

**Bridges to Islam: A Christian Perspective on Folk Islam by Phil Parshall;
Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1983 Soft cover,**

Islam has become a subject of frequent analysis by Western secular journalists. They are seeking to understand it from the perspective of 20th century social and political norms. As a result, Islam is misunderstood in the West. Few know what occurs in the privacy of a Muslim home.

Islam is neither a monolithic religion nor are the Muslims homogeneous. Islam is complex and dynamic. There are militant fundamentalist Muslims as well as mystics, legalists, and secularists. Islam, as a theological system, is both rigid and unyielding. It does not satisfy the soul. Some 70 percent of all Muslims are influenced by folk Islam.

Phil Parshall interacts with the history, beliefs, and practices of folk Islam. He is not a theoretical Islam scholar. He writes from his firsthand experience as a church planter in Muslim villages. He has also been guided through the intricacies of Islam mysticism. To understand mysticism, one must also study Sufism, as it is a fairly well defined influence within folk Islam. Sufism refers to the mystic's teaching about austerity and their simple lifestyle of dress. It is submerged in a sea of subjectivism. Experience is the important factor in life. Folk Muslims are syncretistic and do not follow one path in their quest for God. The mystics have often no social concern. The vertical is sought at the expense of the horizontal.

Parshall brings out the fact that Islamic mysticism is the reason many Muslims are open to prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. He also underscores that healing in the name of Christ can be a bridge to reach Muslims for Christ, as faith healing is well known in Islam.

Parshall pleads with evangelical Christians to develop a greater vision for spiritual needs of the Muslim. He writes, "Do evangelical Christians really care about Muslims? Perhaps less than 5 percent of our missionary staff is assigned to Muslim countries. Approximately one-sixth of the world's population is Islamic. Certainly our response to the Muslim challenge has been grossly inadequate."

Over the years I have read and reviewed a fair number of books on Islam. But seldom have I come across such an outstanding book as Parshall's. Fascinating and soul stirring reading!

Dr. Phil Parshall has been a missionary among Muslim people for the past twenty-three years. He has also written *The Fortress and the Fire* and *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism*.

Johan D. Tangelder