

THE MAGAZINE OF BARNABAS FUND HOPE AND AID FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

# barnabasaid



MAY/JUNE 2007

- **The battle for truth:  
the Islamisation of knowledge**
- Ethiopia: Christian stronghold in the Horn of Africa
- Trained leaders: a priceless gift to the suffering Church





**barnabasaid**  
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To guard the safety of Christians in hostile environments names have often been changed or omitted. Thank you for your understanding.

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Photo © Petterik Wiggers / Panos Pictures

# From the director **White Ants**

The story is told of an Australian who came home one day to find his house had collapsed and little remained but a pile of dust and rubble. Unknown to him, white ants had been eating away at the foundations and supporting timbers of his house for years. While everything had continued to look normal from the outside, internally the house was being gradually consumed. Then one day it had finally crashed to the ground, destroyed by the tiny insects.

In many Western countries an insidious and destructive force is eating away at our Judaeo-Christian heritage. There may be little visible change but ideological Islam is eroding the foundations and supports of Western society, its culture and its religion, by a gradual process of Islamisation.

The pull-out supplement in the centre pages of this issue of *Barnabas Aid* is on the subject of truth. In 1981 the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) was established and registered in the USA. Working in the worlds of publishing and academia, the IIIT has three objectives, which are set out below in the Institute's own words:

1. To provide a comprehensive Islamic outlook through elucidating the principles of Islam and relating them to relevant issues in contemporary thought.
2. To regain the intellectual, cultural and civilizational identity of the Ummah [worldwide Muslim community] through the Islamization of the humanities and social sciences.
3. To rectify the methodology of contemporary Islamic thought in order to enable it to resume its contribution to the progress of human civilisation and give it meaning and direction in line with the values and objectives of Islam.

To summarise, the IIIT aims to transform the world by what they call elsewhere "the Islamisation of knowledge". Every academic subject and every aspect of every culture is to be "Islamised" so that all the civilisations of the world are guided by and imbued with Islamic values and Islamic objectives. This is in effect to re-define truth. Facts are no longer objectively true or false, but their truthfulness depends on whether they fit with Islamic values or not.

Twenty-six years after the institute was founded, the world is well on its way to being transformed. Islam now tops the public agenda across the globe

in a way it did not in 1981. Islam seems to be laying claim to every achievement of the non-Muslim world. Here in the UK we are told that Islam inspired the glorious architecture of our medieval churches and cathedrals. We are told that William Shakespeare may have followed a kind of Islamic mysticism. You will find many more examples of the "Islamisation of knowledge" in the pull-out supplement. The message between the lines is repeated: "Islam is the source of all that is good in your civilisation. So why not become a Muslim?" Effectively the Islamisation of knowledge is a form of *da'wa* (Muslim mission).

Secular media are beginning to assist the process of disseminating Islamised knowledge. Even the respected *National Geographic* magazine has published a map of the Middle East on which is marked a journey made by Abraham with Ishmael and Isaac to Mecca, where, said the magazine, he built the *kaba* and established the *hajj* pilgrimage. There is no hint in the magazine that this is an Islamic version of events, completely at variance with the Biblical story; it is set out as established fact.

In 1 Corinthians 2:14 Paul tells us that spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. Sadly it is not just the Western secular world that has been taken in by the deception, but increasingly Christians are also being fooled. A prominent British evangelical leader now advocates that local churches should invite an imam to their Sunday morning worship and give him an opportunity to present his beliefs about Islam and let the Christians ask him questions. "I simply cannot think of a more impacting, prophetic and dynamic way of exposing believers to a major faith ideology of which most of us are entirely ignorant," comments the evangelical leader. This could lead to such an erosion of the Christian faith that the house collapses.

**Dr Patrick Sookhdeo**  
International Director

# Country Profile



## The Rich History of Ethiopia

In the Horn of Africa, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia sits as an island of Christianity in a sea of Islamic countries. The country is home to approximately 75 million, who face huge challenges from widespread HIV/AIDS and recovery from devastating famines. Despite its Christian heritage, Ethiopia became a secular state with its 1995 constitution; it is currently estimated that the population is around 50% Christian, 45% Muslim.

Unique in its status as the only African country to retain its independence while the rest of Africa was carved up by European colonial powers in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, Ethiopia is currently recovering from the wounds of the past century. After nearly 30 years of war with Eritrea and civil war between rival tribes, coupled with famines which ravaged the country in 1974, 1984 and again in 2002-03, Ethiopians today face huge challenges related to their poverty.

### Land of many names

The land of Ethiopia has known several names. In the Bible it is referred to as Cush. Until the early 20th century it was known throughout the world as Abyssinia, but Emperor Haile Selassie officially introduced the name Ethiopia around 1930. There is still some political controversy surrounding this renaming; however “Ethiopia” appears to have now been accepted by the majority population.

### It began in Genesis . . .

Ethiopians trace their heritage to Noah’s son Ham, through his son Cush. Before 1000 BC the eastern parts of Ethiopia, as well as modern-day Eritrea and Yemen, were part of the Sabeen Kingdom. However at that time a powerful Kingdom called Aksum (or Axum) was established, eventually encompassing the whole of northern Ethiopia and much of present day central Ethiopia. This was the first known civilisation established in what is now Ethiopia.

During the Aksumite reign in Ethiopia the Queen of Sheba visited King Solomon, as recounted in 1 Kings 10:1-13. Sheba is thought to have been on the eastern tip of the Red Sea, in the area of present day Yemen; some historians believe that Ethiopia was also part of Sheba’s territory. The Queen travelled to Jerusalem to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and brought with her “a large group of attendants, as well as camels loaded with spices, jewels and a large amount of gold”. Ethiopian traditions claim that the first Ethiopian king, Menelek I, was the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

### Black Jews: The Ethiopian House of Israel

Within Ethiopia there is a Jewish tribe known as the “Black Jews” or “Beta Israel”, (the House of Israel). They are also sometimes called Falashas, however this is commonly used as a derogatory name. Some of their history claims that they are descended from the entourage of Jews who

accompanied Menelek I to Aksum when he returned from a visit to Solomon in Israel, but other traditions trace them to a son of Moses who established the tribe before the time of Solomon. Some historians believe that a likely explanation for their existence is gradual migration of some Jews from southern Arabia and East Africa during the first century AD. A small number of these "Black Jews", about 10,000, remain in the country. However, the majority were resettled to Israel between 1984 and 1992.

The "Black Jews" had access to the Pentateuch, but as they were isolated from Israel they did not have the message of the Prophets or the rest of the Old Testament. It is likely that the Ethiopian eunuch who met Philip on the road while reading Isaiah (Acts 8:26-40) was either from this tribe or had heard of the Jewish faith through contact with them. The Bible describes how he had travelled

to Jerusalem to worship God – and it was probably his first encounter with the rest of the Jewish Scriptures. After Philip had told him about Jesus and baptised him, he returned to Ethiopia.

Though the Ethiopian eunuch undoubtedly took the Gospel back with him, Christianity was not wide spread in Ethiopia until the 4th

century AD. A Christian boy called Frumentius, from Tyre, Syria, was shipwrecked and washed up on the coast of Ethiopia's capital city, Aksum, where he was taken in by the royal palace as a slave. Frumentius brought many to faith in Christ, and established several churches with the help of Christian merchants throughout Ethiopia. Emperor Ezanus, who came to the throne in 303AD, became the first Christian Ethiopian King through the witness of Frumentius.

## First or second *hijra* as model?

Many Muslims today use Muhammad's second *hijra* (migration) to Medina as the model for how Muslims should behave when in a non-Muslim society i.e. to seize power and run it as an Islamic state. However, during the first *hijra* Muslims lived peaceably amongst the non-Muslims of Ethiopia, without attempting to convert them or claim the country for Islam. The question remains why do so many Muslims choose to copy the second *hijra* with its aggressive/hostile strategy, rather than the first *hijra* and its peaceful integration?

## The arrival of Islam

During the 7th century a group of early Muslims fled to the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia to escape persecution in Mecca. Amongst the group of Muslims in this first *hijra* (migration) was an Ethiopian slave called Bilal ibn Rabah, and it was his influence that led the Islamic prophet Muhammad to send some of his family and followers to Ethiopia for safety. Ethiopia at the time was known to Muslims as a place of freedom from persecution, and the king of Ethiopia was known for being just and for cherishing human rights.

At first there were harmonious relationships between the Christians and the Muslims. The Muslims were welcomed into Ethiopia and allowed to practise their faith without interference. It is claimed that King Negus Ash'ha'mah converted to Islam, despite objections from his family and the Church. Muhammad later instructed his followers to be kind to Ethiopians, since they had received sanctuary in Ethiopia.

However in the latter half of the 7th century, as Islam swept across Africa and the Middle East, hostility and violence increased between the newly converted Muslims and the Christians. Ethiopia became isolated as a Christian country, cut off from the Mediterranean, bringing about the disintegration of the Aksumite Kingdom. There followed centuries of disorder, brought to an end in the 12th century when the Zagwe dynasty came to power.

## Millennium Hopes and Dreams

According to the Ethiopian calendar it is the year 1999, and Ethiopians are currently building momentum to celebrate their entry into the new Millennium later this year. The Ethiopian year has 13 months – 12 of 30 days and a final month of 5 or 6 days, depending on whether it is a leap year. In addition to this they measure the start of each day at dawn rather than at midnight. Therefore they will celebrate the start of the year 2000 of their calendar at dawn on 12th September 2007.

Ethiopia wants to use their Millennium celebrations to shake off the global opinion of an impoverished and conflict-riddled country. Apart from trying to improve their national image, it is also hoped that a global recognition of the cultural diversity within the country will lead to increased tolerance among Ethiopian tribes.



*Continued overleaf*

# Country Profile



## Lalibela's Rock Churches

During the Zagwe dynasty in the 12th century King Lalibela moved the capital city to Roha, which he renamed Lalibela. There he had eleven churches hewn out of the rock. These churches still stand today as one of the world's most incredible man-made creations, showing the great skill and craftsmanship of the Ethiopians, and are a lasting testament to the devotion of this Christian nation.

Islamic expansion continued apace. Ethiopia continued to fend off frequent Islamic attacks, but finally in 1528 Ahmed "the left-handed", a Somali imam and general, succeeded in conquering a large part of the country. By 1535 Ahmed had gained territory which spread from the Red Sea to central Ethiopia. Ethiopian Christians suffered sixteen years of violence from invading Muslims, with their property looted or burned down and their churches destroyed. Taking refuge in the north of the country, the

deposed Emperor Dengel requested help from Europe, eventually receiving a reply in 1541 when Portugal came to their aid. With 400 Portuguese musketeers the Ethiopian army fought on for another two years, eventually killing Ahmed in 1543 and regaining control of Ethiopia, restoring it to a Christian country.

## Continued Conflict

During the 18th century the Ethiopian empire broke down into provinces, each led by its own tribal king. To this day there continue to be tribal tensions and civil conflicts.

In 1930 Haile Selassie, claiming to be descended from King Solomon, was proclaimed emperor after a 14-year struggle with the royal family. When Mussolini overran Ethiopia in 1936, Selassie fled into exile in Britain, remaining there until 1941. After his return and the end of World War 2, Ethiopia was able to regain its briefly interrupted independence; however the province of Eritrea was under British control. In 1952 a UN resolution federated Eritrea with Ethiopia, ignoring Eritrea's pleas for independence. The federation was dissolved in 1962 and Eritrea was annexed by Ethiopia, which again angered most Eritreans, who regarded the act as colonisation from another African nation. War erupted between Ethiopia and the Eritrean independence movement.

Another revolution in 1974 brought communist Mengistu Haile

Mariam to power. Mengistu imposed a military dictatorship upon the country, jailed his opposition, and controlled in great detail the everyday lives of Ethiopians. Large numbers of people were forcibly moved around the country in an attempt to counter famine. During this time the Eritreans increased their guerrilla campaign, and Somalia began an invasion in the southern Ogaden desert. By 1978 the Somalis had gained much ground, and Mengistu's military regime was close to collapse. Temporary aid from Russian and Cuban troops enabled Mengistu to repel the Somalis however the reprieve did not last long. The Ethiopian population rebelled and, with the loss of Russian support in 1991, Mengistu fled to Zimbabwe.

A new government led by Meles Zenawi was put in place. In 1993 Eritrea gained its independence from Ethiopia after nearly 30 years of war, and two years later Ethiopia held its first multi-party election, leading to Zenawi's confirmation as Prime Minister. A peace treaty with Eritrea was finally negotiated in 2000.

## Ethiopia today

The war against Islam in the 16th century, the continuing inter-tribal conflicts, and the war with Eritrea, have all left devastating scars on this once rich country. From its powerful status as the Aksum Kingdom 3,000 years ago, Ethiopia is now one of the poorest countries in the world - in the Human Development Index for 2006 it was ranked 173 out of 180. In addition to the deep wounds inflicted by centuries of conflict, Ethiopia is a country which struggles with earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and frequent droughts, all disastrous for an agriculturally based economy which has a high dependency on seasonal floods and rains. Aid agencies also detail how poor cultivation practices and the uncertain status of their main export, coffee, have also led to the current endemic poverty. They list some of the main problems facing Ethiopians as impure drinking water, constant risk of famine, deforestation, soil erosion, and AIDS.



Nearly half the population is estimated to be under 14 years old. But education for children is becoming more available, with many children now having access to half day schooling. However existing schools suffer from over-crowding. Educating this young population is essential if the country is to lift itself out of poverty. It is also vital for the strengthening of the Christian Church, and to enable Christians to stand against the challenge of Islam. While it is estimated that 46% of the adult population are illiterate, the situation is made worse because church services in the majority Ethiopian Orthodox Church are conducted in the ancient language of Ge'ez, which is not spoken by the population. Many Christians therefore are not strongly grounded in their faith, being unable to read their Bibles or understand what their church leaders are saying. More evangelical churches are now beginning to lead their services in the national language Amharic; however Christians still need deeper grounding in their faith in order to counter the claims of Muslim missionaries. Muslims are very active in missionary work throughout Ethiopia, and are continually changing their tactics, so that Christian leaders must be constantly alert to teach their congregations.

## Growing persecution

By its very existence as a Christian nation in middle of an Islamic region, Ethiopia is a source of irritation to Muslims, resulting in increasing

religious tensions. There is a growing number of armed Muslim activists supported by Sudan in the border areas, while Muslim missionaries travel the country intent on claiming the land for Islam. The current civil war within neighbouring Somalia, which began in May 2006, has resulted in an influx of Somali refugees to Ethiopia, increasing the number of Muslims within the country, and northern Ethiopia is now a strongly Islamic area.

For the Christian Church the situation is increasingly dangerous. In early 2006 large mobs of Muslims attacked Christians in Kemisse (approx 350km north-east of Addis Ababa). Three churches were burned down. In another incident a group of 50 Christians were brutally attacked by Muslim clerics. Later in 2006 anti-Christian violence spread across four districts in western Ethiopia leaving 25 Christians dead and approximately 2,800 people homeless, including many children. The Muslim attackers were armed, organised and trained men, who took the opportunity of a small dispute to spread the attack across neighbouring Christian districts. Many Christians were beaten and tortured; women and girls as young as 12 years old were sexually abused. The violence was not just centred on people, but on the whole Christian community – houses and churches were burned to the ground, and some churches were even converted into mosques. Most distressing for the Christians is that the authorities did nothing to

## The Good News

Amongst these troubles Christian evangelists are finding that many hearts are still open to the Gospel of Christ. Barnabas Fund has been involved in supporting 60 evangelists through Ethiopia, who have seen much success over the past six years, including many baptisms. In the past two years they have brought nearly 2,000 people to saving faith in Jesus Christ, planted 65 new churches, and have shared the Gospel with around 20,000 people. They have a strong focus also on discipleship, so that new converts are given a firm foundation in their new faith.

[Project reference 13-146](#)

intervene during the violence. The attack took place in an area where all the political positions are held by Muslims. Worryingly this type of anti-Christian violence appears to be growing.

Throughout its rich and tumultuous history, Ethiopia has been able to retain its Christian identity, and the Christian Church has remained a strong presence despite the challenges of Islam, communism and tribal conflicts. In these days Ethiopian Christians are facing perhaps their strongest challenge, as Muslims continue with their aim to claim the land for Islam.

## Quick Facts

- Ethiopia is the only Christian part of the Horn of Africa, surrounded by Islamic areas such as Sudan, Somalia and Northern Kenya.
- Its Biblical heritage dates from 1000BC, with the visit of Queen of Sheba to Solomon. According to Ethiopian tradition their son, Menelek I, became the first King of Ethiopia. It became a Christian country in the 4th century AD.
- Islam arrived in Ethiopia in 7th century, during the first hijra. The Muslim refugees were welcomed and lived in harmony with the Ethiopian Christians. But the Islamic persecution of Christians began shortly after.
- There is a growing Muslim presence, both due to the influx of refugees from neighbouring Somalia, and through active Islamic missionaries. There is a corresponding growth in anti-Christian violence.
- Ethiopia is a country afflicted by extreme poverty, stemming from centuries of internal and external warfare, ecological disasters and poor agricultural processes.
- Barnabas Fund began working in Ethiopia in 1998, training and supporting evangelists in rural areas. Many Muslims are responding to the Gospel and coming to saving faith in Christ Jesus.

This series of pull-out supplements is intended to provide background information for Christians seeking to understand the nature of Islam and its contemporary expression. One aspect of this relates to understanding the reason for the oppression and persecution of Christians in various Islamic parts of the world, and another to the growing challenge which Islam poses to Western society, culture and Church.

# Islam and Truth

Many people find themselves very confused about the doctrine and practices of Islam. It seems to be a faith so full of contradictions. What one Muslim says may be the complete opposite of what another Muslim says, even if they follow the same version of Islam. More confusing still, what a Muslim says one day to one audience may be the complete opposite of what the same person says another day to another audience. Why is this particular religion so hard to pin down?

## The puzzling duplicity of Islam

There are two doctrines within Islam which explain why it seems to non-Muslims that there are so many discrepancies and differences in what Muslims believe, say and do. Understanding these two doctrines solves the conundrum of the apparent self-contradictions within Islam. We shall return later to these two doctrines – *taqiyya* and abrogation – but first we shall look at what Islam says about truth and lies.

## Truth and lying

One of the 99 names of Allah is “al-Haqq” meaning “the reality, the supreme truth”. The concept of truth is important within Islam, and the word occurs hundreds of times in the Qur’an and the *hadith* (traditions recording what Muhammad said and did). Like Christianity, Islam is a faith which rejects relativism and believes its own teachings to be the absolute truth. The Qur’an in Arabic is considered to be the very word of God, exactly as engraved on a stone tablet in heaven. Muhammad is considered to be the final infallible prophet to whom the Angel Gabriel gradually revealed the Qur’an and whose life is a model for Muslims to imitate in every detail.

*That God may reward the men of Truth for their Truth and punish the Hypocrites if that be His Will, or turn to them in Mercy: for God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Q 33: 24)*<sup>1</sup>

Just as truth is commended, so also lying is condemned.

*Truly God guides not one who transgresses and lies! (Q 40: 28)*

Yet, despite these clear teachings, another doctrine has developed within Islam which permits Muslims to lie in certain specific circumstances.

## The doctrine of *taqiyya*

The doctrine of *taqiyya* (dissimulation) was first developed for dealing with situations of religious persecution where Muslims could save their lives by concealing their true beliefs. It was extended to allow such deception in order to save not just their life but also their honour or their property. Eventually what had originally been meant only for emergencies became effectively normal.

As Hamid Enayat, a Muslim historian who was a Fellow of St. Antony’s College, Oxford, states:

*[Taqiyya has] “in practice become the norm of public behaviour among all Muslims – both Sunni and Shi’a – whenever there is a conflict between faith and expediency”.*

Shi’as, a minority amongst Muslims who have faced prolonged persecution by the majority Sunnis for their religious beliefs, were especially involved in the development of the doctrine of *taqiyya*. In order to protect themselves from harm, Shi’as often passed themselves off as Sunnis, while secretly maintaining their Shi’a beliefs. *Taqiyya* is therefore particularly strong amongst Shi’a Muslims, but is also practised by Sunnis.

The Qur’anic basis is Q 16:106, which absolves Muslims from Allah’s wrath if they are forced into outward disbelief while in their hearts they remain true Muslims.

*Anyone who, after accepting faith in God, utters Unbelief, - except under compulsion, Whoever disbelieved in Allah after his belief, his heart remaining firm in Faith – but such as open their breast to Unbelief, - on them is Wrath from God, and theirs will be a dreadful Penalty.*

Another Qur’anic text often used to justify *taqiyya* runs:

*And make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction but do good. (Q 2:195)*

It is interpreted as laying a duty on all Muslims to save life, honour and property from danger and unlawful destruction by any means possible.

A Qur’anic warning against friendship with non-Muslims is also seen as lending support to the doctrine of *taqiyya* because of the phrase “by way of precaution” which can be interpreted as **pretended** friendship.

*Let not the Believers take for friends or helpers Unbelievers rather than Believers; if any do that, in nothing will there be help from God: except by way of precaution, that ye may guard yourselves from them. (Q 3:28)*

Various *hadith* provide details of other situations when lying is permissible. For example:

*Allah’s Messenger said, “Lying is allowed in only three cases: falsehood spoken by a man to his wife to please her; falsehood in war; and falsehood to put things right between people.” (Al-Tirmidhi Number 5033: Narrated by Asma’, daughter of Yazid.)*

<sup>1</sup> Quotations in this article are taken from *The Holy Qur’an: Text Translation and Commentary* by A. Yusuf Ali (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1975). Please note that the verse numbering varies slightly between different translations of the Qur’an so it may be necessary to look in the verses just before or just after the reference given to find the same text in another translation.

## Recognising *taqiyya*

Once it is realised that even the most senior, the most sincere and the most devout Muslim could be engaging in *taqiyya*, many apparent contradictions are explained. *Taqiyya* in the defence of Islam allows Muslims to make contradictory statements depending whom they are addressing. Much of what is said by Muslims about Islam to non-Muslims is likely to be untrue. Occasionally they will even admit this.

What is said in English to Christians one day might be totally contradicted the next day by the same leaders speaking to their own people, perhaps in Urdu or Arabic. For example, Hamid Ali, spiritual leader of Al-Madina mosque in Beeston, West Yorkshire, UK, publicly condemned the London bombings of July 7th 2005. But in a secretly taped conversation with a Bangladeshi-origin undercover reporter from the *Sunday Times* he said the 7/7 bombings were a “good” act and praised the bombers.

There are even special translations of the Qur’an in English which are designed to appeal to Westerners and to dispel all their anxieties about Islam. These translations soften the more aggressive verses by wandering further from the original text and its traditional Islamic interpretation.

## The Islamisation of knowledge

Some Muslims have embarked on a deliberate process they are calling the “Islamisation of knowledge”. The plan appears to be to enlarge and elevate the place of Islam within every academic discipline by grounding all arts and sciences in the Islamic doctrine of the unity of God based on Qur’an and *hadith*. Their method includes a massive publication programme and the establishment of Islamic universities and research institutions. They also engage in revising text books in the West by introducing Islam and the “Islamic legacy”, thus disseminating “Islamised knowledge” to students, scholars and intellectuals. But other methods of disseminating information are also used. The purpose is both to revive the faith of Muslims and to be an Islamic witness to non-Muslims.

However, the changes made are not just to introduce factual information about Islam to the text books. There are also false or exaggerated statements introduced in order to make Islam appear in a better light, while the negative aspects of Islamic teaching or Islamic history are cut out. One of the erroneous take-home messages is that Islam should take the credit for all that is best in European civilisation, having been the original source from which Europeans derived their learning and skills.

Some of the “Islamised knowledge” is easy to spot as many of the newer assertions still appear ridiculous to most non-Muslims. For example:

- Napoleon Bonaparte converted to Islam.
- Muslim explorers reached America before Christopher Columbus did.
- Islam arrived in Australia in the ninth century.
- Offa, the eighth century Anglo-Saxon king of Mercia (in the British midlands) was a Muslim.

But other examples have been around a long time and have become widely believed. Here is a selection.

- ***There was interfaith harmony in Islamic Spain.***

For some of the time Christians and Jews were tolerated so long as they submitted to various humiliating rules. But in some periods they were severely persecuted e.g. killing, expulsion and forced conversion of Christians and Jews to Islam.

- ***Muslims led the field in science and medicine during the Middle Ages.*** While much of the learning of the time was

written down in Arabic, many of the scholars were Christians and Jews. This is often not apparent because their names may be Islamised and some became Muslims for various reasons. The first Arabic medical book was written by a Christian priest and translated into Arabic by a Jewish doctor in 683 AD. Furthermore, the scholars’ work was basically no more than to translate into Arabic the work of earlier Greek scholars, with very little in the way of new additions. This applied to medicine, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, zoology, chemistry, geography and technology. “The crossing of the language barrier left the contents almost completely unchanged,” says Professor Manfred Ullman of Tübingen University. What medieval Islam did in effect was to absorb the learning of other cultures, to re-name everything in Arabic and then to claim it all for Islam.

- ***Muslims founded the first hospital.*** The first hospital was founded in Baghdad when this city was the capital of the ruling Abbasid caliphate. However it was not started by a Muslim but by an Assyrian Christian called Jabrail ibn Bakhishu.

- ***Muslims invented the Arabic numerals used in the West today as well as the useful mathematical concept of zero.***

The numerals 1,2,3,4 etc, came to the West via the Arabs but were originally derived from the Syriac alphabet. The Syriacs are a Christian people. The numerals now used in the Arab world (١, ٢, ٣, ٤ etc.) were introduced from Hindu India in the seventh century by a Syriac mathematician. The idea of using a symbol for the quantity zero also came from India.

- ***Muslims invented a beautiful new kind of architecture.***

The domes and arches which are typical of mosques were copied from the architecture of Middle Eastern churches of the time. The minarets resemble the stand-alone bell towers which many churches at that time had. The famous Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem was built by Byzantine (Christian) craftsmen.

- ***Islam spread peacefully in the early years.*** The Muslims conquered non-Muslim countries and imposed Islamic rule by force with non-Muslims in a subjugated position. Some non-Muslims converted to Islam by choice and could have continued in their old faith with the inferior status. Others were offered a choice of death or conversion to Islam.

- ***Women are equal to men in Islam.*** This is not true according to the normal Western understanding of “equal”. According to *shari’a* (Islamic law) women receive a smaller inheritance and less compensation for injuries compared with men. Also their worth as a witness in a trial is less than that

This gold coin from the reign of Anglo-Saxon King Offa (died 796) is the only piece of evidence to back the claim that he was a Muslim. The argument is based on the



fact that it has an Arabic text around the edge, resembling the Islamic creed. But one of the Arabic words has been written incorrectly, indicating that neither Offa nor his officials could read Arabic. Before Offa there had been no gold coins in England. In order to make his new gold coinage acceptable to Arab traders, Offa would have wanted to make his coins resemble

theirs, a normal numismatic practice, hence the copying of what would have been to him unintelligible squiggles around the edge. Offa built many churches and was a great benefactor of monasteries. He anointed his son as his heir in a strongly Christian ceremony.

of a male witness, and the rules for divorce are biased against women. In most Muslim countries, women continue to suffer from second rate status, illiteracy, unfair treatment in cases of divorce and maintenance, and other legal handicaps.

• **The Crusades were an unprovoked European assault on the peace-loving Muslims of the Holy Land.**

The Crusades were a delayed Christian reaction to the initial Muslim *jihad* of the seventh and eighth centuries that had overrun many Christian provinces including Palestine, Syria, Egypt, North Africa and Spain. The loss of the Holy Land to Muslim armies in the initial Islamic *jihad* of the seventh century was deeply mourned across the Christian world but no action was taken by the Christians at the time. The Crusades were also a response to ongoing Muslim attacks against the Christians of the Byzantine Empire which continued after the first *jihad*. Two Byzantine emperors appealed to the Pope for help (1074 and 1095) and eventually, more than 300 years after the initial Muslim conquest, the European Christians came to the aid of their beleaguered fellow-Christians in the Middle East.

• **“Islam” means “peace” and jihad is nothing to do with war.** Islam means “submission” and *jihad* in classical Islam is used mainly of military warfare to defend and extend the Islamic state.

• **The Qur’an says: “If you kill one soul it is as if you killed all mankind.”** These or similar words, often cited to prove that Islam is only peaceable, are a misquote. The actual Qur’anic text runs:

*If any one slew a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole people. (Q 5:35)*

The meaning of the verse depends on what is understood by the part which is usually deliberately omitted - “murder” and “spreading mischief in the land” i.e. what would then justify killing. Some Muslims interpret “mischief in the land” as meaning secularism, democracy and other non-Islamic values in a land. Some consider that “murder” includes the killing of Muslims in Iraq by coalition forces. This verse would then justify killing them in retaliation for the “murder” they have committed. When the whole verse is read, it is actually a justification for killing certain people.

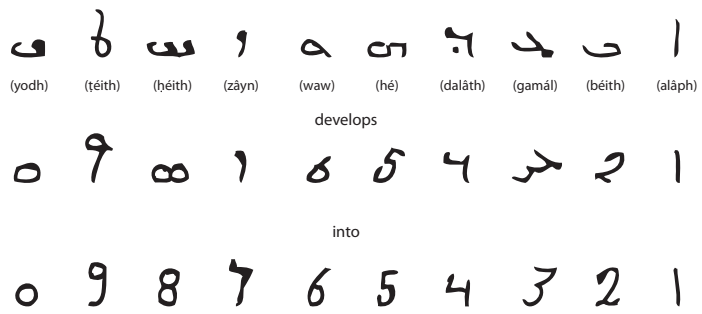
## Abrogation

Another important doctrine within Islam which causes it to appear contradictory is known as abrogation.

We have already seen that the Qur’an is regarded by Muslims as the perfect and unchanged word of Allah. They believe it was revealed piecemeal to Muhammad over a period of some 20 years. But the text of the Qur’an is full of internal contradictions. Muslims deal with that problem by the doctrine of abrogation which, in its commonest form, says that whenever two verses containing rulings contradict each other, the later-revealed verse abrogates (cancels) the earlier one. So long as a Muslim knows the relative dates of the two contradictory verses, he or she will be able to tell which one to ignore (the earlier one) and which one to obey (the later one).

In fact, dating the verses is no easy matter, because the Qur’an is not arranged in chronological order, and even the scholars disagree about the relative dates of some sections. But there is some agreement on which chapters date from Muhammad’s early years in Mecca and which from after his move to Medina.

## The first ten letters of the Syriac alphabet



The numerals used today in the West are derived from the Syriac alphabet

One of the sad consequences of the doctrine of abrogation is the violently hostile attitude of Islam to those of other faiths. The reason is that most if not all of the peaceable verses in the Qur’an date from when Muhammad lived in Mecca. At that time he was very friendly towards those of other faiths. Later, when he fled persecution to set up his own Islamic state in Medina, his attitude to other faiths changed completely, and verses dating from his time in Medina are full of aggression and commands to fight against non-Muslims. In accordance with the standard rules of abrogation, the Medinan verses abrogate the Meccan verses i.e. the aggressive verses cancel out the peaceable verses.

But the peaceable verses are still there in the Qur’anic text. This explains why Muslims can quote peaceful-sounding verses to support the claim that “Islam is peace”, while Islamic history shows us a faith which has set out to conquer territory by military might, killing or forcibly converting non-Muslims.

## Making and breaking agreements

We cannot end this brief look at the subject of Islam and truth without considering why Muslims so often break the agreements they make with non-Muslims. Amongst Islam’s detailed rules for conducting wars, are rules about making peace treaties. Muslims are allowed to make **temporary** peace treaties with non-Muslims but only if this is advantageous for the Muslims. Such treaties should preferably not last more than ten years. When circumstances change so that it becomes advantageous to the Muslims to break the treaty, they **must** do so (having given due notice of their intention).

There are modern liberal Muslims who would like to see a change to the classical Islamic doctrine in the form of the possibility of making **permanent** peace treaties with non-Muslims. Some of these however say that permanent peace should be conditional on non-Muslims submitting to the Islamic state, which is really no different from classical Islam. Others hold that the only condition necessary is that Islam may be propagated without hindrance in the other state.

As with *taqiyya*, the doctrine of breaking treaties has developed despite there being verses in the Qur’an to support the keeping of treaties and promises.

*(But the treaties are) not dissolved with those pagans with whom ye have entered into alliance and who have not subsequently failed you in aught; nor aided any one against you. So fulfil your engagements with them to the end of their term: for God loveth the righteous. (Q 9:4)*

*... break not your oaths after ye have confirmed them; (Q 16:91)*



This beautiful mosque in Jerusalem, known as the Dome of the Rock, was built by Christian craftsmen

## Prolonging the Middle East conflict

According to Sheikh 'Abdul Rahman 'Abdul Khaliq, a Saudi Salafi scholar, peace treaties with Jews are made to be broken. In response to a question about the duty of a Muslim with regard to peace treaties with Jews he writes:

*The first duty is to firmly believe in their invalidity and that because they contain invalid conditions they were born dead the very day they were given birth to ...*

*The second duty of the Muslim is to believe that these treaties do not bind him and that it is not lawful for him to give effect to any of their contents except under compulsion and necessity ...*

*The third duty is to work towards overthrowing these treaties...*

Saudi Arabia's former Grand Mufti, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Ibn Baz, also made it clear that any cessation of hostilities with Israel could only ever be a temporary measure, pending the

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time that Muslims became strong enough to gain possession of the whole land for themselves.

The peace between the leader of the Muslims in Palestine and the Jews does not mean that the Jews will permanently own the lands which they now possess. Rather it only means that they would be in possession of it for a period of time until either the truce comes to an end, or until the Muslims become strong enough to force them out of the Muslim lands.

With teaching like this being promoted, it is easy to see why peace in the Middle East is proving so elusive.

## Conclusion

While many Muslims are honest and open in their dealings with non-Muslims, the possibility of *taqiyya* always exists. This makes it very difficult for non-Muslims to assess the reliability of statements made by Muslims to them. It is easier to be sure of what Muslims think by checking what they say to each other and what they do.

## BARNABAS FUND HOPE AND AID FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

### UK

The Old Rectory, River Street, Pewsey,  
Wiltshire SN9 5DB

Telephone 08700 603 900

Fax 08700 603 901

*Calls to 08700 numbers are charged at normal national rate*

From outside the UK

Telephone +44 1672 564938

Fax +44 1672 565030

Email [info@barnabasfund.org](mailto:info@barnabasfund.org)

Registered Charity number 1092935

Company registered in England number 4029536

### Australia

Postal Suite 107

236 Hyperdome

Loganholme QLD 4129

Telephone (07) 3806 1076 or **1300 365799**

Fax: (07) 3806 4076

Email [bfaustralia@barnabasfund.org](mailto:bfaustralia@barnabasfund.org)

### Jersey

Le Jardin, La Rue A Don, Grouville,

Jersey, Channel Islands

JE3 9GB

Telephone 700600

Fax 700601

E mail [bfjersey@barnabasfund.org](mailto:bfjersey@barnabasfund.org)

### New Zealand

PO Box 8107, Symonds Street, Auckland 1150

Telephone (09) 368 1071 or 0800 008 805

Fax (09) 368 1072

Email [office@barnabasfund.org.nz](mailto:office@barnabasfund.org.nz)

### USA

6731 Curran St

McLean, VA 22101

Telephone (703) 288-1681

or toll-free 1-866-936-2525

Fax (703) 288-1682

Email [bfusa@barnabasfund.org](mailto:bfusa@barnabasfund.org)

[www.barnabasfund.org](http://www.barnabasfund.org)

## Strong leaders: a priceless gift to the Church

For any organisation to flourish, good leaders are important. A good leader can lead a group of people, in the right direction, and achieve many times more than the same group left directionless. God used the leadership of Moses to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt, and He gave Joshua the necessary leadership skills to ensure the conquering of the Promised Land. In the same way good leaders are a vital ingredient to the health of

Church leaders receive vital training and encouragement in Central Asia



necessary to support, encourage and teach the persecuted Church, to enable it to withstand such opposition.

### A precious resource, a particular target

It's precisely in places where persecution is rife that church leaders are often targeted for additional abuse - because those whose aim is to destroy the Church are aware of how vital they are to the health of the Body of Christ.

In October 2006 an Iraqi church minister, Paulos Iskander, was abducted in Mosul. His kidnappers demanded a large ransom, so his family began arranging several loans. However, two days later Iskander's body was discovered, dumped in an outlying suburb of Mosul. He had been decapitated, his hands and legs had been severed, and his body showed signs of torture. It has been reported to Barnabas Fund that Islamic militants in Iraq have a list of 30 other church leaders they want to kill.

Persecution might not be in the form of violence. In Sri Lanka the village elders of a Hindu-majority village refused last year to allow the 5-year-old daughter of the local church leader to go to the only school in the village. Now she must board at a school that is two hours away by bus, in an area controlled by the

Sri Lankan government. The church leader's village is an area controlled by the rebel group, the Tamil Tigers. When fighting breaks out the border between the two is closed and this Christian is cut off from his young daughter.

In several countries church leaders are targeted for oppression by government authorities. In China church leaders are frequently arrested and detained on charges such as "illegal business practices". While in detention they are often mistreated, perhaps beaten or tortured, and consequently many suffer from ill-health.

### Spiritual riches despite material poverty

On top of this targeted persecution, there are other challenges. One of the greatest of these is the overwhelming poverty which engulfs many sections of the persecuted Church. In Pakistan a large proportion of Christians find that well paid jobs are denied them. Because they are Christians they are deemed to be inferior to Muslims, and only worthy of the despised jobs such as street sweeping or working in the sewers. As well as the social stigma carried by these jobs, they are very low-paying and often dangerous to their health.

From such poverty, where Christians struggle to feed and look after themselves, they are not



today's Church family. Without people who are called, gifted and spiritually equipped for leadership any Christian community would struggle to thrive.

While our ultimate leader is Christ, head of the Church, He has appointed many within the Body to act as earthly leaders, charged with keeping our attention focussed on our Lord. Their role is essential in so many ways, and when you add the nightmarish pressures of persecution on to Christian lives then the value of strong leadership becomes even more abundantly clear.

In many areas the Christian community is under intense pressure to turn away from the faith. Without a solid foundation, it is hard to withstand the many pressures and temptations to turn away from the "narrow path". Strong leaders are

- “Andrew” was a Buddhist, and addicted to alcohol when a Christian tract brought him to investigate the love of Jesus. After giving his life to Christ he felt a calling that he should commit to full-time ministry. *“I never thought I will get a chance of studying at a Bible College... I thank the Lord for having opened ways for me to come and study his word in a deeper way.”* Barnabas Fund provides part scholarships for 15 students in Sri Lanka, including Andrew, to attend Bible College. Their sending churches, who are all very poor, provide approximately a third of the costs.

- **“Matthew”, a church leader in Sudan, attended a Bible study course which was supported by a grant from Barnabas Fund. He says *“In the three months I have learned a lot. I feel sorry for the way I used to preach. I really feel convicted and I desire to study more and prepare so well and take this ministry so seriously.”***

- Barnabas Fund provided the costs for a one month intensive training seminar for church leaders in Chad. The aim of the month was to inform, prepare, equip, train and encourage the church leaders. At the end of the month the church leaders, many of whom had arrived discouraged and exhausted, left with new encouragement and feeling better equipped to minister in their churches. Each one was given a mini library of books to take back with them.



A workshop on trauma counselling for leaders in South Sudan

likely to be able to afford the cost of supporting a full-time church leader. Barnabas Fund is currently assisting with the living costs for 100 church leaders in Pakistan. By supporting these leaders, whole Christian communities are being spiritually enriched. There is tremendous response to the Gospel as people see the love of Christ being lived out by Christians, and the joy that they have in their lives despite their physical hardships.

## Investing in leaders

There is no doubt that training church leaders is a long-term investment that will produce manifold blessings for years to come. Theological and pastoral training equips church leaders for the important tasks within the church with which they are entrusted. But where the Church is a pressured minority leaders have little opportunity to receive the training they need to help their flocks thrive. Training is expensive, and few churches can afford to send leaders away to theological college. In addition, the pressurised situations they are in mean that leaders are just too precious to spare for several months while they go away to train. In South Sudan, for example, the Church grew enormously during 22 years of civil war and many new congregations were pastored by dedicated and hard-

working individuals who had never had opportunity for any training.

**There is no doubt that training church leaders is a long-term investment that will produce manifold blessings for years to come.**

Barnabas Fund has several ongoing projects to train church leaders. The details vary from situation to situation. In some cases Barnabas Fund covers the whole cost for church leaders to attend Bible School for training. In other situations churches are able to supply part of the costs, while Barnabas Fund makes up the difference. Several projects cover the costs of correspondence training, so that the church leader is able to continue their vital role within the church while also developing their leadership skills. Turn to page 4 to read about one particular leadership training project in South Sudan.

In addition to basic theological training, leaders need to be equipped for the specific circumstances in which they are ministering. Barnabas Fund frequently funds short training courses and seminars to teach church leaders on topics such as understanding Islam and how to respond to it, and how to reach out to Muslims.

The cost of training a leader is relatively small, and yet the end result

is a priceless gift to the Church: a leader who is ready to serve their congregation and help the suffering Church continue to witness for Christ in their communities. Surely that is a vital investment into the family of believers.

### Leadership Training Fund: 00-430

Gifts to this fund are used to help train and equip church leaders in a variety of countries.

**“Please be assured that the investment of Barnabas Fund is not going wasted, but it is touching so many lives”**

– A teacher from a Bible College in South Asia.



A leadership seminar in West Africa funded by Barnabas Fund