



Bridging the Divide 2013 Consultation Report

Finalized June 7, 2013

We have gathered again this third year to discuss critical issues for the purpose of "Bridging the Divide" over the differences related to ministry practices among Muslims. In an environment of prayer, worship, vigorous discussion and personal relationships we gathered together to listen to each other, to find areas of agreement and to explore the areas where disagreement remains. We were glad for those brothers and sisters from Muslim backgrounds who attended. Hearing from them was again an essential and vital part of our deliberations.

Over the four days together we again gave special focus to translation of divine familial terms and the identity of believers, and then introduced new discussion on the place of the Qur'an and role of the *Shahadah* in ministry to Muslims. We were able to find a certain consensus on the following issues:

Translation:

- As we gather a third year, we sense the BtD venue is consolidating relationships and facilitating better communication across deep conflicts.
- The WEA report on the use of divine familial terms (DFT) was a positive step in the right direction, and it did an admirable job in fulfilling the audit requested by Wycliffe and SIL. It was essential, but we recognize further challenges remain in translating the Bible among Muslim peoples.
- We appreciate the humble and forthright manner in which SIL responded to this audit, and we also recognize the tremendous challenge they have in implementing this report.
- We believe that the DFT controversy of the last several years has diminished trust, and that it will take determined effort to restore it.
- The use of divine familial terms has rightly been at the center of the recent translation controversy, but we acknowledge that there needs to be ongoing conversation regarding Bible translations for Muslim peoples.
- Hearing a case study was a turning point in helping many of us realize the diversity and the complexity of language contexts across the Muslim world and its impact on translation decisions.

Identity:

- We profited from time studying portions of Scripture and looking at our individual and collective identity in Christ, and we look forward to further study together in future gatherings.
- We recognize that the crisis of identity which many new believers experience can be painful. This tension requires time for the full and stable formation of identity in Christ.
- We greatly benefited from well-researched case studies that helped us understand together the actual characteristics of new Jesus movements across the world.

Qur'an:

- We affirm the usefulness of evangelical scholarly engagement with the historical origins of Muhammad, Islam and the Qur'an.
- We are encouraged to see that over time the Jesus movements presented and discussed are developing forms of *ekklesia* with increasing reliance upon the *Injil* (New Testament) and the Holy Spirit.

- We affirm the use of the Qur'an as an evangelistic bridge. At the same time we expect the authority of the Bible to replace the influence of the Qur'an in the life of the new believer.

Shahadah:

- We do not encourage the recitation of the *Shahadah* by followers of Christ, but we empathize with and offer prayerful support to those living under sustained pressure or duress.
- We discussed the harmful spiritual dimensions associated with any confessed allegiance in opposition to Christ.

General Reflections:

- We are impressed with the historic moment we live in, and praise God for the many movements to Christ among Muslims. Research was presented that described particular characteristics of Jesus movements, and this research moved us past unhelpful terminology and categories and assisted our mutual understanding.
- We acknowledge that the various historical and contemporary Christian approaches to Islam carry a shadow, and that each of us needs humble self-reflection.

We recognize that each of these issues requires deeper consideration and biblical reflection. We look forward to ongoing engagement with one another on these issues in the name and Spirit of Jesus Christ.