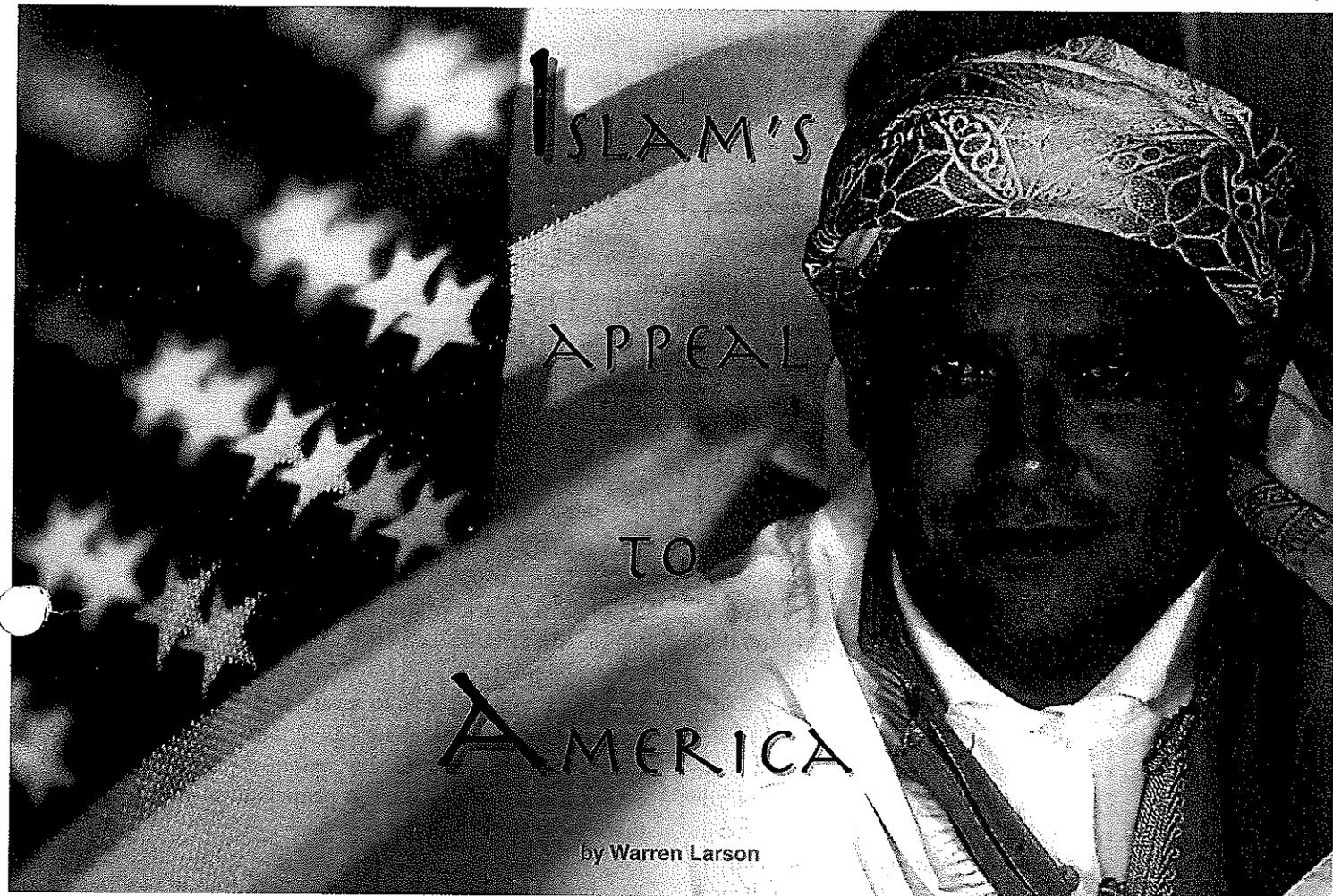


INTERCEDE

VOL. XX, NO. 3

MAY/JUNE 2004



John Esposito, the most influential non-Muslim scholar on American Islam, at times sounds prophetic. “The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?” (1992) suggests Islam is a threat to the West—particularly America. A decade later, in “Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam” (2002), he says a war conducted militarily, rather than diplomatically, will lead to an increase in anti-Americanism, global instability and bloodshed. American foreign policy, he says, is what is behind the anger and agenda of militant Muslims.

Esposito is right on some things but he fails to acknowledge Islam’s inability to promote and maintain peace. This is not to say that most Muslims do not want peace, but an American convert to Islam, who later turned to Christ, speaks as an insider: “Christianity teaches us to love our ene-

mies. With Islam it’s quite the opposite. You should be just, but you should hate the enemies of Islam. And if they openly struggle against Islam, they should be eliminated.”

The Qur’an agrees, for though war is evil, Islam’s demise is a worse evil (*Surah 2:217*). As one Muslim said, “The world as we know it today is how others have shaped it, so we have two choices: either to accept it with submission, which means letting Islam die, or to destroy it, so that we can construct a world as Islam requires.”

This article therefore does not minimize the danger America faces because of a growing, albeit false, Muslim perception that America has targeted Islam. That threat from militants is very real, but the material below focuses on why Islam is

continued on page 4



Until All Have Heard

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

Jim Bennett, Director
Center for
Ministry to Muslims



According to the 2002 World Christian Encyclopedia, worldwide Islam had 865,558 conversions annually during the decade of the 1990s, contrasted with nearly 3 million annual conversions to Christianity during the same period. The overall Muslim growth rate, including conversion and biological statistics, for Islam was 2.15 percent, contrasted with Christianity's 1.45 percent. It should be pointed out that 96 percent of Islam's overall growth rate was biological.

A few years ago at the conclusion of the annual convention of the Islamic Society of North America, Ismail Farouqi said: *We must convert 50 to 75 million Americans. It is possible, especially because the lower stratus of society has been suffering from the bankruptcy of the social order. They are groping for salvation, and we can give them that salvation. If it takes 500 or 1,000 years, that's okay. We're here for the long haul.*

Between 1989 and 1998 the Islamic population in the United States grew by 25 percent. An estimated 5 to 6 million Muslims live in the United States today, with 100,000 Muslim immigrants arriving each year.

A leading Muslim scholar in the United States said to me recently, "For ten years we have studied evangelical missiology and used it to adapt our message to appeal to a North American audience." Islam's "new missiology" is reflected in slick new magazines, television programs and other materials—all with a soft edge to appeal to an American audience.

In the United States, Islam is gaining most of its converts in prisons and on university campuses. The majority of American converts to Islam—85 to 90 percent—are African Americans. Of the estimated 6 million Muslims in the United States, over 2 million are African Americans. A lead-

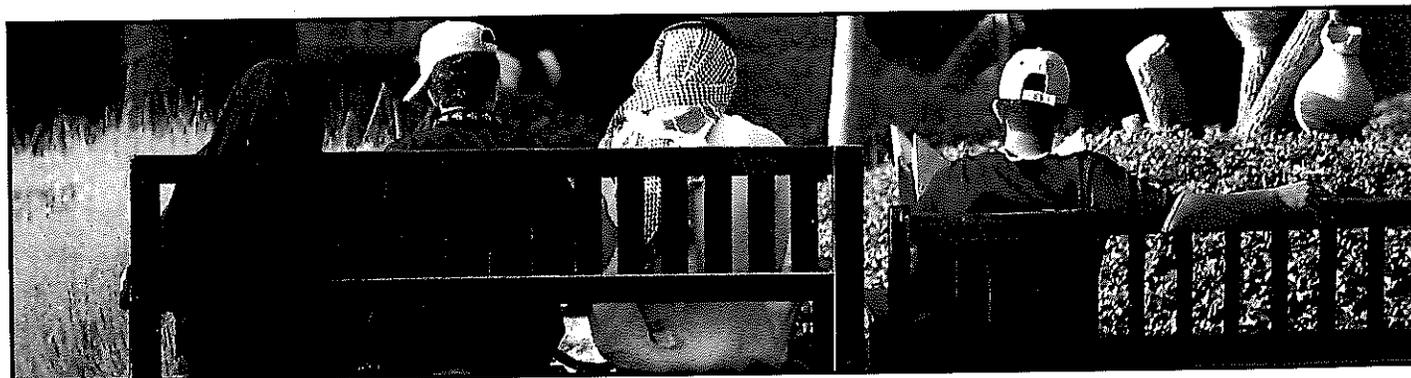
ing African American scholar, Carl Ellis, Jr., notes, "One out of every 15 blacks identifies him or herself as Muslim."

So what is the appeal of Islam to Americans? Joseph Smith, in a thesis entitled "The Practice of Dawah/Missionary Activity in North America and the Attraction of Islam" notes 12 features which most attracted converts to Islam.

1. Islam's Social Laws
2. The Unity of God
3. Brotherhood Taught and Practiced
4. The Morality of Islam
5. The Qur'an's Beauty and Applicability
6. The Simplicity of Islamic Teaching
7. The Testimony of Other Muslims
8. Islam's Rationality
9. The Practices of Islam
10. Its Superiority to All Other Religions
11. The Theology Found in the Qur'an
12. Islam's Spirituality

This list is too simplistic to accept at face value, but it does give us a lot to think about. As serious Great Commission Christians, we cannot naively ignore the reasons that have contributed to the vacuum in people's lives that has caused them to convert to Islam.

We should not be so concerned about whether Muslims are converts or immigrants. We need to find a renewed missiology that begins with an understanding that Jesus died for every person, including every Muslim, and that He loves them and wants them to hear the truth about His redemptive work. We are called to study Muslims, to love, to pray, to reach out and believe for their salvation.





ERITREA

Eritrea's outlawed Protestants confirmed that their neighbors are being hired to report to security agents any gatherings of evangelical believers in their communities. Police "spies" are rewarded with special benefits, including exemption from military service and allotments of sugar and flour. Since May 2002, when the government ordered Eritrea's 12 independent Pentecostal and charismatic churches closed, their 20,000 members have gathered secretly in small groups in private homes. Hundreds have been arrested for holding worship services, possessing Bibles or witnessing about their faith. Currently at least 286 Eritrean evangelicals are known to be imprisoned in nine different locations in the country. Protestant pastors say the Department of Religious Affairs has made no progress toward the official registration of their churches. "The only answer we get is that our applications are with the president," one remarked.—*Compass*

INDONESIA

Muslim protestors have attacked at least four churches earlier this year in the regions of East Java, West Java and North Sumatra, Indonesia. A crowd of approximately 100 people attacked the Gereja Protestant Indonesia (GPI) church in East Bekasi on January 9. Government officials had given permission for the church to renovate an old house which they had used as a church since 1975. However, leaders of the local Amar Ma'arut mosque encouraged Muslim neighbors to

protest against the renovations. Church members met with local government and mosque officials on January 12 and agreed to suspend renovations temporarily. Meanwhile, two other churches were attacked in Surubaya last December and in early January, and a bomb was placed in another church in Medan, North Sumatra. Muslim protestors forced the two churches in Surabaya, East Java, to close their doors. The pastor of one of the churches received death threats from the attackers.—*Compass*

SUDAN

More than 10 Christian churches and a church-run vocational training center at the sprawling Wad el Bashier camp in West Omdurman, Sudan, were demolished in the last two months of 2003. According to sources in Khartoum, authorities ordered the destruction of the makeshift worship centers erected by displaced Christians as part of an urban re-planning exercise. Demolition crews razed centers affiliated with the Anglican, African Inland and Roman Catholic churches, as well as the Sudan Church of Christ. Some mosques have also been destroyed, as well as latrines, shops and bakeries. A recent U.N. report said brick and concrete structures, such as the main Catholic Church in the area, are not expected to be demolished. The camp serves as home to 50,000 Sudanese. Residents affected by the re-planning exercise are slowly being allotted plots of land; but in many cases, they are rendered homeless for months.—*Compass*

PAKISTAN

A Protestant pastor in Pakistan's Punjab province was murdered in January just minutes after he left his home to catch a train to Lahore. Pastor Mukhtar Masih, 50, was shot once in the chest at close range sometime after 3 a.m. in Khanewal, 180 miles southwest of Lahore. Police officials ruled out robbery as a murder motive because 3,500 rupees (\$58) were found untouched in Masih's pockets and there were no signs of struggle. Police suspected it was a grudge killing. As pastor of the local Church of God, Masih regularly conducted 10 minutes of prayer and Bible reading over the church loudspeaker each day at 6 a.m., a common practice in areas which, like Khanewal, have large Christian populations. Parishioners from Masih's congregation confirmed that Muslims had threatened their pastor and several times tore down the speakers. They could not identify any recent incident that might have provoked his murder.—*Compass*

JORDAN

Iraqi graduates of Jordan Evangelical School of Theology are returning home to minister. One has just been ordained as pastor of an Assyrian-speaking church that plans to plant a church on each side of the Tigris River. Another is pastoring a church in Basra. "We now know why the Lord had sent us over 50 Iraqis to be trained at JEST between the two Gulf wars," the seminary's president said.—*Pulse*

ISLAM'S APPEAL

by Warren

a challenge to the Church, and how the Church can be an instrument of peace in the face of rising Muslim-Christian tensions.

WHY AMERICANS CONVERT

"Should Christians Convert Muslims?" in *Time*, recently suggested evangelicals are wrongheaded when they try to convert Muslims, but it failed to mention Muslim attempts to convert Christians. Below are some reasons why, for example, approximately 2 million American Blacks have converted to Islam.

First, many seek self-respect, discipline, family values, moral standards and deliverance from drugs and alcohol. According to Islam, they can change the stereotype of the young Black male on drugs, out of work and in jail. It's a new way of life, a path not only to God, but of self-respect and dignity.

African-American women also convert because they see in Islam an emphasis on modesty, chastity and clarity of economic rights. Many had been abandoned to fend for themselves and their children because of irresponsible and faithless men. An African-American imam (mosque leader), invited to speak in my class at Columbia International University, said: "Jesus paid it all is not what American Blacks must hear!"

Islam then becomes an alternative to intrinsic immorality and corruption—symptoms of a society in the last stages of decomposition. It comes with a well-ordered prayer ritual, specific guidelines on relationships, clear male leadership roles and family values—even a new name! Since Christianity is deemed powerless to effect social change, Islam can establish laws, control moral behavior and produce reform.

Second, converts to Islam say Christian discrimination left them disconnected and disenfranchised, but now as vice-regents in Islam, they have distinction, purpose and empowerment that even the Civil Rights Movement failed to accomplish. As Bruce Fields notes in

"Introducing Black Theology: Three Crucial Questions for the Evangelical Church," it is unfortunate, that "because the issue of racism still exists in our society, it still exists in the church" (53). He goes on to say, "If the world does not see true unity among those who claim allegiance to Jesus Christ, the church should not be surprised when the world is unimpressed with our proclamation that the Father has sent the Son" (64).

Something similar is happening to Latinos. "Islam is Luring More Latinos" in *The Washington Post* quotes a young woman who had been a devout Catholic: "I felt a strong sense of belonging." Another says she felt a "sense of sisterhood...with others who wore hijab (veil)."

Third, there is widespread ignorance as to the real nature of Islam. Muslims equate Islam with peace but the word for peace in Arabic is "Salaam," not "Islam." It means "surrender or to make peace by laying down one's arms in submission." And, to claim that Jihad means striving in the cause of Allah by study and personal devotion—not "Holy War," is only partially true. Muhammad's exhortation to Jihad is mostly to fight infidels (pagans), Jews and Christians. The Qur'an, supported by commentaries and classical writings, claims Jihad is the only sure way to paradise (*Surah* 3:169).

Furthermore, in any country where Islam dominates, Muslims are never free to abandon Islam. Maududi, the most influential Muslim scholar in the 20th century, insists that both the Qur'an and the Hadith (Traditions) demand an apostate's execution. He quotes the Qur'an (9:11-12) and the Traditions: "Any person, i.e. Muslim, who has changed his religion, kill him" (Al-Bukhari, Vol. 9, p. 45).

Equally disturbing are Islamic traditions that predict how Jews will ultimately be exterminated: "The Last Hour would not come till the Muslims fight against the Jews and the Muslims will kill them until the Jews hide themselves, and the stones and trees would speak up saying... 'There is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him'" (Al-Muslim, Book 40, No. 6985)

L TO AMERICA

Larson

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

1. Christians Need Optimism

Stan Guthrie admits in "Missions in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21st Century" that ministry to Muslims is difficult, and that 9/10 of the worst persecution takes place in Islamic states. But he reminds us that many Muslims are embracing Christ. In Indonesia, for example, the Church may have grown to 20 million, far beyond official estimates.

Similarly, in "The Next Christendom: the Coming of Global Christianity" Philip Jenkins wonders if Islam and Christianity can peacefully coexist. But he provides solid evidence of explosive church growth in the developing world—precisely where most Muslims live. And, he feels that in the United States, Muslim growth through immigration will be exceeded by a larger influx of Christians.

2. Christians Need Training

"Call men to the path of your Lord" (*Surah* 16:125) is to Muslims what the "Great Commission" is to us (Matthew 28:19-20), so in the face of aggressive *dawah* (Islamic mission), American Christians must prepare to handle misconceptions. Using both the Bible and the Qur'an with skill and sensitivity, they can demonstrate that Christians do not worship three gods (*Surah* 4:171) and that Jesus did in fact die (*Surah* 3:55; 4:157; 19:15).

But Christians also need to know the differences: For example, God only loves the righteous in Islam (*Surah* 3:76; 4:107), in stark contrast to Christianity where he loves the sinful—even his enemies (Romans 5:6-10). In the Bible he is willing and ready to save all who repent (2 Peter 3:9), whereas a study of God's 99 names in Islam indicates he has the power but may not "will" to save.

3. Christians Need Understanding

Judaism, Christianity and Islam all lay claim to Abraham as father and believe peace will come through the Messiah (*Surah* 3:45) the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). He will exercise awesome power to restrain evil and judge fairly: "They will beat their swords into plowshares" (Isaiah 2:4)

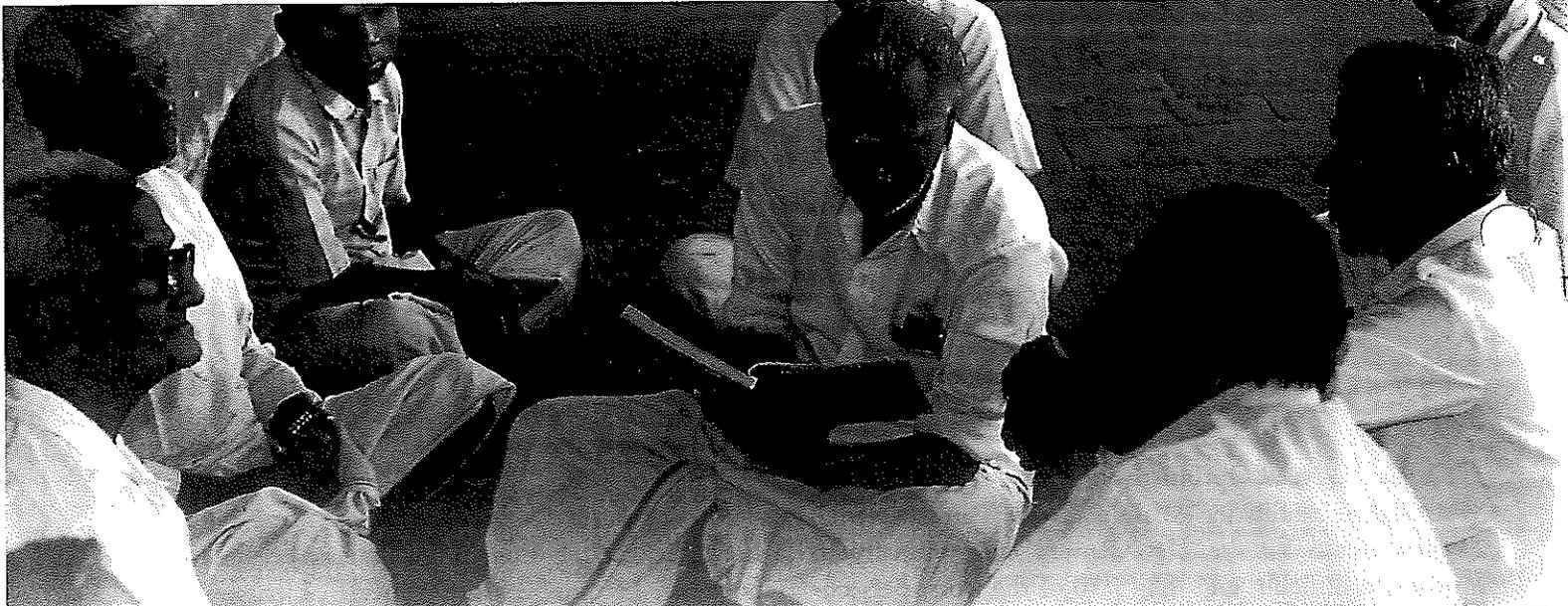
and "he will rule them with an iron scepter" (Psalm 2:9). His reign will be global and "he will be their peace" (Micah 5:2, 4-5).

In this light, rather than indiscriminately defending Israeli policy, we need to pray for the "peace of Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:6). God's "Road Map for Peace" will culminate in the reign of the Messiah who will judge all nations. Thankfully, repentance will be widespread as the day fast approaches when all human peace initiatives in the Middle East fail. The good news is that Jesus' promise to all nations (Matthew 24:30) is echoed in the Bible's last book: "All the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him" (Revelation 1:7). Surely this points to the future salvation of many Muslims.

On that day many Muslims will see Jesus, not only as bridge between people of every race and religion, but they will be able to overcome what has been an insurmountable stumbling block: Jesus is the bridge to God (John 14:6). For when Jesus forgave sin (Mark 2:10; Luke 7:48), as only God can do (Isaiah 43:45; Mark 2:7; *Surah* 3:135), he also said: "Go in peace" (Luke 7:48-50).

It is no coincidence that at birth the Messiah was called "Jesus" for "he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:18) and "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). "He [Christ] is our peace...[who has] destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...thus making peace...[he] came and preached peace" (Ephesians 2:14-18). So we do not need to publicly defame Islam or demean Muhammad as some Christian leaders have done; rather, as a recent book title puts it, we should be "Waging Peace on Islam" through the "gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15). Only the cross brings reconciliation.

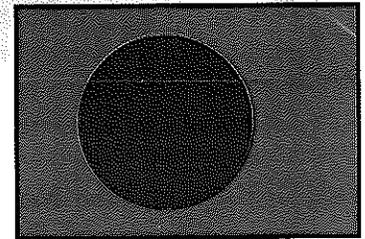
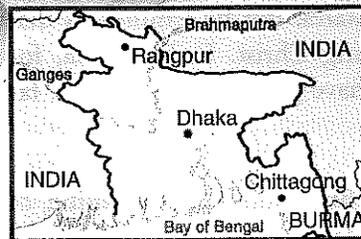
Warren Larson is Director of the Zwemer Center and Associate Professor of Muslim Studies at Columbia International University. He served as a missionary in Pakistan for 23 years and has written extensively on Islam, including: "Islamic Ideology and Fundamentalism in Pakistan: Climate for Conversion to Christianity?"



Population: 140 million
Religions: Muslims 87%, Hindus 11.3%, Buddhists 0.6%
Official Languages: Bengali, English often used
Peoples: Bengali 79.1%, Bengali (Hindu) 1.7%, Sylhetti Bengali (4.6%), Bihari 1.5%, Urdu 0.6%

The People's Republic of Bangladesh, formerly known as East Pakistan, can be found nestled in the delta floodplain between the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers. One of the world's poorest nations, Bangladesh has little intrinsic hope that the poverty will ever be substantially alleviated.

Revulsion at the cruelty of Pakistan's repression in the name of Islam in the 1971 civil war temporarily weakened Bangladeshi loyalty to Islam, giving new opportunities for the gospel. The openness (and even responsiveness), in some areas to innovative methods of evangelism is encouraging. But few nations in the world have such a large number of people who remain largely untouched by the gospel.



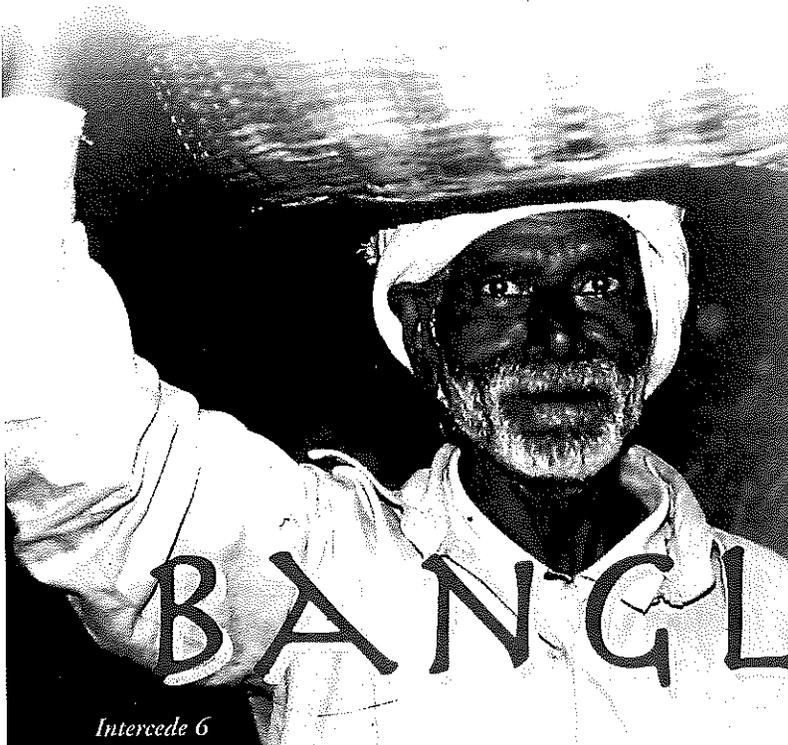
UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP... SYLHETTI

Location: northeastern corner of Bangladesh
Population: 7.06 million
Religion: Muslim (Hanafites) 99.9%
Language: Sylhetti Bengali

The Sylhetti were once Buddhists and Hindus, but during the 13th century, a revered holy man from Yemen converted the people to Islam. Now almost every village has its own mosque. The people have Tibeto-Mongolian roots, and their language comprises Arabic, Persian and Turkish roots. Many of their traditions stem from the Middle East and central Asia. Less than 1 percent of Sylhettis call themselves Christians.

PRAY THAT...

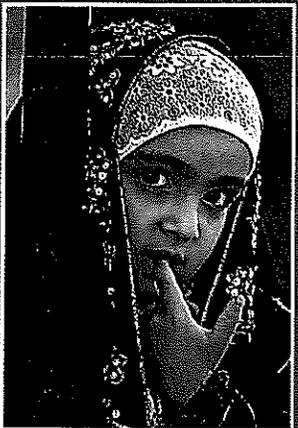
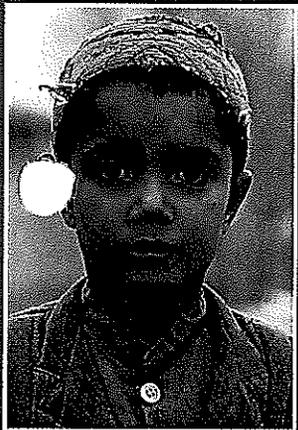
- ...Christian media broadcasts will be made available.
- ...the Lord will soften the hearts of the Sylhettis towards Christians so that they will be open to the gospel.
- ...God will strengthen and encourage the small number of believers who live among the Muslims of Bangladesh.



BANGLADESH

Jumaa Prayer Fellowship

Praying for Muslims
Around the World!



Every request, prayer, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.

1 Timothy 2:1, NIV

Friday, May 7, 2004. Please pray

...that *Christian television programs will have a powerful impact in Afghanistan* and that God will protect these programs.

...for *President Niyazov and the government of Turkmenistan*. It is almost impossible for Muslims to hear the gospel because churches must have government registration, which is not possible for evangelical churches.

...for *the next three weeks for the Institute of Islamic Studies being held in Indonesia*. Pray for the encouragement and safety of each professor and student.

Friday, May 14, 2004. Please pray

...that *hearts of Muslims living in the United Kingdom will be opened to the gospel* as they view gospel programs on television and receive gospel literature. The Jesus film has been widely distributed across the country.

...that *Shiite Muslim refugees in Lebanon, who are mostly women and children, may experience the love of Christ*.

...for *the CMM team member who will be teaching an Islamic class on Christian Ministry in a Muslim Context* at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in Springfield next week. Pray the students will be challenged to reach out to Muslims in their communities.

Friday, May 21, 2004. Please pray

...for *continued harmony between Muslims and Christians in Gambia and Senegal*, majority Muslim countries. Pray that the Islamic training institute in Gambia and radical Muslims in Senegal will not cause this peace to be compromised.

...that *the 110 million Muslims in Bangladesh will hear the true gospel*. The majority follow folk Islam—a blend of indigenous culture and Hinduism, overlaid by a thin blanket of Islam. May Christians be faithful in reaching out to them.

...for *the government in Afghanistan* as they prepare for nationwide elections later this year. Pray the elected leaders will not pass new laws to overrule religious freedom for non-Muslims and that Muslims will continue to have an opportunity to hear the gospel.

Friday, May 28, 2004. Please pray

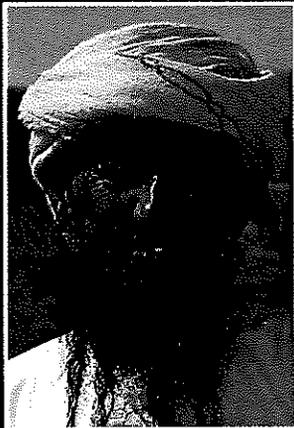
...for *Christians who are willing to continue to minister in hostile environments* because they want to have a spiritual influence. The normal reaction is to flee to a safer place. Thank the Lord for those who don't abandon their work. Pray for grace and perseverance for them.

...for *the CMM team member who will be teaching an Islamic seminar at Moscow Theological Institute* for the next two weeks. Pray that many students will be motivated to witness to the Muslim world.

...for *those Muslims involved in the ethnic-cleansing that is taking place in Sudan*. Arab Muslims are killing African Muslims in the western province of Darfur in record numbers. Pray that the thousands of refugees who are in refugee camps in Chad may have an opportunity to hear the gospel.

Jumaa Prayer Fellowship

Praying for Muslims
Around the World!



*I urge, then, first of all
that requests, prayers,
intercession and thanks-
giving be made for
everyone.*

1 Timothy 2:1, NIV

Friday, June 4, 2004. Please pray

...that *Christians in America will be willing to welcome Muslims* and help them adjust to the democratic society here. This could go a long way to helping Muslims in the States defuse the strong anti-American sentiment abroad.

...for the *many Palestinian Muslims who are coming to Christ*, despite the fact that they face the likelihood of persecution. Pray that each will be encouraged in their faith and know God's presence and sustaining hand.

...for the *many Iraqis who are buying satellite dishes*. Pray that they will tune into Christian programs, such as SAT-7 and be challenged with the gospel message.

Friday, June 11, 2004. Please pray

...that *British Muslims will heed the message of Sheik Dr. Abdur Rahman al-Sudais* who, on a recent visit, urged them to shun terrorist groups and live in peace and harmony with their non-Muslim neighbors.

...that *the Lord will lead lonely Muslim background believers to other Christians* with whom they can have fellowship and grow together in faith. This is true in almost all strictly Islamic countries because of the few believers.

...that *the day will come when church buildings are allowed throughout the Arabian Peninsula*. Praise God that Egyptian Christians living in the United Arab Emirates have been given permission to build a church in Abu Dhabi.

Friday, June 18, 2004. Please pray

...for *converts from Islam who struggle to find employment*. In most Muslim contexts they are discriminated against and have more difficulty getting work than other Christians do.

...for a *Muslim woman in South America who has had two dreams about Jesus*. Pray that she will discover how to follow Jesus with her whole life.

...that *mature and vibrant churches will be planted across the Arab world*.

...that *God will raise up more talented, believing musicians* who are familiar with both local music styles and Quranic recitations, so that new songs proclaiming the gospel can be composed and accepted by the target audience.

Friday, June 25, 2004. Please pray

...that *media producers may be guided in their attempts to reach people in more culturally attractive ways*.

...that *the government of Kenya will seek to maintain inter-communal harmony* in the face of the extreme Islam being propagated in Kenya.

...that *a burden of prayer for unreached peoples will rise among the Christians of Worthing, U.K.* and for those in similar situations. Out of this burden, may effective evangelism and outreach take place.

...for *several young men in Turkey who are doing studies and were recently baptized*. Pray that their families and friends will also respond to the gospel.