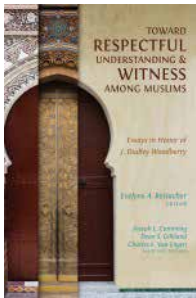


Toward Respectful Understanding & Witness among Muslims: Essays in Honor of J. Dudley Woodberry

Evelyne A. Reisacher, editor.

Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2012, 325 pages

Dudley Woodberry merits to be called the reigning-dean of Islamic studies among Protestant missiologists and Reisacher's collection of essays (this *Festschrift*) in his honour will help establish this status. The Germans coined the term *Festschrift* in 1898 to celebrate a retiring scholar by requesting his colleagues and disciples to write essays in his/her honour. We have very few *Festschriften* in Islamic missiology. The Australian Peter Riddell dedicated one for Anthony H. Johns (1997). The late Kenneth Cragg received one in 2003 and the Jewish linguist, G. Levi Della Vida edited one for Scottish historian of Islam, Sir H.A.R. Gibb (1965) – under whom Woodberry studied in Harvard. Not even Samuel Zwemer or Christy Wilson received this honour.



Those who have neither worked nor studied with Woodberry may well ask, 'Had I studied under him what influence might he have had on my own Islamic missiology?' Evelyne Reisacher, the *Festschrift*'s editor and one of the current scholars on Islam at Fuller, could well argue: 'You may well learn to listen to Muslims as graciously as Woodberry, study Islam as diligently as he does and witness to them as respectfully as he.' This *Festschrift* makes her case through the essays of many.¹⁰ This book, however, is not a tame

work. These essays invite us to revisit many hot button issues through a Woodberrian-honouring lens. Allow me to offer you appetisers from this feast.

First, Woodberry's colleague, Dean Gilliland, offers a biographical portrait of Dudley, his indefatigable colleague and Fuller's erudite 'gentleman scholar'. His portrait deserves a hearty toast and leaves the question: will most of his disciples work as hard and travel as much as Dudley? If he is their model, expect a great outpouring of research, especially in Folk Islam.

Then from Lebanon, Woodberry's former student and current director of the Institute of Middle East Studies at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, Martin Accad, pleads for a heart-felt *kerygmatic* approach. Accad models his approach on the diplomatic debating style of Nestorian Patriarch Timothy (d. 823)—one which promotes a most generous portrait of Muhammad, the Qur'an and Muslims—something which Woodberry and H.A.R. Gibb strongly encourage. Accad recognises that his *kerygmatic* appeal is contrary to the historic style of the eminent Syrian father, St. John of Damascus (d. 749) and divergent from the most successful Arabic evangelist to Muslims in our generation,

10. Fuller Seminary also recently published a *Festschrift* in honor of Edmund Gibbs in November 2012, entitled *The Gospel after Christendom: New Voices, New Cultures, New Expressions*.

the retired Egyptian Coptic priest, Father Zakaria Boutros (p. 34).

Jonathan Culver, who wrote his thesis *"Ishmael in Christian-Muslim Relations"* at Fuller (2001), surveys the Scriptural promises to Ishmael. Culver's essay is almost identical to the writings of Tony Maloof, the current Director of the MA in Islamic Studies Program at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, who wrote his doctorate on *Ishmael in Biblical History* (1998). Culver circumnavigates all the distressing promises on Ishmael—other than reclassifying them as mere metaphors of a 'Bedouin lifestyle' (Amazing! Was the prophecy over Ishmael that he would be God's 'Marlboro Man' on a donkey?). Maalouf wrestles with this far deeper in his exegesis of Genesis 16, Ps. 122 and Galatians 4, although neither of them convincingly enough to overturn twenty centuries of established exegesis. If Culver represents Woodberry's ethos, we do well to expect Biblical exegetes who think outside of the historic hermeneutical paradigm.

David Johnston, visiting scholar of Religious Studies, University of Pennsylvania, is a scholar whose high esteem for Muslims has us listening to 'in-house Shari'a debates'. Johnston focuses on Iranian Rumi scholar Abdolkarim Soroush (University of Maryland), Egyptian scholar Tariq Ramadan (Oxford), and al-Hudaybi, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood leader and Sayd Qutb's colleague. (That Soroush is a self-declared Neo-Mu'tazilite, that Tariq Ramadan is a highly controversial academic voice and that the Egyptian Islamic Brotherhood is a political chameleon, all should beg caution.) Johnston, however, sees these three voices as offering an 'ethical' alternative to the extremism of Qutbists and Salafists. How Johnston blends these 'in-house shari'a debates' with Christian conversations with Muslims was unclear from this text. Is it possible that he—and Woodberry—would encourage such investigative academic journalism deep within 'moderate' Muslim ranks? His essay would then be an example.

Johnston's strong interest in Soroush made me research more. What struck me was that Soroush's 'distinctions' on Islam as a 'religion' sounded strikingly similar to arguments advocated by current leading Insider Movement (IM) thinkers, among whom Woodberry is a significant voice. Soroush distinguishes between 1) religion and our understanding of religion; 2) between essential and accidental aspects of religion; 3) between minimalist and maximalist interpretation of Islam; 4) between religious belief and religious faith; 5) between religion as an ideology/identity and religion as truth. Are Soroush, Johnston, Woodberry and other IM advocates all drawing from similar sources, or from each other? This merits further research.

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Editor Reisacher's essay will interest you in that she draws overwhelmingly from

female scholars to speak about the ‘blame game’ in literature about Muslim women; that is, to what do different authors attribute the blame for the perceived oppression of Muslim women. This genre promises to be a fruitful new branch in Islamic missiology, something Reisacher’s role in the Islamic Studies program at Fuller may well encourage.

Warren Larsen, recently retired director of the Zwemer Center for Muslim Studies at CIU’s Seminary & School of Missions, will engage you on whether there is a case for ‘evangelical optimism’ in Islamic missiology. Woodberry would be an example.

Joseph Cumming, director of the Reconciliation Program at the Yale Center for Faith and Culture, offers the loftiest question in the book: should Woodberry be ranked in the scholars’ hall of fame along with Moses, Daniel & Paul? You are the jury. Cumming also draws us into an essay on Ashari who, along with the two other greatest Sunni scholars, al-Ghazali and Hanbal, together banished the very open-minded Mu’tazilite movement. Cumming, who is known to us through his efforts to promote a common ground in response to the ‘The Common Word’ 2007 text, explores the option of whether we can discover a Christian meaning in Asharite theology. In particular, he is searching for common ground or bridgeable differences between Ashari’s doctrine of Allah’s ‘attributes and essence’ and early Trinitarian formulations of *hypostasis* and *ousia*. This too you must read, weigh and render your verdict.

The recently deceased Anglican Islamic scholar, Rev. Kenneth Craig will request you to “sit where they [imams] sit” and build bridges using metaphors in our conversations with them. The one he will recommend to you use in his essay is the Khilafah-custodian-husbandman metaphor.

SIL missiologist, Rick Brown’s essay is a thorough and vigorous explanation of the historical origins of the Arabic name for God—Allah. He categorically rejects the arguments of non-Arabic speaking Christians who refuse to accept the name ‘Al-lah’ for YHWH. Brown clearly demonstrates that ‘Allah’ originated with pre-Islamic Syrian Jews & Christians, not with Muhammad. All Arab Christians use ‘Allah’ for ‘God’. While most missiologists will agree with Brown, a different question looms—is it only in Arabic that Allah is used? Is ‘Allah’ in another language a generic term for ‘the deity’ or is it the unique deity of Muhammad’s faith? Do Brown’s arguments still apply outside of the Arabic language? This issue is very hot and reading Brown will provide valuable context for this wider discussion.

Woodberry’s interest in ‘Folk Islam’ is well celebrated by contributions from Gilliland concerning the Hausa rituals in Nigeria; from Stephen Sesi concerning the Digo mosques in maritime Kenya, and from Caleb Kim concerning the spiritual power struggles between jinn and practitioners in Swahili Kenya. Woodberrian scholars are welcome experts in these realms.

David Greenlee’s article reflects Woodberry’s zeal for respectfully witnessing to

Muslims. Greenlee invites you to see Muslim *conversion* to the Good News through seven mostly sociological lenses. Woodley's colleague, Phil Parshall, revisits the amazing contextualised work of Sadrach in 1835 (Indonesia) and then his own contextual pilgrimage in the alias nation of 'Quristan' before saluting Woodberry's gentle contribution in seeking to calm the waters in the divide that has recently polarised Evangelical missiologists. Appropriately, John Travis (nom du plume) follows Parshall by generously outlining the contribution of Wilder, McGavran and Woodberry in the recent Jesus Movements among Muslims.

Finally, Christine Mallouhi closes out the Festschrift by addressing her favourite passion: the nature of witness for Christ as peace-making relationships with Muslims carried out in humility and with love.

Because many in Woodberry's community of scholars are respectfully exploring the dynamics of Insider Movements, both the advocates and detractors of this experiment do well to study both the movement and the proponents. This book does the proponents credit. Not all of Woodberry's former students have joined him in promoting Insider Movements. The book would have been stronger had they also been featured. Yet it remains a significant missiological testament of both Woodberry and of Fuller's remarkable contribution. Since these voices will be among the leading writers in the coming decade, I say you give yourself a free weekend to read them and salute Woodberry and his company for their outstanding innovative labours.

Reviewed by Benjamin Lee Hegeman

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

In the Shadow of the Sword: The Battle for Global Empire and the End of the Ancient World

by Tom Holland

Little Brown, London 2012, ISBN: 978-1408700075, 544 pages(!)

Tom Holland is the historian who has written a number of historical novels and three previous non-fiction works of historical scholarship: *Rubicon: The Triumph and Tragedy of the Roman Republic* (2004), *Persian Fire: The First World empire, Battle for the West* (2006) and *Millennium: The End of the World and the Forging of Christendom* (2009). Tom Holland has also presented this 'revisionist view' in his television presentation on the BBC, which is available on YouTube (See: [Tom Holland: In the Shadow of the Sword](#)). Mr Holland has a flair for presenting the details of ancient history in a great storyteller's manner. Most