

SEEDBED

First quarter 1988
Subscription: \$5.00 (U.S.)

Vol. III, No. 1
Editor: Sam Schlorff

SEEDBED is a publication focusing on church planting in the Arab World. Its purpose is to serve as a forum and channel of ideas and information useful to those involved in church planting in the Arab World. Subscription is by invitation, to those associated with the missionary enterprise. Nothing contained herein may be published except by permission. Correspondence, articles or book reviews should be sent to: SEEDBED, P.O. Box 96, Upper Darby, PA 19082 U.S.A.

SEEDBED is published four times yearly. Subscriptions in U.S. dollars should be sent to the above address; addresses of agents receiving subscriptions in Pounds Sterling and French francs will be supplied on request. Subscriptions begin with the first and end with the fourth numbers of each year.

IN THIS ISSUE:

CONTEXTUALIZATION IN ISLAMIC SOCIETY: ISSUES AND POSITIONS
A CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR STYLES OF ARABIC BIBLE TRANSLATIONS,
by David Owen

RECENT SIGNIFICANT JOURNAL ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS:

Islam and Christianity at the Crossroads, by Chewkat Georges
Moucarry

A WORD ABOUT THIS ISSUE: For 10 years, contextualization has been a much-debated topic in missionary circles. The lead article summarizes seven broad issues relative to contextualization in Islamic society. We would appreciate your feedback: Are there important issues or positions you feel have been omitted? Any misrepresentations or distortions? Any significant matters overlooked? Did you find the article helpful? or confusing? Please take a moment and write us.

OLD BUSINESS: We invited 19 or 20 people to respond to David Owen's article in the last issue but only 5 responses have been received so far. Important issues were raised which need to be discussed and critiqued. Let us hear from more of you. There's still time.

CONTEXTUALIZATION IN ISLAMIC SOCIETY:
ISSUES AND POSITIONS

By S. S.

Many groups have struggled to find a clear position on the question of contextualization. Perhaps they fear compromise, or they find that the substantive issues are clouded by a multitude of related questions. In either event, the tensions between socio-cultural forms and the unchanging nature of the gospel must be adequately resolved. My purpose is to attempt to clarify the picture by briefly outlining what I consider to be the main issues involved, the principal positions on each, and the principal problems that remain. I include both contextualization on the socio-cultural level (also called indigenization) as well as on the theological level. It should be noted that the issues are interconnected, the position taken on one often affecting how one views another.

I. The causes of Islamic resistance to the gospel and to the church. While there are recognizable secondary factors (e.g. the Palestinian issue and Western support for Zionism--see Anderson 1976:283-288), many attribute the lack of missionary success to one or two primary causes.

A. Some hold that the theological differences between Christianity and Islam are the primary reason results are so few. Important as these differences are, many today question that they are the primary cause.

B. In recent years, it has become popular to lay the blame on the missionary, and especially the policy of "extracting" the convert from his culture and imposing "western" cultural forms (e.g. Anderson 1976:288-290; Parshall 1985:21). Missionary extractionism by itself, however, hardly accounts for the centuries of rejection that we see.

C. A third view holds the principal cause to be the ideological nature of Islamic society which requires structures for segregating non-Muslims from the Muslim majority that are intrinsically unjust (see IV below). This has generally given rise to a secondary cause: the minority Christian communities have erected linguistic and social barriers as a protective measure against the inroads of the Muslim majority. These two factors explain the paucity of results as well as extractionism itself.

II. The theological evaluation of Islam, especially the criteria used. This determines the way the receptor culture is used in the contextualization process, and the forms that are actually used. Views on Islam have varied widely over the years, from those which are basically negative (e.g. the 19th C. polemic) to those which are mostly positive (e.g. the fulfilment doctrine). This is because Christians are not agreed as to the criterion by which religions should be judged. The various approaches may be classified as:

A. Those which approach evaluation from a supposedly "neutral" standpoint, such as the "marks" of the true religion (Pfander & Tisdall 1910:9-39), or the "essence of religion."

B. Those which use a "theological" criterion, the most popular being the historic Christian message on the person and work of Christ (e.g. Zwemer 1920). This criterion is variously understood, however (see e.g. Cragg 1977:63-64).

C. An alternative view, based on Romans 1-2, holds that religions should be judged by what they have done with the intuitive knowledge of God and of His law received via general revelation. On that basis, they see in Islam both the "Divine approach" (general revelation) and "human rejection," expressed in the repression of that knowledge and the substitution of distortions and half-truths (Bavinck 1966:117-127).

III. **The goal of contextualization in relation to Islamic society.** The planting of the church is generally recognized to be one of the goals of Mission. But how should this goal be understood in relation to Islam in particular? Opinions on the subject differ considerably.

A. Some have understood the goal in terms of the more or less radical destruction of Islam and its territorial displacement by Christianity (e.g. the 19th C. polemicists).

B. Others view the objective in terms of the "fulfilment" of that which is incomplete by that which is complete (Jones 1959:245-6). In recent years, the program of inter-religious dialogue of the ecumenical movement has espoused a concept of mutual fulfilment; it envisages the emergence of a global "community of communities" in which each religion and culture has a part (W.C.C. 1979:6, 9f). This latter idea would seem to have abandoned the idea of church planting altogether, at least for the Muslim World.

C. In evangelical circles, stress is placed on winning Muslims to allegiance to Christ, training them in discipleship, and gathering them into churches rooted in some way in Islamic society. There is disagreement as to whether the goal should include social involvement as well as evangelism.

IV. **The place of the Muslim Convert Church in Islamic society (the Ummah).** The question of the relationship of the church to society has always been somewhat controversial, but the issue is of critical importance in the Muslim world. The relationship of Muslim converts and convert churches to Muslim society constitutes a major missionary problem.

Traditionally, as a "protected" people ("Dhimmis"), Christians are segregated into subject ghetto communities ("Milletts"). The Muslim community imposed segregation on the church as a means of realizing the ideal of ordering every aspect of life by Islamic law (Moffett 1987:481-483). With its legal barriers to the conversion of Muslims

to Christianity and its inducements to Christians to become Muslim (Law of Apostasy, Family Law, etc.), Islamic law has been able effectively to hinder the church from exercising its normal "yeast" function in society (Gibb & Kramers 1953, articles "Dhimma," "Djizya," "Kharaj," "Murtadd," and "Talak [VII]"). In this century, the inequalities of the Millet system have been mitigated somewhat by the adoption of Western-style constitutions in many Muslim countries. The structure is still intact, however; with the rising tide of fundamentalism and increasing inter-communal strife, we may well see a hardening of attitudes and a return to the letter of the law.

The conversion of a Muslim usually triggers a rejection mechanism which reminds one of the "transplant rejection" phenomenon in medicine. Converts are cut off from the family and society, and if the traditional sanction against "apostasy" (i.e. death) is not applied, they are forced either to return to Islam, to join one of the ghetto communities, or to immigrate to the West.

In response, the Christian community has attempted to preserve its identity by using a distinctive religious language and by raising social barriers. (I am describing the Arab World especially at this point, but Christians have responded in similar ways elsewhere.) Christians are often suspicious of Muslim converts and slow to accept them as true Christians. This response is understandable and perhaps necessary, but is nevertheless a major hindrance to the evangelization of Muslims. The principal approaches to the problem are:

A. Traditionally, Muslim converts were either integrated into existing churches, or formed into churches which still rely on the traditional ecclesiastical language, forms and symbols which tend to cause misunderstanding and alienate Muslims. In either case, the result has been the "extraction" of converts into ghetto churches.

B. Some apparently feel that the solution is to push for the acceptance of the principle of religious pluralism in the Muslim world (see e.g. the interesting discussion in W.C.C. 1976:444-452). This may be ideal, but does not seem to be very realistic, given the intensity of the Muslim desire for an Islamic State and the growth of Islamic fundamentalism.

C. Recent missiological thinking has focused on finding ways to circumvent the Millet system and keep it from thwarting Christian penetration of Islamic society. The theory is that if Muslim converts learn to express the Christian faith and life in Islamic terms and are gathered into churches which use Islamic cultural forms (see V and VI below), this just might deactivate the rejection mechanism and permit such churches to take root within Islamic society (Wilder 1977; Parshall 1985).

Others, however, reject the idea as a contradiction in terms and a compromise of the gospel. They feel that the gospel itself requires the rejection of everything associated with Islam, even if it involves extractionism. To keep the controversy in perspective, we

must acknowledge that the theory has not really been tested. We simply do not know if Christians of Islamic culture will be tolerated in Muslim society any more than other Christians. Moreover, if this approach is to succeed, it must "sell" itself to the existing churches in the Muslim world which resist anything "Islamic," tending to feel threatened by such efforts. The churches of Muslim culture must have fraternal relations with those churches if they are to take their rightful place in the Body of Christ. On the other hand, can we afford to simply continue as before without trying to break the strangle-hold of the Dhimmi system of Islamic Law?

V. **The use of Islamic cultural forms in the Muslim convert church.** (By "cultural forms" I mean rituals, customs, institutions and material objects, as opposed to theological forms which will be treated in VI.) This issue has generated considerable controversy in recent years. Positions vary immensely.

A. As we have seen, some adamantly oppose the idea of using Islamic forms as a compromise of the gospel.

B. Others feel it is possible to circumvent the Millet system by planting churches of Muslim cultural expression (e.g. Parshall 1985). They accept the principle of Muslim converts using Islamic cultural forms, but often have very different ideas as to how they may be used, and which forms may be used and which must be rejected. The translation model--the idea of a "dynamic equivalence church"--has been proposed as a solution (Kraft 1979a:315-327; 1979b:114-128).

The idea is interesting, but the use of Islamic forms raises hermeneutical questions to which completely satisfactory solutions have not yet been given. Just how is the form to be interpreted in the Muslim convert church? When a form is used, how can one be certain that a Christian, not a Muslim, meaning will be communicated? Islam and Christianity have a long history of using religious symbols and practices that are similar in form but have different, and often conflicting, meanings. Bible translators at least have an objective standard against which they may measure the faithfulness of a translation--the original text. Church planters have no original church to use as a measure of "dynamic equivalence." All they have is the New Testament which only gives the broad parameters of how the church should be organized and should function. As a consequence, the concept of "dynamic equivalence" as a model for church planting makes for considerable subjectivity. The problem is that there is no criterion for distinguishing those uses of Islamic forms which communicate authentically Biblical meanings from those which are syncretistic. Theological ambiguity may accompany the use of a form, or the wrong meaning may be unwittingly communicated, unless further attention is given to these questions (1).

VI. **The use of the Qur'an and Islamic thought in communicating the gospel.** How this is done determines whether or not the theology of the church being planted will remain faithful to the Scriptures. There are two main positions.

A. The first holds that if Christians are ever to cross the tremendous semantic and cultural barriers separating them from Muslims and effectively communicate the gospel, they must start "from within Islam." They must seek out those gleams of "truth" that are on our side and build on this "Christian potential" to the truth of the gospel (see e.g. Cragg 1979:196-207). In sum, the approach uses the Qur'an and Islam as a theological starting point.

B. The second position holds that the Qur'an and Islamic thought should be used only as a linguistic and cultural vehicle for the communication of the gospel. Such a use is not only legitimate but is also necessary to help Muslims better understand the Biblical message. The only theological starting point which the Christian may legitimately use is the Bible. However useful it may be linguistically, the Qur'an cannot be used theologically; not only does it contain nothing that favors "our side" but such a use is basically syncretistic.

VII. The hermeneutical methods used to interpret the Bible and the Qur'an in the cross-cultural communication of the gospel. The receptor language and culture must be used to communicate the Biblical message if it is to be understood at all. The method used is crucial as it determines how the message will be understood and whether that understanding will faithfully reflect the meaning of the original. In Islamic society, the hermeneutical task is complicated by the fact that one must communicate the Biblical message in relation to a rival "scripture," the Qur'an, which is the single most important formative influence in Islamic culture. How we use the Qur'an in communicating the Biblical message impacts directly on how Muslims understand that message. Traditional methods of exegesis, being mono-cultural, have generally been unable to cope with the tremendous semantic gap separating the two communities. A method is required that is adequate to the interpretation of both books. Here again, we find two methods, comparable to the above two positions.

A. The first, which may be called the synthetic method, approaches the task by using the Qur'an theologically to attempt to bring Biblical and Qur'anic meanings closer together (see e.g. Cragg 1971). It is noteworthy that many who have taken an otherwise conservative stance on Islam have nevertheless sought to give certain Qur'anic passages "Christian" meanings (e.g. Tisdall 1904:104-167). Critics feel that this method tends to undercut the authority of the Bible, distorts its message, and is basically syncretistic.

B. The second may be called an analytic method in that it seeks to interpret each book in terms of its own language system and cultural context, avoiding the theological use of the Qur'an. As yet, however, nothing has been published applying an analytic approach to the special problems associated with interpreting the Biblical message in relation to the Qur'an.(2) What would be particularly useful to translators and communicators is a study of the semantics of Qur'anic language similar to what has been done for the Bible, which compares and contrasts the semantics of the two books.

To conclude, the issues involved in contextualization with reference to Islamic society are complex and the pitfalls enormous. Is it any wonder then that Christians have often fallen into one or another of these pitfalls along the way? I have sought to clarify the issues and highlight what we have learned so far about the basic problem, but unanswered questions remain (see IV and V) and above all there is much work to be done if we are to have a cross-cultural hermeneutic that is adequate to the task. Perhaps you have an observation or suggestion to add to the above, or a critique to make. All feedback is welcome and should be sent to the editor.

Notes

1. In a recent article, Paul Hiebert summarizes a promising methodology for obtaining answers to these and similar questions, which calls for working through the issue with the emerging church (1987: 109-111). What we now need instead of more speculation on this question is for those in a position to do so to consult with a group of Muslim converts using this methodology and write up what they learn.

2. Existing studies in cross-cultural hermeneutics are nevertheless still helpful (e.g. Padilla 1980).

References Cited

- Anderson, John D.C.
1976 "The Missionary Approach to Islam: Christian or 'Cultic'," in Missiology 4 (July '76):285-300.
- Bavinck, J.H.
[1966] The Church Between Temple and Mosque. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Cragg, Kenneth
1971 The Event of the Qur'an. London: George Allen & Unwin.
1979 "Islamic Theology: Limits and Bridges," in The Gospel and Islam: A 1978 Compendium. Ed. Don M. McCurry. Monrovia, CA: MARC, pp.196-207.
- Gibb, H.A.R. & Kramers, J.H.
1953 Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Hiebert, Paul
1987 "Critical Contextualization," in International Bulletin of Missionary Research 11/3 (July '87):104-111.
- Jones, L. Bevan
1959 The People of the Mosque. Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press.
- Kraft, Charles
1979a Christianity in Culture. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

SEEDBED III/1 p. 8

- 1979b "Dynamic Equivalence Churches in Muslim Society," in The Gospel and Islam: A 1978 Compendium. pp. 114-128.
- Moffett, Samuel H.
1987 "Early Asian Christian Approaches to Non-Christian Cultures," in Missiology 15 (Oct. '87): 473-486.
- Padilla, C. Rene
1980 "Hermeneutics and Culture: A Theological Perspective," in Down to Earth. Eds. Stott & Coote. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp. 63-78.
- Parshall, Phil
1985 Beyond the Mosque: Christians within Muslim Community. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- Pfander, Carl G., & Tisdall W. S.
1910 The Mizanu'l Haqq (Balance of Truth). Rev. & Enlarged by W. S. Tisdall. London: Religious Tract Society.
- Tisdall, William S.
1904 Christian Reply to Muslim Objections Reprint Ed. Villach, Austria: Light of Life, 1980.
- Wilder, John W.
1977 "Some Reflections on Possibilities for People Movements Among Muslims," in Missiology 5 (July '77):301-320.
- World Council of Churches
1976 "Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wah" [Dialogue Papers & Discussion at Chambesy 1976], in International Review of Mission 65 (Oct '76):365-486.
- 1979 Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Zwemer, Samuel M.
1920 Christianity, the Final Religion. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
-

A CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR STYLES OF ARABIC BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

By David Owen

After many years of both reading and writing in the field of Arabic Bible translation, I have grown aware of the need for a system of more precise and unified terminology to adequately describe this activity. For this reason, I am offering the following graphic representation as an initial and possible solution to this need. An-

other major factor that is putting pressure on all who work in this field is the Islamic renewal of the past two decades. We have suddenly found ourselves in a new religio-linguistic climate that may demand of Bible translators a different style of language if we are to maintain genuinely receptor-oriented communication.

The chart which I have prepared takes into consideration two primary elements of style involved in the translation formula: religious orientation (RO) and level of formality (LF). When plotted with respect to each other, these factors produce the following theoretical combinations.

ecclesiastical-literary	neutral-literary	Islamic-literary
ecclesiastical-standard	neutral-standard	Islamic-standard
ecclesiastical-colloquial	neutral-colloquial	Islamic-colloquial

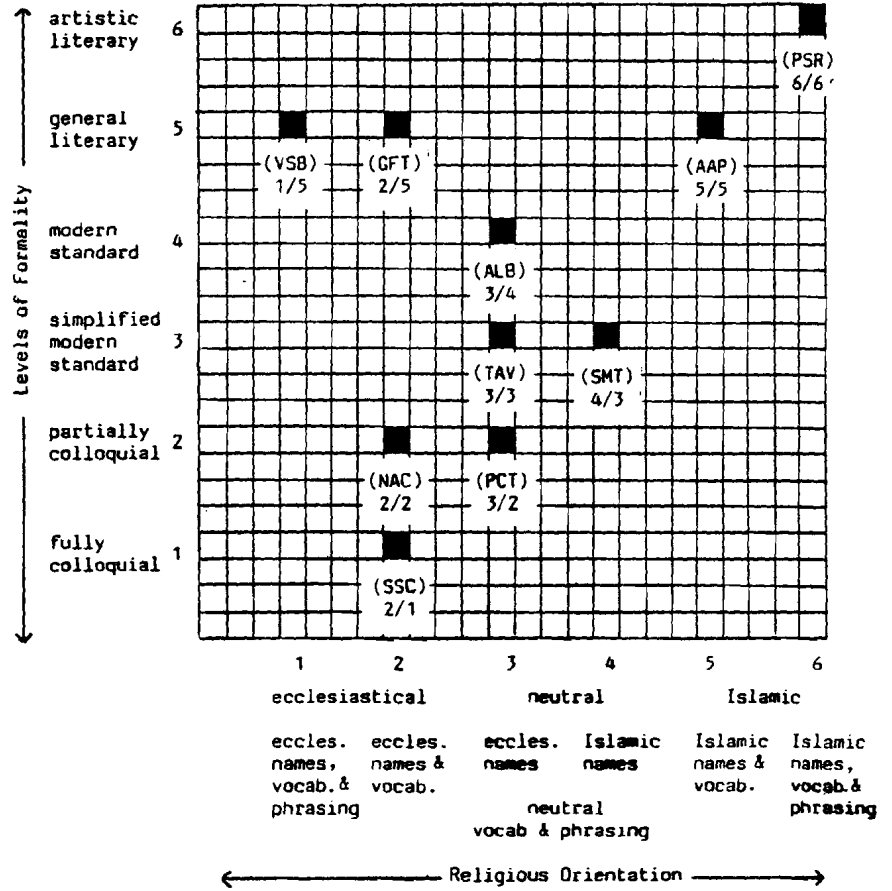
This classification is descriptive only and is not a measure of effectiveness. Each particular style can potentially serve a different but legitimate function depending on one's goals and who the receptor audience is.

I am assuming that these nine categories need no further explanation, their meanings being self-evident to those who have at least an elementary understanding of the Arabic language. But please note that I am encouraging the use of the expression "ecclesiastical Arabic" rather than the more commonly heard "Christian Arabic." I have found the latter term to be both ambiguous and quite often misunderstood. What I mean by "ecclesiastical Arabic" is that its primary function is pastoral and it is suitable for use only within the traditional Arab Christian communities.

The charted positions of the ten translations (most of which are only scripture portions) are tentative for the following three reasons: 1) The categories are only briefly defined and could include intermediate stages (e.g. 2.5 between 2 and 3); 2) I have not yet done a thorough study of all these translations with my newly-defined categories in mind; 3) I have not yet asked all the translation teams where they themselves would place their work. Therefore, the charted positions are only an estimation based on what I perceive to be the goal of the various translation teams. If you feel a translation has been mispositioned, please write me about it. I should add that the "neutral" RO points of 3 and 4 are idealistic. In reality, this category of neutrality is proportionally somewhat narrower than its neighbors.

Finally I propose that this system of measurement be given the name "the Maqdisi Scale" in honor of the city of its birth, Bayt el-Maqdis. I am currently preparing another scale that will enable us to identify and plot the various exegetical methods that could be utilized in translating the Bible into Arabic. All feedback is welcome as we seek to more clearly define the parameters of what is becoming an increasingly important field of specialized missiological research. My address: P.O. Box 52103, Durham, N.C. 27717, USA.

THE MAQDISI SCALE
(Draft # 2, 9/87)



KEY TO TRANSLATIONS

- | | |
|--|--|
| AAP = Afif Ausayran - Psalms | PSR = Project Sunrise - Gospel Harmony |
| ALB = Arabic Living Bible - NT | SSC = Southern Sudanese Colloquial- NT |
| GFT = George Fakhouri (Paulist) - NT | SMT = Subhi Malik - NT |
| NAC = North African Colloquial - Bible | TAV = Today's Arabic Version - NT |
| PCT = Palestinian Colloquial - Gospels | VSB = Van Dyck, Smith, Bustani - Bible |

RECENT SIGNIFICANT JOURNAL ARTICLES

[Note: Since this feature is new, a few significant articles over 2 years old were included. I wish to thank readers who sent clippings or photocopies of published articles of possible interest to readers (may I encourage others to do so as well). If you would like to obtain an article abstracted here, we will be happy to send you a photocopy (reimbursement is requested for long articles).]

Apologetics/ Relationship of Christianity to Other Religions

"Exclusivism, Tolerance and Truth," by Harold Netland, in Missiology 15/2 (April '87):77-95. An excellent article for those wrestling with the problem of the relationship of Christianity to other religions. Today, influential voices are attacking Christian exclusivism, which maintains "the uniqueness and normativity of the person and work of Jesus Christ," as inherently intolerant or based on faulty notions of religious truth. The author examines these arguments and shows them to be deficient. He concludes that if we are to have an understanding of the relation of the religions that is epistemologically sound and accurately portrays their values and beliefs, something like traditional Christian exclusivism is unavoidable.

"Truth in Other Religions," by Ajith Fernando, in ERT 11/4 (Oct '87):292-301. From the book, The Christian's Attitude Toward World Religions, published by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton IL, in 1987. The author is National Director of Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka. Another helpful article that seeks to give an evangelical perspective on other religions, this one looks at the question of truth in other religions. The author holds that other religions teach truth we can affirm, but that these truths cannot save and do not have the divine authority of the Bible (special revelation). He briefly goes into what this means in terms of the Christian being open to learn from others (our perception of God's revelation is always incomplete), but rejecting the religious system itself.

"The Thermodynamical Triple Point: Implications for the Trinity," by Michael J. Bozack, in JASA 39/1 (March '87):39-41. The one who sent us this article comments: I am convinced that the best way to present the Trinity to a Muslim or any serious inquirer is to show him the Biblical verses upon which the doctrine is based. However this does not preclude the use of a good analogy. Over the years, many have used the three states of water to illustrate the Trinity, and I have heard one convert mention that the Lord used it to help him. I praise the Lord for this, but personally I have always had trouble with this analogy because it really represents trimodalism. We all know it does not really illustrate what we mean, but how to explain the Trinity is difficult. Therefore, I think that this ar-

ticle can be helpful to those who work among Muslims. It may be a bit complicated for the average person but we should all have a copy for the occasional serious inquirer with a scientific background who could benefit from it. The phenomenon described comes closer to illustrating the Trinity than other analogies so far.

Contextualization--the Church

"Early Asian Christian Approaches to Non-Christian Cultures," by Samuel H. Moffet, in Missiology 15/4 (Oct '87):473-486. A study of the models of mission/contextualization in the Nestorian church before and after the Muslim conquest. After a brief look at two early theologians, five models are examined in some detail. Some of the details are fascinating; e.g. Asian ascetics, unlike their counterparts in the west, led the movement for renewal and mission because their sense of call to go out and minister was greater than the monastic urge. Of greatest relevance to the missionary to Muslims is the model he calls "the Patriarch in His Christian Ghetto," in which a hostile society segregates the Christian minority into a subject ghetto community. This system, forced upon the Persian church by the Sassanid Empire in the 3rd and 4th centuries, was continued by the Arab invaders in 642 and became the "millah" system of Islam. It is still operative in the Middle East despite tremendous political and social changes that have occurred over the years.

"Fitting Third-World Believers with Christian Worldview Glasses," by David Hesselgrave, in JETS 30/2 June '87):215-222. Many Christians, in the West as well as in the Third World, often retain a sub-Christian worldview after their conversion. The author addresses what he feels to be a main reason for this. He shows how a Christian worldview may be effectively communicated, drawing upon a case study of a work among illiterates in Indonesia by H. R. Weber. He feels one main reason is the way we have approached translating the Bible and have catechized new believers in a rather theoretical topical manner. He then proposes some principles to be observed in teaching new believers which will help them acquire 'Christian Worldview glasses.' Helpful.

Islam

"Autour de l'Islam," an interview with Sheikh Imam Mohamed al-Ghazali, by Mustapha Chelfi, in Algerie Actualite No. 1057 (16-22 Jan. 1986):37-39. In this interesting exchange with a leading Muslim theologian [current position not given], the interviewer does not hesitate to ask difficult questions: Why the backwardness of Muslims vis-a-vis the West? What about the non-separation of the spiritual from the temporal as one reason, as Renan has said? Why the inability of Muslim thinkers to engage in a healthy self-criticism? How can political adversaries go to war against each other and claim to be Muslim? etc (he brings up the death of Sadat). The Sheikh seems to be well-informed, and his answers are interesting but typical.

"Articles from Islamic Journals: An Islamic Perspective on Dialogue," by Penelope Johnstone, in Islamochristiana 13 ('87):131-171. After a five page introduction, the author translates twelve articles from Arabic, published in Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar and the U.A.E. over the last two years, on the subject of Christian-Muslim dialogue. Although it concerns mostly Vatican efforts at dialogue (similar in many ways to that of the W.C.C.), it is always instructive to see what the other side is saying.

Islam--Male-Female Relationships

"Women in Islam: Equity, Equality, and the Search for the Natural Order," by Jane I. Smith, in JAAR 47/4:517-537. One of the best studies on the subject I have seen, the article gives an even-handed evaluation of male-female relationships in Islam, avoiding the exaggerations of apologetics on the one hand and of hyper-criticism on the other. After a brief exposition of the Qur'anic position--that God has given men authority over women, the author summarizes the situation of women in Arab society before the advent of Islam and after. Islam made certain improvements in relation to marriage, divorce, inheritance and religious rights and duties. It is nevertheless recognized that major problems were also created for women through their seclusion, lack of education, and certain provisions in marriage and divorce law. The author lists the principal reforms that have been introduced in the last century to correct these problems. Finally, after examining what a number of Muslims, including women, have written, she concludes that little true understanding of the situation of women in Islam is possible unless one looks at it from within the Islamic perspective.

Islam in Europe

"La France, banlieue de l'Islam [France, Suburb of Islam], by Gilles Kepel, in Le Nouvel Observateur, No. 1196 (9 to 15 Octobre 1987). This article represents 5 pages of extracts from the book by the same title, published in October 1987 by Editions du Seuil, highlighting the reverberations of the Islamic revolution in France in the last few years. The author is a government researcher with the CNRS. In his introductory remarks, the editor of the N.O. states that there are now more than 1000 mosques and over 600 Islamic associations in France, and that all this has happened since 1970! France now has some 2 1/2 to 3 million Muslims, mainly North Africans. Extracts from the book follow: the description of a certain "quartier" of Paris now become a center of Islamic activity; how the Muslim population, most of them blue-collar workers, has been transformed into militant propagandists for Islamic revolution; the impact of the success of the Iranian revolution; the proliferation of groups competing for petrodollars from the Arabian peninsula; the explosion of violence between two competing Shiite groups. The article concludes by giving us a look at some of the discussion going on about

the "integration" or "insertion" of such a cultural-ideological "bloc" into a pluralistic society such as exists in France.

North Africa--The Early Church

"The Death of a Church: Remarks on the Presumed Reasons for the Disappearance of the 'First Church' in North West Africa," by Ulrich Schoen, in TR, 2/1 (April '79):3-20. An important study on the reasons for the disappearance of the early church in North Africa after the Muslim invasion, by a professor at N.E.S.T. and former Reformed Church pastor in North Africa. After surveying the relevant historical facts (includes a list of the different cultural groups involved), Schoen examines and evaluates ten theories that have been put forward to explain this mystery. This section is a gold-mine of bibliographical and other information on the subject, with summaries of scholarly works in French, German and English. Schoen then draws some conclusions, but is unfortunately totally pessimistic about prospects for planting Muslim convert churches in North Africa.

Dealing with Terrorism.

"On Your Guard—Meeting the Threat of Terrorism," and "Kidnapped! A 'Successful Hostage' Will Emerge Alive," by Chester L. Quarles, in EMQ 23/3 & 4 (July & Oct '87):258-267, 342-349. The way things are going, expatriate Christians living or traveling in the Arab world may find themselves increasingly the targets of terrorists. If you fall into that category, these two articles are for you. The first article focuses on understanding terrorists and simple precautions you can take, especially when travelling, to lessen the chances of being a victim. The second focuses on what to do in a hostage situation to survive. By a law enforcement expert.

Journals Mentioned

Evangelical Missions Quarterly. EMIS, 25W560 Geneva Rd, Bx 794, Wheaton IL 60189, USA
Evangelical Review of Theology. Paternoster Press, 3 Mt. Radford Crescent, Exeter EX2 4JW, UK
Islamochristiana. PISAI, Piazza S. Appolinare 49, 00186 Rome, ITALY
Journal of the American Academy of Religion. Scholars Press, 819 Houston Mill Rd. N.E., Atlanta, GA 30329-4218, USA
Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation. American Scientific Affiliation, P.O. Box 668, Ipswich, MA 01938, USA.
Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. c/o Dr. Kistemaker, RTS, 5422 Clinton Blvd. Jackson, MS 39209, USA
Missiology. 616 Walnut Ave., Scottsdale PA 15683-1999, USA
Theological Review. Near East School of Theology, P.O. Box 11-7424. Beirut, Lebanon.

BOOK REVIEWS

Chawkat Georges Moucarray, Islam and Christianity at the Crossroads trans. David Monkcom. Lion Publishing (121 High St., Berkhamstead, Herts, England), 1988, 110pp. L4.95. Reviewer: P.J.B.

This book is more than just another apologetic retracing the same ground that has exercised Christian-Muslim interchanges for the last 1300 years. Chawkat brings to these old subjects a new urgency which helps the contemporary reader in his evaluation of the issues.

The chapters "Islam, an Alternative Religion?" and "Israel, God's Chosen People?" open up for us a perspective on the role of the Christian in the State. What we have here is not merely an assessment of the tragic events in Palestine. Chawkat correctly perceives that the existence of the Zionist State raises questions other than those of the fulfillment or otherwise of prophesy. These questions must be addressed also. It is good to see another Christian author prepared to tackle this issue, as it has occupied the minds of many modern Muslim writers. However one is left with the impression that he has much more to say on the subject, but was not given enough space in which to say it. The treatment is sketchy. Some statements are hurried over, and need, I feel, more explanation than just a string of biblical references. Although Chawkat's references to the books on the Palestinian Issue give us a clear idea of the way he views that particular matter, I for one would have liked to have seen more said on the Christian view of government. The Muslim's projection of Islam as a viable alternative turns, very often, on the question of how organized religion should relate to the institutions of government. (See for example K Cragg, The Pen and the Faith.)

The chapters on the authority of the Bible and the crucifixion of Christ are useful in that they not only catalogue the relevant Qur'anic statements, but also give us a summary of Muslim commentary on these passages. Here, as in the chapter on Man's relationship to God, Chawkat brings out clearly how the Christian position differs from that of Islam. In particular I was glad to see the Christian concept of inspiration properly explained; that we understand the Bible to be both the Word of God and the words of men. (p39) He also turns the frequently used Muslim criticism about the transmission of the Biblical text on its head, arguing that there is much more evidence for the authenticity of the Biblical text than there is for the Qur'anic text (p. 41).

Chawkat is perhaps at his best when he turns to the discussion of the two natures in Christ and the Holy Trinity. Modern western Christians do not feel the imperative of these doctrines to quite the same extent as our forefathers. Thus when, in our encounter with Muslims, we are forced to face up to these things, we perhaps do not make as coherent a defense of the orthodox position as we ought. One of the strengths of this particular book is that Chawkat not only feels these doctrines to be important, but he has thought through the issues at length. So rather than attempting to find some crude analogy by which to explain an abstract idea, he takes us back to what lies behind these doctrines. Clearly this requires a degree of intellectual commitment on the part of the reader. But this should not be a problem in a book written for university students. We need to rediscover for ourselves the imperative behind our confession of God three in one, if we are not to fall victim to the Muslim charge of philosophical obscurantism. Again the author, just as he was getting interesting, seems to have run out of space. One hopes that in future he will take the opportunity to expand his ideas more fully.

In the final chapter we are given an outline of the qualifications of an authentic prophet. But I do not feel that the questions posed about our attitude to Muhammad is adequately answered. More could have been said. (See K Cragg, Muhammad and the Christian)

My main reservation about this book, besides its brevity, was its poor use of endnotes. We could have done with more than just a list of Qur'anic and Biblical references spread thinly over 18 pages. For example, a short note on John Philoponus (p. 90) would have saved me having to consult a dictionary of church history to understand the allusion. (But then perhaps the average reader of the book is thoroughly familiar with Philoponus' tritheism.) Also £4.95 is a little expensive for what is no more than three or four hours reading.

However I would recommend this book to all who want an introduction to Christian apologetics to the Muslim. For those who want something a little less demanding, another recent Lion book, "The Way of Jesus" by Bruce Farnham is highly recommended. This covers some of the same ground at a gentler pace, and without explicit comparison with Islam. But that is not to say that the two books set out to do the same thing. Their perspective and approach are very different. While Farnham's book is clearly addressed to the Muslim reader, Chawkat's intended audience is less clear.

Pouch KeyCode = MIDER9996

MISS ANGELA PURSEY
subscr. good thru: 90