How is ISIS Spreading the Gospel?

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time have never questioned Islam. But now,
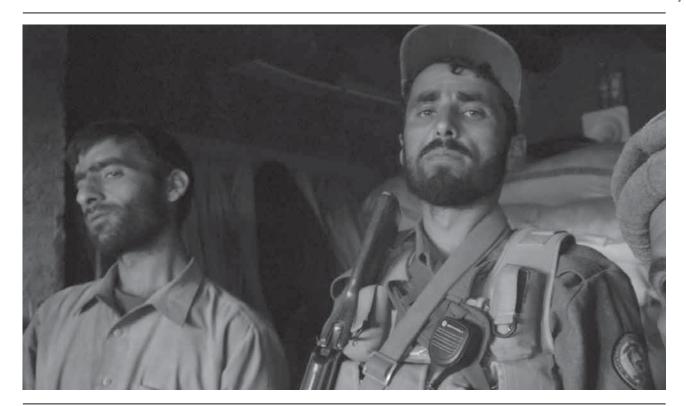I have decided to leave it."

A few weeks ago I received an email from one of my students. She's working among Muslim women and had just gotten off the phone with one of her friends who was weeping uncontrollably. My student initially assumed someone in her family had died. However, once my student's friend regained her composure she made a startling statement: "I have been a Muslim for 41 years and in all that time have never questioned Islam. But now I have decided to leave it." When my student asked her, "Why?" she related that she had been watching ISIS videos, and, because of the brutality that they justified as being the "methods of the Prophet," she decided to leave Islam.

I have often referred Islamic radicals as "proto-evangelists" for the Christian faith. The first there was the Ayatollah Khomeini. His brutal

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regime in Iran, whose atrocities and policies have lead many Iranians to leave Iran, has also led to an exodus of Iranians out of Islam. Estimates are difficult, but the numbers are significant. Outside Iran the numbers are firmer but no less astonishing. In Sweden, fully ten percent of the Iranian immigrant population has converted to the Christian faith. That is approximately 8,000 out of a total of 80,000 in the entire country. Some Iranian believers have called the Ayatollah the greatest missionary because he showed us what Islam is really like.

The next great figure in this progression was Osama Bin Laden. Bin Laden defined the rulers of the Muslim world as apostates for cooperating with the West. Though best known for the September 11, 2001 attacks, his group, al-Qaeda, quickly morphed from killing westerners to killing Muslims. Their brutality has particularly been harsh in Iraq and Syria, as have been actions by the Taliban in Pakistan.

And the latest is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed caliph of ISIS. His declaration of a new caliphate has alarmed the Muslim world. His group's clever—and successful—propaganda films glory in violence, hostage taking, beheadings, sex-slavery, and the slaughter of Muslim and non-Muslims. The recent burning to death of a Jordanian Muslim pilot seems to have stepped well beyond even the brutality of Islamic law and it is likely that ISIS followers may shortly be defined as "apostates" from Islam justifying a new *Jihad* against them.

This propaganda and terror war is being fought on the internet. Most westerners do not watch these films. But it was astonishing to see how quickly the film of the Jordanian pilot's death spread throughout the Muslim world. The man's father watched it on his cell phone in a public meeting.

As Islamic law, and the groups that espouse it, fails, where will people turn? When I met a group of Iranian church leaders in Sweden their fear was that Muslims would turn to secularism, even to atheism. Many have come to the church, but this requires the church to be a "safe space" for Muslims. The tragedy is that many churches are not welcoming for Muslims. They regard them as the enemy. Recently, in a shameful display in Texas, a group of Christians heckled a Muslim meeting and called on them to leave the country. The harvest in Sweden is partly a result of the church taking a stand for Muslim immigrants and against local nationalist parties. The church in Sweden is a "safe space" for Muslims. Is the evangelical church in America a "safe space" for Muslims? The proto-evangelists are doing their job. Are we doing ours? Ⓜ