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The Stories of Farhana and Mr and Mrs Yaqoob

by a CMS Missionary

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FARHANA

Farhana came from a comfortably off family; she is now a woman in her late 50s. She was sent to a convent school as a little girl and was taught from the Bible. When she was married and had daughters of her own she sent them to a convent school too. Her daughters were not taught from the Bible because by this time the government had declared that no Muslim child should be taught the Bible even in Christian schools, but she used to go along and meet the nuns. One particular sister, Sister Ruth, would spend a long time talking to her and answering her questions. Sister Ruth sent her along to a missionary couple who lived near Farhana's house and Farhana used to attend the Bible studies that they would run.

Vision of Jesus

One night she had a vision of Jesus. She wasn't able to describe it but she said there was light, beautiful light, and it meant that she knew it was Jesus telling her that what she was hearing was the truth. She was baptized after receiving further teaching.

Farhana decided to tell her husband what she had done. She knew it would shock him because it is a very disgraceful thing for a Muslim to change from Islam to another faith. People regard it as a deep betrayal and a sin that some see as worthy of death. Farhana was a very strongminded woman and her husband was a very kind and gentle man, but at the same time she was concerned that he could possibly divorce her. She told him and he said to her that he was very upset, very angry and thought it was a very bad thing that she had done but that he knew that he couldn't change what was in her mind and in her heart and if she had to be a Christian, well, 'so be it'. But she was not to bring shame and disrepute to the family name. He said to her that she was not allowed to go out to meetings and to church and that she had to continue to be a good wife to him. She always had to be at home when he was at home and this effectively cut her off from having fellowship with other Christians. p. 187 It meant that she had to rely on people going to visit her for fellowship.

Son angry

One of her sons was so angry with her for her decision that he deliberately started taking drugs in order to scare her, to shock her into giving up her faith. He had already tried burning her Bible but she bought another one. He took an overdose of drugs one day and ended up in hospital and was very sick but even that didn't shake her resolution to be a Christian. Farhana was baptized in the sea about ten years ago and, in spite of difficulties, she has carried on with her Christian faith. Her family at large have not rejected her—in fact they regard her as very impulsive and perhaps immature and think that perhaps one day she will just drift away from the Christian faith.

MR AND MRS YAQOOB

Mr Yaqoob left the country of his birth and went to live in another because of problems and tensions in his family. He set up a small watchmaking business and during the day he was kept busy but in the evenings he would feel desperately lonely because he had no friends or relatives in that country and he would just sit alone in his one-roomed rented place. During those lonely evenings, he wished for a wife and a son.

One evening the thought came to him that he should pray in the name of Jesus for a wife and a son. Years before, Mr Yaqoob had had a Christian friend who tried to persuade him to read the Bible. Mr Yaqoob had always refused. However, Muslims do believe that Jesus was a great prophet who can still work miracles today. He knew that he was asking for a miracle because in this country a man cannot choose a wife himself; the marriage arrangements are always made by the two families concerned. Mr Yaqoob had no one who could do this for him.

Prayer in Jesus' Name

So, in desperation he prayed in the name of Jesus for a wife and a son. God answered that prayer and not long afterwards he met some people, a marriage was arranged and, in a year's time he had a son, Ibrahim. Mr Yaqoob was so grateful to Jesus for answering this prayer of his that he thought he had better find out more about Jesus. Christians used to go to his shop sometimes and sit and talk with him and he gradually became free enough to ask some questions about their faith. Six years later he decided to get a Bible and read it for himself. He did this in secret without telling anyone, not even his wife whom he loved greatly. Gradually he came to the conclusion that what the gospels were saying was true and he wanted to become a Christian.

One evening he went home to his wife with his Bible and sat down and said that he wanted to talk to her seriously. He said that he wanted them both to become baptized the next day in case they died as Muslims. He was convinced that the Christian faith was true and he did not want to die and be buried without having been baptized. His wife hadn't heard any of this before. p. 188 She hadn't known how her husband was thinking and feeling, she had not known that he had prayed in the name of Jesus for a wife and child. She listened to what her husband was saying and later explained it this way: 'It was a miracle: the Holy Spirit came and taught me things I could never have understood in years of thinking or hearing about them.' She wanted to be a Christian too. They both knew that their friends and relatives would very likely cut all communication with them and that they would be despised but they went to a Christian minister and were baptized, not the same day but after some basic teaching. They regularly attended their church's praise and fellowship services and sometimes one or other would have a prophecy to share with the others.

Assurance in death

In August 1989 Mr Yaqoob became very ill; he lost weight, had a terrible cough and became thinner and weaker. At the end of the following January it was found he had lung cancer and little time left to live. Shortly before he died he had a dream or a picture from God of Jesus and three angels coming to him and speaking to him and explaining that he would be with them and that he was not to be afraid. He was not to be concerned that he had been trusting in something untrue but be assured that what he believed was true. He was so delighted with this assurance from God that he tried to contact another friend who was a former Muslim to tell him to carry on believing and trusting and spreading the seed

of the Word of God. He wasn't actually able to meet that friend before he died but his wife was able to pass on the message to him.

Mrs Yaqoob's Family

Mr Yaqoob had no other family members in that country so there was no trouble from his family when he became a Christian but his wife's family were angry with them for making this decision. Mrs Yaqoob could meet with her sister only when her brother-in-law was out of the house. (He is a Muslim *maulvi*, a *mullah*.) Sometimes her mother would come and stay with them and her mother even felt free enough to listen to some of the gospel stories. When Mr Yaqoob died there was no support from the family as there usually is at the time of death. None of Mrs Yaqoob's family and none of their Muslim friends came to console them. She has received no financial support from the family as would usually be the case for a widow with a 17 year old son who has not yet finished his apprenticeship. In spite of the separation from family and all the ensuing social disadvantages, and in spite of financial insecurity, Mrs Yaqoob and her son, Ibrahim, carry on believing and trusting in God. She is full of praise to God that her husband died at home without pain and having had that assurance from the Lord Jesus, that he was shortly to be with him and that it was all true. **p. 189**

Book Reviews

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL DOCTRINE

by Wayne Grudem

(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994 Hb 1264 pp. ISBN 0 310 28670 0)

(Reviewed by David Parker)

Wayne Grudem, from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has contributed a large (1,150 pages of text) and comprehensive volume to the current wave of evangelical systematic theologies. It is presented as a manual of theology, written for students and lay readers, and is characterized by exhaustive attention to detail, extensive listing of biblical texts (not just the references) and arguments in support of the doctrines discussed; there are also numerous footnotes and explanatory sections documenting the author's opinions.

Grudem follows the pattern of Reformed theology quite closely for his main outline, but does not hesitate to go his own way where he feels the necessity. For example, he adopts believer's baptism and a 'modified congregational form of government'. He also provides explanations that are intended to resolve traditional difficulties, like election and freewill, or certain questions relating to the second coming and the charismatic movement. He often refers to or even incorporates summarized sections of his own previous publications, so his positions on such issues as NT prophecy and feminism which have become quite well known are re-presented here. The dedication of the book to his parents, a Baptist pastor, Westminster Seminary professors and John Wimber suggest some of the diverse directions his thinking takes.