

Seedbed



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Editor: Donna Smith

Contributing Editors: Gary Corwin, David Lundy

Proofreader: Sandra Dick

PO Box 4006, Worthing, West Sussex BN13 1AP, UK

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editor.seedbed@wornet.org

Editorial

My three years as editor of *Seedbed* come to an end with the third trimester of 2007. This period has been a fulfilling time of interaction with you; I have enjoyed encouraging you to write about your thoughts and experiences for working among the peoples of the Arab world. You have stimulated us all with your insights and suggestions.

Changes are in the wind for *Seedbed* as Don Little, our missiologist, takes over the editorship. I am sure you will appreciate his fresh approach – using modern computer technology to increase the possibilities for exchanging ideas and for publishing future articles.

This present issue emphasises communication of the Gospel – both by word and by life. First, Marten de Vries describes a Muslim-Christian discussion about Abraham. Both groups agreed to listen to each other. The account of their meeting serves as an example for future exchanges that you might like to try. JF adds to the challenge for finding ways to interact by suggesting a change from the usual debate topics to a look at questions of hypocrisy and of heart needs.

SC raises issues related to transformational ministry in our sinful world and moves us on to the practical application in real life of communication / language skills. As we point others to the Saviour, we live out our faith holistically in our daily roles. EM and HC take us beyond our comfort zone to consider how we may serve the most vulnerable and despised persons in society. We are impressed with the need to pray for them while looking for ways to help them. H. JohnMark gives us practical advice on improving our learning of languages in order to be better communicators of truth.

Our book reviews show us God's work in North Africa. First we have John L. Blanc's account of the awakening in modern-day Kabylia (eastern Algeria); it is evaluated for us by Eva Longley who herself lived through the beginnings of this movement. Our second book choice takes us to a much earlier period of North African church history – the story of third century martyrs in Carthage – a most stirring example for today's new Christians of that area who also face pressures to deny their faith.

May this edition of *Seedbed* inspire you with ideas for carrying out your own ministries.

Donna Smith

Abraham in Mecca¹

by Marten de Vries

‘The stories from the Qur’an and from tradition appear to be especially suitable for a dialogue between Jews, Muslims and Christians.’

Thus ends the report of a symposium held in 2006 and entitled ‘Biblical Figures’, published in the periodical Begrip.² During the conference, theologians from both Christian and Islamic traditions raised the subject of Abraham, Hagar and Lot.

So it seems that here in Rotterdam, we are busying ourselves with something quite worthwhile. Every two months we meet Muslims and the subject of our discussion is always a person who is mentioned in both the Bible and the Qur’an. The assumption is that by using these examples, we can present not only the similarities, but also the specificities of our own religion.

It is likely that our discussion is livelier and more assertive than that of the previously mentioned scholars. But that makes it all the more interesting!

Fighting about Abraham?

In 1994 Karl-Josef Kuschel published his *Streit um Abraham*, which became available in Dutch in 2001³. In short, the book comes down to this: if Jews, Christians and Muslims would simply moderate the specific characteristics of their own religion, we would all have fewer problems. But that is not our starting point, to be sure. In our opinion, this concept only brings forth losers.

In the Netherlands, Francien van Overbeeke-Rippen dedicated the first chapter of her 1998 thesis⁴ to ‘Ibrahiem/Abraham in Koran / Bijbel’. After summing up the complete and partial similarities and differences, she arrived at the conclusion that both religions are about the same Abraham, and therefore, about the same God. In her opinion the self-revelation of God/Allah in Jesus Christ is not in contradiction with the announcement of his will via Muhammad.

1. This article should be read as a follow-up to ‘Mary in the Mosque’, which appeared in an earlier issue of Seedbed.

2. Periodical published by Bureaus voor ontmoeting met moslims van de Rooms Katholieke Kerken in Nederland en de PKN, 32nd annual volume (2006), nos. 4 & 5, pp. 183ff.

3. Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Strijd om Abraham*, Zoetermeer 2001.

4. Francien van Overbeeke-Rippen, *Overgave aan God - Navolging van Christus, Een onderzoek naar afstand en nabijheid tussen Islam en Christendom*, Nijmegen, 1998.

And if it does seem to differ, we should read the texts again and in the right context, so she claims.⁵

This too, is not our starting point.

Following the approved procedure, we had another discussion in February 2007, in a truly pleasant atmosphere. This was probably due to the fact that we, both Muslims and Christians, were able to sample from each other what Abraham means to us. It became crystal clear that the belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and God's Son is all-defining.

Was Abraham a Muslim?

In 1987 a Dutch minister, Rev. Herman Feenstra, wrote a book with the somewhat sensational title, *Was Abraham Reformed?*⁶ To Muslims there is no question about it: Abraham was a Muslim! His merit was that he, as a type of Muhammad, restored monotheism to glory. In so doing, he was the *primeval model* of the true *Muslim*.

While seated in a cave, Abraham came to the conclusion, by thinking logically, that multi-godheads could not exist. He set out on a one-man iconoclastic spree, thereby risking the wrath of his father, King Nimrod, and his community. They set him on fire, but God came to the rescue. For He said to the fire, 'O fire, be cool and harmless to Ibrahim'.⁷

After Abraham came Muhammad. According to tradition, the prophet of the Muslims ascended to heaven from the spot where the Al-Aqsa Mosque now stands. Muslims commemorate yearly this Islamic deed of salvation, from which they derive the precise instructions for the ritual prayers in the *laylat al-miraadi*, the night of the heavenly journey.

After Muhammad had passed by John and Jesus(!) in the second heaven, he discovered in the seventh heaven that he looked most like Abraham. He was even his outward double (hair, nose). His mission was also none other than to bring to perfection the work that the illustrious father of all Muslims had begun.

Abraham's *hajj* (pilgrimage)

What was highly surprising to our Islamic discussion partners was the precedence of Isaac over Ishmael within the Christian perspective. What then is the story as they tell it?

Hagar was originally one of the Egyptian Pharaoh's slaves. He had given her to Sarah as a kind of hush-money for it was not to become known that he had tried to make advances towards her while Abraham was at *salaat* [prayer].

5. pp. 46 ff.

6. H.J.J. Feenstra, *Was Abraham Gereformeerd?*, Goes 1987, Series: *Woord en Wereld* (volume 4).

7. Surat *Al-Anbiya'* (The Prophets 21:69)

Sarah was unable to have children and after some deliberation, they agreed that Hagar would become Abraham's legal second wife. After the birth of Ishmael, Sarah became jealous of Hagar and the bigamous monotheist, Abraham, brought Hagar to Mecca.

There it was that Hagar sought water for her son. While she desperately ran back and forth between the hills of Safa and Marwa, the Zamzam spring welled up before her feet.

In Mecca, Abraham, together with his son Ishmael, rebuilt the shrine known as the *Kaaba* that had been built long before by the 'prophet' Adam. Later on, from Damascus, Abraham made one more pilgrimage to Mecca with his wife Sarah, who had by now become the mother of Isaac.

Abraham's sacrifice

You can already envisage the whole hajj event. For Muslims, the climax of the month of pilgrimage is the sacrificial feast. It is a reminder of the *ritual sacrifice* that Abraham once offered when he was tested by God with the request to sacrifice his son Ishmael(!). In acquiescing, Abraham

showed himself to be a perfect Muslim. He was literally one *surrendered* to God. A true example! As a reward, he was given a ram to sacrifice.

We spoke about *our* sacrificial feast, Good Friday, when we commemorate the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus. We testified that the ram who was slain in Isaac's(!) place speaks of the substitutionary suffering and death of our Saviour.

Abraham is presented as an example to us, too. Not just because of his monotheism... but it was because of his faith that he ...was called *God's friend*. It was his self-sacrifice (his surrender) that allowed him to let go of the results of his achievements.

Abraham is presented as an example to us, too. Not just because of his monotheism (it was God who called him; he

would not have come up with the idea of monotheism otherwise) but it was because of his faith that he – and on this we were in agreement once more – was called *God's friend*. It was his self-sacrifice (his surrender) that allowed him to let go of the results of his achievements. That faith was – of course – accompanied by good deeds.⁸ But it was this faith alone, in answer to God's calling, that formed the basis of the bond (covenant) that bound him to God. And so we also respond to God with our faith in Jesus Christ, the one who surrendered himself for us.

8. James 2:22

Abraham's descendants

At the time of his calling, Abraham received the promise that he, in his descendants, would be a blessing to all mankind.⁹ According to Galatians 3,¹⁰ this promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the descendant, whom the patriarch had looked forward to during his entire life¹¹ and who, humanly speaking, was to be his descendant via Isaac. It was because Isaac was the child of the promise¹² that Abraham dared bring him to the altar. He told himself that God was able to raise his son from the dead if He so wished.¹³

We believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.¹⁴ In Galatians 4, Hagar and Ishmael stand for slavery; Sarah and Isaac stand for freedom.¹⁵

Muslims adorn themselves with names starting with *abd* [servant]. Christians have received the privilege of naming themselves God's children through Jesus.¹⁶

In Galatians 4 we even see the name *Arabia* mentioned. It also appears in chapter 1. Paul first shared the testimony of his conversion with the people *there* – though not exactly in the vicinity of Mecca and Medina. He would have told them how he was overcome, against his will, while on the road to

Damascus – on his way to persecuting Christ's church.¹⁷

In Abraham's footsteps

It was a fascinating evening. Questions were answered, but new ones were also evoked. For example: why do Muslims actually have rituals with blood? What is their meaning? Fatma suggested that it may have to do with the protection of one's own blood and life. Emin immediately rejected this as a form of superstition. But we did find it understandable that the sacrificial feast during the month of Hajj is called *the great feast* rather than the Ramadan feast at the end of the month of fasting. Does not our life depend on the great sacrifice on the Best Friday?

A question came from another person: how can *one* be punished for the faults of the other? Answer: it is an *injl*,¹⁸ – literally a *gospel* [good tiding] that we, as human beings, would be unable to fabricate. That too can be found in Galatians 1!¹⁹ We just believe it. And we celebrate it when 'we cherish the blessed memory of the bitter death' of God's Son who became Man... on Good Friday... and at the Lord's Supper. (We even

9. Genesis 12:1-3

10. Galatians 3:16

11. John 8:56

12. Genesis 17:18-21

13. Hebrews 11:17ff

14. Genesis 50:24; Matthew 22:32; many other biblical stories

15. Galatians 4:21-31

16. John 1:12

17. Galatians 1:17

18. This is what the Muslims call the revelation that apparently descended upon Jesus, just as later the Qur'an descended upon Muhammad.

19. Galatians 1:11

invited our friends to attend our next celebration in April!)

We were seated in a *dershane* or *madrasa*²⁰ with close to twenty-five people, with each one of us calling himself a *child of Abraham*. However it may be, that does create a bond. We feel that we are in some way related to one another. And we keep on looking each other up.

But it is exactly because of this, that it is painful. We cannot truly reach each other. We cannot fit onto Father

Abraham's lap together as long as we are not 'gathered under one Head, under Christ' ²¹ – which is the goal or destination of *our* weekly Sunday 'pilgrimage'. Yet, as Muslims and Christians, we do not want to lose sight of one another.

But, above all, Christians follow Jesus. We know ourselves to be pilgrims in the footsteps of Abraham, on the road to what is called 'the wedding feast of the Lamb'! ²²

20. Expressions that refer to an Islamic school of learning

21. Ephesians 1:10

22. Revelation 19:9

Common Stumbling Blocks and Distractions in our Witness

by J. F.

These comments and questions were prepared by a tentmaker with our company in the Gulf region, for use in equipping others for interaction with Muslims.

It may come as a surprise, but Muslims already know what we believe. They already 'know' Christianity. This should make our job easier, since they already believe in the Bible and its prophets, including Jesus! All we need to do is explain John 3:16 and they should be ready to believe it!

The problem is that they believe the 'true' Christianity defined by the Qur'an, as opposed to the corrupted version we practice. The Muslims' thinking, conditioned by the Qur'an and Islamic teaching, is a-historical and even anti-historical. Their declaration of faith in the prophets and holy books refuses to recognize their actual teaching and content. Their faith is in an imaginary or phantasmal Jesus and Bible, since their beliefs about who they are and what they say are contrary to the Scriptures.

At first we may be surprised that eloquent words of praise about Jesus, in fact, suppress the truth about him. We must also face another aspect of the Muslim world view, which is potentially very different from our own.

As evangelical Christians we extend great effort to take every thought captive to obedience to Christ, firmly grounding all of our thinking in the Scriptures. Devout Muslims on the other hand, extend great effort to ensure that their *practice* of Islam conforms to the requirements of their particular sect. Christians are concerned with theology while Muslims emphasize religious conformity.

This difference can distract us from presenting the liberating good news of redemption in Jesus Christ and cause us to stumble and lose focus while being drawn into a competition of religious requirements.

What follows are several passages from Jesus' ministry that can give us insight into how to respond to the obstacle to the Gospel that is raised by an emphasis on external religious conformity. With each passage are questions to highlight the issue and promote group discussion.

Luke 12:1-3 Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees

Pharisees concerned themselves with the implementation of the finer points of the Law and accumulated traditions of the Jews. Jesus did not oppose their emphasis on obedience, but rather their emphasis on minor issues (Matt. 23:23) and their form of religion that kept sinners from the mercy of God (Matt. 9:13). A conversation with a Muslim can easily lead to comparisons of religious sincerity, obligations, and commitment.

- What is the leaven, about which Jesus warns his disciples, that characterizes the Pharisees?
- What does hypocrisy mean? What does it have to do with the declarations Jesus makes in verses 2 and 3?
- Which religion is 'harder' or makes more challenging demands to follow?
- In what way is such comparison 'leaven' or hypocrisy?
- In what areas or practices are we tempted to make such comparisons?
- In spite of all of our possible criticisms of Ramadan, what similar criticisms could be laid against our 'celebration' of Christmas or Easter?

Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, for 'acting' in public for the praise of men, rather than seeking to honour God. The question of which religion has harder practices ('Only five times? Well we have to pray "without ceasing" so there!' or '...but when I fast, I go 24 hours, or even a few days without eating, not just daylight hours') potentially entangles us in an argument about who can be more effective at hypocrisy. Jesus said that everything covered up would be revealed. It might be more fruitful to talk about our shared human experience of taking advantage of religious practice to distract others from truth about what is really happening in our thoughts, desires, and behaviour. It is very appropriate for us to explain that how we practice the spiritual disciplines of our faith is by no means void of practices that root us in Christ and allow us to express our love for God and our neighbour. However, such practices are not an end in themselves; neither are they regulated obligatory acts in the manner of the pillars of Islam.

John 4:19-26 Qibla and ritual worship

We can certainly understand the idea of the importance of direction in prayer. Solomon presumed that God's people would face Jerusalem and the temple when they cried out to the Lord in prayer (2 Chron. 6:22, 26, 29, 32, 34, 38).

- What is *qibla* in Islam? Does it matter to Muslims? How do you know?
- What notion of *qibla* appears in the discussion between the woman and Jesus?
- What might be an analogous argument between a Muslim and a Christian?
- How might we answer like Jesus did?

The proper direction for prayer is ubiquitous in Islam: in the mosque, in the hotel room, in the airplane. Once the woman recognized that Jesus was a 'religious' man, she raised one of her people's 'talking points' against the Jews. While Rehoboam could have had a basis for convincing Jeroboam that Israel should be worshipping in Jerusalem, that day is over, and the One to whom the Law, the land, Jerusalem, the temple, the priesthood, and the sacrifices point has arrived. There is a time for answering objections and explaining our faith and practice, but we do not bring to Muslims a different direction to pray toward. Rather we bring them Christ and true worship.

Matthew 23:23-28 Ritual Purity. Which part of our cup is clean?

- What does ritual purity entail for the Muslim? What defiles?
- What does ritual purity entail for the Christian? What defiles?

- What is the difference between ritual purity and purity? Which is more easily permeated by 'leaven'?
- Matthew 15:1-9. Hand washing, *wudu'* (careful washing preceding prayer) and God-honouring worship
- Matthew 15:10-19. Are westerners more evil by nature because sin in their society is open? (Rom. 3:9-19).

These passages highlight the prime importance of the heart. Ritual purity was very important under the old covenant. As part of the Law, the role of ritual purity was tutorial, to lead us to Christ. The purpose of much of the Law was to concretely teach holiness through the distinctions between holy and profane, common and set apart, clean and unclean, that are evidenced in people's roles, places, foods, and behaviour. God's people had constant reminders that they were not a perfect people, but needed to be cleansed and forgiven. In Christ our defiled consciences and bodies have been washed, and our sins have been forgiven. This does not mean that God does not care about our lives; the New Testament calls us to turn from many defiling practices. However, Jesus' emphasis on the heart allows us to heighten the Muslim's awareness that his

or her state of ritual purity does not cleanse the heart.

While we are grieved by the state of accepted immorality in our western countries, the topic can allow us once again to draw attention to the heart. In the Muslim world, an individual's restraint is often more due to the restriction of society than the heart. How many get on an airplane and fling off their modest clothes, or go to Thailand or western nations to satisfy every appetite? There is greater temptation in the West, because the restraints are sadly removed. Muslims may certainly boast that there is less publicly displayed sin in the East, but they can only claim righteous hearts when the restraints are removed and the individuals continue to walk uprightly. 'There is none righteous. No, not one.' Hidden sin in the Muslim world is another topic altogether!

I John 2:6 WWMD v. WWJD?

- How does a devout Muslim imitate Muhammad? (*taqlid* and *sunna*)
- What does it mean for a Christian to 'walk as Jesus walked'? (John 13:14, 34, 35; Eph. 4:32-5:2, 25; Phil. 2:5-8; 3:10)

The idea of the imitation of Christ is drastically different from the Muslim imitation of Muhammad. The former is concerned with character, sacrifice, and matters of the heart. The latter is concerned

with manners, dress, hygiene, and repeated sayings.

John 6:14-15 Beware of trying to establish Jesus as King by force

- What is the natural thing to do with a prophet or great man?
- What is the nature of Jesus' kingdom? (Dan. 7:13; Mark 1:15; John 18:36)
- What is our *Umma*? (or better, when?)

Muslims claim that Muhammad makes up for Jesus' lack of statesmanship. They wonder why our governments don't do more to enforce morally upright behaviour, criminalize socially destructive, immoral behaviour, and ban media and expressions of art that dishonour or mock God and religion. We can be tempted to sympathize with these sentiments while forgetting that the historical attempts at uniting the church with Caesar often did not reflect the values of Christ's kingdom. Islam is in its most natural element when it is in its *Medinan* context, united with political rule. Jesus Christ established the church to proclaim and reflect his Kingdom, but not to rule the kingdoms of the world. We spread his Kingdom not through physical weapons but through prayer and his word. As salt and light in the world, Christians, the body of Christ, are to influence the world and not simply make more

Christians (as emphasized by the Transformational Ministry Unit of AWM). When Christ returns, destroys all his enemies and establishes his Kingdom in its fullness, then he will reign. In the meantime his inaugurated Kingdom is in its provisional form. [See Samuel Schlorff's 'Muslim Ideology and Christian Apologetics' in *Missiology: An International Review*, Volume XXI, number 2, April 1993, pages 173-185 for an excellent discussion of the tension between the Christian and Muslim world views on this matter.]

A few comments on how to respond

When we talk to Muslims about the Gospel, we can certainly expect them not to agree. Islam is unique among the other major religions in that not only does it not agree with the teaching of the Bible, but its holy book addresses the content of the Bible and declares it to be false or presents differing accounts of the same subject matter. Recently I have been trying to take a less defensive or reactive posture toward what my Muslim friends tell me. Here are my suggestions:

1. **Acknowledge, expect, and respect their faithfulness to and consistency with Islamic ideology, Sunna, and the Qur'an.** Apart from a work of the Holy Spirit, how can we expect them to do otherwise? We don't need to be threatened by their position, but a mutual recognition of this can lead to honest conversation.

2. **Acknowledge the challenge of the rigours of compliance with the obligations of Islam.** Agree together that people of religions all over the world eagerly go through such rigours for the sake of greater assurance of heaven, or a better future life (reincarnation), or even deification (Mormonism). Most people remain in the religion of their family without questioning it, whether it asks them to kill their neighbour (pagan animistic religions with human sacrifices – e.g. the Aztecs who sacrificed tens of thousands of people a year) or it allows people to starve while food roams the streets (cows, Hinduism), or it teaches them to love their neighbour.
3. **Acknowledge that we expect them to disagree with what we are saying** (see #1). Only God can convince them that the message of the Bible is true. At the initial stages we are not asking them to agree with what we are saying – to do so would require them to reject the Qur'an, and they are not ready for that. We are simply asking them to listen to what it says and to hear what Christians believe from the source. How many times have we sat listening to our Muslim friend give the Qur'anic version of a Bible story and wanted to say, 'That's not what the Bible says'? If we want our Muslim friends to listen to

us, we need to listen to them. Listening and asking questions to understand does not equal acceptance or agreement. If we find that we are responding with 'No, but our book says...' then it is time to have this discussion. To clarify

the source of tension in such discussions, I think it is helpful to point out that what we believe the Bible says is different from what the Qur'an implies that Christians believe(d).

Make Poverty History?

by SC

In the UK, a big campaign called 'Make Poverty History' was started by several Christian and secular aid agencies. The ultimate goal of this campaign was to apply pressure on the leaders of the 'rich' countries to make every effort to ensure that poverty that exists today becomes a thing of the past.

Millions of people purchased and wore the white rubber wrist bands with the engraved words: 'Make Poverty History' – and I was one of them. However, to look deeper into the issue, is it ever possible to make poverty history?

The root of poverty is sin! Sin branches out into oppression and injustice, greed, gluttony, covetousness, overindulgence, corruption, pride and laziness. It is sin that leads one human being to oppress, cheat and take advantage of another. 'A poor man's field may produce abundant food, but injustice sweeps it away' (Prov. 13:23). It is sin that causes people groups to feel the need to 'protect' themselves from the poor and not share out of their own abundance. As a result, we have millions of people living in our world today below the levels of sustenance, where they have no opportunities and where

they are denied the right to earn enough money to feed themselves and their families and to save for the future.

Sin causes what some call a self-inflicted poverty. Dishonest dealings, as well as laziness, can result in people's poverty. 'Dishonest money dwindles away...' (Prov.

13:11). 'Lazy hands make a man poor...' (Prov. 10:4). So, we will not see the end of poverty until human beings repent

and are redeemed from their sins.

Although being poor is difficult, it is not always a bad thing in itself. I am sure many of us have had the experience of being poor – maybe when we were students, or while our family was going through financial difficulties, or at some other time. Was that a bad time in every way? Did it not teach us to rely on God for our provision? Did it not reveal talents and strength of character in us that we didn't know were there? Did it not give us an understanding of others in similar circumstances? Maybe it caused us to be more inventive than we ever were before. Jesus said to us that 'The poor you will always have with you, and you can help

Is it ever possible to make poverty history?

The root of poverty is sin!

them at any time you want...' (Mark 14:7). I don't think He meant that we will have the poor with us only until the campaign 'Make Poverty History' reaches its goal. Jesus himself was poor in earthly terms, and he talked to people about the high cost of being his disciples and the blessedness of the poor (Luke 14: 25-33; Matt. 19:16-24; Luke 6:20-26).

Was the campaign *Make Poverty History* a waste of time then? Not entirely!

The Bible gives us a few practical steps to take in our efforts to deal with poverty. We, the people of God are called:

- To seek justice, encourage the oppressed, defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the cause of the widow (Isa. 1:17)
- To loose the chains of injustice, to set the oppressed free, to share our food with the hungry, to provide the poor wanderer with shelter, and to clothe the naked (Isa. 58:6-7)
- To love mercy (Mic. 6:8)
- To speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute ... to judge fairly, defend the rights of the poor and needy (Prov. 31:8-9)

So, reminding the leaders of rich countries that their laws need to change in order to become fair towards the rest of the world is part of speaking up on behalf of the poor.

However, such leaders cannot be made entirely responsible for doing away with poverty. Even though the unjust rulers of this world will have to answer for a lot before their Maker, they have no real power to deal with the main cause of poverty – sin.

We have access to the only power there is to make the pockets of poverty become history.

I think campaigners would have achieved more if they had gone with their message, not to the 'Rich' World leaders, but to us – God's people! We have the access to the only power there is to make the pockets of poverty become history.

There is no doubt that God can make incidents of poverty history through the actions and interventions of his people. For example, Nehemiah played a key role in stopping the injustice and economic oppression that was happening in Judah at his time by opposing and speaking against it (Neh. 5:1-13).

We are God's hands on earth, and while the world is struggling to understand the true causes of poverty, we have to use the power of God to minister to this hurting world. It saddens me, however, to see how often God's people rely on the power of finances rather than on the

power of the Holy Spirit in addressing the problems of poverty.

I think campaigners would have achieved more if they had campaigned for 'Making Contentment Reality'. The fact is that neither extreme poverty nor extreme riches are really good for us (Prov. 30:8-9). The speed with which rich countries are sliding down the moral scale is breathtaking. The consumer culture that grows in strength is often to blame, not only for the growing poverty in the rest of the world, but also for the degradation of many western nations (Eph. 4:18-19). Riches can lead to self-centredness, choke spiritual growth, breed greed and jealousy, and make us blind to the conditions that poor people live in around us. Many times, the nations of Israel and Judah incurred judgement upon themselves because of their growing affluence, which resulted in forsaking God and exploiting and neglecting the poor.

However, riches can be a blessing if wisely invested and shared with others. In Jesus' parable a servant who doubled the money that his master left with him was rewarded the most. The servant who did not invest ended up by being punished (Matt. 25:14-30). The believers who belonged to the early church shared all their posses-

sions with anyone who was in need (Acts 2:43-44).

To be able to share and invest, we need to be free of the love of money and learn to live contentedly. The world today is desperately in need of a message of what it is to live in contentment for the sake of others and for themselves. We, as people of God, need to demonstrate what contentment and deal-

ing with poverty is all about.

In conclusion, poverty is very unlikely to become history before sin is dealt with completely. As people of God we are called to deal with poverty on different levels: by speaking on behalf of the oppressed to rulers

and authorities, by taking care of the poor, and by being thankful during difficult times when we find ourselves poor. We are also called to demonstrate to the world the strength and benefit of contentment and sharing, which will certainly help to make incidents of poverty history.

Too few of God's people are busy seeing pockets of poverty become history in the world; and too many of God's people are busy looking for finances rather than for

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God's wisdom in trying to tackle the pockets of poverty.

On the other hand, Jesus and the New Testament writers warn us of the difficulties that being rich can bring us. Maybe a campaign 'Make Riches History' would serve humanity better? Not really!

We mustn't forget that the root of poverty is sin, so no ideal formula will ever be found to solve this problem. In the secular as well as the Christian world, the formula changes with impressive speed:

*foreign finances +
grassroots participation =
poverty becoming history*

Or

*foreign finances +
good local legislation +
lowered import barriers =
poverty becoming history, etc.*

Surprisingly, with all the money (secular and Christian), effort and knowledge invested in the process, poverty is still not becoming history.

Even if a given country manages to move from the category of 'developing' to 'developed', the results can be disastrous. We only need to look at the example of many western countries and their constant slide down the moral scale of things. I think it is time to start projects of rescuing 'poor' westerners from their riches. That is because none of the above has enough power to address the real root of the problem.

Sometimes it takes words, at other times it takes silent action, but all the time it takes prayer and God's wisdom to know when and how to facilitate the ministration of justice and mercy to this world through God's own people.

Transformational Ministry: The Contribution of Mothers to Society

by SC and KF

Introduction

At the 2007 Arabian Peninsula conference for company personnel, I, as the TM Coordinator, encouraged them to think of ways that they can minister to the people around them. I defined the subject as follows:

Transformational Ministry is a process by which God's people minister to communities and societies around them in every aspect of human existence: socially, economically, spiritually and environmentally. As transformational workers they are to be stimulators and contributors to positive changes in their recipient societies through the power of God.

Several reasons for the need for this Transformational Ministry in the AP are the prevalence of wealth without well-being, materialism and consumerism, and social issues. Such a ministry is also needed in relation to planting the future church.

The workers then divided up into small groups according to their various roles as tentmakers. Not only were there groups for teachers, medical personnel, engineers and businessmen, but also one for mothers who are at home.

The following article suggests ways that mothers can have an effect on the society around them. KF gives a summary of her thoughts from that group discussion and from other comments during the conference.

As a mother who home schools, I sometimes wonder what impact I can have on our host culture. At our recent regional conference, several speakers addressed this issue. In the session on Transformational Ministries, we learned how a holistic approach can stimulate and contribute to change. One area of concern is that even if people have wealth, they may not have well being. We see materialism and consumerism leading

to a 'disposable' society. This can even be seen in attitudes towards wives, children, maids, etc.

How can a mother at home have an impact on her host culture? As she interacts with or is observed and perceived by nationals, she can be a godly example. This can happen in a variety of settings, both formal and informal.

A mother can contribute to society in several ways. By nurturing her family with loving and consistent discipline, she makes an impression on members of the host culture as they observe this phenomenon.

Healthy family relationships also result in fewer divorces and incidences of abuse. All of these practices lead to hope for the future. Lord willing, we will have opportunities to model godly relationships. As we go about our routine tasks, have guests in our homes, or are in public places together, others will take notice. We can model love for and training of our children in stores and parks. We can show respect for our husband in restaurants and with friends. Some truths in these areas can be 'caught' rather than taught.

In more formal settings, we can teach about biblical (not necessarily western) marriage. For example, the principle to 'leave and cleave' after marriage may help develop stronger bonds between husband and wife. Of course, the newlyweds can still live near family, but the mother-son relationship usually needs to decrease in importance. However, even if a man does not cherish his wife, we can explain that God values her because she is created in His image. We can also encourage her to respect him, although to trust him may be more difficult. Our group of

wives asked ourselves to imagine how it would feel knowing that at any time one could become a co-wife. Knowing that polygamy is permitted in Islam, we can contrast this with Paul's teaching on Christ and the Church.

Although God's word is our authority, we do not always need to read or quote it directly. A number of Christian books about marriage and parenting have been translated into other languages. These can be given as gifts or shared on other appropriate occasions. Seminars on relevant topics can also convey biblical truths in a group setting. Programmes for women and/or children can be effective venues for discussions as well. Some women have held English language conversation groups. Others mentioned the possibility of offering classes in cake decorating or women's health issues. Another existing option in some areas is the *diwaniya*, or *majlis* (gatherings for discussion).

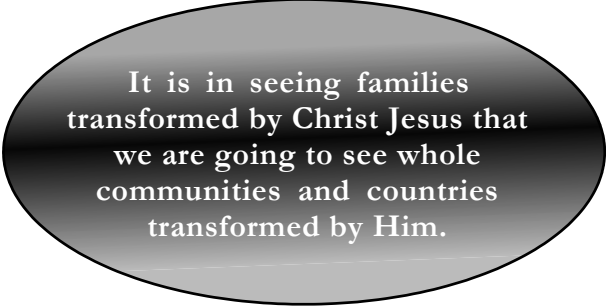
One Australian programme that has opened doors already is called *Mainly Music*. Children are invited, along with their mother or older sister. No maids are allowed. There is a two-minute 'think spot' when certain topics are presented. In the past, this has included *The Five Love Languages for Children* (words of affirmation, physical touch, quality time,

acts of service, and gifts [presents])). Another idea is to talk about parenting as seen in the book of Proverbs. As the women drink tea together, they can discuss the material in a friendly environment.

In the Arab world, mothers have a great influence on their society as they bring up the next generation. Thus, women workers can definitely have an impact as they integrate family and

ministry. One of the speakers summed this up quite well. She said,

Our host cultures' structural foundation is the family. It is in seeing families transformed by Christ Jesus that we are going to see whole communities and countries transformed by Him.



It is in seeing families
transformed by Christ Jesus that
we are going to see whole
communities and countries
transformed by Him.

Transformational Ministry: Helping the Vulnerable

by HC and EM

Editor: *Several workers in North Africa face difficult issues as they try to minister to women who are on the fringes of their society. EM, from a sister agency, has compiled stories of the women she seeks to help. HC has written an introduction to a selection of these incidents in order to stimulate both our thoughts and our actions. Our Saviour set us an example of how to minister to such women through the accounts of his meeting with the woman at the well (John 4) and with the woman caught in adultery (John 8).*

Introduction

What should be the driving force in Transformational Ministry? Our compassion for those who are vulnerable, or a need to see justice done? A desire to be needed and to make a difference?

These may all be elements of our motivation to become involved in Transformational Ministry, but the stories below illustrate the conviction that it is God who compels us, and it is only by His power that any change, any development, any transformation can take place in individuals and communities. The stories may raise more questions than they answer – about responsibility, culturally appropriate responses, biblical responses...and yet these questions lead us to deeply examine our reactions and motivations, and so are a good thing.

The process of transformation can be lengthy, frustrating and sometimes non-existent, much to our surprise and despair. Why do people not want to break free from their situations? What is holding them back? Why are the obstacles so huge? Is our faith lacking? Are we too naïve, to believe things can change?

These questions are valid and necessary, but as EM points out, we know that God can and does transform the most chaotic lives. So we go on in hope, learning from the God of hope, and taking up the challenge presented to us in the places where we live and minister.

Three stories from EM *

**names have been changed*

Home is not a happy place

I recently took a sick child from an orphanage and her carer to the doctor. I had met the carer a few times and was slightly apprehensive! At a first meeting, Fatima comes across as an angry, sullen woman – she has a permanent scowl on her face and a defensive attitude! Although our interaction was initially awkward, we soon both relaxed and started to chat about life. Despite my prior assessment of her character, she blossomed into a lovely, caring woman with a great sense of humour.

After collecting some medicine from a pharmacy, Fatima asked if we could go for a drive. Feeling rather curious I agreed! And after a couple of minutes Fatima started to talk:

My husband is not a nice man, he's mean to me. He drinks, he hits me. He won't even put rubbish in the bin. I have to do everything for him; If I don't bring him a drink quickly at his command, he gets very angry. He doesn't work but I work every day from 7am until 7pm, and I have two children – a baby and an older child. I don't like to go home at the end of the day; I love my children but I hate going back into the house with him – it's not easy.

So what do you say? What is the culturally appropriate response? I would usually advise counselling, legal help, hostels or other options, but I felt very unsure in this cultural context! She wasn't looking for a solution, she just wanted someone to listen to her, but she was hurting and I felt helpless. Is being a pair of ears enough in these situations?

Unfortunately there are many situations like this one and I find myself on a constant learning curve. I don't know if you have come across the slogan found on badges and bracelets 'WWJD – What Would Jesus Do?' I find myself asking that question on a regular basis! Please pray that there will be a constructive way to help and support the myriad of women here who, for the most part, appear to suffer in secret.

Finding hope in the midst of chaos

I remember the first time I met Shayma and her three-year old daughter, Mabrouka. They were living in terrible conditions along with Shayma's mother and her younger brothers and sisters. The house was stinking, damp, and full of rubbish. There were skinny kittens wandering about and the floor was thick with mud and filth.

Shayma is a single mother. She drinks, smokes, and goes in and out of jail for theft and other crimes. She is not only a self-confessed prostitute, but also prostitutes her younger sisters – one of whom is only nine-years old. She lies, cheats and neglects her little daughter terribly. She rents out a room in the house for other prostitutes to bring customers to and is notorious in her community as a huge disgrace and problem. She has had multiple abortions and is well known to the Social Services, Police, and Child Protection Unit.

Shayma has a ‘dead face’; it is like someone has stepped inside and switched the light off behind her eyes. I asked her why she was going through life in this way and she said, *‘No one has ever asked me before why I am living like this.’* She went on to explain that she knew no other way of life. Her mother had prostituted her as a child. Her grandmother had prostituted her mother as a child. And so the cycle of abuse and neglect had continued.

I asked Shayma to think about what she was doing to her child and her sisters, and whether she wanted this cycle to continue for her daughter and future granddaughters. Shayma broke down and said she felt her life was totally out of control: ‘I am no good. I am rubbish. I don’t know what to do or how to stop. People hate me but I don’t care. I have stopped caring about anything!’

Shayma is 24 years old, uneducated, and has no obvious employment skills. She has no life experiences, except the chaos of prostitution and drinking. How would you respond to Shayma; how would you seek to protect the children, help her improve her life and the life of her whole family?

Humans are capable of performing the most atrocious acts e.g. people like Shayma. Many people feel naturally outraged and shocked by stories like these; this is normal. But at what point does the anger, shock and horror become something proactive?

As Christians we are called to follow Jesus’ example of reaching out to the lost and broken. I believe that God enables us to see beyond the chaos to the people themselves. We do not condone or make excuses for people’s behaviour. We feel the disbelief and deep sadness. We believe in consequence and legal justice. We do not accept that it is okay for a person to abuse, neglect or damage others. People need to take responsibility and accept the consequences of their behaviour.

But we also believe in mercy and compassion. We believe that God **can** transform even the roughest of situations, the most chaotic of lives (the Gospels are full of such examples). We **can** love even the most unlovely, messed-up people and have hearts filled with compassion

for the ‘lowest of the low’. We **can** be proactive in encouraging people to transform their lives. We **can** challenge people in authority to think differently because we **can** model *transformational* development work. Not just investing in projects and structures, but in people themselves. We live out the belief that all people **can** experience a transformation of the heart and that they have the right to feel dignity and value. We **can** empower the weak, advocate on behalf of the forgotten and be a positive presence in the blackest of situations.

Who will take my son?

A young girl is made pregnant by her older, married brother. She is banished from her family home and has nowhere to go except to the house of her brother. She is very depressed, won’t hold the baby or care for him. Her brother is aggressive and doesn’t want her or the baby in the house. He is frightened of what she will say to people, but there is nowhere else for her to go. They are trying to arrange for the baby to be taken by the authorities and officially ‘abandoned’ but all the baby homes are overflowing with unwanted children so they have no option but to keep the baby with them. He is a tiny two-month old baby, skinny, dirty, and rejected by every adult in his little world. What will become of him?

A girl comes in to see the hospital social worker. She is only twenty but

looks twice her age with broken teeth, pocked skin and calloused hands. She is weeping uncontrollably and continually wails, ‘Give me an abortion. I beg you, give me an abortion!’ She comes from a place further up the country but ran away from her abusive father. She ended up in a notorious part of town where a ‘kindly older lady’ takes in stray girls and helps them by paying them to run errands for her. She then locks them up in her house – which is actually a brothel – and the girl is trapped into prostitution. This girl managed to escape and made her way to the public hospital. She already has a fifteen-week old baby and has just discovered that she is eleven weeks pregnant with her next. Legally, the hospital will not carry out a termination as she is beyond nine weeks. Her only option is to go to a private clinic, or ‘back-street butchers’ as they are known. Where does she go now? What will become of her and her now two children?

A tiny baby is discovered in the local river – a baby boy. The authorities don’t seem overly concerned, as apparently it is quite common here. The first mother is visited and she still has her baby with her. The second mother is eventually tracked down. She is still distraught but has her baby with her and the one she is carrying. So where did this baby come

from? It is tragic and in reality very few people seem to care. A couple of weeks later, a social worker speaks up saying a young girl had contacted her and told her she 'was about to give birth and her family was threatening to kill her if she came home with the baby'. The girl was completely alone when she gave birth and initially had nowhere to go. But then her family arrived and took her and the baby home from the hospital. Some days later, she secretly phoned the social worker, begging for someone to come and take the baby. The social worker had tried to take action but for some reason was unable to book transport to the girl's house. She heard nothing more from the girl and then the baby was found.

This is a terrible but true story, very recent in fact. I include it because it is necessary that people

hear that such things go on and are not just exaggerated accounts. Many of the situations I encounter are in many ways hopeless as there is no way to address every issue or confront every gap in the process. This is a fact and the reality of this work at this time. I do believe that God can transform any situation, but history shows us that it can be a fast and dramatic process or a painfully slow one! I would encourage you to sit down with pen and paper and go over this sequence of events and express your feelings. Please then use this as a springboard for prayer. While we are praying, these tragedies will still occur, but prayer is the key. Pray for God's intervention, protection, grace, the injustices, the social workers, key people, the process, the authorities, the families, the hospitals, the communities, the girls, the babies.

Arabic Language Learning

Part II: The Common European Framework of Reference and Ministry Goals

by H JohnMark

One tool many of us have used to help us learn a language is a language grid – a list of levels of attainment. There are many different language grids which give some kind of progression from absolute beginner to native speaker. Most are designed for written languages; few of them fully take into account the realities and complexities of North Africa. The existing Foreign Service Institute scales have served well and have the advantage of being well known as well as being used by the language learning textbook LAMP¹. The book not only used the FSI scale as an indication of progress, but also had well-worked-out material for language learning, although most of the material seems to be aimed at learning an unwritten language through using a language helper.

The Common European Framework of Reference, the CEFR ², is relatively new. It can be summarised in a page (see *Appendix*) or used in its expanded form of over 100 pages. It is more thorough and aims to be

more comprehensive than other scales. It is being used across Europe and by many universities in North America. It is very broad and comprehensive in terms of language skills and it also covers learning culture.

The material is available free on the web² and it is offered in many languages (including English, German and French). The end product, in terms of assessment, is actually three products, though only the first one is of interest to us at this point ³.

1. A language passport presents levels for the various skills, starting with five scores for the five basic skills (reading, writing, listening, spoken interaction, and spoken production). In the expanded form each skill and level is broken down into many smaller skills, situations and abilities. These details and scores can be provided as needed. The free testing side is handled by a tool

1. Brewster ET & Brewster ES, 1976. LAMP. Language Acquisition Made Practical.

2. The main CEFR site is http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/CADRE_EN.asp, and the complete framework book can be found at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf.
Note the grid presented in this article is the overview: the

website has expanded versions which go into great detail, along with supporting documentation.

3. One small reservation: because the actual details vary according to the language, there are different versions being prepared for different languages. Nevertheless, the overall framework stays the same across languages. The CEFR, just like the Foreign Service Institute levels will need adapting to the local language.

called Dialang. If you go to www.dialang.org, you can download and install a small program, which, with internet access, will test and rate you according to the CEFR framework. Over ten languages are available. The one for French rates you for reading, writing, listening, grammar and vocabulary. It also offers constructive advice and feedback.

2. My language biography gives the opportunity to describe the language backgrounds of the students and their language activities in the family and the community. In this way there is an emphasis on what can be done outside the classroom.

3. A language portfolio/dossier provides samples of work that can be shown to others.

I find it interesting to see that the French and the Germans lead the way in adopting the framework. For instance, their culture centres actively describe the courses they offer in terms of the CEFR. France has developed official tests such as the DELF for levels A1 to B2, with a DELF Junior version for young people. The DALF is a test of levels C1 and C2. Anyone who has the DALF is not required to pass further French language tests for any French university.

The framework is particularly liberating in the way it separates five skills and allows students to self-assess where they are to a

reasonable level of precision. Then, because the material allows for ample expansion of these skills, smaller specific language goals can be identified. Anyone planning a language programme will find in this framework a wealth of ideas which are well organised and arranged, with progressions of difficulty clearly described for many aspects of language. Reporting one's attainment is also easy; along with the global score and the five scores for the five skills, each skill is further broken down into smaller sub-skills. One can use it with as much detail as desired.

Although institutions such as government culture centres can test according to these levels, the framework is designed for self-testing and measuring small steps of progress, according to clearly set language-learning objectives. This point is important. Most adults, given accurate descriptions of a language skill, can accurately assess their own ability. Therefore, formal extensive and comprehensive language testing is probably not needed for gauging language progress, though the examinations may provide convenient and objective profile statements of current ability. Possibly the main exception is pronunciation because it is often difficult to hear one's own mistakes, and even more difficult to diagnose erratic errors.

At this point, one more technical note will help us. People who speak

Swiss German, when asked how many languages they speak, are often at a loss to reply. Does Swiss German count as one language and High German as another? All Swiss-Germans learn High German at school and are usually fluent in both. In the previous article, I explained that Arabic exists in two basic forms, the high form (the classical) and the low form (the dialects). **When linguists want to count how many forms people know, they call them varieties.** Thus, a Swiss-German who is fluent in French and English is described as being fluent in four varieties.

Let me return to the discussion of the CEFR. The CEFR is not just a grid (passport, biography and portfolio). There is an extensive philosophy behind it. Firstly, it is rooted in the European political scene, where English dominates and yet there is a need to promote and strengthen linguistic diversity. As part of their citizenship in Europe, people are expected to know at least two or three language varieties.

Secondly, and of more interest to us, the concept of **plurilingualism** has been developed. Though the word is a mouthful, it is a very loaded word with a specific approach to what being a bilingual actually means in practice.

Traditionally, until about twenty years ago, the goal of learning a second language was to learn it so well that you could pass as a native

Table I Total monolingualism
L I
H
G
F
E
D
C
B
A

speaker, and do everything in the second language as well as you could in the first language. It was expected that you would master your native language and go on to master the second one. This can be illustrated by a series of tables.

Table I shows the monolingual individual who in all areas of life, from A to H, can function totally and well in their only language. Table 2 shows the ideal bilingual, totally and equally at home in all linguistic situations in both languages.

The reality is that most bilinguals, even those regarded as the best examples, often have gaps in the second language, and even worse, some would say, they have gaps in the first language. This is illustrated in Table 3. A good example of a gap might be the language of talking

Table 2 Total (balanced) bilingualism	
L1 (Language 1)	L2 (Language 2)
H	H
G	G
F	F
E	E
D	D
C	C
B	B
A	A

to babies – this is rarely learned in both languages. Another example is when a professional subject is studied in L2, it can happen that L2 becomes stronger than L1 for that subject.

The situation gets even more complicated when classical and dialect are added to the mixture. The point is that **gaps in a language, even gaps in L1, are normal**. Plurilingualism explicitly recognises this and combines it with the philosophy or attitude that the individual needs to take charge of their language learning, and that most individuals will learn the language they need in order to do or achieve something they want. The plurilingual individual has a range of language skills, like a

Table 3 Bilingualism in reality	
L1	L2
	H
G	
F	F
	E
D	
C	
B	B
A	

toolbox, on which they draw for a specific need. This fits well with the classical-dialect reality of the Arabic-speaking world. Arabs will sometimes use classical, sometimes use dialect, and sometimes use a foreign language. Sometimes they will mix classical and dialect, and other times they will mix dialect and one or more foreign languages, and they will do this mixing with skill.

The CEFR framework for learners explicitly works on the assumption that **mistakes are normal** – and that **the most important goal is adequate communication**. Therefore, for a time, learners may be permitted to use simplified grammar, approximate pronunciation and language mixing (code switching), if this helps to maintain the

continuity and flow of communication. At this point, if you have not already done so, I suggest you read the summary of the CEFR presented in the Appendix, and if you know more than one language or language variety, score yourself for them. Get someone who knows you well to score you and see how closely you agree. Educated native speakers of English will be C1 for all five skills. I say educated, because one of the unexpected applications of this framework has been towards helping native speakers improve their first language, and only the educated can achieve C1.⁴ French will give you five scores. Dialect refers to the two speaking skills and one listening. Classical could be all five, but for some, it could be just listening and reading, making a short speech in classical, and writing a simple letter.

Then I suggest you ask yourself where you want to be, and consider your local opportunities for making progress. You might want to download the detailed version and find the skills and sub-skills you want to improve, and then use the framework as a guide to planning your language learning programme. The CEFR was designed from the beginning to be a useful tool for learners to use; therefore, while there is as much detail as you want, it is not usually very difficult material. To permit comparison with the materi-

al in Morocco, the ACTFL scale (another language levels scale) has been added alongside the CEFR scale.

The time element and reasonable general goals

It is generally reckoned that around 1200 hours of work are needed to go from zero to B2 in a language related to one's own. I have seen ordinary learners do this in nine months in French, studying intensively. Classical Arabic can take up to seven times longer – over 8000 hours. I have not seen any published estimates for learning an Arabic dialect, with basic reading and writing skills in classical. My estimate is 1000-2000 hours for the average learner who finds languages difficult and whose main skill is the ability to slog. Given good motivation, a little skill and some help, I think it reasonable that ordinary learners aim at the following:

Dialect

Listening – B2

Spoken Interaction – B2

Spoken production – B1 or B2

Classical

Listening – B1

Reading – A2

Writing – A2

You will notice that I have given priority to dialect. This is partly

4. In recognition that children have a different approach to knowledge and to languages compared to adults, separate

versions of the CEFR are sometimes prepared for children.

because dialect is easier to learn, and partly because, most of the time, even when someone knows both dialect and classical well, dialect will be used for everyday interaction. Plurilingualism explicitly recognises that classical and dialect each have their own priority domains and roles of use, with some overlap. This reality is, unfortunately, not recognised by many language schools. I suffered from Arabs trying to teach me classical as a living language encompassing all areas, even those usually reserved exclusively for dialect. Then when I finally found a language class that taught me classical specifically to read and understand the newspaper, TV and radio, even though all of us had reasonable dialect, the teacher insisted on conducting the class in French! The CEFR provides a framework, an approach, and a resource bank of ideas that can be applied to learning classical for specialised purposes and dialect for general purposes.

The CEFR and ministry goals

The CEFR is entirely secular. I have therefore fleshed it out by presenting a separate list of language goals for ministry. I leave it to you to decide how they line up with the general language goals expressed in the CEFR.

In ministry a common goal is to memorise verses of Scripture.

Some people find this easy to do, and are reasonably fluent from A2 onwards. Other people get to C1 and still stumble and have problems. From personal experience I have noticed that some people can lead an inductive Bible study using prepared questions in dialect, with the local person reading the classical Arabic and explaining it in dialect by B1, but others struggle even at B2. Some people find it easy to memorise a story or tell even a short prepared story without making mistakes, whereas others have to wait until their general language skills and ability to improvise when speaking have advanced sufficiently before they can effectively tell stories. I have seen relative beginners able to repeat memorised verses of Scripture while others at an advanced level cannot do this.

In terms of ministry, it is not always necessary to know classical to be able to do a Bible study. You can ask your Arab friend to read the classical, then continue the discussion in dialect. On the other hand, people writing in dialect put themselves at the level of the totally uneducated. I have seen letters and notes written in dialect, from the home help and the plumber, but this is not appropriate for the foreigner. Fortunately, like French, many letters are so stylised in form and phraseology that it is not difficult to learn a few patterns and to express the con-

tent in simple classical. That is why I rate the writing of letters as a B1 skill – intermediate level. I learned it in French by lifting the phrases from letters I saw, and I read letters in Arabic by totally ignoring most of the words and looking for the subject, names, dates, etc.

Everyone agrees it is important to set specific language goals for ministry at an early stage. There is a tendency to adjust our goals downwards as the difficulty increases and the realities of our own weaknesses hit home. It is easy to get sidetracked into ministry to expatriates,

for instance, and even though such ministry is important, it is not a priority. Once sidetracked, the need for Arabic is less, so less Arabic learning takes place. Therefore, wider ministry in Arabic is restricted. There are a lot of people who have stopped learning Arabic. This is less likely to happen if you achieve B2 or C1, because, paradoxically, with Arabic and French, the higher you go, the easier the language gets, and the easier it is to add in a few more details.

A suggested list of ministry goals

A. Interactional witnessing

1. Can answer simple questions about the common objections
2. Have a range of possible answers for each of the common objections.
For each option an answer can be a simple sentence, or a paragraph.
3. Able to handle most common and many less common questions, and to do so ranging from a quick answer to an answer lasting five to ten minutes, in open-ended discussions.

B. Prayer

1. Simple memorised prayers, e.g. of thanks for the meal
2. Can pray for someone, simply
3. Can pray for a range of subjects, personally, with feeling, and in depth.

C. Bible study

1. Can use Bible verses to reinforce or make a point. If need be, the verse is found in a bilingual Bible and briefly discussed.
2. Can use the Arabic Bible for making points for evangelism or teaching; again, if needed, using the bilingual Bible to find the verse, the local person then reading the classical, and the discussion continuing in dialect.
3. Can plan and present a simple inductive Bible study of ten minutes.
4. Can plan and lead an inductive Bible study lasting half an hour or more.

D. Empathy

1. Can understand simple relationships and grasp the main point of arguments and problems that are presented to one.
2. Can begin to answer simply the personal problems people share, and can, with preparation if necessary, seek out and apply relevant scriptures to the person.
3. Can fully follow a marriage conflict, hear out both sides, be mediators, and share one's own life with the couple as you help them work through the problem. Or, can fully share the tensions of bringing up children and relate to the tensions in such a way that language, while needing some work sometimes (requests for explanations, etc.), is not really seen as an obstacle to ministry.

E. Initiative

1. Can plan and carry out a simple word of encouragement or rebuke.
2. Can plan and implement a small personal discussion on a delicate issue.
3. Can raise and press home with a full discussion on any topic of teaching or caring, and share truth and life with the people concerned.

In view of the variability of learners, where would you place these ministry goals on the CEFR? What do you think are reasonable goals for you personally? What do others who know you well think?

Conclusions

I submit that all those involved in ministry in Arabic should aim to achieve all the above language-ministry goals. But individuals, because of existing language skills and preferences in their first language, may find some of the ministry goals easier than others. Therefore, I have left it to you to match your ministry goals against the CEFR. A few people will go on to become preachers, in-depth counsellors and expert evangelists. They may learn classical to the point where they are reading books in Arabic. These are exceptional goals, but from observing many learners over many years I think that most people can, regardless of gifting, seek to achieve all of the language goals set here in each of the five ministry areas above.

APPENDIX

	A1 Breakthrough	A2 Waystage
Listening	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.
Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.
Spoken Interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.
Spoken Production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.

	A1 Breakthrough	A2 Waystage
Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.
ACTFL Guidelines	Intermediate Low	Intermediate Low/ Intermediate Mid

	B1 Threshold	B2 Vantage
Listening	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.
Reading	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.
Spoken Interaction	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.
Spoken Production	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

	B1 Threshold	B2 Vantage
Writing	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.
ACTFL Guidelines	Intermediate Mid	Intermediate High

	C1 Effective Operational Proficiency	C2 Mastery
Listening	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
Reading	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.
Spoken Interaction	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
Spoken Production	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.

	C1 Effective Operational Proficiency	C2 Mastery
Writing	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective, logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.
ACTFL Guidelines	Advanced Low / Advanced Mid	Advanced High/ Superior / Distinguished

Book Review: **ALGERIE, TU ES A MOI! signé Dieu**

reviewed by Eva Longley

ALGERIE, TU ES A MOI! signé Dieu, Jean L. Blanc (Editions Sènevé, 2006).

‘Algeria, You are Mine! signed God’

‘Couldn’t you write a book about the revival in Algeria?’ Jean L. Blanc, a pastor in Geneva, recounts that this question, put to him by one of the Algerian church leaders, came as a big shock! His interest in and deep affection for Algeria stems from the time in 1962 when he was involved with a group of Algerian scouts who visited Switzerland. So, accepting the challenge, he carried out the necessary research and gathered the testimonies of many who had been part of the remarkable events described. This book is the result.

In the very first chapter Jean Blanc sets out clearly what he aims to do.

This work does not claim to be an exhaustive account of all that happened in Algeria in the past, not even in the past twenty-five years. Nor does it list all that exists in the country now. It is intended simply as a testimony to the reality of God’s work and an encouragement to continue to pray for and support a country where the Church seemed to have disappeared and in which, today, the evangelical church is

numerically the third largest, after Egypt and Sudan, among Arab countries.

This is the story of Arabs and Berbers being touched by the love of Jesus and from this, finding love for each other. It tells of worshipping groups springing up all over the country.

How did it all come about?

In the answer to this question lies the particular value of this book. Many books have been written about the origin of Christianity in Algeria and about the vitality and devotion of the church of Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine and the martyrs, with analyses of why this glorious church disappeared. Blanc devotes a section to this, as well as tracing the history of the modern missionary movement and its impact on Algeria. A number of books have been written about this, too. In addition, different reports of the present remarkable work of God in Algeria have appeared over the past years, but as far as the reviewer knows, this is the first time that there has been a collation of the events leading up to the present situation. Estimates put the number of believers now at thou-

sands – even tens of thousands according to some – whereas in 1980 there were just several hundred, two hundred according to Blanc, found mainly in the cities of Algiers, Oran and Biskra.

In particular, it is noteworthy that the story since 1980 is told very much through the eyes and in the words of the Algerians whose lives were touched. As Blanc points out, this is a work of God through *national* believers, with a strategy they have followed prayerfully, and with their vision of the future. Blanc does not minimise the efforts of foreign Christians: he pays homage to those early missionaries who, as he writes, were told in their orientation that their ministry might never bear visible fruit, but who continued with their witness and service. Their sacrificial lives paved the way for the rapid church growth of today.

How did it start?

While the movement did not really ‘snowball’ until around 1990, a decisive event took place in 1981 – the famous *Camp in the Mountains*. A young Kabyle Christian in Algiers felt that God was calling the church to organise a summer camp in the Djudjura Mountains where young men from many villages camp out for an inter-village football tournament. After months of prayer and fasting together with other believers – Algerian and expatriate – at La Bonne Nouvelle, a group comprising Arabs, Berbers and

one young French teacher held their camp. Blanc entitles the chapter describing what happened next as ‘Djudjura, the place of meeting with God’. The believers’ joy, harmonious relationships, effective praying and witness to a God of love who could be known through Jesus touched many of the footballers, and before long, forty of them professed faith in Christ. Not surprisingly, perhaps, when news got out, the police and military came to visit and the camp was closed! (The next year, 1982, La Bonne Nouvelle in Algiers was also closed and several expatriates were expelled.)*

However, the fire had been kindled and could not be put out. Not all forty remained firm, but those who did so returned to their villages taking the Good News with them. The fact that the camp had involved both Arabs and Berbers, with the collaboration of expatriates in prayer support and logistics, was also important. Blanc quotes Youssef: ‘The Kabyles will always be grateful to their Arab brothers for having brought them the good news of Jesus’. It is important that the Church does not mirror the tensions that exist in the society.

Rabah, one of the original footballers, now a pastor, explains the three-part strategy decided upon at that time, which has been very

*Two small errors occurred in this chapter of the

book: the wife of Bill Call is Peggy (not Betty), and for Langley read Longley.

important for the growth of the church:

- First, establish a Christian group in every locality of Kabylia
- Then, reach out to all the other regions of Algeria
- Finally, spread the witness to neighbouring countries.

Radio and television have been crucial in carrying out the second part of the strategy, as has been the movement of believers within the country. For example, Rabah, after serving the Lord in Kabylia, transferred to Oran in Western Algeria.

It is vital that what has been achieved is not lost. In Chapter 10, Blanc sets out a list of **indispensable ingredients for ensuring continuation**:

- Faith in the Word of God, which must always be made accessible (written or audio-visual). This includes Bible training.
- Fasting and prayer (which has always been the main strategy of the church in Algeria)
- The supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. (Many churches have opened as a result of a miraculous intervention by God.)
- Dreams and direct revelations (important in a context where people think of God as distant and indifferent)
- Deliverance from fear so that evangelistic zeal is maintained

- Desire to reach out in love to those who do not know Christ. (This includes the 70,000 Chinese workers currently in Algeria. More than 300 accepted Christ as Saviour and Lord in 2005.)
- Practical identification with the needs of the nation. (Two examples are: help to all without discrimination, as after the 2004 earthquake, and the creation of micro-enterprises for which outside financial help is needed.)

Two appendices close the book. The second is an extract from the training manual *Spiritual Milk*, while the first contains the law of 28 February 2006 regulating non-Muslim worship and making it illegal to attempt to shake the faith of a Muslim. There have so far been some repercussions, but nobody knows what the long-term effect will be. The believers are not afraid. As Blanc comments: 'You are Mine, says God, and the protection of the One who is Master is guaranteed.'

As Blanc stated at the beginning of the book, it is by no means an exhaustive account of either the past or the present situation. More could have been said. However, although no two countries are identical, this work should be of interest and help to Christians, both national and expatriate, working in similar contexts. It is a pity that it does not exist in English.

Book Review: The Bronze Ladder

Reviewed by Donna Smith

The Bronze Ladder, Malcolm Lyon (Leicester, UK: Matador, 2006).

This is a great book for those who like their history in story form. Malcolm Lyon has carefully researched the life of the inhabitants of early third century Roman North Africa, particularly for Thuburbo Minus, Hadrumetum and Carthage, towns located in Proconsular Africa, now known as Tunisia. Drawing on source books that include the manuscript of 'The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas', he has accurately represented the known details of the lives of those early martyrs.

Lyon makes these historical characters come alive by having them tell their own stories. He has filled in the background and details missing in the early manuscripts by an imaginative, yet historically reasonable, presentation of both known and unknown people.

The book is divided into four sections. The first one, entitled *The Potter's Son*, has Saturus telling his story from his years as a rebellious young man up to the time of his despair as he feels tremendous guilt for his sins. Then the novel leaves Saturus and turns to Perpetua in the second part under the title *The Nobleman's Daughter*. She begins her story with an incident from her childhood that involves an actual ladder. The author

uses this scene for her to speak of her relationships with her father and her brothers. Later on the theme of the ladder will return, but then it will be from her dream of climbing the bronze ladder just before she is martyred. It is that vision which gives the book its title.

In *The New Family*, the third section of the novel, Lyon brings out the life of the early church by using Perpetua to describe her involvement with the other believers, including Saturus. In fact, a romance, purely fictional, develops between the two main characters. The life of the church is expressed through introducing issues of commitment to Christ, fellowship with other believers and discernment of possible errors as they are worked into the conversations of the main characters. Perpetua's struggle with her father, who objects to her faith, shows the stress in family relationships when one person chooses to follow Jesus Christ.

The final section is called *The Journey Home*. It is closely based on the actual manuscript, the historical document that recounts the true story of the martyrs from Thuburbo Minus who died in

Carthage on 7th March 203. Much of 'The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas' contains the prison diary of Perpetua where she records her dreams and visions. The faith and courage of the martyrs shines through the account of the suffering they endured. They looked beyond their pain to the hope of eternal life with their Lord. The final word in the novel is given to the real Pudens, who, while guarding them during their imprisonment, became a Christian. He comments on their victory in death over the might of Rome as he leaves his service and walks away from the arena in freedom to serve his new master.

Lyon has added a helpful explanation for the reader to know what is historical and what is fictitious. His book is dedicated to the young people of Tunisia 'who stand today between the echoes of the past and the choices of the future.' This story is much appreciated by present day North African Christians because it gives them a sense of identity with the past in their own land. It also relates to some of their actual problems of threatened persecution, family disapproval and church life. *The Bronze Ladder* is a good read. For more North Africans to benefit from this story, it needs to be translated into their languages for of those of them who do not read English.

