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Human Nature and Sin

by J. Dudley Woodberry

Doctors base their prescriptions for cures on their diagnoses of the problems they observe. Traditionally Muslims have not diagnosed the problem of human nature as being as critical as have Christians. Consequently, they have not seen the need for as radical a solution.

The Common Muslim Diagnosis of Human Nature

The East African Muslim, Badru Kateregga, notes that "Muslims believe that man is fundamentally a good and dignified creature. He is not a fallen being."

The late Isma'il al-Faruqi goes on to affirm, "Islam denies, therefore, that God had to ransom humanity by means of oblation and sacrifice."

Muslims support these views with such Qur'anic verses as in *Surah 30:30*, which speaks of "the state of natural purity (*fitra*) in which He created people." Al-Bukhari, the leading compiler of traditions about Muhammad, attributes to him the saying, "No child is born except in the state of natural purity and then his parents make him Jewish, Christian, or Magian."

This optimistic view of human nature finds additional support in one Qur'anic account of the Adam and Eve story. *Surah 20:115* says, "We [God] made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot, and we

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Speaking on Behalf of Muslims

How, then, 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? (Romans 10:14)



Ron Peck, Director
Center for Ministry to Muslims

Earlier this year, CMM team member Paul Parks and I went to Indonesia to minister at two of our Bible colleges. Though some friends were concerned for our safety, I knew this was God's time. It turned out to be one of the best trips I have had this year. We were able to share our burden and concern for Muslims with more than 200 students and pastors.

The problems in Indonesia were very evident. Major forest fires blazed out of control, polluting the atmosphere of several Southeast Asian nations. The critical economic situation had reduced the value of the local currency so much, the common people were struggling just to buy food. And though it had not been covered by Western media, the great strife that had existed between Muslims and Christians for years had resulted in a great number of Christian churches and businesses being burned by angry Muslim mobs.

It's wonderful to realize that in times of unrest and suffering, the hearts of many people turn to God.

As I reflect on this trip today, some very strong images stand out in my mind. These images remind me that we need to earnestly pray for our Christian brothers and sisters who are living in such difficult places.

It's wonderful to realize that in times of unrest and suffering, the hearts of many people turn to God. I believe that the national tragedies that are reported in the morning newspaper or on the evening news often indicate places in the world where the Spirit of God is at work in unusual ways. We can always expect testimonies of God's goodness occurring amidst such tragedies.

One such testimony concerns a 20-year-old Sundanese Muslim girl in Indonesia who accepted Christ as her Savior. Because she still lived at home, this young lady shared her new-found faith with her family.

There are many hot spots of strife and unrest in our world today, and I am personally convinced that God is at work in all of them.

She was deeply saddened by the rejection and hostility her family displayed—especially her father's great anger toward her. However, this rejection did not cause her to turn back. In fact, she told her Christian friends that she was believing that her entire family would accept Christ during her first month as a believer. That was certainly a noble wish, but her Christian friends knew that it was something that almost never happened.

Three weeks of the first month passed and the situation had not changed at all. Three more days went by and still nothing happened. Yet the young girl did not lose faith. She still believed her family would come to Christ.

Finally, at the evening meal on the fourth day of the final week, the father turned to his daughter and said, "Why aren't you dead? I have poisoned you three times. Each time I increased the dosage. I don't understand why you are not dead."

The young girl explained to her father that Jesus was her protection. She was not killed by the poison because Jesus had taken care of her.

When the family realized what had happened, they all placed their faith in Jesus as their Savior. What a powerful testimony of the faith of that new Muslim convert in Indonesia!

There are many hot spots of strife and unrest in our world today, and I am personally convinced that God is at work in all of them. When we hear about these troubled areas, we need to target our prayers and our faith toward these nations.

Though we may not know all that God is doing, we can be certain that through all circumstances, He is at work to bring those who are lost into the fold!





Sudan

Operation Mobilization reports that tens of thousands of people in Sudan attended a Christian Family Conference over six days in January. The event was held with the government's permission. On the first night, about 5,000 people attended. Some 25,000 attended each of the last two nights. About 4,000 were said to either make a new commitment to Christ or a recommitment to Christ. The World Evangelical Fellowship Religious Liberty Commission, meanwhile, says that more than 400 people received Christ. "There were so many people who came forward, the designated counselors couldn't cope with the crowd," stated Andrew Prentice, an OM worker based in Scotland. "They asked all the church leaders and others to come forward and help."

—Pulse

Pakistan

A Pakistani Christian, imprisoned for more than five years on blasphemy charges, was quietly released April 24 by order of a lower court in Faisalabad. He immediately went into hiding with his family. Anwar Masih, 30, was arrested on February 2, 1993, after a quarrel with a Muslim vendor in Summundri. Although Masih's accuser claimed that the Christian had uttered blasphemies against the prophet Mohammed, Muslim witnesses testified that the argument was over payment for articles he had purchased, not religion. Masih's wife reported his mental condition had seriously deteriorated during his years in prison.

—Compass

Uzbekistan

The Uzbek Parliament passed a revised version of the 1991 religion law on May 1, claiming it was neces-

sary to counter a national threat from "aggressive" Islamic radicals. Under the new amendments, all religious organizations must register, or be prosecuted for breaking the law. In order to qualify, they must have at least 100 members, up from the previous minimum of 10. The new law also deleted a previous clause that permitted religious meetings to be held in private homes. "With this law, it will be impossible to have any Christian activity," one local Protestant source told Compass. "Most of the churches will be closed, because many have only 50 to 70 members," he said.

—Compass

Sudan

A Sudanese Muslim sheikh who converted to Christianity in 1995 was arrested in late March at his home near Khartoum. Al-Faki Kuku Hassan was arrested by Sudanese police March 28 at a prayer meeting in his home in Omdurman. Several weeks later his family confirmed that he was jailed at the Omdurman Prison. The former mosque teacher has been formally charged with apostasy under Section 126 of the Sudan Penal Code, which calls for the death penalty upon conviction.

—Compass

Philippines

CMM and the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio, Philippines, sponsored the first Institute of Islamic Studies (IIS) April 20 through June 12, 1998. Thirty highly-motivated men and women from eight nations invested eight weeks of their lives in intensive training for a lifetime of effective ministry to Muslims.

Instructors for the Institute included eight well qualified men from diverse ministry backgrounds. Together they have more than 220 years of ministry experience among Muslims.

When asked how IIS helped him, Sven wrote, "IIS has given me a greater understanding of the task ahead. It has impacted my life greatly and given me a greater love for Muslims."

Yakob related, "IIS has given me a great opportunity to broaden my understanding about the Islamic world. It has equipped me...for ministry to Muslims."

"IIS has given me many tools for Muslim ministry. It has deepened my love for the Lord, His Word, and for Muslims," stated Jilapu.

"We are looking forward to holding another IIS next year," Fagerland said. "Already the church in Indonesia that provided the seed funds for this Institute has given an additional \$20,000 U.S. as seed money for next year's sessions."



found in him no determination.” As a consequence of his act, Adam descended from the Garden to the earth “for a time,” after which God turned toward him [in mercy] (2:36-37)—without any need for an atonement.

Subsequently God promises guidance and says that whoever follows it shall have no fear or sorrow in contrast to the disbelievers who will inhabit the fire (2:38-39). The “fallen” seem capable of following God’s guidance without new life and transformation. They do not, with Paul, cry: “I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do” (Rom. 7:18-19). Since Muslims do not utter the same cry of despair, they do not feel the need for the new life of God’s Spirit (cf. Rom. 8).

Indications that the Problem is More Critical

A closer look at the Qur’an indicates that the human predicament may be greater than what Muslims have observed above. When we revisit the Adam and Eve story in the Qur’an, we see the angels’ concern that if humans are put on the earth, they will do corruption there and shed blood (2:30). Even the devil foretells that he will pervert and subjugate most of them (15:39; 17:62).

In parallel accounts of the Adam and Eve story in the Qur’an, Adam is not described as forgetting God’s prohibition but is even reminded of it by Satan (7:20), and by eating the fruit he rebelled against his Lord and went astray (20:121). Adam rejects the type of creaturehood that God assigns to him—in the Qur’an—by attempting to become like angels or immortals (7:20; 20:120-121).

In the Qur’anic account, as in the biblical one, Adam and Eve both know they have done wrong (7:23; Gen. 3:17) and feel shame (7:22; 20:121; Gen. 3:7-10).

Implications For Humanity of Adam’s Failure

A key question is whether the Adam and Eve story has any implications for the human race. Kateregga, as has been noted, said that Muslims

believe that “man” “is not a fallen being.” Yet there are Muslims who acknowledge a connection between the Adam and Eve story and the human condition.

Abu ’l-Husain Muslim, the second most authoritative compiler of traditions about Muhammad, recounts a story attributed to the Arabian Prophet in which Moses says to Adam, “Because of your sin, you caused mankind to come down to earth.”

Some Muslim scholars have noted that humans repeat the actions of Adam and Eve. The Qur’an notes that Satan continues to tempt “the children of Adam” (7:26-27), and Tirmidhi, one of the compilers of the six “canonical” Sunni collections of traditions about Muhammad, attributes to him the words: “Adam forgot and ate of the tree and his offspring forgot; Adam sinned and his offspring sinned.”

The recent Egyptian writer Kamil Husain does not go as far as to say that human nature has a bias to wrong, but he does see the story of Adam as symbolic of the human condition and as dealing with the fundamental nature of humans.

Another contemporary scholar from Morocco, Uthman Yahya distinguished two states in humans: “the first is his original constitution, the prototype created in the image of God, the second man is his actual condition.” The latter he describes with Qur’anic support as feeble (4:28), despairing (11:9), unjust (14:34), quarrelsome (16:4), tyrannical (96:6), and lost (105:2). He then asks, “. . . if . . . man, as he actually is, is capable of living in perfect blessedness, where is salvation and by what means is it to be made real?” Yahya gives the traditional Muslim answer—divine guidance. Christians would ask, “Is that enough?”

When we look at the Qur’anic survey of history, we see little to support the view that human nature is essentially good. There it recounts that each community is sent an apostle (16:36), but one after another they reject him (e.g., 15:10-11; 50:12-14). It concludes, “Most men are not believers” (12:103). If human nature is good, we might ask why, according to the Qur’an, do most people reject right guidance?

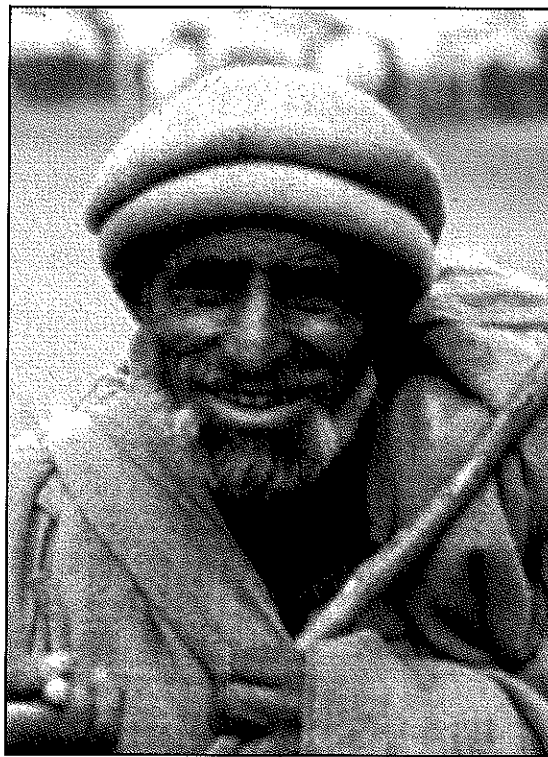
The Qur’an does in fact have hints that the prob-

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lem is greater. For example, Joseph, after successfully rejecting the advances of Potiphar's wife, still notes, "The soul is certainly an inciter to evil" (12:53). This confession led Ahmad Zaki at the 1956/57 session of the Arabic Academy in Cairo to conclude that the soul of humans can be inherently wrongdoing.

The Qur'an goes as far as to say, "If God were to punish humans for their wrongdoing, He would not leave a single creature" (16:61). If this is the Qur'anic verdict, is there not a need for a radical solution?



describes the human predicament which we only see hints of in the Qur'an and its interpreters.

There continues to be an awareness in the Muslim community that sin is a problem in human nature. The traditionalist al-Bukhari attributes to Muhammad the words, "Satan touches every child when it is born . . . except Mary and her son."

Muhammad's earliest biographer describes a dream that the Arabian Prophet had in which two men in white raiment extracted a black drop

from his heart and then washed it clean. Ibn Hanbal, founder of one of the four orthodox Sunni schools of law, related that companions of Muhammad confessed, "We have no control over our hearts." Muhammad did not take issue with their awareness of their condition but only referred them to the Qur'anic "God charges no soul save to its capacity" (2:286).

In Muslim theology and philosophy we see the concept of *al-nafs al-ammara* (the uncontrolled appetitive soul or carnal desire), which is always there to lead astray. Ibn Hazm, a champion of fundamentalism, believed that the human soul, if left to itself, spontaneously inclined to dishonesty. Al-Ghazali, the most celebrated of Muslim theologians, believed that the fall was repeated by each individual.

One of the clearest statements, however, is by the late Imam Khomeini, on the occasion of the inauguration of President Khomeini in 1985, when he said, "Man's calamity is his carnal desires, and this exists in everybody, and it is rooted in the nature of man." Such a diagnosis calls not for right guidance alone but new birth, with its divine transformation of our nature.



This article is condensed from a chapter in a book by CMM called "Through Muslim Eyes." You can receive a copy of this book, by sending \$3 to CMM, 2032 E. Kearney, #205, Springfield, MO 65803.

Sin in the Qur'an and Subsequent Muslim Thought

The words for sin in the Qur'an are cognates of those in the Hebrew of the Bible and other Semitic languages. In the Qur'an, as in the Bible, God is related to humans through a covenant. The form is like the Mosaic covenant (Exodus 20), where, on the basis of God's care (vs. 2), the subjects must abide by certain stipulations (the Decalogue).

There are three aspects of the covenant that are significant. First there is a *Person* behind the law. God is described as giving the covenantal commands in the Qur'an (5:7) as in the Bible (Exod. 20:1-2). Therefore, sin is *rebellion* against God (e.g., *Surah* 7:77; Isa. 59:2).

Second, the covenant is described as *revealed* (3:81-84; Exod. 20:1-2). Sin, therefore, is *disbelief* (e.g., *Surah* 3:86).

Finally, the Mosaic form of the covenant is the basis of law; so sin is a *transgression* of that law (*Surah* 2:229; Joshua 7:11). Thus, there are similarities between Qur'anic and biblical understandings of sin. Yet there is a contrast between their understandings of the function of the law, especially in the New Testament. The New Testament

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Does Prayer Really Make a Difference?

In a recent issue of David Wilkerson's Times Square Church Pulpit Series, he asked the question "Why is it so hard for Christians to pray?" He expressed the thought that often it is because Christians don't believe God hears and answers prayer.

Sometimes you, who are involved in the *Jumaa* Prayer Fellowship, may wonder whether God is answering your continued intercession for the Muslim world. You receive little feedback about the requests in *Intercede* for which you pray since we don't often hear the results because of sensitivity issues.

I believe that this is part of the challenge for us as Christians. Are we willing to remain faithful in prayer even when we do not know the outcome? Or does our faithfulness depend on the gratification we receive from having solid evidence that our prayers are making a difference?

Can we trust in God's promise when we don't necessarily see the answer? Do we really believe that "the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective (James 5:16)?" Several times in the Scriptures we are told, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness (Romans 4:3)."

Again this year, the worldwide Church is calling Christians to intercede on behalf of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering persecution. November 15 is the date set for the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church—a special day to focus on these needy ones.

**November 15--
International
Day of Prayer
for the
Persecuted Church**

You may order a resource kit for a donation of \$15 from the International Day of Prayer by phoning


(888)LETS PRA or (888)538-7772. These materials (1998 video, map, magazine, and easily-reproducible materials for church leaders and Bible studies) will help you gain an understanding of the Persecuted Church and take appropriate action. Information is also available on the Internet at <http://www.persecutedchurch.org>.

Let's believe God and pray! Out of gratitude for the freedom we have, let's not only pray on November 15, but let's make every day a day when we bear the burden of the Persecuted Church through prayer. When we do, we know that a faithful God will respond to our petitions whether or not we hear the outcome.

Prayer does make a difference! On Friday, May 1, we requested prayer in *Intercede*, "for Suliman, a recent Muslim convert who has been rejected by his family in the Middle East. He is so eager for the Word and is determined he will not succumb to the pressure of his family."

Many *Jumaa* Prayer intercessors prayed for Suliman that day. Perhaps some continued to pray for him on subsequent days. We know that three days later, on May 4, his life was spared when he tried to pay a visit to his family.

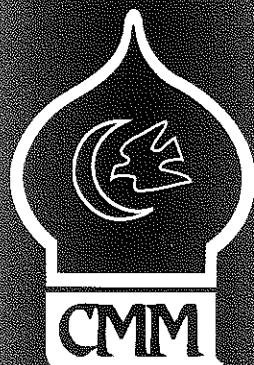
A missionary colleague conveyed his story to us: "My father began shouting and picked up a huge stone of the kind that they use to build houses here. He was about to crush my forehead, and in that split second I thought I would lose my life. Suddenly I was able to raise my hands and fend off the blow. I fell backwards and my brothers held my father and screamed at me to leave. As I was running away I realized that my hands had been seriously smashed. For three days they were swollen and blue, and the pain was unbearable. Today my hands hurt, but I will be okay. I went back to the area last night and stood about a city block away from my family's home and there I walked back and forth interceding for them. My prayer is that they will come to know Jesus."

We have the opportunity to not only pray for those Christians who are being persecuted, but to pray with them for their persecutors. God will work miracles in response to our prayers. 

Jumaa Prayer Fellowship...



Praying for Muslims Around the World!



Friday, September 4, 1998. Please pray

...for the Evangel University students who are taking an Islamics course being taught by a CMM team member this month. Pray that they will be challenged with the need for evangelizing Muslims and see themselves as potential workers in this harvest field.

...for participants in a conference for Sunday School teachers being held in Syria this month. Pray that this will be a time of training and motivating for fruitfulness.

...for a young Tajik pastor who was summoned to a police station in southern Tajikistan and threatened with a question concerning what his response would be when the Muslim opposition takes control of the region. He was told that the authorities could not guarantee his safety should Muslims come to kill him.

Friday, September 11, 1998. Please pray

...for missionaries to respond for the need among two groups of Woodabe Fulani, unreached Muslim people groups in Niger. For many years they have been resistant to the gospel, but now they are asking for someone to come and teach them about Jesus.

...that Christian literature will be distributed wisely in the various churches in Khartoum and the other main cities in Sudan. The illiteracy rate is 85-90 percent. Pray for literacy classes which are being organized to help the people learn to read God's Word.

...for CMM team members who are going to Malawi next week to conduct Muslim Awareness and Training Seminars. Pray that the participants will respond enthusiastically to the challenge of reaching their Muslim neighbors with the gospel.

Friday, September 18, 1998. Please pray

...that many Kurds will respond to the gospel as they view the Jesus film which the Turkish government has now made legal for use in Turkey. It is the first Kurdish film which may be officially copied and distributed in Turkey.

...for the hundreds of individuals from the West Bank and Gaza who ask for Gospels, correspondence courses, videos, and other Christian literature. Many non-Christians are looking for reality and truth. Pray for those who are engaged in the follow-up of those who respond.

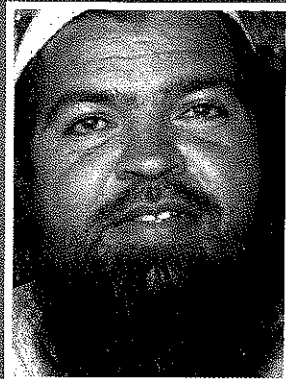
...for Saddam Hussein's son Uday who is reported to have prayed to invite Jesus into his life. Pray that he will receive discipling and that he will be strong in the face of opposition to his conversion.

Friday, September 25, 1998. Please pray

...for healing and inner peace for all inhabitants of Israel and the West Bank who have been traumatized.

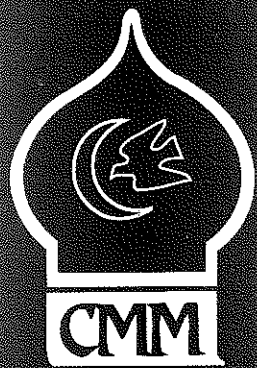
...for the Muslim Head of State of the Sudan, Omar Al-Bashir. According to a report from an unnamed source, he has been given a message from Jesus Christ and asked for prayer. Sudanese Christians have said that restrictions on Christian meetings in Northern Sudan were recently "inexplicably lifted by someone in high position."

...for Islamics seminars being held in South Africa by CMM team members next week. Pray that the number of unreached Muslims in South Africa will present itself as a tremendous challenge to those who attend the seminars.



*I urge, then, first of all
that requests, prayers,
intercession, and
thanksgiving be
made for everyone.*
—(1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)

Jumaa Prayer Fellowship...



Praying for Muslims Around the World!

Friday, October 2, 1998. Please pray

...for the local fellowships in Uzbekistan whose members are being summoned for questioning. Pray that the young new believers will not be intimidated to return to Islam.

...for a Turkish believer in Germany who appears to be dropping out of Christian fellowship due to pressures from his devout Muslim family. Pray God will help him remain strong.

...for an Iraqi family who became Christians and had to flee to Turkey. Pray that they may continue to be encouraged and strengthened in their new faith.

Friday, October 9, 1998. Please pray

...that God will move upon the hearts of His people to reach out to the 27 million Muslims of Uttar Pradesh, India. They are often victims of violence.

...for prison officials in Saudi Arabia who open and read letters to Christian expatriate prisoners. Pray the Lord may use the words of encouragement being sent to prisoners to reach into the lives of these officials.

...that God will intervene for a fellowship in Turkey which has been closed by the police. Pray that the church's new registration will gain approval so that they may continue to meet.

Friday, October 16, 1998. Please pray

...for the continued proclamation of the gospel to Malay Muslims by Chinese and expatriates living in Malaysia. Malaysian law prohibits Malay Muslims from accepting Christ, yet nearly 500 have made decisions for Christ.

...for a CMM team member as he teaches an Islamic course at a Bible institute in Bulgaria for the next 3 weeks. Pray that students will become motivated to share the good news with Muslims.

...for a strong, evangelizing church among the 1,600,000 Shi'ite Muslim Hazara of Afghanistan. There are reportedly less than 100 known Christians among this people group.

Friday, October 23, 1998. Please pray

...for isolated believers in remote mountainous areas of the Saudi Peninsula. Many of them have never met another believer nor do they have a copy of the Scriptures. Pray that they will continue to be encouraged by radio broadcasts, which they receive.

...that Christian workers in Cologne, Germany, will have many opportunities to share the gospel with Turkish families as a result of their work in tutoring the Turkish children.

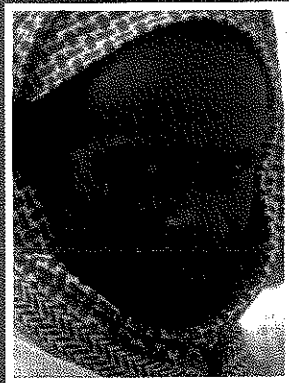
...for children from Christian families in Sudan who are beaten in primary school because they say they believe in Jesus.

Friday, October 30, 1998. Please pray

...that God will raise up another light in a Bangladesh refugee camp to replace Rehi who died from her harsh life and the abuse she received trying to live and raise her three sons there.

...for outreach which is being made possible because of the tour of an Athletes In Action basketball team in Central Asia. Following testimonies given at one game, over 75 children confessed faith in Christ! Pray that those who made decisions for Christ will be adequately disciplined.

...for the financial pressures which are adversely affecting the work of God in Indonesia. Because the cost of paper rose by over 200 percent during 1998, people cannot afford to buy Christian books, translators are discouraged, and printers and other workers are unemployed.



I urge, then, first of all that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for everyone.
—(1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)