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Editor's Comments

Sorry for the tardiness of this issue of *Seedbed*. I didn't sufficiently anticipate the rush of summer activities in July and August.

In the 2/98 issue we promised a comprehensive review of *Al-Injeel* for this issue. We have not yet completed the work necessary for that, so it will have to wait until a later issue.

In this issue we offer the second installment of *Humanity, Sin and Salvation* series, dealing this time with concepts of sin in Islam. You will also find the first of two articles by the previous editor of *Seedbed*, Sam Schlorff. One of our major ongoing preoccupations is to find the most biblical and effective models for church planting in the Muslim world. In this first article, Sam gives a historical overview of the development of missiological thinking on this subject and analyzes particularly the highly contextualized models which have become popular among a number of both theorists and practitioners. In the second article he will propose at least the beginning of what he sees as a more viable alternative.

الإنسان، الخطيئة، والغفران

Humanity, Sin & Salvation *In Islam and Christianity*

Article Two: The Definition of Sin in Islamic Theology, the Qur'an and the Hadith

Introduction

Our understanding of sin is extremely important. It affects, and is affected by, many other areas of doctrine. Our view of the nature of God, for instance, influences our understanding of sin. If God is a very high, pure and uncompromising Being who expects all humans to be as He is, then the slightest deviation from his lofty standard is sin, and man's condition is very serious. If, on the other hand, God is Himself rather imperfect, then man's condition is not so serious. Thus, in a real sense, our understanding of sin will be a reflection of our understanding of God.

Our view of the nature of man also bears on our understanding of sin. If intended to reflect the nature of God, man is to be judged, not by how he compares with other humans, but how he measures up to the divine standard. Any failure to meet that standard is sin. If man is a free being, that is, if he is not simply determined by forces of nature, then he is responsible for his

actions, and his shortcomings will be graded more severely than if some determining force controls or severely limits what he is capable of choosing and doing.

Our understanding of sin will strongly influence our view of salvation. For if man is basically good, his intellectual and moral capabilities essentially intact, then whatever problems he encounters with respect to his standing before God will be relatively minor. Any difficulty he experiences can be attributed to ignorance, a lack of knowledge as to what he ought to do or how to do it. Guidance, as Muslims claim, will solve the problem. A good model or example is all that is needed. If, on the other hand, man is corrupt and rebellious, and thus either unable or unwilling to do what he knows is right, a more radical cure will be needed. There will have to be actual transformation of the person. Thus the more radical our conception of sin the more supernatural the salvation we will deem needed.

**The Nature of Sin in Islamic
Theology (*Aqida, Tawhid, Kalam*)**
العقيدة، التوحيد، الكلام

The Semitic words for sin used in the Old Testament and the Qur'an are etymologically the same, e.g., *Akhatt'a*, *Khatia* أخطأ أو خطيئة (to miss the mark). The New Testament Greek, *hamartia*, does not add new meanings. The words imply breaking or not conforming to some standard. The lenient attitude which the Qur'an espouses regarding sinners is heeded by Islam. Yet the doctrine of sin, including the distinction between light and heavy sins and their respective punishments; was the object of serious controversy in early Islam.

Muslim theologians in the *Mishkat Al Masabih* مشكاة المصابيح have defined good deeds and sin as follows: "Observances of ... duties is called virtue حنة, and the negligence or breach thereof is called sin سيئة. Virtues حسنات and sins سيئات result from lawful and unlawful things In every act there is sin and virtue Any breach of the fundamental duties of which the performance is compulsory and obligatory is called a great sin. Any breach of other duties is called a minor sin. Breach of any duty which the Holy Prophet used to do constantly without any break is a great sin. Constant repetition of a minor sin makes it a major one". (Mishkat III, pp. 121-129)

It would be helpful at this juncture to explain lawful and unlawful actions in Islamic law (*Shari'ah* الشريعة), especially when sin is defined in terms of doing or not doing these actions.

A. Lawful مشروع

1. Those which are obligatory (*fardh* الفرض), being enjoined by God Himself. Disobedience of these is positive infidelity and punishable as such.
2. Those which are a duty but, though constituting sin when neglected, do not amount to infidelity to the faith (*wajib* الواجب).
3. Those which were practiced by Muhammad (sunna السنة).
4. Those that are considered commendable (*mustahab* المستحب).
5. Those which are permitted (*mubah* المباح). They are indifferent and can be committed or omitted without fear of sin.

B. Unlawful غير المشروع

1. That which is vicious and most corrupting, mortal sin (*muftsid* المفسد).
2. That which is distinctly forbidden (*haram* الحرام).
3. That which is generally considered as unclean or undesired (*makruh* المكروه).

Mishkat III pp. 121-129, also (from *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p.251)

C. Heavy and Light Sins

Subsequently Islamic theologians divided sins into *Gunhah-kabirah* جُنْح كَبِيرَة (Major Infraction) and *Gunhah-saghirah* جُنْح صَغِيرَة (Minor Infraction), great and little sins. Among the four Islamic schools of law, there is no agreement on the exact number of *kabirah* sins (The "Mishkat" lists 53, vol. III, p.128); however the following seventeen are generally agreed upon.

Al-Ghazzali cites Abu Talib al Makki's view that the seventeen are as follows:

Four in the heart, to wit:

1. Kufr الكُفر (polytheism)
2. Persevering in sin
3. Despairing of Allah's mercy
4. False Security (imagined immunity against the wrath of Allah)

Four in the tongue, to wit:

5. False witness
6. Abusing the *muhsan* (falsely charging a Muslim with adultery)
7. False oath (perjury)
8. Sorcery (although this is very commonly done by many Muslims—and that in agreement with Islam!)

Three in the belly:

9. Drinking of alcoholic beverages
10. Appropriation of the property of orphans
11. Usury

Two in the genitals:

12. Adultery (fornication)
13. Pederasty [unnatural sexual act]

Two in the hands

14. Theft
15. Murder

One in the feet:

16. Fleeing in battle before infidel enemies

One in the whole body:

17. Disobedience to parents

(From *The Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p.251)

Muslim theologians have also provided solutions for the different categories of sins.

1. 'Light sins' سيئات may be repaired by good works حسنات.
2. 'Heavy sins' require seeking forgiveness of Allah ('*istighfar* استغفار)
3. 'Shirk' شرك, the severest of sins, requires repentance (*taubah* توبة)

Mishkat III pp. 121-129, also (from *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p.251)

Sin in The Qur'an

There are many words in the Qur'an that are used to distinguish between varying degrees of sins. I will only mention 17 of them.

1. *Khati'a* خطية : tumbling, missing the aim, committing an error; a sin committed on purpose (17:31 = 'khit', the same root word)
2. *Zanb* ذنب : a sin, a crime (compare 24: 14 and 81:9), also used for the 'faults' or *zanb* of Mohammed (47:19 and 48:2)
3. *Ithm* إثم : anything forbidden in the law, a heavy sin, 5:2
4. *Shirk* شرك : adding a partner to Allah, polytheism, 31:13
5. *Fahsha* فحشاء : vile deed, crime, and adultery, 6:151
6. *Wizr* وِزْر : sin as a heavy load, burden, encumbrance, 94:1-3
7. *Dhalal* ضلال : straying, to be lost, 6-8
8. *Zulm* ظلم : Injustice, iniquity, unfairness, 26:10
9. *Foujoor* فجور : immorality, depravity, 82:14-15

10. *Sayyi'a* سَيِّئَة : offence, misdeed, 27:90
11. *Su'* سُوء : evil, misfortune, 4:123
12. *Fasad* فُسَاد : corrupting, 2: 205
13. *Fisq* فِسْق : viciousness, moral depravity, 2: 99
14. *Buhtan* بُهْتَان : slander, lying, 24:16
15. *Sharr* شَر : evil, 99: 8
16. *Asyan* عَصْيَان : disobedience, 4:14
17. *Ghai* غَي : error or going astray, 20:121; 53:2

A summary of what the Qur'an teaches about sin

- "Those who avoid great sins (*ithm* اِثْم), and shameful deeds (*foahish* فَوَاحِش), only (falling into) small faults, verily thy Lord is ample in forgiveness". 53:32
- "Nay, those who seek gain in Evil, and are girt round by their sins (*khati'a* خَطِيْئَة), they are companions of the fire: therein shall they abide (forever)". 2:81
- "Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you: Verily the killing of them is a great sin". (*khati'a* خَطِيْئَة) 17:31
- "Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up (*shirk* شِرْك) with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth". 4:48
- "Those who go on increasing in unbelief (*kufr* كُفْر)—Allah will not forgive them nor guide them on the Way". 4:137
- "Those who reject (*kafar* كَفَر) Allah, and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah, then die rejecting Allah — Allah will not forgive them". 47:34

• "O Our people, hearken to the one who invites (you) to Allah and believes in him: He will forgive you your faults [*zanb* ذَنْب], and deliver you from a grievous penalty". 46:31

Sin in the Hadith

Narrated Al-Harith bin Suwaid: The Prophet said: "A believer sees his sins as if he were sitting under a mountain which he is afraid may fall on him; whereas a wicked person considers his sins as flies passing over his nose, and he just drives them away." (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* 8:320)

This verse certainly presents an ideal, but it may be far from reality. Indeed, some Muslims are fearful of the impact of sin in their lives. One teacher of the Qur'an related that his concern about sexual lust leads him to fast every Friday in an effort to obtain mental purity. It is not uncommon for Muslims to ask the Imams what to do for their persistent sins, and the Imams prescribe some works for them. On the other hand, most Muslims I have met are quite unconcerned about the impact sin may have in their everyday existence.

Abdullah ibn Abbas narrated: Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said, "The black stone descended from Paradise whiter than milk, but the sins of the descendants of Adam made it black." Ahmad and Tirmidhi transmitted it, the latter saying that this is a well substantiated (*hasan sahih*) tradition. (*Mishkat* 2577)

Muhammad defined two focuses of transgression

Narrated Sahl bin Sa'd: Narrated Allah's

Apostle: "Whoever can guarantee (the chastity of) what is between his two jaw-bones and what is between his two legs (i.e. his tongue and his private parts), I guarantee Paradise for him." (8:481). Incurrigible speech and unlawful sex, then, draw the Muslim away from the path of Allah.

Muhammad, however, distinguished between thoughts and action

Abu Hurayra narrated: The Prophet said, "Allah has forgiven my followers the evil thoughts (*Hadith al-nafs* حديث النفس) that occur in their minds, as long as such thoughts are not put into action or uttered." 7:147

So sinful thoughts which do not issue into reality are not sin. It is even said that no account of these thoughts is taken in the computation of sins on the day of Resurrection. The ideal is expressed in the following tradition: "The Apostle of Allah said: 'Allah does not take into account what the members of my community think as long as they do not pronounce it or carry it out.'" *Muslim* 201-208.

Another sin highlighted in the Hadith is greed

Abdullah ibn Abbas narrated: I heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) saying, "If the son of Adam (the human being) had two valleys of money, he would wish for a third, for nothing can fill the belly of Adam's son except dust, and Allah forgives him who repents to Him." (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, 8:444). And again in 8:445; I heard Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) saying, "If the son of Adam had enough money to fill a

valley, then he would wish for another similar to it, for nothing can satisfy the eye of Adam's son except dust. And Allah forgives him who repents to Him."

Ibn Abbas said, "I do not know whether this saying was quoted from the Qur'an or not."

Ata said, "I heard ibn az-Zubayr saying this narration while he was in the pulpit." And yet again in 8:446, Sahl ibn Sa'd narrated: I heard ibn az-Zubayr, who was in the pulpit at Makkah delivering a sermon, saying, "O men! The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to say, 'If the son of Adam were given a valley full of gold, he would love to have a second one; and if he were given the second one, he would love to have a third, for nothing fills the belly of Adam's son except dust. And Allah forgives him who repents to Him.'"

Ubayy said, "We considered this as a saying from the Qur'an till the surah (beginning with) 'The mutual rivalry for piling up of worldly things diverts you ...' (102:1) was revealed."

Other enumerations of sins to be avoided are found in the following hadith from *Mishkat III*, pp.129-139:

"Abdullah-b-Mas'ud reported that a man asked (Mohammed): '...what sin is greatest near Allah?' He replied: 'Your calling up a partner for Allah'... 'What is next?' He replied: 'Your killing of your child ...'. 'What is next?' He replied: '...adultery'."

"Abdullah-b-Amr reported that the Apostle of Allah said: 'The greatest

sins are to associate a partner with Allah, to disobey parents, to kill a soul and to take false oath'."

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah said: "Avoid seven harmful things.... Setting up a partner with Allah, sorcery, killing a soul whom Allah has made unlawful except for just cause, devouring the properties of an orphan, keeping behind on the day of fight and slandering chaste, believing heedless women".

"Mu'az reported that the Apostle of Allah instructed me with ten counsels. He said: Set up nothing with Allah... nor be disobedient to your parents... nor give up the compulsory prayers... nor drink wine... beware of flight from holy war... and spend for your family out of your means...."

"Safwan-b-Assai reported.... Set up nothing with Allah, nor steal, nor commit adultery, nor kill a soul... nor take an innocent man to a man of power that he may put him to death, nor practice sorcery, nor devour interest nor cast blasphemy on a chaste woman, nor turn back for fight...."

And finally, there are Hadith that imply that Allah will forgive any sin, except perhaps that of *shirk*.

Tirmidhi transmitted: Anas ibn Malik heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) say: Allah, the Exalted, has said: "O son of Adam! Certainly I shall continue to pardon thee so long as thou supplicatest Me and hopest (for My forgiveness), whatever may be thy faults and sins, I don't care.

O son of Adam, even if thy sins pile up as high as the sky, and thou askest for My forgiveness, I will forgive thee. O son of Adam, if thou comest to Me with an earthful of defaults and meetest Me, not associating anything with Me, I will come to thee, with an earthful of forgiveness." (*Mishkat* 0442 (R))

Implications

1. We risk offering answers to questions that are not being asked (e.g., offering salvation when they are only looking for right guidance). Muslims have said we do not need a transformation, only reformation. They do not need a saviour, only guidance!

2. It is very clear that Islam defines sin in terms of required work or actions not being done or forbidden work or actions being done, rather than as an integral part of human nature

Though Islam speaks of a free man we find that the Qur'anic and Hadith evidence in many cases indicates the opposite. For example the following:

Al-Bukhari records in 4:506: Abu Hurayrah narrated: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "When any human being is born, Satan touches him at both sides of the body with his two fingers, except Jesus, the son of Mary, whom Satan tried to touch but failed, for he touched the placenta-cover instead."

Muhammad's earliest biographer, Ibn Hisham, quoted the prophet as saying: "Two men in white raiment ... opened up my belly, extracted a black drop from it and threw it away; then they washed my heart and my belly with

snow until they had thoroughly cleaned them." (Ibn Hisham, ed., *The life of Muhammad: (Ibn) Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, trans. Al Guillaume, London: Oxford University Press, 1955, p.72).

3. The Islamic approach to sin is problematic. A mild view of sin combined with the expectation of generous forgiveness and mercy does away with a need for salvation and a Saviour. Adherence to Islam and performing its rules is deemed sufficient. As Christians we perceive this to be a disturbing act of deception. We know that the Bible contradicts such a view of sin altogether.

4. The view of sin has serious consequences on the view of God. God is not consistent when it comes to his holiness and his standard of holiness for mankind. A concept of fatalism also comes into the picture very clearly. Despite good or bad deeds, God still might or might not forgive.

5. The worldviews of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are similar enough to aid communication. The similarity between the Jewish and Muslim reliance on the Law and also their common Middle East context suggest that following the models of Jesus, Paul in Romans, and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews could be very helpful.

6. Mentioning Hadith about the sin of man and the list of sins could prove helpful as you share with Muslims about the depravity of man. I have used these as a format to show their

need for a savior because their works could not get them to paradise.

7. There is a proverb that is used among Muslims in Egypt that says, "Whatever is in us is in us even if we go on pilgrimage and come back." It shows that on a popular level there is a realization that man is sinful and needs help.

8. Perhaps more can be made of Sura 12:53 to show the need for transformation

وما أبرئ نفسي إن النفس لأمارة بالسوء إلا ما رحم ربي إن ربي غفور رحيم

"Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame): the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord do bestow His Mercy: but surely my Lord is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful."

Next article will deal with the original sin of Adam. Till we meet again إلى اللقاء .

Abu Atallah

THE TRANSLATIONAL MODEL FOR MISSION IN RESISTANT MUSLIM SOCIETY: A CRITIQUE AND AN ALTERNATIVE (I)

by Sam Schlorff

I—An Overview of the Translational Model in Mission to Muslims

A—Historical Background

The evangelical approach to Islam has been undergoing a period of flux and change these past twenty-five years. Increasingly impatient with the slow progress and meager results in Muslim countries, and the fragility of churches of converts from Islam, many evangelicals have been re-thinking their assumptions and approach especially with regard to their attitude to the Qur'an and Islamic culture, and have been casting about for a new model of approach for ministry to Muslims.

Evangelical Ecumenical Structures and Consultations

What has brought about these changes? One such factor has been the rise of what might be called "evangelical ecumenical structures." These were created for the purpose of uniting evangelicals and harnessing their largely untapped resources for "reaching the unreached." Two such organizations that have been especially influential are the *Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization* (LCWE), formed following the International Congress on World Evangelization held in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974, and the *World Evangelical Fellowship* (WEF), which recently cele-

brated the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of its predecessor, The Evangelical Alliance, which was founded in 1846.

A number of international or regional consultations have been held, often with the close involvement of one or both of these bodies, that have had an important place in shaping the evangelical approach to Islam. These are: the *Conference on "Media in Islamic Culture,"* sponsored by International Christian Broadcasters and Evangelical Literature Overseas, and held in Marseille, France, in 1974 (Shumaker 1974), the *Conference on The World of Islam Today*, organized by the Evangelical Alliance and held at High Wycombe, England, in January 1976 (Evangelical Alliance 1976), the *Consultation on Gospel and Culture*, organized by the LCWE and held at Willowbank in Bermuda in January 1978 (LCWE 1978), the *North American Conference on Muslim Evangelization*, sponsored jointly by the LCWE and World Vision, and held in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in October 1978 (McCurry 1979), the *Mini-Consultation on Reaching Muslims*, a part of the Consultation on World Evangelization of the LCWE, held in Pattaya, Thailand, in June 1980 (LCWE 1980), and the conference convened by the LCWE in Zeist, The Netherlands, in

July 1987 to consider critical issues in Christian witness among Muslims (Woodberry 1989a).

The Influence of the Social Sciences

Undoubtedly, the most important influence behind the changes in the evangelical model has been the social sciences, and especially the increasing number of missionary scholars trained in these sciences. I include here cultural anthropology, sociology, linguistics, translation theory, and communication science. These influences have brought about considerable change in evangelical attitudes toward culture and toward non-Christian religions. For going on forty years now they have been revolutionizing the evangelical missionary enterprise through the infusion of new ideas. The explosion of missiological studies by evangelicals in recent years has been nothing short of phenomenal. But have these changes all been for the better?

It was at the *Conference on Media in Islamic Culture*, held in Marseille, France, in 1974, that missionary anthropology began significantly to impact the evangelical missionary enterprise in the Muslim world. The sponsors wanted this conference to wrestle seriously with the problem of the cross-cultural communication of the Gospel to the Muslim mind, rather than be just another "fair" for exchanging information about methods that seem to work (Shumaker 1974:6). Dr. Charles Kraft, Professor of Anthropology at Fuller Theological Seminary, was chosen to address the cultural dimension of the task. His lec-

tures introduce what will become the main themes of the translational approach to Islam.

A Return to the Use of the Qur'an and to Polemics

Earlier in the century, in reaction to the excesses of the polemicists of the last century, evangelical missionaries had decided to discontinue using the old polemical literature and stick to the positive presentation of Christ, more or less without reference to the Qur'an. Now, we find evangelicals once again beginning extensively to use the Qur'an as a basis for presenting the gospel to Muslims. And we are once again seeing some of the old polemical classics, long out of print, being reprinted, distributed and used more and more along with new titles.

In a paper presented at the High Wycombe Conference, and published in *Missiology*, Fu'ad Accad, former General Secretary of the Bible Society of the Levant, argued that missionaries should return to using the Qur'an as a "bridge" over which to lead the Muslim to faith in Christ (1976:332). He exemplified the approach in his book, *Have You Ever Read the Seven Muslim-Christian Principles?* (1978). Written for Muslims, the book claims that the seven principles, fundamental to the gospel, may be found in the Qur'an as well as the Old and New Testaments. (For a more complete exposition of his approach, see his recent posthumously published work, *Building Bridges: Christianity and Islam*, 1997). Michael Youssef, an Egyptian Christian associated with the

Haggai Institute for Advanced Leadership Training, likewise claims that "Just as the Apostle Paul found it legitimate to use the unknown god on Mars Hill to introduce the Athenians to the true and living God, I, too, through the pages of the Qur'aan, try to point my Muslim friends to the Savior of the World" (1980:4). Abdiyah Akbar Abdul-Haqq, an evangelist with the Billy Graham Association, likewise makes extensive use of the Qur'an in his book, *Sharing Your Faith with a Muslim* (1980). As the *Thailand Report* bears witness, however, many evangelicals do not agree that the Qur'an constitutes a valid bridge to faith. When Accad's *Seven Muslim-Christian Principles* was presented at the Colorado Springs Conference, many, including Christians of Muslim background, strongly disagreed with the approach.

The Quest for New Forms of "Churchness" in which Converts Remain Within Islam

An important feature of the new approach has been what I shall call the quest for new forms for churches in Islamic culture, and especially forms that involve converts remaining *within* Islam. A major catalyst in this has been the contextualization debate that has been raging in evangelical missiological circles since the 1970s, stimulated by new ideas introduced under the influence of the social sciences.

Already in 1938, the Near East Christian Council's *Inquiry on the Evangelization of Moslems* had wrestled with this issue and had come to the following conclusion:

It is [our] conviction... that the ultimate hope of bringing Christ to the Moslems is to be attained by the development of groups of followers of Jesus who are active in making Him known to others while remaining loyally a part of the social and political groups to which they belong in Islam. The ideal is that there should thus come into being a church whose only head is Christ, and which does not carry the stigma of being an alien institution, drawing men away from their natural social and political connections. (Riggs 1938:7)

What this might mean in concrete terms is not spelled out, however, except for these two recommendations: (1) converts should avoid identifying themselves as "Christians" because of the "exclusively... racial, political and social group-notation" the term has with Muslims, and (2) "some spiritual equivalent of baptism, free from the false significance that has grown up in the thought of the Muslim, can and must be devised" (Ibid.:7f).

The quest for new church forms for Islamic culture moved into high gear at the Marseille conference in 1974, already referred to above, where Charles Kraft made a strong plea "that we bend every effort toward stimulating a faith renewal movement *within* Islam" (1974c:143 italics mine). Toward that end, he strongly suggested "that we encourage some Christians to become Christian Muslims in order to win Muslims to Muslim Christianity" (Ibid:144). A reading of his four lectures makes it clear that what he has in mind is a movement that remains basically Muslim in ethos and culture;

he refers to it as "a Muslim church," interpreting the term 'Muslim' as a cultural term primarily." (1974a:24).

These same ideas reappear again and again in various publications and conferences. A variety of terms are used to express one and the same concept. Besides "Christian Muslims" and "Muslim churches," we find the terms "Followers of Isa," "Isa Muslims," "Jesus movement," "Muslim fellowship," "Jesus mosque," "New Creation Muslims" and "House Masjids," to just mention those that come readily to mind. In the paragraphs that follow, we shall examine some of the main concepts and arguments involved in this proposal.

In 1977, veteran Presbyterian missionary John Wilder wrote an article entitled, "Some Reflections on Possibilities for People Movements Among Muslims" (1977:301-320). Drawing on his study of early Hebrew Christianity, and the rise of Messianic Judaism in our day, Wilder theorized that "a people movement to Christ might emerge" (Ibid: 309). He outlined two possible scenarios: "A people movement to Christ which remains within Islam" (the equivalent of Kraft's *Muslim church*, but note that he does not call it a church), or "A people movement constituting a new church of Muslim cultural orientation" (Ibid: 310.). It is noteworthy that it is the first scenario, the vision of a Jesus movement that remains *within* Islam, that seems to have captured the imagination of evangelicals; at any rate that is where most of their creative literary

output has been concentrated. On reflection, this may be due to the fact that no one has bothered to explain how a movement to Christ that remains within Islam (i.e. a Muslim church) differs from a church of Muslim cultural orientation. Certainly, Wilder does not.

At the Colorado Springs conference of 1978, Charles Kraft gave the concept of a Muslim church a theoretical basis in "Dynamic Equivalence Churches in Muslim Society" (1979a). Years earlier, Eugene Nida had introduced the concept of "dynamic equivalence" as a scientific approach to Bible translation. This approach defines the aim of translation in terms of bringing about an equivalence between the understanding response of the original receptors of Scripture and that of the receptors for whom a given translation is made today. It gives a number of procedural rules to ensure faithfulness to the intent of the original text as well as equivalence in the new language (see Nida & Taber 1969). This approach has been followed in most modern translations, such as the NIV. Kraft, however, took the concept a step further and turned it into a model for church planting as well. On the basis of the premise that a person's "faith-allegiance" can and should be distinguished from the "religious structures" of Islam, Kraft proposes that a movement to Christ that remains attached to Islam could be considered a "dynamic equivalence" church.

I would suggest that the goal be the bringing into existence of groupings of God's people within so-called "Muslim"

cultures 1) that are committed in faith-allegiance to God in accordance to biblical revelation and 2) that function within their own sociocultural matrix in ways equivalent in their dynamics to biblically recommended examples. (1979a:120)

What would such a "Muslim church" look like? Already, at Marseille 1974, Kraft was laying his groundwork:

I would press hard for a faith relationship with God and for a faith renewal movement starting within Islam as a culture, based on the faith of Abraham (or Ibrahim), pointing to Qur'an, Old Testament and New Testament as the sources of our information concerning this faith, and issuing in a renewal and distinct people of God, who maintain their Muslim cultural allegiance, worship forms and self respect. I would press further for this faith renewal movement to use all three books (Qur'an, Old and New Testaments) as its basis, and confidently expect and pray for them to discover both Jesus and the exciting relational aspects of the faith that Jesus characterized by referring to his relationship with God as a Father-Son relationship (1974b:76).

Someone has also proposed that Muslim churches would need to "come to terms with the Arabian Prophet" (D.O. 1991:20-23). That is, they would need to recognize that Muhammad is a prophet in some sense of the term. This author states: "I believe that a Muslim follower of Jesus could repeat the witness, 'there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger,' with conviction and integrity, without compromising or

syncretizing his faith in Jesus" (Ibid: 21). He acknowledges, however, that one would have to hedge when it comes to accepting "the Qur'an as a book that verbally descended on Muhammad from heaven," and accepting the Hadiths (Ibid). The prophethood of Muhammad would be understood in terms of "an Old Testament-style messenger" (Ibid:22), whatever that means (cf. Wilder 1977:311).

Proponents also assume that "Christian Muslims" would more or less continue to practice certain of the Five Pillars of Islam, but to what extent they may do so is a question on which opinions differ. Mission executive John D.C. Anderson seems to feel that "Christian Muslims" may continue to practice the ritual prayer and almsgiving, and keep the fast of Ramadan; he suggests, however, that they would be wise "quietly to ignore" the Hajj, and also has problems with Christians repeating the Shahada (1976:296-297).

Phil Parshall seems to have mixed feelings about the Muslim-church idea. On the one hand, he seems to favor the model when he writes: "With certain key alterations or substitutions, the Muslim convert can continue the familiar pattern of prayer" (1980:202), but as for keeping the Fast in the prescribed Muslim manner, he says "there can be no dogmatic answer" (Ibid:210). On the other hand, he discourages the "continued involvement in prayers at the mosque" (i.e. as opposed to praying at home): "The ritual is too closely connected to Islamic belief, theology and religious practice.

I conclude that participation involves either compromise or deceit" (1985: 184). He likewise rightly draws the line at the idea of a movement that is completely integrated within Islam.

I feel it will not be possible for such a total integration (as an Islamic sect) to occur and still allow mutual integrity. There are four reasons for this:

1. The unacceptable exaltation of Prophet Muhammad.
2. The centrality of the mosque to religious expression within Islam.
3. The denial by Muslims of the Christian view of biblical authority as well as their rejection of our belief in the deity and atonement of Christ.
4. The desire of both Muslims and Christians to have an exclusive ummah.(...)

It is then possible that converts may be able to continue within the mainstream of life in a Muslim society, yet distance themselves from things compromisingly Islamic. (Ibid:194)

It is noteworthy that proponents of the model assume that Muslim churches would probably be doctrinally unorthodox as well. Kraft speculates that they would be strongly monotheistic, would have "probably a more distant concept of God than we are familiar with in the West," would tend to be fatalistic and legalistic, and "would probably, like the Jews, be looking for a kingdom rather than a church" (1974c:142). John Wilder, for his part, envisages the following.

As to doctrine, the movement's Muslim orientation might lead it, among the more likely possibilities, to some form

of retreat from the doctrine of the Trinity; a de-emphasizing or "explaining" of Christ's Sonship, perhaps through a device such as Adoptionism; a denial of Christ's true death; an acceptance of the inspiration of only those parts of Scripture they found most acceptable, such as the Pentateuch, the Psalms and the Gospels; and the discarding of one or both sacraments, retaining circumcision, possibly as a substitute for baptism" (1977:311-312).

Are proponents of the Muslim-church idea able to point to cases that show the viability of such churches? Wilder cites two cases of which he has heard, the "Jesusists" of Turkey, and a group in Iran (1976:306, 308 & 319-20. fn. 11 & 12). In his book *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism*, Parshall acknowledges that "examples of contextualized witness to Muslims are rare" (1980: 21), but goes on to briefly describe, in security sensitive terms, the case of two small groups somewhere in East Asia, begun about five years previously, that were more or less continuing within Islam (p.21-27). At the Zeist conference in 1987, Rafique Uddin, a former Muslim living in East Asia, describes how he trained five couples of Muslim background in his approach and sent them out to carry on the work. He claims that three Imams had come to Christ, and that "in one area during two years, 1,200 to 1,500 have come to Christ" (1989:272). He describes his approach thus:

In my current work I have suggested to many new and old believers in Christ (from Muslim background) that we

practice both the five daily times of worship and the annual one month fast. I personally participate in these forms and recite Bible portions in five daily prayers. (...)

To me and to many other first-generation believers in Christ it is a necessity that we continue the Islamic forms of worship but give Christian meanings to these forms. Growth in Christ is much easier if culture shocks can be mitigated through retaining as much as possible of the cultural forms of worship. (1989:269)

It should be noted that the information given in all these cases is too sketchy for one to be able to draw hard and fast conclusions as to the authenticity or viability of these "churches" (the use of sketchy details is of course one of the security precautions one must take in Muslim countries). What is especially needed at this point is independent investigations by objective third parties to evaluate their authenticity and viability. Their short existence also raises questions. What I am saying, in sum, is that there is still no conclusive evidence to show that the Muslim-church model is workable, let alone biblically valid.

Whatever the case may be, there now exists a book on how to start a "Muslim church." Phil Goble, author of a book on how to start a Messianic synagogue, and Palestinian theologian Salim Munayyer have collaborated to produce the *New Creation Book for Muslims* that envisions in very concrete terms what a Muslim church might look like (1989). Replete with Islamic language reinterpreted with Christian meanings, the book contains chapters on "The

Straight Path of the New Creation" (the basic truths of sin and salvation in Islamic format), "The Prayer Life of the New Creation Muslim" (a Christianized Muslim ritual prayer), "The New Creation Confession" (the Eucharist, reinterpreted in terms of a Messianic *Id-ul-Adha*), and "The New Creation Pilgrimage" (baptism, reinterpreted in terms of the Hajj or Muslim pilgrimage). The book concludes with a chapter on "How to Start a House Masjid for New Creation Muslims." Keep in mind, however, that everything in the book is purely and only theoretical; there is no indication whatever that it is based on an actual church-planting experience.

Mention should also be made of a highly contextualized "Scripture" in Qur'anic format, the *Sîrat-ul-Masîh bi-lisân 'araby fasîh* [The Life of the Messiah in a Classical Arabic Tongue] published in 1987, which was conceived to help reduce the barriers to Muslim understanding and acceptance of the Bible that arise from the historical approach to translating the Bible into Arabic (Owen 1987:50-59). Suffice it to say here that the translators of *Sîra* translated select portions of the gospel, using qur'anic language and phraseology to improve readability for the Muslim, as well as the rhymed prose (*saja*) style of the Qur'an. Inspired by the positive impact of Tatian's *Dialesseron* (gospel harmony) on the early Syriac-speaking church, the translation was cast in the form of a gospel harmony but was called *Sîra* (biography) to head off the usual Muslim charge that Christians are "corrupting"

the Scripture. The *Sîra* form is well-known in Islamic literature from the early *Sîrât-un-Nabî* [Lives of the Prophet]. Unfortunately, along with using qur'anic language and phraseology the translators also tried to imitate the Qur'an as much as possible. In typical qur'anic style, they began each chapter with the "basmalah," gave it a name (e.g. "The Sycamore Tree"), and categorized it according to whether it was "revealed in Jerusalem" (*maqdisi*) or "revealed in Galilee" (*jalili*). To top it off, a short chapter reminiscent of the opening chapter of the Qur'an (*al-fâtiha*) was added at the beginning, all this with the idea that a contextualized translation of "Semitic interpretation," and Islamic theological terminology, would facilitate a "Messianic Muslim" movement to Christ within Islam (Ibid.:51-52).

As one might have predicted, because it tries to imitate the "inimitable," the Qur'an, within two years after its publication the Muslim World League had issued a warning against the *Sîra* and the Islamic Research Academy in Egypt asked the Sheikh of al-Azhar to have it banned (reported in *al-'Alam*, 2 April 1989). I have been unable to find out recent distribution figures or exactly in which countries it has been banned, but it appears to be pretty well shut out from distribution in the Arab World. At the very least, one can say that had the translators of *Sîra* been content with improving understanding and readability without trying to imitate the Qur'an, *Sîra* would very likely still be in circulation in the Arab World today.

B—Several Theories Behind the Model

It will be instructive at this point to examine more closely several theories, frequently expressed over the past twenty some years, that lie at the foundation of the Muslim-church translational model.

Missionary Extractionism

The first attributes Muslim resistance to the gospel and to church planting mainly to "missionary extractionism." This theory claims that missionaries "have so often demanded that converts turn against their own culture and convert to a foreign culture" (Kraft 1974a:27). At the High Wycombe conference of 1976, John D.C. Anderson reproached missionaries to Islam with being "cultic" rather than Christian; he charged them with "the isolation of the convert from his culture" (1976:288), and even spoke in terms of missions to Muslims being a "failure" (Ibid.:289), a charge that others will later repeat (e.g. Owen 1987:51). According to Anderson, "we need to differentiate between the traditional concept of making a Muslim into a Christian, with all the transfer of his loyalties to an imported Christian sub-culture that this involves, and ... that of making him into a disciple of Jesus Christ, with a primary loyalty to Him as Saviour and Lord from amidst his national ties" (1976:292).

By the time of the Colorado Springs Conference in 1978, the theory appears to be more or less assumed by a majority of those writing on Muslim evangelization. In his Keynote

Address, Don McCurry states that "missions to Muslims have rejected the culture of the converts and imposed that of the missionary or evangelist" (1979:14). He describes this as "insistence on a double conversion, ... first to Christ, and then to the culture of the missionary or evangelist," claiming that it "may well be the single most important reason for a greater lack of results in work among Muslims" (Ibid). Phil Parshall's two books, *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism* (1980) and *Beyond the Mosque* (1985), are prime examples of works that assume the theory. In the latter, Parshall states at the outset that "My major thesis is that extraction evangelism is an erroneous methodology and should immediately cease" (1985:21. cf. 1980:230).

Muslim Forms and Christian Meanings

Another theory at the basis of the Muslim-church model affirms, on the assumption that the forms/religious structures of a culture are essentially "a neutral vehicle" (Kraft 1979b:113-115), that the Christian is free to take these forms [e.g. both Muslim religious terms and expressions, as well as religious practices such as the ritual prayer] and fill them with Christian meanings. Charles Kraft develops these ideas in terms of several theological propositions which I summarize as follows: (1) the difference between the Old and New Testaments is cultural rather than theological, the Old representing a "Semitic" cultural milieu, and the New a milieu that is "Greek"

(1974a:23; 1979a:115ff); (2) one may distinguish faith-allegiance from the religious structures that give it expression (1979a:117ff), again assuming that the religious structures of Islam are a "neutral vehicle." On this basis he concludes (3) that God accepts Islam as a valid expression of Semitic "churchness" on the Old Testament model, and (4) that one may therefore freely make use of Islamic forms in the new church and give them Christian meanings. Note the following quotations:

God's Word develops in detail God's approach to a Semitic people. He starts where they are culturally and strongly influences the course of their culture from that point on. He accepts their cultural starting points with respect to everything except their basic allegiance. (1979a:117) (...)

[Citing the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, Kraft points out that both sides expressed their faith through much the same cultural structures, and concludes:] The point at issue was not, therefore, a difference in religious structures, but a crucial difference in faith-allegiance. The kinds of ritual, behavior patterns, places and times of meeting, music (if any), prayer times and postures, even doctrinal formulations are quite incidental to the allegiance that is being expressed through them. (Ibid: 118)

[While recognizing that both Christians and Muslims are strongly attached to their respective religious structures, he nevertheless states:] I believe, however, that it would be thoroughly biblical to work toward a recombination of Christian allegiance with so-called Muslim

religious structures.... Indeed,... I believe that this is what Muhammad himself was trying to do: to combine an allegiance to the Judeo-Christian God with Arabic cultural structures. Abraham and Moses and Paul before him had performed similar recombinations between that allegiance and the cultures within which they worked. (Ibid)

The idea that one can fill Muslim forms with Christian meanings has become standard fare in seminars, conferences and books on ministry to Muslims. The Zwemer Institute's *Muslim Awareness Seminar* is a good example; the notebook has a substantial section on "The Relation of Form and Structure to Spirit" (e.g. D. McCurry & C. Glasser 1980). In a chapter on "Form and Meaning" in *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism*, Phil Parshall speaks in terms of "reinterpreting" the Muslim practices.

Of course, if we try to spread the gospel to Muslims by building on the similarities between Islamic practices and certain features of Christianity, these practices will all require a certain measure of reinterpretation. But it does seem that the closer we can relate to Muslim form, the more positive will be the response to our message, particularly in initial instances of evangelistic effort. (...)

It should be pointed out that the Muslim performs all these obligations as a means of obtaining merit. This, of course is incompatible with the Christian message of grace. But [he concludes] what the Muslim needs is a change of focus (i.e., meaning) rather than a mere change of form. (1980:59)

C—Overview of the Translational Model

Before entering into my critique of the translational model, it would be helpful to give a brief overview of the model in terms of its position on several key theological issues. The positions taken on these questions represent the principal components of the model and together constitute the model.

The Objective of Mission: This model views the objective, as far as the church is concerned, in terms of the emergence of "a people movement to Christ that remains within Islam, i.e. a "Muslim church" composed of "Muslim Christians" (for a recent article with a somewhat different take on the model see Brislen 1996).

Theology of Non-Christian Religion: It views Islam and Islamic culture neither negatively or positively, but rather as a "neutral vehicle" for the contextualization of the gospel and the church; all cultures are equally valid.

Contextual Starting Point: On the basis of the supposed neutrality of Islamic culture, the process of contextualization is launched from *within* Islam. This means that, on the level of theology, select passages of the Qur'an are used as a "theological starting point" or source of Truth for proclaiming the gospel (e.g. trying to prove the crucifixion on the basis of certain qur'anic passages). On the level of the church, it means importing Muslim forms, such as the ritual prayer, into the convert church and

attempting to fill them with *Christian* meanings.

Cross-cultural Hermeneutic: The above approach to contextualization involves what I have called a *hermeneutic of synthesis*. By *synthesis* I mean a hermeneutic that interprets the Bible and Christian forms along with the Qur'an and Muslim forms in such a way as to more or less bring the Christian and Muslim perspectives closer together into a kind of dialectical unity. I shall have more to say about this later.

The strength of the model lies in the fact that it takes Muslim culture seriously. As for its weaknesses, I shall go into those in some detail in the next article as I outline the framework of my proposed alternative model.

BOOK REVIEWS

Christ in Islam and Christianity, Robinson, Neal, SUNY Press, Albany NY, 1991, 235pp, reviewed by Abe Wiebe

I was drawn to acquire this book by the summary written by the publisher which states: "*Christ in Islam and Christianity* is an analysis of the different approaches to Jesus in the Qur'an and in the classical commentaries. The author presents controversial suggestions about the relevance of the Qur'anic representation of Jesus and Mary to Muhammad and his message. Included are extensive translations of extracts from the classical commentaries including Sunni, Mu'tazilite, Shia and Sufi." (Neal Robinson is Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, the College of St. Paul and St. Mary, England.) Being especially interested in the questions of Christian-Muslim dialogue, I anticipated that there would be substantial help here with regard to the controversies surrounding Jesus, his person and his redemptive mission to mankind.

The book is divided into seventeen short chapters, well laid out and well written, each presenting a specific aspect of the debate (e.g. Muhammad and the Christians, Jesus' Return: Qur'an 4:159) and concluding with a summary section for further discussion. The first seven chapters, or sixty pages, are very useful as they provide a superb introduction to the topic.

The last ten chapters are much heavier in content and in style. They concen-

trate on how five of the major classical Islamic commentaries, al-Tabari, Zamakhshari, al-Razi, al-Baydawi, and Ibn Kathir, treat key questions relevant to the person of Jesus Christ. The questions under discussion are Jesus' Return, The Crucifixion, The Meaning of *Tawaffa*, The Interpretation of *Shubbiha la-Hum*, The Creating of birds from Clay, the Raising of the Dead, and The Virginal Conception. Each subject is considered as cited in the Qur'an and then as interpreted by the above list of authorities.

Unfortunately, I found little that could be of help in the exchanges that I inevitably have with my Muslim friends. What Robinson presents is for the most part an expansion of the Qur'anic text and teaching about Jesus from the standpoint of the understanding of the classical commentators. He is obviously a competent Islamic scholar with a firm grasp of both Arabic and the Qur'an. His unwritten conclusion is that there is no allowance in the classical commentaries for anything close to a biblical interpretation, if indeed they would even understand such.

Personally, I was disappointed that Robinson did not seek to introduce a stronger Christian analysis. Biblical references are rare and there is little attempt made to point out inconsistencies in Islamic reasoning or to demonstrate how the whole of the Qur'anic foundations are at variance with the Scriptures. In this light the title of the book is a misnomer. It would be more

accurate to simply refer to the work as "Christ in Islam". We are left with the conclusion that the Muslim polemicists and commentators began with the unquestioned dogma that the Qur'an was entirely accurate and that the Christian Scriptures were false. This is hardly surprising. We may share such an outlook in reverse order. But it remains for someone other than Robinson to show us how to move from such a position to effective interaction in open-hearted love with our Muslim friends created in God's image and worthy of His grace.

***Why I am not a Muslim*, Ibn Warraq, Prometheus Books, N.York, 1995, 360 pages, reviewed by Abe Wiebe**

Never have I read a book that is so openly critical of Islam, its tenets, its culture, its history and its influence on today's world. Writing under an obvious pseudonym, Ibn Warraq, who now lives and teaches in Ohio, plunges right into his thesis from the very first pages. His observations are well supported, his analysis is without apology and his attacks against Islam are daring and well aimed. Much of his writing is frankly brutal. If you agree with him, you can only conclude that the world would be much better off had Islam never existed.

Ibn Warraq postures himself as an open-minded crusader in favour of a society governed by intellectual secularism and producing a thoroughly humanistic culture. To quote the author himself, "human reason or rationality is the ultimate arbiter of rights," communal and individual. By

this he means rights in all the diverse areas of human endeavour or behaviour, be they religion, governance or human relationships, be they in a pagan, Christian, Jewish or Muslim context. The mind is the only avenue through which there is any hope of finding an equitable understanding of man's existence. Therefore, it is not surprising that he draws his sword repeatedly against 'revealed truth' or imposed religious structures. These, he claims, are the cause of the world's woes. Actually the title of the book is a misnomer. It should have read, "Why I am not a Muslim, a Christian, a Jew or anything similar."

To my way of thinking the book merits as full-blown exposure in the media as the publication of Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. But the western media has long since decided to play it safe when confronting Islam. Things might get nasty, so why look for trouble.

The first hundred pages, along with the concluding chapter, are the main carriers of Ibn Warraq's ideas. He first chastises the uncritical thinking of the western experts. Then he reviews the origins of Islam, highlighting the serious problem of the insufficient credible sources needed to substantiate what Muslims and Orientalists have been telling us about how Islam arose and how the Qur'an was constituted. He agrees with Wansbrough, Cook and Crone, a trio of orientalists who hold that Islam grew as much out of the traditions and collective efforts of the Muslim teachers of the 8th and 9th centuries as out of the direct revelations

that the Prophet supposedly received from the Angel Gabriel. (We remember that Muhammad's dates are normally given as 570-632). The implications of such assertions are revolutionary in our understanding of Islamic history and culture.

Having made this point, Ibn Warraq then proceeds to engage in a long analysis of the composition and message of the Qur'an, which for all Muslims is the ultimate authority of their faith. This section is tedious and suffers from over-kill. His general conclusion seem to be, 'there is no soundness in it anywhere.'

The succeeding chapters are fairly predictable and reveal very little that is new. He touches on such topics as, *The Totalitarian Nature Of Islam*, *Arab Conquests And The Position Of The Non-Muslim Subject*, *Women In Islam*, etc. In each he quotes extensively from both modern and ancient sources; however his arguments are not as sharp as in the earlier sections. One gets the impression that he has long ago decided that all of Islam is irreparably bad and is now merely citing examples to prove his point.

The final chapter, "Islam in the West," should be must reading for everyone. The author delineates how Muslims have profited from British 'softness' to move into a powerful position within that society, claiming their rights at the expense of the British democratic institutions. Islam, he says, has nothing but contempt for the liberal democratic nation-state. He quotes Dr. Badawi who says, "Islam is a universal

religion, its aim is to bring its message to all corners of the earth." Or again citing an Imam from Bradford, "Islam must be accepted uncritically as the divine revelation by non-Muslims as well as Muslims and thus be reflected in the structure and conduct of the state and of society." He does not contest Islam's right to express itself in Britain on an equal footing. He maintains, however, that, while pluralism is a necessary ingredient in our society, our unquestioned acceptance of multiculturalism as a child of relativism makes us incapable of criticizing cultures on any basis and of making cross-cultural judgments. However, he states, if we value freedom, such critical examination is absolutely necessary. Ibn Warraq believes that the time has come to speak out passionately. He has shown us how!