On the afternoon of June 23, 1919 Samuel M. Zwemer, missionary to North Africa and editor of *The Moslem World*, stood proudly at the podium of the Centenary Celebration of American Methodist Missions in Columbus, Ohio. The Celebration exposition, a twenty-four day “Methodist World’s Fair,” attracted over one million visitors and featured internationally-themed pavilions, ethnographically-charged exhibits, the latest in church media technologies, and a miniature Midway complete with a Ferris wheel, lemonade stands, and church-sponsored restaurants. The fair was a significant endeavor planned by American Methodists from the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The event functioned as a location to showcase the global reach of American Methodist missionary efforts, and in particular, the religious and cultural exchanges between Christian missionaries and Muslim adherents were on display. At the exposition, several decorated pavilions dedicated to Methodist missionary activities spotlighted historical and contemporary interactions between American Methodists and global Muslims.

At the fair Zwemer was in his element, speaking to an audience curious to know more about Islam and its many followers throughout the world. As a reputable American Protestant specialist on Islam Zwemer had been asked to speak of his work with Muslims on “African Day” at the Ohio exposition. Zwemer was introduced to the largely American Methodist audience by

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1 Samuel Marinus Zwemer (1867-1952) was an American Protestant missionary sponsored by the Reformed Church of America. He was educated at Hope Academy and College (Michigan) and New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey. Zwemer spent over thirty years working with Muslims in North Africa and editing the periodical *The Moslem World*. In 1929 Zwemer was appointed as a professor of Christian missions at Princeton Theological Seminary. He later taught at the Biblical Seminary of New York and Nyack Missionary Training Institute (now Nyack College) in Nyack, New York. For additional information on Zwemer see Alan Neely, “Zwemer, Samuel...”
Reverend Joseph Crane Hartzell, a Bishop for the Methodist Episcopal Church and fellow missionary and intercultural specialist of Liberia, Africa. Hartzell helped authenticate Zwemer’s credibility claiming the speaker was “the best posted man on Mohammedanism we have in the Protestant world.”

Zwemer opened his address with a series of emphatic “battle cry” calls and presented several religious and cultural dichotomies between Christianity and Islam. He was careful to shape the representation of this global religious movement for members of his audience. In language familiar to some early twentieth century Protestants he compared Islam with Christianity and proclaimed, “Shall it be Christ’s or Mohammed’s? Would you like your girls and your boys to be brought up to the measure of the stature of fullness of the camel driver of Mecca, or of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World?” He went on to locate the work of Methodist missionaries in several mission outposts around the world confirming, “In the first place, your church is challenging Islam in India. In the second place, your church is challenging Islam in Malaysia; and in the third place, your church has challenged Islam in Africa.”

Several years earlier Zwemer had published a book titled *Islam: A Challenge to Faith*, a full length treatise on the history, growth, tenets, and Christian concerns over the practice of Islam. At the time of the book’s 1907 release Zwemer was Secretary for the Student Volunteer Movement and a missionary in modern day Saudi Arabia. Zwemer wrote, “The churches of Christendom are at last awakening to the fact that one of the great unsolved missionary problems of the Twentieth Century is the evangelization of the Mohammedan world…the purpose of the

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book is to present Islam as a challenge to the faith and enterprise of the church. It has a message for those who believe the Gospel and believe that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth – to the Mohammedan no less than to the heathen.”³ For audiences at the Methodist fair Zwemer’s comments and writings presented particular representations of Islam and of its several million Muslim adherents. This framing of Islam before American Protestants helped shape how Methodists perceived and understood a faith system that had originated in the sixth century, was largely practiced in distant countries far from the Ohio setting of the exposition, and was largely unfamiliar for many Methodists receiving Zwemer’s lecture that day. Zwemer reinforced a centuries-old process that framed Islam into a monolithic and threatening religious system of misinformed and misguided religious adherents.

My paper explores how American Methodists framed Islam during the 19th and early 20th century. The essay investigates the ways in which American Methodist newspaper editors and missionaries positioned certain representations of Islam for readers of the U.S.-based periodicals *The Methodist Magazine* and *The Christian Advocate and Journal*. My paper particularly demonstrates how organizers from the Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church, South used the Centenary Celebration exposition as a public stage to broadcast particular representations of Islam for American audiences. Organizers of the fair dedicated space for exhibits, lectures and plays in order to present “the Mohammedan” in particular ways before curious fairgoers. Ultimately, the fair evidenced how American Methodists were busy around the world converting Muslims to the Christian faith.

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**Representation and the Framing of Islam**

In order to make sense of how American Methodist publications and the Methodist World’s Fair used forms of media as tools to represent and frame Islam and Muslims it is important for this essay to define both “representation” and “framing.” Jamal J. Elias in *Aisha’s Cushion: Religious Art, Perception, and Practice in Islam* posits, “a representation is superior (or perhaps more powerful) to that which it represents in some important aspects. A representation is present when its prototype is absent, or it is accessible while the prototype is inaccessible, with presence and accessibility being better than absence and inaccessibility in all respects but for some philosophical notions of human behavior.” Elizabeth Poole also notes in her book *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims* that representation on the part of outlets of mass media present “the social process of combining signs to produce meanings” and demonstrates how media ultimately constructs its own versions of meaning (norms and values) where “an event is filtered through interpretive frameworks and acquires ideological significance.”

The process of “framing” peoples and people groups also needs definition. Joan Hemels essay “Faith and Journalism under Strain: Some Observations with Relation to Printed Media in the Netherlands” notes framing involves negotiating subtle differences into a topic resulting in how that topic is presented by the media. She notes framing by media outlets “refers to the way in which news content is typically shaped and contextualized by journalists within some familiar frame of reference and according to some latent structure of meaning.” She also notes framing a subject has certain effects on the audience who “adopt the frames of reference offered by

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journalists…to see the world in a similar way.”

These images and representations had been shaped by newspaper editors and missionaries who used these forms of mass media to frame Islam and Muslim adherents in certain ways.

The research of Elias, Poole and Hemels help us investigate how American Methodist newspaper editors and missionaries, all commissioned by the Methodist Episcopal Church, and Methodist Episcopal Church, South, felt obligated toward readers and fairgoers to present a prototype of a religious system and its adherents since most American Methodists were not able to see and interact with Muslims living in North Africa, India, and Malaysia. These images located Muslims as uninformed, nomadic, non-Christians in need of civilizing influences and ultimately Christian conversion. The editors of Methodist newspapers and the planners and missionaries asked to speak at the Centenary exposition were purposeful in how they layered meaning into Islamic faith and tradition through the printed columns of The Methodist Magazine, The Christian Advocate and Journal, and through the exhibits, speeches, and plays of the Methodist World’s Fair. Creatively filtered through written and spoken word a particular construction of Islam shaped through the lenses of Methodist media gave Christians, and in particular American Methodists, a more powerful position, one of ideological significance (and power) used to create presuppositions about Muslims and the tenets of Islam.

**Early American Methodist Accounts of Islam**

The representation and framing of Islam has a long, though largely understudied, history in American Methodism. From the early 19th century until the present Methodist authors, editors, missionaries, and denominational executives have presented Methodists with media resources ranging from published Board of Mission reports to glass lantern photograph slides to motion

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pictures. More recently the Internet and Social Media have been used to paint pictures of Islam and Muslim adherents throughout the world. For purposes of this paper I will focus specifically on early Methodist periodical accounts and the events that took place at the 1919 fair. Much additional research needs to be done using these and other sources of information.

Edward Said in his book *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts determine how we see the rest of the World* notes, “Nineteenth-century American contacts with Islam were very restricted; one thinks of occasional travelers like Mark Twain and Herman Melville, or of missionaries here and there, or of short-lived military expeditions to North Africa…academic experts did their work on Islam usually in quiet corners of schools of divinity, not in the glamorous limelight of Orientalism nor in the pages of leading journals.” For Said, 19th century conversations about “Orientalism” occurred in reports from American travelers published in books and newspapers and by the correspondence and presentations of missionaries from the United States reporting on their work around the world. The use of forms of media by American Methodists, in this case newspapers and exhibits and presentations at the 1919 exposition, provided particular pictures of Islam for readers and fairgoers. Said confirms, these media sources provided “a communal core of interpretations providing a certain picture of Islam and, of course, reflecting powerful interests in the society served by the media.”

Ghazi-Walid Falah’s essay “The Visual Representation of Muslim/Arab Women in Daily Newspapers in the United States” confirms, “the ways in which editorial decisions regarding the arrangement and presentation of images and other materials relating to Muslims and Arabs impart certain meanings to newspaper readers and, by doing so, lend support to specific

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7 Ibid, 43-46.
geopolitical discourses.” For Falah the multiple presentations and representations of people
groups in print (and photographs) underscore and shape a particular political (and religious)
encoding of individuals and religious systems. Editors, artists and later photographers employed
by newspaper companies and religious organizations positioned faith practitioners in certain
ways that informed readers and brought unfamiliar peoples into their homes through ink and
paper of periodicals.

American Methodists did not initiate work in Muslim countries until the early-to-mid-19th
century yet reports on Muslims or ‘Mohammedans’ were presented to American readers through
several newspapers including *The Methodist Magazine* and *The Christian Advocate and Journal.*
The reports were often published from other media sources and provided by British Methodist
missionaries or from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), an
interdenominational mission organization with activity in Turkey and other parts of Asia. John
Hubers argues Protestant missionaries for the ABCFM presented an “appreciative assessment” of
Islamic faith while carefully qualifying the necessity of an American Protestant missionary
message. Rather than present Islam as a dangerous and unintelligent religious movement these
eye early missionaries presented American audiences with Muslims who had names, faces, and
embraced their faith as much as if not more than readers in the United States.9

Two of the earliest examples of reports on Islam by American Methodists were published
in the periodical *The Methodist Magazine* in June, 1819, and April, 1821. In an essay titled, “On
the Study of Divinity” the author discussed the “Darkness of Heathen Philosophy” noting, “Thus
I would without distinction, at once reject the religion of Mahomet, or of the Chinese, of ancient

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8 Ghazi-Walid Falah, “The Visual Representation of Muslim/Arab Women in Daily Newspapers in the United
States,” in *Geographies of Muslim Women: Gender, Religion, and Space,* Ghazi-Walid Falah and Caroline Nagel,
9 Hubers, John. “Making Friends with Locusts: Early ABCFM Missionary Perceptions of Muslims and Islam, 1818-
Egypt or Rome, upon this single reason; because not one of them being able to produce more signs of truth than another, reason cannot in justice prefer one mode to another.” The author specifies, “The religion of Mahomet debases human nature so low, gives us so mean and puerile an idea of the Deity; and so foul a prospect of the celestial enjoyments; that reason unprejudiced, cannot hesitate to reject it; and nothing, but the want of a true exertion of reason, can prevent a general rejection of it.” Reporting on the state of British Methodist mission work in Sierra Leone, Africa the writer confirms, “It is another consideration equally rousing to every feeling of Christian zeal, that among all the pagan nations of Africa, the emissaries of Mahometanism are spreading the imposture, principally by the aid of charms and incantations, in which the ignorance of the African leads him to place entire reliance.” The author goes on to note, “Thus among the negroes of the colony of the Cape of Good-Hope, Mahometan priests are teaching their faith; and among the independent tribes of the interior, the same imposture is occupying the hearts of the native with a hatred for Christians unfelt by them in their purely pagan state.”

The New York City-based *Christian Advocate and Journal* also provided early snapshots of Islam for American readers. In an editorial on July 20, 1827 the newspaper printed a sermon by the Reverend Nathan Bangs on the American Colonization Society. In his treatise, Bangs declared Africa “was soon overrun by the superstitions of Mohammed, and to this day, the greater portion of the people are believers in Mohammedanism. And although many yet remain Pagans, in Abyssinia and some other parts of Africa there are nations who have embraced the Christian religion.” The next year the same publication produced an article titled “Heathen

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Cruelty” which provided a somewhat more favorable view on Islam as a means of assisting to eliminate certain cultural practices in some countries, such as requiring the widow of a deceased man to be burnt alive alongside his deceased body. The writer declared, “Mohammedanism has, indeed, removed some of its grosser features, but what has this imposture introduced in their place?”  

The representation and framing of Islam in early nineteenth century Methodist periodicals informed readers of a faith system that challenged Christianity, beckoned for a missionary force to convert Muslims, and yet provided a window into real human beings embracing a faith in ways that evidenced loyalty and concern for others. In some ways the distant Muslim was broadcast as a devout believer in Islam and one might argue an example of a faithful follower of a religious system for American Methodists. As Methodist missionaries took the message of Christianity to mission stations around the world they were acutely aware from these publications that other religious traditions were also helping to eliminate questionable cultural practices such as the burning of widows. American Methodists could look at Muslims with a watchful eye but could not debate this religion and its followers were as devout as they were toward their religion and were helping people around the world.

The 1919 Centenary Celebration: A Methodist World’s Fair

In addition to print periodicals Protestant missionary expositions were seen as a method to help motivate American Methodists to not only think about world missions but to view actual Christian converts from around the world on display in recreated villages and homes. These venues would not only show visitors the world activities of missionaries but would point fairgoers forward, intending to convince them to imagine how Christian missionaries and missions organizations might help reconstruct the world both physically and spiritually.

13 “Heathen Cruelty,” Christian Advocate and Journal (June 20, 1828), 1.
Centenary Celebration, a “Methodist World’s Fair,” was seen as one such event which would give the Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church, South, a platform from which to broadcast current work and future hopes concerning global missions.

Drawing of the Centenary Celebration of American Methodist Missions (1919)

The three-week fair featured reenacted dogfights between World War I warplanes in the skies above Columbus and the first “sermon in the air” preached by a Methodist seminary professor from the gondola of a blimp above the racetrack grandstands. Entertainment was a significant component of the missionary exposition as “Methodist cowboys” performed in a Wild West exhibit, audiences watched silent films on a ten-story motion picture screen, and thousands of Protestants packed the coliseum to enjoy a theatrical performance called *The Wayfarer: A Pageant of the Kingdom*.

The fair also presented attendees with dozens of interactive exhibits showcasing the recipients of foreign and domestic missions who acted out their daily lives and performed
“native” tasks while on display before curious American viewers. Visitors to the exposition could tour eight international pavilions and watch foreigners at work on native industries or observe Asian and African families eating dinner or cleaning their homes. The fair functioned as a venue of exchange between both viewer and those viewed. On one level the exposition educated visitors on the history and current progress of Methodist world missions. In this way organizers created exhibits, dispersed information through lectures, and handed out booklets and pamphlets describing the work of Methodist missionaries. The fair also functioned on another level, providing visitors opportunities to learn about themselves as Americans while at the same time watching “foreigners” practice “strange” religions and performing domestic responsibilities within the recreated “native homes” of the fairgrounds pavilions.14

Fair organizers located Methodist missionary work with Muslims in three internationally-themed pavilions identified as the Africa Building, the India Building, and the Korea-Japan-Malaysia-Philippines Building. Planners placed exhibits in sections of each building including representations of two mosques along with curios filled with material culture and exhibit walls adorned with wall charts, literature, and dozens of photographs. Missionaries functioned as cultural and religious experts and gave illustrated lectures using glass lantern slides projected from several stereopticon machines. Live plays and demonstrations were also presented using peoples converted to Christianity by missionaries as well as actors who played the part of the “foreigner” in certain presentations. Author Fred B. Smith described the atmosphere of the fair in the magazine Association Men noting “the buildings represented native life in India, Africa, China, Korea, the South Sea Islands, the Philippine Islands and the nations of the Near East. These were filled with charts, maps, photographs and every form of exhibit…the place gave an

opportunity for enjoying what was best in a circus, a country fair, a picnic, grand opera, the
drama and the Church, all at one time.”

**Islam at the Methodist World’s Fair**

In his book *Islam Obscured: The Rhetoric of Anthropological Representation* Daniel Martin Varisco confirms, “who can fault the goal of going beyond mere description, avoiding another catalog of useless facts, anal-analytical stamp collecting and the like? The issue not addressed is how it would ever be possible to only describe, and not at the same time impose, meaning.” For planners of the Centenary Celebration of American Methodist Missions a central purpose for holding such an extravagant event was to avoid presenting American audiences with yet another illustrated lecture, slide show, or missionary sermon on the reach of Methodist missionary endeavors. The exposition brought “useless facts” to life through the in-person representation of missionaries and those missionized. Going beyond mere description the fair included actual homes from Methodist fields of mission taken down, packaged, shipped to the United States, and reconstructed inside the pavilions of the State Fairgrounds. The exhibits also included pageants, parades, samples of clothing, cooking utensils, and curios of weaponry.

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15 Wilson, Alonzo E., compiler. *Methodist Centenary Celebration, State Fair Grounds, Columbus, Ohio, June 20-July 13, 1919* (Columbus, OH: s.n., 1919), 39-40.
17 An example of a parade was “The Victory Processional” held at 6p.m. on the Fourth of July. Dubbed the “Most Significant Religious Pageant in Modern History” the parade took place in the racetrack oval of the State Fairgrounds. The event “epitomized in a spectacular panorama of unexcelled beauty, historical import, and international personnel, the spiritual message of the entire Methodist Centenary Celebration.” The event was produced by Boston-based pageant master Percy Jewett Burrell, and the entire event was filmed by the motion picture crew of David Wark Griffith studios based in Hollywood, California. Over 10,000 participants from several dozen countries participated in what was called “the largest and most significant religious pageant processional in modern history.” Islam was represented on floats for the Africa Building and depicted the reconquest of North Africa for Christianity. Dr. J. T.C. Blackmore and Mrs. Ella Bates Frease sat on floats and African music was performed and several animals including camels, donkeys, and horses were led along the parade path. Islam in India was represented by a procession of missionaries working in India, a representation of a Muslim wedding party and three elephants. A float presenting Islam in Malaysia included “Four Buddhist priests, an equal number of Hindoo priests and two followers of Mohammed, as well as local missionaries and natives in costume. *Methodist Centenary Celebration*, 223.
The global representatives and three dimensional exhibitions infused life and activity into missionary work around the world. These exhibits evidenced the work of missionaries and were also intended to recruit more missionaries and to raise funds for current and future missionary endeavors both in the United States and overseas.

Representing Islam at the fair in a meaningful way was crucial to secure the needed missionary personnel and funding for intercultural work. Exposition organizers decided to stage three exhibits in three separate pavilions to showcase the cultural and religious practices of Muslims and to broadcast the current progress of Methodist missionaries at work around the world converting the peoples of Africa, India, and Malaysia from Islam to Christianity. This section of the paper investigates the buildings, exhibits, and activities used by American Methodists to promote their work through exhibits and demonstrations.

At the Methodist World’s Fair the Department of Mohammedan Lands held its exhibits in the Africa Building, the India Building, and the Korea-Japan-Malaysia-Philippine Building. Dr. William G. Shellabear served as chairperson for the design, organization, and implementation of the various exhibitions in the three buildings. Shellabear was born in England, hired as a missionary for the Methodist Episcopal Church, and considered a foremost expert on Islam after spending many years as a missionary in Malaysia.\textsuperscript{18} Representations of Islamic religious and cultural practices were seen through a variety of live “demonstrations” organized by Dr. H.E. Philips of the U.P. Mission in Egypt. The demonstrations included such activities as: the Koran School, The Argument: Christian vs. Moslem, the Mohammedan Funeral, the

\textsuperscript{18} William Girdlestone Shellabear (1862-1947). Shellabear was a missionary to the Malay Peninsula region for the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was also later hired as professor of missions at Drew Theological Seminary in Madison, New Jersey, USA. He taught the Malay language and was the first professor at Drew to teach courses on Islam. He later taught at Hartford Theological Seminary in Connecticut. For additional information on Shellabear see Robert A. Hunt, \textit{William Shellabear: A Biography} (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: University of Malaysia Press, 1996).
Mohammedan Wedding, the Mohammedan Divorce, the Mohammedan Betrothal, and the Call to Prayer. The average attendance at these demonstrations ranged from 100-200 visitors per event and total attendance estimate for exhibits directly related to the exchanges between Islam and Christianity for the three-week fair was 100,000-120,000 people.  

The Official Report of the Centenary Celebration compiled after the exposition claimed, “Great interest was taken in all the demonstrations, and many people went away with a new conception of what the Mohammedan religion is, and of the effect it has upon its followers.” The report specified “the attractions which were the most effective were: The Argument between a Moslem and a Christian, the Mohammedan Funeral, and Dr. Philips’ addresses on the subject.” Several criticisms emerged regarding the exhibits. The Report also verified “Any kind of a noise would immediately draw a crowd and would often draw people from a demonstration to which they would otherwise have given their attention. The noisy demonstrations should therefore be limited in future for the sake of those being held in contiguous buildings.” In addition, “The maps and charts to illustrate Mohammedanism were not hung in the places where they could be used effectively, and their value was therefore almost nullified. In this respect utility was sacrificed for the sake of scenic effect.”

**The Interior and Descriptions of the Pavilions**

Three exhibits at the fair staged Islam for American Methodist visitors. For the half dollar entrance fee into the fairgrounds visitors could view on display the people, culture, and material objects of lands many had only seen in published periodicals such as *National Geographic Magazine* and *Missionary Review of the World*. The Official Report stated, “In the eight large buildings, representing the features of the Methodist work at home and abroad, there was

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19 *Methodist Centenary Celebration*, 113.
20 *Methodist Centenary Celebration*, 113-114.
presented to the eye the real atmosphere and environment of the foreign cities where our missionaries are doing heroic service. The home work was also visualized in the most remarkable manner...here, for the first time, three hundred thousand people saw the actual life of the people represented in the streets, temples, and masques (sic), which were visualized to the people by actual buildings from the Orient."\(^{21}\)

**The Africa Building**

The Africa Building measured 20,000 square feet and included eight auditoriums representing “North Africa,” “South and West Africa,” “East and South Africa,” “Central Africa,” and the “Belgian Congo.” A section on Liberia demonstrated the work of Methodist missionaries in hospital care and education. During the three week fair 576 meetings were held in the pavilion with approximately 180,000 in attendance. The building interior space included a

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\(^{21}\) Smith, John T. Brabner, “A Unique Exhibition with a Spiritual Significance,” in Wilson, Alonzo E., compiler. *Methodist Centenary Celebration, State Fair Grounds, Columbus, Ohio, June 20-July 13, 1919* (Columbus, OH: s.n., 1919), 42.
“Kraal Exhibit” furnished with a stockade of live animals and six homes made of mud and straw to represent the “authentic” dwelling places of an “African Chief” and his five wives. The exhibit featured several lectures each day and included demonstrations of the preparation and cooking of foods from Africa. The building also included a lecture hall that seated 165 persons complete with a stereopticon lantern slide, muslin screen, and several hundred glass lantern slides.

Throughout the pavilion material artifacts adorned the walls and were placed in glass curios. Exhibits included food products and weaponry from each region, including shields and spears that evidenced “tribes who have little culture,” and indigenous products made “with bark blankets demonstrated the versality and good craftsmanship which are almost inated in every community, be it civilized or uncivilized, according to our American standards.” To represent missionary work with Muslims a mosque with minaret where “the religion of Mohammedan prevails” was prominently displayed within the reconstructed village court. A “Bedouin Tent” was also exhibited and visitors were informed the African dwelling place was made from “authentic wool of sheep native to Africa.” The building also included a street scene complete with a bazaar, café, and stables for additional animals. The walls of the building were painted with murals depicting scenes from Africa and palm trees were added to complete the scene.22

The Director of Exhibits and Programs for the Africa Building was Erwin H. Richards, missionary for the Methodist Episcopal Church to Inhambane, East Africa. The Associate Director of Exhibits and Programs was Daniel Leeper Mumpower, missionary to Congo for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Additional speakers in the Africa Building included J.T.C. Blackmore, Mary J. Richards from Inhambane, East Africa, John M. and Helen Emily Springer, missionaries to the Belgian Congo, Arthur L. and Maude G. Piper, missionaries to Congo, and Bishop Joseph C. Hartzell, W.B. Geebey, and C.E. DeWalt. The building opened at 8 a.m. each

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22 *Centenary Celebration*, 129.
morning and included daily prayer meetings. A “Negro Quartette” sang three times daily
drawing large crowds by singing “native African songs in original languages.” The various
“Demonstrations” included an assortment of lectures and presentations. These included a Call to
Prayer and several lectures on topics including “Christianity vs. Islam” and “The Cross and
Crescent in North Africa.” Additional activities included: “A Peep into a Harem,” “Koran
School,” “Balmer’s Kaffir Choir,” and “Dinah, Queen of the Barbarians.”

The Official Report verified “more people visited the Africa Building” than any other
facility during the three week fair. In particular, “the Kaffir Kraal won more admiration and
thought than any other item in the building” while the “most used [demonstrations] were the
“Slave-Chain Gang,” the “Buying of a Wife,” the “Medical Clinic,” and the “Call for
Missionaries.” The Report confirmed “the discussions on polygamy proved very interesting
inasmuch as most listeners never heard but one side of the argument.”

Not everyone was pleased with respect to the exhibits and activities in the Africa
Building. The Report verified the training of stewards who worked the building should have
been done by the actual missionaries in charge of the exhibits rather than by professional trainers
not connected to or familiar with missionary work. In a most interesting assessment, the
evaluator of the pavilion argued, “The question as to whether black folk or white should operate
the native Kraal Exhibit was liable to changes as often as it was settled by anyone” and decisions
about white or black actors by “proper authority should have decided that point in January
[1919] and kept it decided.” For exhibits on Islam the Report confirmed, “The mosque in the
North Africa Building was large enough to be used effectively” as compared to the mosque in
the India Building which was too small for purposes of allowing people to enter the exhibit.

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23 *Centenary Celebration*, 98.
Ultimately, the purpose of the pavilion, including the representation and framing of Islam, created a positive impression that gave people a particular perspective and appreciation of the religious tradition when compared with the success of Methodist missionaries converting the people of Africa to Christianity. The Report noted, “The masses of people were greatly moved in the interest for missions…There were also individual pledges for support of special work and fresh consecration to mission work anywhere on earth. Renewed interest was displayed in missionary intelligence.”

The India Building

The India Building measured 20,000 square feet with three auditoriums hosting 160 meetings over the three weeks of the fair. Approximately 70,000 people visited the pavilion. The India Building featured a lecture hall “which was darkened and cool [and] gave a place for tired visitors to rest while they watched pictures and pageants which told the stories of India.”

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24 Centenary Celebration, 98.
Exhibitors of the hall projected a series of stereopticon illustrated lectures and silent films including a motion picture presenting the conversion of an Indian preacher named Magan Lal, who converted from Hinduism to Christianity onscreen. The Official Report from the fair proclaimed, “the film was of thrilling interest and told the pathetic story of a young man wondering (sic) from temple to temple until at last he met with the Christians. No such story as this was ever before presented in the history of the movie.”

The pavilion also echoed the architectural skyline of a location in India and included a mosque with two minarets from which missionaries and stewards would call people to prayer throughout the day. The building also included a street bazaar with a magician and several shops for purchasing cloth, silks, brass, costumes, tea, and sweet meats. Perhaps most intriguing was a model of the Ganges River complete with flowing water and a mural depicting throngs of people at water’s edge. The home life of the lower and higher castes was presented as well as the various educational facilities in India. “Holy Men” also walked throughout the building “torturing their bodies that their souls might be purified.”

The Chairman of the building was Fred B. Fisher and demonstrations included the “Koran School,” the “Call to Prayer,” the “Mohammedan Funeral” and “a wedding scene with all its pomp passed through the street and the child-wife was brought into momentary prominence.” A typical schedule of events in the India building included several illustrations and representations of Islam. A day’s schedule in the North Africa section of the building read:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Call to Prayer; Argument, Mohammedanism vs. Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Moslem Boys’ School in the Mosque, Lecture by Dr. E.F. Frease, Supt. Of North Africa Missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Colored Quartet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Moslem Funeral by Dr. Phillips (sic), of Egyptian Presbyterian Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Call to Prayer; Lecture by Haboush, “The Galilean Shepherd”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Nature Music and Life Demonstrations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25 *Centenary Celebration*, 133-134.
2:30 p.m. Colored Quartet
4:00 p.m. Moslem Wedding
5:00 p.m. Life Play “The Betrothal” and Lecture by Mrs. E.F. Frease of North Africa

The Official Report indicated “The daily life of India, with its joys and sadness, was represented” and India’s political and commercial activities were “made real through the agency of the missionary, who explained verbally and by charts.” The exhibition was criticized due to the inadequacy of the model mosque and the Report noted, “The India mosque was altogether too small and was almost useless. The raised floor deterred people from entering whereas there was always a group of visitors inside the North Africa mosque listening to explanations by a steward.”

Korea-Japan-Malaysia-Philippines Building

The pavilion with the longest and most inclusive name was the Korea-Japan-Malaysia-Philippines Building. The pavilion was 20,000 square feet and included four auditoriums, 420

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20 Centenary Celebration, 133-134.
meetings, and a visitor total of 94,000 people. The exhibits included the representation of a Korean home in the demonstration “Preparing and Eating a Korean Meal.” This ‘Life Play’ staged a family from Korea who had been converted to Christianity by Methodist missionaries acting as if they were residents in a living room, kitchen, and bedroom. A home from Japan was also represented as fairgoers could watch actors in indigenous costumes portray a Japanese Christian family eating dinner while the wife cooked, cleaned, and made the bed before curious visitors. A Malaysian home was represented by a “typical Head Hunter’s House” during a Life Play called “Wild Man from Borneo.” Homes from the Philippines were recreated in an electronic model of a village run by belts, chains, and electricity. Visitors wishing to relax could walk along a “Japan Garden Scene” in the midst of a small pond, trees, and flowers, or shop at a street bazaar with a tea shop where “one sipped a cup of refreshing beverage at the tea house.”

Religion and religious adherents were represented by a model of a Shinto Temple. Islam in particular was presented though a Life Play called “Breaking Mohammedan Ice,” several lectures by Bishop Joseph C. Hartzell on “Mohammedanism,” and demonstrations including a “Koran School” and a “Moslem Funeral.” A sample day’s schedule in the building included a program specific to Malaysia:

10:30 a.m. Singing of Malay Hymns
11:30 a.m. Malay Wedding
1: 30 p.m. Woman’s Club Meeting
2:30 p.m. Moslem Funeral
3:30 p.m. Malay School Scene
4:30 p.m. Malay Divorce
5:30 p.m. Malay Wedding
7:30 p.m. Street Preaching

The Report of the Centenary Celebration evidenced both curiosity and success for the minds of pavilion planners. Exhibits were successful in shaping a more complicated perspective of the inhabitants of the Philippines when the Report noted, “The curios were not to give the idea
that most Filipinos carry spears and head axes, but to show that many of them can do find hand work, needle work and lace work, and make fine hats and baskets.” Commentary on the Malaysia exhibit evidenced the work of Methodist missionaries, particularly William C. Shellabear with Muslims. The Report noted, “The Malaysia Exhibit sought to tell the story of that group of tropical islands lying southeast of Asia, their great size, their vast natural wealth, their fifty millions of people and their religious, social and political future…hardy and intelligent they have yielded to the faith of Islam, which puts its dead hand upon progress. They are, however feeling the stirrings of new life, and thirty thousand already can testify to the saving power of Christ.”

**Concluding Remarks**

To promote the Centenary Celebration the Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church produced several publications titled *Graphic Series* highlighting the work of missionaries around the world. The series functioned as a fundraiser for Methodist missionary endeavors and helped build anticipation leading to the fair. In an issue titled *The Land of a Far-Flung Challenge* the cover page presents an African woman with a child in her arms being led away from two men in indigenous clothing. The men, including one who appears to be angry or calling out in anger, watch as the white missionary (most likely a representation of an American Methodist missionary) holding a Bible leads the smiling woman into the distance (future).

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27 *Centenary Celebration*, 135-136.
The *Far-Flung Challenge* presented a particular framing of the civilized and uncivilized, the Christian and the Muslim. The African men do not join the smiling woman being led away by the missionary and readers can assume they did not receive the offering (Christianity) of the missionary. The volume on Africa included a dire framing of Islam for American Methodists preparing themselves for the exposition. Language in the article presented Muslims as “a drab blanket that smothers progress” and “teaches fatalism, no atonement for sin, no redemption by
sacrifice.” Echoing the cover of the magazine the essay claims, “Mohammedanism does not lift
the negro out of ignorance” and “polygamy, slavery and the slave-trade are religious
institutions.”

Echoing early nineteenth century American Methodist writings on Islam the fair and
literature produced for the fair presented Muslims in certain ways, as prototypes of a people
needing Christian faith alongside financial and cultural revitalization from American Methodists.
The pavilions in Ohio, attempts to recreate the living conditions of the people of Africa, India,
and Malaysia, presented Protestant fairgoers with representations of a religious faith system that
beckoned the Methodist Episcopal Church and Methodist Episcopal Church, South to provide
medical and education facilities.

As he concluded his speech at the Centenary Samuel Zwemer declared, “I beg of you
when Dr. Shelleber (sic) goes back to lift high that royal banner, that you will stand by them, and
I prophesy that the Methodist Church will see mass movements and revivals, and a great
ingathering, not only in Africa, but in Malaysia for the word of God. And there you have the
mandatory for India, too.”

The hopeful Zwemer, and the idealist audience in attendance had
seen the work of Methodist missionaries and had heard the arguments for and against Islam in
the fairgrounds pavilions. Methodists who walked the grounds of the Centenary Celebration
witnessed particular representations and framings of Islam and the Muslims their denominational
ancestors had read about over a century earlier. Little had changed. After the fair the decorated
pavilions were disassembled and the missionaries and those converted to Christianity returned to
their countries of placement and origin. American Methodists moved into the 1920s with the

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28 The Land of a Far-Flung Challenge: Graphic Series, Africa (New York: World Outlook for the Centenary
Commission of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1918), 3-4.
29 Voices from the Fair, 29.
hope Islam might be brought to an end and Muslim adherents converted to Christianity by the growing forces of Christian workers and their denominational sponsors.