

This book is also a guide for Christians on how to witness. Maurer uses the final forty-five pages of the book to address the attitude, motivation and practical aspects of witnessing to the Muslim person. The main contribution of this section is Maurer's detailed description of his approach to witnessing that involves asking Muslims questions. Once again there are coloured boxes in this section with very helpful questions showing how this works. In one section, Maurer gives ten basic rules to keep in mind while witnessing with Muslims, which are also presented in outline form. One section that everyone will find valuable is on the use of illustrations, parables and stories. Here, Maurer gives six short stories he has used with Muslims.

The appendices include an eight-page glossary with more than forty Islamic terms, in which the Arabic word is listed along with its transliteration and explanation in English. To cite just one example; he explains that takfir, means 'to declare a person an unbeliever (kafir)', and that it applies 'in particular those who leave Islam' (p. 190). This list of definitions is very handy to have as a reference.

Ask Your Muslim Friend is an excellent one-volume guide for Christians wanting to acquaint themselves with Muslim beliefs and practices, as well as for those who wish to engage with Muslims in an effective and Biblical way. It is both comprehensive in its treatment of its subject as well as concise. This book also lends itself as a resource for those engaged in training non-specialist Christians in how to witness to Muslims. This should be the first book someone reads as they prepare for ministry to Muslims.

Reviewed by Dale Martin

AMERICAN EVANGELICALS IN EGYPT: MISSIONARY ENCOUNTERS IN AN AGE OF EMPIRE

by **Heather J. Sharkey**

Princeton University Press, 2008

American Evangelicals in Egypt is a thoroughly researched account of the American Mission in Egypt, of the defunct United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA) and the United Presbyterian Church in the USA. (UPCUSA). As with the author's other writings, this book is extremely well-documented and draws on many first-hand accounts in English, Arabic, and to a lesser extent, French. It is a book that all evangelicals who have an interest in missionary work among Muslims should read, especially for those serving or going to serve in Egypt.

Sharkey states that her book 'neither advocates Christian missions nor endorses evangelization' (p. 14). Her goal 'is to produce a history of the American missionary encounter in Egypt that illuminates both the Egyptian and American dimensions of this historical exchange while attending to the changing

landscapes of social attitudes and religious beliefs. It aims to show that missionary history is not only 'about' Christianity and its transmission but rather covers the social, cultural, and political lives of individuals and communities' (p. 16) and 'contends, in short, that people involved in missionary encounters changed significantly – and changed each other – without necessarily 'converting' in the sense of either registering or announcing a shift of religious identity or spiritual life' (p. 15).

Although writing from a non-evangelical viewpoint, the author is surprisingly fair in her treatment of evangelicals. This is a testament to her commitment to properly resource her subjects and let the reader draw one's own conclusions. It is refreshing to read a recent publication about pioneer missions in the Middle East that was not specifically written to denigrate missionaries, whether in part or in whole.

The American (Presbyterian) Mission, the largest missionary enterprise in Egypt, began in 1854 and officially disbanded in 1967. Through this 'extended' century, Sharkey identifies 4 distinct time periods and major emphases (pp. 216-7):

1. 1854-1882, the focus was on evangelizing Coptic Orthodox adherents
2. 1882-1918, the 'colonial moment' gave the mission freedom to openly evangelize Muslims
3. 1918-1945, the 'retrenchment' of the mission due to loss of finances as well as Muslim opposition
4. 1945-1967, the turning over of the mission to the Egyptian Evangelical Church

During this time the American Mission 'opened dozens of schools, medical facilities and public libraries; initiated rural development programs to improve livestock and reduce the spread of endemic diseases; and vigorously promoted literacy campaigns, especially for the sake of Bible reading... By the mid-1950s they claimed some 200 living converts from Islam within a small Evangelical Presbyterian community of just under 27,000 members, most of whom had come from Coptic Orthodoxy' (p. 1). In addition, the mission policy and practice gradually changed from that of proclaiming the Gospel with the goal of seeking converts to a 'social gospel' in which educational, medical and other services were felt to be a sufficient witness of Christianity and where conversion of the individual was not actively sought (cf. pp. 14-15, 191, 219-221). Sharkey especially highlights the 'theological transitions' of Charles R. Watson, a one-time member of the American Mission who eventually started the American University in Cairo (AUC), as a premier example of these changes in thinking and practice (cf. pp. 168-169, 222).

The author also touches on a number of important points worthy of serious consideration such as:

- American/Western emphasis on individuality and its clash with Middle Eastern culture, especially among Muslims (pp. 5, 12, et. al.)

- Missionary activity inadvertently mobilizing anti-colonial nationalists and Islamists (p. 1; ch. 4)
- Missionary cooperation giving birth to ecumenism (pp. 3-4, 52, 207, 226-227)
- Start of the American University in Cairo (AUC) (pp. 149-162)
- Move from the belief of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone to universalism (pp. 71, 161-169, 215)
- Missionary influence on the political views and policies of the US (p.2)
- Missionary clashes with the political views and policies of the US (pp. 2, 180, 187-188)
- Acceptance of women into the clergy (pp. 2, 7)
- Failure of the legal passage of religious liberty to result in great conversions among Muslims (pp. 5, 51; ch. 4).

Of the many issues that this book addresses some have great import for those who currently minister to Arabic-speaking Muslims:

- How does one reconcile the tension between Jesus' call to individual conversion in light of Muslim social structure which discourages such individual decisions?
- Many of the ideas about Islam among those missionaries who espoused 'modernism' or a 'social gospel' are identical to the perspectives of those today who espouse C5/Insider movements!
- Regardless of how accommodating missionaries are to Muslims there is constant pressure from Muslims to control and/or eliminate missionaries and their activities from the country, regardless of how beneficial those services are to Muslims.
- The suspicion and hatred of evangelicals that Al-Azhar teaches its students should not be underestimated (nor is this influence limited to Egypt).
- Learning Arabic is essential for understanding and communication; fluency in the language should be the goal.
- It is imperative for missionaries to know what Muslims are saying about them, both in the media as well as 'on the street.'
- Handing over control of local congregations and ministries to native believers should be part of missionary strategy and not a by-product of missionaries losing their legal authority to remain in and minister in the country.

The one major weakness of this book is that the author fails to adequately define 'evangelical' for the reader. The way in which the early missionaries understood and used the term differed from how it was understood and used by some of the later missionaries. For example, she quotes two retired missionaries from the American Mission, who served in the latter half of the 20th Century:

When asked, 'What has the term 'evangelical' meant to you?' Kenneth E. Nolin... answered that he associated the term with the Arabic word al-Injil, meaning the New Testament or gospel. Referring to the fact that the Qur'an recognizes al-Injil as a sacred scripture that is part of Islam's heritage, he added, 'I like the sense of contact with the people of Islam and their Qur'an that it (the word injil) gives, as is also true of the word Allah (God), used in the Arabic Bible.' Meanwhile, when asked whether American Presbyterians were still evangelicals, John G. Lorimer answered, 'We are reluctant to surrender the title 'evangelical.' I am sure that most of my colleagues, and I myself, consider themselves 'evangelical' in the best sense of that word, as distinguished from 'fundamentalist.' The two words are sometimes mistakenly used as synonyms.' (p. 228)

When pioneer missionary, Andrew Watson, who served in the 19th and early 20th centuries, wrote of the 'pure gospel' he had a very specific understanding that the 'gospel' was the biblical message of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and that he, along with other missionaries actively sought individual conversion and not simply denominational identity (p. 19) – it had nothing to do with a word association in the Koran or as a distinct 'tradition' separate from twentieth-century 'fundamentalism.' Towards the close of the American Mission in Egypt, people like Charles R. Watson and James K. Quay may have retained the term 'evangelical,' but had come to redefine its earlier meaning, in practice, if not in theory. Because of this obfuscation the book ends with the unfortunate conclusion that by 1967 American Presbyterians 'were aware, too, that the United States was just one small part of this world and that it had no monopoly on 'true gospel' (p. 231). The pioneers of the American Mission in Egypt never assumed such an arrogant idea. That these pioneers freely worked with other denominations, organizations, and individuals who shared in the core set of New Testament beliefs that properly constitute one an 'evangelical' is sufficient proof that they did not feel that they had a 'monopoly on the 'true gospel.'

In conclusion, Sharkey sets a high standard for research, knowledge, and even-handed judgments to which all of us should aspire. Although her viewpoint is not pro-evangelical it is neither anti-evangelical in the sense that she seeks to negatively criticize evangelicals. *American Evangelicals in Egypt* is an invaluable historical primer that will benefit all who read it. May it compel and inspire further research of our spiritual predecessors and their works in light of what the Bible teaches. We have much to learn from both their successes and their failures.

Reviewed by Adam Simnowitz

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