

Dreams and Visions: An Historical Assessment of a Current Missiologi- cal Phenomenon among Muslims

by Rick Kronk

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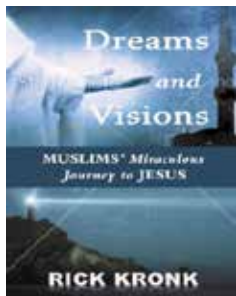
Rick has recently published a book on this topic. To order your copy, go to www.amazon.com, www.amazon.co.uk, www.barnesandnoble.com, or directly from the publisher in Europe at www.evangelistamedia.com. Cost: \$14.99 or 11 £, plus shipping and handling.

Dreams and Visions are back

The remarkable 'More Than Dreams' project of CBN, which was completed in the early 2000's and produced a website and multi-language DVD, did a wonderful job of recording stories of Muslim conversion from different regions of the world.

⁵ The stories were fascinating and the film production was a credit to the craft of movie making. But more importantly, the retelling of these stories illustrated how an all but hidden world of dreams and visions has been rediscovered. A quick internet search will generate hundreds of links to stories of dreams and visions and their impact on the lives of men and women worldwide. One result of the increased investment in mission efforts to Muslims over the last 30 years is that the Western Church has come face-to-face with this little-understood phenomenon. Furthermore, the proliferation of mission accounts of these supernatural experiences is causing the Church to ask serious questions about its own worldview and understanding of Scripture.

The Church in the West has struggled to recognize and appreciate what has been an operative part of cultures in the East and in Muslim cultures in particular. A look back at the history of the Western church will be instructive in helping us finding answers to such questions.



5. See www.morethandreams.com for access to the downloadable stories.

When Dreams and Visions were Common

Even a casual reading of the Bible reveals that dreams and visions played leading roles in the lives of many characters throughout biblical history. Starting with the life of Abraham, we find numerous incidents in which God gave instruction and warning by means of an audible voice that was heard even though nothing and no one was seen. In keeping with the Biblical pattern, whether it be God's call to Abraham to leave his place of residence (Genesis 12) or the later call to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22), Abraham received and believed these divine messages without doubt or argument, and acted accordingly.

Following Abraham, dreams and visions continued to play significant roles at key times in the lives of Jacob (Genesis 31) and Joseph. For Joseph, dreams and visions seemed to be of particular divine use and shaped not only his own personal family life (Genesis 37) but also the history of the Hebrews and that of the Egyptians (Genesis 40, 41). After Joseph, dreams and visions appeared as tools of divine instruction and call for those in positions of authority over the Jewish nation. Thus Gideon received divine counsel through a dream for his battle with the Midianites (Judges 7) and King Solomon was interrogated (1 Kings 3) and later encouraged by God (1 Kings 9) in dreams that confirmed divine provision and blessing.

Though the writings of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Obadiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk all include dream/vision accounts, it is in the life of Daniel that dreams and visions take centre stage. Three times Daniel was called upon to interpret the dreams and visions of others (chapter 2, 4 and 5). In chapter 7, we

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read that Daniel was treated to an extraordinary glimpse of coming world kingdoms. In the closing chapters (8 – 10), Daniel put words to fantastic visions of a future day.

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(Luke 1) and Joseph (Matthew 1), to the shepherds (Luke 2) and to the wise men (Matthew 2). Each of the synoptic Gospel writers (Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3) recorded God's pronouncement 'You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' at the advent of Jesus' public ministry. Finally, Matthew (27) recorded the dream warning sent to Pilate's wife, prior to the judgment of Jesus and subsequent condemnation and crucifixion.

Even as the story of faith continues across the pages of the New Testament, we

read how dreams and visions recurred in the lives of the Apostles and in particular Paul and Peter. In Acts 2, we see Peter explaining how in the last days, God will visit His people with dreams and visions. Chapter 9 records how Saul heard God speak audibly on the road to Damascus. In chapters 10 & 11 Peter experienced divine visionary intervention—a thrice-repeated event that resulted in the conversion of Cornelius and his household. In Acts 16, Paul received his call to Macedonia through a dream. Finally, in Acts 19 we read that he was encouraged to stay in Corinth and preach the gospel in a dream. The final book of the New Testament, the Revelation of John, is a glorious and complex portrayal of a divine vision.

As the New Testament came to a close and the life of the Church struggled against persecution from without and heresy and strife from within, Church leaders sought to collect the apostolic writings to form a coherent whole upon which the history and doctrine of the faith could stand. Finally recognized as the canon of Scripture at the Synod of Hippo (393 AD) and confirmed at the Council of Carthage (397 AD) and Trent (1564 AD), the accepted Old and New Testament writings were considered a complete compilation of the message of God to humanity. Yet God continued to speak.

Extant writings from the first few centuries of the church show that dreams and visions figured prominently in the lives of the saints and Fathers of the Church. According to Kelsey, ‘for the first 500-600 years of Christianity it was thought to be perfectly natural for a Christian to have a supernatural encounter with Jesus. According to the theology of the day, such an encounter was the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit’ (Kelsey 1978, 22). Furthermore, he notes that virtually every Church Father, from Justin Martyr to Origen, from Cyprian and Augustine believed that dreams and visions were a valid means of personal revelation (Kelsey 1976, 167). Augustine heard what he thought to be the voice of a child singing a song (when there was no child nearby), the words of which – ‘pick it up and read’ – led to his conversion.

Philosophy Gains the Upper Hand

As the Church stumbled over the next several hundred years with the decline of the West throughout the course of the Middle Ages, and later faced confrontation from a growing and expanding Islamic foe, questions associated with maintaining the purity of the faith became prominent. Efforts to resolve doctrinal questions and maintain a common expression of the faith were highlighted in Church councils, which were convened as often as deemed necessary, from the earliest at Nicea (325 AD) to the latest of the 21 ecumenical councils of the Roman Catholic Church, Vatican II (1962-1965). From these councils important doctrinal conclusions were often explicitly detailed in published creeds such as the Nicene Creed, which, among other things, took a stand against the teachings of Arius by affirming and upholding the eternal nature of the Son of God.

Throughout this era of the early Church and until the invention of the printing press (1440 AD) and the release of the Gutenberg edition of the Bible just a few years later, copies of the Scriptures were relatively few and those that existed were the fruit of a painstakingly long process of hand copying. Few outside of royal or ecclesiastical circles could read and the sole means of retaining and transmitting the faith rested with the Church. The Church believed itself to be the representative and mouthpiece of God on earth and as a result looked unfavourably on those who opposed its teaching or who claimed to receive a direct message from God (bypassing the Church altogether) via a dream or vision. The case of Joan of Arc is one notable example.

Despite the biblical accounts and the history of supernatural encounters, the belief in a God who still speaks was eventually smothered by the influence of Thomas Aquinas' philosophy of knowledge. The illustrious philosopher, Aristotle, made his mark on Greek thought in the 4th century BC. His extant works include essays that treat dreams.⁶ For Aristotle, dreams were nothing more than the result of natural forces. There appeared to be little coherence between the supposed importance of the dream or vision, and the social class of the recipient: a coherence, which he maintained, would have been there if dreams and visions were indeed sent from the gods. For Aristotle rationality ruled supreme, and dreams and visions – whatever message they claimed to bring – needed to submit to the analysis of reason (Gallop 1990).

Though scholastic and philosophical works on dreams and visions continued to surface throughout the Middle Ages, it was not until the 13th century that Thomas Aquinas developed a theological system that placed a boundary between the supernatural and the rational. In short, Aquinas reached back to the philosophical framework of Aristotle and concluded that though

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dreams and visions were possible vehicles for divine communication (he was a Biblicist after all) they were nevertheless suspect and should be considered only with great care, since the images and messages conveyed by them could just as well be demonic or natural in origin. Fundamentally however, Aquinas' use of Aristotelian thought reinforced the conclusion that knowl-

edge could really only be perceived through the five senses and reason. With this as the foundation for his theology, no real room was left for dreams and visions, or for any supernatural experience.

In *Escape from Reason*, Francis Schaeffer provides a helpful summary of the effect of Aquinas' thought on Western civilization. For Schaeffer, the influence trickled down from philosophy (through men such as Kant, Hegel and Kierkegaard) to af-

6. See Aristotle: 'On Sleep and Waking', 'On Dreams' and 'On Prophecy in Sleep.'

fect art, music, general culture and finally theology itself (Schaeffer 1993, 234). By the time theology was thus infected, Aquinas' conclusions regarding the nature of humanity had sown the seeds that gave rise to natural theology whose conclusions could be derived from empirical evaluations and analytical exercises without recourse to the Scriptures. With the arrival of the nineteenth century, the influence of the previous two centuries of Enlightenment thinking with its materialistic and humanistic components propelled the thought of Aquinas to the forefront of Roman Catholic theology. By embracing such a worldview, strangely enough, the Church found itself in a position to represent a supernatural reality to a congregation who no longer had hope of any access to it. Kelsey notes,

The Christian philosophies of the past three hundred years have overlooked the fact that God wants to encounter men and women and that they can actually know God. A division arose between the Church (who did not want authority questioned) and the secular world because the Church refused to tolerate, let alone encourage, the part of scientific thought that allowed humans to discover that the earth revolves around the sun.

The Church's intolerance of this inquiring spirit forced scientific thought to develop on a completely secular level and to become antireligious to the point of maintaining that human beings have no Godly spirit. This narrow-minded attitude eventually caused thinking Christians to adopt secular thought exclusively and become convinced that God could be known only through reason and not through experience. As a result of this type of thought, people came to believe that while God worked in World happenings, He could not be experienced personally (Kelsey 1978, 7-8).

The Return of Dreams and Visions to the West

One effect of the rise of humanism was the genesis of an insatiable appetite to discover. If man was indeed the epitome of natural existence and the master of his fate, then the pursuit of knowledge was essential to the realization of human destiny. With this in mind, the 18th and 19th centuries saw advances in medicine (germ theory, pasteurization) and technology (industrial use of electricity and the steam engines, telephone, and so on) which propelled humanity forward by great leaps. As significant as these and other achievements turned out to be for the progress of Western civilization, scientific discovery was not limited to the physical sciences. One name in particular stands out from this period as being pivotal in understanding the function of the human mind and emotional aspect of humanity: the Austrian neurologist and psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939). Interestingly, Freud also unlocked the door that led to the recovery of dreams and visions as valid instruments for accessing knowledge. One of Freud's key works, entitled "The Interpretation of Dreams"

(first published in 1913), was a summary of his findings relative to the phenomenon of dreams and visions experienced by patients under his care. In this book, Freud set out to demonstrate that the interpretation of dreams and visions was instrumental to the proper treatment of neurosis and psychosis. Though dreams and visions for Freud were due to natural causes, his analysis of the meaning and purpose of dreams resulted in a reintroduction of the integrity of dreams to the West. That he did so from the perspective of medicine, even psychology, has given dreams a certain social respectability, which has grown with the improved perception of psychology throughout the 20th century.

Another prominent scientist of the late 19th and early 20th century, Carl Jung, adjusted Freud's definition of the meaning and purpose of dreams. In contrast to Freud, Jung concluded that all dreams fit into the following categories: 1) Dreams of external stimulus, 2) Dreams of projected honour or dishonour, 3) Dreams of hidden personal conflict, 4) Dreams of hidden wishes, 5) Dreams of the future and 6) Dreams of warning (Jung 1950, 102-6).

As such, Jung disagreed with Freud's belief that dreams were 'a mere facade, behind which something has been carefully hidden' (Jung, 30). With this assertion, Jung suggested the possibility that some dreams have an outside source both in their content as well as in their occurrence, which may in many instances, be divine. In so doing, he aligned himself with the prevailing opinion of the early Church Fathers, that dreams were a means of divine encounter. Though he considered himself incompetent to correctly apply the metaphysical and philosophical considerations and implications of his observations (1, 2), he clearly acknowledged that there was more to dreams and their interpretations than a collective consideration of internal conflict.

Interestingly, it is through the vehicle of neurology and psychiatry that dreams and visions made a return to legitimacy in Western civilization. Though the Church struggled with the underlying philosophy, conclusions and treatment at times offered by the practitioners of such science, their efforts to understand humans from the inside has opened up a glimpse of the supernatural and helped remove the lid from a closed-box worldview, outside of which nothing exists.

An Unusual Discovery

Lilias Trotter (1853 - 1928) was a British artist and a missionary for over 38 years to the Muslims of Algeria. After serving God in England for a time with the YWCA, she went with her own funding to Algeria to serve God there. In 1888, she founded the Algiers Mission Band, which was incorporated into Arab World Ministries in the 1960's. In addition to a number of books, which she wrote and beautifully illustrated, including *Parables of the Cross*, *Parables of the Christ Life*, and a book for Sufi Muslims *The Way of the Sevenfold Secret*, Lilias Trotter kept a journal of her work in Algeria.

Some fifty years after Trotter's initial departure to North Africa, another British missionary, Constance Padwick, compiled a commentary on the Trotter diaries. In a 1939 article entitled 'Dreams and Vision: Some Notes from a Diary' (Padwick, 205-216), Padwick categorizes the accounts of dreams and visions that Trotter recorded throughout her career in Algeria. Padwick distinguished four types of dream/vision events:

1. Moral Warning – example: Pilate's wife (Matthew 27:19)
2. Guidance – example: Joseph/Mary's departure into Egypt (Matthew 2:13)
3. Encouragement – example: God's encouragement of Paul during the shipwreck (Acts 27:24)
4. The Presence (of God/Christ) – example: Stephen's stoning (Acts 7:56)

What can be observed from the Trotter diaries, despite the confusion over the supernatural that plagued European society and the Church, is a conviction that God speaks through dreams and visions, and he does so without respect to gender or social status. The Trotter diaries recount literally dozens of first-hand stories of men and women who encountered Christ. In some cases, these supernatural encounters led these Muslim men and women to faith in Christ; in other cases, the dream or vision served to confirm a young believer and encourage obedience in the face of opposition and doubt.

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It is likely that Padwick's analysis of the Trotter diaries constituted the first extended treatment of dreams and visions in the missionary community. No doubt others had encountered similar experiences, but little exists that shows the attention to detail and analysis that Padwick offered in her attempts not only to preserve the experiences of Lilius Trotter but also to make sense of them missiologically.

Dreams and Visions – Divine Access to the Heart of Islam

According to the recorded history and traditions of his life, Muhammad had at least two angelic visions in which he was instructed to recite the words conveyed by the angelic being, Gabriel (Bell 1934, 149). These incidents, exceptional as they were in that no other similar vision experiences are recorded throughout the remainder of Muhammad's life (Gilchrist 1986, 100), served as the inception of the Qur'an and the birth of the Islamic faith. Sura 53:1-15 records the initial vision event as follows,

By the Star when it goes down, your Companion is neither astray nor being misled, nor does he say (aught) of (his own) desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him: He was taught by one mighty in Power, endued with

Wisdom: for he appeared (in stately form) while he was in the highest part of the horizon: Then he approached and came closer, and it was at a distance of but two bow-lengths or (even) nearer; So did (Allah) convey the inspiration to His Servant (Conveyed) what He (meant) to convey. The (Prophet's) (mind and) heart in no way falsified that which he saw. Will ye then dispute with him concerning what he saw? For indeed he saw him at a second descent, Near the Lote-tree of the utmost boundary. Near it is the Garden of Abode. (Yusuf Ali, 1990)

Because this incident marks the beginnings of Islam it is highly regarded by Muslims. The theological conclusions, which resulted from this supernatural encounter, have become foundational to the Islamic faith. They include issues of man's relationship to God, the means and nature of revelation, and the mark or identity of a prophet.

Of particular interest is the nature of revelation that resulted in the Qur'an. According to *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*:

...the theory of the revelation of the Koran is particularly complex. The Koran was revealed or descended in its entirety in one night, the 'Night of Destiny', into the soul of the Prophet (Muhammad), which is itself that night. Thereupon it became manifest through him, in segments, sometimes entire surahs, as particular circumstances and requirements in the world and the Prophet's life called them forth. The Prophet said that this manifestation of the Koran came in two ways: 'Sometimes Gabriel reveals to me as one man to another, and that is easy; but at other times it is like the ringing of bell penetrating my very heart, rending me, and that way is the most painful'. (Glassé 1991, 335)

Thus, revelation and its common vehicle, dreams and visions, are inseparably united in the worldview of Islam which, since its rather abrupt beginnings, has continued to benefit from supernatural (of heavenly or demonic origin, without distinction) guidance gleaned from such phenomena. In a worldview that embraces the

perspective that 'faith is conviction through direct experience, and not the result of a process of reason' (Glassé 1991, 231), dreams and visions play a significant role in informing and defining religious meaning. In contrast to Western thought which has historically given little credence to the unconscious, Muslims are fully aware of and engaged in a daily experience that is not only open to, but depends upon supernatural encounters such as occur in dreams and visions.

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Dreams are central to the cosmological outlook of ordinary Muslims from founder to followers, dreams form part of the total paradigm within which Muslims live and move, touch and are touched, meet and are met. They are not optional; they are a meaningful component of life. (Musk 1988, 164)

The Arabic language makes use of multiple terms to refer to the revelatory process carried by dreams and visions though it is apparent that distinction between the types and/or means of the revelatory process is not as important as the event itself. Despite the fact that dreams and visions appear to be unique types of experiences differentiated by the state of sleep of the dreamer, the Arabic terms used to describe such do not often provide a clear distinction.⁷

Throughout the Muslim world, dreams serve a variety of societal functions. For instance, among the Tausag of the Philippines, medicine men begin their medical practice through dreams in which they are visited by *shayatin* (devils). In Afghan Turkestan, the *bakhshi* (doctor) will spend the night sleeping in the house of a patient. The dream received during the night becomes the key to diagnosing the patient's illness and defining the appropriate treatment. The Kabyles of Algeria put food on the graves of deceased relatives if they dream of them, in an effort to communicate with them. In Pakistan, the shrines of dead saints are established as the direct result of dreams, especially as the details of such are revealed in the dreams of recognized holy men (Musk 1990, 186-187).

If dreams and visions are so popular among Muslims and serve as a primary means of revelation, how are they to be understood in terms of Muslim theology? In answer to this question, one must look to Islamic literature on the subject, which helps to explain the separation of the generally monolithic orthodoxy of Islam from its popular and culturally varied expressions of the faith. The former is referred to as 'formal' or 'official' Islam, whereas the latter is known as 'popular' or 'folk' Islam.

Formal Islam embodies the official doctrines and practice of the Islamic faith that are accepted across the Muslim world. Included are such things as the Five Pillars (Es-

7. The Arabic words commonly used to refer to these experiences do not provide for explicit categories. For instance, the word 'ru'ya' literally means 'vision'. However, Surah 48:27 states, 'God has already fulfilled in truth the dream [vision, 'ar-ru'ya] for His Prophet. . . ' Here the term may mean either 'vision' or, most likely, a 'prophetic dream' indicating God's provision or activity on behalf of the Prophet before the events occurred in reality. A second Arabic term used in this context is 'tanzil'. Though the word literally means, 'a sending down [from Heaven], its implicit reference to the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad, endows it with a much broader meaning suggestive of the dream and vision revelatory event. The third common Arabic term used in reference to dreams and visions is 'al-Wahy.' This word denotes 'inspiration from God', and, like the term 'tanzil', is suggestive of not only the content of revelation, but of the means and process as well. (*The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* 1991, S.v. 'Ru'ya,' 339, 'tanzil,' 397, 'al-Wahy,' 416)

posito 1988), the recognized festivals, and reverence and study of the Qur'an. Formal Islam holds to and presents God as the Creator who is functionally removed from his creation – what some might call deistic. By virtue of its dependence on the Qur'an as the primary text of doctrinal instruction, formal Islam deals with the universal issues of life, such as origins, destiny and the true meaning of life. Finally, formal Islam is what is taught in the Qur'an schools and centres of religious training that prepare men for roles as Imams and Islamic scholars and teachers across the Muslim world.

In contrast, popular, or folk Islam, encompasses the myriad colloquial beliefs and practices of Muslims which, in addition to the Five Pillars and other formal aspects of the faith, are intended to give meaning and counsel in the daily course of life (Esposito 1988, 90-95). Because God is understood to be far off and uninvolved in the immediate affairs of men, folk Islam draws upon local beliefs and practices to respond to pressing daily needs and provide answers to the challenges and fears of living in a hostile world. Unlike the commonly held beliefs and practices that fall under formal Islam, the beliefs and practices of folk Islam are not codified and taught in formal settings. They are instead handed down from generation to generation and, as such, vary widely from region to region and even from family to family across the Muslim world.

Responding to this Communication Challenge

Because science and its methodology have become so significant to the Western mind in defining reality and managing the drama of life, Westerners are predisposed to think and act in terms of a strong dichotomy between sacred and secular. As a result, the Western mind more readily accepts as true that which is repeatable and verifiable and mistrusts that which is not. The Muslim, on the other hand, more readily accepts as true that which he or she can experience. Thus, when a Western Christian approaches a Muslim

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What is a Christian to do? How can we make ourselves understood to our Muslim friends? What is involved in appropriate communication that effectively bridges the worldview gap between the two? On the one hand, Scripture makes it clear that because of the fall, humanity is under the curse of sin and blinded by Satan so that left to himself he cannot

understand the gospel apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. II Corinthians 4:3-4 makes it very clear that, '...if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbe-

lieving so that they might not see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.' Yet God has ordained that the gospel should be preached by people to other people so that they might hear and be saved. Romans 10: 14-15, asks,

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, *'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!'*

The answer to the questions Paul raises here is that, left to themselves humans will not and cannot hear or believe without the Holy Spirit of God making use of a preacher: one of us.

This then leads us to the next question: if God has ordained to make use of people as his mouthpieces for the Gospel, how can we present ourselves as the most useful vessels possible to communicate such a message? First, the Christian must understand the essentials of communication. Communication consists, in its simplest form, of three components: the source (who is communicating), the coded message (what is being communicated), and the respondent (the one(s) who receive the message) (Hesselgrave 1991, 41). Once we understand this, our task is to formulate the message that we wish to communicate accurately; with appropriate content, making use of appropriate means, and having in mind the intended audience. Second, the Christian must accept the fact that there are built-in obstacles to understanding the message. Though the evangelistic task is fundamentally one of communication, which is 'an elemental human activity', this fundamental evangelistic task also encounters 'a fundamental human problem' (Hesselgrave, 91), which is the reality of differing worldviews.

The Western Christian who intends to communicate the gospel to Muslims, for example, is automatically confronted with additional challenges in preparing an effective message, which are not just cross-cultural in nature, but cross-worldview. These include such things as competing understandings of truth, differing meanings of shared terms, and undefined concepts. The reality is that if we fail to grasp and respond effectively to these challenges, we cannot be sure that what we intend to communicate will be understood (Muller 2001, 33-34). Nevertheless, accurate communication requires that the sender deliver the message in such a way and by such means that the receiver is able, without adapting to the sender, to understand the message as intended by the sender. To do this, the sender must make use of forms, symbols and language drawn from the worldview of the receiver that adequately conveys the message so that what is understood reflects what was intended. Ultimately, this work is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). However,

humanly speaking, if the Western Christian is to truly communicate, he or she must encode the message in language and symbols which, when transmitted to a Muslim audience, are rightly received and decoded with the intended meaning (Hesselgrave, 41).

In other words, the Christian whose aim is to communicate the gospel to Muslims must understand both the Muslim's worldview and his own. In so doing, he or she must then grasp that the Muslim worldview and biblical worldview are in conflict to the extent that at some level and with regard to certain affirmations (e.g. the identity and role of Jesus Christ), to embrace one is to deny the other. Yet the Western Christian must also realize that a Muslim, to the extent that he or she has escaped Aristotelian influence (the notion that reality can only be known through sensory perception and reason), will be more receptive to experiential phenomena - such as dreams and visions - than he is. As a result, effective communication to this Muslim must take into consideration the role of experiential phenomena.

Despite such challenges to effective communication and formidable worldview differences in communicating the gospel to Muslims, a Christian is not operating within a vacuum. The Scriptures provide the content of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4), the parameters of gospel communication and appropriate behaviour of gospel witness. Furthermore, both Old and New Testaments provide examples of dream and vision experiences that are of divine origin that had a strong influence on the life of the dreamer.

Conclusion

We Christians are to follow the example of Christ in his living (Eph. 5:1) and the example of Paul in his preaching (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:7, 9). In so doing, we are free to utilize everything the Scripture authorizes in order to communicate effectively. We therefore need to try to understand the worldviews from which we come and into which we go so as to identify where each of these overlap with the biblical worldview. We can then utilize that overlap as an avenue of communication for the gospel. Thus, we can seize the opportunity provided by the openness many Muslims have to dreams and visions. We can anticipate that God may use this phenomenon as a means by which an encounter with Christ takes place. With this in mind, we can freely engage our Muslim friends in discussions about dreams and visions that each of us may have experienced or heard about. We can explain those dream and vision elements that point to biblical realities and gospel truth.

The increased evangelistic efforts among Muslims over the last thirty years has brought to light the way that God is using dreams and visions to bring many Muslims to faith in Christ. We realize that not all dreams are revelatory. Some, perhaps even the majority, are simply the products of normal physiological functions as noted

by Freud and Jung. However, the biblical, historical and experiential data suggests that God may choose to communicate through dreams. Moreover, given the Islamic worldview, dreams and visions may be used by God to prepare an individual to 'hear' the gospel message and respond to it. These may open the way that leads to life for many who seemed beyond the reach of traditional gospel approaches. Any Christians who are in contact with Muslims would do well to investigate this divine vehicle of supernatural encounter.

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