

MBN Commentary – Jon Gauger

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Title: The Cross or the Crescent

Transcript:

If it's true that Islam is waging a kind of holy jihad against Christianity worldwide, that war is sometimes fought with an arsenal much more subtle than bombs and bullets. In Zambia, Africa the strategy appears more dove than hawk.

No surprise that in geographically challenged America, many of us have never even heard of Zambia, and we'd be hard pressed to find it--apart from a quick search on Google Earth. I've talked with more than one person who believes that Africa is a single country, rather than a continent of nations.

In Zambia, where I travelled recently with Awana International, you drive on the left, spend your money in Kwachas and wave at the zillions of adorable kids.

Nearly half the population is less than fifteen years old in this nation of 10 million. But it's sad to ponder that many Zambian children are victims of human trafficking. Worse, the government does very little to protect victims. These are the very children being reached today through Awana International--the U.S. based Bible club ministry--which is training national leaders who, in turn, establish Bible clubs all across Zambia--and the entire African continent.

They say that, in the end, the most significant difference between nations of wealth and nations in want is the capacity for choice.

In a Zambian slum--where people live on less than a dollar a day--choice itself is a luxury. You eat what you can when you can...if you can.

What a contrast to have walked through such an impoverished neighborhood in the morning...only to enjoy dinner the same day at an upscale shopping mall in Lusaka (Zambia's capital).

Between the two extremes, we encountered a disturbing reality. In Zambia, it is not just followers of Christ who are reaching out to the poor. Followers of Allah are also stepping up--in a big way.

In fact, the Muslims often do a better job of feeding the hungry, clothing the destitute, and building health clinics. And one more thing: they offer free education (at their Muslim schools, of course).

It's difficult to blame the slum residents for wanting more--for their children or

themselves. Hungry stomachs have never made for discerning theologians.

Yet it's sad to consider that in a land with so much Christian heritage, the Cross of Christ sometimes trails the crescent of Islam in human kindness. In the words of one Christian leader, "When I speak to the churches about this, I get much affirmation. But little real support."

And the price for not walking the talk is huge. "If we do not step up our efforts, in five to ten years, we will have lost a generation to Islam," said another worker.

The Cross or the crescent. It's a debate whose most compelling argument will be spoken in the language of gifts of food, clothing, kindness--and the witness of Jesus Himself. Which is how it has always been.

For Moody Radio, I'm Jon Gauger, and lately, Zambia is what I've been pondering.