

Abstract

Christian-Muslim encounter is part of the mission of the Kingdom of God which has a goal of redeeming all humanity. Christians and Muslims have been historically engaged in competitive truth claim characterized by violence. In Ghana, Christians engage Muslims in a peaceful way by means of integrative community, education and political life style. However, in terms of evangelism, there is always a battle centered on power struggle and soul winning. Evangelism among Muslims in Ghana is focused on provision of social services and theological dialogue. The truth claim of Islam is so rational and appealing to the natural mind that it is difficult to win them on the basis of theology. Moreover, the animistic practices of Folk Islam in Ghana, identical to African traditional religion makes conversion of Muslims into Christianity a difficult task. Ghana being power oriented society, social services and theological debate are not enough to convert Muslims. An effective missiological approach to evangelizing Muslims is power encounter through the work of the Holy Spirit in Missions thus the focal point of this paper.

Key Words: Holy Spirit, Power Encounter, Mission, Kingdom of God, Muslim Evangelism

Introduction

Christians and Muslims relationship which we term here as Muslim-Christian encounter has been characterized by violence and hatred for centuries. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid asserts that Islam and Christianity have been engaged in a competitive truth claim that often leads the adherents of these two religions to the use of violence and unacceptable means to substantiate their truth claims.¹ All over the world, the relationship between Muslims and Christians, who are purported to come from the same father, thus Abrahamic faiths, is marked by intense violence, wars in which very huge number of lives are lost in the name of religion. The September 11, 2011 event which collapsed the World Trade Center in the United States further aggravated the already existing religious tension between these two traditions. In Nigeria, the battle between Christians and Muslims continue to claim several lives on yearly basis and the least attempt by a Christian to present the Gospel to a Muslim results in bloody conflicts. Governments, NGOs, both international and locally organized peace conferences and dialogues with the purpose of bridging the gap between these two traditions that they may foster peace and true reconciliation. However, despites numerous, attempt, there has never been perfect peace between this rival traditions.

Islam spread into the West Africa through the commercial activities of North African Muslims. The presence of Islam was felt in Ghana since 14th centuries from the north and had preceded Christianity. Muslim experts popularly known as “Malam” engaged northern chiefs of Ghana through the practice of divination, preparation of charms and amulets for war purposes. These elements so much appealed to the northern chiefs due to the already existing African traditional religion which shares some commonality with power encounter, practices of divination and use of traditional magic substances for spiritual protection and gaining victory in war.

Out of an estimated population of over 30 million people, 71% are Christians while more than 17% are Muslims. Nevertheless, the influence of Islam on Ghanaian community cannot be underestimated. Most people think of Muslims as violent, terrorists, suicide bombers and many derogatory words that make them entertain fear towards Islam. Out of sheer ignorance, many

¹ Mustapha, Abdul-Hamid, *Christian-Muslim Relationship in Ghana: A Model for World Dialogue and Peace* (Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2011), 21

Christians would not want to have anything to do with Muslims in terms of gospel sharing. However, we are of the opinion that the most dangerous treat of Muslims which needs to be feared the most is their practical demonstration of love and outward sign of unity. In Ghana, they seem to have more effective evangelistic strategies than Christian missions. Islam missions are quickly building schools and mosques and helping human welfare services in most villages in Ghana to spread Islamic influence. Mosques are being built in strategic places, saturated in the north and scattered through the southern part of Ghana.

In Ghana, a West African country, three major strategies were used to improve and maintain peaceful co-existence between Muslim and Christian namely communal, political and educational integrative life styles. Ghanaian over the years have adopted an integrative communal life style as a tool to forging strong relationship with Muslim. Communal life offers opportunity to the Ghanaian to relate closely to their Muslim brothers and sisters by priority as Ghanaian. Every communal interaction in the market place, farms, funerals, festivals, games etc. brought Muslim and Christians together. The sound of the muezzin awakes both Christians and the Muslim for prayers. Ghanaian Christians play host to their Muslim neighbours during Christian festivals like Christmas, Easter, wedding, naming ceremonies, child dedication while the Christian are often seen dining together with the Muslims during the festivals of Idd-ul-Fitr (After Ramadan) and Idd-ul-Adha(Hajj). During an ordination of priest, you often find Muslim relatives in the Church.

The Ghanaian educational system is such that students in most Government institutions are exposed to African Traditional religion, Islam and Christianity which helps in reducing religious fights. The Ghanaian politics of integrating Muslim and Christians into Government top position has contributed to peace in Ghana. Abdul-Hamid observes that in 1954, the Muslims in Ghana formed a political party dubbed “Muslim Association Party (MAP) with Islamic agenda. However, due to the communal life in Ghana, Bankole Awoonor Renner and Cobbina Kessie, two well educated Christian leaders were engrafted into the party thus promoted peace. Since then, the President of Ghana and their Vices has always been strategically selected either a Christian president with a Muslim vice or a Muslim president with a Christian vice.² With the Ghanaian model one would have expected peaceful co-existence in the sub-Sahara Africa.

However, the case is different. In Nigeria, President Olusegun Obasanjo a Christian and his Vice-President Abubakar Atiku, a Muslim were not in talking terms thus political power sharing is certainly not enough to foster peace in Muslim and Christian engagement.³ Even though Muslims and Christians peacefully co-exist in Ghana, there is conflicts when it comes to a Christian’s attempt to convert a Muslim into Christianity.

The battle between Muslims and Christians is often centered on power struggle, land and soul winning. Christian-Muslim encounter in evangelism form part of the goal of the Kingdom of God in missions and as such needs to be well understood and effectively engaged. Many Christians and missionaries are unaware of the impact of Islam, Folk Islam and its animistic practices among Muslims. In the Christian Muslims’ encounter in evangelism, the main approach used by Christians is theology and biblical truth that refutes the Islamic faith. The truth claim of Islam is so rational and appealing to natural mind that it is usually difficult to win a Muslim only on the basis of Christian truth claim. In some instances, social services are rendered to Muslims in an attempt to win them to Christ. These approaches are not productive in all environments especially in power oriented societies like Ghana. This paper briefly through light on Christian-Muslim claim of truth and points out their engagement in evangelism as a necessary part of missions in the Kingdom of God. It also reveals the point that the animistic worldview of folk

² Mustapha, 29

³ Mustapha, 29

Islam and its impact in evangelism cannot merely be fought by theological dialogue. It finally suggests power encounter through the work of the Holy Spirit as an effective missiological approach to engaging Muslims in missions with evangelism in perspective.

Christian-Muslim claim of truth

Islam lay claim of ultimate truth that leads men to salvation where as the adherents of Christianity stand for an overarching truth that Jesus is the only Saviour, mediator between man and God as stated in the Scriptures “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12 ESV).

Lesslie Newbigin remarks that the only way one can know that the truth is incomplete is when one knows the whole truth.⁴ The Christian faith lay claim of the whole truth, the only way that provides solution to human predicaments and that which grant eternal life and peace as is stated in the Bible: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Abdul-Hamid opines that the Qu’ran seems to lay more exclusive claim by stating that those who do not belong to the Islamic faith will not be accepted by God “Allah” in this life nor the life hereafter. “This day have I completed my favour upon you and chosen for you Islam as your religion” (Q:5:3); “The religion with Allah is Islam” (Q:3:19) therefore “who so desires any other religion, other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers” (Q:3:85).⁵ Ghanaian Muslims often require Christians to recognize Muhammad as a Prophet in the same way that Islam identifies Jesus as a Prophet of God. Chris Hewer asserts that Muslims lay claim of the belief that Muhammad is the Last and the Seal of series of prophets including biblical figures such as Jesus, Moses, Abraham and Adam who according to them is the first Prophet sent by God to humankind. For Muslims, Muhammad was infallible and impeccable, sent with a message of truth that corrects mistakes which crept into all previous traditions including Judaism and Christianity, the Qur’an also being the last of series of revelation sent by God to humankind to be preserved until the end of time.⁶ Phil Parshall emphasizes that all Muslims believe the Bible has been actually abrogated by the Qu’ran even though there is no single word in the Qu’ran to support this view.⁷ The divinity of Jesus, Him being proclaimed as the Son of God is very offensive to Muslims. Proclaiming Christ in this way is for Muslims a repetition of ancient errors thus “far exalted in God above having a son” (Q. 4:171, 9: 30); “God is not begotten, nor does God beget” (Q. 112).⁸

In the understanding of Muslim, Jesus is a mere human prophet who received a book from God the “Injil”(Gospel), in the manner that Muhammad received the Qur’an (Q. 57: 27). At the end of Christ earthly life, it only appeared to people that he was crucified on to death on the

⁴ Bruce Riley Ashford, ed, *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, The Church and the Nations*, (Nashville, B and H Publishing Group, 2011), 280-281

⁵ Mustapha, Abdul-Hamid, *Christian-Muslim Relationship in Ghana: A Model for World Dialogue and Peace* (Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2011), 21

⁶ Christ Hewer, *Theological Issues in Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, (New Blackfriars, Vol. 89, no 1021, May 2008), 314.

⁷ Phil Parshall, *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 132.

⁸ Christ Hewer, *Theological Issues in Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, (New Blackfriars, Vol. 89, no 1021, May 2008), 314.

cross whereas in reality he was taken to heaven by God (Q. 4: 157-159).⁹ Michael Nazir Ali observes that any notion of Christ's incarnation or divinity is denied by Muslim.¹⁰ Muslim place high value on the "People of the Book" and have it engraved in their minds that the Christian God and their God are the same and therefore there is no need for a Christian to make an attempt to convert them into Christianity. "Dispute not with the People of the Book save in the fairer manner, and say, "We believe in what has been sent down to us, and what has been sent down to you; our God and your God is One and to Him we have surrendered" (Q 29:45). Proving a point that he was the final revelation, Parshall notes that Muhammad was reported to have declared that "if the illustrious apostle Moses were alive today, he, too, would be following the Divine law brought by me".¹¹

Christians upheld Jesus as the Son of God, the Word of God incarnate (John 1:1-4, 14) as the fullness of revelation as is written:

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:1-3 ESV).

Christians engagement with Muslim on the basis of mere dialogue and proof of Scripture continue to result in conflicts. I therefore disagree with A. Nakhosteen that "there is no more speedy way for the advancement of the Kingdom of God in a Moslem land than to spread forth the knowledge of the Bible".¹² Many missionaries think resorting in Scripture is enough for engaging Muslims. Mission in the mist of Islamic incredulity points to the fact that Christianity can be best experienced as a reality that transforms only by means of faith in Christ through reliance on the study of the Scriptures. Faith in Christ leads to a change in relationship (John 1:12) and transforming mind (1Cor. 2:16) that is illuminated to understand spiritual realities which the normal mind cannot comprehend.¹³ In Christian and Muslim encounter through the Scriptures, we must admit that the Bible contains mysteries that are profound in a way that the natural mind cannot comprehend and is beyond the highest intellect. The claims of Islam are humanly appealing, intellectually satisfactory. As such, it is only by reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit that Christians can effectively be victorious in their encounter with Muslims in mission.

Understanding the Kingdom of God in Missions

Many mission conferences involving churches and mission agencies through out the world are mainly concerned with the plight of humanity raging from condemnation of racial

⁹ Hower, 314

¹⁰ Michael Nazir Ali, *Frontiers in Muslim-Christian Encounter* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1997), 25.

¹¹ Parshall, 135.

¹² A. Nkhosten, in Phil Parshall, *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 133.

¹³ Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheen, Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2005), 107.

discrimination to worship, Justice, peace, evangelism, nuclear power, poverty and many more. Mission has a close relationship with the Kingdom of God within the context of the Church which is an agent of the Kingdom, empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out the mandate of the Kingdom. Christian-Muslim encounter is an aspect of the Kingdom missions. The biblical notion of the Kingdom of God traces its root to the Old Testament with its understanding that there is one almighty God who has revealed himself to humanity through, a chosen people (Israel) and later the Church by means of whom He would reveal his plans and purposes for the whole world. The Kingdom of God concerns itself with the total will of God in all spheres of life¹⁴ and has its goal as the redemption of human beings¹⁵ including the salvation of all Muslims. Charles Van Engen points out that the Church and the Kingdom of God are closely interrelated in the sense that Christ is the King of the Kingdom and at the same time the head of the Church. The Kingdom of God in a biblical sense always points to God's sovereign rule and reign over the whole universe. "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens and His Kingdom rules over all" (Ps 103:19).

Christians and missionaries often trace their missionary vocation to the great commission of Jesus thus "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).¹⁶ The theme of the Kingdom of God was very central in the mission of Jesus and His teachings were strategically arranged to show how people ought to enter the Kingdom (Matt. 5:20, 7:21) and his mighty deeds and miracles became proof of the arrival of the Kingdom which is the very presence of God to deliver His people (Matt. 12:28).¹⁷ The coming of the Kingdom of God in the words of Christ refers to the demonstration of power to cast out demons and to overthrow the powers of darkness and the Kingdom of darkness which has influence on men (Matt. 12:28-29).

An aspect of missions is the destruction of everything that set itself against the Kingdom of God including sin and Satan. The mission of the Kingdom of God is that the Gospel of Christ must be proclaimed in all the world (Matt. 24:14) by the Church, thus Christians who are the people of the Kingdom to all people including Muslims and Islam dominated territories.

Understanding Mission

Kittel Bromley and Friedrich note that the word "mission" is almost missing in both Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the word "send" is used instead of "mission" (Exodus 3:10) and the Greek New Testament uses "*apostolo*" or "*pempo*" interchangeably for the word "mission" (John 3:17, 4:38, 5:23) and has the full meaning of being sent for to serve in the kingdom of God with full authority grounded in God as exemplified in Jesus sending the twelve and the seventy on mission to the Jews and the whole world (Luke 9, 10).¹⁸ The Latin root of the word mission implies "being sent" and there are many examples of

¹⁴ Emilio Castro, *Sent Free, Mission and Unity in the Perspective of the Kingdom*, (Geneva: Council of Churches, 1985), 3.

¹⁵ Georgia Harkness, *Understanding the Kingdom of God*, 54

¹⁶ Castro, 1

¹⁷ George Eldon Ladd, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, Ed. Ralph D. Winter, Steven C. Hawthorne, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), 83

¹⁸ Charles Van Engen, *Transforming Mission Theology*, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2017), 84

God sending people on ‘God’s mission’ in the Bible. However, the things for which God sent people varies from one person to another and thus there was no uniformity in the sending of God.¹⁹ While Joseph was sent on mission to rescue famine devastated people (Gen. 45:4-8), the same sending language was used for Moses who was sent by God to save a people under exploitation and severe oppression (Exodus 3:15-18).²⁰ Jeremiah on his part was sent for the purpose of proclaiming the word of God (Jer. 1:7) while Elijah went on God’s mission in order to influence political transformation (1Kings 19:15-18).²¹ Within the New Testament, the disciples were empowered and sent to demonstrate the power of God in delivering His people through healing of sickness and casting out of demons (Matt. 10:5-8). Before their being sent to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom and to plan churches (Acts 13:1-3), Paul and Barnabas had been sent with famine relief (Acts 11:27-30). More also Titus (2Cor. 8:16-24) was sent on mission of God to ensure trustworthy and transparent financial administration of the Church and letter resent for competent church administration (Titus1:5).²² Likewise, some are sent to proclaim the Gospel for the salvation of Muslims in specific context like Sub Sahara Africa where folk Islam has taken root. The common denominator is that irrespective of the scope of God’s mission, the original sender has always been God Himself and not men or agencies even though He does it through human vessels.

Jesus reveals this notion of sending when he declared to the disciples “As the Father has sent me I am sending you” (John 20:21). Jesus speaking on His own mission states that He was “sent” to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to other towns also because he was “sent” for this purpose (Luke 4:43).²³ Van Engen asserts that this is a basic understanding of the term “mission” which according to him is participation in the mission of Jesus Christ “the Lord of the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit”.²⁴

The mission of Jesus which is also the mission of the Kingdom of God was carried out with the event of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18, Mk 1:10, Luke 3:21,-22, Acts 10:38).²⁵ The Kingdom of God in mission thus involves the reign of God through the Holy Spirit to destroy evil in all its forms, ranging from pain, sickness, death, demon-possession, sexual immorality, injustice and wickedness in high places.²⁶ Missions therefore involves evangelization of nations, responding to immediate human needs and partnering with the Holy

¹⁹ Christopher J H Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s mission*, (Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 2010), 24.

²⁰ John R. W. Stott, *Christian mission in the Modern World*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press: 1975), 21

²¹ Wright, 24.

²² Wright, 24

²³ Charles Van Engen, *Transforming Mission Theology*, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2017), 86

²⁴ Engen, 86

²⁵ Michael W. Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today, Scripture, History and Issues*, (Downers Grave, IVP Academic InterVarsity Press, 2014), 53

²⁶ Goheen, 59

Spirit for social transformation.²⁷ This brings us to the role of power encounter through the work of the Holy Spirit in the advancement of the Kingdom of God in Christian Mission among Muslims.

Power Encounter and Folk Islam

One of the challenges the Ghanaian Christians face in their encounter with Muslim's evangelism is the Muslim's quest for power demonstration to meet spiritual needs which folk Islam seems to provide. Their resistance to the Gospel is due to the Christian's inability to deal with their common spiritual needs. In Ghana, most Muslims turn to a mixture of animistic practices for answers to daily problems.

Power encounter plays a significant role in folk Islam in Ghana. Folk Islam engages in every day human needs that cannot be resolved by means of scientific approach, medicines and rational knowledge. Ghanaians like many other Africans are concerned with the meaning of life, death and ancestors. Folk Islam seems to tow this line of African worldview. Family life stories are linked with individual people's life. Life cycle rites including birth, initiation rites, the right person to marry, funeral etc. make much sense to the Ghanaian Muslim. Parshall Phil asserts that the Muslim worldview is soaked with consciousness of the spirit world and supernatural powers²⁸ which is not only limited to one country thus Ghana inclusive. Huge number of Muslims put on charms or amulets designed to ward off evil spirits and to usher one into good fortune. A verse from the Quran is written on a piece of paper and slotted in the amulet for protection. In Ghana there is a widespread belief in jinn thus superhuman beings. An evangelistic engagement that does not provide answers to these areas of needs will definitely yield less fruit in Muslim Christian encounter.

The question of spiritual and physical well-being and the threat of misfortune is very essential in Christian Muslims encounter. Ghanaian Muslims living within the framework of African worldview have issues with illness, plagues, barrenness, accidents, drownings, fire outbreak, droughts and disasters of different forms. The quest to understand the root causes of these happenings have a great tow on the individual's life. The ordinary Ghanaian Muslim would attribute these misfortunes to people with evil eyes, curses, spirits and supernatural forces which must be identified and appease. Folk Islam in an attempt to providing meaning and solution to fear stricken Ghanaian Muslims would appeal to amulets, talismans, divination, magic, astrology, spirit traps and repellents, ritual of appeasing the gods and the offended ancestors and many other practices. The power of witch doctors, *walis*, shamans, medicine men, magicians, spirit healers are sought for.²⁹ The combination of animistic practices especial power demonstration, Islam truth claim and provision of social services render Islam a force to recon with.

Paul Hiebert notes that one major question addressed by folk Islam has to do with success and failure.³⁰ Ordinary Muslims in the Ghanaian context are bordered by the issue of success and failure and believe that success is determined by the gods one served, the ancestor spirit that is

²⁷ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, Towards A Relevant Missiology*, (New York, Orbis Boos, 1996), 407

²⁸ Phil Parshall *Muslim Evangelism, Contemporary approaches to Contextualization* (Georgia: Gabriel Publishing, 2003), 99.

²⁹ Paul Hiebert, "Power Encounter and Folk Islam" in Woodberry, J. Dudley, ed., *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road* (Monrovia, CA: World Vision Resources, 1989), 47

³⁰ Hiebert, 47

worshipped. Divination, black magical powers, omens, tribal gods, sorcery and witchcraft are believed to provide success in life. When the Ghanaian Muslim is troubled by the unknown, thus the present, past or future, they run to the Folk Islam for guidance by means of divination, dreams, oracles, omens and prophecies. A gospel that is not accompanied by the demonstration of the revelatory powers of the Holy Spirit has little influence on Ghanaian Muslim. Such Gospel are but empty words considered as mere proclamation of certain Biblical knowledge or truth. Folk Islam is geared towards problem-solving in daily life, no matter the method used provided it works. For instance, a sick child may be prayed for by the mullah who tied amulet around his arm to supposedly ward off evil spirits while at the same time applying modern medicine for cure. In the midst of this unresolved questions in the mind of the Ghanaian Muslims, Christians cannot only engage them on the basis of the Scriptures but need a more experiential and practical approach. I agree with Paul Hiebert that the belief that reality is characterized by a conflict between good and evil is quite fundamental to many religion including Islam.³¹ In orthodox Islam, Allah is said to be in battle with Shaitan. Muslims fight jihad, a spiritual war that is moral and inward in their struggle to submit to God's will and fight against demons. Folk Islam encounter beings such as *qarina*, jinn, *dews*, *als*, *pari* and other entities that are thought to have influence over human lives and thus become a border to Muslims. In everyday life, the Ghanaian Muslims are deeply concerned with ghosts, evil spirits, demons, evil eyes, curses and especially witchcraft which immediate negative effects range from sickness, disaster to failure and the positive being good health wealth and prosperity. There is a constant hidden struggle in the lives of the Ghanaian Muslims who want to convert to Christianity. The fear of being overcome by the demons one has first served and also the communal or tribal gods from which gripe one is being delivered. Ghanaian Muslims are faced with the question whether Christ was powerful enough to destroy jinn or *zar*? Is He practically able to fight against the evil spirits, heal and deliver from demonic influence? There are instances where converted Muslims are attacked by sickness, misfortune and some even died for abdicating their faith and destroying their charms and amulets which they claim has some protective value.

Usually, western missionaries often had no ready theological answers for questions related to human crises, spirit oppression and issues of witchcraft or black magic. Most often, Western Missionaries attempt resolving these challenges by means of scientific analyses and methods which does not work generally with the Africans. Folk Islam is essential part of the life of the ordinary Ghanaian Muslim. Paul Hiebert opines that Muslims have a high view of the sovereignty of God but know little of his concern for their everyday needs and thus turn to the folk Islam for answers.³² A simple verbal proclamation of the Scripture that we can go to Christ with our burdens because He cares for us (1Pet. 5:7) is not enough to convince an African Muslim to repentance and conversion into Christianity.

In view of the fact that Folk Islam focuses on power, Missionaries must not only affirm that God is a God of power but must depend on the Holy Spirit for the practical demonstration of power in evangelism. It is true that in this world, God's demonstration of power is not by the sword but by the way of the cross, thus the way of suffering and weakness (1Cor. 1:18-25). However, Muslim will still want some form of experiential power encounter to believe in the Gospel.

Power Encounter in Muslim Christian Engagement

Muslim- Christian engagement in mission require practical power encounter through the work of the Holy Spirit in mission.

³¹ Hiebert, 50

³² Paul Hiebert, "Power Encounter and Folk Islam" in Woodberry, J. Dudley, ed., *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road* (Monrovia, CA: World Vision Resources, 1989), 54

By power encounter, I imply all demonstrations of the power of God through the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1Co. 12:8-11) which manifest in healing, deliverance, exorcism, signs and wonders, miraculous occurrence that defy natural laws. The term power encounter was originally coined by a Missiologist in Fuller Theological Seminary, Tippet Alan to denote an event that often occur among the people of South Pacific during which the spiritual power from which a convert runs in order to seek refuge in God still fights against the power of God and in the process loses to the power of the Christian God.³³ It is a general phenomenon which includes the confrontation which takes place between a believer as God's agent on earth and the forces of demonic darkness.³⁴ Power encounter, is the engagement of spiritual battle between powers of darkness and the power of God for the purpose of showing supremacy or authority manifested through signs, wonders and varied miracles. A recollection of such encounter in the Biblical story is power engagement between Moses and Pharaoh (Exo. 7-12) and Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1Kgs 18).

Power encounter through the work of the Holy Spirit in missions has been proved as an essential factor that leads to effective evangelism resulting in massive conversion and growth especially in the majority world. All over Africa, the overarching emphasis is on overcoming satanic resistance to missions by means of power encounter which Pocock termed as "binding the strong man" or "spiritual warfare".³⁵ From Lausanne 1974, several Missionaries became conscious of the fact that their lack of spiritual power to encounter the demonic world is the main factor that limits world evangelization including Muslims evangelism.³⁶ With the serious impact of folk Islam on Sub Sahara African Christianity, missionaries need the demonstration of the power of the Gospel as revealed in the Scriptures "Our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction" (1Thess. 1:5 ESV).³⁷ Power encounter thus becomes the heart of "missiological strategy" for effective proclamation and conversion among Muslims.

The Great commission is not a one-sided commission but a double commission involving a proclamation and a demonstration of the power of the Gospel. I agree with Edward Rommen, that the Great Commission has "a proclaimed" part and "a heal" part as revealed in the scriptures, "... and He sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal" (Luke 9:2 ESV).³⁸

Power encounter in missions has made very noticeable impact on world evangelization among Muslims at the same period when spiritual warfare orientation in missions increased.³⁹ Philip Jenkins maintains that the prototype of the New Testament Christianity with the demonstration of power, prophecy, healing and spirit exorcism are those who are rapidly making

³³ Charles H. Kraft, *Power Encounter in Spiritual Warfare* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 1.

³⁴ Howard Brant, "Power Encounter, Toward an SIM Position, *International Journal of Frontier Missions*" (Vol. 104, Oct. 1993), 187.

³⁵ Pocock, 184.

³⁶ Pocock, 184.

³⁷ Pocock, 185-186.

³⁸ Edward Rommen, Ed., *Spiritual Power and Missions* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1995), 94.

³⁹ Pocock, 192

converts especially in Latin America and Africa.⁴⁰ Power-oriented people require power proof, not simply reasoning, if they are to be convinced”.⁴¹ Islam operates in power oriented environment in Ghana especially in the northern Ghana. Mission among the animists, a people whose worldview bring to mind a consistent existence of a spiritual world in which dark powers are constantly seeking to destroy human beings, determining most course of event unless they are appeased or influenced by means of magical powers, amulets and incantations requires power encounter.⁴² The need to engage in power encounter in missions has been a major concern for most Pentecostal and Charismatic missions minded Christians in Ghana. The first revivalist that steps on the soil of Gold Coast now Ghana was a Liberian evangelist William Wade Harris whose missionary work was accompanied by signs and wonders thus power encounter. Wade brought the concept of High God nearer to the people of Ghana, he preached the Gospel two years and was said to have won 120,000 converts while Philip Quacoe, a British trained missionary who solely depended on the Western theology won only 52 people within the same culture (West Africa) after five years of missionary work. The secret of the Pentecostal Wade who succeed where the Western missionaries failed was his demonstration of power in missions.⁴³ Harris choice of Ghana and the geographical areas he worked were not determined by his wish but by the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

The Muslim’s life is a life involving power encounter between God and hosts of demonic powers that seek to destroy the mission of God.⁴⁴ Power encounter becomes a hinge on which swings effective Muslim evangelism in missions especially among power inclined societies. For African Christian missions, one of the most relevant passages of the New Testament relating to the issue of power encounter is “ For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). Though this passage meant little to western missionaries, it has many relevance in Ghanaian Muslim-Christian encounter.⁴⁵

The practices of healing and deliverance in mission involves vocalization of faith centered on the use of the nine gift of the Holy Spirit (1Co. 12:8-12) namely Word of Wisdom, word of knowledge, discerning of spirits (Revelation gifts), Faith, healings, miracles (power gifts), prophecy, diverse kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues (vocal gifts) which pave way for conversion in missions.⁴⁶ Ghanaian Muslims are attracted by these spiritual occurrences as they identify with them in folk Islam. I agree with Julie and Wonsuk that within the frame work of culture and religion, healing and deliverance are expectations from deities and spirits and thus divine healing through power encounter in mission responds to the code of native religiosity and

⁴⁰ Philip Jenkins in Michael Pocock, *The Changing Face of World Missions, Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends*, (Grand Rapid: Baker Academic, 2005), 192.

⁴¹ Charles H. Kraft, *Power Encounter in Spiritual Warfare* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 2.

⁴² Pocock, 187

⁴³ Larbi E K. Pentecostalism, *The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Ghana: Centre of Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), 55.

⁴⁴ Pocock, 189.

⁴⁵ Pocock, 192.

⁴⁶ Wolfgang Wondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the full Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017), 109.

thus the occurrence of healing through the proclamation of the word of God, demonstration of power gifts of the Holy Spirit by laying on of hands in prayer becomes a major motivation to Muslims to draw them to God in missions.⁴⁷

Mission and the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the initiator of mission in the Kingdom therefore His role in doing mission in the Kingdom of God is very essential to effective accomplishment of God's mission. The mission of God among Muslims becomes circular activity and human initiated activities if the work of the Holy Spirit is not taken as priority. The ministry of earthly Jesus and His disciples was done under the initiative and guidance of the Holy Spirit who led the disciples in mission when they are clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8).⁴⁸ Therefore, Missions among Muslims can only be effective by means of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Missionary work depends on a great inner "spiritual dynamics" of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁹ The early disciples of Christ did not have much education in the art of mission but they only depended on the Holy Spirit to carry out the mission of God which is the total liberation of humanity. "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). The truth claim of Muslims can be confronted by the power of the Holy Spirit even in the unschooled who is unable to reason on the basis of the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit is indispensable particularly in Muslim evangelization which is not all but an expect of the work of missions.⁵⁰ This great assignment could not be achieved without the indispensable agent who is the Holy Spirit.

Mission is a delegated authority of God to his people based on the great commission of Jesus to all His disciples to do a cross-cultural discipleship work to all people in all nations of the cosmic world of God's reign (Matt. 28:18-20) of which Muslims form part, under the power of the Holy Spirit. The messages proclaimed in mission are given by the Holy Spirit (1 Tim. 3:16) and what He teaches remains the truth. "Then Peter filled with the Holy Spirit said to them... And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:8-12). The truth about the divinity and uniqueness of Jesus which is much disputed in missions among Muslims today has been declared through the Spirit and can only be maintained by they that are filled with the Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation of the Gospel in mission is thus very crucial to the actual understanding of the true intended message of the Kingdom of God in mission which is "Jesus the only savior" of the world (Acts 4:12). Without the Holy Spirit, the proclamation of the biblical truth becomes offensive to Muslims.

The Holy Spirit as Agent of Restoration of God's Creation in Mission

⁴⁷ Julie C Ma, Wonsuk Ma, *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Eugene: Wipit and Stock Publishers, 2010), 38.

⁴⁸ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2018), 115

⁴⁹ Pocock, ed. Douglas McConnell C., *The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics: Evangelical Missiological Society Series Number 5*, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1997), 10

⁵⁰ Robertson McQuilkin, ed. Douglas McConnell C., *The Role of the Holy Spirit in Missions*, in *The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics: Evangelical Missiological Society Series Number 5*, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1997), 23

Michael W. Goheen defines mission as “the participation of God’s people in God’s mission to renew the whole creation and the whole lives of all its peoples and cultures”.⁵¹ The agent of the renewal of the whole creation of God is the Holy Spirit. As such, the Holy Spirit is He that can perfectly renew the world of the Muslims. Mission begins with God’s decision to restore his fallen creation and the church’s mission is to participate with God in the restoration of God’s creation.⁵² The Holy Spirit was involved in creation bringing light and order in the chaotic world (Gen. 1.2).

R. Kent Hughes notes that the same work of the Spirit is that which brings light into dark hearts in mission as revealed in Paul’s application of the scriptures: “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). Just as the Spirit of God moved over the dark waters, in the same way he can move over the dark hearts of Muslims, transforming them into new creations in Christ.⁵³

A new period of restoration which we term as a recreation of the Holy Spirit in mission is prophesied by Isaiah:

“until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places” (Isa. 32:15-18 ESV).

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was to have a transformational impact first on the land transforming it from infertility to fertility. The desert land was to become a productive forest land (Isaiah 43:3). Not only was the land expected to be fertile but there will be justice, righteousness and peace as well (Isaiah 32:16). The concern of Muslims about success and failure in life can be resolved by the work of the Holy Spirit.

In Ghana, Muslims who are concerned for social justice use many animistic approach to curse a wrongdoer by resorting to all sort of magical elements they put on their body.⁵⁴ Wonsuk notes that there is a correlation between the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and social justice as established in Isaiah 11. The effect is peace and righteousness among people of the Kingdom of God.⁵⁵ It is worth noting that Israel the community of God was being judged for injustice, corruption and idolatry. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) depicts the restoration of the people of God, physical wholeness and the establishment of peace and justice among the people of God for mission.

⁵¹ Michael W. Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today, Scripture, History and Issues*, (Downers Grove, IVP Academic InterVarsity Press, 2014), 117

⁵² Wonsuk Ma, *The Spirit of God in Creation: Lessons for Christian Mission, transformation*, Vol. 24, No ¾, (July & October 2007), 222-230

⁵³ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing, Preaching the Word*; Accordance electronic ed. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004), 22. <https://accordance.bible/link/read/PTW-36#91>

⁵⁴ Phil Parshall, *Muslim Evangelism, Contemporary approaches to Contextualization* (Georgia: Gabriel Publishing, 2003), 102.

⁵⁵ Ma, 222-230

The Holy Spirit work in Delivering the Oppressed in mission

As declared by Jesus in His manifesto, Luke 4:18 deliverance of people from the oppression of Satan was part of Jesus mission and His mission is the Kingdom mission. Muslims are concerned with issues of deliverance from evil malignant witchcraft and Satan evidenced in their use of specific verses in Quran (103:1-5, 104:1-6). By giving the disciples authority over unclean spirits and to cast out demons and to heal every disease and affliction (Matt. 10:1, Mark 3:14-15, Luke 9:1-2) Jesus was laying a foundation for subsequent mission practice of the Church.⁵⁶ The authority over demons and deliverance of the oppressed was not only limited to the twelve disciples of Christ but went from the seventy (Luke 10:1-20) and the modern day missionaries who face similar oppressive situation on field among Muslim must rely on the work of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁷ As noted by Arnold, the prophetic declaration of the Mission of the Church and its application by Christ to Himself (Isaiah 61:1-2) is now transferred to all missionaries in the global church. In the words of Pentecostals, the Spirit of the Lord has been poured upon God's new covenant people of this age, anointed and empowered by means of the Holy Spirit not only to proclaim the good news of Kingdom of God but also to proclaim liberty to the captives and the recovery of sight to the those who are blinded by the God of this age (2Cor. 4:4) and the oppressed (Luke 4:18). This constitute part of the mission of the Kingdom of God.⁵⁸ Luke tells how God did extraordinary miracles and healing in the missionary work of Paul (Acts 19:11) through the power of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁹ The mission that Jesus called the Church to engaged in was a mission attached to supernatural oppositions. As such the power of the Holy Spirit is always crucial to overcoming. Jesus spoke about the redemptive mission in a parable that points out that Satan is a strong man that would oppose mission. "No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man then he may plunder his goods" (Mark 3:27, Matt. 12:29, Luke 11:22).⁶⁰

Power Encounter and Missions

I admit that in general the work of the Holy Spirit through power encounter stirs up faith and often leads to a form of conversion among Muslims because of their animistic practices. However, power encounter does not sustain faith in God. I agree with Charles H Kraft that people throughout redemptive history see the demonstration of God's power but still turn back to the very gods that the power of God defeated.⁶¹ This is noticed over and over in the Christian Muslim encounter in Ghana as also in Israel's covenant relationship with God and their engagement with other nations around them. Even after Moses defeated the Egyptian gods and

⁵⁶ Arnold, 169

⁵⁷ Arnold, 169

⁵⁸ Arnold, 169

⁵⁹ Arnold, 169

⁶⁰ Clinton EL Arnold, ed. Christopher W Morgan and Robert A Peterson, *The Kingdom of God*, (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012) 171

⁶¹ Charles H. Kraft, *Power Encounter in Spiritual Warfare* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 11.

Elijah Baal and its prophets, Israel still turn away from God (1Kings 22:6).⁶² Power encounter in mission among Muslims only leads to change in belief and sometimes behavior. However, in most cases the worldview of the people remain the same. Commenting on Peter and John's power encounter in Samaria with Simon (Acts 8:14-24), Paul Hilbert was right to point out that if people's belief and behavior change where as their worldview remain the same, it leads them to "Christo-paganism".⁶³ Reliance on power encounter in missions for growth if not controlled with the right theological understanding and sound teaching may do more harm than good to missions. Among power oriented societies like Africa and majority world, power encounter is a routine incidents where the adherents of the weaker gods give allegiance to the stronger gods while still remaining loyal to their gods reminiscence of what frequently happened in the Old Testament, "So they feared the Lord but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away" (2Kings 17:33).

I am of the opinion that power encounter in missions stirs up people's faith in mission to change their belief but their worldview can only be changed if they understand the biblical principles or theology behind the power encounter which is to point humanity to the sovereignty and supremacy, redemptive power of God with the aim that people might abandon all other gods and give glory to the only true God (Acts 4:12) and living according to His kingdom principles through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. It is the word of God that sustains faith and not miracles and signs as Paul declares: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Jesus said not even the miracle of the dead coming back to life will cause people to repentance unless they listen to the word. "He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead'" (Luke 16:31). It is only the genuine preaching of the word of God that will lead people to true conversion. Paul stays: "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1Co. 1:22-24). Power encounter is good but I rate the word of God above spiritual manipulations of power gifts that are claimed to cause effective conversion in missions among Muslim.

Conclusion

Mission is closely related to the Kingdom of God in the sense that the God of the Kingdom and the God of mission and the God of Mission is the head of the Church which is an agent in carrying out the mission of God. God is sovereign over the whole earth (Ps 47:7-8, Ex 15:18, 1Sa 12:12) and the ruler of the whole universe. He is concern about every aspect of his creation and for this reason, God's mission covers the entire Kingdom of God including Muslims. Since the Kingdom of God is beyond the boundaries of cosmic or geographical locations, the mission of also transcend geographical extension or cross-cultural engagement with the gospel of the Kingdom. The mission of God goes beyond verbal proclamation of the gospel and social services. As noted by Goheen, Mission is "the whole Church", witnessing to "the whole Gospel" in the "whole world" while missions is only a part of mission in a cross cultural context thus geographical extension.⁶⁴ The mission of God cannot be effectively carried out without the

⁶² Kraft, *Power*, 11.

⁶³ Paul G Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapid: Baker Academic, 2008), 11.

⁶⁴ Micheal W. Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today, Scripture, History and Issues*, (Downers Grave, IVP Academic InterVarsity Press, 2014), 117

empowerment of the Holy Spirit because the people of the Kingdom of God needs to know exactly the mind of God concerning His mission and it takes only the Holy Spirit to reveal the true mind of God concerning His mission. The work of the Holy Spirit is therefore paramount in our engagement with the mission of God in the Kingdom of God. In this respect, Christian-Muslim engagement in mission must take into consideration the role of the Holy Spirit through power encounter which must only be used as bat for Muslim conversion especially folk Islam. Instead of Christians fearing Muslims and calling them names, it is more yielding to depend on the Holy Spirit to bring them to the saving knowledge of Christ. Missionaries and all Christians who will adopt this missiological approach to Christian-Muslim encounter in mission will certainly make a difference in their missions endeavor. I however wish to sound a caution. Even though the work of the Holy Spirit through power encounter is an effective missiological approach to engaging Muslim, there is a need for carefulness not in order not to turn Christianity into another form of magic where by God is manipulated to provide solutions even if He decides to lead the Muslims in the way of the cross through His sovereignty into genuine conversion.

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