

are unclean and, more controversially, Paul's claim that Christ is the end of the Law.

The volume and depth of material that Bill includes provides convincing support for the relationship between literalistic reading and extremist behaviour. However, one wonders if a prior chicken-and-egg question should be asked. Is it not more likely that violence frequently co-opts convenient proof texts, rather than that the texts themselves induce violence? A superficial reading of a text is a handy justification for reacting to threats – real or perceived. Surely a lessening of suspicion on both sides would ease tensions more readily than textual criticism, important as it is in the long run. For the Christian, a practical application of the love of Christ should override fear of Islamist rhetoric.

The old adage 'you haven't read a book once 'til you've read it twice' applies well to

*The Certainty Trap*. Some of the book is heavy going even for the initiated, and may well serve leaders the best, but the less technical material in the preface and opening and closing chapters is accessible to most non-specialists. Furthermore, the material does try to do justice to both Islam and Christianity and should be amenable to inquiring minds of both faiths. But most importantly, Bill's book raises the important question of whether refusing to be honest about our doubts is in fact dishonest to scripture. After all, recognition and resolution of doubts contribute to growth and understanding. Bill asserts his own clear Christian faith, but honestly grapples with the dilemma of that certainty against confusing and controversial texts. His recipe for avoiding the certainty trap is greater humility in our human understanding of scriptures.

#### **reviewed by Bryan Norford**

*Bryan Norford, now retired, has an M. Div. from Regent College in Canada. He and his wife Ann have pastored Canadian churches of two denominations, and he continues to write, teach and preach regularly. They have had close association with Muslim families in the past. They recently served a season as managers at Winchelsea in Worthing.*

### **God's Continent: Christianity, Islam and Europe's Religious Crisis**

Philip Jenkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, May 2007), 352 pages

The future of Muslims in Europe is something that is hotly debated, not only in Europe, but also across the world, and not only among secularists or Muslims themselves, but also among Christians. In my work, I find that many Christians agree with the sentiment, if not with the actually wording, of the Egyptian-born Jewish writer, Bat Ye'or, who envisions in her book *Eurabia: the Euro-Arab Axis* that Europe is emerging

into Eurabia: a Muslim-dominated subcontinent, in which the remaining Christians might enjoy some kind of second-class status.

I meet many Christians who believe that Europe is in danger due to the growing presence of Muslims. In her article 'OIC: Eliminating Eliminating "defamation" of Islam', Elizabeth Kendal, principal researcher and writer of the World Evangelical Alliance's

Religious Liberty Commission, speaks of 'the Muslim colonisation of Europe'<sup>15</sup>.

Those who do not believe in some kind of conspiracy theory, or who do not want to sound the alarmist bells just because millions of Muslims have become hard-working, law-abiding citizens across Europe, take Philip Jenkins as one of their allies. Although he is not blind to the facts, that:

- Europe is acquiring much greater ethnic and cultural diversity;
- Muslims have become a permanent part of the European landscape;
- European Christianity is sick (in chapter 2 he demonstrates the weakness of European Christianity);
- Europe today faces a serious danger from violent extremism rooted in radical Islamism (as he points out in chapter 8, entitled 'Ultras'); nevertheless, he believes that 'the vision of a predominantly Muslim Europe nearby on the historical horizon demands serious qualification.'<sup>16</sup>

Throughout his book he argues against the alarmists who believe that European Christianity is dead and that Islam will take over. First of all, he points out (in chapter 3) that there is still life in European Christianity as seen in (among other things) :

- the several hundred million 'cultural Christians'
- the widespread presence of religious-oriented institutions
- the establishment of new religious orders and
- the popularity of pilgrimages.

Secondly, in chapter 4, he puts the spotlight on the sizable number of Christian migrants now living in Europe, 'who represent a bracing, and often startling, new presence within the continent's religious life'.

Thirdly, in chapters 5 to 9, he points out that in the struggle for the establishment of Islam in Europe, there are not only extremist forces, but also reformists, who explore the implications for how Islam needs to change as it adapts to life in Western society.

Undeniably, the public voices of Europe's Muslim communities are often shrill, and some leaders assuredly are extremist, militant, and in some cases, actively subversive. In many countries too, Muslim populations seem deeply alienated from mainstream society, and some ordinary Muslims appear willing to follow the extremists. Yet the religious situation is much more complex than it might appear. While radicals and militant (sic) flourish, their opponents are numerous and significant, and so are the historical forces working against extremism.<sup>17</sup>

The growing presence of Islam in Europe has led and leads to debates and controversies in Europe over assimilation, integration and multiculturalism. Jenkins deals with some of these in chapter 10 and points out that 'while European states have been trying to accommodate and include the new presence of Islam, they have unwittingly revived a series of issues that affect Christianity as well, demanding a rewriting of the rules of engagement between church and state.'<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/reports/articles.htm?id=1725>

<sup>16</sup> Page 14

<sup>17</sup> Page 147

<sup>18</sup> Page 258

The presence of Muslims in Europe has consequences for Christians, as Jenkins points out in the last chapters of the book. It raises questions for Christians about the relationship between Islam and Christianity. Some see the presence of Muslims at our doorstep as a great way to evangelize those who used to be in closed or limited-access countries; others wonder whether the two religions are sisters separated at birth and raised in different family settings.

Jenkins points out that 'Muslims and Christians share common perceptions and can cooperate to combat proposals over abortion and contraception', something which I have found to be true in my present ministry in Amsterdam.

In a climate where there is a lot of doom thinking regarding the future of the Church in Europe and the growing presence of Muslims, I find Jenkins' book refreshing and balanced. It is well documented (it has thirty-seven pages of notes with references to books, websites etc). Of course, when he speaks of the Church, we have to remind ourselves that as a Roman Catholic he might use different criteria for defining committed Christians than evangelicals do. But, we should be careful not to write off Roman Catholic Christians too quickly. On Easter Sunday this year, Pope Benedict XVI baptized Italian journalist and author, Magdi Cristiano Allam, a former Muslim, who recounted that on his road to conversion, the challenge that Pope Benedict XVI offered to Islam in his September 2006 address at Regensburg was 'undoubtedly the most extraordinary and important encounter in my decision to convert'. It is significant that the Pope baptized a former Muslim in such a public way on Easter

It raises questions for Christians about the relationship between Islam and Christianity.

Sunday. In his article of 26 March 2008, 'The mustard seed in global strategy', Spengler comments on this baptism. Although I think he overstates his case when he writes that 'the Pope alone among the leaders of the Christian world, challenges Islam as a religion', I agree that by baptizing a former Muslim in such a public way, he wanted to make a clear statement. And he may not be the only Roman Catholic to do so.

As Spengler writes:

The Pope also has in reserve the European youth movement 'Communione e Liberazione', which he has nurtured for decades. Forty-thousand (sic) members turned out in 2005 when the then Cardinal Ratzinger addressed a memorial service in Milan for the movement's founder. European Christianity may be reduced to a few coals glowing in the ashes, but it is not dead, only marginalized. If the Catholic youth of Europe are offered a great task – to evangelize the Muslims whose restlessness threatens to push Europe into social chaos – many of them may heed the call.<sup>19</sup>

Of course, not everyone who calls himself a Christian is a born-again disciple of Jesus Christ. But that is also true of Muslims. Not everyone born, or whose parents were born, in a Muslim country and who now lives in Europe is a committed, religious Muslim. As someone pointed out, there are many *MINOs* in Europe (Muslims in Name Only).

Europe as a continent is facing several challenges; several of them – particularly the development of Islam, the future of the Church and how they each deal with secularization – are clearly discussed in Jenkins' book. *Those of us with a heart for Muslims in Europe need to read this book.* It will help to keep us from joining the growing

number of alarmists; but, at the same time, without becoming naïve, it will help us to trust that God, who sent his Son to die for the lost of this world, is not only the Lord of history, but also of the future.

In the immediate future, Christians and Muslims will increasingly have the

opportunity to rub shoulders, and in doing so, it is my prayer that our Muslim friends will be attracted to the Jesus they see in us. The first fruits are there; the harvest is about to come.

*reviewed by Bert de Ruiter*

## ***The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross***

Dr. Nabeel T. Jabbour (Navpress, 2008).

Nabeel Jabbour, of Syrian/Lebanese Christian descent, ministered and studied in Egypt before settling in Colorado, USA. He has his doctorate in Islamics and teaches and lectures widely, working with the Navigators. Check his website ([www.nabeeljabbour.com](http://www.nabeeljabbour.com)) for more information.

The description on the back cover of his book gives an apt introduction:

'A war is raging for the minds and souls of Muslims today,' writes Nabeel Jabbour. 'The eternal welfare of 1.4 billion people is at stake. They are being pulled in two directions-fanaticism on the one hand and moderation and open-mindedness on the other... ' In this book, Dr. Jabbour aims to help Western Christians go beyond mere tolerance to a passion for Muslims. He explains how that can be done in ways that are sensitive to Islamic culture, and he presents suggestions on how to build vital relationships with Muslims.

Across the nation of Canada, Christians display an assortment of responses to the Muslims on their doorstep. Some express fear, distrust or anger with statements like 'We are losing our rights; Muslims are taking over.' On the other hand, many Christians want to be good neighbours to Muslims but don't know where to begin with sharing the

love of Jesus. They are asking questions like 'Can I talk about Jesus with my Muslim colleague?' or 'Can I pray with my Muslim friend?' This book can help Western Christians find answers to such questions.

Nabeel begins by describing one of the most stunning sculptures he has ever seen.

'This piece of art had two interrelated scenes back to back, separated by a door. On one side was a Native American man in a fierce snowstorm, knocking at the door of a log cabin and pleading for refuge and warmth. On the other side of the door was a warm room with a terrified mother holding a shotgun while the woman's frightened three-year-old daughter clung to her dress. The terrified mother was refusing to open the door.' Fear kept her from a compassionate response.

By now you will have caught the gist of Nabeel's message – that it has to do with our attitudes towards Muslims. In the first half of the book he helps us understand his friend Ahmad – a Muslim international student studying at an American college. Ahmad's struggles are described in three sections: the Message, the Messenger and the Receiver. He begins the first section with 'My paradigm or lens through which I look at reality is not primarily that of guilt and righteousness like yours, but that of