

SEEDBED

Practitioners in Conversation

August 2010, Volume XXIV No 1

Globalizing Missions, Islam in the West and Diaspora Ministries

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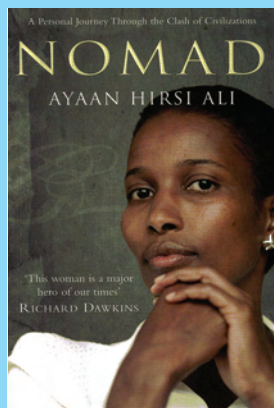
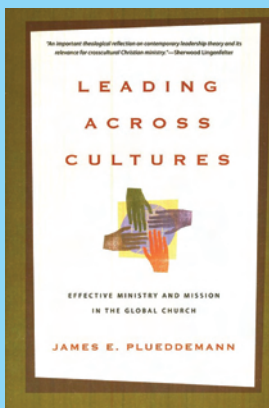
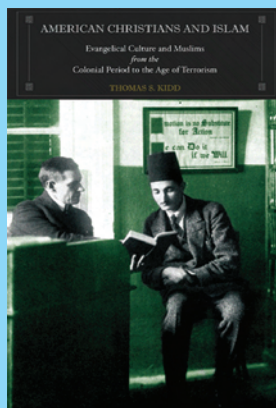
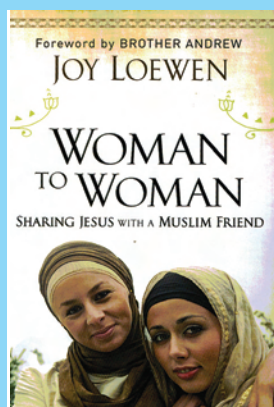
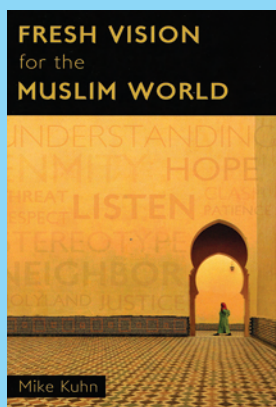
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Globalization. What is it like for European and Majority World agencies to partner with us? Do we understand the culture of our African teammates? How do we partner with the Arab BMB evangelists whom God is raising up? How do we assess new ministry approaches?

In our globalizing world Muslims live in the West. *Seedbed* explores their challenges and ways of ministering to them. There are also thoughtful reviews of 8 important new books.

It is fitting that the last *Seedbed* to be published by AWM is on globalization even as AWM merges with Pioneers' global ministry in 2010. Pioneers will publish future *Seedbeds*.

SEEDBED

Practitioners in Conversation

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Letters to the Editor are welcomed and the best will be published.

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EDITORIAL

Ministering the Global Gospel in a Globalizing World

In his short book (135 pages) *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, 2009), Manfred Steger lucidly discusses the incredibly complex historical, economic, political, cultural, ecological and ideological dimensions of contemporary globalization. As Christians seeking to be faithful to God in our lives and witness, it feels, at times, like an overwhelming challenge merely to understand the vast complexity and interconnectedness of our globalized world, let alone, to know *how* to engage fruitfully in ministry in our various ministry contexts.

In the run up to the Lausanne Congress to be held in Cape Town in October, the Lausanne Movement have set up a series of 'Global Conversations' online (<http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/>) in which Christians from across the globe participate in blogged conversations in eight languages. Conversations are taking place under 21 different headings so far. Both the global scope of this conversation, and the way it is being carried out online, illustrate that even we Christians are globally interconnected in amazing new ways.

So how does our globalizing context influence the way in which we minister, and the content and shape of our ministry? Just one personal example illustrates our new reality as we move into the Pioneers milieu. Last month, I was privileged to fly to Malaysia, to be a part of a small gathering of on-the-ground church planters serving in diverse Muslim cities on four continents (!). Together we grappled with ways that God could use us to help launch movements of multiplying churches in Muslim contexts across the globe. We plan to stay in touch, and regional networks were set up that will keep in touch via secure email and Skype and periodic face-to-face meetings. Today, even when we work in a seemingly remote corner of the world, we no longer need to minister alone, thanks to globalization.

According to Os Guinness and David Wells, in their Lausanne post on globalization and mission (<http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/conversations/detail/10566>), our threefold corporate task, faced with the complexity of our globalized contexts, is to (1) discern and understand our world, (2) assess appropriate ministry in our context, and finally (3) engage in service and ministry where God has called us. Even put in such a simple way, this task is impossible without the support of our communities and teams, and the leading and gifting of the Holy Spirit. But then again, we who are a part of Christ's church are called to the unthinkable high calling of demonstrating 'the manifold wisdom of God... to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places' (Eph. 3:10 – ESV).

It is my prayer that this SEEDBED will help give you increased understanding of our complex ministry contexts so that our ongoing engagement in our local ministry can continue fruitful through the Holy Spirit for the Father's glory.

Serving with you in our globalized world,

Don Little, Editor editor.seedbed@wornet.org or editor.seedbed@a2bmail.net



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Hello Don,

I read with interest your article 'Ministering to Muslims in a Globalised World of Violence and Clashing Civilisations' in the latest Seedbed (Vol. 23, No 3, Dec 2009). In particular the section where you described your developing understanding of the missions task touched upon some things that I have been thinking through, one being openness and the other being socially engaged.

I recently read *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* by Chris Wright and he discussed how Jesus saw himself in the light of the Old Testament. In a sense Jesus came to do what Israel was supposed to have done, that is to bring mercy and justice to the nations (e.g. Is 42) and Jesus himself emphasises his social engagement when, in reply to their question whether he is the 'one', he tells John's disciples to report that 'The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.' (Mt. 11:4-5). In Jer 22:16, God describes King Josiah saying that 'he defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?' These issues are central to holistic mission.

On the subject of openness I sometimes wonder if we (or some of us) are unnecessarily clandestine, occupying roles that get us 'in' but perhaps give us an aura of lack of credibility and may even be strategically sub-optimal. This was something I struggled with as I directed GAP. We were fully supported and so did not live anything like a business director would and this did not sit right with those I met. I am not saying that it is necessarily wrong to do things this way, it might be the only way to run such a ministry but it bothered me.

I have just completed an MBA and am now waiting on the Lord to reveal his will for the next stage in our lives. Until this morning there was a great possibility in KSA but this has now closed. It would have allowed me to help with development within the society – being socially engaged in a small but significant way. For me, this engagement and openness would be refreshing and something I am a lot more comfortable with.

My vision is to work in a secular company occupying a credible role for a westerner allowing me to be clandestine about only those things that I really do need to keep quiet about (e.g. company membership) while being open about my role and my love for Jesus.

Just some thoughts.

PR



PART I**GLOBALIZING MISSIONS: PARTNERING & AFRICAN CULTURE, A BMB
EVANGELIST & ASSESSING AN INSIDER APPROACH TO MINISTRY**VIEWING OUR PARTNERSHIPS
THROUGH OUR PARTNERS' EYES

by Keith Fraser-Smith, former Director of Globalization

Introduction

During the last seven years seven new Partnerships have been approved by AWM's International Council. In the same period one Partnership was amicably dissolved at the request of the Partner. Six of these new Partnerships have been made outside Continental Europe and four are from the New Sending Regions of the world; Latin and South America, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

In the same period the number of missionaries from our International Partners has almost doubled from 28 to 54 adults, representing 14.9% of our current membership. Through the Department of Globalization (formerly called the Department of Global Mobilization) our Partners now contribute around 25% of new mission members annually.

In recently approved agreements the following clause has been included, 'The cooperative process will be evaluated annually.' This article sets out to give the reader an overview of this process at work and is based on responses from our Partners to a list of open questions (See Endnote).¹ The responses were either submitted in writing or written-up from personal conversations on Skype or face-to-face. They have been edited to fit the article and actual quotations are indicated with quotation marks. Rather than referring to the title of the contributor I have used the agency's name (See the full names of our Partner agencies in this endnote).²

Finally, being aware of the different cultural ways of expressing opinions and the sensitivities of the potential readers who might recognise actual situations, especially in the challenges section, I have been as diplomatic in my wording as possible without evading the important point being made.

Perceived Benefits of Partnership

Through the eyes of our Partners we begin by looking at the perceived advantages of partnership. From a Christian perspective, working with and



through a partner is 'a fundamental principle of operation' for DMG.

Partnership between mission agencies increases the potential of additional field opportunities, especially for those organizations that do not have a presence in the Arab world or in countries where AWM has significant diaspora ministry. SMG sums it up when they write, 'We can place workers in the Muslim world.'

Our Italian Partner IM says that the partnership gives 'greater exposure to the needs of the Arab world and access to a mission opportunity for Italians.' SIM (East Asia) writes that through our partnership with AWM we are 'entering into the Arab speaking countries where SIM is not active.'

LAMM describes our partnership as, 'Having opened the door of the Arab world to Mexico.' In their context, they say that 'the partnership with AWM gives their mission credibility within the context of the worldwide missions community.' A twofold result of this improved standing has been a significant increase in the number of candidates applying to their mission and the number of missionaries being sent cross-culturally from Mexico. LAMM also appreciates the way the Department of Globalization staff work alongside them in mobilization. LAMM is co-directed by a husband and wife team and they have valued attending (separately) AWM's International Orientation (IO) programme and Interface (mission-wide conference in 2008) where they could get a first-hand experience of our organization.

For several of our Partners, partnership provides resources and empowers missionaries to fulfil God's calling in the Arab world. CAPRO writes that they appreciate AWM's 'IT services and information sharing on service opportunities in the Arab world.' Satisfaction was voiced in the way missionaries are orientated to AWM, assigned, integrated into teams, receive fellowship, and provided with member care. DMG said that, 'In the context of team life the missionary's potential is released through the complementarity of member gifting.' A 'lone or detached' missionary would lack the accountability that is provided by the partner. The VDM comment was that, 'The missionaries are integrated into a team and identify with AWM's ministry and work.'

PIOZ commented that they had 'confidence that seconded PI workers are working with like-minded AWM workers. For them this is particularly relevant where there are no PI teams.' PIOZ also emphasized that 'The privilege of working with AWM teams rather than duplicating existing ministries' is a benefit of partnering.

As part of the global family of God, partnerships foster relationships between personnel at every level, from agency leadership to field missionary, bringing fresh insights. Today the globalization of missions is a movement of God that cannot be ignored. One agency spoke of their reliance on the strategic leadership

As part of the global family of God, partnerships foster relationships between personnel at every level, from agency leadership to field missionary, bringing fresh insights.



and pastoral care of AWM. The PIOZ contributor spoke of the 'accurate information about the Arab world.'

Where applicable, several of our Partners mentioned that they had benefited from our financial assistance in the areas of publicity, hospitality and Partnership Fund bursaries for missionaries to attend International Orientation and to study Arabic. Finally, there is the blessing of sharing in what God is doing through AWM.

But there are problems and challenges in being partners and to this subject the article now turns.

Challenges in the Partnerships

The main frustration experienced by our Partners is that the flow of communication has not always been regular, especially from the Field. SIM (East Asia) illustrates this by writing, 'More frequent dialogue and communication about the workers and their issues will be helpful.' IM expresses a felt need shared by some other Partners for more general information, 'As a partner organization we would benefit from more user-friendly resources being made available. Multimedia presentations, literature and events should be developed with multi-lingual, multi-cultural users in mind.' The correspondent continued, 'Communication is also an area where the relationship could develop. We could do with receiving a specific news/ministry update where opportunities, news items and needs are highlighted. Something brief that might be able to be circulated in our country.'

Another area of concern is that AWM's strategy development has not been communicated frequently enough to the Partners. It is not sufficient to assume that the seconded missionaries will update their missions with AWM's developments. One agency, DMG, stressed the need for strategic level information about AWM as they help provide a bridge between the missionary and the sending churches. Unless the Partner understands the 'broad vision' as well as the 'team visions' it is hard for them to meet the expectations of the sending churches. The Partner's role is to come alongside the sending churches and to help them understand what the missionaries are doing. This interactive process becomes a training opportunity for the local church. It helps sending churches to grow in their missiological understanding.

There is a request for streamlining the application process. PINZ puts it this way, 'Past investigations have revealed accessing AWM field information on behalf of enquirers to be more difficult than from our agency's teams, e.g. the practice of requiring enquirers to complete pre-application forms before information can be obtained. In this day and age it can deter many enquirers.' LAMM has found that for Latinos the whole process is complicated and that taking them through the procedure takes time. This is partly due to the necessity to work in English. CAPRO voices a related issue when they write, 'The initial understanding and workings of the partnership agreement (were a challenge).'



The English language requirement for candidates is also a challenge to SIM (S Korea) and to IM. SIM, in both South Korea and East Asia, adds that the financial support package for missionaries seconded to AWM is high compared with other S Korean and East Asian mission agencies, especially when both AWM and SIM's administrative fees are taken into consideration. SMG and IM also mentioned the cost of sending missionaries through the Partnership. SMG said that 'The AWM conference which is compulsory³ has also been a problem in the past because it is very expensive.' Another financial concern is mentioned by CAPRO: 'A common problem among all (our mission workers) relates to lack of clarification on the financial policies of AWM, e.g., the Field Administration Fund.'

SIM (S Korea) also points out that denominationalism is very strong in S Korea and that international missions compete with denominational missions for candidates. Denominations are reticent to release their mission candidates to other organizations and they want to set the agenda for their missionaries if they do. Both SIM (East Asia) and SIM (S Korea) refer to the cultural barriers when serving alongside Western workers.

The foundation of effective partnership is personal interaction between leaders that builds trust and confidence. It was agreed that the busy schedules of leaders often militates against this essential process. IM writes, '(There is) difficulty in assigning quality time and creative input to develop the partnership further. One of the challenges we face is how to recruit Italians and how best to potentially use AWM teams/personnel.'

Another comment from IM relating to a Short-Term placement highlights the challenge of working in a multi-cultural team, 'The one short-term missionary generally enjoyed her time with AWM but two major areas of concern emerged. One relates to the issue of team dynamics (leadership, roles, conflict management) that is probably linked to the context of a multi-cultural team. The second area relates to precise information and job descriptions. Not all missionaries are self-starters and a more structured use of time might have been an option to be better developed.' IM further expressed concern about how full-time missionaries in diaspora contexts allocate their time.

This is a constant challenge.

Finally, PIOZ noted an issue distinctive to their situation where there may be a PI team in the same country as a PI missionary is seconded to AWM, 'Who is the PI worker directly accountable to, PI leaders in the area/region or AWM leaders or both?'

The foundation of effective partnership is personal interaction between leaders that builds trust and confidence. Trust between partners is essential and this is developed by personal contact between members of the agencies, especially those in leadership, a transparent information flow and the effective implementation of promised services.

Resolving personnel problems

The partners were asked to suggest how some of the personnel problems their people have encountered within AWM could be resolved or overcome. It is acknowledged by all the Partners that handling personnel issues is very complex as it involves personality, cultural, and team dynamics. There have been occasions when the process of resolving personnel issues has not been handled in the best manner and there is always room for improvement. One mission suggested that we need to build into the process opportunities for feedback and debriefing with the missionaries and the Partner agency leadership.

PIOZ wrote, 'That problems can be overcome by ensuring that expectations and protocols are clearly defined before new workers depart (from their home country).' SIM (East Asia) invites, 'AWM to relax the rules somehow if there is a situation where English can be effective in reaching out to the people (in the Arab world).'

Factors limiting international partnerships in general

Several agencies responded to this question by pointing out that financial constraint, physical distance and the work loads of mission leaders limits the necessary face-to-face contact that is the building block of trust and an effective working relationship.

Two Partners used almost the same words (combined here in one quote) to describe the limitations on effective partnering: 'Differences in ministry focus, organizational culture and ethos, practice, policy, and cultural nuances.' PIOZ noted that 'leadership style may also be a determining (limiting) factor.' CAPRO mentioned three areas: '(1) Lack of trust and mutual respect, (2) lack of clear agreement on financial and operational issues and (3) lack of recognition and acceptance of uniqueness of partnering agencies.'

Other Helpful Comments

'Partnership is the key to the future', said DMG. However, the correspondent added that the future is for 'flexible' partnerships. VDM wrote, 'We would like to say that we appreciate the partnership with AWM very much and our experience over the years has been of cooperation and goodwill between AWM and VDM. The current system of 'seconding' missionaries to work with partners is running well.'

IM writes, 'I believe partnership to be the way forward in missions. Maximizing of expertise and energy is essential. Sharing resources is the most appropriate way ahead. In a new globalized world, globalized partnerships must develop.' IM adds that 'It tends to go in waves and be reactive. When a potential recruit comes forward then the partnership becomes more relevant. At that time areas of need and opportunity are detailed and some creative, strategic thinking goes on as to how to develop the partnership further.'



SIM (East Asia) writes, 'As a whole, SIM EA is happy with partnership with AWM. We are pleased to have the entry into countries that we are not experienced in.'

CAPRO writes that the resolution of challenges has been achieved, 'through patience, open communications and mutual respect between the leadership of both missions and their missionaries' and also writes, 'I must say that we as CAPRO have enjoyed the partnership between us and particularly appreciate the support, understanding and encouragement from the leadership of AWM.'

Conclusions

The overall health of our partnerships appears to be reasonably good but there is room for improvement. Trust between partners is essential and this is developed by personal contact between members of the agencies, especially those in leadership, a transparent information flow and the effective implementation of promised services.

The request for information is high on our Partners' agendas. Currently, all the English-speaking National Offices are asked to send their regular publications to all our Partners at the expense of the Department of Globalization. However, this appears not to be sufficient or else something may have gone wrong with the procedure. (A recent check with our three English-speaking National Offices suggests that we can do better.) The current agreements encourage Partners to customize the materials that we produce but this is not often pursued. In some instances AWM has contributed financially to such projects. There is a limit to the human and financial resources within our organization to provide more advanced and sophisticated resources.

I was expecting issues of culture to dominate the interaction but agency ethos, which has a strong cultural dimension, is the prevailing determinant in the effectiveness of the partnership relationship. An agency's ethos determines the expectations of the partnership, the process of placement and the ongoing accountability for their missionaries, including pastoral care. As the main conduit of information for our partners and their members, especially during the placement phase, our Personnel Department has been required to be flexible. Mature missionaries with field experience coming through CAPRO can be very different from Latin Americans who are coming to the Arab world for the first time and applying with limited English-language ability. There are those agencies like SIM (East Asia) that have very similar procedures to our own and other agencies with whom we have mutually adapted the application process.

The area where culture often plays a role is in the financial sphere. Agencies have different policies and guarding the integrity of both parties is not always easy. For example, from a Western, individualistic perspective, currently the dominant perspective in AWM, we do not want any of our members to suffer financial hardship on the field that could lead to suffering, economic disparity

and potential discomfort in a multi-cultural team. From collectivist cultures, especially those of sub-Sahara and Latin America, financial hardship is naturally shared between team members and 'living by faith' is the immediate response.

Our current International Orientation (IO) for new mission members is a strong feature of our partnership programme and is appreciated by all the Partners. Further, the Partnership Fund has enabled those coming from countries with weaker economies to participate in International Orientation (IO) and cover Arabic learning fees for up to two years. The first facilitates bonding to AWM and the latter provides life-long language tools for ministry.

It ought not to be a surprise that where we have not engaged physically in mobilization, i.e., mobilisers alongside partners, we have, in general, seen very few candidates. The exception to the rule would be CAPRO. Our European partners (DMG, SMG and VDM) do not have the mechanisms for co-mobilization and rely on the recommendations of serving missionaries in AWM or good report from others. Our Pioneers partners in Australia requested mid-term missionaries from the field, who could contribute to their three-week mobilizing programmes. In spite of the promise of all expenses paid tentmakers could not be found who would commit this length of time, especially with the addition of a period with our other Pioneers Partner in New Zealand. Who could blame them when they may only have a four-week annual vacation and have to fit in deputation too?

Those who have participated in an AWM event, like IO or a conference, are probably better informed about the ethos of the organization than others. Inviting Partner CEOs to participate in AWMI Leaders and/or IC meetings helps but as there may be three years between invitations this may not be frequent enough. In addition, generally only those with serving missionaries have been invited and the focus has been on the New Sending Countries.

Finally, several financial issues have been highlighted in the article, especially the additional cost of participating in a Partnership and the necessity for transparent policies.

Action Points

It is evident from the responses of some agencies that we are not providing them with enough information. For example, one Chief Executive Officer said that he would like to receive copies of the biannual Area and Media Reports and Dr David Lundy's executive summaries of AWMI Leadership and IC meetings.

One agency would like to receive press releases and articles written for the public domain that, if necessary, could be translated and circulated. As noted above, other multi-media productions would be helpful too. Recent AWM staff appointments in the area of Communications could make some of this possible but much of the local customization will remain the responsibility of the Partners.



There are a number of further action points that arise from the research for this article:

1. There needs to be a review of how the financial policies are communicated to Partners as well as the policies.
2. We need to create more opportunities for our Partners' CEOs and their delegates to attend AWM events.
3. We need to keep under review the way we mutually exercise debriefing, especially where there have been misunderstandings and/or a perceived failure to meet expectations on the part of either organization.
4. In some instances we may need to be prepared to make more mobilizing visits at the request of our Partners.
5. Finally, it is going to be necessary that in order to provide greater mobilization assistance to our Partners that more AWM mission staff will need to participate in the globalization process.

I want to close by saying what a privilege it is to be at the heart of a network of mission leaders who partner with AWM to reach Muslims of the Arab world and, through God's grace, plant churches of believers. My prayer is that as AWM merges with Pioneers that the lessons that we have learnt together would be put into practice in the new relationship.

1 The questions asked:

1. Name of Partner
2. Length of official partnership with AWM
3. Current number of adult missionaries placed with AWM (excluding short-termers)
4. What benefits have your organization received from the partnership?
5. What benefits have your missionaries placed with AWM received?
6. What problems and/or challenges have your organization encountered / come across?
7. How have these problems and/or challenges been overcome / resolved?
8. What problems and/or challenges have your missionaries placed with AWM encountered / come across?
9. How have these problems and/or challenges been overcome / resolved?
10. How could the relationship be enhanced / grown / developed from the perspectives of the organization and the missionaries?
11. What factors limit international partnerships?
12. Any other comments.

2 AWM Partner Agencies:

PIOZ – Pioneers Australia
 PINZ – Pioneers New Zealand
 DMG – Germany: Deutsche Missionsgemeinschaft
 VDM – Germany: Vereinigte Deutsche Missionshilfe
 SMG – Switzerland: Schweizerische Missions-Gemeinschaft
 CAPRO – Nigeria: Calvary Ministries
 LAMM – Mexico: Latinoamérica al Mundo Mexico

IM – Italy: Italian Ministries

SIM (East Asia) – Singapore

SIM (South Korea) – South Korea

- 3 **Clarification** – AWM conferences are 'strongly encouraged' but not compulsory. We encourage all missionaries to make provision for conferences in their budgets. Some missionaries coming from the Majority World have had partial bursaries to help cover the expenses of these events

SOME COLLECTIVE THOUGHTS ON AFRICAN CULTURE: A COMPILATION OF PERSPECTIVES FROM AFRICAN BROTHERS & SISTERS

Compiled & Edited in November 2009 by Brother Keith (Fraser-Smith)

Introduction

This paper is a commentary on sub-Saharan African culture that is *collective* for both practical and cultural reasons. It needs to be practical as all the contributors are very actively engaged in local ministry and also cultural because the roots of African culture are collectivist rather than individualist and our working together makes manifest this fact. To avoid being accused of stereotyping the beliefs, values and behaviour that are the cultural 'software of the mind'⁴ we have deliberately called the article '*Some collective thoughts on African culture*'. There are four main reasons for not attempting to be more definitive in this assertion.

Firstly, every one of the 48 sub-Saharan African countries is different and within every country there exist many subgroups. Wikipedia estimates that over 2,000 languages are spoken in Africa, underscoring the diversity of this huge continent.

Secondly, the spectrum of traditional to post-modern behaviour is very broad and many of the contributing correspondents wrote about the rapid changes that are happening within sub-Saharan African culture. European colonialism has had a lot of influence on African culture. Among the professional, political and business elites tradition is being supplanted by Western attitudes and behaviour. The general thinking is that to be civilized is to be westernized.

Thirdly, the contributors only represent about 5% of the African countries.

Fourthly, the transformation that Christ brings in the African believer's life cannot be underestimated. One contributor wrote this: 'When I saw your questions I was taken aback because now that I am a new creature in Christ I



struggle daily to put away the obvious African habits which are against the new life.' Another of our team summed up the overall challenge to understanding multi-cultural Africa in these words: 'In a sense we can say there is no such thing as African culture. For example, there are significant cultural differences between cultures in Sothern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria: a person from northern Nigeria may have more cultural similarities with a person from Niger Republic than with a person from southern Nigeria. In the same vein, there are significant differences between cultures in West Africa and in Eastern Africa and between cultures in Anglophone countries and Francophone countries.'

Our hopes and expectations of this paper are that our non-African brothers and sisters would understand us better and that the suggestions we offer would help us to grow together in Christ and create new synergies as our cultures complement one another. We pray that as a result our harmonious witness to our neighbours will be more effective to the glory of God.

To maximise the use of this article in the multi-cultural team setting, Don Little has submitted a series of questions that can be used to explore these issues in greater depth. In fact, these searching questions can be asked of any cross-cultural context (They are listed in this endnote).⁵

So we begin in an appropriate fashion with greetings.

Greetings

Greetings are important in most African cultures. If you are seeing or meeting a person for the first time in the day, you should say a short word of greeting as appropriate to the time of day or situation.

In their book, *Into Africa – Intercultural Insights*, Yale Richmond and Phyllis Gestrin write, 'Like all other personal interactions, greetings in Africa are social events, and if you try to shorten them, you will be considered rude.'⁶

It is normally expected that people shake hands when they greet one another though shaking hands between the genders may be subject to local and religious convention.

Family

The centrality of the family, especially the extended family, is the cornerstone of African society. 'Collective living' says it all. The extended family is still very much around, but globalization is affecting this and the nuclear family is taking centre place these days. Like many parts of the Arab world, people take pride in the fact that they are from a big extended family and would consider it strange if you said that you didn't know your extended family. In the cities, you can hide under the cosmopolitan cover and have a nuclear family of some sort but in the rural areas it is impossible. Tribalism is an offshoot of the communal system of life. My community is more

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important than the other, so I have to take care of my own first before others. Then the more enlightened tribes look down on the others.

To illustrate this family mutuality as it might manifest itself within the multi-cultural team, a contributor wrote:

If a Team Leader makes phone calls once or twice a week to an African team member and says to him, 'Brother I just wanted to hear your voice and be sure you are doing OK', then this African team member will think him the best fellow around and will easily overlook other shortcomings. Family members should look out for each other. The group comes before the individual. When majority have agreed on a course of action, all should unite in its implementation in family spirit. There is room for individualism as long as it serves the overall group interest.

Related to the concept of extended family is land. One contributor commented, 'Land is a link with the history of my family and clan. This is part of my root, identity and ancestry.' Another wrote of how forebears are very important, especially in traditional African society where ancestors are to be revered and worshipped.

Family Roles – men, women, children and the elderly

Generally speaking, African society is a 'masculine' society. Those who do not conform to the 'macho' image would be looked down upon and would be called names like 'girlie or gay.'

Traditionally, women were seen as the weaker sex and treated as such but 'Western civilization has changed all that now', wrote one contributor.

One area where different family traditions may impact the multi-cultural team is the different ways we bring up our children. One African brother wrote: 'It used to be a very communal thing – everybody raises the children together. It is normal to leave your children with your parents if you can't handle it or your job is too demanding! Your children can be corrected and even disciplined by the neighbour or cousin next door!' In the multi-cultural team context it is especially important that couples with children communicate their level of tolerance of other people correcting their children. It might also be necessary to consider what other kinds of interaction with their children parents find comfortable, considering that in some cultures touching, hugging and kissing are the norm. In multi-cultural settings, careful observation, reflection and discussion of behavior between parents and children can avoid misunderstandings and resentment.

The place of the elderly in African society continues to be important. It is the children's responsibility to look after the elderly; either having their elderly parent(s) live with them or taking care of them in their own homes until they die.

The responsibility of the children toward their parents; may take an African mission member off the field suddenly and for an indefinite period of time.

Where the elderly don't have children it then becomes the community's responsibility. That is why some Africans would go to any length to get married and have children. It is very common to hear statements like 'who would take care of me when I'm old?'

The responsibility of the children toward their parents; whether elderly, sick, dying or in sudden death, may take an African mission member off the field suddenly and for an indefinite period of time. Western mission members need to understand and respect that their African counterparts may have different obligations and family expectations regarding extended family crises than they themselves.

Marriage

Traditional marriage rites can precede Christian services. Listen to one brother writing:

In the Yoruba culture, you have the choice of whom you will marry but the families play a very important role. Some families would not allow you to marry their son/daughter unless you come with your family's support and if they feel there's something wrong somewhere, then they could refuse to give their blessing. Very few marriages occur without both parents' consent. I remember during the traditional negotiations for my wedding that it was like I wasn't even consulted – the elders from the two families met and the next thing I knew we were pronounced husband and wife!

Another brother says that it is no longer the practice in his own family that the parents choose a wife for their son. However, he would agree that the elders still have a say in handling the marriage rites.

Community

It has been said that an individual's existence can be summed up by the phrase, 'I am because we are.' One question we asked ourselves was, 'How do Africans feel when they are alone?'

One person wrote, 'We are used to a communal lifestyle and feel sad when alone.' Another contributor said, 'They feel badly and are seen in a negative light. It's said of that person that he is like a cannibal.'

An important lesson for our multi-cultural teams to learn is that the major challenge that Africans find in working with Western missionaries is community. It could be summed up in this quote: 'I've not been on a mission long enough to give an accurate assessment, but I think it would be the issue of communal lifestyle. I know of several people on multi-cultural teams struggling with the seeming individual lifestyles of Westerners and that makes them severely lonely if they are single.'

Don Little has written, 'Clearly, this need for community is a central part of Arab culture, and the natural instinctive understanding that Africans have of this dynamic has potential significant benefit in helping other teammates understand and help create effective community among the church groups we are seeking to nourish.'⁷

Demonstrating concern for a person's welfare is more important than respecting his privacy. This relates to African openness, transparency and vulnerability. In regard to this aspect, one contributor wrote: 'Generally, yes, if they don't feel threatened by the people or the environment. Africans are usually very open to discuss personal things – the belief is that my problem is the whole community's problem.'

However, another brother said, 'It's hard to talk about personal things in public and a person would feel humiliated or shamed.'

These two comments illustrate that context is significant when discussing personal matters with Africans and that bluntness, brashness and frankness can be stumbling blocks to those from collectivist societies.

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Hospitality

Visitors are always made to feel welcomed even if the visit is unexpected. Times have changed, but a stranger was always given food and a place to lay his head. One way honour and intimacy are demonstrated is through lavish hospitality.

'The law of karma is immutable.' This was a newspaper heading in The Post (South Africa – July 16, 2008). In the West we associate karma with Oriental religions, but one of our contributors expressed this: 'Hospitality is very important because of the African belief in the law of karma, that you might be in a needy position tomorrow so if you take care of strangers today you would reap what you had sown. The basic society was very primitive and they needed to be hospitable just to survive. Hospitality in the African mind is that nobody should come to my place without having something to eat and drink and a place to sleep if he needs it.'

Hospitality communicates to an outsider how much you accept the person.

Honour, shame and respect

We are familiar with the categories of honour and shame that are part of Arab society, but they are also strong factors in African society.

One contributor wrote: 'Honour is related to personal dignity and mutual respect. We desire acceptance and equal opportunity before we feel welcomed in a group or new environment. Demonstrative respect for elders is universal to African cultures. If consensus cannot be reached in a decision-making situation then we will defer to the opinion of the elder. However, age has to be matched

by living honourably.' As another contributor wrote, 'An older man who is the village drunk doesn't get much respect.'

Another contributor commented, 'If a brother is in need and you are in a position to help but you only prayed with him, that would be shameful and not honourable.' Shame and honour are very tangible and objective realities within African society, as in Arab culture, and Westerners need to be cautious not to treat them as mere subjective emotions.

'Power distance' and leadership style

A very important area for our multi-cultural teams is leadership style. Geert Hofstede identifies 'Power Distance'⁸ within culture as one the defining characteristics of a society. This is demonstrated in different ways within African society. One contributor said: 'I could be wrong but I think I've seen a preference for an authoritarian figure. I think the general trend is towards someone they respect and who is effective on the job. Certainly not a dictator!'

Another wrote:

We generally defer to chronological superiority. Respect for elders is high on our value scale. Greater responsibility lies with the older person. He has to watch out for the welfare of the younger person and should make the greater sacrifice when the need arises. In a cross cultural/multicultural setting, the leader (TL, etc), even if younger in age, carries the responsibility of the older person. To illustrate, if a team member did not come for a team meeting and he did not indicate ahead that he will be absent, then the onus lies with the team leader to find out why the team member was not in the meeting.

This reminded one of us that in Arab society if someone doesn't turn up for an appointment; a meal, a Bible study or a meeting, then the onus is on the person who made the invitation to contact the person and find out why they didn't come. This is counter-intuitive to the West where the person who doesn't turn up is expected to apologise.

Relationships

Personal relationships are the glue that holds society together. Regular communication is essential to keep relationships from going rusty. For example, if you have not heard from a team member for a while you should call the person to find out how he is faring. Phone calls should not be only to pass on information but also just to say, 'Hi.'

Attitude to time

In the literature, sociologists refer to the Time/Event⁹ orientation as one factor in defining cultural behaviour.

Traditionally in Africa, time is viewed in periods and not in terms of a point in time like minutes and seconds. There is a popular saying which goes thus, 'The white man has the clock but we Africans have time.'

One contributor summed up this point well: 'The society is an organic whole, a community; and the most important element of society is people so rather than keep an appointment with the person you are yet to see, you focus on the person at hand, right now, even if it means you would be late for the appointment you have. It is dishonouring to the one in your immediate presence to rush away from him, especially if he has come a long way to see you.'

Money and possessions

Attitudes to money and possessions can be the source of misunderstanding and tension in a team. One person wrote:

Traditionally Africans do not count money to the last penny; some persons may disagree with me on this point. This is because we have inculcated some western ways and our cultures are increasingly becoming blurred to us. Generally we will not hold it against a person if he cannot account for a small amount of money, just the way auditors do when accounts are audited. Financial independence is low on the value system scale in most African cultures; indeed, asserting financial independence is counter to the herd spirit and collective living which are stronger value systems. Relationship supersedes money and this must always be demonstrated. Where money issues are involved, it should be demonstrated that the relationship is more important. Traditionally we tend to have a laid-back attitude to money and do not hold tightly to money, though this is changing. Generosity is high on our value system; in fact the respect shown a leader and the trust reposed in him correlates with his 'perceived' generosity.

Reflecting on the case of a financial need another contributor commented: 'My family and friends would rally around me. It is usually an expectation that they do this although things are gradually changing and some level of individualism is entering the culture, but the rule of thumb is that I expect family to help in financial difficulties even though I probably won't ask them.'

This collective attitude may be extended to the multi-cultural team where Africans may have an unconscious expectation that resources are shared in the mission family, especially in times of crisis. This is illustrated by the question, 'How are the poor cared for?' One contributor answered: 'The poor are considered to be the

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community's responsibility and are to be taken care of by the more privileged. That is one reason for the high incidence of street begging in Africa.'

Please note that we do not define who the 'more privileged' are in the mission context.

Planning and maintenance

Related to the question of finances is the topic of planning and maintenance within Africa society. One contributor wrote: 'Africans generally have a problem with planning and the few of us in professions involving planning face the brunt of this malaise. Most people I know don't live on budgets and to mention keeping track of expenses would be met with ridicule! This is the reason for massive infrastructure in most African countries rotting away because they were never maintained!'

Another contributor gave an illustration in which he was the manager of a church planting project that involved a social welfare project. The local people were very enthusiastic to have the facility and services, but they were not prepared to make any concrete plans on how to achieve the end goal. It was only when our brother drew up a project proposal with a fixed date on which the project was to begin that anything was achieved. In fact God raised up a Non-Governmental Organization that implemented the plan for the community without them having to contribute to its cost.

Languages

English and French are the lingua franca of Africa but Africans sometimes speak their African language within the family and among themselves. One contributor wrote: 'Western education and the desire to look civilized are gradually eroding African languages. Most educated Africans use the national lingua franca instead of local languages. I learnt to speak English first before my local language and attended a private and exclusive elementary school where it was an offence to speak in 'vernacular' ,as they call it, and where you got punished for speaking your own local language!'

Another wrote: "There's an on-going debate in most African countries facing this crisis and there are arguments on both sides of the divide, but I feel that this is gradually eroding the culture. There must be a way to balance things up. I personally have friends who were raised in Nigeria and can't speak their (African) language. Some are just learning to speak their own language now.'

Our pool of contributors is very small but in general, though often speaking English or French and an African language, all of them wrote that they don't find learning languages easy.

Decision making

The response of one contributor to the question, 'How do Africans make decisions?' reminds me of the resonance of collective cultures and clearly

illustrates the potential effectiveness of globalization. He wrote, 'There is a strong corporate participation in decision-making in African culture, whether the family or the group. Normally, the decision would be binding and each person would know their role.'

Another commented that, 'Decisions are made very spontaneously. The major factor taken into consideration is a desire to please people (usually), so that gives a general people-orientation to the people and culture.'

In answer to the question, 'If an African is asked for directions to a place he/she doesn't know, how does he/she reply?' was this comment: 'It depends on where – sometimes, especially in the rural areas, the overwhelming desire to be hospitable to a stranger would make some to try to describe a place they don't know themselves! Or they delay you trying to find out the place for you when you can easily move to someone else.'

Though generally a high 'Power Distance' culture, Africans like to contribute to a consultative decision-making process. This is important to register in the multi-cultural team context. Team leaders need to be prepared to invest time in both public and private, group and individual, discussions when shaping team policies and strategies.

The supernatural

Many books have been written on the worldviews of Africans, but the perceived proximity of the supernatural to the natural world is pivotal. One contributor shared that 'Non-believing Africans believe very strongly in the literal existence of the supernatural. You'd be seen as odd to believe otherwise and very few Africans would claim a secular atheistic worldview.'

Understanding the traditional worldviews will help the secular-tainted Western Christian to better understand the immediacy of Biblical spiritual warfare that is often characteristic of our African brothers and sisters. It is a strength that they bring to missions, especially in the setting of folk Islam.

The Rt. Reverend Michael Doe, in a book review on *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* by Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, quotes him as saying: 'For Africans the theological issue is not the Western preoccupation with whether God exists, but what kind of God, and whom, in their contemporary context, this God is for.'¹⁰ This perspective immediately connects Africans with Arab-world Muslims for whom God is equally an undisputed fact.

Communications

In answer to the questions, 'How important is body-language in Africa?' and 'What part of the body do Africans speak most with?' one contributor wrote: 'Quite important, and in cross-cultural communication it is important to learn the non-verbal communication in the specific African community. I would say Africans use mainly the face and the hands for body language.'

For Africans the theological issue is not the Western preoccupation with whether God exists, but what kind of God, and whom, in their contemporary context, this God is for.

Another contributor mentions that when a stranger visits a home and the family members present want to communicate something among themselves without the person understanding, then they use their eyes, hands, legs and other body parts to convey the message between them.

Geert Hofstede observes that, 'Lots of things which in collectivist (read African) cultures are self-evident must be said explicitly in individualist (read Western) cultures.'¹¹

Nigerian pastor Anwuri is quoted in an article by Del Chinchén as saying, 'We (Africans) don't counsel through our words. We counsel through our actions.'¹²

Sport

It hardly needs saying, but soccer is the number one sport in Africa. One brother wrote: 'Some are crazy about football/soccer while others are not, but in most parts of Africa soccer is like a national sport. You need to see Lagos when Manchester United is playing, or it's the Champions' League finals. You won't believe you're still in Africa with all the hype about football teams that most of the people watching would never get to see play live!'

Miscellany

Education is also seen as very important. Today Western education plays a significant role.

Music has a long tradition in Africa and in most societies it is very important. Originally it was used to express devotion to the deity or gods. It remains a significant source of entertainment.

In one of the International Orientation cross-cultural exercises, participants are asked to evaluate how attached they are to their regional or national *food*. It is one area most people are ready to make compromises in, yet it still remains very important for Africans. One contributor wrote: 'It feels like Africans have an attachment to their food and you would see most of them travelling even to the West with all kinds of local foodstuff. A worker was going to another African country and on being asked what she needs prayer for, her answer was to be able to survive without eating 'eba'¹³ which she'd been eating every night all her life!'

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, Western individualism and the Gospel have had a significant impact on traditional African culture. However, collectivist traits still dominate in many areas and resonate with Biblical beliefs, values and behaviour. We can celebrate and learn from African attitudes to community that can only enhance our own understanding and relationship to those among whom we minister. As our African brothers and sisters bring Biblical insights from their unique backgrounds into missions, let us celebrate our diversity together in glorifying our Heavenly Father.

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- 1 Greet Hofstede, *Cultures and organizations – Software of the Mind*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1991.
 - 2 **Family Roles:** How might these impact team life expectations? Does the team become a substitute 'extended family' for Africans? Are other team members expected/welcomed to have an active role in helping with children? Share any examples of where unvoiced expectation have led to misunderstandings between Western and non-Western colleagues on a team?
Marriage: In addition to the expectation of how marriage partners are chosen are there other aspects of the way marriages are lived out that would be of interest to share in the team setting? Are there particular expectations of how African couples relate with Western couples on a team? Are the expectations for the nature of a marriage relationship (between the husband and wife) somehow different between Western and non-Western couples?
Community: How much do Africans expect the team to be their new community? How much do they anticipate finding their community identity and needs met through their relationships with local friends and believers? Do you have any examples of how the importance of community impacts team life and your collective ministry? Share any thoughts or examples about the impact of community in relating to Arab culture?
Honour and shame: Given the African instinctive understanding of honour and shame dynamics, Africans have the potential to considerably help the rest of their team relate effectively to this reality. Westerners can sometimes understand honour and shame in their minds but not feel it or be sensitive to it deeply. Share examples of ways that honour and shame play out in team life.
Relationships: Since the strength of teams is in their ability to relate well together, any examples or suggestions about how Africans see this in action in a multi-cultural team ministry situation would be helpful.
Planning and Infrastructure: Any practical examples of how this impacts team life and expectations?
 - 3 Yale Richmond and Phyllis Gestrin, *Into Africa – Intercultural Insights*, Intercultural Press, Inc., 1998, p. 91.
 - 4 Don Little – written in a personal email to Keith Fraser-Smith, October 28, 2009
 - 5 <http://www.geert-hofstede.com>, *Power Distance Index (PDI)* that is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality (more versus less), but defined from below, not from above. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders. Power and inequality, of course, are extremely fundamental facts of any society and anybody with some international experience will be aware that 'all societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others'.
 - 6 Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Person Relationships*, Baker Book House, 1986, ch. 3, p. 37.
 - 7 Michael Doe, 'Thinking outside the Western Box: Enculturation is not a surface adaptation', *Michael Doe reflects*, Church Times, February 27, 2009.
 - 8 Ibid., p. 60
 - 9 Del Chinchin, *African Psychology: Established Counselling Techniques and Practices*, EMQ, January 2004, p. 55.
 - 10 Wikipedia – 'eba' is a staple food eaten in West Africa, particularly in the Southern parts of Nigeria made from cassava (manioc) flour, known in West Africa as *gari*.
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RACHID EL MAGHREBI -
A CONTROVERSIAL & INFLUENTIAL
AMBASSADOR FOR CHRIST

by John Andrews

Since leaving the US in 1983, John has ministered in the Arab world in various capacities, but has a special place in his heart for Morocco. He is currently involved in a media ministry in southern Europe.

Rachid el Maghrebi (lit 'the Moroccan'), has become a household figure in Morocco and throughout the Islamic world. This has not gone unnoticed in the Arab press. For example, '*Nichane*', a Moroccan weekly, recently gave an unusually positive report, detailing his testimony and media ministry:

Clean-shaven, with the glimmer of a smile on his face, and wearing a carefully-tied necktie, that matches his suit, Brother Rachid looks out at his viewers on the weekly programme 'Su'al Jari' (A daring question). This programme, which is broadcast by the Hayat Channel, has made Rachid a TV star who invites Moroccans in particular to embrace the religion of the Prophet Issa...'

I first got to know Rachid when he was a new believer in his late teens in Casablanca. I remember him as a sharp guy with leadership potential, but I could never have imagined that he would become such an influential and controversial ambassador for Christ to his people. Who is this young man who is shaking the foundations of Islam across the Arab world? Here is a brief sketch.

Beginnings

Born in 1973 in El Jadida, Rachid is the son of a Muslim imam, who raised his son to follow in his footsteps. Rachid had memorized one-sixth of the Qur'an by age six, chanting it according to Islamic practice. He diligently performed the rites of Islam – prayer, fasting and alms giving.

In 1985, he just happened to stumble upon an evangelistic radio broadcast in Arabic. He wrote a very Islamic reply, which did not get a response to his questions, but he did receive a short booklet. That began several years of study and correspondence comparing Islam and Christianity. This, in turn, led him to give his life to Christ at the end of 1989.

Nichane gives some interesting details of how this affected his life and family:

'I did not want to make public my new faith. I turned in on myself and continued to perform the prayers in the mosque as before,' Rachid admits. His family suspected something, after

noticing the change that had come over his life, especially since they knew about his correspondence with Christian groups, through the letters that came to the family house.

The family's doubts pushed them to hold a meeting in Rachid's presence, to ask him directly whether he had changed his religion and embraced Christianity. 'They asked me directly, "Have you become a Christian?"' recounts Rachid. He tried dodging the question and changing the subject, but somebody asked him to recite the Shahada. 'Of course, I refused, because anybody who embraces the religion of Jesus cannot recite the Shahada,' says Rachid. This refusal made the members of his family scream at him and some of them wept and cursed them. 'In short, everyone expressed his sorrow in his own way.'

They asked me directly, "Have you become a Christian?"' recounts Rachid. He tried dodging the question and changing the subject, but somebody asked him to recite the Shahada. 'Of course, I refused, because anybody who embraces the religion of Jesus cannot recite the Shahada.'

Secret Believer

For 15 years, Rachid lived as a secret believer in Morocco. He attended Hassan II University in Casablanca, where he studied economics and computer science. He also studied journalism and received training in Bible translation with the Bible Society. For six years, he was the main coordinator of a project that has now almost finished translating the Bible into the Moroccan dialect of Arabic. He later managed a computer company.

For many years he was estranged from his family. He relates that once he entered into discussion with his father, who still worked as an imam in a mosque. 'I confronted my father with many facts about Islam, and he asked me, "How did you know that?" And I answered him, 'By reading the books in your library, like Ibn Kathir's commentary, and some stories from the biography of the Prophet Mohamed. As far as I was concerned, his answers were unconvincing and he preferred not to reply to some of my questions,' he added.

In the late 90s, he got married to a second-generation Moroccan believer, which was not accepted very well by his family. Later he made an effort to reach out and repair his relationship with them. The Nichane magazine describes the change that resulted: 'He agreed with his brothers and his parents that they would not discuss his beliefs or his personal faith. He adds that the relationships became very good, especially after his mother intervened to restore his relationship with his father.'

A new ministry

In 2005, he left Morocco after being harassed by the security services. He was looking for some peace and stability for his young family. A friend helped him get into a program for further computer training, totally unaware that a different calling was awaiting him.

Within the year, a fellow BMB involved in a new satellite TV ministry called him and suggested that he might make a good TV presenter. Rachid was hesitant but was willing to give it a try. The rest is history.

Since then, he has hosted several television shows that compare Christianity and Islam, including 55 taped episodes of *Unveiling the Mask* and close to 200 live episodes of *Daring Questions*. Rachid's deep knowledge of both faiths gives him boldness to challenge false beliefs with wisdom, love and respect.

Daring Questions is a 90-minute weekly show that features dynamic testimonies of Muslim-background believers and gives followers of Islam the opportunity to ask questions about the Christian message through live on-air phone calls.

Daring Questions is a 90-minute weekly show that features dynamic testimonies of Muslim-background believers and gives followers of Islam the opportunity to ask questions about the Christian message through live on-air phone calls. Thousands of viewers have called the program's live prayer line or visited its websites – many to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Translating the Qur'an

Rachid is also passionate about the need for people not only to read the Bible in a language they can understand but also read the Qur'an in a language they can understand. He is convinced that the more Muslims know what the Qur'an says, the more their eyes will be opened and they will question it.

While still in Morocco, Rachid began a project to translate the Qur'an into the local Arabic dialect. He now has 27 Suras completed, continuing the project as he gets time. It was out of this work that he came to write his first book, *Miracles of the Qur'an: study and analysis*, which is reviewed in the following article.

N.B. Quotes taken from an English translation of the article: 'Brother Rachid', a Controversial Evangelist' by Sami al-Muwaddani, Nichane magazine, no 247, April 9-15, 2010.

عجاز القرآن: دراسة وبيان رشيد المغربي

MIRACLES OF THE QUR'AN: A STUDY & ANALYSIS

by **Rachid the Moroccan**

Seattle, WA: Oasis Life Publishing, 2009 (in Arabic)

The book can be purchased at: <http://www.oasislifepublishing.com>

Reviewed by Nadia Bichara. (Translated from French by Don Little)

Nadia is Algerian, and has produced various programs in various media to broadcast in colloquial Arabic to Algeria for many years, which God has used to bring many Algerians to faith in Christ. She and her husband are among the founding elders of one of the longest standing and most influential churches in Algeria, and though now living in France, their ministry is entirely focused on helping believers in Algeria and proclaiming Christ to their people.

True to form, as in his television broadcasts, Rachid has been extraordinarily clear and concise in this book. Rachid is a believer from Muslim background who thoroughly studied Islam in his youth and who continues to do theological and scholarly research today on many thorny subjects that have been raised about the Qur'an by both well-informed Muslims and involved, knowledgeable Christians. In effect, all who carefully examine the historical, geographic and scientific validity of the Qur'an should consider Rachid's analysis.

In one section in which Rachid discusses comparative religions, he puts the spotlight on certain truths that no one has previously raised. His true motivation was that he wanted to be honest with himself and then honest with everyone else about what he has seen and understood. He is particularly concerned to be honest with Muslims whom he loves and for whom he wants to ensure fuller clarity on the essential truths. This is why he has undertaken to write this book in a scientific way in order to raise a number of significant and specific questions.

To this end, Rachid has tackled a topics that no one has dared raise in a book until now, which Muslims in the past and present have taken pride in: the miracle of the Qur'an. According to them, the appearance of the Qur'an is a miracle both linguistically and scientifically, and also in terms of its influence on the world and the fact that it has been so well preserved through the centuries.

Here I will present just a few of Rachid's comments on these important topics.

On the Linguistic aspect of the 'miracle':

Muslims claim that the fact that the Qur'an is neither a poem, nor a sermon, nor a letter shows that it is thereby unique! Rachid responds by citing eminent Muslim specialists who say that any one of a number of people could have written

in this way. Rachid continues: 'Furthermore, if the Qur'an is reputed to be known as the word of God because it is clear and concise, then why did there have to be two witnesses when the verses of the Surahs were originally collected together in order to be written down?' Rachid also points out a number of shortcomings in Qur'anic style and language: words that sound as if they have a foreign origin, and repetitions that should not be present in well-crafted writing.

On the things that Mohammed claimed to be 'revealed':

Claiming that Mohammed was *illiterate*, some Muslims then go on to suggest that another indication of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an is that Mohammed

spoke about certain historic nations that he could have known nothing about humanly speaking, and that he was, therefore inspired. Rachid challenges such thinking and asks: Does the state of being *illiterate* mean that one is completely cut off from the world and that Mohammed could not have heard and listened to people telling of historical events and peoples? After all, we know in any case, that Arab culture is an oral culture. So where is the 'miracle' in Mohammed having knowledge of historical nations outside the Arab world of his time? Who among his contemporaries alive at the time wouldn't have had such knowledge?

Furthermore, Rachid totally undermines the case for his being illiterate by quoting sayings of Mohammed himself, as well as the writings of a number of Muslim scholars. Rachid also shows that a number of the stories in the Qur'an certainly came from the Bible (somewhat distorted, naturally), and other stories in the Qur'an are shown to be simple anecdotes well known by people of his era. Thus all of the claimed 'revelations' that Mohammed had of 'secret knowledge' can be explained easily by other natural means – there was no miracle here!

On the 'miraculous' preservation of the Qur'an:

Rachid dismisses this so called 'miracle' by simply quoting from some poems and other ancient books that we have today that were written even before the advent of Christianity, six centuries before Mohammed. Preserving the text of the Qur'an uncorrupted for fourteen centuries is nothing unusual and certainly ought not to be considered a miracle!

Conclusion:

I very much appreciated that Rachid quoted the writings of Muslim scholars and demonstrated their lack of coherence. What is more, he speaks with disarming logic and asks pertinent questions of the readers in order to make them truly think.

This book is written especially to educated Muslims who are quite knowledgeable about Islam. It is equally helpful for Christians who work among this type of informed Muslim, enabling them to be able to respond to their questions on such matters.

Excellent work, brother Rachid. Bravo!

Does the state of being illiterate mean that one is completely cut off from the world and that Mohammed could not have heard and listened to people telling of historical events and peoples?

UNDERSTANDING AND ASSESSING THE TEACHINGS OF COMMON GROUND CONSULTANTS

By Don Little, Missiologist serving with Pioneers

1 Peter 2:9-10 (ESV)

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who *called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Originally from Canada, Don Little has served in ministry to Muslims in various roles for more than 30 years. In addition to ten years spent with his family as a tentmaking church planter in North Africa, Don has also ministered to Muslims in Europe, India, Egypt and Canada. In January 2009 he completed his doctoral thesis on discipling believers from Muslim backgrounds in the Arab world which emphasised the challenge of keeping believers within their social networks throughout the discipleship and church planting process. With 25 years of service with Arab World Ministries, as AWM merges with Pioneers this year, he continues to serve, now with Pioneers, as Islamic missiologist for the Arab world and editor of SEEDBED. He also teaches Arabic and Islamics at Houghton College in Western New York, USA.

(This article was extensively rewritten in response to detailed input from CGC teachers Jim Nelson and Craig Johnson (pseudonyms), whose input I requested. Though I significantly disagree with key parts of their paradigm, I am attempting to present them as fairly and sympathetically as I can. Jim Nelson's response to this article follows. Note also that quite a few of their responses to and commentaries on my points are in the extensive endnotes.)

The Common Ground Training Conference

The registered charity *Common Grounds Consultants, Inc.* (henceforth, CGC) put on a four day by-invitation-only training conference in January 2009. More than 300 attended, from all over the United States and Canada, who had interest in virtually every part of the Muslim world, including diaspora Muslims. CGC can be found at <http://comgro.org/>. The leadership of CGC consists of a number of former and current members of The Navigators, Frontiers and many other groups who have served in the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa and in Southeast Asia. They are based in Minneapolis, MN, and can be reached by emailing: [info @ comgro.org](mailto:info@comgro.org).

The event was held in a large non-denominational church near Atlanta, GA, that is fully committed to the CGC ministry paradigm. The church first became involved in ministering to Muslims after Sept 11, 2001. They had initially, post 9/11, invited Jay Smith to teach them apologetics and how to argue with Muslims (as they put it), and then they discovered the Common Ground approach and experienced brand-new breakthroughs using this approach of ministry to Muslims. Since then the church has begun developing a number of ministries inspired by the CGC approach. See for example, <http://www.generationsalaam.com/>. The tagline of the Generation Salaam website reads ‘a generation seeking the true peace of God.’ They have also begun another ministry called *Jesus in the Qur’an* (<http://www.jesusinthequran.org/>).

The Main Components of the Common Ground Ministry Paradigm:

At the risk of over simplifying, I want to try to describe some of the key points of their paradigm and of their approach to ministry to Muslims. Input received over four full days cannot be adequately communicated in a couple of pages, but this will give you a broad stroke understanding of their ministry approach.

1. Building Bridges into the Muslim’s world

The Common Ground (CGC) approach is a creative effort to connect with and reach out with the Gospel to Muslims. This approach builds bridges from the Muslim worldview through sympathetic use of the Qur’an to allow new believers in Christ from Muslim background to self-identify *as Muslims*. They seek to use an insiders’ approach, and believe that both Jesus and Paul were effective ‘insiders’. The *tagline* that goes with their logo expresses a positive vision of what they seek to do. One of the Scripture texts they use as their identity and foundation is the well-known declaration by the Apostle Paul that he seeks to be all things to all men that by all means he may be able to win some. They cite I Corinthians 9:22b-23, which, in the New Living Translation reads ‘*Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ. I do all this to spread the Good News, and in doing so I enjoy its blessings.*’



2. Obeying Jesus and remaining Muslims

The origin of the Common Ground paradigm was an outflow of sincere Muslims being drawn towards Christ and asking: ‘Can I remain a Muslim and still love and obey Christ?’ Since Islam is a culture as well as a religion,

the question requires discerning. According to CGC, there are two questions built into the above question: (1) Can a Muslim keep the legalistic, works-based, anti-Christian, anti-Jesus and anti-Bible traditions that Islam generally teaches, and love and obey Christ? And (2) can a Muslim keep the cultural and *religious* practices that do not violate Scripture or conscience, and love and obey Christ? The answer that CGC gives to this second question is an emphatic 'YES!'¹ As they have studied the Scriptures seeking to understand how faithful followers of Christ can remain culturally Muslim, they have developed a unique set of interpretations of Scriptures and of the Qur'an. They have also developed practical approaches that flesh out the conviction that it is perfectly fine for Muslims to remain *Muslims culturally and religiously* and be disciples of Christ so long as this does not violate the Scriptures or their conscience.

3. Emphasis on the Kingdom of God

CGC places a strong emphasis on the *Kingdom of God* instead of emphasizing religions and religious identity and separation. The desire is to get Muslims to enter the Kingdom of God, as Jesus taught, through repentance and faith in Isa, rather than to become 'Christians' and no longer 'Muslims'. In stressing these things, they gave their own clear definitions of the terms they are using:

Christian: One who is culturally Christian, whether or not he or she has faith in Christ

Muslim: One who is culturally Muslim, whether or not he or she has faith in Christ

Church: A fellowship of true believers – the people of God obeying the Word of God, and following the Spirit of God

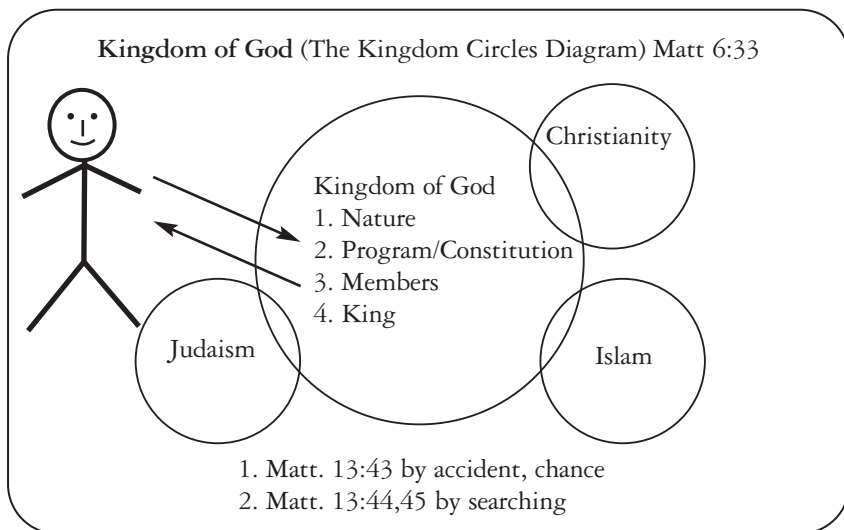
They thus make a point of not encouraging *conversion* of a person from one religion to another. However, they are not new in this emphasis – I do not know of any contemporary mission efforts that do seek 'conversions' defined this way, as moving from one *religion* to another. With these new and limited definitions understood, then it is clear why they have no interest in any Muslim becoming a *Christian*, since they *redefine* conversion to mean leaving one culture (Muslim) to join another culture (Christian). They do not want people joining the 'Christian Religion.' They want them to follow Christ *within their culture* as Muslims, and thus live in the Kingdom of God under the rule of the loving Father in their Muslim environment. Though they make a major point of this emphasis, it is my experience that most everyone seeking to introduce Muslims to Christ would fully agree with them in saying that they are not asking believers to visibly *join* a different religion or religious group. The disagreement that many of us have is with the way that CGCC redefines the idea of conversion in this narrow Muslim sense, to mean only the switching of religions, rather than the more biblical sense, that of repenting of their sin and rebellion against God and obeying Christ.

4. Muslim worldview-friendly communication tools

CGC have developed a number of approaches to talking with Muslims that help them engage in meaningful conversations about Christ without triggering the normal Muslim rejections that they believe are based on *misunderstandings* of both the Qur'an and of biblical Christianity. Two of the main ones are known as the 'Kingdom Circles' and 'the Seven Signs'.

The Kingdom Circles are used in a first conversation with a stranger or friend and are seen as a spiritual interest filter to help the evangelist discern whether the person might have any spiritual interest or openness at all. Many who have learned how to use this little discussion tool have found it quite helpful in getting Muslims interested in understanding more of the Kingdom and of the nature of the Gospel that alone gives people access into the Kingdom, regardless of their religion. Some have seen some dramatic breakthroughs in their efforts through using this tool and the Seven Signs. One sketches a simple diagram on a scrap of paper or a napkin of three overlapping circles, one at a time, while carefully elucidating the meaning of the Kingdom of God and discussing the relationship that Christianity and Islam have to it. The result is something like the sketch here, which expresses what 'People of the Book' believe. *Do not over interpret this sketch.* CGC gives a detailed set of instructions to help talk about the meaning of the Kingdom and how people access it. It is meant only as a discussion tool. As the discussion winds up, those who indicate a desire to understand more about what one has to do to be able to enter the Kingdom of God are invited to participate in a study of the Seven Signs.

The Signs of God, mentioned in the Qur'an (7: 9, 36 & 40 and so on) are said to



be those given to the prophets Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jonah and Jesus. The study of the signs seeks to show how each of these prophets point forward to the coming of Jesus. Typically, CGC people will invite interested people to a Holy Books study in which they explore the seven signs that God has given that confirm his word. They then begin by looking at the story of the above-listed 'prophets', looking at the Qur'anic version and the Biblical version of each story. As they progress through the signs, they explain the plan God has put in place for the redemption of humanity that involves putting everyone who believes in the Messiah onto the 'right path', through the provision of a sacrificial lamb that will take away the sins of the world. As the series of studies continues, they spend less and less time in the Qur'an and more and more time in the Bible, until, by the time they reach David, they mainly use the Bible to explain the ongoing prophetic thread through revelation history that points forward to Christ. This is a 'Muslim-friendly' variation on the chronological approach that draws on the Qur'an as a bridge into the Muslim's worldview.

5. A strong respect for the Qur'an and Mohammed, and sensitivity to how both are highly esteemed by Muslims

Though CGC teachers would not likely see themselves as giving undue authority to the Qur'an, they do display an appreciation for the Qur'an and all the truth that it does contain. They particularly emphasize all of the great information the Qur'an gives about Isa (Jesus) and they make much of the Qur'anic texts that speak positively of Jesus and the Bible. They treat the Qur'an as a book into which God has sovereignly placed much that is of value and much that points back to the Biblical revelation of God and of Christ. They build much of their approach to the Qur'an on the belief that God can use anything that is true in the Qur'an as signposts that will point Muslims to Christ and the fuller revelation of God that is in the Scriptures. Citing Paul's quotation of pagan poets in Acts 17, they argue that when one knows the teachings of Socrates, or the plays of Shakespeare, one can find much in them that point to Christ and to truths that Christ taught. Mining the Qur'an for truths that parallel the truths of the Scriptures is taking the same approach we would take with people who respect and draw on the teaching of Socrates or Shakespeare.

Some of this is simply a good healthy appreciation of and respect for where Muslims are that enables believers to engage in fruitful conversation from inside the Muslim mindset. Some, however, appears to go to somewhat unusual lengths in their valuing of the Qur'an and of Mohammed's good qualities, and I do not remember hearing them criticize Mohammed or the Qur'an. In fact, they make

They treat the Qur'an as a book into which God has sovereignly placed much that is of value and much that points back to the Biblical revelation of God and of Christ. They build much of their approach to the Qur'an on the belief that God can use anything that is true in the Qur'an as signposts that will point Muslims to Christ and the fuller revelation of God that is in the Scriptures.

it a central tenet of their approach to never criticize either when talking with Muslims.² However, this is a very common *ministry strategy* and not a CGC innovation, and one that I follow most of the time in conversations with Muslims.

They do not point out contradictions in the text of the Qur'an, nor its teachings on jihad and the commands to kill all enemies of Islam when they do not submit to Allah.³ They view the Qur'an as a neutral book that can be mined for ideas and texts that point the reader, even a devout Muslim, to Jesus the Messiah.⁴ They see the Qur'an as pointing back to and confirming Jesus and the message he brought.⁵ They suggest that Mohammed was a reformer, a preacher of one God to idolaters, and that he spoke against the evils in his cultural context.

CGC teachers study texts in the Qur'an much the way Evangelicals would handle a Scripture text. They read it and understand it at 'face value' – that is, they do not normally read it the way a Muslim would interpret it from their traditional teachings and the Hadith. Instead, they draw on their Christian worldview and suggest alternative interpretations of Qur'anic texts that are very different from what Muslims normally believe. They seek to persuade Muslims that the Qur'an may have had perspectives on many things, and especially about Jesus, or Isa, that are in line with Christian beliefs. For example, CGC put together a series of Qur'anic texts to show that the Qur'an actually teaches or supports the following ideas: (1) the authority of the Bible as a judge of the Qur'an itself, (2) the exaltation of Jesus beyond any other person, (3) the annunciation, miraculous conception and birth of Jesus, (4) the death and resurrection of Jesus and other important truths. They find that once Muslims believe in Jesus they see such ideas quite clearly in the Qur'an, and thus see how the Qur'an supports some key things that they now believe about Jesus.

Commendable Aspects of Common Ground Consultants (CGC)

1. Using the Qur'an as a Bridge

I respect CGC's attempt to use the Qur'an as a bridge to help Muslims travel from where they are within the Islamic religious system to Jesus the Messiah. One of the presenters told us that he sees the Qur'an as a candle, having some light, and the task of the evangelist is to come alongside the person and gently and wisely guide them toward the glorious full light of Christ. Blowing out their candle first (by attacking the Qur'an) just puts them into complete darkness, which causes more problems. We need to draw them gently and gradually toward the blinding light of Jesus until they no longer have any use for the candle since they are in the presence of the 10,000-kilowatt spotlight of Jesus. The goal is the exaltation of the Christ of Scripture in the eyes of Muslims.

2. Helpful new Communication Tools

CGC are developing some potentially valuable tools that can help many of us in communicating the Messiah to Muslims. These tools generally carefully take into

account the Muslim worldview and seek to speak directly to people who live within that mindset and who are proud to be Muslims.

3. Emphasis on the Kingdom of God in Sharing and Teaching

They have a strong and *somewhat* balanced emphasis on the need for us to proclaim and speak about the Gospel as the 'Gospel of the Kingdom of God.' They find it to be helpful for communicating with Muslims (using the Kingdom Circles as one tool for doing this) and they believe that as Evangelicals we have inappropriately lost sight of the Kingdom of God in our understanding and proclamation. They stress the central role that Christ has as the one who proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God. This emphasis is good, provided it is kept in balance with the rest of the scriptural presentation of the nature of the Gospel, emphasizing, for example, some of the themes that Paul stresses, such as righteousness coming by faith and the importance of the resurrection in which Jesus' death was vindicated and given its saving power.

4. Their love for Muslims

I commend their love of Muslims and passionate work and desire to see as many as possible won to our Saviour and Lord, the Christ. These men and women care deeply for their Muslim friends and desire that they enter into all that God has for them. Their hearts are burdened that Muslims find saving knowledge of the Messiah.

5. Their Serious Study of the Qur'an in order to use it Well

I commend the seriousness with which they study the Qur'an, searching it, scouring it even, for any hints of texts or ideas that might point Muslims to see the Messiah from within their own book. They tell enough stories of how this works to make me believe that they have seen many men and women, and some movements, led toward Christ using this *bridge*. Jim Nelson sold a CD with dozens of studies on the Qur'an, which I purchased. He also presented an excellent talk in which he showed how to present the Gospel in a way that worked within the honour/shame paradigm. CGC people are serious about the Gospel and serious about communication with Muslims in a way *they* can understand.

6. A Gracious Attitude towards People whose Approach they Challenge

Though they disagree with more traditional approaches to ministering to Muslims,⁶ they try to avoid caricaturing those approaches unfairly – though they did not completely succeed. They generally were cautious and *did not harshly criticize or belittle* the ministry approaches of others. One particularly helpful talk was entitled 'Two Kinds of Muslim Believers'. In it, the presenter did a point by point comparison and contrast between the perspectives and self-identity of what they called 'converts to Christianity' versus 'Muslim believers' (MBs). The

perspective taken was that both ways of following Christ are legitimate and that both types of people are committed to Christ as Lord and Saviour, and both have their primary identity with the true followers of Christ, which is the true church of believers.

Areas of Concern

One particularly helpful talk was entitled 'Two Kinds of Muslim Believers'. In it, the presenter did a point by point comparison and contrast between the perspectives and self-identity of what they called 'converts to Christianity' versus 'Muslim believers'

Having just re-read the extensive critique and condemnation of Common Ground by John and Anne Span⁷ and the somewhat more generous but still strongly critical assessment by Jay Smith⁸, both published in the St. Francis Magazine (www.stfrancismagazine.info/ja/) in August 2009, it is hard to avoid the conviction that the people leading Common Ground are *seriously* off track. I am somewhat sympathetic with some of the Spans' critiques, but I found their tone ungracious and their negative conclusions stronger and more condemning than warranted. I spent quite a bit of time with Jay Smith during the CGC consultation in January 2009 and my discussions with him during and following the event helped me as I sought to interpret what I had heard and experienced in Atlanta. Yet, I feel that his critique (mentioned above) is also too categorical and unsympathetic to what people in CGC are actually doing. Nevertheless, I still do have a few serious concerns about Common Ground,⁹ which I will express now. Several other concerns, such as what I consider to be inadequate exegesis of scripture to support their positions, I will leave for another time.

1. CGC has an inadequate and flawed view of conversion

The opening session of the consultation dealt with the use of the word 'convert' in the New Testament and it was argued that the word 'convert' is a poor word choice, speaking *biblically*, for a person who follows Christ. Their view of conversion was then given in the definitions they gave of the words 'Muslim' and 'Christian' (see section 3.3 above) as someone who is merely 'culturally Christian' or 'culturally Muslim'. From then on, all uses of these words assumed this rather unhelpful and inadequate new and narrow definition of commonly used and richly connotative terms, and led to strange and vague combinations of vocabulary, such as the consistent use of 'Muslim believers', as being those who were culturally Muslim who now believed in Christ. Yet the expression 'Muslim believer' in normal English usage is at best vague, and would most naturally refer to Muslims who actually believe in their *own* faith. Conversion was thus *redefined* to mean moving from identification with one social-cultural group to another culturally defined group. This is what sometimes regrettably happens in the Middle East, for example, when a person leaves their Muslim community, takes on a Christian name and seeks to enter the rather culturally foreign Christian community. Though almost everyone I know working among Muslims in the Arab world and in Asia seeks to avoid just such community extractions, or

transfers, it is simply NOT helpful to limit the rich biblical and theological understanding of the term 'conversion' to only use it to describe such a cultural transference from one community to another.¹⁰

The longer I reflect on this question of how we define the terms, the more I am concerned that their redefinition, and shrinking of the meaning of the word 'conversion' is at the heart of the confusion that CGC's teaching causes, and is one of the main mistakes that I believe they are making. I suspect that they are allowing a common Muslim *misunderstanding* of the nature of conversion to reshape the way they think of conversion. In contrast to their assertions to the contrary, the word 'conversion' in the Scriptures normally refers to repentance of faith that 'converts' one's heart from rebellion against God to eager submission to and belief *in Christ*. It does not refer to changing religious communities. The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology devotes fully *eight pages* to a discussion of the three main word groups that refer to conversion that are closely tied together in meaning and usage throughout the New Testament, and none of these words are dealt with in the CGC presentation of their understanding of 'convert', which is only used a few times in the New Testament. Here is what Fritz Laubach says in his discussion of the English theological term 'conversion' as it is found in the New Testament (NT):

Repentance, penitence and conversion are closely linked. Whenever someone gives his thought and life a new direction, it always involves a judgement on his previous views and behaviour. This process is expressed in the NT by three word-groups which deal with its various aspects: *epistreph*, *metamelomai* and *metano*. The first and third both mean turn around, turn oneself around, and refer to a man's conversion. This presupposes and includes a complete change under the influence of the Holy Spirit....

Epistreph is found 36 times in the NT... 18 times (it is found) with its theological meaning of conversion especially in Acts and the Epistles.... When (people) are called in the NT to conversion, it means a fundamentally new turning of the human will to God, a return home from blindness and error to the Saviour of all (Acts 26:18; I Peter 2:25).... Conversion involves a change of Lords. The one who until then has been under the lordship of Satan (cf. Eph. 2:1ff) comes under the Lordship of God, and comes out of darkness into light.... Acts always speaks of conversion as a once-for-all and self-contained event (Acts 9:35; 11:21). From Acts 15:3 it is clear that the word 'conversion' very soon became a technical term that needed no further explanation. (Fritz Laubach, 'Conversion', in NIDNTT, Vol 1. pp. 353-355).

CGC's attempt to redefine 'conversion' and use it to apply *primarily* to a switch from one religious community to another is simply not acceptable and it does not help their communication. Their argument that the term 'convert' and the idea of 'conversion' is primarily viewed negatively in the New Testament simply does not stand up to scrutiny. Their unusual definition and use of this key theological and biblical term led to increasingly disturbing levels of confusion about the way things really are in the *spiritual realm*, as opposed to just the social and cultural realms. When people commit to be obedient disciples of Christ, they enter into the body of Christ, the spiritual church, and take on completely new psychological and spiritual *identities*. They become new creatures in Christ, through faith. As the scripture text that heads this article states, they are called out of darkness and into the light. Their decision to declare allegiance to Christ means that they also cease to be submitted to Mohammed, no longer see the Qur'an as scripture and cease belonging, spiritually, to the Muslim *Ummah*.

CGC's consistent attempts to encourage followers of Christ to remain within the Ummah, retain the name Muslim, and continue to worship God in the mosques,ii causes tension with their new spiritual identity in Christ.

CGC's consistent attempts to encourage followers of Christ to remain within the *Ummah*, retain the name Muslim, and continue to worship God in the mosques,¹¹ causes tension with their new spiritual identity in Christ.¹² Indeed, we do want to do everything we can to help disciples of Christ in Muslim communities to remain in their families and their social networks and to share Christ with those they know and love, just as CGC seeks to do. However, by encouraging Christ's disciples to retain their Muslim *identity* and religious community *commitments* fully, I believe they are working directly in opposition to what conversion means.¹³ Fundamentally, it means that believers leave the *spiritual* darkness from which they have been called (not the cultural milieu), to follow Christ.¹⁴ Encouraging new believers to remain within the mosque, to continue to be known as faithful believing Muslims (that is, one who accepts Mohammed as the final apostle), is asking them to remain within the context of the spiritual darkness from which Christ has removed them.¹⁵ I am not suggesting that conversion means physically leaving the community, or joining the *other* community – the Christian sub-culture in the region. Rather, I believe that converts to Christ (they are not converts to 'Christianity' in spite of what CGC argues) must clearly identify themselves as Christ's followers (they need not use the word 'Christian') who no longer have allegiance to Mohammed or honour the Qur'an as scripture. This does not mean, of course, that they should malign Mohammed or the Qur'an either. They simply no longer revere them as they previously did.

The extent to which this counsel has the potential of betraying believers from Muslim backgrounds was illustrated to me when CGC showed the videotaped testimony of an Arab Muslim who had come to faith in Christ in the US as a

student. Following his faith in Christ and conversion to 'Christianity' (as he put it!), he joined a local church (in the States) and grew as a believer. He had many problems from his family back in his home country when he told them he had 'become a Christian.'

Then this young believer encountered and embraced the teaching of CGC. Equipped with this new way of identifying himself as a 'Muslim believer' who follows Christ, he returned to his family in his Arab country, told them that he was indeed still a Muslim, and was welcomed home with great rejoicing by his family. They now understood that their son, whom they thought had joined 'Christianity', had in fact returned to the Muslim *Ummah* and was once again a Muslim, going to the mosque with them and living again as a Muslim.¹⁶ This story was presented as an example of the positive outcomes that result when a believer in Christ is rightly guided to remain within his Muslim community and retain his Muslim identity. This believer could now live among his Muslim family and share his love for Jesus without restraint. I hope that this had positive outcomes, and I was told that it has led to many of his family also following Christ. Yet I suggest that this same process of him learning to follow Christ without becoming an 'American Christian' should have happened, and could have happened, without him needing to describe himself once again as a Muslim and claim that he was still a loyal Muslim, which was not true to the normal meaning of words.

2. CGC has an inadequate understanding of the church, both local and universal

Sitting through the sessions, I often felt as if the CGC people have largely disowned any form of the institutional church, that is, the actual established way that most Christians worldwide are nurtured and taught, and involved in worship and fellowship. In their efforts to distance themselves from the weaknesses and flaws of the church around the world, as these flaws appear in local churches, denominations and groups, I felt as if they were undervaluing the universal church itself.¹⁷ I do not know why they have such a negative view of the institutional church, especially the American and Middle Eastern churches, so I will resist the temptation to speculate as to the reasons for their rather unhelpful low-church ecclesiology.¹⁸

Their concern is to help start movements of Muslim followers of Christ, and clearly, they do *not* desire to see a movement of explicitly named *churches* of former Muslims. They spoke of small groups of believers, or churches, meeting to read and study the Bible and pray together, dependent on the leading and work of the Holy Spirit. Yet it seemed to me that these were almost seen as simply support groups for Muslims whose primary social identity and network remains their Muslim communities, just as campus ministry groups sometimes serve as

support groups for students whose primary social network is at the university (and thus some do not join local churches). Though they would disagree, their goal does not appear to be building up these new groups so they would become solid and mature *churches* of *disciples*¹⁹ that would one day take their place as authentic and valued corporate members of the worldwide visible body of Christ.²⁰

In their consistent refusal to apply the label 'Christian' to these Muslim followers of Christ, they separate almost entirely from any identification with the contemporary global church.

Because of the often very negative views of Christians and Churches held in the Muslim communities in which they work, CGC teachers recommend that workers distance these new followers of Christ from any connection to that local body of Christ. In their consistent refusal to apply the label 'Christian' to these Muslim followers of Christ, they separate almost entirely from any identification with the contemporary global church.²¹ In my estimation, they undervalue the importance and strength that comes from linking their networks of house groups of 'Muslim believers' to existing churches in their communities and beyond, when possible.²² They appear to believe that Muslim believers, who remain visibly identified as mosque-attending Muslims, have no need of becoming a part of, or connected to, any existing fellowships that are identified as churches.²³ I agree that connecting fellowships of such believers to existing churches in Muslim communities is often *far* from straightforward, and sometimes of questionable practical or missional value. However, CGC appears to rule out any possible value in connecting Muslim believers with local national believers (though they report that such connections do sometimes happen) because they see them as being part of two different religious communities that have different, separate religious and social identities.²⁴

Allow me to add, in sympathy with what CGC is trying to do, that I fully acknowledge that one of the biggest challenges in church planting in the Middle East, and in parts of Asia, is indeed the vexing question of how to relate new believers and groups of believers coming out of Islam to the believers found in neighbouring churches. Such believers are often part of non-Muslim cultural groups that are either despised or oppressed by the Muslim communities in which they live. Believers from Muslim backgrounds whom I have spoken to in several Middle Eastern countries, who have had extensive contact with existing evangelical churches in their cities, generally find that contact to be the hardest part of their experience as believers. Some have even chosen, after long struggle, to break off all continuing contact because it is simply too hard to deal with the negative attitudes toward them, held by Christian background believers. CGC's way of tackling this enormous challenge has much to teach us, even if we do not embrace the full message of almost *entire* separation that CGC models.

3. CGC is too generous in its assessment of Islam, the Qur'an and Mohammed

CGC appears to downplay the demonic undercurrent and power behind Islam itself.²⁵ In their desire not to offend Muslims, they present an almost politically correct view of Islam as a religious system, or at least of its founding documents, that is virtually benign²⁶ and harmless.²⁷ They appear to underestimate the spiritual power of darkness that is acting within the Islamic religious system, not just within Folk Islam.²⁸ Though they do not say this, the impact of their teaching about the Qur'an and Mohammed suggests that the overall impact of Islam as a major world religion can be positive and uplifting for those *within Islam*.²⁹

Combined with this is a very positive assessment of the value of the Qur'an, and its value as a source of truth. Some presentations praised the Qur'an in ways that made me believe that CGC considered God actively responsible for the 'revelation' or at least the appearance of the Qur'an in history.³⁰ It almost sounded as if some believed that all that Muslims need to do to come to true faith in Christ is to open their eyes to the truth already given about him in the Qur'an. Though I know two Muslims whose search for Christ began in the Qur'an, it is very rare for Muslims to come to faith in the Christ of the Gospel except through some form of contact with the Scriptures, with believers or with Christ directly in dreams, something with which both Jim Nelson and Craig Johnson concur.

This positive view of Islam and of the Qur'an was accompanied by a very positive understanding of the man Mohammed and the good that he brought to our world in his example and teachings. Some presenters had no problem referring to Mohammed as a prophet without qualification. They pointed to the many 'good things' that they believe Mohammed brought and the way he called people away from idolatry to worship one God. Though I do not think they equated his prophetic status with that of any true biblical prophet, they had become so accustomed to using Muslim language about Mohammed that they continually talked about him as a prophet, without qualification. How can Mohammed be any kind of a prophet, except for a *false prophet* when so much of what he teaches directly contradicts the New Testament view of God, of Jesus and of the nature of man and the need for redemption? I am very uneasy with this kind of affirmation that Mohammed has some sort of valuable prophetic role.^{31.32}

CGC's very positive perspective on Islam as a religion, on the Qur'an as a valuable source of truth and on Mohammed as an exemplary leader and some sort of 'prophet', leaves me quite uncomfortable. I know that the CGC presentation of Islam has been developed to communicate respectfully with serious Muslims.

Though I know two Muslims whose search for Christ began in the Qur'an, it is very rare for Muslims to come to faith in the Christ of the Gospel except through some form of contact with the Scriptures, with believers or with Christ directly in dreams.

Nevertheless, it seems as if they have adopted a *sanitized* version of Islam typical of those presented to Western non-Muslim visitors to mosques. Having lived among Muslims for many years, I found their positive treatment of everything Islamic to be not at all reflective of the generally negative nature of Islam, its holy book, and its founder Mohammed.³³

Concluding Reflection & Assessment

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We can learn to use their tools and gain a keener awareness of how Muslims may view Western Christians without embracing their insider paradigm.

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So what are we to think of CGC and their approach to ministering to Muslims? There are a number of commendable and praise worthy aspects to what they are attempting to do and their attitudes of compassion towards Muslims. However, I believe that taken together, the faulty and unhelpful teachings of CGC outweigh the merits of the ministry. Probably the most positive aspects of CGC is their longing to see Muslims come to know and follow the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, and some of the tools that they have developed for engaging Muslims in conversation – tools that are sensitive to the way Muslims feel about Mohammed, the Qur'an, Islam, Christians and Christianity.

If you are invited to participate in a CGC conference and would like to learn how to use their tools, by all means, do go and learn what is of value to learn from these brothers and sisters. We can learn to use their tools and gain a keener awareness of how Muslims may view Western Christians without embracing their insider paradigm. It was good for me to be with them and to listen carefully and with an open heart to their teaching, and I think I came away with an increased appreciation of how devout Muslims see themselves. Nevertheless, I believe that following their teaching and advice on how to disciple those who believe in Christ, and on how to stimulate movements of Muslims to Christ that remain inside the Muslim religious institutions, will not yield strong, Christ-honouring churches that can be a testimony of God's saving grace in Muslim communities. My responders, of course, beg to differ.³⁴

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The goal is to disciple new believers so that they become mature and committed participants in their house churches who strive to remain in their social networks and witness for Christ in culturally natural and appropriate ways.

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Should we be seeking to help form communities of Christ-followers who remain within mosques and continue to think of and describe themselves as Muslims as CGC urges? Should we not rather help create churches of Christ-followers who identify themselves clearly with Christ, the Messiah, even as they avoid importing foreign elements in their church fellowships, and avoid the wrong kinds of

connections with foreigners? The goal is to disciple new believers so that they become mature and committed participants in their house churches who strive to remain in their social networks and witness for Christ in culturally natural and appropriate ways.³⁵ We aim to see mature churches multiplying within Muslim

communities – churches that can clearly live out and exhibit the difference between those who follow Christ and those who follow Mohammed. Such communities of Christ's disciples do not need to become Westerners, or associate with Western Christians, but they do need to be known by their Muslim neighbours and communities as those who are *identified with the name and character of Christ*. They need to live in the light and not remain within the darkness from which the gospel has called them.³⁶ To echo Peter, in the text that heads this article, we are calling believers who were not previously a people, to become *God's people* (not Mohammed's). We are calling them to be part of this new and holy nation, the *church*, a people who proclaim the glories of the one that called them out of the darkness of Islam into the glorious truth and light of the Gospel of *Christ*.

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- 1 Jim Nelson's comment: If an American asked if he could remain an American and still love and obey Christ, this also requires discernment. If he means can he retain his promiscuous, money-loving, self-centred lifestyle and love and obey Christ, of course not. If he means can he still eat hot dogs and watch the Super Bowl, then of course he can.
 - 2 Jim Nelson's comment: CGC does make it a central tent not to criticize Muslims, Islam, the Qur'an or Muhammad. Whatever our personal beliefs, criticizing these to a Muslim is not just rude, but it ends any conversation or relationship. 1 Peter 2:17 says we should honour all men, which would include Muhammad.
 - 3 Jim Nelson's comment: 'Jihad' in the Qur'an, which means struggle, is not what the terrorists claim it is. The 'kill them' verses (Qur'an 2:191, 4:89,91, 9:5) refer to unbelievers in the 7th century and do not apply today, much less refer to those who 'do not submit to Allah'. It is very similar to the 'kill them' verses in the Bible (Joshua 6:17 for example).
 - 4 Jim Nelson's clarification: I think it is clear that Islam has used the Qur'an to mislead many millions of people, but it is where they are right now, so we need to start there. We follow Philip's pattern in Acts 8:35, when he began with the scriptures the eunuch was reading to explain Christ to him. In the same way, we start from the Qur'an and point them to Jesus.
 - 5 Jim Nelson's comment: This assumes that there are contradictions. As I have looked at the Qur'an in Arabic, the NT in Greek, and the OT in Hebrew, I feel these can all be understood in a way to be reconciled if a bridge building methodology is used in love and respect. How would we feel if Muslims pointed out all the 'contradictions' in the Bible (one demoniac Mark 5:2 or two Matt. 8:28; one angel in the tomb Mark 16:5 or two Luke 24:4; crucifixion at the third hour Mark 15:25 or the sixth hour John 19:14, etc.)? We feel that we can reconcile all these 'contradictions,' and they feel they can reconcile theirs. This just shows love and respect for other people.
 - 6 Craig Johnson's comment: We bless all approaches where people come with a deep love for Jesus and share this with their Muslim friends. We do feel strongly that we can avoid mistakes that come from the more traditional approaches.
 - 7 John & Anne Spam, 'Report on the Common Ground Consultants Meeting,' St. Francis Magazine 5:4 (August 2009), 52-73.
 - 8 Jay Smith, 'An Assessment of the Insider's Principle Paradigms,' St. Francis Magazine 5:4 (August 2009), 20-51.
 - 9 I hold these concerns in common with the Spans, Jay Smith many others. I attended the hurriedly organized one day conference, in October 2009, hosted by Josh Lingel, of I2 Ministries entitled 'Insider Movement Conference: A Critical Assessment.' Many of the speakers shared

strong reservations and critiques of the perspectives of those who encourage and support insider movements and about CGC in particular, during that event. Visit www.i2ministries.org for both a synopsis of the conference and the entire contents which are available for purchase. They are holding a second conference Oct 1-3, 2010 at Liberty University. Though I share some of the reservations and concerns expressed during this event, I was uncomfortable with the sometimes confrontational and judgemental tone of some of the critiques. I believe we need to hold some meetings in which some of the main spokespeople from both sides can sit down and talk through their concerns face-to-face. These kinds of one-sided events are simply ramping up the controversy and not really clarifying the issues that separate fellow labourers.

- 10 Note that this entire conversation is dealing with the topics and terminology of English. I am NOT making any comment on what are the appropriate ways for converts to Christ to describe themselves in their native languages, whether that be Arabic or Chinese! That discussion is a different and challenging discussion that is related to the present discussion of the term 'convert' or 'conversion.' Perhaps part of the confusion that I believe CGC generates is that it brings in meaning to such words from other languages and then tries to apply them to the English words.
- 11 Read Craig Johnson's objection here, and see my response: 'CGC never encourages followers of Christ to worship God in the mosque; we encourage new believers to continue to associate with their Muslim community which often gathers at the mosque.' DL replies: I trust this is true, but in your material you presented a case study of a Muslim believer who describes very positively how he is able to continue to worship God and pray in the name of Jesus while in a Muslim prayer service in the mosque. When such case studies are presented as positive models of Muslim believers, I think it is fair to say that CGC is promoting this model.
- 12 Jim Nelson's comment: This is not what we promote. They go to the mosques for social identity and for evangelism. True worship is in spirit and truth, and can happen anywhere. If it happens in the mosque, fine, but growth and discipleship take place in small groups (cell-churches or house fellowships, if you will) outside the mosque.
- 13 Jim Nelson's correction: No, this is not what we mean. We should help them examine the religious commitments, and as with anything in culture, reject what is unbiblical, accept what is neutral, and revise what needs it.
- 14 Craig Johnson admits the confusion that this 'redefinition of 'convert' brings and says the following: We have since added a piece in our consultations that may be helpful: What changes after a Muslim believes in Christ? (1) No immorality (2) No folk Islamic beliefs (3) Some Islamic doctrine, (they retain the belief in One true God, angels, heaven, hell, and the Scriptural doctrines, but they now see Christ as Lord and Saviour and the atonement for their sins, and the Holy Spirit as the one who indwells them, etc.) (4) Fellowship with other true believers, often in their homes (5) A change of character, transformation by the indwelling Holy Spirit, and a love for the Scriptures (6) Persecution for their first allegiance to Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.
- 15 Jim Nelson responds: There are spiritually dark places, e.g. universities. Should new believers at a university be encouraged to drop out? No. They should leave dark practices but we are to be light in the darkness. Matt. 5:15-16.
- 16 Jim Nelson's comment: Leaving the 'ummah' is equivalent of renouncing one's citizenship. Is *that* the gospel? If that is all that happened, I would agree that it is bad. But he has won most of his

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family and friends to faith in Christ, and has free access to share about Christ with them. His new creation in Christ (2 Cor.5:17) has a chance to shine in the household Matt. 5:15-16. That would never have happened as a Christian in America.

- 17 Jim Nelson's rebuttal: The institutional church contains believers in varying proportions, but its denominations, buildings, ordination, clergy, etc are creations of men. See *Pagan Christianity*, by Frank Viola and George Barna. The Bible is the standard one must use in cross-cultural work. Theologies, methodologies, orders of service, etc. are not cross-cultural. I am very much against exporting man-made systems. Here in the US, I am a member of and go to a church, teach SS, etc., and that fits in this culture (even though much of this culture is unbiblical). However, I don't want to export it.
- 18 Jim Nelson's response: The Church universal, the body of Christ, is the whole reason we want to see Muslims saved into. We love the Church, but much of what are called 'churches', denominations, etc. are tradition, and are not Biblical. By many such traditions, they make the word of God void. Mark 7:7-9, 13. We try to give the church the position it is given in the NT – groups of believers, not a denomination, not a building, not a statement of faith, etc. (1 Thess. 1:1, Romans 16:7, Acts 8:1, 9:31, 12:5, 14:27, 1 Cor. 16:19, Col. 4:15, 16, Phil. 2, etc.)
- 19 Craig Johnson objects: We in CGC have the DNA of discipleship from our organizations and will never lose our deep commitment to discipleship for these new believers. It seems we did not adequately emphasize our commitment to discipleship in this consultation.
- 20 Craig Johnson explains: They have an authentic, valued membership before God, but the institutionalized church struggles with Muslim followers of Christ. Perhaps the bigger problem is with the institutionalized church. It is wonderful to see our Muslim followers of Christ sit with Christian followers of Christ and Jewish followers of Christ. Together they express their love for our Lord and for each other. It is a beautiful picture of the universal church.
- 21 Jim Nelson disagrees: They have very good relationships with others in the true Church/Body of Christ. It is true that they have very little in common with unbelievers within 'churches.'
- 22 Jim Nelson responds, and Don replies: This sounds like a nice idea, but have you ever tried it? They have nothing in common with each other besides Christ. How many inner-city black-Baptist churches have good 'linked networks' with suburban, white Episcopal churches? The gap is actually much bigger between Muslim believer house churches and existing churches. Plus the very creation of those linkages would often destroy the witness of the Muslim followers of Christ within their social network. **DL's response:** Yes, we have tried it, and it is NOT easy. However, that is often a key role that expatriate workers can play, in linking fellowships of believers from Muslim backgrounds together with some of the leaders in Christian background churches. Jim Nelson: Great! We also strive to do this where appropriate.
- 23 Jim Nelson defends this practice, and then I respond: Not the existing ones. Were you around when the Jesus movement of the late 60's contacted the existing churches? The churches didn't want anything to do with them. The Calvary Chapel movement grew out of the repulsion of existing churches of the new believers in Jesus whose 'culture' was very different. **DL's response:** Do we copy the errors of the past or the good patterns? It is wonderful that Calvary Chapel developed into a solid Christian group, many other Jesus people groups died out after distorting the Christian faith beyond recognition. The objective is not to separate, but to creatively link together so as each group can correct each other's errors.
- 24 Craig Johnson explains: As we look at the example of Paul in the book of Acts. He rarely brought Gentile believers to Jerusalem; he did not have them participate in worship with other believing Jews in the temple. When Peter went to Antioch he miss-communicated the truth of the Gospel just by not eating with Gentile believers. This called for a serious rebuke. We cannot

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take too lightly the seriousness of having the Gospel entrusted to us and then not thinking through well what we communicate with our actions. Unfortunately this is often not well thought through and some good-hearted workers hinder the very Gospel they want to preach (see I Cor. 9:1-19).

- 25 Jim Nelson responds, and then I reply: Every structure, religious, political, social, etc. has demonic powers affecting it. This includes Islam, Christianity, communism, democracy, KKK, a Christian mission, etc. We must break any demonic bondages, wherever they are. **DL replies:** I agree that we have to break demonic bondages wherever they are found. However, surely there is a difference between the demonic bondages found in a typical evangelical church in the West, and the demonic bondages in the KKK. All intellectual systems are not created equal. And just because there can be demonic deception in a Christian group does not mean that we should not be aware that the Islamic dogma and system is itself a deception and it is responsible for the demonic deception and spiritual darkness so common among Muslims.
- 26 Jim Nelson disagrees: Not at all. I see the Islamic religion as a big bondage to millions.
- 27 Jim Nelson responds: This is why we have sessions on Folk Islam and Spiritual Warfare. We cannot and will not down-play this spiritual battle. We have lived too long in Muslim countries to think that Islam is harmless. Craig Johnson also responds to this critique: I would say no! Rather we come to our Muslim friends with respect and gentleness trying to be Biblical in our approach to the lost (I Cor. 10:32-11:1, I Pet. 3:14, 15, Col. 4:5, 6). Attacking an unbeliever and his beliefs rarely leads to him finding Christ. Jesus attacked religious leaders who were leading many astray, but his general ministry model was of seeing the value and dignity of every person and treating them with respect. His instruction is to do to others as you would have them do to you, summing up the whole Law and prophets (Matt. 7:12)
- 28 CGC has a very good set of teachings on how to deal with the demonic and to help people to be delivered from demonic oppression. Thus, CGC demonstrates an awareness of the personal and demonic side of evil and have much experience and good advice on dealing with it. My concern is that they do not seem to see that the typically high level of demonic oppression and bondage found in Muslim communities is built into Islam as a religion and into the ideological system of beliefs that is Islam. Thus, believers need freedom from the spiritual authority of Islam itself, and not just from the demonic oppression that comes from Folk Muslim practice of it.
- 29 Jim Nelson responds: None of us have said this nor belief this. We have found that by finding areas where we share common ground, by respecting what they respect and honor they will reciprocate and allow us to share about the One, Jesus the Messiah, whom we honor and love.
- 30 Jim Nelson comments and then DL replies: Compared to some African tribe who knows nothing about Jesus, I see that God has sovereignly allowed a lot of truth to be in the Qur'an. **DL replies:** I used to think that Islam contained more truth than animist religions, but I am not so sure any more. Also, animists' response to the Gospel has historically been far more positive than has the response of Muslims to the Gospel. Thus I question the general value of the information about Jesus that is found in the Qur'an. Typically it prevents Muslims from seeking Christ rather than stimulating them to get to know the Messiah.
- 31 Jim Nelson responds and DL replies: I feel he is a man who desired for his people to have Scripture, and who did his best to present what he could discover of the Scripture to his people. (For example, Qur'an 10:94, 4:136, 16:43, 21:7, 26:196, etc.). **DL replies:** Though this may

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have been true, it surely cannot be said about Mohammed's later teaching and example once he gained political control. Mohammed's earlier apparent 'piety' is overwhelmingly made irrelevant by the sum total of who he was and what he started. He fits well into a not-atypical pattern of other world leaders who started out well-intended and ended up promoting much evil.

- 32 Craig Johnson defends Mohammed, and DL replies: How often we make assumptions without careful investigation. Reading various biographies by sincere people, several who are Christians, reveals much good in the life of Muhammad. Of course, it is wrong to venerate Muhammad, as some Islamic traditions do. It grieves my heart when I see both the name of God and Muhammad's name at an equal level in large letters in a mosque. This is wrong. Yet Muhammad did much good; he cared for the poor, he stopped the infanticide of new-born baby girls and he changed the Arab world from following many false deities to understanding there is only One True God, the God of Abraham. Fear, worship, and serve this one true God is perhaps the primary message of Muhammad. **DL replies:** But ultimately, what Mohammed did, by his leadership and prophetic message, was to overrun Christian lands, subjugate Christians and destroy church buildings as his followers conquered Christian nations. Mohammed raised up a worldwide religion that is everywhere strongly opposed to everything that is at the core of the Gospel. So, again, even though he may have initially done some good things, his overall track record and legacy is just the opposite of that of the Messiah whom he opposed.
- 33 Craig Johnson says it is more a matter of emphasis: We have never endorsed everything Islamic. Did you somehow miss the session on Folk Islam? Or did we not present clearly enough the dangers of Folk Islam? We could spend time in our seminars denouncing the evils that have happened through Muslims and at times the organized institution of Islam. We don't dwell on this because we assume with the media in the West and anyone's experience with lost Muslim friends, has more than informed people of negative things that have happened in the name of the religion of Islam. The lost are lost and still in the domain of the evil one. We try in our consultations to provide teaching and tools that will equip labourers to more lovingly and effectively bring the Good News of Jesus and His Kingdom to their Muslim friends and contacts.
- 34 Craig Johnson comments: However, it has. We are aware of several examples and movements. But it does take hard work, much discipleship and training and a wonderful work of the Holy Spirit.
- 35 Craig Johnson agrees, sort of: Yes, this is the goal of an Insider Work and we trust many other ministries.
- 36 Both Jim and Craig respond: (Jim) The light is *supposed* to shine in the darkness!! The light is not supposed to be put under a bushel, or be taken into a light store. (Craig): Yes, they no longer participate in the evil practices of darkness yet they remain in the households with their families and friends being the salt of the Kingdom and light to those still in darkness (Matthew 5:13-16).

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RESPONSE TO DON LITTLE'S ASSESSMENT OF CGC

By Jim Nelson, CGC speaker and long-time Navigator staff

It is a privilege to respond to Don Little's article. He is a scholar with spiritual integrity in asking for and incorporating a response. I was asked to write a short response to this article, and will focus on the Biblical basis for CGC's teachings and justification for using the Qur'an.

CGC teachings

1. **The Kingdom of God** – CGC focuses on the Kingdom of God because Jesus did. It was Jesus' first message (Mt. 4:17, Mk. 1:15), his last message (Acts 1:3), and a major focus of his teaching (98 references). It was preached in Acts (Philip in 8:12, Paul in 14:22, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23, 31), and is mentioned in eight of Paul's letters, Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, and Revelation. Our focus on the Kingdom of God is Biblical. It is latent in the Qur'an (2:107, 247f, 3:26, 189, and 30 other verses), and it is intriguing to Muslims.

2. **Incarnation/becoming like** – Jesus is our model of incarnation (Jn. 1:14, Heb. 2:9-15), becoming like us in everything except sin (Heb. 4:15). Paul also 'became like' those he wanted to reach (1 Cor. 9:19-23) in everything except sin (1 Cor. 9:21).

3. **Disciples remaining in their socio-religious context** – Jesus never told a Jew to leave his socio-religious context. Nor did Jewish followers of Jesus in Acts ever leave their socio-religious identity as Jews. Rather, they continued meeting and worshiping in the temple (Acts 21:26, 24:11) and met and taught in synagogues (Acts 9:1, 20, 19:8, 26:11, etc). They never forsook Judaism (Acts 21:20, 22:3), Jewish customs (Acts 28:17), Jewish feasts (Acts 20:16), or even Jewish religious parties (Acts 15:5). Paul calls unbelieving Jews 'brothers' and talks to them as 'our people' (Acts 28:17).

Jesus' does the same in his Samaritan ministry (Jn. 4:5-42) and his four Gentile ministries (Mk. 5:1-20, 7:25-30, Mt. 8:5-13, Jn. 18:33-19:11). He never tells them to leave their socio-religious context. Had that been Jesus' goal, he missed some great opportunities (Jn. 4:20-24, Mk. 5:18-20)!

Believing Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles remained Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles, but were *not* mistaken for 'mainline' followers of those religions. Unbelieving Jews called followers of Christ a 'sect' of Judaism (Acts 28:22). Samaritans believing in Jesus as 'the Savior of the world' (Jn. 4:42) were no longer typical Samaritans who still expected Messiah to come (Jn. 4:25). Decapolis residents 'marveled' at the demoniac's message, (Mk. 5:20) but still considered him a fellow Gentile.

What happened? Movements! ‘How many thousand’ (Jews believed) (Acts 21:20). ‘Many’ and ‘many more’ (Samaritans believed) (Jn. 4:39, 41). ‘Four thousand’ (Decapolis Gentiles followed Jesus) (Mk. 7:31, 8:1-9). (Compare Mk. 6:30-44 with Mk. 8:1-10 for 10+ indications that they are Gentiles.)

Paul follows Jesus’ methodology and tells Corinthians to ‘remain in the state in which (they) were called’ (1 Cor. 7:17, 20, 24) whether marital/social (10-17), ethno-religious (18-20), or socio-economic (21-24). This was his rule in all churches (17), as affirmed in Romans 3:30, Galatians 3:28 & 6:13, Ephesians 2:11-16, Colossians 3:11, etc.

They remained in their ‘ummah,’ and became light and salt to those around them, but did not continue to practice works of darkness.

4. Evaluating cultural practices and either accepting, or rejecting them – Jesus sometimes accepted and followed the cultural norm (e.g. man-made custom of sitting down to teach (Lk. 4:20-21), and sometimes rejected it (man-made Sabbath regulations Mt. 12:3-6).

Paul did the same, rejecting some practices (1 Cor. 6:15-20) and allowing others, based on the conscience of the weak (Rom. 14:13-21, 1 Cor. 8:4-13). Muslims who follow Jesus should similarly evaluate cultural practices (like going to the mosque) and follow their conscience. Their conclusions may vary.

5. Not insisting on ‘conversion’ from one religion to another – The Greek word for conversion from one religion to another is *prosylutos* (proselyte), and is used four times in the New Testament (Mt. 23:15, Acts 2:11, 6:5 & 13:43). Each time it refers to a Gentile converting to Judaism. It is never used to describe believing in Jesus. The three words in Little’s article do not mean ‘change religion.’ They mean ‘turn,’ ‘change one’s mind,’ and ‘repent,’ respectively. CGC totally agrees that these things are part of true faith. They have become associated with ‘convert’ because of the influence of the King James Version of the English Bible. In 1611, the word ‘to convert’ meant ‘to turn.’ English has changed, but the meaning of the Biblical words does not change when English usage does.

6. Not adding to the gospel – Acts 15:1-29 has parallels to the ‘insider’ discussion. Judaizers wanted Gentile believers to take on Jewish religious identity through circumcision (1,5). The council decided against adding that to the gospel (19-21), and freed Gentiles from having to change their religion and become Jews.

Paul calls Judaizers who changed the gospel ‘accursed’ (Gal. 1:6-9), referring to adding circumcision (changing religion) to the gospel (Gal. 2:3-5, 12, 3:3-5, 5:2-12, 6:12-15). Advocates of Muslims taking on Christian culture and religious identity (Christianizers?) should carefully consider whether they are adding to the gospel and falling under Paul’s curse.

7. Not adding Christian language, culture, and practices to the gospel – The word ‘Christian’ is used in the New Testament only 3 times (Ac 11:26,26:28, 1 Pet 4:16). Each time, the word is applied by non-believers to followers of Christ. I believe all three cases are intended negatively. With no instance in the New Testament where believers used ‘Christian’ about themselves, making Muslims who trust Christ use it is adding to the gospel, especially since the Muslim understands ‘Christians’ as immoral, wine-drinking, pig-eating, loose-dressing, corrupt, materialistic, polytheistic, unclean infidels. Muslims see Hitler and Stalin as ‘Christians.’

8. Using culturally-relevant material in our sharing – Acts 17:28 is one well-known example of using a non-Scriptural text in witnessing, but the New Testament has 500 other quotations and allusions from non-OT sources (New English Translation, Novum Testamentum Graece, New Testament (ISBNs 0-7375-0060-3 and 3-438-05420-5, pp 802-808).

This and Acts 8:35 are what we follow when we begin with Muslims in their book, which has a lot more ‘bridges’ than polytheistic Greek poetry!

Some ‘bridges’ the Qur’an contains

The Qur’an itself is very pro-Jesus and pro-Bible. Islam has become anti-Jesus and anti-Bible.

9. Jesus in the Qur’an has at least 40 unique names, titles and qualities, including: born of a virgin (19:20), Messiah (4:172), the blessed one (19:31), sinless (19:19), aided by the Holy Spirit (2:87), highly exalted (3:45), predestined mercy of God (19:21), life-giver and creator (3:49), and Word of God (4:171). His death and resurrection are called blessed (19:33), and he is alive (5:117), ascended to God (3:55), a sign of the Hour (43:61), and a witness on the Day of Judgment (4:159).

10. The Bible is mentioned in the Qur’an hundreds of times. The Qur’an confirms it (5:46, 4:47, 3:3, etc.), and calls it inspired (16:43, 4:163), revealed by God (3:5, 4:136), given by God (6:154, 17:55, 5:46), authoritative (10:94, 2:213, 5:43, 44, 47), and unchangeable (10:64, 34, 18:27, 6:115, 15:9, 5:48). It says it has light and guidance (5:46, 6:91), truth, leading and mercy (11:17, 46:12), and gives assurance of salvation (2:4). It is called the Book and Wisdom (3:48), the Clear Book (37:117), the Criterion, Shining, and the Reminder (21:48). Muslims are told they must believe in it (10:94, 16:43, 21:7, 42:5, 2:285, 4:136), and if they don’t, they are going to hell (4:136, 5:44, 45, 47, 40:69-72, 2:81, 3:11, 59:17, 35:36).

To keep to the word limit assigned to me, I have drastically summarized. For more details, attend a CGC consultation.

LITTLE'S RESPONSE TO JIM NELSON'S RESPONSE

By Don Little

I will make just one point in reply to Jim Nelson's response, in which he attempts to provide Biblical *validation* for CGC perspectives, rather than responding to my stated concerns. I understand his attempt to demonstrate that their approach has NT *textual* support. After all, if CGC could demonstrate such biblical support, then what further objection could anyone have? However, it is not that simple.

My objection to CGC is *not* that they use the Qur'an as a bridge to help draw Muslims to Christ (cf. Nelson's points 1, 8 – 10 above). That is fine, so long as it is done wisely. Rather, my core concerns have to do with the *spiritual* and *religious* identity of Muslims who follow Christ, and how they relate to their Muslim *religious* heritage and *spiritual* environment after believing (Nelson's points 3-7), given the true spiritual nature of the Islamic religion.

I cannot accept CGC's assumption that contemporary Muslim *religious experience and context* closely parallels the experience and context of 1st century *believing* Jews. I reject the unstated hypothesis, underlying Jim's third to seventh points, that the experience of first century Jews, who believed that Jesus was their Messiah, can be used as a *model* to instruct Muslims who come to believe in the Jewish Messiah, about how to relate to their Muslim religious heritage. This wrongly confuses religious-spiritual categories.

The faith that we have come to know as 'Christianity' is a continuation and fulfillment of truth that Yahweh had been revealing to his chosen people for more than 2000 years before Christ. Gentile believers in the Messiah were grafted into this ancient faith; they did not start a new 'religion'. It is theologically *unjustifiable* to take the way that 1st century believing Jews were taught to relate to the emerging community of non-Jewish Christ-followers (in the NT, e.g. as in Jim's numerous NT references), or vice-versa, and use it as a *model* for the way that believing Muslims are to relate to 'Christians' and Christianity today. We are simply not dealing with parallel *spiritual* realities.

Instead, it is more accurate to see Muslims coming to faith in Christ *today* as *spiritually parallel* to non-Jewish pagans coming to faith in Christ *then* (and now)-such new believers were fully expected to stop going to temples, praying to idols and offering sacrifices to demons. *They had to leave their spiritual religious practices, just as Muslims must.* Of course pagan Gentiles were not asked to become Jews! However, they were, as were Jews, called to repent, and believe in and obey Christ fully. A pagan Gentile, coming to faith in Christ, was expected to live an increasingly transformed life (morally and spiritually) and to leave behind all idol worshipping and demonically tainted, religious practices. This call to obedience still applies to Muslims who believe in our day.

PART 2**UNDERSTANDING AND MINISTERING TO MUSLIMS IN THE WEST****RADICALIZATION OR ASSIMILATION?
DIASPORA MUSLIMS IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA.**

by Dale Martin

Dale Martin is a pseudonym. Dale currently works as an Islamicist with PI-USA in training and directs the Summer Institute on Islam. He is on loan part-time to Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary where he is Lecturer in Islamic Studies.

Introduction

A number of recent reports have noted the rising discontent and marginalization of second and third generation Muslims in parts of Europe. The Muslims in North America, however, appear to be assimilating more completely into society, and as a result, are less vulnerable to being recruited by Islamic fundamentalists than their European counterparts. There are several reasons for this: the degree of diversity of ethnic origin, immigration policies of the host country, and access to the educational system and professional work force appear to be at the root of these differences. These difference have definite implications, which I will spell out in the course of this article, for those working with the Muslim Diaspora on their continents.

North American Muslims

The diaspora of Muslims in North America is made up of diverse populations. About 68 percent of Muslims were born outside the US in over 80 different countries.¹ They have formed a number of national origin communities, often building their own mosques and community centers. They make up small minorities in most of North America. There are so many linguistic, ethnic, and religious differences between them that it would be incorrect to imagine the Muslim community as a single and homogenous unit within North American society. It is more like a mosaic, or as one author has described it, 'it is at once a mosaic, and a tattered quilt.'² It is truly a microcosm of the entire Muslim world which includes all religious schools of thought, intellectual trends, political ideologies and Islamic movements.

The North American Muslim community, therefore, has a number of identities. As the second and third generations increasingly find their identity as Americans, Canadians, and Mexicans their ties to their parents' country of origin weaken; they tend to reject the efforts of their parents and grandparents to define

Islam in culture specific or national origin terms. This seems to be in sharp contrast to what is happening in Europe where second and third generation immigrants have become more attached to Islam than their parents. Collectively, the North American Muslim communities are in a state of transformation as they reproduce themselves into the North American context. As professor Jane Smith has stated, 'The result may well be that a truly American Islam, woven from the fabric of many national, racial, and ethnic identities, is in the process of emerging.'³ The ethnic make-up of immigrant Muslims in Canada is very similar to those of the United States with 37 percent of South-Asian descent, 21 percent of Arab descent, 14 percent of West Indian descent and the other 27 percent is made up of African, Chinese and other ethnicities.⁴ As in the US, cultural diversity of Muslims in Canada may hamper intra-Muslim communication. Attempts to organize Canada's Muslims by Islamic groups is at an early stage and many of them have competing agendas. Muslims are represented by the Canadian Islamic Congress, the Muslim Association of Canada (MAC), the Council of American Islamic Relations Canada (CAIR-CAN) and the Muslim Canadian Congress. Thus, no one group in Canada or the United States can speak for all its Muslim citizens. Canada has often been described as more of a cultural mosaic rather than a melting pot as is commonly referred to in the US. While the integration of Muslims proceeds fairly smoothly in both countries it may be that the process of assimilation will occur differently in Canada.

Islamic Institutions

In 1960 there were only 104 Muslim places of worship in the United States. In 1993 this number had increased to 1100 and today there are over 2100.⁵ The Muslim Student Association (MSA) has 150 chapters in the United States and is thought to be funded by extremist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood.⁶ In general, mosques established by Arabs prior to 1960 are liberal and women are allowed to participate on administrative boards. Mosques established by Arabs in the last thirty years tend to be more conservative and the participation of women is restricted to certain roles.⁷ One moderate Muslim leader, Muhammed Hisham Kabbani, has warned that Islamic extremists have taken over about 80 percent of the mosques in the United States.⁸ The main institutions of American Islam do not accurately represent the interests and views of moderate Muslims who make up the majority. Khalid Durán believes that the American Muslim Council (AMC), the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) and the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) are all run by extremists connected with various Islamists groups.⁹ Pipes has described the Islamic Society of North America as a Wahhabi front group and pointed out that CAIR is funded by Saudi financing.¹⁰ Similar extremist elements appear to be present in both North America and Europe. However, response to it is

generally apathetic in North America as a result of several factors including the diversity of ethnic backgrounds and the degree of assimilation into the North American educational systems, work forces and culture. One important distinction between the situation in Europe and North America is that a majority of those entering North America today are well-educated professionals. Many Muslims initially come for undergraduate or postgraduate studies and are able to stay on when they find employment in various professional fields. Those with a university education can have an easier assimilation into the work force than laborers who often work two or three part-time jobs at minimum wages.

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Another factor in the rejection of extremist elements is the limited degree to which second and third generation immigrants are included in the leadership of mosques and other Islamic institutions. Arabic-speakers tend to have greater proficiency in fiqh and shari'a so they often dominate many immigrant Muslim mosques in functions like teaching Arabic, leading prayers and teaching the Qur'an. As such, they are over-represented in Islamic organizations. It would appear that the African American Muslim community and second and third generation immigrants are very much under-represented in official organizations and publications. This may be one reason why they are less attracted to the mosque than the first generations and radicals appear to be. The Shi'a minority in the US and Canada has established their own separate mosques and organizations. The Shi'a separation from the Sunni majority has grown rather than diminished in the United States.¹¹ Pakistani immigrants from the Ahmadiyya sect have typically established their own mosques and organizations as well.

Assimilation or Radicalization of Muslims?

Larry Poston divides immigrant Muslims into two broad categories: 'defensive-pacifist' Muslims and 'offensive-activist' Muslims.¹² The first are those who have come to North America with the intention of finding a better life and who have a minimal desire to convert North Americans to Islam. They are content to raise their families, pursue their occupations and take part in American life. These 'defensive-pacifist' Muslims have been instrumental in establishing mosques and Islamic institutions to help Muslims preserve their Islamicity in the midst of a 'Christian' North America. 'Offensive-activist' Muslims seek to propagate their faith and persuade Americans to abandon their current religious beliefs or secular lifestyle and convert to Islam. They believe that Islam is the only path and that non-Muslims will be condemned on Judgment Day. These Muslims generally refuse to assimilate into North American society. They also condemn 'defensive-

pacifist' Muslims for succumbing to materialism and secularism. Most 'defensive-pacifist' Muslims reject the radical agenda in North America.

A poll taken of British Muslims before 9/11 found that 70 percent considered themselves Moderates, 15 percent considered themselves Liberals, and 15 percent were considered Radicals (They support jihad with Scripture and are passionate about Islam).¹³ After 9/11 in the summer of 2002 the percent of Radicals grew to 25 percent and after October 2003 it increased to 45 percent. Most of these new Radicals came from the Moderates group. A British government study picked up by The Times of London in 2004 estimated that there were 10,000 Al Qaeda sympathizers in the U.K. The significant insight here is that it appears to be second and third generation immigrant Muslims who are becoming radicalized rather than their first generation parents.¹⁴ Long-time observer of Islam in the West, Fouad Ajami, describes how Islamists from the Middle East have found a willing audience for recruiting in second generation children in Europe. Europeans had been expecting Muslim immigrants to assimilate into European life and culture, ultimately producing a more tolerant version of Islam. Instead, Ajami notes, a neurotic zealotry has emerged within the gates.¹⁵ In England and France government leaders have at times described the situation as a cultural and religious battleground. Several factors seem to be responsible for this radicalization of Muslim youth in Europe. One is that moderate Muslims have failed to establish themselves at the center of their communities.¹⁶ Another element often cited is the collapse of the Christian values that once defined the nation's identity, creating a cultural vacuum which Islam is busy filling.¹⁷ Melanie Phillips points to the danger of the doctrine of multiculturalism, which believes that upholding majority values is somehow illegitimate. This effect is exacerbated when combined with the official policy of appeasing Islamic extremism.¹⁸ While living and working in France for two years during the 1980s it was apparent that the predominant Muslim majority from the countries of North Africa were in many places socially alienated from other French nationals. The fact that second and third generation North Africans continue to be viewed by French society as outsiders points to a potential barrier for assimilation and appears to make them more vulnerable to radical Islam. These are the same dynamics which were responsible for so many African-Americans in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s turning to the Nation of Islam in the USA.¹⁹ In contrast to nominal white Protestant churches and the withdrawn black Protestant churches, the Nation of Islam offered the African-American person a sense of community, of belonging, a God-given purpose and a respectable identity and dignity.

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Many are wondering if the same political, cultural, and social factors in North America could create a similar radicalization of North American Muslims. There are, however, significant differences between the Muslims of North America and those of Europe. There is a much greater ethnic diversity of Muslim immigrants in North America. This diversity has resulted in a fragmentation of Muslims along national-origin lines preventing widespread movements. North American Muslims tend to have a higher education level and be better off financially than their counterparts in Europe.²⁰ For instance, proportionally, Canadian Muslims withdraw much less from the social security system and contribute to it more than the Canadian population as a whole.²¹ One study found that children of immigrants in Germany were scoring significantly below German students in a variety of areas while a study of 400 immigrant families in the USA revealed that 40 percent of the immigrant students received, on average, grades of A or B over a five year period.²² This leads to a greater integration into the University system and professional work force.

Differences in immigration policy between Europe and the North America are consequential. It is far easier for immigrants to obtain full citizenship in the US and Canada than in most European countries. The North American experience is one of rapid linguistic acculturation and native language loss.

Differences in immigration policy between Europe and the North America are consequential. It is far easier for immigrants to obtain full citizenship in the US and Canada than in most European countries. The North American experience is one of rapid linguistic acculturation and native language loss.²³ The US and Canada are traditionally immigrant or host countries while France, Germany, and other European nations are traditionally emigration societies with no long tradition as host societies. The US and Canada also have a much lower proportion of Muslims to their general population than do European nations. Taken together, these factors appear to give hope that the kind of radicalization of second and third generation European Muslims will not happen in the same way or to the same extent as in North America.

North American Muslims are integrating into society far more rapidly and eventual assimilation appears likely for most. However, strong attachment to the mosque may be a barrier to assimilation. The Somali refugee population is proving to be an exception and a number of churches in our area report a high degree of suspicion and lack of assimilation into the local community. There are reports that American Muslims have become alienated since 9/11 as evidenced by becoming more religious.²⁴ One recent study pointed out the role that religious institutions have in the lives of immigrants by providing a place of bonding and/or providing a bridge to the wider society.²⁵ Allen found that Muslim refugees used the mosque primarily for bonding purposes while Catholic refugees used their church for both bonding and bridging to the wider society.²⁶

Conclusions

Islam has developed from a relatively insignificant number of Muslims before 1960 to a rapidly growing population today in all three countries of North America. The influence of Islam in the USA is increasing and becoming more significant, though the American and Canadian Muslim communities are relatively new and very much in the process of finding their identities compared with those in Europe. Muslims have come from 80 different nations, escaping injustice, poverty, wars and persecution to build a new life among us. Many have come from many hard to reach 'restricted access' countries where it would be very difficult to send missionaries and sustain a viable witness. In Europe many of the Muslims have formed concentrations from the same ethnic or national-origin background. This makes it easier for them to identify as a community, agree upon an agenda and be united in pursuing it in contrast to the fragmented and heterogeneous communities in North America. Muslims in Europe have stronger identities as a result of being less culturally diverse. North American Muslim communities are in a process of finding and forming their identities as they assimilate into the North American context. They do not seem to be holding onto their ethnic identity as tightly as in Europe. Extremist Islamist groups are well-funded from outside both continents and are attempting to influence the kind of Islam which will emerge. They have found more of a hearing with second and third generation Muslims in Europe who have not assimilated as fully into the educational system and professional work forces as their counterparts in North America. Many observers are pointing to cultural, social, and religious factors as the explanation for the radicalization of Muslims in Europe. An important study by Phillip Connor concluded that less welcoming immigrant contexts result in higher levels of religious commitment than the person had in their home country before immigration.²⁷ Many of us working with immigrant Muslims would confirm this having observed that immigrants who feel unwelcome and misunderstood tend to fall back more tightly on Islam as part of exercising their identity.

It appears that the lack of diversity of ethnic origin, immigration policies, and access to the educational system and professional work forces are significant factors for the rising discontent and marginalization of second and third generation Muslims in Europe. When immigrants have job security, a level of satisfaction and comfort, and an identity of dignity in the community they appear less likely to turn to the solutions which radical Islam is actively propagating on both continents. There are several major implications for those of us working in Diaspora ministry to Muslims which could be the subject of an

Muslims in Europe have stronger identities as a result of being less culturally diverse. North American Muslim communities are in a process of finding and forming their identities as they assimilate into the North American context.

The church into which we are inviting the Muslim immigrant needs to be an authentically multicultural community which is welcoming and not culturally distant. Otherwise we need to create culturally friendly contexts for them to discover the Christian faith.

entire study. The friendship network into which we are inviting Muslims must be a welcoming community that provides a bridge for the Muslim immigrant into the host culture, educational system, and professional work force. Our network should be attempting to introduce the Muslim immigrant not only to Jesus but should enable them to assimilate in practical ways so that our network appears to be a viable alternative to the Muslim immigrant community. The church into which we are inviting the Muslim immigrant needs to be an authentically multicultural community which is welcoming and not culturally distant. Otherwise we need to create culturally friendly contexts for them to discover the Christian faith. The Muslim immigrant needs to be able to see a real potential identity for himself or herself as a member of this welcoming community. If the Muslim sees the community of Christians as a viable entryway into the host culture not only will Muslims be less likely to remain marginalized and vulnerable to Islamists, but the gospel will get a better hearing.

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 - 5 Joshua Lingel, who teaches Christian Apologetics to Islam at Biola University, states, 'There are well over 2100 mosques, 165 Islamic Schools, 426 associations, and 90 Islamic publications,' personal communication.
 - 6 The Muslim Brotherhood has unofficial links with other organizations as well as having sponsored its own organization, the Muslim American Society (MAS).
 - 7 Haddad, Smith, & Esposito, *Religion and Immigration*, 163.
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- 19 Three excellent books on this topic are *The Nation of Islam: Understanding Black Muslims* by Steven Tsoukalas, *Black Theology and Black Power* by James Cone, and *Free at Last?* By Carl Ellis Jr.
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A CANADIAN RESPONSE TO 'RADICALIZATION OR ASSIMILATION?'

By Ed Loewen

Leader of In Canada Ministries to Muslims with Pioneers Canada

Dale Martin highlights significant differences and trends in Europe versus North America. Allow me to expand on the notion that the Canadian scene encourages a moderate Islam.

Canada was the first country to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy in 1971. In this, immigrants are encouraged to retain their identities and take pride in their ancestry. Many Canadian cities host annual festivals that showcase the multitude of cultures – this mosaic Dale refers to. In the name of multiculturalism, various levels of government even provide some funding to construct Mosques that double up as community centres.

We are told that by 2017 the visible minority in Toronto and Vancouver could well become the visible majority. As ethnic communities become larger, they also become more self-sufficient. Immigrants mainly need established Canadians for learning English and perhaps for jobs. Canada is known as a country of immigrants. Because of this, it is hard to describe what 'Canadian culture' really is. We are not particularly patriotic or proud of being Canadian. Some dominant themes are tolerance and peace. Canadians do not write articles and books that highlight the danger of Muslims living among us lest they be charged with fear mongering.

Since 1990, we have had a large influx of less educated Muslim refugees from Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia. In the 70's we welcomed 'boat people'. Many Muslim international students and professionals settled during this earlier time too. For many of the later refugees, fitting into society may be a long journey of perhaps four or five years, by the time they finish ESL, high school, and get into the working world.

Most first generation Muslims in Canada, whether secular, practicing, educated or uneducated are drawn to their own communities – not necessarily to the mosque. It is not Islam uniting them as much as culture, language and food. Canada's first mosque was built in Edmonton in 1938 and funded partly by a Women's auxiliary of a mainline church. Its role was to be something that would bring the Muslim community together. Today that mosque is a historic building and used freely to promote Islam. This is Canada!

What are the results of adopting multiculturalism as official policy? There is probably more of the 'you' versus 'us' attitude in Canada due to multiculturalism

but not so negative in consequence – just keeps us apart. Many Muslim girls adopt the hijab and are proud of it: ‘We will live the way we like; just as you do your thing’. The least assimilated into Canadian society are Somali women followed by Muslim females in general. Because Canada is more secular (i.e. lower church attendance) than the US, the church is less visible in Canada. In addition, because Canadians are tolerant, more naively think that Muslims are all ok. I think the mosque is emboldened to do ‘dawah’ amongst us.

Many Muslim girls adopt the hijab and are proud of it: ‘We will live the way we like; just as you do your thing’.

On the other hand, because we have not been at war with Muslims until recently and because of our tolerance, there is less reason to become radical in Canada. Meanwhile educated Muslims are busy conveying the message of a peaceful religion on TV programs. Christian/Canadian ideas are somewhat adopted and syncretised with Muslim beliefs. Now Allah loves and cares for the individual. International students from Saudi Arabia and Iran are also active in teaching Canadians about Islam. Muslims have it pretty good in Canada.

The second generation of Muslims is often less informed about Islam and they themselves have become more tolerant. They feel close to other immigrants who share similar struggles of identity, even with non-Muslims-this is much different from their parents’ experience.

Another factor that limits radicalization among Muslims in Canada, Dale rightly observes, is that our Muslim population is diverse in terms of division caused by ethnic origin and sects in the first generation. There just is not enough of the same kind of people to form a community identity. In addition, the second generation hangs out with Muslims from other ethnic backgrounds – especially in cities with a variety of, and relatively small, Muslim communities, like in Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Moncton. The second generation of Muslims is often less informed about Islam and they themselves have become more tolerant. They feel close to other immigrants who share similar struggles of identity, even with non-Muslims – this is much different from their parents’ experience. Second generation Muslims usually identify themselves as Canadians. Here is where assimilation is beginning to succeed.

This creates a unique challenge for the church. Churches have sown goodwill by opening the door to newcomers wanting to learn English and for all sorts of practical help. Still, assimilating them into church or effectively reaching them is another matter. Christians are hampered by theological weakness, being distracted and viewing evangelism and discipleship as the responsibility of, or as a program of, the church, not a personal call of God to reach Muslim neighbours or colleagues of whatever ethnic variety.

A EUROPEAN RESPONSE TO 'RADICALIZATION OR ASSIMILATION?'

By Bert de Ruiter

Bert works with OM as Champion of Muslim Ministries in Europe. Bert has an MA in World Evangelization and a D.Min in Muslim-Christian Relations. During the past 25 years Bert has been ministering in almost 50 countries around the world to help Christians share their lives with Muslims. Bert and his wife Jenny live in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and have two children and one grandchild.

In this interesting article, Martin encourages the establishment of authentically multicultural Christian communities to provide a viable entryway into the host culture in the West. He finds the need for such multicultural communities because Muslims in North America and Europe are often marginalized. I fully agree with his recommendation and believe that the Church of Jesus Christ should reflect the love and grace of its Head, Jesus Christ, in the way they speak of and relate to their Muslim neighbors.

In comparing the situation of Muslims in Europe with those in North America, the author might be right in stating that Muslims in Europe are more marginalized than their counterparts in North America and therefore more vulnerable to being recruited by Islamic fundamentalists. I am not familiar with the situation of Islam in North America, so I will not comment on this. But I am familiar with Islam in Europe, having taught in several European countries and having studied Islam in Europe for the past fifteen years.

I do not deny that in Europe we find extreme Islamists who have come to Europe to use the freedom here to fight against what they see as violations of the Islamic truth.¹ Some believe they can't participate in Western societies and seek to establish a *Khalifat* in Europe.² Although they are fringe groups at the moment, it is true that the lack of integration of Muslims has the potential of fostering social and political instability and conflict.³ Failure to help Muslims integrate into society leads to alienated and marginalized Muslims who are vulnerable to extreme Islamists. Leiken states that 'the social malaise felt by Muslims in the suburbs of major cities can turn into extremism and terrorism.'⁴

But it is important to distinguish between radical Islamists⁵ and conservative Muslims, because conservative Muslims interpret the Qur'an conservatively without becoming jihadi warriors.⁶ One example of this last group is the Muslim Brothers who are an activist movement with an enlightened conservatism and a devoutly religious outlook that continues to attract young educated Muslims. Jocelyne Cesari points out that this movement 'wants to reconcile the exigencies of Islam with secular life without losing their soul.'⁷

Also, it is important to realize that we are not the only ones that are concerned about radical Islamists. Muslims share our concern. Several of my Muslim friends have pointed out that the victims of Islamic terrorism are often other Muslims. Recently, two Muslim friends wanted to meet with me. One of them is a director, and the other is a board member of an Islamic broadcasting company that airs programs on national radio and television in the Netherlands. They expressed their concern about the attempt of radical Muslim to infiltrate their organization and use it as a medium to broadcast their radical views. They asked whether I could use some of my contacts in the government to point them to the activities of these extremists and prevent them from operating in our country.

Tariq Ramadan believes that Europe is currently living through a silent revolution in Muslim communities in the West in which more and more young people and intellectuals are actively looking for a way to live in harmony with their faith while participating in the societies that are their societies, whether they like it or not.

In reading Martin's article, I found a lot that is valuable, but I found it lacking in balance. From the outset it puts the spotlight on the dark spot of radical Islam, a small minority of the 50 million Muslims in Europe. In doing this, Dale appears to join the many Evangelicals who, when talking or writing about Islam, often look for the dark spots and seem to ignore the bright spots. Dale refers to a rising discontent and marginalization of Muslims in Europe, but ignores the many indications that Islam is also establishing itself in the democratic and secularized context of Europe. Tariq Ramadan believes that Europe is currently living through a silent revolution in Muslim communities in the West in which more and more young people and intellectuals are actively looking for a way to live in harmony with their faith while participating in the societies that are their societies, whether they like it or not.⁸

The fact that Islam is beginning to adapt to the European context can particularly be noticed in: (1) the emergence of Muslim leaders who indicate their acceptance of European norms and institutions by engaging in civic and political life; (2) democratization of religious authority; (3) changes in describing Islam's status as a minority culture; (4) a desire for gender equality, and (5) changes in interpreting the meaning of shari'a. Cesari also mentions other encouraging signs: the growth of interfaith dialogue, the concept of democracy, the status of the apostate and the application of human rights.⁹

With the author, I hope that the Christian churches both in North America and in Europe would be welcoming communities, where Muslims find acceptance and love, and through this the author of salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. but if we want to be taken seriously as a channel of God's love, we should begin to learn to see Muslims as they see themselves, to identify with their struggles and concerns, their hopes and dreams. As John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople in the 4th century said: 'People who love interpret the facts about the one they love much more accurately than those who do not love. Because our eyes have seen badly we have only noticed the darker aspects.'

- 1 Robert Leiken, 'Europe's Angry Muslims,' *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 4 (July/August 2005). Leiken warns of first-generation jihadists who have migrated to Europe expressly to carry out jihad. He describes them as aliens, typically asylum seekers or students, who gained refuge in liberal Europe from crackdowns against Islamists in the Middle East. Among them are radical imams, often on stipends from Saudi Arabia, who open their mosques to terrorist recruiters and serve as messengers for or spiritual fathers to jihadist networks.
- 2 Ramadan, *Western Muslims*, 24-27. Ramadan discusses six trends of thought within Islam and he admits that some of these streams cannot conceive of participating in Western societies (e.g. the scholastic traditionalism of the *Taliban* and *Tabligh- I Jamaat*) or refuse any kind of involvement in a space that is considered non-Islamic (e.g. *Salafi Literalism*). Others, like political literalist *salafism*, which in Europe is found among the *Hizb al-Tabrir* and *Al-Mubajirun* wed a literal reading of the Texts with a political connotation concerning the management of power, the caliphate, authority and law. He also points out that *Salafi* reformist thought, that adopts a reading of the sources that is based on the purpose and intentions of the law and jurisprudence, is very widespread in the West.
- 3 Robert J. Pauly, *Islam in Europe: Integration or Marginalization?* Pauly gives three examples in which such conflicts are manifested in contemporary Western Europe: a) the above-average crime rates in urban districts in which Islamic communities are situated; b) the confrontations between younger generations of Muslims and the police that periodically escalate into large-scale riots; c) the rising support for far-right political parties.
- 4 Leiken, 'Europe's Angry Muslims'
- 5 Jytte Klausen finds that the new radical Islamist groups combine a global utopianism with a paranoid conception of power. See Klausen, *The Islamic Challenge: politics and religion in Western Europe*, 46.
- 6 Klausen suggests that these people should be described as neo-orthodox. Klausen, 45.
- 7 Jocelyne Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy meet*, 143.
- 8 Ramadan, *Western Muslims*, 9. Ramadan encourages Western Muslims to go back to their sources and distinguish between what in their religion is unchangeable (*thabit*) from what is subject to change (*mutaghay-yir*).
- 9 Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy meet*, chapter 9.

MARTIN'S RESPONSE TO BERT DE RUITER

By Dale Martin

It would appear that de Ruiter and I are in agreement on a number of points in this discussion and certainly on the primary conclusion that authentically multicultural Christian communities are vital for providing a much-needed gateway into our societies. He also acknowledges the presence of a small minority of radical Islamists in Europe and the vulnerability of second and third generation Muslim immigrants to being recruited by them. Although I do welcome his perspectives on this important topic, I must take issue with some of his points and the manner of his characterization. First, my article was not about radical Islam and it certainly was not focused upon the dark spot of radical Islam from 'the outset.' Outside of a brief mention in the introduction, I think you would need to read two or three pages into the article before you would find the next mention of radical Islam, which was a quote from a moderate Muslim. The article begins by characterizing the Diaspora of Muslims in the United States as 'a mosaic' and having a number of identities and ethnic makeups. So I find this assertion completely misplaced.

The main point of the article was to compare the factors which are potential barriers to assimilation in the North American and European contexts and which seem to indicate that the second and third generation Muslim immigrants in Europe are more vulnerable to being recruited by Islamic fundamentalists due to a greater degree of marginalization in society. In my mind the main focus and concern of the article was on assimilation of the second and third generation Muslims into our societies. I would therefore disagree that the article lacked balance and I must say that I was astounded that because of such a brief text that I could be so quickly characterized as one of the many Evangelicals who 'often look for the dark spots and seem to ignore the bright spots.' I also found the Chrysostom quote at the end offensive. I have Muslim friends and acquaintances from all across the spectrum of Islam including several fundamentalists. My Muslim neighbor might actually describe himself as a Muslim culturally but more of an agnostic. I believe my view of Muslims to be positive and balanced. They are warm, generous, hospitable, curious, hard-working, religious people seeking after God but bound by a religious system that does not lead them all the way to salvation.

I would consider it naïve to pin our hopes on moderate or conservative Islam to reign in those who are at the most extreme end

Whether we like it or not the real guardians of the Islam that is closest to what is in the texts of the Qur'an and Hadiths are the fundamentalists. History demonstrates that moderate Islam or tolerant versions of Islam are temporary. Sooner or later, there is a reform movement bringing the community of faith back to the purest expression of Qur'anic Islam.

of the spectrum. I have often asked Imams when doing mosque visits whether they would categorize themselves as a moderate or conservative. Quite a few times I have heard them say in response, 'There is only one kind of Islam.' Whether we like it or not the real guardians of the Islam that is closest to what is in the texts of the Qur'an and Hadiths are the fundamentalists. History demonstrates that moderate Islam or tolerant versions of Islam are temporary. Sooner or later, there is a reform movement bringing the community of faith back to the purest expression of Qur'anic Islam. Whether our dear Muslim friends are moderate, conservative, fundamentalist, or nominal matters little in the end. None of those versions of Islam can save them, only Jesus.

THROUGH THEIR OWN EYES: UNDERSTANDING MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE WEST

By Elsie Maxwell

Elsie has lived in London, England, since the early 1980s, following many years living and working in Tunisia, where she did her PhD in African English literature and Islamics. She taught Islamics for many years at the London School of Theology and was involved in ministry and training with OM and AWM ministry teams in London, as well as being very active at All Souls Church, Langham Place. She continues a diverse ministry in her very active retirement in London.

When you look at Muslim women in the west, what do you see? We westerners tends to see the growth in the number of women wearing the hijab scarf or the number of completely veiled Muslim women. What does the Muslim woman see as she looks at the same landscape? In this article I will let some Muslim women speak for themselves by giving you a review of selected books and articles they have recently written. In the end, I will summarise the main issues, changes or features as Muslim women see them.

1. A Statistical View of Muslim Migrants in the UK

Dr. Serena Hussain completed her doctorate, 'A Statistical Mapping of Muslims in Britain' at the University of Bristol in 2005; it was the first PhD to be supported by the Muslim Council of Britain. She uses the quantitative data of the 2001 census, which clearly shows the growth of British Muslims since the 1960s, and the subsequent changes that occurred.¹

Hussain's comments on the background of the people and highlights the following issues: (1) She identifies the first group of migrants, coming from 1945 to the 1970s, as migrant workers from areas of poverty who accepted undesirable employment for financial gain. (2) Hussain cites two events that led to Muslim immigration into the UK: the 1947 partition of India and the building of the

Mangla dam in Pakistan which displaced 100,000 Mercuric people. She also notes that Bengali Muslims are among the largest people groups who migrate to the UK. They previously migrated to Assam Province in India; but, then found themselves in a Hindu country, and returning to the Bangladeshi city of Syhlet was not an easy option. (3) The immigration growth shown in UK cities is a normal outcome of a chain migration as kin networks of these people groups migrated and settled in the same areas of Britain to reproduce the former village communities with the same language, culture and kinship. Hussain's concerns focus on the people, their needs, their cultural and social behaviour patterns behind the migration and choices they make. She notes that recent events of the 1990s, including unstable political developments, conflicts, natural disaster and religious or ethnic persecution, caused many more people to migrate to the West. The number of applicants for asylum rose to 14,570 in 2002. Likewise, these people clustered in cities to form new kinship and language groups and likeminded Muslim communities. *Her emphasis is strongly on the people and why they left and not on what the country of migration (the UK) is offering.*

In general, the British government and society first viewed these people as *ethnic groups* rather than *religious groups*. Progressively, however,

Proponents of the secularized society expected that for these immigrants religion would move from the public to the private sphere; but, in the case of Muslim immigrants, Islam has moved from the private to the public sphere.

ethnic groups rather than *religious groups*. Progressively, however, Muslims have been seen more in terms of their religious affiliation. Proponents of the secularized society expected that for these immigrants religion would move from the public to the private sphere; but, in the case of Muslim immigrants, Islam has moved from the private to the public sphere. The census brought the notion of a religious minority clearly to the forefront. The survey showed the importance of religious practice in each group. For example, the South Asian ethnic minorities nearly all claimed a religion and 90% said it was of personal importance to them, which is far from the usual response. (Whites 5%, Caribbeans 20%, Indians and African Asians 35%, and Pakistanis and Bengladeshis 67%.)' (Modood et al. *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity and Community*, Palgrave MacMillan, 1997, p 35 & p306). But counting or measuring practicing Muslims is problematic. How does one decide what the indicator of practicing is? One can measure the

growth of Mosques, but attendance at the Mosque is not obligatory for women and children or men facing practical difficulties in attending. Muslims do not make a distinction between practicing and non-practicing.

But the data of the census helps to provide general data about Muslim women in Britain: Muslims have the third highest marriage rates of young marriages ages 16-24 – 34%, ages 25-34 – 93% compared to 44% of Christians. There is clearly a trend *to formal marriage at younger ages*. The number of dependent children is the highest – 63%, but Sikhs and Hindus also have high rates.

Although 73 % reported speaking English, and thus should be able to get jobs outside the home, yet Muslim women reported they are not in paid employment and are 3 times more likely to stay at home. The younger generation expressed a greater desire for a more vocal religious identity, but there is no official data available to decipher the levels of religiosity for Muslim women.

2. An Insider's Look at Faith

A second recent document is the research report by Dr. Sara Silvestri, a professor at the City University, London and Cambridge University. Her report covers Europe's Muslim women in Belgium/Brussels, the United Kingdom/London and Italy/Turin.² She used a questionnaire plus structured and unstructured interviews with Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Moroccan Egyptian, Somali, Turks and Chadian women to gather her data. Her research attempts to examine the respondents' relationship to their faith and their ordinary interaction with and feelings towards European society. In her summary of findings, she states that:

The situation is much more fluid, complex, and multi-layered, with many opinions and behaviours – often of an opposite nature – coexisting together.... despite recent vocal attacks of controversial Muslim intellectuals and female activists denouncing female repression in their religion.... all the respondents... affirmed to love and follow their religion freely. Islamic principles and practices were seen not as blind impositions but as a rational source of personal morality that the individual is free to follow. (Silvestri, 2008, p.6)

Many of the interviewees made a special emphasis of their personal autonomy in relation to faith and the essential idea that their faith was all-encompassing. The stress on the importance of the home and their mother in the teaching of their faith was noteworthy, but the younger generation see further knowledge and self-education in religious matters as important. Some expressed concern that religious leaders were unprepared to share the changes and questioned their way of learning (43-45).

Silvestri's report showed a strong affirmative response that the women felt they belonged to Europe, and were emerging as independent, determined individuals. Most were speaking the language of the country of residence. Most also acknowledged the benefits of living in a democracy and wished to continue as such rather than under Sharia law. They hoped that their children would be more fully integrated into European culture (p.7). This is interesting as on the one hand we have seemingly strong Islamic growth visible in the public sector, but on the other hand, social research showing religious growth as becoming an increasingly private and personal matter among many women.

3. Exposure of Wide Reaching Problems in Marriage

The British public have become alarmed, shocked and concerned about the need to protect and help Muslim and Hindu women. Recently, the media has portrayed a number of tragic cases of arranged and forced marriages and honour killings, not just in Muslim countries, but also in the Western countries where they are now living. Issues were raised in the House of Lords, and government committees were formed. The opening of this problem with people for whom honour and shame are the highest code for behavioural patterns has been difficult and led to painful clashes. While problems surrounding marriage are not new, the idea that these matters would be exposed in public by Muslims and not just outsiders is new. Now there are a large number of books written by Muslim women about marriage – personal stories of arrangements that went horribly wrong or tragic honour killings – available on Amazon. See, for example *Leila, Married by force*, in which a Moroccan born in France tells her story. Some other good examples are *Murder in the Name of Honour: The true story of One Woman's Heroic Fight against an Unbelievable Crime* and *The Imam's Daughter*, the story of a British born daughter of a Pakistani Imam in northern England.³

Yet, in the summer of 2008 prominent Muslim institutions based in the UK endorsed a new European version of a Muslim Marriage Contract promoted by the Muslim Institute. This Contract, 'emphasises the Qur'anic vision of marriage as a relationship of mutual love, mercy and kindness... recognises the role Muslim women play in modern societies.' In practical terms it no longer requires a 'marriage guardian for the bride' and it 'enables the wife to initiate divorce and retain all her financial right agreed in the marriage contract.'⁴ The annual report of the Muslim women's helpline registered 1500 to 2000 serious calls to the helpline about forced marriages, but they have no clear data records and percentages to show whether it is an increase or if now women are aware of the helpline and the younger ones are more emboldened to seek help. The behaviour of forced marriage and honour killing is difficult for researchers to verify and case studies are too few to provide significant answers to these problems. Young Muslims still tend to comply with their parents' plans, but there is evidence that the trend is changing. See, for example the campaign against forced marriages begun in 2008 by the European Muslim Network.⁵

4. The Strides Taken and Recorded by Muslim Women

Over the years, there have been many developments and changes for women in the area of Muslim institutions, publications, scholarship, and activism. These changes are far-reaching and broad, extending from how the Mosque is viewed to how women respond to the religion.

Growth of Muslim Institutions

The Mosque in non-Islamic countries has a unique and different role than the one in a Muslim country. Many of the mosques I have visited are not just religious

places of worship and religious education (teaching Arabic). They also offer services to meet the community's needs. For instance, most mosques have a number of rooms for meetings, facilities for weddings, spaces for hosting Ramadan meals and rooms offering accommodation. They also have the appropriate religiously clean rooms to care for the dead and the required ceremonial body washing. The Mosque promotes Islamic culture, welcoming the wider public by putting on special events, awarding special offers in the book shops and opening library services to students.

Women have founded culturally based groups for the promotion of culture and counselling services plus a variety of helps for children's education, health, and finances. It is not surprising that a number are London based services, but Birmingham, Leicester and the Bradford Northern areas also have likeminded groups, such as the following: Moroccan Women, Newham Asian Women's Project, The Southall Black Sisters (West London region), Hassania Moroccan Women Centre, An Nisa (Brent, London), Saturday School and Montessori-Olive Arabic School of City Circle (London).

Additionally, since the growth of Islamic schools, both primary and secondary schools have been granted official recognition like other church or religious based schools. There are still many more schools, however, which are not official but run privately with paying pupils.

Growth of Muslim Publications and Scholarship

For the first time, a Muslim women and family focused magazine, *emel*, has been published. The publication is for Muslim women, and it has a female editor, Sarah Joseph. Joseph is a convert to Islam from Christianity.

The magazine *emel* resembles any woman's monthly journal. Topics include the following: a main feature often related to the holiday event of that month or season, editorial articles on topical issues of faith and current affairs, articles of real life written by real people, articles on food, a health page with doctors advice, fashion pages of the newest ideas for women and children, a page about cars, some house furnishings, art, music and gardening. It is in many ways a family magazine and emphasises life and faith as one.

The continuous quality of the monthly magazine is striking. Its high glossy modern style is extremely attractive. It has good quality content with a variety of articles and issues covered. The Islamic religious topics are also discussed, but one feels there is an effort to present things in a positive light and an appealing manner. The Fast of Ramadan has been made the attention of one magazine each year, which is not unusual, but there has also been a feature magazine on Jesus and Christmas the last two years. Well known Christian leaders have been interviewed about their faith. Often the cover picture featured both veiled and

The Mosque promotes Islamic culture, welcoming the wider public by putting on special events, awarding special offers in the book shops and opening library services to students.

non-veiled women. Two outstanding issues were *The League of Extraordinary Women* and *Power Women*, which catalogued the UK's most influential Muslim women. Women leaders and ordinary women have both been publicly and visually presented to the British society.

This magazine supports the idea that Muslims are not just an ethnic minority group but a significant religious minority who want to be seen, heard, understood and accepted as a religious group.

Just as Muslim women can now feature in and produce a major publication, there has also been a rise in Muslim women's role in scholarship. Today, there are a number of progressive Muslim female scholars and theologians. Some examples include the following: German converts Halima Krausen and Rabeya Mueller; US-based Lebanese scholars, Amina Waddud & Aiziza al Hibri; Pakistani-American scholar Amsa Barlas; and Syrian-American scholar Nimat Hafez Barazangi. These Muslim women establish their own voice in theological issues and become known to a wider public world.

Amina Wadud is an American professor of Islamic studies. She is working for women's reform but from the Qur'anic text. She rereads the sources to demonstrate that the texts are favourable to women as well as men, and that the religious official and culturally patriarchal rulers are usurping the role of God in wrongly applying the principles.

Wadud's first book was *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: OUP, 1999). The ideas in the book were also championed earlier by Leila Ahmed who regarded the text as egalitarian. However, Ahmed read with a patriarchal lens, and thus Wadud felt the material needed to be reread and re-contextualised. Wadud expresses her personal journey of critically analyzing Islamic theology and reconceptualising the relationship between a Muslim and her God. She made International headlines when she led Muslim Friday Prayers in New York City. Her most recent book is *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's reform in Islam* (One World, Oxford, 2006).

Asma Barlas works on the same theme in her book *'Believing Women' in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin: University of Texas, 2002). Her work is an historical analysis of past religious authority and shows how inequality and strong negative attitudes to women developed. She affirms the equality of the sexes in the sacred scriptures.

Nimat Hafez Barazangi explores similar ground in *Woman's Identity and the Qur'an: A New Reading*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006.) Her search has a personal emphasis as she sees the self-identity of Muslim women as important. The participation in rereading the Qur'an is the foundation to becoming the spiritual and intellectual person mandated in the Qur'anic view of the individual and what God intended in his creation of pairs, (al-zawjayn) male & female. The most striking chapter is the one called 'Religio-moral-rational

characteristics of the Qur'an and the story of creation'. Her major emphasis is on self-identity of women and the implications of this for society.

Growth of Muslim Activism

Women are progressively challenging Islam. There are now women activists for certain rights within the Islamic community. For instance, **Irshad Manji** is a Canadian writer and harsh critic of Islam in her book, *The Trouble with Islam*. Further, Manji openly admits to being lesbian. Her main desire is to encourage her Muslim friends to question Muslim practices and speak out against violence to women. **Rana Husseini** is a Jordanian journalist and human rights defender. She has spent a great deal of energy raising awareness of the issues surrounding honour killing. Finally, **Ayaan Hirsi Ali** is a Somali-Dutch activist for women's human rights; her prime areas of concern are forced marriage and circumcision of girls, such as the Pharonic types practiced in Somalia. *The Caged Virgin*, London: FreePress (Simon & Schuster UK Ltd.), 2006⁶

These women are outstanding examples! In these past few years some Muslim women have begun to express critical opinions of Islam, and some Muslim women have even published their views, voiced them on television or put them in films. Women have voiced these concerns orally in the past, but putting things in print, in films and into the public arena is new.

Other helpful sources of information for those seeking to understand the experience of Muslim women in the West are the many **websites** where Muslim women are writing about the issues. I would suggest listening to **Sylvia Poggioli** who has posted a six-part series which one can listen to (NPR) or download and read.⁷ **Seyra Ates**, a Turkish law and women's rights activist, also participates with Poggioli in these broadcasts. Ates mentions that sometimes the German court is capitulating to Islam under the guise of religious tolerance. One judge ruled that the Qur'an sanctions physical abuse, so the judge ruled in favour of a husband who beat his wife. Her other fear is that the Islamisation of Turks is growing in Germany.

There are a few notable Western women embracing Islam. Two examples of women who converted to Islam and have written publications include Karin van Nieuwkerk and Anne Sofie Roald.

Karin van Nieuwkerk examines gender and conversion to Islam in the West. Her book *Women Embracing Islam: Gender and Conversion in the West* (University of Texas Press, 2006) is the outcome of a conference in Nijmegen, The Netherlands in May, 2003. It tackles the topic of conversions to Islam, which have accelerated significantly after September 11, 2001 and were seen in Europe to have a political dimension, whether intended or not. The book offers many conversion narratives (American, Afro-American and European) and different

In these past few years some Muslim women have begun to express critical opinions of Islam, and some Muslim women have even published their views, voiced them on television or put them in films.



Islamic paradigms (conversion to conservative theology or Sufi and mystical Islam). There is an interesting section on converts raising their daughters as Muslims and how some found Islam liberating from secularism and materialism. In a very useful and striking presentation, it demonstrates the influence of these converts on society. One should also read the book by Kate Zebiri,⁸ a Christian professor writing about British Muslim Converts.

Anne Sofie Roald, a Norwegian convert mentioned in the above book, is now a well-known European scholar teaching in Malmo University of Sweden. Her research on the role of religion and identity is recorded in *Women in Islam: The Western Experience* (London: Routledge, 2001). The research examines the opinions of Arabic-speaking Sunni Islamists living in the West for more than 10 years as they speak on faith and its practices, da'wa, Islamic world-view, polygamy and head-covering, with or without a face veil. On the one hand, the West feels threatened by the growth of Islam. But on the other hand, Muslims are affected by European ways of living and thought patterns. Change was more related to interaction with the majority society than the length of time spent in the country. The third fact of importance was that membership in a group, as those with close social affiliations to others, were less receptive to alternative views than those who were on the fringe or were individualists. Strong cultural customs, even non-verbalised, play a part in the formation of attitudes. Emphasis on the equality of the sexes has gained much ground, and many women are accepting the re-reading of the Qur'an. But establishing such equality through reinterpreting the Hadith is much more difficult.

5. Summary

It is obvious that Muslim men and women are a significant religious minority in the West and have a certain impact on Western society. Westerners are feeling the influence and some have negative reactions towards this situation.

Also, Muslim women are interacting with their own society as well as the Western society. The degree of contact and interaction varies, but their voices are being heard. It is interesting the number of women who expressed positive appreciation of their Western countries.

The quest for self-identity, which is part of the life search of all people, is also profound for our Muslim sisters. I was astounded to see Barazangi beginning her search by looking at creation and God's purpose for women as this is my favourite way to begin dealing with the identity issue. This was also a major topic of research among the convert women, including the idea of name changing.

It is not surprising that marriage issues are a major area in every study, but the openness in which Muslim women are championing publicly the problems and concerns is new for the people of the honour and shame culture. Television programmes, web sites, and YouTube videos have given voice to these concerns.

Certain changes have been initiated as a result.

The most shocking areas of challenge have been those which would re-read or re-interpret the Qur'an. Women dealing in theology have caused a number of clashes and reactions.

As a Christian I am disturbed by the great increase in women converts to Islam. I found reading their conversion stories challenging. I have learned much by reading Muslim women writers and not just Western and Christian scholars of Islam. Sometimes it was irritating, and other times refreshing, to see another view; but, it is well worth the effort to move out of our comfort zone and read other authors.

The most shocking areas of challenge have been those which would re-read or re-interpret the Qur'an. Women dealing in theology have caused a number of clashes and reactions.

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- 1 Serena Hussain, 'Counting women with faith: what quantitative data can reveal about Muslim women in 'secular' Britain' in Part 3: Islam, in *Women and Religion in the West: Challenging Secularism*. Aune, K, Sharma, S, Vincett, G. Editors. Ashgate Publishing, 2008.
 - 2 Sara Silvestri, *Europe's Muslim Women: potential, aspirations and challenges*, Brussels: The King Baudouin Foundation, 2008. Download at <http://www.kbs-frb.be/publication.aspx?id=241206&LangType=1033>.
 - 3 *Leila, Married by force*. OH! Editions, France, 2004, translated by Sue Rose, 2006 Portrait., Piatkus Books Ltd. 2007. Rana Hussein, *Murder in the Name of Honour: The true story of One Woman's Heroic Fight against an Unbelievable Crime*. One World, Oxford. 2009. Hannah Shah, the Imam's Daughter, Rider & Co, 2010.
 - 4 Taken from a joint Press Release of City Circle, London, The Muslim Law Council, UK, the Muslim Parliament, the Muslim Women's Network, UK and the Fatima Women's Network. Reported by in Silvestri, 2008, p.24.
 - 5 Can be found at: <http://www.euromuslim.net/index.php/2008/03/02/joining-hands-against-forced-marriages/>.
 - 6 Also, read the review of her latest book, *Nomad*, in this Seedbed, below.
 - 7 (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18330334>).
 - 8 *British Muslim Converts: Choosing Alternative Lives*, Oneworld Publications, 2007.

BEARING LIGHT TO ONE ARABIC-SPEAKING COMMUNITY IN THE UK

by Caroline

In 1987-89, Caroline (pseudonym) was part of a two-year OM team in Brussels amongst N Africans and lived for a month in Morocco with a local family. Following a gap in service and more recent language study, she has been serving as an outreach worker in a large northern UK city for the last eight years.

In early 2002, I had newly returned, as a single woman, from sixteen months of Arabic study in the Yemen. Living once more in my own home in a large city, I was catapulted into UK life: a new twenty hour-a-week nursing job, re-identifying with my small household-based sending church, plus the emotional and practical upheaval of helping family support my mother, who was suddenly ill with a long-term sickness. However, I was eager not to miss the obvious opportunities that I had to encounter Arab Muslims locally.

The city has long had a diverse Muslim population, partly of long established communities (Pakistani, Bengali, Somali and Yemeni (mostly from the rural south) in three main clusters throughout the city), and partly of newer, Iranian individuals/families, Asylum seekers (especially Iraqi Arab and Iraqi and Syrian Kurds, some Eritreans). Eight years on and there is a decent sized Libyan post-grad student population (they have developed their own Arabic and Qur'anic weekend schools for their kids). Furthermore, Syrian, Egyptian and a scattering of other less religious Middle-Easterners intermingle. In the last 1-2 years Gulf students, particularly from Saudi, are arriving and increasingly have their families with them, others are single women with chaperones. Algerian and Moroccan's students are also appearing. There is also Egyptian Coptic presence in the area, which is positive and could resource future overt evangelism.

In 2002 and up until today, the known believers from Muslim backgrounds (BMBs) are generally all Iranians (Fellowships exist and a new Iranian pastor was recently installed). There is a long term befriending outreach centre in a Pakistani/Bengali area of the city. Emergency accommodation for destitute Asylum Seekers is provided by one church with volunteers from different churches. A scattering of individuals from various churches are involved in different small outreaches. There is no company team or multi-agency/church team outreach to Arab Muslims. An English couple who have Arabic and overseas ministry experience and are nearing retirement, recently located in the city. An English Christian woman, with Arabic, works for a Yemeni organization full time, befriending women in her context. Another couple, expelled from a non-Arab Muslim country after ten years, are running a significant course for a

large Anglican church to equip people to be good supporters of overseas workers.

Upon returning to UK in 2002, I realized I needed to keep improving my Arabic and sought to find a language helper from the Yemeni community. I had predominantly learnt Modern Standard Arabic (with a Yemeni accent I am told!) and had a background in the Moroccan dialect. A fifty-year-old Yemeni graduate mother, with strong religious convictions, took up the challenge on a bi-weekly basis. Later, our religious discussions grew into a study of the Old Testament in a fairly confrontational manner for a time, using the study *One God One Way*. Another determined attempt at language was joining a Sunday afternoon class full of Yemeni women (with varied English levels) in the local community who were learning to write Arabic. Conducted totally in Arabic, it was a much better place to make friendships and practice language than subsequent night classes I tried, which were run in English by the local secular college.

From these and other encounters or introductions to women and families, I developed a number of solid friendships and had homes to visit in different areas of the city. Some friendships were fun, enlightening with interest in the scriptures; some were draining at times with sudden or on-going complex needs developing. They were times of breaking up the ground, both tentative and bold sowing of gospel seeds in terms of literature, media, discussions and prayer.

I did my best to keep up a quarterly newsletter to my prayer supporters, which included a small core that prayed daily. Such backing is indispensable and I owe a large part of my survival to God's grace at work through them. I was also accountable to my church, and team leaders based at a distance in London, resourced by mutual visits and some shared ministry efforts where I joined them outside of my situation.

A key change from solely visiting homes came when I was encouraged by a Muslim Lebanese friend to volunteer at a weekly women's only secular run conversation and activity club aimed at Refugees and Asylum Seekers. With decent numbers of Arab women attending and new people always turning up, I have continued to be involved and have prayed and sought to draw in other Christians to this setting. Two other mixed gender conversation clubs run weekly which are proving to be good places to make contacts with other groups.

In the last year, God has opened up an amazing opportunity through a woman I met in the conversation club. Newly arrived from Kurdish Iraq and initially only able to converse with me in Arabic, we formed a bond when we met over two years ago. On a casual visit to her home, I showed the Miracle Maker video to her and her husband and eldest son. They are from a Yazidi background, not Muslim, but are very familiar with Islam. She promptly fetched a bi-lingual Arabic English NT (obtained as a gift on a visit to a Christian bookshop in the city!), saying she read

Some friendships were fun, enlightening with interest in the scriptures; some were draining at times with sudden or on-going complex needs developing.

it aloud to her husband most nights or on car journeys! This outgoing family, popular with Muslim Kurdish neighbours and with other Arab friends, seem a God-provided vital link into the community. Quite quickly, I was able to introduce them to a church planting group in the city. This group had developed a weekly chronological Bible storytelling evening following a meal together with other Iraqi and Syrian Kurds, in which I also became involved. A year on this couple and their 9-year-old son are all responding very positively to Bible teaching. Together with another single man, this family have integrated into a Sunday household gathering. There is also a regular weekday visit to their home to read and pray with the wife and son (English, Arabic and Kurdish are all used). All are acknowledging that knowing about Jesus is changing them and we are praying for the Holy Spirit to complete His work of bringing salvation. The prospect of this couple hosting their friends and being a catalyst for their friends and neighbours to hear about Jesus is something for which we long and pray.

Eighteen months ago, just prior to meeting this couple, God moved me into a new local church. This church is actively involved in reaching out to a racially and socially diverse neighbourhood, which includes Somali, Yemeni and Arab student populations. I have been able to encourage and resource, in small ways, a women's befriending ministry that is developing. A weekly coffee morning, run by two women from church who are in the primary school, is starting as the women drop off their kids. An attempt to befriend Muslim neighbours has also begun to overcome barriers into the community. This has led to a quarterly International Women's Food evening. It is held in the church building or in the local park with music, dancing, singing, and food brought and shared.

In an effort to move deeper and attract those who were spiritually open, we ran a Bible Storytelling session for four weeks in a home. We told the story of Ruth. Invitations drew some keen interest and a desire to come, but many factors kept different women away, all except one Moroccan woman who interacted very positively showing much openness. Storytelling fascinates and reaches the heart and often brings a story in response from the one who has listened. It dispels argument and confrontation, and gives insight into how to pray for our friends. It also gives us opportunities to pray with them, as they trust us with their needs.

Long-term relationships that are not displaying obvious spiritual interest have been at their best when I have been involved with the whole family, sometimes for fairly intense periods. A natural pattern has developed for me, to value and pour a lot of time into the children, whatever age they are, modelling to parents the value of playing with them, giving health advice, homework help and taking them on outings. I carry a bag of craft stuff and English Bible storybooks everywhere. One simple family bike trip has been long remembered! Often children have displayed openness as questions about God arise in the midst of play and you realise they have heard you talking to their parents. There is an ebb and flow to these

relationships with lapses of time, and then picking up again unexpectedly strong as ever, all with different opportunities as the children mature.

In this type of work, we are generally prepared for fruit to come slowly. I often remind myself that the UK is a new field, despite the opportunity and freedom to share openly. My struggles with disappointment have not been with Muslim's themselves, but with seeing such opportunities to engage with and befriend them missed because very few local Christians have the vision to reach out across cultures or they are afraid to try in our politically correct society. Many, many more Christians are required to find those whose hearts God has prepared! My own lack of a focused team has led to me working largely alone. I have made various attempts to network with others, find people to work with consistently and made other abortive attempts to take church members along visiting with me (complex social circumstances are hard to take people into).

Challenges continue to abound; loneliness in ministry, demanding nursing work, playing an active part in church life, trying to keep a social life going, elderly parents and how to do deputation.

Working in nursing gives a good salary and that together with some financial support, allows time for ministry; however, it is demanding mentally and physically. Nursing also requires professional updating continuously, often in my own time, which competes with ministry. I have often felt that it leaves me making a 'poor job' of both areas! However, I find it helps when I view all of my time as belonging to God and I seek his direction in integrating the various parts. My days are a mixture of structured nursing, flexible activities and visiting. Some of my Muslim friends are my best friends, either because I have known them a long time or because I see them frequently. Their families are like my family as I see them evenings or weekends, often more than I see my blood relatives!

I have currently learned to accept a lower level of Arabic than I once had, as consistent study cannot be one of my current priorities. To know and keep within my limits was emphasised when I inadvertently ended up in an interpreting situation that was beyond me. Since I was present, I was used instead of an official interpreter in a complex social situation, which could have adversely affected my friend. Now I use the skills I have for developing rapport with people. In some situations, I would love to have more Arabic, especially spiritual language dexterity; in other situations, people are bent on improving their English and it is only right to help them!

The temptation to give up being part of the company and simply be an 'ordinary member of a local church' has come at various low points over the years, but somehow an echo in my heart reminds me that God has called me and is equipping me and working His strength through my weaknesses. This keeps me persevering and knowing that changes of direction need to come from Him not me!

Some of my Muslim friends are my best friends, either because I have known them a long time or because I see them frequently. Their families are like my family as I see them evenings or weekends, often more than I see my blood relatives!



PART 3

A SUNNI WOMAN'S HEART – PART 6

ISLAM MUST BE RIGHT!

by Tahira

The author, a North American, has lived in the Middle East for nearly 20 years, residing in a variety of neighbourhoods and engaging in a variety of ministries. She holds a D. Min. with a focus in Missions and Cross-Cultural Studies from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

For the devout, religion is the glue that holds life together in a system of meaning. Without that glue, life falls apart, and the world dissolves into chaos and confusion. To present the Gospel to a Muslim woman is to threaten the foundations of her existence. This article explores why this is so, and what can be done to help her consider rebuilding her life on Jesus, the Rock.

Barriers

Pride in the rightness of Islam prevents Muslim women from considering objections to Islam honestly. Among my Muslim friends, intrinsic to the definition of truth is the strongly felt notion that truth will always bring honour to God, which for them is the same as bringing honour to Islam. Furthermore, there is social and religious pressure to accept Islam as an indivisible package, where the questioning or rejection of one part is a failure to submit, that is, a failure to be a good Muslim. The women so want to believe in the rightness of this system, which gives their lives meaning and structure, that they readily accept 'scientific proofs' of Islam, which are highly dubious or of which they are incapable of judging the validity.¹ They dismiss, with equal ignorance, any empirical evidence that raises questions about the truth of Islam.

In addition to their own need to believe Islam is true, logical, and superior, Muslim women are pressured by their communities to maintain an unquestioning attitude when it comes to Islam. They are aware that any questioning could result in their being called *kafir* (infidel), making them vulnerable to the punishment of the community. Other belief systems are caricatured and summarily dismissed by the Muslim community. I heard one Muslim woman telling others, 'If you ask anyone (*non-Muslim*) for evidence of their religion, for scientific (or *scholarly*) evidence برهان علمی no one can give any evidence.' Very few Muslim women have heard a Christian apologetic given by a Christian, but only by Muslims with a vested interest in presenting Christianity as illogical and inferior to Islam.

The women of this religious community have deeply embedded prejudices against Christian beliefs, practices and people, and these prejudices hinder the formation of relationships with Christians. The same prejudices diminish the plausibility of anything or anybody related to Christianity. Foundational to these prejudices is the notion that Christians exist to show the superiority of Islam in one of two ways: either they applaud it and thereby confirms its truth or rebel against it and thereby show themselves inferior to Muslims, who have submitted to the truth. These are the two models of Christians Muslims know from Muhammad's interactions with Christians. The relative complexity of Christian doctrine presents a very great barrier, and Christians have failed to offer comprehensible theological explanations to Muslims of such basic Christian teachings, as the deity of Jesus, the Trinity and justification by faith.

Bridges

Christians and Muslims share many beliefs about the normative nature of revelation and about the nature of truth (especially that contradictory 'revelations' cannot both be right). Islam's roots in Judaism and Christianity provide a great deal of overlap in specific beliefs. We also share many concerns about the effect of modern science on faith, and particularly faith in the reliability of revelation. Both are open, in theory at least, to consider scientific evidences, but both are rightly reluctant to give science the final word in the light of God's sovereignty. Both communities rely overtly upon reason and wish to appear reasonable and tolerant to the other.

Fault lines

There are a plethora of contradictions between Islam and science, Islam and reason and Islam and itself. Someone from this subculture who discovers one or more of these contradictions and is honest enough with herself to admit the discrepancy will be highly disconcerted and looking for resolution.

Some aspects of Islam sit uneasily with other cherished values. Among these values, the affirmation of women is probably the one about which women from this population feel most strongly and which they are most willing to discuss with outsiders. The sense of superiority and rightness that characterizes these women is at odds with their self-professed commitment to humility and tolerance, qualities that they know to be essential to the survival of humanity. In particular, there is an unacknowledged tension between the claim that Islam does not deny the Gospel and the vigorous denial of many of the foundational teachings of the Gospel.

Worthy of Observation

Although it is far from the norm, some will quietly question what they have been taught. It is worth looking for people who show signs of inner struggle between

It is worth looking for people who show signs of inner struggle between maintaining reverence for God and determination to know the truth. Vehemence in defending Islam may mask doubts.

maintaining reverence for God and determination to know the truth. Vehemence in defending Islam may mask doubts. One should be especially alert for questions that suggest the person is genuinely seeking to grasp truth. Prejudices have to be challenged on the basis of truth, of course, but it might help the challenge if it were supported by some other cherished value, such as the honour of Islam, 'tolerance,' submission, God's honour, or the affirmation of women.²

Islam is meant to provide a system of meaning, which guides the life of Muslims. It makes sense to be sensitive to women who fail to find the meaning they seek in Islam, especially when emotional needs go unmet along with the intellectual. Examples might include, the Hajji who comes back dissatisfied from what should have been the highlight of her spiritual life, or a bereaved woman who cannot find the profound comfort she needs simply in accepting the will of a distant Judge. Expressions of dissatisfaction will almost always be subtle.

Missional Strategies

The ideal would be for Muslims to recognize for themselves the inconsistencies of Islam. Muslim women are unlikely to do so because they do not want to lose the intellectual, social and moral structure of Islam, which provides a sense of security and meaning for their lives. Their deeply engrained prejudices against any alternative system of meaning compounds their unwillingness to allow themselves to ask foundational questions. Nevertheless, a worker may be able to foster honest doubts by humbly asking sincere questions and explaining why he or she is not convinced of Islam. The claims of Islam's reasonableness could be used as an opportunity for queries. What is good need not be defended by lies or faulty reasoning.

A woman from this subculture who has the courage to doubt is likely to be highly conflicted and in emotional pain. This situation calls for persistent, confidential, sensitive and supportive ministry to help this person seek the truth with courage. Triumphalism should be avoided. Muslims should be challenged to pray for light and to seek truth fearlessly, because God is sovereign and true.

Muslims who raise questions about Christian beliefs should receive concise and respectful answers, which explain clearly, raise a more foundational question or keep the conversation open. The use of proverbs and metaphors may be helpful, but only if understood by the hearer. Answers given should have the backing of biblical authority not just one's own opinion. An opportunity of long-term witness might be gained by providing a Bible and offering to study it together. There is a need for attractive pamphlets or DVDs, which give short answers to common questions.³

Muslims will find answers more plausible when they seem in keeping with sources of authority they trust. It is therefore appropriate to use the Qur'an, the Hadith, science, simple philosophy and the best of popular culture to reinforce, but not supersede, the authority of Scripture. However, such appeals need to be done with integrity, not manipulating isolated facts or verses. Believers in Jesus who answer questions put to them should be aware that intellectual questions often cloak emotional, social and spiritual agendas.

Although personal testimony might easily be dismissed on intellectual grounds, most Muslim women are empathetic and find it hard to deny the personal experience of another woman, especially when that woman is clearly devout and seeking to honour God. It may be effective to explain why faith in Jesus has given one's own life meaning, or the joy of serving God from a motive of gratitude (as against earning), or to speak of one's intimacy with a knowable God.

Conclusion

Jesus said of himself, 'I am the Truth.' This is an audacious claim, one which challenges everyone who finds ultimate meaning in any system, including Islam and Christianity, rather than in the Person of Jesus. While Muslim women have a right to hear from us clear, concise and well-supported reasons for the hope that is in us, few of them are really interested in our apologetics. More than anything else it is the experience of encountering Jesus himself which will give some Muslim women the power to stop clinging to their tightly woven belief structure that cannot save.

It is therefore appropriate to use the Qur'an, the Hadith, science, simple philosophy and the best of popular culture to reinforce, but not supersede, the authority of Scripture. However, such appeals need to be done with integrity, not manipulating isolated facts or verses.

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- 1 Consider, for example, the following quotations. 'Every prophet must show a miracle to prove his divine authority. Our Master Muhammad split the moon in two. This was witnessed by people in other countries, not just in Arabia. You can still see the crack if you look carefully. Scientists are amazed that our Master Muhammad could do this as such a feat requires great heat and power.' 'The change of the qibla was from God, not people. One proof of this is that scientists have recently discovered that the Ka'aba is located over the exact centre of the earth.'
 - 2 For example, in addition to providing evidence for the basic textual integrity of the New Testament, one might appeal to God's honour in preserving his word.
 - 3 Many pithy answers are available on the Internet or from agencies (like Christian broadcasting networks), which answer thousands of questions annually. However, it cannot be assumed that an answer designed for another person or context is appropriate to the immediate need.

PART 4: BOOK REVIEWS

NOMAD: FROM ISLAM TO AMERICA:
A PERSONAL JOURNEY
THROUGH THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

By Ayaan Hirsi Ali

London: Simon & Schuster, 2010. 277 pages. ISBN: 978-1-84737-664-0

As editor of SEEDBED, I do not often review and *recommend* books written by professed atheists, but Ayaan Hirsi Ali's newest book, *Nomad*, should be *required reading* for Christians in the West, and especially for Christians who have Muslim neighbours, friends and work colleagues. I bought the book in a large bookstore in Kuala Lumpur eight days ago, and read it during my 48 hour trip back to Houghton. Reading it as I flew across Asia, stopped off in Europe, and finally arrived in the States was symbolically fitting, since it is the intellectual journey of a woman who began life in Africa as a Muslim, fled to Europe (Holland) where she left the faith of her forefathers, and has recently immigrated to America where she is now finding herself at home as a convinced atheist.

Ayaan Ali begins her book with these haunting and sad words: 'All my life I have been a nomad. I have wandered, rootless. Every place I have settled in, I have been forced to flee; every certainty I have been taught, I have cast aside' (p. xi). This issue of SEEDBED has focused major attention to Islam in the West, and *Nomad* is the moving and revealing account of what life is often like for Muslim immigrants who come to live, by choice or not, in our countries in the West. This first-person account of her experience of learning how to live in the West opens up windows into the life experience of many, many immigrants that can only be otherwise known through extensive and deep friendship with such immigrant nomads.

Throughout the book, Ayaan Ali weaves together stories of her upbringing and journey with wider analysis of the condition of Muslim immigrant communities in Europe and in America. The result is a moving personal account, full of remarkable insights into the Muslim immigrant experience as they often move from one world into another, totally foreign and initially incomprehensible, world, that few actually manage to understand and adapt to. In addition to being a personal account of her own experiences, *Nomad* is a probing analysis and presentation of the three major areas that Muslim immigrants need the most help in integrating into the West: sex, money and violence (Chapters 11-13).

Ayaan Ali believes that there are three primary Western 'institutions' that can

and must ease the transition into Western citizenship. *These institutions must compete with the agents of Jibad for the hearts and minds of Muslims* here in the West, and worldwide. These three are: (1) public education, (2) the feminist movement, and (3) the community of Christian churches. Though, in rejecting the violent and close-minded Islam of her heritage she has chosen the way of atheism, she acknowledges that she will never manage to stir up atheists to try and help incoming Muslims in the West (although she does her best to enlist them as allies with Christians and feminists in the cause). She devotes a chapter to her appeal to each of these so-called 'institutions'. I will pass over her appeals on the first two institutions and dwell on her appeal to Christians in the West.

In her chapter entitled 'Seeking God but Finding Allah' she makes this intriguing statement:

I have a theory that most *Muslims are in search of a redemptive God*. They believe that there is a higher power and that this higher power is the provider of morality, giving them a compass to help them distinguish between good and bad. Many Muslims are seeking a God or a concept of God that in my view meets the description of the Christian God. *Instead they find Allah*. They find Allah mainly because many are born in Muslim families where Allah has been the reigning deity for generations... (p. 239, emphasis added)

Many Muslims are seeking a God or a concept of God that in my view meets the description of the Christian God. *Instead they find Allah*.

I will let you read the book to find out why she thinks that Muslims are actually in search of the God of the Bible. She goes on to make a passionate appeal to Christians:

The Christian leaders now wasting their time and resources on a futile exercise of interfaith dialogue with the self-appointed leaders of Islam *should redirect their efforts to converting as many Muslims as possible to Christianity*, introducing them to a God who rejects Holy War and who has sent his son to die for all sinners out of a love for mankind... The Vatican and all the established Protestant churches of northern Europe believed naively that interfaith dialogue would magically bring Islam into the fold of Western civilization. It has not happened, and it will not happen....

To help ground these people in Western society, the West needs the Christian *churches to get active again in propagating their faith*. It needs Christian schools, Christian volunteers, the Christian message... *The churches should do all in their power to win this battle for the souls of humans in search of a compassionate God*, who now find that a fierce Allah is closer to hand. (pp. 247, 249, 250, 251, emphasis added)

I think these citations from her book help you understand why I believe that this book deserves to be widely read by Christians in the West and beyond. It is tragically ironic to me that it takes an atheist former Muslim to be able to point out to Christians that they have something that Muslims desperately need – the true God of redemption, the loving Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Her appeal to Christians to get involved in the immigrant communities by caring for practical needs and sharing the message of the Gospel in compelling ways, offers, in a way, a blueprint for how we might go about the task. Her compassion for those she sees as the tragic victims of the violent ideology that is Islam, and especially her passionate appeal that we Christians help Muslim women escape from bondage, abuse and slavery, is moving and deeply challenging.

It is my prayer, that as you get this book, recommend it to your friends and give it to your supporters, that God will use Ayaan Ali's stirring challenge to Christians to launch many, many more Christians into bold and compassionate engagement in the immigrant communities in our cities in the West.

Reviewed by Don Little

AMERICAN CHRISTIANS AND ISLAM: EVANGELICAL CULTURE AND MUSLIMS FROM THE COLONIAL PERIOD TO THE AGE OF TERRORISM

by Thomas Kidd

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009

Thomas Kidd's 2009 work: *American Christians and Islam* is a first of its kind. Kidd offers what Western workers ministering in the Middle East need to encounter: an appraisal of how Americans have responded to Muslims throughout the last 350 years as seen by an American Christian historian in the post 9/11 era. Given that North Americans are vibrant partners in the volatile field of Islamic missiology, a knowledge of the history of American involvement is indispensable in both celebrating the wisdom of the past and avoiding painfully repeating the 'uncivil missions of the mercantile world' of previous generations. Kidd's work is largely dedicated to helping us avoid what he believes are the mistakes of the past.

Kidd's expertise in this historical literature enables him to offer an unparalleled account of the earliest responses to Muslims by Americans, from the early New England period reaching right up to the post 9/11 surge in Christian

literature on Islam. Kidd gives us a way of hearing how Americans reacted to the Barbary wars (1803-1815), promoted denominational missions in the 19th century Middle East, reacted to the Arab-Israeli crisis, and more recently, have sought to zealously evangelise the global Islamic *ummah*.

Thomas Kidd's view of Islam follows Edward Said (1935-1993): 'I am relatively sympathetic to Said's Orientalist thesis regarding much of the West's knowledge of Islam and the Middle East' (xii). The problem is that Said remains a very controversial historian for having cultivated an academic 'polemic of blame' by cataloguing the vocabulary and metaphors of 'Orientalists' as evidence of embedded attitudes of cultural and religious superiority. It is true that both Kidd and Said have plenty of examples of the use of such 'Orientalist' language. Indeed, all history – prior to our own generation – is teeming with such 'outrageously negative' language.

Keith Windschuttle suggests that Orientalism, as a mindset, 'is a constellation of false assumptions underlying *Western* attitudes toward the *Middle East*. This body of scholarship is marked by a subtle and persistent *Eurocentric* prejudice against Arabo-Islamic peoples and their culture.'¹ Kidd's book works with the assumption that this critique of Orientalism is accurate and that such 'Orientalism' is wrong. However, it is remarkable that Kidd would write from within the Said school of thought in 2009 given that Said's paradigm *has lost academic credibility* among Islamic missiologists.² As the former-Muslim Ibn Warraq writes: 'In response to critics who over the years have pointed to errors of fact and detail so mountainous as to destroy his thesis, (Said) finally admitted that he had "no interest in, much less capacity for, showing what the true Orient and Islam really are."'³

In defence of the American use of 'outrageously negative' vocabulary, were they not writing to 'insiders' and to fellow-believers? Was it not once common to use *spiritual warfare* vocabulary and metaphors? Yes, these expressions have fallen out of grace in academic Christian circles – much like Victorian poetry in American high schools – but does the fact that they sound so foreign to us, prove anything more than that we have made ourselves foreigners to our own church history? And then again: How accurately can we weigh a person's missiology by popular, *in-house* vocabulary and metaphors of the age?

Kidd, being true to this school of thought, follows Said in refusing to define Islam. He writes: '...what Islam is, or what it causes its followers to do, the answer is best left up to experts' studies of particular groups' (xiii). Well, this disclaimer is simply academic 'punting'. In a July 1st 2010 email to him I asked: 'If you do not consider yourself an expert on Islam, then how can you weigh the

'If you do not consider yourself an expert on Islam, then how can you weigh the impact of this ponderous faith on those 'expert' workers amongst this amazingly complex religion-especially if you say you lack their expertise?' This was left unanswered.

impact of this ponderous faith on those 'expert' workers amongst this amazingly complex religion – especially if you say you lack their *expertise*?' This was left unanswered.

Format of his argument

Kidd presents an anthology of eschatological and polemic statements from people of previous generations. His citations offer rather damaging, and what he believes to be *damning* evidence of Americans lacking courtesy and understanding towards Muslims. He deeply regrets the missionary tone, ethos and the spiritual warfare vocabulary under girding the metaphor of the now antiquated 'church militant'. Kidd seldom finds 'mature' missionary thinkers in his review. He is right; there are very few post-modern, tolerant Christian missionary thinkers prior to WW I. His short list includes Samuel Zwemer as a 'good though not perfect example', as well as post-WWII veterans Christy Wilson, Timothy George and Dudley Woodberry. Even missionaries of the calibre of Henry Jessup are debunked as suffering from a condemning 'Oriental' attitude towards the Levant culture (48-51). Jessup's vocabulary – and by extension – his attitudes, are tried and found wanting.

Kidd gives you a tour of American Evangelical literature mentioning Muslims, from the Early Americans, to the Barbary Wars, to the 19th century 'Orient' missions, to Samuel Zwemer and WWI, to new missiological overtures, to the Israeli-Arab crisis. He completes his survey with three chapters covering certain modern responses to Muslims. He deftly includes the Afro-Muslim development in the US within these latter chapters. Kidd documents shifting reactions to Muslims. He notes how American Protestants viewed themselves as quite superior to both Muslims and Roman Catholics in their morals, their civilisation and in non-violent expressions. That Roman Catholics and Muslims also saw themselves as superior to Protestants is not documented by Kidd nor seen as relevant.

From the Puritan pastors onward, Americans increasingly yearned for the collapse of both the Ottoman Empire and Roman Catholicism as a prelude to the massive anticipated conversion of Jews; and then for good measure, the Muslim 'remnant'. From the 1830s onward, this theme greatly inspired the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in the decaying Ottoman regions. Readers will marvel for how long American Christians have been inspired by the hope for massive Jewish conversion and a Jewish return to Palestine, and how the end-times role they gave to Jews governed their missions to Muslims.

Kidd documents Muhammad's 'diabolic' reputation cited by American Protestants, and used as a means to slander Roman Catholics, deists, or sectarian opponents. He makes special mention of Jonathan Edward (1740). As Kidd wrote to me: 'People like Jonathan Edwards cannot be evaluated by the same

standard of civility as, say, (Southern Baptist 2002 president and severe critic of Muhammad) Jerry Vines. Much of American theological history has been characterized by hostile binaries that nearly everyone accepted, so that there is little point in blaming Edwards for being intensely anti-Catholic or anti-Muslim. But showing that he held these beliefs helps reveal the deep roots of anti-Muslim thought among American Christians.’ (personal email July 01, 2010) It would seem to me that in a pre-sport era, verbal jousting was the acceptable ‘sport’ of the day.

Kidd follows American literature into the Ottoman Empire where evangelising Muslims was strictly forbidden. This led to a missiology of converting Middle-Eastern Christians with the hope that they might display true Christianity to Muslims, and thereby lead to their conversion. That most of these missionaries failed to convert less than a few hundred Muslims in one hundred years suggests to Kidd the total ‘ineffectiveness’ (58) of their ‘deeply hostile’ (63) approach to Muslims. Zwemer however, is admired by Kidd for his balanced, warm, scholarly style. But then even with Kidd’s endorsement, Zwemer could list no more than six converts for his own ministry.

Reflections

Kidd argues that most Evangelical writers were not courteous, kind, or understanding of Muslims or Oriental Christians. The question is, until the collapse of Western colonialism, were these virtues dominant in anyone’s worldview? Should we expect historical writers to sound like us? Should they be judged by our 21st Century ‘Christian’ standards or by those of their own era? That they fail Kidd’s standards is clear; but would Kidd not so judge any Christian writer who exposes the darkness in a global religion? That Kidd would require all contemporary scholars to de-activate their spiritual discernment and cease applying their scriptural understanding of spiritual warfare in order to demonstrate ‘civility, courtesy, and kindness’ strikes me as shallow missiology.

Thomas Kidd noted: ‘Once you get to the 20th century, I do think that one can hold Christians to a higher standard of civility, because certain Christians were exhibiting a serious, thoughtful engagement with Islam’ (in email to the reviewer). Point well made. What remains baffling is that one of the most effective voices in reaching out to the Muslim world today is the Egyptian Copt, now American immigrant, Father Zakaria Boutros, and his very polemic Arabic TV broadcasts. That more Muslims claim his style brought them to Christ is rather inexplicable to many of us in the irenic camp. He is brilliant in understanding, flawless in Arabic, very courteous to Muslims but utterly negative concerning Islam – and that with a courage beyond anything we know. Indeed, he sounds terribly much like the previous American writers who Kidd views as suffering from being ‘outrageously negative.’

Throughout the book, be prepared to read of 'evangelism' or the proclamation of the Gospel as 'proselytism'. To almost every individual cited in this book, to describe their ministry as 'proselytism' would be pejorative and uncomplimentary, even to those Kidd most admires: Zwemer, Wilson, George and Woodberry.

Throughout the book, be prepared to read of 'evangelism' or the proclamation of the Gospel as 'proselytism'. To almost every individual cited in this book, to describe their ministry as 'proselytism' would be pejorative and uncomplimentary, even to those Kidd most admires: Zwemer, Wilson, George and Woodberry. As I read this, I wondered: is this in keeping with Edward Said's treatment of Christianity or is this the present historiographic style in the secular community?

Except for Kenneth Cragg, the strong British influences on American thinkers are absent in this review. Canada too was entirely unmentioned. Notwithstanding his recent arrival to this field, Kidd's book is a valuable resource for studying the landscape of American writers and missionaries responding to the Muslims, and for good measure, for seeing how this literature can be viewed by a Said-influenced Christian historian.

Reviewed by Benjamin Hegeman

Dr. Hegeman is a colleague and friend of the editor. He teaches part-time at Houghton College in the Islamic Studies concentration (and invited me to teach with him at the college), and also spends part of each year in West Africa, where he serves with SIM as the Academic Dean of the Baatonou Language Bible College.

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- 1 Keith Windschuttle, 'Edward Said's Orientalism revisited,' The New Criterion, January 17, 1999; accessed January 19, 1999.
 - 2 Said also failed to neutralise the writings of both Islamic historian Bernard Lewis (1916-) and political scientist Samuel Huntington (1927-2008).
 - 3 Ibn Warraq, *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism*, Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007.

WOMAN TO WOMAN: SHARING JESUS WITH A MUSLIM FRIEND

by Joy Loewen

Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2010. 204 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8007-9483-5

What two words coupled together will give you about 12,300,000 results on Google in 0.24 seconds? Fear and Islam. Perhaps that is why Chosen Books recruited Loewen to write *Woman to Woman*. Loewen understands fear and she understands Muslim women. Born to missionary parents in Islamic Africa, Loewen grew up terrified of the sights, the sounds and what ifs of Mogadishu. In the book, she tells the story of how God's perfect love cast out her own fear and moved her to a place where she is now at home with Muslim women.

For anyone who has ever felt alarm just at the sight of a woman in a head scarf at the mall, Loewen openly shares her own insecurities: 'Obsessive fear spread through my body like a poison, eventually taking control of me and making me a slave to it' (37). Her honesty with the reader and with each Muslim friend she makes as she walks through first encounters, suspicion, weddings and goodbyes gives readers confidence that small acts of kindness, mingled with the Holy Spirit, can change a Muslim woman's life for eternity. Through her own weaknesses and fears, she demonstrates how anyone can move from fear to love and compassion that results in a very special friendship.

The book opens in the present day as Loewen prepares to go to a party of Muslim women who are living as immigrants in North America. Loewen muses on her central theme of 'being at home' with Muslim women. Although she is not from their cultural background and looks very different, she can share in their world through common rites of passage, such as marriage and childbirth. She writes, 'Is this how Jesus felt when He left heaven to live in our world and to identify with us? ...did He remember who He was and where He came from? Did He ever feel confused with His identity or feel like a misfit' (25)? Loewen shares that she feels 'at home' with Muslims, but that it wasn't always that way.

Through the next several chapters, we follow her life from childhood as she tells of some of the terrors she experienced growing up in the Muslim world. She describes how those fears, as well as her insecurities about whether or not God really loved *her*, crippled her ability to have Christ's compassion for Muslims – until she had a divine intervention. As an adult ministering to Muslims in Pakistan, Loewen experienced Jesus' supernatural assurance of His overwhelming love for her.

She describes how those fears, as well as her insecurities about whether or not God really loved her, crippled her ability to have Christ's compassion for Muslims – until she had a divine intervention.

This set her free from fear and opened her heart to be filled with compassion for hurting Muslims.

Loewen's journeys eventually lead her to move back to North America where she begins to minister to university students, immigrants and refugees. The next few chapters of her book are filled with stories about some of her early encounters with Muslims in North America as she learns to walk in humility, define her identity, recognize barriers and bridges to the Gospel, make mistakes and be a learner to the precious people God entrusts to her care.

Christians talk a lot about fear of Islam and Muslims in North America, but we seldom consider how afraid Muslims are of the Gospel. Chapter eight ('Afraid to Know') deals with this subject as Loewen shares stories of two women who wanted to know about Jesus, but were too afraid. It reminded me that in addition to 'feeling safe' as ministers of the Gospel, we also need to 'be safe' for those with whom we are working. They need to know that we will not betray them, expose them, or take advantage of them. When they feel safe, or 'at home', they will ask us the questions that are burning in their hearts.

The remaining ten or so chapters are comprised of a series of stories arranged topically addressing issues specific to ministering to Muslims. Through Loewen's life experiences, the reader encounters examples of how to show hospitality, share holidays, affirm the value of women, help those in abusive situations and invite Muslim friends to share an eternal home in heaven. Loewen also demonstrates how the power of prayer, revenge, community pressure and expectations can enhance or inhibit a Muslim seeker in his or her spiritual journey.

As director of a local ministry in North America that reaches out to Muslim women, I too have seen numerous volunteers move from fear to faith as they allow relationships to blossom with immigrant women. This book is going to be on a short list of suggested reading for volunteers who want to work with us. Loewen's personal vulnerability and very practical advice can encourage any Christian

that they too can do this.

One thing I would like to see added is a short study guide with questions for group discussion. I believe this book would be a great tool for ministries like ours in training American Christians on how to have a truthful, compassionate witness and 'feel at home' among Muslim immigrants.

Reviewed by Janelle Metzger

Janelle spent seven years in the Middle East, with her family, living and working among Muslims. She is now the director of a school that teaches English as a Second Language (ESL) and life skills to immigrant women and children from a wide variety of countries and cultural backgrounds.

This book is going to be on a short list of suggested reading for volunteers who want to work with us. Loewen's personal vulnerability and very practical advice can encourage any Christian that they too can do this.

FRESH VISION FOR THE MUSLIM WORLD: AN INCARNATIONAL ALTERNATIVE

By Mike Kuhn

Authentic Publishing, Colorado Springs, 2009, 273 pages.

ISBN: 978-1-60657-019-7

Fresh Vision is true to its name. True to its subtitle as well, the warp and woof of the book presents an incarnational alternative to understanding the Muslim world. This is fleshed out through personal anecdotes, illustrations, questions and diagrams.

The first eighteen pages, comprising Part 1, cast a new kind of vision for the Muslim world. Kuhn likens the Muslim world to a modern-day Samaria as a means to frame his book. In this chapter, the author confronts us with a choice: to choose the path of isolation, fear, alienation and self preservation, or to choose the path of empathy, self-awareness, deep listening and incarnation. In this way, Kuhn shows us that our ears can become our greatest ally; our empathy can help us avoid a response of fear. He posits that having a Kingdom-centered perspective and remembering Christ's example are both necessary for us to have joyful encounters with Muslims. He also says that we need to offer our Muslim friends security so they will not respond to us with fear. Having such a mindset requires 'careful evaluation of longstanding beliefs that may have become fetishes to a false tradition.'

Part II gives a brief, but good, historical perspective on Christian-Muslim relations. Kuhn touches on the idea of Christians' complicity by inviting his readers to examine themselves: 'Could it be that we (primarily, Christians) have been complicit in the development of religious tyranny in the Muslim world' (p. 19)? He talks about how Christians have viewed the holy land and points out some errors we have made in responding to Muslims. He also gives a pathos for how Muslims view Christians. He relates the effects of World Wars I and II, the two Gulf Wars, and 9/11 to the historical environment and describes how these conflicts have affected the way Muslims view the 'Christian' West.

Part III delves into the theological dimension of how the Islamic worldview is shaped by an understanding of God, humanity and revelation, all of which are at odds with the Christian worldview. Kuhn addresses the thorny question of the need to refine Western affinity for Israel. He discusses what Jesus' Kingdom looks like in the Muslim world today, giving several examples of personal testimonies of Muslims who have trusted Christ as their Savior. In addition, using the analogy of the shepherd boy, David, Kuhn dives into a discussion about the Israelis and the Arabs. He suggests that in order to foster a fresh vision for the Muslim world, we need to 'admit that our vision may have become skewed by

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our predispositions and our constant exposure to various teaching and views' (124). He challenges readers' perception of the present-day state of Israel, asking, 'Who are the Arabs?' He goes on to say, 'Christians need to understand that a clear ethnic association of Muslim people (and particularly Arab people) with Ishmael is inaccurate' (129). He goes on to explain why. Kuhn also delves into 'two contentious issues about which the church lacks consensus: the identity of the people of God and the Old Testament promises specific to the land' (136). He then asks what all this has to do with the Muslim world. He suggests that 'If we are prepared to think clearly and biblically about these issues, we will be better suited to discern the conflicting claims to the land in the Middle East' (158). In addition, he touches upon how two perspectives of history are being promoted: the Western Christian perspective and the Muslim perspective. He observes that 'Christ-followers must take a fresh look at the facts as best we can ascertain them. We should listen to both sides' (171). In doing so he addresses the plight of the Palestinians and suggests that this is a crucial issue for evangelicals to come to grips with if we are to have a viable witness among Muslims.

Part IV is called, 'A Reality Check.' In it, Kuhn presents us with the good, the bad and the ugly as it relates to the Muslim world today. He discusses reformation in Islam and the importance of Mohammad's role in jihad. At the same time, he warns that though Muslims are not blameless, 'the West has ridden roughshod over Islamic sensitivities' and, 'the list of Western transgressions is long' (208). Kuhn warns 'If Western Christians become overly identified with the interests of our government and societies, we will lose that which is most beneficial to our countries – our prophetic voice – what is most essential to Christ's kingdom in the Muslim world – the voice of Christ' (216). He says, 'So now Christians of the Western world and particularly the United States must ask how we can live as loyal citizens of the state and yet give radical allegiance to a crucified Lord' (219). This transitions to the last section of the book.

Part V is called 'Steps to Incarnation.' In it Kuhn discusses God on mission and human beings on mission. He outlines the necessity for a paradigm shift of missional living, poses a new paradigm for post-Christendom, discusses missional living in antagonistic cultures, and what the implication are for the Muslim world. In the final chapter of the book Kuhn talks about living the kingdom and extracting the empire. He compares and contrasts kingdom and empire, ending with some practical suggestions on how we can live the kingdom life.

Fresh Vision for the Muslim World is an excellent book. It contains many provocative and penetrating questions. I found it to be both challenging and refreshing at the same time. I couldn't help but talk with my Muslim friends about some of these questions and issues to test if the things Kuhn has mentioned are true. I would strongly encourage you to read it and 'go do the same.'

Reviewed by DK

DK served with AWM for 15 years in the Middle East; most of that time on the same team as Mike Kuhn. For the last 4 years he has been involved in ministry to Muslims in the US.

KEYS: UNLOCKING THE GOSPEL FOR MUSLIMS,

by Colin Bearup.

Gerrards-Cross: WEC Publications, 2009

Translated from French by Debbie Fahim & dedicated to Magdy Fahim,
1951-1999.

The book *KEYS: Unlocking the Gospel for Muslims* is a teach-yourself-guide or tool for reading Matthew's Gospel with a Muslim audience. The idea is to start with Matthew and familiarise yourself with it so that you can use it with skill and confidence when sharing its truths. The book is designed for people who are new to ministry among Muslims and who want to learn how to share the Gospel effectively with people of different religious views. However, I personally believe the second part of the book, the guide to reading Matthew, is excellent and useful for even those who are more experienced, because it helps us pay attention to key points and relevant issues.

The first chapter is an analysis and it summarizes the Gospel, which is good news; it answers the question 'what does this mean?' and explains how to express it so Muslims hear it as good news. The summary is comprised of the following four sentences:

1. God is holy and perfect, opposed to evil.
2. Man is a sinner, separated from God and is incapable of making himself acceptable to God.
3. Jesus was sent by God to save us: to pay for and conquer sin, to redeem us, to give us new life, and much more.
4. Through faith in Christ, we receive forgiveness, salvation, new life, the gift of the Spirit and we become children of God.

Displaying these sentences in table format creates a helpful visual aid:

GOD		MAN		JESUS		OUR PART	
Is holy	→	Is sinful	→	Is the Saviour	→	To believe and be saved	

Using key words and names that are familiar to both Christians and Muslims, as in the table below, to express these concepts can also be helpful.

GOD		MAN		JESUS		OUR PART
The Judge	→	Guilty	→	The Sacrifice	→	To receive Jesus
The Owner	→	Lost	→	The Good Shepherd	→	To follow Jesus
The True Master	→	Captive of Satan	→	The Conqueror	→	To trust Jesus
The Light	→	In darkness	→	Light of the world	→	To be led by Jesus
The God of Israel	→	Far away from God	→	The Chosen King	→	To enter the Kingdom
The Creator	→	Defiled creation	→	The Second Adam	→	To receive new birth
Most Honoured One	→	Shamed	→	The Reconciler	→	To repent and receive salvation

Islam could be expressed in the same kind of format, which is helpful for understanding the contrasts between the foundational beliefs and how to address them:

GOD		MAN		THE SOLUTION		OUR PART
Is greater than everything	→	Is weak	→	Religion and practices	→	Submission

The next two chapters give some basic advice for sharing the gospel with Muslims, including a list of dos and don'ts about vocabulary, an explanation of gender roles and a gentle reminder to have authentic love expressed in a culturally appropriate manner. It also suggests answers to some of the basic questions Muslims raise.

The rest of the book concentrates on the main purpose: a guide to using Matthew's Gospel. First, the author very aptly guides the reader in learning to use stories in a much more effective manner than simply telling them. There are several examples showing how to present the story (1) engaging with the facts of the story, (2) with the emotions and also (3) engaging with the listener's

imagination. Then the book also addresses the application of stories; how to ask questions and help the listeners to discover the truths for themselves.

Lastly, there is a detailed section entitled: *How to read Matthew with a Muslim friend*, with notes and ideas, laid out chapter by chapter. It is a great tool to have and it helps with Bible reading, as it is especially designed for Muslims. Also, I think it will encourage church members that they can also share Christ with Muslims and not leave this to just the specialists. This is a very practical book. Read it and then give it to someone in your church.

Reviewed by Elsie Maxwell

BREAKING THE ISLAM CODE:
UNDERSTANDING THE SOUL QUESTIONS
OF EVERY MUSLIM

By J.D. Greear

Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2010, 176 pages.
ISBN: 978-0736926386

Another new book on ministering to Muslims has come out this year. J.D. Greear, the author of *Breaking the Islam Code*, worked in the Muslim world for two years in Southeast Asia. He is now a pastor in North Carolina. Greear's main purpose for writing this book is to help those who would really like to see a Muslim brought to faith in Jesus Christ but do not know exactly how to make it happen. He is less concerned with Islam as a geopolitical movement and more concerned with Muslims as individuals. If you want to understand Muslims as people – how they think, what they care about and what the obstacles are that one has to overcome to win them to Christ, then this is the book for you! The title of Greear's book sounds intriguing but there was not that much new insight into Muslims. However, I did like his challenge in the end.

The first four chapters focus on getting readers familiar with the Muslim mindset so we will know how to communicate with them. Some other aspects are mentioned such as the importance of creating the right environment which will be conducive to an effective dialogue, analysing what moves and motivates Muslims and breaking down misconceptions on both sides.

Chapter five deals with the 'Muslim Salvation Code' which in essence means learning about their theology, culture and the typical questions they ask about God and salvation. We have to share with our Muslim friends about how 'divine justice' is shown in the way that God provided a sacrifice for the forgiveness of

sin. We must also explain to them that salvation was promised, meaning that they can have complete assurance of God's favour and eternity in heaven.

Chapter six teaches how to 're-code the Gospel', which helps present the Gospel in a way that answers their questions. I liked Greear's approach when witnessing to his Muslim friends; he does not use the typical words from the 'Four Spiritual Laws' to explain salvation-words like: formula, forgiveness and death, because Muslims have a great difficulty in seeing God as a victim who died in weakness. Instead, he uses words like *cleansing*, *victory* and *story*. He describes the Bible as a continual story about Jesus Christ, who came to earth to remove our defilement and shame and defeated the curse of death.

In chapter seven the author goes into detail to show how the Gospel confronts the ultimate religion of works. He makes three points in stating why '*works*' do not cut it when it comes to being righteous before God. First, *works* fail to address the 'root' of idolatries that *drives* us to sin. The root of sin is esteeming something to be a more satisfying object of worship than God. Works fail to that issue. In Islam, they simply give you a prescribed set of practices to avoid judgment or to inherit blessings. You can use religion or God to get the thing you want without ever addressing the root of sin. Secondly, when our acceptance is based on our performance, we merely develop two other sins in our hearts, pride and fear. And thirdly, the insecurity of always wondering if we've done enough to be accepted causes spiritual fatigue and even hatred toward God.

Chapters eight and nine address the standard objections that Muslims bring up whenever the Gospel is presented. How can God be made up of three persons? How can God be man? Was Jesus' death necessary? Did He really die? Was the Bible corrupted? Greear's main objective is to turn many of the primary Muslim objections into opportunities to share the gospel and not get sidetracked by conversations that turn into arguments, which lead nowhere profitable.

The last chapter is about the challenge that lies ahead in evangelising the Muslim world. The awakening of Muslims to the gospel will not come as a result of any new technique we adopt; rather it will come about through a supernatural work of God. We always need to keep this in mind when reading new material. I liked the author's two major points that are necessary in evangelism; faith and intercession working together. This allows us to stand in the place of a lost person and believe in what God wants to do in their lives, which then releases God's power on their behalf. I agreed with the writer

when he said that the Church's unbelief for the Muslim world is what is keeping God's power from being poured out. Our unbelief restrains God! Greear's last challenge to his readers is to lay down our lives like Jesus did. The church has to

I liked the author's two major points that are necessary in evangelism; faith and intercession working together. This allows us to stand in the place of a lost person and believe in what God wants to do in their lives, which then releases God's power on their behalf.

be like a seed planted in the ground, ready to die, so that there will be life in the Muslim world.

Greear also has a large appendix at the end of his book giving an informative teaching on the whole topic of contextualization. He is comfortable going as far as C-4, where it properly balances faithfulness to the Gospel with redemption of the culture. He sees that the ‘insider movement’ based on biblical examples is unconvincing and the C-5 approach undermines God’s strategy to glorify the name of Jesus by removing the distinction between the Gospel and rival approaches to salvation. The good news needs to stand on the distinctiveness of the Gospel and trust God to show His great power on behalf of the only Name under heaven by which we must be saved.

Reviewed by Grace Wiebe

Grace has been ministering full-time among Diaspora Muslims in a large Canadian city for several years and has plenty of experience with a variety of approaches in sharing the good news of Jesus with her Muslim friends.

LEADING CROSS CULTURALLY:
COVENANT RELATIONSHIPS FOR
EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

by Sherwood Lingenfelter

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008

The subtitle of renowned Christian anthropologist Lingenfelter’s book on leadership, *Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership*, is more consistent with the strengths of the book than the main title, *Leading Cross Culturally*. While the author provides a number of cross-cultural insights in his discourse on leadership, it is in his biblical or spiritual insights on leadership that he shines. One might conclude, in comparing this book to Plueddemann’s one on intercultural leadership (also reviewed in this issue of *Seedbed*), that Plueddemann’s wealth of cross-cultural experience better prepared him to address the topic of leading across cultures than Lingenfelter. One cannot help coming away from both books, but particularly Lingenfelter’s, feeling that they may have worked around people from many cultures in North America more than around cultural diversity lived from the inside of another culture.

Lingenfelter is at his best in touching on issues of power in leadership and in fact has written more comprehensively on that subject in another book. I believe

he is spot on in pointing to the three most common temptations of leaders as being: arrogance, seeking to control and exercise power in order to accomplish one's will and achieve desired results, and at times having to make complex decisions when God seems to be silent, not granting clear wisdom.

The definition of cross-cultural leadership Lingenfelter uses is this: 'Leading cross-culturally is inspiring people who come from two or more cultural traditions to participate in building a community of trust and then to follow you and be empowered by you to achieve a compelling vision' (p. 58). Simple truths about leading in a cross-cultural ministry context are profound but easily forgotten. A couple are mentioned here.

1. 'Unless we have a clear understanding of self and our own culture, and how its beliefs and values restrict our acceptance and service of others, we will not readily reach an understanding of others or be able to serve them effectively' (p. 8).
2. 'Leaders must understand that individuals in stressful situations, despite their considerable cross cultural learning and experience, regress to their default culture-habits, values and patterns of interactions acquired in childhood' (p. 26).

As mentioned earlier, I feel the author is at his best in developing a theology of leadership. Hence, I found chapter three, 'Kingdom Values and Rewards' and chapter eight, 'Power-Giving Leadership' to be his best. For instance, his Table 3.2 (page 48) contrasting 'Cultural and Kingdom Values in Partner Relations' is worth repeating-leaving the exposition of that to the reader going through the chapter in detail. Cultural values defend identity (nationality), whereas Kingdom values deny self (member of body); controlling the process of decision making can be a habit of culture whereas releasing control is Kingdom-minded; critiquing others is a natural instinct whereas serving others is biblically counter-cultural; and seeking to predetermine ends is a worldly approach whereas trusting God for uncertain results is Kingdom-minded. In my view, this series of choices goes to the heart of true servant and effective leadership in an intercultural or cross-cultural context. Lingenfelter interacts with Scripture effectively as he makes these contrasts.

Since power distance is such a big issue in explaining different values in comparing cultures, it is imperative that those exercising leadership of a multicultural church planting team or simply leading in a cross-cultural ministry context in relation to nationals understand the power dynamic. It is gratifying to see that Lingenfelter does not shy away from this topic. He is discerning therefore when he contends that 'control is the basis of power. People who seek to control their circumstances, their jobs, their relationships with others, and their effectiveness in their work are all seeking power' (p. 107). He goes on to argue

that especially in intercultural situations in order to be a servant leader who gives away power (by definition), our leadership needs to be relational rather than positional. By creating opportunities for others to lead by delegation and mentoring in community (chapter nine), we will be effective in multicultural contexts (p. 126). We need to become responsible-to rather than responsible-for leaders (chapter ten) to create the sort of synergy where people serving in an intercultural context flourish. Lingenfelter sees responsible-for people as being those who are emotionally tied to their role and results. In contrast, responsible-to demonstrate emotional detachment from their role and results and therefore are able to empower their team members.

Whether one is involved in a multicultural context or not, Lingenfelter's reflections on leadership will be edifying and enlightening to the seasoned and the novice leader.

Reviewed by David Lundy

LEADING ACROSS CULTURES: EFFECTIVE MINISTRY AND MISSION IN THE GLOBAL CHURCH

By James E. Plueddemann

Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009, ISBN 978-0-8308-2578-3

Drawing on a wealth of first-hand experience in missions in Nigeria and then as the International Director of SIM, this professor of mission and evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School adds invaluable to the growing body of literature on globalisation of mission. As future leaders of international mission agencies will be called upon increasingly to demonstrate intercultural relationship skills, this book seeks to show how that can and should be done. So it is both a book on intercultural (as opposed to cross-cultural) competencies and leadership. Gone are the days when such leaders (even increasingly team leaders in cross-cultural ministry) can be mono-cultural or even bi-cultural in the sense of developing understanding and bonding with the receptor culture.

Plueddemann sets the stage for describing how to lead across cultures in chapter one using five scenarios where committing one intercultural faux pas after another hinders or ruins ministry. He then lists five trends in mission that beg for developing intercultural savvy: mission from everywhere to everywhere; the explosion of short-term missions; the proliferation of church-to-church partnerships; changing mission strategies to give more prominence to leadership

development, often with the erroneous assumption that the 'biblical model' of leadership is culture-free; and the increasing likelihood of working under the leadership of someone from a different culture than yours.

Jim's second chapter tells the story of his journey in mission, a very rich, varied and fascinating one indeed. Chapter three provides the biblical framework for leadership, particularly servant leadership, which empowers nationals and develops leaders. Chapter four deals with the paradox of Bible and culture. The importance of the context in which leadership is carried out is further teased out in chapter five. It is in this chapter that Plueddemann begins to focus on the major categories of cultural difference as delineated in Geert Hofstede's ground-breaking anthropological studies: power distance, individualism-collectivism and low-high context.

Chapter six deals with leadership and power, and therefore the differences between cultures of high power distance (e.g. most Arab societies) and those of low power distance (e.g. North American). So for a leader to ask for advice from a subordinate in a high power distance culture could signal that the boss does not know how to lead. On the other hand, leaders in low power distance cultures instinctively are consultative and expect democratic decision-making.

Chapter seven hones in on leadership and individualism. The fact is that the majority of people in the world live in highly collectivist societies where the individual identity is defined as much by the group identity as anything else. While missions tend to concentrate on how we do things missiologically, like evangelism and church, the call of this book is to develop more sensitivity in how we relate these intercultural understandings to our work colleagues.

The next chapter deals with leadership and ambiguity. Those living in high context cultures, such as the Chinese, are able to pick up signals from the environment more easily than those from low context cultures, such as the Germans, who pay more attention to the verbal communication for understanding. Hence, those from

low context societies expect certainty and live more in the present, while those from high context societies expect ambiguity and are tolerant of it. In each of these chapters dealing with overcoming cultural differences, Plueddemann skilfully interweaves biblical perspectives on these issues.

In the last section of the book, composed of four chapters, the author develops a theology of multicultural leadership. There is nothing much original here. For example, he basically distils Blanchard's theory of situational leadership to support his principle that multicultural leadership must be flexible (chapter nine). Similarly the sections of this chapter on 'the ultimate purpose of leadership' and 'the worldview of leadership' are so generic as to drive one to gloss over them.

Hence, those from low context societies expect certainty and live more in the present, while those from high context societies expect ambiguity and are tolerant of it.

The next three chapters are again so basic about foundational leadership principles as to appear to be a cut and paste job from different messages he has given on leadership.

For those well read in either anthropology and intercultural studies or leadership theory, there is not that much original material in Plueddemann's book. However, his integrating of the two disciplines, and the personal anecdotes and one-page reflections at the end of each chapter from non-western leaders, add to the usefulness of the book. He then pleads for seminaries and missions to produce better global leaders. All those exercising leadership in a ministry context across cultures can profitably read this book because while there are better books on the theory of leadership out there very few address leadership and culture together (apart from organisational culture), especially Christian books on leadership.

Of the two books reviewed here on cross-cultural (or intercultural) leadership, it is difficult to know whether to recommend one over the other. Plueddemann, ironically, while more experienced as a leader than as an anthropologist is better on his intercultural stuff than on leadership; and Lingenfelter, the academic anthropologist has fresher insights on leadership than he does on the context within which the leader works. Read Lingenfelter for his edifying reflections on leadership and Plueddemann for his wisdom on functioning cross culturally.

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Reviewed by David Lundy