

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 1

Volume 1 • Number 1 • October 1977

Evangelical Review of Theology

*A digest of articles and book reviews selected from
publications worldwide for an international
readership, interpreting the Christian Faith for
contemporary living.*

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Christianity on Trial, by COLIN CHAPMAN. (Lion Publishing, 29–33 Lower Kings Road, Berkhamsted, Herts, U.K.)

This is a presentation in three books of the evidence for Christian belief today. The approach is positive and committed. It is also open. The reader is left to make up his own mind to answer the question, “How can we know if Christianity is true?” The books are attractively laid out and profusely illustrated. [p. 71](#)

Discerning God’s Hand in Islam Today

by VIVIENNE STACEY

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CHRISTIAN STRATEGY is to discern the will of God and to do it. This applies to individuals, as well as to Churches and fellowships; it applies to today as well as to tomorrow. Nothing of itself is strategic—neither the towns nor the villages, neither the students nor the newly literate, neither leadership training nor radio evangelism.

Strategy can be considered in abstract. But Christian strategy essentially concerns something happening—now ... somewhere ... to people. Christ was the first strategist of the Way. He was born at a particular place, at a particular time, and he influenced particular people. Herod recognized something of the national strategic significance of Christ’s birth and tried to liquidate him. Pilate, years later, failed to realize the universal strategic significance of Christ’s life and washed his hands and tried to maintain neutrality.

We read in [1 Chronicles 12:32](#) that the children of Issachar were men who ‘had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do’. This implies an effort to discover what God is doing in this world. Clearly, God has a time programme. In the fulness of time, Christ was born ([Galatians 4:4](#)); in due time he died for the ungodly ([Romans 5:6](#)); and in the dispensation of the fulness of times he will gather together in one all things in Christ ([Ephesians 1:10](#)).

There seems never to have been an adequate Christian answer to Islam. According to figures given at the International Congress on Worldwide Evangelization (Lausanne, July 1974) and also according to Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi at the Muslim Foreign Ministers Conference (Jeddah, July 1975) there are over 600 million Muslims in the world today. (Mr. Kaddoumi was the representative [p. 72](#) of ‘Palestine’.) Apart from a movement into the church in Spain in the 13th century and large movements in Indonesia in our time there have been no large responses to the Christian message in the Muslim world. It would

seem logical and surely for the glory of God and the vindication of his Son that many Muslims should find Christ before history reaches its consummation in Christ. Let us therefore try to see what God is permitting in the Muslim world and what he is actively doing through his Church.

MUSLIM BUILD-UPS

Much as we can praise God for what he is doing in Indonesia we have in the end to look closely at the centre of the Islamic world. Arabic, after all, is the language of the Qur'an. The principal nations involved would seem to be: Saudi Arabia, the religious centre of Islam, protector of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina; Egypt, the intellectual centre; Pakistan, the political expression of Islam; and Libya, the revival centre. From these centres, a Muslim build-up is occurring before our eyes.

Politically

An Islamic summit conference was held in Lahore, Pakistan in February 1974. Thirty-seven countries were represented. An article by Mohsin Ali in the *Pakistan Times* of March 1, 1974 describes the major achievements and suggests that 'the Declaration of Lahore inevitably invites comparison with the Declaration of Rabat,' issued September 25, 1969, after the first Islamic summit. At the earlier summit, 24 Muslim states 'and the Muslim community of India', apart from resolving to 'strive for the liberation of Jerusalem', had contented themselves with a tame appeal to the world to ensure Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories. At Lahore, on the other hand, the Conference declared that 'full and effective support should be given to the Arab countries to recover, by all means available, all their occupied lands'. Further, in a separate resolution, the member states of the Islamic Conference Organization have pledged 'to take action in all fields to force immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal'.

Beyond this united sabre rattling, the Lahore summit can point to several other major achievements according to Mohsin Ali. p. 73 (1) A united recognition, for the first time, of the Palestine Liberation Organization headed by Mr. Yasser Arafat as the 'sole legitimate representative of the Palestine nation' and a call for 'the restitution of their full national rights including their right to return to their homeland and to self-determination'. (2) Establishment of an eight-member experts committee (Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and the United Arab Emirates) to devise ways and means for eradicating poverty, disease and ignorance from member states, ending exploitation from abroad, regulating the terms of trade, ensuring full control over their natural resources, etc. (3) Close identification with the African struggle for emancipation. (4) Reconciliation between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

But even beyond these specific items, this second summit was deeply significant in the opportunity it afforded one King, one Sultan, three Amirs, 13 Presidents and six Prime Ministers from 37 states of the world of Islam to come together on a common platform, know one another personally and become acquainted with the problems, stirrings and aspirations of the different parts of the world of Islam—from the sands of the Sahara to the rain-forests of Malaysia.

Another illustration of the political coming together of Muslim nations is the conference of 40 foreign ministers of Muslim lands held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in July 1975. Their unanimous resolution calling for the expulsion of Israel from the United Nations (July 16, 1975) is a forceful reminder of the aspirations of the oil-rich Arab nations and the potential of religious fervour stimulating political and economic policies.

Economically

The radio, TV and press focus enough on the oil question so one need say little here. In the Middle East in 1935 the oil production was 11.49 million long tonnes of oil out of a total world production of 225 million long tonnes. In 1965 the Middle East production was 415.2 million long tonnes out of a total world supply of 1549 million. In 1975 over a third of the world oil was produced in the Muslim lands of the Middle East. This volume of wealth is rapidly transforming the desert lands. Saudi Arabia plans to spend \$142 billion (£67,000 million) on her next five year plan, 1976–1980. The implementation of this calls for much skilled, semi-skilled and **p. 74** unskilled labour, much of which must come from other lands. Saudi Arabia must have been surprised by the results of its first ever census held in September 1974. The figures show a total population of 5.9 million. The U.N. estimates had been over 8 million. Saudi Arabia's crisis of manpower is therefore heightened.

Religiously

Islam is a missionary religion. Recently the Saudi Arabian Government offered the Government of Pakistan \$12 million for building a mosque in Islamabad. I have seen a mosque outside Beirut built by donations from Muslims in Kuwait. Later this year we will see the opening of the new Mosque in Regents Park, London. I have personally met Muslim missionaries in Pakistan: a Saudi Arabian revival team and Jama'at-e-Islam literature distributors. The text of the World Muslim Organization Conference held in Mecca 1974 is becoming widely known with its analysis of Christian missionary strategy and its outlining of Muslim objectives. As Robert L. Nicklaus observed:

The record number of pilgrims at Mecca in 1974 was evidence that the combined stimuli of Middle East oil and politics have revitalized the Moslem religion ... Christians in the third world from the fast growing Church in Africa to the newly converted thousands in Indonesia, will find that Middle East oil wells and battlefields have upped the cost of discipleship. Christians in the financially troubled Western World will find that intensified sacrifice is needed if their efforts in world evangelization are not to be outdone by a well-heeled, resurgent Moslem missionary movement (1975).

Turning now from what God is permitting to what he is positively doing in our time, we must assume that God, the Sovereign Lord of history, is fulfilling his strategy—a dynamic activity of his Spirit in and through the body of Christ for the revealing of the glory of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There are at least three areas of probable divine strategy to which we must pay great attention. **p. 75**

MIGRATIONS AND DISPERSIONS

In the Bible at least three dispersions of God's people are mentioned. For economic reasons some Jews did not return from the Babylonian exile. They maintained a distinctively Jewish way of worship thus unconsciously attracting idolaters towards a purer form of worship. A couple of centuries later Alexander the Great conquered the known world, spreading his Greek civilization. Under economic pressure Jewish migrants went to main cities like Alexandria and settled. They forgot their Hebrew and so the Old Testament was translated into Greek for their benefit, producing the translation known as the Septuagint (LXX). Later many other peoples also benefited from this translation. In Acts we read of a third dispersion—Jewish Christians scattered through persecution. The earlier dispersion groups in Pontus, Bithynia, Galatia and numerous other places formed

the stepping stones from which the Gospel was preached in these districts. The primary factors in the Jewish dispersions were politics, persecution and economics.

What is God's purpose today through the dispersion of peoples? There are 80 Korean churches in Los Angeles. Is Israel a State, or a dispersion, or both? Nearly 15 million Chinese, 5 per cent of the total population of South East Asia, are dispersed in South East Asia—called, by some, the Jews of the East. Gurkha soldiers from Nepal, refugees from Tibet, Indians and Pakistanis in the U.K.—and in the oil-lands of the Persian/Arabian Gulf—are just some of the present-day dispersions.

If God is in charge of dispersions it is not only so that people may be reached with the Gospel, but so that they may reach out with the Gospel. The Gospel goes on circular roads and not like one-way traffic. That great book on evangelistic strategy states with all the authority of inspiration:

He created every race of men of one stock, to inhabit the whole earth's surface. He fixed the epochs of their history and the limits of their territory ([Acts 17:26](#) NEB).

Petro-Migrations

Asians are mostly stay-at-home people. In general, Asian emigration has been a result of compelling poverty, political oppression or religious persecution. But as we've seen above, the new oil wealth [p. 76](#) means that some newly developing countries will now be open to all the influences of the modern world. And since their development plans call for skilled and semi-skilled help from many nations, a percentage of Christians will inevitably be included.

There are probably six million Indians abroad; something less than half a million Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Of the Indians in the Persian/Arabian Gulf a large number are Malayalam speakers from Kerala—India's most educated state where 50 per cent are Christians. It has been encouraging to see new government hospitals in the Sultanate of Oman manned by keen Indian Christian medical personnel, together with a few Pakistanis. Saudi Arabia has extended a welcome to 20,000 Korean workers. One remembers that Korea is 10 per cent Christian.

It is interesting to note from the Church of England Newspaper (August 1, 1975) that the Anglican Church in the Middle East is being reorganized this month into four dioceses: Jerusalem, Iran, Egypt, and Cyprus and the Gulf—together forming the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East. The report states that:

The Gulf States have a large and increasing expatriate population and there are now more Anglicans located there than in the other three dioceses of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East. According to the Bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf, the chaplaincies are barely adequate to cover the need, but in young, ecumenical and forward looking communities the work is exciting and dynamic.

Westerners are, of course, a part of the migrations into the Gulf. Advertisements are constantly appearing in the *Nursing Times*. For example: General Duty Nurses, Saudi Arabia, £4,000 + p.a.; Matron, £450 per month, Rashed Hospital, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Recently a large number of U.K. doctors and teachers have been acquainted with job opportunities in the oil states. This suggests that Christian 'seculars' should be a growing part of any strategy to reach Muslims. 'Seculars' could ...

- (i) Do a two-year stint in such a job and earn most of the money as a contribution to Christian missions thus helping to solve the financial problems caused by inflation.
- (ii) Prepare by study of Islam and methods of church planting [p. 77](#) for such a stint of service in fellowship with a nucleus of others planning to do the same.

In summary, there is perhaps a greater significance than has been realized in the dispersions in oil lands of the Middle East. A prognosis on immigration patterns is important as a guideline for Christian strategy. Cannot more Christians from East and West join for other reasons in the development purposes of the oil lands? And let us all pray for God's dispersions, remembering that they nearly always include Christians.

REVIVAL OF RELIGION

My reading of [Joel 2:28-32](#) is that before the consummation of all things the world situation will get worse, but even so there will be significant outpourings of God's Spirit. Revival could affect the centre lands of Islam in two streams:

(1) Revival in the ancient churches

This would have a profound effect. And there is some evidence of this in the Coptic Church in Egypt. Most of the ancient churches in the Middle East were there before the rise of Islam. As Bishop French pointed out in the last century, they are like dry river beds where the streams of living water can flow again. Wherever people are constantly checking their traditions, their lives and their teaching by the Bible, revival situations occur.

(2) Revival of the churches of the subcontinent

Something occurred at the General Missionary Meeting of the Centenary Keswick Convention that I found interesting. Without previous consultation, both Mr. D. J. Richard, an Indian speaker, and myself, representing Pakistan and the Muslim world, stressed the need for revival—and the conviction that God would bring it. Revival streams from India and Pakistan would affect the dispersion communities in the Gulf areas.

Consider this possible mingling of revival streams—those from the ancient churches and those from the subcontinent—in, say, Libya where there are 35,000 Copts and 22,000 Pakistanis, some hundreds of whom are Christian. Anyone wishing to consult a brief handbook on the ancient churches should read *Rediscovering Christianity Where It Began* (Horner 1974). [p. 78](#)

TOTAL MOBILIZATION OF CHRISTIAN RESOURCES

We are indebted to H.L. Fenton for clearly stating that it is a 'myth' about missions to say that a few go, some give and all pray. He restates the Biblical position that all go, all give and all pray. We are all Christian disciples of all nations called to make disciples of all nations ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)). Let us state this categorically—all disciples are to make disciples. There is no special aura around missions—they are one instrument. Christianity is a 'going religion'. Disciples make disciples—this is total mobilization—no leaving it to the clergy; no leaving it to the missionary. This also means no closed lands. No land is closed to missionary work if there is a disciple of Christ there.

The theme is world evangelism by dispersion journey. Jesus' ministry is fulfilled in journeying—the pilgrim Son of God proclaiming the Gospel to the Jews, but with his face set to Jerusalem and the cross. Acts continues that journeying theme of the Gospel. The risen Jesus, now speaking and acting through the Holy Spirit in the life of this pilgrim people, continues to journey. The Gospel itself receives a new name that indicates its travelling nature: 'The Way'. This is Luke's unique designation for early Christianity: journey language to describe a journey Gospel.

We may agree that there be a total mobilization of Christian resources, but where does strategy come in? We are always crossing new frontiers and it would be presumptuous of

me to outline a strategy for the Muslim world today. However, everything is not new. We must at least plead for:

- (i) A greater co-ordination between Christian radio and TV programmes and Christian publishing houses. Do they complement and support each other?
- (ii) A new look at literature to reach the masses. We must not allow our natural conservatism to prejudice our consideration of new visions and methods.
- (iii) Wider circulation of the Scriptures in language meaningful to the Muslim. We must examine the implications for the Muslim world of the 14 per cent cut in the British and Foreign Bible Society funds.
- (iv) A preparation for revival by the spreading of materials and the preparation of further materials. One test of real prayer for revivals is whether in faith we are actively preparing [p. 79](#) for it and for the consolidation of the church. One lesson from the 1904 revival in the Punjab is that no one was really prepared for it and so some of its benefits were lost.
- (v) An examination of new ways to make disciples from the Muslim communities: family to family evangelism; Christian communes and communities which converted Muslims can join and find true brotherhood and fellowship in what is an extended Christian family situation.

TRAINING

In concluding, I venture to mention what I consider the most strategic area of all—that of *leadership training*. Various sorts of training are given and we rejoice in this but I personally conclude after 21 years in the Muslim world, spent mainly in Pakistan but with an opportunity for travels in 20 Muslim countries, that here is the area of greatest weakness. I suggest:

(1) More training in depth, and more specific training, for *missionaries* going to Muslim areas. A deep knowledge of the Scriptures is essential as Islam is a theologically orientated faith. A knowledge of Islam is needed; but since evangelism is caught rather than taught, far more practical in-service training is needed at home and abroad.

(2) More training for '*seculars*' going to Muslim countries. Why do '*seculars*' not train together and go together? I envisage teams of seculars so trained—some of whom can train others when they arrive in their place of work. No one attempts to climb Everest alone but sometimes a committed servant of Christ goes quite alone to one of the most difficult parts of the Muslim world, and with no real training in mountaineering. No wonder so many are discouraged or ineffective or both.

Could there not be at least one training centre in U.K., one in U.S.A., one in Africa (Nigeria?), one in the Middle East and one in the Far East where disciples of Christ—'*seculars*' and missionaries—go for a short period of training which will involve some actual evangelism? I do not envisage setting up new institutions but using existing ones.

I am working more and more on the principles that Rev. Fouad Accad so ably describes in his address at the Lausanne Congress. He spoke on the theme 'God at Work in Circumstances: personal [p. 80](#) meetings ([Acts 8:26–40](#))' (Douglas 1975:51). One should expect to meet key persons in key places at key times. How else can a comparatively few disciples reach the millions? I have reached the place in my own ministry when I not only expect God to lead me to key people, but when I am trying to teach the principles of evangelism in action I expect God to demonstrate this to my companion also. The amazing thing is that the more one does this with God the more he answers.

The Muslim world therefore needs Christian disciples with a passion for Christ and for people—disciples, whether missionary or secular, who are available to the Holy Spirit,

who are well trained and yet always in training, and who endeavour to train others ([II Timothy 2:2](#)). To my knowledge, ‘seculars’, for all their brains, have not got together in a planned strategy. The mobilization has not been total because there have not been enough in-service trainers of others.

‘The unsearchable riches of Christ’ are greater than the oil wealth. Let us keep on reconsidering the question of training so that we do not fail in the hour of greatest opportunity. For some of us, our God is too small. He is, after all, the God of the impossible. We face the impossible and we face it now. All the odds are against us except that God is God. Winning the Muslim world for Christ is no more impossible than the Incarnation ([Luke 1:36-37](#)).

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Abstract Article

Christian Witness Among Muslims

Africa Christian Press

This book has been written to help the ordinary Christian to know how to behave towards his Muslim neighbours and how to witness to Jesus Christ among them. For many Christians who need help in the face of Islam and in approaching its followers, this book offers an approach that has already proved its value in various parts of Africa.

It is different from other books on the subject: it is in fact called a handbook—a description which is merited by its personal and practical treatment of the subject. It assumes that Christians should seek to understand, fairly and objectively, what Muslims believe and practise. It urges that Christians should have the greatest possible respect and sympathy, and much more love, towards Muslims as persons and seekers after God; but it stresses that all men, no matter how devout and good, need the Gospel of Jesus Christ. [p. 83](#)