

PART 4: BOOK REVIEWS

ASK YOUR MUSLIM FRIEND:
AN INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM AND A CHRISTIAN'S
GUIDE FOR INTERACTION WITH MUSLIMS

by **Andreas Maurer.**

AcadSA Publishing, Kempton Park, South Africa. 172 pages.

(Available from most AWM national offices)

This book is true to its title. Woven through the entire book is the premise that the best way to witness to Muslims is to ask them questions. This avoids allowing the discussion to become confrontational, gets the Muslim friend to think through the issue, reinforces the relationship, and generally produces a more constructive discussion. In every section of the book there are coloured boxes with suggested leading questions that one can ask the Muslim. These lists of questions are very helpful, and it is obvious that the author has had many discussions with Muslims and knows what questions to ask and how to ask them.

This book is also true to its subtitle. The first ninety-three pages are a concise introduction to the history of Islam, Muslim practices, Muslim culture and the contemporary movements one finds in Islam today. Material on Islamic fundamentalism and other subjects is often presented in summarized format as a list of points rather than in a narrative. Thus, the material lends itself to be used as an easy reference or as a resource for presentations. In his section on Sayyid Qutub, the father of modern jihadist movements, Maurer gives a list of thirteen major aspects of Qutub and the characteristics of his teaching given in bullet point format. Most topics, however, are written in brief paragraphs, making this a very readable guide with all the salient points covered.

The last two chapters deal with answering Muslim objections and a guide to encountering Muslims. The charts that Maurer includes, which compare the similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam on various theological topics, are themselves enough to make the book worth having. There are in-depth descriptions of Muslim belief, and quotations from the Surahs and the Bible with very helpful citations of Arabic words relating to Muslim concepts. The answer to the Muslim objection about the corruption of the Scriptures is a comprehensive answer drawn from history, manuscripts and the Qur'an. Maurer has broken this down to three separate questions: 'The Bible is not God's revelation,' 'The Bible is not the Word of God,' and 'Christians have Bibles with contradictory texts.' Complete and specific answers are given to all three questions. Maurer's experience in dialogue with Muslims is evident in how he has identified the specific points of their objections. Readers will find that these are exactly the questions that Muslims they meet will ask them.

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