

Editorial

The enormous amount of attention drawn to Christian-Muslim relations—especially by the 9/11 attacks in the US at the beginning of the present decade—does not seem to have diminished as we approach the end of the same decade.

This is partly due to, on the one hand, the unceasing terrorist activities allegedly inspired by Muslim extremism which are widely broadcasted by the Western media, and on the other, the dramatic unfolding in recent Christian-Muslim dialogue especially since the publication of an open letter (originally signed by 138 Muslim leaders addressed to the Christian counterparts.

Within this context, the present issue of *Asian Christian Review* is devoted to delineate and analyze the current situation of Christian-Muslim relations and to envisage its future.

The issue opens with interviews with two key figures in Christian-Muslim relations, **Michael L. Fitzgerald**, the former president of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the current Papal Nuncio to Egypt, and **Ahmad Syafii Maarif**, the 2008 winner of the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Peace and International Understanding.

Syafii Maarif's speech at the awardees' lecture is also included in this volume. In it, he declares on the basis of his long experience that forging human solidarity beyond religious differences is "not only possible but necessary and surprisingly beautiful."

Three authors write for Viewpoints. Emphasizing the importance of education and mutual understanding, **Prince El Hassan bin Talal** of Jordan appeals for solidarity among Jews, Christians and Muslims in pursuit of the common human good. **Daniel A. Madigan, SJ** argues that for a Christian theology to be responsive to Islam, it has to seriously take into account the specific nature of Christianity as well as that of Islam as the "re-establishment" of the Judeo-Christian religion. **Bernard Adeney-Risakotta** introduces the unique joint venture by Christian and Muslim (and secular) universities in Indonesia of a graduate academic program for religious studies as a new form of interreligious collaboration.

In the first of the main articles, "An Uncommon Call: Prospect for a New Dialogue with Islam?" **Douglas Pratt** discusses the unprecedented initiative by Muslim leaders to reach out to Christians (mentioned above), *A Common Word between Us and You*. After examining the text of the open letter from the Muslim leaders as well as major Christian responses to it, Pratt offers his analytical comments on the ongoing dialogue solicited by the initiative.

Amado L. Picardal, CSsR in his “Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Mindanao” shares his firsthand knowledge and experience of dialogue and efforts to build peace and trust in the midst of the fierce conflict between the Manila government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Picardal’s precious account attests to the power of dialogue as promoted by various groups and in different levels and forms—an important part of which himself constitutes.

An overview of Christian-Muslims relations in another Asian country, India, is offered by **Paul Jackson, SJ**, in his “Christian-Muslim Dialogue in India.” Beginning from the sixteenth century encounter between Muslims and Jesuits in the Mughal court, Jackson concisely illustrates the trajectory of Christian-Muslim exchanges in the country, providing a valuable historical reference leading up to the present time.

With a slight touch of an autobiography, a Muslim scholar **Amir Hussain** offers an educational introduction to the Qur’an regarding interfaith relations in his “From Tolerance to Dialogue: A Muslim Perspective on Interfaith Dialogue with Christians.” Noting also various efforts of dialogue and discussing Jesus as a focal point of dialogue, he argues that North American Muslims can be a model for Muslims elsewhere in inter- and intra-religious dialogue.

Another Muslim scholar **Ibrahim Zein** considers the issue of the implementation of shari’a in post-colonial states in his “Salvation and *Inqadh*: Two Theological Doctrines in Monotheistic Religions and Their Contemporary Implication in Understanding Islamic Penal Code.” Contending that the current debate over shari’a and especially the penal code is largely misguided, Zein re-frames the issue in terms of the two different theological concepts—Christian salvation and Muslim *inqadh*—which beget two different visions of human behavior in relation to law, and examines four major Muslim responses to modernity.

“Desperately Needed: Dialogue among Judaism, Christianity, Islam” is a passionate call to dialogue by one of the most prominent forerunners in this field, **Leonard Swidler**. Situating the arrival of the “age of global dialogue” in the history of religions and describing various aspects of dialogue, Swidler goes on to expound the commonalities of the three religions on which dialogue can be based, and shares his experience in his own interreligious venture, International Scholars’ Abrahamic Trialogue.

Finally, the issue of Islam and globalization is considered by **Peter G. Riddell**, in his “Globalisation, Western and Islamic, into the 21st Century: Perspectives from Southeast Asia and Beyond.” Presenting how globalization is perceived by modernizing and Islamist Muslims respectively and what remedies they prescribe, Riddell demonstrates how Islamic globalization, in response to the Western one, has been conceived, proposed and emerging.

Asian Christian Review hopes that the present volume will be of a valuable help for scholars and professionals interested or involved in Christian-Muslim relations.

In closing, I would like to give my wholehearted thanks to Profs. Daniel A. Madigan, Bernard Adeney-Risakotta, Leonard Swidler and Sr. Filo S. Hirota for their help in preparing the present issue.

Kiyoshi Seko
Editor
January, 2009