

SEEDBED



Practitioners in Conversation

December 2013, Vol XXVII No 1

Theme:

**ARAB SPRING & ISLAMISM:
NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY?**

Plus:

**ARAB CINEMA, TIPS FOR CONVERSATION
& BOOK REVIEWS**

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SEEDBED

Practitioners in Conversation

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EDITORIAL

Silencing the Ignorance of the Foolish by Doing Good

15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. 17 Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor. 1 Peter 2:15-17 (ESV)

On July 3rd, 2013, I had the remarkable privilege of being in the heart of Cairo, only a few minutes' walk away from Tahrir Square. On that historic day, after the Egyptian people took to the streets in the millions, they took back the 'revolution' that they believed the Muslim Brotherhood had stolen from them a year earlier. During my 10-day visit to Cairo, I had the privilege of talking with six Egyptian and other Arab Christian leaders while they were living through the massive and uncertain transitions in their beloved homeland. I was deeply impressed with their strong sense of hope and optimism, and even excitement, for the future of the country and region, even as levels of violence and persecution were sharply rising.

Now, six months later, the future of Egypt is still far from clear even though just this past week 38% of the electorate ratified the vastly improved re-written constitution. In neighbouring Syria, the eventual outcome of the tragic three-year long conflict is completely unpredictable. Today, January 22nd, representatives from the warring factions meet in Geneva for Peace Talks.

This afternoon I heard news from a Canadian colleague who is transitioning from her life in very unstable Yemen to a regional ministry based in Europe. An American colleague who lived in Yemen for decades is now seeking to re-start his life in the United States, since life in Sana'a had become untenable for him and his family as daily chaos and persecution mounted. Conflicts, transitions, shifting alliances and geo-political power plays are re-shaping the entire North Africa Middle Eastern (NAME) region. How are we who are called to serve the peoples of NAME to live and serve and minister in times of tumultuous change?

The three main articles in this issue deal with the rising influence of Islamism (in Indonesia and the US) along with the turmoil in the Arab world. Conditions for ministry in several Arab countries are both the worst I have ever known and also the best. As I talked with both Egyptians and expatriates living in Egypt this summer, most were full of stories of increased openness and curiosity about the Gospel. Even though two of the Bible Society's bookshops were ransacked by mobs in 2013, a record number of Bibles were distributed in 2013!

Taking our cue from the Apostle Peter (above), may God give you all grace, wherever in the Muslim world you live, that through your godly lives, Muslims, and especially the more extremist among them, will be silenced as they see God at work in your lives during these trying times.

Don Little, Editor (seedbed.editor@sent.com)

Notes and News from the Editor

Excellent Resource on the Insider Movement Controversies Available from Bridging the Divide

Over the past three years both associate SEEDBED editor L.D. Waterman and I have been actively involved in ongoing efforts to clarify key issues and build relational bridges among practitioners around the world who do not see eye-to-eye on appropriate approaches to contextualization. This network, called *Bridging the Divide* (BtD), now consists of more than a hundred workers, mission leaders and missiologists from numerous ministry organizations, including a growing number of believers from an Islamic background. In June 2011, 2012 and 2013, we held small consultations at Houghton College, in Western NY, USA. Our fourth consultation is slated to be held late in June 2014 in West Asia.

The BtD Network recently launched a website. To read a range of articles and a to see the vision and purpose of BtD, please visit www.btdnetwork.org.

I want especially to draw your attention to a great resource that can help you understand and enter into the kinds of dialogues that we have been having within the BtD Network these past few years. Last year I was privileged to serve as a co-editor to a special edition of the *Evangelical Review of Theology* (ERT – To subscribe, go here: www.paternosterperiodicals.com/evangelical-review-of-theology) that was *entirely* devoted to the issues being discussed within BtD. The articles are written or co-written by members of the BtD network along with a few non-BtD scholar-practitioners who participated in discussions with BtD members. In an act of great generosity, the ERT gave BtD permission to post this entire issue of the ERT on our website. (Click here: www.btdnetwork.org/collaborations/.)

The lead article is by SEEDBED associate editor, L.D. Waterman. The titles are:

1. Insider Movements: Current Issues in Discussion – L.D. Waterman
2. Does the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 Support Insider Movement Practices?
3. The Ethics of Qur'an Interpretation in Muslim Evangelism and Insider Movements
4. Muslim Idiom Translations in Bangladesh
5. The Philosophy Behind the 2008 Arabic Translation *The True Meaning of the Gospel of the Messiah*
6. Beyond the C-Spectrum? A Search for New Models

Apology for Infrequent Seedbed Production & Changes for 2014

Though there is really no solid reason to give for only publishing one issue of Seedbed in both 2012 and 2013, I do apologize. As God gives grace, the goal is to begin publishing *three* issues a year, as of 2014. We hope to do two issues devoted to Muslim ministry issues. A third, 'special issue' will focus on non-Muslim ministry contexts, and each year the non-Muslim ministry issue will be produced by a different guest editor.

PART I: MINISTERING IN CONTEXTS OF ISLAMISM AND SOCIAL UPHEAVAL

The Dynamics of Islamic Fundamentalism in Indonesia and the Growth of Christianity

By Frank Preston, PhD

Frank Preston and his wife Linda (pseudonyms) have served with Pioneers for over 22 years, thirteen of those years were in Indonesia. He has published book chapters and articles in leading journals on radical Islam, especially Hizbut Tahrir in Indonesia. Currently he collaborates with a multi-organizational team in facilitating CPM training events for expatriates and nationals who work amongst Unreached People Groups.

Abstract

The June 2012 edition of the *Economist* reported that the same Muslim groups in Indonesia that attacked and killed members of the aberrant Islamic group Ahmadiyah and destroyed their mosque also attacked and destroyed Christian churches in various locations. International Crisis Group observes that these groups choose violence against anyone who does not adhere to *their* brand of Islam, be they Muslim or Christian. These groups justify their attacks on interpretations of the Islamic concept of *Takfir*—apostates whom they determine are undermining Islamic principles and thus need to be neutralized (ICG, 2008, 2010). Reports from within Indonesia note that significant numbers of Ahmadiyah Muslims consider Christianity a viable alternative to the brand of Islam propagated by these radicals.

A similar pattern emerged from the failed 1965 Indonesian coup d'état by communist insurgents. Radical Islamic elements sought to take advantage of the political instability to install sharia law in an effort to make Islamic law the basis for Indonesian politics (Machmudi, 2008). Their attempts failed when General Suharto (later becoming President Suharto) crushed the coup and then installed secular governance through the 'Five Guiding Principles' (*Pancasila*) as a way of countering two destabilizing forces: communism and radical Islam. Nearly half a million Indonesians from all faiths and political affiliations were killed during the coup by the forces vying for political control (Ramage, 1995).

But in the era before the coup and in the aftermath, forward-thinking church leaders and missionaries chose to be bold in witness and to prepare indigenous leaders instead of being insular during persecution. This resulted in the largest conversion of Muslims to Christianity recorded in history, with over two million Muslims becoming Christians (Willis, 1977).

Christianity as a missionary apolitical religion

Arguably at its core, Christianity is a missionary religion. Stephen Neill asserts that, 'The church of the first Christian generation was genuinely a missionary church' (Neill, 1986). The book of Acts records the implementing of Jesus' command given in the gospel of Matthew 28:19-21 *to make disciples of all ethnê*, with the command being reiterated in Acts 1:8 *to be his witnesses to all the earth*. Clearly, Jesus' intention was to have the gospel message spread to all ethnic groups throughout the earth. History records the diligence of Christ's followers in obeying this command. Currently Christianity is the world's largest religion, with nearly two billion adherents, and is the fastest growing religion gaining new adherents *by conversion*. Islam ranks second with 1.6 billion adherents (Miller, 2009) with growth that is mostly derived from high birth rates (Barrett, Kurian, & Johnson, 2001).

Jesus established Christianity as an apolitical (non-political) entity. When discussing this issue with Pontius Pilatus (Jn.18), Jesus states that his kingdom is not of this world, thus establishing the flexibility of Christianity to be expressed under any political system, though some systems are more compatible with Christian teachings than others. The second century letter *Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus*, is one of the earliest descriptions of Christian lifestyles under oppressive regimes. In it we find this description of what sets Christians apart from others:

Jesus states that his kingdom is not of this world, thus establishing the flexibility of Christianity to be expressed under any political system.

For Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind either in locality or in speech or in customs. For they dwell not somewhere in cities of their own, neither do they use some different language, nor practice an extraordinary kind of life. Nor again do they possess any invention discovered by any intelligence or study of ingenious men, nor are they masters of any human dogma as some are. But while they dwell in cities of Greeks and barbarians as the lot of each is cast, and follow the native customs in dress and food and the other arrangements of life, yet the constitution of their own citizenship, which they set forth, is marvellous, and confessedly contradicts expectation. They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners; they bear their share in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign (Roberts, 2007).

The last two sentences succinctly state that Christians were able to flourish in any political environment since they lacked nationalistic inclinations.

Islam as a missionary and political religion

Muhammad was born in 570 CE in Mecca, a member of the Quraysh tribe of the Arab ethnic group. At that time, Arabs were polytheists and the Quraysh tribe was caretaker of the *Kaaba* worship centre that housed a multitude of worshiped

artifacts. Muhammad was grieved that the Arabs in general and more specifically his Quraysh tribe had departed from their monotheist roots of worshipping the one God ‘Allah’ to worshipping a multitude of idols and deities. During the month of Ramadan in 610 CE Muhammad received his first of many revelations calling for all descendants of Abraham to obey the holy books of Allah, and return to worshipping Allah only. These revelations, collectively called the *Qur’an* (literally the *recitations* of Muhammad’s revelations), affirmed Muhammad’s monotheist beliefs in Allah, and became his sermons to the Quraysh tribe, and to all Arabs, to return to the one God, Allah. Eventually his revelations in the Qur’an called for *all people* to follow Islam as the ‘right path.’ Those who did not choose to follow were classified as *kafir* or unbelievers (Aslan, 2005).

Muhammad’s last two revelations in the Qur’an (according to Bell & Watt, 1995), *The Table Spread* (Surah 5) and *Repentance* (Surah 9), make it clear that Muslims should continue to spread their religion throughout the earth through conversions, this often involved exercising military and political control to obtain conversions. For example, *Repentance* (9) verse 5 illustrates the missionary and political objective:

But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (Yusuf Ali, 1991)

This passage can be summed up as saying that Muslims are to maintain relations with pagans (other translations call them *unbelievers* or the Arabic term *kafir*) and then to provide a means for them to repent and to become Muslims. The controversial part of this passage is: ‘fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them’ from which some radical Islamic groups use as justification for violent jihad – warring against the *kafir*. But some Muslim scholars feel the intent of this verse is a call for Muslims to practice *da’wah*, a concept similar to Christian missionary activity. The word *da’wah* in Arabic simply means: ‘inviting someone to the way of submission and surrender to Allah’.

Larry Poston argues that the *da’wah* missionary approach used by Muslims for over a millennium after Muhammad’s death involved the political conquest of a nation followed by the establishment of Islamic religious/political institutions. But this proved impracticable in the modern era¹. Most Muslims in the modern era adopted an ‘internal/personal’ process involving persuasion and a personal conversion to Islam (Poston, 1992).

¹ Scholars such as Karen Armstrong (2000) and Albert Hourani (1983) credit the influence of the Islamic scholar al Afghani (1838-1897) for demarcating the modern era of Islam.

After the dissolution of the Caliphate in 1924, Hasan al Banna (1906-1949), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, was grieved at the decline of Islam's *da'wah* aspirations. He felt Islam needed a spiritual revival implemented through a structured approach called *tarbiyya* (literally: a system of education). The basis of *tarbiyya* was the small cell group, called an *usroh* or 'family' that had a leader and about ten members. Four 'families' made up a 'clan', five 'clans' made up a 'group' and five groups made up a 'battalion' - all of whom reported to a branch manager. In this way a large group of members could be managed while the personalized mentoring of Muslims in the tenants of Islam could occur.

Hasan al Banna's vision for how to create an Islamic revival that would eventually lead to the re-establishment of the Caliphate involved three stages: (1) making known the ideas and goals of the Society among its members, (2) forming and sustaining an effective organization which would embody those ideas, and (3) establishing a movement that would put into effect the ideals of the Society (Mitchell, 1969, p. 197).

It exceeds the bounds of this paper to describe in detail the growth of the Muslim Brotherhood internationally, but currently the Muslim Brotherhood is easily the largest Muslim organization in the world. This paper will discuss the Muslim Brotherhood branch in Indonesia known as *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (Prosperous Justice Party) or PKS, and how its aspirations are impacting the Christian community.

Indonesia's religious history and modern Islamic movements

Prior to the 7th century Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms ruled most of Indonesia. Muslim traders and missionaries began arriving in the archipelago of Indonesia by the 11th century and by the 14th century most of Java and Sumatra islands had turned to the Islamic religion. By 1500 CE Portuguese traders began arriving, bringing Catholicism with them. The Dutch began arriving by the 1600s, introducing Protestantism, but the religious terrain was already fairly established with 85% of Indonesia's population being Muslim and the other religions composing the balance.

Though Muslims were a majority of the population in Indonesia by 1500, they were never able to translate that majority into a unified political identity for two reasons. First, the various autonomous kingdoms controlled major swaths of the archipelago, each with their own language and culture. This hindered a common expression of an Islamic *ummah*. Second, the Dutch colonizers used this natural disunity between ethnic groups to maintain control, often pitting one ethnic group against another, and not allowing a common language that would engender expressions of nationalism.

Yet the 'Indonesian' language (a standardized version of the Malay trade language) was growing more common when the Japanese occupation supplanted the Dutch control in 1942. At the end of WWII, an Indonesian resistance

movement under the leadership of Sukarno repelled the attempted re-occupation by the Dutch. On the 17 of August 1945, Sukarno and the Indonesian resistance movement were able to declare their independence as a democratic and self-ruled state (Smith, 1974).

As Sukarno and the Indonesian resistance movement were developing the Indonesian constitution, fundamental and radical Islamic groups sought to use this political opportunity to implement sharia as the political law of the nation. Seeking to mitigate the pressure of these groups to implement sharia and thus likely cause a civil war between radical Muslims and other religions plus moderate Muslims, Sukarno established the 'Five Guiding Principles' (called *Pancasila*) that essentially declared Indonesia a secular yet religiously pluralistic nation (Ramage, 1995).

In the late 1980s, the Indonesian Ministry of Religion began sending students to Egypt to pursue advanced degrees in Islamic religion as a way of neutralizing the influence of radical groups. Many of those students were introduced to the Muslim Brotherhood ideology in Egypt. Upon returning to Indonesia as scholars in leading universities, they began establishing *usroh* study circles and followed a similar pattern of recruitment and training as was practiced in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. These *usroh* circles sought to encourage piety by Muslims and not engage in confrontational mobilization tactics used by radical Islamic groups. This is a core philosophical difference that sets Muslim Brotherhood Indonesia (calling itself Prosperous Justice Party or 'Partai Keadilan Sejahtera' - PKS) apart from radical Islamic groups.

Though Muslims were a majority of the population in Indonesia by 1500, they were never able to translate that majority into a unified political identity.

Essentially PKS, like the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, followed the three stage approach of Islamizing Indonesia by (1) making known the ideas and goals of PKS by recruiting Muslims to their cell groups, (2) establishing PKS cadre into effective organization that embodies PKS ideas and then (3) influence all society through its political and religious agenda (Machmudi, 2008).

At this point the size of PKS is unknown, but it is well established that they are the most politically influential Islamic organization in Indonesia. In the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2007, PKS lost by a small percent after all the other twelve political parties joined into a coalition to defeat the popularity of PKS. In the forthcoming 2014 national election, PKS appears to be a strong contender in the selection of the next president.

PKS aspirations are to strengthen the religiosity of Indonesian Muslims through *usroh* cells (now called *liku*) and to advance political *da'wah* of Islam in Indonesia. Scholars have observed that PKS has been successful in Islamizing Indonesia. There is significant concern that PKS' third stage will lead to

institution of sharia as the basis of national politics (Collins, 2004; Machmudi, 2008).

This assertion could be considered hyperbole. Yet, my discussions with senior PKS leaders, as well as scholars' understanding of obscure language in Muslim Brotherhood documents (Boykin & Soyster, 2010; Habeck, 2006), support the desire for implementation of sharia and reinstallation of the Caliphate. That means a political government in an Islamic majority country must be under the control of a prominent Islamic group like Hizbut Tahrir, Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid, al-Qaeda or the Muslim Brotherhood. Once a Caliph is installed, that leader can exercise the obligation of Surah 9:5 (*Repentance*) to resume the Islamic march toward control over the world. There are significant doubts among political analysts that such a world domination scenario is plausible, but such an aspiration does capture the imagination of many fundamentalist Muslims and incites jihadism (Roy, 2004).

Modern Christian movements in Indonesia

In the 1950s and 1960s, a new wave of Christian missionary groups began to make inroads into Indonesia. Baptists and Pentecostals were founding new styles of churches, medical institutions, and seminaries throughout Indonesia, yet predominately in areas that were classically 'Muslim' territories. This was a departure from the approach of the historical Dutch Reformed denomination where Christians and Muslims did not make incursions into each other's domains. The Javanese Dutch Reformed denomination² and the Baptists began to distance themselves from the practice of requiring local leaders to meet extensive foreign criteria to become pastors or missionaries, and they began to encourage more lay people in outreach activities. Likewise, missionary groups began using mass media in presenting the gospel through radio and print (Willis, 1977).

On the 30th of September 1965, the communist party (PKI) was alleged to have killed the six top military leaders of Indonesia as a way of starting a coup to overthrow the Sukarno regime. The remaining senior officer, General Suharto, called for a mass retaliation against all members of the PKI. Chaos broke out and over the course of several months, nearly 500,000 people were killed. Various Muslim groups participated in purging all those involved in the communist coup, as well as anyone they considered an enemy of Islam. In various parts of Indonesia, Christians gave asylum to those threatened. In essence, certain Muslim groups chose a path of violence to accomplish their goals whereas Christians chose a path to thwart such violence.

Avery Willis documents significant church growth among the ethnic Javanese populations during this chaotic period. Between 1965 and 1970 some

² Several Javanese reformed denominations would fit into this category.

two million Muslims became Christians. Of the reasons for rapid church growth during the period of crisis, the following were most noted: *extensive use of the laity, nurturing of people movements, planting of hundreds of new congregations, use of small groups for Bible study, prayer, training programs for the laity, special evangelistic emphases and missionary spirit* (Willis, 1977, p. 196).

After the rapid growth in the wake of the coup, the growth of the Christian movement stalled with no statistical increase in Christians compared to population growth until the new millennium. A new Christian movement in Indonesia can be summed up in the *Time Magazine* April 2010 edition that discusses a Pew research report:

A religious revolution is transforming Indonesia. Part of the spiritual blossoming entails Muslims embracing a more conservative form of faith, mirroring global trends that have meant a proliferation of headscarves and beards in modern Islamic capitals. More surprising, though, is the boom in Christianity — officially Indonesia's second largest faith and a growing force throughout Asia. Indeed, the number of Asian Christian faithful exploded to 351 million adherents in 2005, up from 101 million in 1970, according to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, based in Washington, D.C. (Apr. 26, 2010 <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1982223,00.html>)

What is reported by Pew research is consistent with observations by field workers. Researchers on gospel advancement report that over the last five years, in excess of two thousand Muslim background house churches have been planted by practitioners using various innovative approaches, comprising nearly 20,000 Muslim background believers. Similar to what occurred in the 1965 era, the more radicalism rears its head, the more attractive following Christ becomes for some Muslims.

Between 1965 and 1970 some two million Muslims became Christians.

One recent report by the Islamic group savemarium.com stated: 'two million (Muslims) are walking away from Islam every year.' Though savemarium.com's data is contested, it is clear that a significant number of Muslims are not interested in the radicals' Islamic vision for Indonesia. In a 2007 study conducted by Hairgrove and McLeod, it was found that 28% of Indonesian Muslims preferred an Islamic based government, 39% did not, and 33% were unsure. This research demonstrates that if any Islamic group imposes its *brand* of Islam, Indonesia will find a significant portion of Muslims who would be open to a religious alternative (Hairgrove & McLeod, 2008).

Conclusions

Some Indonesian Christian missions and churches before the 1965 bloodbath prepared for a large influx of converts. They did this by empowering the non-professional Christians (laity as compared to pastoral staffing). This was done by

allowing laity to lead home meetings and to administer the sacraments such as baptism. But Willis (1977) points out that forward thinking leaders also prepared for a large influx by *nurturing of people movements*. Though the elements of such training were less defined than current church planting movements (CPM) approaches, significant similarities do exist. But the ‘flash point’ was the political upheaval. Some organizations were prepared spiritually and with a vision for what God would be moving among the Indonesian Muslim population. Those who were ready saw significant church growth.

We find ourselves at a similar cross roads. The political conditions impacted somewhat by the Arab Spring and the emergence of groups like PKS and Hizbut Tahrir demonstrate that Indonesia is pregnant for a new movement much like 1967. Already workers are seeing the first fruits of such a movement.

May God grant us wisdom as we prepare for the movement of the Spirit among the Indonesian Muslims.

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Serving Christ in the Arab World in the 'Post-Arab Spring' Era

by Don Little

Islamic Missiologist with Pioneers

An earlier and much longer version of this paper was presented July 3rd, 2013 at a conference of Korean workers held in the heart of Cairo. A version of the original paper will be published in a book that contains all of the papers from that conference. Though the length of this paper has been reduced, and references to Korean-specific issues have been removed, the style of a public address has been retained. I was asked to offer them my counsel and my perspectives on how we should be doing ministry in the Arab world region (also known as NAME – North Africa & the Middle East) at this time in history. This essay is neither a research article nor a report, but rather counsel for those who live and work in and on behalf of Muslims in the region at this time of great transition. This article reflects an attempt to take a step back and look at the whole region and reflect on strategic priorities that we, as the global body of Christ, and especially nationals living and working within the region and expatriates called to minister long-term in the region, may be wise to adopt in light of the current very challenging changes sweeping the region.

I. A personal introduction:

It is a great honour for me to be invited here to Cairo in order to address this gathering of mission leaders and missionaries. I have been asked to analyse and evaluate past and present strategies and practices in terms of their success, failure or deficiencies, and present recommendations for fruitful mission strategies in order to have better and more effective strategies in the Arab regions of North Africa and the Middle East (NAME) in the future. Before plunging into this analysis, I would like to introduce myself and share the kinds of involvement I have had in NAME since 1979.

Through reading the biography of William Borden, entitled *Borden of Yale*,³ while I was still a teenager living in a small town in British Columbia, Canada, God invited me to give my life to loving and sharing the gospel with Muslims. When I accepted this call from God, I had not yet met a single Muslim. Seven years later, at the age of 22, I spent 8 months in Cairo immersed in my first effort to reach out to Arabic-speaking Muslims, and more generally learning about ministry in the Arab world and seeking confirmation of my calling from God.

³ A 1988 reprint edition is available: Mrs. Howard Taylor. 1988. *Borden of Yale*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers.

During a desert outing outside of Cairo in January 1980, I felt a deep confirmation from God that he was calling me to devote my life to *church planting* in North Africa.

When I finally arrived in North Africa in 1988, at the age of 31, married with two very young daughters, and with a fragile ability to use both French and Arabic, I was eager to get started planting churches! Fortunately, the team that I joined was already very much involved with small group Bible studies and discipling individuals and launching a house church. As a result, by the end of my first two years, by collaborating with a young North African believer, I had been involved in helping start a small fellowship of half a dozen men. During my eight years in North Africa, I was part of a team effort that saw the planting of a strong healthy house church with maturing young leadership. That church has continued to grow, develop and evolve, and has been the launch church for a group of national house churches that continue in a number of cities throughout the country. The group of churches continues to plant new churches nationally and some of its leaders encourage such church planting ministry across North Africa and throughout the Arab world.

Following our time in North Africa, I led our mission in Canada⁴ for 8½ years, seeking to mobilize people to do church planting throughout NAME. From 2001 to 2008 I worked part-time on a doctorate in cross-cultural ministry and missions at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Boston and my thesis was on discipling believers from Muslim backgrounds across the Arab world.⁵ Since September 2007 I have been serving as a missiologist in Pioneers' NAME region. Since my time in Egypt, I have had the privilege of visiting 14 of the 19 NAME nations (from East to West): Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Oman, Yemen, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and Mauritania. Most of these visits were for the purpose of encouraging and helping train expatriate church planters. The more I see in these countries, the more I see that those of us who are called to help birth and grow churches in this region (that is the heart of Islam, even though it was formerly the heartland of Christianity) are faced with a huge and seemingly impossible task!

2. Reflections on the history of the church in NAME

Before discussing *current realities* in this region, I would like to make a few observations about the history of the church and of ministry in the region. One would have to summarize the history of the church in NAME, since the rise of Islam in the 7th century, as a long, sad and often deeply tragic story of defeat,

⁴ That mission, Arab World Ministries, founded as North Africa Mission in 1881, merged with Pioneers in September 2010.

⁵ Don Little, *Effective Insider Discipling: Helping Arab World Believers from Muslim Backgrounds Persevere and Thrive in Community*, D.Min thesis at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2009.

persecution, martyrdom, decline, entrenchment and, often, heroic survival under the oppressive and far too often violent yoke of Islam. Philip Jenkins, noted historian of religions, states that⁶ since the rise of Islam, Muslim treatment of Christians in NAME has often been characterized by dismissal, oppression, enmity and at times, organized violence. Christians and their communities living in Muslim dominated lands have been treated as *dhimmis*—non-respected, inferior peoples having no authority over Muslims and few rights of any kind other than to continue to exist and live in their own communities.

Of course, the tragic decline of the Eastern churches cannot be attributed solely to the challenges of life under Islam. At times Middle Eastern Christians have voluntarily converted to Islam. One sad and telling issue was the tragic division between the Byzantine church and the indigenous churches of NAME, that was, sadly, dominant when Islam arrived on the scene. These bitter political divisions over doctrinal distinctives caused some of those churches to look to Muslim leaders for a welcome reprieve from Byzantine dominance. What is more, two of the primary reasons for the decline of the Eastern church under Islam and the growth of Islam, were the inadequate discipleship of Middle Eastern Christians and a failure to labour for the unity of the church in NAME.

Thus, it must be gratefully acknowledged that the very fact that there is such a strong and often vibrant church in *Egypt* today is a tremendous testament to the steadfast faith and perseverance of Christians and their churches in this land through more than twelve hundred years of hardship, decline and oppression. The only NAME nations today in which Christians have been able to persevere under the dominance of Islam are Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. And tragically, even in these six nations, in the past 125 years the number and percentage of Christians in these countries has continued to decline at alarming rates! Christians have been fleeing in droves from the ongoing religious oppression and economic hardships in the ancient Christian homelands. As things stand it is not even clear whether there will be much of a national

⁶ In his deeply disturbing 2008 survey of the history of the church in the east from 500-1500 CE, Philip Jenkins (in *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died*, San Francisco: HarperOne, 2008) catalogues the repeated genocides and attacks on Christians through the centuries. Particularly chilling is his summary accounts of Muslim conquest and suppression of whole Christian regions in Chapter 5, entitled 'The Last Christians' (pp. 139-169) in which he recounts the rapid disappearance of Christian communities across the Middle East under the Ottoman empire. Here are two samples of his observations: 'The largest single factor for Christian decline was organized violence, whether in the form of massacre, expulsion, or forced migration' (p. 141). Also: 'Ottoman forces carried out notorious massacres against Christian populations, and particularly targeted Christian clergy and leaders. In 1480, the Turks destroyed the Italian city of Otranto, killing twelve thousand and executing leading clergymen by sawing them.' (p. 143).

church in some of these countries by 2050—in the region that was still 11% Christian as recently as 1900.⁷ In the other NAME countries, all of the ancient Apostle-planted churches disappeared by the end of the 11th century. The thriving North African Latin churches known for great theologians and church leaders like St Augustine and Tertullian disappeared more than 900 years ago and have only begun to be reborn within recent decades.

This tragic and heroic tale of suffering and decline, and now significant yet small signs of rebirth, ought to sober us all and bring us to an attitude of great humility. Who are we, Christians of the 21st century, to think that in *our ministry in our generation*, we will be able to help plant strong new churches that will flourish and grow strong across this region that has proven to be so hostile to Christ and his church? Who are we to think that we are somehow stronger or more favoured spiritually than our Christian forefathers in these lands who lived faithfully for centuries and continue to have a healthy presence and witness for Christ against all odds? *Surely, the history of continuous decline of the church in NAME ought to give us pause.* Surely this tragic tale of the church's failure to unite and persevere in the face of the onslaught of Islam, in the lands of its birth, ought to cause us to cry out to God for mercy and to intercede with great compassion, for Christians in the NAME region. Unless God does an unprecedented series of miracles, there is very little hope of seeing a reversal in the centuries-long tale of oppression and decline of the church, despite the best missionary efforts of those God is sending to NAME from around the globe.

3. God is at work in NAME today!

Nevertheless, as we turn our eyes from this tragic history to the current situation in NAME, we can see a number of things that suggest that God has not forgotten this region. God is at work in *unprecedented* ways across NAME. Let me briefly list, without elaborating, a few of the many things that suggest that God is at work in NAME in powerful ways.

God is raising up hundreds of Christians and missionaries from new sending countries around the globe and sending them to NAME: Koreans, Chinese, Filipinos, Africans and Latin Americans. God is truly mobilizing a global work force. This is NEW and wonderful!

God is moving in increasing numbers of Protestant churches in NAME and calling them forth in fresh boldness and witness to the Muslims in their communities across NAME. God is birthing Arab missions to Muslims. God is also reviving some of the ancient Orthodox churches in NAME and using their people to bring thousands of Muslims to Christ and into their churches. One

⁷ Jenkins, 141. Christians in Egypt believe that Christians are roughly 10% of the Egyptian population, but the percentage of Christians in the other five Middle Eastern countries is now much less than 5%.

colleague with long history in Egypt suggested that there are probably twenty times as many Muslims coming to Christ through Coptic Christians and churches than through Protestant churches and expatriate workers combined.

God is using TV and Internet Evangelists like Father Zakaria and Brother Rachid in powerful ways, so that all across NAME countless thousands of men and women increasingly doubt the validity and truth of Islam and are being drawn to Christ. God is raising up and using a wide variety of media tools that are helping shake the very ideological foundation of Islam.

In Algeria, God has raised up a growing movement of churches among the Kabyle, such that many Algerians believe that the number of Algerian evangelicals (possibly well over 100,000) now surpasses the number of evangelicals in France. There are stirrings of such movements in a few other NAME countries, particularly among ‘marginalized’ peoples such as the Kurds in Iraq and the Druze in Lebanon and Syria.

The revolutions known as ‘the Arab Spring’ are fundamentally altering the mind-sets of millions of people across NAME. Long gone are the days when autocratic rulers could enforce their way of thinking on the masses in their countries. Satellite TV and the Internet has given the people of NAME direct access to the *world*. In ways unimagined before 2010, people are thinking about what it means to be Arab, about what Islam is and whether or not it has had a good or bad influence on them and on their nations. From what I am being told, there is massive openness to the Gospel in many NAME countries in ways that have not been seen in NAME since Islam dominated the region!

4. Challenges and opportunities in post-Arab Spring NAME

When I think about what is happening now in countries like Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon and even in Syria (and to a lesser extent in all other Arab nations), I see a number of new opportunities accompanying the vastly increased instability and crises that threaten to overwhelm nations and millions of people across NAME. Let me suggest four significant ways in which things are changing and what these changes could mean for ministry.

There is vastly increased insecurity, uncertainty, financial and political change and crises. The tight control of autocratic states is a thing of the past in many nations. This gives many opportunities for churches and missionaries to take initiative and find creative new ways to witness and express their faith in increasingly public ways. Many local Christians are seeing this and stepping out in bold and creative witness.

There is a rising threat of increased violence and persecution against Christians in many NAME countries. This has the potential of strengthening Christian witness. As Christians remain faithful to Christ through much persecution, many who watch them are drawn to the reality of their faith that

suffers persecution patiently. In the past fifty years, wherever there has been an increase in the influence of Islamists in a Muslim country that has had Christians being persecuted, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Muslims coming to Christ. Witness Indonesia in the 1960s and Iran and Afghanistan in the last few decades.

At the same time, the increased persecution leads to extensive emigration, persecution and harassment against Christians and especially against believers from Muslim backgrounds (BMBs).⁸ As I was working on this paper, I received word of a greatly increased government pressure against Christians in Iran, such that many churches may have to close their doors or risk having many imprisoned, tortured and worse. Great numbers of BMBs have left Egypt and other countries of NAME never to return. As an esteemed former colleague explained, persecution is not always the seed of the church, it can sometimes lead to the destruction of the church. May God give grace to all, during this time of increased persecution!

The economic crises facing most post-revolution economies creates openings for entrepreneurs and strong businesses from more stable economies in the East and the West, to step in and offer development and transformative investment to help with nation building.

As already noted above, thousands of people have a new mind-set that means they are far more open to new ideas and to *thinking* about what they believe and why they believe it! Let us all capitalize on this new mind-set and bring them something **true** to think about.

In ways unimagined before 2010, people are thinking about what it means to be Arab, about what Islam is and whether or not it has had a good or bad influence on them and on their nations.

5. Priorities for expat and local ministry in NAME post-Arab Spring

Let me now share with you six major aspects of ministry that local Christians and churches, along with expatriates working in NAME, might do well to make priorities in order to take advantage of the unique opportunities during this window of time in which so many in NAME are going through very difficult yet revolutionary transitions.

5.1 Seize the moment!

Now is the time for all of us—expats, Christian Arabs and believers called out of Islam—to exercise holy and wise boldness for Christ! This is *not* the time for

⁸ I am deliberately using BMBs (believers from Muslim backgrounds) rather than MBBs (Muslim background believers) because I have found that many English speaking believers out of Islam find that MBB emphasizes their Muslim identity, rather than their new Christian identity as believers—BMBs.

us to submit to *dhimmi* oppression and the suppression of the truth of the Gospel because of the growing influence of Islamists, brotherhood and Salafist groups. Let us imitate the Apostles and believers in Acts 4, in the way they responded to threats and intimidation: ‘And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus’ (Acts 4:29-30, ESV). They prayed for boldness and the capacity not to give in to the threats and intimidations of the enemies of the Gospel. And remember what happened in response to their prayer? ‘And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness’ (Acts 4:31).

Allow me to be audacious to suggest to you six ways that we might exercise Holy Spirit-anointed boldness for such a time as this. In doing so, I remind us that as expatriates we will normally pay a very small price compared to the price that our local brothers and sisters are called upon to bear all the time. In our boldness, let us form vital links with local brothers and sisters whose record of paying this high price can instruct us in this calling of obedience.

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5.1.1 Be much bolder in personal and public witness to Christ.

I have heard some very encouraging reports of such boldness in Egypt. In Tunisia, immediately following the revolution, a number of local believers were in the forefront of trying to clean up the streets and they shared their identity openly and boldly—and were persecuted in response! Fifteen years ago I heard some Algerian church leaders share that during the bloody and long ‘civil war’ between the Islamists

and the government in the 1990s, ‘the black decade’, in which some 200,000 civilians were killed, a number of believers would regularly stand on street corners and preach the Gospel openly and boldly. They figured that since the government was so busy fighting the Islamic insurgents they would not be able to bother about a few Christian street preachers. Much of the reason for the tremendous growth of the church in Algeria is a result of their holy boldness, which continues to this day.

5.1.2 Break out in bold and creative expression of the gospel in music, theatre, art, dance, film, blogs and other appropriate cultural expressions.

Let us ask God to give creative gifts to his people in ever-increasing ways. I am very aware that I am not suggesting something new, especially here in Egypt! In

the past few decades, God has anointed and gifted Egyptian Christians in a tremendous outbreak of creative expression, in music, theatre, film, blogs, etc. I am inviting us all to embrace this new move of the Spirit and expand it and ask God to call workers from around the globe that can support such expressions and partner with them for the glory of Christ!

5.1.3 Increase efforts to educate and train local Christians, expats and BMBs in Islamic source documents: the Qur'an, Hadith and Shari'a.

May God continue to raise up a new generation of men and women, expats, Christian Arabs and BMBs who will stand strong for truth and be experts on Islamic source documents so that they can engage with competence and integrity in dialogue with Muslims and in writing and communicating the truth of Christ in light of the foundations upon which Islam is built. In much of the Arab Middle East, local Christians have a very strong advantage over expatriates, because having been educated in state run educational systems that teach the Qur'an and Hadith as part of their curriculums, they have had no choice but to become familiar with Islam's source documents and with how Islam is commonly taught. However, sometimes local Christians do not appreciate what a precious gift they have been given in this intimate knowledge of Islam.

5.1.4 Encourage strong apologetics to give a reason for the hope and truth of the gospel and effective polemics to undermine Islamic truth claims.

If we truly desire to see NAME societies transformed, we must engage in the battle for people's minds. This calls for our most brilliant thinkers and most creative philosophers. Unless the intellectual legitimacy of Islam is undermined in the minds of more and more people in the region, the default response to crises and economic hardship will continue to be a return to the Islam of Muhammad and the Qur'an. If people can understand the true nature of early Islam and the way Muhammad stirred up his followers to conquer, loot and destroy in the name of God, then the attraction to Islam may be broken and the search for truth will become more possible for many. Let us pray that God will continue to raise up apologists like Father Zakaria Botros⁹ and Brother Rachid¹⁰ and debaters and apologists like Jay Smith in London, who travels the world debating Muslim apologists and spokesmen.¹¹ Who else among us is God calling to engage wholeheartedly in the battle for the Muslim mind? Never before have ordinary

⁹ Here is a link to Father Zakaria's website: <http://www.fatherzakaria.net>.

¹⁰ Here is Brother Rachid's YouTube channel for Islam Explained: www.youtube.com/user/IslamXplained and his website: www.islamexplained.com. Here is a FaceBook link to a different program that he hosts: www.facebook.com/daringquestions?sk=wall.

¹¹ Here are some links to Jay Smith on YouTube: [www.youtube.com-Textual Integrity of the Bible - Jay Smith](http://www.youtube.com-TextualIntegrityoftheBible-JaySmith); www.youtube.com/user/PfanderFilms/featured.

Muslims been exposed to so many un-Islamic ideas and philosophies. Never before in NAME have there been so many opportunities for Christians to stand up for truth and oppose error.

5.1.5 Renounce ministry approaches that accommodate too much and encourage Christians to submit to the dominance of Islam.

Many of you are aware of strong voices within the missions community calling us to bring Christ *inside of Islam*. Some desire that movements to Christ would flourish under the surface, inside of Muslim society, so that those looking on

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would, at least initially, not know that the movement is much different from the Muslim way of faith and practice. Is this call to seek to stay within Islam yet another *dhimmi* response to the dominance of Islam? In the present situation in NAME, when the very foundations of traditional Islamic certainties are crumbling, is this not the time for us to exercise wise and holy boldness, proclaim Christ openly and make it clear that there is a very significant difference between following Christ and following

Mohammed? Now is not the time to seek to remain inside a worldview and community identity that is failing and losing its legitimacy!

5.1.6 Return to a robust biblical theology of suffering and persecution.

We Westerners have perhaps failed the most in this area. Few of us have grown up in communities in which persecution of Christians, simply because they are Christians, is common. So, far too often, we do not know how to respond when there is a harsh or violent reaction against those who chose to obey Christ and be his disciples. If we are able to take our models for responding to persecution from the New Testament, rather than from our culture, we will be far better prepared to face and endure persecution and to thrive by the grace of God. As God brings increasing numbers of workers from the global church to NAME, from lands where persecution is very common, we can better learn to stand with our NAME brothers and sisters and suffer with them for the cause of Christ. May God grant us grace to embrace suffering for the cause of Christ rather than avoiding it, fleeing, or going silent at the least sign of opposition. May God give us grace to stand with those who are persecuted rather than distancing ourselves from them.

5.2 Strengthen BMB churches, leaders and networks.

I believe that our second priority for this time in NAME should be to network with, help resource and encourage BMB leaders and networks of BMB house churches. This will help them to grow increasingly strong, vibrant and dynamic across the region. I see two primary elements to this work.

5.2.1 Strong partnerships with local Arab and expat congregations (especially in the AP) for resourcing evangelism, discipleship and leadership training of BMBs.

Along with helping BMBs who join existing churches whose members mostly have Christian upbringing, we need to especially seek to help and resource BMB leaders of house church networks that are not formally tied to existing local churches. Church leaders need to nurture strong ties and relationships with BMB church leaders: not to control them, but to encourage and help give them access to a wide variety of resources in the Arab churches.

5.2.2 Focus effective discipleship that can help raise up bold and faith-filled, grace-transformed BMBs and churches of BMBs.

Discipling must be deep, personal and adapted to local realities across the region. Based on my research,¹² I suggest five core discipleship processes that will contribute to effective discipleship across NAME: (1) Believers cultivating and growing deep personal walks with God. (2) Believers belonging to caring, nurturing groups of believers where they are known and experience community—feeling a part of the Christian parallel to the Muslim *Ummah* that they have left behind in following Christ. (3) BMBs being personally disciplined or mentored by a more mature believer. They need someone who knows them intimately and models Christian living for them. (4) BMBs learning how to be nurtured through submission to the written Word of God. They must live their lives, together with others in their church community, in such a way that the Scripture continually nurtures their life and increasingly transforms their worldview and character. (5) BMBs sharing their newfound faith with others, serving others and exercising their spiritual gifts within the body and in their communities.

5.3 Prioritize ministry along family, peer and social network lines.

I believe that our third strategic ministry priority is to continue to develop evangelism and church planting that works along the lines of peer and family networks to spread the Gospel and multiply house groups and churches. According to David Garrison, who is just completing a major study of movements among Muslims around the world, there are now significant movements in every region of the Muslim world.¹³ Increasingly, researchers are finding that a central key to multiplication of house churches is the spreading of the Gospel along family, peer or social network lines, rather than merely one-to-

¹² My D.Min thesis focused on discipling BMBs in the Arab world. A considerably expanded and revised version is due out in book form in 2014. See: Little 2009.

¹³ Garrison only measured movements that had at least 1,000 baptized believers or at least 50 house churches. I heard his oral report on his research April 29th, 2013, during a global Muslim ministry conference in Thailand.

one between individuals. Here are some related observations and recommendations.

5.3.1 Strengthen house churches and their networks.

In most NAME countries, it is impossible to have officially recognized visible churches of BMBs worshipping in designated church buildings. Therefore we need to prioritize strengthening house church and peer group churches. The often very restrictive contexts in NAME make it necessary to develop house church networks, since there are few other church planting options.

5.3.2 Develop models of churches that multiply.

We need to develop models of church and networks of churches that multiply steadily, planting new groups of believers throughout various social and cultural segments of society. Those who have been involved in successfully planting churches that have endured, have still struggled to find ways to launch a church with DNA such that it multiplies regularly as each church matures. If we hope to see many churches planted, we need to find ways of nurturing churches that reproduce.

5.3.3 Prioritize oral approaches to ministry.

Furthermore, since such a large percentage of NAME people prefer oral rather than written communication, it is vitally important to evangelize, disciple, build and strengthen churches using oral approaches. A large part of effective oral ministry is small group discussion and interaction as a central way of teaching the Scriptures. Thus, focusing on social and peer networks is closely tied to effective oral ministry.

5.4 Create synergy through partnerships with NAME churches

We all need to develop partnering relationships with local churches in the Arab world and be informed and guided in our efforts to contextualize by their long experience and local understandings. Whenever possible (where healthy strong churches exist) it would be wise for expatriate workers to significantly submit to, partner with and work under the guidance of local Protestant churches. In particular, there may well be some new roles that workers from the Global South

can play in partnering with local churches and with Western agency personnel. In regions of the Arab World such as the Arab Peninsula and parts of the Middle East and North Africa, there is room for far more synergy and creative partnership with international expat churches.

Might it be time again for some expat and local Protestant workers and churches to explore new and significant ways of collaboration with the Coptic church in Egypt

Researchers are finding that a central key to multiplication of house churches is the spreading of the Gospel along family, peer or social network lines, rather than merely one-to-one between individuals.

and possibly with other receptive Orthodox and Catholic churches in the Levant? ¹⁴ God is using the Egyptian Coptic church in powerful ways, and strategic partnership with Coptic priests holds some promise for new synergy in some churches in the region.¹⁵

5.5 Expand media ministries

Little elaboration is needed on this proposed fifth strategic priority. Given the vastly increased level of NAME connection with the wider world through all sorts of media, there is no question but that we need to keep expanding media ministries, especially Satellite TV, Internet and smart phone delivery of increasingly interactive content. It is also crucial that such media ministries be increasingly integrated with both local and expat ministries on the ground in order to ensure effective follow-through into church integration and church planting.

5.6 Increase BAM initiatives in many economic spheres.

The economies of Mauritania, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Yemen, in particular, are very vulnerable and can be strengthened by a variety of business initiatives undertaken with both economic and mission objectives. One of the typical weaknesses of many western Evangelical church planting efforts is that the primary types of people we as outsiders seem to have access to are often the vulnerable and marginal youth. Businesses well-run on godly principles by Christians who have a heart for witness and ministry have potential for access into major social networks among those who are core stakeholders in NAME communities.

Space does not permit elaboration, but here are some spheres of activity that could be undertaken through a variety of BAM initiatives. In many of these spheres, there are already excellent examples and models of the way this can be done. In listing them here, I mean to encourage greater engagement in such initiatives as:

¹⁴ I recommend this course of action cautiously. This is not really a new strategy. For all of the eighteenth century and much of the nineteenth this was the primary strategy of Protestant denominational missions. As far as we can tell, this strategy of seeking to work with and help revive the ancient churches so that they could reach out to their Muslim neighbours failed dramatically. In today's context I am only recommending partnering with such Orthodox churches when they are themselves reviving and actively reaching out to Muslims. I am not proposing a return to the clearly mistaken earlier strategy of seeking to revive the ancient churches for the sake of Muslim ministry. For a very sad but thoroughly researched presentation of the abject failure of such a policy among the Kurds, see Robert Blincoe's *Ethnic Realities and the Church: Lessons from Kurdistan, A History of Mission Work 1668-1990* (Pasadena, CA: Presbyterian Center for Mission Studies, 1998).

¹⁵ There are already growing levels of communication and some cooperation among workers in Egypt and certain Coptic priests. Some of this is a result of the phenomenal anointed Egyptian and then international ministry of now-retired Coptic priest Father Zakaria.

- The development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- In some cases, develop manufacturing enterprises.
- The empowerment of women to start and run micro and SMEs.
- Develop football (soccer) and other sports clubs.
- Help develop indigenous music and entertainment.
- Develop theatre, film and the visual arts.
- Strengthen and support agriculture, horticulture and so on.
- Help in the development and resourcing of quality university-level educational institutions.
- Strengthen medical services and medical care.

6. Conclusion: Minister from your greatest strength!

As I peer into the future and anticipate the growing fruitfulness and maturity of all whom God calls to minister in the NAME region in the years ahead, I am

Businesses well-run on godly principles by Christians who have a heart for witness and ministry have potential for access into major social networks among those who are core stakeholders in NAME communities.

hopeful for the future of God's work in this very resistant region. Those of you who are around fifty years from now, and are able to look back on what God has done in NAME, will, I expect, be able to clearly see that the ministry of men and women from around the world was a major part of the movements to Christ that multiplied across NAME. These moves of God will not come about necessarily because you will have found better models and methods of ministry. It will be because, increasingly, you will have become a harvest force characterized by godly men and women of great faith who know how to pray personally and corporately, even as you have

grown in wisdom in the extremely complex task of ministering in NAME. It will be because you learned to minister out of a deep life of prayer and out of deep intimacy with the God who called you to minister in NAME. It will be because together you continually cried out to God for him to do his work and glorify his name in NAME region. In faith, I join with you in expecting much greater things than any of us have yet seen, as we go forward together through this twenty-first century in faith-filled obedience to our glorious God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

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Fethullah Gulen: Establishing Turkish Charter Schools in America

By James Cha

The author served 10 years in Central Asia as a church planting missionary, and is now back in the US as Washington, DC area coordinator with Crescent Project. See www.i43world.org

‘I worked at a Harmony School of Ingenuity for two years...and it was the worst two years of my life,’ confesses an Asian-American school teacher who taught for two years at a Turkish charter school in Houston, TX. Melody (not her real name) discovered soon after her employment that the charter school is drastically different from other public schools in the US. Her experience is shared by many other American teachers hired by 135 Turkish charter school administrators scattered across the US. To cite one example, her school did not have a human resource department, so when she discovered that there was gross salary difference based on gender (male teacher’s salary was \$40,000/year and female teacher’s salary was \$33,000/year), she had no legal place for redress of grievance. During her two years at Harmony, at the persistent encouragement of the administrators, she made a special trip to Turkey. The trip itself was heavily subsidized by the school, and while on that trip, she discovered that the network of Harmony schools in Houston was affiliated with a renowned Turkish leader named Fethullah Gulen.

Who Is Fethullah Gulen?

Fetullah Gulen is a Muslim cleric, educator and a businessman, born in Turkey in 1941. Gulen left Turkey and came to America in 1999 citing health reasons. At the time he was being investigated for plotting to overthrow the secular republic to replace it with an Islamic state (BBC News, June 21, 1999). He had been imprisoned for six months in 1971 under a similar charge. A few months after Gulen left Turkey, a video was aired on Turkish TV in which Gulen stated:

You must move in the arteries of the system, without anyone noticing your existence, until you reach all the power centres. . .You must wait until such time as you have gotten all the state power, until you have brought to your side all the power of the constitutional institutions in Turkey. . . .Until that time, any step taken would be too early - like breaking an egg without waiting the full 40 days for it to hatch. It would be like killing the chick inside. The work to be done is [in] confronting the world. Now, I have expressed my feelings and thoughts to you all - in confidence. . .trusting your loyalty and sensitivity to secrecy. I know that when you leave here -

[just] as you discard your empty juice boxes, you must discard the thoughts and feelings expressed here.

Gulen now resides in Poconos, Pennsylvania, under what some would describe as self-imposed exile. He fears retaliation from the Turkish government for his views and remarks against the country's leaders. According to one source, he is also a very wealthy businessman, worth over \$20 billion. (Berlinski, 2012)

Gulen believes strongly in promoting the ideals of Islam through interfaith dialogues and education, and prioritizes building schools over building mosques. He and his followers have built over 1000 Turkish 'Gulen' schools across the world, including 135 public charter schools in the US. These schools, which are headed by Turkish administrators but funded by US tax dollars, have been plagued with problems.

What Are the Problems with Gulen Schools?

The problems with Gulen schools run wide and deep. At the administrative level, there have been charges of ethnic and gender discrimination and financial impropriety including kick-backs and money laundering. At the teaching level many of the imported Turkish teachers have been found lacking in both English language proficiency and expertise or knowledge in the subject being taught. Mary Addi and her Turkish husband were former employees (teachers) at a Gulen school in Cleveland, Ohio. Her statements provide an insider's view of these problems.

My husband, Mustafa Emanet, and I were employed as teachers at a Gulen-inspired charter school in Cleveland. It was through our association and subsequent marriage that I quickly discovered the vast and varied illegal operations that are integrally part of the Gulen operation and being implemented under the guise of public education via their charter school network.

...my husband and I have been cooperating with federal authorities for the past four years regarding various illegal activities, like extortion through 'kickback' money (as my husband was forced to do), false immigration applications/H1-B visas (through fake employment searches and manufactured positions), and money-laundering activities (rent, kick-back money, tax and retirement funds). The investigation is not exclusive to Ohio and is instead being conducted on a national level.

...the most egregious of the acts committed by the Gulenists is the blatant discrimination against American educators and administrators. By supplanting American jobs with foreign H1-B visa holders, they are systematically (and have been for the past 12 years) putting their own, hand-selected male Gulenists in top administrative positions, including that of Business Manager. Further, if the board were to look closely at their

respective school boards throughout the 135 existing Gulen-inspired schools, it would find that the majority if not all of the board members are Gulenists, and again—the majority are Turkish males.

...despite the high percentage of unemployed American teachers and educators, the Gulenists continue to discriminate against American employees at an alarming rate—all the while using our tax dollars.

...make no mistake—the applicants are part of the Gulen movement as only Gulenists are permitted to run these schools. They are recruited from Turkey specifically to run the charter schools and sister organizations. They

The Gulen movement's...mission is to spread Islam by means of the Turkish events such as trips to Turkey, the Turkish Olympics, other cultural events, and teaching Turkish as a second language.

report to Gulen's men and do only as they are instructed. In Ohio, they were required to attend a mandatory meeting during Spring break in order to read about Gulen.

My husband, along with several teachers from the 'Gulen-inspired' schools personally drove to New York to have a private audience with

Fetullah Gulen. Last May, one of the Gulenists who accompanied my husband, Engin Blackstone, aka Engin Karatas, was asked by a Peoria news station if in fact he had met with Gulen and he denied it—despite the fact that my husband was an eye witness and accompanied him to visit Gulen in New York.

...according to my husband, in addition to garnering as much tax payer money as possible, the Gulen movement's other agenda is to spread Islam through subliminal indoctrinations. More specifically, the mission is to spread Islam by means of the Turkish events such as trips to Turkey, the Turkish Olympics, other cultural events, and teaching Turkish as a second language. Although the Gulenists are careful not to speak directly about their religious beliefs, it is their hope that by indoctrinating American students and parents with their culture and hospitality, that the students will likewise be more susceptible to religious conversion. (Addi, 2013)

A similar story emerges from the statements of a former employee at one of fifteen Harmony Schools of Ingenuity in Houston, TX:

I worked at a Harmony School for two years, and now teach in a Houston ISD school... it was the worst two years of my life....Whenever there was a negative article in the media about Harmony, we were asked to post comments that would spin it in a positive light (which I never did)....We had almost no materials, outdated books, no furniture other than desks (which frequently fell apart), and when we went to Turkey we also realized that when we looked at their classrooms, that we had the same desks as

they did... (Cha, 12/13/2012)

An article in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* tells of a similar story in that city:

Some parents say their children cannot understand their Turkish teachers because their English language skills are deficient. And staffers say the school's operations are shrouded in secrecy, and they risk losing their jobs if they ask too many questions. After *The Inquirer* reported about federal investigations last year, staffers reported that school officials had shredded documents. . .

. . .Rev. James W. Wright Sr., president of Truebright's parent teachers association, said he was embarrassed to learn a statement that school officials persuaded him to read at a recent SRC meeting erroneously claimed that 97 percent of the first senior class had graduated last June. In reality, only 33 of the 50 students who started in ninth grade stayed and received diplomas, according to a former administrator...

. . .not only are the FBI and the Departments of Labor and Education looking into allegations of kickbacks by Turkish teachers at the charters nationwide, according to knowledgeable sources, but at least nine American teachers and administrators at Truebright have filed complaints with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. All allege that they were being paid less than noncertified Turkish staffers.

. . .the Philadelphia School District's charter office has recommended to the School Reform Commission that it not renew Truebright's five-year operating charter on several grounds, including academic performance, lack of certified staff, and high turnover of administrators. . . ('Allegations raised over North Philadelphia charter school run by followers of Turkish imam.' *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 4/19/2012).

Gulen Schools in Central Asia

After the former Soviet Republics gained independence in 1991, Gulen supported the opening of Turkish high schools throughout the region. Known locally as Turkish lyciums, these Gulen schools attracted many bright, young students with the promise of advanced English education in various subjects. The Turkish administrators had agreed not to include any religious teachings in the classrooms. However, there were allegations that Islamic and pro-Turkish meetings were regularly part of student dormitory life. Students who attended retreats at nearby camps or even in Turkey were presented with Islamic teachings. According to one Samarkand Turkish lyceum graduate, the Turkish teachers made the following plea to the group of Uzbek and Tajik students on their graduation day: 'If Turkey ever goes to war with another country, you have to come to our aid!'

Uzbek authorities forced the Uzbek Turkish schools to close in 1999 following a series of bombings in Tashkent blamed on a former Uzbek opposition figure then living in Turkey. Several persons were arrested and convicted of membership in religious groups labelled extremist by the government. One such group is *Nur* ('light'), which has been banned by the Uzbek government. *Nur* was founded by the Kurdish Mullah Said Nursi and associated with Fethullah Gulen. In 2006 a Tashkent court found nine persons, all former students of a Turkish lyceum in Angren, guilty of membership in *Nur*, sentencing three persons to five years in prison and fining six others (US State Department, 2011).

How Should Christians in America Respond?

On one hand, we should be on guard and caution others about deceptive practices and hidden agendas. America is a nation established upon the principles of freedom for all. Turkish educators have the freedom to establish a private school for their community; however, a publically funded school that favours Turkish employees, an Islamic agenda, and the political initiatives of Fetullah Gulen should not be allowed.

At the same time, we should make the most of every opportunity to lovingly communicate the truth of the gospel—especially to those who might not have other occasions to hear. I had the opportunity to participate in several public-input sessions at Loudoun County Public School board meetings. I stated reasons for my opposition to the proposed Loudoun Math & IT Academy application. I thank God that the application was rejected by the school board earlier this year.

We should make the most of every opportunity to lovingly communicate the truth of the gospel—especially to those who might not have other occasions to hear.

During this period, I decided to meet with one of the applicants, a Turkish-immigrant IT engineer. He had completed his undergraduate studies in Turkey and received his PhD in IT at a state university in Florida. He would help establish the IT classes at the proposed Gulen charter school; however, he would not be one of its teachers. I told him that I had serious reservations about Turkish immigrant teachers/educators who were not familiar with the American education system and its philosophy of teaching.

During our lunch meeting, I shared my faith testimony and also asked him the following question: Do you know why Jesus was born of a virgin? (It was a few weeks before Christmas.) According to both the Quran (Q3:47; Q19:16-22) and the Bible (Luke 1:26-38), Jesus was born of a virgin. Why is this significant? And why is Jesus the only sinless prophet in the Quran (Q19:19)? Even

Muhammad had to be forgiven of his sins (Q47:19). The Turkish engineer could not give a reason, and I proceeded to give him the following explanation:

If Jesus had a human father and a human mother, His divinity would be impossible. Jesus had to be fully man and fully God in order to accomplish His work on earth. Furthermore, everyone born of the seed of man (Adam) is born with sin (Psalm 51:5). The Bible says that man can sin even from the mother's womb (Psalm 58:3). Every man has inherited guilt of sin from Adam (Romans 5:18,19), and if Jesus had a human father, He would also be born with the (inherited) sin of Adam. Jesus the Messiah was to be both the perfect priest (Hebrews 7:26) and the perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 9:14) for the sin of the world. He had to be born of a virgin, conceived by the Spirit of God, so that He could accomplish all this.

**Jesus Christ
has called
each one of us
to be His
ambassadors
to the world.**

The Turkish engineer was appreciative of this new understanding, and at the end of our lunch meeting, he was willing to receive a copy of the Jesus DVD (Campus Crusade version) and a copy of the English Bible. He said that he would start reading from the Book of Matthew (my recommendation).

My prayer is that this Turkish engineer would encounter Jesus through the Gospels (and even in his dreams) and follow the true Light of the world.

Jesus Christ has called each one of us to be His ambassadors to the world (2 Corinthians 5:20), including the Gulenist Muslims who may have come to America with a secret agenda. Let us take every opportunity to 1) pray for more labourers into God's harvest field (Matthew 9:38) and 2) share the truth and love of Jesus with those who are lost (Acts 1:8; Colossians 3:3).

To Find Out More About Gulen Schools:

In May 2012, CBS News' '60 Minutes' featured a documentary on Fetullah Gulen:

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7408418n>

For a comprehensive list of Gulen Charter Schools in America:

<http://turkishinvitations.weebly.com/list-of-us-schools.html>

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PART 2: ASSESSING NEEDS, ARAB CINEMA & TIPS FOR CONVERSATION

Need of the Hour

J. Ted Esler, PhD

Esler served among European Muslims before working in mobilization leadership. He is part of a church planting network in the US and is executive vice-president of Pioneers USA.

Your mission is to initiate a church planting movement amongst a pioneering, resistant people group. The odds are overwhelmingly against you. The churches here are like the teeth of that old man you just passed on the street – few and far between. Decades of evangelism and church planting by others have resulted in a relatively small group of believers. The expatriate missionary community works almost exclusively with this small group, conducting leadership development programs, theological training, group Bible studies and a host of platform ministries enabling access to visas. The idea that one works with the national church, a missiologically sound idea, has resulted on a focus aimed squarely at this small group of believers.

Upon entry into the culture, your mission seemed clear. The path to getting there, however, has been tough. Yet you labour on, knowing that after all, God is responsible for the results. In moments of weakness, you ask yourself: *Is labouring on the best strategy?* Unfortunately, you see no other alternatives.

I have had the great blessing of experiencing first-hand dozens, if not hundreds, of distinct missionary efforts. The above paragraph roughly describes the situation in which many UPG-focused missionaries labour today. The ministry that I worked to create had taken a similar path over a few short years. The task is hard. We often have no choice but to work with the small handful of national believers, planting a church person-by-person from the bottom up, grinding away because there are few, if any, alternatives.

Assessing the need of the hour

The problem with this scenario is that among many people groups the type of ministry described above may not be the ‘need of the hour.’

Last year I was corresponding with a gifted field leader about strategies of church planting. We were discussing via email the pros and cons of a training program being offered within our organization. He used a term that I have found very helpful for thinking about the task of church planting. He contrasted ‘church initiation’ with ‘church development.’ *Church Initiation* (CI) is what

happens when the starting of new congregations is the primary focus. *Church Development* (CD) is what happens when the primary aim is to build up existing congregations.

Looking back at the ministry described above we find a focus on 1) leadership development, 2) theological training, 3) group Bible studies and 4) platform-related ministries for visa access. Contrast the list with 1) developing disciples, 2) ministry-related skills training, 3) evangelistic Bible studies and 4) access ministries that further evangelism. These two groups of activities are not, of course, mutually exclusive. Strategies are not quite this black and white. Yet these two models have a very different focus.

Jim Collins tells the story of Walgreens. At one time, Walgreens had thousands of stores that were evaluated on a store-by-store basis. They grew along with the industry growth rate, slow and ponderous. In 1975 something unique happened – profitability rose dramatically. Walgreens began outperforming their own industry and many others. What happened at Walgreens can be explained in part because of a change in what they evaluated. Instead of assessing how much profit they could make on a *store-by-store* basis, they began to look at *each individual customer's visit* and how they could make that visit more profitable.¹⁶

Stores found they were no longer in competition with one another and began cooperating. If the Walgreens on 1st Avenue was out of a highly profitable product then the Walgreens on 5th Avenue quickly sent it down the street to them. Shipping was streamlined, workers began to think about the experience of each customer's visit and advertising was changed to reflect customer tastes instead of an individual store's agenda.

What changed at Walgreens was how they saw the goal. Their activities were rearranged around a goal that better organized their work toward success. Similarly, we might consider how church planters see their goal and if their activities are fulfilling that goal. In the vast majority of unreached people groups, the greatest need is for CI. Yet, my experience is that instead of CI most workers focus on CD. *Often, that CD is not moving toward the goal of CI.*

Objectively assessing the need

I have visited people groups that number in the millions with a small church of just one thousand believers *and three seminaries*. At other times, I have walked through buildings worth hundreds of thousands of dollars serving a church of just a few dozen people. Some works have a focus on training even though the trainees are few. I myself had roughly the same circle of non-Christian friends

¹⁶ James C Collins, 2001, *Good to Great : Why Some Companies Make the Leap--and Others Don't*. 1st ed, New York, NY: HarperBusiness, pages 92-94.

over a four-year ministry in Bosnia. These are examples of CD efforts that might not be appropriately focused.

Both CI and CD are valid church planting strategies *depending on the stage of development of the national church*. For example, three seminaries in one country may be appropriate if the leadership needs of the movement demand it. In the case I am citing, however, the training available outstripped the training need. At the same time, few resources were being allocated to CI.

Why was training so readily available? I believe it was because missionaries were struggling to offer something of value to the church based on: 1) who they were as people (their gifting and abilities), 2) what was possible or more likely to be successful within their context (it was a resistant Muslim people group), and 3) they lacked ideas, solutions, or the will to attempt something different.

I contend that if we look objectively at the progress of the church among unreached peoples, the greatest need is for CI, not CD. Exceptions to this will occur if a church planting movement has grown rapidly. Unfortunately, that is not the experience of most church planters.

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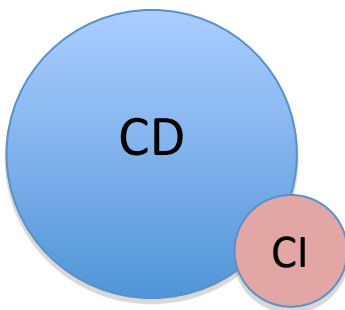


Figure 1: CD out of proportion to CI: Is this what we see happening in most people groups that need a bigger focus on church initiation?

Before going any further, let me say once again that CD might be the best and most appropriate strategy in your context. It is a valid church planting strategy and is particularly important as a movement grows and begins to have greater leadership needs. I am questioning what appears to me to be an over-emphasis on CD instead of CI within most unreached people groups.

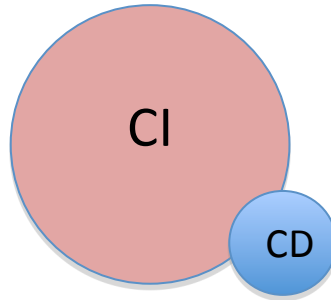


Figure 2: CI as a primary strategy: Is this what we see happening in most people groups that need a bigger focus on church initiation?

Exclusive models?

A valid criticism of this observation may be that it sets up a false dichotomy. If a church is being developed (CD) according to biblical guidelines, one might assume that CI will be the natural result. Perhaps this is true in some cases but it most certainly has not been in others, where decades of CD continue with relatively little significant CI in evidence. Yet, could there be a 'best of both worlds' strategy that would use CD to generate CI?

There may be a small church that is meeting within your people group. Helping them consider how to be involved with CI is an obvious strategy. This may take the form of training them to break out of existing church patterns or practices, taking them to see CI happening in a neighbouring people group, or simply modelling CI before them.

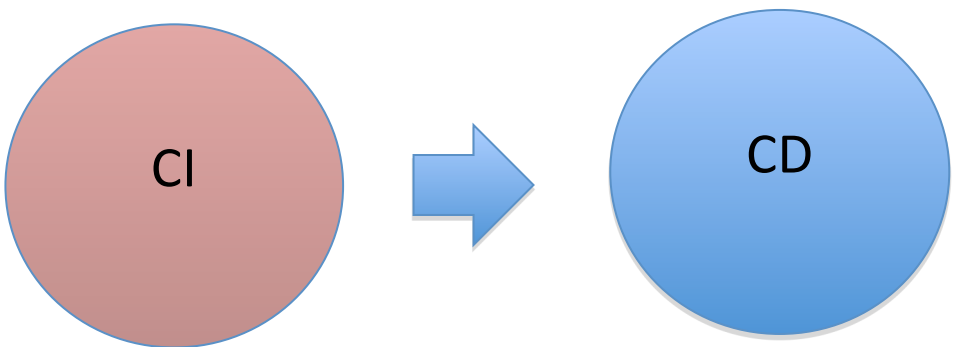


Figure 3: CD to CI: Is this the best way forward for many of our ministries?

Another way to implement this may be to motivate the ‘culturally near’ church (sometimes called the ‘proximate church’) to begin focusing on CI within a less reached people group. Occasionally, historical issues between people groups make this a challenge. Most often, however, missionaries overlook the culturally near church because they are not members of the focus people group. Training them to be effective CI missionaries to the focus people group takes an intentional commitment of time and resources. It may be a less direct route to CI among the focus group but may pay the biggest dividends.

There was a key leader within the reached people group who had the vision to plant new churches both within his culture and into others.

A recent trip to an African country revealed the beauty of this CD-to-CI strategy. Numerous workers from the majority people group were actively involved in reaching out to the many minority Muslim people groups around them. There were few non-indigenous missionaries among the majority people group. Yet, with just a small handful of missionaries, they had been able to leverage the numbers, expertise and resources of the majority culture into a multi-people group CI focused strategy.

I observed a number of powerful factors that made this effort successful. There was a key leader within the reached people group who had the vision to plant new churches both within his culture and into others. There was a base of Christians within the reached majority people group from which to draw workers. There were outsiders (in this case, Western missionaries) who had taken on the role as resource providers. They were assisting with training, funding and strategic thinking.

Application

There are many ways in which God moves to initiate movements. No single training, strategy, funding, or model will unlock the hearts and minds of those whose hearts are closed to the gospel. Yet we are called to work toward this end and it is our desire to do so with effective means.

As we evaluate our ministries this question of CD versus CI should be one that is considered. I suggest an honest assessment with your team asking the following types of questions:

1. How are we spending our time and resources? Compare and contrast CD and CI as you make up your list. Be brutally honest.
2. What role are culturally proximate people groups playing in your strategy to catalyse a movement? CD-to-CI may be an option if you have no culturally proximate partners.

3. Which indigenous workers do you envision someday leading the work? If you cannot readily name a few, than perhaps CI should be your primary concern. How about culturally proximate leaders?
4. Are you lifting your eyes beyond the motif of 'missionary as pastor/church planter' and instead envisioning your role as 'coach and mentor?' If you are pastoring you are probably more focused on CD.
5. How much of your schedule is consumed with visa and platform specific issues? Is this a good balance? My observation is that many visa platforms are so consuming that neither CI nor CD can be accomplished. Continuing in them reveals a strategy of *presence* only.
6. What are your benchmarks? How do you evaluate your work? What are your stories of success or failure that indicate what you value?

These are tough questions and issues. Striking an appropriate balance is just one of many issues that we face in frontier missionary work. Ultimately, we want to do our best. Let us work toward making sure that the solutions we provide are answering the right questions. What is 'the need of the hour' in your ministry?

Arab Cinema: Another Window into Life in the Arab world

by John Andrews

John is a career missionary with AWM/Pioneers. Since having served for a decade in Morocco, John and his wife Marion have lived and served in Spain and in France in a number of service and leadership roles. Most recently John began as North Africa Area Leader, overseeing ministry leaders in Libya, Tunisia and Algeria even as he continues with responsibility in Arab World Media.

No doubt, you enjoy a good film from time to time. Have you seen any good Arab films lately? I've recently discovered some entertaining and thought provoking films on YouTube, films that take on some of the social challenges that the Middle East is facing and the harsh realities of life there. Thanks to YouTube (and subtitles!), Arab cinema is much more accessible to people like me. Here are a few Egyptian and Palestinian films that I would recommend.

1. Cairo exit (2010)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SF0UI6_kFaU

On one level it's a love story between a Copt girl and her Muslim boyfriend and the taboo subject of love across different religions in modern day Egypt. On another we see the harsh socio-economic factors that make such love near impossible to survive. Set in a low-income neighbourhood of the chaos that is Cairo, Amal, the Christian girl, is torn between staying in Egypt to care for her mother or leave with her boyfriend, Tarek, to Europe in a smuggling boat....

2. Cairo 678 (2010)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEkdGHLvEPw>

(Note - click on the captions button to get English subtitles)

Feyza is a working-class mother struggling to pay her children's school fees. It soon becomes apparent that her tardiness to work is simply a result of her desperate attempts to avoid the over-crowded bus 678 where she is routinely harassed and bothered by over-eager male passengers. She soon befriends Seba, a wealthy self-defence teacher whom we learn was raped a year earlier, as well as a middle class student (Nelly) whose life-threatening assault results in a historic first legal case for sexual harassment in Egypt. What binds these women together is a frustration at the unashamed impunity to these men's actions and society's pretend ignorance about their daily struggle to walk down Cairo's streets without harassment.

3. Hassan w Marcus (2008)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_grulLPatHs

This is largely a comedy in which two men, a Coptic Christian in hiding and pretending to be a Muslim, and a Muslim in hiding pretending to be a Coptic Christian, become close friends, neither knowing of the other's deception. This provides some humorous situations. Be aware that these two deceivers are presented as being in equivalent situations, which aids in presenting a tidy can't-we-all-be-friends message. However, this is far from the reality, as the Copts are at the mercy of the majority Muslim population and are often persecuted by them. The movie can be enjoyed if you ignore this reality.

4. Asmaa (2011)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4XoK6ZZjsc>

A lower class woman who suffers from AIDS decides not to surrender to the fatal disease. She focuses on helping those who suffer the same disease by giving them glimmers of hope. A sensitive look at Egyptian society and an uplifting look at this 'shameful' disease.

Here are a few other films that look at Palestinian issues. Each one is very well done.

5. The Syrian Bride (2004)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67s54XH44nl>

A young Druze woman living in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights agrees to an arranged marriage with a Syrian TV star. Since neither country recognizes the other diplomatically, once the bride crosses the border to Syria, she will never be allowed to return to Israel and her wedding day, usually a day of great joy, may be one of her saddest. While the film tells us much about the harsh realities of the political fragmentation in the Middle East, it is also a story with social and cultural ramifications.

6. Lemon Tree (2008)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55HFJczgv0s>

Salma, a Palestinian widow, lives simply from her grove of lemon trees in the West Bank. Her quiet life is disrupted when the Israeli defence minister and his wife move next door and the Secret Service orders the trees removed for security. The stoic Salma seeks assistance from the Palestinian Authority, Israeli army, and a young attorney who takes the case. While the courts deliberate, the Israelis fence her trees and prohibit her from entering the grove. As the trees

with her, the defence minister's wife and, separately, an Israeli journalist, look on Salma with sympathy...

7. Amreeka (2009)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyVVaXwUxgU>

This is the tale of Muna, a single Palestinian mother, and her teenage son who, tired of the hassles in Palestine (road blocks, constant checks), seize an opportunity to move in with her sister and her husband in the small town Illinois. Their experience gives a genuine portrayal of the humorous and challenging adjustments for those who choose to emigrate.

Culture & Language Learning Options: Table Discussion during 2013 Arabian Peninsula Conference in Greece

By Abu Dawood

Abu Dawood (an American) along with his wife and children, had lived and ministered among Gulf Arab Muslims for more than 20 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.

Introduction

Historically in the Arabian World, people coming to the field were required to complete two-years of full-time language and cultural learning before beginning a ministry assignment. In recently years, some professionals have claimed that a two-year gap in work experience may inhibit employment and residency in some countries. As a result, direct entry placements have increased.

Also, to promote life-long learning and continued language growth, a field-worker training program, Learning for Life (L4L) was proposed. The training included goals and assessments for growth in theology, discipleship, cultural understanding, language, and other topics for developing ministry service. The program had clearly demarked levels of achievement assessed by external examination and continued throughout the worker's career. Though not implemented, the L4L program recognized that there is not a one-size-fits-all program for training every worker. The best program is one that is tailored for the worker and considers location, profession, family, age, etc.

At a recent regional gathering, various language learning options were classified into three general categories: learning before field departure, full-time learning in another culture before ministry service, and direct field placement with subsequent language and cultural learning. The discussion focused on the advantages and challenges of each option.

Learning Option	Advantages	Challenges
Study in home country before departure for the field, such as a course at a community college, private tutor, or time at an intensive program.	• Does not require relocation. • Candidate has home support mechanisms to help with children, housing, etc. • May be the most cost effective. • Less stress when studying in own culture. • May be a good method of ‘testing the waters’ before the major investment of relocation.	• Is it possible to learn language & culture in the home country? Even relocation in an expatriate community of the candidate’s country can give a skewed view of the field. • Language learning is likely a secondary goal in comparison to preparations for departure.
Study full-time either at a language program or using a private tutor before engaging in ministry service / employment.	• Proven method of gaining language and culture by reducing life’s responsibilities. • Allows time for soaking in language and culture, and testing ideas (with low risk) before relocating to another location of longer-term service on the field. • Focused learning is a humbling experience, which builds character and perseverance.	• Probably more expensive than just going to the field. • Two relocations in a relatively short time can be quite stressful for families with children. • Causes a gap in professional experience. • Likely learning a related dialect but not the exact dialect of the field, as it often not possible to be resident in field without employment. • Can give the idea that learning is limited to a certain time period. • Can give an uneasy feeling of transition.
Arrive on the field, begin ministry service or employment, and begin language and cultural learning on the field.	• The worker has other sources of kudos besides stressful role of language learner. • May be augmented with summer intensive programs and tutoring. • Allows for learning the dialect of the ministry location. • Sets up the worker for life-long learning in comparison to <i>finishing</i> a culture & language learning program. • Do world-class cities, with French & English lingua franca, require indigenous language abilities? (Compare to Greek in NT times) • Allows to begin ministry relationships with indigenous language tutors.	• Does not allow for full-time study – likely twice a week in the PM. • If learning is not the primary goal, it may be lost to other stresses in the worker’s life. • Traditionally, has not produced the best in language & culture. • Can be expensive if professional institutes are used. • Far slower progress in language and culture in comparison to a focused, full-time program.

Discussion

In summary, the group recognized full-time culture and language learning as historically giving the best probability for success in acquisition of language and cultural abilities. Though difficult, this option often occurs in the midst of other workers with similar objectives. In other words, this humbling experience establishes camaraderie and strengthens identity with a community who value ministry over professional employment.

The discussion also recognized the importance of innovation in exploring options, which consider the worker's age, family, profession, field location, and ministry. However, there remains the issue of the worker's perception of his own identity. If placement is direct to the field, with residency at a secular business of the Arabian Gulf, then the worker faces the risk of identifying more with the expatriate community than the ministry-minded workers and nationals.

Bonding is the establishment of relationship with a community and begins immediately upon arrival. Bonding provides a sense of belonging and communities are defined by social rules of acceptability. If the direct entry worker bonds with the expatriate community (which includes the expatriate church), there is pressure to conform to that community's lifestyle, which often does not value indigenous ministry, language, and cultural adaptation. Without encouragement, it is less probable that the worker will succeed in learning.

As a final note, the discussion recognized that the fact that a worker requires mentorship, accountability and ownership of the need for language and cultural learning in order to be on a successful path for growth. If a worker feels there is no need to learn, then there is no option that will grow these essential ministry skills.

‘Faithful are the wounds of a friend’

by Roland Clarke

Sent from Canada, Roland has been working with SIM in South Africa sharing the Gospel with Muslims for 28 years.

Since 9/11 a never-ending series of terror attacks coupled with violent feuding within the Ummah are exposing Islam’s real face thus showing it to be untrue and unpeaceful. On the other hand, we live in a postmodern age that advocates tolerance and ‘sensitivity’ towards other cultures, especially to Muslims. Criticism of Islam is muted, indeed, strongly suppressed. This mind-set has affected Christians, making us more timid and hindering us from applying basic Biblical principles such as Proverbs 9:8 & 27:6.

I recently published an article online showing how ‘Wounds from a sincere friend are better than kisses from an enemy.’ (Prov. 27:6; cf. 9:8) Until recently I assumed this verse applies only to fellow Christians but now I realize there is more to it.

The article, *Wounds from a sincere friend* recounts two stories which show that giving an unsaved friend a loving rebuke can expose darkness and draw him to the light of Jesus. In both cases, a Muslim friend accepts correction and the friendship was dramatically strengthened!

The article ends with two illustrations from Scripture, showing how Paul and Jesus graciously, yet firmly, critiqued two different false religions as recorded in John 4:18, 22 & Acts 17. Notice, Paul’s sermon did not **just** use commonalities as a way of bridging to his audience, he **also firmly refuted** their idolatry.

In a similar way, Jesus not only showed a gracious attitude to the Samaritan woman by affirming certain commonalities, he told her unpleasant truths, which in effect, wounded her feelings. It is important for us to empathize with her sense of ethnocentric, religious pride. We ought to ask, ‘How would this woman have felt when Jesus said, *‘You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.*’ Not only so, consider how, a few moments earlier, Jesus had exposed the Samaritan woman’s moral bankruptcy, (re five male partners) albeit with gentleness (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24-26).

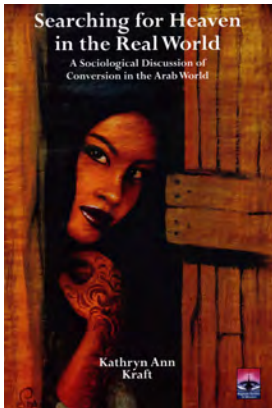
Are you and I willing to rebuke and potentially wound a friend like Jesus did, as a step towards healing? If you wish to read the full article you can read it here: http://www.answering-islam.org/authors/clarke/wounds_friend.html

PART 3: BOOK REVIEWS

Searching for Heaven in the Real World: A Sociological Discussion of Conversion in the Arab World

by Kathryn Ann Kraft.
Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2012.

This 142 page book is based on Kraft's PhD sociological research. Kraft surveys BMBs in both Egypt and Lebanon using ethnographic collection methods that capture their real and rare voices and opinions. Still, the book contains a lot of academic theories and the spirit of a PhD dissertation. I sometimes wished I could hear more of the voices of these BMBs, but I could understand that this was research and she needed to deliver the results of the findings and not to dwell on the details. As an BMB from that region, I identified with what Kraft captured and presented of those BMB issues and hopes.



In the first chapter, Kraft introduces her subject, thesis and research methodology. The second chapter focuses on her perspectives, beliefs and prejudices as a researcher. Kraft attempts in the third chapter, entitled 'Tawhid: Perfect Unity', to explore the concept of oneness of God in Islam and its applications in the lives of the individual believers, the community and BMBs.

This sets the stage for the fourth chapter titled 'Umma: Perfect Community'. Drawing on the concept of the oneness of God, she argues that the Muslim community also seeks such oneness and conversion out of Islam means abandonment from one's own community, even treason: 'an apostate from Islam is deemed a traitor to the community' (54).

Due to the unity between the concept of religion and community in the Muslim mind, after conversion BMBs cannot comfortably feel they are members of their Muslim community. They expect a replacement in the Christian community with high expectation of having similar privileges, rights and duties as the community from which they are exiting. That unfortunately does not happen the way they hope. Kraft identifies three groups from which the BMBs have expectations, two of them are the broader community and one is the family unit. That is Arab Christians, non-Arab Christians and spouses. Some of the Arab

Christians have issues of trust and suspicion with BMBs, a problem which complicates their integration with that community.

With Non-Arab Christians (and Kraft means missionaries or those who are mission minded) the doors are more open, but it seems to be that the cultural values of these non-Arabs is the issue which causes the BMBs expectations to fail too. After she correctly identified that BMBs are 'looking to the void left when they lost their Muslim leadership structure,' (59) she also correctly added that 'they are hoping to be welcomed into missionaries homes and families to share the intimate conversations and even secrets, to share holidays and specials occasions' (59).

Most of the BMBs Kraft met in Egypt and Lebanon did not live an independent life away from their parents or family members. In order to live individually, one mostly needs to create a family through marriage. A good number of BMBs are not yet married, and for many 'finding a suitable marriage partner is, ... essential to their ability to live their lives in *tawhid*, developing an *umma* in their home, even if all intimate relationships have broken down and no longer make sense' (60). Marriage may be the only solution to get out of the pressure of the family especially on female converts who are always pressured to marry a Muslim man. To female BMBs 'marriage to a man like her is a ticket to freedom' (62).

A positive opinion about non-Western missionaries (e.g. Latin, Korean, Chinese, etc.) is there because of the simple life of these missionaries and their focus on ministry.

Chapter five, 'A Perfect Dream', discusses 'the dreams converts have about their lives, and the frustration and disappointment that they feel when they break with those dreams' (63). The chapter first covers the attraction to Christianity as a religion that gives freedom to its adherents to live life according to their conscience unlike Islam, which dictates that life. Next, it moves to relate the dreams and disappointments of these converts.

Kraft admits that evangelical and protestant Christian ministry projects and even churches are funded mainly with Western money and discusses this 'strengthened the already-present association between Christianity, the West and wealth' (68). She captures the very important critique from mature BMBs regarding Western missionaries bringing the wrong message and the large amount of funds spent on these projects or just the lavish lifestyle of these missionaries compared to the rest of the population. Still, a positive opinion about non-Western missionaries (e.g. Latin, Korean, Chinese, etc.) is there because of the simple life of these missionaries and their focus on ministry.

Related to this is the issue of the untrusting and the non-transparent relationships BMBs believe they have with the underground missionaries who are

not telling them who they really are. This could lead to harm for these BMBs as the police may be watching these missionaries. If the BMBs are found to be associated with them, they could get into trouble with the authorities.

As a result of not being accepted by their Muslim community, not being welcomed with open arms into the local Arabic Christian community, having cultural boundaries and the non-transparent nature of their relationship with missionaries and the suspicion that BMBs receive from other BMBs who may think they are not genuine or spies, BMBs live in loneliness and with much disappointment.

The next chapter, 'Perfect Believer', explores how those BMBs define good character and its reference to their cultural framework of honour. It enters into the dynamic of relating to other believers, mainly other BMBs and Arab Christians. It also touches on the development of the in-group biases and bitterness 'against Islam or other unappreciative Christian groups' (82).

Kraft talks about the important role of older BMBs in mentoring and helping new converts. Also, she reports correctly how age plays a role in the coaching process of younger BMBs, several of whom 'wished they had been more cared for by older believers, converts or not' (82). Since a major concern of BMBs is unity among Christians, they pay less attention to the theological and denominational differences, feeling they are more associated with the 'global church', to the extent that many do not affiliate with a certain church or denomination. To them the perfect believer is 'a person of character and faith, not a person with a label' (83).

In a culture of honour and shame, converts are trying hard to balance between honouring their families and being faithful to their newfound faith. Leaving Islam is a stigma that brings shame not only to the individual but also to his family. That is why more converts are not 'coming out' and choose to stay under the stress of secret identity out of respect, love and even fear of their own families. Interestingly enough, families do notice the changes in their converted family members, however most of them follow the policy of 'don't ask, don't tell'. Even declarations of faith like baptism, communion or even marriage are mostly not public actions and confined to certain private audiences. This is not done out of deceit, but rather 'it is out of respect both for their families and for the message of love they found in their study of Christian scriptures' (95).

Chapter seven, 'A Perfect Identity', enters into the complicated area of how these converts form a new identity and it covers the area of the controversial issue of high level contextualization. Kraft reports that many Arab BMBs are troubled by this and they feel that 'all believers in Christ from a Muslim background have in fact adopted "Christianity", or else are theologically confused' (101). Still, Kraft argues that Islam becomes these BMBs ethnicity and Christianity becomes their religion.

In the last chapter, Kraft presents her conclusion that academic studies in the field of BMBs lives and identity have barely begun, but not before she address one of the most important issues for converts, and that is their children growing up as second generation converts in a Muslim context. The challenges faced by these BMBs to raise their children as Christians are tremendous, as these children are still labelled Muslims by the community, their Muslim family members, school and friends. No wonder that a lot of BMB families decide to leave their countries for non-Muslim countries when they have children. Though originally they may have wanted to stay in their countries, eventually they leave just to protect their children from the pressure and stress of dual identities.

This is a book I not only recommend, but it is a book I identify with, as I feel it was written about my own past problems and my future dreams. If you really want to understand BMBs struggle and hopes, this is one of the few books available that you must read.

Reviewed by Daniel Abraham

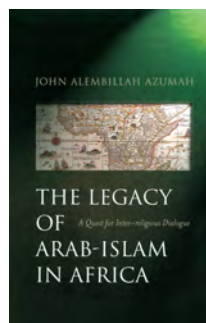
Daniel was born into an Arab Sunni Muslim family in the Middle East and prior to encountering Christ he was a devoted Muslim who sought to persuade Christians to become Muslims. After procuring a Bible to better understand Christian beliefs, the Holy Spirit drew him to Christ as he read it. His journey has included time in the Europe and eventually a move to the USA. Now married and ministering full-time he has many roles including being the webmaster for the Arabic section of www.answering-islam.org.

The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa: A Quest for Inter-religious Dialogue

by John Alembillah Azumah

Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2001

John Azumah is Associate Professor of World Christianity and Islam at Columbia Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, USA (not to be confused with the seminary of Columbia International University in Columbia, South Carolina, USA). Just prior to his recent move to the States, Azumah taught for a few years at the London School of Theology. Originally from Ghana and raised as a Muslim, Azumah has focused much of his scholarly work on Islam in Africa. *The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa* began life as his 1998 PhD



thesis under Dr. David Thomas of the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, in Selly Oak, Birmingham, in the UK.¹⁷

I believe *The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa* is *essential reading* for anyone seeking to understand the history and role of Islam in Africa today.¹⁸ It also shows profound insight into the nature of Islam and its close ties to Arab culture *wherever* it is found. The book consists of four primary chapters as well as a philosophical and methodological introduction and a short concluding chapter. The primary content of the book, chapters two through five, is extremely important for anyone seeking to understand the history of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa. Since some readers of this review will be unable to read the book, I will attempt to give an accurate idea of the topics Azumah deals with in his extensive and very illuminating analysis, by describing the themes of each chapter.

Whenever Islam took control of a region it was anything but tolerant to indigenous elements of the local African cultures.

In the preface, Azumah describes the history and nature of much scholarly discussion of Islam in Africa in the past few decades. He also explains why its strong bias towards privileging only the Muslim point of view leads to a serious deficit in scholarly understanding of Islam, Islamic history and expansion in Africa. The central thrust of the book is to challenge ‘the romantic perception of a “glorious Islamic past”’ (xvi) in Africa.

In chapter one, ‘A Glance at Post-Colonial Assessments of the Western-Christian and Arab-Islamic Legacies in ‘Tropical Africa’ (1-23), Azumah sets the context for the book by arguing that post-colonial assessments are badly slanted in favour of Muslim interpretations which seriously distort both the history and interpretation of Islam in Africa. Azumah takes to task the many contemporary scholars who argue that unlike Western Christianity’s negative impact on Africa, Arab-Islam, as it has come to dominate large parts of Africa, has not undermined the African heritage (7). He shows that, on the contrary, African-Muslim scholars not only have NO place for traditional African values, they actually view indigenous African customs as ‘reprehensible and evil’ (8). Whenever Islam took control of a region it was anything but tolerant to indigenous elements of the

¹⁷ *Black-African encounter with Arab-Islam: An African Perspective*. PhD thesis. University of Birmingham, 1998.

¹⁸ More recently Azumah co-edited a book, along with Lamin Sanneh, entitled *The African Christian and Islam* (2013), which looks like a further promising source for deeper understanding of Islam. This book contains 22 of the papers given at a conference held in Ghana in 2010. If anyone would like to read and review this book, for Seedbed, please let me know! I also highly recommend, and have used in a course at Houghton College, Azumah’s general introduction of Islam for Christians entitled: *My Neighbour’s Faith: Islam Explained for African Christians* (2008).

local African cultures (10). One of the topics that he introduces in this first chapter, is that the centuries old Arab-Islamic enslavement of Africans, which predated the European slave trade by centuries and continues up to the present day, has been swept under the carpet and explained away by most Western Islamicists (14-15). In this chapter he also states that one of his primary goals is to help Africans understand more accurately the actual legacy of Islam in Africa, which is rather dark. He wants readers to not be deceived by what he calls the 'sheer academic fundamentalism and intolerance' of the African indigenous values that Islam destroys. Azumah describes this academic insensitivity to African values as being typical of post-modern Western liberal thought (22).

In his second chapter, 'Indigenous Africa as a Cultivating Ground for Arab-Islam' (24-62), Azumah demonstrates that Islam was initially spread in Africa, not by an invading army, but by 'dispersed Muslim professionals, i.e. traders and religious divines' (61). He then shows convincingly that African indigenous culture and religions were generally quite receptive to the arrival of both Muslim and Christians in their midst and that the traditional African order fostered a creative pluralism that absorbed Islam without really having to compromise its own values. This easy acceptance, and initial containment of Islam within traditional African culture, led Muslims to realize that they couldn't gain traction without jihad of the sword, which they then launched and which Azumah deals with in his third chapter.

In chapter three, 'Muslim Jihad and Black Africa' (63-108), Azumah deals ably with the Sunni doctrine of jihad, describes the history of jihad in Africa and analyses the socio-religious and political dynamics behind several jihad campaigns in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the process he describes the attitudes that jihadists had toward indigenous African believers and their customs (64-5). He notes that the ongoing jihadist campaigns in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were largely stopped by Western colonial powers (by superior military might) as they sought to set up conditions favourable to their own exploitation. He also shows that the jihadist campaigns were all carried out by African Muslims undertaking them as religious duties. There were no invading outsider Arab or Berber armies. It was Islamic jihad doctrine and the conviction that Africa would never submit to Islam without the sword forcing them to submit, that drove *African* Muslims to seek to conquer and subjugate their fellow Africans in the name of Islam.

The following paragraph gives a flavour of Azumah's style and pointed critique:

If the views and policies of the jihadists towards traditional African believers were to be espoused by, say Western-Christian missionaries or any group in our present day and age, they would be rightly branded religious fascism. If the campaign against traditional believers were to be carried out in any part of the

world today it would be viewed as religious cleansing and the massacres that went with it would be first-class genocide. Cultural genocide and religious imperialism would have been the appropriate terms for their programs of Islamization and Arabization had it been undertaken by any other group. But alas, this was not the case; it was Africans mercilessly enforcing Arab ways of life upon fellow Africans in the name of God! Even more so is the fact that these were carried out by a community of people who thought that their case was made in heaven and should not be questioned (99).

And the implications of these alarming realities for today, is very sobering, as Azumah goes on to state:

What is worrying, though, is that the anti-African, anti-non-Muslim and anti-non-Islam attitudes of the jihadists, plus their desire to follow the Arab model, far from diminishing, is still alive in varying degrees in contemporary African-Muslim thought. The absolute claims of the jihadists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have remained the source of inspiration and exemplar model for the overwhelming majority of present-day African Muslims... (100)

The raids, slaughters, kidnapping, trade and enslavement of millions of traditional African believers by African Muslim societies, as we shall shortly outline, were basically viewed as a religious duty.

Azumah's fourth chapter 'Muslim Slavery and Black Africa' (108-169), is almost a third of the book. He describes, with astute scholarship and documentation, the way that the centuries long Muslim slave trade was so pervasive and destructive

everywhere Islam had power in Africa. With the arguments in this chapter, Azumah arrives at one of the most deeply disturbing parts of his discussion of the influence of Arab-Islam on Africa. He argues convincingly that the thing that distinguishes Muslim slavery from slavery in non-Muslim Africa is that it was backed and justified through a systematic religious and racist rationale (117). Listen to these chilling words:

The main justification of slavery in classical Muslim thought, borne out in practice by generations of Muslims, is non-belief in Islam, *kufir*....

It shall be demonstrated in this chapter that while African Muslims exploited slavery to satisfy mundane economic needs, they also, in line with traditional Muslim thought, sincerely regarded it as an Islamic response to the problem of *kufir*. The raids, slaughters, kidnapping, trade and enslavement of millions of traditional African believers by African Muslim societies, as we shall shortly outline, were basically viewed as a religious duty. (117-8)

This review lacks the space to *present* any of the compelling evidence with which Azumah builds his case in this chapter about the purely *Islamic cause* of Muslim-African slavery. He states his conclusion with remarkable restraint and sobriety, given the horrors of African inhumanity to other Africans in the name of Islam. After fifty pages of detailed description, he concludes:

Muslims, from pious to the nominal, within and without Africa waged jihad, raided, hunted, kidnapped and purchased tens of millions of Africans as slaves and in the process slaughtered and caused the death of tens of millions others....

We established that contrary to theories of a humane Muslim slavery, the institution and practice of slavery in Muslim societies was as cruel and harsh as any other slave system. We established that notwithstanding pious Muslim stipulations about slavery, slaves constituted a class of deprived people with the chains of servitude and caste inferiority riveted on their offspring. They were totally denied civil status, and their exclusion from responsible office was reinforced by the entire weight of Islamic law, Muslim social practice and traditional stigma. (168-9)

In the fifth major chapter, Azumah gives what I believe to be his strongest argument, though I find a frustrating problem at the heart of his argument. In this chapter, 'Encountering the Encounters: Arab-Islam and Black African Experience' (170-229), speaking as an African to his fellow-Africans, Azumah strongly challenges Muslim Africans to critically examine the overwhelmingly negative heritage that Arab-Islam has given to Africa and Africans. Yet Azumah couches his entire devastating critique of Islam in words that appeal for honest and frank dialogue between African Muslims, Christians and members of other religious communities. He appeals to Muslim Africans to be honest and face the evils that Islam has wrought in its path of slavery, jihad and genocide across Africa throughout the centuries. He argues that it is only as *Muslim Africans* face up to and acknowledge the evils and failings of their religious traditions, as Christian Africans have been doing for decades, that they will be able to develop a healthy self-understanding as *Africans*. It will only be with such honest self-understanding, that Muslims living in African communities, which are overwhelmingly a mingling of adherents of Muslim, Christian and traditional religions, will learn to live together harmoniously in multi-religious societies. Azumah argues eloquently that Muslims need to be *critically faithful*, that is, they need to remain faithful to the best in their religious traditions, while at the same time having the maturity to challenge the evils and mistaken values embraced too often at the heart of Islamic ideology and frequently carried out in Muslim practice. They must criticize and reject the subjugation of all non-Muslims merely because they are not Muslims, and African Muslims must learn to live in harmony with fellow Africans who do not accept their religion.

Integrity and conviction in one's inherited traditions are vital elements in dialogue, but so also is self-criticism...

This may be called *critical faithfulness*. Some Muslims have argued with much soundness that critical faithfulness to the Islamic tradition is crucial to the present generation of Muslims if they are to 'reconstruct an Islamic future on an Islamic past' [citing Fazlur Rahman, 1979, *Islam*, 235-54]. Acknowledging the 'missteps' within one's inherited tradition is, first of all, a sign of strength

rather than weakness. This strength of integrity is... crucial for dialogue. Second, critical faithfulness to ones' tradition will, help bring about restorative justice to victims, and prevent the injustices associated with these aspects from repeating themselves... Third, being critically faithful to one's tradition will enable an intelligent appropriation and adaptation of these traditions in contemporary times.

Finally, critical faithfulness will help bring about change in old and preconceived unhelpful attitudes and perceptions so as to promote mutual respect and peaceful co-existence between and among communities. (179-180)

The thing that I find troubling about this noble and indeed, *ennobling* vision for inter-religious community dialogue within Africa, is that *in the same chapter* Azumah demonstrates, *definitively*, that it is virtually impossible for Muslims to

find anything in their traditions that will prove a reliable source for such a peaceable multi-cultural dialogue and peaceful co-existence. Indeed, in citing a few high-minded Muslim would-be reformers, he reminds the reader that such men have normally been executed as heretics. Furthermore, he observes that the Muslim masses instinctively reject such aspirations for peaceable relations with non-Muslims since they are convinced of the divinely

Muslims need to be critically faithful, that is, they need to remain faithful to the best in their religious traditions, while at the same time having the maturity to challenge the evils and mistaken values embraced too often...in Muslim practice.

endowed superiority of Arab-Muslim culture and thus the divine necessity for all non-Muslims to live *under* the oppressive rule of Muslims.

In other words, when it comes down to it, according to Azumah's own analysis in this chapter, and throughout the book, there is really nothing *at the heart of Islamic religious tradition* that would yield the benevolent outcome for which he is calling and hoping. Azumah's account of jihad is a penetrating, well documented and devastating description of the slaughter of millions of Africans by African Muslims. Furthermore, his account of the slavery of tens of millions of fellow non-Muslim Africans, by Muslim Africans, motivated by obedience to Allah as Muhammad taught and exemplified, is a tragic and very sobering centuries-long example of what happens when Muslims are faithful to Muhammad. It is hard for me to understand, therefore, how he thinks that calling Muslims to be *faithful to their traditions* can lead to anything but more of the same. How can faithfulness to the best in Islam mean anything other than seeking to be loyal to Muhammad and the disturbing example he set for all who follow him?

In his short conclusion (230-240), Azumah recounts the argument of his book and reiterates that in this book he has called upon 'African Muslims intellectually to engage the basic African heritage in dialogue' (240). He concludes

with a hopeful tone, yearning for *Muslims* to join in the ongoing dialogues already happening across the continent in which Africans are seeking to more deeply understand and develop their indigenous African heritage and self-understanding. These dialogues with the multiple religious and cultural influences that Africans have received and must understand are helping Africans develop a healthy engagement with outside, non-African influences including those that come from Christianity and Islam.

So, what does one make of this book? First, I come away with profound appreciation for John Azumah's deep love for his African identity and people. Secondly, I have been immensely educated about centuries of African Muslim heritage, of which I had only had a cursory understanding prior to reading this book. Thirdly, my understanding of the complexities and of the urgent need for honest, self-critical dialogue has been significantly shaped. The tone in which Azumah writes communicates far more optimism than I am able to feel as to the potential for Muslims to reform themselves in positive ways through being *critically faithful* to their Islamic traditions. I must say that, for the sake of human flourishing in Africa and beyond, I sincerely hope that I am wrong and that John Azumah has the more accurate read on the capacity of Muslims to reform from within, in dialogue with non-Muslims.

I consider *The Legacy of Arab-Islam in Africa* a *must* read for all who desire to understand African Islam.

Reviewed by Don Little

What's Really Wrong with the Middle East

By Brian Whitaker

Westbourne Grove, London: Saqi 2009. 384 pages

Introduction

This is the kind of book I have always wanted to read, even write, on the Middle East. Brian Whitaker's analysis of the Arab world blends cultural perspectives like those found in Margaret Nydell's *Understanding Arabs* (1987), with the elements of historical classics like Gerald Butt's *The Arabs*.

Whitaker has been a journalist for the British newspaper *The Guardian*¹⁹ since 1987 and was its Middle East editor between 2000 and 2007. He is currently an editor on the paper's 'Comment is free'. He also writes articles for

¹⁹ The Guardian is a politically left of centre British newspaper.

Guardian Unlimited, the internet edition of the paper. He runs a personal, non-Guardian-related website, Al-Bab.com, about politics in the Arab world.²⁰ He is a prolific columnist and his on-line articles are consistent with his views expressed in this book. His other major publication was, *Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East* (2006).

As Whitaker wrote *What's Really Wrong with the Middle East* prior to the 'Arab Spring' every one of the nine chapters could be described as having an element of déjà vu. In his introduction Whitaker states his two aims. The first is to highlight the debate among Arabs themselves about change and the second is to address the debate concerning western policy towards the Middle East. He wrote at the beginning of President Obama's first term when there was much optimism heralding a new approach which augured well for 'a more constructive and less confrontational approach' (13). Although the book predates the events with which the reader is now all too familiar the text remains germane.

Shaping a review is always interesting and in this instance the creativeness of the chapter headings and insightful quotes guide my reviewing scalpel.



Chapter I – Thinking inside the box

Whitaker begins with education in the Middle East. Quoting Arab students and specialists we are reminded of the fact that memorization is the primary pedagogical method of learning in the region at every academic level. 'Education in the Arab countries is where the paternalism of the traditional family structure, the authoritarianism of the state and the dogmatism of religion all meet, discouraging critical thought and analysis, stifling creativity and instilling submissiveness' (19).

There is a good section on Islam and Darwinism with special reference to the recent influence of Islamic fundamentalism on the debate. The chapter includes supporting references from international bodies to emphasise that without educational reform in the Arab world, these countries will continue to lag behind the rest of the world.

²⁰ Wikipedia

Chapter 2 – The gilded cage

‘Power comes from the father’s genes’ (48). Whitaker devotes a whole chapter to the pervasive and persuasive influence of the family as a fundamental building block of Middle Eastern society. Several young people recount their experiences of challenging their parental preferences, especially marriage choices, and talk of their ‘secret lives’ and the all too familiar issues of honour and shame. The chapter contains one of the best descriptions of ‘marriage’ options in Islam that I have ever read.

Chapter 3 – States without citizens

In this chapter Whitaker underlines the (pre-Arab Spring) resilience of regimes and the political longevity of their leaders. There are hints of change in his writing when he quotes from the 2004 Arab Human Development Report that Arab governments are facing a ‘chronic crisis of legitimacy, often relying on inducements and intimidation in dealing with citizens’ (84).

There is an interesting description of how the emirates and kingdoms of the Arabian Peninsula handle succession. He then considers presidential states including Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen – all of which, with the exception of Algeria, are now in varying states of tumultuous political and social change.

He writes, ‘The typical Arab regime is both authoritarian and autocratic... highly centralised and concentrated around the head of state’ (93). The result is that statesmen and businessmen are often the same players and those who know Lebanon well will enjoy his description of the Solidere reconstruction project in the heart of Beirut which is inseparable from Rafik Hariri, ‘Mr. Lebanon’ (100). The chapter includes sections on taxes, ‘rentier’²¹ income (oil, Suez Canal and foreign aid), elections and superficial reforms to appease world opinion. However, all are manipulated to control their populations and corruption is endemic.

‘The typical Arab regime is both authoritarian and autocratic... highly centralised and concentrated around the head of state.’

Chapter 4 – The politics of God

This is a relatively short chapter in which Whitaker makes the point that religion, i.e. Islam, provides Arab states with a clear identity, continuity and legitimacy. Secularising Muslims like Abu Zayd in the mid-1990’s, were hounded out of the region for challenging the foundations of the state. He concludes, ‘The debate is not about secularism and the relationship between religion and the state but also about the religion practiced by Muslims’ (147).

²¹ A person [institution or state] living on income from property or investments - The New Oxford Dictionary of English – Clarendon Press 1998

Chapter 5 – Vitamin W

‘W’ stands for *‘wasta’* which Whitaker defines as ‘the magical lubricant that smoothes the way to jobs, promotions, university places and much else besides. In fact, with the right connections, it can solve almost any kind of problem’ (165).

This is a delightful chapter on corruption in the raw; through *‘wasta’* to *‘baksheesh’*, which is exercised by the highest and the lowest in the Arab world, from minor employees to government ministers. The sad thing is that western companies and governments have sometimes been compliant and complicit in such practices. He writes, ‘In practical terms corruption has many harmful effects. It is intrinsically unfair; it undermines democratic processes, distorts free markets, denies people equality of opportunity and in general creates obstacles to progress’ (158).

Chapter 6 – The urge to control

Chapter three provided the framework for control and in this chapter Whitaker provides a detailed analysis of the means. It is about the legal licensing of control rods which are imposed on every institution from publishers through charitable organisations to opposition parties. In recent times, this draconian control has been demonstrated in Egypt through the forcible closure of foreign-registered NGOs that might be considered a threat to the security of the country.

He writes, ‘Although freedom of association is enshrined in international law, many Arabs share their rulers’ view that it is not a natural entitlement’ (182). NGOs are often under the strong patronage of national leadership and can hardly be described as independent. Civil society associations are restricted to such an extent that there is very limited ‘free speech’ in the Arab world.

There is an interesting reference to Tunisian and Egyptian bloggers and the rise of the use of camera phones to circumvent the restrictions imposed upon state controlled media; a foretelling of what was to come. He takes up the role of the Internet towards the end of the chapter. ‘The Egyptian bloggers have one foot in cyberspace and the other foot is in the street’ (228).

Chapter 7 – A sea of victims

In this chapter Whitaker considers all the minority groups in the Middle East, including refugee and migrant worker groups. It is a catalogue of despair from the abuse of domestic Filipino maids in the Arabian Peninsula to stateless Kurds in Syria to Baha’is and Christian believers from Muslim roots in Egypt. He writes, ‘Recognition of equal rights is one of the keys to change in Arab societies’ (259).

Chapter 8 – Alien tomatoes

Why tomatoes? Because one of the Arabic words for tomatoes is *‘banadura’* and this is a corruption of the Italian word for tomato, *‘pomodoro’*. This is a chapter on

globalisation which is viewed as a threat by Arab states. It comes at them in many disguises, primarily ‘Americanisation’.

Whitaker provides many illustrations but here is just one: ‘Abdel-Ilah Balqaziz (Morocco): Globalisation is an act of cultural rape and symbolic aggression’ (263). Innovation is implicitly resisted by Arab states even though, ironically, the wealthy states of the Arabian Peninsula fuel globalisation through Sovereign Wealth Funds. In addition, Islam has embraced globalisation in the form of the Internet, e.g., IslamOnline (285).

There is a valuable discussion on the interpretation and implementation (or lack of) ‘human rights’ within the Arab League, the UN and the EU. It may not be new to many but the way he writes is magnetic. Inevitably Islamic theology features strongly in the debate.

Chapter 9 – Escape from history

Whitaker ends where many would begin with the historical burden Arabs consider themselves to be carrying. ‘This tendency to blame others, justified as it may be in many cases, has now become a problem in itself, allowing Arabs to absolve themselves from responsibility’ (290). The victim and conspiracy mentality is ubiquitous in the region. In a recent Bible study I had with a young Arab believer, he blamed the Arab Spring and its ensuing chaos on Israel and the CIA.

There are pithy passages on the naive US neoconservative concept of ‘total’ war, the rallying cry of a ‘war on terror’ and the generic ‘campaign for democracy’. He notes that sadly political convenience often contaminates the freedom principle, especially outcomes that have favoured Islamic fundamentalist parties.

In his closing remarks Whitaker restates his thesis that what’s really wrong with the Middle East is that it suffers from a ‘freedom deficit’ (‘freedom in depth’). The issues of ‘human rights’, ‘freedom of religion’, and ‘equality’ are high on his change factor requirements.

However, it is all rather depressing, especially when we reflect that the complexity of replacing autocratic systems is compounded by their being no viable alternatives only, seemingly, Islamic fundamentalism with its mosque-based constituency of the frustrated powerless.

He wisely says that the critique of fundamentalist Islamic dogma and practice has to come from inside the Muslim community using its own authoritative sources (319). It is axiomatic that critical analysis of Islam is better exercised by Believers from a Muslim background than non-Muslims.

The critique of fundamentalist Islamic dogma and practice has to come from inside the Muslim community using its own authoritative sources.

Finally, he pronounces that the West's ability to politically influence the Arab world is very limited. Such analysis reminds the Christian reader, however well equipped for the task, that any spiritual breakthrough in the Arab world is all the work of our Triune God.

Conclusion

Whitaker's analysis is accurate and has been borne out by subsequent events in the Arab world which have become the background of our daily news. The prognosis is bleak. There is no doubt in my mind that the challenge is not a conflict of civilizations but a conflict of cultures, 'collectivist' versus 'individualist'. Conservative religious dogma, especially Islam, contributes but it is not the whole story. It took hundreds of years via the Reformation, the Enlightenment/The Age of Reason, and the Industrial Revolution to arrive at what we describe as the 'individualist' Western society. It is going to take time for freedom, especially of religion (314) and association, human rights, equality, and choice to be accommodated by the 'collectivist' world. May I even suggest that since the 'individualist' world is in the minority and currently in crisis we may have to rediscover and accommodate many of the Biblical 'collectivist' characteristics into our behaviour? It is certainly imperative for us to persevere in focusing our missionary zeal on Christ-centred transforming movements from within the communities of the Arab world.

This book is a must read for anyone who has a passion for the Arab world. However, anyone with an interest in the region would be educated by Whitaker's analysis and, though my knowledge of the wider Islamic world is limited, I expect other Muslim communities exhibit many of the same defining characteristics with attendant challenges.

Reviewed by Keith Fraser-Smith

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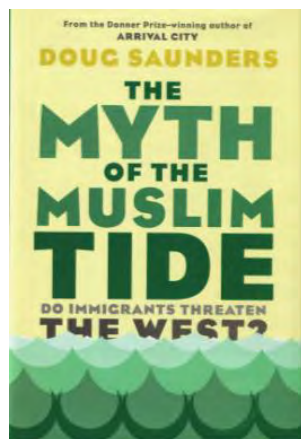
The Myth of the Muslim Tide: Do Immigrants Threaten the West?

by Doug Saunders

Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2012. 199 pages.

ISBN: 978-0-307-36207-0

Billed as a ‘powerfully argued and extremely timely debunking of the myth of a tide of Muslim immigration said to be undermining the basic values of Canada, the United States and Europe’ (dust cover), Saunders’ hard hitting and well researched arguments do a *great* job of undermining the arguments often used to incite ‘Islamophobia’ among Westerners. If you, like me, are often surprised by the strong sense of fear and alarm that some Christians have towards Muslim immigrants, then this book could be of service. As one who has spent a good bit of my life living among Muslims, and now a significant amount of time teaching about Islam and Muslims to Christians in the West, I have learned ways of responding to the exaggerations and alarm over Muslim immigration that one sometimes encounters. However, at times I have wished that I could simply recommend a book that deals with the issue and leave it at that. Is *The Myth of the Muslim Tide* that book?



Saunders compellingly argues his case in four sections. In the first section, dubbed ‘Popular Fiction’ (pp. 1-34) he describes the sources of the ‘Muslim tide’ fears and takes on some of its most well-known and prolific activists and authors. He makes short work of the arguments put forth by such popular crusaders against the ‘alarming rise of the influence of Islam in the West’ as Geert Wilders (*Marked for Death: Islam’s War Against the West and Me*), Melanie Philips (*Londonistan*), Christopher Caldwell (*Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam and the West*), Robert Spencer (*The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)*), Mark Steyn (*Lights Out: Islam, Free Speech and the Twilight of the West*) Bruce Bawer (*While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within*), Pamela Gellar (of www.AtlasShrugs.com) and Gisele Littman (Bat Ye’or – daughter of the Nile, author of *Eurabia* and other books sounding the alarm of the coming Muslim takeover of Europe). Early on Saunders makes a disclaimer that he is not defending Islam and admits to quite a negative view of Islam, nevertheless he argues that the solution to this sense of alarm over the

arrival of Muslim immigrants in the West does not lie in bashing Islam, but in better understanding the economic and political development of immigrant communities over time (6-7).

In his second section, 'The Facts' (35-111) he takes on the actual facts about population growth, integration and Islamic extremism and violence. In each chapter in this section he states a common claim and then proceeds to respond to it and refute it. Here are some of the claims he effectively shows to be unsupported by the facts: 'The Muslim population in the West is growing fast and will soon become a majority in Europe', 'Islamic belief leads to higher birth rates', 'In the future a lot more immigrants will be Muslim', 'Muslim immigrants are not loyal to their host countries', 'Muslim immigrants want to live apart, in isolated "parallel societies"', 'Muslims want to set up "sharia courts" in Western countries', and 'The growth of Muslim population is accompanied by a growth in Islamic extremism and terrorism'. Overall, I found his refutations of every one of these claims compelling. They suggest a fairly accurate understanding of Islam, but an even more sophisticated understanding of demographics and the politics of immigration.

The most fascinating, and at times sobering, part of the book was part three, 'We've Been Here Before' (113-136), in which he recounts how waves of Irish and Italian Catholic immigrants, and then Eastern European Jews had earlier been feared and reviled in almost identical ways that Muslim immigrants are now raising alarm among some Western writers and opinion shapers. For

Here are some of the claims he effectively shows to be unsupported by the facts: 'The Muslim population in the West is growing fast and will soon become a majority in Europe...'

example, the massively expensive Washington-funded 41-volume report of the *Dillingham Commission* (1911) concluded that 'radicalism and criminality were not transient phenomena of immigration, but were inherent in several of the Roman Catholic "races," notably Italians' (124). His description of the fear-mongering and alarm that these earlier waves of 'aliens from another religious worldview' stirred up across broad swaths of North America is both chilling and reassuring. It is chilling because of the tragic hatred and fear that earlier

immigrants stirred up, and reassuring in that all of those earlier fears turned out to be almost entirely ungrounded. He is calling us to learn from the *misrepresentations* of the 'religious other' that we have too often believed so that we can stop fearing Muslim immigrants and instead seek to understand them! Listen to Saunders' conclusion of this historical analysis:

We see it over and over again when a new group of immigrants arrives who are members of a religious minority, usually poor and ill-accustomed to the language and folkways of their new country and the workings of its economy. In response to public alarm at these strange newcomers, writers and politicians

offer the same set of frightened, frightening ideas: *They are different from previous groups. They do not want to integrate. Their religion compels them to impose their values on us. Their reproduction rates will swamp us. They are disloyal and capable of violence.* The similarities between the arguments made about the Catholics, Jews and Muslims are not coincidental; this is the same argument, made for the same reasons, applied to the newest and most alien-seeming group. (136, emphasis in the original)

In his fourth and final section ‘What we Ought to Worry About’ (137-164), Saunders offers some intriguing analysis of how Muslims in the West are coming to understand their own identity. For example, he makes the intriguing observation that when most of the immigrants arrived from countries that are Muslim, their *religious* identity formed merely the background of their lives. But, ‘by the time their Western-born children came of age, they had become Muslims.’ The first wave of immigrants thought of themselves in terms of their ethnic identity, not their religious identity. He suggests that this change happened rather suddenly, beginning in 1979, following the Iranian revolution. It is worth quoting him again here:

Islam may date back fourteen centuries, but Muslim has only occasionally been a preferred label of self-identification. In the last two centuries, it often has been trumped by more modern identities. Until the final years of the twentieth century, it was generally more popular for immigrants to identify themselves by their nationality (Indian, Egyptian) or their ethnicity (Turk, Arab) than by their religion. After all, Islam spanned such a wide range of cultures, races and nationalities that it sometimes seemed meaningless and irrelevant to speak of a “Muslim people.” (140)

He concludes this analysis of immigrants’ understanding of their identity as ‘Muslims’ by suggesting that the ‘retreat into a one-dimensional religious identity’ (143) is a specific response to certain circumstances that could end as easily as it began. Even more intriguingly, he suggests that support for violent jihadist radicalism plummeted in the wake of the Arab Spring. ‘Former jihadist radicals told me that democracy had turned them against violence’ (155). During my visit to Cairo last week, I was privileged to be present for the ‘re-set’ of the Egyptian revolution in which millions of Egyptians demonstrated in the street and called for the resignation of their first Islamist president. My experience in Cairo suggests that Saunders analysis might not be too far wrong. Had I not witnessed firsthand such mammoth opposition to Islamism in Egypt just last week (30 million people took to the streets—said to be the largest peaceful protest demonstrations in human history!), statements like this would have been far harder to swallow (is it truly realistic to envision a de-Islamized Muslim world anytime soon?):

The convulsions we now see taking place in the Muslim world can be understood not as manifestations of a radical otherness, but rather as the classic symptoms of a disorientation characteristic of periods of transition.... Islamism is a moment and not the end of history and that what is discernible on the horizon thereafter is the almost certain eventual development of a de-Islamized Muslim world, as there is already a de-Christianized Christian world and a Buddhist counterpart. Fundamentalism is only a transitory aspect of the weakening of religious belief. (156)

The successful integration of Muslims into the lands and culture of the West is a welcome contrast to the all too often alarmist attitudes encountered among many branches of Evangelicalism.

So, what do I make of Saunders' analysis and arguments? Saunders is not a religious believer of any kind, and sometimes he appears to underrate the power of religious conviction when he downplays the fervour of Muslim radicalism. At times his understanding of Islam feels rather superficial. He appears to be writing as a firm believer in the 'liberal narrative' of the last few generations that assumes that religious belief in general will gradually fade away in the

face of the unstoppable forces of modernization. As a result, his analysis and his prognosis for the future of Muslim communities living in the West is probably overly optimistic.

Is this the book to give to our church friends in the West who are tempted to be alarmed at the rising number of Muslim immigrants in Europe and in Canada in particular? I think it depends on what kind of Christians they are. If your Christian friends only read Christian authors and are unable to learn from secular writers, perhaps a different book would be more appropriate.²² However, this book is a valuable antidote to fear and its analysis is often very compelling. However, were one to accept all of the assumptions out of which he writes, one would probably come away somewhat depressed at the prospects for Christian faith in the West, given the apparent unstoppable forces of modernism sweeping the world in our generation. But, the optimistic vision of the successful integration of Muslims into the lands and culture of the West is a welcome contrast to the all too often alarmist attitudes encountered among many branches of Evangelicalism. I'll let Saunders' last paragraph give you his parting insight on how we might better view this 'Muslim tide' that some think threatens to overwhelm us in the West.

In examining our own recent history along with the fast-shifting cultural realities of these new immigrants, I hope we can begin to see this human tide

²² In that case, you may do better to give them a book like Mike Kuhn's *Fresh Vision for the Muslim World: An Incarnational Alternative* (Colorado Springs: Authentic, 2009). But I believe that Saunders' book might be good to read along with Kuhn's.

not as a seismic and ruinous tsunami but as a regular, rhythmic movement on our shores, one we've seen before. We should remember that a tide is something that sweeps away, but it is also something that arrives periodically, stirs up the currents, and recedes, leaving a fresher vision of the same landscape. Close to the shore, it may resemble a flood. From a better vantage, we realize it is not a cataclysm or a disturbance but one of the vital cycles of human life.

Reviewed by Don Little

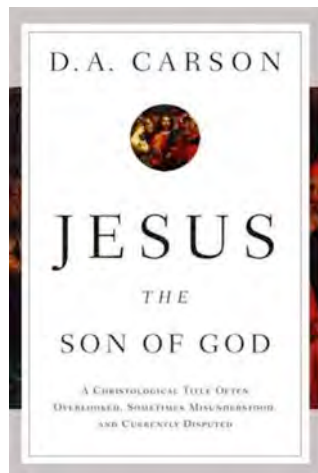
Jesus the Son of God: A Christological Title Often Overlooked, Sometimes Misunderstood, and Currently Disputed

D.A. Carson

Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2012

(117 pages including indexes)

Most Christian missionaries working in the Muslim world are well aware of the turmoil over Bible translations that attempt to communicate the meaning of 'Son of God' without using the literal phrase. Articles defending or attacking a meaning-based approach to this Christological title have appeared in *IJFM* and *St. Francis Magazine*, and disagreement over the practice has been one of the major themes in the Bridging the Divide consultations. D.A. Carson, Research Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical College, wrote this book to defend a literal translation of Son and Father, but its usefulness goes beyond the debate and is far out of proportion to its length.



To summarize my response, this is an extremely important book for both translators and field workers to understand how the Bible uses Son of God and what it means when used of Jesus. For translators, Carson applies his findings to make a strong case for the importance of a literal 'Son' and 'Father' in translation *in spite of the problems this causes for a Muslim context*, a case that may have influenced parts of the World Evangelical Alliance's (WEA) report on Wycliffe and SIL translation practice issued on 29 April 2013. The continuing significance of the book lies in its exegetical and

theological reasoning. For the field worker, the book charts a course to forge a presentation of Jesus the Son of God to Muslims.

The first chapter begins with a very important reflection on the rift between exegesis and systematic theology. Carson values highly the creeds and confessions of the church, but warns that if creeds and doctrine are not re-rooted in the Scriptures in every generation, their foundation in the Scriptures begins to look tenuous and even arbitrary. This unfortunate divide between theology and Biblical studies is responsible for *some* of the disconnect over the translation of Son of God for Muslim languages. I have watched translators be relatively unmoved by passionate appeals to theology that, though eminently biblical, didn't seem to be very relevant to the texts at hand; similarly, I have watched those of a more theological approach be unmoved by stirring exegesis because it didn't seem to fit their system. Neither side seems to be listening to the other, both sides exude frustration; Carson has put his finger on the cause. His call, if heeded, to work from careful exegesis of the Scriptures to summary statements of belief could bring healing to many wounded during the translation conflict.

Jesus' teaching on his unique sonship in relation to the Father, in John 5, functions to show that he is fully equal to the Father in divinity, but in such a way as to avoid the impression that he is a second God.

The bulk of the first chapter is dedicated to showing how the New Testament uses 'Son of God' as a title for Jesus. The main categories he gives for the title are 1) as a link to the promised Davidic King, 2) as a link to Israel as a whole (who was identified as God's son in Exodus 4:22-23 and Hosea 11:1) and 3) as an indication of divinity and/or preexistence. This section lays the foundation for exegetical work. It is worth noting that Carson argues that the title itself is sometimes an indication of divinity. This is a point that most Christians assume and are surprised that it is even an issue. But that has been seriously questioned by well-

intentioned Christians: 'If "Son of God" implies divinity for Jesus, why doesn't it imply divinity for Israel, David and Solomon, all of whom the Bible also calls "son of God"?'

The second chapter, the heart of the book, is a detailed exegesis of what the authors of Hebrews 1 and John 5:16-20 'meant when they declared Jesus to be the Son of God' (43). In Hebrews 1 Carson shows how the writer integrates Old Testament messianic trajectories and *different* uses of Son of God into 'an organic whole' (62) in order to explain how the expected Davidic King of Psalm 2:7 is the high priest in the order of Melchizedek in Psalm 110. He concludes, 'What holds this reasoning together is in no small part the web of allusive uses of "Son" and "Son of God"' (62). Carson shows how Jesus' teaching on his unique sonship in relation to the Father, in John 5, functions to show that he is fully equal to the Father in divinity, but in such a way as to avoid the impression that

he is a second God. Again, the use of Son (and Father) is essential to Jesus' carefully balanced explanation of his relationship to God.

The third and last chapter considers what bearing the forgoing has for 1) what Christians believe about the Son of God and 2) how Bible translations for Muslims should handle Son of God in translation. Carson observes that evangelism in the Western world is now to Biblical illiterates, and that much more of 'the Bible's story line' has to be included for the message – especially elements like God sent his *Son* to die for sins, the divinity of the Son and the Trinity – to make sense. The parallel to evangelism in the Muslim world is impossible to miss. He charts the work for us: '[...] follow the Biblical trajectories forward, unpacking the Son of God themes as [you] go, until [you] reach their climax in Jesus the Son of God – the true man, the true Israel, the true Davidic King, the one who comes as David's Son and yet as the mighty God.' (85) The work done in the book is a rich start to tracing those trajectories. There is more work to be done in order to do justice to the question, 'Why do Christians call Jesus the Son of God?'

Carson argues, not surprisingly, for retaining a literal Son and Father. His strongest and most moving argument is his demonstration of the 'cross-pollination' of distinctive uses of Son of God as applied to Jesus. However, I was disappointed by two of his critiques of the proponents of a meaning-based approach to Son of God. The first was his dismissal of the recent paper 'A New Look at Translating Familial Biblical Terms' by Brown, Gray and Gray as having 'retrenched' on one crucial issue (the familial nature of the titles, 97). I would have preferred an engagement with the content of the paper. The second disappointment is his characterization of the meaning-based approach to Son of God (by some) as an advocacy to work poor teaching into the Bible translations for the purpose of getting results, even if spurious. In all my discussions with translators, many of them quite heated, I have never encountered such a motivation. While poor teaching worked into translation might be a result, it was wrong to attribute that as a motive to a vague 'some of the new translators'.

Carson's book was issued as a gentle polemic in the debate over the translation of Son of God. With Wycliffe and SIL's adoption of the WEA recommendations the translation debate has changed, and there is a need to build consensus around the conclusions of the report. Carson's careful reasoning resonates with the report and can promote better understanding and agreement. For field workers, the continuing need is to be able to give a winsome answer to the question, 'Why do Christians call Jesus the Son of God?' Carson walks part of the way with us to answer that question and points the way to growth in our understanding of the divine sonship of Jesus.

Reviewed by Basheer Abdulfadi

Basheer Abdulfadi is a Western tentmaker who has worked in evangelism, discipleship and church planting in the Arabian Peninsula for the last 20 years.

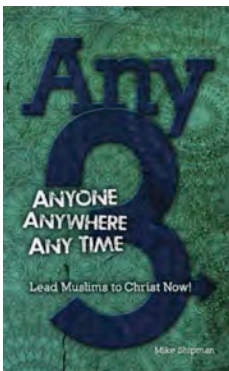
Any-3: Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime – Win Muslims to Christ Now!

By Mike Shipman

Arkadelphia, AR: WIGTake Resources, 2012, 152 pages

As CPM practitioners among the unreached Muslims of the world, one of our primary activities is sharing the gospel with Muslims and training other believers so that they can share the gospel with Muslims. Those of us who read *SEEDBED* are constantly on the lookout for new methods and ideas that have proven fruitful among unreached Muslims.

For those reasons, I was thrilled to hear that Mike Shipman had released a book about the Muslim evangelism method that he and his national colleagues have created, which they have termed ‘Any-3.’ However, this book was not what I was expecting.



What I expected was a manual on how to do Any-3. This would have included a detailed description of the very best way to do Any-3 based on Shipman’s 14 years of experience sharing with Muslims. Though I use Any-3 as the main way that I share with Muslims, I was hoping that maybe there would be an update or new advice to help me be more fruitful.

As it turns out, I didn’t get that. What I did get was a reminder. Not just a reminder about how to do the Any-3 gospel presentation, but a reminder concerning the most important foundation for Any-3: it is simple. As Shipman states throughout the book, that is the point of Any-3 and any gospel proclamation. In chapter 1, ‘God at Work in the Muslim World’, he states, ‘By using the gospel itself as a filter, Any-3 immediately reveals who is and is not open to the gospel. So, instead of having to guess how a person might respond to the gospel based on body language or some other subjective factor, Any-3 lets you know for certain.’ (Kindle Locations 138-140). It was helpful for me to remember that it’s not

about some new, shiny gadget that does things better than the next guy's gadget. Any-3 is simple. Like it or not, that is the point.

Because of that, Shipman only spends the first third of his book telling you how his team developed Any-3, what fruit they have seen and then how to do it. He tells about his team's commitment to begin sharing the gospel with *anyone*, *anywhere*, and *anytime*—the lessons they learned turned into Any-3. Shipman presents the method with five simple steps. Each step ends with a simple transitional question:

1. **Get Connected.** Strike up a conversation and get acquainted with the person you are talking to by being friendly and open. Transition with the question: 'Are you Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, or Christian?'
2. **Get to God.** Upon the person answering the question above, say, 'All religions are pretty much the same, right? We are all trying to please God, or we are all trying to deal with our sin. Sinning is easy, but paying off our sin debt to God is much more difficult, isn't it?' Then transition with, 'In your religion, what are you doing to get your sins forgiven?'
3. **Get to Lostness.** Let them answer your question. Listen attentively and ask questions along the way. Then ask them, 'Are your sins paid off yet?' 'When do you think your sins will be paid off?' 'On Judgement Day, do you know that your sin debt will be paid?' The next transition is 'What I believe it different. I know my sins are forgiven. Not because I'm a good person (though I do try), but because God himself has made a way for our sins to be forgiven.'
4. **Get to the Gospel.** At this point, you tell them *The First and Last Sacrifice Story*. This story starts with Jesus coming to earth, includes a few of his miracles, and then tells that he predicted that he had to die. To explain why he had to die, you tell them the story of Adam and Eve, their one sin, the consequence of their sin, and the sacrifice that God made to atone for their sin (that being sacrificing an animal to make new clothing for them). The story then comes back to Jesus, John's announcement of Jesus being the *Lamb of God*, and Jesus ultimate death, burial, resurrection and ascension. This story takes anywhere from 5-10 minutes.

The transition at the conclusion of this story is: 'According to the Bible, if we surrender our lives to Jesus as Lord and believe that he has paid for our sins through his sacrifice and that God raised him from the dead, our sins will be forgiven.'

5. **Get to a Decision.** To get to a decision, ask two simple questions, 'That makes sense, doesn't it? We can't pay off our own sin debt, so God has made a way for our sins to be forgiven.' Secondly, 'Do you believe what I have told you: that Jesus died for our sins and was raised again?' If the

response is positive, you then lead them in prayer and schedule a follow up meeting. If the response is negative, you simply move on to a different topic and finish off the conversation politely and pleasantly.

The next third of the book slows way down and reminds us why we share the gospel in the first place, what keeps us from doing it, and why those reasons are lies. As I began reading this second section of the book, I kept thinking, ‘Ok. Great lesson. Good to think about. Now, let’s get back to Any-3.’ But after much reflection, I’ve found that this second section is really the meat of the book. It feels as though the reader is sitting down for coffee with Shipman as he gives you a handful of lessons about sharing the gospel. They are all very simple lessons, but valuable ones for us to pick up, dust off, and think about again. For instance, in chapter 8, *Be-e Stings that Poison Effectiveness*, Shipman presents some lies that we often tell ourselves concerning what we must do or be before we can share the gospel effectively. However, these lies ultimately sting us and keep us from being effective at sharing the gospel. One such lie is ‘Be-e Really Smart,’ that is, that we need to understand our focus culture very well before we can effectively share the gospel. However, Shipman reminds us that, ‘The gospel is relevant in every context. So, learn all you can about your community, and while you do, share the gospel frequently. The interactive nature of Any-3 is a great way to learn more about the target culture and religious beliefs while you witness.’ (Kindle Locations 717-719)

In chapter 12, ‘Any-3 Bridges to Success – Messaging’, Shipman has some valuable insight for us about authority as we share the gospel. He says, ‘Essentially, Jesus was saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me, and with that authority I am authorizing you to go’ (paraphrased from Matthew 28: 18). The implication is that everyone who obeys the Great Commission has Christ-given authority to do so. We have the right to share the gospel with kings, paupers and everyone in between.’ (Kindle Locations 1100-1102)

Shipman’s clear message to us is that evangelism is not about the method. His team created Any-3 and it has proved to be fruitful in their Southeast Asian context leading thousands to faith. The power that makes Any-3 successful is not that it is powerful, but rather that it is getting people out sharing the gospel, the true source of saving power. I find that message to be extremely valuable.

‘The gospel is relevant in every context. So, learn all you can about your community, and while you do, share the gospel frequently.’

The last section provides us with a few tools for adapting Any-3 for a non-Muslim audience and a detailed guide for putting on an Any-3 training for your church or other like-minded believers. I found them to be quite valuable since I am unaware of a better-packaged evangelism training method.

Within this last section, Shipman attempts to give a step-by-step description of his team's strategy for initiating a CPM once someone comes to faith. Being familiar with his CPM materials, I found it unnecessary to truncate so much information into just a few pages. It would have been best if he had either left it out entirely, thus making *Any-3* solely an evangelism book, or filled it out more completely, thus making *Any-3* into a CPM book as well.

If you do not yet have a clear and simple way to naturally share the gospel with Muslims, *Any-3* would be an asset to you and your ministry. It would also be valuable for you if you don't have a simple way to train other colleagues in how to share their faith. Even if you already use a particular method, I think you'd find Shipman's lessons neatly packaged and easy to implement in your context.

Because of its simplicity, this would also be a great resource for churches in the Western world that are wrestling with how to share the gospel effectively with their new Muslim neighbours. I would recommend this book to any missionary, pastor, missions pastor, or anyone thinking about going into missions work in Muslim majority areas.

Reviewed by Will Meryl

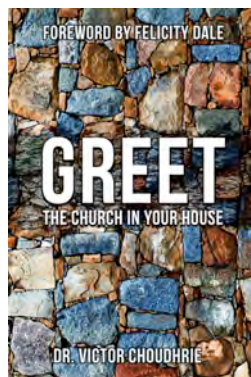
Will is a CPM practitioner and trainer who has been working in Southeast Asia since 2006.

Greet the Church in your House

by Victor Choudhrie

Power Through Love, 2012, available only in Kindle format.

Victor Choudhrie is a well-known church planter and advocate for house churches (which he calls 'ekklesia'). This book is a loosely organized collection of arguments against traditional, mostly Western church models in favour of a simplified house church structure. The format and style of this book is neither academic nor prosaic. It is arranged more like a training seminar outline. The chapters are short and each one is preceded by a set of summarizing bullets. The book could use some editing in its current form. There are, for example, two chapter sevens.



Reading past the format and style of the book reveals an impassioned call for the re-evaluation of contemporary church structures. Choudhrie looks at both history and biblical texts. He argues that the rise of Catholic institutionalization continues to haunt our view of church leadership. He provides numerous short outlines, many in list form, of how a church should function. He addresses governance, roles (he takes a strong stand for egalitarianism), missiology and how his model of church best accommodates biblical ecclesiology.

This book sometimes suffers from overgeneralization. Choudhrie writes, for example, 'In the New Testament ekklesia everyone entered His gates with joyfulness, praise and thanksgiving, while in the modern church, members sit with sombre faces.' (Kindle position 2078). This takes away from the larger issues he is seeking to address.

Choudhrie weaves history from his Indian roots into the book. This brings richness to his topic since many authors have addressed house church only from a Western perspective (particularly in the Western-dominated emergent church movement). Missionaries often plant house churches not because they want to but because repression of Christianity forces them to. This book takes the position that all churches should be house churches.

This book does not offer many new or compelling concepts but reinforces what many house church practitioners teach and believe. What makes this book credible is Choudhrie's many years as a practitioner in a non-Western context. For those working in similar situations this book affirms that it is not only ok but preferable to focus on house church models.

Reviewed by J. Ted Esler, PhD

Ted Esler is Executive Vice President of Pioneers USA, planted churches for 8 years in the Balkans, and currently is a house church planter in Orlando, FL, USA.

Some Indonesian Christian missions and churches before the 1965 bloodbath prepared for a large influx of converts. They did this by empowering the nonprofessional Christians (laity as compared to pastoral staffing). This was done by allowing laity to lead home meetings and to administer the sacraments such as baptism. But Willis (1977) points out that forward thinking leaders also prepared for a large influx by nurturing of people movements. Though the elements of such training were less defined than current church planting movements approaches, significant similarities do exist. But the 'flash point' was the political upheaval. Some organizations were prepared spiritually and with a vision for what God would be moving among the Indonesian Muslim population. Those who were ready saw significant church growth.

We find ourselves at a similar crossroads today. The political conditions impacted somewhat by the Arab Spring and the emergence of groups like Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party) and Hizbut Tahrir (Freedom Party) demonstrate that Indonesia is pregnant for a new movement much like 1967. Already workers are seeing the first fruits of such a movement.

— Frank Preston, pp. 11-12

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