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A SPECIAL NUMBER ON THE JESUS MOSQUE IDEA

One of the functions of SEEDBED is to serve as a forum for the discussion of ideas. One controversial idea that has recently been the subject of considerable discussion among Christian workers in the Muslim World is that of the so-called "Jesus Mosque." Simply put, this idea states that we should no longer be thinking in terms of churches in the traditional mold, inasmuch as this type of church is inevitably marginalized and segregated from the majority society, and ineffective for reaching the majority. The new approach seeks to raise up fellowships of believers who remain *within* the majority society--in *Jesus Mosques*. The theory is that a true saving faith in Jesus Christ may be validly expressed through the practice of Islamic forms of worship, such as the Ritual Prayer (Salât) and the fast of Ramadan, by giving them "Christian meanings."

The idea of devoting an issue to the *Jesus Mosque* idea suggested itself nearly a year ago when I received a letter from Warren Chastain in which he mentioned, among other things, that he was planning an article on the subject, and then a few days later I received the attached article from John Mansour. The two accepted my proposal but it has taken until now for Warren to produce his article. Just a word about the two authors: Mansour, who has written previously for SEEDBED, is a Western Christian writing under an assumed name for security reasons. Chastain, whose overseas experience was in Indonesia, is currently Consultant in Church Planting at the Zwemer Institute. Following the articles we list several articles for those who wish to read further, and a brief review of a book exemplifying the Jesus Mosque approach. In a future issue, Mansour will have opportunity to reply to the article of Chastain; we also invite our readers to send us their comments and critiques, but *please* let's focus on principles. The Editor

DO MUSLIM FELLOWSHIPS DAMAGE UNITY?

by John Mansour*

This paper attempts to deal with an issue often raised in relation to the planting of communities of Muslims who follow Jesus. This is the notion that if these are culturally distinct groups of Muslim believers who meet separately from those who are "ethnically Christian" we are damaging the unity of the Body of Christ. Perhaps it is not this that bothers some as much as the perception that believers who remain within the Muslim community are cut off from the bounds of "Christendom". Clearly, this is an important issue in church planting that must be thoughtfully and prayerfully addressed.

In order better to understand the issues involved, this paper will examine the nature of the religious and cultural differences that separate Christians from Muslims, the early church's approach to different cultures, and the notion of *ecclesia* in the New Testament. We will conclude with a look at how the Bible treats unity, with implications for our response as we engage in church planting.

"Becoming Christian"

Why can't Muslims just "become Christians"? This would not seem to be a problem if the only real difference between Muslims and Christians in the Middle East were that of faith. In reality, however, they are two *culturally* separate communities, with differing customs, holidays, dress and even linguistic forms. Often, they do not socialize with one another, choose to live segregated from each other, and choose different lines of work. Finally, each group has ingrained prejudices against the other (especially regarding intermarriage).

The problem comes when we require a Muslim to change all of these ethnic forms, since (so far) the only ones who follow Jesus are within the Christian community. We want him to have fellowship with other believers, but for him to do so he must adopt a different culture (*in addition to* the necessary step of conversion to Christ). The result is rejection by his family and friends. We see the same problem occurring in the case of Catholics and Orthodox Christians who are required to become Protestant in order to follow Jesus. Whole movements of "Charismatic Catholics" and "Orthodox Renewal" groups have emerged to deny this premise. These are made up of those who love their own people and do not want to be cut off from their brethren "according to the flesh".

"Religion," East and West

Many Westerners tend to perceive religion as something personally held, by autonomous choice. Historically, however, this individualistic approach to religion has not been the norm even in the West. Just a hundred years ago shop-windows in the US could have signs saying "no Jews or Catholics," or something similar.

In the Middle East, religion is not primarily a matter of personal choice. A person is born Muslim, Christian, or other, must marry within his or her community, and remain within its boundaries throughout life. Belief is not important unless the community says that certain beliefs are out of bounds. Practice is much more important. Muslims may be

atheists, freethinkers, and whatever, as long as they show by a few symbolic gestures that they belong to the community. They will probably need to keep the Fast, (or at least not break it in public), and observe the Feasts. Praying regularly is less important, but this depends on the country and how conservative it is.

"Disunity" on the Home Front

It is interesting that many of us consider Muslim fellowships as detrimental to "unity," but never give a second thought to the ethnically divided churches in our own home towns. While in the US recently, I went to a church service in Washington, DC, of which the membership was almost entirely white and yuppie. Not a block away was a church that appealed to urban blacks, and very likely there was also a Hispanic church somewhere in the vicinity. Now, if you asked the people in the first church what they thought of blacks they would very likely say that they are very welcome. The same would be true of the other churches and their attitudes to other ethnic groups.

So why don't more blacks and Hispanics go to the first church? Because they are *more comfortable* among people like themselves! They like being with people who think and talk the same way, speak the same language, and have the same tastes in music and liturgy. *Why then do we have a double standard when it comes to believers and churches in the Middle East?*

Islam as an Evil Empire

Some will say that in the Middle East the issue is religion, not ethnicity. Islam is a demonic, evil empire from which people need to be liberated. The women need to be freed from a paternalistic system that shrouds them under an oppressive veil. The problem with this perception is that it too simplistic. You can no more make generalizations about Islam than you can about Christianity. You can just as easily make "Christendom" out to be an oppressive, paternalistic, narrow-minded system that enslaves millions. One need go no further than the writings of Bertrand Russell and other left-wing Western writers to see this.

Many times have I been in a prayer meeting where someone prayed zealously for the destruction of Mecca, as if this were the key to the "downfall of Islam" (I myself have probably prayed like this in the past). We would do well to remember that Jesus rebuked his over-eager disciples for wanting to call down fire on a recalcitrant village (Luke 9:54-55). His rebuke came, at least in part, from a concern that such an attitude goes against our calling to be messengers of reconciliation and mercy. The Scriptures clearly indicate that our conflict is not with "flesh and blood," but with the spiritual "principalities" behind them (Ephesians 6:12). When we attack someone's ethnic identity, in reality we are attacking the foundations of his very life, not the forces of evil. This does not mean that we should not confront lies or expose erroneous thinking. But what is beneficial, or at least neutral, in the culture should be affirmed and not torn down. Much of Muslim Middle Eastern culture that Westerners may perceive as "oppressive" or "demonic" also happens to be very close to the culture of First Century Palestine, and the culture of the Prophets and Patriarchs.

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Both the Islamic world and Christendom may be seen as "big umbrellas". Under the cultural/religious umbrella of Christianity we find a wide range of beliefs: the nominally religious, the secular, regular attendees (but unregenerate), sectarians (Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, etc.), and a minority who claim to be "born again." Interestingly, the majority are not too interested in how one defines "being a Christian." I still remember a particularly vitriolic debate on the editorial page of my hometown newspaper in which a few "born again" Christians argued heatedly that Mormons are not Christians, while the bulk of the mail poured scorn on their narrow-mindedness.

Is this not also true in the Muslim world? We find there Sunnis, Shias, Alawites, Druze, Ahmadiyya, and the like. To a greater or lesser extent all claim the name "Muslim." And in Bangladesh and Indonesia groups of followers of Jesus also call themselves Muslim. Why then is the idea of an Islamic Jesus movement so resisted by expatriate workers elsewhere?

Jews for Jesus; Muslims for the Messiah

Let's turn to an example closer to home: the "completed Jew" or "Jew for Jesus." No one objects that a Messianic Jewish movement damages the "unity of the Body of Christ". Why is this? Frankly, it is because Jews have better PR than Muslims. Years of "Bless Israel" theology have guaranteed that.

Some will no doubt say that "Islam is a distortion of the truth, but Judaism is a religion from God. After all, they believe in the Old Testament." This argument would hold water if either First Century or modern rabbinical Judaism were a religion of simple belief in the Old Testament. However, Jesus attacked the Judaism of his time for its hypocrisies and distortions of God's Word, yet without repudiating His Jewish identity. In the teachings of modern Judaism likewise, a whole superstructure of doctrine has been added to the Scriptures, embodied in the Mishna, the Talmud, the Tosefta, and the Targums, not to mention the Kabbala and assorted commentators. This body of interpretation ends up producing a religion as distorted and distant from grace as anything in Islam. Yet it contains elements that may be used as bridges to faith, or "redemptive analogies" as they have been termed.

The Messianic Jewish movement has had success because those involved see themselves as being true Jews who follow Jesus, not "Jewish Christians." They love their people so much that they fight to remain within the community. This is not a gimmick to get them converted and then say to them in effect, "Surprise! You're really a Christian now."

In a similar way, a movement of Muslims for Jesus that remains within Islam will really take off only when those within it see themselves as both truly Muslim and truly followers of Jesus. I believe that this has happened already in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Egypt, and that it can and will happen in many more Muslim countries. Elsewhere we have already seen examples of groups proclaiming allegiance to Christ and yet rejecting identification with Christendom. All this is not to deny that Muslims can be won to Christ individually by traditional approaches. However, is this *all* that we want? Don't we desire to see groups of believers (*ecclesiae*) and even a movement?

The Early Church's Message

Considering the first Jewish believers' perception of the way the gospel was preached to the Greeks, it must have been difficult for them to imagine that God would allow Greeks to come to faith. The Jews were not on good terms with the Graeco-Roman world around them. Look at Paul addressing the crowd in Acts chapter 22. He preaches in Hebrew, and they listen to him talk of his vision of Jesus. What drove them into a frenzy was his claim that God had sent him to the Gentiles! In a similar way, the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19) was likely stoked by mutual Greek-Jewish antagonism.

How did the gospel ever overcome this huge barrier? First, God acted sovereignly, using dreams, visions and miracles to point out to leaders such as Peter that He intended to bring the Gentiles to faith. Even then, the Jewish believers did not really take off with the good news to the Gentiles. God had to "recruit" some special people for the task, the most outstanding being Saul of Tarsus. The message which they preached, however, was not a gospel of "fulfilled Judaism." They had to translate the gospel and clothe it in Greek dress in order for the Greeks to fully understand it.

In the inspired Scriptures we find Paul quoting two pagan authors, Epimenides of Crete and Aratus the Stoic, in his preaching (Acts 17:28). Paul also quotes Epimenides in his Epistle to Titus, and goes so far as to dub him "one of their own prophets" (Titus 1:12). Similarly, John's gospel uses the notion of the "Logos," developed by writers such as Philo, to point to the pre-existence and preeminence of Christ. Donald Guthrie has also noted similarities to the works of Philo in Hebrews ("Hebrews, Epistle to the" in the *New Bible Dictionary*). The apostles also used pagan religious terminology; terms such as *mysterion* (mystery), *epoptes* (initiate), *zoe aionios* (eternal life) and *telete* (initiatory rite), were taken from the mystery religions and used to illustrate the gospel. Concepts such as rebirth through baptism were also common among these cults.²

It is hard for us to understand the thoroughness of the translation procedure that these first evangelists to the pagan world used in order to present the gospel. The vast majority of the Church Fathers, such as Justin, Aristides, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Clement and Origen, all made use of pagan writings. Michael Green illustrates what happened in his book, *Evangelism in the Early Church*. He concludes:

"Yes, the lives, the message, the deaths of Christians showed that the risk of taking the gospel and translating it, as thoroughly as a Justin did, into other thought forms was a very worthwhile procedure. They used the Greek epics; they used the Homeric myths, and also Stoic and Epicurean philosophy when it suited them. ... this is the characteristic aim which the Greek exponents of the gospel set themselves: to embody biblical doctrine in cultural forms which would be acceptable in their society. Not to remove the scandal of the gospel, but so to present their message in terms acceptable to their hearers, that the real scandal of the gospel could be perceived and its challenge faced. That was their aim. Many of them must have succeeded in it much of the time, or there would have been no Church strong enough to face the repeated persecutions from the state in the second and early third centuries. Often the attempt was a failure; something of the content of the message was lost with its Jewish wrappings which had been discarded. That was regrettable, but inevitable--assuming that

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the attempt to reach the Gentiles was worth making. And to question that is to question the universality of Christianity itself. If Christ is for all men, then evangelists must run the risk of being misunderstood, of misunderstanding elements in the gospel themselves, of losing out on the transposition of parts of the message so long as they bear witness to him. Christians are called to live dangerously. The principle of the incarnation must be carried into Christian preaching."³

We do not see the radical nature of the translation that occurred because we ourselves are heirs of the Gentile church. Unfortunately, the Jewish branch of the church died out, probably sometime in the fourth or fifth century.⁴ Nonetheless, we will once again be facing these same first-century issues as the gospel goes to Hindus, Muslims and other megablocks of unreached peoples in our day.

The Ecclesia

Part of our problem is that we do not really understand what the church is, according to the New Testament. We impose on the new church standards from our own culture--forms of worship, dress, language, and the like--because we think that's what the church is. The following traditions, among others, have no root in Scripture, and date from after the time of Constantine:

church buildings	church names	pews
sermons	choirs	liturgies and rituals in worship
seminaries	clergy/laity distinction	denominations, etc. ⁵

This is not to say that these are necessarily bad. Nonetheless, when we begin to pass these on along with the gospel, we nullify the power of the gospel of grace, which is able to work from *within* the culture, as leaven works in a lump of dough.

One writer argues that there is no Biblical imperative for a believer in Jesus even to use the name "Christian". Citing studies of the term, he concludes, "The point of all this is to demonstrate that followers of Christ did not identify themselves as 'Christians' in the time of the New Testament, and consequently there is no Biblical necessity for us to use this term to describe our identification with Christ! Historical factors led to its adoption by believers, but we are not bound by this anymore than we are by other practices adopted and practiced by the church, such as: church buildings, Sunday school or identifying ourselves by our denominational affiliation..."⁶

The New Testament term "ecclesia" did not denote a building, or the forms of expression used to approach God. It denoted the community of believers in Jesus. Those within the ecclesia, the body of Christ, have given allegiance to Christ, not to "Christianity" or to the "Christian" community (most of whom, remember, do not follow Christ). "Christendom" then, is not synonymous with the Body of Christ.

True Unity

Within the world wide community of followers of Jesus is incredible diversity. Probably the only thing they have in common is Jesus himself. Yet somehow God claims to make

these diverse elements one through the Spirit. The Apostle describes the astounding nature of this spiritual unity in Ephesians 2:14-16: "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility." Paul claims that the edifice of Judaism (expressed in Jewish cultural forms) which stood between Gentiles and God, the "yoke of the Law," has been pulled down. Gentiles may now come to God by faith in Jesus *alone*! This greatly angered many Jews, who saw it as compromise and blasphemy. It also flew in the face of the human tendency to seek *uniformity*, something visible from the outside. God had established *unity*, a common purpose that is shared though not always visible.

Paul acknowledges the inscrutability of this unity: "In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 3:4-6) Why did Paul call the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers a mystery? Could it be that he was simply pointing out that to an outside observer there was little in common between the Gentile church and the Jewish church, both organizationally, culturally, and linguistically?

Observe how the early church handled cultural diversity: "James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do." (Galatians 2:9-10). If this situation happened today, many would sadly shake their heads and mutter about how James and Paul just couldn't cooperate. Yet true unity in diversity was established! Cultural differences were acknowledged and respected, but were considered irrelevant to the cause of true unity under the one head, Christ. Jewish believers could keep the law as a way of honoring their people and heritage. Gentiles could keep their own culture, and still be believers. And the Judaizers (uniformitarians who said you had to become Jewish to follow Jesus) were repudiated at the highest level.

Nonetheless Paul had continually to struggle against those who tried to undermine the gospel to the Gentiles. The power of ethnocentrism was so strong that many of the first Jewish believers could not really believe in a message of grace through faith in Jesus alone. This is the same issue that we are facing in Muslim evangelization today: What must a Muslim do to be saved? What must he believe to be saved?

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Our theology may be one thing and our practice another. Are our actions consistent with what we preach? Peter believed in salvation by grace alone, but Paul rebuked him to his face because he was not "acting in line with the truth of the gospel" (Galatians 2:14). What did Peter do to deserve this? I always wondered why Paul rebuked him so harshly when all he did was eat with other Jews. The issue, however, is bigger than that. Peter

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ate with Jewish believers and not with Gentile believers because they followed the Jewish ceremonial law and the Gentiles did not. They were not part of the "in" group. They were not acceptable, they were different, and they were "unclean."

How would a Gentile understand Peter's *actions*, as distinct from his *words*? He would have seen that to be *really* acceptable, to be *really* part of God's people, one had to keep the Jewish customs. Otherwise, he would be shunned as an outsider to the covenant. Paul calls this kind of behavior for what it is: "nullifying the grace of God" (Gal. 2:21). Are we not in effect nullifying the grace of God when we speak a Christian subdialect with Muslims, when we maintain our Western religious practices, when we refuse to adopt Islamic cultural forms because they are "unclean?" How unlike the incarnation of our Lord who was willing to become one with the people in order to transform them from within!

The real issue we are facing, then, is that a *false* unity of the church is being pushed on us, a cultural uniformitarianism. Most of us can easily see and reject the false unity pitched by the World Council of Churches, an ecumenistic vision based on organizational unity under human headship. What we don't see is our own cultural imperialism, since the dominant Christian culture in the world (American evangelicalism) happens to be the one we are most familiar and comfortable with. We don't see ourselves imposing anything heavy or difficult, since we are happy and comfortable with our own culture. The rest of the world, however, may not be so interested in becoming culturally "Americanized" in order to come to faith in Christ.

Much of what has been written above is disturbing. It implies a change in the ways we are accustomed to operating. While many will not agree with the extent to which the author is prepared to take the incarnation of the gospel, let us seek to encourage, understand and support one another as much as possible in our diversity. Our goal should be to maintain a unity of love that will testify to our allegiance to the Lord of Love, Jesus Christ. If uniformitarianism is a false unity, then true unity, love for God and love for our fellow man, will expose the false even as counterfeit gems fade next to the real thing.

¹For a secular Jesus movement in Brazil, see Jim Peterson, *Church Without Walls*, NavPress, 1992

²Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970, pp. 121-2.

³Ibid, p. 142.

⁴See Ray Pritz's Ph.D. dissertation, "The Jewish-Christian Sect of the Nazarenes," The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

⁵Taken from James H. Rutz, *The Open Church*, Auburn, Maine: The Seed Sowers, 1992, p. 73.

⁶M.H., Contextualized Identification, unpublished paper.

PSST! WANNA BUY A CONTEXTUALIZED HORSE

by Warren Chastain

"A what?"

"Look! its a beautiful Arabian steed."

"But its got a hump."

"No problem, in this country your horse needs to look like a camel."

"But the front looks like a horse and the rear like a camel."

"Yeah, ain't it beautiful!--but, for you, a special price."

"But what is it?"

"Ummm--call it a camorse."

"That's odd--it looks more like a hormel."

John Mansour never defines what he wants to sell, so we may be excused if we feel like Daniel who struggled to describe the fourth nondescript beast. We will deal with Mansour's paper by sections. The title suggests that his theme is Unity; but this is supplemental to his real thrust which is to argue for what others call a "*Jesus Mosque*," a term he avoids. His ideal is a "movement of Muslims for Jesus that remains within Islam." Like motherhood, Christian unity is much more salable than the genetic experiment he promotes.

But why does Mansour address his appeal to Christians for acceptance? If his group is truly a "Muslim Fellowship" and remains in the Islamic community, then he should be addressing his appeal to Muslims. It is a problem of *Muslim* unity, not that of the church. Let him sell his horse to the community of which he claims "Muslim believers" are members. But aberrant Muslim sects are usually treated more harshly by Islam than are forthright Christians. If the *Jesus Mosque* people openly told of their beliefs and intentions, is there a Muslim in the world who would accept their claim to still be part of the *Umma*? "You say you are Muslim but you don't accept Muhammad as the Final Prophet; you reject the Qur'an as the perfect revelation; you deny the validity of the Shari'ah; you deny that Islam is the perfect religion, and nevertheless claim to be Muslims!" Yes, this is a horse of a different color--what about "truth in advertising"?

To lay Muslim forms over Christian meanings would probably remind the Muslim of the "hypocrites" condemned in the Qur'an. This *Umma* strategy has no validity in Islam, and no right to claim the Name of Christ. If it produces some kind of "success" in converts, would you place this offering at the feet of Christ? Or at the feet of Muhammad? What good is "success" if it turns out to be "wood, hay, and stubble"? But the "success" sales pitch is grossly exaggerated: the mission magazines and prayer letters don't report the long line of failures in the past decade. So we do a disservice to new workers if we encourage them to accept the *Jesus Mosque* as a key to success.

Mansour's solution really doesn't take Islam seriously enough. The anti-Christian and demonic elements of Islam are lightly regarded, and to mention them is dismissed as Islam bashing or a hangover of the Crusader mentality. Tactical adaptations of communication theory are seriously offered as a solution to the problem of Islam. Coach Mansour's strategy for the Christian team facing the great Super Bowl clash with Islam is to wear the

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same jerseys as the opponent--no one in the stadium will notice! Is this taking Islam seriously? And even if the Muslim leaders were that dumb, is this cleverness worthy of the Truth?

“Becoming Christian”

Jesus said he would build his "church," and the apostolic churches were not **ashamed to be** called "Christian": There is no evidence they ever tried to pose as members of a **false** religion to gain acceptance, to avoid persecution, or to witness. They retained their ethnicity and their culture but, like the Ephesian Christians, they cast out Diana and false books. This pattern is still valid today in the Muslim world. An Egyptian Muslim who receives Christ does **not** have to give up his Egyptian citizenship or his way of life, but only those things in the culture which are based on erroneous religion or promote sinful practices. He need only repent of sin, not of his culture or nationality. The *Jesus Mosque* idea confuses clear thinking by insisting that religion and culture cannot be separated, that to be an Egyptian is by definition to be a Muslim. Muslim Fundamentalists around the world are making this claim in every culture where they can pull the wool over the eyes of a gullible public. "Islam is the natural religion of the African," Muslim activists tell African-Americans with a straight face.

Modern anthropological theory is used to smuggle this Trojan Horse into the camp of the Christians. All kinds of exquisite distinctions are made between *form* and *meaning* in the name of contextualization. But don't dare distinguish religion from culture: this impiety could endanger the whole structure. Paul, however, made this distinction fundamental to his own proper contextualization. To win Greeks, Paul would freely use all aspects of Greek culture except those that compromised the Gospel. Christianity has no holy language, so Paul could use Greek. Any truth may be used if done properly (not like Satan quoting Scripture), so history and philosophy may be used as tools; but in no usage will Paul validate false religion. In Mansour's leaps of logic, Paul's citing of Greek literary figures, indeed, even the use of Greek language, somehow supports his case for bringing Islamic ideas into his "Muslim Fellowship." Granted, since it is a Muslim group, he does not need the Bible to prove anything. Indeed, a real Muslim group would not use a corrupt Bible to prove a practice, but only the *Usul al-Fiqh*.

The Ecclesia

Notably missing is a theological basis for his missiological engineering. Mansour sprinkles his text with excellent quotes and Bible verses but, guided by an imbalanced contextualization, he almost invariably draws wrong conclusions. His section on "*The Ecclesia*" illustrates the pattern of argument. He charges the Church universal with ignorance of what the Church really is. He is severe on "traditions" and suspiciously includes only those that interfere with his Islamisation of the church. He charges that these traditions (even "sermons") "nullify the gospel"! But Mansour won't list the Muslim traditions he wants to incorporate into the *Jesus Mosque* fellowships, or discuss how these might "nullify the Gospel." He tells us what true fellowship is **not**, but avoids unveiling what his "church" **is**. This omission is useful for debate but hardly responsible. Mansour warns us against the "leaven" of our traditions, but sees no dangers in the leaven of Islam. The whole point of leaven is that it influences every part of the whole, how much more if

the culture is "Islamic." Mansour would have us believe that culture is neutral, and that even the part that is specifically Islamic is unleavened.

Perhaps this bad leaven may be seen in Mansour's focus on organization, structures, and names, and in his reference to "allegiance" to Christ without defining what this is. To become a Muslim it is enough to have an "allegiance" to Muhammad, but such allegiance is far from the radical change of nature that is required for entry into the Body of Christ. If Muslims swap one "allegiance" for another, they are still in Adam, not "in Christ." No doubt Mansour believes in a New Birth, but his discussion deals with externals and keeps the discussion in an Islamic framework.

Islam as an Evil Empire.

Mansour says it is "too simplistic" to say that "people need to be liberated" from demonic Islam. Really! Is "the whole world under the control of the evil one" (1 John 5:19 NIV), except for Islam? Christian reluctance to adopt Muslim "identity" (read: "practices") is twisted to mean we are attacking their "ethnic identity," and is unfairly compared to calling down fire from heaven. Mansour makes missions overly complex by continually mixing ethnicity, Christendom, culture, Christianity, religion, etc., whereas our goal is less grandiose: to establish small groups of believers who remain within their culture while avoiding the Islamic elements (whether "good" or bad) that suggest they can serve two masters at once. We should contextualize in the direction of their *culture* in harmless areas, rather than toward their *religion*--which is inherently harmful. Satan comes as an angel of light, quoting true Scripture to promote error. Islam tells us to do "good" things too. But there are occasions when it is naive to change stones to bread. You may be tempted to throw yourself off the pinnacle of the Temple (or mosque) to win over the crowds. Some acts may be wrong merely because of the source or context. If we borrow from Islam we are confirming the Muslim belief that what Christ taught is incomplete. Does Jesus need Muhammad to *perfect* the religion of God?

At the risk of being labeled "obscurantist," I thank God for Paul's "simplification": "We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to (Muslim) Gentiles" (1 Cor 1:23). Paul knew the communication theory and religions of his day, but he considers it all foolishness as a means of propagating the Gospel. As a "Hebrew of Hebrews," Paul should not only have been eager, but able to bring into struggling Christianity all the glories of his former religion (with all its good and truth). But what does he say? "Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more ... I consider them rubbish" (Gal 3:7f). Given Paul's obvious readiness to dispense with the best of Greek and Jewish culture as worldly wisdom, can we see him buying into the modern reverence for culture now ballyhooed as *the key* to missions?

I would agree that any group may call itself "Muslim" or "Christian," or any name it pleases. But are Christians or Muslims narrow-minded if they question the peddler's sales pitch? Mansour uses the image of religions as "big umbrellas" which enclose a multitude of contradictory movements, slipping in the idea that his Muslim fellowships have already been accepted by Christian workers in Bangladesh and Indonesia, and then makes the marvelous leap of logic: "Why then is the idea of an Islamic Jesus movement so resisted by expatriate workers elsewhere"?

The claims made about Bangladesh are prodigious, but workers there, both ex-pat and national, raise questions that restrain the Christian community from leaping on the latest bandwagon. Confirming what I have heard from national leaders, one experienced ex-pat team leader, sympathetic to contextualization, said to me, "If this new movement claims to have 25,000 Muslim believers, ask them: What happened to the first 25,000"? But since we cannot establish truth by counting noses, no statistics from Bangladesh can answer the theological question as to whether this effort is valid, or merely misguided Christians sacrificing everything to establish a new sect *within* Islam. If you take them at their word, these believers see themselves as "Muslims" who give a greater role to Jesus than the other Muslims around them, and are still within the *Umma* of Muhammad. Is it possible that Jesus is Head over *two* bodies

It is misleading to use Indonesia as a proof text for the *Jesus Mosque*. The millions there who have left Islam--the largest such group in church history--were not won by witnesses trying to minimize the differences between Islam and Christianity. The National Christians tolerate those few missionaries who push the newest Western ideology--contextualization--on them, but inside they agree with the Christians of the Middle East who reject the idea of a "Muslim Fellowship." The National wonders why the foreigner wants to sell him an *Arab* horse, especially the Western image of an Arab horse. Why join a pseudo-mosque, when they have already left the real thing? Arabs are an admirable people, but why must a Javanese face Mecca to get to God?

Jews for Jesus: Muslims for the Messiah

Mansour suggests that "Jews for Jesus" reject the name "Christian." A phone call to the "Jews for Jesus" headquarters brought a denial that they refuse to use the name "Christian"; they did not know of any Jewish ministry that refused that name. Mansour's argument is as misleading as his premise. "Jews for Jesus" have not remained "within" either the Judaism of the 1st or 20th century. Jewish believers were kicked out of both the Temple and the synagogue in the 1st century, and have not been invited back since. Messianic Jews can still maintain practices given by true prophets that do not contradict New Testament truth, but they make no compromise with erroneous Jewish ideas, and, like Paul, rejoice that they are part of the Christian community. Paul can be our model: he loved Israel, but in Romans 11:28 he calls the Chosen People "enemies" of the Gospel. If Israel is an enemy of the Gospel, is Islam a "friend"? If Israel was "broken off," when was Muhammad's community grafted into the root?

Believers are not saved as part of a cultural community, whatever that community might be. Being a member of the Jewish community did not save Ahab, Nadab, Abihu, or Korah. So it is not false individualism to say that sinners get saved as distinct believers. Can a community believe apart from its members? With what does a culture believe? Culture has been so elevated in missionary circles since World War II as to become a cult. This is evident in Mansour's solution to the problem of Islam: "a movement of Muslims for Jesus that remains within Islam". This glittering mirage may promise water to the thirsty desert traveler, but it will only draw you further into unreality. Can you really cross Jesus with Muhammad? Try telling a Muslim that he can be "truly Muslim" without Muhammad.

When I was a small boy a teenager gave me a nickel and sent me to the candy store to buy "Round-Squares." The kindly Jewish shopkeeper smiled and asked me to "describe them." Mansour has a vision of a community that is "both truly Muslim and truly followers of Jesus." If you can explain how to be both a true follower of Muhammad and a true follower of Jesus, you will not only have solved the problem of how to serve two masters at the same time, but you will also have solved the riddle of Round-Squares!

The false parallel between "Jews for Jesus" and "Muslims for Messiah" ignores the Pauline pattern which proved he could retain his ethnic and cultural Jewishness even after he had been thrown out of the synagogue. It is hard to retain membership in a religion when they try to kill you every chance they get. Jewish believers in Jesus are the only "true Jews"; believers in Muhammad are the only "true Muslims". The term "Messiah" in the above name would be significant if it were used by a Jew, but it does not define a "Muslim." Muslims empty the term "Messiah" of its biblical significance, making Jesus an obsolete prophet who saves no one, denies the Church, and who will ultimately confess Muhammad as his superior. Why stress a term that conveys a minimum of accurate information, and that the group misunderstands?

Messianic Jews do not damage the unity of the Body of Christ because Christ is the fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures; these lead men *to* Christ and New Testament truth, not away from it like Islam. Jews have a special place in God's plan which Muslims do not have. Old Testament Judaism is true, even though incomplete; the same cannot be said of Islam. One cannot therefore justify the *Jesus Mosque* on the basis of a parallel between the mosque and the synagogue. Islam was not founded as a true saving system by a true prophet. The Jewish prophets were sent by God; we deny this to Muhammad.

On True Unity

This section adds nothing to the discussion since Mansour agrees with the decision of the early church that Gentiles could be saved as Gentiles. Muslims can be saved as Gentiles too, but Mansour would have us believe that they can be saved as Muslims and possess dual citizenship in both the community of Muhammad and that of Jesus. Such religious dualism contradicts the message of the Old Testament that Jews must keep themselves pure from the religions around them. It also contradicts the example of the Apostles who did not join the gospel to religious error. Mansour does not provide evidence from the New Testament that the early churches accepted converts as members of two religious communities at the same time. He is under the illusion that the problem of Jewish "ethnocentrism" that the Apostle Paul faced in his day is basically "the same issue we are facing in Muslim evangelism today." Surely this question was settled centuries ago, unless you believe that the Muslims constitute a separate category of people not included in the term "Gentiles." And if you are unclear on how one is saved, how can you offer a solution to the problem of *True Unity*.

Actions Speak Louder than Words

Here again Mansour manages to misunderstand "the real issue," twisting it so much that those who disagree with him are "nullifying the grace of God"--a serious charge indeed!

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What are the crimes of these enemies of the grace of God? The first mentioned is that of speaking a "Christian subdialect." Does that mean that Christian Arabs need an interpreter to live in Cairo? Or is it just that Christians have a different experience of God, and need more terms to describe it? Should they assume that Muslim terms are adequate for Christian concepts? In any case, isn't Arabic enriched when Christians generate terms to describe ideas that Islam obscures?

We are also said to be guilty of pushing "Western religious practices" onto the believers and of refusing "to adopt Islamic cultural forms". Perhaps Mansour did not have space to detail what he means so we must guess a bit. We are forced to ask: "Is all Middle East culture the possession of Islam"? , Everything good will probably be claimed by Fundamentalists; they claim that all was darkness before Islam. Isn't the real situation one of tremendous complexity so that Muslims disagree among themselves as to what constitutes culture? Are "Islamic" forms better, or truer? If diversity is a virtue, as Mansour argues, why must Christians become something they are not? Is it healthy psychologically to deny one's own identity? Are the differences between Islam and Christianity as superficial as a change of clothing? Mansour gives his complaint a nasty twist when he attributes our reason for not getting on the Muslim bandwagon to the bigoted idea that Muslims are "unclean." This is ironic, since if we adopted Islamic ideas we would consider other people as "unclean." The superior ethic says that "it is not what goes into the mouth that makes one unclean, but what comes out."

Mansour strongly condemns "cultural uniformitarianism," but in a very one-sided way. He wants Christians to give up their diversities and conform to his *Jesus Mosque* version of the Gospel. It is like the story of the animals planning a breakfast. The chicken tells the pig we must sacrifice equally: from her very own body she will supply the eggs if the pig supplies the bacon. Mansour may consider it "incarnational" ministry, but the ancient churches, after centuries of experience with Muslims, will probably recognize this assimilationist policy as leading to their eventual absorption into Islam. His tactic is to limit our options to two false paths: do mission in an ethnocentric "Americanizing" way, or follow the path of contextual "incarnational" Muslim virtue. But may it not be that the world does not need to become either American or Arab. Might there not be a third option: to follow Christ without praying toward either Washington or Mecca. In any case, it is not the business of Christians to be creating sects within Islam. Mansour would free us from the legalism of Moses by handing us over to the legalism of Muhammad; how can you be a "true Muslim" without the Shari'ah? Let us offer Muslims the freedom of sons, not the yoke of slaves.

Islam has fought the Gospel for centuries and displaced it with a new religion, an ultimate prophet, and a substitute scripture. It continually defames the Bible all over the world, and oppresses anyone who leaves Islam for Christ. If this is not demonic where is the demonic to be found? Why should the church imitate any part of this system?

ARTICLES & BOOKS ON THE JESUS MOSQUE IDEA

by the Editor

Some readers may like to examine the subject of the *Jesus Mosque* more thoroughly. In what follows, I therefore give an annotated bibliography in date order of several articles known to me, published over the past 20 years, that explore and push the idea. This does not include any of the unpublished articles that have been circulating in the Middle East the past year or two. The bibliography concludes with a brief review, by a colleague, of a book that puts forth in some detail one model for a Jesus Mosque. It will give a good idea of where the Jesus Mosque idea is going.

John D.C. Anderson. "The Missionary Approach to Islam: Christian or 'Cultic.'" In *Missiology* 4/3 (July 1976): 285-300. Anderson charges that the main reason "so few within the cultural milieu of Islam" have come to Christ is "the isolation of the convert from his culture." He then makes some exploratory suggestions along the lines of the *Jesus Mosque* idea as we know it today.

John M. Wilder. "Some Reflections on Possibilities for People Movements Among Muslims." In *Missiology* 5/3 (July 1977), and *Bulletin of Church Development in North Africa* 9/3 (1977): 34-51. Wilder applies his study of early Hebrew Christianity and of the Messianic Jewish movement in our day to the situation with Muslims and puts forward the idea of "a people movement constituting a new Christian Church of Muslim cultural orientation."

Charles H. Kraft. "Dynamic Equivalence Churches in Muslim Society," pages 114-128 in *The Gospel and Islam: A 1978 Compendium*, edited by Don M. McCurry. Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1979. Kraft takes the concept of "dynamic equivalence," developed by Bible translators, and seeks to apply it to church planting. On the basis of his premise that a person's "faith allegiance" should be distinguished from the "religious structures" of Christianity and Islam, Kraft goes on to propose in effect that a Jesus Mosque could be the "dynamic equivalence" of the church in Muslim society. With this article supplying the theoretical underpinning, the *Jesus Mosque* idea really takes off at this point.

D.O. "A Jesus Movement Within Islam." in *Interconnect* No. 5 (Jan. 1991) 12-27. Building on themes developed in the previous articles, the author develops his idea of a "Jesus movement" (*haraka 'isāwiyya*) within Islam that begins with "Islamic-styled Bible translations" after the order of the *Sirat ul-Masih*, which we have discussed in previous issues (see e.g. SEEDBED 2/4 [1987]: 50-59, and 3/2 [1988]: 22-32), and recognizes the prophethood of Muhammad in some limited fashion.

Rafique Uddin.* "Contextualized Worship and Witness." Pages 267-272 in *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road*, edited by Dudley Woodberry. Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1989. The author, a Christian of Muslim background from South Asia, shares how he has practiced and promoted Muslim worship "in its contextualized form, as a believer in Jesus Christ" (p267) in the context of a group of "former Muslims."

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Phil Goble and Salim Munayer, *New Creation Book for Muslims*, Pasadena CA: Mandate Press [PO Box 40129, Pasadena, CA 91114], 1989, 175pp. (Mandate Press is a subsidiary of William Carey Library.) Reviewer: Wendell Evans

The book presents a highly contextualized method for reaching Muslims and incorporating them into worshipping groups compatible with their Muslim culture and society. A relatively short introductory chapter entitled "Soiltesting" uses the two parables of the Sower and the Prodigal Son as a means of determining the receptivity of an individual or group. The second and longest chapter, entitled "The Straight Path of the New Creation" uses a narrative form to present the basic truths of sin, salvation, temptation, satanic opposition and how to combat it. Unfortunately the narrative form is so heavily mixed with exhortation and application digressions that the progression of the narrative is hard to follow.

The third, fourth and fifth chapters develop models for prayer, confession (chiefly seen as through participation in the Eucharist, called the Messianic Id ul-Adha), and baptism (the major theme of the chapter entitled "The New Creation Pilgrimage." The short final chapter presents a model for a house "masjid" and urges the establishment of such for "New Creation Muslims," with adjoining training schools called "madrastas."

The authors seek to use Muslim vocabulary as much as possible. Jesus is referred to as "Isa," and "the Word of Allah." Baptism is termed "sibghat Allah," its form "wudu" and "ghusl." Other examples are given in the preceding paragraphs. Quotations from the Qur'an are generously used, accompanied in the same texts with Scripture texts. Footnotes then give the references, whether from the Qur'an or the Bible. Models given for prayer, baptism, and style of worshipping venue, etc. draw heavily on Muslim forms.

The authors state their hope for the book in the final paragraph: "The contextualized approach presented in this book, though by no means the only acceptable Scriptural model, holds great promise for encouraging an end-time world-wide people movement among the nearly one billion Muslims of the world into the New Creation Ummah of Ibrahim in these last days" (page 174)

Whatever the reason, the authors never state their purpose or their intended readership. At times the major thrust seems to be to encourage Muslims to consider the Scriptures and the claims of Christ. At other times the main theme seems to be to present a model to Muslims who believe in "Isa" (I assume we should not call them Christians, since the authors have refrained from doing so) as to how they should live their New Creation lives. Yet again the book seems to speak primarily to non-Muslim missionaries, seeking to convince them of the rightness and efficacy of the proposed ministry approach. It would have been helpful if they had come out and stated up front for whom they write.

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