

THE ISLAMIC SEDUCTION OF "CHRISTIAN EUROPE"

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THE ISLAMIC SEDUCTION OF "CHRISTIAN EUROPE"

By: Carlos Madrigal

A. 'Europe', the ever seduced one...

From the time "Europe" was abducted by Zeus- giving it its name, to the description of the apocalyptic woman swayed by the beast (Rev 17), these "Christianized" lands have been the object of multiple seductions. Today, it is Islam itself who wants to seduce and subjugate it.

i. "Tolerance" in Islam vs. The European stance of "Mea culpa"

Since its foundation, Islam chose to assimilate the ethnicities it conquered by providing a degree of tolerance to those who embraced monotheism. For Europe, on the other hand, we cannot say the same thing. Even though a few stories do exist of neighborly cohabitation in a mozarabic context, the crusades and the re-conquest of the Iberian Peninsula have stained the history of the continent. However, as the saying goes, "It's not gold all that glitters"; and behind the facade of magnanimity of the caliphs and the sultans lie many stories of pain: from the prisons of Algiers, to the forceful recruitment of janissaries¹, not to mention the disgrace of the *dhimmi*². It was not until the Ottoman capitulations and the resurgence of Islamic nationalist movements towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century that Europe, now in its new conciliatory role, began to announce its unilateral stance of "mea culpa".

"Tolerance" was an advanced posture in the middle ages, but in actuality, its nothing else but discriminatory. To tolerate is to "suffer, or bear patiently" something uncomfortable. The West, on the other hand, seeks integration and the naturalization of minority groups. If the West has indeed advanced, the East has reached a standstill in the best of all possible scenarios.

ii. The "seduction" of Christian women

In the Islamic movement there was a special interest placed on Christian women. It's not a surprise that the merchandise of white female slaves was widespread in Islamic lands. The inclination of the sultans, back in the day, and of the sheiks nowadays to fill their harems with western women is now well known in popular culture. Since the beginning, the Koran legislated concerning this very topic: (*Lawful unto you in marriage*) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book (Jews and Christians), revealed before your time—. (Al Maeda: The Table Spread 5:5). There is nothing said about getting married to Christian husbands, which would imply- in Islamic thought- the risk of assimilation of the Muslim woman and her children to the Christian faith. It's rather alarming that today, although mainly sporadically, some women who go to these countries to share the Gospel end up being 'seduced' and married even to fundamentalists!

Is this type of assimilation and seduction perhaps a stratagem that's engrained in the very "genes" of Islamic propagation?

¹ The **janissaries** constituted of an army formed as a result of a 'human' tax named *devshirmeh*. The sultan's men recruited non-Muslim children (of whom most were Christian), chosen randomly and alienated from their family and roots to later go through stages of a strict selective process, to finally become the fiercest of guards of the sultan.

² The *dhimmi* is the name given to Jews and Christians who lived in Islamic lands, and whose presence was tolerated in exchange for the fee of a special tax and the acceptance of a socially inferior position.

iii. *Making the most of Eastern Christianity to establish "Sharia" law*

Besides the presence of Christians and Jews in the city of Mecca and of the mythical- or otherwise not so mythical- monk *Bahira* who instructed Mohammed, one of the first contacts between "Christendom" and expanding Islam is found in the illustrative case of John of Damascus. Both he and many early Byzantine writers assumed Islam to be no more than one of the heterodox forms found in Christianity. In John's particular case, this thought proves to be very interesting since he was raised in the Umayyad court in Damascus- the capital of the young Islamic Empire- where his father was the court vizier and intimate friend of the future caliph, Yazid. Upon reaching old age John retired to the monastery in the desert of Mar Saba where he began working in his masterpiece which refuted many heresies of the time, and was titled: "Concerning Heresy". The book includes a clear criticism of Islam- the first one written by a Christian (c. 700 AD) - in which John loosely related it to the heterodox doctrine of Nestorianism³. In his particular list, Islam occupied number 100 amongst many others that seemed to resemble Christianity. In fact, there was a relationship that both Nestorians and Muslims were conscious of. In 649 a Nestorian bishop wrote the following: "These Arabs do not fight against our Christian religion; no, in fact we could even say they defend our faith; they respect our priests and saints, and they offer donations to our churches"⁴.

Initially, Muslims were viewed as liberators from Byzantine oppression by Monophysite Christians⁵ and the Nestorians of Syria and Egypt. The same could be said of persecuted Jews who once... "Liberated from the miseries and persecution of Constantinople, prospered like never before; generating in the very process a rich literary collection of spiritual hymns, prayers, sermons, and other pious works."⁶

The incursion of Arab tribes into the lands of the Greco-Roman Empire after Mohammed's death left the first caliphs face to face with the dilemma of administrating a huge beurocratic machine for which they were not prepared. They had to choose between devastating and preserving, between the chicken and its golden eggs. The caliphs finally decided to take advantage of the peoples of the "Book" (i.e. Jews and Christians) by using its beurocrats in key areas. Hence, they made the most of the structure of Eastern "Christendom" to bit by bit, almost unnoticeably, establish the "Sharia". Does this not sound familiar to us when we listen to some of the current claims of certain Imams in Europe? Imam Abu Baseer, a religious leader in England that supports Al-Qaeda declared the following: "One of the goals of immigration is to revive the duty of the 'jihad' and the imposition of its power over the unfaithful. Immigration and jihad go together"⁷...But let's not be alarmists now!

The offices of Christians and Jews in the court of the caliphs and sultans, and the "Christian" wives of many of these rulers (Orhan I, Murad I, Beyazid I, Mehmed II the Conqueror, Murad II, Jem I, Selim I, Suleiman I, etc.; wives of French, Spanish, Greek, Hungarian, Bulgarian... origin⁸), succeeded each other for centuries. However this, by and large, does not demonstrate a sign of tolerance: Doesn't this just demonstrate the Islamic Empire's need for these people in order to

³ **Nestorianism** is a theological doctrine that considers Christ to be radically split into two persons: one human and one divine, both complete in themselves to the point that we could speak of two independent entities. The two persons are united in Christ, who is God and man at the same; hence Christ is said to be formed by two different persons (*prosopōn*).

⁴ Margaret Smith, *Studies in Early Mysticism in the Near and Middle East*, Oneworld, 1995, p. 120.

⁵ **Monophysitism** (from the Greek *μόνος*, *monos*, 'one', and *φύσις*, *physis*, 'nature') is a theological doctrine that states that Jesus was only present in divine nature while on earth, but not human.

⁶ See Michele Piccirillo, *The Christians in Palestine During a Time of Transition: 7th-9th Centuries en The Christian Heritage in the Holy Land*, edited by Anthony O'Mahony, Scorpion Cavendish, 1995.

⁷ <http://www.thebereancall.org/node/5389>

⁸ http://www.internetgazete.com/haber_detay.asp?haberID=55

sustain itself? In any case, at the end of this trajectory, we are seeing that today in many countries with a Muslim majority, the Christian presence is diminishing or about to disappear. While in the last quarter of the 19th century Istanbul's population was predominantly Christian (around 60%) and the city of Paris had no trace of Muslims; as of today Istanbul's Christian population does not even add to 1% and Paris' Muslim population numbers around 1.5 million⁹ out of the current 2.5 million in population (that's roughly 60%)!

B. The origins of the East-West confrontation

¿What has happened during the last century?

Since the 7th century the map of the known world was shaped by the expansion of Islam, which at one point covered almost one fourth of the earth's populated surface. One of the last empires to succumb, almost along the same time frame as the British or Austro-Hungarian Empires, was the Ottoman Empire itself. This period also marked the beginning of the end of the so called "clash" between East and West, i.e. the clash between Islamic Nationalism and Christian Imperialism (at least, as many Muslims see it). Why is this so? Because it was powers like France (under Napoleon), England (during the Victorian period), Italy (under Victor Manuel), Spain (until the reign of the Bourbon's), and others, that split the pie containing North Africa and the Middle East; thereby shaming the prideful Islamic "Umma" which has never forgotten its role as a once World power and representative of the "last and most pure form" of all monotheistic religions. In the very same manner, Muslims haven't forgotten the crusades and remember them as a scene of medieval barbarism against the civilized Arabic world of the time; where Jews, Eastern Christians, and Muslims cohabited (We can't come even close to compare the level of tolerance in the Middle East, back then, with the annihilation of Jews, heretics, and moors that was taking place in the West throughout the Inquisition).

i. The "guilt" culture apologizes; the "honor/shame culture" retaliates

According to the basic definition of the World's three cultures (guilt, shame and fear), the West belongs to the culture of "innocence and guilt" and the East to the culture of "honor and shame". What happens when one is guilty and loses his/her innocence? That person must apologize in order to receive absolution. What happens when a person is insulted and his/her honor is stained? That person must retaliate to recover dignity and clean him/herself from the insults received. This is the very thing that happens today: The West apologizes, while the East demands compensations for the insult it has received. Europe sings along the tune of the "Mea culpa", and Islam in Europe demands a "satisfaction" for the "insults" received. There's a plethora of examples that exemplify this attitude: From the demands of Muslims in Holland to eliminate the crosses in Dutch passports or of erasing the shield of the Swiss national football team¹⁰, to the minaret conflict in Switzerland and the movie director Theo Van Gogh- who was murdered for his short film in which a woman appeared with a verse of the Koran tattooed on her back.

ii. You can't change the "genes" of a culture with a new suit

The Western man clothes the Muslim with a 'suit and tie' and waits for a change of heart. He offers 'democracy' and expects to change his social fabric. But, What the Western man has forgotten is that only the Gospel changes hearts!

⁹ http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/1f4cf7c4-ad5e-11de-9caf-00144feabdc0,dwp_uuid=a712eb94-dc2b-11da-890d-0000779e2340.html

¹⁰ This was the demand of some Turks in Switzerland who would never even think of eliminating the crescent present in their own national symbols.

This is what the Westerner does not understand; who, despite offering the advantages of social justice, coherent principles, and individual rights that seem to initially attract the Easterner, remains perplexed at the sight of the Muslim who keeps swaying to his cultural 'genes' of honor, faithfulness to traditions, and submission to the community. And if the honor, traditions, and culture are rooted in fundamentalism, it can reach to the point of a self-sacrificing terrorist movement. In the West, if one kills someone in self defense he/she is acquitted; in the East if the killer is doing this to clean his/her honor he/she is justified. One has saved "life"; while the other has saved something even more important: "honor". This is like raising a tiger domestically; the day that the tiger's instincts take a hold of him, he eats his benefactor for lunch. Similarly, in the most adequate of environments, even the most Westernized of all Muslims sooner or later relives in the core of his/her being the fervor of the "insult" received. Something similar to this happened with the terrorists of the March 11th bombing in Madrid. Some of them were, to begin with, exemplary University students that the Spanish government was hosting and were being offered a bright future. However, living in the loneliness of the individualized West and having experienced civilian ostracisms they turned melancholic; and when they established contact with fundamentalists they transformed into inexorable murderers.

iii. *We are more alike than we think we are*

To be perfectly honest, our worldview is also stained by biases just like the one of an average Muslim. For example, Turkey demands its inclusion into Europe and the Continent recites the pre-conditions that Turkey must meet. However, what Turkey is looking for is for acceptance (i.e. being 'honored') so that they can have a pretext and reason to submit to the conditions and European rules as 'their' rules as well and not merely as imposition (i.e. insult).

But, haven't we experienced some of this in the Iberian Peninsula before we were "accepted" into Europe? "Africa begins in the Pyrenees," the famous saying went. Spain was "different", things that were purchased were "made in Europe", and the list goes on and on... Our phobias are also extremely similar, but opposite. The Iberian Peninsula was practically Muslim until the 13th-14th century, while Anatolia was practically Christian until about the same dates. In our black and white movies of *Moors vs. Christians*, the Moors were always portrayed as extremely malevolent; while in their movies, the Christians are the treacherous ones. According to popular rumors, Arabs are buying land in the "Costa del Sol" to re-conquer *el-Andalus*, while in their rumors "Christians" buy terrain in Anatolia to restore the Byzantine Empire. The mosque in Cordova was initially converted to a church and now is a museum; the basilica of the Hagia Sophia was initially transformed into a mosque and now is a museum. Our "Catholic" kings expelled the Jews some 500 years ago, while the Ottoman Sultan welcomed them into Istanbul until very recently. The battle of Lepanto curbed Turkish piracy in the Mediterranean according to us, but according to their history the battle of "Inebahti" (as they name it) took place in order to repel Christian piracy. Public baths are "from Turkey" in Spain. The "tavernas" (rustic pubs/inns) are "from Spain" in Turkey. Storks migrate from Europe to Africa through the Iberian Peninsula, and they do the same over Anatolia! We are in both extremes of the Mediterranean, and we are so alike; yet at the same time, so different.

C. The Alliance of Civilizations: Only a Muslim legacy?

Spain leads the Alliance of Civilizations with Turkey. In recent declarations to the Spanish press, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs reminded the press members that "Europe and its nationalities were formed thanks to the Turks"- The Turkish advance to the gates of Vienna kept Charles V in check from devastating the recently self-proclaimed Protestant princes.

Although we have so much in common, there are many things that still make us worlds apart. In this political flirtation that's taking place who is the one making the concessions? In the second day of "Alliance of Civilizations" conference that took place in Istanbul this last April, friendly

ties were being strengthened with the recognition of Spain's rich Muslim heritage, but I never heard anyone mention Turkey's rich Christian heritage. Who is seducing who? In all these exchanges and meetings between the West and the Middle East the side that is not wavering is the Non-European one. A real alliance cannot exist if there is no real reciprocity taking place: For example, if I want you to do something in your house for me, I will do the same for you. In other words, if you concede terrain so that I can build mosques in Europe, I must concede terrain so that you can build churches in my country.

...And this "concession of ground" is not just political and social, but it's also happening amongst believers...

D. Beyond the boundaries of East and West

Before entering the topic concerning the seduction of believers, we must clearly define what our position should be. Despite all the aforementioned points and thoughts, we must not let ourselves be overcome by phobias, paranoia, or alarming conspiracy theories. We must not demonize one fourth of the world's population because of its religion. They are under the power of the "evil one" just as much as Romans and Greeks were in the time of Paul- or even our own people in our respective "Christian" countries. We should not be, become, or view this as "Christendom" vs. the "Islamic Civilization" (and I graciously hope that our sense of identity and citizenship is firmly rooted in the heavens). We can't just label them as "terrorists", per se. Were all Christians terrorists because of the I.R.A? What the average folk is concerned about in the East is about making ends meet at the end of the month: paying the mortgage, the children's school fees, etc- the same very worry that Westerners have. Or, is it that Milosevic was a Christian performing a 'holy crusade' against Bosnian Muslims (like Muslims would accuse us of)? However, at the same time, we can't underestimate Islamic firmness and determination. We can't be allowing ourselves to be seduced or subjugated into a cause that they wholeheartedly believe in; to the degree that sometimes it would even put the firmness of the faith in the best of us to shame. Obviously, we can't expect to find formulas with instantaneous results; because if we do, we'll end up frustrated the end of the day or even worse: seduced!

We must establish ourselves boundaries rooted in our clear identity in Jesus, and solely in Jesus. So what does this imply?

E. Christian Missions being seduced?

There's a seductive force, the most dangerous one yet, to which more and more believers and Mission movements as a whole are succumbing to with the urge of obtaining instantaneous results. It's not only Europe that's experiencing this, but the entire Western mission's movement. Too many centuries of Islamic attrition have transpired for us to be expecting instant results now. There are too many historical wounds in the memory of a Muslim, too many prejudices in the social conscience, and too many fears as to what the reaction of the community might be, so as to not be aware that the key for us is to not concede ground in our faith but persevere to the very end until we reach the point whereby we convince them that we don't represent anyone else but Jesus. This is the way to truly reach and love a Muslim, and help them with the Gospel.

Maybe you're asking yourself: Is there anyone that is actually making concessions? Well, Yes!

Nowadays Islam, or the subtle forces sustaining it, continues trying to seduce the Christian bride- the bride of Christ- just as it did in its first historical stages in the Middle East. However this new chapter in history takes place in Europe and the entire so called Western World.

...Or does the fault lie in the bride who is letting herself be seduced?

i. *A new paradigm?*

I have heard the following type of declarations in various missiological events relative to our topic: "The Church of the last 2000 years will be substituted by a new paradigm...", "We shouldn't be afraid of syncretism", "The Trinitarian councils isolated Jews from the Gospel...the same is happening today with Muslims", "In South-East Asia there are thousands upon thousands that are coming to know the Lord. " These "converts" continue calling themselves Muslims, reading the Koran, praying five times a day, going to the mosque, recognizing Mohammed as a "prophet"... only that now, they "believe" that Jesus died for them and that he is "Lord". There currently is an attempt to lower the bar so that all may enter the sheep pen without using the gate. The seduction that is approaching us is: an Islam that is not conceding, while the Gospel is conceding ground step by step. How long will this last? The Protestant pluralist theologian, John Hick, reinterprets the "only way" (John 14:6) and "there's only one name" (Heb 4:12) as many "ways" and various "names" thereby adulterating their meaning.¹¹ There is a clear attempt to get rid of "intransigent exclusivism" (of the type that Jesus is the ONLY way) to embrace a "conciliatory pluralism" (of the type that *all roads lead to Rome*).

ii. *Converted with/to the Koran?*

There are some others who go from village to village in Turkey preaching the Koranic verses that speak about Jesus, and follow this presentation by giving the Gospel of John as a gift to their listeners- who obviously express their gratitude. They do this with hundreds of them and then say: "they have received the message." But, what message? The one that says "some Christian men that believe in the Koran like us, visited us and gave us a piece of their book..."? Is this not the same as trying to extinguish fire with gasoline?

The Christian woman that marries a fundamentalist says: "I adapt myself to his beliefs so I can win him for Christ." But what is it that exactly happens? It's nothing less than the total opposite that occurs. The Muslim reaffirms himself more in his own beliefs; and the Christian woman disappears behind the *burka*.

iii. *The erudition of Kalaam*

Others are seduced or tempted by the erudition of Sufis (Muslim mystics) or the *âlîms* (Islamic philosophers) that developed a theology that is just as complicated and has nothing to envy from the complexity of much Christian Scholasticism. One such example is Hasan-al-Basri (642-728) who teaches that after repenting (*tawba*) from our sins, we must then repent from our 'act of repenting' because otherwise we don't focus on Allah and it becomes an ego-centric act that seeks self-relief rather than submission to Him. Aren't these thoughts deep and worthy of admiration? We can and we must respect all erudition, mystics, philosophers, and even the teachings of those who have been 'canonized' by their religion. However, what we can't do nor should do is adulterate the Gospel to polish rough edges with other creeds and hence edify a common house with common usage. Yes, there do exist and there should be concepts that we can discuss, dialog, change impressions and polish definitions. To give an example of such topics we could mention the topic of predestination and free will (One of the cornerstones of Islam), and use these discussions to improve social conditions. If there are common beliefs, which indeed there are, we and should use them as bridges to the Gospel, like: Abraham's sacrifice, the virgin birth, Jesus' miracles... Paul cited pagan authors of his day, which shows us that he had carefully studied them. However, what Paul didn't do was yield to "human wisdom" (1 Cor. 2:4) to make the Gospel more accessible to classical rhetoric. The classical philosophers proposed subjects that were just as or even more profound than those posed by Islamic erudites and *kalaam*.

¹¹ John Hick, *The metaphor of God incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age*, CM Press Ltd., 1993. The alarming thing is that Hick's thoughts, and other ones of the kind, are seriously read and considered amongst Muslim circles. In Turkey, for example we have much literature borne from this: Mahmut Aydin's book, *Jesus God or Man? (İsâ, Tanrı mı, İnsan mı? İZ Yayıncılık, Istanbul, 2002)*.

F. Discerning the Spirit of Error (1st John 4:1-6; 5:6-12)

i. *Tolerating another Jesus?*

The core of the attacks against the Gospel, according to 1st John and as shown by the many heresies that have existed throughout the history of the Church, have always been targeted against the humanity and/or divinity of single person; Jesus Christ (as well as the reality or validity of his expiation). The key stumbling block of Islam is the negation of His divinity and death on the cross. We can make no capitulations concerning this topic: "I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that. I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus **other than the Jesus we preached**, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, **you put up with it easily enough.**" (2nd Cor. 11:1-4). Or is it that we want to create a heterodox and islamized sect of Christianity with the kinds of "believers" of whom one cannot tell whether they are followers of Christ or Mohammed?

ii. *CO-HABITATION and/or CON-FESSION*

We can and we must share our lives: our tea, meals, home, time (especially our time), our faith in the prophets and their prophecies, and our prayers and blessings... much like Jesus did, who had no reservations when in order to reach lost souls, entered peoples' houses or different environments without setting any preconditions. However, he didn't enter these places to adapt to them, but to transform lives! The seduction to which we are exposed today is thinking that by conceding terrain both theologically and in the distinctive signs of the Christian convert we will widen the entrance door and will win victory more easily. But this is not the terrain that we must concede! The places where we have to concede and make sacrifices are those places where we have to love them, carry their burdens, become more like Jesus, and suffer persecution. The key for us is: UNLIMITED CLOSENESS IN CO-HABITATION¹², BUT A CLEAR DISTINCTION IN CON-FESSION¹³. We have to be side by side with the less favored or most disadvantaged ones, no matter what their religion might be. We can find common agreement in areas such as: community, legal, sanitary, and educational needs (etc.) with any ethnic or religious group. However, what we can't do is lower the banner for the nations who need to "see" in order to be saved (Is 11:10; 45:22).

Let's not fall into the trap of thinking that those who make such concessions are succumbing to such seduction or are born heretics. Deception advances slyly and establishes itself softly. First, people speak of contextualization (1st Cor. 9:19-22); then of spiritual liberations and transformed lives; then of numbers of 'converts'; then of prejudices that the Church had to overcome so many

¹² Co-habit: "to live together or in company" (2nd definition in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary). I.e. to "live together" in peace, in company, like good neighbors or a family...

¹³ Con-fess: "to declare faith in or adherence to: to profess" (3rd definition in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary) Therefore: Declaring, which implies that there are other people who are receiving and hearing this declaration. All Christians must be a visible exponent of the Kingdom of God and be able to identify with Christ publicly through the help of the Holy Spirit without implicit negations. There's an abysmal difference between "NOT declaring to the world that we are Christians when facing peril" vs. "giving reason to believe that we're NOT Christians" if we keep identifying ourselves as "Muslims". We could argue that in reality and by definition we are more of a Muslim (i.e. "submitted to God") than Muslims themselves, in such scenarios however, we are not hiding our Christian identity but reaffirming it. At the end of the day, what is important is that when we try to hide our identity what we are truly doing is hiding Jesus!

times to promote and initiate Mission movements... and then, finally we realize that what we are all looking for is the same thing: The propagation of the message in such a way that is faithful to the principles of the Gospel but also overcomes certain petrified traditions. However, what is nowadays titled as “petrified traditions” is nothing else than the very rudiments of the Gospel!

iii. *Contextualization and/or “Incarnation”*

Of course we have to contextualize; What’s more, we have to “incarnate” ourselves! Christ didn’t contextualize, he embodied. Today under the concept of “contextualization” we are not only changing the wrapping of the package but also it’s content. Jesus embodied himself but he didn’t transform into an android. In other words he didn’t become human to the point of losing his divine and heavenly nature. We have to present the gift in a wrapping that not only does not offend but also eases acceptance. However the present itself must not change. Some will say that this is the very thing that they do; but if the cross is no longer the ONLY way, the Bible the ONLY truth, confessing that we belong to Him no longer the ONLY source of life; then, this becomes a life with compromises. This is when we are attempting to change the present. He did not come to adapt himself to customs or to change them. He came to identify with us, to suffer with/for us, and later open the one and only way for the salvation of our souls. He didn’t comply with the religious or the sinner. He co-habited with them and he removed himself from their molds. Those who had thirst for ‘more of God’ did not feel close to Jesus because he chose to condescend to their level of sin or bad habits, but because He identified with them (with the Nicodemus’ and the Magdalene’s) and freed them from their ostracism by directing them to liberating truth. This transformation occurred in these people’s lives because they followed a Jesus that did not pretend or conceal.

Which of these is the biggest danger: dissuasion or seduction? Both! If someone dissuades us from finishing our work and if we don’t persevere to the end, we will never see fruit. If someone seduces us to find an in-between path and make the door wider, we’re actually opening another door and not the one of Jesus. These same dangers were the two biggest perils that the churches mentioned in the book of Revelation were faced with. That is why the message to these churches is clear: Don’t give up or accommodate!

We must remember though, that feelings of “Christian” or “Western” supremacy, of spiritual superiority, underestimating Islam and or scorning it loftily brings with itself risks of frustration and seduction. A person that does not respect his/her adversary cannot overcome the blows; he/she would get to arrogant and would be eventually knocked out.

We must not make ourselves to be champions of the West or “Christendom” or even of our own version of what the Church should look like...Our commitment is and should only be with Jesus, 100%.

G. The 4 dangers of being seduced

So, we can say that the 4 stages of seduction are the following:

1. Becoming **subjugated** or trapped by a sense of “guilt” when Muslims demand political and social compensations.
2. Ending up **dissuaded** and throwing the towel when we see that many years of our life pass by with endless toil due to the difficulties and the cost of the task.
3. Becoming **captivated** by Islamic erudition and consequently trying to polish rough “exclusivist” edges between both faiths.
4. Ending up **alienated** by our covetousness for results; i.e. diluting distinctive Christian signs and exciting ourselves with figures of doubtful “converts”.

H. Facing the honor/shame culture: Rom 1:16

A ministry friend of mine in Turkey, who studied Islam in a university in Jordan, told me once that 20 years ago some of the law school students decided to set up a debate amongst themselves. Jewish students would have to defend the Palestinian cause, and Arab students the Jewish one. The Jewish students went first delivered some crushing arguments. When it was the turn of the Arab students, they couldn't present a single argument! Why? Because for them those arguments did not exist!

It's not through more clever argumentation, or more contextualized formulas, or conciliatory concessions; but it's by the power and clarity of the incarnated Gospel that is presented in love and sacrifice, that we can overcome all barriers. We have much to offer and nothing to hide. When left face to face with the honor/shame culture the Word of God gives us the key:

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Rom 1:16); and of course, for the Muslim too.

¡The gospel is honorable, let us not reduce it!

¡The gospel is power, let us believe it!

¡The gospel is the same for all, let us not change it!

Carlos Madrigal,
Istanbul, October 20th 2009