

*Originally delivered as a Faculty Seminar at Renison College in 2005.

Muslim-Christian Dialogue After 9/11: Is it Possible?

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Abstract: This paper explores the possibilities of dialogue between Muslims and Christians following 9/11. It revisits the events of 9/11 and the subsequent reactions. It then turns to an analysis of the post 9/11 image of the “muslim as terrorist” and the distressing reductionism of a “24 inch world.” It will then note the richness of the great traditions of Islam, recall some of the efforts at dialogue in the last quarter of the 20th century, and important new Muslim voices, especially Tariq Ramadan. It concludes with some notes on the urgency of dialogue with Muslims. Dialogue in the human city is essential.

I. Introduction:

Thank you for this invitation to share with you some of my on-going work in the field of interfaith dialogue, more specifically on dialogue between Muslims and Christians. As many of you know, I have been engaged in the study of what I will call “the dialogue of religions” or “the encounter and dialogue of men and women of different religious traditions” for most of the past thirty years. Over that time I have read innumerable studies of the many religious traditions – from Buddhist, Chinese, Hindu, and Muslim to Sikh, Shinto, and Zoroastrian. More importantly, I have spent time in these diverse religious communities, in homes, temples/mandirs/gurdwars/monasteries/universities and talked with adherents of these many traditions both here and in other parts of the world. It has been a learning journey as one encounters this rich diversity of the religious life of humankind. And it was about twenty years ago that I began to engage Islam – the world’s second largest believing world. Interestingly, the first Muslims that I came to know were African-Americans who were initially part of the “Nation of Islam,” and then the American Muslim Mission, the revised movement under Wallace Muhammad. Then I met some Indian and Middle Eastern Muslims, and I quickly learned that “there were Muslims and then there were Muslims.” The Muslim

community/*ummah* itself was globally diverse. Moreover, it was an *ummah* remarkably faithful, though in diverse ways, to the teachings of their Prophet. I have consistently been struck by the depth of their prayer and their respect for Mohammad, their Prophet.¹ As Reza Shah-Kazemi remarks rhetorically,

“...what can explain the extraordinary devotion to his personage, a devotion sustained from generation to generation down through the ages, expressed outwardly in the most sublime litanies, hymns and poems from one end of the Muslim world to the other.”²

I will return to this later.

II. 9/11

When 9/11 occurred, I was in Spain and had just returned to Madrid from Toledo, the old capital, where I'd gone to see an El Greco that I had long admired. I was in the main train station when I noted a large screen showing some planes diving into the World Trade Towers. I assumed it was an ad for some movie. But I was drawn to it, and I was able to read enough of the Spanish ticker moving across the screen to realize it was actual footage of what had just happened in NYC. I immediately returned to my hotel room and turned on BBC and watched, stunned, as the news of the day unfolded. The following day I left for India, and when I arrived in New Delhi, my taxi driver assured me that “we would discover that Pakistanis were behind it!” – giving voice to that deeply and widely held Indian suspicion that all bad in the world comes from Pakistan. Shortly after I returned to Canada, I was to give the Keynote Address to the annual seminar on World Religions sponsored by Canadian Muslims. The theme for 2001 was “God and Suffering.” I felt it was imperative to address the events of 9/11 in my remarks. Here is what I said then:

On the morning of September 11th a hijacked 747 slammed into one of the towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City. Then, as a horrified world watched, another hijacked 747 slammed into the other tower. And within the hour, while people scrambled to get out of the buildings, some even leaping to their certain death, the towers collapsed in a matter of seconds. A third hijacked plane slammed into the Pentagon in Washington D.C. A fourth hijacked plane crashed into the Pennsylvania countryside. On this day, thousands of innocent people died.

¹ In the mid-1990s, I held a conference here at Renison that resulted in a volume I co-edited with S. A. Ali, the founder of the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies: **Muslim Christian Dialogue: Promise and Problems**. Some years later I was invited to contribute to an on-line journal, *FutureIslam*. When I replied that I wasn't a Muslim, the editor responded in a way that I still treasure. I have contributed to the journal.

² Reza Shah-Kazemi, “The Role of the Prophet Muhammad in Muslim Piety,” in **Muslim Christian Dialogue**, *op.cit.*, p. 149.

Within hours of these events, a stunned world began to speak of Muslim terrorists being behind these events. PM Tony Blair of Great Britain spoke of terrorism as “the new evil of the 21st century.” Osama bin Laden reportedly responded on the following day when informed of the events: “Allah be praised.” People gathered around the World Trade Center to offer prayers and to wave American flags. Days later, the entertainment world gathered to remember the acts of courage of hundreds of people on the 11th and concluded with Canada’s own Celine Dion as the lead singer in a stirring rendition of God Bless America. The rhetoric of the religions of the world was suddenly splashed across the media of the world as the Muslim God was set against the God that blessed America. And in the midst of these evil acts, people suffered in all kinds of ways. In addition to the thousands that died, there were the even more thousands who were left behind: wives, husbands, lovers, friends, associates, and children. It is estimated that over a thousand children became single-parent children that day. Many others suffered inwardly: horrified, terrified, frightened by these events.

On the 11th, I had returned from Toledo in Spain to Madrid where I was defending a new religion in a court case, and on the 12th, I was headed for India to be part of an International Seminar on the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan in March of 2001. There I met with Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Tibetan Buddhists and other scholars to discuss the situation under the Taliban.

And now as we meet we are into the 6th day of the American led “War on Terrorism.” Of course, the “war on terror” are the actions of those who would have, it is said, justice. It is said that these are not evil acts. And so the bombs have rained down on Afghanistan in an effort to smash and destroy the training camps of terrorists. But there is “collateral damage” and so innocent Afghani men, women and children also die and the countryside is demolished. The wheel of suffering continues to roll. No one is immune.³

Immediately after the events of 9/11, many Americans began to say “the world has been forever changed by these events” and even that we now find ourselves in a “post 9/11 world.” I found such rhetoric overblown and counter productive, typical of the American penchant to define everything in relation to itself. What was needed was more sober consideration of these events and what they meant about, as well as for, the USA and its role in the world. What is, one might have asked, the American presence in the wider world that led to such hatred of the USA that people had hijacked planes and committed these terrifying and horrific acts? There was no wise response to these events. There was only a reaction: President Bush called it the “war on terrorism.” Since then, the Taliban has been expelled from power in

³ I then went on to discuss the Conference theme of “God & Suffering,” but I have never been invited back to the annual conference.

Afghanistan and Saddam Hussain removed from power in Iraq. But has anything been done to address the issues that gave rise to these events?

The men who hijacked the planes and flew them into the World Trade Towers were Muslims – mostly Saudi Arabian and none from either Afghanistan or Iraq. They were linked to Osama Bin Laden – and to other movements in the contemporary Muslim world. To be sure, these terrorist movements are highly disturbing. Ideological and deeply politicized, they are movements that are fuelled by a deep animosity towards the West (initially for Western colonization of Muslim lands but increasingly since the mid-1970s towards the USA and its imperial ambitions) and by what they perceive as the failures of contemporary Muslim states.⁴ But these are not all Muslims, nor are they a majority, nor do they even represent a large number in the Muslim world. It is the equivalent of identifying Christianity with “Christian Identity,” a group that identifies Christianity with White Supremacy, and other evil things.⁵ The events of 9/11 were condemned by Muslim leaders around the world. Muslim leaders repeatedly said that this kind of action – the hijacking of planes and flying them into civilian targets – could not be justified by the Qur’an, or Muslim teaching. When I hear the term “Muslim,” what pops up on the inner screen of my mind is the Ali family in New Delhi and the Muslims I have met there over the past 20 years – the Shaykh from Nazareth and others praying in the mosque in Israel, the Muslims that I met in Turkey who were so remarkably friendly and gracious on my visits there, the Muslims gathering in the magnificent Blue Mosque in Istanbul for prayer, or scholars like the lovely and able Dr. Meena Sharify-Funk who is here today.

But the image of the Muslim that has emerged after 9/11 is that of Osama bin Laden and the terrorist. In the hysteria that followed 9/11 in the USA – Philip Roth called it an “orgy of narcissism” – the Rev. Jerry Falwell said that even the Prophet of Islam, Mohammad, “was a terrorist.”⁶ This appallingly ignorant remark led to riots and the killing of several Muslims in India. Falwell later retracted his statement and apologized. A Sikh in the USA

⁴ See Mark Jurgensmeyer, **Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence** Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003 which looks at violence laced with “religious passion” in Christian, Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist and Muslim traditions. Who, for example, recalls that Timothy McVeigh had links to the “Christian Identity” movement. When the Oklahoma bombings occurred I was at a conference at Oxford in the UK and the headlines read: Oklahoma Blast Kills Hundreds, Muslim Terrorists Suspected.

⁵ See www.kingidentity.com. The “Christian Identity” groups gathered under this banner are several extremely conservative, racist, and militantly “supremacist” groups, including the KKK.

⁶ More recently, we have had the Danish “cartoons” that portray the prophet Mohammad as a terrorist. Already in 1995, one of the participants – a Muslim from the USA – at the Renison Conference had brought along a “cartoon” portrayal of the Prophet as a terrorist that was being handed out as a tract by an American Christian group from the southern USA. The recent incident was followed by “riots” in Muslim countries. Both the initial “cartoons” and the managed/staged riots were deliberate, politically motivated, events.

was killed, mistaken for a Muslim because he had a “turban.” Here in the K-W area following 9/11, some Muslims kept their children home from school and sharply curtailed their outside activities, feeling considerable animosity. In the USA, mosques were attacked, as were some here in Canada. Prof. Gregory Baum, one of Canada’s leading Catholic theologians, recently remarked concerning the “backlash against innocent Muslims” prompted by 9/11 that he was “horrified by this.” Indeed, he went on to say that “Christian churches have a duty to speak up and support Muslims who are facing uninformed prejudice.” Baum continued, “the church remembers its historic silence regarding prejudice [against] the Jews...and we must not allow this again.”⁷ Baum’s courageous statement in the post-9/11 situation needs to be repeated by other Christian leaders. But it also illustrates some of the new difficulties in pursuing dialogue between Muslims and Christians after 9/11.

Prior to 9/11, there was the long-standing failure of Western Christianity to rightly understand the great traditions of Islam – a failure that is reflected in the long history of the Western world calling Islam “Mohammadinism.” This label is an offence to Muslims since it suggests that Mohammad is the object of Muslim prayer and devotion. For the Muslim, that is reserved for Allah alone. In an earlier essay first given at Aligarh University in India, I spell out some of those misunderstandings.⁸ Before 9/11, I had found that dialogue with Muslims was generally welcomed though sometimes difficult – usually because of suspicions of Christian motives given the history of colonization and a pervasive conversionism within so much of the Christian world. It was possible simply because Islam is a great tradition that has given comfort and direction to millions and millions of people over the past 1400 years. Wilfrid Cantwell Smith, a great Canadian scholar of Islam, later Director of the Centre for the World’s Religions at Harvard and a teacher of mine, made this point about Muslims repeatedly in his many volumes on Islam.⁹ Dialogue with Muslims was not only possible, it was welcomed when the Christian came with an open heart and respect for the Muslim Way. Today, it is the world’s second largest tradition with approximately 25% of the believing world being Muslim – of one kind or another. Christianity is the world’s largest tradition, with approximately 33% of the world’s believers finding themselves in one or another of the Christian traditions. Together these two traditions constitute nearly 60% of the believing world. Yet the relations between these two

⁷ See the article in (KW Record, Saturday, January 21, 2006, p. 8)

⁸ See my article “Overcoming History: On the Possibilities of Muslim-Christian Dialogue” in the **Hamdard Islamicus**, Vol XVII, No. 2, 1994, pp. 5-15, a Muslim journal, that spells out my position. There I raised the issues of “fundamentalism” and “conversionism” as challenges facing Muslims and Christians.

⁹ Among his many writings are **Islam in Modern History** (1959), **Faith & Belief** (1979), and **On Understanding Islam** (1984).

traditions have nearly always been strained if not overtly hostile. However, in the post-WWII period there has been a large movement of Muslims into the historically more religiously homogeneous countries in Europe, the USA and Canada – Turkish Muslims to Germany and other places in Europe, North African Muslims to France and Spain, Muslims from former “colonies” to the UK, East African Muslims to Canada and the USA. Thus some Christians saw, from the mid-twentieth century on, the importance and significance of changing the relationships between Muslims and Christians.

But the Muslims we encountered in the mid-20th century were Muslims that had recently emerged from lands that, formerly Muslim, had been dominated by Western colonial powers. There were the Dutch in Indonesia, now the world’s largest Muslim country. There were the British in India who left India fractured in 1947 with 500,000 to over a million Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs dying during partition. Now there is a Pakistan and an India and each has more Muslims than any Middle Eastern Arab country. There was the former Soviet Union, which dominated the Muslim lands of central Asia. Egypt was dominated by the French then the British until mid-20th century, and after WWI, the former Ottoman Empire was carved up among the British and French. With the end of colonization there has been a resurgence of Islam in the 20th century, but it is a resurgence that still bears the marks, the hurts, the damage of colonization.¹⁰

After 9/11, the atmosphere in the meeting of Muslims and Christians definitely took on a chill. Christians were worried that perhaps these Muslims were also terrorists – that suspicion about the Muslim was always there, usually covertly, sometimes overtly. And Muslims often were aware that they were being seen through the “terrorist lens” that had fallen across the world following 9/11.

III: *La Ilaha Illab Allah*.

If the depth of ignorance in the West was pervasive prior to 9/11, it has been deepened and worsened following 9/11. Now the word “Muslim” is so deeply entwined with that of terrorist, that these words have, for countless numbers in the Western world and beyond, become synonymous. It is thus very difficult to see the great traditions of Islam for what they are. *La Ilaha Illab Allah* (There is no god but Allah) is the belief that stood at the foundation of the faith proclaimed by the prophet Mohammad (570-630) in the midst of the Arabian peninsula nearly a millennium and a half ago. Mohammad saw himself in the line of prophets that went back to Adam, Noah, Abraham and

¹⁰ One book that I would strongly recommend, though it does not address Muslim-Christian dialogue explicitly is Rashid Khalidi, **Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America’s Perilous Path in the Middle East** (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004). It provides an excellent account of the past 100 years of the Middle East and the legacy of the colonial era.

countless others including Isa, the Qur'anic name of Jesus. Mohammad did not see himself as founding a new religion but rather as recalling humankind to "the peace that comes with submission to Allah" – the meaning of the term "Islam." (And Allah is the term that Arab Christians use for God.) Yet Christians have an awful record in relation to Islam. Christianity has more maligned than understood this great faith. We have called it "Mohammadenism" – offensive to Muslims – rather than by its proper name. Its Prophet has been denigrated by Christians time and again: Dante encounters Mohammad in the lower reaches of Hell in his not-so-divine **Divine Comedy**. Its scripture, the Qur'an, has not been acknowledged and is little known or studied by Christians. This history has contributed to many negative images of Islam within the Christian world. Christians need to overcome this history in their relations with Muslims. And there are some signs in our times that this is beginning to happen. For example, the 2nd Vatican Council of the Catholic Church called for dialogue with Islam, as has the World Council of Churches.¹¹ In the Vatican II "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions"... we read:

Upon the Moslems, too, the Church looks with esteem. They adore one God, living and enduring, merciful and all powerful, Maker of heaven and earth...they prize the moral life, and give worship to God especially through prayer, almsgiving, and fasting. Although in the course of centuries many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this most sacred Synod urges all to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding.¹²

Kenneth Craig's **Call of the Mineret** in the late 1950s was a wake-up call for many in the Christian world.¹³ Furthermore, there are those within the Muslim world who have also initiated dialogue with Christians in the hope of moving beyond some of the ignorance and misunderstanding that has too much characterized Muslim/Christian relations. Most recently, there is the voice of Tariq Ramadan, an Egyptian Muslim, grandson of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1920s, educated in Europe, and a Professor of Islamic Studies at Fribourg. Ramadan had been invited as a guest professor to Notre Dame following 9/11, but his visa was revoked, and he was not allowed into the USA as a suspected terrorist or someone having links to terrorist organizations. Ramadan has written a number of very important books and his

¹¹ The WCC has been sponsoring exchanges between Christians and Muslims since the early 1970s. And for many years now they publish **Current Dialogue**, see www.wcc-coe.org.

¹² **The Documents of Vatican II**, W. Abbott, ed. (New York: The America Press, 1966), p. 663.

¹³ See Kenneth Craig, **Call of the Mineret** (New York: 1959). Now an Anglican Bishop, Craig wrote many books on Islam.

Islam, the West and the Challenge of Modernity concludes with this following paragraph:

The awakening of Islam may bring a contribution, hitherto unsuspected, to a real renaissance of the spirituality of the women and men of our world. Again one should avoid presenting the encounter between Islam and the West under the terms of a conflict, but see it instead in the perspective of mutual enrichment. In the face of a civilisation that maintains everyday its attachment to its faith in a unique God, prayer, morality, spirituality in daily existence, the West will benefit in looking, and finding, in its own religious and cultural points of reference the means to react against the sad economist and technician drifts which we are witnessing. Does it have the means? Can it go beyond this stage of nervousness and rejection of everything that is not itself? The question deserves to be raised. Muslims doubt this sometimes; some foresee an inevitable conflict whilst others have trust in God and dialogue. All agree, however, in asserting that the future depends on our present engagement. Our daily spirituality must be nourished by the exactness of justice. This is the ultimate liberation that founds fraternities; to be with God and to live with men.¹⁴

Ramadan's commitment to universal moral principles and to dialogue with other traditions is an element that mark his writings. He is a brilliant thinker, familiar with Western thought, yet deeply rooted in the great traditions of Islam whose voice resonates in the Muslim world. More recently, Ramadan has specifically addressed Canadian Muslims arguing that they must

rise to the challenge: ...they must make a considerable effort to review their sources and traditions. They must determine the fundamentals of their faith and practice. ...They must propose new ways of being Canadian Muslims. It is a complex and difficult challenge that involves knowledge and analysis of traditional Islamic sources; as well as the Canadian environment, its history, its institutions and its culture.¹⁵

¹⁴ Tariq Ramadam, **Islam, the West, and the Challenges of Modernity** (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 2001), p. 311. Speaking to European Muslims, Ramadan remarks that Muslims must "reconsider our respective isolation and strive to promote the *culture of dialogue* that each of us individually knows is fundamentally *Islamic*." p. 220 in **To Be a European Muslim** (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1999).

¹⁵ Tariq Ramadam, "Muslims need creative pluralism", **Globe & Mail**, February 19, 2005.

IV: The 24 Inch World

Contemporary mass media are credited with having given rise to a global village linked and joined by instantaneous communication. Thus there is no time lag between events and our knowledge of those events. What happens in the West Bank or in Pakistan or in China or in Jerusalem or in Moscow is, we believe, immediately available to us on the evening news. But what we often fail to notice is how this instant news reduces the world to twenty-four inches – and to a matter of seconds (the time to speak about the events that we visually glimpse). Our vast, complex, multi-cultural and multi-national world with its repetitive and often slow-moving rhythms on which the sun rises and sets day after day, month after month, year after year, is reduced to images on a 24” screen. And what we see is always the world in conflict. Rather than the tens of thousands of births that occur every day, we see the few, sometimes many, deaths that occur violently in war, crime, cars or catastrophe. How often do we hear, for example, of those efforts to bridge the conflicts or see the daily peaceful interactions of people, even in the midst of conflict.

This terrible and distorting reductionism in the mass media has been repeatedly brought home to me over the past forty years. I remember my year in Geneva when I read the New York Times only three times, when passing through the US on flights from Latin America to Geneva, and I realized that I hadn’t really missed anything at all: the events of the world revealed the constant patterns that had been there at the beginning of the year. Or, during my first year in India with my family, a visit that began with someone taking a shot at PM Rajiv Gandhi at the celebrations at the Gandhi Memorial on October 2, 1986, the day of arrival. The first letters we received were worried about our safety in India. For the letter writers, India had been reduced to the event in one tiny corner of New Delhi – and if it weren’t for the media, we probably wouldn’t even have known of the event where we were in India. This was also a time of trouble in the Punjab and conflict between Hindus and Sikhs. We read and heard much about that conflict, but nothing of the rallies held in the Punjab where thousands of Sikhs and Hindus came together to acknowledge their historic bonds of friendship with one another. When I was in Jerusalem in 2002 during a time of “suicide bombing,” every one of my days was spent with a group of Jews, Muslims, and a couple of Christians trying to build bridges of understanding in the midst of conflict. Random acts of violence and deliberate bombings are not the whole story in any society at any time. But from the way in which our view of the world is framed and reduced to 24 inches, one would think so. And following 9/11, the image of the Muslim as terrorist has been burned into our psyches in ways that make it exceedingly difficult to see anything else.

IV. The Dialogue We Need.

In our current situation, it is increasingly imperative that we/Christians stand in solidarity with Muslims. I noted earlier that Gregory Baum, one of Canada's leading Catholic thinkers, was recently in town (Kitchener & Waterloo) and during his lectures he made this very point. But such acts of courage need to be repeated time and again. For dialogue between people of different faiths needs to be encouraged and my experience over these last decades has convinced me of its necessity. Now it is not possible to explore here the dynamics of dialogue in a wholly adequate way. But let me point to a few things in relation to dialogue between Muslims and Christians.¹⁶ First, dialogue – a living and vital exchange between Muslims and Christians – is essential for giving the Other (Muslim for the Christian, Christian for the Muslim) *a human face*. Face-to-face meeting is essential to breaking through the images that we have of one another. I was both humbled and embarrassed to discover the depth of the images of ignorance there were in me when I first began to meet Muslims. Although I was to realize years later that I had grown up with some Muslims in my small Dakota town (the Hasens, Alec, Ron, Shirley, Betty... who ran a local clothing store: The Golden Rule), I discovered that there lurked in my heart images of prejudice that I didn't even know were there, or where they had come from. But they could not be maintained in the face of actually meeting Muslims and learning their stories and their journeys and their faiths. It is face-to-face meeting that will allow us to overcome the images that prevent us from seeing the human face of the Other, Christian or Muslim.

Second, in our post 9/11 situation, it is now possible to realize that those who follow the Way of “the peace that comes with submission to Allah” (the meaning of Islam) are not *the Other but our neighbour*, literally and metaphorically. When I first came to Waterloo nearly forty years ago, there was no mosque/masjid here; now there are two, and there are other groupings of Muslims as well. The so-called global village has arrived everywhere. We need not look across the globe to see a Muslim. We can look at our neighbour, those we work with, those we study with, those we ride the bus with, those our children go to school with, and we will discover those who follow the Muslim way.

Third, in our meeting and dialogue with one another we don't have to sugar-coat the differences between communities of faith, nor do we need to pretend they aren't there – they are there and they are many. But why do we need to assume that differences and divergencies are only a problem, an obstacle, something to be overcome? Differences can also enhance and enlarge

¹⁶ Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish Muslim make the same point: “interfaith dialogue is a must today, and the first step in establishing it is forgetting the past, ignoring polemical arguments, and giving precedence to common points, which far outnumber polemical ones.” See www.fethullahgulen.org.

those who engage in dialogue. Of course there are differences – cultural, theological, social, etc. – and some of those we will not resolve or even bridge: those we must simply acknowledge and respect. But let’s not assume that there are only irreconcilable differences. There are also common bonds.

In the late 1960s, I made my first trip into Eastern Europe with a group of students from a small college in Minnesota. The Cold War was still hot, and the previous year Soviet tanks had crushed the Prague Spring. As we approached the Czech border, the apprehension in the bus grew – we were entering the “Commie world.” A large fence with observation towers marked the border and contributed to the palpable anxiety. As the bus pulled into the border station and our passports were being collected, a young woman came out of the border station with her two young children. One of the students called out: “Look, they even have children.” We all laughed, nervously. The image of the Other had been broken.

Muslims too have children, they raise families, they often struggle to survive in difficult circumstances, they feel pain, they make mistakes, they fail, they do bad things, they strive to make sense out of the life given to them. Their *ummah* is no more perfect than our *ecclesias*. It seems to me that there is an equal measure of failure in every religious tradition. But as trust builds and relationships between Muslims and Christians deepen, it is possible to explore those failures and aspects of each other’s traditions that are most disturbing and troubling. But in dialogue with Muslims it is fundamental for Christians to know that Muslims respect and honour the Prophet Mohammad,¹⁷ cherish the Qu’ran, pray five times a day, practice charity, and long to make a pilgrimage to Mecca in their lifetime. To respect their Ways is not to betray our own, as some Christians seem to think. Rather, it is for Christians to be faithful to the One who recalled us to “love God and the neighbour” as the whole of the Law and the Prophets. In the world after 9/11, this teaching is even more imperative than ever.

¹⁷ Earlier I indicated I would return to this theme, but the paper has become too long. Suffice it to say here that the Prophet is the “exemplary Muslim” for Muslims.