

Rev. Dr. Turgay Üçal

**MÜJDELEME ADINA
MÜJDELEYEMEME**

*EVANGELISM THAT
DOESN'T EVANGELIZE*



G D K

Evangelism That Doesn't Evangelize

[Rev. Dr. Turgay Üçal](#)

Telif Hakkı/Copyright Rev. Dr. Turgay Üçal, 2013

E-Kitap [Hristiyan Kitaplar](#) tarafından yapıldı. Daha fazla ücretsiz kitap indirmek için [sitemize ziyaret edin](#).

[Türkiye'de Kilise Adresleri](#)

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I. IN THE NAME OF GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

CHAPTER II. INABILITY TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

I. The Obstacle of Theology

II. The Obstacle of Worship

III. The Obstacle of Gospel Proclamation in Missions

INTRODUCTION

It is generally very difficult for any of us to look at ourselves objectively. Particularly when we receive criticism real maturity is required to determine the validity of statements made about us. In attempting to discern this, our Lord Jesus' teaching to examine first the log in our own eye is very important for any follower of Christ seeking to heed his words (Mt.7:3).

Jesus Christ's gospel of salvation is of course meant for all humankind. Unfortunately however, the human tendency to distort any given reality has also affected our understanding of the salvation and teachings of Christ to a certain degree. His salvation and teachings have been taken beyond the bounds of their intended purpose. What people see around us today as "the Church" is many institutions with different ideas of faith, worship, and opinions about "the Church." Even at first glance, they are confronted with significant walls surrounding our Maker's glorious gospel of salvation in Christ.

The gospel, as the divine hand of salvation in the simplicity and transparent character of Jesus Christ, developed especially in the first few centuries as a heart-changing movement among religious Jews tightly tied to their traditions. Their places of corporate worship where worshippers could discuss spiritual matters were very conducive to the growth of the gospel among these Jewish believers. Further, their ability to act collectively as a family and a society and to trust each other due to their common background of Jewish teachings played a significant part in the growth of the Christian faith among them. Later however, when people of many different nations started to accept Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior this unity started to become strained to different extents in different parts of the world. This soon resulted in disputes among opponents within the same faith over whether they could accept each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

As a result, while trying to find harmony among themselves, the people who were trying to adapt themselves to the teachings, way of life, and salvation in Jesus Christ's gospel slowly started adopting new views originating from human opinions and tied to the traditions of their time. They started to develop different practices and even put forth different confessions of faith and creeds and began to defend the truth of their own interpretations. It was during this period that Jesus Christ's authentic foundational principles started to erode through the influence of empires, civilizations, cultures, and languages.

This continued through the 16th and 17th century Reformation movements, until which time Europe had continually suffered from war and unrest. After these religious and political struggles had calmed down to a degree, some Protestant Christians, realizing the opportunity, started missionary movements to establish their beliefs among others.

Through these missionary movements another institution developed within the already institutionalized church. They called themselves "para-church," depending upon their size and development, and often acted independently of churches and sometimes declared their independence from churches. At times, these organizations even proved to be more effective than churches. Though present and developed within the Roman Catholic Church these relatively recently established para-church organizations and today's Protestantism go almost hand-in-hand with mission organizations. As for some Western or Eastern Orthodoxy, with most of their churches in the grip of their country's nationalism and trapped inside of a religion-nationality-culture triangle, they began to focus on their own internal affairs and developed a monopoly mentality (somewhat similar to that of Judaism) toward the universal message of Christ Jesus.

Now the 21st century has virtually brought about a whole new world empire. While the world is still continuing to globalize, technology puts the most distant places right in front of us. Some religious institutions and organizations, with the boldness they gain

from their countries' position as global powers holding the lion's share of the world's prosperity, are aiming at a global religious movement that goes beyond our Lord Jesus' concept of the church. It is interesting that most of these organizations are from Protestant groups that raise the flag against the Pope. Whether they realize it or not, each different organization has formed its own pope. According to the members of each organization the most effective and doctrinally correct ministry is offered only by their individual pope.

After the period of Jesus and his apostles the Church's history developed largely outside of the Middle East. In particular as it developed in the West the Christian faith today has gone far beyond Jesus' life, teachings, and gospel of salvation. So the Christian faith today reflects the West's religious understanding and conception of spirituality.

Under these circumstances, since the basics of the faith developed in Jesus' time, whether or not one wants to accept this the issue of a "fifth gospel" is at hand. In a sense, many of today's dominant Christian denominations believe and live by this "fifth gospel." This so-called "gospel" falls far from the good news of Jesus Christ, which is plain enough to be understood by all people and makes no distinction between people based on language, race, or culture. If we see the modern, industrialized world as an empire this fifth gospel can be seen as a "Gospel of the Empire" that has been formed in the hands of the powerful. This gospel should not be understood as a written text along with the Scriptures. It is like a pair of eye glasses that create a particular perspective, understanding, and interpretation while looking at the Scriptures, while studying Jesus' teachings, and while proclaiming the gospel. To be able to understand these glasses, the history of the West must be evaluated. So besides Jesus' point of view and the perspective he taught, there are now various assessments among those who evaluate his perspective, and there are different perspectives giving direction to his teachings. This is all to say that what we know of the teachings and identity of Jesus Christ has been greatly affected by a tremendous amount of water under the bridge between the time of his ascension and our own day.

Consequently, when this understanding and experience of the gospel are combined particularly with the individualism and the self-centeredness of our day, the saving message of Jesus Christ is completely abandoned such that what remains only resembles the reality, and in the background egos clash and denominations collide. Unfortunately this, as well as a concern to elevate one's own culture and nationality, has been presented to humanity and the world as Christianity.

At the same time the world, which can no longer see, hear, or feel the faith of Jesus in its pure form and the gospel in its actual, simple authenticity is always apprehensive at the approaches of these kind of organizations and institutions and often tries as much as possible to keep its distance from these kind of organizations.

As for sincere followers of Jesus, though they come from different denominations and different countries they are aware of all this and through their sincere prayer, worship, and faith are trying to live and reflect the authentic gospel as much as they are able. As those producing fruit, we can know for certain that they will eventually be rewarded by the LORD and will even receive great reward from fellow believers and neighbors around them. In the same way, those who use the name of the gospel without giving the good news will eventually receive due payment for their actions. When we look at history we see many who have received their due.

We hope our short assessment with the goal of “seeing the log in our own eye” (Mt.7:3) will bring us a little closer to Jesus' authentic gospel and lead us a little more toward being “light,” as he is, for all of humanity.

CHAPTER I. IN THE NAME OF GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

Many sincere followers of Jesus Christ, inspired by his Great Commission (Mt.28:19), have set out in the name of sharing the gospel. To be sure, most of them have had pure intentions and were full of faith. Some of these offered a real life of faith and benevolence that becomes our Lord. On the mountains, in deserts, and among primitive societies, they preached the salvation offered by God in Christ Jesus. They took hold of eternity through the glorious plan of the Father, the radiance of Christ, and the guidance of the Spirit. However since humans, being little gods, are so capable of finding ways to make everything look like themselves, the self-seeking were naturally also among those who set out in Jesus' name to share the gospel. However they were unable to produce fruit like that of the sincere believers. Since they could not produce spiritual fruit, they became more tied to their methods, and as time progressed, began to cling to it increasingly. Finally, they figured out how to justify this behavior and found even their justification in the gospel itself. They shifted all the blame to darkness and evil, and in order to take the power from that evil, another power was needed—the power of man's plans, projects, empty prayers and budgets.

We will not stop them from devising whatever they will, but they will see that in the name of gospel proclamation they will not be able to proclaim the good news unless they return to the simple basics that our Lord Jesus intended for them to communicate.

Who holds the power?

The common belief in churches and mission organizations is that the gospel of Christ is accepted only with great difficulty in some parts of the world. The devil is viewed as the primary cause of this resistance to the gospel. Of course, Satan's complete opposition to God and his temptations on top of our self-centeredness are real issues,

but some churches and missionary organizations have greatly exaggerated this. It has been so exaggerated that it is as if the devil has been brought to a place of greater power than God and the salvation he offers in Christ. Suggestions begin to be made that prayers must be very fervent and intense because we must pray passionately to save people in these kinds of places from Satan's influence, slavery, and rule. As can be seen, each error continually leads to another. It is presented as if God will act according to the fervency of our prayers. In short, in these difficult places, breaking the great power of the devil and bringing into effect the gospel of the Almighty God, is taught as if it ultimately depends on us.

All of these and similar views, well-developed during the 20th century and carried into the 21st century, are beliefs of some of the Protestant groups of our day. As we've seen, these beliefs unfortunately are full of theology that is far from scriptural.

These mistaken perspectives essentially seek to detract from the glory of God and the power of Christ's salvation and are at odds with the reality of his being the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end (Rev.1:8).

The LORD God is the almighty Master of the whole universe. He bestowed his own Word on the world explaining the scope of its reach by saying, "everyknee will bow and everytongue will confess" (Rom.14:11). At the same time, while his Spirit continually works in hearts, he uses sincere believers and sees them as a vehicle of his own benevolence.

This is to say, as is clearly expressed in Scripture, that all ministry belongs to God. He calls, justifies and sanctifies his people, and he most definitely sends them out. So by preparing the hearts of the saved, those not yet saved, and those who will be saved the one Master of this work brings them together onto one road.

Our part is to take our own place in this wonderful plan. So if we join in this process of receiving from the Lord and giving to others as those receiving a real blessing we will obtain real spiritual reward from this ministry. However, if we deliberately refuse to join in this, we will of course be among those who have lost the glorious blessing of the ministry of God. However, as we said at the beginning, when we take our direction from flawed theology, we usually end up at an improper understanding of ministry. We fall prey to the idea that if we do not carry out the work, those who are in the dark and in the hand of the devil will not be saved. In short, if we see ministry as “partnering with God,” we begin increasingly to usurp God’s role from him and to judge between people as if we are their God. In this way, we automatically get stuck in another swamp of bad theology. We can outline the problematic beliefs resulting from this faulty theological perspective as follows:

1. The belief that some regions have essentially been taken from the hand of the sovereign God and have been given over to the devil’s rule.
2. The belief that these regions’ complete salvation from the rule of evil is conditional on our continual begging and prayer.
3. The belief that, without us, the saving work of the almighty God cannot be completely carried out.

Which of us is the savior?

Those who hold to this kind of theology before entering into ministry in missions will always end up with a ministry established on the wrong foundations. Missionary efforts that forsake the Scriptures and the basic teachings of Christ, no matter how well thought-out or planned from the world’s perspective, no matter how economically strong they are, will never bear real spiritual fruit.

Because we forget the teaching “Not by might nor by power, but by [his] Spirit” and the reality of his unilaterally bestowed goodness seen in the truth that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,” (John 3:16) ministry is brought to the point that it’s not in his image, but in our own fallen image. In this way, we make ministry resemble what we understand of ourselves.

Unfortunately, this describes the current situation. This is to say that ministry almost completely reflects human cultural and socioeconomic status. Instead of being light to the nations simply by worshipping the Lord and leaving the work of changing hearts to the all-sufficient saving power of God, thousands of sincere believers with man-centered approaches have started to see themselves as the savior.

Presuming to be the light rather than taking light from the source and reflecting it has pushed all churches with this mindset toward institutionalization and even beyond that to forming para-church ministries with a “me-and-my-program” mentality.

Today many institutions and organizations that call themselves Christian unintentionally or intentionally announce to the world that the best ministry being done in the name of Christ is the ministry that they carry out in their own particular way. In this sense, they even act as if they are spiritual conquerors of other organizations or ministries. Yet in Christ’s understanding of service, the basic principle is “whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Mt. 23:12). In Christ’s teachings, what we see is the Creator’s spiritual reality, not the world’s material reality. In Jesus’ concept of service, “the last shall be first, and the first shall be last” (Mt. 19:30). For those who understand this, there is great wisdom in these important points of Scripture. So it is important to assess how these institutions and organizations present themselves, and in making this assessment, we must use questions based on these truths of Scripture. Then will it become obvious who is and is not ministering in the name of Christ.

To whom does the Church belong?

A church, in reality, is a congregation that belongs to Christ. It is a place for people rejoicing in salvation and lifted up with Christ, beyond merely the material, to the spiritual. There these people worship the heavenly Father in Christ. In the guidance of the Spirit, they study the apostolic teachings, they pray and sing hymns, they break bread together, and they share their lives (Acts 2:41-42). A church is a place where the fullness of salvation taken from the Creator is distributed among the people. Worship is foundational.

Unfortunately today however, some institutions using the name of “church” have turned into big businesses focused on their work with plans, programs and budgets. Leaders afraid of losing their jobs instead of pleasing God make decisions that please people. At the same time, Jesus’ name is constantly on their tongues. The name of Christ used this often has become a name used for self-interest and for gaining material strength. In the same way, in Acts, Simon saw the name of Jesus as a supernatural power and wanted to use the glory of Jesus Christ only for his own interest, name, and glory (Acts 8).

Unfortunately, some churches are not even aware that their theologies have shifted far to one side or the other of the historic apostolic faith. Some of these who define themselves as “evangelical” have almost removed the Father and the Spirit from the doctrine of the Trinity. In the same way, other churches who define themselves as “charismatic,” have almost removed the Father and the Son from the Godhead.

We do not mean to assert that there are no respectable believers, churches, church

institutions and organizations that have sincere faith in Christ and his gospel and who cling to the Scriptures and the ways of God. However, most of those continuing on this loyal path of faith, because of the impression of Jesus' teachings on them, are not interested in announcing their ministries to the world anyway. These are those who are the real followers of Christ and witnesses to the faith. Thanks to God's work through them, his plan of redemption has been carried out up to this point and will continue to advance tomorrow. However the examples we are talking about here are unfortunately those who are often up front drawing attention to themselves and, even more disheartening, are the examples most visible to those of other faiths.

What is the gospel?

Many Jews and Muslims who see evangelism activities combined with an ego-based "promotion" mentality (which advertising of all kinds constantly reinforces for all of us) have difficulty seeing Christ in the organizations and institutions who take this approach as they profess to minister in his name. What is even further disheartening is that the believers in these organizations continue to ask, "Why do they not see Christ in us?" For someone to be able to ask this question after having seen so many poor examples means they are an ignorant person counting themselves among the wise.

The path of Jesus Christ is not a road to a memorized religious creed. It is a way of life. It is a lifelong spiritual endeavor. It is dying to ourselves on the cross with our Lord Jesus and rising to a new life, where Christ is formed within us (Mrk. 8:34). To summarize again, the gospel's effectiveness outside of us depends completely on the effect it has first, inside of us.

Undoubtedly, the gospel is the plan of salvation in Christ offered to humanity by the almighty God. The owner of the gospel is the owner of the universe, and of course, its spread and offer of salvation to men depends primarily on his grace.

At the same time, it is again our heavenly Father and Lord who gives responsibility to those rejoicing in salvation in Christ. The believer himself, in the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Word, is the one with the obligation to consciously live a life of worship and carry this spiritual responsibility.

Of course, in the same way, anyone far from God and living according to his own fallen ego is necessarily oriented towards evil. But only with the Spirit's preparation of the heart for Christ's salvation, or in other words, with the Creator's light penetrating the heart can anyone be rescued from this orientation. Here again, we see that everything progresses according to the counsel, plan, control, and supply of the almighty One.

From whose side do the obstacles come?

So if the gospel is becoming harder to understand, we should remember that problems stem both from the rebellion toward God living in all hearts, as well as from those of us who carry and convey the gospel. The latter can be even more dangerous because of the hypocrisy involved.

For this reason, especially in the reactions of Muslims and Jews to the gospel, we see this second component playing a larger role. We can say this with such confidence knowing that church history is not filled only with great examples, but that because of the existence of the fallen human element it is also filled with other examples that are quite saddening.

The gospel is plainly for man's life, and the gospel's communication to others is in one way, dependent on this gift being presented in its original vessel. It is to be presented by a life lived, and not lived for show, for marketing, as a profession, or for religious pride. When it is not presented through the living of a real life, those communicating the gospel unknowingly create three particular obstacles for those with whom they are sharing truth. This is the primary reason for the difficulty of the Muslim world in hearing and apprehending the gospel.

We can summarize the three obstacles as follows:

1. Theology
2. Worship
3. Missions

CHAPTER II. INABILITY TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

There are great consequences to setting out like a merchant or salesman in the name of the gospel *essentially*(though probably not *formally*) believing that it cannot be determined who has ultimate power, that the identity of the true savior is unknown, that it is not understood what the church is, and consequently believing that the gospel cannot settle into people's lives. He who trusts his own ability to "sell" the gospel or puts confidence in anything other than God himself and in all that he has deemed sufficient for the growth of his kingdom will eventually be forced to face the reality that, *in the name of the gospel*, he is unable to share the good news of the gospel. When these "gospel salesmen" experience this inability in sharing the gospel, and then look at the reality of the magnificent, victorious salvation of God in Christ they end up living with this internal contradiction and pass it on to all those to whom they've brought the gospel.

Just as it is impossible to survive spiritually apart from Christ, so the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19) cannot be fulfilled apart from him no matter how great the power of money, education, technology, or institutions. Sadly this work of the Great Commission is often attempted by faith in these substitutes and apart from Christ. Just as the construction of the tower of Babel (Gen. 11) led to the confusion of the languages of humanity, now there is great confusion with the hundreds and even thousands of denominations formed by those who have gone out in the name of the gospel, in the name of Christ, and in their self-appointed papal authority. In short, just as the tongues of those at Babel were confused, God's people today, who seem to be of the same belief, have come to the point that they cannot understand each other.

The organizations and institutions that *in the name of giving good news cannot give the good news*, while being perplexed that Muslims and Jews cannot understand the gospel

somehow fail to see the huge walls behind which they have hidden the glorious saving gospel of Christ.

Among these walls or obstacles, we will focus now on the three major ones and try to examine the log in our own eye a bit closer. It is hoped that by repentance from the wrong paths we have gone down and by returning to the authentic salvation of the Creator through Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit he will again shed his light on us and we will be light to others as we approach them with faith, love, and respect.

I. The Obstacle of Theology

Muslim theology is generally quite simple, and from its inception its fundamental principles have not significantly changed. The Creator is mighty and God is one, and the priority is to agree on that. The Jewish faith regarding that foundational teaching is clear as well. For Muslims, and even for Jews, the recognition of the prophets and other practices of faith followed later. People do not choose to raise questions on the details of faith but prefer to live in peace under this simple faith sincerely and daily worshipping the one, almighty God. Without a doubt, there are matters of detail discussed in these two faiths, but it is worth noting that all denominations and sects have reached consensus on the fundamental principles and none of them declares the other as faithless. For instance, the whole Islamic world agrees on the obligation of daily ritual prostration before God. Apart from a few exceptions, they nearly all accept the same way of practicing their faith, as well as the five pillars of Islam and its creed.

One religion, multiple theologies

As Muslims and Jews look at Christianity from the outside, instead of seeing a general unity of theology they see glaring and confusing differences between different

denominations or groups of Christians. If we were to look only at the development of Christian theology (the Church's actions aside) from the time of the church fathers until today the spectrum of beliefs we would meet with would help us understand how overwhelming it is for those from Jewish or Muslim backgrounds to be introduced to our faith.

Following the Reformation, with the influence of intellectualism in the field of theology over time this already complex theology became even more complicated. For instance, if a Muslim today wants to get an idea of the Christian faith, he will have a very hard time comparing and trying to understand the Baptist view, the Presbyterian view, the Pentecostal view and their different perspectives of faith. Even with a doctrine as foundational and agreed-upon as the Trinity the varying emphases of different developments of the church completely confuse those unfamiliar with Christianity.

As mentioned above it is possible, and inevitable, to see differing views and multiple denominations or sects within any given religion. However, as also mentioned above, whether in Judaism or even in the views of different sects within Islam, the fact that the fundamentals of the faith and worship system are common to all of them achieves a quite profound unity within each faith. That being said, it should be noted that it is possible to see more differences in perspectives on the faith between radical, conservative, and reformed thought within each religion. In addition, some theological differences may be reflected in local traditions and customs. Despite all of this variation, it is not possible to see hundreds or even thousands of visible nuances, perspectives, understandings, and worship differences in the fundamentals of the faith as it is in Christianity. For example, today the estimated number of denominations, sects and paths of faith in American Protestantism alone is around 20,000 — all of which are putting forth great effort to spread their own theology as the most correct version of the Christian faith.

Everyone's truth differs

In addition, it must not be forgotten that theological differences between one Protestant church and another are such that they affect worship and even the worldview and concept of salvation. We see an example in views on subjects like baptism where one church claims that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is required for salvation, and many others vehemently object. While one considers it one of the essentials of the faith, another excludes it from the faith altogether. This can eventually lead to one church going as far as accusing the other of heresy or excluding them from the community of faith. This is just one of many theological differences contributing to the spectrum of Christian theology carried by evangelists to every community in the world. Especially for a Muslim or Jew who has met different missionaries this diversity is more than enough to completely confuse him.

Similar to the Catholic-Protestant disputes in Ireland, the disagreements between Muslim groups are more of political origin. Among Islamic groups and communities, it is very difficult to find discrepancies in the basics of their faith such as their belief in one God, the five pillars of Islam, and the major teachings of the Prophet. This is not to say that there are no differences but that they are quite minor. In the essential theological meaning of the fundamentals of their faith, there is an extensive intellectual unity of theology.

What about the unity of faith in Christ?

Though a Protestant does not recognize Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons as Christians, those of other monotheistic faiths cannot make this distinction. A Muslim considers almost everyone holding a Bible and preaching to be a Christian or even a missionary. For this reason, in their eyes Christianity is an incredibly broad, colorful, confusing and complex religion with many differences among its adherents. From Mormonism to all kinds of Pentecostal groups and endless other Protestant denominations to Roman Catholicism and then to Eastern Orthodoxy —with hundreds

of colors, ideas and worship styles under a single title— a non-Christian cannot somehow wrap his mind around all these incredibly different theologies and differentiate what is truly “Christian.”

Though we may faithfully and sincerely emphasize our common foundation by making statements such as, “Jesus is all that matters” or “accepting Christ as Savior and Lord is all that’s required,” an outsider cannot see it that plainly or easily. Even for those who have recently converted to Christianity, though they may not express it outwardly this issue can be a real struggle. Sometimes even for sincere believers who have grown up in the faith Christian theology is very complicated with its hundreds of denominations with different perspectives and differences whether on detailed secondary doctrines or even regarding the most basic teachings of the faith.

Moreover, the early church fathers could not even agree among themselves in their debates on various topics, such as whether the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son or only from the Father. On the subjects of the Lord’s Supper and Baptism, the church is continually dividing. Similarly, the church is constantly disputing the subject of authority and is doing everything possible to limit the authority of its leaders.

On the other hand, the teaching of our Lord Jesus is unmistakably clear, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28). The Creator intends to bestow on people spiritual resurrection, well-being, and salvation. However the church, with its structure developing in an institutional way, has been unable to put Christ’s theology in place, and what has been brought forth is a complex mosaic of the faith with hundreds of contradictory understandings of different groups. This comprises another significant theological hindrance to the gospel.

The doctrinal junkyard of institutionalism

Institutionalism, rather than making the path to the gospel easy, usually puts an incredible spiritual obstacle of difficulty before our Lord's true gospel by rejecting people, delivering them to devils and demons, and cursing them. It is of course possible for a sincere believer to immediately deny that this is true today, but the situation is not as he sees it. Modern versions of the same approach are continually repeated, and rather than Christ's gospel being used as the standard, a person is expected to completely conform to the doctrine of his particular church. If he does not, he could be met with church discipline or other consequences.

Particularly those in preparation for sharing Jesus' gospel and the thousands considering themselves in ministry often convey to communities of different faiths a complicated structure, or "doctrinal junkyard," which is far from Jesus' pure and practical teachings. For instance, a group of believers who deny the Trinity and accept only the deity of Christ can, with faith and determination, begin a counter propaganda campaign at a very small church in their Muslim city to bring to their own "truth" new believers who are beginning to learn to worship the God of the Bible. For those closely following this situation, whether new believers or those trying to examine and consider the faith, a mountain-like theological barrier is placed in front of the proclamation of the good news.

Difficulties to which we are blind

Usually when theological stumbling blocks are mentioned in this context, Christians assume the problem to be the Trinity or the deity of Christ. While those are often significant stumbling blocks, we are trying here to point out a separate, even more difficult problem that Christians somehow fail to see in themselves. This issue, as said above, is not limited to the Trinity or the deity of Christ but is the fact that each church or group of any size, in a sense, exercises freedom to create its own Christianity. This comprises a nearly insurmountable theological obstacle to the gospel.

Those in the Muslim world have a broad view that everyone who believes in one God from the heart will eventually return to their Creator. Thus it is quite difficult to fathom the idea that one church can excommunicate another or that, even within one denomination, subgroups do the same to each other.

Propriety in theological debates

In addition, Jewish and Muslim theologians generally keep their theological works and discussions or debates among themselves. Just as every issue in other fields is not brought before the general public, in faith as well there is no room for these debates to be continued among all adherents of Judaism or Islam. However, in the Christian perspective and particularly in Protestant circles, even centuries-old debates are brought to the pews of today's churches without regard for the congregation's previous knowledge of or ability to handle these issues. Then those considering themselves to be in ministry often strive to carry these centuries-old debates and "doctrinal junkyards" wherever they go and to everyone they meet.

Is the difficulty only in the places we go?

For instance, sometimes Protestants of different denominations work together in one mission agency. However sometimes two members of the same organization that have different views can over time confuse a new believer they are both discipling. Eventually, these two sincere believers, whether they are conscious of their denomination's distinctions, try to move this new believer toward their own beliefs. Eventually, the new believer becomes quite lost.

These cases are not always easy to see. When efforts are not fruitful, it is assumed that the culture, the country, or the people's faith is too resistant, and usually those sharing the gospel are considered to be living under great difficulty. This assumption might be true for some places, but too often it's not true. As is seen, the real source of difficulty in most places is the theologies of the people and groups who have set out to proclaim Christ's gospel.

One church or para-church organization, for example, does not approve of or accept the theology of another church or para-church organization. Then, as a new believer (or someone considering the faith) goes from one group to another, his opinions change until he finally gives up altogether, or even worse gets involved in a church and creates strife in the congregation, unnecessarily upsetting the peace of the church.

Unless my Father wills...

The statement "unless my Father wills" (John 6:44) is quite clear. Everything exists because of the Creator. To him belongs the decision to call people or not, and those called or not called also belong to him.

When we look at the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7) for example, his teachings on the life required of the person finding his satisfaction in salvation are quite clear and plain. A life of light is what makes a man human and what will testify to and express life in Christ with the Holy Spirit. As can be seen by a plain reading of Scripture, the salvation and teachings of Jesus who points us to the Father in heaven and sacrifices himself for us are far from complex. These simple teachings of salvation are those that carry the Church from age to age in the guidance

of the Holy Spirit.

For example, when a person professes faith from a sincere heart he is baptized. Under the heading of pre-baptism instruction, there is no requirement saying “you must understand my denomination to be baptized.” The teachings of Christ that are built on a Jewish foundation should not be changed or added to over the years. “Yes” is yes, and “no” is no (Mt. 5:37).

Today, however, most of the “humanitarian projects” managed by multimillion dollar institutions who make use of our Lord’s name for the most part somehow lead nowhere in terms of results. Since it’s a matter of faith, these institutions defend themselves saying, “We have done our best, but what can we do?The devil has taken over these areas.More projects, more prayer and more money are needed.”

Here the issue is not Satan, but a gospel and theology that are filled with problems, fallen captive to human ego, and doomed by worldly plans and projects. Though the name of Jesus is used, this sort of life is far from our Lord’s salvation, truths, and teachings.

Naturally, as long as this atmosphere dominates, the minds of others to whom attempts to communicate the gospel are made will also be confused at the first step. By the time these new hearers of the gospel start to understand and ask questions, the one communicating the gospel has moved on to defending himself, his thoughts, and his complex theology on many different points. Consequently, after a certain time, the confused listener finds a solution in staying away from this believer.

Efforts to prove truths

For a Muslim, the Holy Quran is the sole foundational reference. So in a sense, when it is said, “The Quran says...,” there is no room for further questioning in the mind of a Muslim. What is said in the Quran is fully accepted and believed with respect and without question. For example, if the Quran stated that “Christ was born of a virgin,” no one’s further question, argument or even defense of that reality would be an issue to be considered. This is the understanding and perspective of this faith’s theology. If God made these statements, and what he said is in the Book, a Muslim sees no room for questioning them.

On the other hand, a person who brings Christ’s gospel is constantly eager to prove a truth or set of truths. This, rather than the gospel itself, is one of the issues that most bothers a listening Muslim. The common reaction in a Muslim’s mind is, “If you are so sure of your Book, why are you so eager to prove the Trinity?”, or, “why are you even trying to prove the deity of Christ?” They have a point — the defense of Christian theology, especially for this particular audience, becomes a barrier to understanding and receiving the gospel.

If only, as a sincere believer reflecting the light of Christ, one could say, “If my Lord says so —if he says the Trinity is this way, that’s how I believe it to be.” If only the Christian could, as Christ did, look simply and humanly at his brothers, showing them mercy and loving them without condition or expecting any return (Mt. 9:36). Then, Christ’s gospel of rescuing sinners by the Spirit of God along with sincere faith would most definitely spread with ease as salvation to all those with fully ready hearts, including to Muslims with sincere faith in Allah. Only then would the theology wall which Christians have built throughout history among so many people be brought down.

This case and similar others show that the primary difficulty, apart from regions and environments very different from our own, is the human approaches of those sharing the gospel rather than the societies where the gospel is shared.

II. The Obstacle of Worship

Though generally given less consideration when discussing obstacles to the gospel, worship is another significant element preventing nonbelievers from comprehending the good news of the gospel being shared with them. As mentioned above, Christians tend to consider the doctrines of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ to be the greatest obstacles for Muslims. They are difficult but, as also stated above, the fact that those sharing the gospel usually dwell on these two subjects has become a more significant obstacle than these two important truths themselves. This is the case primarily because this is not an obstacle in the minds of Christians, but an obstacle perceived by the nonbeliever. The same can be said of the obstacle of worship.

What is understood when we say “worship”

For a Muslim, worship is of utmost importance, and the practice of worship is approached with great respect. Worship is an act of submitting themselves to God with their whole person — mind, body, and spirit. Of course, in the Christian perspective, worship also holds great significance. However, when the two faiths talk about worship they have two very different things in mind. For example, while a Reformed church sees worship as an hour of detailed expository preaching, singing a few hymns and praying through certain prayers, a free evangelical church sees it as the singing of worship songs accompanied by guitars and drums along with passionate preaching and prayers. As for a charismatic church, worship is seen as high-volume, enthusiastic praise songs, shouting in prayer, and even sometimes fainting or being “slain in the Spirit.” At this point, we are definitely not arguing for or against any of these worship

styles. We are focusing on the significant difference between Islamic worship and the varied understandings of Protestant worship and the fact that this difference constitutes a wall or a barrier to the gospel.

This is a real obstacle. Particularly during modern times, the word “worship” for a church has even started to lose its historical meaning. The concept of worship has started to erode within modern culture through the use of words like “gathering,” “sharing” and “service.” Whereas, from its beginning, the system existing in Islam, made to be practiced in the unity of mind, body, and spirit and according to Old Testament examples, has essentially reached our day without significant change.

Especially in our day where knowledge and the visual have been completely mechanized, worship can now be conducted with visual effects and technology, such as microphones, recording equipment, and other devices. In short, for Protestant worship today, certain equipment is necessary. A church must own at least a guitar or a piano, and technical personnel are necessary as well. Of course, while this is not exactly the case everywhere, this trend has quickly started to appear among most of the world’s Protestant expressions of the faith.

In countries like the United States, these technical features are important even to keep the youth in a church. In some places, churches with better music or a good band translates into more youth in the congregation. On the other hand, in many churches, debates over classical and contemporary worship styles take place. Besides being far from the teachings of Christ and quite outside of the essence of the faith, the fact that these debates have resulted in two opposing worship models is a serious issue.

As we know, in certain churches worship has become a production art, complete with multicolored costumes as if worship exists to appeal to the theatrical and visual tastes of an “audience.” Jesus’ understanding of simple heart-worship with humility, such that

one does not even raise his eyes, is now almost completely left in the first and second centuries. Islam, however, continues to practice the plain form of worship adapted from that of the synagogues — the form of worship in which Jesus was raised and which accompanied his preaching of salvation.

Heart and simplicity in worship

Since a Muslim is accustomed to a form of worship where the attention of one's heart is fixed on the Creator, he is obviously not easily able to comprehend and adapt to forms of worship where one's attention is directed to machines, music, and visual effects. For this reason Christian worship, particularly for many sincere Muslims, obscures the hearing of Jesus Christ's gospel of salvation.

For a Muslim or a Jew, there is no traditional or contemporary way of being in God's presence. Entering God's presence is simply bringing his heart, mind, and soul before God. Together with deep meditation and prayer he either raises his hands or bows to God expressing worship through the posture of his body. When a Muslim or Jew hears the word "worship" this is what comes to mind.

The statements of our Lord Jesus and the whole of Scripture make it clear that worship is as plain as that described above and is primarily a matter of the heart. Our Lord Jesus himself is the one who compared the religious man's display of worship in the temple with the tax collector's humble, reverent, plain worship (Mt. 6:5-15). It was also our Lord Jesus who, by saying "My Father's house will be called a house of prayer" (Mrk. 11:17) was rejecting all distracting elements within the temple, or in other words, in worship.

The Letter to the Hebrews also clearly emphasizes that we must worship the Creator “with reverence and awe” (Heb. 12:29). Jesus taught as well that real worship involves approaching in secret the Father who is in secret. In a way, Muslims and Jews are attempting to put into practice the teachings of our Lord in the way they approach worship. Though they do not accept the salvation offered by Jesus Christ, they still preserve many scriptural practices.

For this reason, when they meet those bearing “the true gospel,” they are quite confused when they see so much in the worship that is out of line with the Scriptures. Obviously, this makes it difficult for them to respond positively to the gospel.

When this happens, some may ask, “What can we do if God has not yet opened their hearts?” It could be asked of them, “Why should we go at all if we have to wait for God to open their hearts?” Our heavenly Father is, in fact, the one who both prepares hearts and sends his people out that the gospel can enter the hearts he has prepared. Because of this reality we have no right to make excuses or abdicate our responsibility.

So the going out of God’s people is still necessary. But if we say we have obeyed the command to go, the command to worship with reverence and awe is just as foundational as our going. Along with the worship we offer to God when we gather, we offer ourselves as worship in our daily lives. Our obedience to the command to go must also not be isolated from the commands that govern our daily lives such as those to “seek peace as much as possible” (Rom. 12:18; Heb. 12:14) and to “show respect to everyone” (1. Peter 2:17).

Respect, seriousness, and order in worship

For instance, in a synagogue after singing several psalms as worship, the community takes three steps forward with great reverence as if they are stepping into the presence of a monarch, and from then on it is as if they have cut ties with the world. They face Jerusalem and sing certain prayers directly to God. Afterwards they take three steps backward out of the presence of the Lord. They do all this three times a day.

In the same way, a Muslim (if Sunni five times a day, if Shiite three times a day) virtually breaks contact with the world and enters into God's presence, remaining there until, again after worship, he steps back out of God's presence. During worship, they talk to no one, and no distracting activity takes place inside the mosque.

In a similar way, in Thomas Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer, prepared in the joy of Christ's salvation and in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we see the same order, quiet, and simplicity in taking the heart into the presence of God. In addition, a person who prays according to the Book of Common Prayer is privileged to hear the salvation of Christ and the saving voice of the gospel. That is to say that sincere worship is very capable of effectively proclaiming the gospel to people. In worship there is an opportunity to preach the gospel from the heart and in the inspiration of the Spirit. This has been seen many times in church history.

However, today especially, many of the concepts that the Western Church calls "worship" are not even a part of the Scriptural understanding of worship. For example, announcements for camps, field trips, and social gatherings are made in the middle of Sunday worship. These announcements, all the laughter and chatter about various church activities, and many other similar distractions divert the attention from the Creator, from the glorious grace of our Lord Jesus and from the all-surpassing peace of the Spirit. It is also interesting that some Protestants do not feel that some of these elements distract from worship or are not worship at all, but that many Muslims, who have tried to join this kind of worship feel quite distracted.

In Islam, the Quran or even the Bible is never placed or carried below the waist. This is an important expression of respect, and violating it is taboo. Of course, they do not expect a sincere Christian to do the same. But especially for those who claim to share the gospel with Muslims, the fact that they do not care about such a sensitive subject though they may have lived in Muslim countries for years shows that they somehow do not understand our Lord Jesus' tact in his approach with the Samaritan woman. It is quite surprising to find that this kind of situation affects even those who have recently come to faith in Christ and have joined local churches. Even though these new believers may start to raise their voices on these subjects multiple times, some Protestant missionaries for some reason stubbornly defend a selfish approach that says "we're free in Christ and do not need to respect those kinds of traditions." This causes many new believers to fall and creates a very significant obstacle for many Muslims' comprehension of the gospel.

At this point, an incredible misunderstanding is definitely at issue. Freedom in Christ means that people are freed from themselves to be conformed in Christ Jesus to the image of the Creator. But this does not at all mean that when gathering for worship, there should be constant joking, chatter, and laughter without respect for each other (1. Pet. 2:16). At the same time, this also should not be misunderstood. We do not want the perception of Christ to fall into another error that advocates wearing a religious mask or a seriousness that never smiles. What we mean is that for a sincere Muslim or Jew worship is a serious matter, and these details are particularly important if they are going to hear Jesus' gospel. When visiting a church or talking with Christians a sincere Muslim still has a serious perception of a place of worship similar to his view of a mosque. All of these details resulting from a less serious approach to worship constitute for him a great obstacle before the gospel.

When we study Scripture closely it is impossible to miss Daniel's (Dan. 6:10) and other prophets' approach to Scripture and worship. Some will immediately point to the example of David saying that his dancing with musical instruments and singing hymns was his way of expressing worship. However, those will fail to note that the same David writes multiple times of bowing down before the Lord (see Ps. 5:7; 38:6; 138:2), (1. Sam. 20:41). Our current age and environment significantly affects the way we look at the period covered in the Scriptures. In the Scriptures we see God speaking to Elijah in the calm (1. Kings 19), prophets repenting and fasting in dust and ashes, and most

importantly, the priority that our Lord gives to worship. For that reason, he makes the effort to wake up his disciples in the middle of the night for prayer (Mt. 26:39-44).

When we look at these examples, we can easily see that, according to Scripture, today's Christian worship and attitudes toward worship have greatly decayed. All of these discrepancies between Scripture's concept of worship and the Church's current practice of it are entangling our feet.

Both Jews and Muslims, particularly in some aspects of worship practice, can sometimes end up being more in accordance with the Scriptures than Christians themselves. As they move closer to the Scriptures, the impact of the truth is naturally felt. In the same way, if one drifts away from the truth, the effects of that are felt as well. It is true that these groups are not yet rejoicing in the redemption of our Lord, but even slight proximity to the Scriptures can make a difference in major communities. What a huge step forward it would be if the institutions and organizations who claim they belong to Christ could daily live and present Jesus Christ's plain and universally understandable message, teachings and salvation together with that same simplicity and harmony with the Scriptures. Then this heavy worship obstacle would automatically be removed from its place before the gospel.

Week-to-week and daily worship

Today many churches, even those in countries and cities considered to be very Christian, unfortunately keep their doors closed during daily worship. However, when a Muslim or Jew practices daily worship even in an airport, he gives testimony to his own faith. The sad part is that the origin of the daily worship practice lies in the Scriptures. Jesus' Church was once quite active in daily worship. Symbolizing death and resurrection with Christ, morning and evening worship—including praise, prostration, and repentance—were consistently carried out by sincere believers.

Unfortunately, all of these have been left in the past. These days, it is more that the mind-centered, intellectual Bible studies, seminars, conferences, sermons, and prayers based on continually repeated choruses have almost replaced regular worship.

As mentioned above, the church today, to retain young people and for the satisfaction of certain members, has even started to make a distinction between traditional and contemporary worship. However, all these efforts, being man-made and according to human desires rather than the contribution of the Word and Spirit, usually prove to be unfruitful.

Islam, however, has been able to continue for over 1400 years without this anxiety over changing its single form of worship for adults of every stage of life and even for children. Also, as we know, a good number of those in Jewish communities have continued to worship for centuries without changing their worship style. Though the Muslim community has never changed its form of worship, there is a current trend of growth in the number of new adherents to Islam.

Of course, it should be not be inferred from this that Christ's gospel is lacking. In the same way, these other faiths should not be considered true merely because they have borrowed from the truth. On the contrary, both Judaism and Islam are still on the rise because of the truth of the Scriptures. So to the extent that Judaism and Islam remain close to the commands of the Creator, they are effective. In the same way, they lose effectiveness as they move away from God's Word. Of course, this is also true for Christians. Those who are tightly tied to the teachings and salvation of Christ and those who are not, can by no means be considered the same. In the same way, their fruit in Christ Jesus is also quite different.

Spiritual though material

When we consider Christ's teachings that we are in the world but not of it (John 17:14-16), we see that our Lord requires that sincere believers benefit from the blessings of the world but that we should never forget that we are of God and born of God. Unfortunately however today we have come to a point where the church has severely compromised both the teachings of Christ as well as ethics. In the name of being contemporary, the church has become more of a center for spiritual satisfaction and psychological encouragement. In the same way, the situation is such that its social club structure is no longer seen as foreign to the teachings of Scripture.

Again, it is necessary and helpful to continually reemphasize that sincere believers and sober minded churches dependent on God's Word will never be put in these categories. They are always setting themselves apart by their conduct and behavior and by the exemplary lives they present to society. Unfortunately, those who make up the sincere side of the body of Christ are not in the majority but are in a rather small minority.

Undoubtedly, progress in knowledge, science and technology is essential, and of course, the requirements of modern life will be fulfilled. But the Christian life, teachings and pattern of salvation have to first be applied to modern life. The reality that Jesus is the same "yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8) forms a permanent, regular, and unchanging unity of soul that comprises great motivation for daily fruitfulness of the believer. Prayer and worship have never been taught as concepts that are able to be altered. They are as they have existed for centuries. The secret, or sincere prayer to the "Father who is in secret" (Mt. 6:6) has always had its proper place. In the same way, the tax collector's prayer and worship without even lifting his eyes has existed for centuries. The poverty of spirit shown by the tax collector must be reached by any believer regardless of when he lives in history (Lk. 18:9-14).

When Jesus Christ says, "My Father's house shall be called a house of prayer," (Mt. 21:13) we are not to take that to justify an approach that says, "We will do whatever we

want in my Father's house." This is not just a crude expression, but in a sense blasphemy. It is a sabotage of the gospel's magnificent power of salvation.

If you go to a mosque with a Muslim friend, your friend will leave you in a corner and will join you again after he is finished with his worship. However when most of us bring an unbelieving friend to church, it is in the name of evangelism. Since we think our main purpose is to make our friend a Christian, instead of focusing on our own prayers or genuine heart worship, we go to worship concerned about our friend, anxiously wondering: "What does he understand? Does he understand? Does he not understand? Let me show him the hymn. I should give him a theological explanation for this." Meanwhile, we forget that ministry belongs not to us but to the Holy Spirit. These anxious non-believer-in-church experiences make us feel that God's gospel is not being heard or is being hindered. We also think people of other faiths do not understand us or that they are difficult to reach. But we do not see and cannot see how difficult we are ourselves.

We forget that to testify to the gospel of Jesus, we are only to live sincerely and naturally, having Christ formed in us wherever we go. We forget that we only have to point people to the gospel by embodying Christ without show, without self-interest, and without anything more than our lives, our worship, and our work.

III. The Obstacle of Gospel Proclamation in Missions

Some of the Christian institutions and organizations that have wandered far from Jesus' teachings and perspective thereby placing obstacles before the gospel in their theology and worship have actually created the most significant hindrance with the work they have done in the name of "missions."

Every living creature in the universe is the glorious work of the Creator. Our faith tells

us further that man is an especially magnificent creature, being made in the image of God. Christ's redemption and teachings also constantly emphasize this truth. Jesus Christ was sent to the world because of God's love for the world, and he went to the cross for the salvation of humanity. In the same way, God wants us also to die to ourselves in Christ and be raised with him to eternity. For man to lay hold of eternity, God opens man's ears to the gospel and provides the reality of death and resurrection with Christ. This is man's sincere surrender of the heart. This is the opening of the heart to the Creator. It is Christ coming to the heart in order to bring about and form the Creator in man's heart. And this message of the door being opened to eternal glory should be reflected to the world like a light with great faith, with a spirit of worship, with respect and with love. But first, one must take this light and reflect it; one must be genuinely burning with it himself.

Therefore, this is a life of faith — a life, a commitment, a pursuit of worship in spirit and truth. As a natural consequence of this, those living in Christ are the invitations to Christ's light for those living around them. This is an invitation without planning, programs, or projects but a real life lived in sincerity. Of course, the work done with institutions and organizations is not all empty, but it is not the principal work. The principal work is done by sincere believers being salt and light in their own lives.

What is being done now?

Again, there are always exceptions to the rule. There are those with lives full of sincerity, doing as those in the first few centuries, sharing Christ and witnessing to him, living fully satisfied in Christ's salvation, unrelentingly loving in the guidance of the Spirit and reflecting the light of God. However some institutions and organizations have regarded ministry and evangelism merely as a demonstration of status in a life of faith rather than as an offering of worship. They have turned it into a way of proving oneself, a competition of egos, a career, or a profession.

If we read the words of Jesus' Great Commission again, we see that the disciples are sent out to teach others to observe all that Jesus commanded them (Mt. 28:20). Teaching all that Jesus commanded them sometimes means a lifelong student-teacher relationship. This is a long-term, labor-and-relationship intensive process requiring great dedication. It is a process involving the giving of lives. It is not something easily grasped by a "fast-food culture." Spirituality conveyed from one life to another is a process of being clothed with the life of Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:27).

What is being done today, however, is more in the way of statistics-based approaches. "Did you accept Jesus into your heart? Great! Alright, now, go explain it to someone else! Hurry! Go now." Then at the end of the day there are questions like "How many did you bring to faith?" or over the long-term, "How many churches have you planted?" They treat people as numbers, and churches like coffee houses or restaurant chains.

In missions, many claim to have taken Paul as an example. But Paul began ministry only after many years of immersing himself in the faith and after significant transformation in his own life (Gal. 1:11-2:1). After 14 years, he set out and preached the salvation of Jesus Christ from the known Word in the existing synagogues and within the system of worship that existed there. For the most part, Paul carried out his ministry using what he earned by the sweat of his own brow. From time to time, when a congregation, a colleague or a close friend desired to support him, he would leave that work and spend all of his time in ministry.

Today, however, "missions" has officially become its own profession or field of work. Hundreds have been sent into missions regardless of whether they actually minister and regardless of whether they are worthy of the calling. In addition, some are being sent without the backing of a stable church that knows them well.

When we look at Paul's life and the first century church we see that these people did not form a separate class. They were tradesmen among the people earning a living on their own. The church would simply choose one or two among them who were genuinely praying and fasting and send them into ministry for a certain period of time. These going into ministry with very small budgets were half-starved, but they went with great faith and hearts full of the Spirit, and they were doing miracles (2. Cor. 6:3-10). These believers, with reliance on the Spirit, were carrying out their ministry with all their heart and soul, and according to their abilities and earnings were doing everything they could. And as we read in Acts God added many to their number. They were gathering with each other, sharing, breaking bread together, singing hymns and praying. That was all.

The difference between the missionary and the messenger

These believers, after sharing the gospel with their brothers, were not taking pictures or writing reports. They were simply declaring the good news with faith. That is, they were announcing it and communicating it. This was a mission or duty, but though we use the word "duty," they didn't see it as a job. Unfortunately, this is not the case today. In terms of the relationship between spiritual and material, today's missionaries and mission work try to proclaim spiritual realities but do so as a paid profession. In that case, we can define mission work as a responsibility of a Western industrialization mentality and duty as an emotionless task, and from this perspective in a sense, as a "holy war" complete with plans, projects, and tactics.

For the most part, missionaries working in organizations and institutions have to prove their occupational abilities to each other just as they would in any other occupation. This is so because the work, rather than being a declaration or proclamation of the faith, is more of a competition among coworkers. Some have turned this ministry and responsibility of faith, heart, and worship into a "job." One might ask, "Is there no law or regulation regarding this?" Naturally the systems formed are treated under today's standards of employment. And employees have to prove their ministries to each other and bring about a return for their work. Otherwise they will not be able to get a salary and provide for their families because, as we have said, this has now become a profession.

All of this is, of course, clearly seen by both Muslim and Jewish communities. And this situation comprises quite an obstacle to their respect for the missionary. However, many missionaries claim that Muslims and Jews show them disrespect due to their association with Christ. This is not always true. It cannot be thought that Muslims especially, show disrespect because of the faith of a follower of Jesus, one of their most important prophets. Actually, while everyone in a community is hard at work in their respective jobs, the missionary who is at home much of the time spending time with their family and still receiving an income higher than most in their neighborhood are seen as strange, not because of Christ, but because of their unconventional profession. This is the actual source of many locals' disdain toward missionaries.

There is proclamation of one's faith in Islam. The command of proclamation is simply one believer naturally, verbally sharing his faith with his human brother with whom he has a relationship, not caring for a material return but connected only to a desire to please God. All human beings already belong to God. Therefore, in proclamation listeners are called only to God's unity and their worship of him alone. The other levels of religion are explained later. Generally without any planning or projects, a Muslim, conveying his belief visually with his faith and worship is responsible only for making the verbal proclamation to those around him. Among Muslims, organizations and efforts at institutionalization with a wide scope for proclamation in different countries are in a very small minority. Interestingly, such efforts have just recently started to emerge in the Western branches of Islamic groups. It seems that this came about as a result of interaction with Western civilization where mission organizations and institutions are quite prevalent.

Similarly, in Judaism, all human beings belong to God. Only through the call of the Creator, can certain people with the divine call to the faith convert to Judaism. Even if they do not come, the Creator, as the owner of all will judge them according to their spiritual lives. In summary, in these two faiths there is normally no pressuring of others to accept or believe spiritual matters.

As seen in Paul's words "How will they believe if they do not hear?" and in Jesus' words to his disciples "Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you," proclamation is completely fundamental to the long-term teacher-student relationship. There is a life of faith and heartfelt devotion. But just as the holy war concept of the Crusades in Christian history went as far as it did, today's church with its organizations, institutions, technology and televised Christianity has headed far from the teachings of Jesus and the fundamentals of salvation in an incredibly short time.

One of the best examples of this straying from Christ's teachings is seen when political states try to use religion. The faith based on proclamation suddenly finds itself in the arms of coercion. Of course, these are the approaches of those using the religion in a way that goes beyond the religion itself. As mentioned above, though the Crusades were suggested for believers' defense, they were pursued far beyond that limited objective. If we look at the Crusades, we can see the best example of the teachings of Christ, who never promoted war, being stretched to never-intended places. Our focus is on the difference between the actual teachings of a faith and the points to which people have brought those teachings. If Jesus' disciples were not able to bear the realities they were learning, he wanted them, as some did, to get up and leave him.

The problem is not Jesus but the proclamation of the faith in his name

Particularly today, Muslims and Jews view missionaries as sent to completely change people's thoughts, ideas, and opinions - in other words to deliberately and systematically "Christianize" people. This is incredibly offensive to a Muslim or Jew. It is unacceptable. As is seen, for Muslim societies and even for Jews, the person that they do not accept is *nota* sincere believer in Christ living according to the New

Testament, earning his living, and taking care of his family. On the contrary, they do not accept the one coming into people's natural living environments in a way that is not and cannot be natural — when one comes with plans and programs and with the purpose of his profession being to convert people to Christianity. This is what bothers people. These countries' intellectuals, theologians, and even the general public are well aware of the meetings in America or other countries devising tactics on how a nation will be brought to faith, and how to “achieve results” while ignoring the “target” nation's values and even its deep-rooted history. All of these comprise a massive obstacle to the very essence of the gospel itself and Christ's beautiful, saving good news.

Of course, we can sincerely share the gospel in foreign nations, within our own people, and with our fellow human brothers and sisters all over the world. We can do this through our lives, in our work, as examples with our families, as citizens, and as world citizens, by being really human, by having Christ formed in us, by blessing each other, and trying to understand each person where he is rather than always seeing the world from our own culture and out of our self-centeredness. By going to people together with Christ, we can most definitely share the gospel in sincerity with them. If we do this, we will even see that people will listen very carefully to us and show us real respect. But doing these things from the heart, forgetting ourselves, carrying out our worship with sincerity, and as part of that worship, serving people as Christ did—these are both the most fundamental and the most difficult things for the Christian.

For this reason, it is much easier to join an organization or to become a missionary with a professional mentality—because it is always easier to work as an employee and carry out certain tasks during designated hours, treating it as a nine-to-five job. But remember that this is not the Great Commission that Jesus commanded. This is why countries, cultures, and peoples seem to be closed to the gospel. Human hearts may not be closed to the gospel, but they are closed to this self-centered ministry mentality and to people expecting this kind of return for their service instead of living to bless others. However the Creator, in any way that Christ wants or desires, in any place and at any time, through the Spirit will continue to draw his people into eternity. So without us — organizations and institutions, even organized church missions, and institutional churches — the Creator is always doing, and will always do, this work.

Naturally sharing while living in a natural environment

How great would it be if sincere followers of Jesus could go to another place or another country earning their living in their own profession and exhibiting a life in Christ. If this were the case, they would be met with much more respect in many places in the world, and they would have the opportunity to share with people as a sincere follower of Christ in a more natural environment. While earning a living by the sweat of their brow, while performing their jobs, they could also potentially be fired because of their beliefs. This could result in a situation requiring much more courage and one which could very well lead to possibilities for testimony to be given.

The way Jesus Christ views people should also be an important guide for sincere believers. Unfortunately, especially for the ones who become missionaries, we are confronted with a situation where everyone carries his own cultural baggage. Jesus Christ, however, approached people with mercy and with a desire to offer goodness and restoration. He brought the life he lived and his testimony to people with a more heartfelt approach. Today however, even trying to get someone to accept Jesus Christ as Savior, or the gospel of salvation, has become a skill in intellectual sharing or a marketing proficiency.

When a sincere Muslim or Jew perceives God Almighty he always perceives the

Creator from the heart. Of course, whether we like it or not, real perception comes from the heart — rational thinking is only a part of it. For this reason, our Lord's approach was expressed as "standing at the door of the heart and knocking." On the other hand, in today's missions understanding, this is distorted as "standing at the door of the brain and persuading." Even at this point, particularly Middle Easterners can see diversion from Jesus' teaching and approach. It is unfortunate that the Western world now has great difficulty even perceiving this reality due to its individualistic teaching and education system which has been continually based on the relationship between the mind and the ego.

If the approach appealed a little more to the heart instead of the mind and if a sincere Christlike life could be exhibited without return or expectation of a return, it would be impossible for a Muslim or Jew to not feel an affinity with the teachings of Christ. Unfortunately, since the perspectives come from two separate places — mind and heart, it is impossible for them to meet.

For example, after a missionary gets to know a person to a certain degree, the missionary often wants him to read the Gospel of John. Of course, as we have said there are always exceptions, but according to the way large agencies train their members this is generally the case. However the reality for a person of Middle Eastern culture is that individual believers' sincere lives of faith are much more important. This is more valued than the philosophical approaches or extremely deep theological views. For this reason, the life of Stephen, as outlined in the book of Acts, sacrificing his life for his faith and even while dying still being able to pray for those killing him is an important example causing hearts to tremble and offering real lessons in humanity and the life of faith.

Unfortunately, some Christian churches and groups going in the opposite direction of this seem to have long forgotten that our Lord gave himself as a sacrifice for others and taught that one must be able to die even for those who do not love him. Many of those watching from outside of Christianity become very confused as they see these people eager to enlarge the boundaries of their denomination, advance their projects, grow

their churches, and become successful. Among all these emotions, anxieties and of course the efforts of the “self” to prevail, the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus cannot be perceived. Compare the efforts of today with first century teachers of the gospel who were barefooted with one tattered change of clothes but who walked and declared the love of God and Christ together with the Spirit.

Communal ownership with a sincere heart

What makes a man human is love and sincere heart investment with others. An approach where one says, “People should be...” or “People should convert to my faith,” is to necessarily say, “I am right and you are wrong.” If the same was said to you, you would not want to accept the person or his ideas either. So why do we not think according to Jesus’ teaching, “whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them” (Lk. 6:31).

Rather than approaching others with an “I’m right and you’re wrong” mentality, we must be able to say, “This is the truth as far as I have seen, known, understood, and experienced it.” This means listening to another, understanding him, being able to perceive his views as coming from a fellow human brother and approaching him with genuine, not artificial, respect.

When it comes to missions, a “move with the movers” (or following after the latest ‘successful’ tactics or gurus) mentality is dehumanizing because it boils down to meaning “your acceptance of my views means that I can add to my statistics.” At the same time, a situation where one says, “You are dependent on me,” is also an issue. In most cases, a missionary is expected to be constantly “fruitful.” Otherwise, he cannot continue in ministry because his church or organization will cut his support. This also means that the person sharing the gospel focuses on programs rather than valuing personal relationships. Actually to be “fruitful” does not mean continuously convert

people to the Christianity as a convert machine. To be fruitful means to have Christ-like life (John 15:1-8), (Gal. 5:22-23).

As can be seen in every point so far, increasingly new walls are being placed in front of the hearing of the gospel. The one who goes to a Muslim country to share the gospel in the name of ministry unfortunately, as he tries only to get others to accept his own truth, ends up confined by his own mistakes. Accordingly, before they start their gospel work, they don't even try to first see for themselves the thousands of years of accumulated background in this Muslim land or that Jewish region. There is not even a thought of being able to acquire some things that will be useful in these foreign cultures. It is as if the Jesus Movement of the 60s, with its guitar-accompanied hippie mentality has now turned into a computer-accompanied hippie mentality.

Some societies are not drawn to this kind of religious understanding, and they naturally react to it. Upon seeing this reaction, the hippies of the twenty-first century start crying out and this time they claim, "We are being persecuted in the name of the Jesus."

Most definitely, in the history of missions, there have been sincere believers who have sacrificed themselves in real poverty only for the sake of the faith. They did everything within their ability, without expecting return, to proclaim and spread the good news of Christ and to offer real service to people. We of course consider these and similar gospel-workers as being in a different class than all those mentioned above and we see each of them as monuments of the faith. Unfortunately, those we have mentioned as "being unable to share the gospel in the name of the gospel" is a group that is growing daily among the community of believers. These are those who have turned sincere faith and ministry into its own profession and are slaves to the perspectives of their own culture. It is also unfortunate that their voices are the loudest and most heard. At times, it looks as though there is no one carrying out sincere ministry from the heart seeking only to please God, but they do still exist. Today, where the church continues to stand with faith, we owe it to the ones who faithfully pray and worship day and night and who have not been slaves to material wealth. We owe it to those walking with faith and trusting the Spirit instead of their projects.

Those harming the gospel in the name of missions

So, we have tried to explain, from the perspective of those to whom the gospel is being brought, the harm of those putting barriers before the gospel in the name of the gospel and the extent to which these are blocking the spread of the gospel. As we said before, let us look at the log in our own eye.

There are too many examples to outline all of them, but it is important that a few are mentioned. For example, today even in the most developed country if a mission organization wants to give a concert in the city center a permit from the city is required. Some mission organizations ignore these rules and when they are deported from the country consider it persecution in Jesus' name. Moreover, they treat this as an opportunity to raise more support and continue their ministry. Such attempts attract the attention of and upset not only sincere Christians but also nonbelievers. This is disrespect and lack of love, and love of self.

For some people, mission work, even if done with good intentions, is still a way of making a living. Even when some of the local believers in the host country react negatively, this missionary or these organizations sometimes consider this a Satanic attack. This is because the ministry has become a form of employment, and success is seen as analogous with the sustainability of the work - regardless of the opinions of local brothers and sisters. Similarly, those in the organization are also concerned with being promoted within it.

Jesus Christ bestowed on us a victorious life of salvation. The entire world belongs to the Creator, and the Creator freely offers the light of Christ to everyone. However

darkness belongs to man. It is making oneself slave to man-made theologies, organizations, and establishments. Though the person has erected a wall between himself and Jesus, without being aware of this wall, he considers himself an heir of Christ and one of his ministers. Unfortunately, this has been the case for many. However, Jesus' voice is clearly heard in Scripture — to those who will say, “Didn't we do all these things in your name?” he will say, “I do not know you” (Mt. 7:23).

Unfortunately, self-proclaimed Christian organizations and institutions as well as individuals which are all tied to the chain of materialism and integrated with the world, aware or unaware of the situation, are daily putting another obstacle before the gospel in the name of the gospel. Although they adamantly claim to reject religiosity, they are continually heading into a religious darkness and blindness pulling many others with them along the way.

Under these circumstances, when they characterize all their problems resulting from their own mistakes as “persecution” and even attempt to spin that for their own benefit, be sure that for millions of Muslims, Jews, and those of many other faiths the kingdom of heaven and the magnificent salvation of Christ is bound to remain hidden behind the icons on the walls, statues, incense, cameras and film projectors, “Jesus Loves You” brochures scattered on the floor, and in the Bibles with print too small to be read.

Leaving “self” on the cross

What must be done is what has to be done. Simply being able to repent, and through Christ, being able to mortify our self and our flesh, just a little more each day, with a love that embraces all of humanity—to do this in Christ, in the guidance of the Spirit, and by worshiping the Father is to bestow goodness and truth to our fellow man.

Regardless of how hard the consequences may be, our “yes” should be “yes”, and our “no” should be “no.” That is, our churches are not centers for programs and projects, social clubs for community entertainment, or theatrical Bible shows. They should be, as Jesus said, houses of prayer to the Creator open to everyone, regardless of place in life for prayer and worship in peace.

Rather than forming mission organizations as if establishing new sects, believers should be content with being part of a worshipping church, with each one according to his own talents, work, and ability serving Christ in the course of daily life, and by ministering everywhere he is and everywhere he goes, being light to those around him.

“Missions” is a paid profession, but witnessing of Christ must be a work of faith and worship. The real minister of the gospel works not only when “on the clock” or by appointment but should be a person who is other-centered and can truly listen to them and devote time to them whenever necessary.

Without plans or programs, by faith alone

When Paul joined Lydia near the river (Acts 16:14), he had no ‘church-planting team’ like we see today armed with demographics, plans, projects and budgets. Of course, people will naturally make their daily, personal schedules. The working world will have its own separate plans and programs. Science and technology are the same way. But faith and life in Christ are spiritual values too great to fit into plans and programs. Scripture asks if we can even know from where the wind blows or from where the Spirit comes (John 3:8). Can we put the Spirit in a box? We should constantly read Acts. Peter did not plan the Day of Pentecost. He trained disciples who, in turn, started

working together. They did their work without even paper or pen. In the evenings, they met in an upper room, and that too without paper and pen. While they *were* arrested, they did not advertise it. They sang hymns, again without paper and pen.

They were stoned to death (Heb. 11:32,40). They prayed without plans or programs, but they definitely grew. Again, without paper and pen, they spread throughout the world.

Then what happened? Statements of faith were written. Meetings, arguments and accusations ensued. Institutions were formed, and soon afterwards, they split. Then what? For this reason, Jesus asked, “Will I find faith on earth when I return?” (Lk. 18:8).

To be sure, if we leave the real work to him and simply become part of it, we will see every knee bow. With simple faith, by embracing participation in Christ, and by taking significant steps in brotherhood and worship, we can be the last chapter in the Book of Acts.

Bu Kitap beğendiniz mi?

Daha fazla ücretsiz e-Kitaplar Hristiyan Kitaplar.com'dan [indirebilirsiniz](#).

Rev. Dr. Turgay Üçal yazar olarak beğendiniz mi?
[Yazarın tüm kitaplar şuradan indirebilirsiniz](#).

[Türkiye'de Kilise Adresleri](#)