The Dangerous Love of the Gentiles

A Christian Vision for Living with Islam in Indonesia

Ihan Martoyo

Duke Divinity School

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Thesis Advisor: ________________________________________
Dr. Willie James Jennings

MTS Director: ________________________________________
Dr. Brittany Wilson & Dr. Meredith Riedel
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The year 2014 closed with a hostage drama in a Cafe in Sydney,\(^1\) and the year 2015 opened with Charlie Hebdo shooting in Paris,\(^2\) followed by the shooting of three Muslim students in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.\(^3\) Tensions in Christian-Muslim relations are felt in many parts of the world. Even without violent incidents, mutual understanding and sharing a common life between the two faith communities is not always easy. In this thesis, I will first analyze current Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia and then offer a Christian vision of what sharing a life together with Muslims might look like. *Hospitality, friendship* and *love* are the main elements in envisioning this shared common life. But *love* is the most “dangerous” element, especially from or for ones, who are supposed to be enemies.

During the 2014 presidential election in Indonesia, the *subject positions* of Muslims against Chinese Christians emerged and were used as weapons for a smear campaign. A *subject position* is one’s historical and social position in one’s culture,\(^4\) whereas *subjectivity* is one’s subjective sense of oneself inside the culture characterized by particular subject positions. So, during the election in Indonesia, the presidential candidate Joko Widodo (nick named Jokowi) was accused of secretly being a Chinese Christian, despite the fact that he was a Javanese Muslim. Although Jokowi finally won the election, the smear campaign effectively decreased his popularity right before the Election Day, indicating powerful *subjectivities* evoked by the subject positions used for the smear campaign. Being a Chinese Christian – or

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\(^4\) Kelly Oliver, *The Colonization of Psychic Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xiv.
being friendly to Chinese Christians – will decrease one’s perceived suitability for leadership in Indonesia. I will trace the socio-historical context and narratives for these strong ethnic-religious subject positions and show how they were powerfully constructed by the Dutch colonial and the Suharto regimes.

How then should Christians approach Muslims? When Christians come into a conversation with Muslims, there is always a danger of misunderstanding. I am convinced that in building bridges to Islam, Christians must respect the coherence of both faith convictions rather than relativizing and trivializing differences. It is thus important to be aware of the polemical verses in the Qur’an echoing criticism towards Christians, central Christian teachings and the Christian scripture itself. Although there could be a wide spectrum of interpretations of these Qur’anic polemical verses – ranging from strong conservative to modernist and strong liberal – understanding how a traditional Muslim would view a Christian seems to be a minimum requirement for meaningful conversation and relationship with Muslims.

Christians can approach relations with Muslims in various modes: Hospitality, friendship, and love. Hospitality is love expressed to one’s neighbor. The usual problem preventing hospitality to an Other is a fear of violating purity. But if holiness or purity itself includes the practice of hospitality, then one cannot imagine protecting holiness by refusing to be hospitable to the Other. Friendship is another way to envision a relation with an Other, and is often based on mutual liking. However, friendship becomes messy when one happens to like an enemy – someone whom the subject positions and cultural narratives try to convince one to dislike or hate. But to love one’s supposed enemies presents a deeper problem than friendship. It takes courage to envision a kind of joining where one’s identity is not lost, but expands into new possibilities. I will argue that such a “love story” is within the Christian faith – a dangerous love story of the Gentiles.
1. **Tensed Subject Positions: Muslims vs. Chinese Christians in Indonesia**

The president of Indonesia Joko Widodo, better known by his nickname Jokowi, claimed that he belongs to Islam, which is *Rahmatan lil Alamin* (a mercy to all people). This statement was a response to the heavy smear campaign during the presidential general election in 2014, which accused the Javanese Muslim Jokowi of being secretly a Christian of Chinese descent. In July 9, 2014, the Indonesian people went to vote for their seventh president through a direct general election, and more than 130 million votes were cast in the dirtiest and tensest election campaign.\(^5\) This incident discloses the *subject positions* of Muslims versus Chinese Christians that have long historical roots in Indonesia, but often lie dormant in the society during more politically stable times.

Peter Hartcher of the Sydney Morning Herald likens such a smear campaign to the one accusing Obama of being a Muslim.\(^6\) This might not be a mere coincidence, since Prabowo, Jokowi’s opponent, hired an American Rob Allyn as his campaign adviser. Allyn helped George W. Bush become governor of Texas in 1994 and Vicente Fox become the president of Mexico in 2000.\(^7\) Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner from Australian National University mention Rob Allyn’s expertise in negative campaign and producing false survey results favoring a certain candidate.\(^8\)

The smear campaign against Jokowi was circulated by untrustworthy online media,\(^9\) but also effectively in print by the tabloid *Obor Rakyat* (People’s Torch), which was distributed

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\(^5\) Kanupriya Kapoor and Eveline Danubrata called this the dirtiest and most confrontational campaign in the memory of a country which traditionally holds up the the value of consensus politics. Kanupriya Kapoor and Eveline Danubrata, “Both Candidates in Indonesia Election claim victory; Jokowi ahead in more counts,” *Reuters*, July 9, 2014, [http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/09/us-indonesia-election-idUSBGN0FD2KZ20140709](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/09/us-indonesia-election-idUSBGN0FD2KZ20140709)
\(^9\) There are many examples of such websites. One of the most well known is [http://voa-islam.com](http://voa-islam.com).
free of charge in Islamic boarding schools in Central and East Java. The editor in chief and news editor of Obor Rakyat have been named suspects in Jokowi slander case. The Chinese-Christian combination of the slander against Jokowi seems odd at first, because around 53.82% of Indonesian Chinese are in fact Buddhists (data from 2000 population census). Only 35.09% of the Chinese are Christians. However, there is an assumption of linkage between Chinese origins and Christianity, which became apparent during episodes of anti-Chinese protest, when Muslim mobs targeted both Chinese businesses and Christian churches. Scholars estimate the percentage of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia at 1.5% (about 3 million people) to 2% of the population (about 5 million people), or maximum 3% (about 6 million people).

This general election has been called the most religious contest in Indonesia’s history, because of the blatant use of religion as a political weapon. There are stories of a khatib (Islamic preacher) turning his preaching into political campaign against Jokowi during the Ramadhan tarawih prayer. There are also accusations that Jokowi is anti-Sharia or is related to communism. Stronger accusations come from Jokowi’s decision to pick non-Muslim deputies in Solo and Jakarta. Even more, as Jokowi moved to become the Governor of Jakarta in the middle of his second period in Solo, his non-Muslim deputy F.X. Rudyatmo was automatically promoted as the Mayor of Solo. So, proponents of Prabowo fanned the flame of fear that the Chinese Christian Vice-Governor Ahok would be promoted as the Governor of Jakarta if

Jokowi were elected president. Ahok also received severe accusations because of his ethnic background and religion as he was paired with Jokowi for the governor of Jakarta.

Indonesian Muslims have always been reluctant to support non-Muslim leaders. The most quoted Qur’anic verse for this is: “You who believe, do not take the Jews and Christians as allies: they are allies only to each other. Anyone who takes them as an ally becomes one of them – God does not guide such wrongdoers” (Qur’an 5:51). The Indonesian translation uses the word leaders instead of allies. So Indonesians would read this verse saying: “Do not take the Jews and Christians as leaders.” Another verse widely quoted against non-Muslim leadership in Indonesia is Qur’an 4:144, which says, “You who believe, do not take the disbelievers as allies and protectors instead of the believers: do you want to offer God clear proof against you?”

It is not easy to estimate the effect of the religious smear campaign. The final vote-count by the national election commission shows Jokowi won with 53.15% and a difference of more than 8 million votes against Prabowo. However, there are indications that the smear campaign was effective and influential. The racist and religious accusations successfully stole away the huge popularity gap in various surveys between Jokowi and Prabowo, from 20%-40% in the start of the campaign down to only 5% in the last week approaching the election. Moreover, Prabowo dominates the election results in predominantly strong Islamic provinces: West Java (more than 4 million vote’s difference), West Sumatera and West Nusa Tenggara (each with more than 1 million vote’s difference). Thus, the effectiveness of the smear campaign cannot be underestimated.

How does the image of minority Chinese Christians (below 1% of the population) become so effectively threatening for the Indonesian voters? The religious polemical tone against Christian leaders that pictures Jokowi among the infidels and the enemy of Islam is not

17 Similar sounding verses can be found in Qur’an 3:28, 4: 89 & 139, 5:57, 9:23 and 60:1.
the only powerful motif. The smear campaign accuses Jokowi as a Chinese with the secret Chinese name “Oey Hong Liong“ and connects him with some Chinese tycoons, who allegedly control the Indonesian economy. Jokowi is depicted as the servant of “Ah Seng” and Asing - the Indonesian word to point to “foreign” countries. It was also claimed that Ah Seng’s income had grown significantly and reached 30,000$ per year, whereas the pribumi’s (literally “sons of the soils” – the indigenous) income remained at 500-1000$ per year. There are also references that Jokowi is serving the Zionist purpose and protecting the Syiah Islam, which is often considered heretical among the Sunni majority Indonesia.

The Chinese ethnic problems in Indonesia have a long history. Anti-Chinese riots go back to the gruesome massacre of 1740 in Batavia, the colonial city that later became Jakarta. The colonial practice that used Chinese as tax collector and colonial buffer has also been identified as the root of the Chinese problem. Gerry van Klinken reiterates the economic domination image of the Chinese Indonesians by saying that they hold a disproportionate share of the private wealth as small-town shopkeepers all over Indonesia. According to van Klinken, this identification with a particular economic sector has made the Chinese the target of discrimination. Moreover, their supposed loyalty to China turned the Chinese into potential traitors, thus causing the government to close down Chinese language schools and to pressure Chinese Indonesians into assimilating. The attempt to force the ethnic Chinese to become less Chinese is implemented by banning the three cultural pillars: ethnic Chinese social and political organizations, Chinese medium schools and the Chinese newspapers and periodicals.

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21 Ibid, 69.
22 Ibid, 70.
Although Chinese Indonesians seem to be identified with economic domination, they are in fact the target of many forms of economic discrimination. After the independence in early 1950s, the benteng (castle) system was introduced to reserve import licenses for the indigenous population only.\textsuperscript{24} Sukarno, the first president, also introduced Presidential Regulation No. 10 (\textit{Peraturan Presiden} No. 10, also known as PP 10) that prohibited aliens from engaging in retail trade in the rural areas. In the Suharto New Order era, there were practices of collusion, in which government officials took money or business facilities from the Chinese for protection or special treatment.\textsuperscript{25} The identity cards of Chinese Indonesians were also marked, and there was requirement to obtain special documents for identification. Chinese were also prevented from entering politics, military or state institution to avoid the possible return of communism, thus further pushing the Chinese to the business sectors and affirming the constructed public imagination. Christian and Chinese are the rich; Muslim and the native are the poor.

The May-1998 riot at the end of the Suharto regime underlined the social stigma of the Chinese Indonesians. Rioting and looting angry mobs targeted Chinese-owned shops and other places of wealthy consumption: department stores, retail centers, shopping malls, police headquarters and Suharto’s children’s affiliated and Suharto’s Chinese ally (Liem Sioe Liong) businesses.\textsuperscript{26} Witnesses and victims also revealed mass rape, molestation, killing and harassment of dozens of Chinese women and girls. Although most of the society refused to believe that these incidents really happened,\textsuperscript{27} the riots indicate that the Chinese remain an unwanted part of the Indonesian society. Fadli Zon, a student activist and currently a vice-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 276.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Melani Budianta, “Discourse of Cultural Identity in Indonesia,” 516.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid, 514-515.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Documentation of data was difficult, and many victims declined to report the case or to testify. The humanitarian groups that investigated and helped the victims were accused of making up the incidents because they refuse to disclose the identities of the victims. Ibid, 521 n 10.
\end{itemize}
chairman of the parliament from the Islamic Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* or PKS), was recorded saying in 1998:

> The Muslim majority is ready to develop our country without them (the Chinese minority)... If they don’t return their wealth parked overseas, he warns, it’s payback time. Time for the 87% Muslim majority to seize the reins of an economy from a community that accounts for a mere 3% of the country’s 200 million people.  

2. **Jokowi-Ahok and The Breaking of the Racial-Religious Subjectivity**

To be clear, although 85% of the 242 million of Indonesia’s population are Muslims, Indonesia is not an Islamic state, but rather is functioning with a secular political system. However, the Islamic values do have an influence on political life. So, a strict separation of religion and state as it is common in some western countries does not apply to Indonesia. It is however interesting to note that the political Islam in Indonesia has not produced the degree of instability, conflict, or antigovernment rebellion as experienced elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

This integration between Islam and the secular political system is a result of a long struggle and contribution of neo-modernist Islamic thinkers such as Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid. Nurcholish Madjid argues that there is no contradiction between devotion to Islam and a commitment to Indonesia (nationalism). For Madjid, modern nationalism is different from tribal-mindedness, which has been condemned by Islam. In fact, according to Madjid, the first model of modern nationalism was the Medina society established by the Prophet Muhammad and continued by his caliphs. Modern nationalism is open to the participation of all members of society, regardless of religion and community; i.e. regardless of

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28 Ibid, 515.
regionalism (kedaaerahan), tribal relations (kesukuan), ancestral relations (keturunan) and kinship (kekerabatan). 31

While Nurcholish Madjid integrates Islam and modernism, Abdurrahman Wahid integrates Islam with the Indonesian local tradition. The most important aspect of Wahid’s integration effort is the acceptance of Pancasila (Indonesia’s state ideology) as the consummate manifestation of Islam in Indonesia. The first principle of Pancasila, Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa (Belief in the One and Only God) is considered no less than tawhid, the concept of monotheism in Islam. 32 Both Madjid and Wahid believe Islam must not be forced as a state ideology, because it does not acknowledge the plurality of the Indonesian state. Madjid is famous for his slogan: ‘Islam, Yes, Islamic Party, No!’ Wahid argues that Islam should be embraced as the aqida (religious creed), while Pancasila should be taken as the constitutional basis of the life of nation and state. Thus the idea of a secular nation state, which is integrated with Islam, is established in Indonesia. Nevertheless, the idea of non-Muslim leadership is still controversial. There is a widespread consensus that a Muslim leader is the most appropriate for a Muslim majority society such as Indonesia. Thus non-Muslim leadership and racism became the main issue in the smear campaign against Jokowi in the presidential general election.

There has always been an unspoken link between religion and race subjectivity in Indonesia. Suharto regime de-recognized Confucian religion as “not being a proper religion,” but the real reason was the government’s disapproval of it being “too Chinese” and hence “un-Indonesian,” 33 thus establishing a link between race and religion. In 1987, the Commander for Security and Order, Soedomo, issued censorship on four touchy issues: ethnic, religious, racial and group/class conflicts, abbreviated in Indonesian as SARA (Suku Agama Ras dan Antar-

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31 Ibid, 37-38.
32 Ibid, 39.
Rather than producing a tolerant society, this SARA politics actually established a repressive blanket of harmony and unity that still casts its shadows long after the fall of the Suharto regime. Indonesians have never learned how to express and process the hurts and resentments in terms of racial-religious subjectivity. John Bowen notes the interesting linguistic contortions necessary to refer to persons with Chinese background. Everyone could easily complete and understand the term *orang keturunan*, ‘someone of descent’, or *warga negara*, literally means ‘citizens’, as referring to Chinese Indonesians. Given this socio-historical situation, the stage was ripe for the racial-religious smear campaign and tension in the presidential election of Jokowi.

Joko Widodo (Jokowi), born June 21, 1961, a forestry graduate of the University of Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, became widely popular as the mayor of Surakarta/Solo (2005-2011). Together with the Catholic Vice-Mayor F.X. Hadi Rudyatmo, Jokowi tackled and solved many difficult problems of the city. Solo is known for a rather high poverty rate (16%), ethnic and religious tension between the nearly 73% Muslims and 25% Catholic/Christians, and being tied to the militant Islamic organization *Jemaah Islamiyah*. Terrorist suspects of 2002 and 2005 Bali bombings and the 2003 Jakarta bombing are also linked to this city. Jokowi successfully relocated thousands of street vendors to new renovated markets, provided health insurance for the poor, deregulated and simplified business licensing procedure, relocated informal houses from the Solo riverbank, managed more efficient government revenue and taxes, and created a new brand of Solo as an arts and culture destination. The strength of Jokowi management includes his efforts to advocate dialogue between communities, transparency and efficiency in the bureaucracy, and his sensitivity to the plurality

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34 Melani Budianta, “Discourse of Cultural Identity in Indonesia.” 516.
of the communities. Rushda Majeed, a researcher at Princeton, noted, “His (Jokowi’s) conciliatory approach to solving problems and disputes – especially in the sensitive area of relocating the city’s street vendors – earned him the respect of citizens and enabled him to negotiate from a position of mutual trust.”

Jokowi was elected as the Governor of Jakarta in October 2012 with a Chinese Christian Vice-Governor Basuki Tjahaya Purnama (nicknamed Ahok). Both Jokowi and Ahok built a reputation of fighting corruption in the government. They began replacing city officials through “lelang jabatan” (auction for city official positions), built health care and education programs, inaugurated a new public transportation system and an improved flood control system. Ahok himself is also known for putting his governmental meeting videos on Youtube to provide transparency and discourage corruption in the city’s projects. Jokowi has also become increasingly popular by his hands-on style of “blusukan” (literally means “going in”), in which he visits the poor areas in Jakarta and chats directly with the people about their problems. In February, 2013, Jokowi was elected the global mayor of the month by the City Mayors Foundation based in London. He was also listed by Fortunes as the ‘World’s 50 best leaders’ in 2014.

In March 2014, Jokowi was selected as the candidate for presidency by the Indonesian Democratic Struggle Party (PDI-P). He faced Prabowo from the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra) in a general election where more than 130 million Indonesians cast their votes to select their president directly. Prabowo is the son in law of the second president Suharto, whose regime lasted for 32 years in Indonesia. The ex-general Prabowo, currently a businessman, is tied to the human rights violations that occurred during the fall of Suharto in 1998. The national human rights commission (Komnas HAM) has recommended Prabowo to be

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37 Ibid, 18.
38 The “auction” is a term used by Jokowi to refer to the opening up of city official positions to everybody who comes with the highest competency. The applicants must undergo a selection process that involves a soft competency test, a writing test, a psychotest, a group discussion, and an interview.
punished for the kidnapping and torture of student activists. Joe Cochrane, writing for the New York Times, says, “While he (Prabowo) accepted responsibility as a senior officer for the torture of nine of the activists, he has said he did not order it and has denied any knowledge about the disappearances of the other 14.” Many suspected that Prabowo was attempting to engineer a crisis so that Suharto would invest him with emergency powers to bring the situation under control.40

Jokowi won the presidential election in 2014. The Jokowi-Ahok pair even won the election for the governor of Jakarta earlier in 2012. So, the majority of Jakarta is ready for a Chinese-Christian deputy in 2012. And as Jokowi was elected president in 2014, Indonesia has shown its unprecedented readiness for a Chinese-Christian governor in Jakarta. Nevertheless, there are still voices criticizing the Muslim community for electing infidels (kafir) as leaders. This testifies to the remaining strong echoes of the polemical verses such as Qur’an 5:51 or 4:144. Some even argue that it is better to prefer corrupt Muslim leaders than infidels! Jokowi counters this by claiming that he belongs to Islam Rahmatan lil alamin. This is based on Qur’an 21:107: “It was only as a mercy that We sent you [Prophet] to all people.”41 Jokowi argues that Islam Rahmatan lil alamin brings peace instead of hatred. Jokowi claims he does not belong to the group who wants to establish an Islamic state, spreading terror and hatred, calling fellow Muslims infidels (kafir) and oppressing other religions.42

Jokowi does not reconstruct Islamic doctrines or interpretations. His strongest contribution is in providing an alternative reality of a clean and efficient government that even includes non-Muslims as leaders. This new reality flies in the face of such strong Islamic party

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41 Another translation says, “We sent you [Prophet] only as a mercy to all people.” Abdel Haleem, The Qur’an (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 208.
as the Prosperity Justice Party (PKS), which is entangled in corruption, sex scandal and polygamous leaders. Jokowi provides an alternative reality of hope for Indonesians. His efforts exemplify the Qur’anic verse *Rahmatan lil alamin*, that Islam can be a blessing for all people, regardless of their religions.

Since promoted as the Governor of Jakarta, Ahok has also become a key figure in resisting the religious racism of the country. The Islamic Defenders Front (*Front Pembela Islam* or FPI) demonstrated several weeks on the streets of Jakarta demanding the withdrawal of Ahok.  

Currently, Ahok is in the middle of dispute with the city council members, who try to gain money by fixing the 2015 city budget under the table. Public polling from the nationwide Indonesian Survey Circle (LSI) shows that more than 60% of the Indonesians trust Ahok more than the city council. The city of Jakarta under the leadership of Ahok will remain the test case whether a Chinese Christian can be a political active contributor for the well-being of the people.

Christian Chua points out that the widespread assertion of “the 3.5 percent Chinese population controlling 70% of Indonesia’s economy” generates an unfair equation of many ‘ordinary’ Chinese Indonesians with the big businessmen. Chua writes:

> The powerful position of the Chinese billionaires is without question; what is problematic was that the remaining 6 million Sino-Indonesians were considered to be as powerful, wealthy, and exploitative….. This prejudice provided the politico-bureaucratic power holders of the New Order with the means to depict the constantly intensifying economic conflict in Indonesia as an ethnic one between the ‘indigenous’ and the Chinese, using the latter as a buffer to deflect criticism of the regime. To instrumentalise Chinese ethnicity, ‘Chinesseness’ therefore had to be constantly constructed and negatively stigmatised.

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Chua confirms the predatory character of the New Order politico-bureaucrats who instrumentalized the Chinese conglomerates to channel huge sum of money to the authorities as bribes for business opportunities and protection,\(^4^8\) while stigmatizing the Chinese as scapegoats for criticism. Although the fall of the Suharto regime did not get rid of the old corruption system right away, the Chinese tycoons had to adapt to a changing and more open market system. This change also opened up opportunities for some successful *prihumi* entrepreneurs to get involved actively in politics, e.g., Jusuf Kalla (currently the vice president for the second time) and Aburizal Bakrie (coordinating minister for economy under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono).\(^4^9\)

The *subject positions* of Chinese Christians against Muslims in Indonesia turn out to be socially and politically constructed, first by the Dutch colonial government that used Chinese Indonesians as tax collector, and then by the Suharto regime that exploited Chinese tycoons and used them as scapegoats. These subject positions create *mutual fear* among the Indonesians. The minority Chinese or Christians fear violent acts by the Muslims, whereas the Muslims fear economic domination and exploitation by the Chinese Christians. The truth is, both Muslims and Chinese Christians experienced the same oppression during the Dutch imperialism, as well as under the Suharto regime. It is high time that the majority Muslims and the minority Chinese and Christians fight against oppression together in Indonesia, instead of working against each other.

3. **Through the Lens of Islam & The Problem of Supersessionism**

Muslims in general consider Islam has superseded Judaism and Christianity. The Qur’an contains some of the stories of the Christian Old Testament’s prophets and stories about Jesus

\(^4^8\) Ibid, 122.  
\(^4^9\) Ibid, 130.
the Messiah (Isa Al-Masih), but with a distinct purpose to confirm the role and prophethood of Muhammad or to confirm Islamic teachings.⁵⁰

There are some very polemical materials against Christianity in the Qur’an. It is useful here to think about how a traditional Muslim would view a Christian. Islam believes in a strong monotheism (tawhid), expressed for example in Qur’an 112:3: “God did not beget, nor was He begotten.”⁵¹ This language seems to echo the Christian language of Jesus as “the only begotten son of God.”⁵² Moreover, there are several other polemical verses that seem to deny the Triune God explicitly, such as:

It is blasphemy they utter, those who say that God is the third of three! There is no god except the One God. If they do not desist from what they say, there [sic] shall touch those among them who blaspheme a painful torment.⁵³

An explicit denial of Jesus’ divinity can also be found in Qur’an 5:116-117:

When God says, “Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to people, ‘Take me and my mother as two gods alongside God’?” he will say, “May You be exalted! I would never say what I had no right to say – if I had said any such thing You would have known it: You know all that is within me, though I do not know what is within You, You alone have full knowledge of things unseen – I told them only what You commanded me to: ‘Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.’”⁵⁴

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⁵⁰ E.g., Qur’an 2:125 tells the story of Abraham and Ishmael building the Ka’ba at Mecca and puts Islam directly in the line of Abrahamic tradition.

⁵¹ Abdel Haleem, The Qur’an, a New Translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 444. Islamic interpretations of the Qur’an can range from very liberal, modernist approach to conservative traditional view. Some scholars argue (e.g., Montgomery Watt) that the Qur’an made such denials because many of Muhammad’s contemporaries understood these terms literally. Mun’im Sirry, Scriptural Polemics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 133. However such verses can be easily understood today by traditional Muslims as directed against Christians.

⁵² ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν Μονογενῆ Ἐδωκεν (John 3:16): “So that he gave his only begotten son.”

⁵³ Qur’an 5:73. I use the stronger translation by Mun’im Sirry (Scriptural Polemics, p. 133). Other translation is also available in Abdel Haleem (The Qur’an, p. 75): “Those people who say that God is the third of three are defying [the truth]; there is only One God. If they do not stop what they are saying, a painful punishment will afflict those of them who persist.” Watt argues that this verse rejects tritheism, which orthodox Christianity also rejects (Mun’im Sirry, Scriptural Polemics, p. 155). But again, traditional Muslims will understand this as a clear rejection of the Trinity.

⁵⁴ Abdel Haleem, The Qur’an, p. 79. Many scholars find this verse puzzling because it seems to indicate that Christians understand the Trinity to be God, Jesus and Mary. Mun’im Sirry (Scriptural Polemics, p. 156) points to the existence of cultic devotion for the Virgin Mary before the advent of Islam referred to in this verse. Carl Ernst in How to Read the Qur’an (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), p. 198, notes that this is a logical consequence of the common practice in the Eastern Church in calling Mary “Mother of God.”
So, according to the Qur’an, Jesus is asked by God whether Jesus taught people to take himself as God. Jesus denies this teaching and appeals to God’s all-knowing character for confirmation. In the next verse Jesus confirms that he taught people only to worship God.

Beside these direct attacks against central Christian teachings, the Qur’an is also polemical against the Christian scripture itself. The theme of Jewish and Christian falsification of scripture ranges from the concealment of certain truths, distortion and even direct alteration of the text.\textsuperscript{55} One such example is Qur’an 4:46:

Some Jews distort the meaning of [revealed] words. “We hear and disobey,” and “Listen,” [adding the insult] “May you not hear,” and Ra’ina [Look at us], twisting it abusively with their tongues so as to disparage religion...\textsuperscript{56}

Another verse, which is often taken to refer to tahrif (alteration) of Christian scripture, is Qur’an 2:79:

Wretched too are those who write the book with their own hands and then claim it to be from God, they may sell it for a small price! Woe to them for what their hands have written! Woe to them for the profit they made!\textsuperscript{57}

Unlike Christians, who take the Jewish scripture (Torah/the Old Testament) as God’s revelation and incorporate the reading of it into the Church liturgy and private reflections, Muslims do not usually read Christian Bible. Muslims generally believe that everything in the earlier scripture can be found in a purer form in the Qur’an, so there is no need to consult the Christian scripture.\textsuperscript{58} Given these irreducible religious differences between Christianity and Islam, it is important not to relativize or trivialize them while trying to have a conversation with Muslims.

David Novak points out that Jews can show a similar supersessionist attitude towards Christians. While supersessionist Christians generally think that God replaces Israel with the

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\textsuperscript{56} Abdel Haleem, \textit{The Qur’an}, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{57} Mun‘im Sirry, \textit{Scriptural Polemics}, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{58} The stories from the Christian scripture are often told partially in the Qur’an or alluded as something that the audience of the Qur’an would be familiar with. Early Muslim scholars from the 10\textsuperscript{th} or 11\textsuperscript{th} century still referred to Jewish and Christian sources (known as \textit{Isra‘iliyyat}) to better understand the Qur’an. However from the 12\textsuperscript{th} century onward, the practice was challenged and deemed inappropriate and unacceptable. Abdullah Saeed, \textit{The Qur’an, An Introduction} (New York: Routledge, 2008), 76.
Church because Jews reject the Triune God, *counter-supersessionist* Jews think that Christians reject the God who elects Jews with eternal covenant, thus Christians worship a different God and become heretical.⁵⁹ Although Judaism and Christianity show many similarities and much overlap, there are also irreducible differences between modern Judaism and Christianity. Jews may feel that Paul’s universalizing theology creates a tendency for coercive conversion in Christianity.⁶⁰

Moreover, world history has witnessed many violent acts directed against Jews by Christian communities. German Nazism received support from respected academics and leading minds of the time: e.g., for the philosopher Martin Heidegger, Hitler was “authenticity personalized,” to the political theorist Carl Schmitt, Hitler was a decisive leader, and for the theologian Gerhard Kittel, Hitler was a Christian soldier.⁶¹ In the history of the United States, Jews have also been stigmatized and Jewishness was associated with certain physical traits that identified with filth and greed.⁶² As a result, many Jews internalized what their society told them and reacted by downplaying their race and presented themselves as white rather than Jewish.⁶³ Clearly, then, the relation between Judaism and Christianity has been and is still filled with tensions and differences.

Because Jews, like Muslims, have a coherent theology, Christian beliefs are often deemed heretical. Jews and Muslims may also view Christians as not serious in engaging their

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⁵⁹ David Novak, “From Supersessionism to Parallelism in Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” from *Talking with Christians: Musings of a Jewish Theologian* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 9-10. Novak goes on to suggest that the later Rabbinic tradition and Christianity are parallels that build upon the Old Testament pharisaic tradition as their common reference. Despite the similarities and common origin, there are irreducible differences between modern Judaism and Christianity.

⁶⁰ Daniel Boyarin argues that Paul’s move towards universalism creates the violent forced-conversion practice in Christianity. Although Boyarin does not bother to discuss the particular group in Paul’s time, which tried to coerce the Gentiles Christians to be circumcised, Boyarin’s attitude towards Christianity also displays a distinct understanding of Judaism that cannot be reconciled with Christianity. Daniel Boyarin, “Answering the Mail: Toward a Radical Jewishness,” from *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).


religious practices – they do not pray five times a day, nor fast for a month, nor are they circumcised. At best, perhaps Christians can be recognized as associate Jews, but nothing more. And from the viewpoint of traditional Muslims, Judaism and Christianity have been superseded. An interfaith conversation will often encounter such presumptions. Although there could be interpretations in Islam or Judaism that are more sympathetic towards Christianity, Christians should respect the coherence understanding of the other faith convictions and should not trivialize real differences. However, despite potential confrontations, I will argue that it is possible for Christians to envision relationships with Muslims based on hospitality, friendship, and love.

4. **Hospitality, Friendship and the Dangerous Love of the Gentiles**

*Hospitality* is one way a Christian can envision a relationship with Muslims. Luke Bretherton contrasts *hospitality* with the idea of *tolerance* that is widely accepted as the standard approach to plural society. Bretherton argues that the idea of *tolerance* is based on individual autonomy and freedom of expression that gained prominence in the West after the Enlightenment. The theological support for tolerance is often grounded in the fallibility or finitude of human nature. The concern about human fallibility does not necessarily mean a form of relativism; it can rather imply a limited skepticism or recognition that neither party has complete possession of the truth.

In contrast to *tolerance*, *hospitality* is based on the idea of *misericordia*, i.e., the capacity to grieve and to understand the distress of others as one’s own. So, rather than leaving the Other alone, by *tolerating* the one of whom the community disapproves, *hospitality* instead recognizes the Other as a neighbor and includes her within one’s own communal obligation.

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66 Ibid, 124.
67 Ibid, 127.
Bretherton further argues that the practice of *hospitality* is founded on more explicitly biblical and theological imperatives than *tolerance*.\(^{68}\)

The Old Testament already offers patterns of hospitality. One important example is the command to love a stranger as oneself, because Israel was also a stranger in the land of Egypt (Lev. 19:33-34). The practice of harvesting by not maximizing the harvests, but leaving behind some of the harvest for the stranger, the orphan and the widow, is also an important pattern of hospitality (Dt. 24:19-22). Such hospitality is primarily directed towards the poor and the powerless. Beside the practice of hospitality, the Old Testament also emphasizes maintaining purity from the strangers or the unclean. There is also a prohibition to marry foreign women in Ezra and Nehemiah. Thus, the patterns of hospitality in the Old Testament run along practices of maintaining purity and holiness.

The practice of hospitality in the New Testament follows the patterns of the Old Testament while at the same time subverting and inverting some important aspects of the practice. The parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14:15-24 expresses the surprising hospitality of the New Testament. The invitation of the Host meets insulting rejection and excuses. However, in a surprising turn, the Host opens the banquet to the outcasts on the street: the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame (Lk. 14:21). Bretherton points out how this story subverts the social, economic and political order:

The host’s anger is normal, but his response is not. Instead of seeking vengeance he makes the banquet open to outcasts....By inviting outcasts the host steps outside the accepted patterns of competitive social relations that preserve honour and prestige among the elite. And instead of resorting to strategies of vengeance as would be expected, he inverts and subverts the existing patterns of social stratification and the moral order.\(^{69}\)

So, Jesus’ parable tells a story about a Master who subverts social classes by turning his hospitality towards the poor and the outcasts.

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\(^{68}\) Ibid, 125.

\(^{69}\) Ibid, 132.
So far, the story of the Banquet seems to follow the Old Testament in expressing care for the powerless. However, Jesus himself inverts the practice of holiness. Rather than opposing hospitality to holiness, Jesus turns the practice of hospitality for holiness. Rather than maintaining purity and holiness by avoiding contagion from the unclean and strangers, Jesus’ own holiness is shown forth by his hospitality towards the pagan, the unclean and the sinners. With Jesus, it is the holiness that is infectious, not the uncleanness. The hemorrhaging woman, for example, is healed and made clean by touching Jesus (Mk. 5:25-34; Lk. 8: 43-48). The same cleansing happens when Jesus touches lepers, the dead, the blind, the deaf and dumb, or when he eats with a tax collector.

_Hospitality_ as holiness becomes a more suitable practice for Christians to relate to Muslims than _tolerance_. Tolerance relies on the idea of self-sufficiency and can be oppressive because it does not seek to attend and actively help the ones with less power in the society. On the other hand, _hospitality_ suggests an active engagement, collaborative truth-seeking and enrichment of life together with the others.

Another way to imagine a Christian vision of relations with Muslims is through _friendship_. The story of Patriarch Timothy I may help us in imagining a possible _friendship_ between a Christian minority and Muslim majority. Patriarch Timothy I lived in a predominantly Muslim society in ninth-century Baghdad when he wrote the “Apology for Christianity,” which tells about his friendly debate with Al-Mahdi, the Caliph of the Muslims. This debate covers many issues in the Christian faith: for example, the Incarnation, the Trinity, the virgin birth, the death and the resurrection of Christ. The debate shows the importance of these issues in the ninth century, but they also remain relevant for many conversations between Muslims and Christians today. In the debate, Caliph Al-Mahdi also touches the sensitive issue of Christian scripture alteration. As I have written elsewhere:

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The Caliph makes his accusation clear to Timothy, “If you had not corrupted the Torah and the Gospel, you would find Muhammad there.” Against this critique, however, the Patriarch came up with a very strong argument. He employs the criterion used by the Muslims themselves in evaluating the trustworthiness of traditions. According to Muslim tradition, attestations for the same event from opposing parties that cannot have conspired to spread false news must yield true knowledge. Timothy refers to the mutual hostility of Jews and Christians, which make it impossible for them to conspire in corrupting the scripture.\textsuperscript{71}

The distortion of Christian scripture was already one central issue in the debate at that time in Baghdad. From the viewpoint of Islam, any contradictory claims between Islam and Christianity seem to come from the corruption of the Torah and the Gospel, which also caused Christians to fail to see Muhammad and the Qur’an as the latest religious authority.

One famous part of the debate is when Caliph Al-Mahdi asks Timothy directly about his opinion of Muhammad. “What do you say about Muhammad?” asks the Caliph.\textsuperscript{72} Timothy answers politely saying, “Muhammad walked in the path of the prophets,” because Muhammad led his people away from idolatry, polytheism and bad works towards the worship of one God. However, Timothy also clearly claims that there is no testimony concerning Muhammad in the Gospel. Timothy’s answer shows courtesy, deep respect towards Islam, but does not water down important differences between the two faiths.

It seems that Patriarch Timothy wrote the “Apology” mainly to aid Christian readers in understanding their faith when subject to the probing questions that can arise in a Muslim-majority society. However, Timothy’s writing style indicates a genuine friendship between the Caliph and the Patriarch. Timothy was active in the intellectual life of Baghdad, and the Caliph Al-Mahdi even asked Timothy to translate the Greek texts of Aristotle into Arabic for him.\textsuperscript{73} Although the “Apology” was probably written for Christians, Timothy depicts a highly

\textsuperscript{72} Timothy I, “Apology for Christianity,” (108).
intelligent and courteous Caliph, who walked away from the debate scene with dignity and unconvinced by Timothy’s arguments.

Thus, the most important lessons from this debate might not be the theological points being made, but rather how the Patriarch Timothy approaches his relationship with the Caliph. The situation of a Christian minority among the ruling Muslim majority at that time also resembles the power relations in contemporary Indonesia. Interestingly, both the Patriarch and the Caliph employ cross-exegesis in the debate. Timothy attempts to show Christian concepts from the Qur’an, whereas the Caliph tries to use the Bible in discussing Muhammad. This cross-exegesis shows a mutual interest and concern in search for truth, but also an effort to understand the faith of the other. Such honest debate that can touch many uncomfortable questions can only be done in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

*Friendship* seems to offer a deeper relation than *hospitality*. Although hospitality can be extended to one’s friends or family members, Christian practice suggests hospitality for strangers, especially the poor and the outcasts. Thus hospitality broadens the scope of communal obligations to include strangers. Friendship, on the other hand, works with deepening relationships among people based on mutual *liking*, trust and respect. There could be physical and mental attraction between good friends, a desire to genuinely understand each other that goes beyond the responsibility of extending hospitality.

The friendship of Jonathan and David is one example of friendship that goes against the cultural narrative. As the son of King Saul, Jonathan is supposed to be the next line for the throne. Jonathan, an excellent warrior, fought and defeated the Philistines alone with his armor bearer (1 Sam. 14). He is clearly a perfect candidate for the future king of Israel. But Jonathan came to like David; and as the story tells us, David is a threat for the line of Saul in the kingdom, because he was anointed by the prophet Samuel as the next king (1 Sam 16). Yet, Jonathan loves David as his own soul (1 Sam.18: 1, 3, and 20:17). And for David, the love of Jonathan surpasses the love of women (2 Sam.1:26). It is a love of a friend, who defies his own
father, who challenges a king, and forgoes his own claim to the throne to save the life of one friend (1 Sam. 20). It is a love of a friend who will not hesitate to exchange his own life for that of his friend. It is like two soldiers trusting each other in a fierce and deadly battle. Such friendship is stronger than sex, more gripping than death.

The friendship of C.P. Ellis, a Ku Klux Klan leader, and Ann Atwater, a black woman civil right activist in the 1970s Durham, North Carolina, is another example of a very strange friendship. C.P. Ellis came from a poor working class family. He was convinced that all his life sufferings were caused by a communist conspiracy that used the niggers in his city. He found respect, a sense of belonging and meaning in fighting for the white supremacy among his Klansmen. The warm acceptance of the Klan offered C.P. a contrast from the harsh life of poor white people in Durham, and from the disgust expressed in the faces of white middle-upper class men who passed him by while muttering “linthead!” C.P. Ellis was ready to go out to the street with his shotgun to protect what he called the Southern way of life.

Ann Atwater was a single black mother living in a rundown apartment trying to carve out a living one day at a time. Her enthusiasm for action was aroused by a young black community organizer who taught her how to step up to her black rich landlord to demand a minor repair for her apartment. Ann soon became the most militant leader for Operation Breakthrough, a community organizer setting up picket lines and community movement for the blacks in Durham. Ann hated C.P. Ellis, but ended up working with him in meetings to resolve conflicts and map out solutions for desegregating schools in Durham. As C.P. Ellis cursed black people in one meeting, Ann pulled out a knife to jump the man but she was timely grabbed and calmed down by her friends. On the other hand, C.P. Ellis brought his gun to meetings, especially when it took place in a black neighborhood.

Although C.P Ellis and Ann Atwater hated each other driven by a long history of racial tension, C.P. slowly realized that Ann and the black people were voicing the same problems as poor whites in Durham. C.P. began to change his mind about the black people:
These were the people who were supposedly oppressing whites? No, if any group was holding poor whites down, it was the wealthy white factory owners and businessmen who had called the shots in Durham since the days of Buck Duke – the same men who had been meeting behind scenes with C.P. for years, slipping him a few dollars “for the cause” and telling him what a great job he was doing fighting the coloreds. He saw clearly now how those men had used him to keep poor blacks and poor whites fighting each other – while they kept control of the reins of power.\(^{74}\)

C.P. Ellis gradually realized that both poor blacks and poor whites were controlled by rich white factory owners who wanted to keep the status quo by letting both parties to keep fighting. C.P received numerous death threats because of his cooperation with Ann and at one point he tried to kill himself because he lost every community support from the Klan. But against a strong racial hate narrative in the South, C.P Ellis continued his friendship with Ann Atwater until he died in November 3, 2005.\(^{75}\)

*Friendship* can be stronger than hateful cultural narratives, but *love* can be even stronger and more complicated in drawing people together. The book of Ruth tells a complicated love story between two enemies, the Israelite Boaz and a Moabite woman, Ruth.\(^{76}\) Ruth risks everything in leaving Moab and following Naomi back to Israel. Marrying an Israelite for a Moabite is already preposterous. The excerpt from Ruth Whitman’s poem expresses this feeling of Ruth:

Naomi, a Hebrew woman from
starving Bethlehem
came to Moab with her family

My people despised me
for admiring these foreigners,
but I was dazzled.

Their son, Machlon, was a man
I had dreamed of –
tall, wise, kind.

…


\(^{75}\) Ibid, 2005.

\(^{76}\) Deut. 23:3 makes clear that no Moabite shall enter into the assembly of Jehovah.
When Machlon asked me
to marry, my father
cursed me out of the house,

I ran away, to Naomi,
Who welcomed me
as the daughter she never had.\(^77\)

Unlike Orpah, who decides to stay in Moab, Ruth risks following Naomi. Orpah is already brave, but she is still reasonable. Ruth is more than just abnormal. Cynthia Ozick calls this abnormality the *singularity* of Ruth:

Surely there is nothing advantageous in Ruth’s clinging to Naomi. Everything socially rational is on the side of Ruth’s remaining in her own country: what is true for Orpah is equally true for Ruth. ...And still Ruth’s speech, even with God left out, and however particularized by the personal, is a stupendous expression of loyalty and love.\(^78\)

Drawn by *love* and loyalty to Naomi, Ruth throws everything rational and follows Naomi.

But arriving in Israel, Ruth is catapulted into a deeper complicated love. Sleeping at Boaz’s feet in the threshing-floor late at night means great danger for Ruth. Ruth’s identity as a Moabite – a Gentile sinner\(^79\) – makes her easily associated with all kinds of immorality. A Moabite woman seems to be a seductress, a *slut*.\(^80\) Thus Naomi’s instruction for Ruth to put on her best dress, perfume, and to seduce Boaz (Ruth 5: 3), seems to play into the cultural narrative about a Moabite. And even worse, the story seems to leave open what really happens that night. Boaz is feeling happy from the wine, suddenly surprised by a woman lying at the place-of-his-feet.\(^81\) Cynthia Ozick notes that the scene of Ruth lying with Boaz can “burst with

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\(^{79}\) Paul, for example, uses this phrase in Gal. 2:16: “We φύσα Ιουδαίοι (Jewish by birth)” and “οὐκ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἀμαρτόλων, not from Gentiles sinners.


\(^{81}\) In the biblical language, the “feet” can serve as an euphemism for a man’s penis, e.g., David told Uriah to go home and wash his *feet* (2 Sam. 11:8) as euphemism for sexual intercourse (NRSV Harper Collins Study Bible); also the ambiguous story of Zipporah cutting his son’s foreskin and touched Moses’ *feet* with it (Ex. 4:25).
the erotic: a young woman, perfumed, lying at the feet of an old man at night in a barn.”

Barbara Helfgott Hyett also offers an erotic suggestion with her poem “Awakening Ruth”:

> The threshing floor grows warm. Her hunger ripens. She draws the back of her hand across her teeth. The story proceeds. A kingdom begins at the delta of her thighs.

Willie Jennings comments on this open ended love act in the story of Ruth:

> The text leaves ambiguous whether they had sex or not, not because that detail is unimportant, but rather because it opens up a deeper understanding of Boaz’s succeeding actions. He will act from this point forward in the narrative not as one who simply wants to do right by Ruth, but one who wants Ruth.

As Boaz pursues to be the rightful redeemer to marry Ruth, it is clear that he is not driven by duty, hospitality or friendship, but by his love for Ruth.

> Love – more complex than hospitality and friendship – can bind people into a relationship against any hostile cultural narratives and subjectivities. The love between Boaz and Ruth flies in the face of cultural and historical hatred between two enemies – Israel and Moab. Ruth never announces she has given up her identity as a Moabite. It is perhaps unthinkable for Israel to let a Moabite to be joined into the covenant people. But it happens. The dangerous love of the Gentile sinner opens up unseen possibilities: joining without the loss of identity, a king for Israel (Ruth 4:17-22), and even the Messiah (Matt. 1:5).

5. **Loving Islam and Muslims as Christians**

David Marshall notes that the classical Islamic attitude towards Christians is to see Christians positively only if they convert to Islam. Marshall writes:

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86 Willie Jennings argues against assimilation in thinking about the joining of love. He writes: “Joining does not necessarily mean loss, it may mean something added, something new, and something more.” Ibid.
The logic of these classical commentaries is thus that when the Qur’an is positive about Christians, or Christianity more widely, it is actually being positive about the ‘ideal’ Christianity taught by the ‘ideal’ Jesus pointing ahead to Islam and Muhammad. The Qur’an is positive towards Christianity inasmuch as Christianity sees itself as fulfilled in Islam. So it is only positive about Christians who become Muslims; it cannot be positive about Christians who, having heard the message of Islam, choose to remain Christians.  

So, traditional Muslims tend to only view Christians positively as they are in the process or already being converted to Islam, and the ideal Christianity is the one that finds fulfillment in Islam. Some contemporary approaches seem to follow this critical attitude. Isma’il Al-Faruqi claims that Paul and Augustine have corrupted the original message of Jesus, and Ahmed Deedat implies that Christians believe Jesus as the product of physical act of procreation between God and Mary. Although there are also Islamic pluralist views, most traditional Muslims would take Christians simply as infidels.

Strangely enough, Christianity is indeed the faith of the infidels – the Gentiles. Christians in the West might have forgotten this and think that Christianity is a Western European faith, but scripture itself provides us stories of how the Gentiles – that means also Western Christians – came to believe in Jesus. In Indonesia, where Christians are often regarded as kafir (unbelievers) by Muslims, the stories of being the outcast Gentiles become even more truly felt for Christians. The Biblical stories of the Gentiles can be useful to discern ways to approach the more powerful religious majority. The Bible testifies that there are ways to envision relationships with the religious others even inside hostile cultural narratives. Peter knew well, it was unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile, but he did that anyway and met Cornelius (Acts 10:28). Peter has to learn not to see and call what is clean as unclean before he could meet Cornelius (Acts 10:9-16). The Canaanite woman has to struggle through the social stigma that sees Gentiles as dogs to come to Jesus (Matt. 10:21-28). We will

89 One example of Islamic pluralist view is Farid Esack’s Islam, Liberation and Pluralism.
90 Abdullah Saeed quotes Muhammed Salah Al-Munajjid, a Salafi scholar from Saudi Arabia, who claims that any Christian or others who do not join Islam as kafir (unbeliever) and the enemy of Allah.
always have to live inside the many prejudices around us, but we can choose not to be defined by them. The vision of Christian *hospitality, friendship* and *love* might lead us to heed the Holy Spirit in opening possibilities to love Islam and Muslims as Christians.

The vision of Christian *hospitality* frees us to practice hospitality as holiness. Christian *friendship* can be practiced even between people of whom the cultural narratives urge to be enemies. And a dangerous *love* story of a Gentile like Ruth offers a vision of love that does not require assimilation, manipulation or domination of the Other. These visions do not negate the need for *forgiveness* and discernment in individual cases. Patricia Raybon tells the difficulty of practicing forgiveness in relationships heavily tainted by racial prejudice. As an African-American woman living in a white supremacist mentality of America, Patricia Raybon learned to hate white people and their racism and even her own father for making her feel inadequate from an early age. She tells a story of struggle for superiority, hating others while at the same time hating her inadequate self. Patricia explains how *love* sets her free:

I couldn’t fully see how I could grow to love all white people. White people! But there was a hole in my heart from not loving them, from hating them so long, so very much. Or a hole, perhaps, from hating myself for so long, so very much – for despising myself for not being “right.”

But King would say, I believe, such hates are interrelated – superimposed on one another, so that as long as I hate others, I can’t love myself. And, at the same time, as long as I hate myself, I can’t love others.

Patricia Raybon discovers that forgiving others often means forgiving oneself. In the long history of hostile narratives – well crafted by colonial or authoritarian regimes in Indonesia – Christians and Muslims often do not see other possibility than living in hatred and fear of the Other. The visions of Christian *hospitality, friendship*, and the dangerous *love* of the Gentiles can help us see how God opens possibilities.

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91 Could Christians perhaps take up the practice of Christian *Adhan* praying or *Ramadhan* fasting out of genuine respect for Muslims? Discernment is needed in each individual case while keeping open for possibilities.

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