

THE
CROSS
IN THE SHADOW
OF THE
Crescent

ERWIN W. LUTZER
WITH STEVE MILLER



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The Shadow of the Crescent

“As Islam replaces Christianity as the dominant religion in Europe, more and more churches are set to become mosques, which increasingly serve not only as religious institutions but also function as the foundational political building blocks for the establishment of separate, parallel Muslim communities in Europe that are based on Islamic Sharia law.”

Soeren Kern, Stonegate Institute¹

Chapter One

The Church of the Closed Door

Some Christians will not wake up until they go to church and discover that the door is locked and a sign has been placed on it that reads, “This Church Is Officially Closed,” said Frank Wright, the president of the National Religious Broadcasters association.² He was, of course, referring to the strong and growing anti-Christian bias exerted by many secularists, government officials, and even within the United States court system. As we know, there is a growing tide of opposition to expressions of Christianity in the so-called public square—to the point that some have even attempted to use legal means to criminalize such expressions. Our religious faith is expected to shrink until it is only a private matter that is not brought into politics, schools, or the workplace. If secularists cannot close a church, they at least want to render it powerless and irrelevant.

But there’s another kind of experience Christians may soon come to face upon visiting their church. They will discover that the doors are open, but the building has been turned into a mosque. While that may seem a rather far-fetched and unlikely scenario to Christians in America, this has already been happening with increasing frequency in Europe and other parts of the world.

For example, Stonegate Institute reported this in 2012:

The proliferation of mosques housed in former churches reflects the rise of Islam as the fastest growing religion in post-Christian Europe... The latest churches destined to become mosques are located in Germany, where the Roman Catholic Church has announced plans to close up to six churches in Duisburg, an industrial city in [the] northwestern part of the country, due to falling church attendance...

Muslims in Duisburg are now clamoring to turn empty churches in the city into mosques, according to the Germany daily newspaper, *Der Westen*... some Protestant churches have also been converted into mosques in Germany, where the Muslim population has jumped from around 50,000 in the early 1980s to more than 4 million today.³

The same phenomenon is occurring in the United Kingdom, where “there are now more than 1,700 official mosques in Britain, many converted from former churches.”⁴

What many people don’t realize is the extent to which this has happened in centuries past. History and religious studies scholar Philip Jenkins, in an eye-opening book titled *The Lost History of Christianity*, says, “Much of what we today call the Islamic world was once Christian... In most of these cases, churches collapsed or vanished because they were unable to cope with the pressures placed upon them by hostile regimes, mainly Muslim.”⁵

With regard to the spread of Islam in Europe, one of the most respected Western scholars of Islam, Bernard Lewis, says that “some have even described the present situation as the third Muslim invasion of Europe, more successful than either the first or the second.”⁶ As we survey what is happening there and in the United Kingdom, we need to have a wake-up call here in North America. And let’s not think it cannot happen in this country. As we will see later in this book, the conditions that have led to the situation as it stands now in Europe are becoming more and more prevalent in America.

The main challenge for us as Christians is a lack of awareness. Many simply don’t know what is happening. One reason is that so much of what is taking place happens under the radar. Very little media attention is given to the growing influence American-based

Muslim organizations are having on government agencies, the education system, the media, politics, the legal arena, and more. And for many of us, the impact hasn't been overt—at least, not yet. So Islamic encroachment continues quietly and largely unabated—at our peril.

THE TURNING POINT

For me, the turning point was July 2009. My wife, Rebecca, and I had the privilege of joining a group of fellow Christians on a tour of the seven churches of the book of Revelation. The trip was eye-opening. I returned home with a passionate desire to understand why the once-strong Christian presence in Turkey (Asia Minor) had essentially disappeared. I was surprised at the extent to which Islam had overcome a once-thriving Christian region. While there is a small remnant of churches in Turkey, they are overwhelmingly outnumbered by the mosques everywhere. All the towns and villages we visited were filled with tall minarets that dotted the skyline. How had all this happened?

Particularly noteworthy is the fact Jesus Himself wrote letters to seven churches located in this very region, and Revelation 2–3 preserves these letters for us. And now, the visible presence of Jesus no longer exists in these cities. In fact, it no longer exists throughout Asia Minor. Our Muslim friends tell us that the victory of Islam over Christianity in these once-Christian lands proves the superiority of Muhammad over Jesus.

Perhaps nothing symbolized my internal struggle as much as what we saw the day we stood beside the ruins of a fifth-century cathedral in the ancient city of Philadelphia. Remember, Jesus had assured this church, “These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut” (Revelation 3:7-8). And yet next to the ruins of this ancient cathedral is a mosque, with a tall minaret, eclipsing the other buildings around it.

The church walls had long since caved in, but the mosque appeared in good repair and was being used as a school. Dozens of

children surrounded our tour bus with their shining faces and beautiful brown eyes. They wanted to welcome us as Americans and have their pictures taken with us. Their image was indelibly burned on my mind as I realized that these precious young ones were being reared as devotees of Islam. All of them, I'm sure, will eventually hear about Jesus because He is mentioned many times in the Quran, but they will know Jesus only as a mere prophet and not as the Savior who came to rescue us from our sins.

Standing there, I realized that the One who said He could open doors that could not be shut and shut doors that no one could open—the Lord Jesus Himself—appeared to have found the door firmly shut in His face in Philadelphia. The church of the open door had become the church of the door slammed shut.

Think back to the churches to whom Jesus dictated these personal letters: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. There are no visible churches in any of these cities today; indeed, with few exceptions, there has been no readily visible evidence of Christianity in these locales for the past 800 years.

Of course I don't mean to say that there aren't any Christians in Turkey. The 73 million people who live there are predominantly Muslim, and only .2 percent are Christian, Jewish, or of other religious backgrounds.⁷ For the most part, these believers meet in secret Bible studies or cell groups far away from the prying eyes of governing authorities. And I know there are a few media ministries in the country that are sharing the gospel in that region. There are also a small number of Protestant churches in the country. According to Paul Marshall and Nina Shea of the Center for Religious Freedom, Hudson Institute, "several...are led by pastors who were formerly Muslims, [and they] have seen an increase in violence in recent years."⁸

The Turkish constitution grants freedom of religion, but that does not mean that it is always practiced. Indeed, there are virtually no clear examples in history of Christians living in Muslim-dominated lands being granted anything that even approaches equal rights. What "freedom" looks like for Christians in Muslim countries will become clearer later in this book.

While the actual churches to whom Jesus dictated His seven letters—churches that likely met in homes—probably disappeared in the early centuries AD, Christianity did flourish in the region for a time. Just as Christianity spread throughout Europe after the time of Constantine (who died in AD 337), so also Christendom came to dominate Asia Minor. Yet during the Middle Ages, all that changed drastically. Philip Jenkins notes the following:

The statistics of decline are sobering. Look, for instance, at Asia Minor, the region that is so often mentioned throughout the New Testament: it is here that we find such historic names as Iconium and Ephesus, Galatia and Bithynia, the seven cities of the book of Revelation. Still in 1050, the region had 373 bishoprics, and the inhabitants were virtually all Christian, overwhelmingly members of the Orthodox Church. Four hundred years later, that Christian proportion had fallen to 10 or 15 percent of the population, and we can find just three bishops. According to one estimate, the number of Asian Christians fell, between 1200 and 1500, from 21 million to 3.4 million.⁹

The fact that Turkey, which was once dotted with churches, is 99.8 percent Muslim today serves as evidence that Christianity does not always prevail in the places where it is established.

This is exactly what happened in North Africa as well. At one time, this region was predominantly Christian. But all that changed with the conquest of Islam. By the twelfth century, Christianity had been largely wiped out. In his book *The Extinction of the Christian Churches in North Africa*, scholar Leonard Ralph Holme wrote that the churches “fell a victim to the resistless onslaught of the Moslem conquerors,”¹⁰ and that it “perished so completely that the very causes of its ruin have disappeared.”¹¹ All symbols of the Christian presence have been obliterated amid the presence of tall minarets pinpointing the location of thousands of mosques in villages, towns, and cities.

Muslims say that Jesus was great, but Muhammad was greater. He was, after all, the greatest and last of all the prophets. And they point to what happened in Asia Minor and North Africa as evidence that the crescent is more powerful than the cross.

Or is it?

JESUS AND HIS CHURCH

The book of Revelation was written in about AD 95 on the island of Patmos, to which the apostle John was exiled on account of the persecutions taking place throughout much of the Roman world. Today this island is a beautiful place to visit, with its whitewashed buildings that stand out against the deep blue waters of the Aegean Sea. The most important site here is the Cave of the Apocalypse, the place where tradition says John received his revelation from Christ. We don't know if the cave is the same one John stayed in, but it could be, for it is a natural formation with huge stones. On the ceiling of the cave are three cracks embedded in the rock, which tradition says were created when the voice of Jesus sounded forth to give John his vision.

It is generally believed that John was exiled to Patmos as punishment for his faith, for he wrote, "I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos *because of* the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 1:9). Then he went on to describe the vision he received from Jesus, who appeared with blazing glory and sovereign power.

In the vision, John saw Jesus walking amid seven candlesticks, or the churches, and in His right hand Jesus held seven stars, or "the angels of the seven churches" (Revelation 1:20—perhaps the pastors or messengers of these churches). Jesus was walking among the worshippers for whom He died. This beautiful imagery underscores the presence of Christ in His church. He is with His people in the midst of their conflicts, failures, and persecutions. He is with them to provide the help they need to serve Him despite opposition and discouragement. And He promises that those who overcome (see 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21) will be motivated to remain faithful to the end.

Just so, Jesus walks among us today. He comes to our worship services and our Bible study groups. He comes to observe, to strengthen, and to let us know that we are precious to Him. After all, He bought us with His own blood (1 Peter 1:18-19). Take a moment to visualize Jesus walking down the aisle of your church on a Sunday morning. Imagine Him both encouraging and rebuking your congregation, praising people for their faithfulness and warning them about sin.

Some churches today pay consultants to help them evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. But no human being can possibly assess the true condition of a church. Only Jesus can see what is in people's hearts. That which appears vibrant to us may be dead to Jesus. Only He can tell which churches are alive and which are dead.

For example, note what Jesus said about the church at Sardis. This church had enough energy and vitality to give the appearance of life. But when Jesus applied His stethoscope to the church, He did not find a heartbeat. "You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead" (Revelation 3:1). If we had served on the church staff, we would likely have thought that it was a healthy congregation. Yet Jesus pronounced this church as dead. Even so, this congregation had a remnant; there were some who had not "soiled their clothes" (verse 4). There were still some strands of wheat among the many tares. But as we shall see, Jesus ultimately prevails even when regional churches fall into decline.

LESSONS WE SHOULD LEARN

My hope is this book will help us to take the pulse of our churches, and more specifically, our own lives. And as we do this, we will learn the lessons that come to us from the seven churches in Revelation 2–3. We might even be able to speculate what Jesus would say to us if He were to dictate a letter to the Western church or to us as individuals. In the process, we will consider what the future might hold for us.

If we heed the lessons to be learned from the churches in Revelation 2–3, we can make our churches stronger and persevere in the face of whatever challenges come our way. We can become an attractive witness to a watching world, pointing people to the saving grace of Jesus Christ and the hope that is found in Him alone. And we can respond wisely and with love to the Muslim community.

A KEY DISTINCTION

In this book, note carefully the times when I use the term *Islamists*. When I do, it's because I want to distinguish extremists from Muslims and Islam in general. When I speak

of *Islamists*, I have in mind an enemy who holds to an ideology of a world ruled by Islam and the imposition of shariah law everywhere, including in America. But not all Muslims are supremacists; the vast majority of them are moderates who are glad to live peacefully within Western society.

There is some disagreement among well-qualified experts about whether it's possible to make such a distinction. Without taking sides or making this a complicated issue, I simply want to make it clear that when I use the term *Islamists*, I am deliberately focusing on the extremists only.

.....

THE WINDS OF CHANGE

Yes, Osama bin Laden is dead. Yes, many of his co-conspirators are also dead or imprisoned. And as of this writing, there have been no successful terrorist attacks in the United States since 9/11. For all practical purposes, it seems as though the tide has turned and we're winning the war against radical Islamists who desire to punish "the Great Satan," or America. When we think of the war against terror, we think of it mostly in terms of what is happening in the Middle East in places like Afghanistan.

A Different Kind of Invasion

But this does not mean we have nothing to fear from the incursion of Islam into our country. Muslim organizations—such as CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations) and the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation)—are still very much at work, spreading their influence through increasing immigration, building mosques and community centers, pressuring people to keep from speaking critically of Islam, making efforts to achieve political legitimacy, and even filing lawsuits intended to intimidate non-Muslims and to demand societal concessions that favor Muslims' religious practices. While these Muslim advocacy groups do much to give the appearance they are moderate, as we will learn later in this book, their founders, writings, and current commitments are anything but.

In other words, we in the West have become so focused on

terrorism itself that we have turned a blind eye to the dramatic inner transformation taking place in our midst—a transformation we don’t read about in the headlines. In addition, it’s easy for us to assume that it is the more moderate form of Islam that is prevailing in America because the majority of Muslims we meet go about their lives in rather peaceful, ordinary ways. They live in our communities, have jobs, and are raising families. But when it comes to representing Islam as a whole, this segment of the Muslim population is by and large silent, and there is a reason for that, as we will soon see.

In North America, it is those who work within and through Muslim organizations such as CAIR, the OIC, and MSA (Muslim Student Association) who speak as authoritative representatives of Islam. In fact, research has shown that “many of the most prominent Muslim organizations are front groups for, or derivatives of, the Muslim Brotherhood.”¹² We will learn more about the Muslim Brotherhood later in the book. For now, it’s sufficient to say it is recognized as the first modern Islamic terror organization, and its writings declare that “their work in America is a kind of grand jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within...so that it is eliminated and God’s religion is made victorious over all other religions.”¹³ These advocacy groups, and others like them, are pushing agendas that are detrimental to the legal and religious freedoms we enjoy in America. What’s more, these same groups promote strict adherence to what is known as shariah.

A POWERFUL ADVOCACY GROUP

After the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the largest inter-governmental body in the world, overseeing 57 Muslim member countries. According to the OIC’s website, the organization “is the collective voice of the Muslim world.”¹⁴ In 1990, this body adopted the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, “which officially exempted all Muslim countries from compliance with the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights and replaced it with Islamic law (shariah).”¹⁵ Very

simply, the Cairo Declaration states that in Muslim countries, “sharia is the governing rule, and other human rights principles must yield to it.”¹⁶ And in the 1990s “when UN Special Rapporteurs criticized OIC countries for violations of international human rights standards...the rapporteurs were threatened for purportedly insulting Islam.”¹⁷

A key objective of the OIC for the past two decades has been to persuade the UN to criminalize all criticism or perceived insults of Islam around the globe. According to a ten-year program of action produced at the Islamic Summit Conference in 2005, one of the OIC’s goals is “to have the United Nations adopt an international resolution to counter Islamophobia, and call upon all States to enact laws to counter it, including deterrent punishments.”¹⁸ While the OIC claims it is doing this in the name of religious and cultural sensitivity, the real intent is obvious—to make “discussion, debate, and analysis of Islam and its various interpretations out of bounds.”¹⁹

Understanding Why Shariah Is So Significant

What is shariah? Perhaps you’ve heard the term before, and you know it has something to do with Islamic law. Before we can go any further, it’s vital to have a clear understanding of shariah, for it explains much of what we need to know about Islam.

One resource defines *shariah* this way:

Translated as “the path,” shariah is a comprehensive legal and political framework. Though it certainly has spiritual elements, it would be a mistake to think of shariah as a ‘religious’ code in the Western sense because it seeks to regulate all manner of behavior in the secular sphere—economic, social, military, legal, and political.²⁰

Put bluntly, because shariah encompasses all of life, it is totalitarian in nature. It dictates what Muslims can and cannot do. Every law is based on the contents of the Quran as well as the Sunna (which

documents the acts and words of Muhammad and serves as a sacred source of Islamic law). These texts form the basis of all shariah.

Shariah is not optional for Muslims. For a Muslim to accept Islam and deny shariah would be similar to a Jew who claims to accept the five books of the Torah but rejects the Ten Commandments. Those Muslims who reject shariah as a way of life are viewed as not being totally devoted to their religion.

This brings us to an especially important point: Because shariah demands compliance on the part of *all* Muslims, Islamic moderates and reformers are put in a difficult position. In the eyes of Muslim supremacists or Islamists, anyone who is perceived as advocating change that questions or undermines shariah (and therefore undermines the Quran and Sunna) is considered a hypocrite, a dissenter, or an apostate who has committed a grave offense against Allah.

So when it comes to Islam's growing influence in the West, even if moderates do outnumber supremacists by far, that doesn't give us reason to breathe more easily. For the supremacists wield the positions of political and religious authority in much of the Muslim world and their front organizations here in America. It is they who have the dominant voice. Moderates are in a no-win situation because questioning the supremacists, who advocate shariah, is in a practical sense equivalent to questioning shariah itself—a punishable offense. This, of course, makes moderates reluctant to speak out.

Shariah: The Threat to America explains this further:

The shariah adherents who comprise the supremacist camp constitute a mainstream and dynamic movement in Islam. Importantly, that characterization does not speak to the question of whether this camp is or is not representative of the "true Islam." There are over a billion Muslims in the world, and their understandings about their belief system, as well as their practices with respect to it, vary. In light of this, there may not be a single "true Islam." If there is one, we do not presume to pronounce what it holds...

Regardless of what percentage of the global Islamic population adheres or otherwise defers to shariah (and some persuasive

polling indicates that percentage is high in many Islamic countries), that segment is punching well above its weight. For that reason, proponents of an expansionist shariah present a serious threat to the United States even if we assume, for argument's sake...that shariah adherent Islam is not the preponderant Muslim ideology.²¹

That explains why the many moderate Muslims who willingly integrate themselves into Western society have no real means by which to hold back their fewer and more extremist brethren who desire to Islamize the West.

The Incompatibility of Shariah with Western Society

What is it that makes shariah so dangerous to Western society? At first glance, we might think there is no harm in permitting Muslims to observe shariah within their own communities, which already happens right now in Europe and the United Kingdom. But shariah is viewed as being sacred and coming from Allah himself, which, in the adherents' eyes, makes it superior to all other law systems:

[Muslim writers who subscribe to the supreme authority of shariah over all other laws] teach that since everything in the universe belongs to Allah, and as Muslims are the true followers of Allah and therefore his rightful representatives, the oversight of the earth—especially the exercise of political power or authority—is the responsibility of Muslims. All others are usurpers from whom Muslims must endeavour to take power.²²

Given that perspective, we can see why Islamists who live in Western nations have persistently exerted great pressure on government authorities to grant them the right to live in full accordance with shariah.

For these ideologues, shariah is not a private matter. Adherents see the West as an obstacle to be overcome, not a culture and civilization to be embraced, or at least tolerated. It is impossible, they maintain, for alternative legal systems and

forms of government peacefully to coexist with the end-state they seek.²³

Once we recognize the totalitarian nature of shariah, we can see why it is said shariah cannot coexist alongside any other legal system. Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a major legal authority in the Muslim world today, minces no words when he speaks out against integrative approaches:

Secularism can never enjoy a general acceptance in an Islamic society. For Muslim societies, the acceptance of secularism means something totally different. As Islam is a comprehensive system of worship (Ibadah) and legislation (Shari'ah), the acceptance of secularism means abandonment of Shari'ah, a denial of the divine guidance and a rejection of Allah's injunctions...For this reason, the call for secularism among Muslims is atheism and a rejection of Islam. Its acceptance as a basis for rule in place of Shari'ah is downright apostasy.²⁴

Knowing these perspectives and facts, we can easily see why the trend in the West points toward greater Islamization, and not less. Bernard Lewis is quite correct when he concludes we are witnessing “the third Muslim invasion of Europe.”²⁵ The United Kingdom has gone far down this path as well, and in this book, we will learn more about what's happening here in America.

CLARIFYING THE NAME *ALLAH*

Allah is simply the Arabic word for “God.” It is important to point out that Arabic-speaking Christians have been using the Arabic name *Allah* for centuries before Muhammad, and many Arabic-speaking Christians today still use the name *Allah* to refer to the God of the Bible (not the Quran). In this book, however, whenever I refer to “Allah,” I am referring to the god of Islam.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER

As my wife and I toured the seven cities where the churches in the book of Revelation once stood, here are some questions that came to our minds:

- Why did Jesus allow Islam to triumph over Christianity in such a dominating fashion?
- When a church dies, is it always the fault of the church, or are there other factors that contribute to its demise?
- Is persecution always good for the church, or does it sometimes obliterate it?
- Do Islam's widespread victories over Christianity prove Islam is superior?
- Might God use Islam to bring judgment against the Western church?
- What might American churches look like in the next 25 to 50 years?

This book serves as an open letter to Christians in the West. I write with a passion that we would wake up to the fact that our future might be in peril. Islamic influence is spreading rapidly in North America, much as it already has in the United Kingdom and the other parts of Europe, and it has drastically altered the political, cultural, legal, and religious landscape in those places. I write out of great concern for what may lie ahead.

In chapter 9 of this book, I will introduce you to experts who are in a position to know the chilling facts of Islam's designs and strategies against America. We will review evidence that our nation's leaders and policy makers are refusing to come to grips with the nature of what is happening. We will learn that the threat of terrorism is but a distraction to prevent us from recognizing the far more insidious campaign of deception and infiltration taking place in our midst. The Muslim Brotherhood and its many offspring organizations are committed to achieving increased influence through immigration, education,

Muslim community centers, mosques, political legitimacy, intimidation, lawsuits, and if necessary, terrorism. US intelligence analyst Joseph Myers described the plan as being “oriented on an ‘organizational’ approach, toward building and developing organizations and networks that implement ‘civilizational jihad’ in a gradual and efficient fashion.”²⁶

Does that seem unnecessarily alarmist? Not according to senior-level security and intelligence experts who have done a lot of research and study on this. Their concern is backed by hard evidence that is well documented, some of which we will survey in chapter 9.

We as a church must wake up to the reality around us and pray for this country as never before. We also have to train the next generation of Christians for what it will face as Islamists continue advancing their agenda through whatever means possible.

DIFFERENT BOOKS, DIFFERENT PURPOSES

This book has a specific purpose. My intent is not to give instruction on how to share Christ with Muslims, for there are already good resources about that. I’ve listed some of them in the select bibliography in the back of this book.

Also, it is important for us to recognize that there are thousands of Muslims who are converting from Islam to Christianity around the world, including in Muslim countries. Although I will make reference to these and other encouraging developments, these themes have already been more specifically addressed by other authors. In the bibliography I provide a list of resources you will find helpful for better understanding what is happening on various fronts with regard to Islam.

Be assured I deeply believe that we who are Christians have a great opportunity to show our love and compassion to the Muslims among us. I believe that God has brought Muslims to the West so that, free from the social and spiritual oppression of their own countries, they can be exposed to and examine the claims of Jesus. I urge all of us to befriend our Muslim neighbors and introduce them to the love of Christ, whether they become a “Christ follower” or not.

So, as you read this book, which exposes the many ways Islamic influence is spreading, I urge you to resist any notion that we should hate Muslims. We must *not* see them as our enemies, but rather as victims of a totalitarian and oppressive religion. We must see them as people who long for peace and happiness within their own families, and who want to do right by Allah as they understand him. We must see them as people who need not just a prophet, but a Savior to save them from their sins. Jesus made clear that hate is never an option for His people. “Love your enemies” He said, even to those who were being persecuted (Matthew 5:44).

Keep in mind that although we might be intimidated by Islam, God isn’t. His purposes will continue to move ahead. And we can be confident that the future—our future—is in the hands of God, not Muhammad and his followers. Muslims cannot close a church unless Jesus gives them permission to do so. He is, after all, King of kings and Lord of lords.

DISCOVERING THE LESSONS FOR TODAY

The purpose of this book can be simply stated: It is to provide a wake-up call to the church regarding the agenda and strategies of militant Islam so that we might prepare ourselves for an uncertain future.

Fifty years ago, no one could possibly have predicted that mosques would replace large numbers of the churches of Europe. But today, Islam’s growing presence in Europe—with its accompanying insistence on imposing its ways on European society—makes us realize how quickly things can change and how rapidly the Muslim agenda can advance. And similar changes are already taking place in America.

I’ve reduced my thoughts to seven lessons we must learn from the formerly Christian cities of Asia Minor that were conquered by Islam. I begin with the history of the church in Istanbul, which, of course, is not one of the seven cities mentioned in Revelation 2–3. But its history is a window into how a church has been turned into a mosque. If the ancient ruins of the churches in Turkey could speak, what would they say? I believe they would tell us a story that we need to hear. As philosopher George Santayana famously said, “Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it.”²⁷

This book is a work in progress. As long as I live, I want to grow in my understanding of what the church in America should be and do at this critical hour.

Join me on a journey that I pray will be profitable for us going forward. Many brothers and sisters in Christ have already gone ahead of us and paid a high price for their obedience to our Lord. Let us hear their history, and may we learn from their mistakes and triumphs.

Best of all, God is with us.

— The Triumph of the Cross —

A Personal Testimony

I am a Kurd who was born in Baghdad, Iraq. My grandfather was a Muslim, and my grandmother was Jewish. I hid my Jewish ancestry from my Muslim friends because I feared what they would say or do to me. As a child, I remember the Quran being read on a recorder. Every time I heard the words of the Quran my heart became sad and fearful. The god of the Quran was very angry, demanding, and controlling.

In elementary school I studied Islam, the faith my mother practiced. I first heard about Jesus when I graduated from college, and at the time I considered Him only a prophet. The next time I heard about Jesus was in July 1996 while living in Kurdistan. My husband began working as a doctor for an American organization. The wife of one of my husband's colleagues began sharing about Jesus with me. She said Jesus was more than a prophet; He was God. I was very confused and could not accept the idea that Jesus was the one true God.

Four months later, Saddam Hussein began accusing anyone involved with Americans of being spies. Fearing death or imprisonment, thousands fled Iraq, and an associate from a nongovernment organization helped me and my husband to escape. Miraculously, we were able to come to the United States. The second miracle soon followed—the same woman who had told me about Jesus in Iraq became my neighbor in America. With God, there are no coincidences.

After being in America for two years, I became very ill and saw a doctor. After performing some tests, he told me that I had tumors spreading in several areas of my body, and that I would need surgery. I returned home from this visit crying, wondering why God would withhold healing from me. But when it came time for the surgery, after the doctor prepared himself, he said it was as though someone was preventing him from moving ahead. Evidently I was healed, and I've never had relapses since.

Then I began searching for the truth of who God really is. My Muslim friends told me Islam was right, but Christians also claimed their way was right. One day I thought about a devout Muslim woman whom I knew—a woman who fasted and prayed diligently. I had noticed that her prayers had gone unanswered, and it occurred to me that perhaps she wasn't following the one true God.

I then became a Christian and accepted Jesus Christ into my heart. Jesus is my treasure; He means everything to me. I praise Him with all my heart for what He has done in my life. He traded my anger for joy and my great sadness for love and peace. All those who knew me before my conversion say they see such an incredible difference in my life. The difference is because of all that Jesus has done for me. The war within my heart is over; Jesus won.

—Amilah

