

Editorial

The year 2004 has dawned upon us all, and to the surprise of a few, we are still moving along, although with many of the old problems ever at hand. So where are we headed? Are we indeed making progress in taking the Gospel to the 1.2 billion Muslims of the world? Is there any indication that they are listening and hearing the message? Are we as Christians able to point to breakthroughs anywhere on the globe? At least one person I read recently says that we are deluding ourselves if we think that significant penetration is being achieved. Muslims continue to fan out across all continents. In Iraq, the Shi'ites are beginning to flex their muscle. After all, they do comprise sixty percent of the population. In France, the lines are being drawn for a standoff between Muslims wanting to continue wearing religious marks of distinction in schools and the government, which has decided that a strict principle of secularism needs to be enforced. In the US, fully one-half of the president's state of the union address was focused on combating terrorism coming from extremist Muslim groups. It would seem, therefore, that Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" is indeed being acted out, just as the author predicted it would.

Fortunately, this is not the whole story. Reports from many corners of the globe tell us of specific cases where individuals and small groups are turning to Christ. Hardly a nation is left out of the list of remarkable and unique stirrings by the Spirit of God. What would you say about the man in Iraq who had a dream about Jesus every night for seven years until he finally yielded his heart to God? Or the North African in France who, upon stumbling into a meeting, was overwhelmed when he realized that people he didn't know loved him enough to pray for him? There are many other 'signs' of the Spirit of God answering the cry of Abraham, 'Oh, that Ishmael would live before you.' Perhaps you have a story to tell Do let us hear from you, so we all can rejoice together.

This first *Seedbed* of the year takes us into a variety of issues, all of which, I trust, will be of interest to you and hopefully stir some response. Particularly, I would encourage you to share your thoughts on 'That's a Good Answer' and 'Financing Arab World Churches'. Surely, we do not all think the same thing; if we do, none of us is thinking very much.

Abe Wiebe (Editor)

a.wiebe@sympatico.ca

Letter to the Editor

Thank you for taking on the task of Seedbed, which has always been and continues to be a great stimulus. We appreciate very much the challenges and inspiration it contains. Over this last year, my wife and I, with a colleague, have been involved in thinking through the issue of Partnership and particularly the issue of funding. Matters right here where we live have brought home the real nature of the question.

From A.H.

That's a Good Answer

By I.L.

Editor's note: *With this issue we are beginning a series of articles entitled 'That's a Good Answer.' It will be almost like a regular column if we can get enough people to respond or contribute. As many know, there are a number of issues that continually arise in our interactions with Muslims. Other subjects come out less frequently. Nevertheless, the writer of this column has launched us on our pathway. What we have here is our writer's reply to the oft-heard charge, 'Christians changed the Bible.' Please read, reflect and let us have your reactions to it. At the same time, let us have your suggestions as to what should be treated next. Perhaps you have 'a good answer' out of your experience.*

Today's Question:

You Changed Your Bible, Right?

There are several good answers to this question. Most Muslims are impervious to any answer that looks at the evidence. They have been taught that the Bible has been changed, so any evidence to the contrary must be wrong. Therefore, the earlier answers below show them that the Bible was not, cannot and could not have been changed. The later answers concerning the actual documentary evidence can be useful to confirm this, once the initial objection is answered.

Answer One:

Jesus Accepted the Old Testament

Was Jesus a prophet? Did he know the Torah? Did Jesus always speak the truth? The prophet Jesus would have known if the Torah had been corrupted. Jesus did not correct the Torah. The

Torah we have now is exactly the same as the Torah Jesus had. The Jews and the Christians, (both Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant) all read the same Torah. Why don't we read the first part of the Torah, the book of Genesis?

From there, you can begin to lay foundations by reading Genesis.^{1, 2}

Answer Two:

The Three Questions

- 'Is God powerful enough to protect His Word?'
- 'Does the Injil come from God?'
- 'So how could God allow his Word to be changed? Impossible!'

When I was first taught this, I was totally unconvinced by the questions; my reasoning betrayed my past and my worldview. To many Muslims these questions are very powerful: the questions appeal to some of the strongest beliefs they hold. They can be quickly said, even when someone does not really want to hear a good answer, and the questions can remain as a riddle, which can only be resolved when they are ready for more. Be aware that such a riddle is both a strength and a weakness: a strength in that it gives them something to chew over; a weakness in that the underlying problem (that their final authority, the Qur'an, still apparently says the Bible is corrupted) has not been addressed.

Answer Three:

'Yes, ... But...'

I agree the Bible has been corrupted. The Christians Muhammad met had

corrupted their Bible. Muhammad was right to criticise the Jews and the Christians. Nevertheless, the Christians Muhammad met relied on oral tradition. The Bible was not translated into Arabic until about 720 AD; that means after the time of Muhammad. However, the Christians in Egypt, Syria and Rome did have the Bible in their own language. Our Bible today comes from these sources. Muhammad was right to say that the Bible the Christians he met was corrupted, but the Bible we have has not been changed.

Years ago I read a book about bargaining and negotiating. I learned there that a good way to outwit an opponent was to agree with them and to show how right they were, but right only under certain circumstances. In short, we agree with the objection, which usually surprises and delights, then limit the agreement and go on to explain how both of us are right. This answer may be a new one to most readers. It has the advantage of identifying with a Muslim, of agreeing with some of the concerns Muhammad had and leaving Muslims able to agree that Muhammad was right and that Christians are right. Muhammad and the Qur'an are *not* challenged—they are simply restricted.³

Answer Four:

The Manuscript Evidence

The evidence from the manuscripts is vast. If you want to read more, I could find you something. I will give you just one example. Have you heard of the Dead Sea scrolls? Good. Have you ever

read the book of the prophet Isaiah? No? You should. In the ninth century, our earliest copy of this dated back to the eighth century. Copies of the book of Isaiah were then discovered, dated the second century before Christ. Take chapter 53, which in Hebrew contains 166 words. After over ten centuries of copying, there were only seventeen letters different: ten are simply a matter of spelling, four concern minor stylistic changes such as conjunctions, and three concern the addition of a word to verse 11 which does not change the sense of the sentence.

Possible follow-on literature includes:

- Shenk, *The Holy Book of God*.
- Campbell, *The Qur'an and the Bible in the Light of History and Science*.⁴
- *Lire la Bible*.⁵
- Call of Hope:⁶

The Infallibility of the Torah and the Gospel (booklet and tape).

Gilchrist, *The Bible is the Word of God*—the textual history of the Qur'an and the Bible. This is a reply to Deedat and deals specifically with his objections. Read the English first to check if these questions are being asked by the people you deal with.

- Finlay, *Face the facts*.
- Miller, *Beliefs and Practices of Christians*.
- McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, chapters 1-4.

Sometimes this evidence is helpful, usually in addition to other answers. However, if we use it, and if people are willing to consider documentary evidence, we need to be ready for extra questions in the same area, such as the

widespread belief that the Church Councils supposedly decided what was in the Canon and the accusation that the errors we supposedly believe come from Paul, not from Jesus.

**Answer Five:
The Essential Truths
Have Not Been Changed**

What do all true Christians believe? You know that we believe Jesus is God. We believe that he died upon a Cross, and that he rose again. We also believe in the authority and accuracy of the Bible. Well, the earliest manuscript we have dates from AD 135, which contains the early chapters of John 1, in which Jesus as God is clearly taught. Then when we turn to Paul, we find in 1 Corinthians 15:1-9 that these facts are stated. This passage was written in AD 55 and was so widely known that it was quoted by Clement in AD 96 and Polycarp in AD 107. I know the Bible has not been changed. Nevertheless, even if it has been changed in places, the essential truths are here.

This was the argument that convinced me most as a youth when I battled with the accuracy of the Bible. I now regard it as good supporting evidence and for someone who really wants to know.

Conclusion

Each answer leads in a predictable direction, and this should influence our choice of answer. I usually use more than one answer, frequently using the first three in that order, and try to observe which reply they most

relate to. Having established that our Scriptures are reliable and trustworthy, we can then encourage people to read the Bible for themselves. Of course there are other barriers—many are scared to read the Bible because they have been taught that it is forbidden, and we may need to address these issues in love, prayer and discussion.

Footnotes

- 1 See Wendall Evans' article on the use of Genesis 1-3 in Bible study with Muslims, *Seedbed*, vol. 12/3, 1997, pp. 16-20. See also the PALM CD, pdf\others\GenesisEn.pdf also found at www.takwin-masihi.org.
- 2 Sometimes people know about the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says 'You have heard... but I say'. This confirms that Jesus knew the Torah, and confirmed its accuracy but went on to give a more in-depth interpretation. This is a supplementary point sometimes worth adding.
- 3 Geisler NL & Nix WE, *A General introduction to the Bible*, (Moody Press, 1968), p. 326 is my authority. They say 'Muhammad (570-632), the founder of Islam, knew of the Gospel story through the oral tradition only, and this was based on Syriac sources.'
- 4 Found in print or various Internet sources in English, French and Arabic. Try the Palm CD, and various sites for answering Islam, e.g. <http://answering-islam.org>, <http://answering-islam.org.uk> or <http://answering-islam.de/main/>.
- 5 Found on the PALM CD, pdf\others\LireLaBible.
- 6 For Arabic and English versions of their material see www.the-good-way.com. Gilchrist's material is published by Call of Hope and available at the answering Islam sites.

Reflections on Finance and Ministry

By Oum Mark

The example is given: *A church in Houston is linked with a church in Amman so that the church in Amman has financial resources to dedicate some of its members to Arab world mission.*

There was a time when missionary energy was dedicated primarily to the task of preaching the Gospel, discipling new believers and seeing churches established. However, a new wave has hit Morocco in recent years: many companies have concentrated their energies on 'recruiting national Christians'. Regrettably, this has become the latest 'fashionable ministry', and it has permeated the national church. As soon as a strong believer emerges, it is not long before he is 'hired'. In recent years, some who left to study theology abroad were promised by foreign agencies that upon their return they would be given a job as a missionary.

We have wrestled through these issues in our country over a number of years. More recently, we have thought even more about them because of all the brainstorming that is going on in connection with the five-year strategic plans. I feel concerned about the general direction things are going, not only in our company, but also in others.

Some questions need answers:

- Is getting involved with money issues a healthy way to go?
- Is it a matter of right or wrong?
- Is it a matter of principle?
- Is it legitimate for a church to seek money from a mission?

Normally the church enables missions financially in order to achieve the church's vision in reaching the world — and this is the biblical pattern. However, we should inspire and enable in ways that are responsible, taking a biblical, long-term approach. We need to think things through carefully and count the cost. We *do* need to weigh things up.

In this article, we want to paint a picture of what is happening in the country where we minister. I testify, as far as I see and understand the situation here, that the following is painfully true. Let us learn from history. Let us see what has happened when others have made the choices we are now considering.

Money, the Root Problem

The Moroccan church is struggling, weak and vulnerable, and this is primarily due to a lot of mistrust. Being myself from an Arab background, I can say that for the Arab world, both culturally and generally, money is a very strong temptation. Most people are extremely affected by money. Principles are easily compromised, and money is the main source of arguments in families, between partners and in marriages. Sadly, the Christian community is not exempt from this problem. In fact, money is the main reason for disagreement

among believers—more so, even, than denominational differences.

Commitment to Local Church Compromised

Most married Christian national couples that I know of here in my city are employed and financed by an outside agency. Out of eleven couples, there are only two exceptions. And, sadly, *none* of these couples have stayed with their 'home church', nor do they work under the umbrella of the local church.

We have seen several people who were involved in church building until a Christian company employed them, and then things were spoiled. Finance was the main spoiling ingredient, and their relationships with other believers are now considerably strained.

Most of those who are involved with outside companies have started their own church group; whether they are qualified, gifted or called to do so or not, does not matter! You might say that this is positive. Yes, it could be, but most have bad relationships with other church groups and are influenced by their dedication to their supporting company and their church group. Why? Because **they started without a biblical base** and because **there are too many masters** to please. The church thinks *very* differently from outside companies about what should be done.

Shopping for 'Christian Employment'

Tragically, many have fallen out with their churches and then looked for a company that would 'employ' them. And it did not take long! In fact, there is ample choice. To my knowledge,

companies do not take adequate care in investigating believers' testimonies in their communities. Should we not stop and think about the example this gives to new believers who are unemployed?

Building Biblical Models

Every time a company recruits an individual, he or she is separated from his church. How can this help to build the church? Most of these people have never experienced a good example of what a church should be. What are they going to reproduce? It is frightening to meditate on that.

A Calling, Not a Job

We frequently hear some nationals put down the church and disrespect its authority. Their commitment is to whoever pays them. '*Mission*' is a *foreign concept*. For many believers, mission has become a cash dispenser. We need to impart love for God's glory through mission, not entice their interest in financial matters. You cannot build a church without love, but you can build one without money. They really do not think of it as a means to an end, but rather as a refuge from their reality and as a job opportunity. They come to Christ and, before too long, companies 'fish' them, and they are transformed into individuals who no longer fit into their entourage.

'Whenever there is something to do for the glory of the Lord, any witness, any ministry, even a person to follow up, you get paid for it.' (These were the words of a 'leading' national brother.) There is hardly any attention paid to God's will or his calling and no talk of a

burden for the lost; these values that arm the servant of God now take second place. This is the reality, but the nationals are not to blame. Concepts such as these come after years of growth and discipleship and as a gift from God. But companies are racing ahead of him.

Modelling

Sacrificial Giving and Living

There is a phenomenon that we have seen to be very true in this country: those who always receive help, those who are always transported to church, those who are always given the bus fare, and who are not taught to give sacrificially at the very beginning of their Christian walk, will always receive and never learn about giving. **If we teach a church that outside help is indispensable for things to be done, we can only expect it to reproduce more churches like itself.** The questions to be asked are:

- Is the fact that they are doing good things of primary importance here?
- Are we not being distracted from the essentials?
- Is this the model we are talking about in our purpose statement?

Remember the Arab saying: *Faqed el shay la youatih*. ('If you haven't got it, you can't give it.') Church life cannot be taught as a theory. It must be lived until it becomes a part of your understanding and the very basis of your life.

I remember clearly the first time I heard a non-believer accusing us of paying people to become Christians! I was enraged and shocked. Today, I say with pain that I am afraid that this is

exactly the way it is perceived by some Christians who are still weak in their faith. For me, it is no longer a rumour but a reality. Some have recently professed faith in Christ in hope of a job. Others have come out of Christian fellowship when someone else received money and an employment, and they did not! How will a new believer, who comes from a very needy family, learn to give sacrificially rather than receive, if his or her church receives help from the outside? How will he feel unity with others in his church group when he has to economize for days to be able to come to church while his church leader sits at home most of the time and has a car and a house full of things that he can never dream of having? How will he be encouraged to give when his church is receiving dollars or euros?

Some say that the negatives that result from giving churches financial support are just a small sacrifice compared to the benefits.

- **Is this really a small sacrifice to make?**
- And are we the ones who have the right to make this kind of sacrifice?
- What kind of churches do we want to produce?
- Is this a good testimony?
- Is giving not commended any more? When the widow gave her small coin, which was all that she had, Jesus commended her for her giving. There is joy in giving, and we should do nothing to deprive young believers of this biblical principle.
- Are we motivated by what is biblically right or by the pressures put upon us by churches or individuals?

The Danger of Building a Foundation of Dependency

We recently had a conversation with a leader of the most active church in our country. This church is sending people to different cities, but the church itself is receiving money from abroad. They are following the example of a certain large Middle Eastern church that receives help from the West. He disagrees with individuals being paid directly from foreign agencies. However, this dependency on western financing does not help the church grow in responsibility and sets wrong precedents throughout the country. Is it right for the church to be built on such a foundation? This question applies to the church in the *whole* of the Arab world.

The Myth of the Poor Arab Church

Is there a shortage of money?? No, there is *not!* Unfortunately, the influence of Middle Eastern churches on Morocco is more negative than positive. The fact of the matter is that without learning to sacrifice and obey—even to suffer—godly churches will not be produced. Church should not become a meal ticket. Church should be what Christ wants it to be: giving and humble. Would you like your home church in the West to be dependent on a foreign mission? What would happen? People who come out from a church that is always on the receiving end will only plant receiving churches. I hope that it is not our wish to replicate more churches of this kind.

Ministering in Step with the Local Church?

Money tends to drive these churches to go beyond their level of experience and maturity in their ministry. They attempt things that need greater maturity more than money. **What is worrying is their preoccupation with money to the point that God's calling is in danger of being overlooked or even forgotten.**

Encourage

What is Already Happening

Growing up, as I did, in the Middle East, and witnessing God's blessings—including some MBBs who came to Christ without the pollution of money—I know that no established church needs material help to reach the world. Due to the severe political restrictions, you may not have heard about what happens in some parts of the Middle East. But the Lord is using his church in these places. It may, perhaps, be on a small scale, but it is in a pure and encouraging way. In my growing-up years, I saw people come to Christ from Muslim backgrounds. Those who worked among them did so sacrificially, with love and vision. I hope that our company can play a role in encouraging Christians to reach out to Muslims and keep to that worthy goal!

How We Can Help the Church

What worries me is that we are making a strategic plan to help churches find money from the outside or to link churches together for that purpose. Could I suggest a slight change to this

phrase? Can we make our strategic plan to **help churches find money from within their own resources?** God promises to bless. He can, if we give him a chance to demonstrate his loving care and his faithfulness without all the disadvantages and the problems that money from the outside is causing. We are not against western churches being generous and giving gifts that the Lord leads them to give. What we are against is building the mindset that says *'I need someone to give to me in order that I may serve God,'* or *'If someone has more than I do, then it is their money that needs to be spent, not mine,'* or *'I need to be rewarded for serving Christ.'* The thought that has invaded many places in the world we work in, and which so much resembles their former faith, is that **'If I do something for God, I deserve pay.'**

When I came here, I left behind a much better style of living than the one I obtained. It was a difficult adaptation for me, but had I not gone through that tough time, I would not still be here. In fact, it was a great gift from God and an opportunity for me to learn more about the depth of His loving care and about where my heart should be. Are we, as a company, robbing people of that kind of spiritual growth by being distracted by finance?

Finally

Answers to these questions are difficult, but if God's glory is our motivation, our

goal and our *raison d'être*, then the principles found in God's Word will be our light and guide. What action steps can any of the readers suggest? Here are my suggestions:

- Create ways in which we can encourage the national church to feel and be more responsible spiritually and financially.
- Work alongside the church we are aiming to establish, implanting vision and love for the lost, while we disciple people out of their present attitudes and concepts of Christian service. Find practical ways to spread a spirit of humbly giving back the talents that **God** has given, focusing on returning them to Him, not to a particular mission agency.
- Encourage the growth of the church by encouraging believers to be more committed and submissive, in the Lord, to its authority. I believe it is harmful to remove active members out of churches to serve in missions!
- Identify clearly God's calling and motivation, starting with ourselves, taking Jesus' example who ***'made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant'*** (Phil 2:7). We should have a clear and well-thought procedure in recruitment.
- Never put the need of the mission before the needs of the church. Normally we should be working hand in hand and moving in the same direction.

Where Missions Are Headed

By David Lundy

Change is not something to revel in—unless you have ADD and suffer from a short attention span! In fact, Scripture warns us about the danger of befriending those who say ‘if it ain’t broke, break it’ in recommending change for the sake of change: ‘Do not associate with those who are given to change.’ (Prov. 24:21, NASB. The NIV substitutes ‘rebellious’ for ‘given to change’.) Nevertheless, our world, and that of missions, is fraught with *change* as we enter the new millennium. Let me briefly suggest some trends we face in our company and to which we must respond in an appropriate way in the coming years.

- **Churches will bypass the middle-man to do missions themselves.**

Speaking personally, I do not see this as a negative trend, in balance. Yes, it means that such churches do not have the specialisation to prepare those they are sending for cross-cultural living; yes, they may indiscriminately overestimate the value of the short-term teams they send; and yes, they may ‘corrupt’ national believers by throwing money at them willy-nilly. However, I believe church-initiated mission is a paradigm shift to a more biblically healthy theology of mission whereby church is not the *sender* so much as the *sent*.¹ Some of the mega-churches that started this trend to do mission themselves are now coming into a saner position of learning to work with para-church organisations that may have the

expertise and experience that they do not. If mission agencies overcome their defensiveness about this trend and develop attitudes of servanthood to the new churches, I believe synergistic partnerships will emerge that will keep us from becoming steadily redundant. Therefore, look for new ways of recruiting and new configurations of collaborating in our company. We may see church to church-planting team networks developing in the years ahead with our traditional sending mechanisms needing to adjust.²

- **Transformational development will continue to gain momentum as an essential component to world evangelisation.**

Fewer evangelicals are insisting on the separation of *proclamation* from *demonstration* in evangelism. Generation X Christians will settle for nothing less than a commitment on the part of traditional agencies to express the love of Jesus in action, addressing the needs of the whole person. With heart conversion and church planting still seen as being the core of genuine *transformation*, early mistakes of the relief and development movement will be avoided in penetrating the final frontiers with the Gospel.

- **The church in the two-thirds world will increasingly call the shots in the international missionary movement.**

Now making up 80% of the world’s Christians, evangelicals (including

charismatics) from Asia, Latin America, Africa and Oceania are sending missionaries in equal numbers to the western world.³ What they have been more reluctant to do is take the leadership in global gatherings and international organisations. This may have a lot to do with their dependency on the West financially to a significant extent still ('he who has the gold rules' is an unfortunate mindset yet present where global partnerships function). However, notice the recent challenge of the British Anglican community by an African bishop and a Canadian diocese by a Chinese one, whose high view of Scripture and a more literal interpretation of it disallow homosexual practice in the Christian faith community. Voices like Philip Jenkins argue that the conservative church of the two-thirds world will usher in a global revolution of the church that will have the same impact as the posting of 95 theses on a door in Wittenberg in 1517.⁴ South Korea is currently the second-largest sending country in the world with respect to missionaries. Singapore sends the highest number of missionaries per Christian capita worldwide. What I predict will happen over the next decade is that what is emerging in Christendom at large will occur in the missionary community as well; the two-thirds world church and her missionary agencies will graciously force a retooling of western mission agencies.

- **Fluid, networking, collegial methods of leadership and ministry will characterise all growing, healthy**

mission agencies, replacing pyramidal, directive styles.

A function of globalisation and post-modern scepticism of authority structures and meta-narratives, servant leadership will nurture team ministry, plural leadership and rapid responses to escalating crises. Fluidity bred by the Internet will facilitate networking to aid reaping, like an email contact nurtured initially in Frankfurt, now being followed up on the ground in Fez.

- **Soft apologetics and new styles of evangelism will emerge as a result of the clash of radicalised religious civilizations that are seeking to fill the vacuum created by the failure of postmodernism and secularism to capture the souls of a frightened and disillusioned world.**

Any form of fundamentalism will increasingly be suspect—Muslim, Hindu, or Christian—in a world riddled with terrorism.⁵ In this environment, whether in Birmingham or Beirut, a gentler form of apologetic that shows a respect for those following different world religions, while firmly presenting a less combative and more Christocentric defence for the uniqueness of Christ, will be the most influential. Again, blending 'good works' with friendship evangelism will be crucial to gaining a hearing.⁶

I do not have space to delineate other trends that I see on the horizon. Some are 'dreams' or 'hopes' and not 'educated guesses', so perhaps they do not belong here. In closing, let me, however, just mention them with-

out elaboration... and you be the judge.

- Harvesting in the Muslim world will occur in ways seen in the tribal and communist worlds of the previous two generations.
- The Chinese house-church movement will make a greater impact on the 10/40 Window, and in ways no other national church has been able to do.
- Many mission agencies will 'merge or perish' as the church in the West becomes obsessively preoccupied with reconverting its own post-Christian and religiously plural context and has less money to go around.
- The supplanting of incarnational long-term missionaries by short-termers will finally peak and there will be a renaissance of the 'career missionary', as Generation Y 'forsakes all', but this time they will be tent-makers and in sustainable development or micro-enterprise work.
- The 'glocal' church will view the mission field as 'here' and 'there' and will move on both fronts at once.
- Niche mission agencies will thrive as churches take on unreached people groups, and develop global missions in a local way, so that huge agencies with a global outreach will become an endangered species by distrustful postmodern evangelicals.⁷

I have gone out on a limb, so feel free to saw the branch off by contacting me at davidl@wornet.org. What a thrilling age to live in, as our Sovereign God takes pleasure in fashioning a people for himself.

Footnotes

- 1 I feel so strongly about this theology of church that I am currently under contract to write a book on *Rediscovering the Missional Church in a Postmodern and Religiously Plural World*, which will be published by Paternoster in 2005.
- 2 For further study on missional theology of the church and of this trend in missions, I recommend the following books or articles:
 Darrel Gruder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, W. B. Eerdmans, 1996);
 Darrel Gruder (ed.), *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998);
 Stan Guthrie, 'New Paradigms for Churches and Mission Agencies', *Mission Frontiers* (January-February 2002), 6-8;
 J.S. Hammett, 'How Church and Parachurch Interact: Arguments for a Servant-Partner Model', *Missiology: An International Review* (April 2000), 199-207;
 Ros Johnson, 'Cutting Out the Middleman: Mission and the Local Church in a Globalised Postmodern World', in Richard Tiplady (ed.), *One World or Many? The Impact of Globalisation on Mission* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2003), 239-250;
 George Miley, *Loving the Church, Blessing the Nations* (Waynesboro: Gabriel Resources, 2003);
 Paul Pierson, 'Local Churches in Mission: What's Behind the Impatience with Traditional Mission Agencies?' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (October 1998), 146-150;
 Frank Severn, 'Mission Societies: Are They Biblical?' *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (July 2000), 320-326;
 Richard Tiplady (ed.), *PostMission* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002);

- Charles Van Engen, *God's Missionary People* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).
- 3 The term *Majority World* to refer to *Two-Thirds World* is increasingly used by missiologists to refer to the Christian presence there because it is more accurate statistically.
 - 4 Philip Jenkins, 'The Next Christianity', *The Atlantic Monthly* (October 2002), 53.
 - 5 Developing this thesis include Robert Spencer, *Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions About the World's Fastest-Growing Faith* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002) and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1997).
 - 6 Ajith Fernando, *The Christian's Attitude Toward World Religions* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1995) has an excellent chapter on the need for a less aggressive form of uncompromising witness.
 - 7 Todd Johnson, 'It Can Be Done': The Impact of Modernity and Postmodernity on the Global Mission Plans of Churches and Agencies', in Jonathan Bonk (ed.), *Between Past and Future: Evangelical Mission Entering the Twenty-first Century* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2003), 46.



A Look at the Shi'ites of Iraq

By David Gardner (summary by Chris Ford)

With the recent war, Iraqi Shi'ites have gained prominence and see the possibility of political involvement. In this article I will seek to summarize an article called 'Time of the Shia', by David Gardner, Financial Times Weekend, August 2003, pages W1-2.

Thousands came to the shrine in Karbala, barefoot, blood streaming from self-inflicted wounds. These Shi'ite Muslims were celebrating the defeat of Saddam Hussein, their latest enemy. The march was also an emotional response to the suppression they had experienced under the former regime. They were driven underground by the Baath party, the tool of power of some Saddamite clans drawn from the Sunni minority.

In this march to Karbala, the faithful were exhibiting their grief at betraying Hussein, prophet Muhammad's grandson, in the seventh century. They held pictures of Hussein as a Christ-like figure, along with black banners. It was also an earnest expression of their desire to take back political power after being downtrodden for a century. Lebanese Shi'ite leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, exclaimed from Beirut that the Karbala pilgrims were 'inspired by Imam Hussein's spirit of revolution'.

Americans looking on were unnerved. To them, the Shi'ites were a bunch of turbans beholden to Tehran, and they were not about to be allowed to create a nation in Iran's image. The US had watched Iraq from the air for a decade and listened to Pentagon-favoured exiles. The US wanted to liberate Iraq, but it was unaware of

the hopes and fears of the people, especially the Shi'ites.

No More Uprisings

Why did the Shi'ites not rise up when the Americans stormed Baghdad last spring? After the Gulf War in the early 1990s, the then President of the US encouraged a Shi'ite uprising that came close to overthrowing Saddam. But when Saddam fought back, the US did not support the Shi'ites, and Saddam massacred untold thousands. Senior Iraqi Shi'ites say that they cannot forget what the Americans did in 1991. In Najaf, mass graves exist where thousands of Shi'ites were buried at that time.

Washington and London eventually realised the level of trauma experienced by the Shi'ites in 1991. But they were taken aback when various Iraqi Shi'ites established power among Iraqis. They established services in the power vacuum left when the Baath party was dismantled. Law and order were in place in Shi'ite areas while anarchy reigned in the Sunni triangle.

The Shi'ites themselves are the larger issue here. Whether the war was justified or not, the Anglo-American rulers transformed the balance of power in the region. By empowering the Shi'ites, Bush has 'undermined the nearly millennium-old dominance of

Sunni Islam in the Arab world' (Gardener, page W1).

Sunni Response

Sunni leaders are not quite sure what to make of what the US is doing. Until now, Washington has backed Sunni leaders and has been frightened by Shi'ites.

Shi'ites remember that the US backed Saddam in the 1980-88 war against Iran in order to stop the Persian Shi'ite teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini from reaching the Arab world. When Saddam's armies collapsed in 1991, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, America's two chief allies in the region, persuaded the US not to attack Baghdad. They argued for the preservation of the 'territorial integrity of Iraq'. This was purportedly to prevent an Iranian satellite state in south Iraq, yet Iraqi Shi'ites had fought against Iranian Shi'ites for eight years. What Cairo and Riyadh really wanted was to conserve the Sunni order, and they believed that Saddam staying in power was a price worth paying to achieve it.

Neither Saudi Arabia nor Egypt is democratic. They have convinced the US that it is too risky in the Arab world, as it would only serve fundamentalism and Iran. Yet, it was the 'ossified Sunni order that incubated September 11 — inspired, planned and executed largely by Saudis and Egyptians' (Gardener, page W2). The Shi'ites have no part in this order, and their attitudes are different. But now, they can smell power.

Shi'ite Victories

A month after Baghdad fell, Iran's reformist leader, Ayatollah Khatemi, visited Beirut and was welcomed in a fashion unrivalled since Pope John Paul visited Lebanon in 1997. In perfect Arabic, he called for democracy and a popular government in Baghdad. He also called Saddam's fall a 'valuable opportunity' for reform in the region and justice for the Shi'ites.

Four hundred and fifty Shi'ites in Saudi Arabia also demanded justice that week. They presented a petition to Prince Abdullah requesting partnership in the nation, something they have never had. Wahhabis regard them as heretics. A Saudi Shi'ite writer remarked that the change in Iraq has 'uncovered' issues that have been simmering in the Gulf and the region.

Ironically, Shi'ite fortunes were brightened by a Wahhabi — Osama Bin Laden. The events of 9/11 resulted in a series of wins for Shi'ites. In Afghanistan, the Hazara Shi'ite minority was persecuted by the Taleban, which fell. Also, in Iraq, through the defeat of a Sunni regime, the Shi'ites have gained. The Afghanistan and Iraq wars have rid Tehran of the Taleban and Saddam and have boosted Shi'ite influence.

Dynamism

Besides the difference in numbers of Shi'ites and Sunnis, there are a number of other key differences. The role of the imam is one example. For Sunnis, he is a prayer leader, but for Shi'ites, he is a priest-king. Also, Shi'ites' thinking is more dynamic than Sunnis', partly

due, perhaps, to the fact that they are a minority among Muslims, making up only 15%, and numbering 160 million.

Yet, even before they were a minority, Shi'ite clerics updated their teachings in light of modern developments. The Sunnis, in contrast, discouraged philosophical development after the tenth and eleventh centuries, as this caused divisions and heresies. A further difference between Shi'ites and Sunnis relates to structure. Sunni scholars are part of the state, while Shi'ite scholars or reasoners, have followers who see them as 'sources of emulation'. Shi'ite clergy receive part of the Muslim *zakat*, giving them 'financial clout and patronage' (Gardener, page W2). So, where Sunni clergy conform, the Shi'ite approach creates varying centres of influence, leading to lively debate.

Najaf

The centre of that debate is now Najaf. The time of the Shi'ite may have come at last. Banners of the countless Shi'ite martyrs under Saddam are everywhere. Bookstores are crowded with visitors from within Iraq, as well as Iranians and Azeris. New newspapers line the pavement, and mullahs come and go in the houses of leading clerics.

Muhammad Bahr al-Ulum is a reformist ayatollah and a member of Iraq's governing council. He traces the Shia decline in power back to the British, the colonial power that created Iraq in the 1920s. Shi'ites stupidly rose up against them, clearing the way for the Sunni minority to take power. He endorses a broad-based democratic

government where the rights of all majorities, minorities and religious groups are protected. He and others dismiss the possibility that Khomeinist theocracy could come to Iraq, or the rule of the supreme jurisprudent. This is not Shi'ite and is declining even in Iran.

Divisions exist under the surface of Shi'ite politics. The mob murder of Abdel Majid al-Khoi, the pro-western son of an exile and Hawza leader, was blamed on Muqtada al-Sadr, whose father was executed by Saddam in 1999 and whose uncle was a Hawza leader who was executed in 1980. Images of these two prominent al-Sadr martyrs are displayed with pride in many windows in southern Iraq. Muqtada is claiming the al-Sadr heritage. His uncle founded the Dawa Party that was repressed repeatedly and made seven assassination attempts against Saddam.

US Response

The US has revised its plans and has included a small Shi'ite majority on the Iraqi Governing Council. The Shi'ite have great expectations for the region and for Iraq. A radical Najaf cleric pronounced that if all Arab and Muslim governments would give Shi'ites their rights, there would be no problems.

Note: Today, January 15, a large, peaceful demonstration, comprised of thousands of Shi'ites and showing support for a democratically-elected government, is taking place in Basra.

New Testaments in Najaf

Last fall I spent several weeks in Iraq in a Shi'ite area. Many times, I heard about the openness of Shi'ite Muslims to read and discuss Scripture. During visits, the Bible was opened quickly.

This is partly due to the openness of Shi'ite theology to adapt to modernity. It is also the Spirit of God. Read about a worker's visit to the famed city of Najaf.

Some of us visited Najaf on a number of occasions in order to meet people and share about Jesus. We met some men in a coffee shop, but they were not interested in discussing spiritual matters. We went to another area and met some others, but they were not interested either.

One day, it was hot. We needed a drink, so we went into a shop and visited with the shopkeeper, named Ali. During the last few minutes, we shared the Gospel with him and left him an *Injil* (New Testament).

I returned to Najaf a month later. I met Ali and he told me that he read the *Injil* every day as he sits alone in his shop. I had a complete Bible with me, and we sat together and went through the various sections of the Bible—the *Torah* (Pentateuch), the *Zaboor* (Psalms) and led up to the *Injil*. We talked about sin and redemption.

I asked Ali if he wanted my Bible so that he could start from the beginning of the story. He agreed, and we returned a few days later to find out that he had read Genesis 1-16. With his permission, we began a series of studies that began with Genesis and led up to Jesus.

During these studies, Ali's neighbour, Abu Abbas, came in. He told me that he had heard about these studies from Ali and that he had wanted to read the Bible for a long time. Abu Abbas told me that he had written to the radio station and asked for a Bible, but they had not sent him one. Could we get him one?

I tried not to act surprised and asked about the radio station. Abu Abbas said that he and all of his friends listen to the BBC and to Radio Monte Carlo, a Christian radio broadcaster from Europe. Abu Abbas took the Bible and said that he would read it, but he was not open to studying together.

I learned that this was not an isolated incident. I met a guy yesterday who was not open to the Gospel at all. But he did say that what I was saying was the same thing that he heard every night on Radio Monte Carlo. 'They say the same things you're saying,' he told me.

Ali now confesses that Jesus is the Saviour and the Redeemer. But he has yet to make Jesus the Lord of his life. He is not willing to confess that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. He is still depending on other things to save him.

Pray for Ali, that he would embrace Jesus as his Lord and Saviour. Praise God that Iraqis are listening to Christian radio programmes and that God's truths are being heard in Iraq. Pray that God would reap a great harvest among the Shi'ites of Iraq.

A Page of History: Abraha and the Year of the Elephant

By Dr. Andreas Maurer

Introduction

Have you ever met Muslims who mentioned this historical event, the *Year of the Elephant*? I have heard such references only a few times. It is an interesting story, however, and some Muslims emphasise proudly that through this event Allah showed that Christianity was defeated even before Muhammad's birth. It is good, therefore, for Christians to be aware of it. The following text is taken from the book written by John Gilchrist, *Muhammad—The Prophet of Islam*, 1994, pages 11-14.

The Christian King of Abyssinia

An event that took place near Mecca not long before the rise of Islam has to be included in any assessment of the environment in which Muhammad founded the new faith. After the demise of Dhu Nuwas the king of Abyssinia, Abraha decided to make the Christian faith dominant in southern Arabia, and he had a fine cathedral built at San'a to which he hoped to draw all the Arabs as pilgrims. The city survives to this day, in what is now Yemen, though the church he built has long since vanished.

Abraha, although a determined warrior, had a good reputation in the region. He was known to be a Christian of sincere conviction, indeed a very zealous one, and he was renowned for his keen sense of justice, his charitable

nature and the manner in which he championed the cause of the poor and the unfortunate.

Nonetheless, he was determined to make San'a the commercial centre of the Arabian Peninsula and soon after the completion of his cathedral, he issued a proclamation obliging all Arabs to visit it annually. He was well aware of the popularity of the Ka'aba in Mecca and he was fixed in his purpose to displace it as the commercial and religious centre of Arabia. His decree generally went unheeded, however, and the Christian King of Himyar watched with grief as the hordes of pilgrims set out each year for Mecca instead.

An independent record of his contests with the resident tribes in the area of the Yemen is introduced with an inscription introducing the name of the Triune God of the Christians in terms that show that the exact essence of the Trinity was well known to the Christians of Arabia, notwithstanding a misrepresentation of it in the Qur'an. A record of his management of the repairs to the dam of Marib in southern Arabia begins with these words: "By the power of the Merciful One (*Rhmn*), and His Messiah (*w-Mshhw*), and of the Holy Spirit (*rh quds*)". The Qur'an acknowledges Allah as *ar-Rahman* (Surah 17.110) and recognises Jesus as *al-Masih* (Surah 4.171), but it regards the Trinity as representing Allah, Jesus and his mother Mary (Surah 5.78,5.119)

while the Holy Spirit (*ruhul-quddus*) is identified as the medium of revelation (*Surah* 16.102), elsewhere said to be *Jibril*, the Angel Gabriel (*Surah* 2.97).¹ The use of the correct trinitarian formula in an Arabian inscription not long before the rise of Islam, however, shows that the Qur'an is not treating an error among the local Christians and its own misconception does tend to give the impression that the founder of Islam himself was in some confusion at this point.

Abraha's March on the Ka'aba at Mecca

News came to the Christian king one day that a member of the tribe of Kenanah had entered his cathedral and had desecrated it by strewing animal dung all over its interior. Abraha was infuriated, more particularly when he heard that the tribes in the vicinity had revolted against his rule and had assassinated his ally Muhammad ibn Khuza'a, the king of Modar. So he decided to lead an expedition to Mecca with the sole purpose of destroying the Ka'aba.

A large contingent set out with numerous soldiers and horsemen. A unique feature of the army was the inclusion of an elephant among the other animals taken along, a circumstance which was later to give the year in which the march took place its name, the *Year of the Elephant*. (The actual year was 570 AD). When it reached Mughammis near Mecca, Abraha sent a contingent to the outskirts of the city and the soldiers plundered what they could including

two hundred camels belonging to 'Abd al-Muttalib who was to become Muhammad's grandfather.

The *Quraysh* meanwhile decided it was useless to try to resist the large army and Abraha, sensing their unwillingness to engage him, sent a messenger to Mecca telling them he did not wish to fight anyone but sought only to destroy the Ka'aba. He summoned a representative to come out and meet him and 'Abd al-Muttalib duly went forth. When he arrived, he demanded that his camels be returned to him. Abraha was surprised that he should only be concerned about his animals when the centre of his religious faith was about to be eliminated but the Arab retorted that, while the camels were his concern, the Lord of the Ka'aba would look after his own house and would defend it against him.

Abraha returned the camels and set out for the Ka'aba. The *Quraysh* decided to withdraw to the hills around the town after 'Abd al-Muttalib had first taken hold of the metal ring in the door of the shrine and had prayed to Allah to protect it. Meanwhile the elephant was brought to the front of the army and was decked in festive apparel. The guide of the procession marching on Mecca, Nufayl, was very reluctant to proceed with the journey and in a whispered but emphatic voice, he commanded the elephant to kneel. He had learnt the words of command, which the beast had been trained to understand, and caused it to go down on its knees and refuse to march any further. Abraha was annoyed but no matter how hard he tried to persuade it

to rise and press on with his army the elephant would not march on the city.

The Destruction of Abraha's Army

It is not known exactly how the army came to grief but something dramatic appears to have happened to it to cause it to be decimated and give up the march on Mecca. A logical explanation can be given in that, as the *Quraysh* were occupying the hills, they may have rained down stones and rocks on the exposed force and obliged it to withdraw. An outbreak of smallpox or some other plague could likewise have caused Abraha to pull back without accomplishing his goal. A legend soon grew, however, that the army had been beaten back miraculously by a flock of birds which hurled down rocks and stones upon the soldiers. A record of this is found in the Qur'an itself in the following chapter:

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant? Did he not make their guile go astray? And he sent against them flights of birds, hurling against them stones of baked clay, and he made them like green stalks that have been consumed.

Surah 105.1-5

The traditional story of this event describes these unique birds as about the size of a swallow with green plumage and yellow beaks. Each one is said to have had three pebbles, one in its beak and one each in its claws, and as they pelted the army hundreds perished as the pebbles, hurled with an unbelievable ferocity, pierced the soldiers' coats of mail and found their

mark. The rest of the army returned to Yemen and many others died on the way (giving the impression that it was most probably an outbreak of a disease such as small-pox that caused the catastrophe). Abraha himself died not long after returning to San'a and no further excursions from the city were undertaken.

The Qur'an, however, takes the legend at face value. The deliverance of the Ka'aba was obviously regarded by the Arabs as a miracle and a sign that the shrine had a divinely sanctioned significance. It is interesting to note that the Qur'an elsewhere describes the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in much the same way, saying that they too were assailed with "stones of baked clay" (*hijaratam-min sijil- Surah 15.74*).

The sanctity of the Ka'aba, both prior to Islam and within its realm, is in no small measure the result of this incident. During his lifetime, Muhammad always regarded it as a genuinely holy shrine despite the fact that it was surrounded by idols. The very sequel of an Arabian prophet may well have had some connection with this event, creating as it did a sense of divine protection upon the city of Mecca.

Two other factors may also assist in determining why that claimant to universal prophethood should have been Muhammad himself. Firstly, it was his own grandfather who took the lead and initiative in opposing the Abyssinian ruler and in assuring him that the Lord of the Ka'aba would look after his own house just as the Arab chieftain had seen to his. Secondly, it

has always been believed by Muslim historians that Muhammad himself was born in 570 AD, the very Year of the Elephant, and it has been customary for Muslims throughout the history of Islam to regard the destruction of Abraha's army as a sign of the imminent rise of a final messenger who would withstand all the attempts of pagans and unbelievers to destroy the ultimate revelation of God which would be given to him through the mediation of a divinely-inspired Scripture.

It is not known for certain when Muhammad was actually born but there can be no doubt of his lineage and the place of his birth. He was born in Mecca of two members of the *Banu Hashim*, 'Abdallah and his wife Amina. His father died shortly before he was born though his grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib lived on for some years and was the young boy's official protector. Amina died six years after his birth, leaving the young Muhammad an orphan but one who was destined to transform the religious and social characteristics of his people and to eventually become the founder of the only major world religion to succeed the Christian faith.

Conclusion

The above represents the text according to Gilchrist. The significance of this event should not be underestimated. In conclusion, I would like to highlight the following points:

- Muslims see this whole story as a sign from Allah, who confirmed through this historical event the significance of Mecca as the place of pilgrimage, which cannot be touched or destroyed by non-Muslims.
- At the same time, Muslims believe that through this event, the holy character of the Ka'aba is confirmed.
- The fact that it was Muhammad's grandfather, 'Abd al-Muttalib, who took the initiative and stepped forward, praying for the protection of the Ka'aba, is seen by Muslims as a further sign that Muhammad is indeed the true and final prophet.
- In addition, Muslims regard this event as a sign that Christianity was defeated even before the rise of Islam. It is seen as the first victory against Christianity.
- Therefore, Muslims believe that Allah will, in similar miraculous ways, protect the Ka'aba and Islam as a whole against all future attacks by Christians.
- That Muhammad is born in the same year as the *Year of the Elephant* is regarded as yet another sign that Allah brought Muhammad as a final messenger, who will for all eternity make sure that the Ka'aba cannot be destroyed by non-Muslims.

Footnotes

- 1 *Jibril*, Gabriel in the Qur'an, is a Spirit who is not introducing himself (*Surah* 2.97-98; 66.4). Since the message does not agree with the Bible, it cannot be the same Angel (see Luke 1.26-33).

Dealing with Deedat's Legacy

By David Foster

Ahmed Deedat, the world-renowned Muslim debater, is still alive. He has authored many tracts, booklets and books. Deedat's primary strategy has been to attack Christianity as a way of promoting Islam. He furthered his vision by founding the Islamic Propagation Centre International (IPCI), which, in its heyday, was the world's largest centre for propagating Islam.

Deedat's legacy lives on, although this momentum was abruptly curtailed by two events. In 1994, Deedat was struck dumb and remains immobile to this day. A few years later, the IPCI, which operated from a massive building, dubbed the 'Bin Laden' centre, suffered a colossal legal defeat in the provincial high court. After eight years of court proceedings, involving accusations of financial mismanagement and bitter infighting between IPCI trustees, the judge finally demanded that Deedat resign as Director of the Centre. Not only so, both Deedat and his son—the heir-apparent—were dismissed from the Board of Trustees. Somehow, the IPCI survived this shake-up and continues to disseminate Deedat's materials worldwide.

It is not uncommon for Christians, when sharing their faith with Muslims, to be given literature or videotapes by Ahmed Deedat. What should we do when this happens? Ought we to familiarise ourselves with the arguments in Deedat's books and equip ourselves to share answers? Should we give out printed rebuttals, such as John

Gilchrist's excellent replies to virtually all Deedat has written (available on www.answering-islam.org)? The answer is 'Sometimes yes, sometimes no'.

Scripture tells us plainly that church leaders are responsible to refute false teachers (Titus 1:9; Acts 18:28; cf. Proverbs 26:4&5). But notice that Proverbs 26:4&5 form a couplet. The first part says, 'Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.' The second half seems to say the opposite, 'Answer a fool according to his folly...' The point is this—just as there is no absolute formula for answering a fool, there is no predetermined set of answers that must always be given to Muslim enquirers. Sometimes we ought to give an answer; at other times, it may be wiser not to. Jesus sometimes answered his antagonists' questions; sometimes he did not. In Paul's epistles we see at least three instances which require careful discernment in order to properly obey seemingly opposite instructions—sometimes to argue and sometimes not to argue (Titus 2:15-3:11; 1 Tim. 5:20-6:6; 2 Tim. 2:23-3:16).

Let me share a personal experience illustrating the wisdom of refraining from arguing. I went to Mr. Khan's home having prearranged the visit by phone. As soon as I sat down, I noticed he was prepared with a handful of Deedat's booklets on the coffee table. The Christmas season had finished just a couple weeks earlier so I was able to strike up a conversation about Christ's

birth. Before the discussion could really get under way, he pulled out one of Deedat's books and showed it to me. I was puzzled because the title did not relate to our discussion. There was no particular burning issue Khan wanted resolved. He simply had an impression of Deedat as 'the' authority on comparative religion and thought that no one could stand up to him. Pulling out this book was more a symbolic gesture than anything. If Khan had had a particular question that needed to be resolved, I might have told him we could revisit that question later. It seemed, however, that his intention was to discourage or distract me from focusing on the heart of this Bible story.

Khan's plan did not work. Instead, it gave me an opportunity to explain in five minutes why I did not want to discuss Mr. Deedat or his arguments. I told Khan that each and every one of Deedat's booklets has been refuted. I explained how Deedat's persistent efforts to undermine Christianity had culminated in an all-out attack on the Bible—the publication of *Combat Kit*. As with previous books, this one, too, had been answered, without any retraction or response from Deedat. However, this time he had gone too far. No longer willing to remain silent to attacks on the Christian faith, a diverse group of Christian leaders in Durban published a strong public rebuke of Deedat's mockery of the Holy Bible and warned him of impending judgment. This did not bring an apology but a counterattack.

The story might not have had much impact on Khan if it had ended there, without the climax. Only a few months after being warned, Deedat was crippled and struck dumb! After hearing this, Khan himself was struck dumb when it came to mentioning the name Deedat. Through the remainder of that evening, Khan did not dare to bring up any of Deedat's literature or his arguments (nor on any of my subsequent visits). I was able to carry on positively explaining the meaning of Jesus' miraculous birth, particularly the meaning of the name. Khan took some steps towards understanding that the name Jesus, Isa, means 'the Lord saves'.

We read in Proverbs 29:1, 'Whoever stubbornly refuses to accept criticism will suddenly be broken beyond repair.' When this kind of judgment befalls a man, as has clearly happened in Deedat's case, it is not difficult to help Muslims recognise the downfall for what it really is. I believe it is right to refute the arguments of false teachers, but who can argue against the obvious judgment of God when it falls on the life of an arrogant man like Deedat? (Compare Acts 13:9-12.)

Postscript

Since Deedat was stricken, a couple of church leaders and I have made three extended visits in his home. We have had significant 'discussions' with him. He communicates letter-by-letter using the blink of an eye. Tragically, he has shown no sign of a change of heart. He refuses to admit that what has happened to him implies God's judgment or any blame on his part.

Book Review: Islam in Conflict

Reviewed by Abu Bethany

ISLAM IN CONFLICT, by Peter G. Riddell & Peter Cotterell.

Really, now? Another book on Islam? Perhaps you feel like you have read all that could possibly be written about the subject. You have looked at it historically, apologetically, theologically, not to mention empathetically or antagonistically. I picked up Riddell and Cotterell's book with a bit of 'been there, done that' attitude. I came away with some new perspectives and a more balanced view of the often unfamiliar territory of Islamic history.

This book focuses on the historic conflicts that have raged between Christianity and Islam. But it is not just a summary of the crusades or even the theological points of demarcation. Rather, it is a scholarly work that makes the maze of Islamic history more comprehensible for the thinking person. While some scholars have a way of confusing us—muddying the waters—*Islam in Conflict* is a refreshing change. For instance, do you ever find yourself scratching your head and asking 'Now what relation are the Hashimites to the Quraish?' Or, 'Why was the Oath of Aqaba known as the Oath of Women?' Or have you wanted to know exactly where the Quranic story of Jesus giving life to clay birds comes from? Or 'What was the role of the Vandals in the disappearance of the North African Church?' This book is a treasure chest of clarity. It presents the

history succinctly, and focuses in on the areas that most of us are eager to learn more about.

Another aspect of the book that I greatly appreciated was its even-handedness. Examples of Islamic discrimination against other faiths are set forth, immediately followed by the sane realisation that other faiths were being discriminated against in Christian Europe by similar means. The atrocities committed by the crusaders were stated plainly. However, the authors went to great lengths to demonstrate the reasons behind the crusader fear of Islamic incursion. Christianity had experienced total territorial loss in Asia and the Middle East to a succession of Islamic empires (Umayyad, Abbasid and Saljuq). In addition, Islamic attacks on Christian pilgrims were increasing in frequency.

The book gives an excellent overview of modern-day conflicts between Islam and Christianity. The frequently listed and well-known reasons figure prominently: the Palestinian conflict and the staunch US support of Israel in UN security resolutions. However, the authors do not shy away from other lesser-noted reasons, such as the adverse effects that globalisation is producing in Islamic countries and negative stereotypes of non-Muslim faiths in the Qur'an and *Hadiith*. The authors use the term 'westophobia' as a counterpoint to 'Islamophobia' to

describe the 'entrenched and endemically hostile attitudes toward the West' which prevail in many Muslim lands. Chapter 8 is a noteworthy overview of missions to Muslim lands. Although brief, the authors manage to put the salient aspects of missionary endeavour into a few pages.

The book concludes by a discussion of the essential nature of Islam: does it lead to violence, or is it a non-violent religion, capable of cohabitation with other contemporary expressions of faith? The authors state their assessment that violence was integral to the life of the prophet and the early expansion of Islam. As such, it is enshrined in the founding documents of Islam—Qur'an and *Hadiith*. Christianity has violence in its original documents as well. The difference is that the sword passed out of the hand of God's people (Old Testament Israel) and into the hand of the state—a tenet also enshrined in Christian scriptures. Christ was not a man of violence. Muhammad participated in no less than twenty-seven armed raids. What is needed, in the authors' opinion, is a

reformed Islamic hermeneutic if modern-day Muslims are serious about living at peace with other faiths. The authors advocate a distinction between the meaning of the Quranic text (original meaning at the time of a text's first proclamation) and its significance (the application of the text to a new and different situation). Moderate Muslims (quoted extensively in the book) are taking this path, but it appears that they are in the minority.

Where are the weak points of the book? If you are looking for a compendium of Muslim objections to Christianity and how they can be answered, you will want to look elsewhere. The chapter on the Qur'an and Christianity enumerates some of these difficulties, but the treatment is cursory at best. The strong point of the book is its scholarly and even-handed approach to Islamic history, particularly historic conflicts with Christianity. I highly recommend it as an introduction to Islamic history of particular interest to the Christian reader. *Islam in Conflict* should be on the shelves of every Christian worker in the Muslim world.

Book Review: Leaving Islam — Apostates Speak Out

Reviewed by Abe Wiebe

LEAVING ISLAM—Apostates Speak Out, by Ibn Warraq, Prometheus Books, New York, 2003.

Writing under his assumed name, Ibn Warraq presents a withering evaluation of Islam by drawing on the testimonies of those who have lived in the Islamic system and have left it.

As the book cover states,

The witnesses have certain moral and intellectual qualities in common; for instance, they are all comparatively well-educated, computer literate with access to the Internet and rational, with the ability to think for themselves.

The book has two major divisions: first, a thorough treatment of the issue of apostasy and the punishment for it and secondly, a long series of stories of men and women who have left Islam. The latter is the better part. Throughout, there are quotations from the *Hadith* and Islamic literature, which are very striking. Here are two examples: 'We mortals are composed of two great schools, enlightened knaves or religious fools' (Al-Ma'arri, 1058) and 'Islam is a military power blended with faith in its divine case—it is imperialism.'

Whole paragraphs are absolutely unbelievable. Although I have read many books on Islam, parts of this one left me breathless. Yet, while denying Islam and its claims, the thrust is not toward an appreciation of Christianity. It maintains that all religion is but a subterfuge to gain

political power. So Ibn Warraq urges Muslims to move toward humanism, secularism and atheism as man's best alternatives. He calls for intellectual, scientific and religious freedom amongst all peoples as the marks of a united humanity.

The author's attacks against Islam are unrelenting. I leave it up to the reader to discover the full impact for himself. Certainly such a book could only be written in the safety of some western state. Again I draw attention to a few samples. 'The Muslim's beautiful palace of Islam floats in the air without any pillar of truth' (p. 294) and 'Islam's peace is the peace of the graveyard of non-Muslims' (p. 297). I can only imagine what the reaction must be of any Muslim who might possess this volume. Although his allegations are no doubt correct, it hardly seems the right approach whereby we might win Muslims to become followers of Christ. Rather, let us love and pray for them and offer them the Christian scriptures. Let God speak to them through his Word.

The appendix provides a good list of Web sites that are critical of Islam. A starting point might be ISIS@secularislam.org. Probably the easiest way to obtain a copy of the book itself—and I do heartily recommend it—is via one of the Internet booksellers.

Book Review: The Trouble with Islam

Reviewed by Diane Dadian (RSTI)

The Trouble with Islam, by Irshad Manji, Random House, Canada, 2003.

This is not a book to give to your Muslim friends! In fact, many Christians might be offended as well. Buy a copy for yourselves, if you wish.

Written as a 'wake-up call for honesty and change', this book is relentlessly provocative in language and choice of topics. The author, already established as a media journalist and television host, targets the English-reading Islamic community in an attempt to encourage free-thinking or *ijtihad*—perhaps also defined as enlightened self-discovery. She touches on virtually every inflammable topic in the Islamic World, ranging from the rights of women to 'white raisins' in Palestine, in a whirlwind of clever phrases. This is an intensely emotional book with the author's own grievances against her father and Islamic teachers adding even more fuel.

In 247 pages Manji has written a very successful rant against stern, anti-

intellectual mullahs. Her views on history appear to be well-researched on the surface, always slanted to the same predictable end, however. And surely, Palestine cannot be relegated to a brief chapter. But her point is always this: Islam needs reform.

She asks, 'Can you explain why no other religion is producing as many terrorist travesties and human rights transgressions in the name of God? And can you explain this without pointing fingers at everyone but Muslims?'

She calls herself a Muslim *refusenik* and describes herself as a lesbian TV personality and free-thinker, a youngster whose honest questions were squelched, a person who still believes in God but whose circle has widened to include all kinds of people, as someone whose questions will not end.

Engaging and outrageous at the same time, Irshad Manji is worth reading. She has a distinctive voice.