

Book Reports

McDonalds, Minarets And Modernity
by Bob Hitching, Spear Publishing

Reviewed by Charles Montague

In just 76 pages, Bob Hitching takes a provocative and challenging look at the way the world, including the Muslim world, is changing. He analyses the impact of modernity: the various 'isms' and 'isations' that are changing our world. He draws a helpful distinction between the 'isations' (urbanisation, pluralisation, secularisation, privatisation, globalisation...) and the 'isms' (urbanism, pluralism etc). Academics discuss the 'isms', but the 'isations' are happening to us all the time, whether we know it or not and whether we like it or not. They are also happening to the Muslim world.

A recent "Awake Tunisia" video contained the comment: "the Tunisian teenager may have more in common with a Western teenager than you have." The global values of McDonalds, Michael Jackson, Nike trainers, Levi jeans are there too, and will continue to be so in increasing measure. This whole process brings with it a loosening of the hold of traditional religions and cultures (as does the melting-pot process of immigration for the Muslim communities in the great cities of the West). Of course, there are reactions to it, and countries and societies which try to hold back the flood, but Bob feels, along with modern sociologists, that such attempts are all doomed to failure in the long term.

There are two big implications for us which come out of the book. First, are we relevant to this new and constantly developing situation? The young Muslim generation may no longer be much interested in the religion of their parents. They may be more concerned about how to make money and follow the lifestyle of a Western^{er} pop-star. There are also going to be changes in marriage (with people marrying for love rather than arranged marriages, the husband and wife closer together in age with the wife more of an equal partner) and, very probably, a rise in divorce, paralleling Western trends. Homosexuality and other, until now, suppressed behaviour, could come more and more into the open. Our message will have to address these issues.

The second implication is for our own spirituality as Christians. How much are we being affected by modernity and are we aware of it? Has it diluted our faith without our noticing? Bob comments that it is no surprise that a number of evangelicals in the US (and some also in UK, including Michael Harper) have joined the Orthodox Church. He believes that "they are looking for something with some historical roots"—and did not find it in contemporary evangelicalism. Of course, it is there, since our biblical faith goes back through the evangelical leaders of previous generations, to the Reformers and beyond, to the New Testament itself, but is it being expressed? This is merely one example

among many which could be given and which should serve as a warning to us. Bob concludes with a chapter on the 'Restoration of the Sacred', giving some indications as to where we need to go. But perhaps the main value of the book is in the questions it raises — so, if you want a brief but stimulating read, I would recommend it!

Tools For Muslim Evangelism by Roland Muller, Essence Publishing, Belleville, Canada, 2000, 216 pp. ISBN: 1-55306-157-8.

Reviewed by Abe Wiebe

Tools For Muslim Evangelism is a very perceptive and useful manuscript. Roland Muller (pen name) makes a happy opening statement that the Christian World is waking up to the fact that Muslims need to meet with the Lord Jesus Christ. He then proceeds to present a model or plan for reaching Muslims that he and others conceived and implemented in their Middle East experience. Muller maintains that it is not another "how to" book on the subject, although it certainly looks like one. Nevertheless, what gives an authentic ring is his drawing from successful evangelists and disciplers who saw lasting results in their ministry to Muslims.

The concept of "tools" comes from Muller's contention that it is the combination of methods and approaches, personality and gifting, and especially divine blessing that make the difference. Only the last factor is a constant, the rest can vary from person to

person. Moreover, these factors may also vary with each ministry opportunity as well. Yet, he then underscores two qualities of God's servants that he has discerned as absolutely basic. These, he says, are a thoroughly intimate knowledge of the Bible and a deep "cross-experience" that deals death to self and mere personal effort. Quoting Corrie Ten Boom, "God's finest tool in our lives is the tool of suffering," he points out that Muslims aren't attracted to evangelists but to the reality of God.

In the next major section Muller shares what he believes to be the most acceptable and fruitful role for a missionary or tentmaker in a Muslim context, that of the teacher-evangelist. Encouraging us to re-examine the patterns set by Jesus and by Paul the Apostle, Muller maintains that by acting the part of a teacher of religious truth we have the best avenue to gain a hearing for the Bible. Objections, he agrees, must be answered, but as long as we focus primarily on these we are in a defensive position and hemmed in by the Muslim agenda. What the Muslim needs to hear above all is a clear message about Christ and salvation in terms he can understand.

Having thus stated his basic thesis, Muller proceeds to show how this approach works its way out in Middle East culture as a whole. He dwells on contextualization and the Islamic Community, respect for core Muslim values such as shame and honor and the navigating of the crucial phase of friendship-discipling of new converts.