



**EBF Theology and Education Division  
Symposium “Baptist Churches and Changing Society: Middle East Experience”**

**14-17 June 2012, Beirut, Lebanon**

**Muslims in Belgium and a Christian response**

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*(This article is a result of the work of a team)*

**Abstract**

It is estimated that there are approximately half a million Muslims living in Belgium, which is equivalent to 5% of Belgium's total population. In contrast, the number of indigenous evangelical Christians in Belgium is estimated to be around 1%. Therefore, the successful evangelism of Muslims in Belgium is a significant challenge for the indigenous church. In this study eleven Christian workers involved in evangelism amongst Muslims in Belgium were interviewed. They were asked firstly, to describe the local Muslim community they were working in and secondly, to describe their evangelism strategy, including its difficulties and strengths. It is clear that, although there are significant differences between the separate Muslim communities in Belgium, most share a negative attitude towards Belgian society that has led to a withdrawal from Belgian society and the formation of so-called 'colonies'; geographical areas where the migrant home culture, rather than the Belgian host culture, is dominant. This has, in part, led to an identity crisis amongst the younger, Belgian-born Muslims who feel they belong to neither the home nor the host culture. Some of them are finding their identity in a radical form of Islam that is free from the cultural trappings of their parents' home culture, or through membership in street gangs. The evangelism strategy for every Christian worker interviewed was centred upon the formation of relationships with Muslims. Christians must gain a certain level of trust with the Muslim community to overcome the initial negative attitudes before the Gospel can be presented effectively. Thus friendship evangelism remains the most effective method for reaching Muslims in Belgium, but requires a fixed, long-term Christian presence within the Muslim community. This need can be met by mobilising indigenous believers to actively seek to witness to their Muslim neighbours. Crucial to this is the development of a mature Christian attitude towards the presence of Islam in Belgium. Such a Christian response must avoid the extremes of both the 'politically-correct', secular approach, which naively ignores the fundamental differences that exist between the Christian and Muslim faiths, as well as the temptation to react towards Muslims with discrimination and hostility, which is characteristic of the increasingly popular right-wing political groups in Europe.

## Introduction

### *Muslims in Europe and a Christian response*

The majority of Muslims in Western Europe belong to the least-reached people groups of the world.<sup>1</sup> Their presence in Europe in significant numbers dates back to the 1950s and early 1960s when the industrialised European nations invited guest workers from Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan, Morocco and Turkey to provide the manual labour required in the industry sector for sustaining Europe's rapid economic development.<sup>2</sup> The original intention was that they would return to their home countries once their labour was no longer needed. However, rather than returning to their families and home culture, their families and cultures came to Europe, so that their presence is now a permanent feature of European society.

Government leaders in the West have employed a policy of multiculturalism when dealing with newcomers, in which every culture and religion has the right to full expression within society.<sup>3</sup> However, in October 2010 Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, said that the policy of multiculturalism had failed in Germany.<sup>4,5</sup> The ideal of fostering a harmonious society in which different cultures co-exist side by side appears unrealistic, hence there is a shift towards a policy of assimilation, in which newcomers must adapt to a dominant European culture.<sup>6</sup> The comments of the German Chancellor come amid growing tension within all European nations concerning the perceived inability of Muslim communities to integrate within European society and is accompanied by a growing demand from right-wing groups for Muslims to either assimilate or go home. However, the latter is not an option as many of the original migrants have naturalised and become European nationals, whilst an increasing number of Muslims have been born in Europe.

How should European Christians respond to the growing presence of Islam in Europe? Although the question is complex and there is no straightforward answer, Christians should at least see the presence of Muslims in Europe as a God-given opportunity to present to them the Good News of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

### *Muslims in Belgium and the challenge of evangelising them*

The precise number of Muslims living in Belgium is unknown, largely due to the fact that an individual's religious adherence is personal information and is therefore protected from the state. Based upon nationality, numbers of children receiving Islamic education and the number of religious marriages, estimates vary between 4% and 6% of the total population of Belgium, equivalent to between 400,000 - 600,000 people.<sup>8,9</sup> Arguably, the

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1 A least-reached people group is one in which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelise this people group.

2 Nielson, J., *Muslims in Western Europe*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004, p69.

3 Newbigin, L., Sanneh, L., Taylor, J., *Faith and Power: Christianity and Islam in 'secular' Britain*, London: SPCK, 1998, p4.

4 BBC News, 'Merkel says German multicultural society has failed' (October 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11559451>).

5 Since the time of writing several other European heads of State have said the same, including the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, and the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy.

6 Those aspects of European culture that must be accepted by newcomers remain undefined.

7 A distinction is made here between the responsibilities of the state for the welfare of society, and the responsibilities of individual Christians to fulfil the Great Commission.

8 Hertogen, J., 'In België wonen 628.751 moslims', Indymedia (September 2008, <http://www.indymedia.be/index.html%3Fq=node%252F29363.html>).

9 Dassetto, F., Ferrari, S., & Marechal, B., *Islam in the European Union: what's at stake in the future?* Brussels: European Parliament, 2007, p103.

influence of Muslims upon Belgian society is greater than that reflected in their proportional representation, due to the fact that most Muslim communities tend to form ghettos within urban centres. These so-called 'colonies' are geographical areas in which the home culture, rather than the host culture, is dominant. Therefore, although representing only 4% - 6% of the national population, approximately 26% of the population of the city of Brussels is Muslim. Current trends suggest that the number of Muslims in Belgium is set to rise, mainly due to the higher birth rates amongst Muslims than indigenous Belgians, meaning that these colonies will become bigger and more widespread.

In comparison the number of indigenous evangelical Christians in Belgium is estimated at about 1% of the national population.<sup>10</sup> The successful evangelism of Muslims in Belgium therefore represents a significant challenge for the church in Belgium.

The purpose of this study is to assess the state of Christian missions amongst Muslims in Belgium; to find out what Christian work is taking place amongst the Muslim communities and to identify areas of weakness and of potential in order to ascertain what can be done to further expedite the evangelism of Muslims in Belgium. A significant part of the study also involved research into the Muslim communities in Belgium.

Interviews with Christians working amongst Muslims in Flanders and Brussels were carried out. Each interviewee was first asked questions about the local Muslim community that they are seeking to reach, before being asked questions about their work in the community. Therefore, each question during the interview was asked with specific reference to the local Muslim community as opposed to the total Muslim population in Belgium. In this way, an accurate picture of the status of the Christian work in the local Muslim community could be realised, which when put together contributed to an overall, national picture of Belgium.

## **Method**

A total of eleven interviews were carried out with Christians working in Muslim communities in Brussels, Ghent and Antwerp. The interviewees included church pastors, English teachers, Arab Christians, overseas missionaries and Turkish Christians. None of the interviewees were indigenous; all were from outside Belgium. One of the interviewees works with refugees and asylum seekers in Flanders, so in this case the local Muslim community is represented by those Muslims who are seeking asylum in Belgium. Ten interviews were carried out in person, and one interview was done by email.

A list of questions was prepared beforehand (see appendix three). During the interviews, however, questions were often worded differently in order to suit the specific context of the interviewee. Furthermore, additional, unprepared questions were sometimes asked, usually for the purpose of clarification. The basic thrust of the questions remained the same.

In the first half of the interview, questions were asked about the local Muslim community so that a profile of the community could be built. These questions concerned the ethnicity, heart language, ages, socio-economic status, attitudes towards Islam and attitudes towards the home and host cultures of the members of the Muslim community.

In the second half of the interview, questions were asked about the interviewee's evangelistic work amongst the local community; its strategy as well as the perceived strengths and weaknesses.

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10 Operation World, 'Belgium' (January 2011, <http://www.operationworld.org/country/belg/overvw01.html>).

## Results

### 1. Profiles of the local Muslim communities in Belgium.

#### *Ghent*

Most Muslims in Ghent are of Turkish descent. They are divided into three distinct communities according to ethnicity: the Turkish-speakers from Turkey, which is the largest group; the Kurdish community and the Turkish-speakers from Bulgaria. There are approximately 20,000 Turkish-speakers in Ghent, equivalent to just under 10% of the city's population. The majority of the Turks in Ghent originate from the same province of Turkey, Afyonkarahisar. This area in Turkey is known for its conservative Islamic values and traditional outlook, which may in part explain the negative attitude of the Turks in Ghent towards the rest of Belgian society (see below). Few members of the Turkish community speak Dutch. Christian work amongst the Turkish-speakers in Ghent has been most successful amongst the Turkish-speaking Bulgarians, who have historically been treated with contempt by both the Turks from Turkey as well as by ethnic Bulgarians.

#### *Antwerp*

There are significant Turkish and Moroccan communities in Antwerp. The Moroccan community is centred around the district of Borgerhout. A significant number of Moroccans in Borgerhout are second or third generation, in other words they were born in Belgium and speak Dutch as their first language. The city of Antwerp organises various activities, including Dutch conversation classes, to try to integrate newcomers into Belgian society. Vlaams Belang, the extreme-right, nationalistic party of Flanders, enjoys strong support amongst Belgians living in Borgerhout.

#### *Brussels*

It is estimated that 26% of the population of Brussels is Muslim.<sup>11</sup> Municipalities in Brussels that have significant numbers of Muslims include Anderlecht, Vorst (Forest), Ukkel (Uccle), Schaarbeek (Schaerbeek), Sint Joost ten Node and Sint-Jans Molenbeek. The municipality of Molenbeek is regarded as a very Islamic area that is also associated with radical Islam.

#### *Muslim refugees*

Muslims seeking asylum represent a distinct Muslim community within Belgium that is fundamentally different to those Muslim communities that have established themselves geographically as 'colonies'. Muslim refugees who are still within the asylum seeking process do not form groups based upon ethnicity. At the moment Muslims seeking asylum in Belgium originate mostly from Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. Two thirds of asylum seekers are male and have usually come without their family, expecting their family to come later once they have found work. Many are therefore 'free' of their normal social structures, e.g. family, tribe *etc*, and are consequently more open to hear the Gospel. This may be coupled with an anger towards and a rejection of their home culture and religion, as seems to be the case for asylum seekers from Iran. The novel level of freedom that many Muslim refugees experience may equally result in a turning to crime or an abandoning of religion altogether.

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<sup>11</sup> Hertogen, J., 'In België wonen 628.751 moslims, 6,0% van de bevolking. In Brussel is dit 25,5%, in Wallonië 4,0%, in Vlaanderen 3,9%', Non Profit Data (September 2008, <http://www.npdata.be/BuG/100/>).

## **2. A broad picture of the Muslim communities in Belgium based upon the profiles of the local Muslim communities**

### *No two local Muslim communities are identical*

During the study it quickly became apparent that every Muslim community is different. This is true even for different Muslim communities within the same city. In Belgium the Muslim communities are formed around ethnicity, with most Muslims in Belgium being of Moroccan or Turkish descent. This means that Turks and Moroccans, although both being Muslim and a minority group within Belgium, do not form a single community but exist as two separate and distinct communities. Often tensions exist between the different ethnic communities.

Even communities of the same ethnicity vary. The Moroccan community in Antwerp, for example, is not a perfect reflection of a Moroccan community in Brussels. What this shows is that the final character of the Muslim community is dependent upon a combination of many sociological factors, so that even within Brussels there is variation between the Moroccan communities.

Considering that all Muslim communities are different, is it valid then to speak of a broad picture of the Muslim communities in Belgium? Although there are important differences between each of the communities, there are also certain factors that appear more or less consistent between local Muslim communities in Belgium.<sup>12</sup> These are outlined below.

### *An antagonism towards the host culture resulting in a 'siege mentality'*

Both the Turkish and Moroccan communities generally perceive Belgian society as being liberal and morally compromised.<sup>13</sup> Therefore these communities have tended to segregate themselves from Belgian society to prevent perceived moral contamination whilst at the same time attempting to re-create the home culture within Belgium. However, the home culture has become so idealised that the result does not reflect the reality of life back in Morocco or Turkey. Therefore a distinct, 'third culture' is emerging that is different from both the Belgian and the home cultures but which nevertheless is influenced by both.

In practice, this siege mentality means that parents will seek spouses for their children from the home country rather than from within the community, as in their opinion even Belgian-born Muslims may still be morally compromised. Such practices reinforce the cultural distance between the migrant community and Belgian society.

### *The identity crisis of Belgian-born Muslims*

Muslims who are born in Belgium do not necessarily have the same negative attitude towards Belgian society, which is more characteristic of the first generation Muslims. Belgian-born Muslims find it harder to idealise the home culture as they have no personal experience of Morocco or Turkey (except perhaps an occasional trip to visit family, which often involves a culture shock, reinforcing their sense of disconnection from what is perceived as their parent's culture). Yet children in migrant communities frequently experience parental pressure to identify with and be a part of the home culture, through traditions and customs associated with the home culture that are encouraged within the

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12 There is a danger here of stereotyping. However, the purpose behind these generalisations is to provide Christians with a background to the Muslim community in Belgium so that they can communicate the Gospel more effectively.

13 This attitude holds for Western culture in general, not just Belgian society.

migrant community.

When these Belgian-born Muslims also feel stigmatised by Belgian society, the result is an identity crisis. As they cannot identify fully with either Belgian culture or that of their parent's, they are having to find their identity elsewhere. This may be in a form of radical Islam, which they perceive to be free from the cultural trappings of their parent's version of Islam. In the UK British-born Muslims are rejecting their parent's South Asian culture on the grounds that it is deemed 'un-Islamic'.<sup>14</sup> There is evidence that this is happening in Belgium also, such as within the Moroccan community in the Molenbeek municipality of Brussels. For those younger Muslims who are being radicalised, Islam becomes their primary identity and takes precedence over any ethnic identity. However, this isn't the easiest route for young Belgian-born Muslims seeking an identity, as it often involves a rejection of their parent's authority and the family unit remains the fundamental social structure within both Turkish and Moroccan communities in Belgium. Therefore, some younger Muslims find their identity by belonging to a street gang. These gangs are usually comprised of members of the same local ethnic community. They are tolerated within the community and in some cases seem to play a role in defending the community from unwanted external influence. For example, one Christian worker reported how when they had organised an evangelistic film night in the community the local Muslim authority figures sent a gang of youths to disrupt the event. Such gangs have been observed in Laken (Brussels) and in Antwerp.

*How Islam is lived out in practice is largely determined by the community itself*

The governments of Turkey and Morocco, in conjunction with the Belgian government, provide imams for the respective ethnic communities in Belgium. However, these official imams rarely command the respect of the community. It is the older men from within the community who hold the authority and who determine how the members of the community express the Islamic faith.

In the Turkish communities in Belgium there are various Islamic denominations (Tarikats) that compete for the allegiance of the members of the community. These denominations are not endorsed by the Turkish government and so must appoint their own unofficial imams. Whilst most of these denominations are banned from operating within Turkey, their activities are permitted within Belgium.

The Moroccan communities in Brussels experience religious pressure from various different Muslim governments such as those of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which seek to influence the Muslim communities into following their form of Islam. These governments are usually involved in the distribution of Islamic literature; the funding of mosques and the appointment of imams and mosque councils. However, as mentioned, the power and authority within the Muslim communities in Belgium lies not with these governments and their agents but with the older men from within the communities themselves.

### **3. Status of Christian missions work amongst Muslims living in Belgium**

*A brief overview*

There are at least fifteen Christian couples or individuals working directly amongst the approximately half a million Muslims living in Belgium. This is equivalent to roughly one Christian worker for every thirty thousand Muslims. There are at least four churches in Belgium with significant numbers of Christians who have converted from Islam, otherwise

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14 Geaves, R., 'Britain', in Westerlund, D. & Svanberg, I. (eds.), *Islam Outside the Arab World*, Richmond:Curzon Press, 1999, p369.

known as Muslim-background believers (MBBs), in their congregations. Most of the Christian missions work amongst Muslims in Belgium takes place in Brussels. There are two known Christian workers focused on the Turkish-speaking communities in Ghent, and one known Christian worker living in the Moroccan community in Antwerp. At the time of writing there is no known Christian missions work amongst the Muslims living in Wallonia even though there are significant numbers of Muslims in Liege and Charleroi.<sup>15</sup> One organisation is involved with training indigenous Christians on how to witness to Muslim refugees and asylum seekers in Belgium. There are no known indigenous believers working full-time amongst Muslims in Belgium.

*The evangelism strategy of every Christian worker interviewed was centred upon building relationships with Muslims*

Every Christian worker who was interviewed was actively seeking to get to know Muslims in the local community. Although the methods varied, the goal was always to form genuine friendships with Muslims. It seems that the most effective approach for Muslim evangelism in Belgium is to present the Gospel within the context of a relationship of trust (so-called friendship evangelism).

*Ways in which Christian workers build relationships with Muslims varied*

The Christian workers interviewed are involved in various activities through which they hope to build relationships with Muslims. These include language teaching, door-to-door work, literature distribution, food distribution, children's and youth clubs, visiting asylum centres, Bible studies, running community centres, providing hospitality, etc. These activities represent ways in which Christians can intentionally try to get to know Muslims. Alongside these activities there are also passive points of contact with Muslims through shopping in the same shops; children going to the same school as Muslim children; having Muslim neighbours; bumping into Muslims whilst walking on the streets; taking part in events organised by the community; going to the same cafés, etc. There seems to be no one right way of building relationships with Muslims, rather, the more ways Christians come into contact with Muslims the better. At the same time, however, those interviewed reported that certain activities are more conducive for fostering the relationship of trust that is needed for the Gospel to be presented easily and effectively. These include activities such as language teaching, children's and youth clubs and hospitality.

*The need for a long-term Christian presence within the local Muslim communities*

The strategy of friendship evangelism requires time for relationships to form. There has to be a certain level of trust between a Christian and a Muslim before the Gospel can be presented in such a way as not to provoke immediate dismissal. There is a clear need for more Christians to live long-term (~10 years) within a local Muslim community, so that Muslims are exposed to the love of Jesus through the lives of Christians living in their midst. Living in a Muslim community will make it easier for Christians to both intentionally and passively come into contact with Muslims.

*The importance of a suitable role for the Christian worker within the community*

One of the Christian workers interviewed wanted a better explanation to give Muslims as to why a non-Belgian would be living and working within a Muslim community in Belgium. From the perspective of the Muslim community, the presence of non-Belgian Christians within a Muslim majority area who seem to lack a full-time job yet are able to live

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15 Approximately 30,000 Muslims in Liege (15%) and 26,000 Muslims in Charleroi (12%).

comfortably may raise suspicion, which in turn can make it harder for the Christian worker to gain the trust of Muslims in the community. The majority of those interviewed highlighted the importance of a role within the community that is accepted by the local Muslim community. However, this is not straightforward as Christians shouldn't be deceitful as to their motivation for living within a Muslim community. The explanation given must be clear and honest, yet sensitive and wise. Two interviewees serve as Christian pastors within the community and both openly admit to this as their role within the community. The response from the Muslim community has been positive. It clearly identifies them as Christians and so is not deceitful, yet at the same time it does not attract the same negative response from Muslims as a suspected role of missionary.

## **Discussion**

Based upon the results from this study the following five points are proposed to be crucial components of a strategy that seeks to successfully evangelise Muslims living in Belgium:

### *1. The need for meaningful relationships between Christians and Muslims*

The challenge for Christians in Belgium is to get to know Muslims. This is not straightforward considering the aforementioned siege mentality prevalent amongst the Muslim communities in Belgium. The initiative lies with Christians to find innovative ways to bridge the cultural divide and engage meaningfully with these communities. Christians need to intentionally place themselves in situations that expose them to Muslims so that real relationships of trust can be formed. A Christian-run community centre within a largely Muslim area is a useful platform through which meaningful relationships with Muslims can be made. Various activities that facilitate the formation of friendships, such as language classes, youth clubs, women's groups *etc.*, can be held within such a community centre.

It takes time for relationships of trust to develop. Therefore all those involved in Christian missions amongst Muslims in Belgium, including those who are called to support the work, be it financially or prayerfully, should be aware that it may take several years before there is any sign of fruit.

### *2. The need for real Christian partnership across the evangelical spectrum*

Approximately six years ago a handful of individuals living in Oxford (United Kingdom), including missionaries, university students, church leaders, and anyone interested in Muslim evangelism, came together to pray for the growing number of Muslims in the city. This group now numbers approximately fifty people coming from a variety of different evangelical traditions, united by a common desire to see Muslims come to know Jesus. Many have gone on to be directly involved in Muslim evangelism and churches are now actively seeking ways to witness to the Muslims living in Oxford. From a single prayer meeting has grown a Christian partnership that has impacted a city and the world in terms of Muslim evangelism. Perhaps if similar prayer meetings were started in Belgium, bringing together indigenous Christians, experienced overseas missionaries and also those from the international Christian community, we would see a growing burden and vision to witness to the Muslims living in Belgium. These networks could provide the opportunity for greater cooperation between the indigenous church and overseas missionaries already working amongst Muslims in Belgium. Perhaps a prayer meeting for Muslims in Belgium could also encourage greater cooperation between the strong, international Christian community



(English-speaking, Spanish-speaking, sub-sahara African, Eastern European) and the indigenous church.

### *3. The need for the indigenous church to catch the vision for evangelising Muslims in Belgium*

In some ways indigenous believers are in one of the best positions to effectively witness to Muslims living in Belgium. They can easily meet the need for a long-term Christian presence in local Muslim communities. Indigenous believers are more likely to live longer in the same geographical location than overseas missionaries. Furthermore, they are not under the same pressure to find a suitable role within the community, as their presence is to be expected. Even though the number of indigenous believers in Belgium is only 1% of the population their mobilisation would mean that many more Muslims would get to know Christians. Indigenous believers are already in a position to converse fluently with Belgian-born Muslims whose first language is either Dutch or French. This is a significant factor as at present, the numbers of Christians working amongst Muslims in Flanders is much less than those in Brussels. This is partly due to the language difference; overseas missionaries coming to Belgium are more likely to speak French rather than Dutch. The resulting lack of Christian workers in Flanders can be met by the Flemish church becoming mobilised and taking upon itself the task of witnessing to Muslims living in Flanders.

The indigenous church can be mobilised for missions to Muslims through prayer and a greater partnership between church leaders and those Christians already working amongst Muslims in Belgium. Perhaps the latter could be invited to give training to indigenous believers on how to witness cross-culturally to Muslims, as well as introductory teaching on the nature of Islam.

In the United Kingdom MBBs have played a crucial role in the mobilisation of indigenous believers. As Muslim refugees are known to be more open to the Gospel message than Muslims living in Belgium, some of them may become MBBs. These individuals can then go on to become a vital resource for the indigenous church, providing first hand insight into Islam as well as being involved themselves in witnessing to the settled Muslim population.

### *4. The need for a distinct approach to evangelising the younger generation of Muslims*

There is a battle going on for the hearts and minds of young Belgian-born Muslims today. In the search for identity and meaning, many are being lured into Islamic extremism and gang culture. These second, third, fourth, *etc.* generation Muslims are part of an emerging third culture, which is distinct from both their parent's home culture and Belgian culture. Christians need to respond by contextualising the Gospel message in this third culture, thereby helping Belgian-born Muslims to find their identity in a relationship with God. More sociological research needs to be done into this emerging culture.

It is already clear that for many young Muslims living in Belgium finding employment is an issue. Christians can help meet this need by providing extra-curricular training (IT lessons, language classes, help with homework) and forming friendships with them by running youth clubs.

### *5. The need for a mature, concerted Christian response to Islam in Belgium*

As Europe begins to realise the consequences of its policy of multiculturalism, and questions are asked about the compatibility of Islam and Western society, eyes will be on Christians to see how they will respond. Therefore, it is vital that Christians have a mature and Christ-like attitude towards the presence of Islam in Europe. A Christian response will need to avoid the extremes of both the 'politically-correct', secular approach, which tends to

downplay the very real differences between the Christian and Muslim faiths, as well as the hostile and discriminatory response characteristic of the increasingly popular right-wing political groups in Europe. The challenge for Christians is to be different, to show a radically different approach to the Muslim presence in Europe that is characterised by the sacrificial love of God for humankind and a commitment to God's purposes in establishing His Kingdom on earth.

### **Appendix 1 - Questions for group discussion**

1. What has been your experience of Muslims in your area?
2. What could you do to develop relationships further with Muslims in your area?
3. Does your church organise an outreach programme aimed at Muslims living in the area?
4. How could you make your church more 'visible' to Muslims?
5. Who could you partner with in your area so that together you can more effectively witness to Muslims?
6. Could you help start a prayer meeting for those interested in Muslim evangelism?
7. What could you do to witness to the younger generation of Muslims in your area?
8. How knowledgeable is your church community about the Muslims in its area and Islam?
9. Are there any asylum-centres in your area? What could your church community do to witness to Muslim refugees/asylum seekers.
10. What is your attitude towards Islam in Belgium? What is your attitude towards the Muslims living in your area?

### **Appendix 2 - Suggested Reading**

Riddell, P. G., & Cotterell, P., *Islam in Conflict: past, present and future*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003.

- This book provides a good overview of the history of Islam, as well as an analysis of the contemporary, global relationship between Christianity and Islam from an evangelical perspective.

Newbigin, L., Sanneh, L. & Taylor, J., *Faith and Power: Christianity and Islam in 'secular' Britain*, London: SPCK, 1998.

- In this book the authors argue that secularism and the loss of Christianity's position in determining society's values, has left a void in which Islam is free to assert its own norms. Although focused on the British context, much of what is said holds true for the secularised West in general.

Fraih, H., *Undercover in Klein-Marokko: achter de gesloten deuren van de radicale islam*, Leuven: Van Halewyck, 2006.

- A study into Islamic extremism in Belgium by a Belgian-born, Muslim journalist. This book provides some insight into what life is like for Moroccan Muslims living in Belgium.

Jenkins, P., *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam and Europe's Religious Crisis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

- In this book the author sets out to answer the question of whether Europe will become Islamic. Written from a sociological perspective, the author seeks to provide a comprehensive and balanced view of the future for both Christianity and Islam in Europe.

Ramadan, T., *To be a European Muslim*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1999.

- The author, Tariq Ramadan, is one of the leading Muslim thinkers in Europe. In this book he tries to re-interpret the Islamic scriptures in a European context, so that Muslims living in Europe can remain faithful to Islam whilst also being citizens of a European state.

### **Appendix 3 - Questions that were asked during the interview**

#### 1. The worker

1. What is your nationality?
2. What theological or ministry training have you done?
3. What languages do you speak?
4. What led you to work in Belgium amongst Muslims?

#### 2. The Local Muslim Community

##### 1. Ethnicity:

- what nationalities are present?
- what nationality is predominant?
- is there integration between ethnicities?
- are various ethnicities united through Islam?
- what language is the heart language?

##### 2. Demographics:

- what is the age distribution?
- what generations are present?
- what is average socio-economic status?
- what professions are they involved in?
- do young people go to university?
- what is the school drop-out rate?
- how strong is the family unit?

##### 3. Religion:

- to which strand of Islam do they belong? Sunni, Sufi, or Shi'a?
- how many mosques are there in the community?
- are the mosques associated with any particular extra-national Islamic organisations?
- what are the Imams like?
- how do people feel about the Imams?
- how do most people feel about the recent ban on the Burqa?

##### 4. Society

- How does each generation differ with regards to attitude towards
  - i) Belgium

- ii) Islam
- iii) Country of origin
  - Would you say that the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation (Belgian-born) are being assimilated / secularised or radicalised?
  - How devoted to Islam are they?

### 3. The worker's work

1. Who are you intentionally seeking to reach out to?
  - nationality?
  - age distribution?
  - socio-economic status?
2. What are your 'passive' points of contact with them? i.e. how have you rubbed shoulders on a regular basis without actively seeking them out?
3. What are your intentional points of contact? i.e. what is your strategy?
4. How easy is it:
  - to initiate conversation with them? e.g. El Escorial
  - to build friendship and trust?
  - gain access to members of families?
    - Is community strong or have they become individualistic?
  - to have a spiritual conversation?
5. Have you experienced resistance? If so, what kind/form?
6. Have you seen any fruit in the work here? What are contributing factors to fruit or lack thereof?
7. Would you say there is a need for more workers in i) your target group, and ii) the local Muslim community?
8. From your experience, how necessary is it for workers to have lived in the country from which the migrants originate?