

## **Islamisation of Europe (6)**

Will Islam dominate Europe? Will Muslim immigrants eventually integrate and assimilate in their host countries? As we discuss the implication of Islamisation of Europe, we must keep in mind that we are not talking about Arabs and Muslims who not only want to assimilate but also are actively in flight from repressive Islamists regimes. But the terrorist attacks in several European countries perpetrated in the name of Islam have caused increasing suspicion and distrust. Many Muslims have been deeply shaken by terrorist attacks, especially because on each occasion this violence has been linked to their religion. We know that not every Muslim is an Islamist or a terrorist. However, every terrorist has been a Muslim.

### **The Failure of Integration**

How well have Muslim immigrants succeeded in integrating themselves in their host countries? They are often greeted with the same shariah-inspired mayhem that they left behind in their country of origin. From England to Holland to France, many European Muslims have managed to segregate themselves from society at large and maintain harsh traditions ill-suited to the West. For example, their Shariah concept of law and medieval customs are becoming increasingly common in the heart of Europe. Since Islam dominates every sphere of life, it cannot function well in a democratic society. All areas of life are regulated. There is a very marked subordination of women to men. Young women have been killed for dating non-Muslims. One of the most shocking examples of this new reality occurred in Sweden in 2002, when a Kurdish woman was killed by her father for having a romantic relationship with a Swedish man.

### **The Loss of Freedom**

If Europe does not return to its spiritual roots, it will lose its freedoms. The fact is, there can be no free political community without the foundation of a moral community, a community of shared moral commitments based on the Bible. But these shared commitments have disappeared. Many Europeans are no longer certain about their own spiritual and cultural roots. They have apparently forgotten how indebted they are to a Christian world and life view, which had given them the societal virtues of human dignity, justice, religious freedom and compassion. There is no longer a public norm in which an in-depth discussion can take place about truth. Postmodernism has taken its toll. When truth no longer has any meaning, what is there to discuss; what then is the meaning of life?

### **Loss of Missionary Zeal**

One of the great tragedies is the failure of the Church to carry out her mission. Nineteenth century Europe saw missionaries leave for far away countries to preach and teach the Gospel. But in the twentieth century the churches became too involved with

the past and too little with the future. What happened to their missionary zeal? Europe, the richest continent in historical maturity, in people, in financial resources, became the only continent where the number of Christians is decreasing constantly. But at the same time Europe's Muslim population is increasing rapidly, not only through immigration but also through outreach. Islam is a "missionary" faith, determined to win converts. For example, Islamist proselytism flourishes in the prisons of France (where 60 percent of the inmates are of immigrant origin), as it does in British prisons.

### **A Mission Opportunity**

The Islamisation of Europe poses a threat for the Church, but it also offers a chance to present Muslims with the Gospel. Opportunities to evangelize are increasingly available, but there are still not enough workers. Pate Cate noted in the journal of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, "It really can be said that Islam is the most studied and least evangelized religion." But reaching Muslims with the Gospel has always been one of the most difficult missionary tasks.

### **The Koran**

Christians and Muslims differ in their understanding of the Sacred Scriptures. The Koran is not like the books of the Old and New Testaments. It is not thought to be "inspired", to be related through intermediaries such as the prophets or apostles. While Christians understand the Bible to be "both the Word of God and the words of men inspired by God", Muslims believe the Koran contains the unvarnished teachings of Allah, dictated directly to Mohammed by the archangel Gabriel in the Arabic language.

The Koran opposes assimilation and integration. The Jesus of the Koran is not the Saviour of the world. He did not die on the cross for the salvation of sinners. Islam is in principle a closed world, which conquers other cultures and penetrates them. It has no room for religious freedom in a democratic society. The Koran rejects accommodation while Muhammad demanded for himself accommodation and acceptance of his view. This belief has always created a barrier for mission activity among Muslims. The fact is that the commitment to Christ inevitably involves commitment to the authority of the Bible. When a Muslim inquirer is confronted with the claims of Christ through the Scripture, he is faced with a choice: He must either commit himself to the Bible and the Biblical view of Christ, and forsake the Koran, or commit himself to the Koran and the Koranic view of Christ and reject the Scriptures.

### **Apostasy**

The risks for Muslims who become Christians are real, including, in some cases, for those who share the Gospel with them. Many Muslims concerned with Islam's image in the West vehemently insist that Islam proclaims religious tolerance and freedom, as if the law of apostasy never existed or is now obsolete. But the Islamic law of apostasy is not a relic of the past; it is quite alive and well. And the penalty for "apostasy" - changing one's religion - is death. In *The Punishment of the Apostate According to Islamic Law*,

Abdul Ala Mawdudi (1903-1979), a Pakistani deeply immersed in the planning and formation of Pakistan and in the revival and renewal of Islam throughout the Muslim world, states. "To everyone acquainted with Islamic law it is no secret that according to Islam the punishment for a Muslim who turns to *kufr* (infidelity, blasphemy) is execution." Abdul calls apostasy "a matter of treason and ideological treachery which originates from hostility and hypocrisy."

It is imperative that Christians, especially with the intensifying orthodox Islamic revival throughout the world and the continued growth of Islam in the West, become familiar with this law. This law of apostasy is a symptom of a strong and pervasive traditional Muslim attitude, religious and political, toward non-Muslims and the non-Islamic world. We should try to understand those Muslims whose attitudes and actions have been shaped by Islam's traditional law of apostasy. When we do, we may begin to grasp the cost which a convert may have to pay to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The law of apostasy is one of the greatest obstacles for effective ministries among Muslims. In various parts of the world, converts (their numbers are significant) have endured persecutions physically and psychologically, at times violent. Oftentimes the threats of death and injury have been so complete that the actual deed has not been necessary. For example, while a Muslim family will seldom kill a daughter who converts to Christianity, the fear of this possibility will often lead to the desired result of keeping her from following Christ. Some converts are tortured. Few in traditional Muslim countries escape unscathed. Even some converts from Islam in the West exercise caution, fearing possible retaliation upon themselves or even their families in their native lands. But it is a sad commentary that in countries where Islam rules, Christians struggle to stay alive, while in the West, Muslims are free to proselytize and grow and are taking advantage of Western religious tolerance in order to expand their base for world dominance.

### **Cultural Barriers**

New converts often face nearly insurmountable difficulties. A former Muslim, who has grown up with the security of the family network, begins to look to the church for help but usually finds little. The community of saints in Western churches often does not function too well. In the Islamic culture, the extended family provides jobs, training, housing, food, insurance, etc., to its own. In our Western society we look to the government (Nanny State) to supply those needs. Thus, the new convert is left without a real support foundation. At a recent high-level conference on Middle East evangelism, one authority stated that approximately 80 percent of all converts return to Islam, not because of theological consideration but because of cultural needs.

### **Our Mandate**

Conservative Reformed churches with a passion for missions and holistic ministries are needed. But there is an even greater need! How often do we pray for the churches in Europe? Prayer is of the highest importance. It is of greater value than all kinds of

international political conferences. And the European mainline churches need to shed their liberalism and return to a consistent commitment to the historic view of the inspiration of Scripture. What is more detrimental to the cause of missions than casting doubt on the message you wish to bring? The Dutch missiologist Dr. J. H. Bavinck remarked that each question of Biblical criticism, each suggestion that a Bible writer may have been mistaken, is a hindrance when you stand in front of a Muslim or another nationality, who comes into contact with the Gospel for the first time. The church's mandate still is the proclamation of the Word of God. Because in this Word is the Christ of God, to Whom has been given all power both in heaven and on earth.

### **Conclusion**

From the human perspective, it seems that Islam is on the winning side. Our Western civilization may be crumbling right around us. But this is not a time for despair. Islam will not have the last word. This is still God's world, the world of the King of creation and recreation. He will make all things new in His time. In *Where Do We Stand? An Examination of the Christian's Position in the Modern World*, Harry Blamires makes the essential point that "the Christian vocation is always to be a citizen of another kingdom, and therefore to live uneasily in the kingdom of the world." He reminds us that this was St. Augustine's conclusion when he heard that Rome had been sacked. As we are living in very similar circumstances to Augustine's, we are called upon to remain steadfast in the faith, and to remember that here we have no continuing city. We are on the way to the City of God, which human beings did not build and cannot destroy, whose citizens we are of right, and whose citizenship runs for ever.

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