

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.

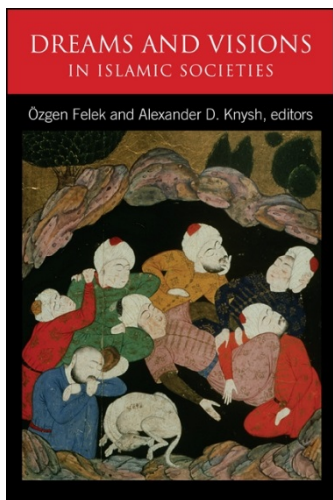
## *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies*

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.<sup>11</sup>

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.

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<sup>11</sup> 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).