

The intellectual, the social, the emotional barriers may be overcome, but unless by the grace of God we touch another heart with love, it may never really come to know the much greater and wonderful love of God for him. A recent convert who was struggling with the social and intellectual barriers, while still a Muslim wrote these words, "It is stimulating to think that cases of conversion through sheer *reasoning* between dogmas of two religions are very rare, perhaps non-existent. In cases of conversion where prosperity, social status, security, vengeance against native society, emotional experimentation and the like, are not the motives, the change of faith is motivated perhaps infinitely more frequently by love for charming virtues, of a magnetic person, or love for a group of lovable associates, than by cold religious arithmetic."

It was this loving friendship of some people that won Dr. Muhammad Daud Rahbar finally to Christ. I think the message for the twentieth-century evangelist among the Muslims is perhaps best given in these words:

"In place of a frontal attack launched on the intellectual level, the best of modern missionaries to Islam pursue a mode of approach which was seldom neglected by their predecessors but which was never quite trusted to bear full fruit — the method of intimate personal fellowship, of loving service, of sympathetic testimony, and of united prayer. Believing that the essence of conversion is direct experience of the saving power of Christ, they seek to lead the Muslim to that experience by helping him to sense his deepest needs, by appealing to what he has already known of God in his inner life, and by sharing with him what Christ has done for them. In counting upon Christ himself, and not theories about him, to exert the drawing power, they are aided by the fact that 'the character of Christ does attract the Mohammedan and is doing so more and more.... The most hopeful note in the Islamic world today is the, to many, irresistible attraction of the Person of Jesus Christ.' To make the Muslim feel that attraction through deepening friendship, through a guided study of the New Testament, through leisurely conference, and through that prayer together which confesses God's Spirit alone can convert — this is the primary aim on which all else depends."

EVANGELIZATION AMONG MUSLIMS STRATEGY GROUP REPORT

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Preamble:

In a packed room with over 75 nationals and missionaries in attendance, the great and crucial issues of Muslim evangelism were discussed. The input of Christian ministers from countries as geographically diverse as Indonesia and Morocco added significantly to the cross-pollination of views regarding the various methodological options open to the servant of Jesus Christ. An informed Christian leader challenged the group by stating that "never in recent history have so many Muslims been coming to Christ." Yet the reality of the over 600 million adherents of Islam yet to be evangelized left a sobering impression on the gathered participants.

Methodology:

A number of traditional means of Muslim evangelism were suggested such as visitation, films, radio, institutional outreach, studied ministry, open air meetings, literary programs, reading rooms, and tract distribution. However, several more creative postulations evolved as the delegates interacted with each other. In various areas indigenous drama and musical programs have been successfully presented as a means of communicating the Gospel. Particularly, it was felt, Christmas and Easter provide ready-made opportunities for this form of sharing Christ.

Recently a healing campaign took place in a major city of the Islamic world. Over 20,000 people stood in rapt attention in a littered brick field to hear the message of a visiting evangelist. The response was so great that on the fourth night the police moved in and arrested the five members of the preaching-healing team. All were declared persona non grata and expelled from the country. Perhaps such a ministry on a discreet church-related basis could be used of the Lord as have the similar great campaigns of Latin America.

Correspondence schools such as those found in Lebanon and Bangladesh continue to prove useful in seed sowing. It was agreed that more emphasis must be placed on follow-up through rallies and camps in order to obtain maximum results from these efforts.

Several experiments are under way with the use of "Fraternities of New Believers" as a type of halfway house for the purpose of winning and disciplining Muslims. A culturally attractive form of worship is adopted with the view of minimizing societal dislocation for the inferior.

The use of cross-cultural national missionaries from within the area now under review was a proposal accepted by all present. In the past teams of Indonesians have visited several Asian countries, the most notable of which was Pakistan. Their ministry was well received. It is hoped that in the near future a team of Asian or Middle East converted Muslims can minister on a much broader basis.

Cultural Consideration:

The cultural disorientation of the convert was discussed at length. The following areas should be fully explored:

1. The need of acceptance on the part of the Christian Church. Most converts are greeted with suspicion if not outright hostility by the established Christian community. The believers suspect the convert of impure motivation. Rejection rather than warm, loving acceptance is the norm. The Church should recognize this unchristian attitude and seek to open their doors and their hearts to the honest seeker of truth.
2. Worship forms should be modified to be more familiar and compatible for the convert. Western church liturgy is not an essential for the small struggling church which is surrounded by Muslim masses. It was postulated that prayer five times a day could be retained. Fasting as taught in Scripture could be emphasized. Scripture memorization and recital of great church creeds would act as substitutes for Koranic readings. Removal of one's shoes and bowing for prayer could act as a further point of non-compromising identification with the converts' traditional religious background.
3. The possibility of establishing a homogenous convert church should be explored. This may take the form of a worshiping group meeting on Friday at 1 p.m. in various homes of converts. Societal and cultural dislocation would thus be minimized. Also this type of service would be very attractive to the inquirer. The few "Fraternities of New Believers" operative in the Muslim world, such as the one in Pakistan, are the closest counterparts to the "convert church" that we have today. This is due to the fact that Muslims come to Christ usually as isolated individuals and not in any type of mass movement.
4. Muslim-oriented language should be used when possible. There has been the suggestion that two translations of the Bible be made, one for Muslims using Islamic thought forms and the other in the more traditional Christian vocabulary. Often the Muslim is totally bewildered by the language found in the local vernacular translation of the Scriptures. Effective communication is dependent on the proper choice of words. In Islamic outreach the Christian community has often been insensitive to this vital area.
5. Deferred baptism should be considered. Kenneth Craig and others have recognized the stigma baptism carries in a Muslim society. It is usually regarded as an outward sign not only of conversion but also of family and national betrayal. The convert immediately becomes an outcast from his own society and thus almost inevitably becomes a mission dependent. Could not the young Christian retain his firm faith, defer baptism, and at the same time have a visible witness among his own family and friends?

There are areas where it was felt no compromise could be effected. Biblical absolutes must not be compromised though cultural relativism should be prayerfully encouraged. Items within the Islamic religion which would be forbidden for the convert include: prayers for the dead, fasting and almsgiving for merit, vain repetition of prayers, obligatory circumcision, and attendance at the prayers in the Mosque.

Resource Assistance:

Instruction for the convert is a necessity. This can be provided for preferably by another Muslim convert. Other options include the local pastor, a dedicated layman, correspondence courses, extension seminary, or even a short time in a Bible school.

The work of the "Fellowship of Faith for Muslims," 205 Yonge St., Toronto, Canada, was noted with appreciation. This group edits a monthly bulletin of news and prayer requests relating to the Muslim world. Also they seek to co-ordinate a listing of available books on the subject of Islamics. The Congress participants felt such a service would be best located within the context of the Islamic world, perhaps in Beirut, Lebanon. A traveling secretary working out of such an office could be a valuable asset in the coordination of Christian ministry among the Muslims.

Conclusion:

Prayer was emphasized as an absolute prerequisite for the servants of God who have been entrusted with the responsibility of propagating the Gospel among the one-seventh of the world's population which owes allegiance to the religion of Islam. Importunate seeking of God was seen as the key to an effective ministry among Muslims. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of hosts," (Zech. 4:6). (Note: It was recognized that some of our brothers and sisters in certain nations suffer the possibility of government action against them. In correspondence with these Christians, sensitivity to the circumstances in which they live should be emphasized.)

Summary: Evangelism among Moslems:

Methods of:

1. Indigenous drama and musical programs
2. Preaching-healing ministry
3. Correspondence schools
4. Fraternalities of new believers, halfway houses
5. Cross-cultural missionaries from other Moslem areas

Ways of overcoming the cultural barrier:

1. A loving, accepting Christian church (cf. present situation)
2. Worship forms taken from Moslem worshiping practice
3. A homogenous convert church
4. Moslem-oriented language. New translation of Scripture
5. Deferred baptism

Resource Assistance:

1. Instruction for the convert (person, written, etc.)
2. A traveling coordinator and a monthly news and prayer bulletin