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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.