

**New Paths in Muslim Evangelism: Evangelical Approaches to Contextualization** by Phil Parshall. Published by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich., Distributed by G.R. Welch Co. Ltd., 960 Gateway, Burlington, ON L7L 5k7. Paperback 278 pp.

Should Muslim converts call themselves “followers of Isa” instead of Christians? How does a missionary reach a Temne Muslim in Sierra Leone, whose house has symbols of three religions on the lintel of the doorway. At the top is printed a Temne Christian text; underneath, a cloth on which is tied a metal symbol, and beneath that, a paper printed with Islam texts. What about the life-style of the missionary? Even the most pitiable, poverty stricken new missionary appears quite wealthy to the national Christians of most Third World Nations. How does a missionary adapt to the culture and language of the country in which he is working?

Dr. Parshall raises provocative issues as he struggles with the two major problems confronting anyone endeavouring to communicate the Gospel to Muslims. First, there has been the failure to separate the kernel of the Gospel from the cultural shell in which it is brought. Second, the Gospel can become so accommodated to values, thought patterns and cultural forces of Muslim society that it is turned into: another gospel”.

Dr. Parshall’s eighteen year missionary experience in the Muslim world has made him impatient with traditional approaches, which have too often proved ineffective in bringing Muslims to Christ. Now we must be ready to experiment with cultural adaptation, which are both Biblical and workable in presenting the Gospel to the Muslims. The Gospel of Christ must be attractively proclaimed within the context of any given people. As the missionary experiments, he must remember that there is no ultimate methodology, but only an ultimate message. Be willing to change tactics, have an open mind, set aside pride and avoid paternalism.

The author focuses on popular Islam. The orthodox Muslims in rural areas are the author’s target group in a predominantly Islam country. The book also cites illustrations of ministries among Muslims around the world.

Dr. Parshall gives a well-informed insight into the Muslim’s world and life view. He states that the Muslim world-view is broadly uniform in the midst of ethnic, linguistic, geographical, and cultural diversity. A whole chapter is devoted to comparing the Western Christian view with Old Testament and Muslim world-views. This chapter alone makes the book a must for anyone interested in broadening his understanding of the Muslim world.

Unnecessary cultural trappings must be removed. But may we resort to pragmatism in our attempt to adapt the Gospel message? Parshall advocates circumcision for all male children as an important part of identification for the convert’s children to have with Muslims. He wonders whether the convert church would not function best with maximum autonomy for each congregation, without administrative structures and

leadership hierarchy. This model would parallel fairly closely to that of the Mosque. As proposals are made, little Scripture support is given.

New Paths in Muslim Evangelism should be read not only by every prospective missionary, it is also good reading for evangelism committees as they search for ways to adapt the Gospel message in their respective communities. A fine sensitive work!

Johan D. Tangelder