

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.

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.

Many are already using the term, ‘a true follower of Jesus’. Some substitute Isa for Jesus but I have some reservations about this as the person of Isa in the Qur’an does not have the same characteristics as the Jesus of the Gospels. The second candidate is the word ‘*church*’ and again he unpacks the meaning preferring to focus on the Greek word ‘*ekklesia*’ that means an ‘assembly of called-out ones’ (p. 122). For Carl, being ‘*ekklesia*’ is a ‘growing, dynamic, life-giving organism rather than a structured institution with hierarchies’ (p. 122). However, the challenge even within Church Planting Movements (CPMs) is that rapid growth brings with it a degree of ‘structure’ even if it is only in the implementation of training. As ‘naming’ is a creation ordinance so relational ‘structure’ between the Creator and the creature (and between the created) is an inevitable aspect of ‘this age’. We cannot ignore the ‘collective’ and assume that we can have organism without organizational structure.

His third candidate is ‘*the Bible*’ for which he does not give an alternative, although several times elsewhere he describes his approach as sharing and using ‘the stories of Jesus’ (p. 137). Fourthly, for the word ‘*evangelism*’ he substitutes the term ‘making disciples’ and finally, ‘*missionary*’. Carl was once asked bluntly in Beirut whether he was a missionary, a question many of us are asked by Muslims. Christians, he writes, may express it like this, ‘Now you say we’re not *Christians*, you say we don’t *convert* people, we’re not *missionaries*, we don’t go to *church*, and we don’t *evangelize*’ (p. 129). Carl replies to the ‘missionary question’, ‘We are people trying to follow Jesus’ (p. 129).

Elsewhere in the book Carl underlines this by reporting a street ‘vox pop’ survey he did asking people to comment on their reactions to two words, ‘*Christianity*’ and ‘*Jesus of Nazareth*’. All those interviewed were negative towards the first while all were positive towards the second (pp. 175-6).

There is no doubt that those of us who befriend and engage with Muslims need regularly to review the religious language we use.

Carl’s writing exudes the characteristics and qualities of a storyteller, the distinguishing marks of Jesus gossipers. He looks behind and within the questions to discover the heart intentions of the speaker and then responds with his own questions. The aroma of Arab coffee-shop banter seeps into the text. There is much to learn from his experiences and wisdom.

Disciple-making for Carl is a process of walking together with the kind of people who are not like us. The final chapter is controversially entitled, ‘Gays, Liberals and Muslims’, and features ‘Poor Richard’s’ which is a little coffee shop/restaurant/used bookstore in downtown Colorado Springs. The owner, Richard Skorman, is a ‘liberal’ whom Carl befriends in a profound way. In an

interview with Carl, Richard says, 'It's the religion of Christianity that I don't like—not Jesus' (p. 162).

The chapter ends with an observation by a friend called Sameer, who calls himself a Muslim who follows Jesus. He comments that the house called *Christianity* needs to be renamed the *house of Jesus* and that when Muslims become inquisitive we have to 'grab them' and open the door and say, 'Look! It's Jesus.' Sameer adds, 'And Jesus will invite them in because Jesus loves people. He is not the guy in the way. He is the way' (p. 177).

This book will infuriate some readers for its 'simplicity' but it gets under the skin. Just remember that Carl admits that he is not a theologian and forgive him for what he sometimes omits and for what he sometimes commits.

Reviewed by Keith Fraser-Smith

Muslims of the Arab-world have been Keith Fraser-Smith's focus for more than 40 years. He lived and worked in the Middle East for 13 years, part of the time overseeing AWM's ministry in the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula. He was also director of AWM's media department for 8 years in France. Then, following five years in a UK pastorate, he spent 7 years in global mobilization which involved building strategic alliances with national agencies that wanted to place missionaries in the Arab world. In 2010 he was appointed ministry coordinator in the UK and is currently the interim-leader of a new area while transitioning to the leadership of a local CPM team of which one strategic element is to mobilize local churches and Christians in a city network. Among his many interests is his pleasure in writing book reviews.