Missionaries in Islamic Lands: Raymond Lull, Samuel Zwemer, and Kenneth Cragg

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I. Introduction

Somewhat outdated, Lamin Sanneh, former professor of Yale University, anticipated in 1998 that “Islam began as a world-conquering faith and remains today a world-embracing religion.”¹) Ernest Hahn also argued that Islam is expanding from its traditional areas into the former Soviet Union, Europe, and North America. In fact, Islamic students today form the largest group of international students in North American universities.²) As to Islam's diversity and scale, Michael Youssef noted in 1992 that “the 720 million Muslims of the world speak at least five hundred different languages and are subdivide into probably 3,500 different homogeneous units.”³)

³) Michael Youssef, Muslim Evangelism, in Perspectives on the World Christian Movement, Ralph D. Winter
Of course, these predictions and descriptions about Islam are becoming reality today. According to the Pew Research Center,\(^4\) as of 2017, there are about 1.8 billion Muslims in the world, they make up nearly one-fourth of the world's population, making Islam the world's second largest religion after Christianity. Within the second half of this century, Muslims are expected to become the world's largest religious group. SIM also says that as of 2017, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. The highest concentrations of Muslims are currently in Asia and the Middle East, with Indonesia's 550 million people forming Islam's largest nation.\(^5\)

Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. How has this happened? Partly, its growth is due to the dawah, the Koranic command to spread the faith. Most of the increase, however, according to the Pew Research Center, is due to high birth rates. The Pew Research Center estimates that by 2070, Islam will overtake Christianity, due to faster birth rate (2.7 children per family vs. 2.2 for Christian families).

Even though this paper should focus on the whole history of mission to Muslim, limited pages for studying, however, is not enough for the history of almost fourteen centuries. In this paper, therefore, I will limit my concerns to three prominent missionaries who devoted their lives to evangelizing Muslims. They are Raymond Lull, Samuel Marinus Zwemer, and Kenneth Cragg.

They worked in different time periods Lull was the person in the fourteenth century, Zwemer in the nineteenth century and Cragg in the twentieth century. Also, they lived in different regions and used different methods. They all are uniquely influenced by their own time. Nevertheless,

\(^{5}\) http://www.sim.org/simnow/religions/islam.html