**A Modern dialogical model for missionary practice between Christians and Muslims.**

By

**Rudolph Boshoff**

Assignment 2

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Assessor**:** Dr Robert Brodie

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**Assignment 2**

Write a critical, well-researched (20 pages/6000-7000 words) paper on a current missions practice.

The paper should include:

* A well-researched and balanced presentation of a current practice in missions. The best way would be to **engage proponents of the view**. For example, if you write on diaspora missions, it is necessary to include those who advocate the view in your presentation.
* A critical response to the practice.
* A number of other academic resources.

Introduction:

Today could be the most exciting climate for global missions as the Christian task always seems historically to thrive in the challenges evident within the World. Christ’s purpose was always to keep us in the World so we can be a witness of His Kingdom strength and vigour (Joh.17:11, 15; Matt.15:13-16, N.I.V.) and within our direct context we need to recognize God’s sovereign purpose. Amidst global crises, like the humanitarian crises in the Mediterranean and the influx of immigrants into South Africa we as a Church globally are to love and welcome strangers in a posture of openness and love (Albinson 2015:1). Orthodoxy does not mean lethargy and the Church needs to understand that the missionary purpose needs to be constantly renewed and reconceived (Bosch 1984:519). Missions cannot be perceived in the Church today in the same way we looked at it a few years ago. The modern challenge for the Christian is that the missional task is not something they invest in or someone they are in support off, but with an influx of immigrants everywhere, we have now become missionaries within our everyday vicinity (Albinson 2015:2). The lost have moved in next to us and should not only be seen as those far away from us in other countries. As a Church we need to reach out to the lost and remember that a Christianity that has lost its appetite for missions is Christianity no longer (Stott 1992:324). We are not only called to establish Churches as it is sometimes understood today, but our aim should be to establish bases of operation where we can communicate with the world around us as a missional Church (Willard 2006:11).

Section 1:

In section 1 of this assignment I want to look at a practical definition for the purpose of dialogue including its theological implications for the missionary’s task. The local Church have now become the global Church. As the Christian Church of old the heart of salvation and the purpose of the Holy Spirit were for the ‘missio dei’ to be central (Frost & Hirsch 2003:16). Acts 1:8 promises, “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (NASB). The Great commission is not just a command to be obeyed but also the expressed character that invigorates the nature of the Church (Boer 1961:161). The Christian mission is therefore still rooted in the very heart of the triune God whose purpose was always to create a missionary Church working towards a missionary consummation (Stott 1992:325). I will also look at some movements in the last few years and their effect on the recent discussions on the practice of dialogical missions between Christians and Muslims through institutions as well as individuals.

Section2:

In section 2 I want to look at the preparation of the Missionary in dialoguing with Muslims by the use of apologetics as a tool for Missionary practice to Muslims. This consummation is not to just “pull a series of proof-texts out of the Old and New Testaments” and then assuring oneself that the missionary task was accomplished. Such shallow observations of the text could be avoided by studying intensely the deeper structure of the complete Biblical message concerning the missional task. “The proof-text method” just does not give substance to the missional prerogative and that we need to “consider the very structure of the whole biblical message” (Verkuyl 1978:90). We will also look at the challenge of contextualization when pursuing the missionary task as well as essential guidelines that would aid us with any dialogue with Muslims. We will also note a few academic resources that would aid the missionary in dialogue with Muslims.

Section 3:

In Section 3 I will critically evaluate the practice of dialogical missions and look at both positives and negatives evident within this practice. There are valuable lessons we as a Church can learn from the last ten years that are positive. The allowance for Dialogue could foster understanding amongst Christians and Muslims that fuels a mutual respect even in “closed” countries and point to resolutions on poverty, injustice and other mutual interests globally that could bring positive change. We are looking for the type of positive change that is not just limited to the Church service, but extends to everything we do and become when we say the word Church (Kimball 2003:28). On the negative side the wrong attitude in dialogue between Muslims and Christians could breed intolerance, violence and even syncretism to compromise in the name of tolerance. If we are pursuing Church as a place instead of a mission, we become ineffective and as Jesus said “saltless” without vigour (Matthew 5:13 NIV) (Kimball 2003:94). Lastly, we need to look at how we can advance modern dialogue in the missional practice of the modern Church. Even though Missiology is concerned with the study of what God has done through His people it should also be the people of God becoming smarter in their pursuit of to see the “Missio- Dei” fulfilled (Elliston 2011:22). It is important to recognize that a Church that is not looking for new horizons by pitching its tent looking to strike camp will never be true to its original calling (Frost & Hirsch 2003:6). Paul of Tarsus writes to the Romans Church and asks, “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:14-15 NIV). This speaks of intention, purpose and practice which will all be affirmed in this assignment.

1. **A dialogical model for modern missions.**

1.1) Modern interfaith perspectives on missionary practice through dialogue.

Dialogue means that there is a conversation between people that look to investigate or resolve theological or social issues by edifying the truth in light with that which corresponds with reality (Schall 2014: ). Pope John Paul II expressed the urgency of dialogue as part of the Church’s evangelical mission in his letter to his Bishops entitled “Redemptoris Missio” (Burrows2009:93) and the World Council of Churches highlighted the importance of dialogue as a missional imperative in their “Missiology Consultation” held in London, England in April 2002 (Niles 2002: ). Even today popular Evangelical Scholars seek to be more missions orientated by engaging in Dialogue with other faiths and perspectives.

* + 1. *The Purpose of Dialogue.*

We should notice as the Church that every Christian is a missionary that needs to dialogue with the world in every place that is in their immediate proximity (McLaren 2004:119-120). We cannot expect for people in other faiths to listen to what we have to say without expressing a sincere interest in what they are saying themselves (Goldsmith 1982:117). The central purpose of the Dialogical model is to create a synthesis of religious understanding we and they can communicate respectfully within a community as prescribed Biblically (Acts 17, 1 Peter 3:15 NIV) for the purpose of common conversation (Schlorff 2006:23). The priority of Missions as "the Kingdom of God [that] centers on the delivery of Christ, clothed in His Gospel, to the ends of the earth through the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The Kingdom does not emerge within us, nor does it evolve through our moral and cultural programs. It descends from heaven, breaking into the present age in the power of the Spirit, beginning the renovation of creation that will only be consummated at Christ's return” (Horton 2011:247-248). The very purpose of dialogue for the Christian always starts and aims to end in the person of Christ. Even though dialogue can be multifaceted and diverse including different contexts we always look to find ways to point the conversation to the Biblical understanding of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:2, Galatians 6:4 NIV). Another purpose of Dialogue is to work together to find strategies to aid in social justice issues surrounding our communities. A classic example of this in our own country is when Muslims joined with South African Church leaders to fight oppression under apartheid in the “old” South Africa. Without the intrinsic value of human life shared by both communities there would have been no unity in their pursuit to abolish this evil but without a clear dialogue between these communities there would have been no clarity as to how to resolve this (Oladipo 2006:77). Dialogue therefore establishes a model to encourage human communication whereby people from different backgrounds can share meaning as the basis for social action and reform (Hall 2005:4).

* + 1. *Theological implications of Dialogue.*

Dialogue always needs to lead to a mutual walk towards the truth which is a continual process. For the Christian Dialogue is a practical expression of believe as observed within their understanding of the Triune God (John 17 NIV). The Incarnation of Christ makes communion with the Father possible and conversation with other fellow human beings plausible. It is by the love of God that we are motivated to dialogue about God being for us and through His Son that we can experience God with, and ultimately share that God is within us (GilChrist 2012:206-222). The very action of the Holy Spirit is a motivation to dialogue in that the Spirit effects the Church where their very presence transforms history, cultures, societies and other religions (Fitzgerald 2003: ). From a Christian missional perspective we must hold these three things central in our conversation with Islam:

1. The Gospel message should be central in our conversation as found in the overall Scriptural context.
2. Our own cultural understanding should not obscure or supplant the original Gospel purpose.
3. Our Dialogue should always aim to convey the Gospel message in a intelligible manner so the Muslim can trace the message back to the Scriptures itself (Corduan1998:41).

The very core, purpose, and heart of the Bible are God’s mission fulfilled in Christ as the central character. The Bible is a missional document telling about God’s missional activity within the world revealing the messianic center working towards God’s ultimate goal of redemption (Wright 2006:21-38). The last theological implication of dialogue of missions is that the Church constantly reforms itself to be relevant to its engaged context. This does not mean that the Church compromise but that the shape of our conversation continually change so we can effectively converse with those people we speak to in a meaningful manner. There is an incredible need for the Church to “do” Church more contextually (Frost & Hirsch 2003:34). We need to reinvent and reengineer the Church to engage the Muslim world in such a way that we can find them within their own relevant (Wells 2005:265).

1.2) Highlights in the history of modern interfaith dialogue influencing missions in the last century.

When we look at the History of Dialogue and its effect on Muslim Christian relations we can identify two streams of influence. First, we can recognize a mutual concern globally between Muslims and Christian’s that places a progressive emphasis on the need for Dialogue amongst the laity and scholarship. This leads secondly to individual organizations and people willing to engage in dialogue directly with the sole purpose to further understanding between Christianity and Islam. Let us therefore investigate the Global and then the individual trends visible in the history of missions in a dialogical context.

*1.2.1) Four progressive dialogues in the last century concerning Christian Muslim Dialogue:*

Shortly before the Second World War in 1938 almost 500 emissaries from different denominations gathered in South India, Tambaram, at Madras Christian College to discuss questions concerning Christian dialogue to a non-Christian world. The discussion was greatly influenced by Dutch Missiologist Hendrik Kraemer and discussed possibilities to reach out to other believe systems as extracted from Kraemer’s missiological principles espoused in his book “The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World”. At the heart of the symposium the central question was if other religions independently existed or did Christianity ultimately fulfilment them? Alternatively the question was asked if Christianity was an independent entity governed exclusively by its own fulfilled expectation (Anderson 1998:374). Kraemer insisted that non-Christian religions were not consummated by the Christian expectation and that two “poles” ultimately shows their difference. First, Kraemer says that there is a distinct difference between the Christian concept of God and all other religions and secondly, the Christian view of man is directly opposite to non-Christian religions (Kraemer 1939:101-102). This affected dialogue with other religions by showing that Christian Dialogue must point to the truth about the Biblical God (Theology) and the true condition of man (Anthropology) (Kraemer 1939:113). Kraemer’s conclusions clearly determined the non-negotiable boundaries of the missionary’s message when dialoguing with other faiths (Anderson 1998:375).

A second discussion that had an effect on global trends concerning the Christian Muslim Dialogue was Vatican II called by Pope Paul VI on 11 October 1962 and closed on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1965. The Catholic Church spearheaded the central concern of global missions and identified that in a postcolonial context the missionary task had to progress due to new challenges (Roncalli 1962: ). The most crucial element in Vatican II was the call by Pope Paul VI to return to the early patristic sources of the Catholic Church to adjust the tone of the Churches Orthodox missional purpose. The Global call for missiology was concerned with the foundational motivation as evident in progressive Church History. Pope Paul VI endeavoured subsequently on the 6th of August 1964 that Christians should open themselves for dialogue to the rest of the world by exemplifying Christian virtues like respect, openness and a readiness to engage all people for the Gospel’s sake. He affirms that his call for orthodoxy is to deepen self-understanding without “watering down or whittling away of truth" amongst the Church of Christ as a whole (Foisy 2013:1). He also called for dialogue that is rooted in the experience of salvation which comes from God our Father to see all man saved and come to repentance. The Pope also cautions that Dialogue should never become narrow minded and self-absorbed but that whoever the Christian engage should do so in deep humility, confidence and prudence. Lastly, the Pope mentions that missionaries should remember that Jews and Muslims should be commended and admired for their devotion but Christians have to clearly communicate that it is the only true religion but communicate this in an attitude of openness when engaging them in dialogue (Foisy 2013:1-2).

The Third discussion that had an effect on global trends concerning the Christian Muslim Dialogue were held 50 years after the Tambaram Symposium in January 1990 by a subdivision of the ‘World Council of Churches’ looking at “Evangelism and on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths” commemorating the gathering held in the same hall in 1938. This time there were participants from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, North America and the rest of Europe. This meeting faced some new questions and challenges concerning dialogue from a Christian perspective to other religions. Some of the adherents mentioned that Kraemer was wrong in his assessment of other religious traditions and that other faiths can offer alternative and parallel avenues to Gods saving action. This would obviously have incredible implications on the practice and content of the Christian dialogue to other beliefs. In response to this idea former missionary, Bishop Leslie Newbigin of the Church of South India affirmed Kraemer’s original approach and cautioned the adherents should not confuse the emergence of the new era of Christendom with syncretism (Helm 1988:340). Newbigin argued that the central problem was that adherence of this view wrongfully centered rather on religion as the pinnacle of salvation. He goes even further and mentions that religion in itself is an area of ‘darkness’ where the New Testament religious leaders rather reject Jesus while the ordinary people accepted Him (Newbigin 1983:22). In their religious fervour, their commitment to the religious law condemned Christ to die on a cross. Newbigin says that their idea will simply edge the Gospel out of the Bible and become an obstacle to the very Gospel itself. Newbigin solidifies the fact that the missionary’s purpose in dialogue with other faiths is not to affirm religion itself as an object of salvation (Newbigin 1978:176-177). Still other participants claimed that Newbigin’s affirmation of Kraemer does not really take the conversation on utilizing dialogue in missionary practice anywhere for the future. The director of this subdivision on Dialogue, Stanley Samartha petitioned Kraemer’s views and asked for sympathy for the inclusiveness of other religions in the role of missions and another pluralist theologian Diana Eck from Harvard University were opposed to Newbigin’s exclusivism. She mentions that Christians should not confine themselves to their own revelation or spiritual experiences if they want to know Gods work in other religious traditions (Thomas 1996:265). The Symposium of Tambaram in 1988 contributed to the very core issue concerning the missionary task in that it created the overall impression that the Church globally needs to understand that missions and dialogue are necessary to express true concern for the lost (Helm 1988:340). Even though there is a clear disagreement as to the resolve of the Symposium, Newbigin mentions that missionaries should recognize the presence of God in the lives of people in other religious traditions and should expect to be a credible witness through dialogue by edifying the “light active in creation in all living things (Newbigin 1995:169). He also mentions that as Missionaries utilizing dialogue we should not endeavour to reveal the sins and faults of other faiths but rather encourage the work of the Holy Spirit that will bring the conviction of sin and draw them to the exclusive person of Jesus Christ (Newbigin 1993:237).

Another discussion that had an effect on global trends concerning the Christian Muslim Dialogue took place on the 12th of September 2006. Pope Benedict the XVI gave a lecture at Regensburg University with a specific focus on Islam contending that the Church globally have to find ways to dialogue with proponents of the Muslim faith in a loving non-violent way (Benedict XVI 2006:1-9). The response to the Pope’s lecture given was not all positive and Muslim Theologians from The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, Jordan drafted a response letter entitled “A common letter between us and You” (2007:1-273). Their main concern was that the Pope quoted 14th century Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos criticism of Islam, which they believed was unfair and narrow minded. Pope Benedict mentioned that this was not his intention to be insensitive. Muslims felt that the Pope was not fair in his assessment and a month later 38 Islamic Scholars drafted a letter that would speak for all credible branches of Islam called “an open letter to the Pope dated October the 13th 2006. A year later 138 scholars co-signed an open letter entitled “A common word between Us and You.” This letters purpose was to encourage dialogue between Christians and Muslims Globally. The positive effects of this letter allowed for a healthy exchange of minds from both sides that would open up a way for Christianity and Islam to exchange common ideas and dialogue about objections and affirmations between these faiths. The letter encourages three tenets that would help further the dialogue between Muslims and Christians globally: a) The Love of God, b) Love of the neighbour and, c) Dialogue (A common word between Us and You). This resulted in two reactions that are positive contributions to the Muslim Christian Dialogue. The First step forward came from then Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams when he called for an ecumenical gathering of Christians on the 2nd of June 2008 to discuss ways that would strengthen and aid Muslim Christian dialogue so that there is a common consensus amongst them (Williams 2008 ). A Second step took place on October the 12th to the 15th of the same year Grant Mufti Sheikh Ali Gomaa of Egypt and Archbishop Williams addressed Muslims and Christians religious Scholars and leaders at Cambridge University to promote understanding for future dialogue between the two faiths at the "A Common Word and Future Muslim-Christian Engagement" Conference. This spawned “the common word letters” between Christians and Muslims that are deemed by Prof. David F. Ford of Cambridge Interfaith Programme to be the most progressive step forward in Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the last fifty years.

*1.2.2) Individuals prevalent in Muslim-Christian Dialogue in the last decade.*

In the last ten years we have seen an incredible increase in Christian-Muslim Dialogue where notable figures on both sides seem to interact with each other discussing the merit of each other’s faith.

* Muslims in Dialogue with Christians:

*Shaikh Ahmed Deedat* – Probably the most influential polemicist in the last decade in the Muslim world, Deedat’s confrontational approach to question Christian leaders, clergy including the Pope made his arguments the normative standard in the Christian-Muslim dialogue. He spoke in a language that appealed to the ordinary Muslims and was granted an audience with kings (Vahed 2013:3). Deedat also debated notable Christians like, Josh McDowell, Anis Shorrosh, John GilChrist and Jimmy Swaggart in front of Christian-Muslim audiences. He also wrote numerous publications that focused on questioning the Christian Missionary on particulars of his own faith. Some of his publications are: ‘Resurrection or resuscitation’ (1978), ‘Is the Bible God's Word’ (1980), Crucifixion or Cruci-fiction (1984), ‘Christ in Islam’ (1983), ‘Combat Kit’ (1992), and, ‘What is His name’ (1981). Professor Salman Nadvi affirms the influence these booklets had amongst Muslims and Christians, when Missionaries approached them, even though they never studied Christianity, Deedat’s literature afforded them the opportunity to ask the right questions to missionaries in dialogue (Vahed 2013:83).

*Dr Shabir Ally* – Dr Ally is probably the most notable Muslim debater since Sheikh Ahmed Deedat and has been actively involved in interfaith dialogues for over 30 years. He hosts a weekly national show on Canadian television called “Let the Quran speak” and is a frequent public speaker and lecturer and Universities and campuses all over the world. He is also the president of the ‘Islamic Information and dawah center international (Ankerberg 2009:38). The most influence Dr Ally has had is on social media where his debates are showcased and his influence merited for the entire Muslim-Christian world. Some popular topics Dr Ally likes to discuss is the Divinity of Christ (Ally 1998:9-29), The Bible versus the Quran (Ally 1998:1-4)) and Paul of Tarsus who he deemed to be the one perverting early Christianity.

* Christians in Dialogue with Islam:

*John Gilchrist* – With over 30 years of experience in missionary outreach to Muslims and numerous publications John Gilchrist has been one of the most respected proponents in concerning the modern Christian-Muslim Dialogue. In August 1981 Gilchrist supported imminent American Apologist in his debate with Sheikh Ahmed Deedat in Durban in one of the largest public debates on the Question ‘Was Jesus Crucified?”. From there Gilchrist would publish important books that would aid missionaries and Christians in their witnessing to Muslims. These books include: ‘Jam ’al Qur’an: the Codification of the Quranic text’ (1989), ‘Muhammad: The Prophet of Islam’ (1994), ‘The Qur’an: The Scripture of Islam’ (1995), ‘Facing the Muslim challenge’ (1999), ‘Sharing the Gospel with Muslims’ (2003), ‘Jesus Disfigured’ (2013), ‘The Quran and the Historical Jesus’ (2015).

*Dr James White* – Dr James White is one of the most well-known proponents of the evangelical debate scene in the World today concerning Muslims. In his recent visits specifically to South Africa he debated well known Islamic Scholars on various topics like: The Crucifixion, The Christology of John’s Gospel, Sin and Salvation in Christianity and Islam, Who was the founder of Christianity?, The Trinity and Tawhid, and many other topics. Dr White authored twenty-four books and the most popular amongst them are; ‘The Forgotten Trinity’ (1998), ‘What every Christian should know about the Qur’an’ (2013), and ‘Sola Scriptura’ (1995). These books as well as Dr White’s public recorded debates had an incredible impact on the debate culture globally amongst Christians and Muslims. With Dr White’s acumen to relate to Muslims in mosques as well as other debate platforms we can recognize a healthy contribution that has been made to the overall missionary method and a willing ness from both sides to facilitate conversations (White 2015).

**2) The priority of dialogue in the missionary task to Muslims.**

2.1) Preparation of the missionary for the dialogical task to Muslims.

Missions to Muslims could be one of the most daunting fields to Christian Missionaries. Mission agencies in the last century have endeavoured to use numerous methods to make Muslim evangelism work. From friendship evangelism to felt-needs approaches – there has been no real keen interest to converse with Muslims but all these approaches rather aimed to convert Muslims. Even though the end result of any missionary task should be to see Muslims come to Christ, the Missionary must be edified to remember it is God that ‘converts’ and the missionary that ‘convenes’ (John 6:44, 1 Thes.1:10, Ps.3:8, Rev.7:10, Eph.1:7, Mark 2:1-10, Jonah 2:9 (NIV) (Gilchrist2003:4). As the missionary set out to dialogue with the Muslim he needs to be prepared in three areas: First, we need to engage the Muslim in an attitude of love and mutual listening. A fruitful dialogue is never just a monologue (Little 1988:22). Secondly, we need to know what Muslims believe. You cannot speak to Muslims if you cannot even take the time to understand central themes surrounding their concepts of faith, Allah, people, culture, or devotional disciplines (Little 1988:23). Lastly, we need to focus in our conversation with a Muslim on the Muslim himself (Little 1988:68). This does not mean that we engage in ‘ad hominem’ arguments to discredit the individuals position but that we respectfully remember the person we are dialoguing is also an person that needs to be respected (1 Pet.3:15-16 NIV).

2.2) Apologetics as a tool for Missionary practice to Muslims.

There are four functions apologetics will aid the Christian Missionary in when utilizing the dialogical model for missions to Muslims. The first is v*indication*, which is to marshal a philosophical cogent argument or scientific and historical evidences to show the consistency of the Christian faith (Boa & Bowman 2001:21). Francis H. Beattie, for example, mentions the importance of considering deadly forces in direct contention with each other. ‘Light and darkness, truth and error, good and evil, right and wrong, sin and holiness’; allows the missionary to vindicate and exempt biblical Christianity from that which is not true by accounting for that which corresponds with reality (Beattie 1903:40). Secondly, there is d*efense;* where the Christian missionary will clarify his own Christian position by assessing misrepresentations and objections raised in protest to the Christian faith (Boa & Bowman 2001:21). James R. White clarifies that the object of the Christian witness to Muslims should advance the Christian–Muslim conversation by providing a reasonable alternative to the Muslim objection from the affirmed Christian position. Any dialogue with Islam must show a respectful understanding of the primary sources of Islam (Qurán, Hadith, Tafsir literature etc.) by showing an comprehensive and full understanding of them in light of the Christian position (White 2013:16). The Third function apologetics will give to the missionary is r*efutation.* Here the missionary in dialogue seeks to answer the objections the Muslim raise to back their own believes (Boa & Bowman 2001:21). Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb mention that it is just not enough to defend the Bible, the Doctrine of the Trinity or the Deity of Christ. Christians need to show the unreasonableness of Islam as a whole by articulating both the truth of the Bible and the falsehood of the quran (Geisler and Saleeb 2002:8). The last function of apologetics that will aid the Missionary in his dialogue with Muslims is p*ersuasion.* When we fail to bring our listeners to apply truth within their lives, we fail in the task of fruitful dialogue (Boa & Bowman 2001:21). Missionary to Muslims, John Gilchrist mentions that, a Biblical response always leads to a biblical invitation to follow Christ (Gilchrist 1999:14). The priority of the Missionary is always to bring the Muslim to the truth of the Christian message and the aim is always to convert the Muslim to faith in Jesus Christ without compromise (Goldsmith 1982:120).

2.3) The role of contextualization to the missionary task to Muslims.

Another vital question we should ask when we look at dialogue as a missionary principle is how Missionaries can contextualize without compromise. Paul mentions that he “have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some”(1 Cor. 9:22 N.I.V). Paul is not calling for Christians to compromise and he warns that those who move away from the orthodox faith must be shunned (Rom.16:17; Gal.1:8-9; 2Thes.3:6, 14; 1 Tim.1:3, 6:3, Tit.3:10). Biblically we recognize that the God of the Bible ‘contextualize’ Himself in the fullness of His own self-revelation by becoming completely known through the context of Christ’s incarnation (Frost & Hirsch 2003:88). Contextualization is the method the Missionary use to situate their message in the relevant context or culture. The Missionary tries to adopt as much of the articulation of the people in their cultural setting without compromising their essential message. Contextualization can involve an outward cultural form like clothing, language, customs and food to find common ground where the message of Scripture can be effectively communicated to the given context (Corduan1998:42). In contextualization, the missionary must consider three things. First, how can the missionary make the Biblical message relevant to the live and conditions of the Muslim without compromise? Second, how can the missionary contextualize the message without the interference of his/her own culture that could obscure the Gospel message? Lastly, how can the Missionary dialogue in such a manner that the Gospel message is conveyed in an ‘intelligible’ manner that would bring the message clear to the hearer (Corduan1998:41). Here are a few guidelines that the Missionary should consider before dialoguing with Muslims.

2.4) Guidelines for dialogue with Muslims.

Modern considerations in structuring your conversation concerning interfaith Dialogue with Muslims.

Muslims are generally very hospitable and very open to dialogue. There are a few things that we need to consider when engaging in a fruitful dialogue.

1. Always remember the Muslim is also a person. Treating people with respect and decency is an essential element in any dialogue (1 Pet.3:15-16 N.I.V) (Register 1979:17).
2. Consider where the Muslim is at in his spiritual journey. This will affect how you will pursue the individual’s questions and observations.
3. You have an obligation to learn as much possible about the Quran, its history, and what Muslims believe about it concerning Christianity, even before you dialogue with them.
4. Allow the dialogue to focus on the common good between your own faith and theirs. Keep to the center of the dialogue that which is most meaningful to both you and the Muslim.
5. Know that many teaching and stories in the Quran resemble similar stories of individuals and precepts found in non-canonical literature and the New and Old Testament (Register 1979:18).
6. Three issues dominate the Muslim’s attitude towards Christianity: First, they hold that the Jews and Christians corrupted their own scriptures. Secondly, they assume Christians believe in Three Gods. Lastly, they hold Jesus did not die on the Cross.
7. The Muslim concept of Sin and Salvation is radically vicarious from the New Testament idea (Register 1979:19).
8. Remember the primary obligation in Dialogue is to listen as well as share, keep this in balance. If you are not sure what they are saying ask to make their point clear (Register 1979:20).
9. Keep biblical verses in context.
10. Remember it is better to win the Muslim as a friend than to win an argument and lose a friendship (Register 1979:21).
11. Make sure your Spiritual life is up to standard.
12. Be attentive with the opposite sex and make sure you never speak alone with anyone (Register 1979:22).
13. Pray for discernment, patience and understanding when talking to your Muslim friend and always remember they are also trying to understand you and what you believe as well (Register 1979:23).

2.5) Academic resources aiding the missionary in dialogue with Muslims

Here I will mention recent literature and resources for the Missionary that will aid him in his dialogue with Muslims.

***Books on the practice of Dialogue between Christians and Muslims:***

* “*Dialogue and interfaith Witness with Muslims*” by Ray G. Register Jr. Printed in 1979 by Worldwide Evangelical Crusade.
* “*Missiological Models in Ministry to Muslims*” by Sam Schlorff. Printed in 2006 by Middle Eastern Resources.
* “*Islam & Christian Witness*” by Martin Goldsmith. Printed in 1982 by Inner Varsity Press.
* “*Muslim Evangelism*” by Phil Parshall. Printed in 2003 by Gabriel Publishing.
* *“Tactics”* by Gregory Koukl. Printed in 2009 by Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
* *“Christians Ask Muslims”* by Gerhard Nehls. Printed in 1987 by Life Challenge Africa.
* *“Facing the Muslim Challenge”* by John Gilchrist. Printed in 2000 by Life Challenge Africa.
* *“Sharing the Gospel with Muslims”* by John Gilchrist. Printed in 2009 by Life Challenge Africa.
* *“Reasoning from Scriptures to Muslims”* by Ron Rhodes. Printed in 2002 by Harvest House Publishers.
* *“Answering Islam: The Crescent in light of the Cross”* by Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb. Printed in 2002 by Baker Books Publishers.
* *“The Crescent through the eyes of the Cross”* by Nabeel T. Jabbour. Printed in 2008 by Navigators Press.
* *“How to lead Moslems to Christ”* by Geo K. Harris. Printed in 1949 by China Inland Missions.

***Books on the Bible and the Quran:***

* “*Comparing the Qur’an and the Bible*” by Rick Richter. Printed in 2011 by Baker Publication Books.
* *“Jam’ al-Quran: The Codification of the Qur’an text”* by John Gilchrist. Printed in 1989 by Jesus to Muslims Publishers.
* *“The Qur’an: The Scripture of Islam”* by John Gilchrist. Printed in 2003 by Life Challenge Africa.
* *“A Qur’anic Truth Unveiled”* by Fred Nel. Printed in 1996 by Eternal Life outreach”
* *“Secrets of the Koran: Revealing insights into Islam’s Holy Book”* by Don Richardson Printed in 2003 by Regal Books.
* *“Islam Revealed: A Christian Arab’s View of Islam”* by Dr. Anis A. Shorrosh printed in 1988 by Thomas Nelson Publishers.

***Books on the History of Islam and the Prophet of Islam:***

* *“Muhammad the Prophet of Islam”* by John Gilchrist. Printed in 2003 by Life Challenge Africa.
* *“Inside Islam”* by Reza F. Safa. Printed in 1996 by Charisma House.
* *“The Hidden origins of Islam”* edited by Karl-Heinz Ohlig and Gerd –R.Puin. Printed in 2010 by Prometheus Books.
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* *“Focus on Islam”* By Dr. Johan Carstens. Printed in 2003 by Anglo Swiss Print.

***Books on Jesus in Islam and Christianity:***

* *“The Qur’an and the Historical Jesus”* by John Gilchrist. Printed in 2015 by Christian Resource Ministries.
* *“Jesus Disfigured”* by John Gilchrist. Printed in 2013 by Life Challenge Africa.
* *“Explaining the Trinity to Muslims”* by Carlos Madrigal. Printed in 2011 by The William Carey Library.
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Certainly as one studies the History of Christian Mission from the time of the apostles through to Carey and early Protestant Pioneers, most of the key men listened keenly to the people among whom they worked. Carey himself spent much time and labour in translating Hindu classics into English and teaching new missionaries the philosophical thought-forms of Hinduism” (Goldsmith 1982:117).

**3) A critical investigation of the practice of dialogical missions.**

3.1) Recent discussions on the practice of dialogical missions.

I will investigate recent discussions on the missionaries task through dialogue.

“*Heated theological arguments never helps. It drives a man into the shell of his convictions*” (Parshall 2003:114).

The temptation in the Dialogical Model is always that we become relativistic and syncretistic which would make Scripture and the authority of the Gospel invalid (Schlorff 2006:24).

There could be quite a few barriers to dialogue with Muslims that we need to look at. First, we need to be aware that there could be a language and terminology barrier. *“The Christian and the Muslim do not mean the same things when such words as “sin” and “salvation” are used”* (Register 1979:12). In fact, the very idea of atonement Christians hold seems radically opposed to the Muslim idea of sin and salvation. This could become a clear hindrance in their conversation and might frustrate both Christian and Muslim alike (Register 1979:13). This might lead the dialogue to a place where both Christian and Muslim fail to hear or understand each other. “*Failure to understand the barriers of language, culture, and opposing beliefs leads inevitably to monologue*” (Register 1979:15). This can turn the conversation into an attempt to change the other person’s religion through persuasion and attack on their religion.

***Recent discussions over the validity of Debate in Muslim Ministry:***

Historically in the 1930’s there were missionaries that greatly questioned the value of polemics in Muslim ministry and majority mentioned that it should rather be avoided which translated into a negation of some polemical works. In the 1990’s, though there has been a return to public debate and an interest to engage Islam polemically. It is also interesting to note that the input to dialogue came from the Muslim side and Christians were more responding to these attacks (Schlorff 2006:56-57).

3.2) A critical evaluation of modern dialogue in mission practice.

I will look at both the negatives and positives in modern interfaith dialogue in missionary practice.

**Conclusion:**

Here I will sum up the points made above.

***Conclusion:***

Baptist Missionary to Muslims Virginia Cobb wrote that; *“We are not warring with Islam…We are not debating with Islam to prove that our views are correct and theirs incorrect…We are not trying to change anyone’s religion… we will accept them as persons as able as ourselves and as deserving of respect and a hearing for their views. We will not go to straighten them out or tell them all the answers. If we are reconciled to them we will be able to appreciate all that is true, good, commendable, and worthy in their lives as individuals and in their culture and religion…We need stronger faith in the power of the truth…We need stronger faith in the reality of the living Christ. Everything does not depend on us. We do not have to present and gain assent to a complete system of theology and ethic…Our message is a Person we’ve experienced, not a doctrine, system, religion, book, church, ethic…Our faith in him is that once we lead a person to him, he will, in direct contact with that person, transform and guide in all else…Christ presented the truth, the call, but never persuaded. He let men come to decision in personal freedom, and even discouraged some who misunderstood what was involved…* (Johnson 1975:147-149).

1. ***The Benefits of Interfaith Dialogue:***

“*Following Jesus means engaging meaningfully with the lives of others.*” (Frost 2006:141).

It significantly improves your understanding of the "other". While you can learn a significant amount about another religion from books, talking to people who practice that religion about what they believe, what they do and how they feel about it transforms your knowledge and more importantly your understanding. At its most trivial, reading books will not get you the experience of what it is like to attend a synagogue and take part in Jewish prayers.

Dialogue helps the people with whom you are talking to understand Islam. Most Jews or Christians know few, if any, Muslims. Their experience of dealing with Muslims is limited to situations such as the workplace where you never talk in any depth about your religion, what you practice and how you feel about it. By taking part in interfaith dialogue, you can help Jews and Christians to understand that Muslims are intelligent, sympathetic people who can discuss their differences with members of other religions while remaining completely confident in their own Islam.

A paradoxical benefit of engaging in interfaith dialogue is that it helps you to understand Islam much better. You may have been brought up practising the religion but that is not the same as studying it in depth to find out how it addresses fundamental issues. I have had to do a significant amount of research on the Quran and the Hadith when preparing for my formal interfaith dialogue discussions. I regarded it as essential to put forward propositions which are firmly grounded in the texts rather than being at risk of simply conveying my own assumptions about what I think Islam says. I have found such research illuminating.

Interfaith dialogue helps society as a whole by producing better mutual understanding among the believers of different religions.

1. ***Considering your audience in Dialogue:***

Paul adds the following perspective to his instruction on the missional task when he says; *“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?” (Rom.10:14-15 N.I.V).*

“*friendship and conversations… [open] op to an opportunity for someone to burst into an extended monologue about their beliefs. Ideas often are transferred variety of experience and circumstances and through myriad conversations*” (Frost 2006:76).

When we engage with anyone in a public or private conversation, we can identify three general principles when we dialogue from the Book of Acts. First, address a specific audience. Second, identify the audience authority and sources and third, use arguments that would carry weight with the audience in question (McGrath 2012:68).

1. ***How can Christians Best Speak with Muslims?*** (***Schirrmacher)***

The order of the day between Christians and Muslims is gentle, yet contentful and unambiguous discussions about belief in God – as was expressed well in the German Evangelical Church’s title of its publication “Clarity and Being a Good Neighbor.” Love and truth go hand in hand for Christians (2 John 1:3), because they want to “be truthful in love.” This is also of great importance for the presentation of the Christian faith to those of opposing viewpoints, which has everything to do with a command in the New Testament and not a modern weakness. From a Christian perspective, there are always two sides of the coin to keep in mind that work together in a complementary manner:

1. *Dialogue in the sense of a peaceful debate.*

Honest and patient listening and learning from others is a Christian virtue. A dialogue between convinced Christians and followers of other religions is possible in the sense that Christians willingly speak with others about their faith (“. . . be prepared to give an answer to everyone . . . But do this with gentleness and respect . . .;” 1 Peter 3:15-16), listen willingly to others (James 1:19), learn about various aspects of life from the experiences of others (see the entire book of Proverbs), and are ready to repeatedly have themselves and their behavior challenged anew. Furthermore, the biblical command applies: “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18).

*B. Dialogue in the sense of giving up Jesus’ claim to truth or giving up the missionary witness is unthinkable without giving up Christianity itself.*

If dialogue means to temporarily or principally suspend the innermost truth claims of Jesus Christ (John 14:6), of the gospel (Romans 1:16-17; 2:16), and of the salvific word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12- 13; John 17:17) in discussions with followers of other religions, or if it means to make such changes that leave the revelation of God in Christ and the revelation of the gospel in the Bible on the same rung as the revelations of other religions, then such a “dialogue” cannot be reconciled with the nature of Christianity and is not intellectually honest towards others.

Both principles belong together, because a critical position towards others and a gentle, respectful interaction with them are not mutually exclusive. When Paul defended himself in Athens in front of the philosophers of his time, it is written that “he was greatly distressed” to see the many (Schirrmacher 2013:73) idols in Athens (Acts 17:16). However, he still began his critical address with the words “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious” (Acts 17:22). How much more must that apply when Christians are in dialogue with followers of other monotheistic world religions! (Schirrmacher 2013:74).

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