



Seedbed

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Editorial

About sixty-five women workers came together recently to listen to each other on all kinds of questions related to their desire to see Christ glorified among North Africans. I was thrilled to interact personally with them at the European centre. At the same time other colleagues were attending a larger conference in Asia where they looked at church planting concerns for Muslim countries. As editor of *Seedbed* I want to continue such forums that offer encouragement and inspiration by providing this written one for the sharing of ideas.

This first issue of *Seedbed* for 2007 contains a variety of articles intended to stimulate both your thinking and your writing. It begins with the incident of Rohani meeting Christ when she came to an English lesson in a refugee camp. She was already prepared by God to search for 'signs'. May her story open another door for you in sharing the Good News with Muslim friends. Have you already come across an opportunity to answer questions about such 'signs'? Or have you a similar experience of how to point someone to Christ?

The second article directs your attention to church planting in terms of evangelism, discipleship and leadership from observations on the situation in one North African country. What comments could you make about the state of affairs in your country of ministry? How have your experiences been similar and/or different?

Once again *Seedbed* includes thoughts about the Arabic language, but this time reference is made to its place in Islam. In

what ways do you agree, or disagree, with the author? I find that his remarks about *ijtihad* and the growing reform movement among younger Muslim intellectuals, especially women, are corroborated by recent publications and documentaries in the UK. What are the trends among the intellectuals in your country?

The final article promotes a greater awareness and understanding of the globalization process taking place within our company. As we embrace the changes, we want to support one another in the adjustments that need to be made. We certainly want to encourage all our partners – of many different nationalities – to contribute their insights into ministry in the Arab world.

A challenge to engage in a variety of ways with Islam and with the present world situation comes from the three book reviews. CM points to the significant theological concerns about the divinity and death of Christ from his reading of *Christology in Dialogue with Muslims*. What can you learn from past and present theologians? Lundy draws attention to two books. The compendium, *Encountering the World of Islam*, prepares us for Christian witness and ministry to Muslims. The other one, *Longitudes and Attitudes*, relates more to the present-day political situations as author Thomas Friedman looks at the world in an age of terrorism.

I look forward to receiving your reactions and contributions in response to your reading of this *Seedbed*.

Donna Smith, Editor
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How Rohani Met Isa

Anonymous, as told to Jamie Winship

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Rohani, which means 'filled with God's spirit,' introduces herself to me one morning as I enter the classroom.

Despite the ravages of her life in Baghdad and a tumultuous journey across the desert into this refugee camp in Jordan, she has a deep, resolute beauty.

'I am Muslim,' she informs me. She straightens her elfin form in a show of dignity that rises above the reality of her life and the loss of everything she has ever loved. My heart is stirred by her strength and determination and then breaks at her lostness, both physically and spiritually.

'I'm a true believer,' I say as other students come into the room and take their seats. Palestinians and Iraqis, they sit and stare from vacuous eyes sunken within hollow faces. Expressions of hopelessness track my every movement.

'What is a true believer?' Rohani demands.

'You need to learn many things,' I say. 'After the class we can talk about this, but first you need English and computer skills.'

'Belief is first,' she answers confidently. 'Everything else is secondary.'

She is a young woman by American standards, 28 perhaps, yet nearly an old maid in her culture. Her violet head covering hangs loosely about her bronzed face. Her eyes are fierce and dark. I shudder at the things they have witnessed. And yet she speaks of the importance of belief.

I put off her challenge until the class is finished. When she refuses to leave as the room empties, I acquiesce. 'What is a true believer in your religion?' I ask.

'Someone who believes in the signs of God,' she answers.

I'm surprised. I was expecting the standard answer about prayer and good works.

'Signs?' I ask. 'What signs?'

'Signs,' she repeats, as if frustrated by my ignorance. 'God gives us signs to understand Him. Like the sign of the Ark of Nuh.'

I'm now truly amazed. 'And what does the ark of Noah tell you about God?'

She drops her eyes and shakes her head. 'I don't really know. I can't understand it. But whatever it means, I believe it.' How tenaciously she holds on to her belief, yet it is incomplete, empty.

We agree to meet the following day to talk further. I ask her to write down all the signs of God she knows so we can discuss them.

Reading the Signs

The next day we sit at a small plastic table in the center of the refugee camp. It is the only place that allows us to meet and talk under supervision and without reprisal.

‘Here is my list,’ she says pushing a folded piece of paper toward me, careful not to touch my hand.

As I read a list written in beautiful Arabic script of 10 signs of God within Islam, I am awestruck. I write down a quick rearrangement of the signs, placing the seven most significant of them in the order that they appear in the Bible. I slide the paper back to her. ‘Read this aloud to me.’

She studies my rearranged list and smiles. ‘The first sign is the covering of righteousness that God promises to Adam through the coming of God’s Word and God’s Mercy. The second is the sign of the ark of Noah.’ She looks at me as if searching for the meaning and then continues. ‘The third sign is the sign of khitan (circumcision) given to Abraham, and the fourth is the sign of the protection and deliverance of Moses out of Egypt. The fifth sign is the Zabbur (the psalms of David).’

‘Do you understand any of these signs, Rohani?’ I ask.

‘No,’ she says, looking embarrassed.

‘Read the final two signs.’

‘The sixth sign is the sign of Yunus (Jonah) and the final sign is Isa (Jesus).’

I can’t contain my excitement. ‘To understand these special signs will bring you the greatest joy you will ever know in your life, Rohani. The greatest joy!’

She laughs at my enthusiasm and then turns serious. ‘These signs have been in our culture for a thousand years but they haven’t brought us any joy. I want to understand them—to understand joy.’

‘If you allow it, I will show you the significance of these signs. They are each explained fully in the Bible.’

The following day we begin our study. The mere possibility of joy has brightened her countenance. She places a Qu’ran on the plastic table, and I lay out the Bible.

She avoids my attempts at polite conversation; she’s eager to begin. ‘Last night I read as much as I could about these seven signs, but the meaning is unclear. The Qu’ran just mentions them and says that all true believers will accept them and be changed by them. What does your Holy Book say?’

I begin with the story of Adam and show her the fall of humanity.

‘Yes, we have this,’ she says excitedly. ‘Adam tries to cover his shame with leaves, but God does not accept this. Then God says He will provide a covering for the man and woman’s shame, and that covering will be His righteousness. He says it will come through His Word and His Mercy. Who is this Word and Mercy, and how will it come?’

I struggle to keep up with her questions. I’m amazed that she knows so much. ‘Does the Qu’ran tell you who this Word and Mercy is?’ I ask.

‘Only Isa (Jesus) is called the Word and Mercy of God in the Qu’ran,’ she says. ‘But what does that mean?’

Redemption Unfolds

Over the next two months Rohani and I meet to study the signs of God. I marvel at how God woos her, and I grow in my appreciation of what God has placed in her culture to lead her to Him.

I explain to her that the sign of God covering Adam—and all fallen people—with His righteousness is a promise of what God will do for humanity. The sign of the ark is another picture of God providing a way of escape from destruction. All this is through His mercy and grace.

The signs of circumcision, the protection and deliverance of Moses, and the psalms of David are pictures of how God will accomplish this task. It will be done through the descendants of Abraham, with the blood of sacrifice, through the specific ancestry of the line of David.

And the final two signs explain through whom God will accomplish this task of covering us with His righteousness. The sign of Jonah demonstrates that He who comes as the Righteous One will spend three days and nights in the heart of the earth. All this culminates in the final sign of Jesus, the Word and Mercy of God.

Rohani is stunned. ‘Does this mean that God has covered my sins and the sins of my people with the death and resurrection of Al-Massiah (the Messiah)?’

‘Yes. But you must accept this sign, this gift from God. As you have said, a

true believer accepts the signs of God and is changed by them.’

‘I want to be a true believer,’ she says, but she is sad.

‘This is so much to think about. This means that the Christ needed to die because of me.’ She begins to cry. ‘I need time to think about this. I don’t think my life deserves such sacrifice.’

Before I can say any more, she gathers her things and leaves.

The following week, Rohani is transferred to another camp in the north of Jordan near the Syrian border. I cannot go there, and I know of no believers working there.

True Believers

Nearly a year passes, and I too move on to another place. In this new place I receive a letter. It is from Rohani, delivered to me by an American who met her.

The letter is a single paragraph talking mostly about her upcoming marriage to a wonderful man:

He is Iraqi, and I love him very much. You will be happy to know that both of us have accepted the sign of the Christ and are now covered in His righteousness. He speaks to our hearts, and we read the Bible each day together. Thank you for teaching me these things. I hope to help many of my people understand and accept the Christ.

Best regards, Rohani: the Spirit-filled one

Redemption is the purchase back of something that has been lost by the payment of a ransom. God paid Rohani’s way back into life and joy with the ransom of Isa, and one day she will stand with Him in eternity.

Reflections on Evangelism and Discipleship

By LDH

The following report is a summary of responses given to questions about church growth and related ministry in a North African country.

Specific demographical groups (including age) that are responding more than others

In the last four years the women have been more receptive than the men. Many of these are poor and from the lower middle class. They are responding, not because they are unhappy, but because they are searching and in need of spiritual input. The majority of these women are in the 20-30 years age range. These women are influencing their men. Why is this so? Television has opened a new world for women and the change in politics in their country has given them a new voice. Maybe men are able to express their views somewhere else in their society, but we are not seeing them because they are not connecting to the church as the women are. At this point it is easier to contact women and build friendships with them than with men.

Particular or combined messages that seem to work best when witnessing to a Muslim

Telling biblically based stories that speak to an oral culture has been successful. North Africans often get the message much better when it is told in a story

format. They are more easily able to pass these stories on to others who need to hear the gospel. Dreams have been used as well to prepare them for the gospel. One worker has met nationals who have had dreams that reinforced the message given, leading to the conclusion that God is reaching out to them.

Christian satellite TV has had a huge impact, as well as keyboard and voice chat on the Internet. This is not only in Arabic. North Africans go into English and French chat rooms and talk with Christians. They soon learn that not all people in the west are Christians. The *Bible Online*, and other similar sites, are open doors for them. All kinds of TV programmes, even 'adult' programmes, have made them ask good questions. Newspaper articles on Christianity in the national press have raised interest in the gospel; there are many hits on a national Christian web site that workers manage. Christians like Zacharias Boutros, employing a debate format, have had an impact. Christian video series produced by Egyptians and Middle Easterners have not received the same feedback. It is felt that this material is not suitable to the needs of the nationals. The Egyptian Christian context does not seem to relate to them. The 'Palm' programme has been used with one church group. The use of MK's book on discipleship, along with storying, has been extremely helpful. These materials are used both for seekers and believers. A

series of basic discipleship lessons, called the *Discovery Lessons*, has also been helpful. In most of North Africa, relational witness seems to be the most effective, although mixtures of radio, Internet, satellite, cassette, VDC, DVD and printed books have also been a great help.

The cultural expression of believers in the Muslim context

Local house-church fellowships use a variety of Christian music: songs from the West, from Middle Eastern Christianity as well as songs written by themselves. Special events are a significant element in the life of the church. Women enjoy going to a Christian party where they can express their joy by wearing national dress, by decorating themselves with henna as for a wedding and by dancing in their traditional way. Relationships are essential to the life of the Christian community. Christians often visit each other to build such relationships. Family is at the heart of these relationships. Food is almost always an element when believers meet together.

State of multiplication of MBB churches

While in most places good missiological principles are being observed, and while a church planting movement (CPM) is certainly desirable, the reality is that it is not yet happening among any agency or church grouping anywhere in North Africa except in Kabylia. Even Kabylia might not qualify as a church planting 'movement', as its growth has been

haphazard and a result of many different factors. A CPM is largely the work of the Holy Spirit, building on biblical proclamation and cultural, political and historical factors under His sovereign control. We would certainly like to see a CPM as has happened in a few select places in the last century, but the present reality in most places in North Africa is slow, steady growth with regular setbacks. From a historical perspective, to see church growth in the last 20 years from a few groups in this North African country to about 52 today is very encouraging!

As national church groups exist in most places, a first goal would be to feed new believers into these local churches. When groups grow too large, they will form new ones. This growth is still slow, but steady. True biblical leadership takes time to develop in this society. There have been many leadership training seminars, but they have not necessarily produced biblical leaders. Leadership training takes time and the modelling of relationships to be effective. The church cannot grow much faster than it is able to lead and shepherd new converts.

Discipleship methods

The most effective discipleship 'method' that we employ is the building of personal relationships. We disciple nationals and encourage them to mentor each other by spending time together and modelling attitudes, actions and words that express their faith on a daily basis in the market place. Discipleship is much more than doing some lessons or

following a series. We help individuals to live with each other in normal life circumstances. We train and encourage believers to follow up seekers and spend time with them, to pray with each other, to discuss their own issues together and to be accountable to each other. Using 'storying' is effective, as it is a part of their culture, and it relates to who they are and to their daily life. This is especially useful for the illiterate and the functionally illiterate. They see their lives mirrored in the lives from the Bible story. The discussion that occurs after the story is a key element in discipleship. Video and audio materials are also used to complement relational discipling.

Effective pastoral and leadership training models and materials

What was said above about mentoring in discipleship applies here. We emphasize relationships and not materials. There have been a number of mini- conferences about leadership here in recent years. Studying theory has not helped real biblical leadership to emerge. This is why we believe that mentoring is of utmost importance. Emerging leaders are being trained on a personal basis, where they are able to talk about leadership issues and struggles. Modelling – a fleshing out of the desired qualities and skills – is crucial. The goal is to see shepherds formed who will care for others as leaders during the week, not just be meeting other leaders. For leadership models we study with them the lives of Nehemiah, Paul and Jesus. MK's materials have also been very useful in leadership training. The most effective

training often involves responding to teachable moments. When leaders are faced with difficult issues, they are very open to learn what the Bible has to say. How do you resolve relational conflict? Who is the best person to do it? How do you reconcile Christians in conflict? How do you mediate conflict? What makes a biblical resolution? The best 'material' to use is the Bible. Going to the Bible to find these answers models the authority of scripture in our lives. It also gives a model that they can imitate in training others. Most nationals do not have many Christian books, but they do have the Bible.

The capacity of our company to respond to a significant movement of the Holy Spirit among Arab Muslims

This question actually pushes us in the wrong direction. If you were asked what you would do if the Lord suddenly added a thousand children to your family, what would you say? Obviously you would need to take exceptional measures to deal with this abnormal situation, but it would be less than ideal. The reality is that in most places in the world growth happens at a steady pace, allowing for church families to form and for new believers to be trained. As the Lord usually adds a manageable number of children to each generation of a family, so He usually adds a manageable number of new believers to each generation of church families, allowing them to grow in a normal, relational, holistic way. Our company has a part in discipling believers and mentoring leaders in order to see churches emerge,

along with all the other mission agencies and North African believers. We are not alone in the mission context and should not plan as though we were. If there were exceptional growth, we all would need to do our part to help build relationships with these new believers and help them to grow in their knowledge of

God and of mission. Rapid growth should not push us to a cookie cutter – one kind of material fits all – mindset. Real spiritual growth and leadership development is based on the Bible and on relationships, calling for personal investment and creativity.

Islam and the Arabic Language

by DSM

I. A Special Relationship

Throughout history the association between religion and language has taken different forms.¹ Some languages are regarded as sacred and are reserved for religious purposes. The Arabic language existed before Islam but the particular form in which the Qur'an is written has a special relationship with Arab life and culture. This is partly due to the fact that in Islam there is no separation between the sacred and the secular; the fundamentals of Islam are all-pervading.

Arabic is one of the world's great languages, mother tongue to about 320 million people. The vast majority of these are Muslims who inhabit Arab countries of the Middle East, the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa, but who in recent years are spreading abroad in their millions, mainly to Europe and North America. They speak one of the thirty or so forms of Colloquial Arabic and many also understand Modern Standard Arabic (or *fusha*, as it is known) that is used for general communication. Classical Arabic (or better, Qur'anic Arabic, termed *Al'Arabiyy'a* by Arabs themselves) refers to the Arabic of the Qur'an, from which Modern Standard Arabic differs only slightly, but Colloquial Arabic differs considerably. Arabic-speaking Muslims are far outnumbered by the one billion or so non-Arab Muslims, most of whose understanding of

Arabic is limited to a few key phrases of the Qur'an or other scriptures.

For Muslims the Qur'an is the final message of Allah to man (*kalam Allah*, Sura 9.6), recited in secret by an angelic messenger to Muhammad (believed to have lived from about 570 AD to 632 AD) intermittently over the last twenty-three years of his life. Others later wrote down the revelations. Muslims believe that every word given to Muhammad was entirely without error and is preserved in the Qur'an as it is available today. Many mistakes of all kinds in the Qur'an have had attention drawn to them. However Muslims refuse to discuss any matters related to the validity of the Qur'an because the Qur'an states that the original Qur'an is in heaven (Sura 85.21-22) in the form of the Mother book (*lauh el-mahfuz*, the 'preserved tablet'). It is uncreated and eternally divine (Sura 85.21-22) and was sent down (*nazala*) by God (Sura 17.105). The language of the Qur'an is said by the Qur'an itself to be "clear Arabic tongue" (Sura 16.103). Modern scholarship seriously challenges this.² The Qur'an issues a challenge (*tahaddi*) for anyone to attempt to excel its language (Sura 2.23-24). It is rather ironic that most Arab Muslims today are far from being adept in all aspects of Qur'anic Arabic. Just as the call to prayer (*adhan*), based on the Traditions of Muhammad, begins with *Allahu Akbar*

(‘Allah is greater’ than any other God), so it would seem true to say that for a Muslim, *Al’Arabiyy’a* is greater than any other language .

2. Arabic and Islam in History

Arabic belongs to the Semitic group of languages, which also includes many others, Aramaic, Syriac, Nabatean and Hebrew for example.³ The Semitic language family is a descendant of *proto-Semitic*, an ancient language that was exclusively spoken and has no written record. It is widely believed that the Arabic script, of which there are many variations (*kufic* and *naskh* are the main forms) is a descendant of the Nabatean script, which in turn probably came from one form of Aramaic. The few earliest inscriptions known that are recognisably Arabic date no earlier than the early fourth century. Most scholars accept that Arabic in pre-Islamic days was mainly an oral language in which tribal poetry of a very high quality is thought to have played a very large part. Others, notably Taha Husayn in the 1920s, concluded that ‘much of that body of work had been fabricated well after the establishment of Islam in order to lend outside support to Koran mythology’.⁴ The Qur’an has been generally considered to be the earliest substantial body of written Arabic, but modern scholarship in recent decades (See section 4 below) has thrown doubts on the dates and the nature of its origins as believed in Islam.

If the Islamic account of the origin of the Qur’an is accepted, it seems reasonable to assume that it was orally trans-

mitted in the local Qureish dialect and probably written down later by others in the *hijazi* script of the region. Some years after the death of Muhammad, a version of the Qur’an was eventually agreed by the community to be the original.

It is important to recognise that the Qur’an is not a book in the usual sense. It is a collection of recitations that are arranged in the approximate order of the length of their chapters (Suras); the longest Sura is first. For purposes of recitation this poses no problem during the times of prayer. Highly specialised schools have been formed to inculcate, practice and develop the extremely complicated art of *tajwid*, ‘the reciting of every letter of the Qur’an correctly, i.e. from its proper origin of pronunciation coupled with its stipulated attributes’.⁵ However, it presents serious barriers to theological study and predisposes to inconsistencies.

More than any other language, *Al’Arabiyy’a*, since its introduction until the present, has remained virtually without change with regards to alphabet, spelling and the majority of its vocabulary. This may be attributed almost entirely to two powerful forces for continuity in Islam. The first and always foremost is what the Qur’an says regarding itself (see above). The second force against change in Islam is human rather than divine, but has its roots in the latter. It has been in existence for around a thousand years and requires further explanation (see section 3 below).

3. The Closed Gates

During the course of the first few centuries of Islam there was much discussion and disagreement among scholars (*ulema*) as to many matters relating to theology, such as the *unicity* of God, the *uncreated* nature of the Qur'an, and *theopraxy* (practice) in Islam, especially concerning Shari'a (Islamic law) about which the Qur'an is silent on many issues.

Broadly speaking, two opposing schools of thought arose among the *ulema* and persisted for several hundred years. These became known as the Rationalist (of whom the Mu'tazilites were once the most powerful) and the Traditionalist schools. Gradually by about the year 1000 AD, Traditionalist *ulema* gained the ascendancy in Sunni Islam and they have retained it until the present day, but not in the Shi'ite schools. Generally accepted until the present, their doctrine of inimitability (*i'jaz*) of the Qur'an, in both form and content, underlies their inflexibility.

The consequences of the enduring triumph of the Traditionalists are extremely serious for Islam as a whole but most of these lie outside the remit of this paper. In one respect, however, some further consideration is necessary here. The Shari'a was developed by the *ulema* as a comprehensive body of rules guiding the life of all Muslims. Its moral provisions are made concrete through the discipline of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), which has four sources. These, in descending order of importance, are:

- a. the Qur'an
- b. the Sunna or traditions of the prophet Muhammad
- c. *qiyas* or analogical arguments
- d. *ijtihad* or individual thinking.

Ijtihad was a major source of law during the formative stages of Shari'a, but about the end of the tenth century the Traditionalist *ulema* outlawed it as a legitimate tool of exegesis. The action has been called *the closing of the gates of ijtihad*. This inflexible attitude has persisted and pervaded all aspects of Islamic life. But recently there is a growing movement among younger Muslim intellectuals, especially women, for reform, that is to say, the opening of the gates of *ijtihad* and the bringing back once more, after a whole millennium, of the right of individual thought in Islam.

4. New Light

In recent decades mainly western scholars of Islam have been casting doubts on the veracity of the traditional version of the origins of the Qur'an and Islam. The story is long and complex and has many sources which have been summarised by Warraq for the ordinary reader.⁶ Scholars have approached the subject from many different points of view and disagree a great deal among themselves. What is different about all their work is that they have applied modern scientific methods of scriptural criticism, that have previously thrown so much light onto the sources of other faiths such as Judaism and Christianity, to Islam. Their work has often been neglected and the little attention it has had from the Muslim world has, not

surprisingly perhaps in view of the closed minds of the *ulema*, been completely dismissive and even hostile.

If we start with the dating of the main written sources of Islam, there is no contemporary evidence to that time, i.e. late sixth and early seventh centuries AD, in existence from within Islam for the Qur'an, the Hadith (the sayings and doings of the Prophet Muhammad), the *Sira* (biography of Muhammad) or the *Tafsir* (commentary and explication of the Qur'an). Such materials all date from around two centuries later. This was in the period following the work of al-Khalil bin Ahmad, (died 786), the founder of Arabic lexicography and of Sibawayh (died 796), to whom the grammar of classical Arabic is attributed. A few Jewish, Christian or other contemporary sources outside Islam tend to confirm such later datings. There is some evidence of an historic figure of Muhammad as a trader, but little else.

In 1972 a most extraordinary discovery of very early Islamic documents was made during the restoration of the Great Mosque in San'aa, Yemen.⁷ Included are parchment fragments of what appear to be the earliest Qur'ans in existence, dating to the seventh or eighth centuries AD. More than 30 years later, very little indeed of these finds has been published and the work has encountered frequent, serious obstacles. The previous research of Wansbrough^{8,9} suggested that the Qur'an evolved gradually over a considerable period of time; the definitive text had not been achieved as late as the ninth century; and that this

later dating coincides with evidence for the progressive rise of classical Arabic over these early years of Islam.

A large proportion of the Qur'an consists of material that is clearly related to older sources, particularly Jewish and, to a lesser extent, Christian New Testament sources. Both these communities had prominent presences in the northern part of Arabia. The most extreme form of the theory that has been developed of the gradual emergence of Islam from Jewish and other non-Arab origins has been put forward (although partially retracted in recent years) by Patricia Crone and Michael Cook.¹⁰

Yet other researchers in lexicography have claimed that there is a strong influence of the Syriac language throughout the Qur'an.¹¹ It has been claimed that hundreds of words are derived from Aramaic (Syriac) or other languages, or make more sense in these languages than in Arabic. For example, of great interest is the word *Qur'an* itself. This is said to be derived from *qeryana*, which was the word used in the Syriac church for a liturgical prayer book, with a purpose similar to that of the Qur'an itself (see Section 2 above). There is much evidence in this linguistic research against the claim of the Qur'an itself (Suras 42.7; 46.12 and many other verses) that it is an Arabic Qur'an.

A great tide of scholarship and interest, from both without and within, is now breaking on the gates of *ijtihad*. It remains to be seen how long, in the present climate of fear, reactionary

forces can continue to resist the probing of independent scholarship.

5. Some Contemporary Consequences

A well-educated Arab Muslim is brought up to claim linguistic superiority over several other groups of people, including all those who do not understand *Al'Arabiyy'a* and who cannot recite the Qur'an with *tajwid*. This includes Muslims as well as non-Muslims. A few of the many millions of speakers of Farsi (Iran), Pashto (Afghanistan), and Urdu (Pakistan and the great majority of British Muslims) might gain some respect if they could master *tajwid* because they could recite the Qur'an although they could not understand it. Linguists¹² do not recognise on technical grounds the right of any speakers of any particular language to claim that their language is in any way superior to other languages.

These are deep, largely unrecognised, divisions within Islam.

In many developing countries at the present time, best documented in Pakistan,¹³ the poorest families send their young boys for a minimum of education in a Qur'anic school (*madrassa*). Frequently this is confined to long daily hours for years of memorisation and repetition of verses of the Qur'an. Many are simultaneously or later trained as Taliban or al-Qaeda fighters.

Finally, in these days of tension there are frequent calls for dialogue with Islam. Little attention seems to be paid to the importance of the role of the Arabic language for the Muslim. If an encounter takes place, it can only be fruitful and not damaging if each side is well-informed and well-disposed toward the other. Until the gates of *ijtihad* are opened, how can this come about?

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A Perspective on Globalization

by KMF-S

There is one thing of which we can all be certain in today's world and that is change. Globalization is one of those areas in which change is rapid. In the introduction to his 2006 edition of *The World is Flat: The Globalized World in the Twenty-first Century*, Thomas Friedman writes, 'Why go through all the trouble of writing an expanded and updated version of *The World is Flat* only a year after the book was first published? I can offer a very brief answer: because I could and because I must.'¹

When we think of globalization, we primarily think of two things: the McDonaldisation of the world and the new age of IT connectivity. But what is globalization as it relates to mission? It is the expansion of cross-cultural missions due to the exponential growth of the church in the Majority World, greatly improved access to information, increased human mobility, and enhanced economic resources.

But globalization brings with it challenges. There is no question that multi-cultural teams require new management skills. Misunderstandings are multiplied when additional nationalities are introduced into Western teams that may already face cultural and communication difficulties between Europeans and North Americans (USA and Canada). Even when the international partners are European, there can be differences of corporate culture with some allowing for greater individual choice than others.

Sending and receiving agencies may have similar doctrinal statements and manual policies, but there are always subtle nuances that can result in tension. The greatest frustrations can come with financial expectations as Western individualism encounters the Southern Cone's collectivism. Many Western mission personnel expect their Majority World counterparts to be financially self-sufficient so that when their team members' home support falters, cutting into an already pared-down salary, or when illness strikes their colleague who has minimal health insurance, they are confused by the cultural assumption that they will contribute.

This article seeks to put these challenges into context in order to demonstrate that the additional human and material resources required in missional globalization are worth the sacrifice in order to deliver a more effective witness in the Arab world. At all times our primary motive should be to bring glory to God and to enable the new sending countries to do the same.

Living in a new world

God, through the working of the Holy Spirit, is doing a new thing. He is raising up Christian men and women from everywhere to go everywhere with the Christian message of salvation.

No longer is the centre of missions the Western world of North America and Europe. Today that centre has

shifted east to Asia and China and south to Africa and Latin and South America.

Patrick Johnstone, the editor of the book *Operation World*, has written,

It is only in the last century that this has been reversed. In 1960 there were 672 million [Western] Christians and only 370 million non-Western Christians. By 2000 this had become 810 million and 1172 million, respectively (59%). By 2040, if the decline in the West and increase in non-West continues, this would become respectively 657 million and 1917 million (75%).²

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.

Revelation 9:7a (NIV)

Countries that once received Christian workers are now sending mission workers to other countries. We call these nations the New Sending Countries, the Two-Thirds World or the Majority World (preferred description).

Christian workers are crossing African borders to take the Gospel from Nigeria to the UAE, from the Philippines to Morocco, from Brazil to Jordan. In the Arab world, Christian Arabs are going from Egypt to Yemen and from Jordan to Morocco. Mainland Chinese are going to the Middle East.

AWM and globalization – a brief historic overview

During the last fifty years, our mission has experienced three distinct stages of globalization though the archives reveal that even before World War II the mission

included the occasional non-British worker. The first stage resulted from the exposure of American GIs to Europe and North Africa during World War II. The missionary vision of returning Christian soldiers was broadened and challenged. NAM³ mobilising offices were established in North America. Beginning in 1948, Harold Fife revived work in the USA which Dr. Francis Steele then so successfully developed. Fife also established an Auxiliary Council in Canada.⁴

The second stage was precipitated in the 1950s and 1960s with the end of colonialism in North Africa. NAM's media work relocated from Algeria and Tunisia to Marseille, France in 1964. The Field Director and the International Secretary moved to southern France from Morocco in the last half of the 1960s. (The International Secretary was expelled from Morocco in 1967.) The French office of the mission was registered as MENA in 1982. Other Europeans showed interest, including the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland. It was in this period that an International Development Fund levy was introduced to help the General Director to travel, including visiting our European partners.

The third stage began in the mid 1990s with the adoption of a pro-globalization policy and the appointment of a full-time Director of International Development (now called the Director of Global Mobilisation). This policy has been reaffirmed in the current five-year plan as one of the six visions. There are agreements with ten official international part-

ners as well as placement agreements with denominations and churches for other mission workers. Over ten percent of the mission's membership comes from non-company entities.

AWM and globalization – six contributing factors

The following six factors are associated with globalization. Some of the reasons are peculiar to AWM and to the Arab world. Hopefully, those reading this article from a different context will find a helpful comment or insight that will be relevant to their particular context.

Firstly, globalization is a value held by AWM.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 2:28 (NIV)

There are currently over thirty nationalities in the mission, embracing citizens from the USA to Australia, from Syria to Brazil and from the UK to Singapore. The variety of nationalities and their numbers increase every year. Over half the appointees at this year's (2006) International Orientation were from agencies with which AWM has a Partnership or Placement Agreement.⁶

Secondly, globalization is responding to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

John 20:21 (NIV)

There is a movement of the Spirit of God worldwide that is convicting men and women that they must share the Christian message beyond their own

national borders. This movement is driven by the physical growth of the church in the Majority World, a greater access to information – especially through the Internet, increased mobility and global economic growth.

OM has been an international mission since its beginning in the 1960s but in the last ten years there has been a rapid expansion in the number of other international mission agencies establishing mobilising and sending bases in countries where they planted churches or had significant input into the life of the church.⁷ But more specifically, there has been a particular emphasis on mission workers from the Majority World.

The most recent reignited initiative⁸ has come from the mainland Chinese churches, registered and unregistered, and is generically known as the Back to Jerusalem Movement. The story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun, told in *The Heavenly Man*⁹ and promoted through Brother Yun's international speaking engagements, has galvanised the Christian public. Chinese house church leaders fleshed out the vision in *Back to Jerusalem*¹⁰ though many of the high expectations have now been tempered with realism.

Thirdly, globalization models the world-wide church.

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

John 17:20-21 (NIV)

International teams reflect the nature of the worldwide church, providing a glimpse of heaven where **'every tribe and language and people and nation'**¹¹ will be gathered to worship around the throne of God. Though not replacing the local church, an international team will reflect characteristics of God's *koinonia* people that include holiness and harmony achieved through sanctification and the peaceful resolution of conflict. When frustrated with the challenges of a multicultural team, defaulting to the glorious vision of heaven can be a great antidote and encouragement to persevere in love.

In Genesis the sign and symbol of the rainbow is that of God's steadfast love and grace.¹² As our international rainbow teams proclaim Christ and reflect Him, so we are reminded that the end of mission is worship, for God desires to be glorified in the nations through the nations.¹³

Samuel Escobar writes:

Training often has to include correcting attitudes, prejudices, feelings of superiority, and spiritual pride within the community of disciples. Information and formation are thus combined for a constant transformation into the pattern of 'a perfect humanity that is shaped to the full stature of Christ' (Eph. 4:13). This process never takes place in a 'solo' way. It always happens in community – in small groups around God's word, taking time to pray, to listen to the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit through the varied insights of the community and the ups and downs of efforts of obedience.¹⁴

International teams provide a unique environment for nurturing Christian ma-

turity. For example, leadership and follower styles vary from culture to culture and one undertaking that Seedbed has already begun is to print articles written by nationals explaining their cultural shape.¹⁵ In his study on cultures and organisations,¹⁶ Geert Hofstede identifies a dimension that he calls, *power distance*. For example, leadership in some cultures is more directive than in other societies in which it is more consultative.

For the sake of our new Majority World personnel, we are learning through careful consultation which countries have racial prejudices and where stereotypes make obtaining visas for language learning a challenge. For example, it is hard for some (like Filipinos) to obtain student visas for language study in the Gulf because of the high percentage of immigrant workers from their country already there. North Africa and the Middle East have a tendency to be negative towards sub-Saharan Africans while the southern countries of the Arabian Peninsula are more positive towards them because of their own proximity to East Africa. Similarly, North Africa is also negative towards Africans, except for Mauritania, due to its proximity to West Africa. The location of the *Banque Africaine de Développement* (African Development Bank) in Tunisia is hopefully making a contribution to racial tolerance.

In spite of these challenges, international teams always bring a fresh and creative dimension to their witness to Christ.

Fourthly, globalization brings new ministry dimensions to a team.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NIV)

Martin Thomas writes:

Christians from Africa, Asia, Latin and South America do not have 'miracle answers', but they bring valuable experiences, gifts, skills, new insights, which can empower new forms of mission.¹⁷

Some sub-Saharan Africans, Latinos and Asians have faced persecution and suffering. Others may have experienced poverty. Many Latin Americans are expected to plant a church before graduating from Bible college or seminary. Christian Africans are familiar with folk religion and the spiritual warfare that is indicative of shamanism and other forms of spirit possession. When the members of international teams esteem one another, they can effectively complement, enrich and complete each other through their varied backgrounds.

Fifthly, globalization brings cultural benefits.

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem,

and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

Acts 11:19-23 (NIV)

Barnabas was a Greek Cypriot who could relate to the Greeks of Antioch more effectively than Jews from Jerusalem. So it is today. The cultures of some nationalities resonate better than others with the culture of the Arab world. For example, Latino culture is closer to the Arab world than European culture. They are from *collective* cultures that emphasise the importance of the extended family and the community. Western culture is much more individualistic. Collective cultures understand honour and shame. People from Western cultures are often unaware of these subtle nuances. Collective cultures demonstrate generous hospitality, stress the importance of appearance and expect reciprocal relations¹⁸ in contrast to *individualistic* societies that value moderation, reserve and independence. It is said perceptively that the West has watches but the Arab world has time. The event is more important than time and status is more important than achievement.¹⁹

Dr Howard Norrish wrote this description of the new Majority World mission workers:

- ♦ They are not seen as imperialists; with no history of colonialism, they arouse little suspicion.
- ♦ They know several languages and learn languages easily.
- ♦ Two-thirds world cultures are group-conscious rather than individualistic.

- ♦ They understand spiritual warfare; many come from backgrounds steeped in the 'spirit world'.
- ♦ Most are from newly-planted churches and have a good understanding of church-planting.
- ♦ To Muslims they don't look 'Christian'. This arouses curiosity and makes evangelism easier.²⁰

Sixthly, globalization responds to world politics.

When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace." But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

Acts 16:35-38 (NIV)

In this passage Paul uses his citizenship in order to obtain his legal rights. Nationality counts in the eyes of Arab-world authorities and since 9/11 and Western intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq and, most recently, the Israeli/Hezbollah war, both American and British citizens are currently not the most popular nationalities in the Middle East. This is illustrated by some American citizens in an Arab-world country recently referring to themselves as 'coming from the country south of Canada' when asked by local people.

Arab-world people don't expect the Gospel to come via sub-Saharan Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans – though the imprudent high profile of the Back to Jeru-

salem Movement has forewarned many authorities in the Arab world to watch out for Chinese mission workers. Fortunately, the growth of the Chinese economy is necessitating increasing cooperation between the hydrocarbon-rich states of the Arabian Peninsula, Algeria and Libya with China. Hopefully, this will cause the Arab world to be less suspicious.

Conclusion

Globalization requires a commitment to the vision, a concerted effort and an investment in resources. These include:

- ♦ cooperating with the new sending agencies in agreeing mutually acceptable standards and procedures,
- ♦ committing human and material resources to partners to contribute to mobilising mission candidates,
- ♦ training and coaching multi-national teams,
- ♦ providing the appropriate economic means that foster relational interdependency rather than institutional dependency,
- ♦ providing appropriate pastoral care.

There will be some agencies for which the cost of increasing multi-culturalism will be too great and there will be Majority World agencies for which the monocultural approach will be more expedient based on their mission's beliefs, values and behaviour.

Whatever the future of missions, may global partnerships continue at all levels.

Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord
God Almighty. Just and true are your ways,
King of the ages.

Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring
glory to your name? For you alone are holy.

All nations will come and worship before
you, for your righteous acts have been
revealed.

Revelation 15:3-4 (NIV)

ENDNOTES

- 1 Thomas L Friedman, *The World is Flat – The Globalized World in the Twenty-First Century* (Penguin Books, 2006).
- 2 P Johnstone's article in Greenlee, David. ed. *Global Passion: Marking George Verwer's Contribution to World Mission* (Waynesboro: Authentic Lifestyle 2003), 181.
- 3 North Africa Mission. The name of the mission was changed in 1987 to Arab World Ministries (AWM).
- 4 Francis R Steele, *Not in Vain – The Story of North Africa Mission* (William Carey Library, 1981), 84.
- 5 Ibid. 107, 108.
- 6 An agency having a Partnership Agreement with AWM fulfils all the functions of a National Office. An agency having a Placement Agreement with AWM fulfils only those functions necessary for sending an approved missionary unit.
- 7 Examples would include SIM, OMF, Pioneers and Interserve.
- 8 The Back to Jerusalem vision pre-dates the establishment of the People's Republic of China.
- 9 Brother Yun and Paul Hattaway, *The Heavenly Man: The Remarkable True Story of Chinese Christian Brother Yun* (Monarch, 2002).
- 10 Paul Hattaway, *Back to Jerusalem: Three Chinese House Church Leaders Share their Vision to Complete the Great Commission* (Piquant, 2003)..
- 11 Revelation 5:9 (NIV).
- 12 Genesis 9:12-17 (NIV).
- 13 John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad* (IVP, 1993, 2003).
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- 16 Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (McGraw-Hill, 1991).
- 17 M Thomas, *Global Connections* (CMS, December 2003).
- 18 Christine Mallouhi, *Miniskirts, Mothers & Muslims* (Monarch Books, 2004), chapter 10.
- 19 S G Lingenfelter and M K Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally* (Baker Book House, 1986).
- 20 Dr. Howard Norrish's article in *Global Passion – Marking George Verwer's Contribution to World Mission* (Waynesboro: Authentic Lifestyle, 2003), 133, 134.

Book review: Christology in Dialogue with Muslims

by CM

Christology in Dialogue with Muslims, Mark Beaumont, 2005, 228 pages. Available from AWM Loughborough.

Many in our company will remember Mark Beaumont with affection from his time in Morocco. Since then he has been teaching at the Birmingham Christian College. In 2003 he received a PhD from the Open University for the book under review, which has had some minor revision since.

The book analyses in detail two periods of Christian dialogue and debate with Muslims: the ninth and twentieth centuries. After introducing each period, Beaumont chooses three outstanding representative figures: for the ninth century, Abu Qurra, Abu Raita and Ammar al-Basri; for the twentieth, Kenneth Cragg, John Hick and Hans Kung. He also includes a careful analysis of the anonymous *Sira al-Masih*, a Qur'anic style harmony of the gospels in Arabic, which appeared in 1987.

Three ninth-century Christian apologists

The author must be commended for the very thorough and careful research that has gone into this work. The three theologians chosen as the outstanding representatives of Christian apologetics in the ninth century will almost certainly be unknown to most of us. Writing in Arabic, they defended the gospel to their Muslim

conquerors with care and respect. By comparing the works that they wrote for a Christian audience with those they produced for Muslims (or, at least, for Christians wanting to answer Muslims), Beaumont shows how they adapted their language and presentation to make Christian concepts clear to the Muslim.

They were not afraid to argue from concepts and verses in the Qur'an. For example, Abu Raita took the verses that refer to God's sitting on his throne to argue that the Incarnation is a legitimate and possible concept. If God can be imagined as being transcendent and yet seated on a throne, surely He can also be imagined as having a localised presence – in a body – and yet at the same time be unlimited by any constraints. They also argued cogently for the appropriateness of the title 'Son of God', with God's fatherhood being understood metaphorically.

The three ninth-century apologists came from three different Christian traditions:

- ♦ Chalcedonian – Abu Qurra, holding that Christ had two distinct natures, divine and human, in one person;
- ♦ Monophysite (or Jacobite) – Abu Raita, holding that Christ had one nature in one person, since the divine predominated over the human;
- ♦ Nestorian – Ammar al-Basri, holding that in Christ there were two persons, both human and divine.

Interestingly, only Ammar presented a truly human Christ who struggled with temptation yet overcame it. For both Abu Qurra and Abu Raita, the power of the divine nature meant that Christ could not fail. However, this doctrinal division clearly weakened the case of Christianity in general, since it gave the impression that even among themselves, Christians were divided and uncertain about what they believed.

While the three apologists could argue convincingly for the Incarnation and the divine sonship of Christ, they all struggled with the Qur'an's denial of his crucifixion and death (Sura 4.157). In their position as subjects to Muslim rulers, they could not directly contradict the Qur'an. So they contented themselves with affirming Christ's death in atonement for sin and his resurrection, and did not enter into controversy on the subject.

As we read Beaumont's careful analysis of their works, we must admire the faithfulness of these apologists to the gospel and the genuine attempt they made to explain it to the Muslim. It is striking that the same questions they dealt with regarding the Incarnation, sonship and death of Christ are still often asked today, and in the same language. As a means of communication for theological matters, Arabic seems to have remained substantially the same through the centuries.

Following the ninth century, Christians in the Middle East became increasingly marginalised, and were often persecuted. Meaningful dialogue and de-

bate with their Muslim rulers faded away. From the side of the West, there were some brave attempts in the Middle Ages, but a sustained and in-depth exchange between Christians and Muslims did not begin again until the nineteenth century. This came as a result of the growth of European self-confidence, colonisation, the studies of the Orientalists and, above all, the modern missionary movement. Beaumont looks first at the labours of Pfander (*The Balance of Truth*) and Ibrahim Luqa (*Christianity in Islam*) before launching into the analysis of his three modern representatives: Cragg, Hick and Kung.

Three twentieth-century apologists

By this time, another significant factor had come on the scene of which Muslims were also very much aware: liberal biblical scholarship. Here I cannot but regret that Beaumont was not able to choose a committed evangelical as one of his representatives for the twentieth century. In his introduction he explains:

There are a number of writers who have dialogued with Muslims from a fairly traditional Christological perspective.... However, they do not match Cragg's innovative approach to Muslims. Kung and Hick have no competition for inclusion, since they are the only twentieth century apologists to present Christ on the basis of modern gospel scholarship rather than the teaching of the Apostles or the Creeds of the church. (p. xxi)

Of the author's three selected representatives, only Cragg is close to an evangelical position. He affirms Christ's divinity and his atoning death for sin, but not the infallibility of Scripture. One of his

main concerns in apologetics is to urge Muslims to recognise that the Incarnation is indeed a possible action for a God who is truly great. Like Hick and Kung, he is anxious to put the spotlight on the historical Jesus, rather than to enter into debates about his divinity.

Although they have participated in high-level dialogues with Muslim scholars, Hick, in particular, and Kung have rather less to offer for evangelicals. The former denies the divinity of Jesus and sees him only as a man who was exceptionally conscious of God. He would regard Muhammad in the same way. For the sake of good relations with Muslims, he is also prepared to ignore the problem of the Qur'an's denial of Jesus' death. Kung does not uphold Jesus' divinity in the terms of the Nicene Creed – 'one substance (or "being") with the Father'. But he is firm on the importance of the historical reality of Jesus' death. He also emphasises that Jesus taught the superiority of love over law-keeping and that he forgave sin. His position is, therefore, more clearly distinct from Islam than Hick's.

However, as Beaumont points out, neither Hick nor Kung can speak with authority for the majority of the Christian community. Hick 'can only speak for a small number of like-minded theologians' (p.191) and Kung's Christology 'departs from mainstream Catholic doctrine which continues to insist on the Incarnation and atonement as essential to faith in Christ' (p.193).

'Sira al-Masih'

Perhaps more interesting for us is the author's evaluation of *Sira*. I remember seeing this work at the Marseille Media Centre in the early 1990s. However, we did not use it or send it out to correspondents. As Beaumont's thorough analysis shows, it is a free harmony of the four Gospels in an Islamic style. It cannot be called a translation or even a paraphrase. Rather, it is an adaptation.

It would be most interesting to know if there is any feedback on the use of this work. Has the Lord blessed it and have people come to know Christ through it? Is it a real way forward or is it a diversion? The authors of *Sira* have taken several significant liberties with the New Testament text. In particular, they have suppressed most of the Father / Son language. Even the Lord's Prayer begins with 'Allahumma' ('O God'), rather than 'Abana' ('Our Father'). Beaumont summarises its Christology as teaching that '*Sira's* Christ has no identity of being with God, although he does appear to have an eternal relationship with Him' (p.193). On the other hand, Christ's death is presented clearly and he even predicts it eight times (as opposed to the three times in the Synoptic Gospels).

Beaumont's evaluation of *Sira* is, on the whole, positive. He describes it as a 'fresh and original attempt to attract Muslim readers to an essentially Christian narrative' (p.187). But he notes that it will probably struggle to gain acceptance. It is unlikely to be appreciated by Arab Christians. If a Muslim reader is attracted by it, he or she will later want to turn to the

New Testament to learn more and then he will come up against all the features which *Sira* attempts to play down. Might this not cause him to question whether Christians really have the original gospel? Which should he regard as reliable: *Sira* or the four Gospels?

Clearly, this brings us into a wider debate on contextualisation. Beaumont's final comment on *Sira* is that 'creative theology in dialogue comes up against traditional modes of expressing faith held by the majority to be essential' (p. 194). But is it fair to describe the Gospels – or close translations of them – as 'traditional modes of expressing faith'? Are they not rather the rock on which everything else is built?

Conclusion

Beaumont's book is an academic study at a high level, yet it has much of interest for us. The ideas and concepts that he

explores are very relevant to discussion with Muslims today. At the level of language, for those relating to Muslims in Arabic, there are things to learn from the three ninth-century apologists. Dialogue has its limits, as Beaumont recognises, but it needs to go alongside proclamation. It is still essential for us to listen carefully and to be sure we are communicating in terms the Muslim will understand. Ultimately, barring some kind of special pleading, it is not possible by dialogue to reconcile two contradictory positions: either Christ died or he did not. But it is possible to clarify the positions of both sides and to communicate with respect.

Let's pray that the Lord will raise up more defenders of the gospel who can engage in dialogue, debate and proclamation from a firmly evangelical standpoint, relying on the truth of the Bible as God's Word.

Book Review: 'Encountering the World of Islam'

by David Lundy

Encountering the World of Islam, Keith Swartley (ed.), Waynesboro, GA or Milton Keynes, UK: Authentic Media, 2005.

This compendium on Islam is an ambitious undertaking. It reminds me of the one compiled by Donald McCurry almost three decades ago on mission to Muslims and the wider missions' training tool, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*. Edited by Keith Swartley as a project of Vision 5:9 and the Caleb Project, *Encountering the World of Islam* is designed for both beginners and veterans. It can be delved into profitably regarding any one topic, such as 'Should Christians use "Allah" in Bible translations?', or studied comprehensively as a textbook. It should be noted in this latter regard that *Encountering* has been developed into a lay course on Islam in the same way that *Perspectives* has.

What I found especially useful were the vignettes interspersed throughout the densely worded longer sections. For example, Patrick Cate's article, 'Gospel communication from within' is broken up by an insert on 'Turkic People'.

It was also refreshing to find a Christian perspective on Islam that gave

a voice to Muslims themselves: thus a paper prepared by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia called 'Islam and the Development of Knowledge' was included in the section of the book called 'Expansion of Islam'.

Also noteworthy was the mingling of current scholarship and thinking on topics related to Christian witness to Muslims with classic treatments. For instance, J. Christy Wilson's stirring article, 'Reaching Muslims through prayer' finds itself alongside one by our very own John Haines, which is then followed by one on the very current topic of 'Ibero-Americans reaching Arab Muslims'.

Further strengths of the book include a robust glossary and an extensive bibliography.

For some, any weakness in the book may relate to what might be perceived as an over-promotion of trendy witness strategies like 'prayerwalking' and reliance on one organization's philosophy of ministry as it relates to church planting and contextualization. Nonetheless, in my view the strengths of the book make it an ideal tool for equipping our people during their first term on the field as they acquire the language.

Book Review: 'Longitudes and Attitudes'

by David Lundy

Thomas Friedman, *Longitudes and Attitudes: The World in the Age of Terrorism* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003 edition).

Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* political columnist Thomas Friedman is currently better known for his best-selling *The World Is Flat* and earlier best-sellers like *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* or *From Beirut to Jerusalem*. However, the less celebrated *Longitudes and Attitudes* is important for people working in the Arab world to read. The book provides a fascinating glimpse into how the Iraq war and subsequent occupation of Iraq by Coalition forces has affected and changed American views on Arab civilization, and vice versa.

Longitudes and Attitudes is really a compilation of columns and diary entries relevant to the topic at hand: the world in an age of terrorism as seen through the prisms of both the Arab and the American. The entries are organized chronologically from those that precede 9/11 beginning with December 15, 2000 to those that follow it, up to April 20, 2003. Updated for this paperback edition is the period of time revolving around the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. What is particularly compelling about the book is the shift of Friedman's attitude towards the US administration over the two and a half years and the fascinating observations

he makes about the Arab world in the course of his extensive travels within it.

Friedman is able to articulate the big picture incisively which makes for page-turning reading even if one might not always agree with his conclusions. Here are some examples:

- ♦ On Islam's difficulty in reconciling itself with the modern world:

What is different about Islam is that while there have been a few attempts at a reformation [adapting to modernity and pluralism], none have flowered or found the support of a Muslim state.

We patronize Islam, and mislead ourselves, by repeating the mantra that Islam is a faith with no serious problems accepting the secular West, modernity, and pluralism, and the only problem is a few bin Ladens. Although there is a deep moral impulse in Islam for justice, charity and compassion, Islam has not developed a dominant religious philosophy that allows equal recognition of alternative-faith communities. (p. 79)

- ♦ On Israel being pivotal to the outcome of the war on terrorism:

Israel's goal must be a withdrawal from those areas captured in the 1967 war; otherwise it will never know a day's peace, and it will undermine every legitimate US effort to fight terrorism around the globe. (p. 150)

Friedman's courage to call a spade a spade, to tell it like he sees it – a journalist's most important contri-

bution to reporting – makes for compelling reading.

- ♦ Here's a snippet on the way Arab regimes deal with extremists:

In February 1982 the secular Syrian government of President Hafez al-Assad faced a mortal threat from Islamic extremists. . . . Assad identified the rebellion as coming from Syria's fourth-largest city—Hama—and he literally leveled it, pounding the fundamentalist neighborhoods with artillery for days. Once the guns fell silent, he plowed up the rubble and bulldozed it flat, into vast parking lots. . . . Syria has not had a Muslim extremist problem since. . . . I tell this story because it's important that we understand that Syria, Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia have all faced Islamist threats and crushed them without mercy or Miranda rights. . . . Once the fundamentalists were crushed by the Arab states, they fled to the last wild, uncontrolled places in the region—Lebanon's Beka Valley and Afghanistan—or to the freedom of America and Europe. (p. 40)

- ♦ Or on the USA getting blamed for all the world's problems:

Is it America's fault that the richest ruling family in the world, the Saudis, have citizens who are poor and frustrated? Is it America's fault that [South] Korea had the same per capita income in the 1950s as many Arab states but Korea has managed its development so much better since that it now dwarfs all Arab economies? (p. 49)

- ♦ On the censored press of the Arab world:

The newspaper *Al-Riyadh* recently published an article by a Saudi "professor" who alleged that Jews make a holiday pastry that requires them to "drain the

blood" from a young Christian or Muslim, but the editor of *Al-Riyadh* was not fired. Right now, the only way you get a free voice in most of the Arab press is by denouncing Israel and America or praising your regime. That distorts the whole political discourse. (p. 147)

- ♦ On American duplicity:

You're not going to get much support in Europe telling people, "You are either with us or against us in a war on terrorism, but in the war you care about—for a greener planet—America will do whatever it wants. (p. 287)

Like most public communicators, Friedman can turn a phrase aptly. Here are a few gems:

At its best, the Internet can educate more people faster than any media tool we've ever had. At its worst, it can make people dumber faster than any media tool we've ever had. (p. 169)

When Mr. Bush takes a war of choice and turns it into a war of necessity, people naturally ask, "Hey, what's going on here? We're being hustled. The real reason must be his father, or oil, or some right-wing ideology." (p. 292)

Arab media called the terrorists "martyrs". It was moral creative accounting:..... (p. 316)

Since the end of the cold war, anti-Americanism has overtaken soccer as the world's most popular sport. (p. 337)

In America, Muslims can enjoy a reasonably rapid transition to citizenship, but in Europe the melting pot often

doesn't get warm enough to melt, and Muslim immigrants are often left permanently out in the cold. (p. 354)

Some may feel that the biggest drawback to reading this book is that it is dated; while it is in parts, it is worrying that many of the attitudes and intractable tensions between the Middle East and the West have not changed all that much. In spite of Iran's new role in the

region, the invasion of Lebanon, the continuing Coalition presence and internecine terrorism within Iraq, the Danish furore, and 7/11, they still remain. This book reminds us that there is more than one way to look at our world. *Longitudes and Attitudes* is somewhat repetitious in its themes but it is refreshing to see a journalist of world renown seek to understand before being understood.