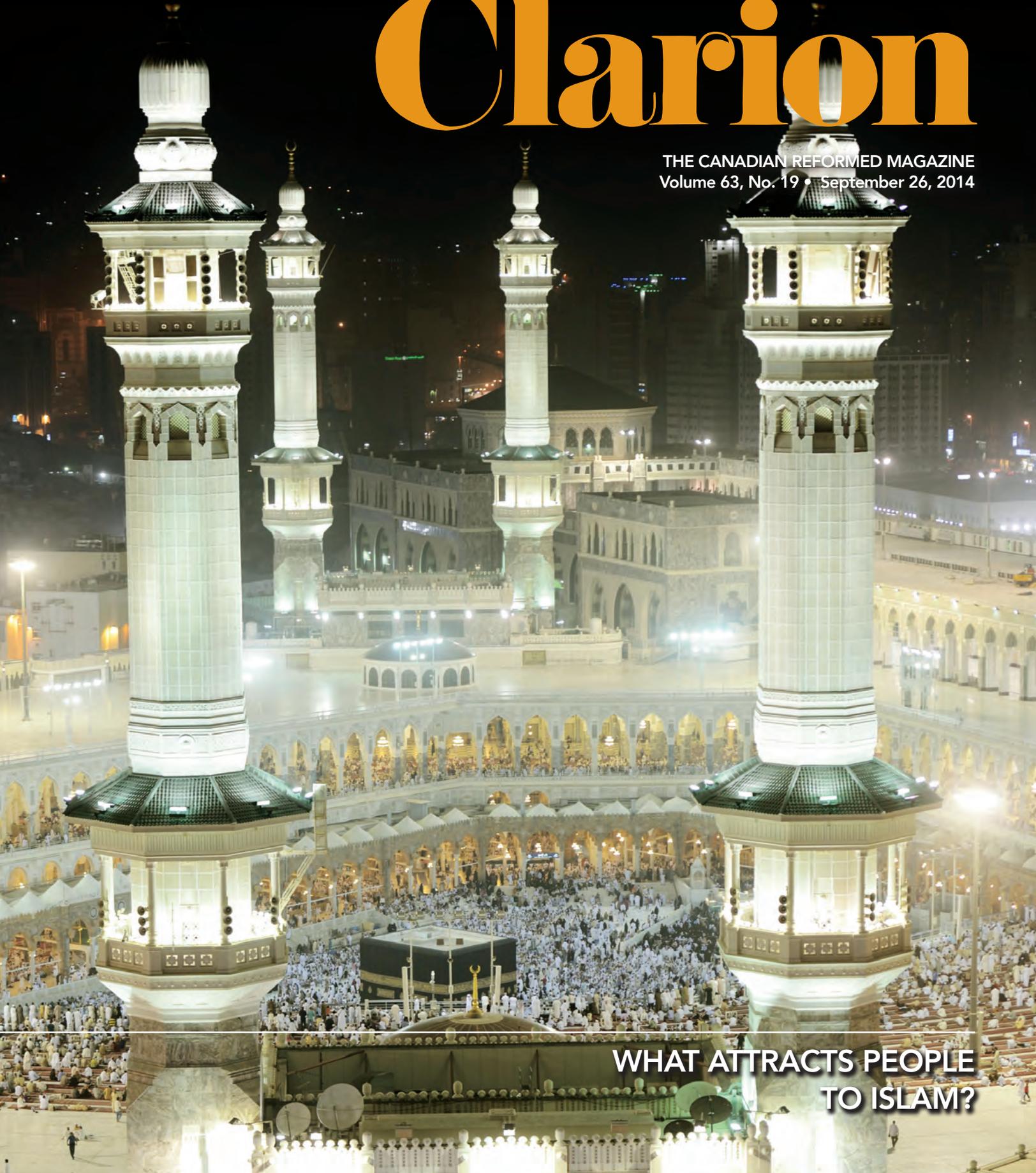


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WHAT ATTRACTS PEOPLE
TO ISLAM?

A Rising Tide of Persecution

There is in Islam an ongoing aim and desire to see the entire world under its rule

We are living in a changing world. Technology keeps on moving forward showering us with an ever increasing number of smartphones, televisions, and other marvels. Sport as in the case of the World Cup of Soccer continues to enthrall millions, if not billions, of people. New economic data (stock quotations, trade figures, mergers) flood into our lives every day. Disasters, wars, plagues, conflicts rock our world constantly. Nothing ever stays the same for long.

The same applies to the Christian church. New theologies are being introduced daily, whether they be orthodox or heterodox. Liturgical experimentation remains on the agenda of many. Evangelism practices are constantly being fine-tuned. Counseling theories and approaches remain a growth industry. Truly, things are a-changing.

Something else is changing too. Perhaps you have noticed it as well. It is the fact that the world is becoming a much more hostile place for the children of God. The persecution of the Christian church is on the rise. Almost every day you can find a news report about Christian churches being demolished, about believers fleeing, being imprisoned, even murdered. It is happening in many different places. In other words, it is not just a matter of an isolated case here or there. No, there is a tide sweeping over this world that is threatening to engulf God's children.

Islamic radicalism

Part of this tide is coming from the forces of radical Islam. Ever since the rise of Islam in the sixth century its relationship with Christianity has been a turbulent one. Coming like a massive dust storm out of the desert of Arabia, it swept away innumerable Christian churches in the Middle East, Asia Minor, and north Africa. For a time it

even tried to batter down the doors of Europe. Needless to say, this did not endear it to those in Christian circles. The Crusades too did little to foster a positive relationship.

In spite of the fact that Islam honours Abraham as a patriarch and esteems our Lord Jesus Christ as a prophet, it has not proven to be either friendly or tolerant to Christianity. Of course, one could say the same about Christianity. The countries of so-called "Christian Europe" did not exactly conduct themselves with honour and valour during the time of the Crusades. There is enough blame to dish out to both sides.

Nevertheless, there is no denying the fact that some who confess the Islamic faith have been radicalized and become much more destructive in the twenty-first century. Whether we are dealing with the events of 911, the attacks orchestrated by Osama bin Laden and launched by al-Qaeda, the kidnappings of Boko Haram, or the outrages of ISIS, the fact of the matter is that Christians are increasingly finding themselves in the crosshairs of Islamic violence.

The nature of Islam

Why is this so? What explains this virulent form of Islam that we are seeing today? William B. Evans in his blog entry called "Obstreperous Islam" (see: "The Ecclesial Calvinist") cites a number of factors. In the first place he says that "Islam is a religio-cultural-political package" meaning that it makes no distinction between the sacred and the secular. All must submit to Allah. Religious pluralism is an unacceptable concept. In every country where the adherents of Islam are in the majority, there is no room for those of other faiths to be accepted as equals.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

"Things are a-changing" writes Barnabas in this issue's editorial. For the church, this means the world is becoming increasingly hostile towards Christians. We may look at Islamic radicalism, Communist oppression, as well as secular humanism. In Clippings on Politics and Religion, Dr. Cornelis Van Dam writes that Christians face the most persecution.

We are also pleased to feature an article (originally published in *Australian Presbyterian* and *Faith in Focus*) interviewing Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo. Born a Muslim, he became a Christian as a student and is now a professor, pastor, author, and director of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity.

Issue 19 continues Prof. Albert Oosterhoff's series on end-of-life decisions. Readers will also find an introduction to Reformed Faith and Life, the Treasures New and Old meditation, and a letter to the editor.

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Another factor that plays a role has to do with Islamic militarism. There is in Islam an ongoing aim and desire to see the entire world under its rule. Many of its followers regard themselves as emulating Mohammed who is seen as the epitome of the “warrior prophet.” Religious imperialism may be dead in the West but it is very much alive in the East. The fact that those engaged in such violence will be rewarded amply in the hereafter with the gift of many virgins (at least for the men) does not help the matter either.

Christians in China are entering into a time of intense trial and testing

A third aspect that needs attention is the concept of “jihad” or holy war. Of course, one could argue that this concept in a different form can also be found on the pages of the Old Testament; however, there is no doubt that such a development was limited and finds no legs in the time of the New Testament or in the teachings of our Lord. The warfare that we as Christians wage today is spiritual. Nevertheless, in certain Islamic circles, as among the followers of ISIS in particular, the concept of waging a holy war continues to exist and to be acted out with horrific consequence.

A fourth factor has to do with the ambivalent message of the Qur’an itself. The writings in the Qur’an relate to two different periods in the life of the prophet Mohammed. In the early period he comes across as persuasive and kind; whereas, in the later he is much more militant and hostile. So which period is dominant? Most Islamic scholars are of the view that the later writings abrogate or set aside the earlier ones. Where does that leave us? It leaves us with an Islam of militancy and force.

Communist oppression

Still, Christianity today finds itself under assault not just from Islamic radicalism but also from Communist oppression. In this connection one can think of what is happening in China today under its relatively new leader, President Xi Jinping. For some time it appeared as if the Chinese authorities were relaxing their opposition to Christianity. Not only did they grant official status to

those churches that applied for government recognition, they also appeared, at least in certain places, to tolerate the existence of so-called “family churches” or “underground churches” or “house churches.”

Yet this too appears to be changing. In the last year the government has waged a fierce campaign against churches in the city of Wenzhou. In that city, sometimes called “the Jerusalem of China,” it has taken aim at both the neon crosses that rise above many churches and at any number of church buildings as well. No one knows exactly how many crosses have been taken down or how many buildings have been demolished, but the figures are substantial and disturbing. Go to an Internet site run by Bob Fu called *ChinaAid* and you will soon see that this is no minor development.

A curious aspect of this anti-cross and anti-church building crusade is the fact that not just so-called illegal churches or “house churches” have been targeted but also officially government recognized churches have run afoul of the authorities.

In addition to churches being under attack, there are also indications that more and more Christian leaders are being singled out for harassment, arrest, fines, and imprisonment. A further extension of this is that special attention is now being paid to foreigners who are promoting Christianity in China. In short, Christians in China are entering into a time of intense trial and testing.

What’s behind it?

Needless to say these recent developments in China have given rise to endless speculation as to the reasons for this oppression. There is the view out there that President Xi, despite his outwardly gentle and kind looking demeanor, is really a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Some commentators suggest that he is out to promote and produce more home grown religion. Perhaps he wants to see a revival of Confucianism or the rise of a particular Chinese type of Christianity (whatever that may look like).

Others are of the view that this is all about control. In other words, the leaders of the Communist Party feel threatened by the rapid spread of the Christian faith and are making a concerted effort to contain it. They seem to believe that increased pressure and persecution will serve as an effective antidote to a rising Christianity. Alas, they have not discovered the real truth which is that righteousness exalts a nation and that Christians are

among its best citizens. Who else respects and prays for those in authority over them, obey the laws of the land, pay their taxes, and live quiet and peaceful lives?

Secular humanism

But if there is persecution coming today from Islamic radicalism and Communist oppression, it is good to remember that there is also another threatening force, called, for want of a better term, “secular humanism.” Whereas the former two are creating a lot of misery in the Middle East, Africa (as well as in Indonesia), and Asia, the latter is doing its dirty work in the North America and Europe.

A time is fast approaching when our freedoms will be no more and our values will be under widespread assault

At the moment it is not so far advanced that it is resulting in arrest, imprisonment, and death, but the stage is being set. Write a letter to a local newspaper in which you disagree with abortion, euthanasia, the gay parade, or same sex marriage and you can expect an avalanche of invective and hate. The day when Christian values can be openly presented is rapidly disappearing. Those of us who are Christians in Europe and North America, who are serious about our faith and about adhering to biblical norms, should start preparing ourselves. A time is fast approaching when our freedoms will be no more and our values will be under widespread assault.

Perceiving

Should all of this alarm us? Should it catch us by surprise? Not if we know our Bibles and the teachings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Together they teach us that the proper Christian stance in times like these consists of three things. First, we need to be perceiving. Armed with the sword of the Spirit, we are told about the signs of the times and we are to be looking for them constantly. Our Lord tells us to “watch out” (Matt 24:4) and to “keep watch” (Matt 24:42). The kind of things that are happening to believers around the world today should neither surprise us nor shock us.

Petitioning

Secondly, living as we do between the advents, we are encouraged to petition the throne of God constantly. The Apostle Paul urges believers then and now to “pray continually” (2 Thess 5:17) for strength and guidance. He also urges us to pray for deliverance (2 Thess 3: 2). Quite simply we cannot fight this spiritual battle in our own strength. We need divine help. We need it every day and in every situation, especially when “wicked and evil men” (2 Thess 3:2) assault us, rob us of our freedom and seek our life.

Persevering

Finally, the Scriptures of God counsel us to persevere. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews urges us to run the race of the Christian life “with perseverance” (Heb 12: 3). Paul tells us to “stand firm and hold on to the teachings we passed on to you” (2 Thess 2:15).

One of the sad facts today is that some are abandoning the faith. Friends and relatives come back from the old country with a list of people who no longer serve the Lord. School friends get together later on in life and reflect on who is and who is no longer committed to Christ. Desertion is a grim and bitter reality. The imitators and followers of Demas (2 Tim 4:10) are still with us. So be warned and remember that whether it be in the face of worldly temptation or painful persecution, the Lord calls on us to stay the course.

*Fellow pilgrims,
keep on perceiving, petitioning,
and persevering!*

Why, he even promises all sorts of incentives to those who overcome: the right to the tree of life, escape from the second death, hidden manna and a new name stone, authority over the nations, a white dress and a name in the book of life, a crown, and a seat beside Jesus on his throne (Rev 2, 3). You see, the blessings are innumerable. So if you have an ear, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

Fellow pilgrims, keep on perceiving, petitioning, and persevering!





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Denying Himself for a Pearl

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”

(Matthew 13:45-46)

The people were looking for Jesus to do spectacular things. The Pharisees were looking for a sign that would prove Jesus' authority. Jesus responded by noting that the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. The extraordinary is in the ordinary. That is why Christ's followers will deny themselves for what is ordinary. It is how they come to possess treasure.

Rabbi Jesus told another parable. It is closely connected to the previous one, for he begins with the word “again.” The parable also looks very similar to the foregoing one – so similar that many wonder what the difference is. Most conclude that the difference must be in the finding and the searching. “Treasure in the field” is about a person who happens upon Christ and Christianity, while “the pearl” is about a person searching for the truth.

However, when we read carefully (using a more formally equivalent translation like the NKJV) there are two notable differences between the parables. First, in the second parable the kingdom of heaven is not “like a pearl” but like a “merchant.” In the first parable the kingdom of heaven is “that which is found,” while in the second the kingdom of heaven is “that one doing the finding.” Second, the verbs in the first parable are in the present tense while those in the second parable are in the past. The first parable is about something that happens,

the second parable is about something that has happened.

So what did Rabbi Jesus say once he had explained why people will deny themselves for “a field?” He explains why the treasure in the field had value. He indicates why the kingdom of God in Jesus the Christ is worth all your devotion. He makes clear why the kingdom of heaven in the church is worth it.

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant. Rabbi Jesus personifies the kingdom of heaven. It makes most sense to understand him to be referring especially to the king of the kingdom of heaven. That would be the Triune God, who looks to rule through the person of the Christ, both God and man.

A pearl merchant would seek a pearl of high value for it would prove his ability to trade in pearls. That is why he would sacrifice everything to own a valuable pearl: it would eventually bring him glory. So the point of the parable is again the sacrifice made. God was looking for a people to call his own, a special people. He found that people. Their value lay in the fact that he loved them. To own them, God gave all he had: He gave his Son. The Son of God gave all he had: He emptied himself and became a human being. To purchase the citizens for God's Kingdom the Christ would pay with his life.

The parable is prophetic. It is told in the past tense. The payment had

begun, for Christ had emptied himself of divine glory. The payment was not yet complete, for death at the hands of Israel (the pearl!) was still forthcoming. For Christ, because this was the will of the Father, this future event had the certainty of the past.

Deny yourself for a field, for the Christ denied himself for a pearl. If you ever feel unsure about your faith, about the wisdom of your devotion to Christ and his church, the benefit of self-denial for the sake of God's Kingdom, then reflect on what it cost God. He made a beautiful and functional world. We all but destroyed it. He could have left us where we plunged ourselves. However, he did not. In his grace he came looking: “Adam, where are you?” Why did God bother? Because man was of great value: the image of God! God promises a way out. Did we realize back then what price God would pay?

Think of Israel, that “stiff-necked people.” Read the prophet Hosea where God tells of what great lengths he goes to, to own this pearl, valuable because God loves her. Think of John 3:16, or 1 John 4:9-10. God's love for the world is so great he sent his only Son, true God, to take on human flesh and die the most ignoble of deaths.

This is no fable. Having faith in God, denying yourself for a field, it is not foolish. For the church contains the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of heaven has given all to own the church.



Clash of Cultures:

Christians must be clear-sighted about Islam, for better or worse

Patrick Sookhdeo talks to Peter Hastie

This article was originally published in Australian Presbyterian and then appeared in Faith in Focus. Reprinted with permission.

Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo was born in Guyana, South America, into a Muslim family and became a Christian while a student in London. He studied theology at London Bible College and holds a PhD from the London University's School of Oriental and African Studies. He has also been awarded doctorates from Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon, and Nashotah House Episcopal Seminary, Wisconsin.

Dr. Sookhdeo has been a visiting lecturer at Oak Hill Theological College, London; Ridley Hall, Cambridge; and Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. He has served as a visiting professor at Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, and Washington. He is also adjunct professor at the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies and senior visiting fellow at the UK Defence Academy. He has worked in London as a pastor and church planter for twenty-three years. In 2001 he received the Coventry Cathedral International Prize for Peace and Reconciliation. He is the author/editor of ten books. He is the international director of Barnabas Aid and Barnabas Fund, and director of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity. He is married to Rosemary and has three adult daughters.

Patrick, Islam is one of the most powerful religions in the world today. How does Islam shape the belief of its followers?

The most important thing to grasp about Muslims is that they see themselves in terms of their religion. They are committed to it. Islam defines their identity. They may not believe all the teachings of Islam but they still define themselves as traditional or cultural Muslims. The vital thing is that issues of faith and religion are of supreme importance to them. Of course, this is not the way that people tend to see themselves in the West. We are more ambivalent towards religion and are likely to find our identity in ways that are decidedly secular.

Are Muslims like Jews in this sense?

Yes, they are similar in the way that each of their religions tends to define them. If you are born a Muslim or Jew, then that is what you are. You can be Jewish or Muslim without believing everything that the religion teaches. I remember someone once saying to me, "Islam is in your blood. It's always there." What is happening today is that as more people become Muslim and Islamic values and identity become more widespread, Muslims feel more emboldened. The interesting thing is that as the number of Muslims grows, instead of being repelled by some of its more unattractive features, people are actually drawn to it because of its sense of duty, discipline and order.



So what attracts people to Islam?

Islam projects strength and vitality in a way that secularism and Christianity in the West do not. For example, Muslims believe in a transcendent God. In the West the tendency has been for God to become so immanent that He is hardly different from us. People are searching for authority in a directionless world and Islam offers a god and a plan that appears to answer many of their religious longings.

Again, western society is collapsing because the notion of duty has been lost. Our age has abandoned ideas of obligation and responsibility. Islam, on the other hand, focuses on order, duty and morality. Against the West, which is preoccupied with sexual freedom, Islam presents itself as a defender of ethics, family and community. I should add, however, that the way that Islam presents itself and the way it actually operates are worlds apart. Be that as it may, Islam presents itself as an advocate of strong theism and traditional morality, and that is how it's perceived.

Many in the West see Islam not simply as a proselytising faith but as a political and military force as well. Is there something about the nature of Islam that gives rise to this threat?

There is an aspect of Islam, arising out of Muhammad's own struggles with his enemies, that gives rise to this perception. Muhammad's life as a religious leader

and prophet can be divided essentially into two stages. If we take the traditional Muslim chronology, which is questionable, Muhammad's activities in Mecca up to AD 621 are essentially peaceful and spiritual. During this period he conducts no wars although he does experience persecution as a result of his new-found beliefs. Then in June 622 he flees from Mecca to Medina in what is described as the *hijira* (or migration). This is the turning-point in his career and marks the beginning of the Muslim era and calendar.

Traditionally the *hijira* takes place as a result of persecution. Muslims claim that Muhammad was forced to leave an enemy land for a secure place in which he could practice his religion. Nevertheless, the debate continues as to why he really left Mecca. Some scholars believe that Muhammad was actually preparing to move to Medina so that he could establish a city-state there and install himself as its leader. They claim he had political and military ambitions as well as religious ones. It may well be that both positions contain elements of truth. Certainly Muhammad did experience considerable hostility in Mecca. However, it is likely that he was making plans for the spread of Islam and the invitation from Medina coincided with his plans for the next stage of Islam's development.

Do you think it's remarkable that in the short space of eight years he was able to move into Medina and assume its leadership?

Yes, Muhammad was an extraordinarily gifted leader. From the moment he arrived in Medina his preaching achieved almost total success. He soon gained political and religious control of the city. He became its statesman, legislator and judge. It was the first independent Muslim city, and Muhammad attracted many followers from the surrounding regions. Now at that stage, as any leader would do, he had to consider how he was going to defend his faith and how he would take it forward.

At this point, we see certain developments emerging. Muhammad claims that he received sanctions to engage in offensive wars to defend his religious city-state and he announces that the Jewish tribes are to be seen as a threat.

In AD 630 he was able to return to Mecca with an army of 10,000 warriors. He conquered the city and established the Meccan shrine, the *ka'ba*, as Islam's most sacred place. So Islam developed in a cauldron of conflict and Muhammad from the outset began to fight to defend and propagate his faith. In such a context, warfare and conquest became inevitable. Although the notion of *jihad*

includes the idea of striving against evil and doing good, the concept expanded to include the ideas of defensive and offensive wars. I think at that point you can see the shift in Muhammad's theology. He now has this wider view of the world and Islam's place in it. He also sees that an Islamic worldview leads inevitably to Islamic world domination. He looks into the future and sees that salvation for the nations lies in submission to Allah. It thus becomes his mission to achieve this through conquest.

Some would argue that Islam is more of an Arab liberation or revolutionary force. Muhammad certainly stamped his identity on the Arab people and gave them a religious aspiration to expand their sphere of influence beyond their region.

Was his view driven largely by his vision of the future or by political necessity?

I think that anyone who looks at the texts objectively will see that Muhammad is driven to a large degree by political necessity. We mustn't forget that he was constantly under attack. He felt that he had to both defend himself and attack his enemies. Once he had conquered Arabia, he believed he had a mission to bring the whole world into submission to Allah. Therefore he had to expand.

However, we mustn't forget that Muhammad believed that he was God's final prophet and that Islam was the true expression of God's will. If this was so, then it raised problems as to how Muslims were to deal with those who contested those claims. What are Muslims supposed to do with infidels? Restrict them or enslave them? And how should they deal with their enemies, the Jews? The very nature of Islam's absolutist claims raised considerable problems for the way that Muslims relate to others.

The Islamic view of the future is something that develops more in the Hadith literature after the time of Muhammad than in the Qur'an itself.

Muslims are often portrayed in the western media as a religious group that feels superior to other faiths. Is this a fair portrayal or just media bias?

I think we need to understand that there is, in the very nature of Islam itself and its followers, an inherent sense of superiority. It is because God has sent the final messenger, Muhammad, to them. They alone possess the truth; they are supreme.

This comes to the fore in their view of creation. It is very different to the Christian view. As Christians we believe that all men are created in the *imago Dei*, in the divine image. Every human being is therefore invested with pro-

found significance irrespective of our sex or station in life. In Islam that isn't the case. In fact, it's blasphemy. Islam believes that while God made man from the ground and breathed life into him, man does not necessarily possess the divine image. This creates a problem in establishing human value. How do you assess the value of a man to a woman, or a Muslim to a Jew, or a Christian, or an unbeliever? Muslims believe that the worth of a follower of Muhammad is twice that of a Christian. So Islam, by its doctrine of creation, creates a real distinction in value among human beings. While Christian men and women are worth half the value of their Muslim counterparts, infidels or pagans are worth even less. Under Islamic law, humanity and the value of human life is classified in very legal ways.

Is Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilisations" thesis about Islam and the west a credible explanation?

I think Huntington would have been more helpful in his analysis if, instead of using the term civilisation (which is a technical word with different nuances), he had spoken of a "clash of values." I would certainly agree with him that there is a clash of values, both in an internal and external sense.

Within Islam itself there is a clash taking place which some have expressed rather simplistically as a clash between the "mosque and the McDonalds." Essentially, it's a clash of Islamic tradition versus modernity. This is an internal battle of values within Islam between those who



want to hold on to their traditional values and those who believe that Islam must adapt itself to the modern world. The former believe that nothing within the Qur'an and the Hadith can change. The idea is that Muhammad represents the perfect model of life and this must be implemented in its entirety.

However, there are clashes taking place at other levels too. For example, there are various clashes that are taking place throughout Islam as a whole such as the Sunni-Shiite conflict, ethnic conflicts, and conflicts amongst the Kurds, Sunni and Shia. All these clashes are having significant effects on Islam.

“Islam presents itself as an advocate of strong theism and traditional morality, and that is how it's perceived.”

Finally, you have another major conflict which is a conflict between Islam and the West. This is focused on values. The Muslim sees Western culture as being built primarily upon the sovereignty of the individual. They regard Western law as nothing more than an expression of the will of the people as opposed to the will of God. They view the West as culture based on human autonomy – essentially to do whatever you like. Everything about the West is inimical to Islam, since Islam calls for complete submission to Allah.

Although Muslims would claim that Islam allows substantial freedom, it is always a freedom within very strict limits. It is impossible to venture beyond those limits. In Islam the community is always greater than the individual and this places very severe restrictions on freedom of expression. For example, you haven't got freedom to discuss the authority of Muhammad and whether or not he is a prophet. In many Islamic societies to do so is a criminal offence. You haven't got the freedom to say, “Let us take the Qur'an and examine it using some of the critical methods that are applied to the text of the Bible.”

This creates enormous tensions for Muslims. On the one hand, they envy the West and its success. They want what the West has to offer but they don't want its values. What they don't see is that the foundation of the West's progress lies in its commitment to analysis, criticism and the right to choose. I think the tension between wanting what the West has to offer in terms of its technology and standards of living and rejecting its fundamental ideals represents a major clash for Muslims today. It's a huge struggle for them.

From AD622 Islam has been engaged in territorial claims against other societies.

Are there any lasting lessons on how the West should meet and face those challenges?

Islam teaches that all lands belong to Allah, who has given them to the Muslims. The nations they don't possess are theirs in theory and will gradually become theirs in practice. The conquest and subjection of territory has been a central teaching of the Qur'an and an integral part of Islam.

The earliest Muslim leaders, beginning with Muhammad, had a policy of expansion. Muhammad captured Mecca and then subjugated the whole Arabian peninsula. A few years after his death, Muslims captured Damascus and then all Syria. This set a pattern for what was to come. Within the next few centuries Islam spread throughout many countries in Africa and Europe, then into the Indian subcontinent and later into south-east Asia.

What we need to understand is that in Muslim thought the past determines the present which, in turn, determines the future. So, if you want to understand the way Islam works today, you need to look to the past. And if you want to know where we will be in the future, then you need to go back and look at the past.

In the last thirty years in particular, especially since 1979, Islam has been undergoing a resurgence. Muslims believe that Islam will one day rule the world. They have rediscovered the Qur'an, the role and centrality of Muhammad, the *hadith* (traditions recording Muham-



mad's words and actions), the *sunna* (the customs of Muhammad), the *Shariah* (their rule of life), and the period of Arab "holy history" (the period when they were victorious). Now, in rediscovering these elements of their faith, particularly the last, they have been re-energised. There is a verse in the Qur'an which says, "Power and honour belongs to Allah and his messenger Muhammad." So, Muslims believe that when they are faithful to Allah they will be victorious. In their eyes, power belongs to God, and when Allah gave it to Muhammad and the early leaders of Islam who followed him faithfully, they won every engagement on the battlefield. They defeated the nations to the east and the Byzantines to the west because Allah was with them.

For the last thirty years, Muslims have undergone a similar process of reflection and analysis. They have been re-examining the golden ages of Islam and yearning for an end to the age of western colonialism. They long to remove the shame and defeat of the past and seek victory and honour in its place. This explains why they see the world in ways that seem so foreign to us. In their eyes, it's Islam that will win. In the end Islam will triumph over the conspiracy of the Jews, Americans, Europeans, and the rest of the world. The point is that Muslims are driven by a conviction of ultimate triumph over their enemies and that the world belongs to them.

Islam says that it stands for the traditions of the biblical prophets and regards Jesus Christ as the greatest prophet before Muhammad. Is there some contradiction between Muslims' claimed veneration for both Jesus and Muhammad? Why do they think Muhammad is superior to Jesus?

Muslims place Jesus on a very high pedestal. They accept His virgin birth, His sinless life, His miraculous deeds, His ascension into heaven and His second coming. That sets Him apart from Muhammad. However, Muhammad still ranks above Jesus because Muslims believe that he is God's final messenger. He delivers the final revelation. Therefore, in Muslim eyes, Muhammad surpasses Jesus and every other prophet. He is also a man's man. He isn't weak. He has a sword, leads his people into battle, and has a wife; in other words, he lives in the real world, as a real person, engaging in real actions, and at the same time bringing the final message.

In that sense, there is a sense of tension between Jesus and Muhammad. Jesus almost seems too spiritual for life in this world. Muhammad, on the other hand, is portrayed as a perfect model for humanity. Some Islamic theologians

have gone so far as to claim that at the creation God made Muhammad first, then took a portion of him and created the world from it. In this sense, Muhammad is seen by some Muslims as the unifying principle behind the universe. Others have actually elevated Muhammad to a position where he is an intercessor before Allah, so it's an interesting tension that emerges between Jesus and Muhammad. Ironically, they don't see any tension because they simply ascribe a lesser role of intercession to Jesus.

But how do Muslims deal with the miracles of Jesus? Don't they establish His credentials as the final prophet and the divine Son of God?

Muslims don't dispute the many miracles that Jesus did. The Muslim consensus is that every prophet must work a miracle. As far as Muhammad is concerned, they believe that the great miracle which he wrought was to write the Qur'an when he was illiterate. Nevertheless, miracles are not critical for Muslims despite the fact that at the moment there are a lot of books coming out on Muhammad's miracles. For Muslims, the key element is the final revelation. That is the greatest miracle.

"Islam actually condemns suicide bombers and terrorists; what it does not condemn is armed conflict (jihad) performed in the name of Allah."

How does that separate Muhammad from a self-proclaimed prophet like Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon church?

You have raised a critical area for Islamic theologians: exactly how does one distinguish between a true prophet and a false one? The problem that Muslims confront is that there are some definite parallels that exist between people like Joseph Smith and Muhammad. For example, scholars have pointed out that in both cases an angel acted as a mediator. In the case of Joseph Smith it was the angel Moroni, but for Muhammad it was the angel Gabriel. Again Smith claimed that the book of Mormon was written on tablets (in his case gold ones), and Muhammad claimed that the Qur'an was written on tablets too. So the parallels are striking. These observations raise an issue which is very difficult to discuss, namely,



where do these “revelations” come from? What was their source? This was a concern, dare I say it, for Muhammad himself. It is alluded to in the Qur’an and has become embedded in the controversy. It is a critical area but it is almost impossible to explore in Islamic theology.

Is it a life-threatening issue?

It’s incredibly life-threatening! Anyone who challenges the authority of Muhammad in today’s climate is risking reprisal. Everyone has seen what has happened to people like Salman Rushdie.

What are the essential teachings of Islam and do they have anything in common with Christianity?

The essentials are very simple. Muslims believe in one God, as do Christians. The problem is that we disagree about the nature of God. While Christians are Trinitarian, Muslims are virtually deistic. They also believe that Muhammad is the ultimate prophet of God. We cannot accept that because we believe that God has spoken finally in the person of Jesus Christ. Further, Christians cannot accept that the Qur’an is in any sense the word of God. To do so would invalidate the claims of the New Testament that Jesus is God’s final word to us.

Again, although Muslims say that they believe in the second coming of Jesus, Christians cannot agree that Jesus will return as a Muslim. Instead, we believe that

Jesus will return as supreme ruler to judge all humanity. Nowhere does the New Testament teach that Jesus will set up an earthly kingdom made up of Muslims and then lead them back to paradise.

So while there are some superficial similarities, it is extraordinarily naïve to think, “Oh, isn’t it wonderful; we both believe in Jesus.” One senior American evangelical recently suggested this in a public prayer. If you listen carefully to what he said he referred to Jesus or ‘Isa – the Muslim form of Jesus – as the person who had changed his life. Ask yourself, “What is the meaning of ‘Isa?” ‘Isa in the Qur’an offers no salvation. He doesn’t save you from your sin because Muslims believe that He didn’t die on the cross. Now since it is only God who can save, the ‘Isa of Muslims is a very truncated Jesus.

The problem today is that too many Christians are playing the Muslim game of contextualising Christian theology into Muslim theology. What is often forgotten is that the so-called “similarities” disappear on closer inspection. Indeed, the differences are huge and if we fail to understand those differences we risk being swallowed up into Islam. My present fear is that this is already happening in much Christian theology.

What is it about Islam’s understanding of God that differentiates it from all the other religions?

Islam focuses on the utter transcendence and power of Allah. He is essentially a powerful force as in classical deism. And since God rules with absolute will, then it is His power that’s important at the end of the day. We can only submit to that will.

What are the implications of such beliefs?

Well, it means that the idea of fate tends to become a working principle in the believer’s life. Whatever happens to you is according to God’s will. When your car breaks down, “it is the will of Allah”. Personal responsibility becomes unimportant and the use of reason and analysis are often viewed with suspicion. For example, we treat traffic accidents and road fatalities very seriously in the West. However, in Saudi Arabia it’s not appropriate to talk about road accidents or how many people were run over. It’s simply the will of God. If an airplane crashes with a Muslim pilot at the controls, then is he responsible? The short answer is no; it is the divine will.

The problem here is that Islamic theology has no real basis for engaging in change. If all of life is subject to fate, what logical basis do you have to engage in change? The contrast with Christianity is striking at this point.

The Bible tells us that we are made in the image of God and that we are also fully responsible for our actions. This means that it is possible to make responsible choices and to bring about fundamental change. We can use our minds and energy to great effect. It is these assumptions that have undergirded the modern scientific enterprise and the cultural advances of the West. Christian thought, which stresses the importance of the mind and the need to make responsible choices, has been the great engine that has driven western progress. Unfortunately, the reason why Muslim societies are unable to experience the same kinds of transformation is that their theological understanding of God, themselves and the world does not permit it. This is what is missing in Islam.

“Muslims are streets ahead of the Christian missionary effort in terms of radio, television, and influencing government and society.”

The other problem with an Islamic view of God is that if he is so sovereign, then how do you separate out his actions? Evil comes from him, but so does good. In Islam God becomes completely arbitrary. One day he can be kind to you and the next day he can be awful. That is not a satisfactory basis for a personal relationship with his followers.

Can you explain jihad? Is it just a spiritual concept as some suggest, or does the term also refer to actual warfare?

The concept of jihad began in a relatively positive way. The Arabic word means “striving.” It was used originally of striving to live a good and righteous life and to worship God with all one’s heart and mind. It’s a concept that refers to strong exertion in living a noble life.

However, with the passing of time, jihad took on more violent connotations. This was inevitable because Muhammad had to defend his community against enemies. At that point, he received revelations which allowed him to engage in a defensive war and then in offensive war. These revelations allowed him to justify his “striving” (jihad) in a military sense against those who wanted to destroy him.

When some people say that Islam promotes peace, in one sense they are correct. But in another sense they

are obscuring the fact that the concept of jihad also has violent associations. The fact is that both ideas are contained in the one word.

Now one important question that is often debated in Islamic circles is whether jihad represents the sixth pillar of Islam? Certainly in the Saudi version of the Qur’an we read of jihad as being the sixth pillar. There jihad is understood as a “striving” to the end of time for Muslim world domination.

Certain Muslims today – especially modern Wahhabis – have latched on to this more radical idea and are giving it wider currency. The question that confronts Islamic leaders is this: is it a really legitimate interpretation of the Qur’an to have a theology of armed conflict and violence embedded in the text with modern application, or should those texts be interpreted more fairly to emphasise the original notion of jihad? This would enable Islamic scholars to teach that striving for righteousness and holiness is good, that serving others is legitimate, that education is desirable but that hurting others and waging war, whether in defensive or offensive conflicts, is no longer a valid concept for Muslims in today’s world. Islamic scholars really need to re-examine their sacred texts and realise that the concept of jihad should be interpreted in more enlightened ways. There needs to be a revolution of understanding within Islam, and they must come to terms with the relationship between reason and revelation. There is now a body of scholarship which is saying that there needs to be such reconsideration, but those scholars are a very small minority.

Muslims are clearly operating with a different worldview to the West. Is there anything wrong in seeing them through exclusively western eyes? For example, should we be calling “mujahidin” terrorists or suicide bombers?

No, I don’t think we should. The terms “terrorist” and “suicide bomber” are meaningless words for those engaged in jihad. We need to let them define themselves and then approach them on their own terms. Otherwise, we will never address the issues that are at the heart of the conflict. The problem is that Islam legitimises the concept of jihad and says that it’s okay to go and defend other Muslims who are facing oppression. Indeed, it justifies violence and dying in the cause of Allah. Until we address that issue we cannot begin to resolve the problem. We are talking at cross-purposes.

We need to realise that Islam actually condemns suicide bombers and terrorists; what it does not condemn is

armed conflict (jihad) performed in the name of Allah. When the West condemns terrorist and suicide bombers, Islam agrees. The issue we need to address is whether the Qur'an really teaches the modern and radical understanding of jihad, in which war and violence are justified. Currently Islamic teaching on war is in a state of flux. The traditional doctrine of jihad is no longer all-pervasive and unquestioned; new lines of interpretation of the Qur'an and of the term jihad are being explored, although they are not nearly as influential as the more radical views.

Some might claim that you are just playing with words?

No, I am not. Every Muslim who dies on the battlefield in jihad dies as a martyr. We need to understand that. When we call them criminals or terrorists we blind ourselves to the real problem and obscure the fact that the real issue is a theological one. What we have to do is address the principles of violence within their religion. And this is why I have problems with typical Western responses to Islam. They are not sufficiently theological. They don't relate to the core texts of Islam and question the claims of the radicals.

"Sometimes Christian money has been used by radical groups to engage in violence.

I have known of Christian money being used by terrorists to kill Christians."

People often say to me, "Why do you start with their religion? Why don't you just say that there are a few extremists out there who are a bunch of criminals and they don't represent the religion?" And I say, "Hang on. You can't start there. You have got to start with how Islam understands itself in terms of conflict. How does it see the use of violence? How does it understand fellow Muslims who pursue violence?" Unless we begin here, we will make no progress in addressing any of these issues.

I think the best hope in the long-term of confronting the problem of Islamic violence is to re-examine the textual evidence and theological justification for it. Without an underlying theology to fuel jihad, it will eventually shrivel and die. The best thing we can do in the West is to encourage sincere Muslim scholars to pursue theological reform which reexamines and challenges the violent

tradition of jihad and the connection of Islam with the state. Such a strategy has the greatest potential to isolate those who are committed to violent jihad from their support base amongst wider Islamic society. Unless the West addresses the textual legitimacy of radical Islam, then all that the future holds is an endless struggle against dedicated Muslims who continue to emerge hydra-like as a result of this underlying ideology.

Christian theologians have been engaging with Islam for 1400 years. Do we have anything to learn from the early apologists like John of Damascus, Thomas Aquinas and Raymond Lull?

I think we have a lot to learn from them. First, they remind us that theology is all-important. The problem that we face today is that too many theologians and mis-siologists think that culture is the vital issue. So they study culture and tend to push theological issues to one side. John of Damascus and the others took a different approach. They realised they were up against a theological system that had to be addressed as such. They were not only masters of Christian theology but they were also experts in the teachings of Islam.

Is Islam engaging in a missionary enterprise of its own in the West?

Yes, it is – on a massive level. Western Christians have little idea how large it is. Islamic dawa (mission) is multifaceted. It is also centrally organised on a prodigious scale. The Saudis have spent over \$100 billion between 1980 and 2000 on establishing global dawa. They have poured money into the building of mosques, the training of teachers, developing literature, publishing and media. It's been done on a colossal scale.

"They want what the West has to offer but they don't want its values. This creates enormous tensions for Muslims."

Muslims are streets ahead of the Christian missionary effort in terms of radio, television, and influencing government and society. They have a clear goal within our society to Islamise it. There is a development of consciousness, organisational structure, and engagement with authorities to bring about a community founded on Islam. They see themselves as engaged on an eternal venture to transform the whole of society.

Are Muslims working to eliminate Israel?

This is what they say in public from time to time. One of the most alarming things that I have witnessed recently is a growing convergence between Muslim and Christian attitudes towards the Jews. I am deeply troubled by the growth of anti-Semitism in the church, especially among evangelicals. It has surfaced recently over issues in Gaza. The Muslims have very shrewdly positioned themselves as victims. So they have said, "Come and help us!" Now a number of Christian leaders have crossed over to support the pro-Palestinian, anti-Semitic lobby. While I am not inviting anyone to take a particular side on this issue, I think some Christians are being sucked into an anti-Israel position which borders on the anti-Semitic. Evangelicals are now being duped by people at the very heart of their own community. This trend towards anti-Semitism became very clear recently during the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

What happens when Christians give funds, say, to the Palestinian government?

Christians who make such donations have no control over where their money is spent. This is very sad because more and more Christian groups are working with Islamic aid agencies such as in Pakistan. Christians must realise that once they give their money to such groups it can be spent in ways that would offend them. Sometimes Christian money has been used by radical groups to engage in violence. I have known of Christian money being used by terrorists to kill Christians.

How should a Christian approach evangelism and witness to Muslims?

I believe profoundly in the love of Christ towards Muslims. I was once a Muslim, too, so I am fully committed to sharing the gospel with them.

I think we must remember the spiritual dimensions of the struggle we face. If we want to share the gospel with them, nothing less than the power of God released by the Holy Spirit is adequate. In my experience, most of the Muslims who come to Christ are not won over by intellectual arguments which challenge the validity of their faith. They usually have a personal encounter with Christ, often as they are reading the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament. Others have testified to the power of the love of Christ working through their Christian friends. Sometimes the Lord uses extraordinary means to reach Muslims and speaks to them through dreams and visions.



While arguing with a Muslim is often not fruitful, knowing about Islam can certainly help Christians answer some of their most frequent objections to the gospel. Christians need to know how to answer the claim that we worship three gods and that the Bible has been corrupted by the Christian church. If Muslims believe that we have a good understanding of their position, that will help our conversation and might encourage them to be more open to Christianity. Have courage to share your own testimony; believe in divine intervention.

There are more Muslims becoming Christians today than any other time in history. In virtually every part of the world, Muslims are turning to Christ in growing numbers. I think this is an enormous encouragement. I have been a Christian now for nearly fifty years and in recent years I have never seen so many Muslims being saved. There is no single effective approach. Many become Christians through national workers. Others hear about Christ through radio or television ministry, never meeting missionaries but just Christians in their local communities. One Coptic Orthodox priest, Father Zachariah, has had a phenomenal effect through television in leading Muslims to Christ. The Muslims offered sixty million dollars to kill him because he has been so successful. So the role of radio, television and literature is crucial in Christian evangelism. I think God is doing wonders through a wide variety of methods. It is just allowing the Lord to use us for his glory. C



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Christians Face the Most Persecution

Christians are the world's most persecuted people, but you would never know this from mainstream Western media. The odd high profile case such as that of Meriam Ibrahim earlier this year gets media attention but she is the exception. She had been jailed in Muslim Sudan for marrying a Christian and was thus considered an apostate and sentenced to death. After an eight month ordeal during which she gave birth while shackled in prison she was happily released. But many more arrests do not end so well and do not get media coverage. To put the matter in perspective, consider the following from a July 28, 2014 article by Paul Vallely from the online edition of the *Bel-fast Telegraph*.

According to the International Society for Human Rights, a secular group with members in 38 states worldwide, 80 per cent of all acts of religious discrimination in the world today are directed at Christians. The Center for the Study of Global Christianity in the United States estimates that 100,000 Christians now die every year, targeted because of their faith that is 11 every hour. The Pew Research Center says that hostility to religion reached a new high in 2012, when Christians faced some form of discrimination in 139 countries, almost threequarters of the world's nations.

All this seems counterintuitive here in the West where the history of Christianity has been one of cultural dominance and control ever since the Emperor Constantine converted and made the Roman Empire Christian in the 4th century AD.

Yet the plain fact is that Christians are languishing in jail for blasphemy in Pakistan, and churches are burned and worshippers regularly slaughtered in Nigeria and Egypt, which has recently seen its worst anti-Christian violence in seven centuries. The most violent anti-Christian pogrom of the early 21st century saw as many as 500 Christians hacked to death by machetewielding Hindu radicals in Orissa, India, with thou-

sands more injured and 50,000 made homeless. In Burma, Chin and Karen Christians are routinely subjected to imprisonment, torture, forced labour and murder. Persecution is increasing in China; and in North Korea a quarter of the country's Christians live in forced labour camps after refusing to join the national cult of the state's founder, Kim IlSung. Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the Maldives all feature in the 10 worst places to be a Christian.

The article goes on to mention voices that have been raised in protest such as Rupert Shortt's book *Christianophobia* (2013) and John Allen's *The Global War on Christians* (2013). One can also add Paul Marshall, *Persecuted. The Global Assault on Christians* (2013). But why the silence of the major media and overall lack of concern from America?

Although there is no simple answer to that question, surely a major factor is that Western nations are rejecting their own Christian past and embracing secularism. The article quoted above notes that "in the UK, it is socially respectable among the secular elite to regard Christianity as weird and permissible to bully its followers a little. This produces the surreal political reality in which President Obama visits Saudi Arabia and 'does not get the time' to raise the suppression of Christianity in the oil-rich nation; and in which Prime Minister Cameron gets a broadside from illiberal secularists for the historically unquestionable assertion that Britain's culture is formed by Christian values."

It is to the credit of Prime Minister Stephen Harper that he recently (July 22) has publically protested religious persecution in Iraq. The Office of Religious Freedom which his administration established has repeatedly denounced violations of religious freedom worldwide. As Christians who cannot but be moved to prayer for these oppressed people? Also our worship services should include fervent prayer for those oppressed when praying for the needs of Christendom. While we enjoy peace and tranquillity, let us not forget those who suffer and pay the ultimate price for their love of Christ.



End-of-Life Decisions

(Part 2)



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In the first article in this series I stated that these articles are not about euthanasia and I discussed end-of-life decisions about property, health care decisions, and end-of-life decisions about the person. In this article I shall discuss the medical aspects and the legal framework that govern end-of-life decisions.

The medical aspects

Until the 1980s, end-of-life decisions were typically made by the medical profession. At that time the practice of medicine was essentially physician-centred and the primary and foundational medical ethic was that of beneficence and non-maleficence, *i.e.*, of doing good and not doing harm. Consent to treatment was required, however, for treatment without consent amounts to assault. The physician-centred practice of medicine began to change in the 1980s when new principles of medical ethics took root. The basic concept of these principles is the patient's autonomy and the right to make decisions about his care. In other words, the practice of medicine became patient-centred. This meant that patients and their families could now make decisions about health care by factoring in their personal values and beliefs. Those were also considered before by the physicians, but now they have become important, though not decisive factors.

Partly as a result of the change in medical ethics, more and more people launched proceedings in the courts to seek direction from the courts about end-of-life matters. For those and other reasons, provincial legislatures stepped in and enacted legislation to facilitate the making of end-of-life decisions.

The legal framework

Each province now has legislation in place dealing with end-of-life decisions. In these articles I focus principally on Ontario's legislation because I am most familiar with it and it is the most comprehensive.

Ontario has two major statutes that address end-of-life matters: the *Substitute Decisions Act 1992* (SDA) and the *Health Care Consent Act 1996* (HCCA). The former makes provision, among other things,¹ for the making of a Power of Attorney for Personal Care ("PAPC").² The HCCA imposes rules about giving consent for health care and treatment.³ The following is a summary of the most important provisions of these two statutes.

The SDA permits a person who is at least sixteen years old and capable, *i.e.*, has the necessary mental capacity, to appoint an attorney, who is also at least sixteen years old, to make decisions concerning the grantor's personal care. Personal care includes: health care, nutrition, shelter, clothing, hygiene, and safety. Further, the PAPC may contain instructions with respect to the decisions the attorney is authorized to make. This means that the grantor may: (a) include what are sometimes called "advance directives" about her future health care in the PAPC; and (b) authorize the attorney to make health care decisions for her when the advance directives are inapplicable to particular situations.

Advance directives, sometimes incorrectly called "living wills," do not need to be included in a PAPC, but may be made in a separate document. Further, in Ontario, but not in other provinces, they may be made orally. In addition, in Ontario, subsequent oral advance directives will override prior written directives, including those contained in a PAPC.

The HCCA makes the personal autonomy of persons for whom treatment is proposed⁴ a foundational principle. Thus, it requires that wishes with respect to treatment expressed by a person while capable and after attaining sixteen years of age be adhered to.

The Act requires that a health practitioner who proposes treatment (defined as anything done for a "health-related purpose") for a person (the "patient") shall not administer the treatment unless: (a) the patient is capable and has given consent; or (b) the patient's sub-

stitute decision maker (SDM) has given consent on the patient's behalf if the patient is incapable.⁵ The Act includes a prioritized list of possible SDMs who may give or refuse consent on behalf of an incapable patient. These are: the patient's guardian of the person, the attorney for personal care, a representative appointed by the Consent and Capacity Board, the patient's spouse or partner, a child or parent (including a children's aid society or other person entitled to consent in the place of a parent), a brother or sister, or any other relative. If there is no such person, the Public Guardian and Trustee must make the decision. If two or more persons have equal priority and they cannot agree, the Public Guardian and Trustee must also make the decision.

*The physician-centred practice
of medicine began to change in the 1980s
when new principles of medical ethics
took root*

Section 21 of the Act provides that an SDM must adhere to the following principles in giving or refusing consent to treatment on behalf of an incapable patient: (a) a wish applicable to the circumstances that the incapable patient expressed while capable and after attaining age sixteen (a "capable wish"); and (b) if the SDM does not know of such a wish or if it is impossible to comply with the wish, the SDM must act in the incapable patient's "best interests." To determine what a patient's "best interests" are, the SDM must take into account: (a) the values and beliefs of the patient; (b) wishes expressed by the patient that do not amount to a capable wish; (c) the likely effect of the proposed treatment; (d) whether the expected benefit will outweigh the risk of harm; and (e) whether a less intrusive treatment would be as beneficial as that proposed by the medical team.

Section 37 provides that if a health practitioner has proposed a particular treatment, the SDM refuses to give consent, and the health practitioner believes that the SDM has failed to comply with section 21 of the HCCA, the health practitioner may apply to the Consent and Capacity Board ("CCB"), a specialized tribunal created by the

Act, for a determination of that question. The CCB may hold that the SDM has acted in the patient's best interests, or it may hold that the SDM failed to act in the patient's best interests and direct the SDM to give consent to the proposed treatment. There have been many applications to the CCB since the Act came into force. Usually the Board's decision is the end of the matter. However, the Act does make provision for an appeal to the Superior Court of Justice. A significant number of cases have been appealed to that court. A few cases have also been appealed further to the Ontario Court of Appeal.

In the next article I plan to review a number of recent court cases that have wrestled with end-of-life decisions.

¹ It also makes provision for a Continuing Power of Attorney for Property, referred to above, and for appointing other representatives for property and health care, such as guardians.

² Please note that a power of attorney, whether for property or personal care, is a document. In it the grantor (the maker of the document) appoints a person who is called the attorney. The document authorizes the attorney to make decisions for the grantor. People often say (even some lawyers who should know better) "Mary is my power of attorney." This gives the impression that the document has a head and arms and legs. Not so. The person, Mary, is your attorney, not your power of attorney.

³ Statutes in other provinces use different terminology and the rights and obligations of the parties sometimes differ significantly from the Ontario model. See, for example, Alberta: *Personal Directives Act and Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act*; British Columbia: *Representation Agreement Act, Adult Guardianship Act, Health Care (Consent) and Care Facility (Admission) Act and Patients Property Act*; Manitoba: *Health Care Directives Act, and Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability Act*.

⁴ The Act also applies to admission to care facilities and personal assistance services. I have left these out of consideration for simplicity's sake.

⁵ The Act rightly makes exceptions for exigent circumstances, such as an accident or admission to an emergency department. In such circumstances immediate treatment is often necessary and there may be no one able to give consent. Hence, consent is dispensed with.



Introducing Reformed Faith and Life – Canada

Beginnings

In order to introduce Reformed Faith and Life – Canada, I have to first give you some history. It begins with the zeal and the determination of Rev. Aaron Kayayan, who served as a minister of the French Reformed Church, and later, as the French-language broadcast minister of the Christian Reformed Church’s “Back to God Hour.” You may notice that the name, Kayayan, doesn’t sound particularly French; in fact, it is an Armenian name. Rev. Kayayan’s parents had fled to France as refugees, to escape the genocide which was being carried out by the Turks in 1915-18.

Rev. Kayayan loved to preach the gospel, and, he loved his “home and native land” of Armenia. For seventy years, most of Rev. Kayayan’s lifetime, Armenia had been part of the U.S.S.R. – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – and it was not possible to openly proclaim the gospel there.

By the time the Soviet Union dissolved in 1989, and the “Iron Curtain” fell, and the doors were open again for the proclamation of the gospel, Rev. Kayayan had retired, and was an emeritus minister of the Dutton United Reformed Church. But he recognized that the Lord was providing an opportunity to reach into Armenia with the gospel.

As a Reformed believer, he had a deep confidence in the power of the preached gospel to gather God’s elect into the church. As a capable theologian, he also realized that teaching and training were necessary in order to confirm and deepen his hearers’ understanding of God’s Word, and working out of the Reformed faith. And as a veteran radio gospel minister, he knew that radio broadcasting was an effective way of bringing the gospel to untold numbers of people, living in a whole variety of circumstances – in the big cities, and in isolated villages, in Christian enclaves, as well as in Muslim areas. So he

began to prepare and record and transmit programs in the Armenian language, with a program called Christians for Armenia. He also began to write and translate Reformed literature in Armenian, in the form of books and a theological journal for the purpose of training and supporting men who were in the ministry.



Rev. Aaron Kayayan

As the French-language minister of the Back to God Hour, Rev. Kayayan’s messages had been broadcast among African countries that had been colonized by France and Belgium. These colonies had become independent, but significant segments of the population continued to use French as their main language. In his zeal to bring the gospel to his beloved Armenia, Rev. Kayayan didn’t forget about the people of Africa. He recruited his son, Rev. Eric Kayayan, a minister of the Reformed Church in South Africa, who had been raised in France and was thus fluent in French, to carry out a parallel ministry in French. Rev.



Rev. Eric Kayayan

Kayayan Jr. produces gospel messages, and prepares theological materials for the African countries where French is spoken, including those that have Muslim governments or majorities. The French-language ministry is called *Foi et Vie Reformees* (Reformed Faith and Life).

Rev. Kayayan Sr. passed away in 2008, and the search

for a successor, to focus on the Armenian ministry, continues. But his son has taken up the leadership of the two ministries, now known as Reformed Faith and Life (RFL). He recently moved with his family from Pretoria, South Africa, to France, in order to better carry out his responsibilities.

RFL comes to Canada

Rev. Jelle Tuininga, well-known emeritus minister of the Trinity URC in Lethbridge, Alberta, was a good friend of Rev. Kayayan Sr., and became a great promoter of his work in Canada. In order to gain support among Reformed believers in Canada, and to make it possible for Canadian donors to receive charitable tax receipts for their donations, Reformed Faith and Life – Canada received charitable status in 2000, with the help of Mr. Harold Olij, a lawyer practising in Smithville, ON.

Currently RFL – Canada is made up of eight volunteers, mainly drawn from Reformed congregations in the Hamilton-Niagara area: Rev. Dick Wynia (Vineyard Canadian Reformed Church of Lincoln) chairman; Mrs. Christine Wynia (Adoration United Reformed Church of Vineland) secretary; Mr. Ed Bos (Zion United Reformed Church of Sheffield) treasurer; Mr. and Mrs. Ed and Wilma Gringhuis (Zion URC of Sheffield); Mr. Sibrand Stulp (Vineyard CanRC of Lincoln); and from out west, Mr. Andrew Barwegen (Trinity United Reformed Church of Lethbridge). Our work is under the oversight of the council of the Zion United Reformed Church of Sheffield, and members are appointed to the board with their councils' approval. Since it was established fourteen years ago, RFL – Canada has collected hundreds of thousands of dollars from Canadian supporters, almost entirely from the United Reformed Churches.

RFL – Canada expands

One of our original members, Mr. Henry Groen, had a particular desire to see the work of RFL – Canada expanded to support the radio broadcast of the gospel and publish theological materials in other areas of the world. In God's providence, shortly after it was established we were given an opportunity to provide funding for the broadcast of the sermons and educational presentations of Rev. Ken Wieske, in Portuguese, in connection with the mission work of the Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church of Surrey in the Greater Recife Area in Brazil. That work is now overseen by the Canadian Reformed



Church of Aldergrove and Rev. Julius VanSpronsen has also been working there now for several years.

Several years later, we had contact with Rev. Bernard Westerveld of the St-Marc congregation of the Eglises Reformees du Quebec, which led to RFL – Canada helping those brothers and sisters to broadcast Rev. Eric Kayayan's French language messages, Foi-et-Vie Reformees, in Quebec City.

Not long after that, the Lord opened another door for us, this time, in far off Kupang, West Timor, Indonesia, where Rev. Edwer Dethan, a missionary of the Smithville Canadian Reformed Church has been working for several years. A small radio station, Radio Sahabat FM, has been set up in conjunction with his missionary work, both to provide employment and skills training for the orphans cared for by the New Hope Orphanage, and to broadcast the gospel to people living in the Kupang area.

Finally, as you will read elsewhere in this issue of *Clarion*, RFL – Canada is able to take advantage of its experience and "expertise" to help the Vineyard Canadian Reformed Church of Lincoln carry out a commitment it has recently made, to raise funds in Canada for The Timothy Project, one aspect of the Reformational Study Centre (RSC), based near Pretoria, South Africa. RSC provides materials and training for English-speaking ministers and students throughout Africa, but needs the help of brothers and sisters and congregations here in Canada to carry the financial burden.

Support for RFL – Canada

The purpose of this article isn't simply to introduce you to Reformed Faith and Life – Canada, and leave it

at that. RFL – Canada has always enjoyed solid support among members and congregations of the URC. However, each year, tens of thousands of the dollars we receive are used to support mission work near and dear to the hearts of the Canadian Reformed. It would be good, and right, for us as members and congregations of the Canadian Reformed Churches to become involved in supporting the efforts to broadcast the gospel, and spread the Reformed faith in various places all over the world, in prayer and in giving. Our total commitment to the different programs and ministries with which we work is more than \$150,000.00. It would be a great encouragement to us, but more importantly, to the brothers and sisters with whom we partner in Brazil, West Timor, Quebec, and South Africa, if financial support for these efforts would also come from among the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Newsletters describing the work of these various ministries are published three to four times a year, to keep churches and private donors up to date on what's being done. Financial statements are available on request. We would be happy to answer any questions you might have about our work. At the moment, we don't have our own RFL – Canada website, but you can learn more by going to www.foi-vie.org.za. You can send me an e-mail (dick.wynia@gmail.com) and I will do my best to provide you with any information you might need, or connect you with someone who can.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letter to the Editor,

In Brother Leo Kampen's article "Is Voting Governing? A Response" (August 15, 2014) he has a list of issues that help determine who he will vote for as elder or deacon after considering biblical norms. I found this list of qualifications quite surprising and disturbing and thought to myself, "Perhaps his wife should be doing the voting"☺.

Seriously though, when my children who are voting for officebearers discuss with me how to decide whom to vote for, I advise them the exact opposite of what he suggests. I suggest they try *not* to think of "issues," but rather to think of the guidelines given in Scripture in Timothy, Titus, and also Proverbs. Some questions we discuss are: Do they have a good knowledge of Scripture? What is their family life like? Are they good listeners? Do they show compassion? Would you be comfortable

with them in a home visit and be able to share your faith life with them? My husband used to say he had a good council when the members were able to set aside their personal views on "issues" and really listen to one another and then when decisions had to be made usually voting was unnecessary and a consensus could be reached. These are the officebearers we should vote for.



Brother Kampen's list goes beyond the norms given to us by Scripture and using these extrabiblical guidelines is un-biblical and a very wrong way of voting for officebearers.

Sincerely,
Margaret DeJong, Hamilton 

*Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication.
Submissions need to be less than one page in length.*