

Men walking on the moon within ten years seemed to be a far-fetched goal in the early 1960s. The fall of the Soviet Union and the Iron Curtain probably appeared unlikely even as late as the Fall of 1988. Volf's irenic response to the Muslim Common Word initiative and his model of engagement are a commendable example for us to follow at every level of society. It is at many points challenging and thought-provoking for Christians as well as for Muslims. This is healthy and necessary if genuine dialogue and better mutual understanding are to be achieved. Rather than assume that this will never happen, perhaps we should receive Volf's book as an invitation for all of us working with Muslims to continue engaging them in vigorous theological dialogue as well as in other ways. We should do all of this trusting and hoping that this may very well be God's time for the Muslim world. This could happen just as suddenly as the toppling of governments across North Africa. Who is to say that a Reformation of Islam is not possible as well?

*Reviewed by Paul Martindale.*

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## **Chrislam: How Missionaries are Promoting an Islamized Gospel**

Joshua Lingel, Jeff Morton & Bill Nikides, eds.  
i2 Ministries Publications, 2011, 344 pages, \$25

*When doves love they quarrel; when wolves hate, they flatter. (Martin Luther)*

Who has not heard the thunder rumbling on the missions-to-Muslims fronts? Well, latch down for the storm. Choose your climate zone but *Chrislam* is written to burst like a tropical hurricane or a cold arctic tempest over Evangelical quarters in North America, who are, according to Jay Smith 'funding the inside movements out of ignorance' (295).

The title *Chrislam* is alarming. It is meant to be. It is designed to be the grand *slam* on the most mercurial missiological movement known in our post-Lausanne era, called the 'Inside Movement' (IM) in this text. Nor does the subtitle, 'How Missionaries are Promoting an Islamized Gospel' leave room for an interrogative debate. This is a multi-authored verdict from the keyboard of the most troubled

judges in the ‘historical camp’: their book is their collective verdict.

I need not encourage you to get *Chrislam*: you will certainly buy it. When you do, have your pen and ruler ready, as I did. Ink will flow as you read this in the airport terminal or waiting patiently in a medical lounge—as I did. Do not take it on holidays with you: it is too stormy.

While *Chrislam* is not a ‘Whose Who’ of the debate, it has succeeded in bringing many strong voices to the Evangelical jury, including many quotes from other authors. There are many other voices I missed, but in a Christian world that now recognises more than 500 Evangelical emerging experts on Islam, listening to some 50 leaders in this anthology is, frankly, impressive. Nor again was this book about the moderates bridging the middle; for good measure that may yet come.

The tone and the introductory material marshalled by the three editors is very strong drink: Joshua Lingel, Jeff Morton and Bill Nikides. Lingel, who is both the i2 Ministries director and a global apologist, contributes two chapters in the book critiquing the Muslim-friendly Bible translations. West African missionary and i2 Ministries curriculum writer Jeff Morton focused three further chapters on the ‘dubious missiology’ of IM, while Presbyterian minister and i2 Ministries Asian researcher Bill Nikides contributed three additional chapters, chiefly on IM questionable theological underpinnings. This book is truly an i2 Ministries production.

Following their introductory ‘missiological storm warning’, Nikides, Morton & Lingel first hold court by presenting three chapters filled with a systematized anthology of prominent IM theological, missiological and translation citations and quotes. This is noble and a helpful abridged anthology. Their desire is to ‘be fair and honest with their views’ (2). As a reader, you will need to decide if the IM proponents have been quoted adequately in this text or if they could have wished to summarize the editor’s questions in a more favourable light. But fair is fair: the quotes are all selected from published IM-writings. We do well to anticipate their rejoinders.

According to *Chrislam*’s authors, what IMers are doing is, mildly put, extreme missiology; strongly put, syncretism and heresy. The authors do not argue with new believers living as temporary insiders. What horrifies them is the IM theology of keeping new believers inside the very forms of the religion of Islam. You will read the authors’ assault on (1) what they see as IM ‘mantra’ Bible verses used to justify ‘remaining in’ Islam, (2) what they see as the naïve re-packaging of fourteen-century old anti-Christian Islam into a Jesus-friendly *proto-evangelium*, (3) what they see as disdain for unity within the Body of Christ, which is rich in the Spirit’s wisdom of Christian history, and finally, (4) the temerity of replacing eternal titles of God as Father and Son with Muslim-sensitive alternatives.

There is much in this book with which teachable IMers must agonise. That not all concerned detractors will speak to them this undiplomatically will become evident to them over time. They will need much grace to hear most of the author's strong pent-up critique and 'prove from the whole of Scripture' questions of what they may have assumed to be the Spirit's brilliant blessings on their creative, never-look-back, IM missiology. That *Chrislam* can register so many biblical critiques, so many theological alarm bells, so many 'why is this not heretical' questions, is ample evidence that the IM can no longer dismiss this storm breaking over their fleet—and, truth be known, if these accusations are not answered satisfactorily, it may well cause a lot of generous churches to cease sending their funds to them.

It is too late to close the barn door after the horses have bolted, but after reading the book, I could have wished the editors had opted for a better arrangement of the material. Section 5 struck me as their best, since it had me listening to the heart of passionate voices of believers from Muslim backgrounds (sorry, Elijah Abraham, but I like this title) as well as their non-Westernised narrative material. Section 5 should have been first, followed by the closing section 6 authored by Jay Smith, David Cook, and the great late Samuel Zwemer. I would recommend you first read 5 and 6, and then only return to the Intro and 1-4. You will greatly appreciate David Abernathy's gracious chapter in section 4 entitled 'Jesus the Eternal Son of God'.

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You will join me in congratulating the editors for their excellent selected bibliography, which lists major biographical works and websites and blogs for both advocates of the IM and their detractors, the 'Historical Perspective.'

Will this new i2 Ministries text inspire their IM brothers to willingly admit their errors? Or again, might *Chrislam* cause the regrettable hardening of the arteries in both camps? Will it be cheered by 'historical' colleagues, who agree with the book's authors, as the definitive rebuttal of the IM theology, missiology and the translation issues? Will it join fear-mongering texts on our shelves, suffering from a too damning tone? Or will God allow it to become one of several tools that lead to a profound missiological audit on both sides?

My prayers go for the last option. As I shared with my IM colleagues following the Bridging the Divide consultation in Houghton College (June, 2011): 'The Holy Spirit may well be telling us *all* to take a giant step backwards from the brim of a potential missiological disaster.'

Unmistakably, the honeymoon is over. For two decades, the spokespeople for

the creative IM movements have crowed like proud roosters over alleged numerical breakthroughs among Muslims. They do well now to hear this text's theological roar from historical orthodox thinkers and accept that this is one missiological storm from which they would be wise not to duck and hide.

***Reviewed by Benjamin Hegeman***

Benjamin is a colleague and friend of the editor. He teaches part-time at Houghton College in the Islamic Studies concentration and also spends part of each year in Benin, West Africa, where he serves with SIM as the Academic Dean of the Baatonou Language Bible College.

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## **Speaking of Jesus: The Art of Non-Evangelism**

by Carl Medearis

Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2011, 192 pages

Carl sums up his thesis succinctly when he writes that, '*Christianity*,' is not about joining a religion but following a person [Jesus]' (p.181). The pivotal Scripture text for his thinking is 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, especially Paul's words recorded in verse two, 'For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.'

This book is not specifically about Christian-Muslim relations but about how every follower of Jesus should conduct themselves towards their fellow human beings when it comes to being communicators of the Good News, Jesus. Carl's objective is to challenge the obsession with theological and doctrinal 'correctness' before sharing Jesus, especially within the Conservative Evangelical church tradition in the USA. He claims that such missiological methodology results in a negative, sterile 'us and them' attitude. Though not averse to using the word 'sinner' and 'sinners,' Carl's emphasis is on Jesus' own propensity for ministering to those on the margins of society. He writes that we should stop playing the 'our religion can beat up your religion' game (p.103). Instead, 'I just talk about Jesus' (p. 47).

This short review will leave others theologically better qualified to comment on this approach. My comments are restricted to the few references to Islam and Muslims. In this respect, Chapter 9 is the most important. Carl questions the value of speaking '*Christianese*' (p. 119). The first candidate for comment is the word '*Christian*' that he says is not anti-biblical but is not helpful in many contexts (p. 121). This is particularly true in the Muslim context with its long history from the crusades to current Western military intervention in the Muslim world.