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MERF News

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

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A Different Gospel

by Dan Burmawi

Luke's Gospel Begins:

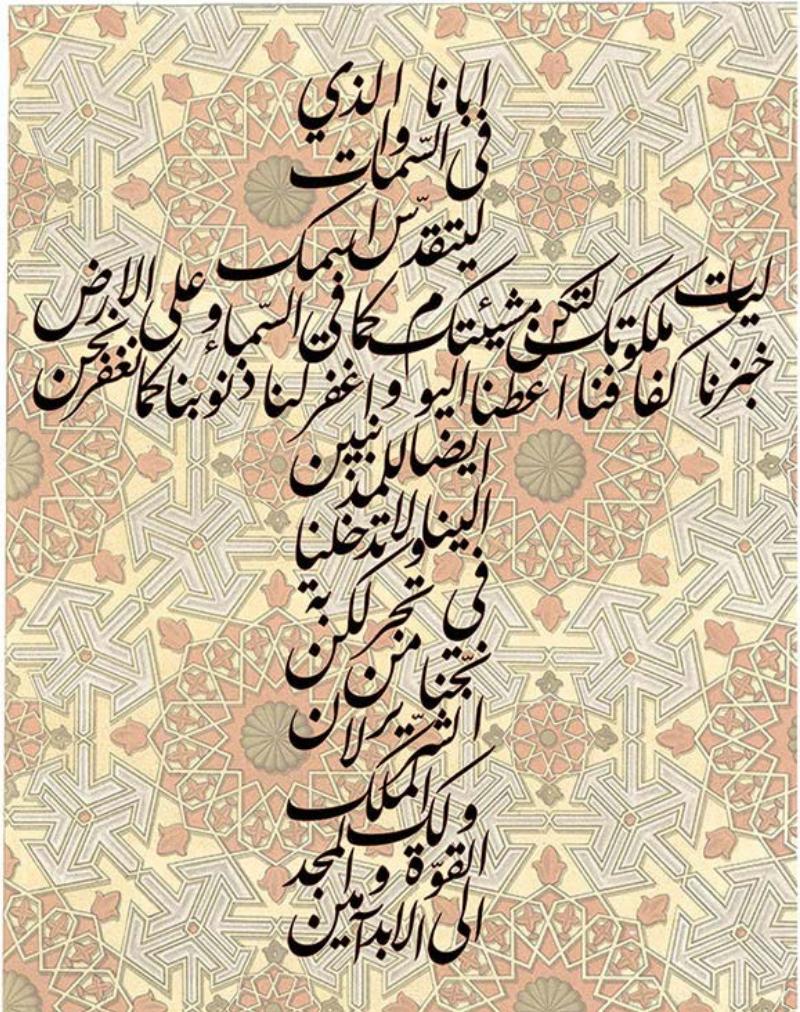
Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4)

The Lord's faithful servant of Greek background, Luke, became aware of seriously defective claims about Christ, aimed at dissuading his thinking fellow Greek inquirer, Theophilus, from following Christ. He heard unreliable accounts about Jesus. Luke became alarmed by gravely dangerous claims of unbelieving Jews against Christ, his

deity, his fulfillment of Old Testament Scriptures, his virgin birth, moral and spiritual perfection, heavenly teaching, vicarious death and resurrection. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he recorded the gospel following careful, detailed investigation of the facts. Similarly, I am personally concerned about the serious errors of new Arabic publications falsely promoted as helpful for winning souls for Christ of people from my Muslim background.

Attending a Celebration

As a convert, I was invited to attend the launching celebration of a supposed new Arabic New Testament ‘translation’ called “The True Meaning of Issa’s Gospel.” The ‘spiritual’ leader of the project and its financier



The Lord's Prayer in Arabic

is of Alawite background. (Alawites are a fringe sect of Shiite Islam.) He addressed us about this new “revolutionary translation,” claiming noble objectives. It wasn’t long before I realized that he was an innovator of a different gospel. The presentation of the Savior’s identity and his earthly ministry is distorted. It gives false impressions that contradict the inspired Scriptures. When asked for valid

reasons for altering the original words, expressions, concepts and even sentences in the inspired Word, he had none. When asked if he is willing to give the effort and time to explain difficult words in Scriptures to Muslims, he didn’t respond. All Arabic-speaking churches and mature converts reject this and similar publications. Yet, they still are distributed, sowing misunderstanding and confusion.



Dr. Cornelius Van Dyck (1818-1896) completed the Arabic Bible translation left unfinished at the death of Rev Eli Smith. It was first published in 1865.

Today a revised version is approved by Arabic-speaking churches.

Dr. Van Dyck also wrote many helpful Arabic textbooks for Christian education.

Not New

Attempts to reduce the offense of the gospel message to be more acceptable to Muslims and others are many in the history of missions. All are characterized by inaccurate renderings of Scriptural words and distorted versions of the true gospel of Christ.

For example, in the mid-1970's, some missionaries with limited Arabic, worked with locals to develop "common Muslim-Christian principles." The product twisted passages of both the Bible

and the Muslim Koran to make them mean the same. Despite claims to effectively persuade Muslims to follow Christ, years have passed and the so-called converts are nowhere to be seen.

The apostle Paul, encountered similar attempts by the Judaizers who influenced Galatian believers to whom he wrote: *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- not that there is another one,*

but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1:6-7)

Adjust Self – Not The Gospel

These and similar dangerous publications seem based on two false assumptions: First, the gospel, *the power of God unto salvation*, is weak and unconvincing and thus needs removal of anything hard to accept by Muslims. Second, Muslims require a softer different gospel. The apostle Paul made it very

clear that it is not the gospel that needs to be adjusted, but those who present it (1 Corinthians: 9:19-22). What a difference between adjusting the gospel content and adjusting oneself to humbly, sacrificially and lovingly explain the true gospel to Muslims and others.

As a former Muslim, had I received such a catastrophically false impression of the Lord Jesus Christ in a humanly-inspired false gospel, I would still be lost. I would also promote a corrupt and corrupting false message. But by God's grace, the Holy Spirit blessed me with faith through faithful testimony to Christ. Neither I, nor other converts I know, find it difficult to understand the gospel of God's grace in the Arabic Bible accepted by churches, the revised Smith-Van Dyck version. A more up-to-date revision is underway. Now, with other MERF partners, I bear witness to Christ and see the fruit among the growing numbers of Muslims who are hungry for the true gospel.

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