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Contents

- 59 **Editorial: Time for the Muslims**
Guest editor Robert C. Douglas
- 61 **Undergirding the Effort with Prayer**
J. Christy Wilson, Jr.
- 66 **Uzbekistan: Life Amidst Death**
Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse
- 69 **Ongoing Strategy Debate in Muslim Missions**
Robert C. Douglas
- 75 **Mission Lessons from History**
Lyle VanderWerff
- 81 **Islamic Fundamentalism: Implications for Missions**
Nabeel T. Jabbour
- 87 **Church Planting Among Folk Muslims**
Richard D. Love
- 93 **Gospel Communication from Within**
Patrick O. Cate
- 99 **What's Happening Among Muslims Today?**
Don McCurry
- 107 **Islam in the West—U.S.A.**
Richard P. Bailey

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Editorial: Time for the Muslims

The thought of evangelizing the Muslim world by the year 2000 challenges the vision, faith and strategic planning of God's people as almost nothing else. The challenges are tremendous. More than one billion Muslims! Approximately one out of every five people in the world is a Muslim. Even more significant, one out of every three unreached people is Muslim. Muslims constitute the largest bloc of unreached peoples in today's world. And their numbers are rapidly increasing due to high birth rates. More than 930 major ethno-linguistic groups need churches planted among them—a task calling for the best of cross-cultural missions.

To complicate matters, Islam is itself a dynamic missionary religion. It's a faith that thrives in today's urban world, and is a movement with access to billions of oil dollars. It is a religion with a resurgent sense of life and destiny. During the last couple of decades of the 20th century, Islam is once again on the march. Muslims today are aggressively evangelistic in many parts of the world. They are enjoying growth in nations of Western Europe and North America, and are beginning to think strategically.

Muslims view other areas of the world as their own. There are 38 nations where over 50 percent of the people are Muslim. Most of these countries officially see themselves as Islamic. In these areas Islam intends to remain dominant. People with power tend to resolutely resist efforts of non-Muslims to evangelize. Most Islamic nations, which are predominantly Islamic, would have to be labelled "restricted access" countries.

At a recent missions conference in Los Angeles, Muslims announced a goal of winning 50 to 75 million Americans to Islam. Their target, "the

stratas of society suffering from the bankruptcy of the social order." They declared they are in North America for the long haul, indicating a willingness to invest centuries to gain their objectives. As models of what may be required, they alluded to their history of gradually becoming numerically dominant in Egypt, North Africa and Indonesia.

In Europe, Muslims see Britain as strategic to Europe, and London as the key to Britain. Thus an Islamic conference speaker noted, "Unless we win London over to Islam we will fail to win the whole of the Western World."

Since the birth of Islam in Arabia in the 7th century, Christian mission efforts from both the East and the West among Muslims have been minimal. Traditionally the Church has largely viewed Muslim peoples as being unwinnable. This is reflected in the relatively small numbers of Christians and missionaries working full time with Muslims. Some estimate that only two percent of all Christian workers (traditional missionaries and tentmakers) worldwide are involved in ministry to Muslims. Even fewer are working at planting the Church among Muslim unreached peoples.

There is growing evidence that the Church's heart is awakening to its biblical mandate to carry out effective witness to Muslims. More Christians, East and West, are shaking off old fears and beginning to boldly live and speak the gospel. Sometimes the cost is high—physical threats, economic boycotts, imprisonment, and even loss of life. Yet they speak and live, and God is honoring their faith.

For major progress to be made in evangelizing Muslims by the year 2000 and beyond, several basic elements need to come into place:

1. *Vision.* God's people not only need to

see the task but be able to conceive of its accomplishment. The vision must include a sense of the hundreds of unreached Muslim peoples, the challenge of cross-cultural missions, the importance of lay participation, the need for new approaches due to restricted access and the necessity of worldwide cooperation on the part of the Body of Christ.

2. *Networking.* Those who are applying themselves to Muslim evangelization need to be in touch with each other to avoid isolation and discouragement, as well as, to minimize duplication of efforts.

3. *Strategic Planning.* Organizations reaching out to Muslims need to better determine strategic peoples, places and work forces for the job. This requires a lot more grassroots research.

Every article in this special edition of the JOURNAL focuses on critical concerns in Muslim missions. Written by insightful and experienced workers of the Lord, it is our hope they will stimulate thought, prayer, discussion and action on behalf of lost souls among the unevangelized peoples in the Islamic world.

Unquestionably, God's purpose includes the Muslim world. It is thrilling to be involved in what appears to be the beginning phases of an unprecedented harvest. The coming harvest springs from God's love and grace. With thanksgiving we honor the dedicated labor of those who have gone before, of those who cleared, plowed and planted. The harvest is coming, it is here. Now is the time for the Muslims!

Robert C. Douglas
Guest Editor
Pasadena, California, USA
April 1994

Undergirding the Effort with Prayer: Muslims Being Reached Foremostly Through Extraordinary Prayer

by J. Christy Wilson, Jr.

“The opening of the Muslim world for the gospel,” writes Patrick Johnstone, “cannot be organized by human effort or stratagems but only by prayer. Our weapons are spiritual, not carnal. Pray for an army of intercessors to be raised up that a breakthrough as decisive and sudden as that in China and the former USSR may also occur in the Muslim world.”¹

Of the approximately 11,000 people groups in the world still to be evangelized, about 4,000 of them are Islamic. Our Lord has promised, “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a testimony to all nations (*ethne* or people groups), and then the end will come.”² In that same passage, Christ said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.”³ Thus world evangelization is absolutely certain. But how are the Muslim people groups going to be reached? The answer is: Foremostly through extraordinary prayer.

The First Level

Dr. J. Edwin Orr, in his books on the history of awakenings, has pointed out that there are four levels to every true revival.⁴ This is true in the book of Acts and on down through Church history. (1) The first stage is prayer and reconciliation among Christians. (2) The second is evangelism as the lost are won to the Lord. (3) The third is that of missions with participation in world evangelization and, (4) the fourth is our service for Christ in action as we love our neighbors as ourselves and supply their needs physically, intellectually, socially and spiritually.

Most of the revivals in the past have

been localized because of the difficulty of transportation and communication. I believe that we are now on the verge of an awakening of worldwide proportions. This will fulfill the prophecy of Joel,⁵ quoted by the apostle Peter:

In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy, I will show wonders in the heaven above, and signs in the earth below. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.⁶

This revival, I believe, will bring about the completion of Christ’s commission of world-wide evangelization and will be the heart of reaching unreached Muslim groups for Christ.

Revival Resulting in Missions to Muslims

We see this on a limited scale in the awakening of 1858 and following. It started with a convert of Charles Finney who was an urban missionary, by the name of Jeremiah Lanphier, who began the Fulton Street Wednesday noon prayer meeting in 1857 for workers and business people in New York City. Within six months, about ten thousand were gathering for prayer every noon. This revival resulted in over a million converts being added to the American churches in the next two years.

The most prominent leader of this awakening in the States, as well as in the British Isles, was D. L. Moody. One of his closest associates, Ruben A. Torrey, said that Moody was a far greater man of prayer than he was a preacher. Here again we see the abso-

lute necessity of intercession in great awakenings. Moody was not only involved in evangelism, as huge numbers came to Christ through his messages, but he also helped establish the Y.M.C.A. in North America, started schools for girls and boys, established the Moody Bible Institute and founded a Christian publishing house, now called Moody Press.

His involvement in missions, which is another stage of true revival, came through close friends like Arthur T. Pierson who popularized the phrase, “The evangelization of the world in this generation.” In reference to this, Moody said, “It can be done—it ought to be done—it must be done.”⁷ According to our Lord’s promise in Matt. 24:14, we can add “It will be done.” In the summer of 1886, Moody invited Pierson along with Adoniram Judson Gordon to speak to 251 student leaders who had been invited to his Mount Hermon School for Boys in Massachusetts. One of these was Robert Wilder who had just completed his senior year at Princeton.

Wilder was born in India where his parents had been missionaries. He and his sister, Grace, prayed faithfully that 100 of the students at the Mount Hermon Conference would give their lives for foreign missionary service. In answer to their intercession, exactly 100 signed the pledge, “God helping me, I purpose to be a foreign missionary,” and the Student Volunteer Movement was born.

The following academic year of 1886-87, Robert Wilder and John Foreman, a seminary student, spread the vision by visiting campuses across the United States and Canada. Over 2,000

more signed the pledge to become missionaries. One of them was Samuel Zwemer at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. He went on to become the greatest missionary to Muslim peoples in history.

Zwemer believed that God was calling him to the hardest mission field in the world, the Islamic peoples of Arabia. No mission board would send him. They said that he would be killed for sure and they did not want to be responsible for that. Therefore he and Dr. Cantine formed their own agency, the Arabia Mission. As Dr. Zwemer said, "If God calls you and the board won't send you, bore a hole through the board and go anyway." After exploring around the whole Arabian Peninsula, they established mission stations in Muscat, Kuwait, Bahrain and Busra.

After working in the Muslim world for 25 years, Zwemer was invited to speak at a Keswick Convention in England. He used as his text,

Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word, I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net broke. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.⁸

Zwemer went on to say that he and others had toiled in the Muslim world all night and had taken next to nothing. He could count the Muslim converts on his fingers. But he said we have the command of Christ to obey and that if we are faithful the time will come when so many Muslims will come to Christ, that like the problem with the overloaded boats, there will not be room in the churches to hold them. The people at the Keswick Convention were so touched that they asked Dr. Zwemer what they could do. His answer was, "Pray!" This was the beginning of the Fellowship of Prayer for Muslims which has conducted special times of inter-

cession ever since.⁹ For example, days of prayer for Muslims are now held several times a year in Philadelphia and in the Los Angeles area. They also produce and distribute literature which encourages prayer.

It was the Student Volunteer Movement that also influenced Dr. William Mc E. Miller (1892-1993) to give his life for missions. While he was studying in seminary, he put a map of the world on the wall of his dormitory room. He would then kneel by his bed in front of it and would pray, "Lord, I am willing to go anywhere in this world for You. Show me where." It was then that he heard Dr. Zwemer share the challenge of the Muslim world. God, through him, called Bill Miller to go to Mashad in Eastern Iran near the border of Afghanistan.

Bill Miller then started a daily prayer meeting in his room to ask God for missionaries in accord with Christ's command, "Pray the Lord of the harvest that He will thrust forth laborers into His harvest."¹⁰ Through prayer, he was able to get over a hundred to be willing to be missionaries. Among those were Dr. Philip Howard, the father of Elizabeth Elliot, whose husband Jim was killed by the Auca Indians, who also was the father of David Howard who has been a missionary in Colombia, Latin America, who has headed up two of the Urbana Student Missionary Conventions, was Director of the Lausanne Congress in Pattaya, Thailand, then was Executive Secretary of the World Evangelical Fellowship and is now vice president of the David C. Cook foundation. Through Bill Miller's challenge, my parents also went as missionaries to Iran. Thus we see the results in the Muslim world that came through prayer following the great awakening of 1858.

Prayer for Muslims in Afghanistan

I was born in Iran where my parents were missionaries. As a little boy, I

heard them praying for a country to the east which had no Christians. It was Afghanistan. I do not remember this incident, but my mother told me that our Iranian Pastor, Stephen Khoobyar, once asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I said that I wanted to be a missionary to Afghanistan. He replied that missionaries were not allowed in that land. I said that was the reason I wanted to be a missionary there.

Not only did the missionaries and Christians in Iran pray for the closed nation of Afghanistan, but dedicated men and women of God on the borders of that country in India, later in Pakistan and in Russia also interceded. For example, Flora Davidson from Scotland lived in a two-story adobe house in the town of Kohat on the Northwest Frontier. In front of a window which looked out on the mountains of Afghanistan in the distance, she had a little bench. There she would spend hours on her knees praying that God would open that country to the gospel.

She also started a circle of prayer for Afghanistan. She would regularly distribute requests for intercession to believers who were concerned about reaching that nation for Christ. Later Margaret Haines, the sister-in-law of Dr. William Miller, worked with Flora Davidson in Kohat. She edited and published a quarterly prayer bulletin called "Missions on the Borders of Afghanistan." When she returned to the Philadelphia area because of poor health, she continued to encourage intercession for Afghanistan and for years put out monthly prayer letters for the work in that country.

After I finished my studies, Afghanistan was still closed to regular missionaries. Therefore, I signed a contract with the Ambassador at the Afghan Embassy in Washington, D.C. to teach English in that country. After arriving there in 1951, while reading my Bible, I saw that this was what the Apostle Paul did."¹¹ Following him, I became a self-supporting missionary.

When my wife, Betty, and I arrived in Kabul, our main ministry was prayer. We also met with other Christian teachers for intercession. This was the way a house church began in our home. I used to pray every day for my Afghan Muslim students in the government school where I taught. One of these for whom I interceded went abroad for further study. He belonged to the Royal Family of Afghanistan. Later on I received a letter from him telling how he had put his trust in Jesus Christ as his Savior. He also had joined an evangelical church and was teaching a young people's Sunday school class. He enclosed a check to help out with God's work in Afghanistan.

Not only is prayer for Muslims effective, but also prayer with them for their felt needs can be a sign and a wonder when they see the answer which then can lead them to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. On one occasion, an Afghan friend came to me with his uncle who needed a cataract operation. They had just been turned away from the government hospital where they were told that a bed for him to have the operation would not be available for three months.

My friend explained to me that this made it very difficult since his uncle came from the central highlands which was a journey of several days each way. It therefore would be difficult for him to make the trip and come back in three months. On the other hand it would be very hard for him to stay in Kabul, the capital, away from his family for three months. He asked me whether I knew the head of that government hospital. I said that I did. He then asked me kindly to write a note explaining the situation and asking whether it might not be possible to admit his uncle sooner. I replied that I did not have to write a note but would personally speak to the head of the hospital.

The friend then asked me what the name was of the one in charge of the hospital. I answered, "His name is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Head of every hospital." I then said, "Let us talk to Him now." Praying in their language, I explained the situation to the Lord and asked Him to help. I then told them to go back to the government hospital. But they were reluctant to return there since they had just been turned away. I

nal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."¹³ He also brings this out when he writes,

Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.¹⁴

Our real foe is Satan and all of his evil forces. In the same way, Jesus Christ has taught us to petition daily in the Lord's Prayer that we might be delivered from "the evil one" [*tou ponerou* in Greek].¹⁵

Notice that Paul says our struggle is not against flesh and blood or people. We need constantly to love our Muslim friends. Our Lord loves them infinitely and this is the reason He has not only died for them but has commanded us to take His good news of forgiveness and eternal life to them. We must see that we are really fighting against the spiritual powers behind Islam. For this reason the passage adds that along with being strong in the Lord and putting on the whole armor of God so that we can stand against the devil, we also need to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests."¹⁶

What accounts for the origin of Islam? Muhammad claimed that an angel or messenger from God appeared to him and gave the revelation of the Qur'an. He states this in Surah 81:19-23, "This is in truth the word of an honored messenger, mighty, established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne, (One) to be obeyed and trustworthy; and your comrade is not mad. Surely he beheld him on the clear horizon."¹⁷ We might ask, was this revelation really from God?

It is interesting to see how certain cults also trace their origin to a vision of an angel or a special messenger who

...some billion people of the world are trusting a false absolute for their eternal salvation.

said to them, "You asked me to intercede with the Head of the hospital and I did this. Now go back." Finally they agreed to try again.

Several hours later my friend returned to see me and he was all excited. He exclaimed, "You do know the Head of that hospital!" He went on to explain that as soon as they returned, a patient was just being discharged and they admitted his uncle immediately, putting him in the bed which had just been vacated. And they would perform the needed operation soon. This Muslim became a believer in Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior.¹²

A Muslim convert to Christ in Europe has found prayer to be an effective means of evangelism. He finds out what needs they have and then challenges them to pray to Jesus to help them with these needs. When the Lord answers, they see a sign and a wonder in response to their prayers. Many Muslims then also pray to Christ to forgive them their sins and receive Him as their Savior and Lord.

The Weapons of our Warfare

As the Apostle Paul reminds us, "The weapons of our warfare are not car-

they claim came from God. For example, Joseph Smith, Jr., the one Mormons follow as their prophet, claimed that the angel Moroni appeared to him and gave him his commission three times.¹⁸ Also Sun Myung Moon who started the Unification Church claims that Jesus Christ appeared to him in Korea on Easter Day in 1936 and called him to be a special messenger.¹⁹ The Apostle Paul warns us that at times “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”²⁰

The Apostle John tells us in the Bible that “the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”²¹ He also tells us to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God.” He then reveals the test for determining the source. “This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.”²² In other words, true divine revelation acknowledges the incarnation of Christ. The Qur’an throughout denies that Jesus is God or the Son of God. Furthermore, Islam also denies that Christ died on the cross for our sins.

It was through seeking the real forgiveness of his sins that Haji Sultan Muhammad received Jesus as his Savior. He writes his testimony in the booklet, *Why I Became A Christian*.²³ After being an Islamic leader, a scholar and one who had performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, he finally concluded that only in the death of Christ was there atonement for his sins.

Even though Muhammad was a preacher or forthteller, he was not a prophetic foreteller. There is no instance in the Qur’an where he prophesied a future event which then came true, such as the prophets of the Old and New Testament did. Moses stated,

You may say to yourselves, ‘How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?’ If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true,

that is a message that the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.²⁴

Muhammad had no authenticating miracles with his message such as Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Christ and Paul. Furthermore Christ said, “I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me”²⁵ Or as the Apostle Peter said, “There is no other name (apart from that of Christ) under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”²⁶ This is the reason we should be deeply concerned since some billion people of the world are trusting a false absolute for their eternal salvation.

George Otis, in his book *The Last of the Giants*, points out that just as Joshua and his armies had to fight warriors of great size before the Holy Land was occupied, so we today have awesome forces that hinder the evangelization of the world. He points out that the greatest of these giants is Islam.²⁷ John Wimber states that Jesus Christ has won the war for world evangelization, but we through His strength need to do the mopping up and win the battles. The way we are to do this is not through our own strength, but through prayer to the Commander of the Lord’s army, even as Joshua did.²⁸

A World-Wide Revival of Prayer

We should be greatly encouraged with the present revival of prayer around the world. The Concerts of Prayer Movement is gaining faithful groups of intercessors on every continent. Dr. C. Peter Wagner, who is Coordinator of the AD 2000 Prayer Track, writes, “It is becoming clear that the real battle for world evangelization is a spiritual battle.”²⁹ Campus Crusade’s Dr. Kim Joon-Gon of Korea writes, “The Lord Jesus has the keys to open what no one can shut. I believe in the next ten years, history’s greatest revival will take place.”³⁰

In 1993 and 1994, Youth With A

Mission encouraged Christians to fast and pray in a special way for Muslims during the Islamic lunar month of Ramadan. They plan to continue this practice on a yearly basis. Also October 1993 was set aside as a time for focused prayer for the 10/40 Window of 62 countries. Over two-thirds of these nations were Islamic.

Conclusion

God the Father gives the promise to God the Son, “Ask of Me and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.”³¹ We too can claim this promise for Muslim peoples. As our Lord said, “Until now you have not asked for anything in My name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy will be complete.”³² World-wide awakening will come through what Jonathan Edwards called “explicit agreement and visible union of God’s people in extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion and the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom on earth.”³³ In this way, all unreached people groups, including the Muslim peoples, will be reached. Then, as the Bible has promised, “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”³⁴

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Uzbekistan: Life Amidst Death

Polluted water, a dying land and environmental diseases are matched by a resurgent Islamic faith among the Uzbeks of Central Asia. See front cover photo of an Uzbek senior citizen.

by Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse

It is large and dead—it is the Aral Sea in the homelands of the Uzbek people in Central Asia. Uzbekistan is a Republic of the former Soviet Union and has suffered irredeemable harm because of it.

The Soviet government economic planners chose Uzbekistan as the Republic to be the main producer of cotton for all of the USSR. This would have been fine if there had been enough water to implement this policy. Unfortunately, the people were forced to divert water that normally flowed into the Aral Sea—the fourth largest inland sea in the world. It has dropped from fourth largest to sixth and the last native fish species was killed by pesticides in 1983. In some places the original shoreline is 40 miles from the now dead and deadly waters.

Heavy winds blow the toxic residue of pesticides and slat off the desert-like bed into Uzbekistan—slowly but inevitably turning into a desert. Because of this and the lack of good water, Uzbeks suffer from high levels of cancer of the esophagus, liver disorders, respiratory diseases and eye problems. They also have one of the highest infant mortality rates in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Islam Is Flourishing

Despite severe economic and environmental conditions Uzbeks are flourishing in two areas. They have one of the highest birth rates in Asia—a normal family has up to seven children. Secondly, they are reconnecting with mainline Islamic countries and rediscovering their Muslim roots. The former Communist

government officially repressed Islamic practices and the learning of the Arabic language, but now both of these are making comebacks.

The Uzbeks were the third largest ethnic group in the former Soviet Union and the largest Muslim minority. Like the Uighurs, and other Turkic people groups, they converted to Islam many centuries ago and consider Islam an integral part of their individual and community identities.

Patriarchal and Communal

Uzbeks homes are centered around the father. They tend to be large and clan-like, therefore the extended family is very important. Since two-thirds of Uzbeks live in towns of 2,500 people or less, this traditional pattern of the Uzbeks has not been lost even after 70 years of Communism.

They enjoy music, poetry and storytelling. They have maintained the trappings and ceremonies of Islam during the Communist occupation, and now many are discovering the larger Muslim family once again—Jordan sent 60,000 copies of the Koran and Saudi Arabia sent one million to Uzbekistan in 1990.

*“My body pains from anguish
and desire,
My hair turns red from blood of
tears.
Lips are sweet as sherbet,
But without sweet answers to my
quest I would die.”*

A lament by Nadira, a 19th century poetess and wife of a Khan, after the death of her husband.

Christianity

Up against more than 12 centuries of Islam and centuries of Russian Orthodox crusading oppression, Christianity has not had a real chance among the Uzbeks. The best estimates indicate that there are only 30 Uzbek Christians and no viable Christian church or congregation is known among Uzbeks anywhere in the world. If the United States had so few Christians in proportion to its population, there would be only 350 Christians in the U.S.

The advance of Christianity among the Uzbeks will be accomplished only be creative, determined pioneering missionaries. It will take significant prayer and commitment by those who send these missionaries to see a beachhead established.

Some Uzbeks have been exposed to the gospel but have not responded. One Uzbeks young man came to the Lord in 1980 but was imprisoned in a psychiatric hospital for witnessing to others.

Although the New Testament is now available in their own language, it cannot be distributed.

The Uzbek name means “self-lord” or “one’s own prince.” This perception, coupled with their strong family ties, make it very difficult for outsiders to penetrate this proud and threatened people.

Pray for the Uzbeks!

•**Pray** for the *Russian Christians* who live among Uzbeks to have love, humility and vision to reach out to their Muslim neighbors.

•**Pray** for the *salvation* of thousands of Uzbek families and neighborhoods.

•**Pray** for *tentmakers and other foreign visitors*—for wisdom and patience in befriending and reaching the Uzbeks.

•**Pray** for the *Uzbeks in Afghanistan*. Also

pray for the salvation of the few thousand refugees in China, Pakistan, U.S., Australia and Germany.

•**Pray** that *radio programs and print material* could be produced by the few Uzbek believers.

•**Pray** for the birth of the Uzbek *church* —a growing dynamic fellowship of believers, who might serve the Lord free from persecution.

•**Pray** that the Uzbeks can see themselves as God sees them: *loved*, accepted and wanted by Him as their Father.

Uzbek Facts

Religion: Sunni Muslim.

Population: 16+ Million

Uzbekistan—15 million (85% of the newly established state; 68% Rural, 32% Urban)

Afghanistan/Pakistan—1 million
China, USA, Australia, West Germany—several thousand.

Products: Cotton, fruit, vegetables, light industry, minerals, silk.

Diet: Melons, fruit, tea, bread, rice, beef and lamb.

Recreation: Traditional singing and dancing; hospitality, poetry, humorous story-telling.

Health Care: Poor water & sanitation, infectious intestinal diseases.

Literacy: High, but not in Arabic.

Uzbekistan—Uzbek Homelands

Area: 172,700 sq. miles, mostly flat sun-baked lowlands and high mountain ranges

Population: 23 million total, Uzbeks-15 million

Fact: Uzbekistan produces 1/3 of Soviet cotton.

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Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse
721 N. Tejon
Colorado Springs, CO 80901

Ongoing Strategy Debate in Muslim Missions

God's people have grown in their concern for winning Muslims. However, many issues of strategy remain unresolved. This article highlights some key areas of ongoing discussion—contextualization, social action, tentmaking and human rights.

by Robert C. Douglas

The caller was searching for “the silver bullet.” He explained that he had only a few minutes to talk. He was attempting to figure out how to think about ministry to Muslims—a group only recently thrusting themselves into his consciousness. “What is the key to reaching Muslims?” he asked.

Another of those searches for the sure-fire way, word, book, technique that can't miss! I feel a bit chagrined to have to confess that I didn't have a handle on the bullet. I also feel a bit of resentment. When will people cease trying to reduce outreach to Muslims, who are so rich in diversity, to a one-step recipe? But, thank God that more and more Christians are developing an awareness of the world of Islam — and at least beginning to ask questions.

The world of Islam, encompassing more than one billion people, touching every continent, challenging Christianity theologically, socially and materially, is a world undergoing incredible changes. Exploding population, economic upheaval, religious revival, urbanization, modernization and secularization—these are but a few of the currents sweeping through the Muslim domains. This impact among Muslims spills over to the rest of the world. Who would have anticipated it fifty years ago? Who can see clearly where it will lead in another half century? Whatever else may be said, it is an exciting time to be alive and involved in missions to Muslims.

Mission can be defined in many different ways. One definition is: “Mission is discovering what God is doing in

the world and then becoming His partner.” The emphasis in this definition is exactly where it ought to be—on God. For, ultimately, missions is God's business. This definition suggests that God is a God who is fully engaged in His work, which means that an awareness of trends in the world equals an awareness of God's pointers. Clearly God is at work among Muslims.

With the increased ferment in Islam there has come a concurrent increased interest on the part of Christians to effectively evangelize long-neglected Muslim peoples. The evidences of this are everywhere. The growing attention of Islam at Urbana through the past twenty years, the creation of new organizations, or departments in older institutions, whose aim is to concentrate on Muslims, the Zwemer Institute, the Assemblies of God Center for Ministry to Muslims, the Muslim “desk” in SIM, Frontiers, the rush of agencies into Central Asia, the “Adopt-a-People” program, Open Door's Muslim focus, the 10-40 Window, all of these, and much more, point to a stirring of God's people to seriously penetrate a very needy segment of humanity with the Gospel.

Agencies of all kinds, old and new, charismatic and non-charismatic, large and small, East and West, are working at seeking to find their way forward in tackling what may be the “last frontier.” Evangelical Christians, with all their diversity, are in complete unanimity when it comes to the question of basic Muslim needs. It is Christ! The uniqueness of who Jesus is and what He did to save humankind propels for-

ward the increasing mission focus on Muslims. There is great unity here.

Agencies committed to Muslim work come at the task with a variety of approaches. Some may have their own corporate equivalent to “the key” to winning Muslims. Diversity abounds in terms of strategy. Underlying the strategic or methodological questions lurk a host of spoken and unspoken assumptions. Assumptions about Scripture, its nature, authority and use, culture and the social sciences and a theology of culture, the possibility and perimeters of syncretism, as well as the nature and influence of the demonic in things Islamic. The old adage “Ecclesiology determines missiology” is surely true. Behind ecclesiology are theological and worldview considerations which influence all else. Diversity of methodological decisions reflect much of the above.

A practical result of differing underlying assumptions is a series of ongoing debates—usually friendly—about several facets of mission to Muslims. Included are: 1) questions about contextualization, 2) the relationship of evangelism and social action and human services, 3) the place and legitimacy of tentmaking, and 4) the extent to which human/religious rights issues are legitimate concerns and, if so, how they ought to be addressed. Until now these have remained—and undoubtedly to some degree will remain—unsettled questions in mission to Muslims.

Contextualization

The term “contextualization” is in wide usage in mission circles today—and

much debated. In some circles it has all but supplanted the older language of “indigeneity.” It is one of those words that now has the power to evoke intense feelings by its mere mention. To imply that someone is “for” or “against” contextualization is almost instantaneously to pronounce them blessed or cursed, depending on one’s perspective.

When the discussion of contextualization is applied to the Muslim world the level of intensity seems to increase. This is linked to assumptions regarding things Islamic. For instance, it is not uncommon for Christians to assume that: “If it is Islamic, we can’t have anything to do with it.”

Conversations regarding contextualization center on questions of “how much” to contextualize and where to draw the line. All cross-cultural workers are theoretically committed to getting into their target culture, if only by learning the language. Encouraging the translation of Scripture into the host tongue is an act of contextualizing, though it may not be thought of under that term.

More profound questions grow out of diverse understandings of the nature of religion and its place in culture. To dress as Muslims do, or observe their dietary rules, or greet one another in ways common in Afghanistan (for example) are not the crux of the debate. These are seen as cultural.

What is disputed is the use of Muslim “religious” forms. For instance, should one keep Ramadan or not? Are Jesus’ mosques (or tariqahs) legitimate? What role, if any, can the Quran have in Christian witness? Should Islamic (religious) terms for God, Jesus, salvation, etc. be used?

It is easy to imply that there is one right strategy (“the key” again!), which in turn suggests that there is a great uniformity among Muslims. In fact, the world of Islam is exceedingly diverse, which requires a host of approaches which take context (setting) seriously.

Underlying the contextualization debate are different assumptions about the Bible itself (no question of it being God’s Word) and its relation to culture(s), both ancient and modern. Where and how do the divine and the human come together in revelation, inspiration and resulting Scripture? Sorting through this is not easy. The decisions of some churches which seem to have reduced the Bible to just another book add a note of caution to the process.

A further fly in the ointment is uneasiness about the influence of the social sciences. All contemporary cross-culture workers are indebted to the insights developed by the social sciences over the last fifty years. As cultural anthropology, sociology, communication theory and linguistics have evolved, missionaries have found ways to make practical applications of these disciplines to their work. Missiology has taken on a life of its own, a delicate wedding of Scripture, theology and the social sciences. At the same time, Evangelicals have become more attuned to the assumptions driving the social sciences and have often judged them lacking in respect for the transcendent.

How to separate the practical insights of cultural anthropology from the underlying relativistic assumptions has been an enormous challenge! Some observers of contextualization conclude that theories of culture, with their social science moorings, have taken actual precedence over Scripture. Where this suspicion prevails, contextualization comes under a black cloud.

Another issue has muscled its way into the contextualization discussion in the last two decades. It centers in the demonic. Its contemporary expression arises out of charismatic renewal and the attendant emphasis on signs and wonders, and particularly spiritual warfare. Clearly, “charismatic” means different things to different people. The same is true of spiritual warfare.

Spiritual warfare clouds or clarifies

(depending again on unstated theological assumptions) the nature of efforts to reach Muslims. In its most emphatic expression it asserts, “If it is Islamic, it is demonic.” Clearly this view has implications for contextualization. For how can missionaries, or any Christian, have any association with the works of the devil?

One’s world view of theology, and one’s sense of culture and view of “religion” are swirled together so easily at this point. What is to be viewed as “Islamic”? In what ways is the Islamic different from the cultural, if at all? Also how does one assess the presence (or extent of presence) of the demonic? Extreme manifestations may be reasonably clear, but what about all the subtle forms evil takes? Where and how are theological assumptions at work?

Rarely stated is the assumption that Evangelicals come to this discussion free of “contamination.” Yet our theology and methodology give evidence of being shaped to some degree by our culture. Therefore, is it fair to state: “If it is Western (or Evangelical) it is demonic”? Is there confusion about syncretism (what it is, when and how it happens) and cultural accommodation? The easiest way of dealing with this mix of complex issues is by not dealing with it. A few good proof texts one way or the other takes care of so much.

No one wants to underestimate the presence and power of the demonic. Nor does the Evil One deserve more attention than is his due. Clear thinking and acting is vital. However, one wonders if things Islamic (whatever that means) have gotten a “bad rap”—due not so much to their inherent nature, but due to the fears, negative experiences, and culturally shaped theologies of those outside looking in.

Social Action

The world is rapidly shrinking due to modern technology. It is more and more difficult for nations to insulate them-

selves from broad political, social and economic forces. The Muslim world, touching all continents, impacts all dimensions of political and economic life in far more ways than oil, and is itself subject to ups and downs triggered by forces far afield. Ideology is often brought in by non-ideological dynamics beyond any group's control.

Today a number of areas within the Muslim world suffer from spasms of upheaval in spite of, or because of, globalization. The lack of freedom in general, self-determination in particular, and the absence of credibility of many governments spark unrest. In some areas new waves of nationalism are exploding. Conflict, economic underdevelopment and natural disasters have triggered waves of refugees. The specter of terrorism is never far away. Nuclear, biological and chemical capabilities add to uneasiness. The old systems of alignment (East vs. West; USSR vs. USA) no longer hold. Questions of who to look to for security and prosperity are uncertain. This situation is dangerous but also is an opportunity for Christian service. God has often worked in the midst of upheaval to bring people to new religious awareness and faith in Him.

Vast portions of today's Muslim world are wracked by economic crises generated by war, ecological irresponsibility, famine, natural disaster and economic mismanagement. In many places people have rising expectations. In some instances frustration due to failed hopes is growing. The gap between rich and poor is widening across the Muslim world as well as within individual nations. Solutions are hard to come by because globalization shifts critical decisions outside of national borders. Donor fatigue is a reality both in the hearts of humanitarians and the halls of government. Disasters, natural and man-made, are not likely to lessen,

but only shift from place to place.

Economic problems have frequently resulted in a new willingness to question and search (e.g. Central Asia) and a new openness to God's Gospel (e.g. Mali and Burkina Faso). Jesus confronted human need, manifesting His divine love in reaching out to the suffering. But what are we to do today?

Muslims constitute the largest block of unreached people in today's world...More than 930 major ethno-linguistic groups need churches planted among them—a task calling for the best in cross-cultural missions.

For much of this century, Evangelicals have wrestled with defining the proper relationship between evangelism and social action. What does legitimate social involvement entail? A host of concepts have claimed attention: benevolence, disaster, relief, development, peace and justice questions.

Among Muslims these same discussions are going on—often intensified due to the abject poverty in Muslim areas and due to Islamic accusations of missionaries "buying converts" to Christianity. It has mattered little that Muslims have offered a host of enticements to Christians to embrace Islam! Today's world is one of incredible need and increasingly restricted access to many Muslim areas. These factors have forced agencies to include greater social services in their agenda in order to qualify for visas. The importance of social service/action is not apt to decline.

Often a variety of practical considerations necessitates the development of independent structures, staff and finances as far as in-the-field evangelism and social action operation goes. The struggle to define purposes and goals for

each and to integrate strategies conceptually remains a challenge, and likely will continue into the future.

Tentmaking

A related area that is gaining increased attention is "tentmaking." A number of terms are in use to identify this strategy. Proponents have their favorite labels and a rationale for those

preferences. Within some circles there is a debate as to the validity or invalidity of tentmaking. Christian workers need to remember that "tentmaking" was basic to Christian mission for many centuries. It also was and is basic to Islamic expansion.

Beyond labels and broad decision for or against tentmaking are definitions of who is and who is not a legit-

imate "tentmaker." Does tentmaking cover full-time employees of major secular multinationals? Many seem to prefer tentmaking in the form of small business creation, or occupations otherwise involving limited time commitments. Often educational and medical service is considered. The variety of global situations will necessitate parallel variety in tentmaking format.

A more basic problem facing tentmakers is at an emotive as well as a conceptual level. It is the conflict many tentmakers feel between vocation and ministry. The lack of integration of the two breeds frustration, confusion, and for many, burn-out.

Many tentmakers see their vocation solely as a basis for presence among their target people. It merely allows them to "be there." Ministry involves activities and time separate from one's "job." For some, ethical issues of honesty and integrity versus deception are intense. Job becomes a "cover" and generates inner conflict, a sense of illegitimacy for the Gospel's sake.

The root of these conflicts is theolog-

ical, cultural and methodological. Evangelicals are heavily impacted by neo-platonic philosophy with its sacred-secular dichotomy and the attendant segregation of job from faith. Confusion abounds in the way Evangelicals play concepts off against each other. Sacred-secular, earthly-heavenly, flesh-spirit, world-heaven. Methodologically the resulting dichotomy sets evangelism (souls) over against social action (bodies). In every-day terms, people become convinced that “church work” or ministry is a separate category from the stuff of parenting and making a living. Biblical theology moves in different directions.

The Lutheran perspective that equates vocation with ministry is much needed. Until serious thought is given to integrating vocation and ministry, along with internalization of the result, tentmaking will hardly realize its full potential.

Human Rights

Yet another place which remains unsettled in Evangelical thought is the area of human rights. Religious rights is a sub-category in the larger human rights field. There is wide recognition that Islam often discriminates against minorities living within Muslim states. Freedom to worship and minister is a problem. Freedom to change religion is almost nonexistent. Persecution inflicted on converts from Islam can be brutal.

Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Iran’s records of religious intolerance are tragic and fortunately well-publicized. Afghanistan, just emerging from a ten-year struggle, maintains a constitution that is increasingly Islamic. The new government has already added restrictions on secularists, women, and freedoms of the press.

Pakistan’s treatments of non-Muslims and Muslim sects like Ahmadiyahs remain harsh. The small Christian presence is threatened with fur-

ther isolation by the attempt to install discriminating identity cards. The federal, non-Sharia, court rescinded this law and may provide other judicial routes for Christians to live at peace with their Muslim neighbors and enjoy government securities. But the future remains uncertain.

Malaysia’s steady eroding of religious rights for non-Muslims extends to language use. The Kalatan State is pushing for further legislation to conform society to Islamic law. It would include the death penalty for a Muslim adopting another faith.

There is a growing concern on the part of Evangelicals to respond to religious freedom concerns. This has led to a proliferation of new organizations, “desks” monitoring religious rights for older agencies, and networks monitoring and sharing data regarding persecution occurring within Muslim countries and peoples.

However, lack of consensus exists in regard to what to do in addressing religious rights problems, timing of action and appropriate channels to be used. Is there a place for public outcry? When does lobbying leading to the threat of withholding government aid become counterproductive? Is public (and even “private”) pressure of this kind an inappropriate repackaging of nineteenth century “gun-boat diplomacy”?

Then there is the vulnerability of people in criticized nations. Obviously, agencies with staff in the field expose themselves to direct retaliation through overt action. And what about the possibility of fallout for local Christians who cannot leave, are not subject to deportation, and do not have embassies to act in their behalf?

In one way, the Church of Jesus Christ is the Church Universal, with the whole having a responsibility to show care for regional or local expression. In another way, churches exist primarily within local contexts and are faced with unique challenges to life and limb,

which must be addressed locally.

Behind the religious rights problem is a philosophical/ theological issue for Christians in the West. How does one define religious rights, toleration and the relationship of “church” (or by analogy - mosque) and state? Our Western heritage predisposes Evangelicals to come to this discussion with a well-developed set of assumptions regarding politics and religion. The possible implications of those assumptions have not always been thought through by Evangelicals; hence, debate sometimes takes place in a fog. Conversely, most Muslims come at the matter of religious rights, especially the freedom to change one’s religion, with a whole different frame of reference.

Islam has always conceived a political role for religion, a fact that has increasingly become apparent to Westerners faced with Muslims in their midst. Christians are caught in a bind in the face of Muslim demands: the logic of religious toleration, of hospitality, requires making concessions to Muslims, while the logic of individualized Christianity, of religion taken out of the public arena, disqualifies Westerners from dealing effectively with Muslim theocratic demands.

The church was never more involved in politics than during the era of the Holy Roman Empire. Under the Empire, Christianity became “Christendom,” and the political ruler was seen as God’s appointed agent, the earthly counterpart to the heavenly sovereign. In that scheme, political affairs and religious matters were two aspects of one and the same reality. Church and state were united for the same purpose, even though as institutions they represented different functions. While the church held custody of the absolute moral law, the state was concerned with enforcing the rules that gave practical expression to the higher spiritual law. Conformity rather than personal persuasion was the chief end of religious activity. This approach is little different from the

ideal society conservative Muslim thinkers aim for today.

Such an arrangement worked only so long as there was a more or less homogeneous, cohesive society apportioned into stable social classes. Cohesion became increasingly difficult to maintain in the face of growing pluralism and social mobility. With the rise of national ethnic consciousness fueled by the drive for religious freedom, the formal structures of the religious empire collapsed and Christendom dissolved. These same dynamics are at work in some places in today's Muslim world.

The late Ayatollah Khomeini once complained that Muslims have been robbed of their heritage through Western connivance. Western agents, he charged, "have completely separated [Islam] from politics. They cut off its head and gave the rest to us." The reference is to the creation of the secular national state in Muslim countries as the successor to the transnational Islamic caliphate. A similar complaint was made by Sadiq al-Mahdi, the Sudanese political leader who attacked the secular national state. In respect to such sentiments, Kenneth Cragg wrote: "The renewed and effective politicization of Islam is the most important single fact of the new [Islamic] century [which opened in 1979]."

These views have their roots in the Prophet's own personal legacy in Medina and Mecca where he established territoriality, dar al-Islam, as the handmaid of religious faith. It is from Ibn Taymiyya that modernist Muslim reformers in the last 200 years have received their marching orders, from Jalal al-Din Afghani to Sayyid Qutb and Ayatollah Khomeini. Ibn Taymiyya spoke about the indispensability of God and the Prophet in political affairs, what he calls "divine government and prophetic vice-regency."

Uncompromising words that

impute territoriality to religious orthodoxy make Muslims dissatisfied with a merely utilitarian political ethic. Yet they are words that also make it difficult to co-exist in a pluralist society and complicate a Christian religious rights response. There is a large body of material in both Muslim and Christian sources that supports a public role for religion without making territoriality a condition of faith.

It is important to recognize the context in which Muslims have encountered the West, not as a subjugated people of a colonial empire but as immigrants looking for opportunities. We must keep abreast of moderate Muslim counsels concerning the dangers of territoriality, and both sides need to come to an agreement about freedom of religion. Christians cannot preserve religious toleration by conceding the extreme Muslim case for territoriality.

When it comes to religious rights, a special area of concern is the role of women and family. The Muslim world has always placed great emphasis on the sanctity of the family, which has not changed. What is changing is the role of women in society. Attention has been given to renewed use of the "veil." This practice, which ebbs and flows according to the year and country, is symptomatic of wide-ranging debate over women's role. This discussion clearly impacts understandings of family. In some ways Islam is struggling with a 1,000-year gender gap.

In seventh century Arabia, the Quran's words regarding women could only be considered revolutionary, as they offered a great contrast to the despotic Arab society controlled by powerful males and tribal networks. But in the 1990s, the Quran's statements about women are foreboding and offer little hint of improving the status of half of the world's population.

Many scholars and legal experts have been proposing that the principle of

independent judicial-religious decision making be reintroduced in order to overcome some of the discriminatory practices against women and other minority groups that have evolved after the Quran was revealed.

Opportunity

The challenge of Islam is tremendous. More than one billion Muslims! Approximately one out of every five people in the world is a Muslim. Even more significant, Muslims constitute the largest block of unreached people in today's world. And their numbers are rapidly increasing due to birth rate. More than 930 major ethno-linguistic groups need churches planted among them—a task calling for the best in cross-cultural missions.

There are 38 nations where over 50 percent of the people are Muslim, and countries officially view themselves as Islamic. In these areas, Islam intends to remain dominant. People with power tend to resolutely resist efforts of non-Muslims to evangelize. Most predominantly Islamic nations would have to be labelled "restricted access" countries. In 25 other countries, at least 10 percent of the population is Muslim. Significant numbers of Muslims can be found today in all parts of the world.

It is clear God is at work among Muslims. This decade promises to be strategic for the Muslim world. In many ways the 1990s may be "the decade" of the Muslims.

The thought of evangelizing the Muslim world challenges the vision, faith and strategic planning of God's people as almost nothing else does.

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Mission Lessons From History:

A Laboratory of Missiological Insights Gained from Christian-Muslim Relationships

by Lyle VanderWerff

The history of Christian-Muslim relationships provides a laboratory from which can be drawn many lessons for those committed to fulfillment of the Great Commission. The church would do well to research the record of the centuries since A.D. 622. Where in the past has the church been effective in its witness amidst Islam and where has it failed in its work of reconciling men and women to God in Christ's name? It is a bitter-sweet record with lessons both negative and positive. In this brief study we will seek to highlight several of these lessons.

There is a need to shift from a confrontational or adversarial relationship to one of open communication and exchange. Dialogue and witness must replace animosity and polemics. The Muslim world still requires a *preparatio evangelica* to ready it for a fuller acceptance of the Gospel. We pray for a larger groundswell of Muslims for the Messiah as well as individual conversions and the awakening of people groups. While we pray and labor from the perspective of Christ's return, we must confess that it may take a hundred or thousand years. Thus pioneering missionaries must tap the insights of the past fourteen centuries as well as live expectantly. May we be granted the patience of God, that is a power that stretches far beyond our expectations.

Islam's Formative Period

One of the factors prompting the rise of Islam was that the church had "Neglected Arabia" (title of a publication of the Reformed Church in America under Samuel Zwemer and James

Cantine). The deserts and cities of Arabia had been passed over by churches which failed to realize the spiritual hunger of the predecessors and contemporaries of Muhammad. There were Christian communities such as the Arab tribe of the Ghassanids and the Persian tribe of the Lakhmids but these were barrier builders rather than bridges for the Gospel. Likewise, there was little evidence of reaching out to the Arabs by the churches in Bahrain, Yemen, and Ethiopia, although it is known that some of Muhammad's earliest disciples embraced Christianity after fleeing to Ethiopia. However, the heartlands of Arabia received only the heretical, fringe expressions of that faith, leaving Muhammad still seeking.

Because of the rapid expansion of Islam during its first century (A.D. 622 to 722), Muslims openly borrowed from many cultures incorporating much into Dar Islam (House of Islam). Islam continued to draw from the religious and cultural heritages of Syria, Egypt, North Africa, Spain, Eastern Turkey, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Persia, Northern India, and other Asian contacts.

Although Muslim caliphs and army generals were the power brokers who insisted upon surrender or death, they soon harnessed the *dhimmi*s (subject and protected peoples) who paid the annual tribute tax according to the Pact established by Umar. These terms of subjection severely handicapped Christian influence, but it was still amazing that so much knowledge, religious discussion, and technology was transferred into the House of Islam.

However, there was mutual mis-

understanding between Muslims and Christians from the beginning of Islam. Muhammad originally saw all monotheists as being co-religionists, but in his quarrels with the Jews at Medina there developed an animosity which influenced outside contacts. Muhammad made a direct appeal to the Jews of Medina, considering himself to stand in succession of Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. Animosity increased as they rebuffed his overtures and he reciprocated by expelling them or killing their male leadership (cf. Banu Qurayzah). He charged Jews with corrupting the Scriptures where they differed with his "revelations." Although Muhammad's attitude towards the Jews soured, he solicited a more reconciliatory stance toward Christians and other "peoples of the Book." He urged his followers to count Christians as friends (Surah 5:82).

At first he sought to protect Christian leaders and places of worship. But as the forces of Islam expanded politically these freedoms were curtailed. The military conquests under the first four caliphs would further erode Christian-Muslim relations. Religion was used to sanction this expansion. Warfare has a way of obscuring the best of intentions. Records of theological discussions are limited. Political, economic and military issues stole the limelight. Muslim Arab rulers discourage fraternization, keeping their troops stationed in garrison towns nearby.

There were some rays of light. Positive Christian-Muslim communication is reported in the accounts of: John I, Patriarch of Antioch; Nestorian Patriarch Isho Yabhb III; and Rector John of

Mission Lessons From History

Nikiu who was over the Coptic bishops. Christians were often courted by the ruling caliph as their help was needed in ruling this expanding dynasty. Syrian Christians had much to offer. Tribal desert Arabs had yet to learn to manage a rich cultural heritage, a heterogeneous empire. The Umayyads would appropriate many Byzantine policies and practices at Damascus. There was a steady flow of Christian contributions helping Muslims to shape their dream of a better society. Trade and correspondence benefited all parties. Emperor Leo III writes to clarify some Muslim misunderstandings about the Christian faith. He urges Muslims to read the whole of Scriptures, and answers the charge of corruption. He discusses the nature and work of Christ, the judgment and resurrection, future life, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Leo's letter had a positive impact on Umar. As a reformer Umar would also converse with Pope Gregory and John of Damascus. In the persons of Umar and Gregory, one can observe the benefits resulting from sincere and cordial conversation. Unfortunately some Muslims jealous of the high offices held by Christians pressured Umar to restrict those who were not politically correct. Properties, positions, and pressure tempted many to convert to Islam.

Light from the Ummayyad Period

John of Damascus (ca. 665-750) exhibits some of the qualities needed in effective witnesses amidst Islam. This Christian held high office and served as a personal counselor to the caliph. His pen represents a knowledge of the Quran and Islamic beliefs, and a dialectical style influenced by Aristotle. In his book on heresies, he classifies Islam as a Judeo-Christian offshoot. Sadly he moves from sympathetic scholarship to verbal attack. It is hard to say where dialogue leaves off and debate begins. In his work on disputations, he describes a technique whereby Christians should

answer Muslim questions. Such argumentation would have crippled a sensitive quest for the Gospel. This reactionary style would influence Christian-Muslim communication for centuries. It would take great patience to move beyond the controversial format which Christians and Muslims borrowed from Greek philosophers. A thousand years and more would pass before Christian apologetics would take a more conversational tone.

The Abbasid Period

Many Christian leaders continued to serve as physicians, financial administrators, political advisors, etc. In turn, Muslim rulers settled disputes between Jacobites, Maronites, and Nestorians. Christian professors served in the universities at Alexandria, Baghdad, Damascus, and Jerusalem. There was a hunger for physics, astronomy, philosophy, and literature. Classical works were translated from Greek and Latin into Arabic and Syriac by men like Theodore of Edessa (d. 785). It was a season of theological ferment.

Under the Abbasids, Islam and Christianity were impacted by rationalism and suffered a "hardening of the arteries." The scholastic theology of Al-Ashari (d. 936) represents an institutionalized religion. Al-Ghazali (d. 1111) attempted to recover an experiential faith by drawing from Sufism which has drawn on the wellsprings of Christianity, but still much was to be desired. Islam and the West became isolated from each other. Nearly a millennium would pass before exchange in the public square would allow discussion as to the nature of God's redemptive rule in Christ. Christians, as *dhimmi*s, were protected, yet, under the millet system, they struggled to survive by turning to science and technology (much as did Christians in China under the cultural revolution, 1966-1976). The surprise is not that many Christians became Muslim to escape the poll-tax and politi-

cal pressure, but that millions of Christians stood their ground sacrificially.

Nestorian Patriarch Timothy, in his extensive correspondence (780-823), reveals a commitment to mission regardless of the cost. He spent two days at the court of Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdi in 781 giving expression to a orthodox faith. The Caliph commended Timothy for his meaningful theology but lamented his failure to accept Muhammad as a prophet. They differed too in their discussion of the unity and trinity of God. For Timothy, the Quran and Muhammad lacked the confirmation by miracles, a seal dear to Nestorians. Other Christians like Al-Kindi (ca. 830) were not so gracious in their dialogue and appeared more concerned to score points against Muhammad rather than share the grace of God! Aristotelian logic became a substitute for the Gospel. Where discussions retained a biblical basis, Christian-Muslim dialogue was more productive. The Word of God remains a trysting place, an encounter in truth.

Herein is a lesson not to be lost. Both Christianity and Islam purport to be grounded in revelation. Islam acknowledges the authority of the Scriptures in spite of the sometime charge of "corruption." Of necessity, Muslims are committed to the fact that God reveals Himself and that He preserves what He reveals.

We do well to begin our conversations with the Old Testament. Christian-Muslim dialogue must be founded on what God has done. It is well to start with the basic biblical truths: creation, fall, redemption, covenant and kingdom. Ask the basic question of Abrahamic faith: How did Abraham experience righteousness in the sight of God (Genesis 15:6)? Muslims as well as our Jewish neighbors need to address such foundational issues. It will be amazing how much common ground we share. Today Christians in Europe and the United States are in a comparable position

with an influx of peoples of Muslim background. There are new opportunities for dialogue, for fulfillment of Christ's call to bear witness, and to reap a rich inter-cultural harvest of great blessing.

Early and Reformation Mission Models

Initially Europe responded to Islam out of fear. Muslim expansion threatened her existence. It is no wonder that the literature of the West was filled with harsh caricature and stereotype. Muhammad and Muslims in general were given "bad press" in Medieval Europe.

Fortunately more accurate information began to circulate and more positive models of Christian witness began to emerge such as: Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny (1092-1156); Peter of Lombard (d. 1164), author of his *Sentences*; Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), founder of the Franciscans; Raymond of Penaforte (d. 1275), who won many Muslims to Christ in North Africa and in Spain; Thomas Aquinas (d. 1272) whose *Summa* was concerned for witness to peoples of other religions; and, Roger Bacon (d. 1292) who sought to view others free of prejudice. The last part of the 13th century could be called, "the hopeful decades."

One of the most outstanding figures in the Medieval Period was Raymond Lull (1235-1315). Convinced of the futility of violence (i.e., the crusades) and undergoing a drastic conversion at about 30, he made a covenant with God to serve the Muslim world in the Spirit of Christ. For over fifty years he devoted himself to three things necessary for effective witness.

First of all, Lull sought an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the languages of the people. After painful grappling with Arabic for nine years, he established a college at his hometown, at Marjorca, to train Franciscans.

He urged the Pope at the Council of Vienne (1312) to form five more colleges for languages, geography and culture. These colleges were located at Rome, Bologna, Paris, Oxford, and Salamca. Teaching himself in biblical and mission studies at Paris, he appealed to popes and kings to reach out to

To the degree that the Church is able to become the embodiment of the kingdom of God, she will become in Christ the bridge for reconciling all peoples to the living God.

Muslims in love.

Secondly, Lull's prodigious literary output resulted in several hundred pieces. His autobiography and mystical work on the "Book of the Lover and the Beloved" was as popular as his "One Hundred Names of God" was practical. Witnessing to Muslims at Tunis, North Africa, he made the case for "the law of Christ." He revealed a faith that was experiential as well as rational.

In the third place, Lull proved to be a man of action as well as words. He would witness to Christ and gather converts in Tunis even though he knew it was prohibited on pain of death. He sought an open forum, a parliament of religions. He discussed with the leaders Islam's weaknesses: namely, the lack of love in its concept of God, and the lack of harmony in its attributes of God. Martyred at age 79 (June 30, 1315), Lull remains known for his exemplary life. That life was shaped by the motto, "The soul that loves not, lives not."

Space does not allow for a thorough treatment of the Roman Catholic and Pre-Reformers who contributed to a healthier attitude towards Muslims, fuller knowledge of and compassion

for the Saracans. Protestants are often distressed to learn that reformers, Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564) were so slow in developing a clear concept of missions. The truth is that Luther was preoccupied with renewing congregations and supplying pastors who always were in short supply.

He had a "sending" heart but inadequate resources. He did argue that the Pope should send evangelists to the Turks rather than troops.

Scholarly John Calvin was also convinced that only a reformed church could convey the Gospel to all nations. He corresponded with 300 Swiss-French Calvinists who settled in Brazil and took the challenge to evangelize the Indian peoples there, but unfortunately these letters

have been lost. However, Calvin's global vision of a sovereign God and a sinful world would later form the impetus for the modern mission movement!

Light on Mission Methods

From 1800 to the present, Christian witnesses in India (including Pakistan and Bangladesh), have provided many insights as to effective communication with Muslims. William Carey, Henry Martyn and the evangelical chaplains, Thomas Valpy French, Robert Clark, and others learned to encounter Islam without the sharp clash of the controversial method. Alexander Duff, J.N. Farquhar, A.G. Hogg, among others, learned that education could become a vehicle for preparing the way of the Gospel as well as equipping future leadership in the land. Medical missions and other social services in India demonstrated the reality of God's love in Christ and gave the national churches a place in the sun.

Mission work in the Near East posed a complex set of concerns. Angli-

Mission Lessons From History

can and Reformed churches soon recognized that the weakened presence of the Orthodox Churches which had long suffered under the millet system needed revival if Christianity was to recover its larger mission. Presbyterians, the C.M.S., and others combined encouragement to these Eastern Brethren, as well as limited evangelization of Muslims. Pioneer missions by the Arabian Mission begun by Samuel Zwemer and James Cantine stretched from the Mesopotamia valley to Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman.

High points in the Twentieth Century are seen in the lives and labors of Temple Gairdner, a CMS missionary to Egypt, and of Samuel Zwemer, a Reformed Church in America missionary. The latter's tireless efforts founded the work and churches in the Arabian Gulf, before building an ecumenical network from Indonesia to Egypt to Europe to Princeton. Zwemer's reformatory theme of "Proclamation" would impact a generation of missionaries following Madras, 1938. Gairdner was sensitive to culture and the crucial needs of the national church. A respected scholar of Islam and committed to evangelism, he became an advocate of a "Christian Presence Amid Islam," an approach which matured under the superb leadership of Kenneth Cragg. In Zwemer and Gairdner one finds a balance which can still serve evangelical-ecumenical servants of Christ amid Islam.

Worldview and Witness

Turn of the century witnesses among Muslims will need to have a broad, maturing theology. Unless one has a solid view of God's sovereign claims in Christ and the kingdom, he or she will not be able to sustain a conversation about the realities of the Spirit-filled life. I have discovered that there are eight worldview questions which provide pegs on which to hang a discussion. These eight questions help keep the discussion focused, and open to either expansion, further definition and even

contraction. These eight are:

1. What is the nature of ultimate reality, of God himself? What can be known of God and how can it be known? Christians and Muslims can agree on the importance of this question.

2. What is the essence of nature, the creation, the cosmos? The temporal world retains worth, order, beauty because of its Maker and is the arena for discovery for saints and scientists.

3. What is the essence of our humanity? What does it mean to be human, male and female? What characteristics, potential, and destiny mark our shared humanness?

4. What troubles humanity? What ill or sin or problem disturbs the human race? How serious is the sickness?

5. What cure or solution is offered for this dilemma? Is there any salvation from this sin? Can we describe the means, the way in detail?

6. What is the good life or life-style or viable ethic that is sought? How then shall we live?

7. What shape should human community (a new society) take? How is the covenant community (*ecclesia, ummah*) subject to the transcendent kingdom of God? To what ends should human resources be employed? What is the mission (commission) or vocation which should engage the energies of those whose lives have been renewed by faith? Note the mandates that shape our labors.

8. What is involved in human history and destiny? What guidelines are gained from the lessons of history? What does the future hold? What will occur with the return of Jesus the Christ? What vision shapes our vocation? What energy flows from a biblical eschatology?

Christian-Muslim dialogue can begin with these larger questions and then focus more directly on the particulars of the Scriptures. This discussion can tap lessons from the record of more than two thousand years of Old and New Tes-

tament history. By keeping the discussion focused on these eight basic questions, there evolves a common quest for truth and less time for polemics and argumentation.

Ultimately every discussion must eventually center and conclude on Christ, regarding His person, word and work. The kingdom (reign) of God, which is the heart of the Gospel, eventually will become the unique issue that leads to "eternal life." In Him, we have the way, the truth and the life! Therefore, those who would witness to Muslims must have the patience of Christ, ready to labor long and hard, for a thousand years more if need be, in order to incarnate the love of God among them. Such steadfast affection and flexibility will help prevent rash words and acts. This will allow time for the Muslim peoples to hear and surrender to the rule of the Messiah.

Two Additional Lessons

1. *Respect for Ancient Orthodox and National Evangelical Churches.*

A careful reading of history should heighten appreciation for the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches in lands with a Muslim majority. Those who have survived Islam's severe domination over 14 centuries, and yet have retained a vibrant faith and a caring ministry, deserve close examination. How did the Syrian, Armenian, Assyrian, Greek, Nestorian, Coptic, and other Orthodox churches sustain their faith? In the presence of Islam they still maintain body life in Christ's name for millions. Before we launch into creative, pioneer efforts in new locations, we are obliged to learn all we can from these "living saints" and form a partnership with them in the Gospel.

When the first Protestant missionaries of Reformed and Anglican churches arrived in the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century they were shocked by the conditions of the Eastern churches. They debated whether or not the

Eastern churches could witness without first undergoing a revival. Yet it must be said that even though sorely tried, they were still bearing witness to Christ as persecuted minorities. Since then, Eastern Christians have gained much deserved attention from Protestant and Roman Catholic brethren.

In the last two centuries, national evangelical churches have emerged. They represent the fruit of the modern missionary movement, mainly the result of Reformed-Presbyterian and Anglican workers. Such evangelicals in Egypt, Palestine/Israel, Lebanon/Syria, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and the Gulf States deserve credit for providing a church home for both nationals and thousands of expatriate laborers and professionals. For example, in Kuwait the former Arabian Mission (1914—) has blossomed into the National Evangelical Church. There a vibrant Arab congregation serves host to other ethnic congregations, including an International English Congregation (organized 1962) which represents peoples from around the globe. Every day and night of the week, groups gather for study of the Word, prayer, stewardship and fellowship. Truly this is the Church of Christ, united as one, holy, catholic and apostolic household of faith. It is the church, evangelical and ecumenical. In addition to the churches of the Reformation there are Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox by the thousands. In the shadow of Islam, all often know they are joined by the Spirit for worship and witness.

There is no way that those who would be itinerant evangelists or pioneering witnesses can be effective apart from part-

nership with these indigenous bodies of Christ. It is scandalous when a touring Protestant evangelist visits an isolated house-church in Kuwait or Bahrain and reports that there are only a “dozen” Christians in the land while ignoring the tens of thousands who are there living out their faith with courage. We must not underestimate the breadth and depth of God’s work in our time. Likewise in our talks with Muslims about the form God’s covenant community should take, we must bear witness to the kingdom of God in Christ which transcends the present form of the church (*ecclesia*...*ummah*).

Muslims have yet to experience the birth pains which the church experienced in the Reformation. It gradually divested itself of political “principalities and powers” and had to learn to live as a “community of faith” in a pluralistic world. Because Islam has long visualized itself as a totalitarian system, it has been frustrated whenever it loses control. Even now, Muslim lands are struggling with the questions of religious freedom, espoused in the United Nations Charter. While there have been recent waves of fundamental reaction, the rising tide of modernity will spare neither Muslims nor Christians. Diversity, plurality, and modernity are often viewed with suspicion by evangelicals, but they can also serve as allies. The same forces that disrupt traditions and shallow religiosity can also prepare the way for a fresh encounter with the Living God. Religion, rather than secularism will prevail, but it will be a reformed faith. Christians and Muslims and Jews alike will be humbled by the testing of history. Christians will do well to always

remain advocates of religious freedom, giving all persons and peoples space in which to respond to the overtures and visitations of God.

To the degree that the Church is able to become the embodiment of the kingdom of God, she will become in Christ the bridge for reconciling all peoples to the living God. To the degree that Muslims and Jews and others draw close to God’s rule in Christ, they can be drawn into the circle of the Messianic community. If the church is to be both recipient and agency of the coming kingdom it is being called to transformation.

2. Future Witness to Muslims Requires Students of Islam.

Islamic and missiology must become part of the church’s curriculum. Ignorance is an enemy of effective witness. Not to know your neighbor is to nullify good intentions.

It is recommended that every mature Christian study a bibliography covering Islam’s origin, founder, history, civilization/culture, worldview, record of Christian-Muslim relations, current mission patterns and prospects. Enquiries regarding a basic reading list of Muslim-Christian relations may be made to the author or editor.

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Islamic Fundamentalism: Implications for Missions

Islamic Fundamentalism is a strange phenomenon that needs to be interpreted. The challenge is to enter the worldview of the Muslim Fundamentalist, share its consciousness, explore its interior beliefs and values and look at the wider world through its windows, while at the same time retaining our own.

by Nabeel T. Jabbour

Looking at a Picasso painting and finding out that it was sold for a huge sum of money is a cultural shock. Why would anybody pay so much money for such a “strange” painting? Of course it has a tremendous value as an investment, but where is the beauty in the art? I need someone to interpret the beauty and the art, so that I can begin to understand and appreciate Picasso.

Islam, like a Picasso, is a “strange phenomenon” to most Western minds while Islamic Fundamentalism is even more difficult to understand. There is a tendency to judge the Fundamentalists’ dedication as extremism, their willingness to lay down their lives for serving God as fanaticism, their holistic view of life as rebellion against the state, and their hatred of and desire to punish sin as blood-thirstiness, their convictions as dogmatism, their solidarity as exclusiveness and their sense of dignity and honor as haughty pride.

What are the implications as a result of the resurgence of Islamic Fundamentalism on missions to the Western world? There are important implications. There also are obstacles within the “messenger,” as well as within the “receiver,” as well as between the two. We might not even have the faith to perceive the Muslim Fundamentalists as a “receiver,” but there will always be a major obstacle between the “messenger” and the “receiver.” Our wrong attitude as a “messenger” to a great extent will determine how much we experience the Muslim Fundamentalists as a thorn in

our flesh, preventing us from being effective in our ministry.

If we come with our preconceived ideas and project our prejudices on Muslims, then we will experience fierce antagonism from them in general, but especially from the Muslim Fundamentalists in particular. We might not have a direct contact with the Fundamentalists, but their presence and their attitude will contribute to shaping and coloring the attitudes of the governments in the Muslim world to missionaries. The challenge for us is to dare to enter their worldview, share their consciousness, explore its interior and look at their world through their mind set while at the same time retaining our own perception and worldview.

In my book, *The Rumbling Volcano*, (Mandate Press, 1993 Pasadena, CA) I have attempted to study the phenomenon of Islamic Fundamentalism in Egypt and its implications on the Arab world, as well as on the wider Muslim world. Egypt is a strategic country in the Middle East, so in a sense what happens in Egypt greatly impacts the Middle East and has a ripple effect in Africa and the Third World. The revolution of Nasser in 1952 was followed by many revolutions in the Arab world and Africa. If Egypt should become an Islamic state similar to that of Iran, then sooner or later many other countries will follow.

The method of study in my book was phenomenology and hermeneutics. I wanted to research Islamic Fundamental-

ism as a phenomenon and attempt to see it from the perspective of its leaders, such as Al-Banna, Qutb, Faraj and Al-Khumeini. My desire was as much as possible to “get under the skin” and “in the minds” of these men and interpret my perceptions to the Western Christian reader. As you read, please be reminded that I’m attempting to stand in the shoes of the Muslim Fundamentalists and present Islam as *they* see it.

In two chapters of my book I examined the political, religious, economic, social and psychological factors that play a role in attracting young people to Fundamentalism. Unless we seriously attempt to understand the Fundamental Muslim and “get under their skin,” so to speak, we will end up with prejudices that contribute to erecting higher barriers. Before we can expect the “receiver” to overcome the obstacles within himself, we should expect from ourselves—the “messenger”—to overcome our own obstacles.

Therefore, in this article (by permission of the publisher), I have chosen to incorporate various sections from the two chapters of my book dealing with the factors that help young people become Fundamentalists. Although my references mainly relate to the situation in Egypt, the principles are applicable to a great extent in Algeria, Indonesia and other Third World Muslim countries.

Political and Religious Factors

According to the Fundamentalists, Islam is in a state of resurgence

because resurgence starts in the depth of the conscience and is later manifested in life and doctrine. Furthermore, Islam is in a constant state of change and progression demanding Muslims be committed to a continual revolution in the midst of changing circumstances. Therefore, from within Islam itself, the resurgence emerges because of its dynamism, comprehensiveness and relevance to man's basic needs (Ahmad 1989a:42). The evidence of this Islamic resurgence is seen in the following points:

The Speed of Its Expansion

Islam is not limited to national or racial boundaries, nor to certain political, cultural or economic environments. Islam has not only spread in the Arab World, but in Nigeria, Turkey, Pakistan, Iran and in Indonesia. Furthermore, its expansion has not been limited to Muslim countries, but also occurs in countries like India, the Philippines, the former Soviet Union and even some Western countries.

Diversity of Its Centers

Islam, in its resurgence, went beyond national and denominational boundaries. The spiritual dimension gave unity to this resurgence in the 1970s, as seen mostly in Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. These countries have a diversity of languages, denominations and cultural backgrounds.

Continuity

In Egypt there has been a series of ebbs and flows between secular waves and Islamic resurgence. The first wave started at the end of the 19th century, when Afghani, followed later by Muhammad `Abdu, responded to the westernization process which came as a result of the strong colonialism of the 19th century.

The second wave came between the two wars through Hasan al-Banna and the Muslim Brotherhood. This was in response to the westernization process, which came with colonialism and manifested itself in openness to Western

culture and education.

The third wave came in response to the secularization brought about by Naser's revolution, resulting in the humiliating defeat of the 1967 war with Israel. This third wave started right after that war and is continuing into the 1990s in response to the successive failures of socialism and capitalism, as well as in response to man's basic needs of which most Egyptians have been deprived. According to Ahmad, these repeated waves are sure evidence of Islamic resurgence (1989a:43-44).

Comprehensiveness of Islam

At certain times in the history of Islam, resurgence was seen in attempts made to defend the faith and attack heresies. At other times, it was seen in conquests of new lands and spreading Islam through the power of the sword.

However, in this century, whether in the Islamic League of Afghani, the Muslim Brotherhood of al-Banna and Qutb, or others who came throughout the 1970s and 1990s, the distinct characteristic of this resurgence is the comprehensiveness of Islam. Islam is *dân wa dawla* (doctrine, life, and politics) and it includes all the various aspects of the life of the individual and of the nation. Economics, politics, theology as well as the judiciary system, are part of an all-inclusive and comprehensive Islamic system. (Qutb 1987:36).

The Various Classes of the Society

In Egypt, the Fundamentalists are recruited mostly from active youth in their twenties and thirties. They are university students and graduates who tend to be conscientious and ambitious. Furthermore, most of these recruits spent their childhood in villages and little towns. Ahmad agrees that Fundamentalism in Egypt is most appealing to these groups, yet he states that in later stages of its development the resurgence will penetrate the various strata of the society. Iran, in its Islamic revolution, was not limited to the students and the young graduates, but appealed to a

wide spectrum of society (Ahmad 1989a:45). So resurgence is attractive and appealing. It gives the recruit a sense that he belongs to an attractive and powerful solidarity and gives him a conviction that his faith is the only true faith because it is alive and is in a state of growth and expansion.

The Return of the Caliphate

Since 1924, when Sultan `Abdul Majid II in Turkey died, the caliphate has been in a state of vacancy. The caliph, like the pope in Roman Catholicism was a symbol of unity and solidarity. Under the caliph, the Islamic nation *umma* spread from Morocco in the West to Indonesia in the East, reaching as far as parts of the previous Soviet Union in the North and some black African countries in the South. It was a grand *umma* indeed.

The dream of the return to the caliphate, where all Muslims unite together and live with dignity and social justice following the precepts of the Qur'an, is a utopia which appeals to the emotions of most Muslims (Amara 1985a :47-49).

In 1952, the Muslim Brotherhood bought a piece of land on Muqattam mountain in the suburbs of Cairo and intended to start an Islamic utopia with 30,000 families living there. Their plan was foiled when Naser took the land in 1954. Shukri took his people to the desert to live the utopian Muslim society, and he was able to make an appeal to the youth to join him, in spite of how absurd it looked.

The dream of the return to the caliphate and the establishment of the Islamic *umma* is an impossibility when perceived rationally. Yet, when perceived with the eyes of faith, supported by yearning emotions, it is possible. Who would have ever thought that the banished Imam would one day return to Iran, shaking the foundations of a throne. If it succeeded in Iran, it could succeed in other countries, and perhaps

one day Muslims around the world would forget their differences and agree on their caliph.

The Impact of the Gulf Countries

Waves of Egyptians returned from the Gulf countries to Egypt in the 1970s, carrying with them new convictions. While in the Gulf they saw how the petro-dollar that "God blessed the Muslims with" was used for the propagation of Islam. They became aware of how Saudi money was well spent in printing and distributing the Qur'an, building mosques all over the world, and training and sending Muslim missionaries. According to their beliefs it is no wonder God is blessing these countries with oil. Unlike Egypt, which is geographically located between Saudi Arabia on the one side and Libya on the other side, both countries have an abundance of oil. Why is it that the western desert in Egypt, which is the continuation of the Libyan desert, has no oil, while Libya "floats" on oil? Is this a coincidence, or is God punishing Egypt? Besides that, Sadat's efforts to take back the oil wells of Sinai as a result of the peace treaty with Israel were not blessed by God. By the time the oil wells returned to Egypt, the price of oil had dropped dramatically. It seems that God is punishing Egypt because it has not been faithful to Him. If Egypt returns to her God, He will then remove the shame and dishonor that has befallen her. If Muslims repent and apply the Shari'a then God will have mercy.

The other impact that came from the Gulf was Iran's model. Al-Khumeini, who dared to look at the "truth" and dared to call hypocrisy by its name, was endowed with courage similar to that of the prophet. He opposed corruption and unbelief and dared to stand against the stream. Al-Khumeini, who lived by the precepts of Islam and established

an Islamic country over the ruins of the Shah's empire, had the courage to stand alone against the super powers, the world, and even against the leaders of Muslim countries and their hired Imams who were living in hypocrisy (in `Amara 1985b: 230). Al-Khumeini was

The youth of Egypt are being assured that they belong to the greatest *umma* on earth and that corruption, hypocrisy and lack of dedication are the causes of the "catastrophe" which Islam is experiencing.

able to wage an expensive war for eight years against Iraq, in spite of the United States' blockage of Iranian capital in American banks, the low price of oil, and the damage to the oil industry as a result of the war. Al-Khumeini, who stood alone with the courage that springs from the faithful adherence to Islamic beliefs, was able to bring Islam to the front pages of the newspapers of the world.

Economic, Social and Psychological Factors

According to the prophet and Muslims throughout the centuries, Islam is the best economic, social, religious, legal and political system on earth, *khayru 'ummaten 'unzilat linnas*. Yet as Muslims look around them, they find a large gap between what Islam is and what it should be. Efforts have been made to bridge this gap by charismatic leaders like al-Banna and al-Khumeini, by ideologists like Qutb and Mawdudi, and by influential Islamic writers like `Amara and al-Ghazzali.

The youth of Egypt are being assured that they belong to the greatest *umma* on earth and that corruption, hypocrisy and lack of dedication are the causes of the "catastrophe" which Islam is experiencing.

Teaching, training and dedication are available to equip future generations. The places for teaching are available in popular mosques and apartments of members, scattered beyond the reach of the secret police. All that's needed is for youth to respond to

this challenge and become committed and available for the process of teaching and equipping.

On the front page of *Al-Ahram*, a Cairo newspaper, on May 6, 1990, the Minister of Interior declared that al-Jihad organization members are recruiting and training boys and teenagers to attack police stations with Molotov cocktails. Why is it

that even the young are so motivated to join the Fundamentalist movement? In a previous section we have considered the political and religious factors. In exploring an answer to youth involvement, we will now consider other causes, such as economic, social and psychological factors as they interrelate with each other.

In Egypt, from the beginning of the revolution in 1952, attempts have been made to give a blow to the feudal lords and to give members of the lower classes an opportunity to improve their economic and social status through upward mobility. University education was open and within reach of every person who could graduate from high school. University fees were minimal, almost non-existent. Furthermore, promises of secure jobs within the government and public sectors gave hope and motivation to the new generation. Later it was discovered that neither the degree nor the job were real solutions. Kepel, describing the disguised unemployment, states:

By law, every graduate in Egypt has the right to state employment. This measure, a powerful weapon against non-employment, is actually the purveyor of massive disguised unemployment in the

offices of a swollen administration in which productivity is as low as the employees are badly paid. If a state employee lacks an additional source of income, he can still manage to feed himself by buying the state subsidized products on sale in the cooperatives, but he is unlikely to rise above this level of bare subsistence. The price of anything determined by the market would be beyond his reach. Almost every state employee has a second or even third job. (Kepel 1985:85).

During Naser's time, the people were forced to live under these difficult conditions because there was a war to be waged for the liberation of Palestine. People were generally willing to sacrifice because Naser offered dignity and honor by making Egypt one of the leading countries in the World.

In 1971, Sadat inherited a heavy mantle from his successor. Conditions were going from bad to worse, especially when Sadat's promises remained unfulfilled, he had to delay the long awaited battle of revenge. Not only was there poverty, but there was also a sense of despair and self-ridicule among the Egyptians. The 1973 war with Israel was a surprise to many, but Sadat was finally able to fulfill what he and Naser promised to do.

Social Factors

The people who are attracted to the Fundamentalist movement are the lower middle class and the students. The basic reasons for their attraction to Fundamentalism lie 1) in their social and religious sense of despair and 2) in their being a class of the society that has no future. They see themselves as marginal in their impact on the history of the nation.

The lower middle class in Egypt does not see a place of significance, either in the religious sphere, or on the social ladder; therefore, they have a pessimistic perspective on life. Significant impacts on the history of a nation are made through individuals, and since the individuals belonging to the lower

middle class are deprived of their rights and the qualities which give the person a platform, they find that the only way they can enter history is through the Fundamentalism door. It promises to radically change this unjust social system and give the marginal population the opportunity to enter the heart of the history of the nation. These groups then not only play the normal roles which they were deprived of, but they even play a much bigger role, rejecting the values and the foundations of the existing social system. (Habib 1989:130).

Another group of people who go through a similar set of experiences are the university students. Education is compulsory and a long span of years is required to graduate from the university. In this type of educational system which offers no motivation, except to the few who enter the faculties of medicine and engineering, students become marginal as well. Students are forced to be marginal and look to the future with anxiety and despair because they know that what is waiting for them is disguised unemployment. They readily become an social group in the society with distinct cultural values. They, along with the young graduates who find no hope for upward mobility, become open and eager to respond to a invitation of Fundamentalism which promises involvement, significance and a role to play in making history.

Because the revolution of 1952 in Egypt made education free and available to all, lower class people were given the hope that they could join the upward movement of social mobility and reach the middle class. As a result, the universities grew, producing about half a million young men and women annually who were supposed to have become middle class people because of their education. The middle class became the huge tail on a disproportionate creature, with a small head and body.

People who belong to the tail are

basically the lower middle class. Many of these people came from the villages and small towns, migrating to the big cities to live in the suburbs, bringing along with them their rural culture. Most of these people arrive to a sort of self-actualization through jobs where both the husband and wife work. Many find it hard to make it in this difficult battle for survival. These disenchanting people are the ones who become good candidates for Fundamentalism. When this group of deprived people in the lower middle class becomes big enough, revolution then becomes inevitable (Habib 1989:133).

By comparing the poor suburbs in Cairo with the rest of the city, we see a tremendous contrast. Not only are the streets narrow and dirty, but the water supply, sewage system, telephones, electricity and all other necessities are under tremendous pressure because of the over-crowded situation. Therefore, in the suburbs of Cairo with its population of over 16 million, the message of Fundamentalism is very attractive and appealing to the youth. In these poor suburbs of Cairo, the young, the ambitious and the conscientious, yet marginal people, have nothing to lose and everything to gain by joining al-Jihad or other Fundamentalist organizations. Because they are young and idealistic, they tend to see issues from a black and white perspective. The solution for everything can be found in Islam and the application of the *Shari'a*. Although their families are not fully convinced of these idealistic views, in time they at least become sympathizers with the cause of Fundamentalism.

Psychological Factors

We have seen earlier that economic, social and even psychological factors interrelate to form the environment in which the candidate of Fundamentalism lives. The economic open-door policy at the time of Sadat, which was accompanied by manifestations of western life styles, resulted in estrange-

ment. The young people who belonged to the lower middle class, who had gained a university degree, discovered that they still could not find a way to work at the small companies of the private sector which pay good salaries. They looked at those “strange and westernized” young people who got the jobs and money with resentment and envy. That kind of perception made them consider themselves inferior to those who become westernized, they therefore withdrew from the society to increased marginalization (Abdul-Fadil 1982: 108).

This state of marginalization needed to be justified, and the justification came through the condemnation of the evil, injustice and corruption in their society. To stay pure, one must adhere to God and separate oneself from this polluted society (Husein 1982:207). The gap between the rich and the poor was greatly widened as a direct result of this open-door policy. The new class of millionaires, who owned the expensive and latest models of Mercedes, existed in the same city living next to the multitudes of poor.

The poor come not only from the lower middle class people, but rather from the lower classes who live at times below the subsistence level. It is quite common nowadays to hear of apartments which serve as a residence to more than twenty persons. Each family, of about eight members, takes one bedroom in a three bedroom apartment which has one bathroom. In the morning a queue of more than twenty are waiting to use the bathroom. The battle for survival is not only finding a place on the floor to sleep, but having enough to eat and riding the crowded buses to school. The battle goes on, and with it there is the growing conviction that life is a jungle. Survival is for the strongest and the most violent. It is no wonder that sayings such as “*Ma`ak irsh bitsawi irsh*” (Your value is by how much money you have) and “*Tghadda bi abl ma*

yit`ashsha bik” (Eat the other person for lunch before he eats you for supper) are becoming the convictions of the new generation.

In this jungle, the persistent question is, “Where is God, and where is the justice of Islam?” According to Allport, in *The Nature of Prejudice*, progression to violence might follow this path:

The challenge before us is to really believe that the power of God unto salvation is in the gospel and that this message is very relevant in the Muslim world.

1. A long period of categorical pre-judgments on the rich, the government, and the puppet Imams who serve as the mouthpiece of the government.
2. A long period of verbal complaint.
3. Growing discrimination. (E.g., the rich, through their connections and bribes, can get anything with the least effort, while the poor are treated like the scum of the earth).
4. The existence of social strain that results from economic deprivation, a sense of low status and fear of unemployment.
5. People have grown tired of their own inhibitions and are reaching a state of explosion. They no longer feel that they can or should put up with rising prices, humiliation and bewilderment. Irrationalism comes to have a strong appeal.
6. Organized movements such as al-Jihad and other Fundamentalist groups attract the discontented individuals.
7. From such formal or informal social organization, the individual derives courage and support. He sees that his irritation and wrath are socially and even theologically sanctioned. His impulses to violence are thus justified

by the standards and the *fatawa* (casuistics) of his groups or organization.

8. Some precipitating incident occurs. What previously might have been passed over as a trivial provocation, now causes an explosion. The incident may be wholly imaginary, or it may be exaggerated through rumor. A story goes around that a Christian man raped a

Muslim teenager, so leaflets are distributed about that wholly imaginary incident, and the spark ignites the fire of violence.

9. When violence actually breaks out, it is likely to happen when two opposing groups are thrown into close contact, such as Christians and Muslims living in the same neighborhood, or university students on the same campus. At such meeting points, the precipitating incident is most likely to occur (Allport 1958: 56-58).

The factors which help produce the type of environment where the youth become good candidates for Fundamentalism could be political, religious, economic, social or psychological. In this vacuum, youth looks for an identity, a place of belonging and an enemy to vent his hatred. In Fundamentalism, the young find their identity in following God, their place of belonging in becoming dedicated members in the various Fundamentalist groups, and their enemy in Satan and the hypocrisy of the so-called “Muslim society.”

Perhaps if the Egyptian people, the government and “official” Islam would listen, and attempt to understand and take the young Fundamentalist seriously, they might hear them say:

I am afraid and lonely, and you are all liars. I am sad and resigned, and you are failures and hypocrites.

I am committed to God, and I must have the opportunity and the right to live, but I am incapacitated and chained by you.

Any initiative or creative approach which I might take is going to be condemned by you as heresy and thwarted by you. There-

fore, I will resort to the already certain and proven, which is the inspired Qur'an... Since I came to the conviction that my deliverance is in my commitment to a solidarity of like-minded dedicated followers of God, my vengeance and anger is going to be directed against you hypocrites... Even if I do not succeed, that is not the issue. I might become a martyr and a model to be followed. After all, what is ahead of me is paradise, but as for you, the fires of hell are waiting to receive you.

In this scenario, we see emotions of loneliness, fear, despair, as well as idealism, purity, absolutism, dependency, martyrdom spirit, dreams, the revolution, surrender to God, aggression and suicide (Rakhawi 1982:146-147).

Fundamentalist numbers are growing rapidly because the environment is ripe for recruiting, discipling and equipping men who are willing to be commandos for Islam. After all, is it not true that "Islam is a tree which is nourished by the blood of its martyrs"?

Mission Implications

1. When we consider the mission field in Muslim countries, do we start with blueprints of western models and assume that we will communicate? The challenge is to look at Islam and Islamic Fundamentalism as phenomena and dare to study them without prejudice.

2. Are our methods and tools so western to the degree that we are perceived as coming with a Western plant along with its Western pot to plant Western churches in the Muslim world? The challenge for us is to study the gospel and dare to see it without our Western wrappings and present it pure, and encourage the Muslims to wrap it with what looks to them as authentic and genuine.

3. Does our gospel address issues such as poverty and injustice? The challenge before us is to dare to go to the Scriptures with a thorough study and

come up with answers to the real and felt needs of people we want to reach.

4. Do we go to the mission field with authentic identity and appropriate life style? Some tentmaking jobs are very hard to understand. Why would an American leave America and come all the way to Egypt to sell books in a bookstore? To the Egyptian, any young man with a high school degree can do this job. Why is this American in Cairo? Is he a C.I.A. or a missionary in disguise?

The challenge before us is to think through this whole issue of identity and life style and dare to come up with creative and new answers. Does Mother Teresa struggle because of her life style or identity?

5. Are we making good use of the radio and the television? Does the message have the ring of truth and authenticity? Or is it seen as something so western, so biased toward Israel and so Greek in its logic rather than Eastern in its mode of communication? The challenge before us is to dare to shed our culture and put on the culture of the "receiver" so that they can hear the message.

6. Are we willing and able to see the potential of the nationals and see ourselves as Western Christians as the servants of the nationals for Jesus' sake? The challenge before us is to see the value of the nationals and dare to trust them without manipulating or controlling.

7. We are in a race to reach the vulnerable people that are ripe for the message, either ours or the Muslim Fundamentalists. The challenge before us is to really believe that the power of God unto salvation is in the gospel and that this message is very relevant in the Muslim world.

8. Simon the Pharisee was an objective observer evaluating Jesus and the prostitute. Jesus in contrast was an involved and compassionate participant as He forgave the woman and in the pro-

cess transformed her life. The challenge before us is to listen from the depths of our hearts to the "strange" logic of the Muslim Fundamentalists. Not only to listen, but to attempt to understand them and to really take them seriously. Perhaps we might discover that we can have compassion for people that are so radically different from us, and in the process lead them to their Saviour.

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Church Planting Among Folk Muslims

More than 3/4 of the Muslim world are Folk Muslims. Church planting among them must be based upon the theology of the kingdom of God that involve power, truth and cultural encounters.

by Richard D. Love

“Mr. Uka, why do you give offerings to the ancestor spirits? Why don’t you just cast them out?” I asked. “Oh no!” he replied, “you don’t cast them out. They are your ancestors. You have to respect them!” (Love 1992:153). Welcome to the world of Folk Islam!

Mr. Uka, a Sundanese Muslim from Indonesia, illustrates the beliefs of people whom missiologists call Folk Muslims. Folk Muslims or Folk Islam will vary from culture to culture and country to country, but the underlying animistic belief system and orientation to life pervades the entire Muslim world.

Whereas Formal Islam advocates a comprehensive, legalistic code of ritual and laws, Folk Islam’s domain is spirits, demons, blessing, cursing, healing and sorcery. The chart on the following page summarizes some of the major differences between the two types of Islam (Love 1992:41).

Although the practices of Folk Islam contradict many aspects of Formal Islam, those who practice Folk Islam rarely see themselves as being syncretistic. They still view themselves as being genuine Muslims. From their perspective there is no conflict between their popular religion and its more orthodox variety.

The result should be a clash... the surprising truth is that there is relatively little dissonance between the two domains. Official and popular expressions of Islam tend to live easily with one another. Indeed, both views may operate in veiled partnership within any one single Muslim... The lack of such obvious dissonance is, perhaps, the main reason why Western investigators, including Christian missionaries, have often failed to recog-

nize the existence of the Folk-Islamic world (Musk 1989:224).

Phil Parshall estimates that “perhaps 70 percent of all Muslims in the world are influenced by a system we could properly term folk Islam” (Parshall 1983:16). Don McCurry believes that possibly 85 percent of the Muslim world is animistic (McCurry 1980). Therefore, if we are serious about reaching over 700 million Folk Muslims, we must develop an approach that addresses their unique concerns.

Because Folk Islam is a blend of animism and Islam, we must deal with both animistic concerns and Islamic beliefs. It is crucial that we understand and deal with the spirit realm issues of animism (see Burnett 1988; Van Rhee- nen 1991 and Steyne 1989 for excellent summaries of animism). However, Folk Muslims demand different strategies than animists, because they see themselves as Muslims. If they are challenged about their faith, they respond like fervent fundamentalists! They zealously confess their creed and defend their faith. Though animistic in practice, Folk Muslims still hold a strong emotional attachment to Islamic beliefs.

In this article I would like to describe a three-dimensional approach to church planting among Folk Muslims that we developed in Indonesia. An effective church planting ministry among Folk Muslims demands power encounter, truth encounter and cultural encounter. Based on the kingdom of God, we confront the powers of darkness through exorcism and healing (power encounter), preach the good news that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (truth encounter), and express the reality

of the kingdom through culturally relevant rituals (cultural encounter).

Power Encounter

Although once the exclusive domain of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, the issue of power encounter is now a major concern of the broader evangelical world, *Wrestling With Dark Angels* 1990. Timothy Warner of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; Neil Anderson of Talbot Theological Seminary; Philip Steyne of Columbia Biblical Seminary, and Charles Kraft of Fuller Theological Seminary have all written on the subject (Warner 1991; Anderson 1990; Steyne 1989; Kraft 1989). An entire issue of the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* dealt with this theme as well (Vol. 10, No. 4, Oct. 1993).

Power encounter is also a “hot” subject in Muslim ministry. Arthur Glasser, Bill Musk; Paul Hiebert, J. Dudley Woodberry, Phil Parshall and Vivienne Stacey have all shown the relevance of power encounter for reaching Muslims (Glasser 1979; Musk 1989; Hiebert 1989; Woodberry 1990; Parshall 1983; Stacey 1989). Therefore, we need not repeat the basic principles and the obvious, especially in a short article. However, a few comments and practical suggestions will prove helpful.

Spirit realm issues aren’t always obvious to the Westerner. More than a few missionaries have ministered to a people without any awareness of how important and pervasive spirit realm concerns are to their target people. Many Sundanese appear to be modern urbanites — dressing in blue jeans, eating at Pizza Hut, watching Western movies, and enjoying Western amenities.

Church Planting Among Folk Muslims

Yet these same people offer blood sacrifices to appease the spirits when they build their modern plazas (Love 1992, I:80). Urbanites can still be animists.

I was talking recently to Mr. Dindin about place spirits. He is a young, educated, married man who would be considered very “modern” or “urban” in his thinking. I pointed to a large tree in our community and asked him if there were any spirits in the tree. He said, “Budiman [the author’s Indonesian name], I believe there are all kinds of spirits. But we are not supposed to focus our attention on them. We should not spend all our time worrying about them.” Then, only a minute after saying this, he told me a story about a tree that couldn’t be cut down because the spirits were too powerful (Love 1992, I:72-73).

One of evangelicalism’s most prominent practical Islamicists, Phil Parshall, confesses:

In some senses, I have learned more in this short time about grassroots Islam than I did in my first eighteen years... Amazingly, one can be surrounded by certain dynamic situations and still be quite unaware of what is happening. This is particularly true if one seeks to understand Islam from a Western perspective—which is what I sought to do during my early years as a missionary (Parshall 1983:13).

It is crucial to understand spirit realm beliefs. It is, first of all, essential for our own protection. Timothy Warner documents numerous instances of physical and spiritual attack on missionaries that coincide with the author’s personal experience (Warner 1991:77-97). Curses and sorcery should not be taken lightly. This is real war!

Secondly, ministry fruitfulness depends on it. It is very hard to be relevant to our target people if we don’t know the issues they struggle with. It is very difficult to bring deliverance if we don’t understand their bondages.

Consequently, we have trained our Sundanese believers to deal with these issues by helping them understand and experience the kingdom of God in their lives (Matt. 12:28; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20). For “the kingdom of God is a macro-theological model, central to the Scriptures and relevant to the Sundanese. This enables us both to contextualize our message as well as adequately address the spirit realm” (Love 1992, I:185). Musk sums it up well:

Formal Islam	Folk Islam
Cognitive, truth-oriented	Heart-felt emotional
Legalistic	Mystical
Ultimate issues of life, origins, heaven, hell, purpose.	Everyday concerns of health, guidance, success, prosperity.
The Al .Qu’ran and sacred traditions	Supernatural power, spiritual revelation
Institutional	Inspirational
Supplicative	Manipulative

Our look at popular Islam pushes the issue of kingdom-power very much to the forefront... People are sick and in need of healing; by magic or by Christ? People require help in a world of hostile, occult ‘beings’; by alliance with evil spirits, or with the Holy Spirit... For too long, it would seem, in Christian witness among Muslims, there has been no power encounter because there have been no power bearers (Musk 1989:252).

Truth Encounter

Power encounter alone, however, is insufficient. Folk Muslims need truth encounter as well. Like many Folk Muslims, the Sundanese perceive the Gospel of forgiveness through Christ as generally irrelevant. But if you tell them, “Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil,” you have an immediate audience. This “Satanward dimension” of the Gospel is relevant to Folk Muslims because they are preoccupied with the

issues of power and protection.

The “Godward dimension” of Scripture is usually given preeminence in western evangelical theology. Our personal relationship with God is stressed; forgiveness and fellowship are the focus. This emphasis is sound, it is biblical, yet it is incomplete.

There is a Satanward dimension to Scripture as well. Jesus not only came to save us from our sins, but also to destroy the works of the devil.

Through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection we have been saved from the kingdom of darkness. Jesus has defeated Satan and ushered in the kingdom of God on earth.

An objective reading of the New Testament highlights the importance of the Satanward view of salvation. First of all, spirit powers are mentioned in almost every book of the New Testament. Moreover, the Satanward view is a primary theme in

some books (e.g., Mark, Ephesians, Colossians).

Secondly, the earliest confessions of faith (which summarize the essence or core of the Christian faith) frequently mention Christ’s victory over the forces of darkness. Heinrich Schlier notes that spirit powers are mentioned in the early church’s “sermon paradigms, formalized *kerygma*, primitive professions of faith, and hymns and Eucharistic prayers... from the earliest age, the Church’s preaching and professions of faith contained references to what we call ‘principalities and powers’” (Schlier 1966:7-8). According to Oscar Cullmann, “the express mention of the victory of Christ over the demons, powers and authorities belongs to all the earliest confessions up to the year 150” (Cullmann 1949:24).

Thirdly, while the Satanward view of the Gospel is presently down-

played among Evangelicals, this hasn't always been the case. This theme has played an important role in church history and historical theology. Gustaf Aulen describes this Satanward view of the Gospel as the classical view of the atonement, the dominant view of the atonement for the first thousand years of Christian history: "Its central theme is the idea of the Atonement as a Divine conflict and victory; Christ—*Christus Victor*— fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the 'tyrants' under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself" (Aulen 1986, 4).

The following seven passages in the New Testament best summarize the Satanward view of the Gospel. While a solid exegesis of each passage would be preferable, due to limitations of space at this point we can only list them:

The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the Devil (1 Jn 3:8).

You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him (Acts 10:38).

For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:12-14).

When he had disarmed the rulers and authorities, he made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through him (Col. 2:15). Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14).

He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to

come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet (Eph. 1:20-22).

Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him (1 Peter 3:21-22)

We have developed a Sundanese tract that uses a modified "Bridge to Life" approach, borrowed from the Navigators. It is based on the theology of the

Church planting among Folk Muslims demands a three-dimensional model, involving power encounter, truth encounter and cultural encounter.

kingdom of God, summarized in the following eight points:

1. God is the king of the universe (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 103:19).
2. Men and women were created and blessed to rule the earth as God's representatives (Gen. 1:26-28).
3. But Adam and Eve disobeyed God and so were expelled from the kingdom of God (Gen. 3:22-24; Gal. 5:19-21).
4. Because of sin Satan now rules the earth (1 John 5:19; 2 Cor. 4:4; John 12:31; 14:30; Eph. 2:2).
5. Consequently, we have become enslaved by Satan and are now under the wrath of God (1 John 5:19; Eph. 2:1-3; John 3:36).
6. Our sin separates us from God and His kingdom (Isa. 64:6; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21).
7. But God still loves us and sent Jesus Christ to defeat the devil and to deliver us from the kingdom of darkness and save us from the wrath of God (1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14; Col. 1:13-14; Col. 2:15; Eph. 1:20-21; 1 Pet. 3:22).
8. If men and women want to enter into the kingdom of God, they must

repent and believe in Christ (Acts 2:38; 26:18; John 1:12). We have used the kingdom of God as an organizing and integrating theological paradigm from which to contextualize the Gospel to Muslims. Kallas' view on the life of Christ is to the point.

If we see the work of Jesus as the defeat of Satan and the destruction of Satan's grip on this world, then suddenly the life, work, death, resurrection of Jesus assume an impressive unity. He begins the fight with Satan in the exorcisms and healings... and then Himself shatters death as the ultimate weapon of Satan, thus completely destroying the power of Satan. The life of Jesus thus seen is a cohesive, closely knit, ascending battle which reaches its climax in the resurrection (Kallas 1961:86).

Cultural Encounter

It is not enough to engage in truth encounter and power encounter. We must also work with the emerging church to develop rituals — what I call a cultural encounter. The word ritual can be defined very broadly to range from the etiquette of daily greetings to the solemnity of sacred ceremonies. We are particularly concerned about the role of ritual in religious settings.

Cultural encounter is an important dimension of church planting for a number of reasons. First of all, religious ritual serves numerous social functions. These functions are crucial to the preservation of culture and give individuals a sense of group identity. Religious rituals reinforce the social order, and produce a feeling of solidarity between its members (Hiebert 1983:375-376).

Secondly, ritual is central to a Folk Muslim's worldview. It is at the heart of religious behavior. "Ritual articulates the formula for eliciting help from the spirit world... Through ritual, that is, right ritual, man seeks to tap into a power

Church Planting Among Folk Muslims

source” (Steyne 1989:96). “Rituals provide traditionally approved ways by which people are able to *influence* the powers which they believe control their lives” (Burnett 1989:104). Therefore, the rituals of our target people need to be Christianized so that the reality of the kingdom of God can be expressed through these indigenous cultural forms.

Anthropologists note numerous types of religious rituals. However, the three broad categories suggested by Burnett provide us with the most helpful analytical model for church planters (Burnett 1988:93-106). *Life-cycle rituals* refer to rites of passage, transition rituals which mark the important stages of life such as birth, circumcision, marriage and death. *Calendar rituals*, by contrast, are not related to stages of life but rather to points on the calendar, such as Muhammad’s birth or Ramadan. *Crisis rituals* are usually precipitated by unforeseen events (sickness, accidents, curses, droughts, unexpected death) and are carried out in order to ameliorate problems, restore health, harmony and/or balance in life.

The Folk Islamic beliefs and practices, which make up our target peoples’ rituals, must be replaced through the process described by Paul Hiebert as “critical contextualization” (Hiebert 1985:171-192). There are three elements in the process of contextualization: adoption, transformation, and rejection. Some aspects of culture are neutral and thus can be adopted. Other cultural practices are forbidden in Scripture and must be rejected. There exists a third category of behavioral patterns that can and should be transformed by using the old forms, but by giving them new meaning (Gilliland 1989).

A simple example of cultural encounter from a Sundanese life-cycle ritual illustrates how the theology of the kingdom relates to the Folk Muslim. Spirit realm concerns and Islamic beliefs were major components in the develop-

ment of the following ritual.

Mr. and Mrs. Orlando, members of a Sundanese church called Cai Kahuripan (which means ‘Living Water’), recently moved to a new neighborhood. So they wanted to put on a *hajjat* [communal meal] to pray for protection from the forces of darkness and ask for blessing from God.

Over thirty-five people (twenty-five of these Sundanese Muslims) squeezed into the Orlando’s little home. Twenty of these gathered in the front room where the ceremony was held (all men), ten women gathered in the back room and a handful of late-comers sat outside. Mr. Orlando opened the ceremony in traditional Sundanese fashion with an Arabic greeting. Next, he thanked the guests for coming to his *hajjat* and especially honored the leaders of the community. He then asked for forgiveness. “I ask for your pardon because my house is too small, the food isn’t that good and I can’t speak Sundanese very well.” After that he quoted the Pancasila [Indonesia’s governmental philosophy]. First of all he mentioned the fact that all Indonesians believe in the oneness of God. Secondly, he pointed out that Pancasila gives Indonesians freedom of religion. He then closed his short speech by asking those people who confess a different religion than he does to merely witness the ceremony.

Next, the leader of Cai Kahuripan, Mr. Pono, clad in the traditional holy man attire (a white long-sleeved shirt and a black *peci* hat) gave a similar Arabic greeting. He proceeded to quote the Al Quran and Sundanese proverbs as examples of his theme: We can receive protection and blessing from Allah because he is a loving God. Cai Kahuripan next sang two songs, both of which emphasized love. The first song was from Psalm 103. The second song was taken from the love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13. These songs were in Sundanese, using their five note (pentatonic) scale as well as the Sundanese auto harp, the *kecap*.

Mr. Pono then read a confession taken from numerous verses in the Bible:

‘I confess that there is one God. There is no God but Allah. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. Also, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. However, this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent Isa Almasih [the Arabic term for Jesus the Messiah] to die for our sins. So, this is eternal life, that we might know the only true God and Isa Almasih whom he has sent.’

Next, Mr. Pono used the Lord’s prayer as a basis to pray for protection and God’s blessing. However, instead of beginning with the word “Father” (which is very offensive to Muslims), he prayed to God, “who loves us like a father loves his children.” Because Mr. Pono was sensitive in his choice of words, the whole gathering repeatedly echoed “Amen” at the end of each petition. The gap between Christian and Muslim was bridged, at least for the moment, and without compromising theologically.

Then, the traditional rice cone was placed in the middle of the gathering and Mr. Orlando cut off the top and gave it to the oldest man present. After that the rest of the food was brought out and everyone feasted. Besides a lot of joking around, many people commented on the songs. The Scripture songs, put to a blend of traditional and pop Sundanese music, touched the hearts of the people. People talked into the evening and Mr. Pono had ample opportunity to draw near to this new network of people, as well as share some from Scripture (May 1991) (Love 1992, I:189, 190).

Summary

Church planting among Folk Muslims demands a three-dimensional model, involving power encounter, truth encounter, and cultural encounter. Based on the biblical paradigm of the kingdom of God, we confront the powers of darkness through exorcism and healing (power encounter), we preach the good news that Jesus came to destroy

the works of the devil (truth encounter) and express the reality of the kingdom through culturally-relevant rituals (cultural encounter). This points the way to successfully plant the Church of Jesus Christ among Folk Muslims.

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Six Major Families Of Unreached Muslim Peoples

African Peoples of the Sahel:

259 peoples; pop. 50 mil.

Arab Peoples:

184 peoples; pop. 113 mil.

Iranian Peoples:

181 peoples; pop. 116 mil.

Turkic Peoples:

256 peoples; pop. 142 mil.

Malay Peoples:

175 peoples; pop. 104 mil.

North Indian Peoples:

100 peoples; pop. 150 mil.

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Gospel Communication from Within

If we are to successfully open windows and doors in Muslim walls, we have to begin from within the Muslim mind and heart, from what they accept and value, not what they reject and despise. Here is an article pointing the way.

by Patrick O. Cate

Historic walls separate one billion Muslims from a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. This article deals with some of the historical theological walls, besides the cultural, social, familial, political and linguistic barriers that are present. We need to continually keep in mind that there is no substitute for prayer, love and a personal relationship for bringing Muslims into the light of our Savior. These require time, energy and a high value in our priorities.

To begin outside of the Muslim mind, driving points which Muslims categorically and antagonistically reject is similar to banging our heads against a wall. If we are to specialize in opening windows and doors in Muslim walls we have to begin where the Muslim mind is, with what he accepts and not what he rejects. We don't begin where we want him to arrive.

Throughout the fourteen centuries in which Muslims and Christians have been dealing with each other the same arguments have continued to emerge: the deity of Christ, the triune God, the sonship of Christ, and the trustworthiness of the Bible. We could profit by reading John of Damascus (date 749 AD) and many others who debated with Muslims in the first centuries.

In dealing with Muslims, it can frequently become a logical debate building on premises which Muslims already reject, resulting in a seeming attack on Islam. Sometimes Muslims are permitted to state the nature of the trial, the accusations, and be both the judge and the jury, leaving Christians on the defensive. In communicating the

love of Jesus Christ to Muslims, we need to try to prayerfully understand the Muslim mind and to share God's sincere love for Muslims beginning from within their mind and heart and frame of thinking. It is crucial to begin "where they are," with what Muslims accept and value rather than to start with presuppositions they reject. Beginning with what they accept, we need to gradually help them overcome their preconceived notions for rejecting the Gospel so that they can come to know God in a personal way through faith in Jesus Christ. This article offers a practical step by step approach to Gospel witness to Muslims, disarming them in key areas, and lowering barriers to the Gospel.

The Deity of Christ

Muslims have been taught to reject the idea of the deity of Christ. However, it is possible to lead some Muslims to become open to this concept, and to even accept it, without quoting the Qur'an or the Bible and without using the precise words "deity of Christ."

After establishing rapport with Muslims, I turn the conversation to spiritual things, especially towards Christ. I like to ask my Muslim friends if they believe that Christ had a virgin birth. They respond in the affirmative. Then I say, "So He had no father and therefore His birth was unique and supernatural, wasn't it?" Sometimes Muslims will point out that Adam did not have a human father or a mother, to which I also agree. But I come back to Christ and point out, "But He did not have a father like the rest of us, did he? So his birth was unique and it was supernat-

ural, wasn't it?" Although this is clearly mentioned in the Bible (Matt. 1:23) as well as in the Qur'an (3:45-47), I usually don't quote either of them at this stage.

I then point out that, Christ performed many, miracles of love, kindness and compassion. He healed people who were blind from birth and they could see; that He healed people who were lame from birth who were able to jump with joy; that He healed those with leprosy and even raised the dead (Surah 3:49; 5:110). Therefore, Christ's life was unique and supernatural. Sometimes, Muslims will say, "Other people have performed miracles, and that the Qur'an is a miracle of Mohammed." I respond, "The Bible does say that there were others who performed miracles. However the miracles of Jesus Christ were supernatural and unique acts, weren't they?"

Even though what I have shared up to this point is already believed by Muslims, and although I usually do not quote the Bible nor the Qur'an, nevertheless they generally accept what I share with them concerning Christ. This now sets the stage and I introduce something briefly that they usually do not accept, and say, "And the prophet Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, and also arose from the grave and conquered death." Sometimes, a Muslim at that point will reject what I said but I try not to answer his contradiction. Muslims need to hear the Gospel, and often I do not know how many times a particular Muslim will need to hear it before he/she believes. But I want it to be one less Gospel witness. It also is possible that I will never see

them again, which is another reason for sharing the Gospel with them.

I then introduce another point about Jesus which they already believe. I say, "Then the prophet Jesus ascended to heaven." But I add, "And there is *not a grave where you can go to worship at his dead bones*. The end of his life was unique and supernatural wasn't it?" (See Surah 3:55 which deals with Jesus' ascension.) I use the phrase, "so there is no grave where you can worship at his dead bones" to alert Muslims of their roots and tendencies toward animism. Not only in Medina, where they go to pray at the bones of Mohammed, but throughout the Muslim world, Muslims hold to animism or to a supernatural power, in this case in the dead bones of their dead saints, through which they believe their prayers can be answered. This is attributing a partnership to God. Although I do not go into a detailed explanation regarding this point, it nevertheless serves as a gentle reminder. Avoiding at this point the fact of the death and resurrection of Christ, I say, "So the end of Christ's life was unique and supernatural. The end of his life is not like the rest of our lives where there is a grave and a dead body." I do not use the phrase "death of Christ." At each of the three points in the discussion on the life of Christ, I ask the question, "Wouldn't that make His birth, His life and the end of His life unique and supernatural?" I keep asking this question until I get an affirmative answer from my Muslim friends.

To introduce the crucial part in the development of thought, I review and say, "So that would make Christ's birth, His life, and the end of His life to be unique and supernatural," which leads up the fact that "The prophet Jesus would be the only person who ever lived, who had all three: a unique and supernatural birth, a unique and supernatural life, and a unique and supernatural end to his life, wouldn't He?" Sometimes Muslims will point out exceptions of individual cases, and, of course, I point

out, "yes, there are other people who had a supernatural birth or performed miracles." Therefore it is important to emphasize Jesus' singularity by using the words "only" and "all." Christ was the only one who was singular and unique in all three.

I keep asking these questions until I get an affirmative answer. I ask, "Since the prophet Jesus is the only one to have a unique and supernatural birth and life and end to His life, that would make Him the most unique and supernatural person who ever lived, wouldn't it?" Recently, when I came to that point with a Muslim, he answered, "Yes," he dropped his objections and immediately asked, "Could you get me a copy of the New Testament so I can read it?" So without using the words, "God," "deity," or "Son of God," through this discussion and progression of thought it truly is possible in a first conversation to get a Muslim to agree that Christ is the most supernatural and unique person who ever lived, which comes very close to acknowledging the deity of Jesus Christ.

Sometime ago I was dialoguing with a number of Muslim friends on the floor of one of the major mosques in America discussing these questions. There were some ten of us from a local seminary and about ten Muslims and the conversation got rather heated. However, I kept asking my same question, "Wouldn't that make Him the only person who ever lived who had a supernatural and unique birth, life and end to His life?" I kept asking it until the resident scholar, a sheikh, answered, "Yes." This then changed the conversation radically from attacking Christianity to praising Jesus. Obviously that doesn't mean that they believed and were saved. But it helped to stop their attack and opened their minds to possibilities they had never thought of before.

One advantage of this type of approach and train of thought is that it follows from within the Muslim mind, moving from the known to the

unknown. The fact that they are ready in their mind to accept the virgin birth, the miracles, and the ascension of Christ can help them see that Christ is the most unique and supernatural person who ever lived, since He is the only one to have all three attributes. Muslims have never quite put it all together before nor realized the significance of such a life. I suggest that "other lovers" of Muslims try this approach also.

The Son of God

In most conversations with Muslims, it is not the Christians who bring up the concept and discussion of "Son of God," but Muslims begin to address it with their absolute rejection of it. However, I have found that this is one of the easiest objections to answer. For starters, we need to ask, "What do you mean by Son of God?" Usually they do not come up with an answer, so I try to probe, and I say, "Do you mean that God in a sense got married to Mary, or had sexual relations?" When they affirm or acknowledge this, then I say with much more emotion than they, "*haram, fosh* —blasphemy," expressing a much stronger denial of this concept than they felt or expressed. It is important for them to hear and realize that what they reject, namely that God had sexual relations with Mary, is more blasphemous to us than it is to them.

But then what does "Son of God" mean? I think it is important to again begin within the Muslim mind and proceed step by step. A little research can be of much help at this point. I would encourage every Muslim evangelist to make a study of the Muslim language that he uses, to find as many metaphorical and kinship terms and illustrations as he can within that language for son, father, mother, daughter and sister. I have a list of sixty kinship analogies in Arabic and five in Persian.

Possibly, the most common figure of speech in Muslim languages, using "son of" is "*Ibn is sabil*," which literally

means, “son of the road.” The meaning from Arabic would be “wayfarer, wanderer, passerby, or traveler.” The reason that it could be the most universal concept is because it is found in the Qur’an five times (See Surah 8:41; 9:60; 17:26; 30:38; 59:7). In the Qur’an “son of God” is rejected as a title for Christ and “son of Mary” is accepted.

My method of using this with a Muslim is very simple. I simply ask, “What does this mean? Does it mean that the road got married and had a baby road, who was a traveler? Does it mean, that the road got married and had sexual relations that produced a son of the road?” The usual response is, “No, no, no!” So I say, “What do you mean?” The response usually is something like, “A wayfarer, a wanderer, a passerby or a traveler.” Then I respond, “So you do not mean it literally or physically, or biologically, but you mean it in a spiritual way, or a metaphorical way. In the same way, when the Bible says that Christ is the Son of God, we do not mean that God got married to Mary and had sexual relations and produced a baby Jesus. We do not believe in a ‘papa God’ and a ‘mama God’ producing a ‘baby God.’ That is blasphemy. I usually say, “We don’t mean it literally, biologically or physically, but we mean it spiritually and metaphorically.” I repeat this series of questions and responses concerning “Son of God” with each of the analogies I use in this approach.

In Egypt, a very famous idiom is that an Egyptian is an “*Ibn in nil*,” or a son of the Nile. So I ask, “What does this mean? Does it mean the Nile got married and had sexual relations and produced baby people who are Egyptians or baby Nile rivers?” They, of course, reject that. Then I ask, “Well, what does it mean?” Usually I need to continue, “You don’t mean that an Egyptian is physically a son of the Nile! You don’t mean it literally, physically, biologi-

cally, but you mean it in a spiritual, or metaphorical sense.”

Egyptians also say that Egypt is the “mother of the world” or, “*Masr um il dunyah*.” So I ask, “what does this mean? Does this mean that Egypt got married, had sexual relations and produced all of the other nations of the world?” Again this is rejected. I usually respond, “Then of course, you don’t mean it literally, physically, biologically.”

Another common Egyptian idiom

It is possible in a first conversation to get a Muslim to agree that Christ is the most supernatural and unique person who ever lived.

is that the Sphinx is the “*Abul houl*” which translates, “the father of terror.” Regarding this I ask the question as to what this means. Does this mean that the Sphinx got married and had baby Sphinxes who were terrors?” They would respond, “No, the Sphinx guards the desert and the pyramids.” So I respond, “So you don’t mean it literally, physically or biologically, but mean it in a spiritual and a metaphorical way. It’s the same when we say, ‘Christ is the Son of God.’ The Bible doesn’t mean it literally, physically, or biologically, that a ‘papa God’ got married to a ‘mama God’ and had a ‘baby God.’ We mean it spiritually and metaphorically.”

In the Persian language, Shiites often revere Ali more than Mohammed. I go through the same analogies, as they speak of Ali as the husband of widows, the father of orphans, the sword of God and the hand of God. I would ask questions like, “Did Ali, father all the orphans of the world? That would not be right! Did Ali marry all of the widows of the world? That would not be right! Are not four marriages enough? Isn’t it immoral to marry them all? So what does it mean? Do you mean it liter-

ally, physically or biologically? In the same way that you do not mean it literally, physically, or biologically, we do not mean God got married and had sexual relations with Mary and produced a baby God when we say Christ is the Son of God.”

These are just a few analogies from Persian and Arabic. Much of this is very cultural and different idioms would be used in each of the various Muslim languages.

It is important, not merely to help them to realize that their definition of Son of God is incorrect, but also provide a positive definition and ask ourselves the question, what does it mean? We must not only ask what it does not mean, but what the concept is and tries to communi-

cate. Theologically the phrase, “Son of God” communicates several important concepts. One of those is that the Son *reveals* the Father. Hebrews 1:1-4, indicates this when it says, “God has spoken to us through the Son and the Son is the exact representation of His nature and the radiance of His glory.” We need to deal with the concept of *revelation*. What does it mean to reveal? Sometimes, I’ll use a visual aid and touch the curtains in a nearby window and say, “If I had not been in this country before, and had arrived at night when it was dark and these curtains would be closed, and in the morning they would be opened, and the veil would be removed—revelation would occur—and I could look out and see how beautiful the country is. We cannot see God face to face, but He has chosen to remove the veil to let us get to know Him better through getting to know the Prophet Jesus. In this world, a physical son reveals his father to us. When we see a son, we know something of his father even if we have never met the father before.

Muslims frequently think we are taking a good man, a prophet, and mak-

ing Him into God. By beginning from within the Muslim mind, where he is and what he values, we can gradually lead him to the truth.

In Islamic history and theology there were two leading groups, the Asharites and Mutazilites. The Mutazilites, who held to man's free will and human responsibility, lost out to the Asharites, who held to the sovereign free will of God. This concept is made famous in the cry, "*Allahu akbar*," God is the greatest! "*Allahu akbar*" is shouted from every minaret five times a day and mentioned during each time of prayer. Mobs shout it against their governments, dramatically trying to say we are on God's side and you are not, and with His help we will overthrow you. It clarifies that God is completely sovereign and we are to submit to Him. He can do whatever He wants to do. We, as puny beings, here today and gone tomorrow, cannot tell God what He can or cannot do. We cannot tell God that He cannot reveal Himself in the form of the prophet Jesus for our salvation. It is not a case of man becoming God, but God choosing to remove the veil and to reveal Himself in the form of the prophet Jesus for our salvation.

The Trinity

In addition to dealing with the deity of Christ and the Son of God concepts, there are a variety of approaches which can help in communicating the idea of the Trinity. One which comes from within Islamic thinking would need to come back to Asharite theology, embraced by all Muslims. Asharites hold to two basic points of theology. One is the sovereign free will of God and the other is that the Qur'an is the un-created speech of God existing in the mind of God from eternity past.

Normally I don't broach this subject. However, when Muslims accuse Christians of having three Gods, I ask them, "Do you believe the Qur'an is

created or un-created?" I keep asking them until they answer the question. When they answer that the Qur'an is un-created, I say, "So the Qur'an is eternal and un-created, and God is eternal and un-created. You have two eternal and un-created beings or things, you have two Gods, right?" Of course, they strongly refute that. I go back and ask the same question again and maybe even a third time. Finally I say, "You are telling me that you have two eternal and un-created things, but one God. You know, that we also have two or three eternal and un-created beings or things but one God." (John 1:1)

Fuoad Accad shows that Muslims are the ones who worship three gods: Allah, the Word and the Spirit. If they deny the eternity of the Word and the Spirit, he then points out that there was a time when Allah was both dead (no Spirit) and dumb (no Word).

The Problem of Sin

It may seem easy to think that if we can prove the deity of Christ and the sonship of God and the trinity, etc., that Muslims would take the next step and become Christians. But this too often is not the case. Believing Christ is God and the Son of God, and believing in the trinity, does not make a person a Christian. A person has to believe that he is a sinner, confess his sin, repent and believe that Christ died on the cross for his sin. The root problem is not the smoke screens that Muslims raise, but the biblical definition and existence of sin that they want to deny. For most Muslims, sin is like a child cheating on a quiz in first or second grade. It's not a big issue. It's not a moral affront to a holy God. One of our main tasks as Muslim evangelists is to help them realize that they are sinners, and because God is holy, sin is no small matter.

In my case, if I have a thirty-minute conversation with a Muslim, I might spend ten minutes establishing rapport; spend another ten minutes on the

problem of sin; and then use another ten minutes on the person and work of Jesus Christ, who He is and the answer to the real problem of sin. I would then conclude by asking them to read the Gospel of Luke. But how can we get the problem of sin communicated? We deeply need to know the issues involved. Muslims don't seriously consider themselves sinners and God holy. Therefore, they could care less about a Savior who delivers them from their sin.

One way to communicate the concept of sin is by a visual aid. I usually say something like the following, especially if it is a cold day. I might ask my Muslim friends, "Wouldn't it be great to have a cup of hot tea right now, or a coke?" He might say, "Yes, that would be great!" Just before I would give it, I would say, "Wait, a minute!" At this point I would add a bit of poison or bug spray or I might add Drano. A clear glass of Coke with a bit of liquid Drano added changes the Coke's color and makes the visual aid even more effective. Then I would offer it to him to drink and say, "Don't you want it?" As he refuses it, I point out, "I only put a little bit of poison in it, most of it is very good tea or coke, why don't you want to drink it?" I point out that it is just a little bit of poison, 99% of it is very good tea or Coke. I ask the question, "How many sins did Adam have to sin in order to get out of fellowship with God? God told Adam to till the ground. He tilled the ground. God told Adam to name the animals. He named the animals. He just sinned once. He took fruit from one tree and he was out of fellowship with God." At this step, I point out that I have sinned far more than one sin, and so has he, and so has everyone else.

God is holy and man is sinful. God is in heaven and there is no room for sin in heaven. "Who wants to go to heaven if, like this world, it is going to be filled with people who are adulterers or think adulterous thoughts, who steal and cheat people, who speak and

think with profanity, who do not speak the truth? Heaven is filled with God. God is holy and pure. God is completely separated from sin so we cannot go to heaven and bring our sin with us. Our sin must be forgiven before we can go to heaven. Adding more tea (or Coke) will not get rid of the poison. Adding more good works will not get rid of our sin. That is the wonderful thing about the prophet Jesus. When He died, He died on the cross as the complete sacrifice for our sins so we can be completely forgiven so that we can go to heaven and not bring our sins with us.”

Muslims are attracted to animism because they believe it gives them power over weak areas of their life. But when they are honest, they readily acknowledge their lack of power over personal sin. More than anything else Muslims need to know Christ has the power to forgive sins and to give personal victory over sin’s power.

The Christ-Shaped Vacuums

There are four things which Jesus Christ offers that Islam does not have. Islam does not emphasize a loving God; a personal God; the assurance of forgiveness of sins; nor the assurance of eternal life. There are a variety of ways in which we can communicate that God is a loving personal God. We should remember that Love is one of the ninety-nine names of God. It’s the ninety-third name, *al-Wadud*. This is not a strong concept within Islam. Rather, the concepts of God’s justice, sovereignty, greatness, and unity are central to them. Muslims really do not have a concept of a loving God who cares for them, they certainly do not have a concept of a personal God. For them, God is transcendent, He created the world, but is removed from it and them. When a Muslim wants something personal, he frequently prays to a dead saint or uses a fortune teller or reverts to animistic rituals. When he prays to God, he uses memorized, recited prayers, but does not enjoy a per-

sonal relationship with a loving personal God.

A wonderful way that the Gospel can be communicated and corrected is by praying for them at the end of a conversation. In our conversations with them we should have discerned where they are hurting and what some of their problems are and then I frequently ask them, “May I pray for you? It’s my custom to close my eyes and bow my head when I pray.” I then pray to God, to our loving Father, concerning the particular problems they have. This demonstrates a loving personal God, who hears our prayers. About 50% of the time, when I lift up my head, I see tears in their eyes. Muslims, who have been converts much of their life, have said, “You are the first person who ever prayed for me.” Of course, Muslims do not have the assurance of the forgiveness of sins or of eternal life. Yet this is a wonderful gift that Christ promises and the Word of God teaches. We need to be very careful to point out lovingly these four areas because they are vacuums within the Muslim heart which they do not know how to fill.

One of our goals in a conversation with Muslims is to get them to read Scripture. It is obviously advantageous to have a copy of a Gospel (I prefer Luke) in their language to give to them and to ask them to read. Frequently, I will ask, “Don’t you think it’s wise if we read all of the books given by God?” Most Muslims will answer, “Yes.” The truth is, most Muslims have never really read the Gospels. I tell them, “This is a biography of the prophet Jesus,” When I give it to them, I ask that they promise to read it, saying, “This will not do you any good as a fetish to keep off the evil eye, (as many Muslims might think), but it can help you to come to know the Prophet Jesus Christ. He can answer your prayers and can give power over sin and evil in your life.”

This might be the time to suggest they watch the *Jesus* video in their lan-

guage. An additional goal for which we should prayerfully direct our efforts, is to find those who would like to get together to read and study the Bible.

In an ideal relationship we would have an in-depth study of the person of Christ, possibly through the Gospel of Luke; an in-depth study through the Old Testament prophets which a Muslim accepts; or an in-depth chronological study beginning in Genesis. These types of studies provide an excellent foundation for faith.

However, since Muslims normally reject the Bible as authority, it might be advantageous to begin from within their mind, from where they are, and from within mutually accepted theological concepts.

Conclusion

I encourage others to prayerfully test and adopt some of the ideas and practical steps suggested in this article. Perhaps God would bless this approach to open the minds and hearts of many Muslims to the wonderful news of the Savior of the World who loves them and died for them. However, no matter what we do or how we look at it, the *sine quo non* of introducing Muslims to our Savior and Lord is love and prayer—prayer that God would lead us to Muslims who are open to spiritual things. Indeed may it be that God would redeem from all Muslim nations, tribes, and tongues a people for Himself for His glory even by the year 2000!

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What's Happening Among Muslims Today?

Explore the complexity of the Islamic peoples, the faith of Christians living and working among their Muslim neighbors,, and the attacks of Satan through the principalities and powers of evil. However, above all, note the hand of our sovereign Father God who in His great mercy is accomplishing His redemptive purpose throughout the Muslim world.

by Don McCurry

There are four major players in the arena of the Muslim world today. First and foremost is God. Then, obviously, there is that vast body of people who call themselves Muslims. Thirdly, there is the deadly enemy of us all, Satan. Last of all, there is the Christian presence, both local believers living in or near their Muslim neighbors, as well as foreign fellow-believers who are exercised to do something about unreached Muslim peoples. All four are interactive, making it difficult to discuss each separately, but I shall try to discuss each part. To ask the question, "What's happening among Muslims today?" is to necessarily focus and comment on the activity of each of the four players. Accordingly, I shall take up the discussion in the above order.

Our Father God, of course, is more than a "player." He is *the* Player. When we study the Scriptures, we learn that God, in His wisdom, orders the affairs of mankind in such a way as to show both His justice and His mercy. Nations who choose to follow His ways tend to enjoy His blessing and prosper. There are records of mighty deliverances, divine interventions, and great favor. On the other hand, He uses the folly of nations to show His justice and power in other ways. There are known historical events that show God using evil against evil, even through wars, to accomplish His righteous purpose. He has been known to cause earthquakes, send lightning, hail, plagues, droughts and famines, all of which reveal His justice and work to the eternal good of those who love Him.

No one is exempt from His rule. Yet through it all, He reveals the yearning of His own heart for the salvation of all. The inspired Scriptures tell us that, "God our Savior...wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3,4). "He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9), and, "God is love" (1 John 4:16). In spite of the tremendous judgments that have necessarily fallen on Muslims, largely because of their own doings, (more on that later) our Heavenly Father loves them and wants them to be saved.

A topic so broad needs some definition. First of all, who are we talking about? How many of them are there? We are talking about one billion, fifty-six million people (mid-1992 Census). They constitute about twenty percent of the earth's population. Eighty percent of these people live in forty-seven countries where they form either a majority or a plurality. Twenty percent live as minorities in other countries.

The Turkish and Persian Blocs

These Muslims can be divided up into major racial blocs. For example, the Turkish majority or plurality countries, would be Turkey, plus four of the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and lastly, Azerbaijan in the Caucasus region. Minority groups of Turks in Iran, Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Cyprus, plus immigrants to many other countries would also be included.

The Persian-speaking countries are

Iran and Tajikistan. However, there are significant Iranian and Tajiki minorities in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and to a lesser extent, other Central Asian republics. Because of the policies of the present Iranian government, there are Iranian immigrants in Pakistan, Turkey, India, most countries of Europe, some in Latin America, and at least a million in the United States.

India, the Malay and Arabic Speaking Peoples

The Indian Subcontinent would include Pakistan and Bangladesh (former East Pakistan) and the huge Muslim minority wedged in between these two in India. This bloc would constitute well over three hundred million people. Immigrants from these communities are ubiquitous with significant numbers in the Arab Gulf states, Europe, as well as in the United Kingdom, and in the United States and Canada.

Farther east, are the Malay people who are a majority in Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. These people are also scattered among other Asian countries, such as Singapore, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea.

In the Middle East and North Africa, there are twenty-one countries that make up the Arab-speaking world: Morocco (and the Saharan Republic occupied by Morocco), Mauritania, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan (North), Somalia, Djibouti, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Saudi Arabia. Added to these would be the Israeli-occupied territories of

Gaza and the West Bank. Large numbers of immigrants from the poorer Arab countries can be counted in the millions in Europe and to a lesser extent in the Americas.

The Sub-Saharan African Peoples

The last major bloc of Muslims are those of Sub-Saharan Africa. Included here would be Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Sierra Leone, the Gambia, the Comoro Islands, and French-occupied Mayotte. (Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti were included in the Arab-speaking bloc.) Added to these would be the large Muslim minorities in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Malawi, Togo, Benin, Cameroon, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, the island of Mauritius, and smaller minorities in other African countries.

Above we have described the major racial groupings, or blocs of Muslim countries, as defined by political boundaries. But when we get into the question of languages and ethnicity, the picture becomes much more complicated. In his excellent two-volume work entitled, *Muslim Peoples*, Richard Weekes lists four hundred and eight distinct Muslim groups. The first two hundred and one of them comprise ninety-five percent of the people of the Muslim world. Other researchers further sub-divide these groups. For example, Michael Camp, at the time he did the research as a volunteer at the Zwemer Institute, identified eight hundred and ninety-five groups. The majority of these, of course, were small to very small groups, but nevertheless, worthy of our attention in terms of evangelism and Bible translation needs.

It can readily be seen that Muslims are almost as diversified as Christians, although not as widely scattered geographically. This is why, when writing about what is going on in the Muslim world, we need to specify what part of the Muslim world and what people group or groups we're focusing on.

Factors of Change

Homer Barnett, in his landmark work, *Innovation: The Basis of Cultural Change* (1953:395), wrote: "Whole communities, tribes, and nations of individuals—or a majority of them—can experience anxiety and hopelessness as a result of large-scale misfortune. Consequently, a new idea that offers prospects of relief may have widespread appeal."

Although our lead question is, "What is happening among Muslims today?" this question cannot be understood or answered without taking into account certain historical events and how they affect the situation in the world today. These factors can be divided into such categories as war, the impact of poverty, secularism, and natural disasters, all leading to disillusionment with the status quo.

A word of caution is needed here: Disillusionment does not necessarily mean that people so affected will automatically be receptive to the gospel. They may, for example, become militant revolutionaries, seeking to "correct" situations that do not agree with their ideas of why Muslims should always be prosperous and rule the world. Nevertheless, there is ground for believing that many disillusioned Muslims will ignore the revolutionary option and be open to the gospel in a way that was not possible before.

Starting in the seventeenth century Muslim countries fell into the hands of colonial powers. This, according to an Islamic interpretation of history, was not supposed to have happened. It was a great shock for them. Therefore, by the end of the Second World War and the liberation of all of these countries, Muslim expectations of the recovery of their former glory rose very high. But freedom did not bring greatness.

Conflicts and War

Since the end of World War II, the Muslim world has suffered several set-

backs that have brought widespread disillusionment. The first, of course, has been the feelings of humiliation and frustration among the Arabs following their defeats in the wars with Israel. Millions of Palestinians were rendered homeless; others have been impoverished. Islam has not saved them, nor did other Muslim nations do much to help those who were made destitute. As a result, there is a level of receptivity among some of the Arabs, especially Palestinians. I must hasten to add that there has also been an explosion of militancy that would tend to camouflage the growth of the gospel among them.

In the civil war between Punjabis (West Pakistan) and the Bengalis (East Pakistan), Muslims massacred, raped and pillaged Muslims. The Bengalis were the victims of these war atrocities. The receptivity to the gospel now being witnessed in Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan), I'm sure, is due in part to the cruelty of the Punjabi Muslims against the Bengali Muslims. Even among the defeated Punjabis (beaten by the army of India), the sense of shame, disgust and disillusionment was so great as to predispose some of the Punjabi POWs to be open to the gospel.

Likewise in Pakistan, there have been other factors that contributed to this disaffection of Muslims. Following the disastrous civil war of 1971 with the loss of East Pakistan (Bangladesh), there was civil war in West Pakistan (now just Pakistan) where the Pakistan military (largely Punjabi), was pitted against the Baluchi secessionists. In the subsequent decades, the people have witnessed unbelievable corruption in their governments which have succeeded one another with monotonous regularity. The country has also been further destabilized by the inter-province rivalry between the Punjabis, Sindhis, Pathans, the Baluchis, and the Muhajjirs (immigrants and their children who originally came from India at the time of the Partition of India in 1947). The

result has been that Islam has not worked out well in pulling together the disparate ethnic segments of Pakistan. A native Punjabi (Punjabis are 61% of the population), who has just recently come to the States, said that he has never before seen such an astonishing level of disgust with Islam among the Muslims.

The Sudan, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan

In the Sudan, there has been at least two decades of civil war, largely as a result of the Arab northerners trying to impose their religion, by force, on their unwilling southern non-Muslim subjects. Even though converts and evangelists have been jailed and tortured, the gospel is growing among both the southern animistic tribes as well as among the northern Muslim Arabs.

The case of the long war between Iraq and Iran, with possibly a million casualties, has caused a widespread disillusionment among the Iranians. Hardly a family has not lost a son. Even though two Muslim converted pastors have been martyred in Iran, the churches are full of inquirers. Bibles are in great demand. God is working supernaturally through visions and dreams to draw thousands to Himself. About seven thousand Iranian Muslims have come to Christ in the last few years. Is this related to the disastrous military losses by the armies of Iran? To a large extent, we must answer yes. In addition to the military losses the cruelty of the present rulers of Iran has contributed to the polarization of Iranian society has certainly helped to explain the remarkable receptivity to the gospel.

Following Iraq's second disastrous war—the one with Kuwait and her allies—the gospel is now in demand in Baghdad among Iraqi Arabs. As a spin-off of the Iraqi defeat, the Kurdish minority, which earlier had suffered unbelievable atrocities at the hands of the

forces of Saddam Hussein, is now wide open to Christian relief workers and is showing unprecedented response to the gospel.

In Afghanistan, if it did nothing else, the brutal Soviet invasion, occupation and destruction of that land dislocated and traumatized millions. As a result, local Christian workers among the Afghan refugees in nearby Pakistan estimate that about a thousand Afghans have become believers. And in spite of the bloody inter-tribal warfare among

Is there any connection between all this carnage and the new receptivity to the gospel among Muslims?

the various Muslim ethnic groups since the Soviet withdrawal, all kinds of Christian aid and relief operations are being welcomed to minister to those in need. Is there any connection between all this carnage and the new receptivity to the gospel among Muslims? The circumstantial evidence supports the idea.

Lebanon, Chad, Eritrea, Nigeria and Somalia

Lebanon, too, is another country totally altered by war. Palestinians, Shias, Druze, various Christian parties, and Sunnis have all had a turn at fighting. The interference and intrusion of foreign powers (Israel, Iran, the United States, the United Nations, and Syria) have all had a demoralizing effect on many. Under those circumstances, one would hardly expect an openness to the gospel, and yet, according to certain Christian leaders remaining in Lebanon, there is a new receptivity that was unheard of before. In fact, one of the key Christian leaders said openly in a conference not too long ago, "Now is harvest time in Lebanon: Send us your workers. Come and help us." Again, the stress of war apparently has rendered hitherto resistant Lebanese Muslims

open to the gospel.

Similar results are discernible as the result of civil wars in Chad, the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia, and the Muslim oppression of non-Muslims in Nigeria. It is yet to be seen what the civil wars in Somalia will do to open up that formerly resistant land and people to the gospel. My guess is that the time of the beginning harvest in Somalia is not far away.

Poverty and economic decline

also has a way of making people open to looking for an ideology and a way of life that would give them a better life than what they have experienced in Islam.

There is a serious economic decline in the whole Muslim world. The only exceptions are Afghanistan, Maldives, Mali and Senegal, roughly thirty-one million people or three percent of all Muslims are experiencing some economic growth. In other words, there has been economic decline among the other ninety-seven percent of Muslim countries (with a question mark concerning those few countries where statistics are not available). Worse, the non-oil Muslim countries are generally among the poorest in the world.

It is a fair question to ask, "Why is this so?" I'm sure that various world economists could give a variety of reasons, each based on their area of expertise. Plausible explanations could be such as the following: over-population, shortage of natural resources, lack of education, lack of development of technological expertise enabling them to compete in the world, constant destabilization of the political scene making progress impossible, and corruption among the ruling elite, to suggest a few. In addition to these, I would like to suggest another reason that may be more significant than all of the above, for it has to do with a specific teaching from the Word of God.

What's Happening Among Muslims Today?

Islam, to my knowledge, is the only major religion that has set out to curse those who believe in the Son of God (Quran 9:30). Because of the linkage between Christ and Abraham, and between believers in Christ and Abraham, this cursing has serious consequences. In Genesis 12:3, where God is speaking to Abraham, we read, "...whoever curses you, I will curse." This was said of Abraham and, I'm sure, it also pertains to his progeny, that is, to all believers in Christ today. If this observation is valid, it would suggest that Muhammad has brought down upon himself and all of those who follow him the curse of God.

When we ask the question, "What's going on in the Muslim world?," at least in the current period of history, we see the decline in the fortunes of Muslims, with the majority of them living in poverty. That's a heavy burden to carry. The massive emigrations out of Muslim countries by people in search of work, and the greater receptivity among the poor of the Muslim world is a mute testimony to this. We Christians are in the privileged position of lightening that load for Muslims by blessing those who curse us, forgiving them, showing them love and friendship, and through the gospel, setting them free from the deception and bondage that led to their terrible plight. Wherever Christians follow this teaching of Jesus, we are seeing it result in a harvest.

Islam and Secularism

Muhammad and his earlier disciples made huge tactical mistakes in absolutizing the words and deeds of Muhammad as binding upon all Muslims and by confusing religion with politics. (There is no separation of religion and politics in Islam.) The result has been that Muslims are locked into the seventh century ethnocentric Arab behavioral pattern of Muhammad expressed in the Quran, "the last and final revelation," that was supposed to be

adequate for all the rest of human history.

Secularism and the rise of Western civilization has put Islam in a terrible dilemma. This has come about because of two above-mentioned mistakes. The result was to make Muhammad the model man, not only for all Muslims, but for the whole human race. This means that everything Muhammad did and the way he did it or said it was to be normative for the rest of mankind. Another blunder was to declare the Quran (the collected "official" pronouncements of Muhammad) to be the "last and final revelation" of God to the human race. In the light of subsequent history, both the man and his book have been seen to be nothing more than an absolutizing of a slice of seventh century Arabic culture as epitomized in the religious, political and military model of this one solitary Arab man, Muhammad. The hope of this for the believing Muslim is that Islam should be reigning supreme over all the earth. That it is not is a puzzle to the devout.

The truth is that Muhammad could not have possibly conceived of life as it is in the twentieth century. Therefore, Muslims are forced either to come to terms with the supremacy of modern technological societies, at least economically and militarily, or utterly deny the accomplishments of non-Muslim countries, particularly the West, and seek to reimpose on all Muslims, and ultimately on all mankind, the absolutistic model of a seventh century Arab culture. Neither move is possible. When Muslims take the line of accommodating to Western culture, it is in opposition to the core teaching of Islam, thus weakening the grip of Islam on its followers. For those Muslims who take the other approach of ignoring the achievements of the West and reverting to an Arabic version of seventh century lifestyle as modeled by Muhammad, a dilemma follows. They are forced to use the tools and skills developed by the very people they feel destined to

conquer. Along with these tools and skills, comes the Western value system (worldview) that gave birth to them. Today we see the Muslim world in the throes of this controversy. The choice seems to be to accommodate to Western culture or to prepare to go to war with the West (and all other non-Muslim countries) to assert Islamic supremacy.

What is happening in the Muslim world today bears this out. Countries such as Turkey, Algeria, Egypt, Senegal, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, to name a few, are trying to maintain some semblance of being semi-secular states. On the other hand, countries like Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Sudan are girding themselves up for subversive schemes against the West, trying with all their might to topple all secular-leaning Muslim governments, bring all Muslim countries into line with their plans to impose their version of "orthodox" Islam on all Muslim countries, and finally upon the whole world. To say that the Muslim world, particularly the Middle East, is in a state of ferment, is putting it mildly. Therefore, we see this growing disenchantment with Islam as an open door for the gospel for those Muslims so inclined.

New Developments in Central Asia and the Caucasus

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, we have amazing new developments in various Muslim countries, such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. Rule of atheistic communism squelched Islam for almost fifty years — at least on the surface. Folk Islamic practices and the underground Sufi brotherhoods survived. But the average Muslim did not practice Islam outwardly. The result is that the majority of Muslims do not know their own faith. Three Muslim powers are trying desperately to deal with this. Turkey is seeking to build a greater Turkish bloc with its brand of semi-secular

Islam. Saudi Arabia is seeking to fundamentalize these deprived Muslims with a massive influx of Qurans and the subsidizing of Muslim missionaries, and Iran is seeking to build radical cells of militants to mobilize all Muslims for their great Holy War against the West.

But God has been at work, too. Baptist and Pentecostal churches are seeing converts from Islam come into their churches. In some cases, new “home mission” societies have been formed. Missions have been formed in the former Baltic states that are now sending missionaries into the Muslim areas. European agencies are sending in literature and all kinds of tentmaking missionaries. And, as one would expect, missionaries from the Western hemisphere are flooding in, predominantly from the United States, with ever-increasing numbers coming from Latin countries.

Several trends have been observed. Folk Muslims of Azerbaijan are wide open to the gospel and responding. Georgian Muslims, whose ancestors were formerly Christian, are now coming out of their four-hundred-year Islamic captivity and responding to the gospel. The same could be said for the Bulgarian Muslims whose ancestors were originally Christian. Armenians, in spite of the ancient animosity to the Turkish peoples, are now undergoing spiritual renewal and, as impossible as it may seem, are reaching out to Muslims in certain areas and girding up for further efforts among Muslims! The Korean missions first aimed at winning the one percent Korean population of the major Central Asian cities are now reaching out to the Muslims with considerable success. In Kyrgyzstan, the work first began by reaching youthful drug addicts, converts are now in the hundreds. In Kazakhstan, the first fruits were among secularized, intellectual Kazakh women! In Uzbekistan, German Soviets working beside Uzbeks won

the first Uzbeks to Christ. Among them was a national poet. Hymn writing is now going on in Uzbeki. The least reached at the moment are the Turkmens and the Tajiks. But in Tajikistan, there is some evidence of early Jesus sects among the Muslims in the region. I have seen a sample Quran, where the name of Allah and Jesus (Isa) were illuminated in brilliant red ink. Archivists told me this dated back to the sixteenth century. In

We may expect fierce spiritual and even physical warfare with serious consequences for those who dare to witness to the living Christ in a hostile Muslim environment.

Kyrgyzstan, a lecturer in the Department of Antiquities told me of many ancient ruins of old Nestorian churches and monasteries all along the old silk route. She said, “Why don’t you Christians come here on archeological expeditions and recover the ancient glory of your people here?” These are threads of history that could be followed up for the sake of the gospel. If Kabyles in Algeria, and Bulgarians and Georgians whose ancestors were Christians are now returning to the faith of their fathers, why not explore the possibilities along the old silk route where there was a Christian witness?

In Tataristan and Buskordistan, there are reports of Muslims turning to Christ and asking for Bibles and other books in their own languages. Although the work is harder in the Caucasus region of southern Russia and northern Georgia, there are known converts now in Ossetia. The windows of opportunity may not stay open for long. We must make every effort to go through these open doors now!

The Interplay of Satan with Islam

Satan, being a major player in what’s

going on in the Muslim world, is not a topic that is popularly taken up. His very existence is denied by secular humanists, and those Christians who have bought into secular humanistic thinking, without realizing they have abandoned a biblical worldview. There are still others, who in their effort never to offend Muslims, even if what they say is true, would just consider it bad form to discuss the subject of the Satanic influences

on Muhammad’s life and the development of Islam. This writer is one who believes we need to be aware of Satan’s activities in Islam, and how to deliver Muslims from their deception and power. Scripture tells us that the whole world lies in his power (1 John 5:19). Muslims are no exception.

If Satan can masquerade as an angel of light, “It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:15). When we seek to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ among Muslims, we suddenly become aware that we have awakened a dangerous power that energizes them. As the Christian message makes inroads into Islamic territory, Satan can and does stir Muslims up to kill new believers, destroy Christian businesses and burn churches. Examples abound from the southern Philippines to West Africa. This in no way is meant to take anything away from the exciting news of the breakthroughs of the gospel in the Muslim world.

Christian in the Muslim World

The fourth so called “player” in the Muslim arena are the Christians, whether they be local residents or foreign workers. What has been happening among them is perhaps the most startling news of all. It can only be called an “awakening,” a response to the growing awareness of the extent of the Church’s unfinished business in the Muslim world. For years, only the very hardy and determined would choose to

work in the Muslim world. They often did so without much fruit to show for it. But now there is a multi-source flood of new workers going to the Muslim world and we are seeing results we never dreamed of before.

There are at least five sources of these newly recruited workers involved in reaching Muslims for Christ. First are the workers in the older missions and older churches that have been faithfully preaching the word in season and out of season to Muslims. They have been the perennials in the fields. Then there have been other older missions that formerly did not concentrate on Muslims but recently have begun to divert more of their workers to the Muslim world. In other words, there has been a redeployment of personnel, followed by recruitment of newer personnel to join with them in these newly occupied fields. Then, contrary to the opinions of all who thought it could not happen, there is a growing awakening among the older churches in the midst of the Muslim populations. *Out of these churches have come both evangelists to work locally with their Muslim neighbors, as well as missionaries of their own to go to other unreached Muslim fields.*

The fifth stream is the most astonishing of all! It grows out of the fact that missions have succeeded in what they set out to do in many parts of the non-Muslim world. So-called "mission fields" now have strong churches which are becoming mission sending churches. It has been thrilling to see streams of workers now flowing into the Muslim world from major bases in Latin America, Africa and Asia, as well as hundreds of cross-cultural workers moving from their own ethnic churches to unreached Muslim peoples within their own countries. Even though Western

Protestant missions seemed to be gradually declining, an analysis would show that is not true in the Muslim harvest fields; it would be in those areas where missions have succeeded. From their very successes, new "Two-Thirds World" missions are arising to actually augment the overall number of missionaries, in general, and more to the point, those focused on the Muslim world. Because of the alertness of Muslim intelligence agencies to pick up on these little tidbits of information, it is best not to detail what is actually happening.

The result of this expanded work force is that Muslims are coming to Jesus in virtually all Muslim countries. In some cases, it's just a handful; in others, it is in the scores or even hundreds; in a few, however, it is in the thousands. The point is that there is a penetration of the gospel everywhere through the cracks and fissures in the House of Islam. I believe it is safe to say that the foundations of Islam are being seriously challenged and eroded by a variety of forces, some of which have been mentioned earlier in this article. God is pleased to work through His growing number of laborers who are taking advantage of the new situation and receptivity among so many Muslims today. Of course, Satan is fighting back. There is a backlash and increased persecution. But Muslims, in numbers never before dreamed of, are coming to Christ!

Conserving the Fruit of the Harvest

The big question is what to do with the converts. The Koreans are absorbing their converts into Korean churches, the Russian Baptists into Baptist churches, the same for the Pentecostals. In Egypt, there are hundreds of converts in the ancient Coptic Orthodox churches. In some areas we see the dual

phenomenon of converts from Islam coming into older Protestant churches (Pentecostal and Baptist) while other converts are incorporated into totally new types of churches that seek to retain a lot of Islamic forms.

So far, in most parts of the world, when Muslims leave Islam, they really want to leave it. They want no part of Islam ever again. Yet, missionaries with a contextualizing desire in their hearts are determined to introduce Islamic-looking churches, religious forms and vocabulary, all in the interest of a hoped-for larger harvest. Will it work? We really can't tell yet. There's turmoil in the Christian mission camp. In the indigenization process, the mission force is looking for safe ground somewhere between complete extractionism, and the danger of syncretism. Only the testing fires of persecution coming from the Muslims will reveal what will finally emerge from the mission efforts to Muslims. Only time will tell if the already existing churches, both ancient and modern, can successfully reach out and absorb the influx of new believers from Islamic backgrounds. One of the biggest challenges the church-mission force now faces in Muslim missions is how to maintain the unity of the Spirit while holding conflicting views of how to evangelize Muslims, receive new believers and incorporate them into the Body of Christ—how to plant the Church of Jesus Christ among all the unreached Muslim peoples of the world.

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Islam in the West—U.S.A.

One of the greatest mission opportunities of our generation is to evangelize segments of the unreached peoples of the world right in our own cities and neighborhoods. Here is the challenge of a lifetime—bringing the Gospel to our Muslim friends in their different immigrant acculturation situations. But reaching them with the Gospel will require first rate cross-cultural evangelization, generous love, and above all, earnest prayer.

by Richard P. Bailey

“**T**here is a major difference between Islam and Christianity...” Thus began the words of an American convert to Islam, who rose to a place of leadership in American Muslim circles before turning to Christ. His words show why he chose to follow Jesus after many years of seeing Islam from the inside. “...Christianity teaches us to love our enemies. With Islam, it’s quite the opposite. You should be just, but you should hate the enemies of Islam. And if they openly struggle against Islam, they should be eliminated...” (*Christianity Today*, April 7, 1989).

What about “the fastest growing religion in America”? How many Muslims are there in our country? Are they here to take away our jobs and blow up our country, or has the Lord sent them here because of our failure to reach them for Christ in their own countries? Can Muslims be saved, and can we effectively share the Good News of Jesus Christ with them?

History of Islam in the West

Although there is evidence of Muslims in America almost from its beginning, the number was negligible until about 1960. The earliest record of an organized Muslim gathering for prayer was 1900 in Ross, North Dakota. A mosque was built there in 1929, but later abandoned. As other Muslim immigrants arrived and their numbers increased in many urban areas their gatherings multiplied. Islamic organizations began to appear in Highland Park,

Michigan in 1919, in Brooklyn in 1923 and in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1925.

The last gained a mosque in 1934, and is the oldest extant mosque in America. Social and ethnic organizations later became mosques or Islamic centers, and then leagues of Muslim organizations were born, such as the Federation of Islamic Associations (FIA), which held its first convention in 1952. The Muslim Student Association (MSA) was established in 1963 and now has several hundred university chapters across America. After the demise of the old FIA, a new continent-wide organization called the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) came into being in 1971. In 1982, the MSA became one of many organizations under the umbrella of another federation of Islamic organizations called the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA).

The real flood of Muslim immigrants began as a result of the change in U.S. immigration laws in 1965, which gave much larger quotas to Muslim nations. The affects of that change began to be felt by 1970, and today more than half of the Muslims of America have come since that time. At the present time, Muslims comprise an estimated 14 percent of new immigrants entering this country. Borge Schantz, in an excellent article entitled, “Islam in Europe” *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXI, No.4, October, 1993) describes how the great immigration of Muslim workers into Western Europe during the 60s and 70s has now stopped. This is

not the case in the USA, where Muslim immigration really got going in the 70s and continues until today.

The other major factor in the growth of Islam in America is the movement among African-Americans. It began with a pseudo-Islamic cult with roots going back to 1913 when Noble Drew Ali established the Moorish-American Science Temple in Newark, New Jersey. He was followed by W. Fard Mohammad, who was believed to be Allah, himself. The real growth of “the Nation of Islam” began about 1950 under the leadership of Elijah Mohammad and Malcolm X. There were 15 “Mohammad’s Temples” in 1955, and 50 by the end of 1959. Malcolm X’s conversion out of the Nation into orthodox Islam in 1963 (and assassination in 1965) and the elevation to leadership of Warith Deen Mohammed (upon the death of his father, Elijah Mohammad, in 1975) brought both transformation and division. W. D. Mohammed carefully brought about “the change” from the fantasy and racist theology taught by his father to orthodox Islamic teaching. In the process of this drastic change, Louis Farrakhan and others left to start a new “Nation of Islam” in order to maintain the original teaching of Elijah Mohammad. Others also started new groups, such as “the Five Percenters” and the “Nubian Nation,” with a jumble of teachings borrowed from Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Today, according to a *New York Times* article (May 3, 1993), there are as many as 18 different

Islam in the West—U.S.A.

groups of African-American Muslims. The largest is “Al-Islam” under the unofficial leadership of W. D. Mohammed. Edgerley and Ellis do an outstanding job of outlining the history and development of most of these groups in their pamphlet, *The Emergence of Islam in the African-American Community*. According to a *U.S. News & World Report* of October 8, 1990, African-American Muslims now number over one million, or 25 percent of the American Muslim presence. The American Muslim Council, quoted in a February 24, 1993 article in *U.S.A. Today*, estimates they comprise 42 percent (over 2 million).

Ethnographic Outline

According to a series of articles in the *New York Times*, May 2-4, 1993, on Islam in America, approximately 95,000 legal Muslim immigrants entered the USA in 1991, of whom 35,000 are ethnically from South Asia (Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Guyana and Trinidad); 21,500 from Persian countries (Iran and Afghanistan); 21,500 from Arabic countries; 7,500 from African countries; 6,000 Malays (from the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia); and 2,300 from Turkey. Somehow they neglected to mention European Muslim immigrants from Albania and the former Yugoslavia. While this gives us a picture of the present immigration ratios, in the past the percent of Arabs was higher. It is clear that the largest ethnic groups of Muslims in America today are African-American, South Asian, Arabic, and Persian, probably in that order, with smaller numbers of all the other Muslim ethnic groupings as well.

Size and Growth Rates

Because of the census bureau’s stubborn policy against obtaining any information about religion, it is impossible to get exact figures of the number of Muslims in the USA. Researchers and organizations have made

estimates ranging from two and a half to nine million. My own estimate is five million. In an interview in *Christianity Today* of April 7, 1989, Steve Johnson, a former American Muslim leader, estimated that there were 4.6 million Muslims in America, including 40,000 to 75,000 white American converts (“Probably two-thirds of the Caucasian converts are women who marry Muslim men.”), 1.3 million Black Muslims, and 3.2 million immigrants. In that same article, he also said that, “Some say the number increases by ten percent a year.” My estimate is a growth rate of six percent annually, based on my own calculation of the following four factors.

1. Immigration

Using the figure of 95,000 legal Muslim immigrants per year from the *New York Times* article and adding an estimated additional 45,000 illegal immigrants, we have about 140,000 immigrants.

2. Conversions

There are something like 28,000 conversions to Islam annually in America, mostly from the African-American community.

3. Marriage Conversions

Annually about 7,000 American women marry Muslim men and convert to Islam for the sake of their marriages. Many of these men have come here as university students or on business or tourists visas.

4. Birth Rate

Immigrant Muslims, especially, average more than twice the number of children that other Americans have. I estimate that this year’s increase of births over deaths will be about 125,000 this year. The total of these four figures is 300,000 more Muslims in America this year.

Geographic Factors

As is the case with all immigrants, most Muslim immigrants reside in the large metropolitan centers of

America. There are about 700,000 in both Los Angeles and New York, with lesser numbers in Chicago, Detroit, Washington and Houston. There are growing numbers in all the other cities as well. Certain ethnic groups seem to prefer certain locations more than others. Iranians, for example, are in Los Angeles, Houston and Washington while Pakistanis are mostly in New York and Chicago. Arabs are concentrated in Detroit, New York and Los Angeles; Turks, Central Asians and Bangladeshis are largely in New York; Indonesians in Los Angeles.

Another characteristic of Muslim immigrants is that the second and third generations as well as the most highly educated tend to move out into the suburbs and the smaller towns. There are growing numbers of educated and successful Muslims in the suburban areas, and it is common to find Muslim doctors practicing medicine in many smaller towns across America.

Organizations and Movements

Zaheer Uddin, in the cover story of the January, 1990 issue of *The Message International* (published by ICNA), gives an excellent overview of the various activities and organizations of Muslims in America, starting with the local mosque. A great variety of buildings have been converted into mosques. Some are former houses, apartments, lodge halls, warehouses, churches and synagogues, while others are consecrated rooms in office, factory and college buildings. Increasingly Muslims are erecting new buildings as mosques, many of which are very impressive. One of the most beautiful is the Islamic Cultural Center on Manhattan’s upper east side, which was completed after 20 years at a cost of \$17.5 million.

In 1986, the American Institute for Islamic Affairs estimated that there were 600 mosques in the USA. In 1989, the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, DC published a booklet on

“Understanding Islam and the Muslims” in which it stated that there were 1,000 mosques in the United States. This figure was based on records being kept by ISNA and other Muslim groups. In 1993, the ICNA listed 1,400 established mosques (on the basis of a survey it had done in one city, the ICNA estimates that there may be as many as 3,000, counting the less official, unlisted locations where there are regular Friday gatherings in homes and offices). This means the rate is accelerating and there are presently at least two new mosques opening per week in America!

In many cases, the first mosques that are organized develop into “Islamic centers,” in which the social and educational as well as the religious needs of a particular immigrant community are being met in one central building. In addition to regular prayers and lectures on Islam in the mosque itself, there often are classrooms for instruction on Islam and ethnic languages. Many times there is a bookstore, an office, recreational facilities and/or an area for wedding receptions and the celebration of religious holidays within the building. Funerals are conducted there, sometimes including the preparation of the corpse according to Islamic practices.

Because Muslim parents are alarmed by the influence secular American culture is having on their children, many mosques are initiating teaching programs to teach their children the basics of Islam. These programs are of three types. The most common is having special classes on Sunday afternoon when children are free. A second type is after-school classes several days a week. In the case of a few mosques that are able, a full Islamic day school is organized to integrate Islam along with “the three Rs.” In 1990, the ICNA listed 60 such Islamic schools in America, and in 1993 their list had grown to 90.

In addition to mosques and schools, Muslims in America have organized publishing houses, colleges, youth camps, relief organizations, political action groups, college student associations, women’s organizations, as well as many different professional groups. Organizations, such as the North

in the spread of Islam. Thirdly, the majority of Muslims are somewhat uninformed in this discussion, and are focused instead on simply meeting their own daily material needs. With the size and local leadership of the Muslim community rapidly increasing, however, these people will be pressured to take sides.

My fear is that most of them will eventually join the second group.

At this point in American history, it may seem unnecessary to entertain any question about two percent of our population having any significant influence on our American political system,

but I believe we must. “No man can serve two masters.” Islam’s “Shariah” (law) is a complete legal and governmental system and in my opinion is also incompatible with the U.S. Constitution. I believe therefore, we will be seeing an increasing number of Muslim U.S. citizens in direct defiance of our laws and insisting on their own laws. In effect, they will want the status of being a nation within a nation, such as the Muslims of England are now demanding, even insisting on immunity from Christian evangelism.

Effective Evangelism

We can now address the whole point of this article. The history, growth, activities and locations of America’s Muslims is vital information only if we care about them! They have been taught that Jesus was taken to heaven without dying or rising again, that He is not the Messiah, and that they must earn their own way to Paradise. So according to God’s Word, unless they turn and receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord, they are headed toward judgment and eternal condemnation. It’s an item for great praise that God is bringing hundreds of Muslims into new life in Christ all across America and He is using caring believers to share the Gospel with

The history, growth, activities and locations of America’s Muslims is vital information only if we care about them!

American Council for Muslim Women, the Association of Muslim Social Scientists, the YMFA (Young Muslims for Faith and Action) and the Muslim Political Action Committee, reflect the level of adaptation Muslims are making to the American way of life.

Political Factors

With regards to involvement in American politics, Muslims can be divided into three categories. First of all, there is a minority which fervently believes their best method of impacting America for Islam is to work within the system by voting and eventually getting Muslims elected to office. A second minority is equally convinced that the secular USA government system is anti-God and anti-Islam, and that they can best influence American society by being totally separate from it both in life style and actions. They feel that American law is “man’s law” and that they are obligated to obey only Allah’s law (the Islamic Shariah). Therefore this minority justifies ignoring marriage laws by performing second marriages in the mosque or overseas, hiding tax information about their personal or business income, and avoiding compliance with business and zoning regulations in order to have more money to use

them!

In order to understand how we can best reach them with the Good News of God's love for them, we need to see them as three separate groups, because each of the three groups requires a different strategy and approach.

First Generation Immigrants

As stated above, some 55 percent (about 2.75 million) of America's Muslims are first generation immigrants. This means immigrants presently comprise the majority of the Muslims in the USA. Furthermore, unless the U.S. government's immigration policy is changed, their number will continue to grow until they reach a critical mass of about four million. At that point, new arrivals will simply replace earlier immigrants dying of old age. Four million is a huge group of people! That's more than the Muslim population of 18 individual Muslim nations, including Jordan, Chad, Albania, Lebanon and Kuwait.

Although Muslim immigrants coming to America believe they are coming here for economic opportunity and/or political freedom, we should see that God is actually bringing them here so that they can hear the Good News of Jesus Christ! This overwhelming fact is clear to those Christians who are praying for the Muslim world. Most of these immigrants are coming from areas where there is very little opportunity to even hear the Gospel. And if they have heard it, social pressure has not permitted them to carefully consider it. In other words, they have been cut off from God's truth about Christ both by geographical distance from true Christians as well as by their own society's hostility to the Gospel.

Just coming to America, however, does not automatically enable them to hear and understand the Gospel. Here they are faced with a series of other barriers which cut them off from the

Gospel just as effectively. Although they are no longer geographically separated from born-again Christians, most of them are now separated from them by linguistic and cultural differences and are still unable to hear the Gospel. A recent Muslim immigrant may live near a church, have cable TV with access to Christian programming, have picked up an English Bible in a motel room, and even work alongside a born-again American Christian in his factory or office, but his limited English makes him unable to understand the full meaning of the words and expressions he hears. He is especially unable to understand the spiritual meaning of religious vocabulary used in the Gospel message.

Furthermore, although most immigrants may be removed somewhat from the social opposition of their Muslim families, American culture is as great a barrier to their understanding of new life in Christ as anything else. They are bewildered by the blatant immorality and indifference of unfriendly Americans, whom they assume are all Christians. They are almost never invited into American homes, they find that Americans are embarrassed to talk about God or religion, and those church visitation groups that sometimes come to their door seem to be in too much of a rush to drink tea or listen to anything they want to talk about. If they should ever visit a church service, they are usually mystified and "turned off" by the apparent irreverent manner of Christian worship. Not only do people enter with their shoes on and sit comfortably on cushioned seats next to their wives or girlfriends, but they never once bow down with their face to the floor in the worship of God! They even appear to be entertained by fashionably dressed singers and joke-telling speakers! In the article mentioned before, Borge Schantz points out how ineffective western mass-communication methods are among immigrant Muslims in Europe, because, "All Islamic cul-

tures depend upon personal relations."

These linguistic and cultural barriers are just as effective as the geographic and social barriers they faced before. It is imperative that we realize these people are basically unreachable by American Christians since they can be reached effectively only in their own language and culture! This is to say that evangelizing first generation immigrant Muslims in the U.S. is not "home missions," but foreign cross-cultural missions of the first degree.

The people who are best able to reach first generation immigrants are immigrant ethnic Christians and/or American missionaries trained in the languages and cultures of the immigrant Muslims. There are large numbers of Arabic Christians here in America and a good number of Iranian Christians. It is not surprising, therefore, that the largest groups of Muslim converts to Christ in America are Iranians and Arabs. Sad to say, there are relatively few immigrant ethnic Christians from the other parts of the Muslim world.

As far as missionaries are concerned, a few mission societies (such as International Missions, Inc.) are beginning to train and place missionaries here, but so far their number is insignificant. It is unfortunate that many American Christians seem to think that this is a job which should be delegated to retired missionaries living on social security, and our missions money should be sent overseas "where the need is greatest." When those same Muslims were far away we sacrificed our young people and money trying to send the Gospel to them, but now that they live next door, we shrug our shoulders and ignorantly think, "They don't need missionaries. All they have to do is come to church if they want to hear."

Immigrant Muslims in America are very much in touch with their societies back home, and they have a powerful influence on most of the Muslims of the world. It is time to recognize the stra-

tegic potential of this very significant group of Muslims living inside our own borders.

A good supply of literature and radio cassettes is available from overseas in all the major languages of Muslim immigrants, although there is a real need for such materials to be produced here, contextualized to the American scene.

American Converts of Islam

Another 25 percent, or about 1.25 million of the Muslims in the USA, are American converts to Islam. Although these include some 80,000 Anglo-Americans, the great majority of converts are African-Americans. Their American sub-culture and their unique Muslim doctrines combined with their not-so-distant "Christian" cultural heritage require different workers as well as a different approach than that used with recent immigrants from the Muslim world. African-American Christians are best able to reach them for Christ, but there needs to be a new analysis of biblical answers for the African-American community's spiritual, cultural and economic needs being used to attract people to Islam.

There are great opportunities to reach out to many African-American Muslims who are not deeply confirmed in their beliefs. Many, for example, are unaware that the Quran teaches that Jesus never died on the cross or that orthodox Islam teaches that people of all races are equal before God. Others, having converted for social reasons (for the benefit of protection from other violent prisoners in jail, for identification with a seemingly strong and self-disciplined group or for racial identity), may not have understood the full implications of Islam's teaching about sin and salvation. Then there are opportunities as a result of the doubts and confusion generated by various divi-

sions and diverse doctrines. For example, books written by leaders of one group proving that another group is not true Islam, or W. D. Mohammed trying to explain that his father, Elijah Mohammad, was a man sent from God and yet was wrong in what he taught. Or the argument between the Black Israelites and the Nubian Hebrew Nation (a Muslim group previously called "The Ansar") about the existence of "true Israel" today. Then there are the "Five Percenters," who claim to be the only true Muslims in the

Are the Muslims here to take away our jobs and blow up our country, or has the Lord sent them here because of our failure to reach them for Christ in their own countries?

world!

There is a desperate need for sensitive and effective literature and preaching showing how the Black person can find "dignity, African identity and global significance" in Jesus Christ. People such as Carl Ellis and others working with him in "Project Joseph" need encouragement and support as they seek to fill this need.

Second Generation Immigrants

The remaining 15 percent (approximately three-fourths of a million) are the descendants of immigrants, who came as children or were born here. This group of children and grandchildren of Muslims immigrants is exploding and will continue to grow at about twice the American birth rate as long as new immigrants continue to enter this country. In just a few years it will become the largest of the three groups of Muslims. Unlike first generation immigrants, who will reach a critical mass, this group will continue to grow as the fourth,

fifth, sixth and succeeding generations come into being. In other words, this group is future Muslim America for which we need to be praying and planning for now!

Not only will this group continue to grow in number, but it is also the group most accessible to the American church. Growing up in America, going to American schools and watching American TV, these Muslims are culturally and linguistically American.

They can be reached by Christian laymen through American church programs and evangelistic efforts if believers will just care enough to do so. I know of several in this group who came to Christ the first or second time they were invited to church! Sadly, however, 95 percent of them have no born-again Christian friends and are never invited! Is it any wonder that some of these young people are becoming the

strongest, most effective advocates of Islam in American society?

Now is the time for America's pastors to become familiar with the issues and beliefs of Islam and to lovingly preach and teach the Bible's answers to these questions without "Muslim bashing." There need to be classes in our Sunday Schools and Bible schools where these issues are addressed as "Islam in America" and not just "over there." It is time to wake up to the potential of either a great harvest or a strong opposition to the Gospel from among these young American Muslims.

What Can We do?

What can the American Church of Christ do to insure that these three groups of unreached Muslims hear and understand the Gospel? As I see it, the following are crucial actions that must be taken by American believers.

1. Awareness

First of all, we need to be concerned

Islam in the West—U.S.A.

enough to do the research, to keep informed, and to plan seminars to inform others of the presence, beliefs, and needs of Muslims in America and in our communities.

2. Prayer

Secondly, as the information is gathered, we need to stimulate earnest and faithful prayer for the salvation of Muslims in our land. God is working in Muslim lives only in answer to earnest prayer.

3. Love for Muslims

Practical expressions of love must be shown to the Muslims living around us, such as speaking to them, being interested in them, inviting them to our social activities and homes, enjoying their company and sharing our hearts with them. This is the only way we will get rid of our prejudices and stereotypes.

4. Supporting Immigrant Workers

We need to have a greater eagerness to financially support qualified ethnic workers under responsible organizations. I know of a number of such people whose desire to serve the Lord among Muslims is frustrated by a lack of support.

5. Preparing Missionaries

We need to encourage those young people who express an interest in missions to reach Muslims for Christ here in America by standing behind them financially and prayerfully the same way we stand behind those going overseas to reach Muslims.

6. Publishing Literature

There is a great need for people and funds to be allocated for the task of publishing literature and preparing videos and cassettes that are culturally effective for each of the three groups of Muslims in America.

Summary

We need to be aware of the history, size, growth rate, ethnic composition, geographical locations, and organizations of Muslims in the U.S., but our major focus should be on recognizing the need of prepared workers to reach three distinct groups of Muslims for Christ. Fully supported cross-cultural missionaries and national immigrant ethnic Christians are needed to reach the largest group of first generation immigrants; caring African-American Christians churches and laymen are needed to reach African-American converts to Islam; and all churches and Christian laymen, in tune with what God is doing, are needed to reach the rapidly growing second and third generation immigrant Muslims. May the Lord help us see these urgent opportunities right inside our borders and motivate us to effectively bring the Gospel to our Muslim neighbors in this decade.

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A Reached Muslim

Isaiah 21:13-16

by Timothy Abraham

One of the bewildering questions in our world today is, “How can we witness a worldwide peace in the Islamic countries?” By and large, my Muslim friends attribute this decline in Muslim states to the unfaithfulness of governors. As far as orthodox Islam is concerned (that is, Islam based on Muhammad’s words found in the Qur’an and the Hadith), these Muslim governors must be resisted, deposed and punished until they recant. No wonder Islamic history has been fostering on the fights and battles that broke out between an allegedly godless governor and an outraged Muslim community. Even the early successors of Muhammad (Caliphs) were killed by their own Muslim people.

If this is presumably the case with our twentieth century allegedly perverted Muslim governors, what about the early successors of Muhammad who took charge of the Muslim nation? This is quite an interesting question, as it reveals to us how successful the early Islamic reign was, and this consequently decides how applicable the Islam reign for today is, on a worldwide scale, for which the Muslim fundamentalists aspire. In this conjecture it is essential to state that the Muslim fundamentalists are not anything far from true Islam. Unequivocally, they arrive with the early real spirit of Islam as manifestly rooted in the Glorious Qur’an and the daily norms of life of the prophet Muhammad. They imitated every detail of his life, the way he used to sit, walk, eat with his fingers and lick

them afterwards till they were recleaned, etc. For good measure, they try to revive and reinstate the Muslim nation as it was established by the prophet Muhammad and the early successors (Caliphs). The problem is not with the Muslim governor, nor is it with the Muslim community; rather, it is the human heart that needs to be changed with a new heart in which the Spirit of God dwells (Jer. 24:7; Ezek. 11:19).

Like all peoples of the world, Muslims are so dearly loved by God, and they fit crucially into God’s redemptive plan for humanity. God’s Word emphatically teaches that He has put eternity in their hearts (Eccles. 3:11), and these hearts will remain restless until they find their rest in Him. Having the same worth and value as any people on earth, our Father makes His sun rise on them and sends them rain, no matter how wicked they can be (Matt. 5:45).

This, in turn, leads to another question, “If Muslims are so loved by God, would He still answer their prayers?” My answer is, “Yes!” Some oppressed Christians in the Islamic countries say the answer is “No!”, contending that Muslims do not pray in the name of Jesus. Yet, Christians in the West say that their God is not the god of Muslims, for he is Allah, not Jehovah. Even though

Muslims do not pray in the name of Jesus, God still hears their cries and yearnings for Him. A Muslim would lift his or her heart and say, “Ya Ellahi, ya sami As-Salah,” translated, “My God, O You who hear prayer!” This is literally what David prayed, “O You who hear prayer, to You all flesh will come” (Ps. 65:2). Here, all flesh, includes Muslims – even Muslim radicals! In the whirlwind of my mental agonies, stirring for the irrefutable TRUTH as a committed Muslim, I cried to Him in the middle of the night, “O You who hear prayer, show me the truth, and the truth You lead me to, I will serve for the rest of my life, whatever the cost may be.”

Unequivocally, God opened my eyes and confirmed to me the truth of Christ as the exclusive way to knowing Him. This is why I used to teach skepticals, who were found, to say, “Lift your heart to God (Allah, our Lord) and He will show you His truth.”

Without compromising the truth, or falling into the trap of a universalistic Christology, God loves Muslims and hears their sincere prayers and deepest cries for His help. God hears prayers from the unsaved in many cases. In his helpful little book, *Praying in the Holy Spirit*, Dr. H. A. Ironside says:

Prayer is almost universal in mankind. "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come." Unsaved men pray. All nations pray. It is the sense of need, of weakness, that leads men to cry out for help to a Higher Power; and it is wrong to say, as some have said, that the prayers of unconverted people are never heard. The man whom our Lord healed of his blindness said, "We know that God heareth not sinners." This is true, in the sense that he meant it. But the cases of Hagar in the wilderness, the heathen mariners mentioned in Jonah, and other similar instances must not be overlooked. It is wrong and foolish to try to set bounds to the mercy of God. He who hears the prayer of the young ravens when they cry for food, hears the agonized heart-cries of troubled men who are of "more value than many sparrows" in His eyes. Both Scripture and history testify to prayers answered in wondrous grace, even when those who prayed were ignorant of the One to whom their entreaties were directed.

It is in the very nature of God to answer prayer, even for unworthy creatures.

Doctrinally, this is true because the Qur'an adapted lots of verses and stories from the Bible. For instance, Muhammad quoted First Corinthians 2:9 verbatim and related that Allah said, "I have prepared for my righteous servants what eye has not seen nor ear heard". While Muhammad's eschatology is strong, his soteriology is weak. Islam is the only non-Christian religion that gives such a high and historical place to Jesus Christ as merely a prophet. Eschatologically, Islam places an

enormous emphasis on the Day of Judgment and the impending account a Muslim will give in the transitory life to the grave. Instead of searching for points of disagreements between Islam and Christianity, which are already irrevocably existent, we must seek to establish common ground and reach out in love. While in Arabic we say "Allah", in English we say "God", even though the God of the Qur'an is theologically different from the God of the Bible as we will explain later.

Unfortunately, Muslims have been shunned by the West for a long time. They have been the object of some western historians' sarcasm. Islamic history came under heavy fire. Lots of books have emerged recently, and they attempt to expose Islam. Rarely do these authors try to point out the good things in the Muslim/Arab culture. Arabs have been portrayed as those who live a poor primitive life in the desert and ride camels. Sadly, people in the West can be so ethnocentric that they think their culture is superior to that of the Arabs. Nothing could be further from the truth. Just as our Lord crossed the cultural barriers of His day, where the Jews thought of themselves as being superior to the Samaritans, and He still sought to give the Samaritan woman at the well eternal life (John 4:9), so should we go to all Muslims and win them for Christ. The harrowing events of bombings and persecution of Christians in the Islamic world challenge us more and more to reach out to Muslims, speaking the truth in love, and there always will be a time when they ask us for the reason of hope which is within us.

Me, Become a Christian?

Our unanswering aim, here, is to reach

Muslims for Christ. In order for a missionary to win a Muslim to Christ, he or she must fully understand what this entails. We do not proselytize Muslims, but rather we introduce them to Christ, Who loves them as much as the Jews. When I began my deep search for the truth in 1985, as a strong Muslim fundamentalist, I was ready to be called anything but a Christian. When I was five years old, two Christians rented a room in our house. In Egypt, Christians are viewed as low-class people. "Son, they are kind people, even though they are Christians," said my mother. I cannot forget the day when my mother said something to my Christian friend from Cairo, "You are a godly person and, still, you are a Christian." Of course, I was embarrassed before my friend who came to visit me for the first time. He came all the way from Cairo to my village in order to share Jesus with me. My friend had a tremendous impact upon my devotional life. He did not bother about the scorn the Muslims harbor for Christians.

How did we view Christians in our Egyptian society?

A Christian is often termed as "Kuftis". You hear a Muslim saying, "Don't hang out with him, he's a Kuftis!" Kuftis is equivalent to a scumbag, a person who is considered inferior. A Christian in the army is shunned because he is Kuftis. In other words, a Muslim is not supposed to join them in eating. Muslims would argue that these Kuftis people are generally known for eating pork, and they are unclean in that they do not take baths. Christians are prohibited to enter Mecca and Medina because these cities have Shrines for Muhammad.

When I was drafted into the army, I felt God was going to use me in this wilderness, since our Lord was in the wilderness and in the Spirit at the same time. The lieutenant-colonel would never allow any Christians to make his tea. He confided to me, his English teacher, that he once vomited when he ate cakes made by his Christian neighbors. Kuftis!

“Don’t you notice, Timothy, that Christians can be recognized by their smell from a distance?” argued my Muslim friend Ahmed, “Their priest puts on a distinctive kind of cologne that turns me off.” “Christians’ perfume, Christians’ clothes. Immodesty marks their women. Kuftis!” A member of the zealous Muslim Brotherhood relates the following conversation between a Muslim and his Christian teacher:

“Mrs. Isis, you teach many teenagers, and they are easily turned on by the sexy clothes you wear.” She retorted, “It does not matter what I wear, what matters is my heart.”

I wish I would have met Mrs. Isis after my conversion from Islam to Christ and open my heart to her. I would say to her, “Mrs. Isis, you could have contributed to my conversion earlier by showing me what a Christian is in the example of Jesus. While I recognize that the criteria of modesty is something cultural that varies from one culture to another, you should realize the outward eloquently speaks of what is inside.” Why should we let these things be a stumbling block to Muslims’ conversions? I

understand that greatness is reaching out to people and meeting them where they are. I also understand that the Apostle Paul said, “I became as weak to the weak” so that he might win them for Christ.

“Other Sheep”

In the Egyptian Christian community, pastors would teach on waiting upon God using the story of Abraham and his wife Sarah and Hagar. Galatians 4:21-25 speaks of two covenants, “Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bond woman, the other by a free woman [that is Sarah] but he who was of the bond woman was born according to the flesh, and he of the free woman through promise.”

Surprisingly, the children of the bond woman, the Arabs, resemble their father [Ishmael] in many ways: And the Angel of the Lord said to her: “Behold, you are with child. And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction. “He shall be a wild man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man’s hand against him.” (Gen.

17:11, 12)

It is remarkable that God did not reject Ishmael or his descendants, but rather He says to Abraham, “And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation” (Gen. 17:20). It is essential here to point out that God made His covenant with Isaac, not Ishmael (v. 21). We occasionally see the children of Ishmael coming to commit themselves to the everlasting covenant that God had established with Isaac.

These converts, who come from Muslim backgrounds, are indiscriminately, as Isaac was, “children of promise” (Gal. 4:28). They receive the same Jesus, are washed by the same Blood, heirs of the same Kingdom, and royal children of the same King.

In Islamic countries, whenever we would be introduced to a new convert from Islam, we would identify him or her as our brother or our sister “from the other fold”. Jesus said, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice” (John 10:26). These people, once enemies of the cross, are now brothers and sisters in Christ. The Apostle Paul bowed his knees before the Father and interceded for “the enemies of the cross” (Phil. 4:18). He later tells us that his intercessory prayer was answered, in that there were saints “of Caesar’s household” (Phil. 4:22).

Now, the crucial question is, “How earnestly do we pray for Muslims?” Since 1917, the Church worldwide has been praying for the fall of communism. I vividly recall those days, as a strong Muslim fundamentalist, when I was reading about the Christians who were beheaded, their hands and feet cut off, and other appalling stories that moved me to tears. It was because they believed that Christ suffered for their sake, that they were willing to lose their lives for Christ’s sake. The people who were persecuted blessed those who scourged them in prison, and therefore, God’s Spirit began moving and touching the hearts of the persecutors. As a result of the church’s continual prayer of Saul of Tarsus, he had that dramatic encounter with the Lord Himself (Acts 9:1-8).

A few days after I converted from Islam, I learned that many Christians in the Middle East, America, England and the Philippines were earnestly praying for my conversion. Only a week before I converted, I wanted to expose a medical student girl to the Islamic press so that they would sentence her to death. It was amazing grace at work as the answer to God’s saints’ prayers that changed my stony heart toward Christ. (They prayed earnestly for the conversion of so many other Muslims).

In his book, *Thinking Mission with Christ*, the late Dr. Samuel Zwemer, who spent twenty-five years as a missionary to Muslims, shares his deep burden for Muslims in the statement: “The challenge of the muezzin [i.e. that sheikh who calls Muslims to pray five times a day], so romantic to the tourist, is a cry of pain to the missionary; it hurts.” When I was a little child, I was challenged by that “muzzein” to run

to the mosque and pray on time. When I was converted, that was the time to pray for them to accept Jesus and have a personal relationship with Him. It is powerful intercessory prayer that changed me from responding to the “muzzein” in his mosque to the voice of the Crucified One.

Torn Between Two Cultures

We have already discussed how Islamic worldwide terrorism should be more of an incentive than a deterrent. Their terrorism is nothing but a cry for their dire need for Jesus, who replaced the stony heart with a living one in which the Spirit of God dwells. Not every Muslim is a terrorist, any more than every American woman is what we see in Hollywood movies. Undoubtedly, sweeping statements are a stumbling block in relating to other cultures. Unfortunately, some American and European writers portray Arabs as liars and full of cheating and hypocrisy. It is the human heart, apart from Christ, that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:11). We want to see these Arab brothers and sisters holding onto their great Arab heritage rather than extract them out of their families and friends over the long run. It saddens me that some Egyptians, and generally Arab people, are ashamed of their Arab culture and start dressing like hippies or Western singers. This is what Egyptian thinkers and philosophers may term as “the western man ‘khwaga’ complex”.

Please do not get me wrong. I am not against “modernization” or “progressiveness”, but I am against violating the identities of people and the obliteration of their culture.

Basic Muslim-Christian Reading List

by Dr. Lyle VanderWerff

Dr Lyle Vander Werff's basic Muslim-Christian relations reading list:

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