

the true and the beautiful in others. My wife has often noted in a similar vein that evangelicals have moved from a doctrine of *justification by faith* to a position of *justification by doctrinal statement*. This focus on doctrine to the neglect of integrity of character often leads to the worst kinds of hypocrisy and posturing, with evangelism no more than a form of propaganda intended to win nominal allegiance.

Part of Mazhar's genius is his artistry in presenting the message of Christ in a way that maintains the dignity of those listening, rejecting 'all shameful and underhanded methods' (2 Corinthians 4:2, NLT). Mazhar has excelled at utilizing Jesus' very Eastern methods of presenting truth, allowing listeners the freedom to respond or to go their own way.

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One way we could describe this is that Mazhar downplays logic, preferring to speak by analogy. He prefers parabolic discourse to the direct and embarrassingly blunt styles promoted by some evangelists.

To return to the image of borderlands, perhaps what is most challenging about

Mazhar is that he lives, not by making brief forays from the safe centre to the dangerous periphery of Christendom and then back again; rather, he lives out the approach Vincent Donovan took when he said, 'do not try to call them back to where they were, and do not try to call them to where you

are, as beautiful as that place might seem to you. You must have the courage to go with them to a place that neither you nor they have ever been before.'

YOU CAN JUDGE PARENTS BY THEIR CHILDREN

by *Abu Dawood*

Abu Dawood, along with his wife and children, has lived and ministered among Gulf Arab Muslims for over fifteen years. He teaches at a higher education institution and serves on a team that seeks to befriend Muslims, minister to those seeking God, disciple believers, and, by God's grace, establish indigenous churches.

In 1996, we first met Mazhar Mallouhi while serving on a multi-agency team in the Gulf. A few of our team members had previously known Mazhar in Egypt and had shared with us tales of his exploits, stories and love of practical jokes. Personally, I did not know what to expect of the man and I remember being quite nervous the first time we hosted him and Christine, his wife, for an evening meal.

During that first encounter, I remember Mazhar not saying too much and I wondered if the tales were deserved. That

is, until our daughter, who was two at the time, came and gave him a hug. The two began to play together and I saw Mazhar melt from being distant and reserved to laughing out loud and tickling our screaming toddler. Mazhar then smiled and said, 'You can judge the parents by the children,' and since then we have become good friends and colleagues who have worked together to fund several translation projects.

In *Pilgrims of Christ on the Muslim Road*, Paul-Gordon Chandler summarizes the life and attitudes of Mazhar. I write attitudes

because the word *beliefs* implies a clear definition of something that in reality is much more fluid. If you ask Mazhar a clearly defined question about a particular tenet of faith, you'll likely get a story in response, which is often left to the listener to interpret. Even so, there is one clear consistency in Mazhar's life: devotion to his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, which the book clearly presents.

The first third of the book summarizes Mazhar's life, which began in Syria as a Bedouin sheep herder with fears of illiteracy and poverty, and progressed to become a prominent author with a vision for making the gospel message available in bookstores and libraries throughout the Arab world. The biography describes Mazhar's spiritual journey which started with his fascination at the Christ-like features displayed by Ghandi. His interest in the gospel grew through reading the Russian authors while serving in the army. Finally, as Mazhar read the Gospels, he was impacted by Jesus and, as he described it, decided to follow the Master, Jesus. This new life in Christ led to alienation from his family, moving to Beirut to join an Arab Christian community, attending seminary in the USA, and then returning to reside in various countries of the Arab world – always with a compassion for people and a love of Arab culture. Throughout the biography, the author focuses on Mazhar's struggles with identity, as a Syrian Muslim living among various Arab and Western Christian cultures.

It is on the issue of Muslim identity and the work of Christ in the Arab world that the author concentrates in the following section of the book, *Bridging Two Worlds*.

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Chandler begins to describe Mazhar's thoughts of Islam, Arab culture and Christian witness among the Arab people. Considering his struggles with identity, Mazhar is critical of the historical Western missionary efforts in the Arab world, which tended to focus more on unintentional westernization than on the essence of the gospel. Though the author doesn't mention

it, I have heard Mazhar say that he feels his mission is to save the Jesus of the Middle East from the Christian missionaries of the West. What the author does mention are some of Mazhar's biblical insights to the parables and teachings of Jesus that flow from being a cultural Arab. Many of these

insights and stories are helpful for those who minister among the Arab people.

It is Mazhar's use of story, parable and verse that first endeared him to me. When questioned about his views on Islam, he shares about the impossibility of fighting against darkness. He then goes on to share about the need for more candles in the darkness. Though somewhat cryptic, this exemplifies Mazhar's style of sharing truth and his passion to display genuine love and care. If someone attacks his belief in Jesus or claims that the Bible is hopelessly corrupted, Mazhar is quick to request the help of the aggressor to better understand. Mazhar knows that Arabs will not refuse a request for help and that a respectful response better enables the hearing of gospel truth. Thus, Mazhar shares with the aggressor that he is hopelessly devoted to the person of Jesus Christ and the beauty of the gospel. The request for help leads to

further discussions and opportunities to share the truth. A logical argument will not convince an Arab to believe if he has never comprehended the reality of Jesus. As Mazhar explains, the Arab Muslim is like a Bedouin who has driven his car to the city. All his life, he has been driving in the desert and when he comes to the city, the police immediately pull him over to the side of the road and claim he has driven through a red light. The response of the Bedouin is, 'What red light?' He has never seen a red light before and has no idea what it is. Similarly, Arab Muslims have no idea about the truth of Jesus Christ and we must help our neighbours see the light.

The final section of the book is presented in an interview format with Mazhar answering specific questions of the author, Paul-Gordon Chandler. The questions span Mazhar's view of theology, the church, Islam, the Qur'an and scripture. His answers are helpful in our ministries and provide advice on baptism, creeds and other Christian practices in the life of the Muslim believer.

Contextualization of the gospel has been a concern among missionaries since Acts 15. The author and some from the insider-movement have put forth Mazhar as the model for Christian witness and discipleship of Arab Muslim believers. On the contextualization C-scale, Mazhar labels himself as C5 – a follower of Jesus who remains in his indigenous culture and community and does not take on the label of *Christian*. As explained in the book, the label *Christian* in an Arab Muslim context

may imply Westerner, traitor, alcohol vendor and an immoral person like those displayed in Hollywood films. Therefore, Mazhar prefers other labels that better describe his identity as a cultural Arab Muslim who is devoted to Jesus.

Though I agree with these C5 labelling concerns, I do not see how C5 leads to the establishment of the indigenous church. The book discusses baptism, sacraments and other church-related issues without clearly describing the church in the Arab Muslim context. When questioned about the church, Mazhar describes a setting with friends gathered together in an Arab coffee shop discussing politics, literature and God. Though I agree with Mazhar that the Western church of today bears little resemblance to the community churches of Acts, I also feel the coffee-shop gathering does not sufficiently model the church. This is especially true in

regards to corporate prayer and praise, which are clearly described in the Early Church.

A second concern of mine relates to identity. The book describes Mazhar's spiritual journey and struggle with identity as a believer in Jesus. In the end, he found that he did not need to become a Western Christian in order to be a pilgrim of Christ. And it is among the Arab intellectuals and

people of the Middle East that Mazhar has been able to serve and live as an Arab Muslim who is known to follow Christ. With that being stated, I do not feel Mazhar is calling for Western missionaries to portray themselves as insider Arab Muslims, as the author seems to imply. Our skin does not tingle at the reading of the Qur'an as

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Mazhar's does and I do not feel it is possible for us to ever fully comprehend all the nuances of the Arabic language, family, society and religion. In fact, labelling ourselves as Muslims and quoting the Qur'an would likely be perceived as deceptive and insulting.

God has clearly gifted and called Mazhar to minister among the Arab people. Chandler's book captures a taste of Mazhar's enthusiasm for life, literature and

the Lord Jesus. It also describes Mazhar's passion for seeing the Bible distributed and accessible in all parts of the Arab world. Some have questioned his understanding of systematic theology but that misses the point of a man who is known for his generosity, hospitality and keen insight into the lives of those around him. I personally count Mazhar as one of my close friends and whole-heartedly recommend *Pilgrims of Christ on the Muslim Road*.

A MIDDLE EASTERN BMB RESPONDS TO CHANDLER'S BOOK

by Mostafa S.

Soon after he became a Christian 28 years ago, Mostafa became active in outreach to Muslims in his Middle Eastern country, and he and his wife have provided shelter and discipleship training for countless Believers from Muslim Background (BMBs). He has suffered much for his faith and is a tireless evangelist and teacher, known and respected across the Arab world. At the request of his church leaders in the Middle East, he and his family moved to Europe some ten years ago, from where they minister locally and internationally in evangelism, discipleship and teaching.

I. Reviewing this book from a BMB perspective

I am honoured to be asked to share my thoughts about the book *Pilgrims of Christ on the Muslim Road*. This book explores the very rich life of my brother in Christ, Mazhar Mallouhi, the Muslim who converted to Christ so many years ago now. Coming from a Muslim background myself, I can say that Mazhar was one of the signs on the road for me, as well as for many other converts, when I started my journey with Christ some twenty-eight years ago. At that time, the number of converts who were well known in the Arab world was very small, and the idea of changing one's faith from Islam to Christianity was nearly unheard of in our countries and among our communities in the Middle East.

Mazhar Mallouhi is one of those people who can establish and strengthen his relationships with others smoothly. He has

very strong charisma that helps him to be accepted and welcomed by people from other faiths. What made me very sad is that on the very day that I was going to spend the whole day with Mazhar and some other converts, the security police in my country arrested me and put me in prison for about eleven months. Thus, I have still not had the privilege of meeting Mazhar personally.

Nevertheless, I have read most of his books and have even published comments about his book *An Eastern Reading of the Gospel of Luke* (a special edition of the Gospel of Luke published through Mazhar's publishing company). In that review, I raised some questions about what the Muslim Moroccan professor wrote in his introduction to *An Eastern Reading*. In the introduction, he claimed that he owns an authentic or a genuine copy of the Gospel of Luke! Even stranger, at the end of his nice introduction, he