

SEEDBED

Practitioners in Conversation

May 2014, Vol XXVIII No 1

Theme:

**DEVELOPING HEALTHY CHURCHES
AND MOVEMENTS**

Plus:

**HELP FOR CONVERSATION WITH MUSLIMS
& NINE BOOK REVIEWS**



SEEDBED

Practitioners in Conversation

May 2014, Volume XXVIII No 1

Developing Healthy Churches and Movements

Editorial: Churches Mature and Strong for Generations 3

Part 1: Towards well-led Mature Church Planting Movements

A Case Study in Apostolic Church Planting: An Interview with
Pastor Afeef by *Don Little and Pastor Afeef* 4

Vital Lessons for New CPMs from a 45-Year-Old Movement among
Muslims by *Blake Bennett* 21

Reforming Baptism: A Call to Return the Normal New Testament
Way of Committing to Jesus by *Steven Steinhaus* 28

Healthy Leaders Make Healthy Churches by *Julyan Lidstone* 43

Part 2: Help for Conversations with Muslims

When Muslims Say... Responses to Things that Muslims often say to
Christians by *B.T.* 50

Part 3: Book Reviews

Longing for Community: Church, Ummah or Somewhere in Between?
Edited by David Greenlee 57

A Wind in the House of Islam by David Garrison 59

Seeking Jesus, Finding Allah: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity by
Nabeel Qureshi 63

Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies, edited by Ozgen Felek &
Alexander Knysh 66

Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City by
Timothy Keller 69

Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook
Edited by Krabill et al. 73

*Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual to Help Communities Reach their
Kingdom Goals* by Brian Schrag 73

Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes by E. Randolph Richards and
Brandon J. O'Brien 78

Discovering Church Planting by J.D. Payne 81

SEEDBED

Practitioners in Conversation

Editor: Don Little

Production Manager: Matt Green

Copy Editor: Belinda Thompson **Production Assistant:** Joseph Boyle

Subscription Manager: Amanda Lynn

Special thanks to L.D. Waterman for your excellent service as SEEDBED's Associate Editor! God's richest blessings as you move to your new ministry.

Seedbed is a forum for the exchange of ideas. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the editor or of Pioneers.

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

Please send all correspondence to seedbed.editor@sent.com

Seedbed is available *free of charge electronically* in PDF, ePub & Kindle (mobi) formats. Please specify format & send all Subscription requests to **Amanda** at seedbed@orlandoteam.com

Subscription Information for *Printed Edition* (normally 3x a year)
(Subscription fee covers printing, handling & mailing costs only)

International (outside North America): US \$20.00 **USA & Canada:** US\$ 17.00

Subscriptions & individual copies can be purchased online with a Credit Card at:
www.pioneers.org/seedbed

All printed copies will be mailed from the US office of Pioneers.

Otherwise, send payment in the local currency to your local office as below:

International (in £s only please): AWM, Seedbed, P.O. Box 51, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 0ZQ, United Kingdom **or** to the US office in Orlando.

USA: Pioneers USA, Seedbed, 10123 William Carey Drive, Orlando, FL 32832

CANADA: Pioneers Canada, Seedbed, 51 Byron Ave., Dorchester, ON, N0L 1G2

Annual subscriptions begin with the first issue of the year.

Mid-year subscribers will be sent back issues for that year.

*Cheques written in Pounds Sterling should be made out to **Arab World Ministries**.

All other cheques should be made out to **Pioneers**.

Copyright © 2014 Pioneers

Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

Printed in the USA

EDITORIAL

Churches Mature and Strong for Generations

One hundred and sixty-two years ago, in the town of Houghton, here in New York state, a few people started a church in the local school building with the mission of reaching out to the town known for its bars, brothels and wickedness. Jeanie and I have been members of this small town large church for four years, and this morning's sermon called us afresh to undivided devotion to Christ. From this church, and from the two institutions that have been directly birthed from it, a Christian high school and college, men and women have come to faith in Christ, been nurtured in their faith and have gone on to live and serve Christ across the nation and in dozens of countries around the world *for generations*.

This issue of SEEDBED focuses on developing healthy churches and movements among Muslim peoples. The church that I was a part of in North Africa will soon be celebrating 20 years since its re-launch in 1995 and it is sending and training men and woman to go across the nation and across North Africa and beyond to plant churches. In our godly zeal to help establish churches and movements of churches in Muslim lands, I wonder how many of us can envision the churches or movements that we are labouring to see God-birthed, continuing to flourish and bless others *generations* after their founding. Being a part of this generations-old church here in Houghton reminds me of the importance of praying and planning for fruitfulness across multiple generations.

How big is our vision? Are we labouring and aiming to see churches and movements of churches planting other churches that will continue on and still be flourishing more than a hundred years after we are gone? The first two articles in this issue describe tremendous movements, numbering in the thousands, which have been around for 15 and 45 years, respectively. Both continue to go through significant growing pains. In the 45-year-old movement, they have been working on some creative ways of ensuring that the youth who grow up in the churches become themselves stronger Christians than the generation of their parents. All of the articles in this issue, include thoughtful reviews of some very important new books, deal with significant aspects of ministry and church planting, and contain insights that, under the anointing of the Spirit, have the potential to help nurture churches and movements that continue strong *for generations*.

Near the end of his long life, the Apostle John said: 'I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth' (3 John 1:4 ESV). My prayer for all who read this SEEDBED is that you will be able to look back as you near the end of your life, and share the immense joy, that John had, of knowing that *your* spiritual children continue to walk in the truth.

That we may see faithful fruitfulness through *generations*,

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

PART I: TOWARDS WELL-LED MATURE CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS

A Case Study in an Apostolic-Style CPM: An Interview with Pastor Afeef

By Don Little with Pastor Afeef

Pastor Afeef is the Founding Director of Arabs 4 the Arabs (AFTA). Don Little is the editor of SEEDBED & Pioneers' Islamic Missiologist.

In the summer of 2013 I met Pastor Afeef in a consultation in Cairo. I had several opportunities to talk with Brother Afeef, and was deeply impressed by what I heard about the ministry of the mission he founded in 1998. He felt God calling him to begin a ministry led by Arabs, staffed by Arabs and funded by Arabs, in order to plant churches among Muslims of the Middle East. The name of this ministry is *Arabs 4 the Arabs (AFTA)*.

Last summer Pastor Afeef added some helpful background and terminology that he does not mention in the interview. He is one of the founding pastors of the Nazarene Church in Amman, Jordan, and was either personally responsible for planting, or helped to plant, most of the several dozen 'above ground' Nazarene churches in the country. As Afeef mentions in the interview, below, the vast majority of the Christians in these 'above ground' churches, the ones known and legally recognized by the government, that also have church buildings, come from Greek Orthodox or Catholic backgrounds. Then, fifteen years ago, as Pastor Afeef recounts in this interview, God called him to begin to train church planters to plant 'below ground' churches among *Muslims*, rather than only amongst Christians. God has since birthed a remarkable movement across the Middle East under Pastor Afeef's leadership. Now, the vast majority of people planting these 'below ground' house churches among Muslims are themselves BMBs, even though when AFTA started, all the church planters were from Christians backgrounds.

Since this issue of Seedbed is focused on developing healthy movements of churches in Muslim nations, I asked Afeef if he could write an article for SEEDBED that would describe the movement he is leading as a case study of a healthy movement of multiplying churches. Though Afeef was willing to participate, he was unable to *find the time to write in time for this issue of SEEDBED*. Fortunately for us, he agreed to carve out time to answer my questions in a Skype interview. On Thursday, May 8th, I spoke with Afeef for about an hour, and the

written version of that interview here has been checked by Pastor Afeef for both accuracy and security.

Many who read SEEDBED are praying and working towards seeing movements of churches being established across the Muslim world. David Garrison's 2014 book, *A Wind in the House of Islam* (see review in this issue of SEEDBED), describes a number of kinds of movements that God is raising up across the Muslim world. The movement that God is using Afeef to lead does not fit the model of the kinds of movements that Garrison was highlighting. Neither does the shape of this movement match what are typically called church planting movements (CPMs). Of the four movements whose expatriate facilitators I interviewed in Indonesia in May 2013, only one somewhat parallels this movement being led by Afeef.

I think the term that most accurately describes this movement would be an *apostolic* CPM. It is being led by an apostolically gifted man, who is in turn training and helping raise up leaders who have apostolic gifting in eleven Middle Eastern countries. In Garrison's study of movements, he used the cut off criteria for a *movement* to be 1000 baptized believer or 100 churches planted in the previous decade or two. This AFTA-facilitated movement across the Middle East easily fits within Garrison's criteria for a movement since, according to Pastor Afeef's account, there are at least 300 'below ground' house churches with an average of about 20 – 25 baptized believers in each (see below). This means that the movement has at least 6000 believers, the majority of whom are from Muslim backgrounds, and is thus the largest movement that I am aware of in the Middle East outside of Algeria and Iran. And it began only fifteen years ago!

I have chosen to preserve most of the informal format of the *actual recorded interview* that I did with Pastor Afeef because I believe it best enables the passion and vision of this apostolically gifted leader to shine through.

An Interview with Pastor Afeef, conducted by Don Little

Editor: *As we begin, let me commit our conversation to God in prayer.*

Father, I thank you for my brother Afeef, and for the way that you are using him in mighty ways. I ask that you would guide our conversation that it may bring glory to your name – both the conversation and that which is written for others to read. We ask that you will guide in the questions I ask and guide Afeef as he responds and thinks how to share. We ask that your presence will be strong with us as we talk together now. Amen.

Editor: *To start out, can you first introduce yourself. Tell our readers a bit about yourself, your family, where you live. Then share about your experience church planting and how you were led to begin to train others to do church planting.*

Afeef: I was born in 1959 in the south of Jordan in the ancient country of Moab. Our whole tribe think of ourselves as Moabites. My family were nominal Greek Orthodox, but they were communists. So we didn't have any religious upbringing and I never saw a Bible until I was almost 18. Church meant nothing. Church was only the place to go to get baptized, to have weddings and to have burial services – and that was it. And we were kind of threatened by the Muslims because we couldn't answer their questions and we were not supposed to answer their questions, because we were afraid of provoking the giant.

I moved from the village to the city to finish my high school. During that time I was involved in a little gang and I was part of the Communist Youth Party. And one day I heard about a little evangelical church that was having a private meeting behind closed doors. And I thought, OK, I am going to go and attack them, break the door and see if their Jesus can help them. I don't know why I was provoked. I was a troublemaker, a wrestler, a bodybuilder. I went with a friend and we kicked the door open. It was a little room with less than thirty people and we shouted at them, you know, screamed at them... They didn't scream back, and they offered us some seats with them in the small room packed with less than 30 people. And the young man leading the group was a Lebanese, who was visiting... You know him – I am talking about H. A. It was his first visit to Jordan.

And he continued his talk and he was explaining the sinner's prayer. And then he started explaining, really vividly, even using drawings, the amazing transformation that what would happen when someone would receive Jesus into his or her life. And I said to myself, 'Boy, I have been trying all my life to change my life, and I couldn't'. And feeling guilty, I had tried to commit suicide a few times out of guilt. And H.A. was saying that just a simple prayer, words to someone called 'Jesus', would change my life! I was struggling within myself. And I could hear a soft voice within me saying 'What if it is true?' And I said, 'boy, am I lost.'

And I just prayed, and invited this person called Jesus... I said: 'Jesus, if you are really as this man says, and you can change lives, please change mine.' And I felt something coming over me, from the top of my head through to the tip of my toes. I couldn't express what I was experiencing. And that was the beginning of my coming to the Lord. It was a Thursday evening, the 24th of February, 1977, around 7 pm. The next morning, when H.A. was still doing his training, my friend went to him and said, 'If you don't tell me what happened to my friend Afeef, I'll beat you up!' He explained the gospel to my friend, and he too believed. He is today a full-time pastor in a city in the north of Jordan.

That is who I am. I am a married man, to one wife, and we have four children. Ah, making my life story short... I was trained as a lawyer. The Lord changed my plans, and I went to Manchester, England, for theological training. After I finished, I came back and started planting my first church in Amman, Jordan in 1984. It was a miserable experience, because for five years, I couldn't win one soul. But then, after five years, a revival broke out. And as a result, many people I trained became full-time pastors. In 1998, I...

Editor: *Can I ask you a question? Was that first church planting ministry with Muslims?*

Afeef: No. It was among the Greek Orthodox and the Catholics. At that time I never believed that Muslims could become Christians. It was, like, impossible. That's what we were told.

Editor: *Go ahead, you were going to mention something that happened in 1998.*

Afeef: In 1998 I woke up one night after having had a dream. I saw waves of ants coming out of Jordan and going throughout the Middle East and throughout the Muslim world. And I tried to ignore the dream. I thought that I had eaten something bad. But almost every night the dream came again. It became a nightmare. It became a distraction. When I was with people, and I wanted to pray, I would close my eyes, and see the ants swarming out of Jordan. Evidently, God was saying something to me. And a friend from OM said, 'God is calling you to the mission field, to the Muslims, my friend.' And I prayed with him about this interpretation.

He was getting ready to go to the land of the Queen of Sheba. So, I thought, OK, I'll talk with my wife, and we will pack our things and go there, since it is one of the most unreached countries. Well, my wife, being a very obedient Arab wife, said to me, 'Over my dead body!' I showed her a video of the only five star hotel in the country. But nothing! Eventually she released me to go and, 'spy out the land.' And I went there on a two week trip. I couldn't find schooling for our kids and I was shocked how terribly primitive conditions were.

Editor: *Did you go only to the capital on that trip?*

Afeef: No, I also went to other cities, and to villages, which were even worse! I came back having been shocked. And I thought, 'It must be something else.' A few weeks later, my wife allowed me to go on another trip, and after I came back, I said to the Lord, 'You have got to do something! You've got to take this nightmare out of my life, or you've got to explain to me what it means!' As I was praying, it dawned on me that I didn't see one little ant. I saw waves of ants! And I realized that God was not speaking to me about simply being another missionary – he was speaking to me about starting a movement! And that was the birth of what we now call AFTA – *Arabs 4 the Arabs*.

That year we began training people for five days, people who were interested in going on trips to other Arab countries. To go and try to find opportunities to share their faith, and if they could not, to simply walk and pray in the streets. And we sent them for two weeks, and when they came back the reports were amazing!

Editor: *And were these people all from Christian backgrounds?*

Afeef: Yes, we didn't have any BMBs with us then. But they came back and told me about Muslim people wanting to receive Jesus, and praying. And already some had had a vision in which Jesus appeared to them in a supernatural way. And boy, that was what I needed! And in 1999 I started preaching missions everywhere. I had 13 crazy young men and we started a 13 month training school – I had NO idea what I was doing!!

Editor: *But you knew you had to train them.*

Afeef: Yes, I knew they had to be trained. And I knew it wasn't simply a 'fill in the blank' kind of training that was needed. And I knew I needed to live with them to share my life with them. So we lived together. I rented a big apartment for them, and we literally lived together; we ate breakfast, lunch and dinner together. We would wash dishes, do the cooking together. We did the shopping together, prayed together, cried together, cleaned the toilets together.

And during this time, the Lord sent to me someone from YWAM, who knew how to do Discipleship Training Schools, and we started organizing things. At the end of the training, we sent these people out for two months. They went to different countries, and most of them ended up being in Sudan. And I went and visited them and stayed with them for two weeks in Sudan, and it was life changing! And from that time we began sending people, but just short-term.

Now we have 82 full-time long-term church planters. Most of them are local BMBs, and they have planted over 300 underground house churches. Actually, only God knows the real number, but at least three hundred. And we are in eleven Middle Eastern countries. Next month, in June, we are starting training for North African church planters. There will be about twenty of them coming together for training, from Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. That is our first move into North Africa.

Editor: *Can you tell a little bit about the churches being planted: their size, ratio of men and women, and so on?*

Afeef: The size varies. Our definition of a church is any number of people who are committed to obey Christ and are committed to each other.

Editor: *So, four or five people is a church?*

Afeef: That is a church, but we have churches also of as many as eighty people. They don't want to divide up. Some churches have a vision for dividing and multiplying, but others like to stay together because they feel secure in a larger group. So, we have from five up to eighty. But the average is from 20 to 25 people.

Editor: *And are they typically made up of young men, or young families?*

Afeef: They are mainly young people. Few churches have older people. The majority are people from the early twenties up to the early forties in age. And we are talking about young couples, husbands, wives and children. And now we have seen even the third generation. Because in some countries they get married when they are twelve or thirteen even. And so we see the third generation and the grandfather is not yet fifty!

Editor: *And are there some countries where there is a lot happening, and others where it is just starting?*

Afeef: In certain countries, or in particular people groups, God is really at work. Among the Kurdish, in the land of Aram, the land of Abraham, in the northern part, it is all Kurdish people. We have one full-time single male worker. He has churches in sixty villages. There are something like three hundred and sixty villages from the same Kurdish people group, who believe they are the remnant of the ancient Medes, mentioned in the Bible. So, right now he has organized churches in sixty villages. He has all volunteers and he is the only full-time worker.

The other area we are starting to see great response, is in the same country, near Damascus and toward the Jordanian border, a huge revival among the Sunnis. For example, one of our church planters is a blind man. He is married with no children. Nine months ago they had eight house churches. And because of all that is going on in the civil war, today they have nineteen churches! In the last nine months it grew from eight to nineteen. He, and three full-time workers are training twenty-five new leaders. The requests are too much, with people asking him (the blind worker) to come to their homes, pray with them, read the Bible with them, and so on. They have a few Druze and a few Shiites, but most are Sunnis.

And because of the influx of refugees into our country as well, many Sunni Muslims have accepted the Lord, and have been baptized by members of our team. And they have Bible studies, children clubs, and so on, in Jordan. And they did a medical outreach among them. In three days they saw more than 900 patients.

And now God is doing amazing things in Upper Egypt. In villages outside M. and outside B. When I mention these places to Egyptians, they have never

heard of them. And now we have eighteen full-time workers just in Upper Egypt. They have more than thirty-five regular house meetings.

All of the workers are Egyptian. Most of AFTA workers now are locals. Earlier I mentioned that we began in Sudan. The last non-local in our work there was deported from Sudan almost a year ago. We train locals and empower them. And we have full-time coaches. We have poured everything we know into the lives of these coaches, so that they can do the discipleship training, the leadership training, the church planting training within their countries in their own settings.

Editor: *Is the vision of the church planters you are training to plant and then pastor the church, or to plant and have other people lead the local house church once it is planted?*

Afeef: It is part of our training to teach the church planters to raise up local people in the churches to lead the churches. When you plant a church, you pick up a leader as your assistant, and when things are growing, you move out, and leave the leader there and go and start another church, and encourage the new leader to also start another one. And because of what is going on, people are often scattered, and wherever they go they plant more house churches. They are opening their homes for their friends. That's why we don't really have an accurate idea of the number of church groups.

Editor: *You are probably aware of an approach to church planting that works on the basis of inductive Bible studies and small group meetings. Are you using this style, or is it mostly more a preaching style?*

Afeef: We are using this style – using the inductive Bible study principles, and storytelling. They are using story telling mainly for outreach. They are using it a lot and it is very effective. And when they meet together, they do inductive Bible study. It's all interactive. We don't have pulpits.

Editor: *It's all in the homes...*

Afeef: It's all in the homes, and they have fellowship. They pray together. They have communion. They apply the Word of God. They even have offerings and they decide together how to use the collected money. And they do outreach. Sometimes the only outreach they can do is that they have the names of their unsaved friends and they pray for them. If they cannot talk to them, they start with prayer.

Editor: *As churches are being planted, what kinds of patterns are you seeing? How long does it take for a church to be planted? Are there patterns you see in most countries?*

Afeef: They are almost the same. They are friends sitting together in a house. The only problem is that in some settings, ladies cannot sit together with the men. So, they have them sit in another room, and they listen. Unless they are having a big celebration. Then the men would sit in one corner, the women in the opposite corner, and the children in between. And in some countries

the ladies are totally covered, and in other countries, they dress like they are Europeans.

Editor: *Have you penetrated the more wealthy countries of the Gulf?*

Afeef: We do have two church planting efforts in two different Gulf countries. There are two groups, but no multiplication yet. It is slow there.

Editor: *You said that your training began with intensively living together with young men. Is that kind of intensive training continuing, or has the training changed somewhat?*

Afeef: Yes it was very intensive. It was living together. But now we have changed the training. We are having some people who are already disciplined. We have some who went away and got a degree in theology. When we do the training, we first ask: What kind of people do we need? What kinds of outcome do we need from the training program? Then we look at the group of people who want to be trained. We interview them and discover where they are at. And, from the level they are at we adapt the training. For example, with some people we share the Gospel to make sure they are born again. We did this for two weeks in Turkey, for a group from the land of the queen of Sheba. And while we were doing that, one journalist who was with us, in that class, he accepted the Lord.

For example, I am going to do three months of training for ten people from the country of the Queen of Sheba. We will do the training in the first country mentioned in Isaiah 19.

Editor: *Will you personally be there for some of the training?*

Afeef: I will be there for the first week, and another two weeks, later. I will be teaching the Gospel at the beginning, to make sure that they are all believers and that they have assurance of their faith. So, I start with this, even if they have been believers for many years. First of all, I make sure they know the God they believe in. And if they have not really received Jesus, I give them the opportunity. If they want to share the Gospel with others, I make sure they know the essentials of the Gospel, the skeleton of the Gospel. Without that, you cannot make progress! So that is a must! We start with it.

Then we deal with having your own private time with the Lord. How do you worship on your own? How do you use the Scripture, how do you pray? How do you listen to God? You know, so these people will build their personal relationship with God.

Then we talk about the character and characteristics of God. Then we talk about inductive Bible study. We talk about the meaning of being a follower of Jesus. We talk about inner healing, because we want them to be healed from things in their lives. We are aiming at the character rather than at head knowledge.

Editor: *And does that inner healing also include deliverance on occasion?*

Afeef: Oh, absolutely! Deliverance has to be part of the inner healing. And the impartation of the Spirit, laying on of hands, deliverance, asking the Holy Spirit to come and help them, to set them free. And many people are delivered. Casting out demons is part of it. They have previously been involved in a demonic religion. Let's face it! And now they need deliverance; they need to be cleaned up.

Editor: *This is why you want to do a three-month long training – to have time to get through a lot of these things?*

Afeef: The first month I call the honeymoon month. Everyone pretending. Everyone putting on their best. Then after a month, all the mess starts coming out as they live together in one place.

Editor: *It's very intensive. So, after you get through this inner healing, and prayer, and then you start working on preparing them to be church planters?*

Afeef: And then I start working on *Servant Leadership*. Or I call it, Jesus leadership. Then I give them the pattern of how Jesus did ministry – Jesus ministry. Then, three weeks before the end of the training, I start teaching them church planting. I teach them the book of Ephesians – I do a verse by verse study of Ephesians because this is a really good basis for discipleship.

Then we talk about discerning one's mission. What is God calling them to do. I teach them the big picture of God's Kingdom and God's plan for the world, and how to discern my role in his plan. I teach them that they need to receive an understanding of their role in God's work directly from God through prayer and listening to God.

Then, the last week, we talk about their roles and how to start. When you go out from here, back to your country, what do you do? We talk about specific action plans, and then we follow up with them, once they return home and begin their ministry.

Editor: *And when they return and begin their ministry, does AFTA help with their funding? How does it all work? Do they support themselves?*

Afeef: No, they have no support from their homes. Most people do not have any church background.

Editor: *No, I mean, self-support in the sense of working, paying their own living expenses through a job.*

Afeef: Yes, most of them support themselves through their jobs. A few receive subsidies from AFTA. And probably less than one in ten will be fully supported. We would support a leader who would be the trainer of the trainers. Because my job is to work myself out of a job as soon as possible. I

would like to see a local person doing everything I know – and hopefully more than one local person!

So, usually we take one person, and we keep training him and bringing him with us, training him, make him an assistant, and helping us. For example, after they go and talk to their friends, we like them to bring their disciples. We go to their country, or a neighboring country, wherever security permits us. And when they bring their disciples, we do a discipleship training for their disciples, and they are our assistants, the leaders. And then we send them back with their disciples. And it starts growing.

And then we say, Ok, we want you to do another discipleship training school. The disciples who we trained previously are the assistants, and the leaders, who were our assistants the previous time, do the main teaching, as they teach the disciples of those who were disciplined the last time. We are there to help them organize and do practical things but they do most of the teaching during the day.

In the evenings, we will teach the leaders more practical leadership skills. Any issues that arise during the training we turn into a case study, examining in the Scriptures how Jesus faced such a challenge and thinking through together how best to deal with such situations. So we are giving them ongoing training. And it is also ongoing training for us, because we are always learning from them as well.

Editor: *And when you say that you will fund one person to be a trainer of trainers, how do the other ten leaders live or support themselves? Are they still doing their old jobs?*

Afeef: Most of our church planters have their own jobs. And if they need financial help, that is for their local house church to decide, because they have offerings and tithing, and they can help each other.

Editor: *So you start with offerings and tithing right from the beginning?*

Afeef: Yes, we teach tithing as part of the church planting skeleton. It is part of our worship to God. We don't do it because there is a need, because we want to do ministry with it. It is simply part of our worship to God.

Editor: *When you think of the churches in the movement, how would you describe a healthy, thriving church? What does an unhealthy church look like? How do you distinguish?*

Afeef: What do we mean by healthy? That is my question. If we mean by healthy, that there are no problems – there is no such church! If we mean by healthy, that they know that they are saved by grace and preserved by grace, and they need Jesus in everything in their lives... Oh, yes, there are plenty of them! And when we say healthy, we mean they worship, they pray, they experience the power of his presence. The Word of God is bearing fruit in their lives and they are responding to God's call to reach out to others, then yes, there are many churches like that. But if one thinks that healthy means that they are

happy and there are no problems, no attacks from the enemy – there is no such church!

Editor: *I have found that a key component in seeing churches stay healthy is that they are led by maturing servant leaders. Has this been true in your movement as well?*

Afeef: You know, Don, we tell our leaders – they have to be fathers. They are fathers. And I tell them the difference between a father and a leader. A tiny little difference. A leader can tell you everything that you are supposed to do, but a father does it with you. And that is a huge difference! So, if they are not willing to be like Jesus, to wash the feet of others... If you open my Bible, you'll find a piece of a towel in it, that is now growing yellow with age. And I tell them, 'This is my ID card. I'm a servant.'

Editor: *So you're modelling and teaching servant leadership all the time.*

Afeef: Oh yes. Because even the ministry we do, we call 'Jesus ministry'. We don't borrow strategies from the secular world as they do in the West. We just go and see how Jesus did things. How did Jesus pray with sick people? How did Jesus open a topic of conversation? We don't have three point sermons. We allow people to interrupt our teaching all the time, and we respond to their questions. If Peter would submit his sermon in Acts 2 to any lousy Bible college, he would get an F. Don't you think so?

Editor: *If it's a good Bible college, I would hope not!*

Afeef: (Laughter!) But, what I meant is, too often we teach our people the Roman and Greek style of teaching and ministry. But we need to go back and ask, how did Jesus do ministry? He's our example. So I call it 'Jesus ministry'. So, they keep trying to model themselves and their ministry on Jesus, rather than on other models.

Editor: *In this movement, how often do you see one church multiplying and planting other churches, verses one church planter planting many churches in succession?*

Afeef: You know, you have both – both are happening. This is not an issue for me. The issue is the kind of churches we are producing. Are they really biblical churches? We encourage them to be after the model of Jesus, and if they are, I have no problem.

Editor: *Yes, but are you finding that, say within a church, two or three people decide to start another church?*

Afeef: I have found this. And I find other churches that would grow, and become thirty or forty, and then they would split into two. Or even, one person in a church saying, sorry, I need to go back to my village and tell my people about what happened to me. And he would go back there, and most of the time he would be stuck there, because he's planting a house church, and another house church, and then another. For example, one person went back to his

village in the summer to pick up olives – one of our workers. And we couldn't contact him for more than three months. When he came back from the village after three months, he told us about twenty house churches that were planted in that area.

Editor: *Praise God! That is so beautiful!*

Afeef: And he brought the leaders of the house churches back to the city to be trained by us.

Editor: *Amen! Hallelujah. The blessing and anointing of God clearly appear to be on this movement! What would you say are the two or three biggest challenges you face right now? Both you personally, and the movement?*

Afeef: The biggest challenge personally is myself, because I need to discern and to be sensitive to His instructions. There are times when I walk ahead of him, or when I am holding things back. I need to understand his calendar. I need to understand what he is doing, and what he wants me to do in order to tune in with what God is doing. That is the biggest challenge all of us have.

The second challenge is, sigh, the Judas. Security. Everywhere in our country, and in our part of the world, in Egypt, Assyria, Israel... Because of the kind of people we work with, or the political environment. Everything is hostile. I mean I have friends who've lost their lives.

Editor: *Is that happening regularly, or more rarely?*

Afeef: Not regularly, but there are a number of them. Every year there is an incident here or there. Sometimes it is not intentional. Like in the area neighboring Aram, a rocket hit a house next to the house in which a house church was meeting. A shard from the rocket hit a brother and cut off his shoulder, and after eleven days in an intensive care unit, he passed away. It wasn't persecution, it was a causality of the civil war. But we also have people who have been shot, or hung because of their faith in Christ.

Editor: *So the first challenge is learning discernment, and the second is dealing with Judases. Which other big challenges are you dealing with?*

Afeef: May I mention something...? And I hope you will not misunderstand me, and even your readers will not misunderstand me. Having some people bringing new theories about how we do church planting. And they come and they think the Middle East is their laboratory. Like the 'insider theory'. It's theories, you know. And it's confusing the locals.

Editor: *And this particular theory, the 'insider theory' is bothering people in your movement?*

Afeef: It's bothering all the friends I know. For example, I am scheduled to meet someone on Monday who is supposedly being persecuted by his family. He lost his job, and his life is threatened. And you know what? That man does not believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the incarnate God! And he is paying

a huge price. What kind of a Gospel are we preaching to these people? We are diluting the Gospel. We are trying to make Jesus only a prophet. And you can add Jesus to your faith. And you can continue to believe that parts of your holy book (the Qur'an) are inspired! How on earth can we tell that to people? This is human wisdom!

Editor: *So you are encountering these kinds of converts too often, who do not really understand the heart of the Gospel?*

Afeef: Two years ago, a leader from a group in the Queen of Sheba country came to my place. And the people who introduced me to him (he was coming for medical treatment) said that he had been a believer for many years. I discovered that the man didn't even know the Gospel. And he received Jesus with us. And we prayed for him and the Holy Spirit came over him, and he was transformed. For them, he was a believer for many years! But the man never read the Bible, he didn't even know who Jesus really is. For him, Jesus was only a prophet! If Jesus is only a prophet he cannot save!

You see, this is human wisdom. I know that these people think they are doing good. They have good motives. *But we cannot compromise the truth of the Gospel!*

Editor: *That is why you start your training with a strong emphasis on the Gospel and by making sure that people really know Christ?*

Afeef: This is the bare minimum! This is the starting point, the skeleton upon which everything else hangs. You and I, even if we come from different theological backgrounds, we agree on this. This skeleton has the same number of bones, the same shape. But maybe you look blond, or black or Asian, but it is still the same skeleton inside that holds it together!

Editor: *Before I go on to another question, is there another big challenge that you want to mention?*

Afeef: There are other challenges. My biggest challenge is that people in the Middle East want to be part of a big crowd. They see the Christians, they see that they have churches. They like buildings. And I think if we want to go back to the model that uses buildings, we will not be able to fulfill the Great Commission.

Editor: *So, is it often the case that as a house church grow to 30 or 40, they want their own building?*

Afeef: Yeah! And of course, (laughing) I don't have the resources for buildings! And I don't want to have such resources (laughter)! It's up to them. I don't care. Because with us, we are not a denomination. Our ministry is kingdom ministry. I want to see Egypt, Assyria, Israel worshipping the Lord, a blessing upon the earth. That is my vision – that is my scriptural mandate.

So we do church planting. We do reconciliation. We bring people from Egypt, Assyria, Israel, and we lead them in identification and repentance, and we teach them that the Kingdom of God has nothing to do with Israel, except that Israel was the first born, that Israel has been chosen, not for their own salvation, but that they might be lights for and servants to other nations. We do such gatherings from time to time, in secure locations. And it is a huge thing! It is a real blessing for all of us.

Editor: *Amen! Are there one or two stories, of what God is doing, that you want to share, to give glory to God?*

Afeef: Yes! Let me give you this fresh story from the land of the Queen of Sheba. I just came from there about ten days ago. I met with a young man in a coffee shop, who was introduced to me by a mutual friend. We call him 'Ali'. Ali told me that he got to know about Jesus through a program on the Internet. And he was in his last year of study as a pharmacist. And when they found out that he had become a follower of Jesus, the professors failed him in all of his final exams, so that he was disqualified and could not complete his studies. And I thought Ali would be sad about this. But he looked at me, with his shining eyes, and said, 'Don't think I am sad. I feel honored to pay this price. And if they want to kill me, that would be the highest honor.'

And then, Ali went on and said, 'I wanted to disengage my people from their religious studies, so I decided to run a campaign to make the largest candle in the world.' He said, 'I announced this campaign on Facebook and on the radio. And I said, "If you are disgusted with what is happening in our society, and you want hope for our society, then the only hope for the darkness that our society is going through is the light of God. So, let us build the largest candle in the world."' And he told me that thousands of people came and brought candles. And they started building this big candle. And other Christians joined him, to the point that, the President sent people from the palace and told them, 'Boys, we like what you're doing! Why are you doing this? And Ali said to them, 'Because we need the light of the world to light our country.'

I asked him what he meant? Ali said that Jesus is the only one who can change my country, who can transform the politics, the economy, the social systems. No one had talked to him about transformation! But they know it! Their knowledge of the Bible is very limited. They only barely know enough to be Christians and they don't know much of the Bible. They haven't even read the whole New Testament, and now they are talking about transformation!

Ali will be one of the ten people we will train for three months. Because I see in him an apostle!

Editor: *And it's these kinds of people whom you are asking God to raise up?*

Afeef: Absolutely. You know, they are using Facebook. Not only is Facebook being used for the Arab Spring. It's being used to spread the spiritual Arab Spring in that country. Facebook has been their main tool for evangelism – sharing their faith with others.

Even when I was in the training school, I would check my Facebook account before going to bed, and would see hundreds of comments. One person said that he had wanted to go to a church, so he went to an Ethiopian church. But the church wouldn't allow him in, because he was not Ethiopian, he was a local person. They told him that it was against the law, and the government would close them down if they let him into their church. And then, he throws this experience up for discussion: 'Is this right? Shouldn't I have the freedom to choose which religion I believe? And people, hundreds of them, began writing comments. And so I wrote on my post: 'Freedom for all! People should have the right of religious freedom.' And I put some verses from the Bible on the post. Then I discovered that many involved in the discussions were believers! Because they would send me private messages and say, 'Hey, Pastor we know you. We are glad you are helping us with this!' It's amazing!!

Editor: *So, social media is really helping the whole church planting process.*

Afeef: Oh yes, oh yes. Now, we are setting up a digital church. I have a friend, from the land of the Queen of Sheba who now lives in Cyprus. We are working through YouTube, Facebook and a website, to write material for the whole Gulf, for the house churches. To train them, to help them understand the Bible, to provide them with Arabic worship songs, news, prayer requests, everything. It's almost completely set up. That is his ministry. We call it 'Digital Church.'

Editor: *Another question. Are there certain things you strive to put in place to ensure that these churches thrive over the long haul? What are they?*

Afeef: I think that the most important thing is that they take the Word of God seriously. And I want them to have a personal relationship with Jesus, not just when they meet together, but as individuals. If they don't have that personal ongoing relationship with Jesus, forget it. When they meet, I want them to know that they are there to worship the Lord Jesus Christ, to listen to him and obey him, *and* to minister to each other as one body. So, I tell them: You are a family – what would you do in a family? I tell them that they don't choose their family members. Whether you like them or not, they are your brothers and sisters. You need to love them, you need to help them, and you need to stand by them. And I say, if the blood of Adam can make us one *human* family, how much more the blood of the precious Lord Jesus Christ. And if they don't live like a family, the church won't carry on. If it's only like a club, and they just come when it is convenient, it won't work.

Editor: *So, submission to the Word of God, an intimate personal relationship with Christ, and intimate, deep family church life.*

Afeef: Yes, commitment to each other, yes.

Editor: *A different question now. What two or three top counsels would you give to expatriate church planters who have moved into the region in order to be involved in church planting?*

Afeef: Number one: Make sure that is it God who has called you over here. It is not just an adventure!

Number two: Find local believers, work with them and learn from them—come as a student.

Number three: Work with the locals, even if it is humbling, even if it is frustrating, because that is the way that you will be most fruitful, and don't plan to stay forever, as if you never expect to leave! Work yourself out of the job as soon as possible.

Editor: *You are clearly excited about what you are seeing God do. Can you describe what you envision God doing in the next two years, five years, ten years? What vision has God put in your heart?*

Afeef: I tell you. I am expecting him to come in twenty-four months (Joyful laughter)! I am expecting that the ground will no longer be able to hold down the surging underground water, and it will break the ground and it will become public, and it will shock the whole world. It cannot be underground anymore! Because of what God is doing. It's amazing!! And it will be a wonderful shock for us. And the rest will be blown away!

Editor: *Just a few days ago I read that Al-Sisi, the newly elected president of Egypt, wants to destroy the Muslim Brotherhood. I suspect that you would think that the Muslim Brotherhood is going to be destroyed by a spiritual revolution, rather than by force.*

Afeef: You know, the biggest service to the kingdom of God in this region was that Morsi became the President for a while. He exposed it! People started to see the ugly face of their religion. But the problem, the challenge is, do we have the alternative? Do we have the REAL option for them? Do we have the structure, the patterns, the systems in place, as the church, to take over the influence in our societies?

I am not going to wait until the millennium to see the kingdoms of the world become his kingdom. I want to see it now. I want to see him bringing it over my people. I want to see my people enjoying the freedom, the liberty, the light in Jesus. So that they become truly human, in his image.

I want to see him transforming the governments. I am in the process of starting an NGO to challenge anything that is not in accordance with human rights and with the principles and values of the kingdom of God. And I am going to register it legally in Jordan. This is one of the ways I feel that God is

calling me to prepare the people – to prepare both the church and people in society generally. It is in envisioning the believers and preparing the unbelievers that there is more for you than simply this empty practice called ‘religion’.

Editor: *Your vision is so massive! How many do you work with now as your core team? Do you have a dozen or forty leaders that you work with to accomplish this grand vision?*

Afeef: I have eighty-two people. And out of these people, for example, in my office, we are four. And, in every country, I have one person who is the leader of the team in that country. So now there are eleven country leaders. But in some countries, like in Egypt, for example, there are three leaders. So we are talking about twenty people with whom I work closely, on an almost daily, or at least weekly basis.

Editor: *So my last question is simply: What else would you like to add? Any final thoughts?*

Afeef: I want to add one thing. This region has a redemptive purpose, according to Isaiah 19, to become a blessing to the world. And I believe that, not only will Egypt, Assyria and Israel worship Jesus together, but they will become, once again, a blessing to the whole world. In the early church, the blessing came from this region. And now, it will come out of this region, and to the whole world, until we see the King of Glory coming back.

Editor: *Hallelujah! Will you finish our conversation with prayer, my brother?*

Afeef: It is an honor, my brother.

Father, I thank you and I bless your holy name, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, I pray, Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven, in the Middle East and North Africa, as it is in heaven! And I pray, Father, your hand upon my brother, and that through the writing of this article, Father, that you will mobilize your people into mission. Because, Father, I understand from your Word, that we are here for one purpose—that is the purpose of bringing your kingdom to this earth. The purpose is mission—preaching Christ, the only hope. And Father, I pray, in the name of Jesus, that people will respond, and that many people will understand your season and your time, and they would tune in, and become your hands and your feet. Help us, Father, to live on this earth as your living body. That we would become channels of blessing, of your blessing, to the nations around us. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Vital Lessons for New CPMs from a 45 Year-Old Movement among Muslims

by Blake Bennett

For the past twenty years, Blake (pseudonym) and his family have lived among an Asian Muslim people group. He has initiated church-planting, training and youth initiatives among this people group.

The Muslim ministry with which I am involved has been steadily growing for the past 45 years, and we qualify under Garrison's definition as a movement (refer to the review of Garrison's recent book in this issue, below). Because we have been in existence for so long we have had to deal with issues of attrition and the next biological generation that are still future concerns for younger emerging movements. This article presents three foundational lessons learned during the thirty-eight years of this movement, lessons that sometimes seem to be overlooked in discussions of church planting movements.

Lesson 1: Even in initial efforts, it is best to emphasize and develop models of solid discipleship and congregational life of the house church, rather than focusing mainly on evangelism. Solid discipleship and congregational life, in turn, requires local leadership of the house churches, though a cultural outsider may actually be the one who plants the house churches.

In the early days of our ministry, assisted by missionaries, national co-workers planted sixty-four house churches among our unreached people group. Subsequently, all but five of those house churches collapsed and our ministry was shaped by lessons learned from that experience.

The most obvious lesson is that, in order to survive external pressure and internal difficulties, house church leaders need to be trained in, prioritize, and actually spend significant time in discipleship and congregational life, rather than putting almost all of their time and focus into evangelism. However, this point begs the question, 'How can house church leaders do effective discipleship and leadership of congregational life?'

We have found that a significant factor is not 'how' but 'who' leads discipleship and congregational life. For the purpose of continuing to exist, *the* main factor is 'who' walks the house church through times of external pressure and internal problems.

In almost all cases, we've found a cultural insider¹ (generally a local) is better able to both avoid and positively respond to external pressure and persecution. People of our culture tend to be suspicious of outsiders. In the interest of community harmony, however, they do afford 'local insiders' some space for behavior and beliefs that differ from the community norm. Thus, it is often possible for a local informal leader to negotiate the ongoing presence of a Christian sub-community with Muslim community leaders. A cultural outsider, though perhaps initially welcomed due to hopes for financial assistance, will generally not him/herself be able to negotiate the presence of a Christian sub-community.

Likewise, a local informal leader is most often informed by community leaders of anti-Christian outside provocation, which in our experience usually originates from non-local Islamic boarding schools. The local informal leader is advised on how to adapt to this pressure – by not standing out (i.e. temporarily stopping singing), not meeting together as a group (i.e. meeting instead in family groups), or even by temporarily shutting down. Sometimes local Muslim community leaders cave in to pressure and permanently close the house church. Often, however, they agree to the house church reopening after the local community is no longer in the spotlight of outside provocateurs.

All of this negotiation in the face of outside pressure can only occur if there is a local insider house church leader with whom the local Muslim community leaders can negotiate. Because our cultural outsider leaders in the 1970s did not know how to navigate persecution, they tried to minimize their own and their house churches' problems by staying away. This in turn led the believers to feel abandoned by their leaders, with the result that they fell away from the faith.

Internal problems are likewise better handled by a local insider house church leader rather than a cultural outsider. Most of our house churches are small (4-12 people), and they're most often composed of one extended family. Within that extended family, someone has the traditional role of resolving family squabbles. Ideally, that person is the house church leader, or if not, the house church leader empowers that person to resolve the issue. A cultural outsider wading into a family issue most often has neither the background knowledge nor the role/prestige to resolve internal issues.

¹In this article, the terms 'insider' and 'outsider' refer to the way one is viewed by members of the local community. In our cultural context, 'insiders' consist of those who are well-known personally and share the worldview of the community, generally but not exclusively through growing up in the community. In our cultural context, 'insider' is not defined primarily in religious terms, as in the 'Insider Movement' missions model.

The same insider/outsider dynamics apply to discipleship and congregational life generally. Discipleship and congregational life is multi-dimensional, with each dimension defined in large part by the culture. A cultural insider almost intuitively understands the issues and challenges faced by house church members individually and in their family life. He/she also knows the culturally appropriate process of speaking into those issues. What the cultural insider needs is mentoring in ‘content,’ i.e. the Biblical way to deal with issues as they arise. Cultural outsiders, by contrast, often have a much stronger grasp on ‘the answers’ through their longer training and experience. However, they tend to be unaware of or misinterpret issues in discipleship and congregational life, and their well-intentional input sometimes doesn’t ‘hit the mark’ or can lead to offense.

There are several movements and pre-movements among our people group. In all of these, cultural outsiders (nationals from other ethnic groups) have played a key role in church planting in new locations. Our cultural insiders tend to feel inferior and thus generally lack the courage to plant churches outside their extended family and community.

Though cultural outsiders have done the bulk of the initial church planting among our people group, ministries that rely on those outsiders to lead house churches have all floundered over time. The most obvious example is Korean missionaries who plant and then attempt to pastor house churches. I’ll never forget locals sharing with one of our least effective leaders, ‘This Korean may be our pastor. But when we have problems, we come to you.’ Despite two decades of extensive evangelism among our people group, Korean missionaries have not been able to initiate a movement. Though there are likely a number of reasons, one important factor seems to be an inability to empower and release locals to lead house churches.

A less obvious example is a national ministry that utilizes full-time national workers from other ethnic groups. Every year, more than a hundred Muslims come to faith through these national church planters. However, over a four-year period, the total number of BMBs who attend house churches has barely budged. In my evaluation, one factor is the much higher emphasis placed on evangelism versus discipleship by these national workers. A second significant factor seems to be cultural outsiders (the national church planters) ‘falling into’ the role of disciplers and house church leaders. Even though the organization’s leadership has become aware of the need for cultural insiders to function as disciplers and leaders, the insiders find it difficult to assume leadership if the more-educated outsiders are present.

Lesson 2: Characteristics of an individual culture can greatly influence the progress of evangelism and discipleship. It is useful to

adopt a general model of church planting (like CPM), but the overall ministry will be much stronger long-term if that general model is adapted to address the distinctives of the local culture.

Some fifteen years ago, a senior national leader conducted an open-ended survey among BMBs in our movement. His main question to those BMBs was: ‘What was the most important factor in you becoming a follower of Christ?’ The survey results surprised us. Using many different illustrations, the great majority of BMBs in our network described the most important factor as ‘character change in the life of an extended family member.’

Fifteen years later, we still see the same dynamic: our most effective evangelistic method is observable character change. By way of illustration, currently our most effective evangelist is a former thug. Together with his wife, this man has brought some 300 Muslims to faith over the past few years. A few moments’ conversation is adequate for locals to recognize that this man is or was a thug. But his words and actions are loving; they contradict the identity of thug. This contradiction makes locals intensely curious to know, ‘How did you change your character?’

To my knowledge, you won’t find ‘character change observable among extended family members’ among the evangelistic strategies expounded in books and articles on how to reach Muslims. Why not? Books and articles attempt to detail strategies that have borne fruit across the spectrum of Muslim people groups. Many cultures, however, have their own distinct points of concern, such as ‘character change’ in our people group. Moreover, generally effective strategies may have limited impact in a particular culture. For example, people in our people group are overall not interested in religious conversations, because they’re not all that interested in even their own religion.

From its inception, our missions agency has emphasized learning from and adapting to the local culture, a stance that facilitates making discoveries like the importance of character change explained above. However, up until five years ago our agency did not encourage its teams to pursue a coherent church planting strategy. The result was that most missionary teams had plenty of cultural insights but few church plants (and very few new believers) in which to implement those cultural insights.

As I see realities on the ground, adopting CPM as an overall church planting strategy has given focus and direction to missionaries in my organization. However, in our excitement about CPM, it seems to me that missionaries in our agency risk going to the other extreme. We risk assuming the attitude of my high school-age daughter, who had this to say after attending a CPM training: ‘The training showed me that planting churches isn’t just for

older, elite missionaries. All it takes is being open, sharing stories, and being proactive. Anyone can do this, even me.'

I am pleased that my daughter (and anyone else) is emboldened by the simplicity of CPM to attempt to do it. However, the conclusion she drew from the training – just apply the CPM paradigms and you'll eventually see the results – is somewhat naïve. I see the same conclusion everywhere. Unfortunately, seeing CP happen among Muslims is not generally that easy. The general CP paradigm is needed, as is the Lord's anointing and (generally) years of hard work. However, from my observation of our own and other movements, an often overlooked factor is adaptation of the generic CP paradigm to the local culture. My advice is: choose and work with a generic CPM model *and* adapt that generic model to your local context, based on your own research of that individual culture.

Lesson 3: A movement can only exist long-term if the biological next generation follows the Lord and marries fellow believers. In contexts where house churches are scattered, this can only happen if children of BMBs are gathered together on a regular basis. Furthermore, gatherings of adolescent children of BMBs present an excellent opportunity to grow in self-confidence and overcome the cycle of poverty that continues to oppress first generation believers.

Nine years ago, we were alarmed to discover that 80% of the children of BMBs in our network of house churches were reverting back to Islam. The most significant immediate cause was marriage to Muslims. Because the house churches generally consist of one extended family, potential boy/girlfriends of a similar age were mostly siblings or nephews/nieces, and were thus not marriageable. Except for those few Christian family members, all the young believers' friends were Muslims, resulting in tremendous peer pressure to be a Muslim. Finally, employment opportunities in the village were often limited to Muslims, again resulting in pressure to convert. To make matters worse, because youth are typically regarded as unimportant in this culture, national pastors started few youth-oriented ministries for these believing youth, with the result that the youth were not disciplined, to the point that upon close examination, many were not born again.

We realized that if something wasn't done quickly, we would lose the next generation of believers in this ethnic group. We were forced to ask ourselves the question: What's the point in going to great cost and effort to plant churches among an unreached people group if in 15-20 years, those churches will in all likelihood no longer exist?

At the same time, we realized that the youth presented an opportunity for breaking the cycle of poverty. After over 25 years of (mostly) failure giving micro-loans, we realized that, other than the few adults from a business or leadership family, the believing adults in our movement were steeped in dependency issues. No matter what loans we extended or jobs we offered, these adults would not be able to succeed economically to the point of providing for their families and educating their children, much less giving to pay even a part-time lay pastor. The youth, however, might be pliable enough to internalize a Biblical worldview and practice of work, as well as gain the confidence to overcome the sense of inferiority they had absorbed since childhood. In our cultural context, people who have good character and succeed financially by their own smarts and effort (i.e., not through corruption) are viewed by all as role models, even if they're Christians.

Five years ago, we started 'BMB Youth' (pseudonym) with the goals of (1) breaking the cycle of poverty, i.e. instilling a Biblical worldview and practice of work, resulting at the very least in believers graduating from high school and holding down secular jobs; (2) marriage to believers rather than to Muslims; and (3) youth-specific discipleship leading to the youth themselves being formed as spiritual leaders. To this end, we pulled together fifty middle school and high-school-age children of BMBs from house churches in isolated villages. They gathered twice a month for two 1.5-hour sessions – one spiritual and one business.

The business session utilizes Junior Achievement, a 96-year-old secular program current providing business training to eight million youth in 100 different countries. In our business training, the students run their own small-scale businesses, with input from a local young adult businessman. Our spiritual training combines Bible studies with sharing groups of three youth with one adult mentor. In the sharing groups, students open up and share their struggles on their own timetable, and adult mentors give advice as appropriate. Sharing generally starts with problems with school friends, then boy/girlfriends, then family problems. Because over half of the students come from broken homes, we deal with a lot of family problems.

We've discovered in the last five years that our youth come from a culture with little love. In the workplace, in local communities, and even within families and the house churches, people generally don't sacrifice for others' well-being. Rather, they use each other to get what they want. Passive-aggressive coercion is the norm. Most youth naturally bring this paradigm with them, i.e. they assume that 'BMB Youth' stands to gain something from their attendance. However, as they follow our program, they gradually realize that we love them and are developing their spirituality, leadership and business abilities for their own good. Gradually, their previously-empty 'love tanks' begin to fill, which in turn enables them to grow in confidence, which enables them to succeed in their Junior

Achievement student companies, share more deeply, study the Word on their own, lead younger students, and wait for believing boy/girlfriends. 'Fuller love tanks' currently fuel alumni gathering three times per month despite being given no transport money, staying until the lights are turned off, sharing their struggles with each other, and retaining the secular jobs in which they are placed. Two alumni couples are now seriously courting, and we pray they can model Christian marriage to younger students and fellow alumni.

Conclusion ²

In conclusion, the long-term existence of a movement among Muslims (or any unreached people group) requires a focus on discipleship and congregational life, rather than focusing mainly on evangelism. Solid discipleship and congregational life, in turn, requires local leadership of the house churches, though a cultural outsider may do a significant amount of initial church planting. Solid discipleship, congregational life and evangelism are also greatly facilitated through identifying and addressing characteristics unique to that individual culture, a task which becomes easier to the extent that insiders speak into their own discipleship process. Finally, the long-term existence of a movement depends on the next biological generation following the Lord and marrying fellow believers. In contexts where the house churches are scattered, this can only happen to the extent that children of BMBs are gathered together on a regular basis. As we gathered our next biological generation, we found ourselves learning additional unique cultural characteristics, which in turn enabled us to better reach and disciple those from our people group.

² If, after reading this account, you would like to contact the author to find out more about the solutions that were implemented that has led to a growing movement 45 years on, especially their innovative approach to nurturing and discipling the youth in the movement, feel free to contact the editor (seedbed.editor@sent.com), and he will forward your email request to the author.

Reforming Baptism: A Call to Return the Normal New Testament Way of Committing to Jesus

by Steven Steinhaus

Steven Steinhaus (pseudonym) is a Pioneers field worker who has been serving with his family for twenty years among Muslims in Southeast Asia. He is also currently working on his DMin.

‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...’ (Mat 28:19)

Introduction

The global church today urgently needs to rethink the doctrine and practice of baptism. Our modern, entrenched theologies have led many of us to positions on baptism that I believe are neither truly biblical nor very helpful, yet we hold to them tenaciously. Even among evangelicals, some preach ‘baptismal regeneration’ while others push for ‘immediate baptism as in Acts’. Even more cling assiduously to the concept of ‘faith alone’ thereby relegating baptism to the realm of optional activities or worse, to ‘works’. All claim Scripture as the basis for their views. However, I would argue that each lacks the ability to acceptably handle all the New Testament material: ‘baptismal regeneration’ leads to confusion on the New Testament’s clear teaching of salvation by faith alone; ‘immediate baptism’ tends to truncate normal and biblical processes leading up to intelligent commitment, especially in household or group evangelism; delay of baptism (catechism) compromises the clear and urgent appeals of Scripture to ‘believe and be baptized’ (Acts 2:38, etc.); and infant baptism, built on a covenantal view of salvation, appears to make logical sense but lacks even a single New Testament example.³ All viewpoints struggle with certain verses that just don’t seem to fit. Consequently, the average believer ends up lost in an array of heated debate and circuitous theological discourse that slows his disposition to obey Christ’s commands and can ultimately lead to a pick-and-choose

³ The purpose of this paper is not to discuss and explain the theological bases for the various views on baptism, all of which ‘make sense’ to their own constituencies. Instead we will look again at what the Bible actually says about baptism and examine the actual cases of how it was practiced in the New Testament. Thus, while not trying to offend anyone, I am aware that much of what I have written in this paper will be offensive to nearly all theological camps and traditions. While this is regretful, it should be noted that even my own traditions have not withstood this same scrutiny.

approach towards discipleship. Worse yet, today in the West, millions of *un*believers have been baptized and assured of their salvation while in the East missionaries and mission churches continue to perpetuate these same imported patterns leading to a new multitude of baptized ‘believers’ who are even more ignorant due to their non-Christian backgrounds.

Due to such problematic practices with baptism in the mission fields of Indochina, a Korean missionary recently issued ‘An Urgent Plea for Disciplinistic Baptism in the Buddhist Context’ in the *Evangelical Mission Quarterly (EMQ)*. His article forms an impassioned attempt to remind the world that immediate baptism of minimally informed Buddhist converts can actually be counterproductive to the process of discipleship (Kim, 2013). In my own context of ministry in Indonesia, some advocates of a version of T4T Church Planting Movement (CPM) methodology (Smith, 2011) argue for immediate baptism of Muslim individuals who profess faith even if only after a private, short gospel presentation. To argue their case, they use ‘The Acts Hammer’ - a list of passages in Acts where immediate baptism is given to people who respond after apparently only hearing a short gospel presentation (including Saul, Cornelius, the Ethiopian eunuch, the Philippian jailer, etc.). To them, these passages constitute evidence that we need to do baptism the same way in Muslim contexts today.

Examples from the mission field and longstanding theological debates provide ample evidence that the issues surrounding baptism are not merely academic. Our views and models of baptism impact our view of salvation (soteriology), policies regarding church membership (ecclesiology), and our models of mission, evangelism and discipleship (missiology and practical theology). Baptism, therefore, turns out to literally be a watershed issue impacting fundamentals of the Christian life. Is it possible that an objective, non-denominational reconsideration of the New Testament data on baptism might lead us to some key ideas and concepts we’ve been overlooking?

The lost key: What baptism meant and *how* it was performed in the New Testament

To a modern evangelical who is well acquainted with the New Testament, no matter where one falls on the positions noted above, there remain many verses about baptism that are quite difficult to understand. All evangelicals hold to salvation by faith *alone* through the grace of God (*sola fide*). Consequently, if we *require* baptism *for* salvation, most would consider this a contradiction of *sola fide*. If we see the ritual of baptism as *effecting* salvation, then we lapse into ‘sacramentalism’ (viewing the sacrament as salvific, not faith). However, certain verses pose serious problems to our evangelical view. In the sections below, I list many such verses, with some comments on them. Note the italicized words in particular:

- 1 Peter 3:21 states, ‘and this water symbolizes *baptism that now saves you...*’ Is this teaching sacramentalism?
- In Acts 2:38 - ‘repent *and be baptized...*for the forgiveness of your sins’. Is Peter requiring baptism for forgiveness?
- In Acts 8:36-38 Why was there such urgency for baptism instead of a simple profession of faith or prayer of repentance? How did the eunuch even know about baptism?
- In Acts 10:43-47 Peter tells Cornelius’ household to ‘believe’, and immediately *orders* them to be *baptized*.
- Acts 9:18; 22:16 In neither case is there any mention of Paul’s repentance or faith, yet he was baptized.
- Paul himself, the New Testament author who seemed most concerned about articulating salvation by faith alone, pens many similarly perplexing verses about baptism:
- Galatians 3:26-27 states, ‘You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you *who were baptized* into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ’. Are we clothed with Christ through faith or baptism?
- Romans 6:3-4 challenges readers: ‘Or don’t you know that all of us who were *baptized* into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him *through baptism* into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.’ Paul seems to be linking *baptism*, not faith, as the way into new life and the resurrection.
- Colossians 2:11-12 echoes Romans 6:3-5, also appearing to point to baptism as the way that believers put off the sinful nature and are raised with Christ: ‘In him, you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in *baptism* and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.’
- Throughout Paul’s writings, the idea of *unbaptized believers* seems totally alien to his thinking. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 Paul assumes everyone in the church at Corinth had been baptized and had received the Spirit. In fact, these realities were what Paul was appealing to as a basis for unity. Ephesians 4:3-5 and 1 Corinthians 1:13 continue this same theme, both of which speak of ‘one *baptism*’ into Christ which unifies the church. Yet *unbaptized* believers are common in the Church around the globe today.

The Apostles John and Mark, as well as the author of Hebrews, also make similar statements on baptism, which give us pause.

- John's Gospel records Jesus' emphatic statement that 'No one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is *born of water* and the Spirit' (John 3:5). Though many attempts have been made to understand the water as something other than baptism (see for example Carson 1991, 191-196), the early church saw it differently. In fact, John 3:5 had already become a common baptismal text by the 2nd century (Ferguson 2009, 369), correlating nicely to Titus 3:5 which emphasizes both water and Spirit.
- Mark 16:16 states, 'whoever believes *and is baptized* will be saved'. Most scholars believe the whole section of Mark 16:9-20 is a second century addition not attributable to Mark himself. Nevertheless, even if it is not original, we can discern the early Christian thinking that linked *salvation with baptism*, similar to what we've seen in other canonical passages above.
- In Hebrews 10:19-22 the author implores readers to draw near to God with full assurance 'having our hearts *sprinkled* to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our *bodies washed with pure water*.' Surely the reference to having our 'bodies washed' is about baptism. In fact, Beasley-Murray says this verse is probably the most affirming of a 'sacramental view' of baptism in the whole New Testament. (Beasley-Murray, 265)

From the above compilation of verses, the similarities seem striking and perplexing. Does the New Testament teach sacramentalism and baptismal regeneration? Does it encourage us to baptize people who are inadequately prepared? I believe not. But I also believe our common understandings are mistaken as well. Instead, in order to resolve all of these problems we need to recover an insight lost to most of the contemporary church.

The 'key' is that baptism is *not* a ritual that imparts eternal life (contra sacramentalism and baptismal regeneration) *nor* is it to be administered *after* one commits to Christ (contra the dominant view of many evangelicals), *nor* is it just an optional ritual in addition to 'praying to receive Christ' (contra the attitude of many in the parachurch). It is also *not* to be administered to people who have no understanding (contra paedobaptists) nor little understanding (contra many evangelicals and especially many cross-cultural evangelists) of what the Gospel is or who Jesus is. Instead, in the New Testament the act of baptism was given to new believers *at the point of* an informed commitment to Christ. That is, the way people expressed their faith in Christ initially in the New Testament was *by being baptized*. They did not pray a 'sinner's prayer' or 'go forward'; they went through the ritual of baptism, a powerful symbol which was an 'acted-out-prayer'.

Notice the precision with which I. Howard Marshall comments on 1 Peter 3:21. He explains that much of the confusion we face about baptism stems from the fact that when the New Testament writers pen phrases such as 'baptism

saves you' it is 'simply shorthand for conversion' (Marshall 2011, 131). Marshall continues:

God saves you in and through the act of baptism, which is the outward expression of the twin facts that he regenerates you by his Spirit on the basis of the atonement wrought by Christ and that you come committing yourself in faith and repentance to Christ as your Savior... Baptism saves you not by any virtue in itself but by the effects of Jesus' resurrection... although baptism is the normal means of Christian initiation, salvation is not the result of merely submitting outwardly to baptism.' (131-132)

Scholarly agreement on baptism as the NORMAL New Testament way to commit to Jesus

I. Howard Marshall's analysis above corroborates the opinion of the vast majority of leading scholars. Though many practitioners may have not realized it, the scholars' collective opinion on this issue is overwhelming: in the early church people *became Christians* through baptism. Here are just a few of these scholarly voices. George Beasley-Murray writes, 'Baptism is the vehicle of yielding to Jesus Christ', and 'the occasion when a person is met by Jesus Christ' (1962, 95). Writing as an English Baptist, Beasley-Murray was fully aware that what he wrote was not in line with the common practice of his day: altar calls complete with calling people to 'pray to receive Christ.' A more recent and truly encyclopedic volume on baptism was penned in 2009 by Everett Ferguson of Abilene Christian University. He echoes Beasley-Murray stating: '[Baptism] is the occasion of divine activity in bringing the benefits of the death of Christ to the believer' (2009, 165). Robert Banks writes, '[Baptism] is not an outward representation of an already concluded inner decision. It was by the means of baptism the individual or family actually committed themselves to God' (1994, 78). Arthur Patzia states, 'Most commentators see Acts 2:38 as the most normative statement of Christian initiation in the New Testament. Baptism was seen as a unity event – faith-baptism-Holy Spirit – rather than a sequence of three separate experiences' (2001, 236-238).

Michael Green writes, 'Conversion, baptism and the new life, at least as far as adults were concerned, were inseparable' (ibid, 156). Similarly, George Patterson writes:

The invitation of the apostles, for example, was not to raise one's hand or to 'come forward.' They simply told those who trusted in Jesus to show their repentance by being baptized (Acts 2:38; 22:12-16). Any decision-making ritual that man has devised to replace baptism as the instrument to confirm salvation has had a much poorer record for determining who are sincere. Baptism is the decision-making ritual.' (2008, 40)

Finally, Wayne Meeks points out the uniqueness of the form and function of Christian baptism:

By making the cleansing rite alone bear the whole function of initiation, and by making initiation the decisive point of entry into an exclusive community, the Christian groups started something new. For them the bath [baptism] becomes a permanent threshold between the 'clean group' and the 'dirty world.' (2011, 153)

The ramifications of this profound 'lost key' are many. What would it take to reinstate baptism as the culmination of our evangelism? What would we need to do differently? How would we need to disciple people differently? What impact might it have? Here are a few of the possible ramifications we might encounter if this ancient practice were once again applied in our ministries.

1. It would give us a powerful teaching device, which, as the ritual of baptism is carried out, would instruct both the person being baptized and the congregation witnessing it. This then would demonstrate and remind everyone of what our salvation means, while also simultaneously clearly marking the point of entry into the Kingdom and the Body. (This would tend to eliminate statements such as the oft-heard: 'I prayed to receive Christ many times but I'm not sure when I really became a Christian.' And, 'I became a Christian years ago, but I've never been baptized.')⁴

2. It would help prevent us from baptizing those who lack credible evidence of making a well-informed decision. This could be done like the Bereans who 'examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true' (Acts 17:11) through a group process of pre-baptismal teaching *before* commitment. Examples from the New Testament could be studied in order to show that those baptized were fully cognizant of the decision they were making, that is nothing less than a life-long commitment to Christ and his Body.⁴

3. It would help prevent us from viewing the act/ritual/metaphor of baptism as salvific in and of itself, for baptism would come as it was in the New Testament *after teaching* in which we would clearly affirm that it is *by faith* that one comes to Christ (Rom 3:28; 4:5; 5:1; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8 etc.), and *by faith* that a person gives himself/herself to baptism as an expression of faith-commitment (Acts 8:12; 16:31-34; 18:8; Gal 3:26-27; Eph 4:3-5; Col 2:11-12 etc.). Such teaching would bring a person to the place of commitment through the proper symbol (baptism) at the proper time (when sufficiently understood and clearly ready to commit).

⁴ In the Appendix we discuss one way of doing this through 'Discovery Groups'. This is one way being used very effectively around the world to lead individuals and groups to an intelligent decision for Christ before baptism.

4. It would help us settle the question of infant baptism, for infants clearly cannot understand what is happening to them during their infancy, nor would they be unable to undergo the whole acted-out metaphor of immersion.

5. It would improve Church unity, for it would clearly delineate who has credibly professed Christ and who is still seeking. (This is especially important in areas of persecution.)

6. It would strengthen perseverance, since those who submit to baptism would be well ‘vetted’, discipled and already have believing friends, family and mentors.

How this truth has been hidden from us

In light of such clarity from such a diverse body of reputable scholars, coupled with so many potential benefits, how is it that this ‘lost key’ has evaded so many in contemporary evangelicalism for so long? Here are several possibilities:

1. *It goes against our evangelical traditions.* If this understanding of New Testament baptism is correct, it runs counter to numerous evangelical traditions. I know of no evangelical group that tells people to delay ‘making a decision’ or ‘being saved’ until the point of baptism (except for what’s happening in some CPMs in Asia and Africa).⁵ In contemporary evangelicalism, the practice of urging people to repent and believe in Jesus has become divorced from the New Testament *way* in which they did so – through baptism. Do we cling to our views not based on fair-minded exegesis but out of allegiance to religious-cultural traditions and sentiments?

2. *It seems counter to lessons from our history.* Another reason modern evangelicals have missed the biblical teaching on baptism may stem from overzealous application of lessons from our history. Initially, an over-reaction to Roman Catholicism at the time of the Reformation made nearly everything seemingly Catholic to be anathema to most Protestants. Later, during the early 20th century, revivalist preaching flourished in our nation’s history, bringing unparalleled successes that many seek to imitate. Yet we apply methods from one era and location to our peril if we don’t remember their contexts. At the time of the Great Awakenings in England and America nearly everyone professed ‘Christianity’ and most had already undergone a ritual ‘baptism’ as infants. Therefore what was deemed necessary was not a conversion to *Christianity* but a personal commitment to knowing Christ *personally* through repentance and new birth. Consequently, the tactic of the great revivalist preachers like Finney and Moody was to encourage individuals to ‘make a

⁵ Of course, only God himself knows when a person is actually converted and saved.

decision' to follow Christ, without regard to family considerations, periods of pre-baptismal instruction or the practice of (believer's) baptism.

Though this did lead to many professions for Christ, we are now unfortunately left with a lot of 'evangelical baggage' (Smith, 2010) including a lack of commitment to discipleship and misunderstanding of baptism.⁶ Today, having built entire theologies and ministries on revivalist concepts, we're unable to see the idea that *salvation by faith was initially expressed in baptism in the New Testament*. Consequently, we either disregard the idea altogether or end up in theological confusion. In the words of Scot McKnight, revivalism has led us to a truncated Gospel focused on making *decisions* instead of making *disciples* (McKnight 18, 2011). McKnight further contends that instead of truly being 'evangelical' we are now simply 'soterian' (focused on getting people saved) resulting in a 'massive, nominal, non-disciple Christianity' instead of a life of 'intelligent discipleship' (ibid, 15). Are we brave enough to actually change the way we ask people to commit to Christ?

3. *Most Westerners are incredibly individualistic*. Perhaps another reason that many have missed the Bible's teaching on baptism (as the *entry point* of commitment to Jesus), is because of the Western focus on the individual and the need for a 'personal' decision. In national values surveys, America is consistently ranked as *the most individualistic nation in the world in history* (see Hofstede, 2005; Trompenaars, 2006). Thus, we should not be surprised that such values have overtaken the Church and have blinded us to certain biblical teachings.

Such individualism, however, is contrary to the book of Acts, in which most conversions reported were group conversions. In fact, out of the thirty instances of conversions recorded by Luke in Acts, all but three were families or groups. (The exceptions were Paul, the Ethiopian eunuch and Sergius Paulus). While individual conversions are also valid, the extreme shift from the exception to the norm should give us pause. Patzia notes, New Testament 'baptism was never regarded as an individual or private act because being united with Christ meant to be united with his body the church, and thus with every true believer' (Patzia, 241). Correspondingly, Gordon T. Smith warns us to not advance 'extreme individualism' which contributes to the loss of evangelical youth who never really connect with 'the language of revivalism' (Smith 2010, 15). Furthermore, such individualism runs contrary to the Spirit's work in Africa and Asia today where millions are coming to Christ *together*. Jerry Trousdale documents current movements in the contemporary African context and relates the importance of 'allowing time for group process' so that 'a whole group,

⁶ Gordon T. Smith in his book *Transforming Conversion* gives a very helpful list of twelve common evangelical teachings that have brought us to this point (Smith 2010, 15-25).

rather than just an individual or two, become disciples of Jesus and are baptized together' (Trousdale 2012, 40).

Since American Christianity and missiology are continually being exported throughout the world, we need to be very careful we do not slow the work of Christ by overlooking the importance of groups coming to Christ together and the necessity of joining a group (church) after conversion.

4. *The desire to go fast.* Another possible reason many have overlooked the New Testament model of baptism is a desire for quick results. In revivalism, the emphasis was on getting people to make decisions *now!* There was a great concern to be sure people were 'in' and 'saved' in case they died suddenly or the rapture occurred. But the resulting impact on discipleship has been disastrous, leading to millions of 'decisions' instead of millions of disciples. However, Jesus' command was to make *disciples* and to *baptize* these disciples (Mt 28:19). Out of concern to faithfully fulfill this command, the early church quickly moved to protracted periods of catechism *before baptism* in order to be sure people understood and practiced the essentials of the faith.

How can we sort out the tension between urging people to act immediately on the gospel (as in Acts) without ending up with lengthy periods of catechism? I believe a look at Acts will help.

While we have to be careful of taking Acts as normative for today, I do think the examples found there are instructive on two main points relative to baptism. First, in Acts most people were baptized *as groups* (as noted above). Second, baptisms happened *only after* there was significant background, experience or teaching. The various forms of *baptizo* occur eighty-one times in the New Testament, with twenty-two occurrences in Acts. These twenty-two occurrences of the word describe nine 'case studies' in Acts. These nine baptismal events from which we can study and learn, are as follows: (1) 2:38-41; (2) 8:12-16; (3) 8:36-38; (4) 9:18/22:16; (5) 10:47-11:16; (6) 16:15; (7) 16:33; (8) 18:8; (9) 19:3-5. By studying these nine events, we can see that all baptisms in Acts except for the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31-34) and perhaps the 'many Corinthians' (Acts 18:8) were either Jews (including proselytes and 'God-fearers') or Samaritans. This reveals that these people would have had *very significant background knowledge and experience* before making a commitment in baptism. They were not committing to a guru based on minimal knowledge; they were committing to Jesus of Nazareth as the long-awaited Messiah for their people, the one who fulfilled their Scriptures.

In the case of the Philippian jailer, though this was an 'immediate baptism' of a pagan apparently without much background, he also had much more than a short gospel presentation: he experienced the mighty miracle of an earthquake which also amazingly loosed the prisoner's chains (16:26); heard the overnight witness of the Apostle Paul and Silas through word and song (16:25; 31-32); and

witnessed the amazing character of these men who did not flee but concerned themselves with their captor's life (16:28). Furthermore, the jailer was not baptized alone, but along with his whole family (16:34). We have no other cases of Gentiles who had no background knowledge being immediately baptized in Acts except for possibly the case of the Corinthians in Acts 18.⁷

It is also important to note that in *every case* in Acts, whether with Jew or Gentile, individual or group, teaching preceded baptism. This teaching may have been through conversation and dialogue, and sometimes with accompanying miracles. But the idea that a modern, short 'gospel presentation' with an expectation for immediate belief and baptism is analogous to what happened with people in the book of Acts is simply untenable.⁸ The normal pattern in Acts was of preaching and teaching over some time leading to a (group) decision to believe and be baptized.

Today many thinkers from a broad spectrum are calling for a return to time for 'process' before baptism. Tim Keller writes about his ministry in New York City:

...coming to this point of uniting to Christ by faith often works as a process, not only as an event. It can occur through a series of small decisions or thoughts that bring a person closer and closer to the point of saving faith. In a post-Christendom setting, more often than not, this is the case. People simply do not have the necessary background knowledge to hear a gospel address and immediately understand who God is, what sin is, who Jesus is, and what repentance and faith are in a way that enables them to make an intelligent commitment.⁹ (Keller 2012, 281)

Keller advises that there should be 'a great deal of instruction leading up to any adult baptism' (ibid, 317) thereby 'combining the power of revivalist preaching and pastoring with ecclesial patterns of church life' (ibid, 318). Timothy Tennent, based on years of experience in India, writes:

⁷ Even if these Corinthians were predominantly pagans (the text does not specify) it seems clear they had been exposed to Paul's ministry and the influence of Crispus, the synagogue leader, over a period of weeks or months.

⁸ Some may argue that the Samaritans' background knowledge was so syncretistic that it should not be considered 'significant'. However, we must recall that Samaritans did at least know the following important things: the Torah and the Prophets, the Jewish customs (some of which they chose not to keep), the expectation of the coming Messiah (see John 4:25), the 'gossip' about John and Jesus. These facts put them in a very different situation than most adherents of major non-Christian world religions today.

⁹ I would suggest that this is even more the case in places that have never been Christian.

In my experience of working in India, I have found that discipleship often *precedes* conversion by many years. This seems counterintuitive in the West, because Christendom always assumed a larger Christian context, making it easy to live as a Christian, since Christian ethics and values were presumably infused throughout the whole of society. However, in India, it often takes many years for someone to comprehend the gospel message and what it means to follow Jesus Christ. Lengthy periods of instruction and modeling often take place long before someone receives Christian baptism. This is closer to Jesus' model exemplified in the Gospels, whereby intensive instruction took place with His disciples for several years before they fully understood and accepted His lordship. (Tennent 2010, 81)

Perhaps this glimpse into our evangelical background, presuppositions and biases will allow us to find the courage to reform baptism to be the life-changing salvation event God intended it to be.

Saving faith is expressed through baptism; we are not saved by a ritual

Having argued for a return to the ritual of baptism as the point where a person or group is ready to make a well-informed decision to follow Christ, we now turn our attention on the issue of why this idea is not tantamount to 'baptismal regeneration'. The solution to this problem is found in stressing our absolute commitment to the doctrine of salvation by faith alone: we are not saved by baptism but saved through faith in Christ (Eph 3:8-9 etc.). No amount of dunkings, washings, sprinklings or christenings can save us from our sins. We are saved through faith in Christ, by the grace of God. However, the purpose of this article is to call us back to the New Testament *manner* in which that initial commitment to Christ is made – not on a whim, nor silently, nor privately, but through baptism.

Thus, in baptism the Gospel proclamation and the hearing of faith become united in one indissoluble act, at one and the same time an act of grace and faith, an act of God and man. That is why in the New Testament faith and baptism are viewed as inseparables whenever the subject of Christian initiation is under discussion, so that if one is referred to, the other is presupposed, even if not mentioned. (Beasley-Murray 1962, 272)

Thus there is no conflict between faith and baptism. Baptism is simply an acted-out prayer and witness of commitment that the new believer 'prays' when she commits herself in faith to her Savior.

Suggestions for baptismal practice today

The following points are suggestions on ways to reform baptism today, in order to restore it to be the powerful symbol it was intended to be. These are offered as guidelines or ‘best practices’ to be followed when possible; not as ‘mandates’ that have to be performed no matter what.

1. Only baptize adults, or youth, who can demonstrate an adequate understanding of Jesus as Lord and his claims upon their lives, with an accompanying desire to submit to him. Children should be nurtured into the faith and offered baptism when they are fully cognizant of what it means to follow Christ and of the magnitude of that decision.

2. Cease calling people to ‘receive Christ by praying a prayer’. Rather give people time to process and prepare so that when they’re baptized, it’s a sincere and genuine commitment to Christ, as we see in the New Testament.

3. As much as possible, baptize people with their family and friends, as was the case in most baptisms recorded in Acts. This may require waiting for some members of the family to catch up with the group, but will allow for the power of the *oikos* (household) thus likely winning more people and keeping them in their cultural contexts.

4. Just prior to baptism, look at the biblical passages, stories and teachings on baptism with the new disciples so that they understand fully the symbolism of this ‘acted out prayer’, and why they are commanded by Jesus to undergo it.

5. Baptism should be always viewed by all as the point of commitment to Christ and to His body. Hence, it should not be administered lightly nor should it be unduly delayed. When a person or group demonstrates that they are ready to intelligently commit to becoming disciples of Christ, baptism would be given as soon as possible, accompanied by full membership in a local (hopefully culturally relevant) church. (Refer to the Appendix, ‘Overview of the Discovery Group Process Leading to Baptism’ as one modern-day way being used in CPMs around the world today to bring people and groups to intelligent decision.)

6. Since Jesus gives no command about who should baptize, and because inordinate delay upon serious commitment to Christ should be avoided, it seems best to have the person who has been discipling the new believer up to that point be the one who baptizes. Apparently this is how it happened in the New Testament, for we know some people who were not apostles were baptizing (for example, Philip in Acts 8:12 and 8:38; Ananias in 9:18) and we see that Paul was concerned to *not* do most of his baptizing himself (1 Cor 1:14-17).

Conclusion

In light of clear New Testament teaching and practice, I propose that we reform baptism. To be biblically accurate and make disciples (not just converts), reforming current evangelical views and practices of baptism is critical. For Jesus himself gave the command: ‘Go therefore and make disciples, *baptizing* them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you’ (Mat 28:19. Italics mine). May God give us the grace to obey.

Appendix to *Reforming Baptism*:

Overview of the Discovery Group Process Leading to Baptism

Today thousands of churches are being started and people are being discipled around the world by means of ‘Discovery Groups’ or ‘Discovery Bible Studies’ (Trousdale, 2012). The idea is to ‘disciple into conversion’ so that those being baptized have significant knowledge of God and Christ, as well as what it’s like to follow him (John 7:17). Today there are over 100 Church Planting Movements happening around the world that have been catalyzed using this approach.

To start a Discovery Group, the outside evangelist begins to meet the Person of Peace (Luke 10:6 and parallels) in his family (or group) at least weekly, studying chronological Bible studies in the Person of Peace’s home over a period of months. The studies are not teacher-led but inductive: the evangelist only asks questions and allows the group to discover God’s truth for themselves directly from his Word. By following these simple steps each time, the group quickly learns the process and can reproduce it easily: (1) read the story; (2) retell the story several times; (3) ask what this story teaches about God; (4) ask what this story teaches about mankind; (5) ask what they think they should do in response to it, both individually and as a group; (6) ask who they could pass this story on to. When the group comes together the next time, they ask how it went with their applications and if they were able to share the story with anyone.

In certain contexts, this process may last up to thirty meetings in order to carefully lead groups from creation to Christ. In other contexts, the process only lasts for six meetings. The number of meetings and stories is determined by the need of the context. Each meeting takes approximately two hours allowing time for questions to be discussed and for each person to engage meaningfully with the text. Usually only one passage (or story) is used per meeting. If a group does not understand or apply the lesson(s) from the previous week, often the previous lesson is simply discussed again. Over the weeks as the study progresses, miracles sometimes occur and often significant lifestyle changes happen which confirm the Word. Usually if a group stays together through the process, most or all become believers together.

When the group comes to a climactic text such as John 3:1-21 or Matt 7:13-14 and decides they want to follow Christ, they are encouraged to come to Him through baptism.

Works Cited

- Banks, Robert. 1994. *Paul's Idea of Community*. Peabody, MA: Hendrikson Publishers.
- Beasley-Murray, George R. 1962. *Baptism in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Carson, D.A. 1993. *John: The Pillar New Testament Commentary*. Leicester, England: Apollos.
- Ferguson, Everett. 2009. *Baptism in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Green, Michael. 1970. *Evangelism in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Hofstede, Geert and Gert Jan Hofstede. 2005. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Keller, Timothy. 2012. *Center Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Kim, Daniel Daesoon. 2013. 'An Urgent Plea for Disciplinistic Baptism in the Buddhist Context'. In *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 3, July 2013.
- Lightfoot, J.B. 'Apostolic Fathers' (translator).
<www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-lightfoot.html>
- Marshall, I. Howard. 2011. *First Peter: IVP New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press.
- McKnight, Scot. 2011. *The King Jesus Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Meeks, Wayne A. 2003. *The First Urban Christians*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Moon, Jay W. 2012. 'Rituals and Symbols in Community Development'. In *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. IXL, no. 2.
- Patterson, George and Dick Scoggins. 2002. *Church Multiplication Guide*. Pasadena: William Carey Library.
- Patzia, Arthur G. 2001. *The Emergence of the Church*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Smith, Gordon T. 2010. *Transforming Conversion*. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Smith, Steve and Kai, Ying. 2011. *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution*. Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources.

Trompenaars, Fons and Charles Hampden-Turner. 2006. *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Trousdale, Jerry. 2012. *Miraculous Movements*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Healthy Leaders Make Healthy Churches

By Julyan Lidstone

Julyan and his wife spent 15 years church planting in Turkey. On their return home to Scotland he became missions and outreach pastor at his church for 4 years. For the last 12 years he has served as the leader for his agency in Western and Central Asia. They are also involved with ministry among Iranians and Turks in their city.

The Problem: Authoritarian leaders

The collapse of communist ideology in the late 1980s led to a remarkable period of church growth throughout the post-Soviet world. The exciting reports coming out of Eastern Europe and Central Asia were a wonderful answer to prayer for those of us who had been praying for the Muslims in those countries. There were many reports of amazing healings, including credible accounts of people being raised from the dead. Richard Hibbert was working among the Muslim Turkish speaking Roma of Bulgaria at the time and wrote that by 1995 there were around 10,000 believers gathering in one hundred congregations (2013, 315). Similarly, the Uighurs of eastern Kazakhstan were also responding and in just one provincial town veteran worker and Bible translator John Smith¹⁰ reported that there were one hundred new believers being led by a local pastor.

Sadly, the momentum of those early days has not been maintained and visitors today report a marked decline. Hibbert estimates there are now only 6,000 believers from among the Muslim Roma of Bulgaria. While Smith was greatly saddened when he found out that the Uighur congregation of 100 had stopped meeting altogether. This prompted both men to conduct research into the causes of decline by visiting both those still attending churches and those who have given up. Hibbert's findings were written up in *Missiology* (2013) and Smith's conclusions were recorded in his newsletter and then in personal correspondence with myself. There was a remarkable congruence in their results.

Encouragingly, both found that the people who had given up on church had not given up on Jesus. Just one informant in Bulgaria had reverted to Islam, while none of the Uighurs had denied their faith. One lady had not been to church for 14 years, but still boasted about how she had robustly denounced the Jehovah's Witnesses! People had defected from church, but had not become apostates.

¹⁰ Personal communication. Name changed to protect identity.

Both identified the same two main reasons for these defections. One was inadequate community formation, with many complaining about malicious gossip, unresolved conflicts and a sense of shame when they were unable to maintain the kind of behaviour expected of them. Sociologists of religion Stark and Bainbridge have observed that around the world defection is associated with a failure to form satisfying social bonds (1996).

However, the single most significant factor was complaints about the leader. Pastors were seen as aloof, authoritarian, controlling and competitive, often dealing with dissent through shunning or public shaming. John Smith observed that many of the Uighur defectors were ‘mad at the pastor for what they considered a whole string of insensitive remarks’.

It is widely recognised that the leader of an organisation plays a key role in the formation of its ethos and values, so it is not surprising that the ongoing health of a church depends on the pastor to a very significant extent. The leaders of new churches in Muslim societies are themselves usually first generation converts, whose understanding of leadership and authority is therefore shaped by the prevailing cultural norms. Sociologists like Hofstede would classify most societies of Asia and the Middle East as high power distance, meaning leaders are expected to be remote and domineering, asserting their authority through the acquisition of privileges (2005, 57). These cultures are also collective rather than individualistic, which means shame and honour are powerful drivers of behaviour, controlling social interactions.

Patron Leaders

Leadership in such societies is structured in terms of patrons and clients. As the word suggests, patrons are strong father figures who are expected to care and provide for their clients; in return the clients submit to their patrons with loyalty expressed in gratitude and praise. Both parties are satisfied, as the patrons gain honour, while the clients find security. This is the default model of leadership in hierarchical shame-honour societies and while it can be a genuinely mutually rewarding relationship, it is easily open to abuse.

The potential problems associated with patron-client models of leadership in churches have been widely observed. Such leaders:

- Cannot confess weakness: the leader feels he has to defend his authority to maintain his honour, and so cannot acknowledge any weakness. He has to know all the answers all of the time.
- Suppress criticism: any criticism is seen as an attack on his authority and honour, and so must be silenced. This leads to a culture in which it is difficult to voice different opinions or report disagreeable facts.
- Discipline by shunning: dissenters and critics are punished by shaming, which means the leader may shun them, or even publicly disgrace them.

- View new leaders as a threat: Emerging leaders are seen as potential rivals, so they cannot be empowered with delegated authority. This typically ends with the gifted young man having a catastrophic row with the leader and taking his friends off to form a new church.
- Compete with other leaders: Leaders of other churches are also seen as threats to the leader's pre-eminence, so there is a felt need to put them down with criticism.
- Burn out: Shouldering all this responsibility, and the consequences of the inevitable conflicts and leadership challenges, is a burden too hard for most to handle with the result that many fall into discouragement or sin.

While these symptoms have been observed in churches in many hierarchical societies, from Korea to Brazil, it may be that the Islamic view of an authoritarian God as remote, capricious and threatening reinforces the harmful leadership tendencies in Muslim societies. The implication is that new churches in these societies will suffer even more from these maladies.

I am British, which means I tend to be individualistic, and sceptical of authority figures. I see the weaknesses of these patron leaders very clearly and am offended by what I perceive as their domineering and abusive behaviour. I instinctively want to challenge them with the current Western model of democratic, empowering and facilitative leadership. Yet I am aware that in so doing I am making claims for the superiority of my cultural framework that I cannot defend. I am inviting them to a leadership style which is foreign to their cultures, which they cannot implement, and which will create confusion among their followers.

Paul's Approach to Patron Leadership

Does the Bible offer another view of leadership and authority, which challenges both the East and the West? Yes, it does! Jesus and Paul successfully exercised leadership in cultures of abusive patron leaders and yet were able to subvert the prevailing understanding of authority and to demonstrate how leadership works in the Kingdom of God.

The first century societies were intensely hierarchical, engaging in a never ending competition for honour. Andrew Clarke's *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth* (1993) describes society as rigidly stratified, with leaders endowed with near absolute powers. At the pinnacle of society Caesar was accorded divine status, and at the domestic level a father could exercise powers of life and death over his slaves, and even over his own children. The supreme value for everyone was the pursuit of honour, and it is recorded that Alexander the Great was driven to his exploits by his desire to be known and 'honoured by mankind the world over'. Men competed for titles recorded in inscriptions, or to be praised in

speeches delivered by professional rhetoricians. Invitations to eat at feasts, marriage contracts and even commercial deals were all conducted with the aim of putting others under obligation and so elevating one's own status. Honour was seen as in limited supply, so shaming one's rival was an important way of enhancing one's reputation; indeed, court cases were not so much a mechanism for establishing guilt and innocence as disgracing one's enemy.

1 Corinthians

Clarke and others have shown how deeply influenced the church in Corinth was by its cultural context. Theissen demonstrates that the divisions reported by Chloe's household (1 Cor. 1:11) were probably caused by friction between the elite and the commoners, as is clearly seen in the scandalous abuse of the Lord's Supper (1982, 154). In keeping with the practice at guild meals, the wealthy patrons flaunt their status by eating first, and by eating larger portions, thereby humiliating their less noble brethren (1 Cor. 11:22). This elite loved the smooth, polished rhetoric of Apollos, whose sophistication matched their view of themselves. They were offended by Paul's refusal to rely on 'wisdom and eloquence', concerned that he may empty the message of the cross of its power (1 Cor. 1:17).

Paul's response to this attack on his authority is not to resort to their tactics of high flown invective, but to glory in his shame, playing the part of a despised fool, willing to become the scum of the earth (1 Cor. 4:8-13). Pickett showed that crucifixion was the ultimate humiliation reserved for slaves, and Paul overturned all social conventions by modelling his life on the cross of Christ (1997, 77). In so doing Paul's spiritual authority was not undermined, for he goes on to exhort the Corinthians as their spiritual father, and is so bold as to threaten the possibility of his 'rod of discipline' (1 Cor 4:21).

2 Corinthians

However, this strategy was not rewarded with immediate success, and Paul's relationship with the Corinthians continued to be a source of deep sorrow. Barnett's reconstruction of Paul's relationship with the Corinthians suggests that after a painful visit he wrote a letter with 'tears' (2 Cor 2:1-4), which secured a repentance on the part of many that gave him great joy (2 Cor 7:16), but which still left him having to deal with the false apostles and their friends (2011, 234).

Reading between the lines we can deduce why the false apostles found Paul so distasteful, with his refusal to conform to the contemporary norms of shame and honour:

- 10:10 He was 'unimpressive in person and contemptible in speech.' They expected leaders to have dynamic personalities, and to be powerful orators. Alexander was their preferred model, not Jesus of Nazareth.

- 11:7 He did not take financial support because he earned a living by working with his hands. No self-respecting philosopher or teacher would demean himself with manual labour. Moreover, refusing their support meant refusing their patronage. Paul refused to compromise his ministry by selling himself.
- 11:18 Being steeped in the Old Testament he saw boasting as foolishness (e.g. Ps 75:4). Boasting was an accepted part of the first century pursuit of honour, with the elite flaunting their status, wealth and achievements.
- 11:20 He was too weak to exploit others or slap them in the face. The ‘super apostles’ and their friends understood leadership and authority to give them the right to use and abuse those under them. Their clients looked up to strong leaders and expected to be mistreated by them.

Paul unwillingly accepts he has to play their game of boasting, but does so with such skill that undermines all their pride. He boasts about suffering, but suffering which left him with the shame of the scars of having been flogged like a slave (2 Cor 11:23). He talks about his exploits, but recounts an incident in a basket that makes him look foolish (2 Cor 11:33). He too has had powerful spiritual experiences, but he wryly comments that his prayers were not even able to heal himself (2 Cor 12:8). He boasts of his weakness, because in his weakness God’s power is made perfect.

Chapter 13 records how God’s power was indeed made manifest in Paul’s weakness, as Paul now makes it clear he is coming with authority to deal with the sinners, hoping to build them up but ready and able to tear them down (2 Cor 13:10). Romans 15:26-27 indicates how he was successful in his mission, as the saints in Achaia got behind Paul’s project of sending a gift to the poor of Jerusalem and were ‘pleased to make a contribution’. Paul defeated the challenge of the Corinthian elite and their false apostles, not by resorting to their tactics of boastful rhetoric and flaunting wealth, but instead subverted their world view by insisting on following the example of his Lord in taking on the shameful role of a crucified slave.

Application Today

It is the leaders who bear the responsibility for the spiritual health of a church. In the case of Corinth the divisions reported by Chloe’s people were the result of the hierarchical understanding of authority of the prominent patrons of the fledgling church. Today we see how domineering leadership at best limits growth and at worse leads to conflict that in turn causes many to be disappointed and to stumble. This was the case in Corinth, with leaders who had been taught by Paul, and it will be same for us who seek to nurture new communities of faith in the Muslim world. Our greatest challenge is the development of leaders who have personally embraced the principles of the cross and of grace.

However, Paul found that challenging the prevailing leadership paradigm caused conflict and enmity. It seems that those who had been his friends became disillusioned with his failure to conform to their expectations and turned against him. They mocked and humiliated the man who had led them to faith, causing him to endure some of the most painful periods of his life (2 Cor 4:7-12). They welcomed the false apostles who brought a seductive but poisonous interpretation of the gospel. Judas did the same to Jesus, and many of our colleagues have similar testimonies today.

Of course, many Westerners today undergo these crises because of their own cultural shortcomings. Their limited understanding of patron-client relations, and insensitivity to the feelings of others, set them up for failure in their relationships with local believers. However, even though Jesus and Paul understood their cultures as insiders, and possessed remarkable rhetorical skills to communicate their message, they still suffered betrayal and rejection.

While teaching is essential to changing this mind-set, it is seldom sufficient to change deeply entrenched attitudes. Mere propositional information cannot change hearts. After having spent three years listening to Jesus, on the night before his crucifixion the disciples were still arguing about who would be the greatest (Luke 22:24). Such paradigm shifts require a personal crisis deep enough to precipitate questioning of values and foundational worldview. The disciples of Jesus were radically changed by the experience of having their Lord wash their feet, and then submit to the humiliation of the cross. I believe Paul's 'boast' in 2 Corinthians 11:21-12:10 also succeeded in exposing and subverting the norms of the dominant culture.

I have observed that people are most open to this transformational kind of learning when they have failed. Several leaders of Middle Eastern churches whom I know have mellowed with time, learning from the conflicts and splits of their earlier ministry. They have learnt not to be threatened by young leaders, to rejoice in the triumphs of their fellow-leaders, to accept criticism from followers without responding with exclusion and shaming. The role of the mentors of such leaders is to turn the times of discouragement into opportunities for growth.

For both Jesus and Paul this transformation of leaders' attitudes came at the price of their own suffering and disgrace. By accepting the shame, and waiting patiently for vindication, they demonstrated how authority is handled in the Kingdom of God. By personally modelling a radically counter-cultural leadership style, they were able to see others start to minister in the same spirit. If we are to plant healthy churches, we too will have to have the spiritual resources to be silent when criticised, meek when attacked, forgiving when betrayed. As we participate in Christ's sufferings, we will enjoy the power of his Spirit blessing us with fruit that abides.

Works Cited

- Barnett, Paul. 2011. *The Corinthian Question*. Nottingham: Apollos.
- Clarke, Andrew. 1993. *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hibbert, Richard. 2013. 'Why Do They Leave?' *Missiology* 41: 315-328
- Hofstede, Geert and Gert Jan Hofstede. 2005. *Cultures and Organisations: Software of the Mind*. New York: McGraw Hill
- Pickett, Raymond. 1977. *The Cross in Corinth: The Social Significance of the Death of Jesus*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Stark, Rodney & William Bainbridge. 1996. *A Theory of Religion*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Theissen, Gerd. 1982. *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

PART 2: HELP FOR CONVERSATIONS WITH MUSLIMS

When Muslims Say...

Responses to Things that Muslims Often Say to Christians

I receive this article by email May 1st, 2014. When I corresponded with the author, he wanted to remain anonymous, but was happy for me to pass this on to whomever I thought could make use of it. I thought that his suggestions offer some good insights to use in talking with Muslims. And, even if they are not at the level that you are accustomed to engaging Muslims, and even if you disagree with some of the answers and assumptions he makes on occasion, they are a fresh reminder that it is possible to give helpful explanations to our Muslims friends. Though I have edited the original text to improve its readability, I have left a number of original features that remind us that he is not a native English speaker. – The Editor

Hi brothers and sisters,

Good morning. I trust that everything is going very well in your family and work by the grace of our Lord and Saviour.

Recently I spent some time listening to many Christian apologists and former Muslim converts on the internet. From them I learned some useful answers to those questions which Muslims are likely to ask during conversation. I prefer these answers to long theological discussion, because they are short and to the point. Instead of trying to avoid answering Muslim statements such as 'Jesus is not a son of God' or 'Jesus is only a prophet', these answers intentionally encourage Muslims to ask such questions. I think many people receiving this email may already know the appropriate answers to give to such statements or questions. But I do hope this short list of responses to Muslim misunderstandings and questions will be of some use to bring Muslims to Christ.

Let us go out and engage Muslim friends, colleagues and neighbours in conversation with love and boldness today!

God bless you, your family and work.

When Muslims say that God does not have a son:

When I was in the army, we called each other brothers. Did we call each other brothers because the same mother delivered all of us? Of course not. We were brothers relationally, not biologically. We behaved to each other as if we were brothers, caring and loving each other. This is what it means to say that Jesus is the Son of God. To Christians it is most absurd to say that God (the Father)

married a woman and Jesus (the Son) was born as a result of this sexual relationship. Jesus is the Son to God relationally, not biologically.

When Muslims say that they also believe in Jesus:

Your Jesus and our Jesus are not the same. In fact your Jesus never existed in history. He might exist only in your mind and imagination. Suppose that the name of my wife is Julie and the wife's name of another man is also Julie. Are my Julie and that man's Julie the same because they have the same name? Of course not. The Jesus you believe never existed in history. The real historical Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who willingly chose to die on the cross to forgive all sins of mankind, because he loved them so much.

When Muslims say that they worship the same God:

The God of the Bible and Allah of the Quran are not the same. What is the most important attribute of Allah of the Quran? (Answer) The most important attribute of the God of the Bible is love. What is the relationship between Allah and mankind? (Answer) The relationship between God and mankind is that of a Father to his children. Does Allah of the Quran love sinners and those who disobey him? (Answer) The God of the Bible loves sinners and those who even disobey him. As you see, the God of the Bible and Allah of the Quran are not the same. Suppose that the name of my wife is Julie and the wife's name of another man is also Julie. Are my Julie and that man's Julie the same because they have the same name? Of course not.

When Muslims say that Jesus is only a prophet:

Do you think the Spirit of God or God's Spirit is eternal or created? (Answer) Since the Bible and the Quran agree that Jesus is the Spirit of God or Ruhullah, the unique title given only to Jesus, Jesus is eternal as you said just now with your own mouth. Jesus eternally exists as the Spirit of God.

If our spirit is taken away from us, we are not us anymore and we would be like an animal. Our spirit is the very essence of us and without it we are nothing. Jesus is the Spirit of God, the essence of God. Since Jesus eternally exists, he did not need the sperm of a father and the egg of a mother to be born like you and me. He needed only the womb of a virgin to take the flesh to come into the world.

Whenever God does a miracle, he always has a good reason for it. Jesus came into the world through a virgin, which is a great miracle in the world. But there is a good reason for it, because Jesus has already existed eternally as the Spirit of God. He did not need the sperm of a father and the egg of a mother. In the case of Adam, it was very natural for Adam to be born without a father, because there was no father and mother to begin with in the first place. He was created by the breath of God but he was never called the Spirit of God or

Ruhullah. Do you think your spirit and your breath are the same? Do you think a human has the ability to become God? On the other hand, do you think God has ability to come to earth as human? (Answer) Basically you limit God's power within your own reason. Your own reason is more important than God's ability. Do you not agree with me?

When Muslims say that Jesus did not die on the cross:

The death of Jesus was one of the most well documented historical facts from ancient times. Those who do not have any kind of faith or even oppose Christian faith accept the fact that Jesus died on the cross. This is not an argument between Muslims and Christians, but an argument between Muslims and believers of all other faiths including even atheists. '1 plus 1 is equal to 2' is a fact, never becomes 3 or 4 whatever conviction or belief you might have. Furthermore, not far from the cross Mary and the disciples of Jesus were closely watching Jesus on the cross. A mother can distinguish even identical twins without difficulty. Your argument that somebody other than Jesus died on the cross simply doesn't fit the historical evidence. How do you think?

When Muslims say that in the Bible Jesus did not say he was God:

When I go out with my family, people know that I am the father of the family and the husband of my wife. It is obvious by watching how I say and behave to my family. I do not have to shout to other people in the street 'I, XXX, am the father of this family and the husband of this woman!' Do you think I am not the father of the family and the husband of my wife, simply because I do not proclaim my status to other people?

There are numerous verses in the Bible that show the divine nature of Jesus. Here are just two of them.

Who do you think has the authority to forgive our sins? Of course only God. This is what Jesus said. 'When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"' (Luke 5:20-21)

Who do you think has the ability to give mankind eternal life? Of course only God. This is what Jesus said. 'I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.' (John 10:28)

When Muslims say that Christians worship three Gods:

How many families live in your house? (Answer) Yes, only one family, not four or five families. You are in the family and your wife is also in the family, but you are not the same as your wife. This is a simple illustration of Trinity, although it is not a perfect example. In your family, who is higher, you or your wife? Or you

and your wife are equal in nature? (Answer) Yes, you and your wife are equal in status. Even if you are physically stronger than your wife, you may bring more money to the family than your wife and your signature is above the signature of your wife, you are nevertheless still equal to your wife in nature. Do you not agree? The same is true with Trinity. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, like a family, even as there is only one family in your house. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are equal in nature, but they have different roles. The members of the Trinity always do things in perfect harmony and loving union.

When Muslims say that many Christians have converted to Islam, while no Muslims have converted to Christianity:

I know that some Christians have left their faith for Islam. I also know that many Muslims have left Islam to follow Christ. Conversion has always happened in both directions. Would you send me 2 or 3 YouTube videos of Christian converts so that I could watch them in entirety? When we meet next time, we could discuss why they have left their faith, and on what points I agree with them and on what points I disagree with them. I will greatly appreciate if you could send me links to such videos.

As I mentioned before, I know that many Muslims have also left Islam to follow Christ. Out of your respect for me, would you also watch 2 or 3 YouTube videos of Muslim converts telling their stories? I am sure you will watch them in their entirety just as I will watch the ones you send me. Here two videos:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqcNX6GPCFY>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bc4A3eiUTJo>

When Muslims say that each person must pay the consequence of his own sins:

Suppose there is a deep lake beside your house. You have warned your son many times not to play near the lake, because he might be drowned. One day you find your son has slipped into the lake and is drowning. He is crying out to you to rescue him! What would you do? Will you say to your son, 'I have warned you many times not to play near the lake, but you did not listen to me! Because this is your own fault, you must pay the consequence of your disobedience. Good luck! Or will you jump into the lake to save your son, even risking your own life, because you love him so much? (Answer) That is what the God of the Bible actually did on the cross, because he loved the world so much. God reached out to us first because of his love for us, instead of sitting back and wishing us luck in saving ourselves!

When Muslims say that the Bible is corrupted:

Do you know exactly when the Bible was corrupted? Do you know exactly who changed the Bible? Do you know which part of the Bible was altered? Did you actually read and compare all the manuscripts of the Bible side by side to reach your conclusion? If I am not mistaken, you have believed whatever you have been told without really examining the evidence. Is this the way you learn new things?

All the *Bibles* we have now are based on the original codex manuscripts, which were written about 400 to 500 AD. By the time the *Qur'an* was compiled by 'Uthman in 651AD, the codex manuscripts of the Bible were widely distributed throughout the world, including in the Arabian Peninsula. These Bible manuscripts were called the light and guidance in Surah 5:44 & 46. Since all the Bible is the light and guidance, many Christians spend more than half of their Scripture reading time reading the Old Testament, which is also called the Torah, even if Jews still do not accept Jesus as the Messiah. But it does not matter whether they accept Jesus as the Messiah or not. The light and guidance is always light and guidance. What percentage of your time do you currently spend reading the Torah and the Injil? Twenty percent or ten percent or even less than five percent? Since the Bible (Old and New Testaments) contains at least 4 times as much content as the Qur'an, in terms of light and guidance. So, I ask again, how much time do you spend reading the Bible to learn some of this light and guidance? If you don't read the Bible, isn't your Islamic belief, that is solely based on the Qur'an, somewhat like a house without foundations and walls, that only has a roof. Do you not agree with me?

When Muslims say that the claim that Jesus took the penalty of their sins on the cross, and now forgives their sins, is simply to give a license to continue to sin:

Have you ever read the famous French novel entitled 'Les Miserables' by Victor Hugo? It is a very interesting story of a French prisoner named Jean Valjean. He was sentenced to a nineteen-year prison term of hard labour for the crime of stealing bread. Convicts at the time had to carry identity cards after release, however, and no innkeeper would let a dangerous criminal spend the night.

For several days after his release from prison after serving his nineteen years, Valjean wandered the village roads, seeking shelter against the weather, until finally a bishop showed kindness on him. That night Jean Valjean lay quietly in a comfortable bed for the first time in his life until the bishop went to bed for sleep. Then he rose from his bed, searched the cupboard for the family treasure, and ran away into the darkness.

The next morning three policemen knocked on the bishop's door, with Valjean in handcuffs. They had caught the convict in flight with the silverware,

and were ready to put the criminal in chains for life. But the bishop responded in a way that no one, especially Jean Valjean, expected. 'So there you are!' he said to Valjean. 'I am delighted to see you again. Had you forgotten that I gave you the candlesticks as well?' Jean Valjean was shocked and felt like a bomb had exploded in his heart. He stared at the old man with an expression no words can convey. The bishop assured the policemen that Valjean was no thief, saying 'This silver was my gift to him'. When the policemen left, leaving Valjean free to stay with the bishop, he gave the candlesticks to his guest, now speechless and trembling, and let Jean Valjean go after asking him to live a new life.

He kept the silver candlesticks as a precious reminder of grace and dedicated himself from then on to helping others as a new person.

If you were Jean Valjean, would you take the grace of forgiveness of the bishop as a license to keep stealing and cheating others, or would do the same as Jean Valjean did? (Answer) God does not seek people who abuse his grace as a license for sins or love him out of duty or out of fear of punishment, but he seeks those who love him back out of thanks for his unconditional love and grace, no matter how few they might be.

When Muslims say that they can go to heaven by keeping God's commands:

God has given mankind his laws through the prophets and commanded them to follow carefully all the words of his laws and decrees. If anybody follows all the words of his laws and decrees, he or she can have 'righteousness'. Righteousness is a state where the one with it can meet God face-to-face in heaven without harm. In fact it is the ultimate goal of mankind.

Jesus summarized all God's laws into two: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and Love your neighbours as yourself' Here is what 'Love your neighbours as yourself' means. Let us say that you knew a man who delighted in spreading bad rumours about you to other people and even attempted to kill you several times. One day when you walked by a lake, he was drowning in the deep water, and when he saw you, he cried out to you for help. Since the lake was very deep, there was a very high probability that you would die in the process of saving the man. 'Love your neighbour as yourself' means that you jump into the water to save this man with genuine compassion for him. If you can do it, then you have righteousness. If not, you do not have such righteousness, then you cannot go to heaven, because you do not follow all the words of his laws and decrees.

Nobody in history has ever achieved such righteousness by his own effort, with only one exception – that is Jesus Christ. When Roman soldiers drove huge nails into his hands and feet causing unbearable pain and humiliation, Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' (Luke 23:34)

Jesus responded to their persecution which led to his humiliating and death, by forgiving and loving them.

Jesus is the only one in history who ever completely followed his own command: "Love your neighbours as yourself". Only Jesus has righteousness. When we invite Jesus as the Saviour and Lord into our heart, he comes into us with his righteousness. This is the way that sinful human beings can become righteous.

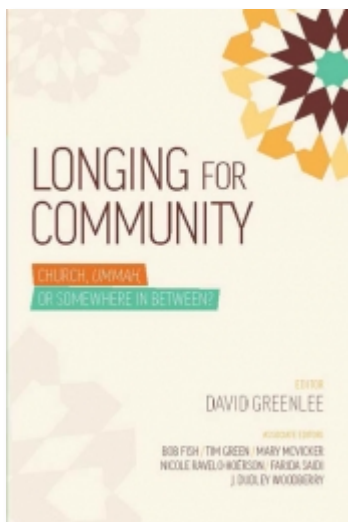
The presidential place of Korea is called the Blue House because the colour of its roof is blue. The best security guards of Korea guard the entrance of the Blue House. Suppose I stopped my car at the entrance to go into the Blue House. By looking at my face, the security guards would immediately reject my entrance and ask me to go back. But as soon as they noticed that the president of Korea was in the back seat of my car, they would let me in without question. They allow me to enter, not because of me but because the president was in the car. This is what would happen when we are at the entrance of heaven. God allows us to come into heaven because there is righteousness in us. This righteousness did not come by following all the words of his laws and decrees on our side, which is impossible, but by inviting into our lives and submitting ourselves utterly to Jesus, who alone is righteous.

PART 3: BOOK REVIEWS

Longing for Community: Church, Ummah, or Somewhere in Between?

David Greenlee, Editor

Pasadena: William Carey Library. 2013, 272 pages.



This book is the result of the Second Coming to Faith Consultation (CTFC2), a meeting held near London in 2010 with some sixty missionaries and missiologists involved in the Muslim world. It follows up on an earlier volume, also edited by David Greenlee, *From the Straight Path to the Narrow Way: Journeys of Faith* which came out of the first CTFC. The significance of this is that each chapter was written by a presenter at that consultation, thus the authors are all field practitioners and researchers.

Those familiar with the earlier volume will notice some similarities, but what will stand out is the clear shift in focus. Whereas the first volume was focused on *how* Muslims are coming to faith, this book focuses on the

thorny issue of the *identity* of new believers. In the introduction, Greenlee rightly points out the importance of the identity issue and that until recently 'has not received sufficient attention in the new but growing body of studies concerning those of a Muslim background who have come to faith in Jesus Christ' (p. xiv). Flowing loosely from this central theme, the authors tackle a wide variety of subject matter. The following are a few examples.

Jens Barnett and Tim Green are given a total of four chapters to unpack the very significant issues of identity choice and cultural hybridity. Karen Scott explores social, cultural, and religious barriers faced by women converts in South Asia. She places the socio-cultural status of women in Islam in contrast to biblical perspectives, and then reminds us that the emerging BMB church must make an intentional effort bring about this paradigm shift.

Rick Brown considers the issues of truth, courtesy and respect for other cultures. How can cross-cultural workers maintain respect for Muslim cultures without compromising gospel truth? His answer is by practicing 'critical

contextualization,' that is carefully sorting through the meanings of cultural practices before deciding what can be redeemed and what must be discarded.

And a final example comes from Ruth Nicholls who contemplates the possibility of new, culturally relevant liturgies for drawing Muslim seekers to Christ. Nicholls presents a case for contextualized forms of liturgy such as creedal statements, catechisms, chants and prayers which speak to the deepest hearts of Muslim seekers and foster spiritual growth for new believers from Muslim backgrounds.

These are only a few of the many helpful and challenging topics covered in this volume. Each of the authors brings important thought and insight to the kinds of issues which field workers face when reaching across the divide between the Crescent and the Cross. However, due to the complexity of the topics covered, these engaging chapters are only starting places to provoke deeper thought and reflection. But they are a great place for that as we each seek to apply the latest research to our own ministry contexts in the Muslim world.

I believe this is a book that will speak to various constituencies. Field practitioners in the Muslim world will find it a helpful resource for issues they face on a daily basis. For seminary students it represents some of the most current missiological thought and might be a stepping stone to research on related issues in the Buddhist and Hindu worlds. Furthermore, it is my hope that even missions-minded pastors will find the time to read at least a few of the chapters, that is if they truly wish to understand the issues faced by those who they send-out into the complex world of Islam.

All in all, Greenlee and his team of contributors have done the missions community a valuable service in this volume. They bring a wide range of perspectives to bear on the topic of the nature of the emerging church in the Muslim world, and I as a reader have been greatly enriched by their insights.

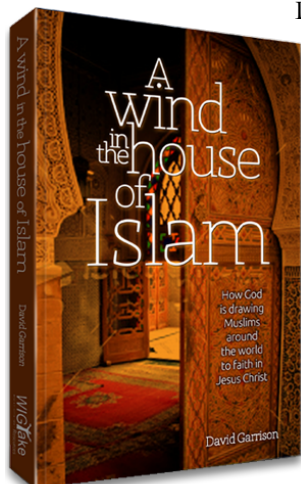
Reviewed by Gene Daniels

Gene Daniels (pseudonym) is an American missionary, researcher and writer whose views about the nature of the Church and faith in Christ have been shaped by living and working among Muslims in Central Asia.

A Wind in the House of Islam: How God is Drawing Muslims around the World to Faith in Jesus Christ

by David Garrison.

Monument, CO: WiGTAKE Resources. 2014. 314 pages. \$19.



David Garrison's book is different from many similar books and articles on methodology and conversions of Muslims. These other books often highlight some new effective approach such as spontaneous people movements, disciple-making movements, Insider Movements, dreams, visions & miracles, using the Quran for witness or 'just share Jesus' relational evangelism. They are sometimes over-hyped, pop-missiology that worked in one part of the world and are offered to encourage success-starved workers among Muslims scratching away and chipping at the edges of the Muslim world. I admit that after reading those books, or going to such seminars, I have often excitedly rushed off to try the new approach.

However, typically I have wound up disappointed with my inability to implement the new approach and frustrated by the poor results. I have found myself asking: 'What am I doing wrong that it is not working?' I confess that sometimes I have given in to jealousy followed by dismissive scepticism of the methodology, questioning of their veracity and even maligning the people involved! Alas, I eventually repent, then rejoice with my fellow workers who are enjoying success and ask God to show me what I might learn. This book by David Garrison goes a bit deeper, surveys the movements more broadly and offers a host of factors contributing to movements. It is written neither as sensationalism nor as an academic study. It does not adequately verify the reports of some of the movements but significantly appears to be a systematic attempt to get a handle on what is happening in terms of movements among Muslims and why.

The data discussed in *A Wind in the House of Islam* is based on hundreds of interviews by David Garrison and his team. It represents the analysis of the answers given by local believers (those from Christian background, Muslim background and those who self-identify as Muslim Followers of Christ) involved in ongoing people movements among Muslims over the last few years. The goal was to distil some contributing factors from the reported phenomenon of movements. A movement is defined as 1,000 believers and/or 100 new churches of conversions of Muslims to Christ in a decade or two. It is not clear what

definition of church he is using, probably a house church/fellowship in most cases though some of the accounts involve using redeemed mosques. Although all nine regions are presented as having movements, it seems clear that the movements he really features are those which have significant depth—the movements in Eastern South Asia, Indo-Malaysia, and East Africa. Consequently, he gives less comprehensive coverage to most of the other regions.

The thesis is that there is a movement of Muslims coming to Christ in each of the nine regions of the Muslim world. For each region, he gives some ethnic, historical, linguistic and political context. The acknowledgement that there are variations in the Islam practiced and manifested in each of the nine regions is a useful contribution to this field of missiology among Muslims. We should be more aware of the varying contexts rather than assuming that Islam is monolithic across regions. Results of a particular approach will vary when ‘franchising’ a methodology as a tool for use everywhere in the Muslim world. However, David Garrison is not posing a one-solution answer to reaching Muslims. Instead, he lists numerable factors influencing and affecting why and how movements are starting in the Muslim world. In some regions, the evidence for a movement is very thin or too immature to measure. In other places such as South Asia, where the start of the movements dates back to the 1970s, there is much known about such movements, including the existence of what are normally considered traditional churches, in some of them.

Now I want to discuss some of the more controversial stuff; contextualisation – particularly the point about Muslims not changing religion or converting to Christianity or adopting a Christian identity. These Muslim followers of Jesus are counted in the movements that Garrison discusses. Garrison accepts that some practitioners use high contextualisation missiology, that a Muslim can become a follower of Jesus in their heart, but not immediately (or ever?) quit their identity as Muslim. He states that true conversion will eventually cause someone to change religion. However, how much should we retard the rate of transition of identity from Muslim to Christian in order to intentionally influence others towards following Jesus? Some missiologists and field workers have perhaps been doing too much loose experimentation for the last thirty years, trying to justify, test, evaluate, measure, analyse and further experiment with this approach in hopes of sparking large-scale movements of Muslims to Jesus. Garrison, in keeping with his pattern of adroitly straddling the line on high-contextualisation and not stating where he stands on critical issues, does not offer conclusive evidence for or against any particular approach but instead offers a range of contributing factors to movements.

I offer critiques of parts of the book to promote better investigation of the phenomenon of movements. If Garrison’s aim was to do academic research, then I question whether the methodology of using interviews and reports of

movements by outsiders as the basis for analysis can be legitimately viewed as sufficiently objective to withstand scrutiny. Many of the personal accounts of believers are very touching, amazing, inspiring and sometimes tragic, but is this valid evidence when an interview with only one person is considered proof of the existence and characteristics of an entire movement?

How sceptical should I be of the validity of information gained from interviews? Telling an interviewer what they want to hear, putting the most flattering spin on events and being optimistic about numbers are all too common in missions, not just in Muslim cultures. I am mindful that it was a safe interview environment for the interviewees who were responding to questions given by westerners. Their answers might not however coincide with what they say when challenged by a hostile local interrogator. Were the interviewees 'cherry-picked' for the book or are they truly representative of the entire movement?

The characteristics of some of the reported movements are very questionable because the reporting seems extremely sketchy, rife with unverified claims and the numbers claimed have been seen by few if any outsiders. See, for example, the note given about a movement in West South Asia, p.280, note 6. If the workers in that region are unconvinced about the veracity of the reports then how is the reader to conclude if it is really a movement? Verification of the existence of the groups, the depth of commitment and the numbers reported are difficult to obtain. In this case, is it because the proponents of these movements feel that closer examination jeopardises the fragile existence of the movement and thus they prefer to keep them isolated relying on second-hand reports? Are these singular interviews representative of the movement and is it even worth reporting if it is so disputed? I wish the team had asked more probing questions at times, gotten better independent verification of the numbers, observed first hand more of the group meetings and had included criticisms from detractors in those same regions. Certainly not all nationals or workers are convinced of the genuineness or the size of these movements. However, Garrison's metric of doing interviews with hundreds of people is a step in the right direction to discover commonalities leading to effectiveness and goes beyond simply telling a few anecdotal 'glory stories' and then making grandiose conclusions about universal applicability in the Muslim world.

Additionally, in an apparent attempt to probe deeper, the interviewing team occasionally asked follow up questions to test key areas of belief about Jesus son of God, the Bible, Muhammad and the role of the Quran. If we can trust the answers given, then most seem orthodox in their beliefs. Interviewees from older movements are thus more mature. However, newer believers, particularly in more contextualized fields, when confronted on these same points were vague, incomplete, and nuanced in their answers. Their replies were non-offensive and non-committal to either Christian or Muslim audiences. I suspect that perhaps their contextualization-trained mentors had already influenced these

believers. It seems that some of these highlighted movements have been happening for so long and with such unclear results, I wonder if they are still moving towards orthodoxy and in what way they see a connection and reconciliation of practices with the rest of the Body of Christ?

Not to undermine his analysis or conclusions but it seems obvious that in many cases of movements there were large-scale upheavals causing Muslims to question their faith thus disrupting the status quo. War, major political changes, revolution, natural disaster, etc. created an opportunity for some daylight to come between Islam's hegemony over their situation and their lives thus giving Muslims an opportunity or increased motivation to make their own religious choices. Nonetheless, the factors Garrison lists as contributing to movements, capitalized on the situation or crisis God allowed to come about and thus assisted the resulting movement.

Turkey is not specifically represented and is a huge challenge, not very closely associated with the rest of the central Asian Turkic world. Why isn't Iran better represented? David Garrison is not alone in failing to dig deeper into the Iranian movement. Somehow, the Iranian movement is rarely held in the same regard as more contextualized movements among Muslims. In the Persian world movements are less contextualized and are perhaps dismissed as old fashioned and not so missiologically intriguing as the more highly contextualized movements, even though their numbers are greater and their depth and breadth are well documented.

The book's grand historical analysis seems solid – that there are more movements to Christ in the last 12 years than the previous thousand plus years! The rate of movements of Muslims turning to Christ seems to be accelerating as well. Credit is due to the earlier missionaries upon whose shoulders we stand to enjoy such fruit. Credit is due as well to the innovators in Muslim outreach the last thirty-five years whose work, although often controversial, has helped to sow seed among Muslims and foster discussion of using different and better approaches to reaching Muslims.

Garrison's book inspires, personalises, documents and offers analysis of these movements over history which makes it a must read for missionaries among Muslims and those studying missiology. Wishful and sceptical thinking aside, there seems to be some genuine significant evidence compiled from many of the regions that movements to Christ truly are afoot in the Muslim world thanks to *many* contributing factors.

Reviewed by Rob A

Rob and Iris worked in a war torn country from 1992 to 2012, doing NGO work and leading four teams with Frontiers and EPC (Evangelical Presbyterian Church). They continue to focus their ministry to the region from New England. They have 3 field-born kids. Rob has an MA in World Christianity from Denver

Seminary and is working on an M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell seminary. They do recruiting and oversee field teams, and also teach and do translation work.

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity

by Nabeel Qureshi

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2014. 296 pages

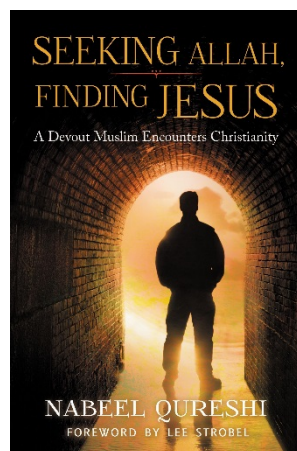
This is a beautiful seamless narrative biography of how a young, devout, brilliant Muslim young man, raised in a Pakistani, God-fearing Ahmadiyya family in America, is befriended by a Christian classmate, and through years of struggle and much researching, and finally through dreams that were answers to prayers, comes to genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also of interest to note that Nabeel lived through the horrifying events of September 11th, 2001, which shattered his assumption that Islam was a religion of peace.

In the Introduction, Nabeel states his three purposes for writing this book. The following are the lead sentences in each paragraph (pp. 17-18):

1. To tear down walls by giving non-Muslim readers an insider's perspective into a Muslim's heart and mind.
2. To equip you with facts and knowledge, showing the strength of the case for the gospel in contrast with the case for Islam.
3. To portray the immense inner struggle of Muslims grappling with the gospel, including sacrifices and doubts.

At the very beginning of this well-crafted narrative, the author candidly states certain liberties that were taken with the material. "The words I have in quotations are rough approximations. A few of the conversations actually represent multiple meetings condensed into one. In some instances, stories are displaced in the timeline to fit the topical categorization" (p. 19).

From the Prologue and throughout Part One, the reader is taken inside Islam as practiced by this devoted and affectionate family. For non-Muslim readers, unacquainted with the intimacies of a devout Muslim's day to day routine, the author shares how God-oriented every aspect of their family routine is. Arabic phrases uttered during their prayers are shared with their



translations. 'Glory be to Allah, the Highest.' Another shorter variant of this is 'Glory be to Allah.' 'God is great.' 'I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is his servant and messenger.' 'I seek forgiveness from God.' 'The peace and mercy of Allah be upon us.' These exclamations and many others illustrate the God orientation of this devout Muslim family.

Testimony is given to the great influence of his mother in inculcating the teaching of the Islamic faith to Nabeel and his sister. It is also of interest to know that his father is one of those Muslims who has been trained to propagate their faith and that his mother was the daughter of such a man. Two of the foundational teachings in the home were that the Quran is the perfect book and Muhammad was the ideal man. Later in the narrative, the reader will learn just how hard it is for a Muslim who has been taught this all his life to tolerate those who would question either of these 'truths'. To these above teachings were added that righteousness comes through prayer and obedience to the teaching of Muhammad.

Because Nabeel's family was of the Ahmadiyya sect of Islam, there is a necessary explanation of the diversity that exists in Islam among the different sects, and this diversity exists also in the various schools of Islamic Law (Sharia).

For the Muslim who has been taught that Allah is high and mighty and to be feared, 'Dreams are the only means by which the average Muslim expects to hear directly from God.' Later in the text, the reader will learn that there are standard books on how Muslims are to interpret dreams, and in the case of Nabeel, how his mother's interpretation of one of his dreams was crucial in leading Nabeel to faith in Jesus.

Nabeel highlights the differences that exist between Muslim young people growing up in the West compared with those who grow up in a totally Muslim milieu in a predominately Muslim country. To the point, the Muslim receiving an education in the West learns to think critically and reasoning becomes the rule, whereas, Muslims growing up in a totally Muslim culture is taught that authority is the rule and questions are not to be asked. This is dramatically illustrated in Nabeel's agonizing ordeal as he learns to question and to reason – a practice that inevitably leads to a clash with his father who is bathed in the aura of unquestioning authority.

In the providence of God, Nabeel was befriended by a classmate who was a dedicated Christian. This long-term friendship lasted through the teens and adult years and is still ongoing. This friendship was critical to Nabeel coming to faith in Christ. David, his friend, ably defended his Christian faith, much to Nabeel's surprise, for Nabeel came from the Ahmadiyya branch of Islam which has been famous for debating and confusing Christians.

Eventually, the ground shifts from Nabeel's attacks on the Christian teachings about Jesus being the Son of God who was crucified to David challenging Nabeel on why he believed what he did. This is when Nabeel's struggle really begins. The reader will be fascinated as every point of Muslim teaching about the Quran and about Muhammad is challenged and to see how hard put Nabeel was to respond, not blindly, but with the new tools of reasoning.

Not only was David blessed with his own brilliant reasoning powers used to the full in defending his faith, but he was assisted by others who were Christian leaders well-schooled in the field of apologetics. In this light, one of the turning points in Nabeel's life was when he began to see that his father, an authority of Islam, could not reasonably answer questions raised by these well-informed and well-trained Christians. As the narrative approaches its climax, Nabeel is led to abandon the acceptance of his Muslim faith based on submission to authority and to begin to really look at those parts of the Quran and the Hadith concerning the life of Muhammad. What followed was shattering.

From Qur'anic and Hadith sources alone, Nabeel learned of Muhammad's encounter with a frightening spirit being that early on led Muhammad to contemplate suicide. He learned of Muhammad's marriage to a six year old, of his raiding and looting his neighbours' caravans, of his taking his adopted son's wife as his own, of his assassinations, of the beheading of hundreds of Jews and the enslavement of their wives and children, of his coming under the spell of a witch's curse. His disillusionment became total.

And finally the hard part. What would his conversion do to his family? For Nabeel truly loved his mother and father and his sister. His family lived in a shame and honour culture. Nabeel knew that if he openly professed Christ, his family would be shattered – disgraced in the eyes of the Muslim community

It is at this point the reader will be surprised to learn that Nabeel asks God for three dreams (not just one) to lead him to the decision to openly declare his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Contrary to what most of us in the west might believe, the Lord answered Nabeel with three dreams, one of which his own mother interpreted (not knowing it would lead to her son's leaving Islam).

The final dream, illustrated so dramatically on the cover of the book, has Nabeel standing before a narrow door leading to the light on the other side of the door where his Christian friend is waiting for him. When Nabeel shared this dream with his friend, it was David's privilege to point Nabeel to Luke 13:22, (Jesus speaking) 'Make every effort to enter through the narrow door...' In the Epilogue, Nabeel writes of his painful but ongoing relationship with his beloved family who did not permanently reject him.

This book is an education on Islam from an insider, and will also teach the reader in rich detail not only how to defend one's own faith, but will also teach how to gently and lovingly lead the Muslim to investigate the false foundations on which Islam is based. I believe that this narrative biography of Nabeel Qureshi should be a must read for anyone wanting to work with Muslims, even for those who have already been doing so because of the thoroughness with which all issues have been tackled.

Reviewed by Don McCurry

Don is a former missionary in Pakistan and a long-time worker in many Muslim fields who has been training workers among Muslims for decades.

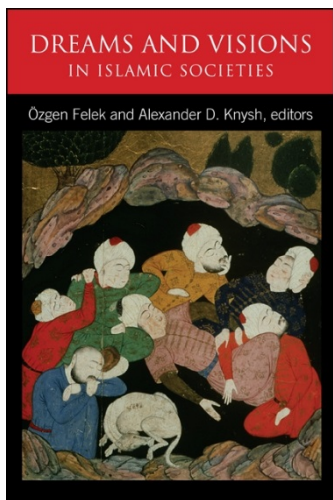
Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies

Editors: Ozgen Felek and Alexander D. Knysh

New York City: State University of New York, 2012, 322 pgs.

This volume provides a scholarly and decidedly Islamic look into the world of dreams and visions. This is a subject that has become particularly prominent of late in mission circles with regard to Islam. The editors' purpose in this book is

not so much an appeal to listen anew to the messages brought by dreams and visions as it is to give a historical overview of how dreams and visions have functioned in Islamic societies from Mohammad to the present. To do so, the volume is divided in two sections.



The first section gives a summary of dreams as they have been preserved in biographical, historical, theological, poetical, oral narratives as well as current web sources of explicitly non-Sufi Muslim societies. In so doing, the selected contributors make a solid case for dreams and visions as generalised experience of regular, ordinary Muslims both historically and inter-communally. It is evident throughout that the principle, 'each

good Muslim could expect guidance from God in dreams' (p. 1) has been, and continues to be, a worldview expectation of normal religious experience.

The second section deals with the significance of dreams and visions in Islamic mysticism in general and in Sufism in particular. Here the authors' contributions serve to shed light on a particular aspect of Sufism by which

adherents validated claims to religious and political leadership (over other Muslims). In short, dreams and visions for the Sufi faithful fulfilled the task of image, authority and status-building devices (8).

Despite the evolution of Islamic society since the inception of Islam, the place of dreams and visions has remained relatively unmoved in significance and function. Dreams and visions lift the dreamer to a state where the 'mysteries of God and his creation, otherwise impenetrable to the human intellect and sense perceptions, are unveiled' (1). Dreams allow the dreamer to 'grasp the true state of affairs in this world and the next' (1). For many, dreams were as real as the historical or personal events they predicted or attempted to explain and they provided a certain orientation in a world otherwise marked by chaos and uncertainty (6). Finally, though Islamic prophecy came to an end with the death of Mohammad, dreams and visions were sanctioned as vehicles of divine communication by Mohammad himself in his final sermon (139), leaving the Muslim community with the promise of divine guidance on into the indefinite future. In the words of one Western scholar, dreams are a 'form of divine revelation and *a chronological successor to the Koran*' (2).

Despite the common occurrence of dreams and visions across Islam in general, the relative importance of the phenomena varies from one society to another. In contrast to the Sunni majority, which enjoyed a rich tradition of dream-lore and popular and often competing interpretive schools, the Shia minority turned to dreams and visions to 'cope with their minority status and the historical injustices inflicted on them by the Sunni majority'(5). For the Sufi, dreams and visions were understood to confirm their theologically elitist position by which they claimed for themselves the title 'friends of God' to whom God had granted special capacity not only to 'see' the things of God but also infallibility in the conception of and interpretation of their dreams (9).

In summary, the collected articles make clear that:

1. Dreams and visions were, and continue to be, perceived as potential vehicles of divine communication and instruction, though categories of 'personal' dreams and even 'satanic' dreams are possible.
2. Despite challenges of symbolic and allegorical elements, the Islamic worldview predisposes dream recipients to accept the veracity of the dream.
3. The occasion of a dream or vision incites an urgent interest in ascertaining the meaning and expected response. With this in mind, interpretive philosophies and structures were established to ensure the necessary triage, provide authoritative interpretations and encourage appropriate action.

It is clear that this volume provides a fairly extensive review of the place of dreams and visions in Islamic societies both historically and across various

Islamic theological traditions. Though much of the discussion is fairly technical, drawing from extant medieval texts and authors unknown outside restricted scholarship circles (in most cases), the text nevertheless confirms the historical and intra-societal continuity of an Islamic worldview; one that is decidedly receptive to divine revelation.

In the end, this is what makes this volume of interest to evangelicals. Despite social, economic, gender, ethnic or intra-faith differences, Muslims carry a deep-seated expectation that God can and may speak to them. One of the authors put it this way,

It is by way of revelation that God communicates to humanity via His prophets, and once they are gone, God continues to send messages to human beings that hold meaning and import for their lives. The more comprehensive one's knowledge of revelation, that is, of the Qur'an, and the deeper one's understanding of the teachings of Mohammad, the more able one becomes in seeing the meanings of true dreams. (132)

Interestingly, this idea that God speaks to mankind is also the story of the Christian faith. Though materialistic philosophies since Thomas Aquinas have served to all but remove the supernatural from the 'rational' faith of the West, perhaps, on this count, Muslims have something to teach us. And yet, simply agreeing to the possibility that God can use dreams and visions to communicate is not sufficient. Rather, a full-orbed resurrection of a biblically-grounded epistemology must be undertaken so that we do not substitute pragmatism and experience for that which indeed is biblical and applicable for us today. Having said that, imagine the impact that what are now referred to as 'Isa-Dreams' can have (and are having!) on those who live within this worldview.¹¹

Finally, this volume is for those who seek more fully to understand the roots of historical Islamic thought and practice with regards to dreams and visions. In that a number of contributing authors dealt extensively with Turkic and Sufi history and sources, it may have particular benefit for those working in those contexts today.

Reviewed by Rick Kronk

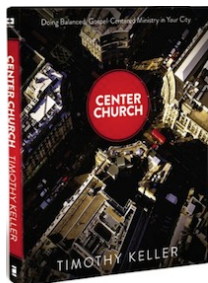
Rick Kronk is the author of *Dreams and Visions: Muslims' Miraculous Journey to Jesus*, (Destiny Image, 2010). He spent sixteen years in church planting among Muslim immigrants in France.

¹¹ For an introduction to this topic, refer to my recent article in SEEDBED, 'Dreams and Visions: An Historical Assessment of a Current Missiological Phenomenon among Muslims' (SEEDBED XXVI:1 (2012) 37-49).

Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City

by Timothy Keller,

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 400 pages, \$20 on Amazon



In *Center Church* Timothy Keller seeks to show what exactly it looks like for a local church to be an engaged, evangelical ministry center in the middle of a large heterogeneous metropolis. His book is the answer to the question so many are asking: How has Redeemer Presbyterian been so successful in New York—one of the most secular and materialistic cities in history? Should we all adopt the ‘Redeemer Model’ and replicate it in our town?

Keller, however, advises that the key to success is not simply copying Redeemer Church, but ‘doing the hard work’ of going back and creating a ‘theological vision’ for our ministry. That is, ‘a faithful restatement of the gospel with rich implications for life, ministry and mission in a type of culture at a moment in history’ (20). In fact, Keller’s whole book is an attempt to help pastors do just that. This then, is what Keller means by ‘Center Church’: a balanced approach to doing church that is never cookie-cutter but (1) has the gospel at its center; (2) is balanced in all ways, especially in theological emphases and in ‘word and deed’; (3) is *for* the urban and cultural centers of the world (which most Christians have abandoned); and, (4) has its own clear theological vision at the center of its ministry.

Perhaps this vision is what is most stunning about Keller—the breadth of his vision—one which not only has room for the rest of us, but actively and genuinely seeks to partner with us, no matter what our denomination. Keller states,

We wanted to help church planters learn as much as they could from our reflection and experience, but we had no interest in starting little copies of Redeemer because we know that every city—indeed every neighborhood—was different. We believed a city needed all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people. And we know that church planters need to *create* ministry, not replicate it. We wanted to help plant churches that would be *unlike* Redeemer in many particulars but still like Redeemer in certain ineffable ways. (20, *italics his*)

The ‘ineffable’ things Keller hopes we’ll agree to are simply the main points of a center church, which are elucidated in the remainder of his book. These Keller boils down to three major axes: *gospel, city and movement*. Each of which requires *balance* (or centrism). Thus, to be a center church, we need a *gospel* that is

faithful to the Word, neither swaying into legalism/religion (as many pietistic and fundamentalist groups have) nor into relativism/irreligion (as in liberal churches). We need a position toward the culture of the *city* that is neither under-adapted (which only challenges and confronts) nor over-adapted (which only appreciates). And, we need an understanding of *movement* that allows for structured organization (including tradition and authority in the church) but does not snuff out the dynamics of fluid organism, cooperation and unity (23). Keller concludes his vision for Center Church with this challenge, ‘The more that ministry comes ‘from the center’ of all the axes, the more dynamism and fruitfulness it will have’ (24). I’d love to be involved in a church like that!

When I stop and consider what Keller is saying in this book it is honestly mind-boggling. Gone are the divisive, hard-nosed doctrinal statements some Calvinists are known for (Keller says that such ‘Z-doctrines’ (307) can be held, but should not be normally espoused in Sunday services). Missing are calls for pastors to ‘imitate me as I imitate Christ’. (Instead Keller seeks to give a book to everyone that will preclude them needing to come and see him in action, but give the keys to success to anyone who will read it.) Unmentioned are doctrinal polemics on Baptist, Pentecostal, Arminian or other theologies—instead Keller presents a very helpful discourse on how to engage in ‘gospel polemics’ in a winsome way (see pages 372-373) and shocks us by saying that Redeemer even financially supports church planting by other denominations (369). What affords Keller such grace towards so many others that could be considered inferior in theology or practice? Again, it’s his vision: ‘In New York city, we pray for and work toward a time when 10 percent of the center city population is involved in a gospel-centered church’ (377). To attain such a vision Keller readily acknowledges, ‘it takes all kinds of churches to reach a city’ (380). To me, such a vision can only come from the Spirit of Jesus himself who said, ‘Lift up your eyes and look at the fields!’ (John 4:35) and ‘whoever is not against you is for you’ (Luke 9:50). Only when we truly look at the Word *and* at the fields will we see the need to work together.

Tim Keller has written a magisterial book primarily for pastors serving in major metropolitan areas around the world. For me personally, as a missionary serving in a smaller city in Indonesia, I found his vision for church planting affirming and his articulation of the gospel to be refreshing. And I am captivated by his vision. Nevertheless, there were areas of concern that make the book of only limited use for those ministering in Muslim contexts. I’ll end this review by noting these things and giving my perspective on them.

First, Keller almost invariably refers to D.A. Carson when he needs a scholarly quote. As a Trinity Evangelical Divinity School graduate and former student of Carson, I am also a fan of Carson. But I found it almost embarrassing how often he quoted Carson—not only on issues of NT scholarship, but even on issues relating to outreach and culture. I think Keller would better exhibit his

wide-evangelicalism by using quotes from a broader spectrum of reputable scholars. More importantly, I'd also suggest he refer more frequently to the *Bible* to back his points rather than always feeling the need to quote another (human) scholar.

Second, Keller seems to be intent on promoting 'Christianity', whereas I believe we are to promote Christ. I understand the difficulty of avoiding the category 'Christian' all together, especially in an American context. But I also cringe when an author seems to muddy the waters between the Person of Christ and the religion(s) of Christianity. There were several times where this thought struck me forcefully in the pages of this book; I cite just one example here. Seeking to illustrate what 'every-member gospel ministry' could look like, Keller gives several examples. In one case, a Christian states the following to his unbelieving friend, 'If Christianity is going to be of any help, it will only be if you come to believe that it is not just helpful but *true*' (280). I found myself asking, 'which form of Christianity' is he talking about? And, would it not be better to substitute the Person of Christ in this sentence rather than seeking to defend a faith that is practiced by over 1 billion people alive today in nearly every expression imaginable? Now, undoubtedly, Keller is using the term 'Christianity' in the very best sense. However, to many, many unbelievers around the world they are simply not interested in 'Christianity': they see only the abuses of the Church, our sordid history, Western decadence, or perhaps their own unhappy childhood. I find it's preferable to simply talk about the Person of Christ and his teachings instead of trying to clean up the public image of 2,000 years of Christian history. And this is the case around the world, but especially with Muslims.

My third concern—and most significant—is how Keller seems to always assume that the preaching ministry of the church will be central. But is that necessarily so? What if the Pastor is not able to always 'get it right' and preach 'excellent' sermons as Keller apparently does? Over and over again Keller tells pastors that we 'must speak' in certain ways that—strive as I may—I find myself unable to consistently do. In one poignant example he states that we should 'avoid sentimentality and hype' as our communication 'should be marked by gentle humor and honest realism ... yet seasoned with a ground note of joy and hope that never diminishes...' (273). Oh that I were that way! And every pastor! But what if we're not? Are we doomed to failure in a consumer-oriented society that demands excellence? Or perhaps, in this area, Keller has somehow slightly moved the balance from the Word to the *Preacher* of the Word. As I see it, Scripture puts much more emphasis on the message (1 Cor 1:18) and the Gospel (Rom 1:16), the proclamation of the Word (Rom 10:17) and the actual power of the Word itself (Heb 4:16) than on the speaker. In fact, Jesus and Paul specifically warn us about not becoming the center of attention lest we become

proud and people's attention moves off of Christ and onto men (see Matt 23:10-12, 15; 1 Cor 2:1-5).

While I am not accusing Keller of spiritual pride, I am fully aware of this danger in my own heart – and of the cult of the personality around the world. I think that Keller has the wind of the Spirit in his sails in so many ways in this book, but in this area I wish I could show him how God is using Discovery Bible Studies around the world. Churches that have substituted Discovery Groups as the main way for members to get into the Word have found a way that is much more interactive, interesting and life-changing than even the best Reformed preaching. And these Discovery model churches are exploding around the world, numbering several hundred thousand today. I am not suggesting there is no role for well-trained and eloquent preachers. But that perhaps the preacher-centered Reformation model may have run its course and the Spirit is leading His Body to more reproducible models that allow for ‘the rest of us’ to also be effective in multiplying churches the way Keller longs for.

With these caveats in mind, I heartily recommend *Center Church* to pastors everywhere, especially those in major urban centers. And I'd recommend it for missionaries working in urban environments who want a serious read on doing balanced, gospel-centered ministry paving the way for effective multi-organizational collaboration. Even those who are unwilling or unable to apply Keller's understanding of the centrality of preaching to their contexts will learn much about the nature of the church, a theology of ‘city’ and the importance of church planting. Oh, how we need more ‘Center Churches’ around the world, and leaders who ask: ‘What's it going to take to reach the city/region/people God has given me?’ May Center Church be greatly used of God around the world.

Reviewed by Steven Steinhaus

Steven (pseudonym) is a Pioneers field worker who has been serving with his family for twenty years among Muslims in Southeast Asia. He also wrote the article *Reforming Baptism*, above, in this issue of SEEDBED.

Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook

James R. Krabill, general editor; Frank Fortunato, Robin P. Harris, and Brian Schrag, eds. 2013. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

and

Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual to Help Communities Reach Their Kingdom Goals

Brian Schrag. 2013. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library.

At the heart of any ministry is the desire to communicate the gospel message in as clear and understandable a manner as possible. But charting that course is rarely simple or direct, no matter what the context. Whether your ministry is in a cross-cultural setting or right at home, urban or rural, you are likely to encounter questions of worship style. The so-called ‘worship wars’ in churches in the US over the last couple of decades only highlights the tortuous complexities involved. Decisions about musical style, visual elements and other expressive arts are complicated by generational differences, previous church experiences and other socio-economic demographic variations.



In recent years, a growing number of missionaries and scholars have been specialising in exactly this area of arts in Christian worship. The developing field is called *ethnodoxology*. Robin Harris, president of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists, explains that the word was coined in the late 1990s by Dave

Hall (then serving with Pioneers) by combining *ethne* (peoples), *doxa* (glory) and *logos* (word). Hall defined the term as ‘the study of the worship of God among diverse cultures’ (p. 86, *Handbook*). The foundation of the ethnodoxology movement in the years since is the belief that music, while a universal activity among humans, is *not* a universal language. That is, a single musical style does not communicate clearly across all cultures. And the same is true of drama, dance, oral verbal arts, visual arts, and other forms of expressive culture. A musical work that to one person signifies joyfulness may be completely incomprehensible to someone from a different culture.

The danger of the ‘music is a universal language’ trope in cross-cultural missions is that when the gospel is brought into a community it will likely bring the artistic trappings of the messengers along with it. What seems clear and beautiful to the missionaries may introduce unnecessary distance between the scriptures and the community. The communication of truth cannot ignore the artistic forms in which that communication is presented.

Understanding the value of local arts is more urgent now than ever before, with even the remotest communities increasingly touched by global media influence. This international influence leads minority communities to make cultural choices, in some cases without fully comprehending the future effects of their present choices. Attracted by the allure of international performance options, these communities risk losing their own distinctive artistic traditions. This is a moment in history in which weakening local arts will fade away if they do not find a meaningful place in new contexts. Not only does the church need these creative expressions, but it may soon be the only context in which these traditions continue and thrive. The church now has the opportunity to show its love for God's creation and the world's cultures in a tangible, vital way; and in turn, these expressive arts can enhance the communication of the gospel.

Into this discussion comes a two-volume set of books from the ethnodoxology movement. The first volume is *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, edited by James R. Krabill, Frank Fortunato, Robin P. Harris and Brian Schrag. The *Handbook* is an eclectic anthology of readings old and new that celebrates a wide panorama of Christian worship. Organized into three sections – Foundations, Stories and Tools – the *Handbook* comprises 148 short chapters by 95 authors, representing many geographical regions. What a task, to summarize and review such a collection! The journey through the many questions and issues of Christian worship is guided by a few broad themes, including: biblical foundations and theology, autobiography, and case study. Many chapters are a mix of all three themes, and as the reader progresses through the book, the interplay of these perspectives in the chapters paints a vivid picture of global worship experiences.

For biblical foundations, I enjoyed Andrew Hill's too-brief overview of what the Bible definitely says about Christian worship and its Old Testament foundations. I was also challenged by Harold Best's 'Seven Affirmations' about God's creation and human creativity. The affirmations move the reader from the biblical example to personal applications for individuals and congregations.

I always find autobiography compelling, and the autobiographical chapters in the *Handbook* are no exception. In particular, I would recommend Jean Ngoya Kidula's story of growing up in a musical family in Kenya and then maintaining those connections after relocating to the US – all the while negotiating the expectations of multiple musical identities. Also fascinating is Tanya Riches' contemplation of her worship experiences, first as manager of Hillsong United, and then as researcher in rural Australian Aboriginal churches. She considers the hard questions of how musical choice in worship relates to issues of social justice, power and identity in Australia:

I have felt for some time that to truly engage music mission *as an Australian* means facing our history and all it entails: the colonisation of the Indigenous population, as well as the experiences of the original immigrants and their ensuing generations. Will ignoring the rhythms and beats of our country's first peoples not put me in danger of a new imperialism, one that threatens the realm of worship and which would be so far from the true spirituality God desires? (p. 333; emphasis in original)

In just three pages, Riches raises some of the most difficult, yet most urgent, issues for any ministry. Her Australia-specific reflections urge the reader to consider the same questions in his or her context.

Case studies abound throughout the *Handbook*, especially in Section 2: Stories, whose chapters are arranged by geographical region. The wealth of stories collected in the book include:

- Two chapters by Rob Baker which give an entertaining, honest glimpse into leading music workshops in West Africa.
- Mark Charles's explanation of the struggles and successes of bridging Christian faith and a Navajo party celebrating a baby's first laugh.
- A history of black gospel choirs in Japan, told by Gary Fujino, including how one choral association is building community through performance.
- Eric Sarwar's experience designing a recording project to produce children's Christian songs in the predominantly Muslim context of Pakistan.
- Jo-Ann Faith Richards confronted with the difference that language choice in worship can make to clear communication of the message.

As I read the book and vicariously lived through the case studies, I was overwhelmed anew at the incredible variety that exists in the world's arts, in the ways Christians express themselves in worship, and in the responses to difficult situations.

The *Handbook* speaks equally to leaders in urban, multi-ethnic churches and to missionaries and leaders in minority communities. Sections 1 and 2 include chapters about each of these streams, but they become especially clear in Section 3: Tools. Chapters by C. Michael Hawn, David M. Bailey, Kenneth L. Wallace, Jr., and Ian Collinge look at creating a more multicultural worship experience in a Western (especially North American) church context. The advice in these chapters is applicable to any urban church with a multi-ethnic congregation, or a church that is looking to connect with other ethnic communities in the neighbourhood, or a church that simply wants to explore connections to the rest of the world. Other chapters in the Tools section – for example, chapters by Brian Schrag, Robin Harris, Kenneth R. Hollingsworth and Héber Negrão, and Michelle Petersen – speak more directly to people working in a primarily mono-cultural, minority community which is exploring the use of local arts in Christian worship perhaps for the first time.

The *Handbook* doesn't need to be read straight through (though in preparation for this review, I did just that and I enjoyed it immensely). Some of the chapters flow naturally from one to the next, but more often each chapter is its own distinct moment. I recommend setting a copy of the *Handbook* beside your computer keyboard on your desk, or even on your bedside table, and commit to reading a little bit each day, letting the stories and encouragement wash over you and inspire you toward more effective artistic expression in worship.

The second volume in the ethnodoxology set is Brian Schrag's *Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual to Help Communities Reach Their Kingdom Goals*. The goal of the *Manual*, from the title of the first chapter, is to see 'all the arts from all the world for all of God's purposes'. The *Manual*, therefore, becomes a natural 'what's next' after reading chapters in the *Handbook* and wanting to get involved with arts in any context. The *Handbook* inspires the reader to do *something* with local arts, and the *Manual* outlines a flexible, practical model to initiate action.

Schrag identifies three approaches missionaries tend to employ in using the arts. The first he calls the 'Bring It – Teach It' model: when the missionaries teach their own arts to the host community. This model can lead to wonderful exchanges of artistic styles, but it also risks excluding local arts in favour of introduced styles. In the second model, 'Build New Bridges', the missionary learns just enough of the local arts styles to incorporate some elements of those styles into his or her own arts; or, the missionary seeks collaboration with local

practitioners. As with 'Bring It – Teach It', this can be a fruitful approach; but it can also lead to unsustainable results, as well as conflict in cases of vast power differentials. The third model is 'Find It – Encourage It'. In this model the missionary acts as a catalyst to encourage local practitioners to create new works themselves in a sustainable, culturally appropriate way. The *Manual* takes 'Find It – Encourage It' as its guiding framework, and the method Schrag proposes flows from that approach. The Creating Local Arts Together (CLAT) method is a seven-step process:

1. Meet a community and its arts
2. Specify kingdom goals
3. Select effects, content, genre, and events
4. Analyse an event containing the chosen genre
5. Spark creativity
6. Improve new works
7. Integrate and celebrate for continuity

CLAT is not a rigid model in which each step must lead to the next with no deviation. Rather, the expectation is that a community working through this model will move back and forth through the model as they learn and grow in their worship arts. And though the process was originally designed to help outsiders understand and encourage local arts in Christian worship, the model is also appropriate for local leaders as they seek greater depth in their own congregation's worship.

The CLAT process begins with getting to know the community. This section of the *Manual* includes practical tips for engaging in different kinds of field research. One result of this step is a Community Arts Profile, which helps community members and others identify their local artist resources. These resources will be the building blocks of using the arts to reach 'kingdom goals'. These goals, common to any community seeking to follow Christ, include: identity and sustainability, shalom, justice, Scripture, church life, and personal spiritual life.

In the remaining steps of the process, the community will consider ways to use their artistic traditions to speak God's truth into problems that need to be solved and questions that need to be answered. After thinking through the right arts for the right contexts, local practitioners begin creating new artistic works. Schrag offers guidelines for critiquing and improving those new works, and then integrating them into community life as the process repeats itself in a cycle of artistic creation and celebration in worship.

Schrag's model for co-creation, in various adaptations, has been field-tested all over the world. I have used it in teaching music workshops to Christian congregations in villages and towns in Papua New Guinea, and I have found it to be very helpful in working together with communities to discover ways of

using local arts for achieving kingdom goals. The CLAT method does not require that the reader have extensive background or education in the arts. The language in the *Manual* is understandable to the layman, and people with no arts training could incorporate the CLAT process into their existing ministries.

Taken together, the two-volume ethnodoxology *Handbook* and *Manual* represent not only a tremendous statement on the current state of expressive arts in Christian worship but also guidance in how to continue developing and enhancing the communication of the gospel. I commend both volumes to leaders and fieldworkers engaged in any sort of ministry. It will challenge you, stimulate ideas about future directions, and open up a vast panorama of God's creation in worship.

Reviewed by Neil R. Coulter

Neil is a Senior Ethnomusicology & Arts Consultant with SIL International. He and his family have lived in Papua New Guinea since 2002. He is also the Senior Editor of the online publication *Global Forum on Arts and Christian Faith* <http://artsandchristianfaith.org>.

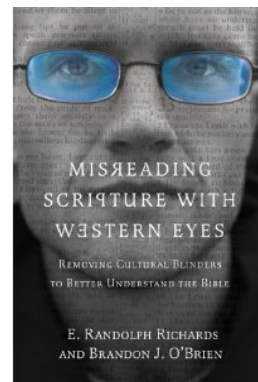
Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes *Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*

E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien
Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012

Favourite Quote - Bible reading is necessarily contextual. There is no purely objective biblical interpretation. This is not postmodern relativism. We believe truth is truth. (12)

Richards and O'Brien see worldview as an iceberg. Worldviews can blind us to what is really being said, resulting in what they call 'cultural blinders.' The authors organize nine of these cultural blinders into three categories based on the iceberg idea. Those we see and know, like the ice above the water. Those just below the surface that are not so obvious. And those that are deep below the surface that can do the most damage to interpretation and application of scripture.

The book is organized into three parts corresponding to the top, middle and bottom of the iceberg. Each chapter ends with probing questions.



Above the Surface

Mores

Race and Ethnicity

Language

Just Below the Surface

Individualism and Collectivism

Honor/Shame and Right/Wrong

Time

Deep Below the Surface

Rules and Relationships

Virtue and Vice

Finding the Center of God's Will

The authors basically challenge us to 'read ourselves' but not in the usual meaning of the words when applied to Bible reading. Usually we go to the bible looking for the lesson or the application, studying it to examine ourselves. I call this the Aesop's Fable view of scripture. Your 'take away' is the famed 'moral of the story.' This is not exactly what the authors mean by 'read ourselves.' It is not so much a reading on a personal level than it is on a collective level. How do we as Westerners understand a reading of scripture when something is missing or doesn't quite make sense? Are we filling in the blanks before we ask if the missing thing might have been assumed by the original hearers? How can we know? The best part of this book is the conclusion with its advice. (You won't likely appreciate this advice without reading the whole book first!)

The last chapter 'It's All about Me: Finding the Center of God's Will' will surely challenge American sensibilities. If the cultural blinders that are found deeper on the 'iceberg' have greater potential for misreading and therefore misapplying scripture, then Westerners, especially Americans, would be wise to prayerfully read and reread chapter nine. With all of our self-help Christian books to find God's will for us, you just might find this chapter a refreshing change, as I did.

Another genre of Christian books, second only to the self-help, in titles, are those on prophecy. Again, the section in chapter nine, 'God's Planned End Will Happen in My Lifetime' was informative and refreshing. I now have a word for the unsatisfactory exegesis I've unwittingly accepted most of my Christian life. *Pesher* is a method of interpretation that requires two presuppositions. Briefly stated they are 1) that a text refers to the end times and 2) that we live in the end times. The authors point out 'these assumptions have serious consequences for the way we read scripture' (198).

Another assumption, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, a term coined by sociologist Christian Smith, teaches that the purpose of religious faith is 'providing therapeutic benefits to its adherents.' (195) The authors look at recent

history to help us understand how we acquired these assumptions or cultural blinders. I found their suggestions insightful and gracious.

Lest you get the impression this book is too sombre, know that the authors provide some humorous real life experiences. As they attempted to conclude with ‘Three Easy Steps for Removing Our Cultural Blinders’ they are faced with their own Western style of problem solving. Brandon asks a friend, Phebe, for help.

Phebe is Syrian and speaks Arabic as a first language. She and her husband, a Canadian, are high-school sweethearts who met at a boarding school in Germany. Before moving to Europe, her husband grew up in Ecuador. After they married, they spent time as missionaries in Africa. They now live in the Chicago suburbs. They are perhaps the most ‘international’ couple I know.

And she said-

‘That’s sort of a Western thing to want, isn’t it?’ she asked with a smile. ‘Three easy steps for identifying our cultural presuppositions!’ (211)

I will mention here that in the chapter on ‘mores’ they do suggest three questions to ask yourself (which I have written in the inside cover of my ESV Study Bible) when the story doesn’t quite make sense. These are:

1. Clearly, this passage is saying (or not saying) _____ is right/ wrong.
2. Is (that issue) really what is condemned?
3. Am I adding/ removing some elements? (48).

But this book will not give you a new methodology. The authors’ goal is to ‘help you become a certain kind of reader: the kind of reader who is increasingly aware of his or her cultural assumptions. And that takes time, self-reflection and hard work’ (212). There are no ‘three easy steps’ but they offer advice to help us do the hard work of self-reflection, embrace complexity, beware of overcorrection, be teachable, embrace error and read together.

This book is NOT just for those working across cultures. If you read the Bible, you are in the ‘foreign land of Scripture’ (11).

Reviewed by Pat Noble

Missions Catalyst News Editor. Perspectives Coordinator and Instructor.
You can reach Pat in many ways at <http://patnoble.flavors.me/>

Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting

by J.D. Payne, 2009, Biblica, 458 Pages

J.D. Payne is a missions pastor at a large and influential church in Birmingham, Alabama (The Church at Brook Hills, pastored by David Platt). His background includes service with the Southern Baptist's North American Mission Board.

This book straddles the fence between summarizing basic church planting ideas while attempting to be comprehensive in that summary. The reader will find that Payne mostly succeeds at raising issues faced in church planting without delving too deeply into these topics.



The book is broken into three sections all focused on church planting: the theological foundations, missiology (which Payne roughly describes as the “art and science of mission”) and historical paradigms. One can easily see by the topics that they are treated, by necessity, very briefly. The historical section, for example, focuses on Moravian, Methodist and Baptist efforts. There is little discussion of Pentecostals and the growth of the non-Western church. He does explain paradigms regarding church planting movements as well.

Toward the end of the book there are a host of topics briefly mentioned but not seriously dissected. For example, Payne introduces business as mission, tent-making, family issues faced when living cross-culturally and models of church planting. There is a section that contrasts pastors and missionaries. I couldn't help but think of Payne's Baptist roots when I read this book. This example is one of a couple that flavors the book with a North American perspective. I would not suggest using this text to train non-Westerners.

The book's greatest strength is its weakness. It is an introductory text and can only note the issues: not explore them in detail. To ask for more would not be fair to its intention. This book is a good choice as a text for a basic “introduction to missions” course. Most serious long-term practitioners will find it too basic.

Reviewed by Ted Esler, PhD

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

A person is standing in a field, their back to the camera. They are wearing a dark jacket and light-colored pants. The field is covered in dry, yellowish grass. In the background, there are several trees with green and some autumn-colored leaves. The sky is bright and slightly hazy.

First of all, I make sure they know the God they believe in. And if they have not really received Jesus, I give them the opportunity. If they want to share the Gospel with others, I make sure they know the essentials of the Gospel, the skeleton of the Gospel. Without that, you cannot make progress! So that is a must! We start with it.

Then we deal with having your own private time with the Lord. How do you worship on your own? How do you use the Scripture, how do you pray? How do you listen to God? You know, so these people will build their personal relationship with God.

Then we talk about the character and characteristics of God. Then we talk about inductive Bible study. We talk about the meaning of being a follower of Jesus. We talk about inner healing, because we want them to be healed from things in their lives. We are aiming at the character rather than at head knowledge.

— Pastor Afeef, page 11

SEEDBED is published by

Pioneers

10123 William Carey Dr
Orlando, FL 32832

For subscription information
or to purchase individual copies,
visit Pioneers.org/Store