

# **Christian Witness among Muslims**

a guide toward seeing  
Islam and Muslims  
through the eyes of  
Jesus the Messiah

FFM  
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### **Preface to this Edition**

**Christian Witness among Muslims** was first published by the African Christian Press in Ghana in 1971. The author has preferred to remain anonymous since, as he said, so many people contributed to its existence. However, he has kindly granted the possibility of editing it. Hence its subsequent appearance in India (in several languages), North America and Germany.

The FFM is grateful to its members who have contributed to the content of this latest edition.

For the most part, this edition seeks to preserve the basic intention and content of the previous editions, while at the same time gearing intention and content to be somewhat more relevant to North American readers. Given the intensifying turmoil in our world, it would also seek to intensify the plea that Christians increase their efforts, practically and prayerfully, to share the Gospel of God with Muslims.

Do you, your family, your congregation sense an obligation toward Muslims?

*Dr. Ernest Hahn, 2011*

## **PART 1:**

### ***Christian Attitude toward Muslims***

## **CHAPTER 1 New Love for Muslims**

*Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.  
(1 John 4:8)*

Right at the beginning, let us confess one of the great failures of Christians. We have not usually shown much love toward Muslims. It doesn't make it any easier when news headlines regularly report terrorist actions carried out in the name of Islam. Meanwhile, the Muslim population around us may be growing in numbers and influence. Some Christians wish the Muslims would just "go back where they came from." Other Christians live more or less separately from Muslims; they may meet at school, on business or at work, but it seems they rarely take Muslims as close friends.

### **Why We Should Love Muslims**

The main purpose of this chapter is to persuade you, a Christian, to learn to love Muslims. Here are three reasons:

- God loves all people, including Muslims. He sent Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup> to die for all. So we are called to love Muslims, even if sometimes they seem to be our enemies. (Romans 5:6-8; Matthew 5:43-45) From the Qur'an, Muslims know Jesus Christ best as Isa al-Masih (the Messiah = the Christ, "the Anointed One"), the son of Maryam (Mary). Isa is pronounced Ee-saw.
- Jesus Christ said that the second great commandment is: "Love your neighbour as yourself." (Mark 12:31)

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<sup>1</sup> From the Qur'an, Muslims know Jesus Christ best as Isa al-Masih (the Messiah = the Christ, "the Anointed One"), the son of Maryam (Mary). Isa is pronounced Ee-saw.

Wherever the Muslim is your neighbour, Jesus tells you to love him.

- In many lands, Christians and Muslims live together as members of the same nation, and even as members of the same village or family. Everywhere in the modern world, people of good will are striving for unity and co-operation.

## **How Shall We Show Love to Muslims?**

***Be friendly to Muslims.*** Little by little, try to break down the barriers that separate Muslims and Christians. Start in the ordinary way of greeting and smiling. Pay visits to show your friendliness. Give proper respect. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Pray for those in trouble. Be honest in business dealings. If any Muslim has done evil against you, forgive him or her. If you have done evil, ask forgiveness.

Show your love by co-operating with Muslims for the welfare and progress of your community. Islam and Christianity both call for justice and for compassion toward the sick and needy. There are many things that Muslims and Christians can do together in their own interests and in the interest of their community.

***Understand Muslims and their faith.*** Some people think that to be a good Christian you must condemn non-Christians. This is a mistake. (See Luke 6:37) You are a better Christian if, while holding firm to your own faith, you show love and tolerance in your attitude to people of other religions. Note how charitable Jesus was to the Samaritans (Luke 9:51-55; 10:29-37; 17:11-19) and to the Gentiles (Matthew 8:5-13), both of these groups considered as enemies by the Jews, Jesus' own people.

Sincere Muslims have many things in common with sincere Christians. They are struggling to do good and are tempted by evil. They are sometimes lonely, disappointed, troubled, sick or facing death. They want to know the meaning of life and seek God as the answer to their problems.

So your love for Muslims means that you first recognize them as fellow human beings. Then, in order to understand them, study the religion which is precious to them. Do not study Islam with the sole aim of finding fault. Rather, look for its good points and be glad about them. Do unto them as you would want them to do to you!

***Tell Muslims about Jesus Christ.*** Some people misunderstand the word "love." When we say: "Christians should love Muslims," they think we are asking for a sort of compromise. They think "loving Muslims" means "Don't tell them anything about the Gospel, because that might offend them."

That is not what "loving Muslims" means. Loving Muslims means the opposite. When you have something that's valuable, you like to share it with those you love. If we really love Muslims, we shall certainly want to share the wonderful Gospel of Jesus Christ with them.

Further, as Christians we must obey the command of Jesus, who not only told us to love our neighbour, but also told us that "repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations." (Luke 24:47; compare Matthew 28:19,20) There will be more on this subject in Chapter 2.

## **Summary**

This book will help you to understand your Muslim neighbours. It will also help you explain the Gospel to them. But the most important thing is for Christians to have a new attitude of love toward Muslims. That will be a powerful witness to Jesus Christ!

Two proverbs say: "What love cannot do, is not worth doing" and "The person we love, his house is never far away." The Bible says: "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13)

## **For Discussion among Christians**

Someone said: "The Muslims of my area are so

aggressive and proud. It is impossible for us Christians to love them." How would you answer? (Consider 1 Peter 2:11-16; 3:8-18)

Another said: "The Muslims of my area are different from us in race and customs, and we have little to do with them. So we cannot love them." How would you answer? (Consider John 4:7-9, 39, 40; Acts 10:28, 29; Luke 10:29-37.)

Another Christian said: "In my area Christians and Muslims do love one another. But we are afraid to preach because that might spoil the good relationship." How would you answer? (Consider Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 5:14,15,19,20.)

Someone else said: "If we admit the good points in Islam, people will think it is just as good as Christianity. So we had better go on criticizing it!" How would you answer? (Consider Matthew 7:1-5; Luke 18:9-14; 1 Corinthians 13:4-6; Romans 5:6-8.)

In fact, Muslims and Christians hold several similar ideas in their world views. Unlike secularists, especially those who are agnostic or atheists, both Muslims and Christians believe that God created the world and that He created it with intention, with purpose and meaning. He speaks to all human beings through nature and conscience and we are accountable to Him. What effect should this have on our attitude toward Muslims?

## **Prayer**

Lord God, our Heavenly Father, we acknowledge that we Christians have not always loved Muslims in the past and present. Forgive us for failing to love our neighbours as ourselves. In Your mercy let Your Holy Spirit kindle within our hearts new attitudes of friendship and understanding for Muslims, for those near us and far away. In the Name of Jesus the Messiah, Amen.



## CHAPTER 2

### Our Message to Muslims

*For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.*

(2 Corinthians 4:5)

First, stop and think. Have you met any Muslims in the last few days? Have you shown love to any? If you have no Muslim contacts, perhaps you could show this book to someone who does. Now, we are going to study the above text in three parts.

#### **We Must Not "Preach Ourselves"**

This means we must not have any sense of superiority when we tell people about the Gospel. "Preaching" (or "proclaiming") does not mean: "I am better than you." It means: "I have heard some wonderful news that I would like to share with you."

Preaching does *not* merely mean: "My religion is better than your religion." This thought simply arises from the wrong feeling of superiority. Christian preachers will have private thoughts about other religions, thoughts which should be as generous as possible. But these thoughts are no part of their message. Their message is simply about God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ.

Another kind of preaching ourselves is to be always speaking and never listening. Notice how Jesus listened to the woman of Samaria, and how Philip listened to the Ethiopian (John 4; Acts 8:26-38). Effective Christian pastors listen to their members.

Even more, Christian preachers among Muslims must listen to them to understand their deepest thoughts and feelings. Then when it is their turn to speak, they will be sensitive to their hearers. And their message will be more understandable and attractive.

## **We Must Preach Jesus Christ as Lord**

Do we need to give any message to the Muslims? Some Christians say: "Christianity and Islam are the same—believing in one God. Only the way and manner of worship is different. So there is no need to tell Muslims about the Gospel."

This is a mistake. We are glad the Muslims reject idols and believe in only one God, as we do. We respect the sincere devotion and goodness of many Muslims. But this does not mean all their beliefs are the same as ours. Consider these differences:

Muslims honour Jesus as prophet, but they do not know Him as their Lord and Saviour. They deny that He is the Son of God. (See Chapter 10)

Orthodox Muslims say that Jesus did not die on the cross and did not rise from the dead. (See Chapters 7 & 8)

Muslims seldom call God "Father." They say that God has no sons, and people are only His slaves or servants.

So these most precious truths of the Gospel (Jesus the Messiah as Lord and Saviour, His cross and resurrection, God as our Heavenly Father) are seldom, if ever, known to Muslims. Or if they are known, they are rejected.

Do you remember the Jews in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost? They were sincere religious men and women and believers in one God, but God inspired the apostles to proclaim to them Jesus as Lord and Saviour. In a similar way, devout and good as many Muslims are, God wants them to hear and believe the great things He has done for the world in Jesus Christ.

"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." But how shall the world know, unless someone tells the good news? God is "entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." So, unworthy as we are, we are made ambassadors for Christ, appealing to people to be reconciled to God through Him. (2 Corinthians 5:19, 20)

## **We Must Be Servants to Those to Whom We Preach**

This reminds us again to avoid all sense of superiority. Jesus, our Lord and Master, stooped down to wash people's feet. What will you do in order to be a servant to Muslims? Some Christians may still say: "If we go too far in loving the Muslims, we risk compromising our faith. So we had better keep separate from them." But listen to the apostle Paul: "I have become all things to all people that by all possible means I might save some." (Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.) Of course, the saying "all things to all people" can be misunderstood. It does not mean: "Worship idols with the idolaters and get drunk with the drunkards!" You must be all things to all people, but you are not to do anything that is against your faith in Christ. You cannot, for the sake of "love," deny Christ!

But apart from compromise, do everything possible to show love, to serve and to let people know God's salvation through Jesus Christ.

## **Summary**

In approaching people of other religions, there are two mistakes Christians sometimes make. They are either hostile and aggressive, which is forbidden by Jesus' command that we love our neighbour, or they compromise and keep silent about their faith in Christ. Because of love for the neighbour, the Christian must try to present Christ by deed and word to people of other religions.

## **For Discussion among Christians**

Have you heard Christians saying that there is no need to tell the Gospel to Muslims? What reason did they give? Are you now prepared to answer them?

How was Jesus "all things to all people" with the sinners and the Pharisees? (Luke 5:29-32; 7:36-48; 19:1-10) Was this compromise? What was His aim?

Deciding how far to go in loving Muslims without compromising your faith may be difficult. Discuss some examples.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Behaviour of the Christian Witness

*And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.*

(2 Timothy 2:24, 25)

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul advises the young preacher on how to be a true Christian witness. In the first 13 verses of Chapter 2, Paul tells him to centre his faith on Jesus the Messiah, risen from the dead, and to endure hardship for the sake of the Gospel. In verses 19 to 22, Paul warns that everyone who professes Jesus Christ must turn away from evil-doing. Then in verses 24 and 25 (quoted above), he tells how the Lord's servant should behave when he is witnessing for Christ.

#### **Do not Quarrel; Be Kind to Everyone**

See also verse 14: "Warn them before God about quarrelling about words." Often a Christian has set out to witness for Christ but has ended up in a useless argument! How can we avoid this quarrelsomeness?

***Avoid attitudes that cause quarrels.*** Do not aim at a debate in which we are trying to "defeat" the Muslim. Do not argue to prove yourself right and the Muslim wrong. Instead, aim at a friendly discussion in which Christian and Muslim show a sincere interest in each other. Then in this kind way you will seek to bear witness to what God has done for the world in Christ.

***Avoid subjects that cause quarrels.*** Some Christians think they should "preach the Gospel" by attacking Muhammad, criticizing the Qur'an and condemning the morals of Muslim society. This is a wrong approach. It hardens Muslims against your message and provokes them to reply with criticisms of the Bible and of Christian society.

***Avoid situations that may encourage quarrels.***

Beware of debates that may lead to fruitless contention. Would it be better to have a quiet chat with a few people in private?

## **Be a Good Teacher**

***Understand people.*** To teach Janice mathematics, you must understand not only mathematics; you must understand Janice also. Study Islam and the Muslim community to understand Muslims. Ask sincere questions and listen to the answers.

***Go from the known to the unknown.*** Start with the things Muslims already know: one God; Jesus as prophet, teacher, healer; the Last Judgement; prayer; morality. Lead on from there.

***Do not start by speaking of the things Muslims find difficult and perhaps offensive*** (such as the Holy Trinity and Jesus as the Son of God). When you do speak of these, show that you understand the difficulties that Muslims have with these expressions. Say that you want to explain what Christians mean by them. Assure them that we do not believe in three gods, or in God physically begetting a son. We believe in one God!

***Go step by step.*** Keep to one point at a time. If a Muslim mixes many subjects together in their questions, choose the most useful subject and politely ask them to keep the discussion on this one. Come to the other subjects later or on another day.

***If you do not know, say so!*** The Christian need not pretend to be a know-all. If you are asked a question you cannot answer, say that you will try to find the answer and bring it later.

## **Gently and Patiently Instruct Opponents**

You should not consider all Muslims as opponents! No doubt some will oppose your witness and show their misunderstanding of the Gospel. Then you have to correct them, but with *patience* and *gentleness*.

Thus you might say: "Excuse me, I have to say something a bit different," or, "I think there is a misunderstanding there!" If you meet someone who is bitter or angry, you might say: "Please, we all stand before God. None of us is perfect. Let us not quarrel but sincerely try to serve God and understand one another." Often a smile and a joke will help. Your calmness and patience in a difficult situation may be an impressive witness to Christ.

Then, of course, how will you react when the Muslim corrects you?

### **God Grant Them Repentance and Knowledge of the Truth**

Some Christians have said: "It is a waste of time, you will never convert Muslims; they will not listen."

Certainly you and I will never convert a Muslim, for conversion is the work of God. Do not imagine that by much arguing you can make someone believe. By too much arguing, you may rather provoke people to resist the message.

But we should never set limits on the power of God. He can bring anyone to know the truth. Our task is to give our witness, with prayer and with love, and then to trust that God will do His own work.

In fact, many Muslims are attracted by the Gospel, and not a few have fearlessly declared their faith in Christ. If Christians showed greater sincerity and love, who knows what could happen! Needing more information? Contact FFM, for example!

### **At All Times Pray!**

Pray privately for your Muslim friends and their families. Pray for their health and welfare. Pray that God will guide them as they think over your discussion and as they read the Bible. Pray that the Holy Spirit will touch their hearts and lead them to the truth.

Pray, too, for yourself, that your love may be genuine and

that you will always be learning more of the goodness of God.

### **For Discussion among Christians**

In some areas, Christians have difficulty starting a friendly religious discussion. Discuss how to do this.

You can start by asking a Muslim about his or her faith, such as the meaning of a ritual or festival. Can you comfort and advise someone who is sick, suffering, or in some difficulty, and so begin to speak of God's love? Can you speak of your regret that Muslims and Christians have so often been hostile or suspicious? Can you offer a portion of Scripture or other Christian writings, saying that you are happy to hear that Muslims, too, believe in the *Tawrat* (Law of Moses), the *Zabur* (Psalms) and the *Injil* (Gospel).

What passages would you choose when you first ask a Muslim to read the Bible?

In your experience, is it good for a Christian to offer prayer when he or she visits, or is visited by, a Muslim? If so, how will you pray?

## **PART 2:**

### ***Understanding Muslims and Helping Them Understand the Gospel***

#### **Introduction**

Part One (Chapters 1 to 3) described the general principles of Christian approach to Muslims. Now in Part Two (Chapters 4 to 12) we introduce you to what you might talk about in your witness among Muslims. Each chapter has five sections:

#### **Understanding the Muslim**

This section gives a short introduction to the Muslim point of view on a particular subject. From this you should find out for yourself what your Muslim friends think and feel about the subject.

#### **Steps of Christian Witness**

This section suggests how you may lead the Muslim, step by step, from what the Muslim already knows, to an explanation of the Gospel.

#### **Discussion with a Muslim Friend**

This section suggests what to say during your witness. You can discuss the material, encourage your friend to comment, and then respond.

#### **Practical Hints**

This section provides practical do's and don'ts that Christians have learned over the years.

#### **For Discussion among Christians**

This section should challenge and inspire us Christians to make sure we believe what we say we believe and practise what we preach.



Wherever possible, Christians should follow the order of these chapters in their discussions with Muslims. Muslims who understand the Christian view of God's unity and love (Chapters 4 and 5) are more prepared to think, or even re-think who Jesus the Messiah is, and what He does. When they have learned more of the life of Jesus Christ (Chapter 6), they will be in a better position to think about His death and resurrection (Chapters 7 and 8). Once Muslims understand Jesus as "the Word of God" (Chapter 9), they are much more able to make sense of "Son of God," "Holy Trinity" and "Holy Spirit" (Chapters 10 and 11). If Muslims question the authority of the Bible and the reliability of the Biblical manuscripts, look for help in Chapter 12.

Of course, it is often not possible to be systematic. In any case, we must try to be prepared to take up any topic in which our Muslim friend shows interest.

## CHAPTER 4

### Love God and Love Your Neighbour

*"The most important [command]," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."*

(Mark 12:29-31)

#### Understanding the Muslim

**Unit vs. Unity.** *Oneness of God.* Muslims have a strong belief that there is no god but God. According to Islam, the greatest sin a person can commit is to worship anything else beside God, that is, to associate (or "join") other gods with God. The purpose of human life is to worship God.

**Ritual Worship.** When they speak of "worshipping God," Muslims think first of the rituals (the ceremonies and outward actions) of prayer, fasting, giving alms, and so on. Yet, if you take the discussion further, many will agree that "worship" includes much more than ritual.

**View of Christianity.** Because the above two beliefs are so important in Islam (the Oneness of God and the performance of ritual worship), many Muslims are puzzled and even distressed about Christianity. They hear that we call on Jesus as Lord. They see that we do not perform anything like their own ritual worship. Do Christians, then, actually worship one God?

#### Steps of Christian Witness

The first step in our witness is to reassure Muslims that we believe in one God and are zealous for the worship of God above all other things.

The second step is to share with them the teaching of Jesus that a person's "worship" or "service" is, above all, *loving God and loving our neighbours as ourselves.*

## Discussion with a Muslim Friend

Refer to the Muslim creed: "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah." (See Appendix A.) Ask about the use of this creed in Islam. (For example, it is a part of the Muslim call to prayer and it is spoken in the ear of a new-born child.)

Agree that God is one and that we should worship nothing beside Him. Tell how someone asked Jesus Christ which commandment of God is the first and greatest. Ask the Muslim: "What would you say?" Then tell him Jesus replied: "*The most important one is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.'*" (Mark 12:29)

Yes, it is so important in Christianity that God is one. Most Christians learn by heart the Ten Commandments that God gave through Moses, which begins with:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. *You shall have no other gods before me.*" (Exodus 20:2,3)

But what does it really mean to worship only one God? To say it with the lips is not enough. Even Satan knows there is one God. But he does not obey God. (James 2:19)

Again, to bow down in a ceremony of worship is good, but it is not enough. People may bow down hypocritically. An African proverb says: "Every lizard prostrates; we don't know which one has a bellyache." Just so, people bow but God alone sees their hearts; He knows who is sincere in worship.

True worship is to love God and to obey Him, isn't it? When Jesus was talking about the first and greatest commandment, He continued: "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart...*" True worship of the one God means to love Him more than anything else; more than we love ourselves, our power, money or pleasures.

Jesus also told people the second great commandment. Ask your friend to say what he thinks is the second most important law of God. Jesus said that it is: "*Love your neighbour as yourself.*"

Do we love our fellow human beings? See how we human beings oppose one another, how we deceive one another and speak evil of one another! Often even people in one family fight among themselves; how much more people of different towns, different tribes, different nations and different social classes! Look at us Muslims and Christians: how far have we loved or failed to love one another? Yet we have God's command through Jesus to love our neighbour as ourselves! We who are Christians know that we have many faults and have often failed to keep this law of God. May He have mercy on us all!

Your Muslim friend may like to quote local examples of enmity and jealousy that divide people. As far as possible, do not take sides, and do not judge who is right or who is wrong. Keep to the point that we all are failing to love God and our neighbour as we ought, and that we all need God's mercy and guidance to worship Him truly.

Say: "Especially we Muslims and Christians. I hope we may care for one another more. Thank you for your kind welcome to me today. Can we meet and discuss this another day?"

## **Practical Hints**

**Pray.** From time to time during any such discussion, pray silently: "Father, help me to speak and listen in a way that will lead to good understanding between us. Help me to give a sincere Christian witness. Help my friend to hear Your voice in their heart."

**Avoid controversy.** At this stage, avoid controversial questions about the Holy Trinity and the deity of Christ. But if the Muslim raises them, give a simple, courteous answer, without raising a spirit of debate.

For example, a Muslim might say: "But you Christians are worshipping three gods instead of one God." You could reply: "Oh no, please! We wouldn't dare to do so after so many commands to worship God alone. We only believe that the one God, above and beyond us, has made Himself known to people as Creator, as Word and as Spirit. It is God alone we

call upon."

Or, if asked: "Why do you worship Jesus?", answer: "You see, we worship the one and only God through Jesus Christ, because God has so wonderfully revealed Himself to us in Jesus. Of course, we cannot understand and explain everything about God, since He is so great. But, praise God, He has revealed to us what we need to know about Him and His salvation for us—so that we can praise Him with understanding and thanksgiving. And, please believe me, Christians can never think that Jesus is a second god beside God!"

Often this short answer will satisfy your Muslim friend for the time being, and you can return to your discussion on love for God and neighbour. However, if your friend is really eager to discuss the Holy Trinity or the Person of Christ, do not refuse to do so. (See Chapters 9,10,11)

**Use familiar terms.** Use names and expressions that are familiar to Muslims. (See Glossary)

**Recommend the Bible.** Use the discussion to stir your friend's interest in the Bible. Speak about the Bible reverently, not argumentatively. Offer to lend a Bible, or give a Scripture portion. Suggest passages that you know he or she will enjoy reading, and talk about these next time you meet. (Suggestions: Psalm 23; 1 John 4:16-21; James 2:16-21; Luke 10:25-37.)

Could you offer a DVD, *The Life of Jesus the Messiah*?

## For Discussion among Christians

On what occasions do Muslims repeat the Muslim creed? Ask your Muslim friends and find out all you can about what it means to them.

What can we do as Christians to show that we confess that God is one and that we worship God above all?

Is there any way in which we are failing to love our neighbours as ourselves? How can we put this right?

## **Prayer**

Lord God, our Heavenly Father, You alone are the Creator and Preserver of the whole universe, of the earth, and of all the people living on it. We thank You and praise Your holy Name! Open the hearts of Christians and Muslims that they would learn to live together in harmony and promote peace on earth among all nations. Encourage and enable us as Christians to share, through word and deed, Your blessed Gospel with Muslims also. In the Name of Jesus the Messiah, Amen.

## CHAPTER 5

### God, Our Heavenly Father, Is Love

*But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?"*

(Luke 15:2-4, read the whole chapter.)

#### Understanding the Muslim

**"God is greater!"** (*Allahu akbar!*) is repeated in Muslim prayer and in everyday life. After the Oneness of God, His greatness seems to be the most important thing in the Muslim belief about God. God is far greater than our thought of Him, greater in power and wisdom and mercy; nothing is to be compared with Him.

**Does God love all people?** This is not so clear in Islam. On the one hand, the Qur'an calls God "the Merciful," "the Compassionate," and "the Loving." On the other hand, the Qur'an says that God loves the good people and does not love the bad. (*Surah* 3:134, 140)

Muslims interpret this subject in different ways. Here we can only say that all Muslims have some idea of God's love, but not many will think of it in the way that Christians do. The Christian thinks of the love of God as it was revealed in Jesus Christ: "God proves His love for us in that while we still were sinners, Christ died for us." This is a strange idea to most Muslims. Only the Bible says that "God is love." (Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:8)

**Is God our Father?** The Qur'an, the Traditions (*Hadith*) and the Muslim commentators seldom, if ever, call God "Father." Many Muslims suspect that the "Fatherhood of God" means a physical fatherhood; that is, that God had relations with a woman and produced children. Such an idea is blasphemous to them—and it is blasphemous to Christians too! Also, many Muslims feel it is bringing God too low if we

compare Him with a human being, such as a father. However, some Muslims have accepted that they can call God "Heavenly Father" in a spiritual sense and understand themselves to be children of God.

## **Steps of Christian Witness**

The expression "Son of God" often leads to argument. Many Muslims know by heart the verses of the Qur'an that say that God begets no son (as in Surah 112). It may be hard for them even to listen to your explanations. So, do not start your talk with a Muslim by trying to convince him that he is (or could become) a son of God! Instead, start from the love of God, especially as revealed in Jesus. Then lead to Jesus' teaching that God is the loving Heavenly Father. Tell what it means to you personally to trust God as Father.

## **Discussion with a Muslim Friend**

***The love of God, revealed in Jesus.*** In the time of Jesus the Messiah, people thought that a holy man, a religious leader, ought to have nothing to do with unholy people. As the proverb says: "A man wearing a white cloth doesn't enter the palm-oil shop." So people were astonished when they saw Jesus mixing with despised and sinful people. They criticized Him for it.

Jesus explained His action by asking them to think about a good shepherd. A shepherd may have 99 of his 100 sheep safely at home. But is he content with that? No, if even one is missing, he will go out looking until he finds it. Then how happy he will be when the lost sheep is found! (Luke 15:1-7)

Through this parable of "The Lost Sheep," Jesus was teaching that God is the greatest Shepherd, who loves every one, including the lost and the sinful. Of course, God's love for sinners does *not* mean that He likes them to continue in sin. His love means that He wants to save them from sin! For this reason He sent Jesus Christ into the world to seek and to save the lost. (Luke 19:10; Mark 2:17)



**God's love is like a good father's love—but far greater!** Jesus went on to show the greatness of God's love by telling the parable of "the Prodigal Son." (See Luke 15:11-32, especially up to verse 24.) Many Muslims are drawn to this parable. Find out if your friend has heard it. Show where it is in the Bible.

Discuss the story. When the son was doing evil in the far country, what was the father thinking about him? Did the father still love him? What would you say if the father had rejected him, saying: "Go away; after all the evil you have done, you are no more my son?" Do you think the father should have beaten the boy to punish him? Probably not many fathers would do as this one did, forgiving the son completely and welcoming him back with joy and honour. But Jesus was teaching us that God's love is even far greater than an earthly father's love!

Jesus taught us to pray, saying: "Our Father in Heaven...." (Matthew 6:9) But please let me make one point clear. Muslims always say that God could not be a father in a physical sense, in the way that human fathers sleep with their wives and beget children. Of course they are right. Christians agree with Muslims here. We can never think any such thing about God.

When Jesus taught us to call God "Father," it was in the spiritual sense, to show the greatness of God's love. You know that even among men there are some we call "father"; not to say that they physically begot us, but that they care for us and we respect them. For example, people in India call Mahatma Gandhi "the Father of our nation." Pakistanis may call Mohammad Ali Jinnah "the Father of Pakistan." Americans talk about their Pilgrim Fathers. Many nations talk about "our Founding Fathers." Much greater than this is the love of God, which Christians think of when we call Him "Father."

***The joy of trusting in God as Father.*** We all have times of trouble, we are tempted by evil and are surrounded by enemies. At such time some people despair of God, thinking that He no longer loves them. If you look at all the suffering in

the world, you can begin to wonder: "If God loves us, why does He allow this to happen?"

Yet, through Jesus Christ, we have learned to trust in God's love, no matter what happens. The mighty God, the Judge and the Creator of all worlds, cares for each one far more than the best human father cares for his children. His love surrounds us. His love is stronger than the power of evil! (Romans 8:35-39)

In Jesus' own life we see a perfect example of trust in God as Father. Betrayed by friends and tortured by enemies, He prayed: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Then, at the point of death, He prayed confidently: "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:34-46)

## **Practical Hints**

If a Muslim raises the question of "sons of God," try to give a brief, friendly answer and then, if possible, return to the main point of your witness. For example: "Of course, we often use the word "son" as a metaphor or parable. Thus also the Qur'an speaks of the traveller as 'the son of the road' (*ibn al-sabil*). We do *not* mean the road married a wife and begot a child! Similarly, "sons of God" has a spiritual (not physical) meaning; it shows the great love God has for us and the trust we have in God." (1 John 3:1)

Be ready with illustrations of a child's trust in their father. For example, a little girl once went out in a boat on the sea for the first time in her life. It happened that her father was the one in charge of the boat. A great storm blew up, people were tossed here and there, many were shouting and weeping. But the little girl sat calm and smiling. Someone asked: "How is it you are not afraid like the others?" She replied: "My father is in charge of the boat. He knows I'm here."

Our earthly fathers cannot always protect us, but we know that God is all-powerful. Christians believe the message of Jesus Christ that God is our Father. Through all the storms of life, we know that He is "in charge of the boat" and He cares

for each one of us. In some areas, it may be better to tell this story about a boy. Or tell the story about some other frightening situation, such as being in the jungle at night.

It is said that in some languages, the word for "love" may not be appropriate for speaking to Muslims of the love of God. If this is so in your friend's language, you may then begin by speaking of God's "mercy". But note: in Christian marriage, both husband and wife promise to love each other. If each promised the other, "I will have mercy on you," would it make a difference?

Consider also Matthew 5:44, 45; 6:25, 26, 31-33; 7:9-11; Romans 8:14-16; Hebrews 12:5-11.

### **For Discussion among Christians**

We Christians say "Our Father," and many of us recite: "I believe in God the Father Almighty!" Do we really think about "God as Father" and believe it? What do we do during the troubles of life? Do we trust in the Heavenly Father? Or do we despair, or rely on "magical" protection? Let us get right with God ourselves, so we shall have a genuine testimony to give to Muslims about the peace and joy of trusting our Father God.

A good son or daughter is expected to copy the virtues of his or her father. Are we behaving as sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father, showing His goodness in our lives? (See Matthew 5:44,45.) Another proverb says: "The praying mantis has given birth; now it is up to the child to learn to dance like his father!"

## CHAPTER 6

### The Life of Jesus Christ

*... peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power and how He went about doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him.*

(Acts 10:36-38)

### Understanding the Muslim

***The messengers of God.*** Muslims believe that God has revealed His will especially by sending messengers to the world. Generally Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad are called both messenger and prophet. Muslims consider that such persons received Scriptures from God. All preached more or less the same message. At the Last Day they will witness against those who rejected their message.

***Muhammad, "the seal of the Prophets."*** Muslims believe Muhammad received the Qur'an as God's complete, final revelation for all. The life and teaching of Muhammad are believed to give the perfect example for people to follow.

Some Muslims do seem to raise Muhammad to superhuman status. But Orthodox Islam insists that, however great Muhammad was, he was only:

a man, of a purely human nature. He was neither a great god, nor a small god, he is not an object of worship; we do not pray to

him, but pray to God for him. (Shaykh M. Abdullah Draz)

***Jesus, son of Mary, the Messiah.*** Jesus is mentioned in some 90 verses of the Qur'an and in many Traditions (*Hadith*). He is called a prophet and messenger, a blessed and righteous one, honoured both on earth and in Heaven, one of those close to God. In the Qur'an His birth is announced by Gabriel and Mary conceives Him miraculously while still a virgin. The Qur'an says He healed the blind, the

leper and raised the dead. God gave Jesus the book called the Injil (Evangel, Good News) containing guidance and light for all people. Jesus gathered disciples who believed in Him as the messenger of God. Many of the Children of Israel, especially their religious leaders, wanted to put Him to death. But God rescued Him from them. God will place those who follow Jesus above those who disbelieve, until the day of resurrection. Muslims honour Him with the titles: "the word of God" and "the spirit of God." (See Chapters 9 and 11.)

Yet in Muslim belief Jesus is like the other human messengers, a created mortal man, no more than a servant. He must never be called "God," "Son of God" or "Lord," for there cannot be any other god or lord beside God. Jesus did not die on the cross. (See Chapters 7 and 8.) However highly Muslims honour Jesus, still Muhammad usually remains in their eyes the supreme and final messenger of God for all the world.

## Steps of Christian Witness

What a challenge! Muslims honour Jesus in so many ways but reject the most important aspects: His deity, His death on the cross, His resurrection. How shall we meet this challenge?

As usual, go "from the known to the unknown." Do not begin by trying to prove that Jesus is God. (In fact, Biblically, Jesus is God *and* man.) A Muslim will almost inevitably misunderstand and reject what you say. Even Jesus' disciples did not at first realize that Jesus was the Son of God. They had long observed His life before Peter was enlightened to know more fully who Jesus the Messiah was. (Matthew 16:13-17)

So normally your first step of witness about Jesus will be to encourage your friend's interest in the life of Jesus, especially in those events also mentioned in the Qur'an. As they begin to better understand the words and deeds of Jesus, they should clearly grasp that Jesus is a man and yet **more** than a man, a great prophet and yet more than a great prophet.

## Discussion with a Muslim Friend

We have already seen two very important things in the life of Jesus Christ. In Chapter 4 we saw how Jesus commanded us to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. The religious teachers at that time were much concerned about detailed rules and rituals. It was a new and shocking idea when Jesus said that **love** was more important than all these rules.

Then in Chapter 5 we saw how Jesus made friends with sinners, with despised and humble people. He demonstrated to the world how God loves sinners, how He as the Heavenly Father never stops loving any of His children.

From there we can go on to discuss the events in Jesus' life that the Qur'an mentions. Ask your Muslim friend what they know about the life of Jesus. Ask your friend to read or listen to the story of the birth of Jesus in Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-56; 2:1-40. According to the Qur'an, God says: "We breathed into Mary of Our spirit and made her and her son a sign for all people." (Surah 21:91)

The Qur'an recognizes John the Baptist (Yahya) as a prophet and tells the story of his birth. Discuss John and lead to his testimonies about Jesus Christ; for example,

I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." (Luke 3:16)

The Qur'an (Surah 3:49) says that Jesus healed the blind and the leper and raised the dead, but it does not give any details. Most Muslims will be happy to know such stories as Mark 1:40-45 (a leper), Mark 10:46-52 (blind Bartimaeus) and Luke 7:11-17 (the widow of Nain's son).

Make clear Jesus was not a magician or "wonder-worker," doing miracles to astonish people. His miracles were signs, teaching people about God. They show God's mercy to all people. They show that in the coming of Jesus "the Kingdom of God is at hand." They call all people to repentance.

The prophets had foretold a great day of salvation with the Messiah who would make the blind to see, the lame to walk, the dumb to sing; He would preach good news to the poor and set free those who were oppressed. The miracles of Jesus show that this salvation has come with Jesus Christ. (Isaiah 35:5, 6; 61:1, 2; Luke 4:16-22; 7:18-23; 11:20)

## Practical Hints

***Do not compromise.*** Muslims who are friendly to us sometimes propose a compromise: "If you Christians will only leave out 'Son of God,' then Muslims and Christians could agree on one God and Jesus as a prophet. In this way we could end our differences." We do appreciate the good intentions of this proposal. But it is impossible for us to omit any part of the Bible's testimony to the Messiah Jesus!

***Do not try to prove the integrity of the message of the Bible from the Qur'an.*** Some Christians have tried to end the differences by claiming that the Qur'an supports vital Christian doctrines that Muslims reject. Thus it is possible, by cleverly and wrongly twisting the meaning of some Qur'an verses, to give the impression that the Qur'an itself "proves" the Holy Trinity, the deity of Christ—even that He is Son of God.

But Christians must not misrepresent the Qur'an. Doing so is unfair, unjust and only annoys Muslims (as we are annoyed when Muslims misrepresent the Bible). This practice may also confuse other Christians, giving the false impression that the Qur'an agrees with the Bible on our own foundational doctrines.

***Be careful how you speak about Muhammad***—if you speak about him at all. Initially, at least, it is better to let the Qur'an and Muslim Tradition speak for him, and to remember that God is Judge. (Luke 6:37) Attacking Muhammad may be quite irrelevant to your conversation or even distort it, and may damage your friendship.

Also be careful about comparing Jesus and Muhammad, because here comparison may more often offend than edify. They may feel you are doing it to attack Muhammad, since

the position of Jesus Christ in Christian faith (as Lord and Saviour) is different from the position of Muhammad in Islam (as messenger). Therefore, comparison may be misleading.

If you have to make any comment on Muhammad, let it be a favourable one: that he understood that we should worship one God (see Appendix A), or that he established unity and order among warring tribes.

***Be careful about what you try to prove from the miracles of Jesus and His virgin birth.*** Some Christians have claimed these as proof that Jesus is God or the Son of God. These "proofs" fail to convince most Muslims, since other prophets have also performed miracles. Adam, they may add, came into the world miraculously without a father and mother.

Jesus never used miracles as mere "proofs" of His deity (see Matthew 4:6,7). The Bible witnesses that the miracles are primarily "signs" fulfilling the prophecy of the coming of God's Kingdom in Jesus Christ and of everyone's need to repent.

## **For Discussion Among Christians**

Is it our difficulty that we are weak in understanding the life of Jesus Christ? We know some separate stories about Him. We know John 3:16 by heart. But can we describe His life? Practise giving a five-minute talk about Jesus—not about the key doctrines, but simply about what Jesus did and said.

Give similar talks about some of the Bible stories mentioned in this chapter. Connect each story with a Muslim belief. Tell the story in a lively way, showing what sort of person Jesus is and how "the Kingdom of God is at hand" in His ministry.

What special occasions can we use to make the stories of Jesus vivid and personal, both to Muslims and Christians? For example, when we pray for the sick, we could tell how Jesus healed the sick.



## CHAPTER 7

### The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ

*[Jesus said] "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."*

(John 10:11)

*Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.*

(1 Corinthians 15:3)

### Understanding the Muslim

***Did Christ die?*** Many Muslims have heard the story that God took Jesus to Heaven just before the crucifixion, and that God miraculously caused a substitute to be crucified in His place. They feel this gives more honour to Jesus than the Christian belief that He died on the cross and was buried. For most Muslims, a crucified Jesus would be a shamefully defeated Jesus. God would not allow His prophet to die such a shameful death!

Most Muslims deny that Jesus died on the cross. On the other hand, Muslims may seriously differ as to what happened to Him: Did God actually substitute someone on the cross in place of Jesus? If so, who was this person? Would such a substitution by God befit God's justice? If God made the substitute look like Jesus, would this not suggest that God deceives? Some traditional Muslims rejected the substitution theory. Still others, members of the Ahmadiyya Movement, claim that the real Jesus was nailed to the cross, was taken down while still alive, recovered from His wounds and lived to the age of 120 years, finally dying in Kashmir, India.

***Do we all need an atoning sacrifice?*** Muslims readily admit that they sometimes disobey the commandments of God. Nevertheless, they feel that God forgives them their sins because of (1) their belief in God, (2) their rejection of idols and (3) their repentance and other good works—to cite some examples. They hope that on the Day of

Judgement, God who is merciful will allow them to enter into Paradise. There is no need, they say, for another to die for their sins.

***Does God need an atonement?*** Islam emphasizes the absolute freedom of God. He does whatever He wills. When He decrees something, He merely says: "Be!" and it is. So, if God wants to forgive, He does not need any atonement. He simply forgives.

## **Steps of Christian Witness**

Thus, Christ's death for our sins, so precious to us, is puzzling to Muslims. (Remember how difficult it was for Peter to believe that the Messiah would die. See Matthew 16:13-23.) So your first step of witness is, simply, to tell the story of events leading up to the cross. Then let the meaning of Christ's sacrifice come naturally from the story.

Your witness should balance three aspects of the crucifixion:

- What people did: They opposed Jesus and plotted to kill Him. (Muslims believe this.)
- What Jesus did: He made a voluntary, loving self-sacrifice on behalf of people. (Would your Muslim friend explain to you the meaning of the martyrdom of Hussein, a grandson of Muhammad, for many Muslims?)
- What God did: God so loved the world that He planned and used the death of Jesus as the way of bringing forgiveness and cleansing to humankind.

## **Discussion with a Muslim Friend**

As an introduction, discuss the theme of "self-sacrifice." Find examples from the history or legends of your own people. Or tell the story of Damien: This was in previous days when there was still no cure for leprosy, and lepers were sent away to an island where they lived hungry, dirty, quarrelling and hopeless lives. Damien, a Christian, went to live with them and cared for them. Eventually he caught the

disease and finally died of it. He gave His life for them. Go on to tell how Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for us, as no one else could!

**What people did.** Jesus brought peace, healing and forgiveness. He showed people the way to God. You might think that everyone would love Him! But the religious leaders were angry because Jesus said love was more important than their ritual laws. They condemned Him for mixing with sinners. The self-righteous did not like to have their faults revealed; powerful men did not like to have their power challenged. Were not even Jesus' disciples guilty of betraying or deserting Him?

The same sins that spoil the world today were the sins that led people to plot to kill Jesus.

**What Jesus did.** The Messiah could have gone into hiding; instead, He voluntarily set His face to go into the midst of the opposition: into the capital city, Jerusalem. As a human being, He had natural human feelings and prayed that, if possible, the cup of suffering might be taken away from Him. But His prayer continues: "Yet not my will but Yours be done." (Luke 22:42) He knew in advance that people would reject and kill Him. Still He would not allow His disciples to take the sword in His defence and He refused to call on His Heavenly Father for a miraculous deliverance. (Matthew 26:51-54) He believed it was God's will for Him to lay down His life. (John 10:17,18)

Why did Jesus the Messiah believe this? Hundreds of years before, the prophet Isaiah had written his inspired vision of the "Servant of the Lord" who was to suffer and to lay down His life for the salvation of people:

But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities... He poured out His life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:5,12).

Jesus saw Himself as the fulfillment of this prophecy. He foretold that He would suffer and be killed. (Mark 8:31; 14:24) He said that He "did not come to be served, but to

serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) He determined to sacrifice Himself even to death, in love for humankind and in obedience to God. He died so that we may live! So the Christian thankfully declares that He "loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

**What God did.** The sacrifice of Jesus is the supreme sign of God's love for humankind. "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) At the same time, the sacrifice of Jesus shows God's view of our sin and our absolute need for His forgiveness. So God planned the sacrifice of Jesus for humankind. He made the death of Jesus to be the way for all people to receive His forgiveness, to become His true servants and friends and, yes, to become His children!

Why did God choose this way to save humankind? Could He not have chosen another simpler and easier way? But who are we to tell God what He can or ought to do? Nothing is plainer in the Bible than that God willed the sacrifice of Jesus as His way of redeeming us, redeeming all humankind.

## **Practical Hints**

We cannot hope to explain fully the meaning of Christ's death. But Christians believe:

***It puts an end to all other atoning sacrifices.*** We feel our own guilt as a stain, a defilement that separates us from God. The Children of Israel (and so many people of other religions) have offered animal sacrifices in the hope of cleansing the stain. The Bible says that it is the sacrifice of Jesus offering His perfect life-blood that, once for all, cleanses our guilt and brings us into fellowship with God. (Hebrews 10:11-25)

***It assures us of our forgiveness.*** Of course this cleansing from guilt is not automatic. We need to accept it by sincere faith, by trusting in Jesus Christ who died for our sins. So the "way of salvation" is not a matter of first trying to be righteous in order to make ourselves worthy of salvation. It is a matter of first coming as an unworthy sinner and accepting

God's free forgiveness. (Luke 18:9-14; Romans 5:1-11) What joy to know our sins need to be forgiven, can be forgiven, have been forgiven! Praise God!

***It reveals the horror of sin and the righteousness of God.*** Some people might think: "If God's forgiveness is free, we can commit any sin we like. God will easily forgive us!" This is *not* its intention!

In fact the death of Jesus Christ is a terrible warning against sin. See what our sin did to Jesus! Sin deserves to be judged and punished. But God in His mercy allowed the punishment and judgement to be carried by His beloved Messiah. Through the Messiah crucified, God offers us forgiveness. At the same time, He shows us His righteousness. (Romans 3:21-26)

***It is the supreme victory.*** Christ has won the battle against the powers of evil. (See next Chapter.)

The Qur'an says: "They slew him (Jesus) not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them." (Surah 4:157) Indeed, Christians find few, if any, Quranic verses more inconceivable and unacceptable than this verse. Of all communities, Muslims alone deny the death of Jesus on the cross. Their denial is based primarily on this verse.

While wishing to avoid argument, we may ask Muslims: "Are you familiar with the Quranic verses that refer to the killing of other prophets (such as Surahs 2:61, 91; 4:155; 5:70)? In the light of these passages, does Jesus' 'escape from the cross' deprive Him of His full obedience and His total surrender to God, *in life and in death*? Does He escape from what He taught His disciples to accept?" (Matthew 16:24, 25) Do Muslims believe He was willing to sacrifice Himself?

You may have to deal with the contention of the Ahmadiyya Movement that Jesus was put on the cross but never died on the cross, that He went to Kashmir where He continued to live and eventually died and was buried. This contention would falsify all the evidence of the Bible. The Bible clearly states that Jesus was crucified, that He died on the cross, that He was buried and that He rose from the dead!

Let your main emphasis be on what the Bible says. In telling the story, show how strong the evidence is that Jesus died. (Jesus foretold His death: Mark 10:45; Romans, Jews and Jesus' disciples were eye-witnesses: Luke 23:47-49; Mark 15:43-45; the grave was sealed and guarded: Matthew 27:65, 66). Emphasize the story of Gethsemane, which some Muslims misrepresent by quoting only: "Let this cup pass from me", and omitting "yet not my will, but what You will."

Eventually we must show the Muslim how the Bible also links the death of Jesus with the person of Jesus. His opponents sought to kill Jesus because of the claims He made about Himself. (John 10:31-39; 19:7)

Both Muslims and Christians refer to Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ. Try to find out what the Qur'an and Muslims understand by the word "Messiah." Compare it with the Biblical and Christian understanding of "Messiah." For Christians the Messiahship of Jesus and the death of Jesus are inseparably linked.

Ask Muslims in your community to tell you about the great festival, also called "The Festival of Sacrifice." (See Surah 37:102-107.) What is their idea of sacrifice? Do they perform any sacrifices? If so, what is their significance? Does their idea of "sacrifice" help you to explain to them the sacrifice of Jesus?

### **For Discussion among Christians**

Practise retelling the events leading to the death of Jesus. Include in a balanced way the three aspects of what people did, what Jesus did, and what God did.

In language that Muslims would understand, describe what the cross of Jesus means to you.

If you meet a person who is suffering severely (physically or mentally), how will you use the story of Jesus' death and resurrection to comfort this person?

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **The Victory of Jesus Christ**

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

(1 Peter 1:3)

#### **Understanding the Muslim**

"I take refuge with God from Satan, the accursed" is a common confession of faithful Muslims. Through this confession they recognize that they need to be saved from all the powers of evil, within or outside of them, and that God alone can save them from these evil powers.

Some Muslims (like some Christians) are concerned with created things rather than with the Creator as their way of salvation. There is little or no Quranic support for the popular Muslim practices of trusting in amulets, the intercession of saints or even in the intercession of Muhammad. On better Quranic authority, generally Muslims believe that God will save them because of their faith in God or because of their faith in God *and* their good works, or simply because God wills to save them.

Yet few Muslims are certain that God will save them now or in eternity. Is this statement harsh and exaggerated? In any case, the best way for Christians to understand the matter is to enquire from Muslims what they understand about it.

#### **Steps of Christian Witness**

We need to explain Jesus Christ's whole ministry, especially His death and resurrection, as a glorious victory over the powers of evil. Your Muslim friend has likely heard only of the death of Jesus, not of His glorious resurrection and victory over death. "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." (1 Corinthians 15:17) Christ lives to intercede for us. Christians "take refuge with God" by trusting in Jesus Christ, alive forevermore!

## **Discussion with a Muslim Friend**

Throughout His life on earth, Jesus suffered temptation from Satan, even as we do. Perhaps you have heard the story of the time when God first called Him to preach. He went into the desert for 40 days, fasting and praying, and Satan tempted Him there. Satan took Him up a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment, saying: "I will give you all their authority and splendour...if you worship me." Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" (Luke 4:5-8)

The following event shows us how Jesus can control the evil forces in people's lives. One day, in the house of God, a man with an evil spirit screamed out at Jesus. Jesus simply spoke His word to drive out the spirit. The people were astonished and said: "What is this teaching? With authority and power He gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!" (Luke 4:31-37)

At last, Satan entered the hearts of Jesus' opponents to induce them to destroy Jesus. They betrayed Him, jeered at Him and crucified Him. But Satan could not make Jesus do any evil. See how patiently Jesus endured, without anger or sin. Did He curse His enemies? He prayed: "Father, forgive them." He laid down His life, willingly, to save the world according to God's plan. So His death on the cross was no defeat; it was a glorious victory over Satan! (Hebrews 2:14,15; 12:2)

Then, to demonstrate the victory, God raised Him from the dead. God has made Jesus Christ to be Lord over all the "powers" and "spirits", whether good or evil. (Acts 2:36, Romans 14:9; Philippians 2:8-11)

Jesus Christ is alive, with God. He has gone through the sufferings and trials of human life, even through death, for God to make Him our living Saviour. When we meet temptation, death, and all the evil works of Satan, we call to the Lord Jesus Christ and He brings us victory. He intercedes with God for us, both now and on the Last Day. If we trust Jesus Christ, nothing can separate us from God's love.



Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39; see also Hebrews 2:17,18; 4:15,16)

### **Practical Hints**

We are not interested in attacking a Muslim's understanding of salvation. But we may remind Muslims that their religion tells them to take refuge in God alone. Moreover, we should testify to the blessing of trusting in God through Jesus. Because of what God has done for us through Jesus, our salvation is dependent upon *God*, not upon our feeble and imperfect works, no matter how good they appear to us. *He* is our Refuge and Salvation. And He has sent Jesus to be our way to Himself.

Christians have several symbols of their faith. They should understand, and help others to understand, the origin and significance of these symbols. Two of these, Baptism and the Lord's Supper (also called sacraments by many Christians) invite us personally to share in God's grace and deepen our faith. Generally, they form part of the congregational worship service celebrated every Sunday. Need it be said that all Christian worship services need to be conducted with reverence, in an orderly manner, and to God's glory—and as a positive witness to outsiders who may be present? Then of course, there are other symbols of our personal and our family faith and commitment: family prayer, pictures, Bible verses, the Bible itself (well-treated and well-used) and, finally, our own character as a symbol.

The water of Baptism, the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, and the paper and ink of a Bible text have no magic power in themselves to help or harm anybody. They are not charms. But as signs they express and deepen our faith in God through Christ, and help us to receive God's presence: His salvation, power and guidance.

Some Christians display a cross or pictures of Jesus Christ as a reminder to trust in Him. We should be clear that we are not worshipping pictures or a cross.

Two small points may help a Muslim to believe Christ's death and resurrection. Jesus lived a fully human life; so, it was natural for Him to go through the human experience of death. (Hebrews 2:14,15) Secondly, according to the Qur'an, Jesus raised the dead; so, it should not be difficult for Muslims to believe that He Himself could and would rise from the dead, especially since the Bible so clearly states that He has done so. Praise God!

### **For Discussion among Christians**

What factors in Jesus' life did Peter emphasize in his sermons in the Book of Acts? (Compare 1 Corinthians 15:3,4.)

Discuss the cross and resurrection of Jesus as the heart of the Gospel. Consider the witness of Jesus' disciples before and after His resurrection. Locate Bible references that Christians worshipped on Sunday, the Day of Jesus' Resurrection from the dead.

How does the resurrection of Jesus make a difference in your life?

Are you trusting in material things, the things of this world? Do you have a sincere testimony on this? (See Acts 19:18-20) Or are you taking refuge with God alone, through Jesus Christ?

Do you believe that all evil power can be conquered in Christ's name?

Are we helping one another to overcome evil? Happy is the church where James 5:13-20 is practised!

## CHAPTER 9

### Jesus, the Word of God

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... Through Him all things were made ... In Him was life ... The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us ... full of grace and truth.*

(John 1:1-4,14)

#### Understanding the Muslim

**God is One and Most Great.** Remember that the great sin in Islam is to worship other gods beside God. Do not be surprised if Muslims are suspicious of your testimony to Jesus Christ, wondering if you are making Jesus into a second god.

Also, although Muslims can think of God as "near," the main emphasis in Islam is that He is far above us, completely different and separate from us. So if you use such language as "God became man" or "Jesus is both God and man," Muslims may feel you are saying something impossible or meaningless, even blasphemous.

**God speaks.** Islam teaches that God speaks to people through angels and prophets. God's Word accomplishes anything He wants. Most Muslim theologians say that the Word (*Kalam*) of God is an eternal and uncreated attribute or quality of God. God sends it into the world in the form of Holy Scriptures, most notably the Qur'an. This is something like the idea of John 1:1. Roughly speaking, one can say that Muslims believe: "In the beginning was the Word of God...and the Word became a Book.

**The Word of God (*Kalimat-Ullah*).** This is a popular Muslim title for Jesus: "God's word which He conveyed unto Mary." (Surah 4:171)

Muslims regard Jesus as a created being only. Therefore, they may not regard Jesus as the Word of God in the same way that the Gospel of John understands Jesus to be the Word of God. Yet there is a similarity, which makes it easier

to use this title for Jesus when conversing with Muslims.

## **Steps of Christian Witness**

The previous chapters show the uniqueness of Jesus. He lived and died as a man, yet did and said things that made Him different from any other man. Then who is Jesus? We agree with Muslims that God speaks to all; we contend that God's Eternal Word came into the world as a human being, Jesus Christ.

## **Discussion with a Muslim Friend**

I am happy that you already know much about Jesus the Messiah. The Qur'an says He was born of a woman, just as we have been, and "he and his mother both ate food." Yes, the Bible, too, teaches that Jesus lived a real human life among human beings. He grew up as all children do. He ate and drank and experienced joy, pain, suffering and temptation—though never falling into sin. He became a great religious teacher and leader. Muslims call Him a messenger and prophet of God.

Yet there is something more about Jesus in the Bible. Things happened in His life that make Him different from any other prophet. These lead us to believe that Jesus was a man, yes, but also more than a man!

His miraculous birth was a "sign to all mankind." John the Baptist, himself a prophet, pointed to Jesus as someone far greater than himself. Jesus announced: "The Kingdom of God is at hand." With His coming a new age had dawned.

This new age was the fulfillment of all that God had promised through the prophets of Israel. Through Jesus, blind people received sight, lepers were healed, the dead were raised to life, sinners were forgiven and converted, and poor, despised people heard the good news of God's love. Jesus revealed that God is our loving Heavenly Father. A person's first duty is not to observe many religious rules, but to repent: that is, to acknowledge one's sins, to turn from evil to God, to love God and one's neighbour.

The leaders rejected Jesus. They seized and killed Him. But that was not the end. Jesus' death was not a defeat. God made His death to be a sacrifice by which Jesus took away our sins and gave us peace with God. God also raised Jesus from the dead in victory over all the powers of evil. Jesus lives! To those who trust Him, He gives a share in His victory over evil.

After His resurrection, Jesus said these astonishing words:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me ... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

(Matthew 28:18-20)

On the Last Day, Jesus Christ will be the judge, treading all evil under His feet and fully establishing the Kingdom of God the Father. (Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28)

All of this is the clear testimony of our Bible, setting Jesus on a different level from the rest of humanity. But the Bible says just as clearly that God is one and no other is to be worshipped beside Him. How then shall we describe Jesus?

Many have found the answer in the first verses of John's Gospel account: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." So when we read in the Bible about "the Word of God," it does *not* mean another thing or another being or a second god beside God. "The Word" means God Himself in action, God expressing Himself.

John's Gospel goes on to explain who Jesus Christ actually is. The eternal Word came into the world, was born and lived as a human being, humbling Himself by coming to our level, showing the glory of God and bringing us salvation. "The Word became flesh (a human being) and made His dwelling among us...full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) Jesus the Messiah is the Word of God. This thought is not strange to Muslims.

We should add: We are sorry if we Christians have sometimes given you the false impression that we make

Jesus into another god beside God. This is not what we mean. We mean that God's eternal Word came on earth as Jesus the Messiah to live a human life among people. God revealed Himself in His Word, Jesus Christ, so that we know God as our Heavenly Father and pray to Him through Jesus Christ our Lord.

By believing in Jesus, we put our trust in God. By honouring Jesus, we honour God's Word and we honour God. (John 12:44,45) Praise God!

## **Practical Hints**

Take a simple illustration from human speech. Where was my word before it came out of my mouth? You may say it was in my heart or brain. But if I call a doctor to cut open my heart or my head, can he find my word there? It seems, mysteriously, that I and my word are the same and cannot be separated. I am in my word and my word is in me. Whatever my word does (e.g., it may please you or annoy you), it is I who am doing it by my word. So whatever the Word of God does, God Himself is doing it. Trust God's Word and trust God!

Apply this to Mark 2:1-12. How could the Son of Man (Jesus) have authority to forgive sins (verses 5, 7, 10)? How can the Son of Man be judge on the Last Day? (Matthew 25:31-33) This is possible because Jesus is the Word of God. What He does is the action of God Himself.

Muslims often call Jesus "the spirit of God" (*Ruhullah*). We are glad that they want to give Him such honour. At first, this might seem to be an unusual title for Jesus. However, the Bible refers to the Lord Jesus as a "life-giving spirit." (1 Corinthians 15:45; see also 2 Corinthians 3:17) The Bible clearly states that Jesus is a human being, flesh and blood. And also that God's Spirit was with Jesus and filled Him. (Mark 1:1-10; Luke 4:1-19)

Do not to jump into controversies about Christian doctrine. First introduce the life and teaching of Jesus, with the prayer that God Himself will show your friends who Jesus is.

When asked the direct question: "Who is this Jesus?" answer in the language of the Bible, rather than in the language of Church creeds. The creeds were written to instruct Christians and to warn them against heresies. They may be less suitable for explaining the Gospel to non-Christians initially. Moreover, since many Muslims feel the Bible (especially the Gospel accounts) has authority, they may respect what you say even more when they see it is clearly based on the Bible.

Language such as "second person of the Trinity," "being of one substance with the Father," and "divine and human natures of Christ" seldom help explanations to Muslims, especially when they are only beginning to learn about Jesus from the Bible.

For the most part in these discussions we have avoided calling Jesus Christ "the Son of God." This does not mean that we are concealing or compromising on Christ's Sonship. (See next chapter.) It simply means that, out of love and respect for our Muslim friends, we want to start our witness with concepts and language that are more familiar and acceptable to them.

This is the Biblical method of witnessing! Different books of the Injil (the New Testament) present Jesus Christ in different ways. Some books speak repeatedly of Jesus as the Son of God; other books (Acts and Revelation) rarely use the title, and still others use it not at all. (Timothy, Titus, 1 Peter)

## **For Discussion among Christians**

Practise telling who Jesus is along the lines of this lesson. For the moment, don't call Him "the Son of God" or "God."

As we think of the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us remember His warning: "Not every one who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21)

## CHAPTER 10

### The Son of God and the Holy Trinity

*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being.*

(Hebrews 1: 1-3)

#### Understanding the Muslim

In the view of many Muslims, to say "Son of God" means to believe that God physically begot a child as we humans beget children. This would be blasphemy. God is so great that, if He wants to create anything, He has no need to come down to human level and take a wife. He simply says: "Be," and it is. Many Muslims know and recite Surah 112 of the Qur'an:

Say: He is Allah, the One!  
Allah, the eternally Besought of all!  
He begetteth not nor was begotten.  
And there is none comparable unto Him.

Muslims feel deeply about this. Even if you explain that "the Son of God" (referring to Jesus) has nothing to do with physical begetting, many will still suspect that somehow this title is dishonouring to God. Some modern Muslims, nevertheless, do accept that Jesus could be called "Son of God" in a metaphorical or a spiritual sense. But, they may add, any righteous person can be called "son of God." Jesus, therefore, is seen as only one among God's righteous people.

If you tell Muslims that "Jesus is God," they will inevitably misunderstand you. (Do we understand it fully ourselves?) They may ask: "Do you mean that when Jesus was born, God was born; that when Jesus was (as you say) dead for three days, God was dead? Then, please tell me, who was



looking after the world while God was dead?" These may be fair questions and hard to answer.

When Muslims criticize the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, they usually have the idea that it means three gods, of whom Allah (God) is only one; or that it means dividing God into three parts. According to the Qur'an:

They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the third of three .... (Surah 5:73) And when Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Didst thou say unto mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah ...? (Surah 5:116)

### **Steps of Christian Witness**

First, set your Muslim friend's mind at rest. Trinity = *Trinity*. Christians believe in one God, in God's unity. Christians, like Muslims, deny that "Allah (God) is the third of three", that there are three gods, that God has a wife and through her, a son. Similarly, Christians deny that God deifies a man, that He turns Jesus, a man and a prophet, into a God. Then use helpful examples from everyday life to introduce what the Bible means by "the Son of God."

### **Discussion with a Muslim on the Son of God**

Give illustrations to show that, when in everyday speech people say "son of something," they are often speaking metaphorically (or, as here, spiritually), free from any physical or sexual connotations. Give examples such as son of the road (= a traveller, appearing in the Qur'an also), sons of thunder, sons of light and sons of darkness. Or how about the designation "son of Satan," a designation familiar to many Muslims and used by one person to designate another person as satanic, evil—a designation free from any biological and sexual connotation. Surely Satan has no wife or son! Present these examples light-heartedly, not argumentatively. Emphasize that we speak of Jesus as the Son of God only in a spiritual sense. As God is unique, so is Jesus' Sonship

unique.

Give illustrations from everyday life and from the Bible to show the relationship of son to father (excluding the physical relationship). Find proverbs, stories and experiences to help make the conversation interesting and meaningful. Lead to one or more of these points:

- The son is the *picture of his father*. When we know the son, we know what the father is like. (Hebrews 1:3; John 14:9)
- The son has the *closest knowledge of his father* and obeys his father. (Matthew 11:27; John 8:28,29)
- The son is the *highest representative of his father*. He can stand in the father's place and receive the honour due to his father. (Mark 12:1-9)

Show how God told Jesus at His baptism that He is the Son of God (Mark 1:11). It does not mean "physically begotten." Jesus' prayers show how He trusted in God as Father. When Peter recognized Jesus as the Son of God, Jesus congratulated him and said that God Himself had revealed this to Peter. (Matthew 16:16,17)

Many Muslims will be open to consider these explanations. Still, because of their tradition, they may not find it easy to give the title "the Son of God" to Jesus. You need not argue about it. If your friend finds it easier to think of Jesus as the Word of God or the Messiah, let that suffice for the present. Trust God to make things clearer in time.

## **Discussion with a Muslim on the Holy Trinity**

Many Muslims understand that some passages in the Qur'an have reference to the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity. In fact, you will agree with your Muslim friend that God has *no* wife, that God is *not* the third of three (Surah 5:73) and that Jesus and Mary are *not* two gods beside God. (Surah 5:116) It saddens Christians that Muslims may understand these verses to be references to the doctrine of

the Holy Trinity when, in fact, they do not at all address this doctrine. Similarly, when the popular Muslim Qur'an commentator, Yusuf Ali, translates Surah 4:171 by "Say not 'Trinity'," he mistranslates, leaving his readers understanding that the Qur'an actually cites the word "Trinity." It does not. Another translator, Marmaduke Pickthall, correctly translates the Arabic of this passage (Surah 4:171) as "Say not 'three'." In brief, the Bible does not teach tritheism and Christians are not tritheists or polytheists. What the Qur'an here rejects, Christians do not confess!

Again, show that Christians believe firmly in one God and that nothing is to be worshipped beside Him. (Mark 12:29; Exodus 20:2, 3)

The Bible shows the one God revealing Himself as the Father, as the Son and as the Holy Spirit. If your Muslim friend is finding it hard to listen to the titles "Father" and "Son," you may say that God reveals Himself as the Creator, the Word and the Holy Spirit. Also, mention that this does not mean God changed Himself from one thing to another. He exists eternally as one God, God alone: the Father, the Son (Word) and the Holy Spirit.

Still, your Muslim friend might continue to contend, this leads Muslims to understand that Christians worship three deities, for  $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ , never 1. In response we might recall that  $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$ , always 1! God's being one, His oneness, His unity cannot be reduced to a mathematical formula!

Of course, God is greater, far above our thought and understanding. No one (including Christians) can explain exactly how God exists and communicates with us as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Neither will a Muslim claim to explain fully the nature of God. In fact, Muslims generally understand God to be totally different from His creation and beyond all our understanding.

Still, simple examples may help us to think about what the Bible says about the Holy Trinity. For example, Mr. so-and-so is a mechanic, a husband and a church member;

you may meet him at work, at home or in church; all the time he is all three, yet he is only one person. Similar examples are: a person, who mysteriously exists as body, mind, and soul; the sun, which we see as a globe in the sky, as rays in the air, and which we feel as warmth on the body.

Emphasize that your examples are imperfect. Examples do not prove the Holy Trinity; they only help people to think about its meaning.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is simply a Christian summary statement of what the Bible teaches about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Rightly understood, this doctrine exists *to defend the unity of God* and to guard against the false idea that Jesus is a god beside God.

For example, the Bible says that Jesus, while a human being, does things that no created being could do: He forgives us our sins, He holds all authority in Heaven and earth, and He will be the judge on the Last Day. Someone reading this might mistakenly think that Jesus is another god beside God. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity warns us against any such misunderstanding. It speaks of the one God who reveals Himself through His Word, the Word who lived as a person among all people, Jesus the Messiah. So what Jesus does is not something apart from God; the acts of Jesus are acts of God Himself. Likewise, the one God reveals Himself to us as Holy Spirit. God works in us and among us through the Holy Spirit. The acts of the Holy Spirit are the acts of God Himself.

Acknowledge that mere talking cannot convince anyone about the Holy Trinity and the Son of God. God wants us to trust in Him through Jesus Christ. When we, moved by God's Holy Spirit, trust in Jesus Christ, little by little we shall grasp the meaning of these doctrines.

## **Practical Hints**

Do not be annoyed with the Muslim for raising these questions and for not being easily satisfied. They are fair questions.

Do not refuse to answer by saying: "It is just a mystery." Truly, God is a mystery, in the sense that our small minds cannot fully grasp God's greatness. Nevertheless, He has given us many things in the Bible that all people can and should understand about Himself. Be prepared to show texts of the Bible (especially from the Gospel accounts) that reveal Jesus as the Son of God. But do not stop there; go on to explain the meaning.

Do not start a doctrinal debate in which you try to defeat one another. Do not argue. Listen, explain, pray and leave the conclusion with God.

Try to keep to one subject at a time. Do not mix up Jesus as God, Jesus as Son of God and Christians as sons of God.

If a Muslim points out that other people beside Jesus are called sons of God, welcome the point. The Israelites as a whole (Hosea 11:1) and Christians "adopted" through God's mercy (Galatians 4:4-7) are called sons of God. This means that they are called to know and to obey God and to be His representatives in the world, as discussed earlier in this chapter. But they do this imperfectly; Jesus Christ alone is perfect in His Sonship.

Do you believe that Jesus is God? If a Muslim asks this, it is probably best to reply (as in Chapter 9) that Jesus is the eternal Word of God who came into the world, lived and died and rose from the dead as a human being. You may answer also in the words of Colossians 1:19, 20; 2:9.

Or you could say: "Jesus is God showing Himself to us in this world, communicating as a human being with us as human beings in ways human beings communicate".

Some Christians speak much about Jesus (Jesus saves, come to Jesus) and very little about God. This gives Muslims the impression that we are making Jesus a second god or a substitute for God. Bible texts emphasize that God sent Jesus and acted in Him (John 17:3; Romans 3:25; 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:19), and that the work of Jesus is entirely to the glory of God. (John 12:27, 28; Philippians 2:11; 1 Corinthians 15:28) Study these texts, and practise speaking with

emphasis on what God did in Christ, and on faith in God through Christ.

If a Muslim questions you about the Holy Trinity, respond by first asking for their understanding of the Holy Trinity. If the Muslim seems to wish a quick and simple answer, you might ask: "Can someone understand calculus without first learning basic mathematics?" Any serious understanding of the Holy Trinity, of course, calls for a serious study of the Holy Bible. So, too, any serious study of theology, Christian or Muslim, requires serious study of their respective sources. (See Appendix D)

### **For Discussion among Christians**

Practise speaking among yourselves about the Sonship of Christ in accordance with the suggestions above. Help one another to find good illustrations. Remind yourselves often that you are aiming not to argue about words, but to lead people to Jesus. We, too, need to draw closer to Jesus, and through Jesus to our Heavenly Father.

In the same spirit, practise speaking about the Holy Trinity.

## **CHAPTER 11**

### **The Holy Spirit and The Church**

*Jesus said: "The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you ... He will testify about me ... He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement."*

*(John 14:26; 15:26, 16:8)*

#### **Understanding the Muslim**

Muslims usually use the title "Spirit of God" or "Holy Spirit" in a different sense from Christians. They take it to mean a created being, such as the angel Gabriel or Jesus Himself. (Surah 19:17; 4:171) The divine nature of the Holy Spirit is scarcely, if at all, recognized by Muslims.

Some Muslims claim that Muhammad is the Counsellor whom Jesus promised in the Gospel according to John, chapters 14,15,16. The Qur'an and orthodox Muslim teaching have never said that Muhammad is the Holy Spirit. Still some modern Muslims do give him this title, since the Counsellor is called the Holy Spirit.

Muslims think of "Islam" primarily as submission to God. They express their submission by obeying a complete set of rules and regulations for ritual worship and daily behaviour. These rules and regulations are embodied in the Shariah. For Muslims the Shariah is God's divine Law, contrasted with the rules and regulations devised by rulers and governments in this world. They may feel that Christianity, too, ought to have a similar set of rules and regulations given by God through Jesus for the Christian community, and may be puzzled that this is lacking in the Christian community.

#### **Steps of Christian Witness**

Tell how Jesus the Messiah promised and sent the Holy Spirit to His disciples. Then show how the Church is

essentially the community of believers in Christ, united and governed by the Holy Spirit.

## **Discussion with a Muslim Friend**

A Muslim may introduce the idea that Muhammad is the Counsellor or the Holy Spirit. You will have to show, politely, that this is a misunderstanding of the verses in John, chapters 14,15,16—and of a particular word in the Injil's original Greek text, "*parakletos*," meaning "counsellor" or "advocate," which Muslims have altered to suggest it means "praised" and therefore refers to Muhammad. The Counsellor of whom Jesus spoke is not a man but the Spirit, not seen by the world but already dwelling in the disciples of Jesus over 500 years before Muhammad was born. (John 14:16, 17)

Do not aim to prove the Muslim wrong. Instead, aim to witness to the Christian experience of the work of the Holy Spirit. Better, you might introduce the subject of the Holy Spirit by discussing power. For everyone wants power. Some want to get power for evil or selfish purposes. You and I want the power of God to fight against evil, the evil of the world around and the evil of our own hearts. We want His power to do good to all.

When Jesus the Messiah was put to death by His enemies and buried in a tomb, His disciples were brokenhearted and without hope. They had no power. Yet, by the mighty power of God, Jesus rose from the dead. He showed His disciples His hands and feet, and said: "It is I, myself. Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." (Luke 24:39) He told the disciples that "repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations ... You are witnesses." (Luke 24:47-49)

Those few, simple disciples had no special learning and no religious or political authority. How could they preach to all nations? Jesus promised that they would be "clothed with power from on high."

It happened soon afterwards. On the day called Pentecost, this power came to them. They recognized it as



the power of the Holy Spirit, that is, the presence of God Himself dwelling in their hearts. They had already known God to some extent. Now God filled their lives with His divine power. They prayed with power. God answered their prayer with miracles of healing. They were united in a wonderful fellowship of love and joy. They preached fearlessly that all people who repented from sin and believed in the risen Jesus Christ would receive this same Holy Spirit.

The number of believers grew rapidly. This was the beginning of the Christian Church. Read with your friend the fascinating story in the Acts of the Apostles, especially chapters 2,3,4,5. Try to show that the Christian Church is not a group of people who follow the same particular ritual or observe exactly the same laws of daily behaviour. It is a fellowship of people who believe in God through Jesus Christ; it is a fellowship created and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Different members of the fellowship are equipped by the Holy Spirit with different gifts, just as the parts of the body have different functions. Some preach, some teach, some have great faith, some have power to heal the sick, some serve and some are administrators. Every believer, great and small, has some gift of the Holy Spirit to contribute to the common life and welfare of the Church.

Yet there is one gift which *all* believers should have: the power to love (1 Corinthians 12 and 13). The Church should be a fellowship of people who love one another (and love others as well), because God through Christ has so greatly loved us! We should be people who readily forgive one another (and forgive others), because God through Christ has forgiven us. (1 John 4:10,11; Ephesians 4:32)

Admit to your friend that Christians often fail to live like this. We sinfully shut our hearts to the Holy Spirit. Yet we do experience the Spirit pricking our consciences and guiding us to be more loving and forgiving.

The "fruit" of the Holy Spirit should be seen in the life of the believer: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22,23) The same Spirit fights against

the evil of our human nature: our immoral and impure actions, idolatry and witchcraft, quarrelling, fighting, jealousy, anger and selfish ambition, splitting the community into hostile sections and drunken revelling. (Galatians 5:19-21) Those who belong to Jesus Christ try to put to death this side of their nature. The Holy Spirit has given us a new life. Hence we try to live and pray under the guidance of the Spirit. (Romans 8:2,11,26)

## **Practical Hints**

Muslims know that we do not live up to this teaching. Nevertheless, it is part of our witness that, by God's power, we humbly admit our faults and speak of what we are aiming to be.

Apply Galatians 5:22 to your behaviour with Muslims. Are you meeting them with "love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness ...?" If not, you are failing.

## **For Discussion among Christians**

Which of the "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21) is the greatest problem in your Christian community? Of which fruit of the Spirit do you especially need to have more? Pray together about it.

What do you feel is fundamental to the Church and the Christian life? Do you think of the Church mainly as an organization to be administered and a place to go on Sundays? Or do you know it as a living fellowship where Christians help and encourage one another and where they also reach out to help others outside their fellowship?

Is the Christian life mainly a set of laws to be obeyed? Or is it, above all, "God's love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit"?

## CHAPTER 12

### The Integrity of Our Scriptures (The Holy Bible)

*[Jesus said] "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them."*

(Matthew 5:17)

#### Understanding the Muslim

***The People of the Book and their Scriptures.*** The Qur'an frequently calls Jews and Christians "the People of the Book." By this name the Qur'an means that God has given them revelations in the form of Scriptures through some of their prophets and apostles. Thus the Qur'an mentions the *Tawrat* (Torah) given through Moses, the *Zabur* (Psalms) given through David, and the *Injil* (Evangel, Gospel) given through Jesus. The Qur'an commands Muslims to believe in all revealed books, not only in the Qur'an. (Surah 4:136) Why then may it seem that Muslims seldom pay attention to these previous Scriptures?

***The corruption of the previous Scriptures.*** Many Muslims believe that, during the course of history, Jews and Christians have changed and corrupted their Scriptures. Today's Scriptures are not trustworthy revelations of God.

***The abrogation of the previous Scriptures.*** Some Muslims say that the Qur'an, as the final revelation of God, has abrogated (replaced) the previous Scriptures. The Qur'an contains everything that is of value in the previous Scriptures. People therefore no longer need the previous Scriptures. The Qur'an suffices for all.

***The Injil.*** Some Muslims believe that the Injil is no longer with Christians. The true Injil as given to Jesus, a few Muslims would say, was taken into Heaven when Jesus was taken into Heaven. What remains with Christians is an untrustworthy collection of writings of the followers of Jesus. These reasons, then, are some of the reasons Muslims give

for rejecting or ignoring the Bible or parts of it.

Still, other Muslim scholars have not been able to accept these reasons. They accept the present Scriptures of the People of the Book as revelations of God, but they suggest that the People of the Book do not interpret their Scriptures correctly. In any case, they may add that the Qur'an still displaces the previous Scriptures.

## **Steps of Christian Witness**

Muslims sometimes refrain from discussing their difficulties about the Bible. They may not want to offend Christians who treasure the Bible. Or they may feel that Christians will not understand their point of view. Or, perhaps, they may be unaware of any such criticism of the Bible.

When the authority of our Scriptures is discussed, Christians should patiently listen to Muslim claims. At the same time, the Christian should not allow the discussion to degenerate into a Muslim–Christian "battle of the books," an angry debate over the Qur'an and the Bible about which book is better and even the best. If possible, turn attention on the content of the book, what the book says to us rather than what we say about it. The contents of a book, not a theory about a book, not the glorification of an unread book, is after all, our chief concern!

## **Discussion with a Muslim Friend**

***Why these objections?*** When the Muslim raises his doubts about the integrity of the Bible, the burden of proof should rest upon him. Politely ask him why he believes the Bible or parts of it to be corrupted, abrogated or taken into Heaven. What is the evidence? Has he merely heard it from a teacher? Is there any Quranic evidence to support these claims?

***The Quranic testimony to the Tawrat and the Injil.*** It might help both Muslims and Christians to examine what the Qur'an says about the Tawrat and the Injil:

How come they unto thee (Muhammad) for

judgement when they have the Torah wherein Allah hath delivered judgement (for them)? ...

Lo! We did reveal the Torah, wherein is guidance and a light, by which the Prophets who surrendered (unto Allah) judged the Jews, and the rabbis and the priests (judged) by such of Allah's Scripture as they were bidden to observe, and thereunto were they witnesses. So fear not mankind, but fear Me. And barter not My revelations for a little gain. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are disbelievers. (Surah 5:43,44)

... and We (God) bestowed on him (Jesus) the Gospel (Injil) wherein is guidance and a light, confirming that which was (revealed) before it in the Torah—a guidance and an admonition unto those who ward off (evil).

Let the People of the Gospel judge by that which Allah hath revealed therein. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed; such are evil-livers. (Surah 5:46,47; see also 5:66,68)

And if thou (Muhammad) art in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto thee, then question those (the People of the Book) who read the Scripture (that was) before thee. (Surah 10:95; see 3:3,4)

These and many similar passages point to the existence and the value of the Scriptures with the People of the Scriptures. There is no hint that the text of these Scriptures has been corrupted, abrogated or taken into Heaven. Clearly the People of the Scriptures are not the People of the Corrupted Scriptures. Why should they wish to corrupt their Scriptures? Is it possible that those Muslims who make such claims misrepresent not only the People of the Scriptures but also the Qur'an?

***The Injil as Jesus' Scripture.*** The Injil is Jesus' book in the sense that He is the subject of it and the inspiration for these Scriptures and the focal point of their witness. On the other hand, the Christian may do well to help the Muslim to understand that Jesus never received the Injil in the way that

Muslims understand the prophets and apostles, as well as Jesus, to have received their Scriptures from God. Jesus Himself is the Injil, the Evangel, the Good News! The various writings of Jesus' apostles and disciples included in the Scriptures called the Injil testify to this.

But again, whatever your Muslim friends may think about our Scriptures, *encourage them to read them!* Would it help if more Christians better understood Islam and the Qur'an, as Muslims often invite us to do?

## **Practical Hints**

***The Christian like a farmer.*** In dealing with such Muslim objections a Christian may be compared to a farmer who clears and ploughs the land before he sows the seed. With the help of the Qur'an, he tries to remove some misunderstandings about the Bible that Muslims have. (This does not mean that Christians believe the Bible because of the testimony of the Qur'an to the Bible.) With the removal of any misunderstandings about the Bible, the Muslim may be more ready to receive its message with an unbiased mind and an open heart.

***The Christian like a storekeeper.*** The Christian is like a storekeeper who introduces his customer to a new kind of rice in his shop. He does not ask his customer merely to admire the rice; he suggests that he tests it by tasting it. Thus, the Christian does not only talk about the Bible; they also invite their Muslim friend to taste the sweetness of its Word and experience the goodness of God. What better testimony to the integrity of the Bible and to the truth of the Bible than the Bible's own testimony to itself!

***The adamant customer.*** Even if the Muslim continues to hold their arguments against the integrity of the Bible, invite them to read parts of it so that they at least have some understanding of what they reject. Someone has said: "The Bible, like Paul in chains, is able to give a worthy testimony to itself."

## For Discussion among Christians

Occasionally we read of Christians in some countries who cannot obtain a Bible. If a copy comes into their possession, they secretly and laboriously copy it so that others can share its message. Can you imagine you and your congregation without a Bible? Do we sometimes take the Bible for granted, like air or water or sunshine?

Have you ever shared a Bible or a Gospel portion with your Muslim neighbour? Would your neighbour prefer it in English, or in another language, or even both languages? Does your sharing, or failure to share, indicate its value to you?

Or what about sharing a DVD Life of Jesus—available in Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, as well as in English and many other languages?

Discuss Muslim responses to the Bible or to a Christian DVD. How best can you respond? Do you feel that references to the Qur'an (e.g., Jesus heals the sick) can help you encourage your Muslim friend to read the Bible?

How would you feel if a Muslim corrected you, a Christian, on the basis of the Bible? Would you be grateful? Would it be right for you to help him, a Muslim, similarly with a passage in the Qur'an?

Have you ever noticed how carefully Muslims handle the Qur'an? What do they think of Christians who handle the Bible carelessly and place it on the ground?

Consider Jesus' answer to the Sadducees: "Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?" (See Mark 12:18-27.)

Consider the 12-year-old Jesus "in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:41-52). Give other instances when Jesus used the Scriptures.

Multitudes of Muslim women love Mary/Maryam, the mother of Jesus. The Qur'an often calls Jesus "the son of Mary." Surah 19 of the Qur'an is entitled *Surah Maryam*. Discuss advantages in sharing with women the Gospel

according to Luke as an introduction to the Injil.

### **Comments from Two Muslim Scholars on the Bible**

The famous Egyptian Muslim scholar, Muhammed Abduh, notes with reference to the charge of the corruption of the text of the Bible:

It would not have been possible for Jews and Christians everywhere to agree on changing the text. Even if those in Arabia had done it, the difference between their books and those of their brothers, let us say in Syria and Europe, would have been obvious. (J. Jomier, *Jesus, the Life of the Messiah*, CLS, Madras, 1974, p. 216.)

Adil Ozdemir, a Turkish Muslim scholar, states:

... I am talking about us Muslims. There also seems to be a contradiction in our attitude toward the People of Scriptures (Jews and Christians). We respect Jesus but not Christianity. We believe in the Scriptures but refuse to read the Bible. I know that this is a sensitive issue, but it comes to my mind and I cannot help reflecting upon it. In my personal background I was led to believe there are no more true Christians today who follow Jesus. I was also told that Christians changed their Scripture. If this had been true, then we might have proved how all this happened and why. We should have discussed this point with our Christian friends. (Newsletter No. 34, 1987, Office on Christian-Muslim Relations, NCCC, USA)



## **PART 3:**

### ***Helping the Serious Enquirer***

#### **Introduction**

In Part 3 we are thinking especially of Muslims who are interested in the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah. Perhaps they are thinking of becoming Christians, or perhaps they have already begun to believe in Jesus the Messiah as more than a prophet. We will call this Muslim "the enquirer." What special help does the enquirer need to understand and follow the Christian way, the way of the Holy Bible? We will discuss the same themes in Islam and Christianity and will consider how best to help the enquirer understand the Christian faith.

#### **CHAPTER 13** **Bible Study and Prayer**

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

(Acts 2:42)

#### **Bible Study**

##### **Scripture in Islam**

The Muslim idea of Scripture, as we have seen, is different from the Christian idea. Therefore, the Muslim enquirer may need special help to know how to study the Bible.

Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the supreme revelation of God.

Generally, Muslims believe that the Qur'an, verbally inspired, did not come from the mind of Muhammad. For them, it is God's eternal Word/Speech located on a

Preserved Tablet (*Lawh Mahfuz*) in Heaven and sent down through the angel Gabriel to Muhammad, free from all human and worldly contamination. In turn, Muhammad dictated the message to his secretaries, who put it down in writing. Many Muslims would say that the Arabic Qur'an alone is the true Qur'an. A translation of it is only an interpretation.

Islam offers Muslims a code of law (based primarily on the Qur'an and the *Hadith*/Traditions) that directs Muslims how to behave in life and worship. This law is called the Shariah. Generally, the Shariah, too, is considered to be divinely inspired and, thus, unlike and superior to all human legislation.

Generally, Muslims recite the Qur'an with a different idea from the Christians' idea of Bible study. Their recitation of the Qur'an, especially in Arabic, is mainly a way to praise God for sending down His revelation and to express their reverence and obedience. Of course, many also study it. They may read the Qur'an, either in the original Arabic or in a translation or in both. Nowadays, the Qur'an is translated into a growing number of languages.

## **The Bible in Christianity**

For the Christian, the supreme revelation of God is not through a book but a person, Jesus the Messiah. He is the eternal Word of God, God's Speech, the Mediator between humanity and God. But to enable us to know about Jesus Christ, God inspired prophets and apostles, through His Holy Spirit, to write the Scriptures. These Scriptures tell not only the story of Jesus' life and teaching, but also how God spoke beforehand through the prophets, through the history of the Children of Israel and afterwards through the life and preaching of the Church, beginning with Jesus' apostles and disciples and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Christians do not believe that revelation must be brought "straight down from Heaven" without going through a prophet's mind. Rather, God guides the whole thinking and

experience of prophets and disciples of Jesus so that what they speak or write will come through their conscious mind and will be truly a revelation from God. So Christians believe that people wrote the Bible by the inspiration of God. We trust it completely as "the Word of God," leading us to believe in Jesus Christ who is (in an even greater sense, as we have noted) God's eternal Word, God's self-revelation in the world or, as Christians also say, God's incarnation for us and for our salvation.

We Christians do not think that the Bible exists mainly to be recited and only in its original languages, Hebrew and Greek. It is there, carefully translated from its original languages into our own languages, to be studied and understood and lived out. As God inspired the writers and their Scriptures, so He speaks to its readers, telling them how He created all things, teaching them His will and encouraging them to obey His commandments, warning them of the consequences of disobedience. The Bible gives many examples of God's judgement and mercy. Above all, the whole Bible bears witness to Jesus Christ, how God through Jesus the Messiah has saved us from our sin and given us new and eternal life. Everything in the Bible must be read "in the light of Jesus Christ." All of its roads converge on Him.

Since Jesus has perfected the Old Testament revelation, there are many rules and rituals in the Old Testament (for matters, let us say, such as circumcision or abstention from some foods) which His disciples need not obey.

## **Helping Enquirers**

Enquirers may need your help to understand what the Bible means to Christians. Many things that you may have known from childhood will be strange and new to them. When possible, please spend time reading the Bible with them. Explain the significance of the Bible for Christians. Lend them an introductory Bible study book. Perhaps enroll them in a Bible correspondence course. Also, let them see the Bible being treated reverently by Christians.

## **Prayer**

### **Ritual Prayer in Islam**

The Muslim Prayer is a ritual that must be performed exactly in Arabic before God. To know the meaning of the words may seem to be less important than to perform it correctly.

This does not mean (as some Christians may think) that Muslim Prayer is insincere or only an outward form. The reverence and the participation of the whole congregation can be very impressive. We are only pointing out that this idea of prayer is different from the Christian idea.

On the other hand, Muslims may also pray to God in a more personal and informal manner while bringing their feelings and needs before Him.

Find out from your Muslim friends more about the content of their prayer. Does it include thanksgiving, confession of sins, intercession for others and intercession for oneself? Ask what their prayer means to them.

Women should observe the ritual laws as men do. Some mosques have a place for women. Usually they pray in their homes.

### **Prayer and Worship in Christianity**

Christians do not think of prayer primarily as "performing a ritual." They think of it more as a conversation with God. We hear God's Word in the Bible and we reply by our prayers and by our everyday obedience. We speak in our native language and hymns and songs. We may use set words, or simply open our hearts and speak as children speak to their fathers and mothers.

This Christian way of prayer is unique in that it is offered to God, our Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ. We dare to approach God as our Heavenly Father because God has first approached us, revealing His love for us in Jesus Christ. We speak to God because we know that He loves us and seeks our good. We do not pray to "make use of God" for our selfish reasons; we pray that God may make

use of us for His purposes and make us useful to others!

In our prayer we express:

- *Our gratitude and praise* ("Thank you, God!") for who He is and what He has done for us, for everything that each day brings, for all God's gifts of health and all material and spiritual blessings as well as the love of friends, including Muslim ones! (Psalm 103), and even for our difficulties that draw us closer to Him. (For God promises us a blessed life, but not an easy one!)
- *Our penitence* ("Forgive me, God!") for being evil, for all evil thoughts, for all actions that may have harmed someone, for all good actions not done. (1 John 1:8,9)
- *Our petition and intercession* ("Please, God!") spreading out our wants before our Lord, as children telling their parents how they are and what they need (Matthew 7:7-11). We add: "if it be Your will," because God knows best what is good for us.

Women have a full share in Christian worship and fellowship. Often the Christian women are more prayerful and energetic than the men! Then, of course, the same may be said of Muslim women, whether during or outside of Muslim worship.

## Helping Enquirers

The informality of Christian prayer can surprise Muslims, but it can also attract them. One former Muslim became interested in the Gospel on the day he first heard Christian *extempore* prayer (personal, informal and heartfelt prayer). Explain the meaning and manner of Christian prayer. Invite the enquirer to join you in your family prayer, in prayer for others as well as for yourselves, even in visiting and praying for the sick, and so on.

There is also more formal worship in Christianity. The enquirer may be interested in this because it is closer to their experience in Islam. Tell them what you "recite" in your church. It may be the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, or confession of sin. Everyone joins in singing hymns to express

our unity and joy in worship. The Lord's Supper (Holy Communion) will be interesting to many Muslims because it is a sort of "ritual" performed in obedience to the command of Jesus. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) Emphasize that in this service (as in all our worship) we celebrate God's victory through the risen Christ, the One who gives us pardon and victory, and who is the living Way to God. Sunday especially is designated as the day for formal worship since on Sunday, as already noted, Jesus the Messiah rose from the dead.

### **For Discussion among Christians**

If Muslims attended your church during a Sunday worship service, what would they find? Would they find what they are accustomed to in Islam: great reverence; much praise to God; proclamation of God's Oneness; everyone participating in the worship? Would they find the things that may be lacking in Islam: an emphasis on understanding the Scriptures and the worship; a sense of personal conversation with our Heavenly Father, earnest intercession for the needs of others; joy in the great saving acts of God? Or will they find the preacher giving a monologue over the heads of an inattentive congregation; unintelligent mumbling of lessons and prayers; and a sermon, perhaps unprepared, full of moralizing but omitting to proclaim God's judgement and mercy in Christ?

Consider in which Christian gathering your Muslim friend may feel more comfortable, more "at home." Could it be in your home? In smaller groups and more informally?

A Christian wrote a book entitled *Instrument and Purpose*. He intended to show how we should be God's instruments for God's purposes. Do we, however, sometimes reverse the roles by wanting, consciously or unconsciously, God to be our instrument for our purposes?

Some Christians fast, linking fasting especially with prayer. Muslims, of course, are to fast during the month of Ramadan. Can you compare the fasting of Muslims and Christians, noting also why they fast and their ways of fasting?

## CHAPTER 14

### Joining the Church

*"Brothers, what shall we do? "... "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit..." And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

(Acts 2:37-47)

### The Community in Islam

***The meaning of being a Muslim.*** "Being a Muslim" means not only that one holds particular beliefs and practices, but also that one belongs to a particular community, called the *ummah*. In this community, Islamic law (*Shariah*) governs (more or less) the worship, the beliefs, the customs and the habits of the people. Generally, everyone adopts a certain style of politeness and cleanliness, everyone has an Arabic name, everyone joins in the fasts and festivals, and often everyone wears the same style of clothes. All these show the solidarity of the community. Still, as Muslims move around the world, often living in minorities, and the world becomes "smaller" and more united, Muslims, too, become more affected by external and alien influences, not least by Western technology and secularism. Even Muslim countries experience these influences. And, we must admit, these influences are not always good.

***The horror of apostasy.*** The Muslim community may be shocked when a member apostatizes (= leaves Islam) to join another religion, to abandon Islam, or become agnostic or atheist. Why shocked? Normally, the Muslim community will not view the member's act as simply a personal and private decision of faith. Rather they will understand the member's act to be traitorous and the member to be a traitor, an enemy, perhaps a member of a rival community. Normally Islamic law punishes the apostate by death—though some schools of Muslim law would exclude the execution of a woman. True, not all converts from Islam are put to death. Still, many live in the shadow of persecution and even death! Even if apostates

escape execution, they may be ostracized and even their families threatened and pushed to bring them back into Islam. (Lest we forget, in the past some Christians too, sadly, have engaged in persecuting heretics—though with no support from Jesus!)

***The call for tolerance.*** At the same time, many Muslims recall the Quranic summons to tolerance, most clearly reflected in the following passage: "There is no compulsion in religion." (Surah 2:256) Some passages also pay great respect to the religions of "the People of the Book"—Jews and Christians. Other passages, however, severely criticize the Jews and Christians, especially the Jews. (See Appendix B)

Nearly all Muslim nations have accepted the United Nations Charter, which declares freedom for individuals to change their religious belief. Many Muslim communities, however, do not grant this freedom to their members. Some Muslim nations have prepared their own declaration of human rights based on Islamic principles. In fact, the whole issue of freedom of religion, including the correct interpretation of Qur'an 2:256 (it excludes Muslims from the freedom of leaving Islam, many Muslims say) is seriously disputed among Muslims. Currently, some Muslim nations are advocating that Islam, as a religion, should be exempt from criticism. Yet, persecution of Christians continues in a considerable number of Muslim lands.

## **Fellowship in Christianity**

***The meaning of being a Christian.*** Ask a group of people what "being a Christian" means and you may get surprising answers. Some will think being a Christian means going to church, or even following Western customs. Others will say it means being loving and kind. Certainly a Christian should go to church and should be loving, but the essential meaning of being a Christian is threefold:

- to have personal trust in God through the Lord Jesus;
- to have fellowship with others who share a similar trust;



- to live as a disciple of Jesus, living not only for oneself but also for others.

This definition warns us against three common misunderstandings of Christianity: formalism, individualism and perfectionism:

**Formalism.** That is, relying too much on the outward form and expression. To be a Christian is not to be born into a certain community with a particular culture, or to follow certain customs and laws, or even to perform religious rituals regularly. No! Being a Christian means having a personal relation with God and trust in God through Christ that is rooted in and manifested from the heart.

**Individualism.** That is, thinking that faith is merely an individual thing, "just between you and God," and that there is no need for a Christian to join a church fellowship and to participate with fellow Christians in the worship of God. Faith is certainly personal, but it is also something that you should have in fellowship with other believers. To be "born again" means also to be born into a family! A Christian is a member of the Body of Christ. "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us." (1 John 1:3; see also Mark 3:33-35; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 2:13-19)

**Perfectionism.** That is, thinking that a person is not a Christian until he or she is perfect in knowledge of Christian doctrine, perfect in obedience to Church rules, and perfect in overcoming all sins. No! Those who put their trust in God through Christ are at once Christians; they have entered the Christian fellowship and the new life in Christ. Their understanding of Christianity may be weak and their morality may still be doubtful. But our Gospel is of God's grace for sinners. Jesus died so that we may live. We must trust that by God's grace (with the help of Christian fellowship also) we will grow in knowledge and in Christian character. (See Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 5:8; 14:1, 10-13; Galatians 6:1, 2; Matthew 13:24-30.)

**The loving fellowship.** Jesus said: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"

(John 13:35). Paul explains further: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." (Colossians 3:12-14)

***The outreaching fellowship.*** The Church sometimes makes the mistake of separating itself from the world in order to preserve its power, its customs or its purity, for fear of being "contaminated." The Church sometimes adopts a particular culture or discipline as a sort of "wall" to defend itself from the world. We know there are real dangers and problems for Christians in mixing with the world, including the Muslim world. Nevertheless, the Church must reach out in service and in witness. Jesus said: "Therefore, go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19). He said: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one ... As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." (John 17:15-18)

## **Helping the Enquirer**

***Build bridges of love.*** Try to break down the feeling that Muslims and Christians are two hostile communities sharply differing in religion and culture, separated in dress, custom, place of residence and perhaps even language. We are to "love our neighbour," loving the neighbour "the Good Samaritan way." In this way both communities might accent the positive rather than the negative and thereby become more understanding and tolerant of each other, each helping and being helped.

***Emphasize sincerity.*** Given more mutual respect and credibility among Christians and Muslims, can we discuss with Muslims our concerns about the traditional Muslim law of apostasy—and persecution of Christians? For does not this law compel people to profess what they do not believe, to act insincerely and hypocritically? Indeed, there should be no compulsion in religion!

Also, with your enquirer, emphasize sincerity. What

motivates the enquirer to become a Christian? First, Christians must be aware that converts from Islam to Christianity may have to pay a heavy price for leaving Islam. On the other hand, the convert must know that Christians are not trying to get converts by any means, good or bad. You, a Christian, are presenting the Gospel in the hope that people will freely and sincerely put their trust in God as Jesus the Messiah has revealed Him. Your sole motive is to offer your Muslim friend what God has already provided you, that is, your assurance of salvation and new life.

**Love the enquirer.** Inspire other Christians to love the Muslim as well. An Iranian convert from Islam said: "Most Muslims I know who have followed Christ have done so because of the sacrificial life and sustained love of some Christian friend." To love Muslims means to:

**Understand Muslims.** Put yourself in their shoes. Are the Muslim enquirers with whom you have contact subject to any serious family/community opposition? The intensity of the opposition, of course, may vary. Still, Muslim enquirers anywhere may be, or should be, aware of it and share it. In any case, as already noted, you should not expect them to be "perfect Christians" right away.

**Pray for Muslims.** And pray with them. Visit them and give them a warm welcome to your home as well as to a worship service. If the church services are not held in their language, may group worship (however small) in their language be considered? In a home, if not in a church building?

**Help Muslims.** Here the implications of where and how to help may vary greatly. In countries where Muslims and Shariah dominate, the cost of conversion may be the loss of family, friends, job and much worldly security, perhaps even open persecution. As far as possible, help converts to maintain their independence and to be self-reliant. If necessary, compensate them when they suffer loss, to regain their self-reliance.

Related to the above is the concern of Christians in the West for new refugees, among whom also there may be

converts from Islam who have undergone persecution in their native land. For these—and why not for new Muslim immigrants also, if they wish? Christian congregations can help such families use whatever resources are available to ease their integration into their new surroundings. In the process, we may learn not only how to graciously give to these new immigrants but also how to graciously receive from them, in areas which do not conflict with Christian faith. We can often learn a lot about hospitality, for example, from our Muslim friends.

***Teach the enquirers.*** Help enquirers to understand Christian beliefs and practices in order that they may grow in personal faith and, at the same time, be able to answer questions and criticisms from other Muslims. Go through this book, especially the sections "Discussion with a Muslim friend" in Chapters 4 to 12. Explain the place of fellowship in Christian faith. Tell them that the Church of Christ is made up of pardoned sinners, not of perfect saints! This may encourage them to join the local church and to help them recognize that the present members of the church are likewise not perfect! Prepare them to tell others about Jesus, to face difficulties and, yes, even persecution, may God forbid! (Matthew 5:11,12; Mark 8:31-38; 1 Peter 2:9,19-25)

## **About Baptism and Profession of Faith**

Both enquirers and their Christian friends must earnestly seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit about the time for open profession of Christian faith and baptism. Enquirers, of course, should make the decision.

It is a normal and needful part of the Christian life to declare one's faith openly and to be baptized. "Secret believers" who tell no one of their faith are missing some of the greatest riches of the Christian life. Believers who profess their faith without being baptized may be in a "safer" position, but still miss a great blessing. Nevertheless, we have to look sympathetically at the practical difficulties.

It would normally be wrong to baptize a minor without parental consent. The age of majority, when the youth can

act independently, may depend on the outlook of the local society.

Most Muslim communities regard a woman (at least a young woman) as a dependent in the same sense that a child is. It will generally do more harm than good to baptize her without the consent of parents or husband. If a woman is to be baptized, the greatest care must be taken to do it honourably and to give her the support of the Christian fellowship.

When an adult Muslim male puts his trust in Christ, he should be helped to see from the Bible the value of profession of faith and baptism. It should be expected that the Holy Spirit will lead him to an earnest desire to take these steps.

On the other hand, it is understandable that such a man may wish to become well-grounded in the faith and Bible knowledge before exposing himself to the criticism and perhaps persecution of his fellows. He may want to become financially independent first. Or he may also wish to postpone his baptism for a year or two so that he can witness in his Muslim community instead of being cast out at once. Thus he might win his family and some friends to be baptized as a group. Or, at least, Muslims might come to tolerate his conversion.

Nevertheless, there is a tremendous danger in such postponement of baptism. Cut off from Christian fellowship and without the challenge of witnessing, the new convert's faith may weaken. After a certain point it is usually better for new believers to be baptized and to join the Church, even if this means they must be cut off from Muslim society. Quite often, in fact, converts will be aware of one or two family members sympathetic to their conversion.

We must prayerfully rely on the Holy Spirit to indicate to the converts themselves the right time for baptism. Christians must surround the enquirers with love and fellowship both before and after baptism. At baptisms, there should be Christian sponsors who will take special responsibility to guide and encourage, more so on the day of baptism and

thereafter, if opponents are threatening them. Someone should warmly and intentionally receive the new believer into their family. Holidays are a time of special importance. Tragic to be alone at Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, or any other time of family celebration.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **An Outline of Islam**

#### **Its Origin**

"Islam," an Arabic word, means "submission to the will of God." A Muslim is one who submits to God. So, in a sense, all the prophets proclaiming one God, and their followers, have been Muslims. But in everyday speech, a "Muslim" means one who submits to the will of God as revealed in the Qur'an and the Hadith (or, as a Muslim may add, in the Shariah) and who accepts Muhammad as the Messenger of God.

Muhammad was born in Mecca (in what is today Saudi Arabia) about 570 A.D. In this part of Arabia the majority of the people were idolaters. Alongside them were some Jews and Christians, and even the idolaters believed in the supreme God (Allah).

According to general Muslim understanding, from about 610 A.D. Muhammad began to receive, as he believed, revelations sent down from Allah through the angel Gabriel (*Jibril*). Muslim Tradition (*Hadith*) tells us that these revelations continued from time to time for about the next twenty-two years and were eventually gathered together to form the Qur'an under Islam's third caliph, Uthman, some twenty years after the death of Muhammad. Muhammad began to preach that man must give thanks to Allah for all things, worship nothing beside Him, and do good in preparation for the Last Judgement.

A small community of believers gathered around Muhammad, but they were persecuted by the Meccans. So, in 622 A.D., Muhammad and his close companion, Abu

Bakr, emigrated from Mecca to Medina. The migration from Mecca to Medina, called the *hijrah*, marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. In Medina he was no longer only leader of a religious minority but became the ruler of a city. His revelations now laid down rules for the whole life of the community: not only its religious ritual, but also the laws of marriage, commerce and warfare, the administration of justice and the rules of courtesy.

More and more Arabian tribes accepted Islam as their religion and Muhammad as ruler until, in 630 A.D., even the Meccans submitted. In 632 A.D. Muhammad led the pilgrimage to Mecca, preached his "farewell sermon," and died soon after.

Islam spread rapidly. Within one hundred years of Muhammad's death, Islam had spread westward throughout the whole of North Africa and extended eastwards to the borders of India. Generally, in the course of time it spread by warfare, by commerce and by Sufi Muslim movements. Today probably well over one-fifth of the world's population is Muslim.

## **Its Beliefs and Practices**

As noted above, Islam is derived especially from the Qur'an (the Word of God, according to the Muslims) and the Hadith (the inspired Traditions of the words and deeds of Muhammad especially, according to Muslims). The following extracts of Muslim origin give a little idea of Muslim beliefs and practices:

### **The Articles of Muslim Belief**

1. Allah<sup>2</sup>
2. His angels
3. His Scriptures
4. His messengers

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<sup>2</sup> God in both the Arabic Bible and the Arabic Qur'an is designated as "Allah". The existence of the term "Allah" precedes the time of Muhammad and the origin of Islam. It may be said that Allah is the sole Arabic name for God.

## 5. The Day of Resurrection and Judgement

Some Muslims have added:

6. Destiny: The decreeing of good and evil by Allah Most High

### **The Pillars of Muslim Practice**

Muslims would say: "The messenger of God (blessing and peace be upon him) said: 'Islam is built upon five pillars':"

1. Confession: Bearing witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah
2. Prayer: Performing the ritual prayer
3. Alms: Paying the ritual alms
4. Fasting: The fast in the month of Ramadan
5. Pilgrimage: Pilgrimage to the House in Mecca (*Kabah*) for whoever can perform it

### **Muslim Ethics**

Some of Muhammad's first followers in Mecca fled to Ethiopia, where the Christian king treated them kindly. This is how they explained Islam to him, according to a Muslim source:

O king, we were an uncivilized people, worshipping idols, eating corpses, breaking ties of kinship, failing in our duty toward those under our protection, the strong among us devouring the weak. Thus we were until Allah sent to us a messenger. He summoned us to acknowledge God's Unity and to worship Him and to renounce the stones and images which we and our fathers formerly worshipped. He commanded us to speak the truth, to be faithful, to respect ties of kinship, to treat well those under our protection, and to refrain from crimes and bloodshed.

He forbade us to commit abominations, tell lies, devour the property of orphans or slander chaste



women. He commanded us to worship Allah alone and not to associate anything with Him and he gave us orders about prayer, almsgiving and fasting. So we trusted him, believed in him and followed that which he brought from Allah.

Thereupon our people persecuted us, so we emigrated to your country, having chosen you above all others, hoping that near you we shall not be unjustly treated, O king.

### **Muslim Prayer**

The opening Surah of the Qur'an, called *Fatihah*, recited at every prayer time:

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,  
The Beneficent, the Merciful.  
Owner of the Day of Judgement,  
Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we  
ask for help.

Show us the straight path,  
The path of those whom Thou hast  
favoured;

Not (the path) of those who earn Thine  
anger  
nor of those who go astray.

Surah 2: 84, 86, some concluding verses:

Unto Allah (belongeth) whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth; and whether ye make known what is in your minds or hide it, Allah will bring you to account for it. He will forgive whom He will and He will punish whom He will. Allah is able to do all things ...

Allah tasketh not a soul beyond its scope. For it (is only) that which it hath earned, and against it (only) that which it hath deserved. Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget, or miss the mark! Our Lord! Lay not on us such a burden as Thou didst lay on those before us! Our Lord! Impose not on us that which we

have not the strength to bear! Pardon us, absolve us and have mercy on us, Thou, our Protector, and give us victory over the disbelieving folk.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **The People of the Book**

The Qur'an frequently refers to the Jews and Christians as People of the Book. According to the Qur'an, as God revealed the Qur'an to the Arabs through Muhammad, so He had revealed the Tawrat to Moses and the Injil to Jesus. Muhammad saw himself as a prophet following after Moses and Jesus in the line of God's prophets to the world. As long as Muhammad remained in Mecca, it appears that he maintained good relations with both Jews and Christians and also with members of other monotheistic religions. About them the Qur'an says:

Lo! those who believe (in that which is revealed unto thee, Muhammad), and those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sabaeans—whoever believeth in Allah and the Last Day and doeth right—surely their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve.  
(2:62)

When Muhammad moved from the city of Mecca to the city of Medina, he came into closer contact with the Jews who formed an important segment of the population in that city. In the course of time, however, their good relationship broke down. The Jews, it appeared, could not accept Muhammad as a prophet. In turn, Muhammad and his followers, at that time accustomed to praying while facing Jerusalem, changed their direction for prayer to Mecca. There they focused in particular on a structure called the *Kabah* which, Muhammad claimed, Abraham and his son Ismail (Ishmael) had built and had dedicated to the one God. Eventually, the Jews, while maintaining their traditional

religion, submitted to Muhammad and Muslim rule.

Perhaps the initial good relations between Christians and Muslims are best seen when, at the request of Muhammad, the Ethiopian king, a Christian, welcomed Muhammad's new followers to come to Ethiopia, away from their Arab enemies in Mecca who had begun persecuting them. At that time Muhammad still resided in Mecca. Yet even after Muhammad moved to Medina, for the most part he continued to look with favour upon the Christians. The Qur'an speaks of Christians as "the nearest in affection" to the Muslims. (Surah 5:82) Nevertheless, it also advises Muslims not to take Jews and Christians as their friends (Surah 5:51), noting also that the Jews and the Christians feuded with each other. (Surah 2:113) The Qur'an clearly attests to the growing tensions and fractured relationships between the Muslims vs. both the Jews and the Christians.

The following Quranic passages have negatively influenced Muslim attitudes toward the Jews and the Christians and subsequent Muslim actions against them—virtually from the time of Muhammad, throughout the period of the first four caliphs and even until the present. For all practical purposes, these passages summarize Islam's understanding of itself as superior to all other religions. (Surah 3:85) These verses read:

Fight against such of those who have been given the Scripture as believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, and forbid not that which Allah hath forbidden by His messenger, and follow not the religion of truth, until they pay the tribute readily, being brought low.

And the Jews say: Ezra is the son of Allah, and the Christians say: The Messiah is the son of Allah. That is their saying with their mouths. They imitate the saying of those who disbelieved of old. Allah (Himself) fighteth against them. How perverse they are!

He it is who hath sent His messenger with the guidance and Religion of Truth, that He may cause

it to prevail over all religion, however much the idolaters may be averse. (Surah 9: 29,30,33)

Historically, Muslims have considered Surah 9 to be among the latest revelations of God to Muhammad.

No doubt, the significance of these verses is well rooted in the Shariah also. At the same time, they clearly indicate the Qur'an's claim that Islam alone is acceptable to God. (Surah 3:79) Yet, if such verses continue to strongly influence the mindset of so many Muslims, including even those in our local communities, still how many Muslims there may be who oppose the spirit of these verses or may even be unaware of them.

In any case, the Bible leaves Christians with only one option: God loves Muslims. And, as Christians, so do we! Or, if we are in doubt, we know we ought to love them! Yet, how often, we incline toward strife instead of life. O God, may we pray, guide us upon the straight path, Your straight path of love, not the path of those who go astray. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Muslim and Christian Intermarriage**

Currently more young people are mingling with others of other faiths and are deciding for themselves whom to marry. Not surprisingly, Christians and Muslims meet and are attracted to one another. Both Muslim and Christian, if they are more than Muslim or Christian in name only, should honestly consider the implications of Christian-Muslim intermarriage before betrothal and marriage—each not only in self-interest, but in the other's interest also.

In many Muslim areas, Muslim men have only one wife. Some Muslims also openly prefer monogamy, condemn polygamy and dislike divorce. Yet Muslim law allows a Muslim man to have four wives, though not a woman four husbands. According to Muslim law, a Muslim husband may

easily divorce his wife, but not so easily a wife her husband.

Again, according to Muslim law, a Muslim man may marry a Christian or Jewish woman, since both Jews and Christians are People of the Scriptures. A Muslim woman, however, may marry only a Muslim man, again according to Muslim law. The Christian or Jewish woman who marries a Muslim man may retain her faith. But, in many cases, such women are pressured to become Muslim. The children of such marriages must be brought up as Muslims, the premise here being that the man is the head of the house.

Muslim marriage is essentially a contract. Christian marriage is a lifelong covenant. II Corinthians 6:14 reminds us that the Christian is not to be "yoked together with unbelievers." Is there any more significant yoke than that of marriage? Can a Christian in good conscience enter into a marriage relationship with anyone who is not a committed Christian—whether atheist, Hindu, Muslim, nominal Christian—and be able to honour Christ with a whole heart in the marriage and home? Would there be no conflict of loyalties?

Christian marriage: God's way, Biblically-paved, straight and narrow. No detours.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **What Is the Nature of "the Glorious Qur'an, the Word of God"?**

#### **An introductory response to a frequent Muslim question and a little mind-stretcher on Muslim and Christian reasoning**

**Muslim:** According to Christians is Jesus God, or the Son of God, or ...?

**Christian:** Let me begin to answer your question with a

question. I have heard Muslims say the Qur'an is the Word of God, the eternal Word of God. Is the Qur'an God?

**Muslim:** Is the Qur'an God? Of course not! God forbid! God is one! But, yes, the Qur'an is the Word of God, even the eternal Word of God.

**Christian:** But if the Qur'an is not God, then the Qur'an must be less than God, created, finite, temporal. Is it so?

**Muslim:** No, it is not quite so simple. Indeed, God is one! He alone is God and no one or nothing is like Him. This, however, does not tell us who God is. On the basis of the Qur'an, Muslims have also defined who God is and what He does. You know how the Qur'an, and the Hadith also, provide descriptions of God, what Muslims call God's Beautiful Names, and you have seen Muslims with their rosaries (*tasbeih*) recite God's ninety-nine Beautiful Names. Based on these Names, Muslim scholars began to define God—who He is and what He does—in terms of His attributes (*sifat*). Thus God is called the Knower and hence He possesses the attribute of knowledge; He is called the Living One and the Mighty One, hence He possesses the attributes of life and power. Some scholars have spoken of God's seven attributes, others of eight and still others of more.

But then came the more difficult question: How to define the attributes themselves. Are they created or uncreated? And how do they relate with each other and with the eternal being/essence (*dhat*) of God? Briefly stated here, Orthodox Islam has defined God's attributes as separate entities, eternal and uncreated and subsisting in God's eternal essence. The recognized formula: "They are not He nor are they other than He."

**Christian:** Well now, this is interesting. Why don't we hear more about Islam's understanding about God, Islamic theological definitions and their intricacies? But what does all this have to do with the Qur'an itself and its nature?

**Muslim:** Clearly from the Qur'an God is a Speaker.

Hence one of His attributes is Speech/Word (*Kalam*). So the Qur'an as the Word of God is an attribute of God and, therefore, not God nor other than God.

**Christian:** Then, if I am hearing you correctly, are you saying that the Qur'an is not God and is not a creation? If the Qur'an is neither divine nor temporal, then ... well ... tell me what you mean. I want to understand.

**Muslim:** Again, according to Orthodox Islam, the Qur'an as the Word of God is not God, nor is it other than God.

**Christian:** Just a moment. If the Qur'an is not God and the Qur'an is not other than God, then what is it? Is this to say that the Qur'an is not God and the Qur'an is God? Or even that the Qur'an is not God, yet of God (whatever that means), and therefore possibly other than and even more than God—in the sense that it is also a book, or has become a book?

**Muslim:** According to Orthodox Islam, the Qur'an is the eternal Word of God. More precisely, Orthodox Islam notes that the Qur'an is the representation on earth of the eternal Word of God, the Mother of the Book (*Umm al-Kitab*) inscribed on the Preserved Tablet (*Lawh Mahfuz*) in Heaven. Through the Angel Gabriel God revealed it to Muhammad.

**Christian:** If the Qur'an is the eternal Word of God revealed by God to people, is it a real book on earth?

**Muslim:** Yes, indeed! Orthodox Islam understands the Qur'an to be both uncreated and created. The eternal Word of God became a real book. It is a little difficult to explain. The relation between the created and the uncreated is a little complex. Yet finally Orthodox Islam has upheld and continues to uphold the basic Islamic confession that God is one. Orthodox Islam defines the unity of God as a series of God's individual and eternal attributes subsisting together separately within the essence of God—a unity encompassing plurality, a unity more than a unit.

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Thus far the dialogue. Obviously Muslims have given serious thought to who God is, what He does, and His relation to His creation. The Muslim community, like the Christian, is not monolithic theologically. For example, the Mutazilah, another Muslim movement, whose members are called the People of (God's) Unity and Justice, contended for a purer and even more absolute Oneness of God, dismissing the concept of separate eternal attributes as eternal entities subsisting within the eternal being of God. The Orthodox, they said, believed in a plurality of eternals, thus negating God's unity. To them the Orthodox, like the Christians, were idolaters. The Orthodox were seen as even greater idolaters, in that Christians believe in only three eternals, not in seven or more eternals as the Orthodox Muslims believe. It follows that the Mutazilah, like the Shiah and other Muslim movements, have concluded that the Qur'an is only created.

Then, back to our original consideration about Jesus' relation with God: Could Muslims' understanding of the Qur'an's relation with God help them grasp the Biblical understanding of Jesus, both as Word of God and Son of God, and His relation with God—a relation also free from any idea of sexual significance? Briefly stated: If God's eternal Word can be thought to be "enbooked" (the Qur'an), then surely God's eternal Word also can be thought to become incarnated (enfleshed) as a human being, Jesus the Messiah?

But why stop here? Could the dialogue, in fact, profitably be continued in a discussion of how the Mother of the Book inscribed on the Preserved Tablet relates to the Qur'an? How, for example, is one to understand the nature of motherhood here? May motherhood here imply fatherhood involvement also? Then for the Qur'an also the designation of son or daughter?



## APPENDIX E

### A Glossary of Islamic Terms<sup>3</sup>

#### Practices

<i>Kalimah</i>	The Muslim Confession that there is no god but God (Allah) and Muhammad is His prophet
<i>Salat or Namaz</i>	Ritual prayer
<i>Sawm or Rozah</i>	Fasting
<i>Zakat</i>	Legal alms
<i>Hajj</i>	Pilgrimage to Mecca
<i>Din</i>	Religion, judgement. The above are the five pillars of <i>Din</i> in Islam.

#### Special Days and Festivals

<i>Ramadan</i>	The month of fasting
<i>Id al-Fitr</i>	The festival of the breaking of the fast
<i>Id al-Adha</i>	The festival commemorating Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son
<i>Muharram</i>	The month in which the martyrdom of Husain, son of Ali and grandson of Muhammad, is especially remembered

#### Some Prophets and Messengers

<i>Aiyub</i>	Job
<i>Dawud</i>	David
<i>Harun</i>	Aaron
<i>Ibrahim</i>	Abraham

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<sup>3</sup> The English transliteration of some of the Arabic vocabulary, apart from the word "Qur'an", is conveniently simplified throughout this publication.

<i>Ilyas</i>	Elijah
<i>Isa al-Masih</i>	Jesus Christ
<i>Musa</i>	Moses
<i>Nuh</i>	Noah
<i>Yahya</i>	John the Baptist
<i>Yunus</i>	Jonah

### **Sacred Scriptures**

<i>Tawrat</i>	Torah, Pentateuch, the Old Testament
<i>Zabur</i>	Psalms
<i>Injil</i>	Evangel, New Testament
<i>Ahl al-Kitab</i>	People of the Book (Jews and Christians)
<i>Ayah</i>	A revelation, sign or verse of the Qur'an
<i>Surah</i>	A revelation or chapter of the Qur'an

### **Other**

<i>Ahmadiyya</i>	An unorthodox (sometimes banned) Muslim sect
<i>Bismillah</i>	In the name of Allah; an invocation
<i>dhat</i>	Essence, substance, being
<i>dua</i>	Free prayer
<i>Fatihah</i>	The first surah in the Qur'an
<i>Hadith</i>	Canonical Tradition, primarily accounts of Muhammad, his words and deeds
<i>Hijrah</i>	Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina, from which date the Islamic calendar begins
<i>Iblis</i>	The devil

<i>ibn al-sabil</i>	"son of the path", traveller
<i>ilham</i>	Revelation, inspiration
<i>imam</i>	Prayer leader; special leader of Shiah Muslims
<i>iman</i>	Faith, belief
<i>jahannam</i>	Hell
<i>jannat</i>	Garden, Heaven
<i>Jibrail or Jibril</i>	Gabriel
<i>kafir</i>	One who is guilty of <i>kufir</i> (unbelief, blasphemy), an infidel
<i>Khalifah</i>	A successor to Muhammad, as caliph (ruler) over Muslims
<i>kitab</i>	Book, scriptures, record of our deeds
<i>Lawh Mahfuz</i>	Preserved Tablet on which the Qur'an is inscribed
<i>malak</i>	Angel
<i>mushrik</i>	One who is guilty of <i>shirk</i> (idolatry, polytheism, associating something with God)
<i>nabi</i>	Prophet
<i>rasul</i>	Messenger, apostle
<i>Shahadah</i>	see <i>Kalimah</i>
<i>Shariah</i>	The Islamic law
<i>Shiah</i>	The major split in Islam, originally political
<i>siffah</i>	attribute
<i>shirk</i>	see <i>mushrik</i>
<i>Sufi</i>	A Muslim mystic
<i>Sunni</i>	The main division of Islam; a follower of the <i>sunna</i> (path) of Muhammad
<i>tasbih</i>	Rosary
<i>Tawhid</i>	The unity (Oneness) of God
<i>ulama</i>	Muslim scholars

<i>ummah</i>	Muslim community
<i>Umm al-Kitab</i>	The Mother of the Book
<i>wahi</i>	Divine and literal inspiration of the Qur'an

### **A Prayer**

O Lord God, pour out Your blessing on the peoples of Islam.

Grant that these, who always proclaim Your greatness,  
may know the greatness of Your love revealed in  
Jesus the Messiah.

Forgive us that so little of Your love  
has reached the Muslims through us.

Take away from us our pride, our indifference  
and our antagonism.

Teach us to love our Muslim neighbours  
as we love ourselves.

Help us to understand them  
and to help them understand Your Gospel.

And if any of us should suffer at the hands of Muslims,  
teach us to overcome evil with good,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.