

The Operation Reveille Shofar

"AND JOSHUA FELL ON HIS FACE TO THE EARTH, AND DID WORSHIP." (JOS. 5:14)

Body Languages Project Cultural Imperialism and Constrain Christian Witness

by Bruce Sidebotham

Imagine listening to a sermon by a man wearing lipstick and eye shadow. Imagine a pastor in a ball cap leading congregational prayer. Imagine girls in bikinis leading praise and worship.

Just as religious convictions may be expressed propositionally with symbols called words, they may also be communicated nonverbally with body language. Just like sounds mean different things in different languages, clothes and actions mean different things in different cultures. Today we scorn Latin speaking medieval Roman Catholicism for outlawing Bible translations and worship liturgies in native languages, yet we often practice the same kind of ethnocentrism with respect to body language.

American men show reverence by taking off their hats, but Middle Easterners show reverence by taking off their shoes. Americans honor one another by standing up, but Middle Easterners honor another by bowing down. American Christians pray with hands folded, heads bowed, and eyes closed but Middle Eastern Muslims pray with cupped hands, uplifted heads, and open eyes.

Most Christians consider their own non-verbal conventions to be the "right" ones. Such attitudes caused the first recorded church fight. Men from Judea were teaching the new Gentile believers

in Antioch that they had to follow the cultural traditions of the Jews (Acts 15). On a survey of ministry leaders in Colorado Springs nearly all who indicated that worship in spirit and in truth should avoid set forms and rituals also felt strongly that men should take off their hats to pray.

In Indonesia, Christians will generally not fellowship with converts from Islam unless they abandon more than just Muslim beliefs. They must renounce head coverings, dietary disciplines, and everything that is culturally Middle Eastern. Curiously, the body language of early Christians was much closer to that used in Islam than it is to the dress and movements used by Christians today. For example, Paul exhorted first century women to remain silent in mixed assemblies and to cover their heads when praying (1Cor. 11:4).

Since God desires worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24), non-verbal elements should express spiritual reality according to the prevailing vernacular



"And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed." Mt. 26:39

body language. However, indigenous body language can be misused. It may become a gimmick to make seekers comfortable or a trick to camouflage secret believers from discovery. Some non-verbals (i.e. temple prostitution) are so inextricably linked to pagan meanings that they must be avoided.

Debate rages in missionary circles over how thoroughly indigenous practices may be accommodated. Historic solutions may be grouped into three major categories: extraction, crusade, and incarnation.

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL CHRISTIAN WITNESS

IDEAS FOR STARTING RELATIONSHIPS WITH MUSLIMS

SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPE OF THE CAUCASUS THEATER

INFORMATION ON SOME STRATEGIC MINISTRY RESOURCES

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Extraction removes individuals from their cultural context. They not only believe like us, they also look and act like us. Extracted converts often become trophies and are put on display by the receiving Christian community. Occasionally extracted converts will try to help at extracting others. The extraction process usually heightens hostilities between the Christian and non-Christian cultures.

The crusade solution uses coercion or manipulation to subdue whole communities rather than just individuals. Charlemagne forcefully converted whole tribes of white America's European ancestors. Medical care and famine relief are great ministry tools, but they can also create "rice Christians." Crusade-like attitudes in evangelism result in outward conformity without inward transformation. In 1996, many Rwandan pastors and bishops enthusiastically promoted genocidal butchery between predominantly Christian Hutu and Tutsi tribes.

Incarnation tries to copy what God did in Jesus. Just as God became man without losing his divine identity, the church empties itself of ethnocentric forms, rituals, privileges, and prerogatives to accommodate and enter a new culture without losing its inherent nature, reality, and function.



Many cultures avoid furniture in meetings because it sometimes elevates one person above another.

For example, Easter was once a festival dedicated to a pagan fertility goddess named Eastre in English, Ishtar in Persian, and Ashtoreth in the Old Testament (note the fertility symbols of eggs and rabbits). Christmas came from a Roman festival honoring the harvest god, Saturn (note the centrality of material abundance). Even our English word "God" comes from a pagan word totally absent from the original Biblical languages.

Once predominantly Middle Eastern and Jewish in cultural expression, the body of Christ has been truly incarnated into modern Western culture. As Christianity has transformed European

culture, it has also been corrupted. Can we allow and even promote Christianity's reincarnation into Middle Eastern culture without extraneous European cultural baggage?

The most fundamental crisis facing the world today is an identity crisis. Summarizing today's geopolitical landscape in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, Samuel P. Huntington writes, "We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know who we are against" (p. 21). Of all the objective elements which people use to define themselves, Huntington says religion is the most important (p. 41).

In a globalizing world of great suffering and rapid change, standardized religious forms provide comfortable foundations for personal sanity and community security. Foreign religions are not only misunderstood, but they also threaten personal safety and community stability in most of the non-Western world.

By using the body language of culture the way they have used native language Scriptures, Christians can create a cross-cultural identity in Christ that transcends ethnic and civilizational rivalries, proving once again that Jesus really is the Prince of Peace for the whole world.

BOOK REVIEW

Daughters of Islam: Building Bridges with Muslim Women

by Miriam Adeney, PhD. InterVarsity Press USA, 2002

by Marguerite Duerr

This book is thrilling. The author tells human stories with scholarship and skill. She unveils the cultural expression of God's love to Muslim women. She applies secular research to cross-cultural ministry and shows how to share God's truth effectively.

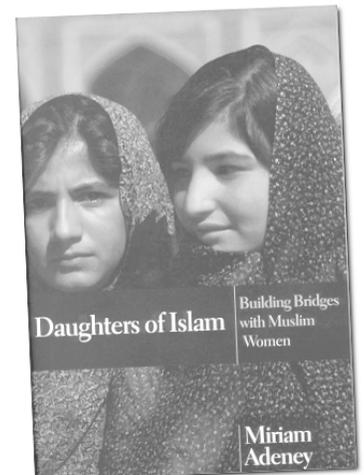
Daughters of Islam reminds us that even with contemporary research and zeal to bring all women to Christ, we must not neglect the basic disciplines of faith. We must remain faithful in "Bible study, prayer, fellowship, holiness, love, perseverance" to be prepared to act when and how God reveals.

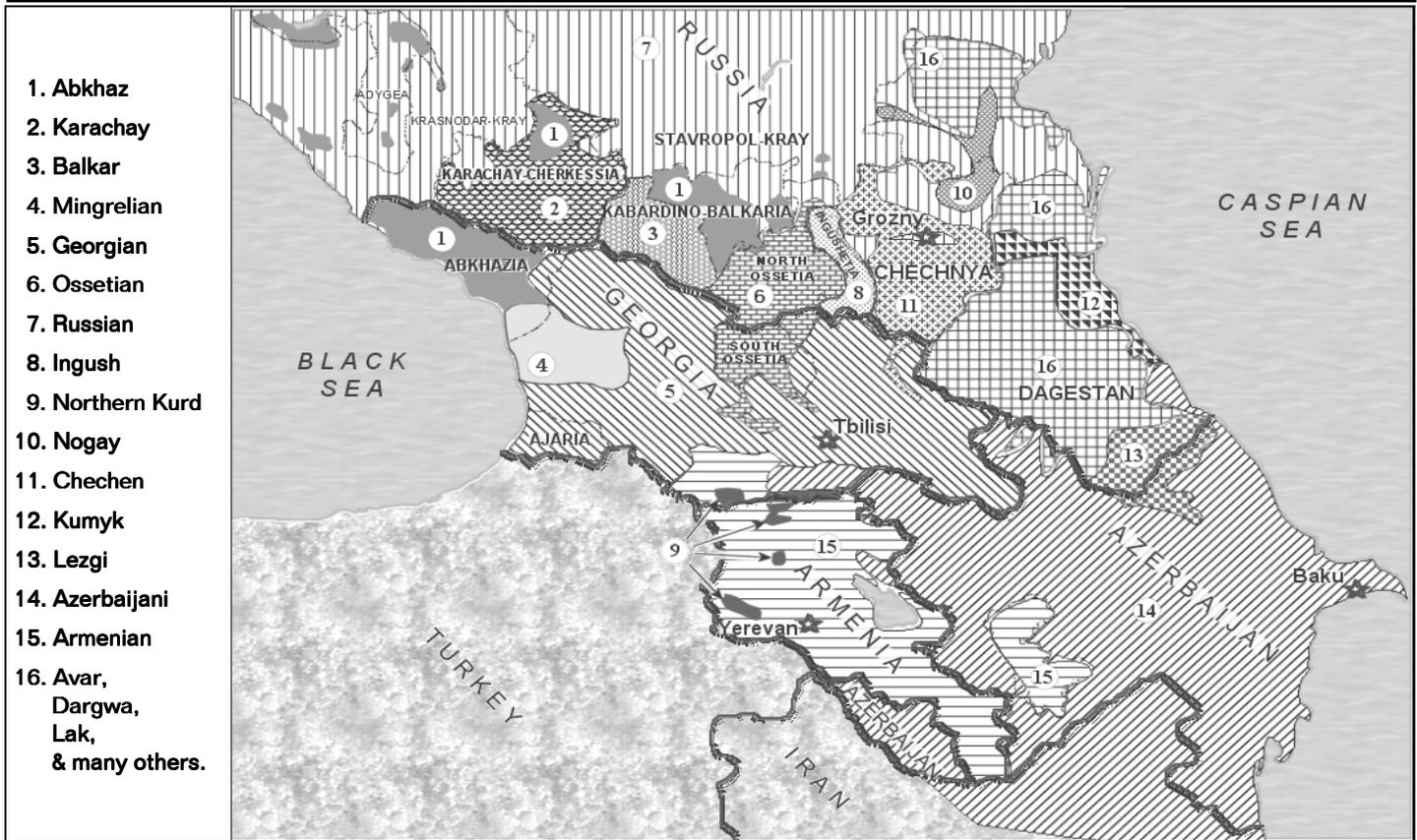
"Loving the Lord with my mind means studying culture patterns and applying my findings to missions," Miriam tells us.

Fifteen or so case histories show how to minister to Muslim women in different national and cultural arenas.

Simin's story is especially heartbreaking. She has heard God's voice and felt his love surround her, but when confronted with the gospel cries out, "If this is what you wanted to show me, God, then I shouldn't have started looking for you. This is like asking me to take off my clothes and run across the grass naked." Having grown up in the church, this speaks to me of the great faith Muslim converts must have, and the depth of deception that must be overcome.

Ministries to women and Muslims recommend this book. It is available from <www.harvestlogos.com>





Ethnic Group	Population	Religious Affiliation Percent			Scriptures	Gospel Radio	Jesus Video	Notes
		Non-relig.	Christian	Muslim				
Abkhaz	810,000	17	60	23	whole Bible	yes	no	Orthodox & Sunni, autonomous in Georgia
Armenian	4,600,000	30	70	-	whole Bible	yes	yes	Armenian Orthodox, homeland is Armenia
Avar	501,000	-	-	100	portions	no	yes	Sunni Islam, homeland in Dagestan
Azerbaijani	6,273,000	10	-	90	whole Bible	yes	yes	70% Shia, 30% Sunni, 10 million live in Iran
Balkar	71,000	-	-	100	New Test.	no	yes	Sunni, homeland in Kabardino-Balkaria
Chechen	792,000	37	-	63	portions	no	no	Sunni, fighting for independent homeland
Dargwa	282,000	-	-	100	portions	no	yes	Sunni, homeland in Dagestan
Georgian	3,479,000	18	77	5	whole Bible	yes	yes	Orthodox & Sunni, homeland is Georgia
Ingush	197,000	-	-	100	portions	no	no	Sunni, homeland is Inguishetia
Karachay	276,000	-	-	100	New Test.	no	yes	Sunni, homeland is Karachay-Cherkessia
Kumyk	251,000	-	-	100	New Test.	no	yes	Sunni, homeland in Dagestan
Lak	92,000	-	-	100	portions	no	yes	Sunni, homeland in Dagestan
Lezgi	367,000	-	-	100	portions	no	no	Sunni, homeland in Dagestan
Mingrelian	300,000	-	1	99	none	no	no	Sunni, homeland in Georgia
Nogay	77,000	-	-	100	New Test.	no	no	Sunni, Crimean Tartar in Dagestan
Northern Kurd	102,000	1	-	99	New Test.	no	yes	mostly Shia, also Yazidi & some Sunni
Ossetian	509,000	10	50	40	New Test.	no	yes	Orthodox & Sunni, autonomous in Georgia
Russian	8,645,000	35	65	-	whole Bible	yes	yes	Russian Orthodox

Population data is from National Geographic, February 1996. Other data is from the World Christian Encyclopedia, 2000 ed.

Clashing Civilizations Breed Extremism and Ministry Opportunities

Ancient Sunni Ottoman, Shiite Persian, and Orthodox Russian civilizations converge in the ethnically diverse and oil rich valleys between the Black and Caspian seas. Resulting conflicts fuel fanaticism, threaten national security, and are finally attracting American military and media attention.

Is the church going to start paying attention too? Does God prioritize preserving our lifestyle, or does he have something else in mind?

Jesus can soften hardened hearts and open closed minds that block systemic changes and lasting peace. God uses his people and orchestrates history not to preserve the American dream, but to get the gospel demonstrated and proclaimed in every nation to all people.



RESOURCE CONTACT INFORMATION

Resource	Contact Info
<i>Online Scriptures:</i> (Azerbaijani, Russian, Kurdish, Armenian)	< www.ethnicharvest.org/bibles >
<i>Gospel Radio Broadcasting:</i>	frequencies & times (UTC) posted at < www.febc.org/phptest.wbr >
<i>Audio:</i> Audio Scriptures International Global Recordings Network	1-760-745-8105 < www.gospelcom.net/asi > 1-888-444-7872 < http://members.aol.com/glorenet/ >
<i>Videos:</i> JESUS Film Project Multi-Language.Com	1-800-560-8713 < www.jesusfilm.org > 1-717-738-0582 < www.multilanguage.com >
<i>Scriptures:</i> International Bible Society American Bible Society Scripture Gift Mission	1-800-524-1588 < www.gospelcom.net/ibs > 1-800-322-4253 < www.americanbible.org > 1-877-873-2746 < www.gospelcom.net/asgm >
<i>Books & Tracts:</i> Multi-Language Media Four Spiritual Laws (Avar, Kumyk, Russian) Fellowship Tract League (Georgian, Russian)	1-717-738-0582 < www.multilanguage.com > < www.greatcom.org/laws/languages.html > < www.biblebelievers.com/FTL1.html >
<i>People Profile Videos (Azerbaijan):</i>	1-303-730-4170 < www.CalebProject.org/peoplev.htm >
<i>Online Ministry Resource Directory:</i>	< www.missionresources.com >
<i>Expatriate Christian Fellowship in Georgia:</i> Tbilisi International Christian Fellowship	Point of Contact (David) e-mail: 112101.1451@compuserve.com home phone: 32-33 81, cell phone: 899-58-49 66

MINISTRY CONTACT INFORMATION

Ministry	Agency	Contact Info
Service and Support	Open Doors Engineering Ministry International Every Home for Christ	1-949-752-6600 < www.sufferingchurch.org > 1-719-633-2078 < www.emiusa.org > 1-800-423-5054 < www.ehc.org >
Monitor Religious Persecution	Voice of the Martyrs Jubilee Campaign	1-918-337-8015 < www.persecution.com > 1-703-503-0791 < www.jubileecampaign.org >
Relief & Development Ministry	World Vision Salvation Army in Georgia Salvation Army in Russia	1-888-511-6598 < www.worldvision.org > Georgia_Region@caucasus.net russia@rus.salvationarmy.org
"Tentmaking" Job Placement	InterServe Mission to Unreached Peoples	1-610-352-0581 < www.interserve.org > 1-888-847-6950 < www.mup.org >
Ministry to Expatriates	World Evangelical Fellowship	1-630-668-0440 < www.worldevangelical.org >
Evangelism & Church Planting	Frontiers Strategic Frontiers of YWAM SBC Int'l Mission Board	1-800 GO-2-THEM < www.frontiers.org > 1-719-527-9594 < www.sfcos.org > 1-888-422-6461 < www.imb.org >

Your donation helps provide this free information to military Christians.

Here Are Some Ways to Befriend Muslims

by Bruce Sidebotham

God brings Muslims to America and sends Americans to Muslim countries for good reasons.



Nations are mingling for good reasons.

In his letter to the Romans Paul asks, "How can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?"

With Christians and Muslims getting "sent" all over in today's world, how can Christians "preach" the gospel to Muslims? Here are some principles and ideas.

First, we need to understand that "preaching" is also non-verbal. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you [preach] the Lord's death until he comes." Our behavior towards Muslims needs to support our gospel message.

Second, we need to understand that a lot of "preaching" (verbal and non-verbal) gets misunderstood because the cultures are so different. For example, different postures for praise and worship make Christians appear arrogant and blasphemous to most Muslims.

Third, in order to counteract misunderstanding that proceeds from cultural distance, we need to cultivate revealing personal relationships. Here are some ideas to help us reach beyond mutual misunderstanding and suspicion.

Use Holidays

Besides some vague recollection that Muslims spend a month in fasting, most Americans are clueless about holidays in Islam. When have you heard, for example, about Islam's second holiest

day when they sacrifice livestock animals by slitting their throats and bleeding them to death publicly? When and how do Muslims celebrate their New Year (which is different than ours), Muhammad's birthday, Muhammad's exile, Muhammad's ascension, and the Koran's delivery?

We expect public respect for Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter, but what respect have we given to others?

Just as Christians fill their holiday seasons with celebration, generosity, and outreach, Muslims also want to win friends and influence people during their holidays. Therefore, these present excellent opportunities for interacting and starting relationships.

Use Multimedia

To Muslims, the Bible is corrupted. Reading it is sin. It and the Koran disagree. Both are just texts on a page. Printed Christian products, therefore, arouse suspicion and fan hostility, because they symbolically challenge their counterpart, the Koran.

Islam forbids religious art and music. Christian multimedia has no counterpart in Islam. As a result, its threat is not perceived.

Muslims devour Western entertainment. They cannot produce comparable quality. They will enjoy Christian music for hours and watch videos about Old

Testament prophets over and over. Packages of entertaining multimedia will be appreciated as house and farewell gifts whatever their content. Even the Scriptures, in audio form alone, can be much more readily tolerated.

Use Prayer

Of course we should pray for our Muslim friends and neighbors and

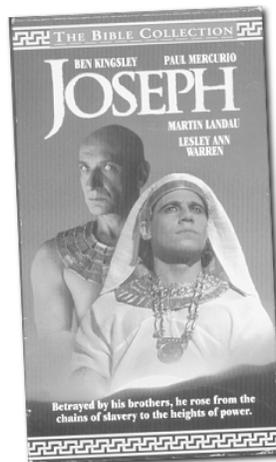
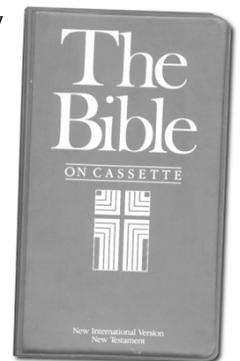
for our witness to them, but I mean something much more. Pray *with* them! And do it in Jesus' name.

Public school administrators get crazy when Christians pray, but Muslims do not. Muslims also pray.

Muslims see us as extensions of our non-believing materialist culture. Muslims know the physical and spiritual worlds are interconnected. Praying with them shows that we are different from the culture around us. It shows that we believe God is relevant too. It also demonstrates concern that helps to build good relationships.

Use Identification

Just as God became a man, we must enter Muslim space in order to communicate with them. Muslims may be coming to America, but they are not coming to us. Just as the comforts of earth were inferior to the glories of heaven for Jesus, no one else's customs seem as natural as our own. Awkwardness is inevitable. Sacrifice is necessary.



Show Compassion

If Muslims were looking for coherent historical, scientific, philosophical, and theological systems, they would not be Muslims. Arguments do not faze them. Dependence, fear, and intimidation demand their unconditional allegiance. Scientifically investigating the facts would betray loyalty. Inspiring doubt just leads to more violence and bondage by heightening dependence and fear. Forced conformity and standardized religious rituals masquerade as the brotherhood and love which all Muslims highly value.

Muslims are yearning for brotherhood, yet little in the Muslim world is more elusive. Love, without strings and expectations, flowing from our own independence, security, and freedom will lead them to brotherhood that comes from sonship.

NEWS

Religious Tensions Rise in Georgia

by Mark Albrecht, in World Evangelical Alliance's Religious Liberty Conference

A defrocked Orthodox priest in Georgia known as "Father Basil" has been persecuting Protestants and others for several years. The situation has recently careened out of control and is attracting international attention.

Father Basil Mkalavishvili regards all non-Orthodox Christians as "un-believers" and schismatic "evangelists," who preach a heretical form of Christianity that opposes the Orthodox faith which dominates Georgia. His followers, somewhat like a Christian militia, have attacked other Christians with frequent and brutal regularity.

"People are being beaten up, including pregnant women," said Bishop Malkhaz Songulashvili of the Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia. "Bones are broken, Bibles are burned, property is destroyed and money is stolen. People even have their heads shaved by his followers to humiliate them."

World Evangelical Alliance's correspondent in Georgia reports, "Father Mkalavishvili has proclaimed 'a protection of the Orthodox Church in Georgia.' He has demanded a new law

to close all Protestant churches. He has some 100-plus 'guerrilla' fighters who actually attack people with wooden crosses, which they use as weapons. Many Christians have been wounded and even bitten in these attacks. For example, on Sunday, 3 Feb 02, the Orthodox priest Vasili Mkalavishvili and a group of about 150 people broke into a warehouse owned by the Baptist Church and used by United Bible Society, and they burned Bibles and Christian literature."

On 9 Mar 02, Protestants banded together and brought a complaint before the Office of the Public Defender, citing the religious freedoms outlined in the new post-Soviet constitution.

While this case is still pending, the Helsinki Commission was concerned enough with the situation that it fired off a letter to Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze on the 15 May. It reads in part, "Alarmed by reports of continued organized mob violence against minority religious groups, we want to express our concern about the apparent inability of your government to end the attacks

and provide adequate redress. Permitting these ongoing and egregious violations eviscerates Georgia's commitments as a participating State in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). We urge you to take concrete steps to provide for the security of all Georgians without distinction as to religion."

The report was signed by 15 U.S. senators and congressmen. The full text may be seen at . . .

<www.csce.gov/press_csce.cfm?press_id=232>

Keston News Service reports, "Defrocked Orthodox priest Father Vasily Mkalavishvili and his supporters disrupted a press conference on 26 Jan at the ombudsman's office in the Georgian capital Tbilisi, where a petition calling for an end to his reign of terror was being presented, and on the same day launched a series of attacks on Jehovah's Witnesses in Tbilisi. He has targeted Protestant Christians too, but several Protestant leaders declined to allow Keston News Service to report incidents of harassment, fearing possible repercussions.

WEB SITE & OPPORTUNITY

<www.febc.org/phptest/wbr/>

This site allows you to query a database of international gospel shortwave radio broadcast schedules and frequencies for hundreds of languages. Check it before traveling overseas and be prepared to share the information with taxi drivers and hotel clerks.

Hope For Afghanistan Conference

6-12 July 2002

Horizons International is sponsoring this conference on Ministry in Afghanistan in Boulder, Colorado.

For more information, contact Tim Fox at 1-303-442-3333 or Joseph Lopez at 1-303-774-5141.

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**Operation
REVELLE**
a ministry of
Mission to Unreached Peoples

Training and equipping military Christians for cross-cultural ministry



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The Operation Reveille Shofar is a FREE quarterly resource.

Donation checks to help with publication and distribution costs can be made out to Mission to Unreached Peoples.