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MERF News

Middle East Reformed Fellowship—“Declaring the Whole Counsel of God”

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Do Muslims Need Christ or Christianity?

BY PASTOR VICTOR ATALLAH

Recently, a young Muslim government official told me that my English first name did not harmonize with my Arabic last name. He assumed from my last name that I am Muslim. I just pointed to my gold wedding band and he understood, since Muslim men usually don't wear gold.

Uninformed Christians make similar assumptions. For example, it is largely assumed that all Arabs are Muslims. Even many Muslims are unaware that at least 10% of Arabic-speaking people call themselves Christian. Only a few generations ago the percentage was double or triple or more, with large concentrations of confessing Christians in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine and northern Sudan. Likewise most Western and other Christians assume that



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all Muslims are the same. Most do not realize how divergent and even divided Muslims are.

Man-made Religion

To my surprise, the Muslim government official who questioned my name wanted me to know that personally he is neither religious nor interested in any religion. When I said that

Christ didn't come to establish a religion, he looked puzzled and asked, “What about Christianity?”

I answered, “That is another man-made religion. Much of it violates Christ's life and teaching as well as what He came to our world to do. Christ neither authorized nor blessed it!”

This led to a discussion on what people call “Christianity” and how it differs from the biblical faith. Becoming aware of this distinction is vital. It lies at the heart of MERF's strategy for media outreach to Muslims. All Christians interested in sharing the gospel with Muslims need to keep this in mind.

Obstacle

Confusing “Christianity” with the gospel remains a

great obstacle. It negatively impacts carrying out the Great Commission among Muslims. Most Muslims identify the West as “Christian” and assume that Western culture expresses Christian values and lifestyle. So, the decadent and promiscuous life patterns promoted in the Western media are identified with “Christianity.” Also, many Muslims view modern western politics as the religious and political agenda of Christians and Jews to jointly undermine their religion and nations. Popular Western expressions like “Judeo-Christian values” distract from Christ's unique and life-changing ministry to our fallen humanity.

The Muslim official had heard about and admired Christ's teaching on love and forgiveness. Yet, like many educated Muslims, he does not see such ideals in “Christianity!” Sadly, confusing cultural

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“For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”

— Galatians 6:15-16



“Christianity” with the biblical message results in Muslim resistance to the gospel. Many even assume that Christianity supports wars with an agenda to dominate and enslave others. They point to the Crusades, medieval church conquests and recent Western involvement in regional conflicts.

Spiritual Kingdom

A Muslim acquaintance recently asked if it is true that Christ would literally return to establish an earthly Jewish kingdom with Jerusalem as his capital. I told him of Jesus’ teaching about the spiritual nature of his kingdom (John 18:36).

God’s people are now composed of all races. They are the “new creation” who make up the citizenship of the Israel of God (Galatians 3:26-29, 6:15-16).

He needed to know how earthly Jerusalem was a fallen earthly type which Christ replaced by the heavenly Jerusalem (Galatians 4:24-26, Revelation 21:2-3).

Some Christians promote the idea that Jerusalem and the land of Israel/Palestine are “holy places” vital to

Christian religious life. This misconception distracts many from giving ear to the Bible’s teaching on the true meaning of the “kingdom of God.”

My friend listened intently and replied that this contradicted what other Christians say. He added: “Let us agree that you have your religion

the true biblical message that the earthly nation was a necessary conduit for God’s plan for a universal kingdom of believers through Abraham’s promised “SEED” (OFFSPRING) -- Christ himself.

This and other Arabic broadcasts correct popular misconceptions. Biblical

instruction continues to generate exciting responses from many Muslims. A Palestinian school teacher from Jordan said: “...I am persuaded that Christ’s message fulfilled the divine religion of our father Abraham... This made me free from all other religions...”



Christ’s warning - No one can serve two masters - Luke 16:13

and I have mine... Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, is a heavenly religion; it also has an enshrined holy right to Jerusalem...” We must pray for him and other Muslims as well as Christians, Jews and others to have their minds and hearts focused on the truly liberating Christ of the Bible (John 8: 34-38).

An Arabic conversational series of broadcasts entitled “Abraham’s Nation” is available online. It clarifies

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