar Saba and contributed formatively to the development of Christian

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5 The term is borrowed from the Arabic *fataha* “to open”, which is used in the Muslim historical sources. For details, including the role of the Patriarch Sophrenius, see Francesco Gabrieli, *Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam*, World University Library: New York/Toronto, 1968, p.154


apologetics, writing in both Greek and Arabic. By the mid-9th century apologetics had given way to more systematic Arabic Christian theology; works known as jumla, equivalent to the Latin summa, embraced the range of Christian theology -- Biblical exegesis, history, doctrine, liturgy, ethics -- formulated consciously within the world view of Islam. Of this development Sidney Griffith states: “The time was now ripe for a comprehensive presentation of the Christian point of view, taking into account the new socio-political realities of life under the rule of Muslims.”

The Mar Saba theologians did not write about Islam; indeed, they seemed to adopt a policy of judicious silence about the Qur’an and Muhammad. But they wrote from within the Islamic cultural milieu, and their theology, robustly Christian in content, was expressed in the language which is characteristically associated with the Qur’an, and in dialectic with the developing traditions of Islamic kalam (theology) and falsafa (philosophy). This corroborates Hodgson’s argument that “social groupings have intergraded or overlapped almost indefinitely throughout the Eastern Hemisphere”, confounding the 19th century European tendency to essentialize and separate civilizations. Contra Hodgson, however, it challenges us to apply this insight to religion also. Christian scholarship of Islam begins not from the outside looking in, but from within a common cultural matrix to which both Muslims and Christians contributed.

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9 Part of the Summa is specifically addressed to “hypocrites” (munafiqun) whose accommodation to the ways of Islam amounted, in the anonymous author’s judgement, to “wavering” (mudhabdhaba).

10 Hodgson, p.30
The theologians of Mar Saba were Melkite.\textsuperscript{11} The fact that their historical association with the liturgical and ecclesiastical traditions of imperial Byzantium placed them in an politically awkward position within the Islamic Caliphate may account for their willingness to adopt the language of their political masters, in contrast to the Syrian and Coptic Christians who took longer to make the transition. For purposes of the present discussion, however, the reasons for this linguistic shift are less important than the fact of the shift itself. While they retained Greek as the language of liturgy, the Melkites adopted Arabic as their language of theology. This shows the degree to which it was possible, prior to the Crusades,\textsuperscript{12} for Christians to share a lingua franca with Muslims: they appreciated its Islamic associations, but judged it an appropriate linguistic medium for the exposition of Christian faith. They understood their work as tashahhud (giving witness), the methods of which entailed muhâwara (dialogue), mujâdala (conversation), munâzara (disputation) or radd (refutation). These reflect the variety of styles in which the Melkite theologians sought to expound their Christian witness within Muslim society. Thus, while neither being, nor wishing to be thought of as “missionaries” in the western sense of the term, they qualify for inclusion under the category of “missionary scholar”. Indeed, they serve to remind us that “witness” in the Orthodox sense of martyrria (Greek) or tashahhud (Arabic) was the original meaning of “mission”, denoting a sacramental view of witness from within the community in which it is given. This concept, as we shall see, is being retrieved in modern western missionary scholarship of Islam.

\textsuperscript{11} From Arabic malki, “of, or pertaining to the king”. Applied to Middle Eastern Christians loyal to Byzantine liturgy and doctrine, supported by the Byzantine emperors at Nicaea (325) and Chalcedon (451). Arabic sources use the word to include (Greek) Orthodox and (Greek) Catholic alike, though current ecclesiastical usage tends to use it mainly of the Greek Catholics.

\textsuperscript{12} Griffith argues that Palestinian Arabic Christian theology did not survive the establishment of the Frankish Kingdom of Jerusalem in the 11th century, although it continued to flourish in Baghdad. (Griffith, p. 263)
b. Western Christian scholarship

Turning to the West, it is again in the monasteries that we find the earliest Latin interest in the study of Islam. Cluniac monks from France were probably the first Latin Christians to venture as missionaries to Andalusia, there to encounter what Montgomery Watt has termed the "synthesis between indigenous and adventitious elements of the population": which is to say, Jews and Christians who had been in Spain since the 2nd century, and Muslims who conquered the Visigoths in the 7th. By the 11th century the Abbey of Cluny already housed a library of Islamic literature, and it was the twelfth Abbot, Peter the Venerable (1094-1156), who recruited a group of Cluniac scholar-monks in Toledo to translate a collection of Islamic religious texts, including the Qur'an, from Arabic into Latin. The Toledan Collection constituted the primary source of textual knowledge about Islam in medieval Christendom. The task of translation was an expression of missionary motivation, and what resulted laid the foundations of the 13th century expansion of scholarly interests among Dominican and Franciscan missionaries. In the 15th century Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) relied on it when, as a missionary diplomat, he tried to elaborate a theological modus vivendi with Islam. The following century, in printed form with introductory essays by Luther (1483-1546) and Melanchthon (1497-1540), it provided the Reformers with their information about the religion of the Turks.

But this is to anticipate. Peter the Venerable failed to persuade theologians of his own day to make use of the translations. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) was more interested in supporting the Crusaders than understanding their foes. He refused to write a Christian response to Islam, and eventually Peter wrote his own in the two volumes, Summa Totius Haeresis Saracenorum and Liber Contra Sectam Siye Haeresim Saracenorum.\(^{13}\)

Distinguished for their charitable intent more than scholarly content,\textsuperscript{14} these first faltering attempts at a Latin account of Islam were qualitatively surpassed by the work of the Dominicans in the 13th century. In the realm of language, Ramon de Penyafort (1180-1275) pioneered missionary schools for the study of both Hebrew and Arabic; these were established first in Tunis where the Dominicans maintained a mission from 1225, and then in Barcelona for Hebrew and Valencia for Arabic. De Penyafort is credited with persuading his fellow Dominican, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), to write an exposition of Christian doctrine for use among Dominican missionaries to Islam. In contrast to Peter’s biblically-based approach, Thomas’ \textit{Summa Contra Gentiles} (1259-1264) used philosophy rather than scripture to outline the religious principles that Christianity and Islam held in common. According to this Thomist view, if a Muslim could be persuaded to admit the rational basis of Christian faith, the verities of Christian doctrine could thereafter be received through grace.

Applying these principles, the late-13th century Dominican, William of Tripoli (1220-1291), was the first to explore the libraries of Syria in search of historical information on Islam -- the life of the Prophet, the compilation of the Qur’an, and the history of the Caliphate down to his own times. He wrote up his research, together with a review of points of theological agreement and disagreement between Islam and Christianity, in his \textit{Tractatus de Statu Saracenorum}.\textsuperscript{15} William’s near contemporary, the Italian Ricoldo da Montecroce (1243-1320) studied Arabic, Islamic theology and philosophy for five years at the Mustansiriyya University in Baghdad, and included among his writings an

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{14}] Thus Peter wrote: “I do not attack you -- Muslims -- as our people often do, by arms, but by words; not by force, but by reason; not in hatred, but in love.” (Kritzeck, p.47)
\item[\textsuperscript{15}] Peter Engels, \textit{Wilhelm von Tripolis: Notitia de Machometo De Statu Sarracenorum}, Echter Verlag: Würzburg, 1992 includes the Latin text with German translation (pp.267-371)
\end{itemize}
Itinerarium which contains reports on the social conditions and mores of the Muslim communities he visited in Palestine, Syria and Iraq.\textsuperscript{16}

To these early Dominican missionary studies of the Islamic religion, history and society must be added the contribution of the Franciscan Ramon Lull (1235-1315), the first medieval theologian to develop a full missionary theology toward Islam. Following in the path of St Francis (1181-1226) whose First Rule instructed Franciscan missionaries on how to live peacefully among Saracens, Lull pioneered a different theological approach to Islam to that of his Dominican peers. Although he shared Ramon de Penyafort’s enthusiasm for the Arabic language, and Thomas’ avocation for philosophy, he was imaginative as Ramon was rational, mystical as Thomas was scholastic. His distinction lay in his pioneering interest in Sufism, the mystical tradition of Islam.\textsuperscript{17} He read, translated and popularised the work of the Persian theologian, al-Ghazali (d.1111), whose integration of Sufi interiority with Islamic religious learning made his \textit{Ihya Ulum al-Din} (The Revivication of Religious Sciences) one of the masterpieces of medieval Islam. Al-Ghazali’s thought influenced Lull’s great work, the \textit{Ars Magna}.\textsuperscript{18} He may also have read the Murcian mystic, Ibn al-Arabi (1165-1240), whose emanationist theories of the manifestation of divine attributes in the phenomena of nature, and in the personalities of the prophets, are reflected in Lull’s own mysticism.\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{17} Annemarie Schimmel, \textit{The Mystical Dimensions of Islam}, University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 1975

\textsuperscript{18} Mark Johnston, \textit{The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Lull}, Clarendon Press; Oxford, 1985

We do not need to enter this debate, however, to affirm the significance of Lull’s influence on the development of the Latin missionary scholarship of Islam. He used his several university appointments in France and Italy to include Islam in the curriculum of religious sciences. From the court of James 1st of Majorca he found patronage for his ambition to create a new study centre, this time in Miramar in Majorca. Toward the end of his life he persuaded the Council of Vienne (1312) to approve, though it failed to implement, his plans for the establishment of Arabic and Islamic studies in the universities of Rome, Bologna, Salamanca, Paris and Oxford.

This brief review of the 13th century Dominican and Franciscan initiatives reveals the scope and intent of early-medieval Latin missionary scholarship of Islam. It was linguistically-based in Arabic, marking a qualitative advance upon Peter the Venerable who was entirely dependent on Latin translations. It broadened the knowledge furnished by Peter’s Toledan collection to include Islamic history, Qur’anic study, philosophy and mysticism. In contrast to the Crusading model of Christian-Muslim military confrontation, it presented a vision of ecumenicity between Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

This last point is most imaginatively expounded in Lull’s *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men*, written probably at Miramar circa 1275. It tells of a Gentile’s search for true religion, which leads him into conversation with three sages, a Jew, a Christian and a Muslim; each commends his religion in the most positive and courteous terms, without a trace of polemical rejection of the others; the Gentile held his own counsel as to which of the faiths he would choose; but the three wise men, reciprocally impressed by each other’s explanations of the truth, promised to continue their conversations until, “agreed on one faith, they would go forth into the world, giving glory and praise to the name of our Lord God.”20

The final defeat of the Crusades at Acre (1291) provoked a Latin retrenchment against Islam that turned the tide against Lull’s vision. The Miramar

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20 Ibid., vol.1, p.303
school failed, and the university projects did not get off the ground. It was to be a further three hundred years until European universities turned seriously to the study of Arabic and Islam, by which time they were prompted by factors very different from those of the Dominicans and Franciscans. The ecumenical spirit was kept alive, however, in a vision of inter-religious harmony that marked the Renaissance. In the same year in which the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople (1453), Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) wrote his De Pace Fidei in which he set forth a theological vision of unity between the world’s religions on the Platonic principle of *religio una in rituum varietate*.\(^{21}\) This was followed in 1460 by his more detailed study of Islam through its sacred text which, as his title *Cribratio Alcorani* suggests, “sieved” the doctrines of Islam for what was held in common with Christianity: these, he deemed, originated in divine revelation, while the rest was a matter of historical provenance. Simplistic as Nicholas’ methodology may seem, his work marks the earliest attempt at a Christian and, in an ecumenical sense, missionary, reading of the Qur’an in the interests of religious harmony. Nor was he alone in his enterprise: John of Segovia (d.1458) and George of Trebizond (d.1460) also canvassed the idea of a Christian-Muslim peace conference.

Nicolas’ ecumenical missionary response to the Turkish problem was outflanked by Council of Florence (1438-1445) which advocated a narrower and more militant ecumenism. Rather than engaging Muslims philosophically, it proposed a counter-Islamic reunion between Rome and the Orthodox churches, those within the Caliphate, and those which lived beyond Islam in Ethiopia and

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\(^{21}\) James Biechler & Lawrence Bond (ed), *Nicholas of Cusa on Interreligious Harmony: Text, Concordance and Translation of De Pace Fidei*, Edwin Mellor Press: Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter, 1990 which includes the Latin text with English translation pp.1-63. The phrase “*religio una in rituum varietate*” occurs in the introductory para and recurs in various forms through the text. For example, in relation to “the Arab” that “*una est igitur religio et cultus omnium intellectu vigentium, quae in or praesupponitur.*” (“Therefore, for all who are vigorous in intellect there worship, which is presupposed in the diversity of rites.”)
India. With respect to the latter, Latin Christians had scant knowledge but a boundless imagination. The myth of Prester John, supposed to be a Christian king in the East -- whether African or Asian they were not too sure -- fired the imagination of many a Latin Christian with thoughts of a Christian alliance that would encircle and contain the Muslim Caliphate. As this proved hopeless, the 16th century Council of Trent (1543-1563) opted for what seemed the surer policy of re-uniting Orthodox Christians through proselytising missions of conversion. To the small Franciscan terra sancta mission which the Mamluk Muslims permitted to be restored in Jerusalem after the Crusades, the Council now added the intellectual energy of the Society of Jesus (founded 1534). In the spirit of Trent, three Jesuit missions were dispatched to the Maronites of Mount Lebanon in an attempt to confirm their tenuous Catholicism which historical evidence traces back to the Crusades (though Maronites insist that Catholicism has been the essential component of their identity as an eastern Christian community from 4th century Antioch where they began). To support the work of these missions, a Maronite college was founded in Rome (1580), and under the later leadership of the Maronite scholar, Yusuf al-Simani (Assemani: 1688-1768) it became medieval Europe’s largest repository of Syriac manuscripts relating to the Maronite tradition and of Arabic manuscripts relating to Islamic civilisation.

In 1586 Arabic typography was introduced to the printing works of Ferdinand de Medici, the Cardinal Grand Duke of Tuscany, and Islamic texts became more easily available to scholars. Travellers, traders, soldiers and diplomats swelled the European interest in Islam, or more exactly in the Ottoman civilization with which they had primary contact. The first chair in Arabic studies was created in Paris (1587). The next century saw the founding of further chairs in Leiden (1613), Cambridge (1633), and Oxford (1634), and Lull’s vision found its long-awaited fulfilment.

But motivations were shifting as the growth of Islamic scholarship in Britain shows. In 1581 Elizabeth the First chartered the Levant Company for a group of London merchants who intended to trade with Syria. An ambassador was appointed to Constantinople, and trading networks were extended along the coast of Asia Minor and the Levant. The Oxford-trained Archbishop William Laud (1573-1645) saw this as an opportunity to collect Islamic manuscripts, and persuaded Charles the First to decree the practice of one manuscript per ship. These he gathered and bequeathed to the Bodleian Library in Oxford where he established the Laudian Chair of Arabic in the University in 1634.

Its first incumbent, Edward Pococke (1604-1691), was a former missionary-chaplain of the Levant Company. In Aleppo he had gathered Arabic manuscripts relating to poetry, history and philosophy, which he translated and used as a basis for his *Specimen Historiae Arabum*. Pococke was succeeded in Oxford by his pupil, Simon Oakley (1678-1720), also an ordained Anglican priest, and he was interested mainly in the history of Islam. His *Conquest of Syria, Palestine and Egypt by the Saracens* [1708] and *History of the Saracens* [1718]) pioneered the study of Arab history in its own right, "as a secular record rather than as a backcloth for ecclesiastical controversies." 23 Ironically, it was non-clerics who took the greater interest in Islam as religion. George Sale (1697-1736) made the first translation of the Qur’an from Arabic into English, 24 adding a Preliminary Discourse and elaborate notes that drew upon Muslim commentaries. Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) read Sale’s Qur’an, and was sufficiently impressed to give a positive account of Islam, including the Prophet Muhammad, in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788). 25

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23 Charles Bosworth, "The Study of Islam in British Scholarship" in A Nanji (ed), p.54

24 The earlier English translation by the Scotsman, Alexander Ross (1591-1654) was a re-translation from a French version by Sieur du Ryer, "Lord of Melezair and resident of the King of France in Alexandria."

25 For an assessment of these and other Protestant images of Islam, which rehearses polemical themes, see Samir Khalaf, "Protestant images of Islam: disparaging stereotypes reconfirmed", 13
The British example of an emerging tradition of university scholarship of Islam in the 17th and 18th centuries shows a shift of interest from medieval monastic precedents. It was one of substance. University scholarship of Islam was interested broadly in civilization, of which religion was part, but by no means the whole. The missionary study of Islam as religion was rapidly superseded by the emergence of “Islamic studies”, defined by Marshall Hodgson to include both society and religion, but emphasizing the former, to which the latter is subordinated as a cultural or social expression. The privileged position which the missionary had enjoyed in the medieval world was at an end. Enlightenment interest in Islam was inspired, as Volney showed in drama, by an antipathy to Christianity in particular and toward religion in general. The “church-less” character of Islam as a religion without clergy was parodied as an ideological weapon by Deistic critiques of orthodox Christianity. The antithesis with which this paper began was becoming a reality.

Modern developments.

a. 19th century university studies

The father of modern Islamic studies is generally considered to be Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) who held the chair of Arabic in Paris. He pioneered the methodological approach that was to mark the secularisation of university

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Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, vol.8:2, 1997, pp.211-229

M Hodgson: 58. He proposes the nyologisms of “Islamdom” to denote Islamic society, “Islamicate” to refer to Islamic culture, and uses Islam specifically of religion: 58-60) He suggests that “there is some advantage in distinguishing between ‘Islamic’ as an adjective ‘of or pertaining to’ Islam as either an idealized or a cumulative tradition of faith, and ‘Muslim’ as an adjective ‘of or pertaining to’ the Muslims, insofar as their accept that faith.”

Volney’s play, Le Fanatisme où Mahomet le Prophet (1741), was intended as an allegory of the Catholic Church’s persecution of the Huguenots.
scholarship. His two-volume *Grammaire Arabe* (1810) established philology as the main disciplinary tool of Islamic studies. Arabic held pride of place, followed by Turkish. These were the languages of the Ottoman Empire, identified by Europeans in the 18th and early 19th centuries as the "Near East", being their closest point of contact with the world of Islam. Lying outwith the Ottoman domains, Persia and Persian were a "Middle Eastern" addition of particular importance to Britain and Russia, as Britain expanded its economic, military and political involvement in India; and Russia sought warm-water access to international trade through the Indian Ocean. The "Far East" -- what lay beyond Britain’s Indian empire -- fell within Dutch imperial influence, and the study of Indonesian languages was the speciality of the university of Leiden.

Whereas the medieval scholarship of Islam reflected the interests of the Church, the 19th century development of Islamic studies went hand-in-hand with diplomacy and imperialism. Within university scholarship, however, there were two areas of religious interest. First came the cultural interest of Semiticists, researching the *Sitz im Leben* of Biblical texts and their authors. For example, Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) pioneered research in the textual history and historical background of the Hebrew scriptures, and for this purpose he used Arabic as a cognate language and culture. He believed that the study of pre-Islamic Arabia and the early history of Islam revealed typological parallels with the development of Hebrew religion: which view, however, was challenged as the

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28 William Wright published the first two-volume *Grammar of the Arabic Language* in English (1859-1862), followed by Edward Lane’s *An Arabic-English Lexicon* in eight volumes (1863-1893)

29 J Redhouse published *A Turkish and English Lexicon* (1890)


31 For the history of this term, see Martin Buss, “The Idea of Sitz im Leben -- History and Critique”, *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, vol.90, 1978, pp.157-170
methods of Biblical criticism were turned on the sources of Islamic religion and history.

A second religious interest among university Islamic studies lay in the philosophy of religion. Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921), as we have noted, disliked Evangelical missionaries and criticised their Anglo-Saxon version of Luther’s doctrine as alien to the Semitic mind. By contrast he admired Islam which he saw as a naturally Semitic religion which could speak to the needs of its Semitic relative, Judaism. Goldziher was a life-long member of the reformed synagogue in Budapest, and confessed to being drawn to Islam as “the only religion in which superstition and pagan elements were expunged not through rationalism but through orthodox teaching.” In his *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, he explained Islam as a human and civilisational exemplification of Schleiermacher’s notion of religion being essentially dependence upon Transcendence.

The university discipline of Islamic studies thus embraced both Islamic civilisation and religion, but the latter was analysed under historical-cultural categories that reflected the secularising instincts of European scholarship. Islamic society and religion were accessed primarily through Arabic texts. This privileged Cairo and Damascus as the centres of intellectual attention, where manuscripts could be acquired in abundance. This in turn privileged the “reformist” (Islahi) thinking of Syrian and Egyptian Islamic scholars like the Syrian journalist-scholar ‘Abd ar-Rahman al-Kawakibi (d.1902) and the Azhari sheikh, Muhammad Abduh (d.1905). Like them, 19th century Europeans scholars, Jews and Christians, preferred earlier to later texts, the common desire being to return to the origins of religion and (re-) interpret it through the mind of its earliest proponents. As Hodgson points out, Islamic studies from their inception “have tended to be concerned, above all, with high culture, to the neglect of more local or lower-class social conditions; and within high culture, to be preoccupied with religious,

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32 "Der Islam...sie die einzige Religionen, in welche Aberglaube und heidnische Rudimente nicht durch Rationalismus, sondern durch die orthodoxe Lehre verpönt werden." (Ignaz Goldziher, p.59)
literary, and political themes, which are most accessible to a philological approach.”

b. 19th century missionary scholarship

While 19th century missionary scholarship shared certain traits in common with Islamic studies in the university, we find it most instructive to call attention to dissimilarities. Among Protestant missions, the motivating spirit came directly from 18th century Evangelicalism with its emphasis on personal conversion and salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Henry Martyn (1781-1812), the first English missionary among Muslims, was a friend of Charles Simeon (1759-1836), the leader of the Evangelical revival in Cambridge. Martyn represented the rationalistic strand of Evangelical debate with Muslim religious thinkers whom he encountered in Northwest India and Persia. By comparison it was Karl Pfander (1803-1865), with his background of German pietism, who dominated missionary thought through much of the 19th century. His *Balance of Truth* provides an apologetic comparison of the doctrines of the Bible and the Qur’an, of Christianity and Islam, the former being based on a pre-critical acceptance of scriptural inerrancy.

Pfander was a self-taught missionary scholar who spent most of his life in Persia, isolated from the contemporary theories of Biblical and Islamic studies in the European universities. This proved a considerable handicap in his public debates with Muslim religious leaders in Agra. Through Indians who had studied in Britain, they were aware of the new trends of Biblical criticism. They were also aware that some British scholars were writing rather sympathetically about Islam.

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33 Hodgson, p.41

and Islamic civilisation. To Pfander's sharp discomfort, his Muslim debaters skillfully turned these arguments against his belief in Biblical inerrancy and the moral failures of Islam.

Into this breach stepped two Evangelical scholars. The more famous in Islamic studies was William Muir (1819-1905), a Scot who made his career in the Indian civil service where he rose to become governor of the North West Frontier. There he encountered Islam, and through knowledge of Persian (the administrative language of Moghul Empire) and Arabic, he devoted his leisure hours to reading the original sources of Islam and Islamic history. On returning to Scotland he became Principal of the University of Edinburgh and a supporter of Islamic studies. (The Muir Institute of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies witnesses this history.) Although never a missionary himself, his *Life of Muhammad* and several other volumes on the early history of Islam were written in support of the missionary cause, specifically to give it a stronger foundation in scholarship so as to avoid further embarrassment of the kind that Pfander had endured.

Contemporary with Muir, William St Clair Tisdall (1859-1928) was the first missionary scholar to apply European critical scholarship to the sources of Islam, concluding that Islamic origins lie in a confluence of Sabean, Jewish, Zoroastrian and heretical Christian influences, evidence of which he found in his study of various stories in the Qur'an and Hadith. A similar kind of approach

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37 Avril Powell (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) will shortly publish the authoritative study of Sir William Muir.

38 *Sources of Islam*, T and T Clark: Edinburgh, 1901. David Coffey is currently completing a doctoral thesis on Tisdall at the University of Edinburgh.
was developed by the Scottish émigré to North America, Duncan Black Macdonald (1863-1943), who -- as has already been mentioned -- was appointed first professor of Islamic studies in Hartford Seminary Foundation.

If missionary scholars thus have borrowed some of the concepts and results of university scholarship, the fit has never been comfortable. Evangelical Christianity is, after all, characteristically concerned with the quality of personal faith, rather than with the origins and textual history of religion. Andrew Walls illustrated this generalisation in the comparison which he has recently drawn between, Karl Pfander (already mentioned) and Samuel Adjai Crowther (1807-1891), both members of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Crowther was not a trained missionary scholar of Islam, but his posthumous work *Experiences with Heathens and Mohammedans in West Africa* (1892) manifests a very different way of observing Islam than we find with Pfander. As Pfander pressed the doctrinal polarity between Christianity and Islam, Crowther’s reflections on Islam accepted the Qur’anic understanding of Jesus (*Isa ibn Mariam*) without denunciation, and built upon it toward a Christian witness of Jesus Christ that avoided the doctrinal formulae which Muslims find provocative. No less biblical that Pfander, Crowther’s use of the Yoruba vernacular commended Christian scripture to the Niger *mallams* with whom he debated. More important than the profusion of biblical texts with which he concludes his *Experiences* were his socio-cultural observations about the customs of the Muslim communities he visited along the Niger river. Anecdotal and often prejudicial as they are, they provide -- for the first time in the English language -- a humane account of Yoruba Muslim life.39

As Crowther gave a human face to Islam in West Africa, so it was CMS women missionaries in Qajar Persia who provided the earliest descriptions of the condition of Persian Muslim women, avoiding both apologetics of Pfander and the romanticism of orientalist scholars of Persian poetry. The most famous of

these is Mary Bird, whose *Persian Women and Their Creed* (1899) is based on years of medical and educational work among Persian women and children in Julfa. Friendship, not text, was the source of her information. It must be recognized, however, that her strategic preference for high-born women who were more likely to effect social change among their poorer sisters parallels the university scholars’ preference for the literary elite; both cases illustrate the European class-based ideology that infused both university and missionary scholarship of the day.\(^40\) In refreshing contrast the letters of Isabella Read, while reflecting her Evangelical faith, anticipate what might be termed a “post-Orientalist” approach that has no ulterior motive in observing the lives of Persian and Armenian women. Isabella married an Armenian, and took an “almost child-like pleasure in Persian and Armenian women for their own sake, without constant need for theological qualification.”\(^41\)

\textit{c. 20th century Protestant missionary contributions}

Twentieth century developments of missionary scholarship have significantly advanced Evangelical interests in the human aspects of Muslim society. Developments can here be traced along three main lines which in reality often intersect, though for purposes of overview they will be treated separately.

The first, and arguably the oldest, though it did not come to prominence until the 1970s, is the anthropological study of Muslim cultures and societies. This was pioneered by the German-American missionary scholar, Samuel


\(^41\) Ibid., p.160
Zwemer (1867-1952). A convinced Calvinist, he had deep theological misgivings about Islam. According to the Calvinist polarity between faith and works, between grace and law, his judged Islam to belong to the work-law syndrome, its civilisational achievement providing copious evidence of the spiritual and ethical ambiguity, and ultimate hopelessness, of the human search for God. This categorical rejection of theological value in Islam liberated Zwemer from the snares of inter-faith ambiguity, and freed him to explore other reasons for the social strength of Islam. He was fascinated by Muslim cultural and social practices, and particularly in the seemingly endless variety of ways in which popular religion manifested itself. He mapped and charted Muslim societies from Africa to China, gathering popular artefacts of all kinds that he later gathered into a unique collection in Princeton Theological Seminary. This was research data for a new kind of missionary scholarship, which he used to advantage in his Studies in Popular Islam (1939).

The foundations which Zwemer laid in a practical anthropology of Muslim popular religion have been built upon in more recent times by a coterie of Evangelical missionary scholars who have added the theoretical superstructure of a missiology drawn from the social sciences. Encouraged by the 1974 conference on world evangelisation held in Lausanne, which included the theme of “cultural contextualisation” in its title, Evangelical missionary scholars of Islam met in North America in 1978 to discuss “The Gospel and Islam.” The conference volume bears eloquent testimony of the fact that theology was all but displaced by cultural and social analysis. Islam is understood to exist in people more really

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42 Reported in Across the Muslim World (1929), as well as in other volumes: Report on a Visit to Mesopotamia, the Persian Gulf and India (1924), and Report on a Visit to India and Ceylon (1928). In addition he contributed numerous regional studies as articles in The Moslem World journal which he founded and edited in Princeton.

than in texts; given that most Muslim peoples are rural and uneducated, preference is given to studying Islam as it is lived rather than as it is supposed to be according to its theological texts; folk Islam has precedence over formal Islam. The aptly-named Samuel Zwemer Institute continues this integration of the social sciences and Islamic studies.

An alternative route to researching the human qualities of Islam has been explored by the British missionary scholars of the Anglican tradition, especially by CMS-related missionaries in Egypt. The young Anglo-Scot, William Temple Gairdner (1873-1924), was a CMS missionary in Cairo. With a good command of Arabic, he pursued doctoral studies in Hartford Seminary Foundation under Professor Macdonald, where he translated al-Ghazali’s *Mishkat al Anwar* (Niche of Lights), a treatise on the mystical understanding of verses of the Qur’an which liken God to Light. Gairdner later recalled this as a conversionary experience, in the sense that it turned him from a polemical to a spiritually-searching approach to Islam. In his address to the 1924 Jerusalem world mission conference, which was read posthumously after his premature death, he referred to Islam as a *preparatio evangelica*.

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45 Arguably the grounds were laid by the Scottish Presbyterian, of decidedly universalist tendencies, Duncan Black Macdonald (1863-1943) who taught Islam in the Kennedy School of Missions in the Hartford Seminary Foundation.

46 *Sura al-Nur*, Q24:35

Gairdner's biographer, Constance Padwick (1886-1928), pursued this line of missionary scholarship in her own research into the prayer life of Islam. The *lex credendi*, she argued, is a surer route to Christian understanding of what lies at the heart of Islam than either Goldziher's study of Muslim creeds or Zwemer's peregrinations around Muslim societies. Her study of *Muslim Devotions* 48 offers an alternative method: missionary scholarship as spiritual exploration rather than sociological reduction. Kenneth Cragg, who has written several appreciations of Constance Padwick, 49 elaborated this approach in his extensive writings on Islam. With gentle yet persistent re-iteration, he argues that missionary scholarship should reflect the meaning of the Gospel which it serves. Islam, like any religion, should be understood by its interior commitments to the life of the spirit, rather than relying superficially on civilisational or social manifestations. Cragg therefore seeks to respond to Islam’s primary witness (Ar. *shahada*) that “there is no god but God” with an interpretation of the New Testament’s understanding of God who, in condescension, reveals the inner meaning of divine transcendence as immanence among humankind. From his first book, aptly entitled *The Call of the Minaret* (1956), he applies this missiologically to Islam by seeking to relate the Gospel to the Qur’an in “a community of faith” which respects differences of belief while affirming a communality of inner intention. 50

Where is line to be drawn, it is often asked -- especially by more secularly-inclined university scholarship -- between a *communicatio in spiritualibus* that is arguable legitimate, and a Christianising of Islam that dissolves the distinctive “other” by spiritual co-option? The question has been raised of Kenneth Cragg, as


also of Louis Massignon who will be discussed later in the paper. Cragg’s response that religions need to be in communication with each other, lest they create a culture of religious apartheid is true, but arguably misses a point which, as we shall see, Massignon very clearly made in his own work. It is this: Islam needs to be valued in its own spiritual and historical specificity, and that cannot be abstracted from radical commitment to action for liberation and justice. Judged against these criteria, Cragg’s difficulty in dealing with Muhammad, especially when his ministry moves beyond the proclamation of principles in Mecca to their political application in Medina, suggests that what he appreciates of Islam is what he sees, actually and potentially, through Evangelical perspectives. 51

This brings us to the third trend of Protestant missionary scholarship of Islam which is emerging at the present time. It is being advanced most persuasively by Christian scholars who, like the Melkites with whom this paper began, work from within the Islamic socio-political experience. They seek to engage the particularity of the Gospel with the socio-spiritual wholeness with which both Islam and Christianity are concerned. From his African perspective, the Methodist missiological writer, Lamin Sanneh, rightly insists that it is in the socio-political matrix religion and politics that Islam and Christianity find their effective encounter. 52 Charles Amjad Ali from Pakistan finds in political theology the new basis for Christian scholarship of Islam which can at the same time be relevant to Muslim scholarship itself. 53 From Lebanon, the Orthodox Christian


53 Charles Amjad Ali, “Theological and historical rationality behind Christian-Muslim relations”, in JP Rajashekar & HS Wilson (eds), Islam in Asia: Perspectives for Christian-
Tarek Mitri has focused international attention on the need for new Christian scholarship of Islamic shari‘a which takes full account of the diversity of current Muslim scholarship in this area.54

Speaking to this challenge, I would cite some recent, yet unpublished research in Edinburgh on the theological self-understanding of Pakistan’s Christian community, separated from Islam both as a dhimmi minority and an outcast dalit community of sweeper background. Formal Islam in Pakistan denies discrimination by religion or caste, but both are defining realities in the experience of Pakistani Christians. From this perspective a new Pakistani missionary scholarship is beginning to emerge. It is contextual but countercultural, or to borrow the phrase of the Latin American missiologist, José Miguez Bonino, it is “subversive” in the sense of literally “turning things round from below”, challenging the received legacies of both Islamic studies and missionary scholarship of Islam. It is a scholarship of the marginalized for whom liberative justice is the inalienable goal and authentication of scholarship. On the one hand it challenges the western secular view of Islam and Christianity as antithetical civilisations bent on mutual confrontation;55 and, on the other it challenges Christians and Muslims to make common cause in striving for what Bishop Josiah Idowu Fearon of the Sokoto Diocese of Nigeria calls “reconciliation” of sociopolitical conflict on the basis of liberative spiritual values.56

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*Muslim Encounter*, pp.3-15


c. 20th century Catholic scholarship

While this paper has discussed the nature and influence of medieval Catholic missionary scholarship of Islam, it falters at the threshold of the modern Catholic tradition. This is too vast and rich to be condensed into a few paragraphs. In terms of comparison with the character of contemporary Protestant thought, Catholics have given much greater attention to the study of Islamic religious doctrine. This has been significantly set in the missionary context. The real pioneer was the Egyptian Dominican, George Anawati, whose *Introduction a la Theologie Musulmane: Essai de l'Ineologie Comparée,* published in 1948, broke new ground in the study of comparative doctrine. Anawati had a life-long association with the Dominican Institute in Cairo. Its sister institute in Baghdad was associated with the work of the American Dominican, Richard McCarthy, who studied that theology of the classical Iraqi scholar, al-Asha'ri (d.935), founder of the *Asha'riyya* school of Islamic orthodoxy. Louis Gardet, of the Society of Missionaries to Africa, continued this scholastic research in his study of *Dieu et la Destiné de l'Homme,* and was closely associated with the development of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome. While some Protestant scholars have also contributed to this areas of scholarship -- for example, Duncan Black Macdonald, already mentioned, and William Montgomery Watt of the University of Edinburgh -- they work never enjoyed

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57 J.Vrin: Paris, 1948

58 *The Theology of Al-Ashari,* Imprimerie Catholique, Beyrouth, 1953


60 Macdonald's work on *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory,* (C.Scribner & Sons: New York, 1903) is to be credited more for its synthesis than originality of scholarship, opened this field to Islamic doctrines for the study of Protestant missionaries in the Kennedy School of Missions. William Montgomery Watt of the University of Edinburgh began his study of Islam when attached to St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem; his
the influence among Protestant missions as did that of their Catholic counterparts among Catholic missions. Evangelical instincts, as we have seen, moved in different directions.

Rather than attempting to deal comprehensively with 20th century Catholic scholarship, this paper will focus on the contribution of the French Islamicist, Louis Massignon (1883-1962), who is widely regarded as the leading Islamologist of his generation.

The mention of Massignon immediately challenges the generalisation with which this paper began: that missionary and university scholars inhabit different worlds. In Massignon’s case this was not so. Never a missionary in a formal sense, his resumption of Catholic faith in 1908 was the result of a profound conversionary experience, the effects of which accumulated through the rest of his life in the holistic integration of faith and scholarship. In 1909 he met the French contemplative missionary monk, Charles de Foucauld, with whom he continued in correspondence until 1916 when de Foucauld was killed at his hermitage among the Tuareg people of the Atlas mountains. In 1931 Massignon became a Franciscan tertiary, adopting the name Abraham. In 1949 he moved from the Roman to the Melkite Catholic rite, and in 1950 was ordained a Melkite Catholic priest in Cairo. For eighteen years he was Professor of Islamology in the College de France (1926-1954) where he pioneered a new approach to the study of Sufism, which will be examined below. If in his earlier years he thought in terms of the conversion of Muslims, the maturation of his own conversion led him to a sense of spiritual kinship with Muslims, together with Jews, as reciprocally-dependent children of Abraham. In spiritual terms this was expressed in the textual analyses of the historical development of Islamic religious thought in classical times (e.g. The Formative Period of Islamic Thought [Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 1973]) have found positive reception among Muslim as well as Christian scholars.

Badaliyya movement which he founded in Egypt in 1934. It emphasised the discipline of intercessory prayer which sought both to “substitute” (Arabic badala) what Muslims do not believe of Christ, and to empower the “saints” (Arabic abdal) whose prayers God accepts for the good of others. Massignon knew the two popes whose pontificates embraced the Second Vatican Council: John XXIII and Paul VI. Both were sympathetic to the Badaliyya, and Paul VI was actually a member of one of its groups. This was a channel through which Massignon’s posthumous influence was felt in the Council’s deliberations about other religions, especially Islam.62 The last years of his life were spent in spiritual-ethical activism in the political realm, amid the tragedies of the Franco-Algerian war (1954-1962). Already committed to Gandhian non-violence, he resigned his professorship in order to devote himself to the cause of Christian-Muslim reconciliation. He died, exhausted by the struggle, within months of Algeria’s independence, in 1962.

These glimpses into Massignon’s life may convey something of the spiritual-cum-academic wealth of his scholarship. Much has been written of both aspects. This paper will emphasize only four characteristics germane to issues that have already been discussed.

Firstly, Massignon’s approach to the scholarship of Islam was spiritual without being Christianizing. His life long study of Sufism, especially the work of the 10th century Baghdad Sufi, al-Hallaj (d.920), marks a new way of scholarly analysis and appreciation of Islam’s mystical tradition. In 1922 Massignon presented two doctoral theses. The first to be published, entitled Essais sur les Origines du Lexique Technique d’la Mystique Musulmane,63 demonstrates the specificity of Islamic mystical terminology, by this means showing that the language of Sufism flows from the Qur’an and early Islamic exegesis: Sufism


63 Geuthner: Paris, 1954
should not, therefore, be viewed as an alien importation from Christianity and Hinduism as western scholarship, both university and missionary, had long supposed. The second and more famous work, *La Passion d'al-Hallaj: Martyr Mystique de l'Islam*, studied the life of this 10th century Baghdad Sufi (d.920), exonerating him from the judgement of heresy which led to his execution, and attesting the miracles which are attributed to him. The missiological implications of these two theses are clear: that Islam has an authentic spirituality which should not be subsumed under Christian or other religious categories; and that it has produced real saints who, in the case of al-Hallaj, manifest Christ-like qualities.

Secondly, like many medieval Catholic scholars of Islam, Massignon’s scholarship was ecumenical, but in a specific sense which surpasses medieval precedents. He saw Jews, Christians and Muslims, as children of a common spiritual ancestor, Abraham. He elaborated this vision in his study of *Les Trois Prières d’Abraham*, with reference to Abraham’s prayer for Sodom, his prayer for Ishmael, and his prayer for Isaac. In the second of these prayers, based in Genesis 17:18-21 and Sura al-Baqara 127-128, Massignon interprets Islam as “the only incorruptible fragment of the paternal legacy made to Ishmael, rediscovered at last and venerated with a jealous exclusiveness.” Within this framework he

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64 For the example of a missionary scholar contemporary to Massignon, see Henrik Kraemer; *The Christian Message in the Non-Christian World*, Harper: NY, 1938, where he states: “However widespread mysticism in Islam may be, it is wholly an alien growth in this religion.” (p.358)

65 Gallimard: Paris, 1975


67 English translation borrowed from Neil Robinson, p. 92
specifically acknowledged Muhammad as an authentic prophet who bears witness to "the transcendence of the glory God."\(^{68}\)

Thirdly, Massignon scholarship was socially-engaged. His own mystical spirituality, far from being world-denying, was radically shaped by Gandhi, whose social doctrine of *satyagraha* -- which Massignon paraphrased as "the civic vindication of truth" \(^{69}\) -- he first learned from Indian Muslims and later discussed with Gandhi when the latter visited Paris in 1931. This belief that commitment (Sanskrit *vrata*, vow) to the power of truth, which binds the soul as much as the intellect, can change the world, transforming injustice to justice, was as much the expression of Massignon's spirituality as was his mysticism. The latter can only be understood in terms of the former. This accounts for the last eight years of his life that coincided with the Algerian war of independence (1954-1962). Following Gandhi's example of renunciation, he resigned his professorship and committed himself to non-violent action for peace, visiting Algerian prisoners in jail, and leading joint Christian-Muslim pilgrimages to Marian shrines honoured in the popular piety of both religious traditions.

Fourthly, Massingnon provides a glimpse into his understanding of mission in the concluding passage of an early article on "The Roman Catholic Church and Islam." It was written in 1915, the year before Charles de Foucauld died. Published in *The Moslem World*, it ends with a reference to his friend "who has lived for twenty years in the Sahara a secluded life of hard penance, of perpetual adoration, in order to prepare the way for the missionaries of tomorrow. Gradually the Tuaregs have come to his hermitage, and his goodness of heart enables him to act as a peacemaker among them even before their wills are affected. He does nothing more than be present. It is only a germ, a seed corn planted deeply in the soil awaiting the missionaries of the future, those

\(^{68}\) Griffith, p.199-210; cf. David Kerr, p.428-430

whose lives will manifest this heroic combination of the Christian virtues which the church defines as 'Holiness'.” (Massignon’s italics)70

**Conclusion**

We have travelled a long way from the Melkites of Palestine to Massignon in France, too far perhaps for the reader’s patience. Like any survey, what has been said is vulnerable to superficiality, though not, I hope, to distortion. If we have shown that missionary scholarship of Islam merits serious attention as scholarship, our primary object has been achieved. If it has been demonstrated that missionary scholarship has been innovative, the one could wish that the practise of Christian mission among Muslim had been more attentive to what the missionary scholars have been saying. This, however, is not a point to be pursued in this paper which is, to recall, concerned with the right meaning to be laid on the conjunction in its title: Christian mission and Islamic studies.

Massignon’s reference to de Foucauld refers to missionaries of tomorrow, of the future. In a comparable way, Massignon’s own scholarship may be seen as laying the foundations for a new approach to the study of Islam, challenging university and missionary scholars to re-think their conceptual assumptions. Griffith’s discussion of Massignon includes a review of ways in which Christian and Muslim scholars have engaged with his ideas in the second half of the 20th century. By way of conclusion to this paper, we would draw out two questions from his approach. Of secular university scholarship his legacy asks: where is religion in Islamic studies? Of missionary scholarship it asks: can Islam be authentically understood without respecting its specific qualities of religion, qua holiness? Both questions raise epistemological issues that Jacques Waardenburg has begun to explore in terms of the relationship between Islamic studies and the history of religion.71 He writes: “The major epistemological problem in Islamic

70 *The Moslem World*, vol.5:2, 1915, p.142

studies still seems to be the correlation between the scholarly categories of
description, analysis, and interpretation, and the adequate translation and
conceptualisation of Islamic realities on the basis of the raw data themselves.” 72
Although Waardenburg does not address missionary scholarship, his observation
can well be applied to it, with an important expansion: that correlation needs be
found between the concepts and categories of scholarship and the raw data of
Islamic religious experience, while recognising that missionary scholarship seeks
to infuse both with an ethico-spiritual commitment to transforming human and
social conditions toward greater affinity with the reign of God.

If Massignon shows a way of doing this, he would see it as but preparing a
path for others to tread. The fact that the journey we have followed in this paper
began and ended with the Melkite Christians in the Middle East may signal that
the questions with which we are left are best answered by Christian scholars
working within Muslim societies. As scholars whose social, cultural and spiritual
contexts bring together two religions that others hold asunder, they know better
than others that it is in people, Muslim and Christian, that these religion exist, and
that it is in that hands of people of faith, Christian and Muslim, that the future of
their religions rests.

72 Ibid., pp.200-201