

The Muslim World
10/18/2000

ENCOURAGEMENT

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One of our closest colleagues, a son currently living and working in East Africa, knew that we would be encouraged by something he ran into while attending a Christian conference in Kenya. Some years ago, he was instrumental in pursuing the local printing of **The Bible and Islam**, specifically edited to be read by African Christians. It was prepared within an affordable price range. He shared his joy at discovering that book still available on a book table. During the conference he made the acquaintance of other participants who told him just how much his father's book, **The Bible and Islam**, and his life work (Saatu'l Islah) of broadcasting the Gospel in Arabic, had made a difference in their lives. They were delighted to make this connection with the author of the book..

Ever since his college days, Michael has been aware of the value of book tables. He took an extra year to get his Masters at Utah State University so that he could spend time in an IVCF ministry to Muslim students, that included many hours of standing by a book table which he kept supplied with Arabic, Persian and Turkish literature. So—it wasn't surprising that one aspect by which he judged this particular conference in Africa was the literature, which he scanned on the various book tables. "There was no talk of extreme-contextualization, or compromise. Not only was your book being sold, but I met various participants who were influenced by it."

He went on to describe a Kenyan Christian with a remarkable past. This young man, after finishing university, decided to found an indigenous Kenyan mission. He recruited a group of dedicated young men willing to live in isolated parts of eastern Kenya, ministering to Somali and other Muslim groups. His own Christian pilgrimage had led him from a charismatic beginning to an appreciation of the liturgy of the Anglican Church. He credited **The Bible and Islam**, plus Bonhoeffer, as having the greatest influence in bringing him to where he is theologically at this moment. This Kenyan was a voracious reader. Michael happened to have with him, a copy of a Bernard Lewis book, **Race and Slavery in the Middle East**. He lent it to his new brother in the Lord. This is a very important book for Africans to read. It is 50% documentation and along with its illustrations would soon convince any East African that Islam has not been free of racial discrimination, despite claims to the contrary. A quote from the jacket of the book gives an excellent description of its contents:

Illuminating the legacy of slavery in the region where it lasted longest, from the days of warrior slaves and palace eunuchs and concubines to the final drive for abolition, Bernard Lewis examines the romantic myth of the Middle East as a racial utopia. With

twenty-four rare and intriguing full-color illustrations this fascinating study describes the Middle East's culture of slavery and the evolution of racial prejudice. Lewis shows that while Islam clearly teaches non-discrimination, prejudice often won out over pious sentiments, and he explores in detail how Africans were treated, depicted, and thought of from late antiquity to the twentieth century

We come into the picture at this time, with our retirement ministry. Could we find some more copies of this book? It needs to be more available in seminary libraries and in the hands of certain key people. We immediately got to work on the request. We did locate some copies even though our first attempt met with the cold statement that it was *out of print*. We shipped them to our son and he forwarded them on to various contacts made at that conference. It's been great just to know that eight copies of this book have now been placed in strategic locations in East Africa where they will be available to people in leadership positions. There is still a definite place for literature in ministry.

Another interesting participant in this conference was a church leader from the country of Chad, who presented a paper on the history of Islam in Africa which “clearly followed some of your analysis, Dad; of Islam being distinctively post-and anti-Christian among world religions.” This young leader quoted from B.K. Kuiper's textbook, **The Church in History**. He had attended SIM's ECWA seminary in Jos and thus had some contact with the Reformed faith while there. He had also made the acquaintance of Carla Vander Weele, (now Carla Arensen) another graduate of the same high school as our son (Illiana Christian High in Lansing, Illinois) who had worked with AIM in Chad. The Chadian pastor was a close friend of the Kenyan mission leader. He runs a small training institute for Chadian missionaries. His aim is to motivate and equip Chadian Christians to bring the Gospel to unreached people in their own land. So this Chadian, his Kenyan friend and Michael, found themselves to be kindred spirits. Again Michael said: “it was great to see how your book, Dad, has influenced many more than we will ever know this side of heaven. By the way, printing THE BIBLE AND ISLAM at Evangel Press, Nairobi, while in East Africa, has certainly disseminated more copies in Africa than we can imagine.”

At the same time Michael met an “enthusiastic young Anglican from Southern Sudan, working in Khartoum University. He said your programs had meant a lot to him as a young Christian. He knew Adam Musa well and was fluent in Arabic and very knowledgeable about Islam.”... “So, being at this conference gave me a look behind the scenes to see how our Lord is at work, even in at-Turabi's back yard.” (Turabi is one of the radical Muslim leaders formerly in high place of government in Sudan). It was great to hear the name Adam Musa once again. He had handled all of our mail, around 200,000 pieces, to the Khartoum address over a period of 36 years, before Sudan became useless as a center for receiving and forwarding mail from all the closed and semi-closed Muslim countries.

It was such a delight the other day to receive an Email letter from our dear friends Dick and Thea Van Halsema freshly back from Turkey. To our surprise we learned from Thea that **The Bible and Islam** was being used in the study course there this summer.

Our book is available for down-loading on our web page and the other morning we looked for e mail and got an astonishing letter from a South African missionary presently working in the Crimea, Ukraine who had come across our Russian version of The Bible and Islam. Feeling that it was abridged he was delighted to be given our e mail address and asked how he could get a copy in English! He said: "I, myself, am also a Reformed missionary of the Calvinistic tradition, and therefore all the more enjoyed your book. I believe it sets a beautiful standard for missions amongst Muslims."

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October 18/00