

**A Practical and
Tactical Approach to**



MUSLIM EVANGELISM

2021 EDITION

PART 3

A TRAINER'S HANDBOOK ON

MUSLIM EVANGELISM

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Please note:

This document is one of a set, which consists of

ISLAM as it sees itself, as others see it, as it is

(TT1, 213 pages)

THE ISLAMIC-CHRISTIAN CONTROVERSY

(TT2, 131 pages)

A practical and tactical approach to MUSLIM EVANGELISM

(TT3, 140 pages)

In addition to these Teacher's Manuals we offer the matching Student Handbook

REACH OUT (100 pages)

Recommended Literature at the end of a chapter is restricted to readily available sources.

A **Bibliographie** you can find at the end of each of the books.

All **Quotations from the Bible** are taken from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise marked.

All **Quotations from the Qur'an** are taken from the translation done by Yusuf Ali (New Revised Edition, Amana Corp. Maryland, USA 1989).

Translations from other Islamic sources are at times rather unintelligible and contain spelling and grammatical errors, which we did not correct in our quotes, but some have been marked with a [sic], indicating the error.

Readers who use other copies of a Qur'an may find a somewhat different verse numbering system (particularly in Surah 5). The reader is advised to search for such verses 2 or 3 verses before or thereafter.

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1. INTRODUCTION

MUSLIMS AND THE BIBLICAL MESSAGE

Islam has come into focus. It has a profile as never before in the Western world. Muslims gain more and more prominence in the media. They come over forcefully and with strong conviction. They present us with a challenge, which was unthinkable even 20 years ago. Many Christians are bewildered and are not sure how to respond. Can they really be reached with the Gospel?

Muslims just do not, as a rule, attend a Christian 'Crusade'. The very word reminds them of the historical past when 'warriors of the cross' invaded their lands.

We can hardly expect a Muslim to accept an invitation to our church. But even if he/she does, our church service will be as strange and confusing to him/her, as a service in a mosque would be to us. What then is the answer?

Whenever keen Christians try to relate the Gospel to Muslims, these are likely to respond with arguments, which all too often throw the unaware witness off balance. An emotional debate results, and that serves little more than to save the face of the loser.

The consequent very limited personal contact between Christians and Muslims hinders a meaningful communication of the Gospel. There is a fear to witness to Muslims, which caused the very lamentable reality that the Great Commission of our Lord became the Great Omission. Muslims are largely overlooked when it comes to an evangelistic effort of a church. Indeed we hear that Christians say: "Muslims believe in the same God as we do. We follow different forms, but in essence it is much the same." On such a base the resulting contacts are confined to inter-faith dialogue with no intention to share the Good News.

To reach Muslims, we have to reconsider the old biblical concepts of evangelism. Christ did not say, "Let them come to you!" but "Go! Proclaim! Teach them! Make disciples (pupils, learners)!" (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15). Muslim evangelism is essentially a passing on of Biblical information from person to person.

These notes are meant to help change the unfortunate situation that still pervades. They want to assess the real hindrances but also correct the common mistakes and misunderstandings, which have led to the assumption that Muslims are beyond reach.

Muslim Evangelism is Different

We already noted that Muslim Evangelism is quite distinct from the ‘normal’ preaching of the Gospel. It is true that a lot more effort and preparation is needed to reach the hearts of Muslims. This is caused by several factors.

Muslims live in quite a different context to ours. They have, as a rule, strong convictions about their faith, and that is in many subtle ways contradicting the Biblical message. Many religious words and concepts in Islam differ widely in meaning from the Biblical revelation and often complicate meaningful communication. To compound that, Muslims are not only religiously, but also socially and culturally embedded in a community that is providing them with a strong feeling of belonging. As comforting as this is, it also punishes any deviation from their faith. This is indeed an intimidating factor for anyone considering a change of faith.

Should Muslim Evangelism not be left to Missionaries?

Since it is no secret that Muslim evangelism is a difficult task, it must surely be a job for missionaries and ministers?! Of course! But we should also understand that in Biblical terms every Christian is a missionary, saved and sent to share the Gospel. How many Muslims can one full-time missionary reach meaningfully with the Gospel in a year? A hundred? That would be a highly extravagant figure by any standard. Maybe 3.000 in a lifetime? How many missionaries would it need to evangelize 2 billion Muslims? 666.000, plus the administrators and those to see to the logistics. As it is, one has to accept **the shocking reality that the ratio is half a million Muslims to one missionary!**

It was never meant, I dare to suggest, that evangelistic and missionary work, i.e. the sharing of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, was to be done by full-time workers only. Of course, the Scripture mentions evangelists (Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 4:5 and Acts 21:8). But there is no mention of a *gift* of evangelism. It is a work, which is to be done by every believer. As in the days of the Book of Acts, every believer should be a witness of what they know of and experienced with Christ (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:46-48). The challenge “*to go into all the world and to proclaim the Good News to all creation*” is surely open-ended until our Lord returns. And for that purpose you and I have a calling to be His witnesses. It is, no doubt, significant that the word ‘*witness*’ in the Greek original reads ‘*marturion*’, and that means martyr. To witness was a highly dangerous task in the early days of the Church, and still demands sacrificial involvement today, particularly when done to Muslim people. But we *are called* to be His witnesses!

So let the ministers and missionaries be the trainers to equip all Christians to “**know how to answer every one**” (1 Peter 3:15).

That would, no doubt, set the scene for the evangelization of the world that we have been ordered to complete. **Since Muslims can really only be reached on a person to person basis, there is no way to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ, except that every Christian is willing to build a contact with a Muslim in his/her proximity.** That, of course, only applies to countries where Muslims and Christian live side by side. Islamic countries need professionals that are willing to share their lives with Muslims by moving there as ‘tent makers’.

The Justification for Muslim Evangelism

Will Evangelism not lead to divisions within families, hardships and even the threat of assassination of converts in extreme circumstances?

Yes! The answer to that is a question of values. We all believe in life after death – and we believe this with all our hearts. We also expect divine judgment of each and every person and a consequent eternal abode in either heaven or hell. Finding the right way to reach the right destination is therefore the most important factor in life.

Both, the Bible and Islamic teaching recognize this need, but differ fundamentally on how to find forgiveness, reconciliation to and peace with God. That is, they differ altogether on how a person can find the way to heaven.

The Bible clearly teaches that salvation is obtained only through Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death as a sacrifice for us. He alone died on the cross for the trespasses we committed against the order and will of God.

Islam, to the contrary, insists that heaven is obtained by merit, which is affected by personal effort. The death of Christ is denied as untrue, and by that token His sacrifice for us is rejected.

Both these premises are mutually exclusive. Consequently, one position must be true and right and the other must essentially be wrong. Fortunately, evidence for the divine inspiration of our Scripture and for the crucifixion and death of our Lord Jesus is absolutely overwhelming. That convicts Islam to hold to a pseudo-truth. It also means that Islam, in spite of all the genuine sincerity of many of the Muslim people, withholds wittingly or unwittingly the saving knowledge of God and of Christ.

How then can Muslim Evangelism be done?

Muslim evangelism is a complex task. It is probably more difficult than evangelism of most other unreached peoples groups. There are, of course, reasons for that. One of the contributing factors is the Muslims’ understandable fear of losing the hope *they* have to enter paradise.

They also fear to be abandoned by family and friends and to lose their identity when becoming Christians. In addition we face considerable problems in effective communication of spiritual content because of differing thought and cultural patterns, and concepts. That makes it imperative to deal with topics like understanding Muslims, culture, communication etc. before coming to what we want to learn in the first place.

**EVANGELISM IS OUR WITNESS TO THE EVIDENCED AND
VERIFIED TRUTH OF GOD’S SALVATION THAT IS OFFERED
FREELY TO ALL MANKIND.**

**IT IS COMPREHENSIBLE AND UNDERSTANDABLE
COMMUNICATION ABOUT GOD AND HIS REVEALED WORD
TO PEOPLE WHO MAY HAVE A VERY DIFFERENT WORLD-VIEW,
AND BY THAT A WARPED PERCEPTION OF GOD.**

Love, integrity and honesty are the foundation of Muslim evangelism, as for any other form of sharing God’s Truth. Love will go the extra mile to discover the other person in his/her mindset and understanding of *their* world of thought and faith.

To balance this statement it must be said, however, that neither knowledge, nor skill or method is a prerequisite for (Muslim) evangelism. It is the work of God’s Spirit in a person that affects *spiritual* understanding and enlightenment. Yet love, care, understanding and empathy are indispensable contributors.

Available Training Materials

‘**Battle for the Hearts**’, a professionally produced Video Seminar with 12x50 minute lessons on the same topics is available on CD ROM from Life Challenge and SIM.

This volume attempts to briefly outline the present set-up of Islam, but majors on understanding Muslims within their social, cultural and religious environment in order to build a base for a spiritual conversation for an effective sharing the Gospel.

2. THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM

WHAT IS ISLAM?

Islam sees itself not as just another religion next to Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism or Christianity. Islam claims to be the first and the only valid religion in existence. It is more than a religion. It is a way of life. It integrates all aspects of life in itself, be it faith, prayer, social life, personal hygiene, matrimony, commerce, politics and everything else.

It is, in fact a system, which governs and controls the lives of close to 2 billion men and women around the globe.

Islamic publications describe it in these terms:

Islam in its clear and direct way of expressing truth has a tremendous amount of appeal for any seeker of knowledge. It is the solution for all the problems of life. It is a guide toward a better and complete life glorifying in all its phases God, the Almighty Creator and the Merciful Nourisher. Islam is the first and the final religion of mankind. Islam is the most rational religion. It gives a clear code of life. Islam is the shortest and broadest road that leads to God.

'Islam at a Glance', Durban, RSA

THE SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE OF ISLAM

Since the end of the World War II the old 'world order' has been replaced. Morally, politically, socially and economically just about every aspect of life has changed dramatically. It began with the collapse of the colonial systems and the successful dissemination of a liberal humanistic worldview. This created a new perception of justice and ecology, and a new interpretation of socialism, democracy and freedom. We also experienced the shift from the East-West conflict to an impending North-South one.

Parallel to that the migration of many millions of people to Western industrialized countries in search for a better future has created a new society with a great potential for conflict in many places on our globe. The victimization of people and systems, which resisted a change in their value system, adds to the problems we face. People that are unwilling to accept the 'liberalization' of ethics and morality are labeled 'fundamentalists'.

A new brand of nationalism has in many cases not kept its promises to facilitate the so much needed and wanted economic upliftment. An **unprecedented pessimism** accompanies the population explosion, urbanization, the AIDS threat, massive unemployment and the soaring of criminal and terrorist activities that lead to hopelessness in many areas of the world. Just about everybody be-

believes to be an exploited victim of one or other group: of the rich, the state, terrorists, Jews, the Americans or the Muslims, the trade unions, the employers or whoever.

At the same time the industrial revolution with its ever-increasing appetite for energy - which is largely found in the oil fields of the formerly poor and marginalized Islamic countries of the Middle East - has created right there an unprecedented wealth. As we all know, wealth represents power. The human potential of Islam also increased vastly when the former Soviet Union broke up and a number of the Republics in the South began to view themselves as Muslims in an Islamic state. Material affluence with its inherent power is, by that token alone, no threat to others. **Only if aligned with an ideology, monetary power becomes a danger.** This happened i.a. when Iran came under the influence and power of the 'Ayatollah' (= 'a sign of Allah') Khomeini. Because of his fundamentalist views he was forced to live in exile for a number of years, a time he used to effect a reversal of the Western influence in and on his country. When, after his return to Iran, his orthodox Islamic doctrines were forced onto the many secularized people living there, many Muslims worldwide viewed this as the turn of the tide, which was to lift Islam out of oblivion to restore its former power and glory. But all those who disagreed with these views were forced to submit, even eliminated. On a more international scale, bin Laden has begun an all out effort to unite the Muslim world through a global Jihaad against all who do not submit to the law of Allah.

While there are other connotations, the word 'Islam' means 'submission'. What happened in Iran, later in Afghanistan and increasingly in other countries like Indonesia, Nigeria, Algeria etc, actually represents the authentic form of Islam. Many Westerners perceive the present Islamic revolution to be the work of a relatively small group of 'Islamists' or 'fundamentalists', as they are now called. That may be partly true, but it does not reflect fundamental, i.e. original Islam.

Islam has a new vision and moves to the foreground, becomes very vocal and demands attention by flexing its muscles. A number of Islamic states were formed and show their non-confirmative spirit. Caused by this, Muslims raise their heads, being proud of their new image. While decidedly not all Muslims are happy with this to them threatening trend, the pressure exercised on them allows for no deviation.

It is certainly not our intention to defend the present Western value system. But this at least allows relative freedom of expression and freedom of religion and worship. Islam has quite another agenda, largely misunderstood and underestimated by the rest of the world.

HOW ISLAM UNDERSTANDS ITSELF

Ye are the best of Peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah.

Surah 3:110

O ye who believe! Take not into your intimacy those outside your ranks; they will not fail to corrupt you. They only desire your ruin.
Surah 3:118

Muslims love to view themselves in this light. Despite of this Islam faces a major crisis which is somewhat expressed in its vocal appearance, fanaticism and radicalism. Islam fears 'modernity'. This is the impact of what is called 'secular humanism', which already controls much of our society today. God is deposed and man and his needs and wants are for many the highest authority. The Bible has been attacked and criticized already for a century or two. The result is that in the Western world, but also beginning in Africa and Asia, the authority of God is strongly contradicted and Christian values and ethics ridiculed and put aside.

THE GOAL OF ISLAM

To understand the underlying trend of thought, we ought to have a look at the Qur'an.

In Surah 8:39 we read (according to Pickthall's translation):

And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah altogether and everywhere.

The actual rendering should be "***until all of religion comes to Allah***".

The word 'oppression' should actually read 'uprising' or 'revolt', which turns the passive tense into an active one. We should further realize that this is not just a question of all the people submitting to God. It means that all have to submit to Islam and its laws.

Surah 61:9 confirms this:

It is He Who has sent His Apostle (i.e. Muhammad) with guidance and the Religion of Truth that he may proclaim it over all religion, even though the Pagans may detest (it).

This is backed by a Hadith:

The Messenger of Allah said: 'I have been commanded to fight against people till they testify the fact that there is no god but Allah, and believe in me (that) I am the messenger (from the Lord) and in all that I have brought'.

Sahih Muslim I, p. 17

Consequently,

Islam has divided the world into two parts:
the '**Dhar-ul Islam**'
and the '**Dhar-ul Harb**';
or in English, the '**Territory of Islam**'
and the '**Territory of war**'.

This may not necessarily constitute armed conflict, although in the history of early, original Islam that was the prime method of the propagation of Islam.

It is understood that countries that are not as yet under the Shariah, will still have to be submitted to Islam.

As Christians we might be tempted to assume that conversion is essentially a spiritual experience. As Christians endeavour, pray and wish that the whole world should come under the rule of Christ, so Muslims endeavour to make the world Islamic. But that is not so, as we can already see.

The Church cannot legitimately force its influence on the state, or rule the state. This would contradict the Spirit of the Gospel. In Church History **wars have been fought, but one must wonder, which of these could claim to have been supported by the New Testament**, which is our authority.

Islam bases on a different premise. Only when the **Shariah** has become the established law of a country, it is an **Islamic state**. To affect this, the rule must be in Muslim hands. Islam does not differentiate between the secular and the spiritual. It follows an integrated system. Personal hygiene and politics, family life and prayer, hunting and business practices are all regulated by, and fall under, the Islamic law. While Christians and Jews may be tolerated in an Islamic state, they are certainly disadvantaged and not permitted to propagate their faith in an Islamic country.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD?

When we observe the current trend of Islam carefully, we can indeed notice how it **consolidates itself** and how **concerted efforts are made to strengthen its position in many countries**, and by no means only in those, which were traditionally Islamic. **Muslims double their population biologically twice as fast as non-Muslims do**. This promotes migration and we can observe how in recent times **much of the economy of Africa is dominated by Muslims**, but also in Europe, America, Australia and Asia an impact can be noticed. **Whoever controls the economy has by that**

token a strong influence on government, the media and education. It will further not be overlooked that Islam has also gained socio-political profile.

Muslims build very prestigious mosques, even in areas with a very small number of their own persuasion. In poorer countries **schools** are added, and **free education** is offered, in contrast to most Government schools. This is indeed attractive, and many parents cannot resist such temptation. In addition **philanthropic help** is offered to people in poor, drought-stricken areas. **Employment is offered, but to Muslims only.** This invariably raises the pragmatic question, "why not become a Muslim?"

The charity displayed, together with the sincerity, which can easily be gauged in many Muslims, plus the social and material benefits are convincing. And who can blame the people - unless they are committed Christians and have a goodly grounding in the Word of God, the Bible?

ISLAM IN AFRICA

"Africa is to be the first Islamic continent" one now hears quite frequently. Is this wishful thinking, or do Muslims pursue this goal in earnest? Reality tells us that the move is on.

Let us have a hard look at the advance of Islam in Africa: Representatives of 24 African states at Abuja in Nigeria in November 1989 founded The In its opening communiqué we are informed about its aims and purposes. It expresses understandably the legitimate desires of Muslims, such as the unification of all Muslims throughout Africa, the putting away of 'artificial boundaries', and the 're-instating' of a strong and united 'Umma' (= congregation of all Muslims) with the purpose of fulfilling the commands of Allah.

We will have to consider, however, the little syllable '*re*'. It keeps on occurring in this document: **'re'-instate the Umma in Africa, 're'-store the use of Arabic script in the vernacular, 're'-instate the application of the Shariah** etc. This means that a formerly existing situation is endeavoured to be restored, to be reinstated. This implies that there **was** an Umma in Africa, within which the local languages were written in Arabic lettering, and that Africans **were** under the Shariah law. But that is **not true**, excepting North Africa and perhaps very isolated cases when e.g. Ki-Swahili was written in Arabic script. Let us look at some of the statements:

The Conference notes the yearning of Muslims everywhere on the continent who have been deprived of their rights to be governed by the Shariah and urges them to intensify efforts in the struggle to reinstate the application of the Shariah.

The arising question certainly is how any country can be administered when two sets of laws are applied to different people? The Muslims in Britain are pushing for this, something that can only lead to either confrontation or disintegration.

Therefore, the 'establishment and application of the Shariah to all Muslims' can only mean disaster. It will inevitably lead to friction and oppression, as the example of Nigeria already displays. We find a worse dilemma in the Sudan, where the North is Islamic and the South pagan or Christian. Muslims have introduced the Shariah, but the non-Muslims refuse to accept this and are being under constant oppression.

Highly questionable also are the following objectives. The ISLAM IN AFRICA ORGANISATION intends:

- **to ensure the appointment of only Muslims into strategic national and international posts of member nation.**
- **to eradicate in all its forms and ramifications all non-Muslim religions in member nations (such religions shall include Christianity, Ahmadiyya and other tribal modes of worship unacceptable to Muslims'.**
- **to ensure that only Muslims are elected (!) to all political posts of member nations.**
- **to ensure the ultimate replacement of all Western forms of legal and judicial systems with the Shariah in all member nations before the next Islam in Africa Conference.**

Among the disclosed names of the member nations we find Nigeria and Tanzania which have no Muslim majority. A number of other nations have not been mentioned. These are likely to have an even lesser Muslim presence.

It is indeed noticeable by now that these aims are being implemented, and not only in Islamic states, but also in those with Muslim minorities like Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and even South Africa, where we find no proportional representation of Muslims in Government, but that they are exceedingly overrepresented.

May the figure of money be mentioned, which was 'generously donated' by the 'government and people of Nigeria' for the "Islamic Development Fund": **US\$ 21 billion!** (IAO communiqué) The Roman Catholic publication "Mission aktuell", which is the German official magazine of 'MISSIO', the Roman Catholic mission, reported that in the same year (1989) 'the Nigerian head of state', General Ibrahim B. Babangida, had 'a credit bank balance at the Arab-African International Bank of US\$ 57.48 billion". His chief of the army and two cabinet ministers had lesser amounts (US\$ 15.2; 17.8 and 24.9 billion).

ISLAM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In close agreement with the above development we find an article in the Turkish newspaper "Dünya" (1980). It speaks about Islamisation and says: '**The whole territory is to be 'islamicised ' before the year 2000 and in the Middle East in such a way that all living (people) who did not turn Muslims**, (the Coptic Christians, the Christians in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syrian (i.e. Syrian-orthodox Christians), Armenians, Nubians and Israelis), must be totally annihilated'.

We have to realize some hard facts: The Christians in Turkey and Lebanon have almost been eliminated. Christians in Egypt are under constant scrutiny and are dictated upon by the state. Christians and pagans in Southern Sudan are being exterminated. The press speaks of genocide. There is no freedom of religion in any of the North African countries, and in several countries in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan or Malaysia or Indonesia.

In 1981 the so-called '**Mecca Declaration**' was adopted by the 'THIRD ISLAMIC SUMMIT CONFERENCE OF KAABA'. Here are some extracts:

We have resolved to conduct Jihaad ('holy war') with all the means at our disposal so as to free our territory from occupation.

We declare that the oppression suffered by Muslim minorities and communities in many countries is a flagrant offence against the rights and dignity of man. We appeal to all states in which there are Islamic minorities to allow them full liberty.

We are convinced of the need to propagate the precepts of Islam and its cultural influence in Muslim societies and throughout the world.

Which Islamic territories were occupied by non-Muslims at the time of this summit? We have to read these lines, as it were, with Muslim eyes. It was, first of all Israel, the 'thorn in the flesh' of Islam, but also Southern Sudan, part of Chad, Northern Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, parts of Tanzania, Kenya and many others. The Islamic understanding is that, unless the Shariah is in force and an Islamic government in place, this is 'dhar-ul harb', territory which still needs to be conquered.

William Muir, one of the great and indeed very fair orientalist (1819-1905), made a statement which almost sounds like a prophetic utterance:

It is my conviction that the sword of Muhammad and the Qur'an are the most fatal enemies of civilization, liberty and truth which the world has yet known.

In this context we have to seriously ask the question in which countries Muslim minorities are suffering oppression? What kind of oppression is meant? Muslim minorities feel oppressed as long as they are not governed by the Shariah - which would amount to 'full liberty' according to Islam. The last paragraph confirms this in no uncertain terms. While Muslims vociferously demand freedom from oppression, they oppress Christian communities in their own countries. Indeed many human rights issues have been raised in this respect - without response.

Despite the alleged 'oppression' in the 1980's, every two weeks one mosque was opened in Britain, a rate of expansion similar to that taking place in France and Germany. Similar advances are made in many other countries.

As far back as the early 1980's, a document emerged from the **Islamic Foundation in Leicester (UK)** with clear statements of intent such as:

... the Islamic Movement (is) 'an organized struggle to change the existing society into an Islamic society based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah and make Islam, which is a code for entire life, supreme and dominant, especially in the socio-political spheres'.

... (the) framework will have to be based on recognizing the fact that the ultimate objective of the Islamic movement shall not be realized unless the struggle is made by locals. For it is only they, who have the power to change the society into an Islamic society.

"Watchman Update", Dec. 1991 by Dr. Clifford Denton

The Ayatollah Khomeini is reported to have said:

“If we want to gain the final victory, we will have to know exactly what is to be done. Else we will meet the same fate as Hitler, who committed suicide ... In the early days of Islam the unbelievers were constantly hit over the head with the sword to make them Muslims. Many were killed. One should not shrink back from becoming a martyr ... Up to date we did not kill a single human being, but only attacking wild beasts have been purified, arrested and put away”.

As a result many thousands have been executed.

That this is no joke can be concluded from some gruesome fact. In 2001 alone some 167.000 Christians were killed for their faith. That is 450 a day! And two thirds of them were martyred by Muslims. (Helmut Matthies, ideaSpektrum 9/2003)

Again we like to persuade the reader not to blame this on the Muslims he comes in contact with. This report was not compiled to blame any person, but to expose a religious system, which is imperialistic, oppressive and deeply anti-Christian.

THE CHRISTIAN ESTABLISHMENT ENDEAVOURS TO GET TO TERMS WITH ISLAM

The present setting of Islam in this world is indeed very threatening. It gains acceptance and profile, even in liberal 'Christian' circles.

There are several contributing factors. Muslims are aware that oil reserves do not last forever. Consequently, they have invested vast amounts of capital in industries of the developed countries, which secures a considerable influence in these. Subsequently, the press in these countries, fortified by the left-liberal premise from which they often operate, will rather be supportive towards Islam.

Quite in line with this is the liberal World Council of Churches (WCC). It seeks '**dialogue**' with other religions in order to learn from each other and to accept one another. In practice this **denounces and replaces the Christian witness of Jesus Christ**, as the only hope for mankind.

The Vatican sides, at least partly, with this, as can be implied from the prayer for peace arranged by the Pope at Assisi, to which representatives of all kinds of religions had been invited. At the Second Vatican Council the following statements were formulated:

The plan of God's salvation includes those who acknowledge the Creator, and in the first place among them **the Muslims**. (L.G.16)

The Church has a high regard for the Muslims ... unfortunately many hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims. **This sacred Council now pleads** with all to forget the past, and urges **that sincere efforts be made to achieve mutual understanding for the benefit of all**. Let them together preserve and promote peace, freedom, social justice and moral values. (N.A.3)

Unfortunately, it is true that the Church has fought bitter and bloody wars against Muslims, which, as we already observed, cannot be supported from the New Testament, but made hardly any move to present the Message of Grace to them.

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM

Islam is in many ways the antithesis to the biblical faith. How are we to react? The antidote for a power syndrome is love. How can one fight love?

We are not to fight Islam. We owe Christ's love to the Muslim people. We let them experience our attitude toward them in the spirit of Christ. And that love is patient and kind, it does not boast and is not proud. It is not rude or self-seeking (success orientation!) or easily angered. It also does not keep a record of wrongs. It protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres. And it rejoices in the truth. Therefore it does not fail and will not end.

Do we remember these words? They are all recorded in 1 Corinthians 13. This kind of love is our foundation for sharing of the Truth. And it is this love, which will urge us to be wise in our contact with Muslims (Colossians 4:5) and to be prepared to meet with them on their own ground (1 Peter 3:15). This attitude will motivate us to learn about Muslims and Islam and about the controversies they may bring up and how to respond to them. This is the very purpose of this seminar. So let us learn as much as we can to prepare ourselves for the launch of the rescue mission!

In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord!
Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone
who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.
But do this with gentleness and respect!

1 Peter 3:15

Recommended Literature for Chapter 2

Holy War in Islam, Abd Al-Masih, Light of Life, 71 pages

Shows how the Jihaad idea was part and parcel of original Islam and how the development of Islam based on the example of Muhammad's life is challenging the whole world due to the immense birth growth as part of "the holy war in Islam".

Is an Islamic World Empire Imminent?, Abd Al-Masih, Light of Life, 91 pages

Gives the background to developments in the Islamic world and in Israel up to today, including statistics about the Muslim world.

Ishmael, my Brother, compiled by Anne Cooper, MARC, Evangelical Missionary Alliance, 1993, 317 pages

A study book from the UK focusing primarily on Islam as faced in the West; includes activities, points for reflection and guidance for further reading. It covers the Christian witness, understanding Islam and Muslims in their cultural setting and the challenge of Islam today. The approach taken is non-confrontational. (pp. 229-301)

Islam under the Magnifying Glass, Abd Al-Masih, Light of Life, 139 pages

Shows the many faces of Islam by giving information about Allah, Muhammad, the Qur'an and the Shariah in comparison with the Christian point of view.

Islam Unveiled, Abdullah Al-Araby, The Pen versus the Sword, 1994, 44 pages

Written for the challenge of Islam in America where Islam is presented for Black Americans as the true identity in splendid light.

The Church in Africa takes note of the Islamic Agenda, LCA 1996, 8 pages

The pamphlet shows the challenge of Islam the church is facing today. Order as many copies as you need.

The Great Commission, You and the Muslims, Gerhard Nehls, LCA 1980, 135 pages

Challenges Christians to a sober assessment of the growth of Islam and to understand evangelism, the Muslim and Islam and then to reach Muslims with the Gospel.

Who Cares?, Gerhard Nehls, LCA 1992 revised, 32 pages

Why have Christians failed to reach Muslims in the past? How can the serious reader develop a strategy in reaching them? How could others be mobilized alongside? A simple yet profound eye-opener.

3. UNDERSTANDING EVANGELISM

GOD'S WORK OF EVANGELISM BEGAN IN ETERNITY

Man has an inborn conviction of God's existence

Augustin in his 'Confessions' (VII.xvii.23) calls the inborn consciousness or awareness of the existence of God the 'loving memory' of God, and underlines this by saying: "*You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You*".

Passages from the Psalms may allude to this:

The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the works of His hands ... night after night they display knowledge.

Psalm 19:1-2

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon, the stars ... what is man that you are mindful of him ..?

Psalm 8:5-6

In the Epistle to the Romans, we are told:

What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them, for since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - His eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made

Romans 1:19-20

The existence and function of the universe and the utter complexity of life exclude the possibility that creation originated by mere chance without a guiding high intelligence behind it. Every gene in every living DNA molecule is bursting with information, and information essentially needs a source. In the book Ecclesiastes we are instructed:

God ... has made everything beautiful in its time. He also has set eternity in the hearts of men.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

Franz Delitzsch in his commentary on this verse rightly explains:

... no instinct in the natural world is an illusion, so also the impulse toward the eternal, which is natural to man, is no illusion. There is

an instinct peculiar to his (i.e. man's) nature impelling him to pass beyond fragmentary knowledge and to comprehend eternity.

Man carries an 'image' of God in his mind unless influenced by religious or philosophical instruction. People untouched by that when exchanging their perceptions of God are likely to have very similar notions, however undefined they may be.

Religion attempts to explain this inner awareness

In real life almost all people are living in some kind of religious environment. In this context religion 'explains' by its teaching that Krishna, Buddha, Yahweh or Allah is that God. The New Testament implies that:

Now, what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you

Acts 17:23

Paul then proceeds to explain who God really is, and what He expects man to be. All religions try to fill the naturally undefined perception that man has of God. Teaching stands over against teaching. At this point the Truth question ought to come to the fore. **It is more than just a matter of like or dislike, it concerns the establishment of what is true and what not.** This process is painful and may even be traumatic. It needs openness and courage to new ideas and readiness and honesty to choose, even if the consequences might be rejection or persecution.

We may divide our perception of God into two parts:

- What we intuitively 'know' (**inward** knowledge) and
- What we have been taught (**outward** knowledge).

I like to suggest that when a person earnestly prays, his/her perception of God is more determined by the sub-conscious, intuitive, built-in 'knowledge' rather than by teaching.

When a Muslim and a Christian pray - and I like to exclude here the ritual worship when doing '*salat*' - they are not as far apart as when discussing the nature of Allah - God.

**It is, therefore, wise not to begin the building of a spiritual relationship on a point of doctrine, but rather on our perception of God.
This means that we begin with what unites us
and later turn to the points of difference.**

**The Gospel is really only meaningful to a listener,
when he or she has understood the true nature of God
in His absolute holiness and righteousness.
The standard of God is expressed in His Law,
which unveils the nature of man in his depravation, sinfulness
and utter inability to save himself.
Then only the desperate need for salvation, atonement and
reconciliation to God becomes apparent.**

What we must not allude, however, is that we are all believing and serving the same God. The intuitive knowledge is by no means a comprehensive or even a saving knowledge! But God wants us to know Him in a personal way.

WHAT EVANGELISM IS ALL ABOUT

Evangelism is an English word which is derived from the Greek work '*evangelizo*' = to bring good news, which is also translated as 'preach'. We already understand that it is not only what we say which matters, but equally what the hearer understands.

The Good News, the 'Gospel' in a nutshell could be formulated somewhat like this: It is, of course, that God in His holiness and righteousness has made a plan to rescue us from the alienation and separation from Himself, which is a result of our sin. God is willing, even longing, to pardon, to save us, to be our salvation (Jesus = salvation!). He entered our world in Christ. Although totally incarnate in human appearance and nature (Phil. 2:6-8), He did not sin and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice in our stead to suffer and die for our sins on the cross. If we accept His pardon personally by recognizing Him as our Saviour, we are redeemed. We are reconciled to God, and become by means of 'adoption' His children and by that heirs of eternal life with God. By His merit alone, without any of our own doing, we now are assured of eternal joy in God's presence, in heaven.

This is concisely expressed in Scripture:

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation - if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the Gospel. This is the Gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed.

Colossians 1:21-23

Our salvation was affected by a once-for-all act. God's side of salvation is ever sure. True children of God will always endeavour and strive to please the Father and to turn away from further sin, although they are not able to become sinless. They want to do everything in a spirit of gratitude. The Holy Spirit of God, Who lives in them, guides them and assists them to follow God, to understand spiritual Truth, and to find constant cleansing for any sin.

EVANGELISM HAS A HOLY CALLING

All calling to evangelism and discipleship is holy, because the call for it comes from God. Our Lord Jesus Himself says:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of **all** nations ... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.

Matthew 28:18-20

The Lord left no doubt about His will and purpose:

The Lord ... is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but **everyone** to come to repentance

2 Peter 3:9

God our Saviour ... wants **all** men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:4

We must take it that when God speaks of ALL, He means all!

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And **how** can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And **how** can they hear without someone preaching to them?

Romans 10:14

While we rejoice over so many nations and tribes that have heard and in a measure responded to the Gospel, too many have never really had a chance to hear and understand. One of those groups, in fact the largest, are the Muslims, now over 1 billion people! Admittedly, some of these have 'heard', but with Muslim ears. These have been very carefully programmed to misunderstand our message.

**Are we aware
that about half the population of Africa
is made up of Muslims?**

If we would try to reach **all** and **every one** of these, how many of the Christian workers would **you** have sent to the Muslims? You say half? Or even more than half? I would have done the same. But in fact by 1975 only about 250 of 16.000 missionaries working in Africa, went to the Muslim half of the population. Over the last twenty years the Islamic agenda has taken a much stronger public profile and Christian missions among Muslims has been given greater priority, but still not in adequate proportions. But certainly this is not just the task of expatriate missionaries.

We maintain that in obedience to God's Great Commission, every follower of Christ, who lives in the proximity of Muslims, should prepare himself and go to his Muslim neighbour or colleague to share the Good News.

WHY MUSLIM EVANGELISM?

Because:

- it is undoubtedly God's will as expressed in His Word.
- our love for God is measured by our devotion to His will.
- the growth of the Muslim population makes it all the more urgent.

While the world population at present doubles every 56 years, the Muslim population does so every 27 years. This is by biological growth. The world Muslim population increased from 150 million in 1900 to 850 million in 1993.

THE HISTORY OF MISSIONS TO MUSLIMS

Mission to Muslims is The Great Omission!

Perhaps because Muslims are probably the people most resistant to the Gospel, Church history has comparatively few records about efforts by the Church to reach out to Muslims. The infamous "crusades" resulted in mistrust, hatred and misery on both sides. In no ways can such actions as the crusades be derived from the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ!

John of Damascus (appr. 675 - 750 AD),
Francis of Assisi (1182 - 1226),
Raymon Lull (1235-1316) and, more recently
Henry Martyn (1781 - 1812),

C.G. Pfander,
W. St. Clair-Tisdall (19th century) and
W.H. Temple-Gairdner,
Samuel Zwemer and
Charles Marsh (20th century) just about complete the list of recognized missionaries to the Muslim world.

The underlying reasons for this apathy in mission are complex:

- **Lack of motivation** (the recruiting power of missionaries on home assignment was very limited because of their limited number and by that their exposure)
- **Lack of expected 'success'**. Few are prepared to work and live without the prospect of results in a success-orientated society. This is a fatal mistake, because it construes the belief, that the number of converts portrays the success of a missionary. No one can convert but Christ alone! A missionary has been successful (although this cannot be statistically established) when he has intelligently and for a Muslim perceivably and understandably shared the Gospel with him
- **Lack of funding**. Who likes to support a missionary who possibly works for years without 'planting' churches or even 'making' converts?

It is God's will that:

ALL should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)

NO ONE should perish (2 Peter 3:9)

ALL men should be saved (1 Timothy 2:4)

ALL should come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

Therefore Christ commanded His disciples at **ALL** times to go to **ALL** people (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-18).

PRINCIPLES OF MUSLIM EVANGELISM

A careful study and application of the following scriptures will be the perfect foundation for any evangelism, teaching, admonition and service for God:

Muslims do, as a general rule, not come to Christian meetings. That leaves personal and media evangelism the only real options.

It is our conviction that **Muslims could best be reached through these**. This is vastly different from preaching. A preacher will hardly be challenged on what he says. In person to person evangelism we are! That demands specific skills, which a Christian who wants to witness to Muslims must acquire.

A witness should be well acquainted with:

- **the Bible** and more particularly, **the Gospel**
- **communication** that is truly understandable to 'outsiders'
- **the Muslim**, the way he sees himself, the world around him and how he feels about his own faith as well as Christianity
- **cultural** and religious **issues** which inhibit the understanding of the Gospel
- **the spiritual battle** we are engaging in when witnessing to Muslims.

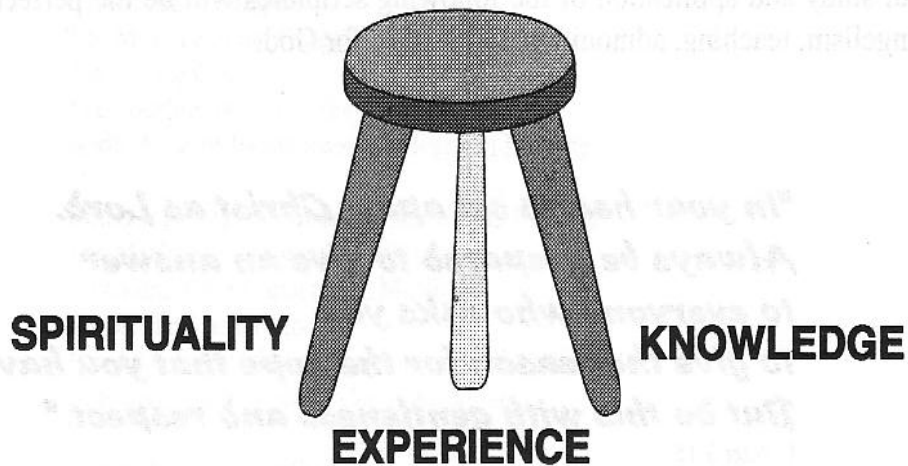
THE THREE 'LEGS' OF MUSLIM EVANGELISM

We may liken (Muslim) evangelism to a stool with three legs. These may be seen as representing:

SPIRITUALITY i.e. personal sanctity and prayer-relationship with God is the foundation;

KNOWLEDGE of the Bible, its major doctrines and the ability to substantiate its truth, but also a fair knowledge of Islam, communication and related fields. This can be obtained by learning.

EXPERIENCE, which cannot be obtained from a book or in a classroom. It comes by doing - even if we make mistakes - as long as we learn from these.



I suggest that we hold to this order too: Spirituality - Knowledge - Experience.

EVANGELISM AND PRAYER

You will have wondered why so much has been said about knowledge, understanding, and methods in Muslim evangelism and so little on prayer. What has the priority?

Let me reflect on the statement made above. There are three components in Muslim Evangelism:

**Prayer (or spirituality)
Understanding (or knowledge) and
Experience.**

Neither is a substitute for another!

When speaking about prayer, we deal with one of those words that may have very different meaning to various people. Every true Christian will constantly praise, worship and thank God, but also seek guidance, protection and assistance from Him. Obviously it is not our eloquence in praying, nor the length (elaboration) of it that is crucial.

It is God's prerogative to respond, in accordance with His wisdom and power. While faithfulness, sincerity and right attitude towards God are important factors, we accept that the power of God to perform is coupled with His wisdom. He knows best, both time and measure of His actions, and we may safely trust Him in that. If God can do and knows everything - why pray at all?

Because God has honoured us to be His co-workers. He draws us into His confidence. Evangelism is our action on God's behalf. We cannot do it without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit. Yet we are His partners. Being aware of this, **prayer becomes our siding with God to achieve His will and purpose in and through us. So, our dependence on, and devotion to God, makes prayer an absolutely indispensable part of evangelism.**

CONTENTIOUS ISSUES

Aggressive methods will invariably cause more harm than good. This seems to be an obvious statement, yet in practice many Christians don't abide by it.

A Christian witness to Muslims should also be careful and wise when airing his/her **political sentiments or convictions**. To openly attack Islam or take sides against an Islamic leader like Idi Amin, when he was still in power, or Saddam Hussein, Gaddafi, Yassir Arafat or bin Laden and the *al-Ka'eda* serves little purpose and is not our task to perform.

Likewise, a ‘crusader mentality’ is not befitting a Christian approach, **be it in public rallies or in ‘Anti-Halaal-Campaigns’ where Christians have been known to collect signatures against the almost exclusive sale of *halaal* meat in supermarkets.** That is hardly our calling.

THE ‘UNTOUCHABLES’ IN ISLAM

Allah, the Qur’an, Islam and Muhammad

These are what one may term **the untouchables** to a Muslim. A critique of Muslim leaders, certain practices or a political issue is likely to be discussed by and with Muslims without a problem. But touch the untouchables and expect a very strong reaction.

On the other hand, one can hardly avoid speaking at some time or other honestly about Islam and its contrast to the Biblical message. Muslims often have a very romantic understanding of Islam. They suppress anything negative in the character and behaviour of Muhammad and his teachings and promote only the positive, invariably fanciful and often fictional facets of Islam. This decidedly hinders them to truly consider the message of the Bible and by that to realize the absolute superiority and trustworthiness of the Gospel.

However, in a spiritual conversation it is really impossible not to touch on these topics. How can one do this without undue offence? With love for our Muslim friend and love for the Truth.

Repeatedly one may be asked what we think of **Allah, Islam, the Qur’an, or Muhammad.**

How can one respond without unnecessary offence, using the given opportunity? Let us look at a model on how one can approach such a sensitive topic:

What do you think of Islam?

How are we to react when asked our opinion on any of the untouchables? Muslims obviously expect either a positive or uninformed answer and seek to expound Islam by such a question. I always found it best to turn the tables.

You want me to say what I think about Islam? That is not an easy question to answer. Both of us treasure our religion and organize our whole life around it. We put our hope in it for time and eternity. Yet, to you I am an outsider with different convictions.

In answering your question I am likely to contradict part of what you believe. Therefore I want you to know and be assured that there is no malice in what I will say. Because I honour and treasure you as my brother in humanity, I also owe you my honest opinion. So, how or where can I start?

While I am touched by your devotion to Allah, your religion and your prophet, I have to ask myself, whether I would genuinely consider to become a Muslim and why – or why not. In the light of this let me try to formulate what is in my mind.

You know that I am a Christian and naturally compare other options with what I have. If I were convinced that Islam is the right way - and that must be approved by God - I would surely not be a Christian, but a Muslim. So far nobody has convinced me.

The healing of our broken relationship with God is the only thing in life that really matters. It is our only hope to spend eternity in His Presence. Therefore, false information about God and His proposed offer to receive pardon for our sin would mean no contact, no forgiveness, and no peace with Him. The consequence would be eternal separation from Him and that is hell. In the light of that, we have an obligation not just to be nice, but also honest to each other.

While the Biblical message and the message of Islam have a number of similarities, there are also existential differences. If one is true, the other cannot be.

One of the major disagreements between the Bible and the Qur'an is who Jesus really is and what he did. While the Qur'an says a lot of good about him, it states clearly that Jesus is "no more than a prophet" and that he was neither crucified nor killed. By that token he did not reconcile us to God, the Father, as the Bible teaches. The truth about that is crucial. If the qur'anic teaching is right, all Christians have added a partner to God, which is idolatry. In addition they believe that Jesus took their sins on himself and suffered the punishment for these as a sacrifice, when he died. This, according to the Qur'an is equal to unbelief. So according to the Qur'an Christians would clearly believe and live in contradiction to God and His Word, and that leads to hell.

If, on the other hand, the biblical message is true, a Muslim, even if he tries ever so hard to live up to the standard of the Law of God and follow the Pillars of Islam and the Sunnah, will essentially fail. No one has ever reached the standard that God's holiness and righteousness demands, for nothing unclean will ever be able to enter His Presence. We all accept that some people are decidedly better than other. But nobody is perfect enough to be accepted to live forever in God's heaven on his/her own right, by his/her own merit. We are all hopelessly lost unless God does something for us. And that He did, when He sent Jesus.

Which of the two each other excluding statements is true? That we have to know! So it is our first duty to establish the dependability of our respective sources. We can

gratefully acknowledge that God provided us with the means to find out without a shadow of a doubt.

Many passages in the Bible tell us that we have to verify the truth of what a prophet speaks. One criterion is that a message that is from God must be verified by unpredictable prophecies. When these are fulfilled, we can be sure that it must come from God. We are warned not to accept any message that does not carry a seal of this divine proof. That seal is fulfilled prophecy (see Deuteronomy 18:21-22; Zechariah 4:9; Isaiah 41:21; 44:7,26; Amos 3:7; Jeremiah 28:9; Deuteronomy 13:1-4 etc.).

Some 700 to 1000 years before Jesus was born, long before anyone could even imagine that something like that could happen, God told His prophets in much detail about the coming and life of Jesus. He predicted the time of his coming (Daniel 9:24-26) and that his mother would be a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). He foretold his place of birth (Micah 5:2), that he would be 'God among us' (Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6), and that he would prove his power by signs and wonders (Isaiah 35:4-5). And it tells us explicitly that his hands and feet would be pierced (Psalm 22:15-18) and that he would suffer and die for our sins (Isaiah 53). But God also predicted that he would rise again from the dead (Psalm 16:10). This and much, much more we can check out and find it to be part of the recorded life of Jesus. Could there be any reason why I – and you – should discard this truly divine sign, given to us in order to be able to distinguish between the Word of God, and the word of a man?

You have asked me about what I think of Islam. Maybe I deviated somewhat, but my answer is that in the light of what I already outlined, I prefer to be a Christian. As a Christian believer I have the assurance that what I believe carries God's unmistakable seal. I have the assurance that my sin is forgiven that God loves me and grants me to be at peace with Him and that when I leave this world, I will go home to Him.

But what Jesus said is not only true for me. It is equally true for you. He stated: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me!" (John 14:6). You, as everybody else, will have to come to grips with that claim, honestly check its dependability as compared with the statements of Islam or any other religion for that matter, and exercise your God given faculty to decide which way you will take. You may have to clear out a misconceptions. You may have to find an answer all the doubts that are still in your mind. It may take a little time to do it. But for God's sake – do it! I will do my utmost to stand by you, to help you get the needed answers. But the decision to obey and follow God and what He revealed, no one can make for you!

Muslims are not used to such kind of reasoning. The given example provides:

1. An assessment of the differences between Islam and the Bible
2. The reason why as Christians we question the veracity of Islam
3. The reason why we can fully trust the Bible
4. The message of the Gospel
5. A challenge to consider and come to Jesus.

And it is presented in a kind manner with the least personal offence to the listener.

To continue we should further try to establish who God really is:

- He is a personal God.
- He cares.
- He gets involved in our world.
- He listens to us.
- We can approach Him as His children.
- He wills well for us.
- While we decidedly revere Him, we are not frightened of Him.
- We fully confide in Him alone and need no other agencies.
- He is not preoccupied with Himself so that He has no time for us.
- He does not exercise revenge when we fail and approach Him for forgiveness of our sin.
- Unlike the description of God in the Qur'an, He is trustworthy, for He has committed Himself in His Word and will not retract even a letter from it.
- We know where we stand with Him, for if we confess our sins in true repentance, He will forgive us, for He promised in His Word to do so.
- Provided we approached God for forgiveness the way He told us, we can indeed rely that 'we have been saved!'
- We can gratefully acknowledge that we have been forgiven, that the former separation from God is now breached.
- When we die, we know where we will go.

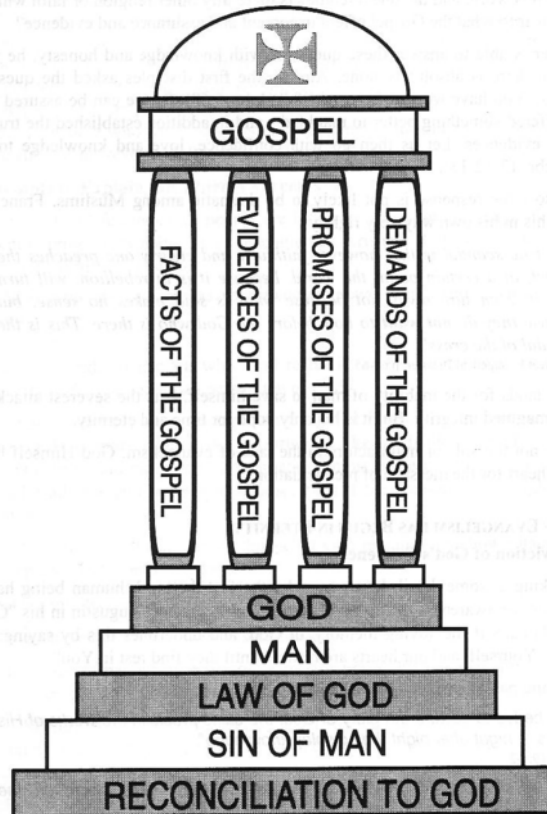
To a Muslim these are possibly presumptuous statements: Allah is not predictable. If he were so that would belittle his power. He is free to act as he wills. Nothing commits or binds him. He can withdraw his word, and has evidently done so!

**Evangelism is the sharing of the Gospel.
The Gospel explains salvation.
Salvation is an act of God. It is a free offer to all mankind.**

THE FOURFOLD EXPRESSION OF THE GOSPEL

The illustration depicts the foundation of the Gospel and the four pillars on which it rests. The foundation signifies the need for a basic understanding of God, man as God views him, the dividing factor, which is sin as it is identified by the Law of God, and the way to find reconciliation.

The four pillars are to demonstrate the four aspects of the Good News, as we find them in the Bible. We examine these.



1. The facts of the Gospel

The Gospel is so full of content that it is practically not possible to present it in one evening or two without the recipient having some background knowledge. In our streamlined no-nonsense society in which few bother to study the 'small print', we have become used to uniform approaches that are supposed to secure (instant) results. These do not work with Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists or other people who are not acquainted with the Christian value system and terminology. All too often we will find in the quick-fix methods an illusion of communication. An intelligent and binding decision cannot really be made without the recipient having basically understood the message. What then comprises the Good News? What are the facts of the Gospel? We already looked at this and, because of its importance, repeat it:

GOD is eternal, holy, almighty, all-knowing, all-present and righteous. He is the creator of all and has a claim on all His creation, and that includes our lives. He is not as an impersonal, remote super power, but a personal, loving God.

MAN stands in stark contrast to God. As everything else he was created for a purpose. He was the object of God's love and meant to be closely related to Him. For that reason he has been created in God's likeness. Unlike all other creatures he was not governed by instinct, but rather enabled to choose and make decisions concerning loyalties and life style. But man chose to violate the intention and will of God. He did that consciously, willingly and constantly. The first sin led to the "Fall of Man", and this resulted in a permanent persisting urge in man to **SIN**. This caused the inner separation of man from God. C.S. Lewis in his book "*The Problem of Pain*" says:

We must look for ... sin on a deeper and more timeless level than that of social morality.

This act of self-will on the part of the creature, which constitutes an utter falseness to its true creaturely position, is sin. For the difficulty about sin is that it must be very heinous or secret, else its consequences would not be so terrible.

Sin is man's 'declaration of independence' from God, his assumption to be able to live without Him in time and eternity. The Bible identifies how sin appears. The lack of trust in God is sin (Romans 14:23). The transgression of the Law of God is sin (1. John 4:3). In fact all unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17), and it is inexcusable too (Romans 1:20; 2:1; John. 15:22) (though not unforgivable!).

They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.
Ephesians 4:18-19

What sin is, is defined by the **LAW**. While it is right to drive on the left side of the road in Britain, this is an offence in France, where the law demands that traffic should move on the right lane of a road.

I would not have known what sin was except through the Law.
Romans 7:7.

God gave the Law to counsel and guide man, but man, including all of us, broke the Law repeatedly. God's diagnosis is depressing:

The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that **every inclination of the thought of his heart was only evil all the time.**

Genesis 6:5

This appears to be a rather harsh judgment, but that is how God sees man. Depravity resulting from sin has made man insensitive to sense and understand God's position. Sin is not just the trespassing of the one or other rule, or the omission to do a right thing, as Muslims view sin. It causes the total depravity of man in all his ways. This is constantly displayed in his preposterous assumption to be able to help himself out of this dilemma. Man's pride goes as far as to assume that he can earn merit before God.

This blindness regarding the holiness of God leads to sin, which to his own detriment hinders man to seek, see and accept God's offer of **reconciliation**, because it seems unnecessary to him.

From the beginning God offered atonement and reconciliation to Himself through the blood of a sacrifice. All those who believed God offered their sacrifice for sin and made thus peace with God. Ultimately JESUS CHRIST is that only sacrifice of God who takes (potentially) away the sin of all humanity (John 1:29). But this offer of God must be accepted and received personally. There is no other way (Acts 4:12).

This offer is safe-vouched by the already mentioned evidences embedded in the Word of God. Gratitude to Christ for this total liberation of the past and present, and His power which operates in reconciled man (Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:2; 2 Peter 1:4; 2 Corinthians 3:18), restores man to his original position and purpose.

In this new position man "participates in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). He becomes part of God's plan to help rescue mankind out of the world of sin and blindness. God created man to be the object of His love. True, born again believers enjoy this love and the closeness to the triune personal God. They respond by offering their love and worship. This is the consummation of God's purpose. - These are the facts of the Gospel.

2. The evidence for the truth of the Gospel

Many people need objective evidence to show that they can rest assured and build their lives on the biblical message. Muslims, perhaps more than others, need all the supporting evidence we can give to come to the conclusion that the Bible is the Word of God, which can be fully trusted.

The Apostles used this method extensively (Acts 2:25 ff.; 3:18-24; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:3; 1 John 1:1-3; 2 Peter 1:16-21). (For a closer look at the eye-witness, historical and prophetic evidences please turn to 'The Islamic Christian Controversy'). From the given Scriptures we conclude:

- a. The Apostles quoted OT prophecies and challenged the people to consider the implication of their fulfillment to establish their 'case'. In the Gospel according to Matthew alone we read at least 25 times phrases like: '... as the prophets fore-told...!'
- b. Peter in Jerusalem refers to the crucifixion and death of Christ just 7 weeks after the event, which is strongly denied by all Muslims. Neither then, nor later did the Jews deny these facts. They were the ones to know and were unfavorably disposed towards the Gospel. We can take it for granted "that nothing has escaped" their "notice, because it was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26). How do we assume the Jews would have acted, if these statements were not true and common knowledge (Luke 24:18)?
- c. Paul refers to the numerous (then still living) eyewitnesses (1 Corinthians 15:3-6). We may well imply, that he meant to encourage doubters in Corinth to verify his claim. In addition he repeatedly states that these facts were "according to the Scriptures", i.e. in fulfillment of the OT prophecies.
- d. Luke refers to his eyewitnesses and a careful investigation of "everything from the beginning" in an attempt "to write an orderly account".
- e. Jesus Christ showed Himself after His crucifixion and death to the eyewitnesses "and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive over a period of 40 days" (Acts 1:3). There was no need to prove His death. The Romans only permitted His body to be taken after His death was confirmed (John 19:33-37).
- f. John, the Apostle, begins his epistle by pledging himself as a surety and eyewitness of the life and death (John 1:7) of Christ.
- g. Peter, just before his martyrdom (2 Peter 1:13-15) testifies to the truth of Christ's deity, which he confirms as an eyewitness, however, not without also referring to "the more sure word of prophecy".

Recognizing the need to substantiate the facts of the Gospel, the Apostles used what God had given them, to state their case honestly and soberly, presenting the evidence with it. Why don't we? Muslims need to see how strong God's case really is!

3. The conditions, expectations, and demands of the Gospel

When sharing the Gospel one must not forget to mention that God lays claim on a person when he/she commits his/her life to Him. The acknowledgement of Christ as Saviour is tied to the need to accept him also as Lord with all the consequences that implies.

The Lord confronted the people by telling them:

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower, will he not first sit down and consider the cost...?

Luke 14:28

People we witness to, must know what God expects from them when they turn to Him: Repentance (= turning away from the old lives), and baptism (Acts 2:38; 3:19), faith (Acts 10:43; 13:38-39), the willingness to obey (Hebrews 5:9) and the determination to continue to the end (Hebrews 3:6; Revelation 2:10; Matthew 24:13). While the sinner ought to strive for salvation, the believer will strive for holiness without which no one shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:13-19). Finally God wants us to be His witnesses (Matthew 28:18-20). Again these words, strange to most people, need to be defined.

The Gospel is Good News. But listeners must be made aware that it is bad News for those who reject the Good News. There is some reckoning and reasoning to be done (Isaiah 1:18).

4. The promises of the Gospel

This is a wonderful note on which to conclude our presentation of the Gospel. What an abundance of hope, joy and encouragement God has given to us! Just consider: He assured us of His mercy (Psalm 103:7), forgiveness (Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 59:2; 43:25; 44:22; Jeremiah 31:34 etc.), eternal life (John 10:22-28; Matthew 25:34, 46b), a new life here on earth (2 Corinthians 5:17), rest (Matthew 11:28; Revelations 14:13), His continued presence (Matthew 28:20b). He wants to give us what the whole world is striving for, but cannot find elsewhere: love and joy and peace (John 14:27; 15:9, 11; Galatians 5:22). He also promises heaven to His followers (John 14:3) where His beloved shall reign with Him (Revelations 5:10). To do our tasks on earth well, we are also given the needed gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8-10; Ephesians 4:11; Romans 12:6-8, Acts 2:38b).

At the end of this chapter we have to ask ourselves an honest and heart-searching question:

Could we think of something the heart, mind, and conscience of man could need or want to be totally satisfied in this world and the one to come?

Is there any other religion or faith that can offer anything better or more desirable to what the Gospel offers in content, assurance and evidence?

We can honestly confess that there is absolutely none. Already the first disciples asked Jesus the question, 'Where shall we go? You have words of eternal life!' (John 6:68). So we can be assured that nobody has ever offered something better to mankind - and in addition established the truth of it with supporting evidences. Let us then go with confidence, love and knowledge to share these Good News with others! (Hebrews 13:12-13).

But even these facts, evidences and promises are not likely to create a dramatic response among Muslims. Francis Schaeffer expressed this in his own way very rightly:

The true scandal is that however faithfully and clearly one preaches the Gospel, at a certain point, the world, because it is in rebellion, will turn from it. Men turn away not because what is said makes no sense, but because **they do not want** to bow before the God who is there. This is the 'scandal of the cross'.

The Great Evangelical Disaster', p.64-65

The cross stands for the inability of man to save himself. It is a severe attack on his pride and assumed integrity. But it is his only hope for time and eternity.

We are grateful to acknowledge that we are neither the sole nor the main actors in the task of evangelism. God Himself has prepared the human heart for the message of reconciliation. He will draw to Himself every true seeker (Jeremiah 31:3; John 6:44 and 12:32).

THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF EVANGELISM

We have looked at the positive side of evangelism, what is negative about it? That it calls all people away from counterfeit religion. Satan has managed to infiltrate mankind by offering all kinds of 'ways to God'. But there is only ONE WAY, and that is our Lord Jesus. Even certain churches deny that by calling to a 'dialogue' with other religions, seeking agreement with other 'truths'.

But according to the Bible anyone seeking salvation cannot really find it without Jesus, who is God's only provision to obtain forgiveness and by that reconciliation to Him. This essentially leads to a turn-about (= repentance), a change (= conversion) of direction. It involves the admission and confession of our sin to God, the expression of our will to forsake all evil and to follow and obey God. As our "Yes!" at the wedding ceremony decidedly also means a "No!" to all other sexual or erotic partnerships, so our "Yes!" to Jesus excludes all other spiritual relationships. Faithfulness is one of the great themes of the Bible.

So also a Muslim must realize that to follow Jesus essentially means a break with Islam. As a rule a Muslim will realize this him/herself. If not, there will come a time to make it clear to him/her that one cannot believe in a Jesus who died for our sin, and one who did not.

4. THE MUSLIM

NOT ALL MUSLIMS ARE ALIKE

Here a most important statement must be made. We may by now have come to a point where we begin to fear or resent the Muslims. We have to correct that:

**Muslims, like all other people, are a creation of God –
and are loved by Him!**

They have a zeal for God - but it is unenlightened (Romans 10:2).

**Our Lord Jesus died for every Muslim
as much as He did for you!**

We have to differentiate between the religion of Islam and the people who follow it for lack of better knowledge and understanding. Islam does not offer salvation or assurance of forgiveness, and those people who grew or grow up under its teaching know no better!

They have little chance to believe, because they have not sufficiently, effectively and convincingly enough heard and understood the Gospel. That is certainly not their fault. To some degree it is ours - if our evangelistic effort excludes the Muslims in our environment - or if our effort does not take into consideration the altogether different mind-set and understanding of a Muslim.

Besides the sects within Islam, we find a great variety of people:

- orthodox and liberal Muslims
- those who are only Qur'an orientated, and others who major on the Hadiths or both
- blind fanatics and wonderfully considerate Muslims.
- each Muslim is following one of the four law systems (Hanifa, ibn Malik, ash-Shaffi'i or Hanbal)
- the mystics who follow the teachings of their '*murshid*' or '*pir*' (inspired soul guide), those who venerate departed 'saints' and yet others who reject both
- Muslims who obey the 'letter' and others who try to spiritualize Islam
- the educated and the simple
- rural and urban people
- people with different cultures, habits, characters, needs, desires, tastes, temperaments, social and ethnic backgrounds etc. Many of these follow 'folk Islam', i.e. a form of Islam, which accommodates a considerable part of their former religion and tradition, including witchcraft.

As in every other social group, Muslims differ in character, education, temperament, cultural background, doctrinal position etc. Although *rituals* and *forms* may be quite uniform, the differences remain.

MUSLIMS ARE CONFIDENT TO BE ON THE WINNING SIDE

Western 'Christian' politicians go far out of their way to accommodate the demands of Islam. They realize that enmity to Islam can backfire badly; they are scared of worldwide terrorism. While Christianity as a whole seems to crumble, Islam seems to take its place.

All this has boosted the self-confidence of most Muslims. After many years in oblivion, they are in the limelight. They are confident that their time has come for Islam to replace the decadent remnant of the Christian area.

MUSLIMS ARE THE PRODUCT OF THE ISLAMIC SYSTEM

Islam demands submission to Allah's will – as expressed in the IMAN and DEEN and the SUNNAH.

This presupposes the identification with the system and faith of Islam. That has led to the erection of a 'wall' around the Islamic community, particularly for those living in a non-Muslim context. This reminds us of the wall within the formerly divided city of Berlin. The wall was built by the communist regime. Officially it served as a line of defence against Western democratic influence. In reality, however, it was to prevent the mass exodus of people to the West. The psychological 'wall' around Muslims is to keep Islam and all that goes with it **in**, and everything else **out**. And those inside are not aware of the real purpose. Every Christian witness may be viewed as a 'missionary' and this causes the defenses to go up.

We remember that:

ISLAM = submission
MUSLIM = one who submits

Consequently, a Muslim views himself as a slave of Allah. Every Muslim must submit to the Sunnah and by that to Allah.. It is '*ta-abudi*'; that means it has to be obeyed, not analyzed, considered or tested:

*Allah's law is not to be penetrated by intelligence, it is ta'abbudi ,
i.e. man has to accept it without criticism, with its apparent incon-*

sistencies and its incomprehensible decrees, as wisdom into which it is impossible to inquire. One must not look in it for causes in our sense, nor for principles; it is based on the will of Allah, which is bound by no principles.

Dictionary of Islam. by H.A.R. Gibbs & J.H. Kramers, p. 525

MUSLIMS ARE 'UNDER THE LAW'

A Muslim essentially lives 'under law' in contrast to the Biblical 'under grace'. (Galatians 3:10; 5:3-4; Romans 3:28; 8:3-4; 10:4).

Yet his position cannot be compared with the dispensation of the people under the 'Old Covenant', for there was a distinct law of cause and effect, which enabled every person to assess his position before God. It also clearly offered atonement with God.

Law is rule by power. - Grace is rule by love.

Whether he admits it or not, a Muslim is under total submission to the Shariah and dominated by the two Islamic concepts of:

Halaal = Lawful or permitted
Haraam = Unlawful or forbidden

This will govern his life in all its aspects.

We have to understand that...

...to a Muslim religion consists of performing prescribed tasks. There is a long list of religious duties that have to be observed every day. No Muslim can ever claim to have fulfilled these satisfactorily. Consequently, a sincere Muslim will always be aware of his/her shortcomings, which carry consequences! He/she can therefore never assume to rest in God and to be at peace with Him. He/she does not even know whether or not his/her sins are forgiven.

When a Muslim breaks the law, he is expected to compensate for this by some merit (almsgiving, extra prayer, extra fasting, the pilgrimage or some good deed).

For the rest, he relies on Allah's mercy, grace and forgiveness, which are often mentioned in the Qur'an, but for which **no assurance** is offered. Thus a Muslim can never be sure about his standing before Allah.

A **Muslim** who is somewhat acquainted with the Qur'an and the Hadith, **fears death and judgment** and with that the punishment of the grave. He cannot be certain at all about the outcome of the Last Judgment and his eternal destiny. He hopes (and even that is not qur'anic!), however, that after having been punished for his sins in hell, he will be admitted to paradise. Perhaps this is a reflection of the purgatory.

But a sin he fears above all others is '*shirk*', the 'unpardonable sin' of adding a partner to Allah. He would do that when accepting Christ, which would be paramount to the acceptance of 'another god'.

Even so, his being a Muslim provides him with:

- a sense of belonging
- a set of convictions about Islam, the Qur'an and Muhammad
- a sense of Islam's superiority
- but also a fear of rejection and hell. And this accounts for his anti-Christian sentiments.

SUBMISSION AND FEAR MADE MUSLIMS RESISTANT TO THE GOSPEL

A Muslim is probably more resistant
to the Christian message than any other person.
His mind is programmed to misunderstand the Christian message.

But a loving and considerate approach weakens his resistance. To assume that people with that background and so different in their thinking can all be approached and reached by the same method as nominal Christians is simplistic and quite unrealistic.

Therefore, this course does not want to provide a step by step "Do-it-yourself" program, but rather suggests principles, which can help Christians to select the best way of witnessing in every given situation and opportunity.

It must be emphasized also, that Muslim evangelism (as any other) cannot be learned in a classroom or simply from books. Knowledge can neither substitute experience nor Christian character.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ABSOLUTES

Our worldview and our value system govern our thinking and behaviour. We ought to consider this when meeting with Muslims. Their worldview and value system have influenced their attitude towards the Christian message – as we are influenced to be suspicious towards views we deem to be false.

The Muslim we meet does not live in isolation. He is an integrated part of his family, clan, tribe and community. This determines his thinking and his decisions. It also heightens his fear and apprehension for change significantly. It will be well worth to consider the 'group behaviour factor' when we witness to a Muslim.

The authority conflict

To a Christian the final authority on all matters is God and we refer here exclusively to **Yahweh Elohim, the God of Israel, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**. What we know about Him besides His revelation in creation, we find in the **Bible**. Therefore Scripture is the final authority for every true Christian. Consequently, we believe that **Christ** is the only way, the only means by which fallen man can be reconciled to God.

To a Muslim the final authority is Allah, who revealed his will in the **Qur'an through Muhammad**, who is believed to have received the Qur'an and with it its interpretation and meaning by inspiration.

These respective authorities are not negotiable. They are absolute or ultimate, because "man is unable to go beyond them in his questioning mind", to quote Prof. Klaus Nürnberger. According to him, an ultimate cannot be invented or created by man, but man is convicted and convinced of its claim to be absolute truth. In his study notes on Theological Ethics (UNISA), he states:

Ultimates constantly question each other and man has to make up his mind which of these claims to truth is valid and which is not.

Once an ultimate is established, man no longer questions it. He accepts it as valid and binding.

We are all aware of the power which an ultimate, a conviction, has over a person. Countless thousands have valiantly and willingly died for whatever they considered to be the ultimate, be it religious, political or ethical. We wish it would be true, however, that in all humans "ultimates constantly question each other" and that people would "make up their minds which of these claims to truth is valid and which is not". The worldview and belief of people is formed almost exclusively on the basis of what is accepted within their respective group. It is accepted without any serious questioning.

The ultimate gives purpose, meaning and direction to an individual as well as a group. The closer knit this group is, the stronger is the influence of their ultimate on the individual. This is particularly true about Muslims.

A group is people

Prof. Nürnberger mentions **the reciprocal effect**:

Groups... **grant a sense of acceptance and belonging**. Every person needs the assurance that he has the right to be what he is, to do what he does, to strive for what he cherishes. The right of existence is granted him by the group to which he belongs. **He is surrounded by people who have similar views, values and interests.** (parents, peers, etc. G.N.) **He becomes certain that it is 'normal' to be what he is and to do what he does.**

They firmly believe that they are right and view reality quite objectively, while **the other party is believed to be distorting the truth to serve its own ends**. But then **they also lose their capacity to recognize and rectify their own mistakes** and to shoulder their own share of the responsibility. For this reason the individual identifies with the group. **Touch the 'honour' or integrity of a group and you have attacked each one of its members personally!**

Ultimates normally grant the right of existence only under certain conditions. Man has to fulfill certain prerequisites, live according to certain rules, subject himself to specified norms and criteria of acceptability".

The group, on the other hand, depends on the loyalty of its members for its continued existence. It grants recognition, status, acceptance and belonging only under certain conditions. You have to know and accept the rules of the game if you want to join a football club. Acceptance in any group is conditional. And that is the pointer to the fact that **groups 'stand for' something bigger than themselves. They represent an ideal, a value, a conviction of some sort - thus an ultimate. In the name of the ultimate the group therefore punishes deviant behaviour with contempt, ridicule, harassment or rejection.** The group may question or withdraw the right of existence it granted. But to be an outcast is tantamount to 'spiritual death'. All this is what we call 'Social control'.

The group provides belonging - but at a price

Like everybody else, every Muslim has a deeply rooted need to belong to a group and to be accepted by it. He or she feels to be part of the 'Ummah', the congregation of Islam, which not only grants this belonging to those who submit, but also watches over all its members. While (in most Muslim societies) there is a very considerable tolerance towards non-observance of Islamic duties, even sin, there is no tolerance toward a Muslim who becomes a Christian. The Qur'an says:

...if they turn renegades, seize them and slay them wherever you find them.

Surah 4:89

The group dictates behaviour

Members think, behave and relate to each other in a given way. They are different from 'those outside'. All groups produce perimeters, and the acceptance of these are conditional to the right to be part of the group. This boundary is to keep those inside in and those outside out.

Regarding 'outsiders', Nürnberger writes:

It is, however, not the outsiders themselves that present the problem for the group, but what they stand for. They have a different system of values, norms and beliefs. They represent another ultimate. **The very existence of another ultimate presents a threat to the unquestionable validity of the ultimate of the group itself.** But once its validity is challenged, its function as a justifying authority for the group and each of its members is questioned. That is **why the in-group turns against the out-group.** In the first place **it isolates itself from the out-group. Communication with outsiders is restricted and controlled. Information from the outside is scrutinized and filtered.** In the second place, **the out-group and the ultimate it represents are consciously depreciated. Their system of values and norms is considered to be amoral. The members of the out-group are forced into a stereotype such as 'the' rich or 'the' oppressors. A deeper understanding of the other group and what it stands for is prevented because it is dangerous for group certainty and group loyalty.**

The danger of ideologies

We all have realized that:

Ideology is based on a selective and biased observation of reality; it uses reason to build up a system of arguments in its own favour; the real motivation behind an ideology is desire and self-interest and it therefore contains an element of dishonesty. But all this can be quite unconscious. In fact it must be suppressed into the subconscious if the person concerned is to believe in his own integrity.

Religion may well be or become an ideology. In such a case there is always a powerful personality in the lead.

Prof. Nürnberger well observed that:

... obsessive and compulsive power over people ... may catapult vast masses of people into hysterical action or resistance. Mobbing and rioting may be the result.

Since members have identified themselves with their group and its ideology, they experience any attack on the latter as an attack on themselves. They become defensive or, if threatened, aggressive.

It sweeps its own yard clean, as it were, and throws the rubbish over the fence into the yard of its neighbour. The group will see only those aspects of reality that support its views. This is called SELECTIVE PERCEPTION. It will interpret the world in the way that is most profitable to it. We call this BIAS. **It will build up a system of clever arguments with partial truths and a twisted logic to prove its views to be correct.**

Controlled by an ultimate, man will act in a certain way, argue in a certain way, strive for certain things. Challenge an ultimate and the person concerned gets uneasy, his face darkens, he may become emotional, aggressive or even fanatical. If a person is taken over by emotions it is usually a sure sign that an ultimate has been hit.

Christians are also part of a group

All those acquainted with Islamic-Christian polemics are painfully aware of the truth of the above statements. **We do have to admit, however that Christians cannot be acquitted**

either. While we cannot escape emotional reactions when our ultimate, our triune God and His Word, are provocatively attacked - and in debates with Muslims this is often the case - we have to be self-controlled to avoid unbiblical retaliation, which is damaging to the cause of Christ. There is no need for it anyway... if we are convinced by rational evidence that we hold to the Truth.

None of us is likely to escape selective perceptions altogether, i.e. we all become one-sided in our intake of information. To do this out of fear is really ceding defeat, for when rational and factual argument is truly on our side, we need not fear - not for ourselves and much less for God!

Our only fear should be that of closing the eyes and ears
Of the people we like to win for Christ!

The danger of convictions

As we already noted, the feeling of belonging and acceptance is vital to man. Nürnberger puts it like this:

Once a man is sure that he is what he should be, and is doing what he is meant to do, that he is acceptable in the ultimate sense of the word, that he is true to his real being, that he found his authenticity, he is able and willing to sacrifice social, economical and political interest, possessions and privileges, family and friends, yes, even his own life.

We will have to honestly ask ourselves who or what is determining our values, rules or norms. While it is obvious that Scripture is our foundation, who interprets Scripture for us? Here the hermeneutic question arises. **Should we really succumb to standards, forms or even moral or ethical norms that are clearly determined or dictated by the group we belong to or its leadership?**

Obviously the Islamic community is a group which fits these quotations. We do well to consider this and its implication in evangelism.

Meeting the challenge of untruth

All this points to conflict.

Evangelism is essentially a challenge to the ultimate of a Muslim or even Islam.
When we evangelize, we offer an alternative to a Muslim's ultimate!

If this is true, **any form of evangelism that does not challenge a Muslim's ultimate is not evangelism at all.** It may and should not be immediately evident, but will become apparent.

To win others for Christ means exposure to other concepts and views.

Perhaps not all can do this or are equipped to do so. But if we claim to have and follow the Truth, we should not be afraid to listen to the other side, to present the Christian position positively and also to testify why we believe and trust it. The Word of God supports this:

Know how to answer everyone!

Colossians 4:6

Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should!

Colossians 4:4

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone!

1 Peter 3:15

If we do not take this to heart, i.e. if we believe without a sure basis, that is without real knowledge of our faith, we are not likely to be evangelists but propagandists across the line to other faiths, and then we may well be viewed to be fanatics, and not without a cause.

The other side of the coin

While a person or group of persons might seem to be intricately and intangibly caught in the system of Islam, we know of people who came out, and these are by no means only those on the periphery or fringe. Prof. Nürnberger shows in his studies the motivating force behind this and we do well to study this carefully:

But the confirmation of our right of existence by the social group to which we belong, is not the last word. **Once a man has a more profound ideal or conviction, he is willing to serve it even if this may lead to conflict with the group to which he belongs. The deeper his life is rooted in an ultimate, the less dependent he becomes on his social environment for recognition and acceptance.**

To effect a change one has to be exposed to alternative ultimates. That is the only way. Man simply cannot do without a basis for his life **and you cannot expect him to move before he is convinced that his foundations have given way and that he has now**

been presented with a more valid and stable alternative. That is the only way.

(All emphases are ours)

This confirms the thesis of a loving confrontation in which a conflict is not avoided, but in which the Gospel in all fullness is presented in a kind and loving, unemotional, factual and spiritual manner. But it also means that at the right time in the right way, the insufficiency, yes, the error, of Islam is exposed. This obviously does not normally happen in a week or two.

MUSLIM THINKING THAT BAFFLES US

We find thousands of Muslims who commit the Qur'an to memory (in Arabic!), but comparatively few who pursue an independent and serious study of its content. What and how to believe is determined by teachers, who are the religious authorities and not by personal study and its conclusion. Most Muslims can tell us stories from the Qur'an and the aHadith (plural of Hadith). All have the same kind of knowledge and understanding of Islam and most seem to be ignorant of the doctrines that are likely to provoke critical concerns (such as abrogation, predestination, the real history of early Islam, the collection and revision of the Qur'an etc.). This, however, does not mean that individual Muslims do not differ greatly on minor issues or use controversial arguments.

An experience may illustrate this point:

I learned that Muslims don't think the same way that we think. I began to question a fanatical Muslim. I said: 'Did God forgive Mohammed's sin?'. The man replied loudly and emphatically, 'Yes!' Then I asked, 'Did Mohammed sin?' He answered with a loud voice, 'No!'. Three times I asked him those two questions, and three times he answered the same way. 'Yes, God forgave Mohammed's sin' and 'No, Mohammed never sinned!' To this young Muslim man it was logical that Mohammed never sinned, yet that God forgave Mohammed's sin.

It was difficult for me to understand this kind of logic until a Somali who had been in America for ten years came back to Aden, and helped me in perfecting my study of the Somali language. I mentioned this experience to him, and asked him how to understand it. It was easy for him to understand the logic, and he explained it to me. He said: 'Is it not favourable to say that Mohammed never sinned?' I said: 'Yes'. 'Well', then, he said, 'is it not favourable to

say that God forgave Mohammed's sin?' I said, 'Yes'. 'Well, that is the way to explain it'. Apparently, whatever is "favourable" for Mohammed is logical to the mind of a Muslim, and believed!"

Personal Soul-Winning Experience Among Muslims by H. Warren Modricker

A much more touching example was published in the Islamic periodical *Al Balaag* (Nov./Dec. 1988). Here a scholar and author of Islam, a Hafiz [someone who has memorized the whole of the Qur'an], reports his deeply distressing experience:

In Defense of the Honour of Muhammad

Peace and blessing of Allah be on him

One day in April 1978, I was studying Maudoodi's famous commentary on the Qur'an, Tafhimul Qur'an, vol.4. I had to look up something concerning the wives of the Prophet. Suddenly I read this about Maria the Copt (may Allah be pleased with her): "(The Prophet of God) took Maria Qabtia, who had been sent by the maqauqus (ruler) of Egypt, especially for himself. With Maria he had intercourse on the basis of his having her in his power. It is not proven about her that he freed her and married her" (Tafhimul Qur'an, vol.4, commentary on Sura al-Ahzab, verse 50, note number 88, pages 113-114).

Such was the effect of this reading on my mind and soul that, without exaggeration, for three straight days, I could no longer believe even in the prophethood and messengership of Muhammad (may the peace and blessing of Allah be on him). Again and again I said to my friends: See and check. Has Maudoodi actually written that about Maria the Copt which I have understood? Or is there something which I have not understood? At my insistence, my friends again and again read the relevant passage and said to me: 'Surely this writing means what you have understood it to mean'.

I cannot explain fully what was the condition of my mind at that time. Strange doubts and fears of a nature that would put me outside the limits of Islam arose in my mind about the mission of the leader and seal of the prophets. I was so disturbed because the ugly act which Maudoodi was attributing to the messenger of God was so hideous that even a sinful person like myself could not have committed it or thought of committing it. How could a great messenger of God, walking on the path of Truth, have done such a thing? Whatever else such a person might be, he certainly would not be a messenger of God.

Some people may object to the weakness of my faith; however it is not a question of the weakness of my faith but of the credibility of my appropriate witnessing. We know from the Qur'an that it is correct to assume that faith can increase and also become weaker on the basis of reason and reliable evidence. My faith is based on the truthfulness and justice of the holy Qur'an and the highest moral and ethical example of the messenger of God referred to in the Qur'an as 'the pattern of excellence'. Hence imagine my mental condition when the greatest scholar and thinker of Islam in these times comes forward as a witness and testifies that whatever the enemies of Islam had been saying in their malice and hate about the messenger was partially, if not entirely true. The stories that the Prophet was a lustful person and used women as concubines (O Allah forgive us) and that Muslims could take men as slaves, even without war, and take women from decent households and use them as concubines without benefit of marriage, was being given the seal of authenticity by a scholar of Islam.

Thus when we get this witness from the greatest scholar of Islam in our time, that 'in fact' the messenger of Islam had not even been forced by the conditions of war but had merely, according to unIslamic culture then prevalent, taken Maria as a slave girl, and that too without marriage, and forced her entry into his household, then who would conscientiously believe in the messengership of such a person? Surely this was a deed which went against the very Qur'an which the messenger had been sent to teach and publicize. It is of course true that some other Muslim commentators and historians have also written that Maria was the slave girl of the Prophet. This took the meaning in my mind that originally she was a slave girl but the messenger of God must have married her. This did not leave a bad impression. But the words Maudoodi used, that it had not been proven that the Prophet every married her, were shattering. Such misleading words I had not come across from a scholar of Islam".

Hafiz Muhammad Sarwar Qureshi

This revealing letter shows us:

- There are Muslims who are genuinely applying ethical norms to Muhammad and Islam.
- If Muslims would know more about genuine Islam, they might indeed consider the Christian faith as a possible alternative.

- But even if that is not a consideration, as in our case, the writer must recognize, that Islamic historians and commentators confirm the truth of Maudoodi's statement on Muhammad having concubines. And even if he rejects this fact on the ground that "what must not be, cannot be", he has to live with the knowledge that Muhammad falls short of his own standard. While this may be an extreme case, it is quite logical for Muslims to interpret the Qur'an and the life of Mohammed in such a way. This is characterized by the concept of "ta-**abbudi**". This contains the root word abd = slave. A Muslim is a slave to Allah, his revelation, laws and concepts, which have "to be accepted without criticism". Bound by this premise, Muslim theologians have always resisted any text-critical studies on the Qur'an and Hadith. These are to be believed and obeyed and not investigated!

It is quite paradox and inconsistent that Muslims happily employ the most ridiculous statements of liberal and modernistic 'Christian scholars' to question the Bible, while bluntly refusing to subject the Qur'an and Hadith to a truly scholarly evaluation. ('The Islamic Christian Controversy')

THE POWER PRINCIPLE

Muslims from the very beginning were obsessed with what we may term the Islamic 'power syndrome'. "*Allahu akbar*" "Allah is great!" is consistently on the lips of Muslims. **Allah must rule everywhere**. The **Holy War** has been and still is a form of aggression, although Muslims are inclined to reinterpret it. Islamic Arabia was founded on the force of Muhammad's army. The **power struggle after the death of Muhammad** was expressed in ugly scenes. **Hatred** culminating in **assassinations** even within the leadership of the Muslims, and the **expansion of Islam by military means** bear witness to that fact. We remember that Islam divided the world into two territories: **Daru'l-Islam** and **Daru'l-Harb**, the Territory of Islam and the Territory of War.

All this is governed by the Islamic theological concept of the **Islamic theocracy** and has become part of a Muslim's thinking. Allah is the supreme ruler and the entire world must submit to him. Wherever the Shariah is not yet established and practiced, is still war territory that still has to be subjected to Allah.

This principle is applied to all spheres of life, often resulting in an intricately devised, aggressive anti-Christian propaganda, to which particularly those Muslims are subjected who live in a context of Christian influence.

Every Christian witness to Muslims should know about this given situation, for a spiritual conversation will be influenced or even determined from such background.

A soft approach by Christians to avoid confrontation or to take a humble position in a debate will essentially create an impression of *weakness*.

Muslims may appear rather overbearing and forceful

Muslims are very vocal to make known their demands regarding Muslims living in non-Muslim countries. They, on the other hand, are not prepared to grant similar rights to Christians living in an Islamic context. "Allahhu akbar!" He must rule, not equity (the quality of being impartial).

This may explain the militancy of much of Islam and their often arrogant, forceful and demanding attitude, even in countries in which Muslims constitute a small minority.

We should, however, also take note of the fact that Muslim groups which are doctrinally or politically of a different opinion, may well be abusive to each other. This was clearly visible in many historical events and the extended and brutal conflict between Iraq and Iran, in which chemical weapons were deployed, and in which Muslims fought Muslims, each side claiming to fight a Jihaad or "holy" war.

But not only on the battlefield are Muslims conducting their warfare. Expecting uniformity within Islam, one is surprised by its fragmentation. This is illustrated by many a publication. The choice of language alone, as chosen in the following extracts of an Islamic pamphlet, shows the absence of mutual respect:

An open invitation to all Muslims

For many decades now the self-appointed and undemocratic Muslim clergy (ulama) have styled themselves as the so-called "high priests of the faith". However, this status is completely incompatible with the basic tenets of the Holy Qur'an. In fact, in Islam there is supposed to be no priesthood or clergy class at all.

But owing to a number of factors, several partly-educated Muslims have pushed themselves over the years into what they falsely consider to be the "learned elite". This semi-literate group has then manipulated the religious life of all Muslims.

With no proper counter-force to check their theological impropriety or ethical excesses, the Islamic religious hierarchy (particularly the Muslim Judicial Council [MJC]),(which should stand for the MANIACS & JOKERS CLUB) has now become a law unto itself. So much so, that they have been unaccountable for any misdeeds or wrongdoings committed in their individual or institutional capacity.

By their appalling actions and absurd antics, the narrow-minded Muslim leaders have distorted, twisted and destroyed the original message of Islam for their own selfish gain.

(This pamphlet was published by Muslims in Cape Town in South Africa)

May the knowledge of such expressions make us more gracious when we feel attacked or rejected. - Now let us consider a vast section of the Islamic society, which represents a dominant as well as questionable force throughout the world of Islam.

Are we intimidated?

I might as well ask, "are you afraid of snakes?" Our feelings might not be all that different. Is there a good reason to be afraid? **We are afraid of something we feel inadequate to deal with**, something unfamiliar. I have handled dozens of very poisonous snakes. Once we overcome our natural fears and know the dangers and limits that are involved, we are equipped to catch and pick up any snake. The same applies to personal evangelism. We may be inhibited and have a natural fear of contact with strangers, but will be filled with joy, when we have victory over our fears.

FOLK ISLAM – THE CHOICE OF THE MUSLIM MASSES

Orthodoxy and Folk Islam

The word 'Folk Islam' is used as opposed to 'Orthodox Islam'. 'Orthodox' actually means believing and acting in the right way, of the kind that is closest to the source. Orthodox Islam by that token is the official Islam, close to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Folk Islam, on the other hand, is unofficial, though generally tolerated and practiced. Unlike official Islam, it does not provide a clearly defined doctrine.

Folk Islam is the practice of what is actually believed by the 'normal' Muslim in his given situations of daily life. It does not want to contradict or eliminate orthodox Islam. On the contrary, all Muslims rather universally accept the orthodox forms and tenets. Yet Folk Islam decidedly follows another agenda, another set of values and beliefs, and these differ fundamentally in form and content from the orthodox version. From its inception, official Islam seems to have turned a blind eye to this. It has been and is much more accommodating than, for instance, biblical Christianity.

What Folk Islam is all about

Life is rather complex, and often it does not move along expected ways. Every one faces crisis situations, fears, suspicions, sometimes superstitions, and unpredictable or unexplainable hap-

penings. While religion endeavours to explain certain experiences, it is up to us to interpret the others. In an effort to explain an experience, we assume to understand the intrinsic reason for it. This decidedly differs from person to person - and from region to region. The traditional thought patterns of our environment are likely to influence, even determine our assessment, and subsequently the cure we seek. Let us look at an example.

People perceive the world differently

When a 'Westerner' catches a flu, he is likely to consult a doctor or go to a pharmacy to get some medication which will kill the 'bugs' and restore his health. In Southern and Eastern societies, particularly among the lesser educated, the reason and the subsequent solution for a malady is sought elsewhere. People there view and interpret the world from a still very prevalent animistic worldview. Everything is assumed to be governed by prevailing invisible powers. Some are stronger than others. Any malady is seen to be caused by a (negative) force and needs to be remedied by a stronger one. There are 'wise', also called 'holy' men and sometimes women, who deal with that. They are called shaman, *mwalimu*, *marabout*, *pir*, *wali* or by whatever other name. They are acclaimed to have access to 'higher' powers. It is perceived that some of these powers are 'good', while others are bad. Such a 'holy' person is consulted to assess the cause of a given malady and its source, and then to employ a stronger remedy or power to break the force of the cause of the malady.

This is more often than not a 'medicine', which is prescribed by men or women who employ magical forces. It is rather revealing that magic or occult practices are very similar in cultures as far apart as North America (among 'red Indians'), Asia, Africa and even Europe. South America is no exception.

Islam compromised on animistic issues

This is by no means a recent development. It was found in Islam right from its beginning. Even Muhammad is reported to have engaged in magic practices. A lot of Islamic rituals, particularly those done during the Hajj ceremony, were adopted from Arabic paganism. When Islam expanded, it did not, as in the case of the Christian practice, recognize and reject magic cults or influence as satanic, but rather tolerated the integration of the former with the new. Consequently, we find a large variety of occult practices within Islam just about everywhere! This has caused a decided shift of authority away from God towards all kinds of occult practitioners, and by that, according to Scripture, satanic powers.

Why do even ardent Muslims submit to this, although their whole perception of religion is focused on submission to Allah alone, who is "*taweed*", i.e. absolutely one and only? Because

many (most?) of the occult practices have a deeply religious flair and operate by seemingly acceptable means for protection, healing, or guidance.

Enlightened people in the West will have to learn that many of such practices are not just some kind of humbug. Real, very forceful and awe-inspiring powers are indeed involved and have to be dealt with.

Folk Islam reflects the animistic worldview

We have to realize that during the past 100 years or more many thought patterns have influenced the original African worldview. Christianity and Islam as well as Western secular thought have left strong imprints on the original worldview of the African peoples. Yet, the shaman in Africa still plays a very prominent role.

While Christianity rejected the animistic and spiritistic content of the African religion, though not always successfully, Folk Islam has absorbed much of the African worldview. Yusufu Turaki has identified the African Worldview

Animistic religious beliefs consist of:

1. belief in impersonal mystical, mysterious powers, unseen, hidden, magical
2. belief in spirit beings
3. belief in gods, divinities, deities (rain, sun, other nature gods)
4. belief in the supreme being, whether it is a human being or an impersonal being depends on the area.

Angels and the Holy Spirit are different to these spirits. In Africa there is a strong belief in a hierarchy of beings. Reality in Africa exists in the spirit realm. True reality is not in what is seen – but in the unseen. Sickness is not the real thing. It is the power behind. The same applies to calamities. Some spiritual powers cause it – the always open question is: why?

Animistic philosophy and worldview

The philosophical way to see things is:

5. **in a spiritual view of the world** – it is seen as a spiritual reality.
Beyond a physical view is the spiritual reality.
This compels people to find a spiritual cure for calamity, sickness and death.
What is seen is not the real thing. Reality is spiritual.
6. **in power consciousness** – for everything in the world is caused by powers.
There is a strong belief in personal or impersonal powers. Edmond Smith calls this 'dynamism – vitality'. This is controlled by the Law of Power- be it mystical or real. It involves the need to be in charge. People will go anywhere or do anything in search for

power. If a President is in need for power, so is a Bishop. You must 'shop around' where to find the utmost power ...

7. **a holistic or organic view of the world.** Everything, even the higher and lesser gods, are organic. They are governed by the law of harmony. Never step out – or ancestors will get angry and harmony will be destroyed.

The Law of Harmony is not a written code. It is transmitted in society – it is caught not taught. The Law of reconciliation seeks to see, understand, respond, apply and to restore harmony. Law of harmony and reconciliation differs from area to area.

8. **a communal view of the world.**

The world is seen through the Law of Kinship, i.e. blood relationship and tribalism and ethnicity

The one who steps out of his boundary – raid cattle or women - is a hero.

Government and war zones are neutral territory, places to get as much out of it as one can to bring home as much as possible.

People outside the tribe – are not really people – they do not matter.

If you steal from other tribes and bring the booty home- you perform an honourable act.

That's why the Western world views Africans as corrupt people, but they are just true to their own ethnicity, tribe and kinship.

(Tribal Gods of Africa, Y. Turaki, 1997 and notes taken from personal conversation with Yusufu Turaki, 2002)

The practice and the practitioner of witchcraft

We will find that the Qur'an is a well-used object in Islamic witchcraft! For instance, a sick person will participate in a ritual in which a verse, selected from the Qur'an because of its assumed healing power, is written (e.g. with chalk or charcoal) onto some writing material. Then the written text is washed off with some water into a container. This solution is then used as medicine to be taken by the patient. Or, the paper with the verse on will be burnt, and the ashes will be used as remedy. Or, the verse will be worked into an amulet, which will have to be worn for protection or healing. There is no end to the list of practices.

Da'wah means 'invocation' ('to call upon', 'to conjure up'), and this term was and is used for occult practices in the form of 'white magic', i.e. by calling on the name of God instead of Satan (Dictionary of Islam pp.72-78). It is very clear, however, that both 'black' and 'white magic' are satanic means to seduce and spiritually blind the ignorant. Today the word *da'wah* is used for doing Islamic missionary work.

To a Muslim, Allah is up in the highest heights. He is far removed, absolute and sovereign and can only be worshipped in a master-slave relationship. He is feared! Perhaps because of this perception, Muslims are seeking someone to relate to. Therefore, to many Muslims a 'holy man', even or particularly when he is already departed and consulted at the '*kramat*'

(tomb), is in reality more of a confidant and consultant in personal affairs than Allah, who is addressed largely in prescribed words and forms. In popular Islam witchcraft is actually a practical expression of greater confidence in *jinns* or spirits than in the personal involvement of Allah. This is ever so different from the Christian position. In the Bible we read: "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you!" (1 Peter 5:7).

The occult practitioners are revered as 'holy men' or 'saints' because of the '*baraqa*', the blessing, the power, they are able to dispense. Christians may well question the sanctity of such men. In Folk Islam, because of their position of power, they are considered a '*walis*' (particularly in India), which, interpreted, means a spiritual guide. The remarkable phenomenon is, that a *wali* may exercise his power even beyond the grave! He is, as a rule, buried in a shrine, called '*kramat*' or '*karamat*', which becomes a place of pilgrimage for people seeking help for a great variety of requests, such as sickness, barrenness, marital affairs, to obtain a suitor's attention (love potion), influence of the evil eye, business advice, to mention just a few. The problem is the shift of faith and dependence from God to man, or rather demons that pose as sympathetic assistants and do help - but on the expense of a person's spiritual condition. Spiritual hardening is invariably the ultimate price to pay, and that leads to eternal doom!

It is beyond question that many of these 'holy' men do have access to supernatural powers.

Devote Muslims assume this to be divine influence, however. Measured by Biblical standards, is clearly occult, and by that demonic power. The innocence, good intention, or sincerity of both, the practitioner and the seeker for assistance does not protect them from a resulting spiritual bondage.

Why people turn to witchcraft

Why do people turn to the occult for help? Don't we all at times feel helpless or fear certain situations? What can a rejected wife in a male dominated society do in order to get help?

Causes which make a Westerner go to a doctor, marriage counselor, psychiatrist, or pastor, are the ones to let an Animist, Buddhist or Hindu, folk-Muslim, and sometimes nominal Christians seek advice and help from a magician. (Just open a secular magazine and look at the horoscopes offered and consider just how many people consult it! Or look at the advertisements propagating fortunetellers and 'faith healers!'). It is the natural thing to do, because everybody believes in the supernatural (often without the potential to distinguish between the truly divine and the occult). It was done as long as history exists. Can it be wrong to seek help? The Bible gives an unequivocal YES for an answer! But who knows that? And who is not prepared to take chances when a problem becomes truly pressing, particularly when a person is led to believe that occult practices are a religious act?

We must conclude that the occult world,
including their human representatives,
minister to felt needs in order to harvest often
innocent people for the kingdom of Satan.

Spirits, angels and jinns

Islam, like the Bible, differentiates between angels that are considered to be of divine origin, and evil spirits. Jinns are similar beings. Supposedly originally created from fire, they are, as a species, considered to be value neutral. Some are good and some are bad. But who can distinguish between the two? Jinns are a breed somehow between angels and humans. They are invisible, though may adopt the form of humans or animals, and also reproduce and die. They may also have sexual encounters with humans (see Genesis 6:1-2), which are said to be highly lustful, and this is, according to witness reports, frequently experienced. Just about every honest Muslim will have to admit his fear of jinns and their intervention in their lives. Therefore protection against jinns and evil spirits is needed, coveted and sought, curiously by occult means.

Muhammad and the evil eye

A cause for great fear is the 'evil eye'. The evil eye may affect every part of life. "The fundamental concept of the evil eye is that precious persons or things are constantly vulnerable to hurt or destruction caused by other people's envy. Such envy or jealousy is projected through the eye", writes Bill Musk ("The unseen Face of Islam", MARC 1989).

The evil eye is feared in many cultures world-wide, and is not specific to the Islamic world. It did, in fact, exist before Islam began. In the Hadith of al-Bukhari (7:827) we read that Muhammad said, "evil eye is a fact". It also says that he ordered "to do *ruqya* (if there was danger) of an evil eye". *Ruqya* is 'enchanted', the use of spells, itself an occult practice! We also read that Umar related (7:784): "If any person suffered from an evil eye or some other disease, he would send a vessel (containing water) to Umm Salama. I looked into the container (that held the hair of the Prophet), and saw a few red hairs in it." This implies that the water in which were some hairs of Muhammad, served as a medicine against the effects of an evil eye or diseases, again a magical practice. The effect of an evil eye is the opposite of *baraqa*, blessing, namely a kind of curse, and may have an effect on man, beast or things. Hence the fear of it.

Who does not want to know the future or try to get some vital information?

Divination is another occult practice applied by many Muslims. Divination is used to identify culprits or 'bad medicines' and, of course, to discover what the future holds - and who would

not like to know? It is used for determining the right marriage partner, the sex of an unborn child or to find out about a business proposition. It is equally used to select the right medicine for treatment by the use of a pendulum, etc. Divination is performed in a trance-like condition by a medium. It is assumed that the prior knowledge of events may avert negative or false decisions. Naturally this is in contradiction to the Islamic doctrine of predestination, but that does not seem to concern Muslims. This simply proves their proneness to the occult.

The spiritual void in Islam

When we witness to people about Christ, and in our case more particularly to Muslims, we have to bear in mind that their official religion does not satisfy the incarnate longing of every person for assurance of forgiveness. It also lacks the assurance of having been accepted by God, being loved and cared for by Him, and being able to trust Him for eternal life in His Presence when we depart from this world. Orthodox Islam does not offer this.

Consequently, even a pious Muslim is left with a void, for rules and regulations can never satisfy the deepest longings of any heart. This led soon after the inception of Islam to the forming of Sufi orders which heavily borrowed and borrows spiritual content from other religions and philosophy. Parallel to that revived heathen traditions raised untrustworthy expectations for protection from the forces of the unseen world. All this has led an immense number of Muslims into ever-increasing bondage.

The conflict Folk Islam brings with it

By implication all Muslims practicing Folk Islam opted to use sources that appear to be more powerful than their own, to make the best of a given situation. Of course, **they do see results**. Perhaps even spectacular ones! But in the final analysis they sell the only hope to access eternal bliss, for some questionable form of well-being in this life.

We meet the Muslim where he hurts, at his felt needs

When Folk Islam is what a Muslim practices - and that is much more often the case than we may expect - the best way to reach him with the Gospel is to address him at the level of his own need and reality. Here the issue is not so much the Qur'an, the Hadith and the Sunnah over against the Bible. It rather is his 'felt need' (and this is not really, as it is often taught, to fill the stomach!), in other words his fears and unfulfilled hopes and how he can cope with the powers at work in his life and the life of his family. That is existential to him/her. That is his reality. Religious discussion is theory. In it he can easily hide behind orthodox religion by presenting some poorly understood anti-Christian polemics, a smoke screen behind which he can hide.

The liberating Gospel

The Gospel is the Good News for him that God is truly greater than the forces he fears! God is not far away. He is not remote and unconcerned for "Jinns and people" (Surah 11:119; 7:179; 32:13) after having predestined their temporal and eternal fate (see chapter on predestination in 'Islam ' on p.150). God knows our fears and needs - and is willing to provide the remedy. Because He is all-knowing and everywhere and holds the power over everything, He alone can provide for us, not necessarily according to our wishes, but in our best interest, which He knows! And once we receive Him by faith and He lives in our hearts, we not only participate in His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), but can also expect assistance and guidance through prayer in His Name. We need not fear any shaman, or witch, or jinn, nor do we need any powers or remedies from them.

We can have access to God Almighty – at all times!

We should and can demonstrate to our Muslim friend how we cope with life and fear and want and disappointment. But we should also not be shy to demonstrate God's power over the enemy by helping him to be liberated from the forces which bind and blind him.

Casting out oppressing or possessing spirits

While we pray for one another and ourselves, exorcism (casting out of a demon) is not done by prayer, but by command in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ! The oppressing or possessing spirit must subject itself to our trusting and authoritative command in Jesus' Name! It might well try to bluff us in some way or other to undermine our confidence in God, to make us give up. But it cannot resist the power of Jesus!

Exorcism is not to be done lightly; nor will we impress the enemy by pulling off a show of some sort! Human power will just not do. Exorcism should be done while clad "with the whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6:10 ff). It will be good to do this in the company of one or two other believers, and better still by preparation through prayer and fasting. By this we fulfill another part of the Great Commission (Mark 3:13-15; 16:15-18). It is perhaps 'normal 'to be scared of attempting exorcism, particularly if we never did it before. The study and citing of Luke 10:18-19, and also Acts 19:13-20 and other related Scripture will be most helpful. And so is the knowledge that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever!" (Hebrews 13:8).

(Read Genesis 3:14, Matthew 12:43-45; 16:19; 17:18-21; 18:18; 28:18-20; Mark 16:16-18; Luke 8:29-33; 10:17-20; 22:31; John 8:44; 12:31; 14:30; 17:15, Acts 16:18; Romans 8:31ff; 16:20; 2 Corinthians 2:15; Ephesians 2:1-6; 6:10ff; Colossians 2:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-2; Hebrews 2:14-15; James 2:19; 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 3:8; 4:1-5; Revelations 12:7-12; 13:1-10; 20:10).

Recommended Literature of Chapter 4

Ishmael my Brother, compiled by Anne Cooper, Tunbridge Wells: MARC, 1995, pp. 192-207

The Occult in Islam, by Abd al Masih, Light of Life, Villach: Austria, p. 49

The Unseen Face of Islam, by Bill Musk, MARC, 1989

5. CULTURE AND ITS ROLE IN MUSLIM EVANGELISM

A DEFINITION OF CULTURE

Someone said: **We don't see things as they are - but as *we* are!**

What we are is determined by a number of factors, of which culture is a very prominent one. How can we define culture?

“Culture is the integrated system of learned patterns of behavior, ideas and products characteristic of a society”, says Paul Hiebert, a well known mission-anthropologist.

“Culture is the totality of man's learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, behavior acquired through social learning” (Robertson McQuilkin, former principal of Columbia Biblical Seminary).

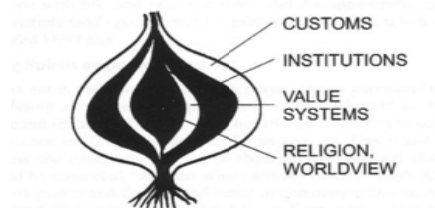
For the purpose of evangelism - and that is what we are concerned with - the understanding of culture and its role is:

- to help communicate the Good News, the Gospel, in the peculiar circumstances of a given culture and
 - to implant it into this culture so that it can become part of and transform it.
- Here theology, anthropology and communication fuse or merge. Let me define this a little better to avoid misunderstanding. The knowledge about God and of God has to be translated not only into another language, but into another way of thinking and human experience. This demands that we have to seriously question most quick-result orientated evangelistic concepts and slogans.

Our aim is to present to a specific cross-cultural audience an understanding, a realization, a cognition which exactly reflects in their minds and world the truth of the eternal word of God.

HOW DOES CULTURE FUNCTION?

A working concept of culture may be graphically illustrated in the form of an onion.



- The outer layer represents the **customs** and **artifacts**, i.e. what meets the eye (dress, manners, speech etc).
- The layer under that constitutes the **institutions**, like government, marriage, justice systems etc.
- The next layer represents the **value system** of a society, and the very centre accommodates the **religion, ideology and world view** of that society.

In principle the inner effects the outer.

**RELIGION (ideology) forms and effects the VALUE SYSTEM,
the VALUE SYSTEM forms and effects the INSTITUTIONS,
the INSTITUTIONS effect the BEHAVIOUR and THINKING of the people.**

HOW TO COMMUNICATE SPIRITUAL THOUGHT IN A SIMPLE AND UNDERSTANDABLE MANNER

Two people assess a tree. One says: "Wonderful!". The other says: "Useless!". Why this difference? The first man is an artist. He considers the tree to be a beautiful motif for a painting. The other man is a forester. Such tree, he judges, is useless for timber. We judge from different perspectives.

Or, if I ask an audience to think of ice - and then ask them to describe to me what they thought of. Someone may think of Antarctica, another of whisky 'on the rock' with ice, some others may think of ice cream or ice skating or a fridge. All these people had an exposure to the **concept** 'ice', though they thought of different **experiences**. But try to describe 'ice' to a man in the tropics that has neither a fridge nor a TV!

The only real tool for the transmission of thought is language. Language has organically grown and developed within a given culturally integrated society over a long period in which intercultural contact was, unlike now, the exception. Consequently the words, grammar, phrases and idioms are embedded in a collective realm, which is determined by the experience within a given culture.

The concept of 'ice' is tangible. What about the transmission of abstract thought to people of another cultural and religious realm?

When we compile a "Gospel message" and transmit it into Urdu, Malay or an Arabic, but depend entirely on a dictionary, the content is likely to be highly unintelligible to the hearer. Technically, for instance, the word 'wind' may mean the **winding of the clock**, or a **wind which blows**, or **something a baby 'brings up'**. The word **uniform** may mean **unvarying** or a **type of dress** etc.

The meaning of such words is given by their context and the experience of the people concerned. This pertains to language study. Matters become much more complex, when we try to convey spiritual content, in which words may carry a grossly different meaning or content: 'conversion', 'salvation', 'repentance', 'grace', not to mention 'God' or 'accepting Christ', are words full of meaning to an Evangelical. A Catholic may get quite a different message from these words. How much more a Hindu, Muslim or Buddhist! Other concepts are more complex still: 'Son of God', 'trinity' and 'crucifixion', to name but a few!

This demands at least a general knowledge of the content of a person's religious convictions or life philosophy, but also of his understanding of the religious terminology used. How much more understanding should we have when witnessing cross-culturally! (See also chapter "Communication and its Function").

**Understanding begins and grows by listening
to people and learning from them.**

Some obvious questions arise at this point:

- Must we first become theologians, missiologists and anthropologists before we can attempt (Muslim) evangelism?
- Where does the work of the Holy Spirit come in? Has the Word of God lost its power?

These are indeed very justified questions. Let us briefly assess them:

We have to learn to differentiate between what only God can do – and what He expects us to do!

We cannot and should not try to convict of sin, or to convert. Even "to lead into all the truth" is ultimately not what we can do. It is God's prerogative.

What we are expected to do, is to transmit the Word of God. It is a 'mystery' to all outsiders. And we are commanded to do that as clearly, boldly, graciously, knowledgeably and wisely as its content deserves:

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so **that they cannot see** the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2 Corinthians 4:4

God gave me to **present** to you **the word of God in its fullness-** the **mystery** that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now **disclosed to the saints** (i.e. believers). Colossians 1:26

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will **fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel**, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Ephesians 6:19-20

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, **expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words**.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13

Pray for us... that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ.... Pray that I may **proclaim it clearly**, as I should. **Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders**; make the most of every opportunity. **Let your conversation be always full of grace**, seasoned with salt, so that you may **know how to answer everyone**.

Colossians 4:3-6

**We should never attempt to do what only God can do.
On the other hand we should not expect God to do
what He told us to do!**

A MUSLIM'S WORLDVIEW AND OUR MESSAGE

The personal worldview of a person determines his understanding of our message.

We might not be aware of this, but ought to realize, that very often we read the Bible through the 'glasses' of our respective worldviews. And we interpret and apply Scripture as our context or even tradition dictates. People of another environment or culture may well perceive certain things differently. This, however, should never affect the fundamentals, i.e. the **message**, but rather the peripheral, forms and lifestyle.

Let me use an example from the 'world'. Depending on our analysis of the cause of poverty, injustice and political oppression in this world, people seek to implement a cure. One group people will blame unjust structures - and the definition of **what** is unjust and **why** varies widely - and economic as well as political exploitation by the West, for the misery in the world. Another list

of concern is the population explosion, political and economic corruption of governments, lack of motivation and productivity, as causes.

In like manner, biblical concepts have been subjected to varying interpretations at different times in various cultures. E.g. each society will naturally brand what it perceives as threatening or destructive to individuals or society. Some Christians have compiled long lists of what is viewed by them to be sin (e.g. cinema, trousers for women, use of cosmetics etc). Should they move to live in another society, they may well at first conclude that all the Christians there are either liberal or worldly or legalistic and exclusive, depending on the various backgrounds. This has to be born in mind particularly when doing cross-cultural evangelism (or teaching).

The ‘wrapping’, the form or method of communication, must change, for it has to be understood by today’s people and situations.

The ‘content’, the message, must diligently and conscientiously be preserved.

As we will consider later on, it must be the aim of the communicator, to create in the mind of the listener an understanding of what the Bible really teaches and means, in spite of the fact that he/she is deeply influenced by another religion, perception, or worldview.

WHEN SHAME MATTERS MORE THAN SIN

In the ‘Gospel of Shame Cultures ’by Bruce Thomas we read:

Anthropologists differentiate between ‘Shame Cultures ’and ‘Guilt Cultures’. What does that mean?

Fundamentally one may assume that people living in a ‘Guilt Culture ’associate acts against generally accepted norms as a personal fault for which they are responsible to whatever authority they relate. Protestants appear to be strongest in this type of culture.

The great majority of people, however, live within a ‘Shame Culture’. To them it is not so much an offence to become guilty of sin, but that to be found out [*about whatever*] brings shame on them, their family, society or religion ...

We often find that Muslims, because of their unbiblical view of God’s Law, man and sin, are quite unaware of their sin. Because of

his/her preoccupation with ritual cleanliness and the compensation to rectify omissions [*of this kind*], a Muslim is not really seeing the need for a Saviour. What he is subconsciously looking for is freedom from shame.

Theologically and with regard to our personal relationship with God this is detrimental. We ought to repent for the sins we have committed, for they bring shame on God, and not so much feel ashamed to have been found out. When we consider the altogether different perception of sin in Islam and the Bible, we may have to blame this [*on the submission to a*] shame culture... Also Muslims should know that sin is the trespassing of Law and the dividing factor between God and man.

Muslims are, apparently, more preoccupied with maintaining ritual cleanliness [*that is strict observance i.a. to the strictly prescribed prayers*] rather than with what they may consider 'small 'sins. To be ritually unclean is abominable to them. Consequently, we often find that Muslims, because of their unbiblical view of God's Law, man and sin, are quite unaware of their sin. Because of his/her preoccupation with ritual cleanliness and the compensation to rectify [*any of such*] omissions, a Muslim is not really seeing the need for a Saviour. What he is subconsciously looking for is freedom from shame.

Theologically and with regard to our personal relationship with God, this is detrimental. **We ought to repent for the sins we have committed, for they bring shame on God, and not so much feel ashamed to have been found out.** When we consider the altogether different perception of sin in Islam and the Bible, we may have to blame this [*on the relevant*] shame culture ...

I have discovered that one of the most difficult aspects of evangelizing Muslims is getting them to appreciate their need for a savior. I have found the Islamic doctrine of God and man to be such that Muslims tend to be unaware of their sinfulness and inability to save themselves. As a result, convincing a Muslim to embrace Jesus as the sacrifice for his sins usually requires considerable time and pre-evangelistic effort ...

Sin as perceived by shame culture Muslims

In the light of this new perspective, I began to consider that perhaps the greatest need felt by these Muslim people is not the obtaining salvation from sin, but for deliverance from the tyranny of being in a near constant state of defilement. Every element of their daily lives is ordered by this insecurity; the direction to face when falling asleep, the Arabic words uttered when beginning a task, speech, or greeting, and even the way to blow your nose or wipe your bottom. Defilements come in various levels and for each level there is an appropriately matched cleansing. Burping and passing gas is one level of defilement. Touching your private parts is another. Touching semen, urine, faces, or menstrual flow is getting pretty serious; serious enough that a woman's prayers will not be heard during her period. I wonder if there is a more relevant way to present the gospel under these circumstances. Perhaps we could communicate more effectively with a gospel message addressing man's defilement as well as, or as part of, his depravity.

The depravity of those living under a shame culture

There is no one righteous, not even one '(Romans 3:10) and 'all our righteous acts are like filthy rags '(Isaiah 64:6), because we are defiled. Sin is not inherited but stems from our being. The Muslim who understands that the ground is cursed wherever he steps if he has not bathed after having had sex is showing an understanding of how bondage to unrighteousness stems from defilement. This defilement may form the basis for shame, insecurity, and a felt need for the gospel in shame cultures.

Shame is not to be confounded with guilt

Niels Mulder says, "Shame is the feeling of anxiety about one's presentation, about being criticized or laughed at, for short, a feeling of embarrassment and fear for the eyes, ears, and opinions of others"². Gailyn Van Rheenen quotes Jacob A. Loewen saying, "While shame is 'the response to disapproval of one's own peers,' guilt is the 'self-condemnations resulting from the violation of internalized convictions of right and wrong..."

The missing link

Has there been something missing in our understanding and preaching of the gospel so that we fail to reach the Muslim at his point of deepest insecurity? Does the Muslim's preoccupation with endless cycles of ritualistic cleansing point to another human problem as basic as sin? Do we need an approach to evangelism, discipleship, and contextualization which will meet people at this other point of need? Could such an approach revolutionize outreach and church planting in some of the most resistant parts of the world? Someday, I hope we have answers to these questions.

The Gospel of Shame Cultures by Bruce Thomas [pseudonym]

Radically different concepts of God and man

Despite some general similarities to the biblical version of man's fall, there are radical differences between the Christian and the Islamic interpretations of Adam's transgression. Whereas in Christian theology man's disobedience is viewed as a fundamental turning point in his relationship to God, according to the Muslim perspective this was only a single slip on Adam and Eve's part that was completely forgiven after their repentance. It had no further effect on the nature of man and the rest of creation ... Another Muslim author, Faruqi, notes that "in the Islamic view, human beings are no more 'fallen' than they are saved.' Because they are not 'fallen,' they have no need of a savior. But because they are not 'saved' either, they need to do good works and do them ethically which alone will earn them the desired 'salvation'.

Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1993), pp. 42, 43.

More than perhaps to any other people's group, evangelism to Muslims must be done in love and with concern for the lost. Let Francis Schaeffer formulate this for us:

Love is not an easy thing; it is not just an emotional urge, but an attempt to move over and sit in the other person's place and see how his problems look to him: love is a genuine concern for the individual. As Jesus Christ reminds us, we are to love him 'as ourselves'.

This is the place to begin.

Without a spiritual and right attitude, evangelism is a senseless and cruel undertaking. Evangelism may well cause the murder or total rejection of the convert from Islam, and may divide a loving and caring family. Love, not sentimental love, but the love of Christ (not even *for* Christ),

will dictate how we speak the truth in each given situation (Ephesians 4:15). Scripture gives us a beautiful pattern:

...we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. ...

You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

CONTEXTUALISING THE GOSPEL

Cultural sensitivity and contextualization have become the missionary watchwords of our day. While in former generations an air of paternalism and cultural superiority could be sensed, the pendulum has now swung far towards the other side. George Houssey believes that the “fear of tampering with culture is one of the most inhibiting factors in reaching Muslims.” He reports that a veteran missionary to a Muslim country adamantly told him that she would not give a Bible to a Muslim because it would offend him.

Suggestions to “try by every possible way to become like Muslims” in order to “present the Gospel in religious and cultural forms that Muslims feel at ease to identify with” carry the potential danger of denying the power of the Gospel. Statements like “missionaries should use certain passages from the Qur’an as a springboard for explaining the Gospel” not only give credit to the Qur’an to be a divinely inspired book, but also reveal the fear that the Word of God has no appeal.

We can sense an endeavor to assimilate **forms**, sometimes even the **content** of the Gospel, which are or may be perceived to be foreign to the people to be reached. They want to avoid rejection on cultural or sociological grounds.

The idea of contextualization was born when a new national and cultural awareness or consciousness emerged in the post-colonial era. Anything that smacked of foreign domination was suspect. The national awakening generally went hand in hand with an indigenous religious resurgence. So rather than risk rejection on these grounds, some missiologists experimented to ‘indigenize’ or ‘inculturalize’ the Gospel. After all, many of the church forms were decidedly western-cultural rather than Biblical. Just look at church buildings and their spires, forms of

church government, rituals like a communion service and many hymns which are characterized by given cultural, even historical or stylistic forms of the home-countries from which the missionaries imported them.

Of course, there was hardly a way by which at that time Scripture could be studied in the context of African, Asian or South American situations. The interpretation of Scripture into these contexts can really only be done by the indigenous people - **after** they had been thoroughly taught and established in it.

But now, certain missiologists reasoned, time has come to change that. While there is always an element of fresh air and excitement about new thoughts and practices, one must expect that the pendulum can easily swing too far to the other side, and that indeed did happen in a number of cases.

Ritual forms, which are intrinsically Islamic, though they may originally have been adapted from Jewish or Christian worship, were now introduced. One does not go to church, but to the 'Isa Mosque' (= church), where the 'followers of Isa' (= Christians) would meet after their ritual washing (*wud'u*) to offer 'salat', a somewhat Christianized form of the Islamic ritual 'prayer' on a Friday. Obviously they would cover their heads and follow the Islamic way of prostration. They might even chant the Bible reading - in Arabic, of course! During Ramadan they would 'identify' with their Muslim neighbors by keeping the fast, or at least part thereof.

Of course there is nothing wrong with fasting or prostration in prayer - **if** one would not create the perception that these Islamic forms are recognized and seen to be preferred to established 'Christian forms'. This does not necessarily mean that all Christian forms are Biblical or relevant, though.

We must understand that forms and rituals are largely symbolic, and carry, by that, meaning. We have asked many a convert from Islam how he/she would assess this. The answer was always, that it would mean compromise or even syncretism, a mixing of religions.

How do the Scriptures assess such actions?

We dared to tell you this Gospel despite strong opposition.
The appeal we make does not come from impure motives.
We are not trying to trick you!

1 Thessalonians 2:2-6

We have renounced secret, shameful ways. We do not use deception ... On the contrary; by setting forth the truth plainly

we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 4:2

Obviously these texts do not specifically speak of a detailed approach to people of other cultures. But it does tell us that we ought to speak **in the sight of God, before God!**

Some Christian group has drawn up an excellent basis for contextualization. Here are some extracts:

The task of evangelism demands that the timeless, supra-cultural truth of Scripture be communicated accurately to people of every culture. For the evangelistic message to be understood, it must be relevant to the cultural context of the receptor.

In cross-cultural settings, this requires the evangelist to distinguish between the heart of the Gospel and the expressions and presuppositions of his home culture. This message needs to reflect an understanding of the worldview of the target audience, showing an appreciation for their culture. The Word of God confronts all cultures, however, challenging sin and evil. In order to avoid the unbiblical pitfalls of syncretism and christo-paganism, every facet of all cultures (including our own) must be brought under the judgment of Biblical revelation.

Cultural forms that make clear the meaning of the Gospel, without in any way detracting from its content, must be sought. We joyfully acknowledge our dependence upon the Holy Spirit to guide us in this task and to open the minds of our hearers to the glorious light of the Gospel.

There are several assumptions, which lie behind our idea of appropriate contextualization: the church. These truths cannot be compromised in any way.

We define contextualization as meaningful and appropriate cross-cultural transmission of biblical truth, which is faithful to its original intent and sensitive to culture.

Biblical truth is absolute and defines the essence of the Gospel

- There are, however, various legitimate ways in which these same truths can be expressed and applied in different cultures. These expressions and applications must be consistent with principles of biblical interpretation.
- As every culture contextualizes the Gospel and church, missionaries come to new cultures already biased towards their own home culture. To transmit this would be theological imperialism. It leads to the confusion of the Gospel and the planting of a foreign church.
- A contextualized Gospel and church which are faithful to Scripture and sensitive to culture must be worked out for each culture being entered. This insures that the issues which must be decided for someone to be 'converted' are the core (and not subsidiary) issues. It allows flexibility in forms of expression which are meaningful to the new church within its culture.
- A contextualized church should be better able to maintain unity, sustain its purity, and witness to its own community. Having experienced the process of contextualization, it should be better equipped to transmit Biblical truth to other cultures. It may result in increased receptivity.

We may well wonder how Muslims view an exaggerated approach as shown earlier?

Islamic perceptions of Christian contextualisation

Under the heading "The Christian Islamization of Christianity" we read in the "Muslim Journal" (July 1987):

Contextualisation on the surface appears as a litany of deceit, of 'convert at any cost'.

But the deeper process involves setting aside Christian practices to embrace the pillars of Islamic action. A quick look at (the author's) recommendations reveals the deep structure of contextualization.

Old missionaries, a la Zwemer, wrote endless vitriolic condemnations of Islam and Muslims. Newer missionaries take a more "compromising" stance. Without embarrassment (the author) can write, 'without compromise, we can appreciate the good in Islam'. Their stance weakens from rejection to compromise. The next step is adoption.

(The author) feels compelled to say, about Muslims, that "they must be convinced that the rituals Christians follow to assist them in knowing God are indeed superior to their own highly formalized

*and ritualized system of religious expression". That is the rhetoric, but look at the actual practices - relinquishing baptism, observing the Ramadan fast, donning hijba and Islamic dress, and affirming the truthfulness of Islam. Perhaps (the author) like many missionaries is discovering that the rituals that actually assist them in knowing God are from the Qur'an and the Sunnah rather than Christian tradition. Perhaps (the author) and the Christian missionaries will discover that Allah (SWT) is using their deceptive "contextualization" as the occasion of their own Islamization. 'Allah (SWT) is the best of planners' (= "schemers")
Surah 3:47; 8:30*

Obviously missionaries experimenting with such daring forms of contextualization never had the intention to be perceived that way. But we need to be realistic: sooner or later confrontation with the truth will become a necessity.

LIFE STYLE EVANGELISM

Being worried that the Christian witness has so little effect on Muslims, and shows relatively small results, alternative methods of witness are being sought out by many Christians. Most of these are based on a sincere wish to make Muslims realize the need for the Saviour and value of the Gospel. Some concluded that the use of apologetics, reasoning, proclaiming or explaining spiritual content lead to controversial debates or polemics. Claiming that argumentation about spiritual issues is vain and therefore to be avoided, they opt for a demonstration approach: Let us live among the Muslims and let our Christian love, charity and humility speak for itself!

The advice to avoid polemics and not to use apologetics in favour of displaying a Christian lifestyle in humility and love to attract Muslims to Christ is simply based on the assumption that Muslims think like Christians. This does not mean that a Muslim is **not** attracted to loving and caring people! But a timid witness in the eyes of a Muslim is a display of weakness. Weakness, in his sight, is despicable, though he may not say this outright. The strength of his own witness to Islam he views as a duty towards Allah.

Christian life style without clearly defined presentation of the Saviour Jesus Christ is no witness at all. A Muslim will essentially suppose that the influence of Islam on the Christian is beginning to show fruit.

There is decidedly no wisdom in starting a deliberate polemical argument! Yet one can very often not avoid it without losing ground. As a Muslim testifies and stands up for his religion, he expects an honorable Christian to stand his ground. We ought to be careful, however, not to be

drawn into endless debates on trivialities! Likewise all our argumentation is to be clearly based on love.

CONFRONTATION AND ACCOMMODATION

While we all prefer to build bridges rather than walls, we have to make sure that **no false signals are transmitted**. We will see to it that **no compromise** is entered into, and that the content of the Bible is not blurred or obscured by the methods, symbols, words and concepts we use, for these are merely forms of expression.

We will avoid assimilation to Islam. Assimilation is all too often not only a whitewashing of Islam, but also an obliteration of the distinction and difference that Islam as an anti-Christian religion displays. The next logical step would be syncretism.

UNAVOIDABLE CONFRONTATION

The more liberal a person or group is, the more the idea of 'dialogue' is promoted. Of course, there is nothing wrong in a dialogue with 'outsiders'. It is a Biblical practice and Paul and others practiced it. But when dialogue is translated into an exchange of thoughts and religious experiences, or 'ecumenical' prayers jointly performed by leading representatives of various religions, the signal given is that of acceptance of the divine origin of these. This will not only confound church members, but will in addition prove counterproductive to an effective evangelistic witness.

We just cannot avoid to present the Christian message over against Islam.

That means that **we have to expose the origin, roots and deficiencies of Islam at some time or other**. When and how this must be done, is a sensitive matter, but **to avoid it will mean that a Muslim will never be convinced in his heart, that he must turn away from Islam to become part of Christ**. That is confirmed in Scripture:

As I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. **Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.**

Acts 17:23

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, **to win** as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, **to win** the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under

the law), so as **to win** those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as **to win** those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men **so that by all possible means I might save some.**

1 Corinthians 9:19-22

Let me again quote Francis Schaeffer on this point:

Truth carries with it confrontation. Truth demands confrontation; loving confrontation, but confrontation nevertheless. If our reflex action is always accommodation, regardless of the centrality of the truth involved, there is something wrong. Just as what we may call holiness without love is not God's kind of holiness, so also what we may call love without holiness, including when necessary confrontation, is not God's kind of love. God is holy, and God is love.

The Great Evangelical Disaster

We are aware that confrontation is not 'in'. **Humanism** has, unfortunately, left its definite imprint even on some of the minds of Bible-based Christians. Who can, in our world in which we are constantly exposed and bombarded with philosophical and religious thought, claim to be unaffected?

While we have to be empathetic, understanding and lenient on the one side, we also have to realize that accommodation is unacceptable!

Even when the unrelenting wrath of **Ahab** and Jezebel sought to destroy him, Elijah confronted the four hundred and fifty **Baal priests** and the four hundred prophets of **Asherah** on Mount Carmel. **Elijah** did not go there to discuss or interact over a cup of tea how he could cooperate with them or how to come to a consensus about worship in Israel. It was a confrontation of truth against untruth!

IT IS THE TRUTH THAT MATTERS

Our conversation with Muslims should seek to establish, first of all, **where and what the Truth is about God and man and their relationship is.**

Search for the truth is essentially an objective task, in which sober and rational information, thinking and deduction have to take place.

This is not common to a Muslim. But that does not mean that one has to give up on this premise. To the contrary!

A Muslim must be encouraged to use the God given faculties to divide truth from error and to choose what can alone be established as divine revelation.

Let us consider some basics:

1. **In order to choose the Truth**, I have to choose from whatever other 'truths' are available.
2. **In order to accept the Truth**, I have to compare and seek to substantiate what acceptable evidence speaks for a message to be of divine origin. I have to learn to differentiate.
3. **Before I compare competing 'Truths'**, I need to have sufficient information about these - and use it!

Let us illustrate the point:

What would you prefer, a banana or a 'pagro'? You don't know a 'pagro', so you will opt for a banana. But what if the 'pagro' is the most delicious fruit there is? If you seek information, you will find out that there is no such thing as a 'pagro'. So the choice is clear and you can accept the banana as the right choice.

Let me mention just three men, whom I know personally, who made such choices.

Abdallah: When he heard the Gospel first, he was too busy with studies to attend to it. But then he read all he could to be informed. He was convinced of the reliability of the Gospel over against the teachings of Islam and chose. He accepted the Truth.

Abbas: Heading an Islamic Information Centre in a certain country, he came across comprehensive Christian literature, written particularly for Muslims. He studied this (got information), then chose and accepted the Truth. For that he lost his job and was severely persecuted, he lives in another country now - but has honored the Truth, because he recognized it.

Goolam: He turned Christian but for lack of knowledge reverted to Islam. When confronted with the Truth he argued: 'You have your truth, and I have mine'. Then the issue was made clear: was Jesus crucified or not? The Qur'an says no, the Bible says yes. Given substantiated information, he processed this - in this case OT prophecies fulfilled in Christ - and made his choice. He too chose the Truth.

All this amounts to conflict - but the Truth shall set us free (John 8:32)! The tendency to avoid conflict or controversy prevents the kind of communication, which is necessary, for without a clear statement of the Truth, no true faith can emanate.

HOW TO AVOID MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Love dictates two things: firstly, I must accept another person without prejudice, and secondly, I will learn so much about him, that I become able to speak to him in a way that he will be able to comprehend. Mere outward assimilation (does a Muslim really expect that?) is not love!

An illustration will help again:

During a **public debate** between an American preacher and the Muslim antagonist Ahmed Deedat, seemingly hard pressed, the preacher resorted to a story to show the power of Christ over against that of Muhammad. He stated that he knew someone on a mission field who had visited a Muslim who had fallen ill. An Islamic leader had prayed for that sick man "in the name of Muhammad", but he did not get better. Then the Christian missionary prayed for that man "in the name of Jesus" and he was healed!

What was the effect of this statement? Not only did this reflect an uncalled for triumphalism, but on the video, which was produced of that debate by the Islamic Propagation Center, a footnote was inserted, which rightly stated, that no Muslim will ever pray "in the name of Muhammad"! It was simply a projection of Christian practice into Islam. That made Deedat's day. He exposed his opponent to be a liar (or at least someone who repeated a lie, even if done unintentionally).

The problem here was that the Christian debater was ignorant and unprepared for such an encounter. He should have known so much about his opponent's religion as not to make such a blunder.

These videos are shown internationally and the resulting damage can hardly be overestimated.

**Our message must always be verified by our integrity
and fortified by our insight and knowledge.**

THE USE OF THE QUR'AN IN MUSLIM EVANGELISM

We are all aware that Muslims accept and believe in the Qur'an and reject the Bible. This fact led to the suggestion that one should use the Qur'an to present Jesus from its pages. There are some

very positive statements about Jesus in the Qur'an. But one should resist the temptation to 'prove' the crucifixion and death of Christ from it. It would be a very ambiguous attempt, and can be done only by a 'clever' Christian hermeneutic. How legitimate is this?

The Christian qur'anic hermeneutic assumes an essential agreement between the Qur'an and the Bible on many points. In so doing, it creates an authority conflict for Muslim inquirers and converts, and for the emerging Muslim convert churches.

The fact is that commitment to Christ inevitably involves commitment to the authority of the Bible. When a Muslim inquirer is confronted with the claims of Christ, through the Scriptures, he is faced with a choice: he must either commit himself to the Bible and the Biblical view of Christ and forsake the Qur'an, or commit himself to the Qur'an and the qur'anic view of Christ and reject the Scriptures.

Samuel Schlorff: "The Hermeneutical Crisis in Muslim Evangelism"

We may legitimately remind a Muslim that the book he believes in dictates faith in the 'former Scriptures' (i.e. the Bible) and that it has a lot of good to say about Jesus. But at the same time we express that it very difficult for a Christian to accept the denial of the crucifixion and death of Jesus, the qur'anic doctrine of God and the doctrine of abrogation (see "Islam, as it sees itself, as others see it, as it is",) or 'predestination'. We should indeed refrain from "preaching Christ from the Qur'an" as some do. The Qur'an constitutes no authority for a Christian! We must make this quite clear! The Isa of the Qur'an is not an extended or true image of the Jesus of the Bible!

OUR USE OF ARABIC TERMS IN MUSLIM EVANGELISM

Depending on the type of people we reach out to, the use of Arabic may be absolutely essential. But even in non-Arabic speaking countries, Muslims have been and are being trained in the Arabic language, for religious terms and rituals are normally formulated in Arabic. It is, therefore, definitely an advantage to know these and their meaning, so that we may make use of this knowledge when defining the meaning of a word or concept.

But then there could also be the temptation of showing a Muslim how 'clever' we are, instead of showing them our care to understand their point of view even to the extent that we learned some of their vocabulary. This may well be appreciated. However, we ought to **know** what we do, else we either reap ridicule or create apprehension in the Muslim, as he might fear to meet a well-learned 'Christian missionary'.

Let me illustrate:

We heard of a foreign missionary, who, in a conversation with some Muslims, kept referring to Jesus Christ as 'Nabi Isa' (the prophet or messenger Jesus). On his mind was no doubt, the use of a familiar term in order to avoid 'foreign' terminology. At the end one Muslim clapped him on the shoulder approvingly, saying: "You are the first Christian, who admits that Jesus was no more than a prophet!" So the attempt to be accepted backfired.

To avoid 'proselytizing' efforts by Christians, Muslims have begun to react and to inhibit the use of Arabic by non-Muslims. It is surely significant, that Muslims in Malaysia have managed to see the "Control and Restriction of the Propagation of Non-Islamic Religions Bill 1989" passed. It prohibits non-Muslims from using expressions used by Muslims to describe anything pertaining to non-Muslim religions. Words like '*Allah*' and '*rasul*' fall under this category. Since 1981, the Malay-language Bible, known as the *al-Kitab*, has been banned because it used words like *Allah* (for God) and *rasul* (for prophet) ("SIM NOW" Sept.-Oct. 1989).

We see the need for a selective use of Arabic terms, being aware that using '*Injil*' for Gospel and '*Nabi Isa*', '*Moosa*' or '*Ibrahim*' is hardly more than effort to be familiar. One also should be fully aware that these do not necessarily convey a Biblical meaning. This applies particularly to '*Nabi Isa*' and '*Injil*'.

Recommended Literature for Chapter 5

Biblical Christianity in African Perspective, by Wilbur O'Donovan, Carlisle: Baker Book House, 1985, pp.297-311

Ishmael my Brother, compiled by Anne Cooper, Turnbridge Wells: MARC, 1993, pp.143-158

6. UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION AND ITS FUNCTION

We will see that understanding culture and understanding communication are two sides of the same coin.

Until quite recently and even up till now various denominations viewed each other with suspicion, and much more so different religions. **If we had to give a detailed account of why we are Christians and not Muslims, Presbyterian and not Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons or New Apostolics, our reasoning is not likely to be convincing.** We proceed from our subjective reality, which we (or anybody else, for that matter) perceive to be the Truth. If someone attacks our position we withdraw or argue our point, and **even if we lose the argument - will still stay what we are**, perhaps a little more doubtful or fanatical. Many a Christian has heard or read forceful attacks by Muslims against the Bible and Christ. They were silenced because they had no answer. Yet, they will hardly consider becoming Muslims. And Muslims will react the same way.

In order to win Muslims, we will have to be able to convince him/her
that Jesus offers infinitely more
and that He can indeed be fully trusted.

THE MECHANICS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication means that an idea which I have in my mind passes through my lips and reaches the other person's mind. Adequate communication means that when it reaches the recipient's mind, it is substantially the same as when it left mine. I will have substantially made the point I wish to convey. The words that we use are only a tool for translating the ideas which we wish to communicate...

"The God Who is There" by Francis Schaeffer

Besides body language we have no other tools than words to convey thought. There are actions we can explain without words by means of a sign language, e.g.:

"I am hungry!"

"I have a headache!"

But how do we mime:

"We are saved by grace through faith"?

While it is relatively easy to communicate mundane issues by sign language, it is quite a different matter to convey **abstract thought**, but **it is most difficult to transmit a spiritual message**. Let us try to analyze this.

Words are relative to their users. When I say 'I am hungry', then this will mean something different for a subsistence farmer in a drought stricken area than to an affluent Western business man looking into a full refrigerator half an hour before supper. When I say it is hot or cold I convey a different message in terms of expected degrees to an Eskimo or a man in Mombasa in East Africa.

The more specific a word becomes, the more likely it is to differ in content from that of a different culture.

COMMUNICATION AND THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

When we share the Gospel with an outsider, is it not the Holy Spirit Who communicates the message to the spirit of the listener? Can anyone, for that matter, understand the Biblical message without the operation of the Holy Spirit? The answer to that is obvious. **The Holy Spirit always effects spiritual understanding.**

But what, if my sharing of the Good News is unintelligible to my listener? Maybe I speak on an academic level that he cannot follow, or I use words he is not acquainted with. Maybe I use a terminology that makes no sense to him. Will the Holy Spirit not overrule this?

If it were meant that way, we would not have been charged to present the Gospel to 'all creation'. We would not have been charged to share the message understandably, as we will read just now.

Of course, God the Holy Spirit can intervene in a direct manner - and does so quite frequently - to open the mind of a person. **But as a rule spiritual truth is first committed to the mind of the hearer. It is processed there. And that may be followed by a spiritual realization, which leads to a spiritual understanding of the message. That is the work of the Holy Spirit.**

We must conclude that the promised work of the Holy Spirit is not a substitute for our witness, and our witness will not be effective without the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the listener.

INTRODUCING JESUS TO A MUSLIM

Let us investigate this. Donald N. Larson, a linguist at Bethel College, USA, observes:

When Christians and Muslims meet, it is not with clean slates but under conditions established in their respective groups and in terms of what each knows at that point in his life and how it is organized in his mind. They engage each other as outsiders. Well-defined boundaries keep them separate. They may be able to talk freely about the weather, but when it comes to the central issues of life, like their respective worldview and lifestyle, they tend to avoid each other. When they cannot, they tend to collide.

The Gospel and Islam, pp. 72-73

Every person, when confronted with something to him unknown, is depending on a comparison with what is already known to him. Naturally, the characteristics of the known thing will be transferred to the unknown. Let us try to illustrate this.

When the first cars appeared, people looked under the bonnet to find the horses or oxen, which moved the car. Moving vehicles were always associated with drawing animals. Likewise when a Christian learns that Muslims believe in one god, it is natural to identify him as Yahweh, and to impute that his characteristics and nature are those of Yahweh.

The question therefore is not: 'Do we believe in one god', but 'how has this god revealed himself? What is he like? What is the name which identifies him? The careful student will not only look at superficial similarities, but also at the fundamental differences, those pertaining to the nature of God and the consequences that flow from that. Larson continues:

The Christian must know something of what the Muslim knows in order to make effective use of his (i.e. the Muslim's) own knowledge and experience.

When Christian utterances enter Muslims ears, the meanings of those utterances are organized on the basis of what is already in the Muslim's mind. Likewise, when Muslim utterances enter Christian ears, the meanings are organized by the Christian on the basis of what is already in his mind.

To put it somewhat differently, as a Christian transmits what he knows, the Muslim takes it, compares it with what is already in his mind and processes it accordingly. In the same way, as the Muslim transmits what he knows, the Christian processes it on the basis of what is already in his mind. That is, the Muslim organizes what the Christian sends according to what he knows, and the Christian does the same thing. Each controls his own output. However, neither exercises much control over what the other does with what he trans-

mits. Neither can withdraw what is already in the other's minds. At best he can say things which may supplement or rearrange it.

Only when the Christian can understand and appreciate the Muslim's reality as he (i.e. the Muslim) does, can he talk about his own Christian reality in terms which the Muslim can understand and in ways that enable him to appreciate the Christian's point of view.

Therefore, if the Christian hopes to touch the Muslim at significant points in a significant manner, he must be prepared to talk, but he must also be prepared to listen.

The general problem boils down to the specific problem of belonging. Christians and Muslims belong to different "tribal" traditions. In their respective groups each comes to know different things, map them into language in different ways, meet others under different conditions and hold different beliefs.

ibid., p.73

Paul Hiebert, a Professor of Anthropology, adds that:

When Christianity enters a new culture, it must not only be translated into a new language, but also into the thought forms, symbols and customs of a new culture.

ibid., p.60

Muslims, Christians, Hindus and others have integrated thought structures. Words may be the same as in other languages, have been coded by their respective religion, culture and sociological factors.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN SPIRITUAL COMMUNICATION?

When we think of ourselves we may divide our self into BODY, HEART or SOUL and MIND. What do we want to express by that?

We assume that
our MIND is center of our THINKING
and our HEART is the center of our FEELING

When we do arithmetic, we apply our MIND. When we see someone hurt or mourn, we are moved in our HEART.

What about our FAITH? **Do we practice it with our HEART or MIND?** With both:

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your **heart**.

Jeremiah 29:13

Love the Lord your God with all your **heart** and with all your soul and with all your **mind**.

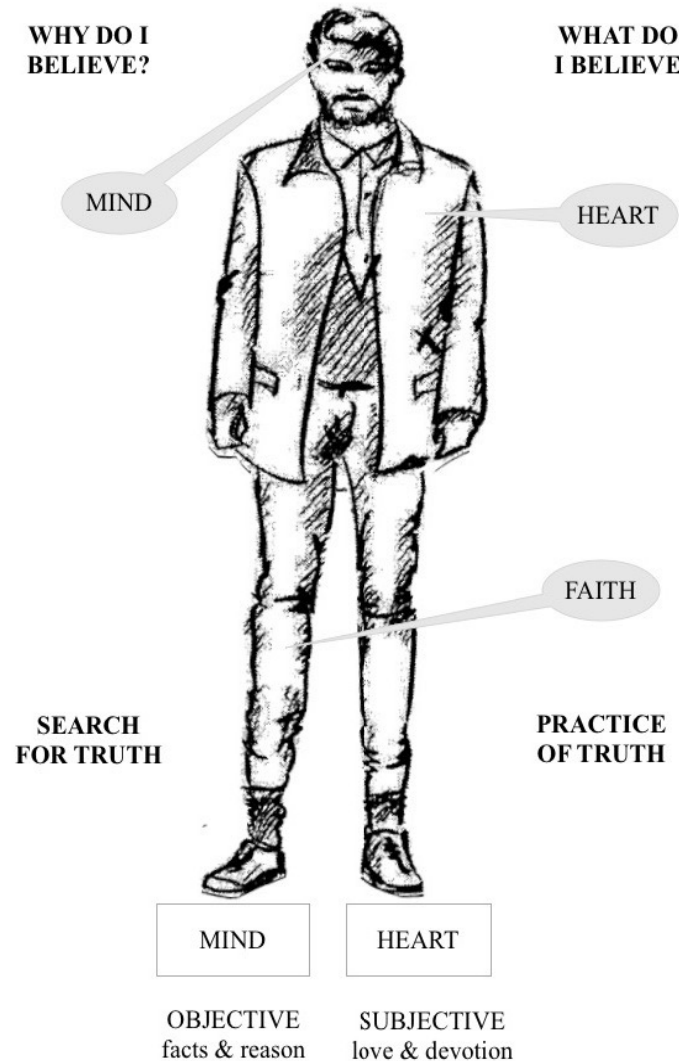
Matthew. 22:37

Our faith is built on two foundations: TRUTH and LOVE.

To discern between truth and deception we need to apply our MIND.

To worship and adore our Lord, we apply our HEART.

A drawing will illustrate this:



The Christian witness needs to be clear on WHAT he believes. He knows the facts and promises of the Gospel; this is both to be understood in his mind and believed in his heart.

But then he also needs to give the evidence for it: WHY do we believe this Gospel to be true and dependable. This objective verifies the Truth.

Our message will enter through our senses (ears and eyes), and is then scrutinized by the mind and heart or emotions. This should trigger off the question:

DO I LIKE IT?

It comes from the heart. Here our presentation of God in His glory, majesty, purity, righteousness, mercy and love is of great importance. Do we picture Him as threatening, watching our very step to punish us for any mistake? Or do we 'portray Jesus Christ clearly before their very eyes' (Gal. 3:1) and demonstrate how God, although grieved over our sin, is the Good Shepherd who seeks and goes after the lost sheep until He finds it?

The 'picture' of God that the Bible provides
is absolutely and overwhelmingly more attractive
than Allah is depicted in the Qur'an.
We must never forget that!

The next question is likely to be different:

IS IT TRUE? CAN I TRUST IT?

It comes from the mind. Here the evidence of the Gospel needs to dispel any doubts. If the mind is satisfied, it is time for the decisive question:

DO I WANT IT?

And that question is linked to another:

AM I WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE?

Every Muslim knows what it means for him/her to leave his/her religion, and at this point come the bidding and yet hard words of Jesus:

Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not
worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more

than me is not worthy of me. And anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Matthew 10:37-39.

But the price must never be considered without the knowledge of what the 'price' actually 'buys'! It is the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins and our reconciliation to God. It is the everlasting sunshine of His love over and around us! It is Life in His presence forever!

THE GREAT 'BUT'

What we just considered is a balanced and logic way to think, feel and decide. We all too often have to deal with another kind of logic. A fictitious incident may help illustrate the point:

A man is undergoing psychiatric treatment. He believes to be a mouse. After a lengthy therapy he becomes convinced that he is a human after all and is released.

A short while later he returns to the psychiatric hospital panting and with horror on his face: "Right on the road is a big cat!" he pants. The psychiatrist reminds him: "But you do know that you are a human being". "Yes, of course", the patient replied, "but does the cat know that?"

Unfortunately, we often find little or no logic in religious thinking. It is, as a rule, a mixture of culture, tradition, misinformation, hear-say and fear. It is believed, because all Muslims believe it – and they can't all be wrong.

Must we despair? NO! Number one: God is there! He recognizes an honest heart and the Holy Spirit will be at the listener's side.

But we also should be helpful by recognizing what the problem is and then direct the message accordingly. And we need to exercise part of the Fruit of the Spirit: patience.

THE RESULT OF GOOD COMMUNICATION: UNDERSTANDING

We are given a biblical model:

... we do not write you anything you cannot read or **understand**. And I hope that, as you have understood us in part, you will come to **understand fully**...

2 Corinthians 1:13-14

Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he (i.e. Christ) **explained** to them what was said in **all** the Scriptures concerning himself ... He said to them: "Everything must be ful-

filled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. Then he opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures.

Luke 24:27, 44-45

These texts have two facets: **understanding by means of explanation** and **by illumination through His Spirit**. Both aspects are vital.

The 'normal' sharing the Gospel, the Good News is basically confined to saying: 'You are a sinner and by that lost. Christ died for your sins. If you accept Him as your personal Saviour, your sins will be forgiven, and you will go to heaven'.

That, of course, is the Good News. But there is ever so much more to be said about God's love. We have to mention that He is holy! He wants us to be with Him, forever! But we cannot, because we are very unholy and holiness and sin do not mix! What is sin? What is God's expectation from us? How do we relate to God's Law? The Law is not just the Ten Commandments! It also introduces the possible atonement by sacrifice. What is a sacrifice really? How does all this apply to Christ? These and many more issues have to be made known.

If one book of the Bible would be enough, why did God send 66? And when presenting the Gospel, which is the plan of God for mankind, why begin at the end? Do we normally read books from the end? We have to be careful to present the facts of the Gospel so that they make sense to the outsider, i.e. comprehensive enough.

It is good to remember what Christ said about the seed, which fell on good soil. It speaks of

...the man who hears the word and **understands** it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Matthew 13:23

The treasurer of Queen Candace of Ethiopia was reading a very significant prophecy concerning Christ's death. When Philip asked him, '*do you **understand what you are reading?***', he had to answer, '*how can I, unless someone explains it to me?*'

This is confirmed by yet another passage:

All over the world this Gospel is producing fruit...just as it has been doing among you since the day you **heard and understood God's grace in all its truth.**

Colossians 1:6

Let us never forget:

**A Muslim will understand the Gospel
in proportion to
how we understand him and his religion**

But it is not only the understanding that matters, but also the integrity of the witness:

We do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by **setting forth the truth plainly** we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 4:2

CONTROLLING A HEATED DEBATE

'Hot' issues need to be handled soberly without getting visibly upset.

This demands knowledge of the subject - usually Apologetics - and restraint, but also the ability to analyze and lovingly clarify the issues involved.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; **be self-controlled**; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1 Peter 1:13

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

1 Peter 5:8

OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE COMMUNICATION

The testimony – our subjective communication about God

We call **subjective** experiences 'testimonies'.

What is real to us, but needs not to be a reality to others. Consider this simple illustration:

John is deeply in love with Rebecca. The way he feels is very real to him. Rebecca's mother also loves her, but this is not the same reality. John's friends also 'love' her, but John's love is

quite another experience. John's friends also were or are in love, with other girls. They surely have a very real experience of what falling in love is. But only John experiences what his being in love with Rebecca really is. It is his unique experience and reality.

We should differentiate between objective facts and subjective spiritual experiences. Both are real to us, when they come our way. The more personal this experience is, the more precious, but also subjective, it is. We may be deeply grateful for our experiences with God, but it does not necessarily convey the same feeling to someone else, it may even be misunderstood and be compared with what someone else experienced on another level. An example:

"God has answered a prayer of mine in a wonderful way!" I may consider that to be a testimony for Christ. But my Muslim friend may with full conviction respond by saying: "O, I have the very same experience all the time!" He compares my statement with his reality and that may be quite different. Or he may think that Christians always see something supernatural in everyday events, but these do happen to all kinds of people after all.

"God told me ..." is a dangerous statement to make. It will essentially be assessed a subjective statement. Although it was probably meant to give weight to what follows, but will generally rather lead to the assumption that the user of this phrase wants to elevate him/herself in the eyes of the listener.

This assessment of testimonies should not discourage us from testifying about God and His work in us. But it should be used in conjunction with, and support of the biblical message. A personal testimony, if well placed, can indeed stir the hearts of people and inspire faith, but it just is not the Word of God, and that is what we like to convey.

The word of God – our objective communication of God

Objective communication is the transmission of the biblical message. When an honest and objective person hears the facts of the Gospel and the evidence that verify the Word of God, he or she may need some time to emotionally and rationally come to terms with it, but then will have to consent to it, for anyone may test the veracity of the Bible. That makes it objective. Whether one likes it or not - it is evidenced fact.

7. REACHING OUT

Having received the foundational insight by a thorough study of the many topics that relate to Muslim evangelism, we come to the actual purpose of all these lessons, to share the Gospel with our Muslim neighbours and colleagues in a, to them, meaningful and understandable way.

Our willingness to step over the line with the aim and purpose to make Christ known, will have to be matched by our empathy and sensitivity towards our Muslim contacts.
These are proof of our love for them.
They must realize that we are trustworthy.
This can really only happen within a relationship, and that grows best in an atmosphere of understanding and trust.

But even that is no blueprint for success!

Let us right at the outset come to terms with one needed precondition:

No knowledge or skill, no method, strategy, loving involvement or trick of any sort will suffice, for:

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him ...

John 6:44

We are told to make known the Good News. We have to be content with doing just that - plus a little more: we should be loving, faithful and patient in doing this.

This will include an effort to persuade - and even to argue or reason. We have to make ourselves understood. Christians must not hide behind a pseudo-spirituality, 'leaving everything to the Lord'. But we also have to accept the freedom of choice of the other, who is very likely to reject the Good News of Jesus. So we find these three basics:

1. We have to explain the Gospel in such a way that it is clearly understood by the listener
2. The Lord must 'draw' that person, that is
3. Our listener must be willing to open his heart and soul to the Truth of God.

While we should be prepared to do our best, we can neither convict of sin, convert or save. What we are expected to do, let us do with a deep sense of responsibility. **If we want to act responsibly and that is why we will prepare ourselves in the best possible way.**

Every salesman deserving this name is trained, and keeps on training himself, to best present his goods. Of course, it is below the dignity of the Gospel to use 'sales techniques' in presenting the Gospel, yet we should constantly be eager to learn, and be prepared to improve our skills.

This does not mean that we neglect to devotedly seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit! But we do our homework as men like Paul, John, Stephen and all the other saints did, as can be seen from Scripture.

It is the Holy Spirit Who will teach us all things and will **remind** believers of everything the Lord Jesus had taught them (John 14:26). This presupposes that there **is** something to be remembered!

OUR FOUNDATION

In order to develop the best strategy we to consider first of all:

- 1. What does the Word of God expect us to be and to do regarding the Muslim population within our reach?**
- 2. How can we best accomplish what our Lord called us to do?**

That alone is our criterion.

DIFFERENT SITUATIONS DEMAND DIFFERENT APPROACHES

It would be simplistic to assume that Muslims could all be reached in the same way everywhere. Basically there are two types of Muslim evangelism between which we must differentiate:

- Muslims in countries or areas which are **overwhelmingly Islamic**. They might even have an Islamic government and adopt a hostile attitude towards the Christian faith.
- Muslims in countries with **Muslim minorities** or where there is a near balance between Christians and Muslims. In this case both communities live in the same territory without Muslim dominated authorities and where freedom of religion is granted.

Our strategy model fits the second situation.

MUSLIM EVANGELISM AND 'SUCCESS'

In our modern society everything is measured by success. Therefore it is an ever-recurring question how successful Muslim evangelism really is. If there is little prospect for success, the interest in Muslims drops, perhaps with a sympathetic commendation for the few that stick it out.

What is 'success' in evangelism?

A builder is a successful worker when he lays more than 800 bricks a day. A salesman is successful when he/she sells goods in excess of what a customer intended to buy. When is a witness for our Lord Jesus successful? The seemingly obvious answer is when he sees a lot of converts.

This is highly objectionable, for it presupposes that we can 'make' converts. But we are not God, who alone can save.

A witness for Jesus is successful when he/she faithfully and conscientiously communicates the Good News of God to a person until it is understood. A Muslim's remark, "oh, now I understand!" is a confirmation of a successful transmission of God's Word. The recipient may not want to respond to God. To change that is beyond the capability of the witness, for that is on a spiritual level man cannot influence. We may be able to persuade a person to 'make a decision'. But that is not likely to affect a truly spiritual rebirth.

Our Lord commanded us to go and share the Gospel. He also told us to make disciples. But what is in between, the transformation, the New Birth, is God's prerogative to perform.

Our 'success' is established by our faithfulness in doing God's will to make Him known. Whether our listener "hears or refuses to hear" (Ezekiel 2:5), is his responsibility. It is our calling to share the Good News with him faithfully. (1 Corinthians 4:1)

PREPARATION AND EXPERIENCE

Earlier it was said that knowledge, prayer and experience belong together and that none is a substitute for the other. It is obvious that **one can get no experience without exposing oneself** to Muslim evangelism.

Whether or not we are gifted to communicate the Gospel, no person can know until he has practiced it long enough to find out. No person is able to find out whether he or she is gifted to play the piano, unless lessons are taken and many hours of exercising and rehearsing have been done.

Skill comes with learning and experience. This does not exclude the possibility of making mistakes. Every witness will have to be content to learn from these mistakes as not to repeat them.

What we learn from books or in a classroom can never be an alternative to experience, as important as this may be. On the other hand, experience without instruction will only in very exceptional cases lead to knowledgeable and effective communication.

And we know from Scripture, that

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:2

This is followed by those most beautiful and challenging words:

Love is patient, love is kind ... it does not boast(!), it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails!

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

THE WITNESS

Even though feeling reluctant to discourage someone with a willing heart from considering Muslim evangelism, we will have to look at certain qualities a witness should have.

These qualities depend largely on the situation and intensity of involvement. On a personal level every Christian should be able to be a witness to his or her Muslim neighbour or colleague. But those who would like to participate in Muslim evangelism more extensively should train to develop abilities and to enhance their gifts. Even so most of the basic qualities should be natural to every Christian:

Our attitude

We cannot stress enough the importance of **right attitudes**. Muslim evangelism that is induced or nourished by fear of Islam or by a spirit of triumphalism is bound to produce negative results. Even an in-depth-knowledge of Islamic teaching and practice may be (and too often is!) used in an aggressive and destructive manner. A Christian witness will wholeheartedly seek to understand a Muslim and to share “the truth in love”.

Prayer

Prayer is a key issue in our struggle against the principalities that blind and bind (see Ephesians 6:10-20). It is therefore necessary for the witness to seek before the Lord the right attitude, courage and wisdom for him/herself, and for the listener to have an open mind and be free of bondage.

Compassion

We all need compassion for those men and women who live without the Saviour, who have been deceived or live in a system which does not afford them any knowledge of the Bible and its teaching. They are lost though they may be religious, zealous and sincere.

Empathy

Without the desire to understand the person we speak to, we will hardly be able to communicate properly, particularly in a cross-religious situation. Even the Apostle Paul admitted:

I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.

1 Corinthians 2:3

But then he made a resolve:

Though I am free and belong to no man, **I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.** To the Jews I became a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. **I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.** I do all this for the sake of the Gospel that I may share in its blessings.

2 Corinthians 9:19-23

Courage

Courage is needed to go where others shrink back from going, to share the faith in love even in a hostile situation:

But **we are not of those who shrink back** and are destroyed, but of those who believe ...

Hebrews 10:39

Humility

Humility is the absolute absence of conceit or arrogance. We speak with a Muslim as being on the same level, not to look down to her or him.

Who makes you different from anyone else? **What do you have that you did not receive?**

1 Corinthians 4:7

By the grace given to me I say to every one of you: **Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought**, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Romans 12:3

... make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but **in humility consider others better than yourselves.**

Philippians 2:2-3

Faithfulness

This is how men should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover **it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy" (or faithful).**

1 Corinthians 4:1

‘Stickability’ is perhaps the quality most lacking in Muslim evangelism.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A witness should be conscious of the fact that the Gospel is supra cultural. **No one needs to change his or her culture in order to comprehend the Gospel, to accept and follow it.** Naturally, the Gospel should be embedded in a given culture and expressed in adequate cultural forms. These should, however, not be a stumbling block to members of another culture. While absolutely no concessions may be made regarding the **content** of the biblical faith, we have no mandate to force our traditional cultural **forms** on anyone else.

One will have to carefully observe and sensitively respond to every given situation, and decide what may or may not be done or said.

Be yourself!

God created and molded each of us in a specific way. **Let us be what God has intended us to be**, and bring in all our gifts, enriched with information and knowledge, to carry out the great unfinished task to the glory of God and for the salvation of lost sinners.

It is not always easy to decide which methods and approaches will work well. It is always better to be ones genuine self rather than to copy the ways and methods of someone else. But also other considerations will influence our approach, such as **a given time frame, a specific situation or the character trait in the listener**. These should influence every approach. A spiritual, wise and watchful witness will find the right way.

Some potential roadblocks should be considered, however.

Tact, understanding and consideration

are indispensable qualities we should show. When we enter a home, we are guests - and behave as such! If we use the Bible or lead a spiritual conversation and there is a knock at the door and family or friends come to visit, one should not embarrass the host, but rather put away the Bible to protect him, and to change the subject for the time being. Muslims are afraid of other Muslims and do appreciate such behaviour.

Leading a conversation

actively is often very necessary. Muslims have a way of jumping from subject to subject, when they feel they cannot deal with a topic, and rather defend themselves by attacking the Bible. When they come up with non-relevant questions without being prepared to listen to the answer, one will have to firmly lead the conversation; else one will just be involved in silly argumentation.

The only really suitable vehicle for that is the **media**. If it cannot be done on **TV**, but that is excessively expensive. A long-term effort in the **local press** is second best. **Readers' letters and articles** will be helpful. But they must in no wise be aggressive! They should merely inform about aspects of the Christian faith that are generally misunderstood, not mentioning Islam or Muslims.

Another even more effective effort is an informative 'flyer' that is distributed to every home in a given area. The appearance of a newspaper (four pages is fine) is cost effective and neu-

tral. The headlines and topics must be relevant and appealing (and not only to Christians!) and not be aggressive. If this is done once a month or once every three months, it is likely to be noted. All this we call **broadcasting**.

Dealing with prejudice

An ever so important rule is to pick the people up from where they are! In the case of Muslims, they are purposely misinformed and by that very suspicious toward the Bible and the Christian faith. To change this, we have to first clear the rubble in the way. The aim is to create a reasonable openness towards the Christian message in a community. Best, a broadly based effort should be made to lessen an existing antagonism and to clarify misinformation. This is called pre-evangelism. It aims to correct specific false impressions people may have about the Gospel.

Controlled emotions

are often needed when Muslims attack our Scriptures or Jesus Christ. Particularly then, we got to keep feelings cool! There is no point in losing the temper! Nothing is achieved when an irrational argument gets out of control. Of course, some Islamic arguments are calculated to make us lose our composure. Let us be on the guard!

Illustrate your point!

This is very important indeed! Not all people can follow abstract thought easily. In certain cultures the very use of the language is symbolical or illustrative. Almost every transmission of abstract thought - and a spiritual presentation is just that - will be enhanced by using parables, metaphors or allegories. Our Lord Jesus made it almost a rule to use these. This should encourage us to use of illustrations from the context of real life. (In the appendix some selected examples are given.)

Substantiate your point!

Our personal convictions and opinions are of very little use. When we make a statement, be it from the Bible, history or Islam; let us make sure that we are not vague about it, by providing the necessary frame of reference. This may not always be possible at once, but we can offer to provide this at a next arranged meeting. Always aim to prove your point, but also expect this from your Muslim friend who will hardly be able to prove much of what he stands for, particularly when we are reasonably well informed about Islam ourselves.

Ask questions!

Have we ever wondered why we like people who show an interest in what we are and do? Let us think about that for a moment.

Asking questions displays our interest in our vis-a-vis. It is not threatening. To the contrary, it transmits a feeling of acceptance. It is part of human nature to incline toward those who take us serious. And since we are made up of body, soul and spirit, we all have needs for these three components.

Asking questions is a good way to slowly discover the other person and to lead to a more personal level of communication. In turn we open ourselves to the other. That makes the other and us vulnerable, but also brings us closer together.

Listening is indeed a very important aspect of a conversation. To bombard the other with our 'message' or 'testimony' or even Bible verses, may leave the 'witness' with the feeling to have preached on the Gospel solidly, but is likely to push the listener into the defensive, or, worse, an unnecessary confrontation.

What kind of questions could or should we ask?

If a little 'bridge' has been built on a personal level, it is only natural to say that "one hears so much about Islam these days, and that this raises questions that need to be answered. Can you help me?"

"I hear (or noticed) that you pray five times a day. Why five times, and not three or ten? Why does everybody do it the same manner?"

"After saying the prayer 6.200 times every year, will not a routine kill a genuine devotion when doing it? Should one not rather 'pray from the heart'? Is there not a danger of prayer becoming a mere habit?"

"I hear (or noticed) that you bring sacrifices. Is that done in the same way and for the same purpose as God commanded to Abraham or Moses? What does the offering of a sacrifice mean, or affect?"

Politics and religion

Zionism and Islam are enemies to each other. Actually it is more than Zionism that is resented by Muslims. It is anti-Judaism (one can hardly say anti-Semitism for Arabs themselves are Semites). Traditionally Christians have been - and should be - pro-Jewish. But they should al-

so pro-Muslim, be considerate, loving and understanding. To take the side of Israel and the Jews, can be very offensive to Muslims. On the other hand it is difficult to take the side of the Arabs, when it comes to the Biblical occupation rights of Palestine by the Jews. Like in politics, Christians should be understanding and kind-hearted to both sides - without calling wrong right or vice versa.

Male-female contacts

are obviously viewed from their own cultural background. That means with much more suspicion, rigor and concern than in a Western society. Therefore, a witness must make quite sure not unnecessarily offend their Muslim friends. What may be quite a normal chat to us may well be considered immodest, even offensive, in an Islamic context. Even shaking of hands, particularly after the ritual washing before the '*Salat*' or '*Namaaz*' prayer, may be considered defiling. One should indeed be careful not to expose a person of the other sex by being alone in a conversation with her or him.

How to dress

is an aspect of importance in the Islamic world. Depending on their cultural heritage, ladies cover much more of their bodies than their Western counterparts with all too often rather unattractive clothes. This is viewed as a token of modesty, in an effort not to display any personal appeal or charm. To understand this we will have to consider the altogether different perception of modesty and morality in Islam. While originally (and even today in the territories of the *Shiah* sect of Islam) '*mut'ah*', a temporary marriage for a few hours, days or even weeks, was or is acceptable and legal, it is still the practice that a couple in courtship will never be allowed to meet without a chaperon. The extensive covering of the body in some cultures, including the '*burka*' (veil covering the face), is imposed on the women in order not to arouse men. Christians find it difficult to understand such forms, because we are called to practice modesty and morality from the heart. While Christians do not promote vile apparel, their dress is decent within the context they live in.

A Christian lady seeking contact with Muslims will not unduly demonstrate her resentments about the taboos in Islam. In most cultures she will hardly be expected to conform to Islamic rules anyway. But then she also does not wish to give the impression that she is out to animate men. Good taste and sensitivity will make her find a path in middle. A good norm would be the suggestion of the Apostle Paul, who wrote:

I want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety...
with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

1Timothy 2:9-10.

Women trying to conform by dressing the Islamic way are known to have been accused of assimilation with the motive of deception. This happened to missionaries for dressing like the indigenous people. Again, considerate and tactful people will find the right way.

The use of the right hand

is used for 'clean' activities such as eating, the left for 'unclean' ones, such as wiping the bottom. This somewhat stigmatizes the left hand - something to be aware of. In many Eastern cultures eating is done with the right hand only, while the left hand is kept under the table. While Eastern hospitality is often considerate enough towards Westerners to provide the 'tools' to eat, the witness be well advised to use his right hand, if these are not available. It is advised in this context not to hand a gift of any sort (particularly a Bible) with the left hand.

Hospitality

is a great virtue of most Orientals, including, of course, the Muslims. To refuse it may be offensive. One should, on the other hand, not insist on inviting Muslims for a meal, if they decline. They have their reason:

The Halaal Law

In Islam just about everything is basically divided into two categories: '*halaal*', lawful and '*haraam*', unlawful.

Food laws are naturally included in this system. Like in Judaism the *kosher* law, the *halaal* food laws have been extended much beyond the original intent and purpose. Basically, a Muslim is only allowed to eat meat slaughtered in accordance with the Islamic ritual of cutting the throat of the animal and bleeding it to death. Exceptions are fish and locusts. Unlawful is the meat of predators as well as of pigs, canines, donkeys, mules and a host of others.

A Christian may buy food from a Muslim butchery when entertaining a Muslim friend, and yet the friend may still be suspicious and feel uncomfortable eating with Christians. The pots and pans may have been used for preparing pork. Worse, one hears stories of Christians having deceived Muslims by adding pork fat to food offered to them.

It has been brought to our knowledge that certain Christians demanded from a Muslim convert to eat pork before receiving her or him into a Christian fellowship. What a disgusting and unbiblical thing to do! And yet, one can understand it, when, like in the Middle East, Muslims fake becoming Christians with the object of marrying Christian girls, only to return to Islam once they have succeeded.

So let us not be too persuasive when inviting Muslims and sense a reluctance or evasiveness on their side. Generally speaking, it is our experience that a Muslim feels much more at ease in his own environment.

Holy Books

are generally honoured by most Muslims. These include in particular the Law of Moses, the Psalms of David, the Gospel of Jesus and the Qur'an, or, shall we rather say, the Bible and the Qur'an.

Obviously Christians also have a deep reverence for the Bible, but in quite another way. While we may underline important passages in the Bible and write our references in the margin, or deposit our Bible on the bedside table or desk, this borders on desecration to a Muslim. He may rarely open the Qur'an to read it - yet he will always keep the Qur'an on the highest place in a room, probably have it wrapped in a special cloth and will wash his hands before touching it. Folk Islam will provide portions of the Qur'an as amulets or charms for protection. Can we see the difference? In Islam it is the Book as such which is revered. We value the content of our book, the message.

Titles

have to be used with care! Consider: can we honestly speak of **the Prophet** Muhammad? Or should we speak to a Muslim (or any non-Christian for that matter) of **the Lord Jesus**? To us Muhammad is a false prophet and to a Muslim Jesus is decidedly not Lord. Therefore let us be sensitive and truthful in our conversation, even in this respect. A suggestion: I never call Muhammad a prophet or messenger of Allah, neither do I speak about the Lord Jesus to Muslims. I rather call Him Jesus, the Messiah.

Inviting a Muslim to your church

As a general rule this is unwise. A Muslim feels as uneasy, as we felt when entering a mosque, synagogue or even a Hindu or Buddhist temple.

Once when I had a preaching appointment in a service, I had to tell a Muslim visitor in our home that I had to leave. In a spell of curiosity he asked me whether I would mind if he came along. Of course I did not! So he came. He insisted, however, to sit next to the isle in the back. Later he confided that he was terribly scared and was ready at any time to run out of the church! And he focused on the framework, rather than the message.

Besides, a Muslim is likely to misunderstand the message, unless it is specifically designed for Muslim ears.

A Muslim needs 'Stepping Stones'

before coming to church and to understand what is happening there. Some may have viewed church services on TV. That will lessen the possibility of being put off.

But as a rule a 'house church' consisting of some caring people, preferably from a Muslim background, can be a big help. Here the inquirer or young convert can explore the fundamentals of the Bible with some mature Christians. He can feel at ease, ask questions, observe and learn step by step by seeing and listening how we pray and sing, how we behave in a Christian community, etc. But such 'house church' should **not** be taken to be a traditional Gospel meeting!

We must try to get away from the idea, that preachers are the (only) qualified people to evangelize Muslims.

The Commitment of a Muslim to Jesus

is the aim of evangelism. And that applies also to Muslims. It may happen progressively in the form of a process. The point is reached when any person, including a Muslim, accepts the claim of Christ that He indeed died for the sins of all mankind. Salvation from the consequences of sin is granted only to those who truly desire to live in agreement with the intent and will of God. This offer wins validity after it has been accepted knowingly, and very personally, before it is ratified from the side of God. While the **form** may differ from the customary (must we really expect and aim for that?), the **content** of the faith ought to be fundamentally biblical. Surely, there will still remain open questions. As long as these are not of a fundamental nature, we should not make an issue of them, but pray that the Word of God will in time provide the answers. The Holy Spirit **will** guide!

After the Commitment: what now?

The new convert needs close Christian friends to stand by him, and to assist and advise him or her on the many spiritual questions that will still arise. A 'house church' is perhaps the best tool for that. The new believer will need assistance in finding the new world to live in, for his old world will have rejected him. Understanding, kindness and personal care will have to continue until such a person has become a devoted disciple himself or herself, being able to witness to others. This may well mean that the convert needs to be accommodated with and cared for by a Christian family.

What about Secret Believers?

We can hardly find support for this in the New Testament. And yet, there may be wisdom in counseling a young believer not to confess his new faith immediately and enthusiastically. In cases where an attempt on his life is real, and he is the first convert in a family or village setting, one might well consider the possibility of low key witnessing until such time when two or three other converts provide enough moral support to do so more openly. Of course, this can only be a temporary measure. We do not forget the words of Scripture:

Many even among the leaders believed in him (Jesus). But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

John 12:42-43

8. MUSLIM EVANGELISM AS A PEOPLES' MOVEMENT

With a fair (!) background of information, it is possible for every Christian believer to be an affective witness to 1 – 10 – 100 Muslims, by personal contact, by distributing suitable (!) literature, or even without stepping out of your home from your iPad, computer or Smart Phone. Where do I, and *where do you fit in?*

THE CHOICE OF AN OUTREACH MODEL

There are several options to choose from:

Personal or friendship evangelism

Many Christians already have some, maybe superficial, contact with the one or other Muslim and are, by that token, a potential to witness to them.

Literature (media) evangelism

Very unfortunately, we must accept the sad fact that the majority of Christians is very reluctant about a commitment to participate in home-to-home visitation evangelism. They may feel incompetent and by that insecure, when it comes to witness to people of another religion, of which they know little or nothing. This is understandable, but it is not necessary to stay ignorant. Also, not everyone is at least a bit of an extrovert or gifted to lead an informed conversation. But there is another option! The use of specifically prepared literature is strongly recommended. The normal 'Gospel tract' will hardly 'get home' with a Muslim reader.

Where do we find such specific literature? You will find some recommendations in the Appendix.

Internet evangelism

The electronic medium is a relatively new communication tool. On the internet the possibilities for contact with Muslims know few limits. Of course, one will have to have access to a computer and the internet. But one will have to know how to use a social media platform (such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger or others to make contacts /friends with Muslims), but it seems that this mode of evangelism gains rapidly in importance.

Home to home outreach

This is the way to make sure that all Muslim families within a given area are contacted. The outreach team is divided into teams of two (preferably a male and a female witness). An invasion of more is threatening!

You have knocked at the door! Just imagine there is a knock at *your* door and a couple of Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses come to involve you in a discussion. That is the way Muslims may feel when we knock at their door. We come somewhat as unwanted intruders. That can be quite stressful for the two witnesses, particularly when they are sensitive by nature.

The first few seconds actually decide how the witnesses will be received. It may well be by a welcome, but also by a polite but cool "no, thank you!"

If a team stands at the door with tie, jacket and a Bible under the arm, the response may be different than to a team in customary dress and a cheerful introduction, like: "We are two thieves and like to steal a few minutes of your time". That is an icebreaker that easily dispels suspicion or prejudice. The host must not feel threatened or intimidated. We want to open not only the door of the home, but also of the hearts. Friendliness is decidedly better received than stern preaching.

While we should not hide our identity and purpose, our first visit should in particular fulfill one purpose, and that is to be welcome the next time.

What then could we say when the door opens? **A good beginning is to invite the people to seek a personal contact with God**, that is so needed in this world of chaos, envy, hatred and strife. Muslims will hardly hesitate to tell you that they, being Muslims, are sincere believers and pray five times a day. "We are well aware of this and commend you for your sincerity, but actually we mean something else. Personal contact with God, as in a human relationship, needs exchange of thought. We like to encourage you to make it a daily practice not only to talk to God, but also to listen to Him". That is generally a dimension Muslims do not know, so one can explain: "We mean that you listen to what He revealed to us in His Word. This is what every person should know intimately."

So far the word 'Bible' was not mentioned, but every Muslim will know what we speak about. They may respond by saying: "We have the Qur'an and read it." "Well, that is wonderful! Do you read it every day and do you understand it?" This is a tricky question, for very few Muslims would do that. They are likely to evade. Most Muslims may be able to read Arabic, but do not understand it, but the reading brings merit only, when it is read in Arabic. We may ask question about this and in contrast tell Muslims about the adventure of our daily devotions. And then we can say that we, as Christians, thrive on the promises of God and delight ourselves on what He means to us, and what He has done for us. We are now in the midst of a spiritual conversation!

We should also show the needed consideration by asking, whether our visit is convenient, or whether we should come at a time more appropriate for this topic. At the end we should express our gratitude for the hospitality and time given to us. In brief, we should leave behind a perfect testimony on which to build when we return a week or two later. We do well not to come over as argumentative or as a nuisance to them.

"We are doing a **religious survey** of this area and would kindly ask you for a few minutes to fill in a questionnaire", is another way of approach. If well designed, a questionnaire will lead to crucial questions, which in turn are likely to lead to a fruitful witness. We request permission to ask questions regarding the family. No names need to be given. After some general questions to dispel insecurity or fear, we may come to the 'religious' part. "What is your religion?" This is a question answered by all Muslims with enthusiasm. "Are you practicing your religion?" may be a follow up question. Again one is likely to get an affirmative response. "Why do you follow and practice your religion?" is a dicey question. The answer could be one of conviction, or a simple statement that they were born into it.

This is the point when one may politely and inquisitively put aside the questionnaire with a personal question: "Do you really mean to say that you leave your eternal destiny to the choice some ancestor of yours took, perhaps without knowledge or the ability to compare?" Again we are in a good spiritual conversation that we can guide and extend to the point when we can present the Gospel to the family. Again no haste is recommended, but rather the building up of trust and confidence and a personal relationship, which is so conducive to the sharing of the Good News of the Bible.

Public debates

Public debates about the Bible and Islam have a long tradition. They have kicked up a lot of dust and are inclined to arouse the emotions. But they have at the same time helped to make the Biblical Christ known and they exposed Islamic claims to the truth to be questionable.

C.G. Pfander, who debated in a highly scholarly manner with Muslim doctors in various countries in the Middle East in the 19th Century, gave a classic example for such debates. His book, the *Mizanu'l Haqq* ('The Balance of Truth'), and the Islamic response, the *Ijaharul Haqq* are still in circulation. Unfortunately, the influence of Humanism has prompted even Christians to criticize Pfander's presentation, although no honest reader will find a lack of genuine love and respect in it. However, it is thoroughly honest, and the truth is a real stone of offence to Islam.

Ahmed Deedat, a Muslim of South Africa, revived public debates between Muslims and Christians in the 1960s and 1970s. He challenged well-known Christian preachers on the

trustworthiness of the Bible and the life of Christ, particularly the crucifixion. His strength was in his rhetoric and the ability to pick opponents who were all too often unacquainted with the needed apologetics. The resulting video presentations of such debates are still very much used by Muslims to ridicule the Christian position.

This implies that debates have their place, but need very well equipped presenters. They need to be spiritual, well-spoken personalities with love, and know the Scriptures and Islam intimately.

While debates invariably create an emotional and by that token often irrational atmosphere, they present an opportunity to make the Biblical message known and to question the integrity of Islam. Honest seekers were and are given food for thought, and that is good.

One should think twice, however, before using public debates as a method for Muslim evangelism today. They may well backfire and create hostility rather than openness.

Conclusion

Whatever method of evangelization is applied, it must be discrete enough not to embarrass those Muslims that are contacted. They may be open to listen to the Gospel, but resent to be exposed to other Muslims as being interested in the Christian faith.

It is very important that Muslims do not only learn about the Biblical message by reading *about* it, but that they can also see it in action, not so much in church activities, but by meeting real Christians and watching their life style. That obviously necessitates personal involvement and a life committed to Christ.

A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

Building a foundation for a spiritual conversation

To make contact with a person is best done when it comes naturally, and the opportunities for this are many, once we overcome our inhibitions to befriend Muslims. Unless it is a passing opportunity to talk to each other, we are well advised not to start a conversation on a spiritual note. Rather show a personal interest first.

And then begin to show an interest in the religious faith of the other.

Promote trust rather than argument.

This is likely to lead to a more relaxed atmosphere and provides a better basis for a fruitful conversation later.

Fear is the Prime Inhibitor for Muslims to Believe Jesus

In the back of our minds we should always be aware of the inhibition that hinders Muslims to accept Christ:

- **It cannot really be the mind**, for all the evidence speaks for the truth of the Gospel.
- **It cannot be the heart**, for what we find in Jesus Christ is infinitely more desirable than what Islam has to offer.
- **It is, in fact, fear.** Fear is the single most inhibiting factor in the minds and hearts of Muslims that hinders an open-minded conversation on spiritual matters.

It is the fear of stepping outside a system that controls the hearts and minds of the people. Muslims are afraid of the immense pressure from their loved ones and society, should they decide to follow Christ. But they are also afraid of losing whatever Islam promises.

Even an enthusiastic display of unreserved faith in Islam is ultimately based on that inner fear. People who fear are not prepared to listen with an open mind. They lack the readiness to accept truth, even if they find it more trustworthy and appealing than their own religion.

Honesty and true conviction are always marked by the readiness to listen, compare and decide on merit. Where that is missing, a believer turns into a fanatic, whatever persuasion he may hold.

That is why it is said of fanatics that they have an open mouth, but a closed mind.

NOTE

In the light of the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus, Muslim evangelism has never been an option for the Church. It is His command! The question is not so much, whether we want to do it, but how. The New Testament gives helpful advice:

Our appeal does not spring from error or uncleanness, nor is it made with guile; but just as **we have been** approved by God to be **entrusted with the Gospel, so we speak**, not to please men, but **to please God who tests our hearts**. For we never used either words of flattery, as you know, or a cloak for greed, as God is witness; nor did we seek glory from men, whether from you or from others, though we might

have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gently among you, like a nurse taking care of her children. So being affectionately desirous of you, **we were ready to share with you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.**

1 Thessalonians 2:3-8

And now let us join hands to complete the unfinished task!

In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord!

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have!

But do this with gentleness and respect!

1 Peter 3:15

And remember:

Delay is the most subtle form of denial !!!

Recommended Literature for Chapter 7

Sharing God's Love with Muslims, by Bill Dennett, New Holland: The Bible League, 1992.

The Christian Witness to the Muslim, by John Gilchrist, Benoni: Jesus to the Muslims, 1988.

The Great Commission - You and the Muslims, by Gerhard Nehls, Nairobi: LCA, 1992.

Convert Care: Discipling Muslim Background Believers, by Horst Pietzsch, LCA, 2003

8. SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The term 'Spiritual Warfare' has been formulated fairly recently. It wants so give a name to activities Christians are to undertake when attacking, or protecting themselves from, demonic and satanic forces.

Spiritual Warfare suggests, first of all, that there is a war raging between God and Satan, between the Kingdom of God and the domain of Satan, involving every one under their respective rule.

**Spiritual Warfare
is the execution of the spiritual authority
that has been delegated to us by our Lord Jesus**

Perhaps, most of us have little or no experience of real war. It is the most gruesome, devastating, destructive and extreme form of struggle with the aim and purpose to win the victory, to gain the total supremacy over the opponent. Sometimes such an open war is subdued and becomes 'cold war'. This only affects the mode of warfare, not its reality or intensity or purpose, however, our Lord told us:

**I have given you authority ...
to overcome all the power of the enemy;
nothing will harm you!"**
Luke 10:19

ISLAM'S RESISTANCE TO THE GOSPEL

The Gospel is the antithesis to the dilemma of man. It is the Good News that, in spite of our past sinful life, we may be reconciled to God. Jesus, our Saviour, claimed to be the Truth and the Light of the world.

In contradiction to that, as every other religion, **Islam** poses to bring the truth and light.

No wonder, says Scripture, for Satan himself masquerades as servant of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness

2 Corinthians 11:14.

It is consistent with the teaching of Christ that the 'enemy' sows weeds (Gr. zizanion = darnel) among the wheat (Mt. 13:24 ff.). The tragedy is not so much that the fields look untidy, but that the sown weeds are deadly poisonous and can hardly be distinguished from the wheat!

The system of Islam is not only contradicts the 'former scriptures', i.e. the Bible, but devised a system that indoctrinates, deceives and captivates its followers so completely, that it is indeed very difficult for them to come out of it.

The effort to liberate people from unbelief, or religious counterfeits that want to replace the Gospel, is called Spiritual Warfare.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT 'SPIRITUAL WARFARE'

In Scripture we read that **'there was war in heaven...'** or of **'the weapons of our warfare...'** (Revelations 12:7; 2 Corinthians 19:4). We can observe the tremendous struggle between right and wrong, truth and deception in this world - and that this is constantly increasing in favour of lies, evil and deception. Even the standards (and I do not think of relative, time bound forms!) in the churches are constantly lowered by compromise and accommodation (a featuring a pseudo 'spirituality'). To hold an uncompromising position is viewed, even in many evangelical quarters, as 'unwise' and may well be branded 'fundamentalism'. Others openly align with the very enemy of God to achieve a goal of common interest.

To make our point we need to contour the issue a little better.

We know that we are the children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

1 John 5:19

This is an enormous, and too many an irritating, statement. But it is true. God's Word says so.

An analysis

Let us, right at the outset of our examination of this concept, state that there are no such words as 'spiritual warfare' in Scripture. What then do we find in Scripture to alert us, or to challenge us to **'fight the good fight'** (1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7) and to be **'a good soldier of Christ Jesus'** (2 Timothy 2:3)? (It is well to note that the words **'agon'** and **'agonizo'** are used here in the Greek original, meaning to **agonize, contest**. Other words used are **'epagoniezomai'** [epi = upon or about, intensive; agon = a contest], **'athleo'** [engage in a contest], **'anthistemi'** [struggle against], **'nikao'** [overcome]), **'parrhesiazomai'** [to speak boldly or freely,] **'suzeteo'** [to seek together jointly] and **'dialegomai'**, which is best translated as **'to reason'** as well as. We find relatively little about this topic in Scripture:

Paul ... was speaking boldly [parrhesiazomai] talked and **debated** [suzeteo] with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him.

Acts 9:29

As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he **reasoned** [dialegomai] with them from the Scriptures, explaining and **proving** that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead.

Acts 17:2

So he **reasoned** [dialegomai] in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the market-place day by day with those who happened to be there.

Acts 17:17

Every Sabbath he **reasoned** [dialegomai] in the synagogue, trying to **persuade** Jews and Greeks.

Acts 18:4

They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and **reasoned** [dialegomai] with the Jews.

Acts 18:19

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, **arguing persuasively** [parrhesiazomai] about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had **discussions** [dialegomai] daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus".

Acts 19:8-9

... I will know that you **stand firm** [agonizo] in one spirit, **contending** [athleo] as one man for the faith of the Gospel ...

Philippians 1:27

I ... urge you to **contend** [epagoniezomai] for the faith that was once for all entrusted to *the saints*.

Jude 3

Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. **Resist** him, **standing firm** [anthistemi] in the faith.

1 Peter 5:9

... I ask you ... help these women who have **contended** [athleo] at my side in the cause of the Gospel ...

Philippians 4:3

I urge you...to join me in my **struggle** [agonizo] by praying to God for me.

Romans 15:30

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labour, **struggling** [agonizo] with all his energy which so powerfully works in me. I want you to know how much I am **struggling** [agonizo] for you ...

Colossians 1:29-2:1

Everyone born of God **overcomes** the world. This is the victory that has **overcome** the world, even our faith.

1 John 5:4

They overcame [nikao] him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony ...

Revelations 12:11

To help us in our struggle, to stand firm, to contend, to resist and overcome, we are given instructions:

... our **struggle** [agonizo] is not against flesh and blood, but against...the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms".

Ephesians 6:12

The most descriptive passage we all know:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace. In addition to all

this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel.

Ephesians 6:10-19

We are made acutely aware that **as Christians we are** - whether we realize this or not, whether we like it or not - **involved in a 'struggle' against 'the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms'**.

**Evangelism, particularly so among people of other religions and cultures, is always a spiritual battle.
In evangelism we strive to liberate slaves bound by Satan, and that may have repercussions.**

The Apostle Paul affords us some insight into his own experience:

I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message (content) and my preaching (form) were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

1 Corinthians 2:3-5

We also read:

... our Gospel came to you not simply with **words**, but also with **power**, with the Holy Spirit and with **deep conviction** .

1 Thessalonians 1:5

Power in evangelism

Who of us does not feel the desire to be able to demonstrate God's power, the Spirit's power? Particularly in this century much thought, debate and prayer has been devoted regarding this question. Scores of books were written and many a preacher is considered 'powerful' because of his performance. But much division has been caused in the Church because of this topic. Let us try at this crucial point to find a biblical, spiritual answer.

- **Not WE hold the power, but God.**

We have this treasure (God's light of the knowledge of the glory of God) in jars of clay (i.e. we are earthly beings) to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us.

1 Corinthians 4:7

- **In OUR weaknesses God manifests HIS power.**

To keep him from becoming conceited because of "the surpassing great revelations" he received, Paul was given "a thorn in his flesh", whatever that was. Gladly he then conceded:

... I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me....

2 Corinthians 12:9

- **GOD'S POWER is manifested and operates through the Gospel of the cross of Christ!**

The Gospel ... is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

Romans 1:16

The message of the cross ... is the power of God!

1 Corinthians 1:18

Christ crucified ... the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 1:23

The meaning of this expression must be found in the fact that the cross is called a '**stumbling block**' for people, or '**foolishness**' in their eyes, and also an '**offence**' (Gal. 5:11). The reason for that was that people insisted to find forgiveness and salvation on the strength of their own efforts by keeping the Law. Paul retorted:

You, who are trying to be justified by the Law have been alienated from Christ. You have fallen away from grace!

Galatians 5:4

In the same fashion Christ is called a rock of offence (1 Peter 2:8). What is so offensive, so 'foolish' and something to stumble over? The wider context suggests this clearly:

**The offence of the cross
is the declared inability of man to save himself
by 'good works' or any other means,
and his absolute dependence on what God has already done!**

Man in his pride does not want to be dependent, a beggar before God.

The Gospel alone, which is the message of the cross, contains the power of God that effects salvation as well as godly living and the qualification for service.

We pray that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being **strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience ...**

Colossians 1:10-11

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness.

2 Peter 1:3

We believe this to mean His demonstration of the Spirit's power.

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

Having identified the key issue, let us now look at what God expressed regarding our involvement in this gigantic battle:

Though we live in the world, we do not wage **war** as the world does. The **weapons we fight with** are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, **they** have divine power to demolish strongholds. **We demolish arguments and every pretension** that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and **we take captive every thought** to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Here the word '**war**' (Greek '**strateuo**') is coming into focus. 'The weapons we fight with' should rather read as in the A.V. '**the weapons of our warfare**' (Greek '**strateia**'). The Greek word 'stratos', meaning an encamped army, indicates armed conflict, here obviously a spiritual conflict.

Closely connected, it seems, is the following Scripture:

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow **deceiving spirits and things taught by**

demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

1 Timothy 4:1

What exactly do the above texts state?

- There are arguments and pretensions that set themselves up against the knowledge of God.
- People will abandon the (biblical Christian) faith following deceiving spirits and things taught by demons through hypocritical liars without a conscience.
- We (ought to) demolish such arguments and pretension, by means of 'weapons', which have the divine power needed.
- This amounts to a war against 'the rulers, authorities and powers of this dark world and against spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places' (Ephesians 6:12).

Such warfare is not worldly, but the opposite, namely spiritual.

Let us answer the following questions:

- How does the world wage war (also among individuals or political groups)?
We know the answer: by force, deception, cunning, compromise, subversion, lies, character assassination, false propaganda, threats etc.
- What are the 'weapons' we are to 'fight' with?
The Bible says (Ephesians 6:14-18): Truth, righteousness, the proclamation of the Gospel, faith and salvation. In addition we do well to look at some other passages:

We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 4:2

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of **this** world rather than on Christ.

Colossians 2:8

POWER ENCOUNTER

'Power Encounter' has become somewhat of a trade name and wants to formulate how we, as Christians, ought to defeat satanic forces by the power of God. We are told that signs and wonders play a special role to demonstrate God's power.

We recognize that Evangelism is indeed a power encounter with the world of darkness. "The Lord will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation" (Exodus 17:16). The Amalekite stands as a symbol for satanic forces opposing the people of God. But a new dimension has been added to the struggle.

Deceiving and territorial spirits

In our effort to try to identify in which way our spiritual warfare ought to be, we are directed to a somewhat strange passage in Daniel. Daniel had mourned (!) for 3 weeks rejecting choice food. This was followed by a vision at the bank of the river Tigris. Daniel saw what the bystanders could not see: 'A man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude'.

Calming the terrified Daniel he spoke and said:

Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But **the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days**. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.

So he said: 'Do you know why I have come to you? **Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come**, but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No-one supports me against them except Michael, your prince).

Daniel 10:12-13,20-21

There are passages in Scripture, particularly those related to the unseen world, which do little more than let us sense dimensions we cannot possibly comprehend with our human mind or spirit.

What we can learn from this passage that even the heavenly beings are intercepted and delayed by demonic or satanic forces. **We can deduce** from this and other texts **that Satan rules over a host of fallen angels – demons - that these are well organized and are directed by a demonic hierarchy**. The 'Prince of Persia' and the 'Prince of Greece' may well be chief demons with orders to control their respective territories.

What can we learn from that, and what can and should we do?

- The "man dressed in linen" was helped by Michael.
- Daniel was not asked or expected to help. Why?
- Michael was Daniel's 'prince'.
- Prayers are heard by God and answered, even when delayed for reasons we cannot fathom.
- The 'man dressed in linen' continues to fight the 'princes' of Persia and Greece.

We fight not against flesh and blood, but struggle against rulers, authorities and powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

We are to take our stand against the devil's schemes, to struggle, stand our ground and resist the devil, to pray and be alert. But **we** are not intended to defeat them. The whole context of this passage (Eph. 6) suggests defense. The decisive battle is fought and won by Jesus Christ and His angels.

Power Encounter is also practiced in Islam

Although not running under that title, we find that 'Power Encounter' is well used in Islam as well. We should be aware that spiritual warfare is not a one-way-street. The reverse of it is called cursing.

Already in the Qur'an we read concerning Christians:

*Allah's **curse** be on them! How they are deluded away from the truth!"*

Surah 9:30

This is almost grotesquely amplified in another statement:

*O ye people of the Book [i.e. Jews and Christians G.N.]! Believe in what We have revealed [i.e. the Qur'an, G.N.], confirming what was (already) with you [i.e. the Bible, G.N.] before we change the face and fame of some (of you) beyond all recognition ... or **curse** them...! Surah 4:47*

When a delegation of Christians from Najran in the South of Arabia came to Muhammad, he challenged them to accept Islam, which they declined. Thereupon the following 'revelation' came to him:

The truth (comes) from Allah alone, so be not of those who doubt. If anyone disputes in this matter with thee [i.e. Muhammad G.N.], now after (full) knowledge has come to thee, say: 'Come! Let us

*gather together - our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves; then let us earnestly pray, and **invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie!***

Surah 3:60-61

Since this time cursing has become a practice in Islam, up to this present day. (In regard to this, the author of these notes has been challenged to do this twice. Such curse will not succeed with a believer. As Christians we can, of course, not curse in return. We bless!)

Truth vs power

The Bible proceeds from the premise of truth. The response to Truth is faith. We entrust ourselves to God by faith and then realize and experience that we are safe in His hands:

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin.
The One Who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one does not touch him.

1 John 5:18

Islam proceeds from the premise of power. In folk religion - and here many Muslims are also involved - the premise is equally power.

In Folk Islam the question is not so much, "**Is it true?**", but "**Is it more powerful?**" Those who ask the latter question are driven by fear. They feel helplessly relinquished to spiritual forces, which they hope to control or manipulate through a shaman (witchdoctor) who may well be an Imam.

OUR PREMISE FOR EVANGELISM

A crucial question is, how to address people who view themselves as pawns in the game of powers they are unable to influence. Should we present them with the Truth and persuade them to exercise faith - or should we seek to 'display' the power of God to convince them by seeing?

We live by faith, not by sight!

2 Corinthians 5:7, says the word of God.

Yet we read of instances, when 'many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the Apostles' (Acts 2:43; 5:12). This is confirmed:

When the crowds **heard** Philip and **saw** the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he **said**.

Acts 8:6

The counterfeit and the real

These days we hear of mind boggling claims of miracles and healing. Based on this enormous counterfeit practice, we ought to insist that claims on healing or miracles need to be substantiated. If someone is indeed healed, and we believe this still happens today, that healing can be verified.

If a person is declared to be healed - and he or she is not actually instantly and fully restored to health - which can be confirmed by medical doctors - the one who claimed the act of healing is dishonest. When God miraculously heals, it is instant and permanent and can be substantiated by medical tests. All else is make-belief! This does not exclude a gradual healing by prayer, but that should not be classified to be a miracle.

While millions flock to meetings in which supposedly signs and wonders take place, the reality is that while uncritical and gullible Christians believe this to have happened, critical investigation all too often concludes these to be a hoax. The 'real thing' does not seem to happen in the form of a sensation.

Let us stay real. By all means, let us pray to God that He might use signs and wonders to convince the people we like to reach! But let us first of all be honest and share the Truth in that spirit. Make-belief is difficult to sell.

THE TRUTH IS THAT SATAN AND HIS PROPHETS ARE LIARS

We are aware that our Lord called the devil a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44) and we learn that he was a liar from the beginning (1. John 3:8). Spiritual lies are obviously made up to contradict spiritual truth. This is done in an effort to diffuse God's truth, or at least to confound the seeker. Scripture names the liars - that is the human counterpart of the father of lies.

I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because **no lie comes from the truth. Who is the liar?** It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. **Such a man is the antichrist - he denies the Father and the Son. No-one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.**

2 John 2:21-23

We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God which he had given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. **Anyone who does not believe God has**

made Him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about His Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

3 John 5:9-11

At this point we have to stop and think a little. A statement as explosive as this is not well liked these days, even in Christian circles. Of course this message was inspired before Muhammad came, of whom we all thought while reading this text.

Should we speak out thoughts like this? I suggest this depends on whether we (intended to) 'wage a war as the world does' or whether we seek to have the mind of Christ. To suppress the truth is asking for God's wrath (Rom. 1:18). But in any case the truth needs to be tempered with love.

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS AND BONDAGE

The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:4

We know...that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him, who is true.

1 John 5:19-20

... you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Ephesians 4:18

Let us try to evaluate the above passages, which are fully representative of this topic in Scripture:

1. The 'god of this world', obviously Satan, has blinded the minds of unbelievers.
2. This leads to a darkened mind and thus a darkened, confused understanding of spiritual content.
3. The cause is the closing of their eyes and ears by inspiration of Satan, leading to the hardening of their hearts.

4. If they would open their eyes and ears they would not need to live in the futility of their thinking, because they would no more be ignorant, they would be understanding and perceiving, their hearts would turn and they would be healed. **An act of will is asked for, a decision to be truthful!**

It would be justified to call such a spiritual condition "bondage".

How can people under bondage be liberated? In our given context we need to define what we mean by that.

Muslims are desperately fearful of eternal consequences, should they turn away from Islam. They also fear rejection by family and society should they become Christians, which may amount to a psychological and mental trauma.

In addition, Muslims are extremely fearful of death or rather the judgment after death.

Muslims do not know that Jesus Christ has by his death already destroyed Satan, the one

who holds the power of death - that is the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death"

Hebrews 2:14-15

We have to conclude, therefore, that Muslims live under bondage without existential knowledge of the way they can be liberated.

NOT ALL MUSLIMS ARE OPPRESSED OR POSSESSED

We do not believe that evil spirits possesses all Muslims. However, the teaching and system of Islam from its inception is clearly anti-Christian. By that token we can well believe that it was and is satanically inspired. That also explains the extreme resistance by Muslims to the Gospel.

Muslims are trapped in this system by an unprecedented indoctrination both in Islam and against the Christ of our Scriptures.

LIBERATION FROM BONDAGE

Whoever is bound is unable to free himself. Assistance from outside is indispensable. Therefore, whoever is bound or blinded by Satan can only be liberated by someone more powerful. The Lord Jesus (in Matthew 12:29) likens Satan to a "strong man" and asked a vital question:

How can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.

Matthew 12:29

Then He authorizes His followers, saying:

Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.

Luke 10:19

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils.

Mark 16:17

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

James 4:7

Many a believer, including the author of this study, can testify of this by personal experience.

Recommended Literature for Chapter 8:

Biblical Christianity in African Perspective, by Wilbur O'Donovan, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996, pp. 187-217

The Great Deception, by Abd al-Masih, Call of Hope, 1995

9. SUITABLE ILLUSTRATIONS FOR MUSLIM EVANGELISM

This list of illustrations is far from being comprehensive. It would be good to see many more issues which are difficult for a Muslim - conditioned as he is by his upbringing - enlightened by some illustration which could help him to comprehend it better. As you use these or other illustrations (see also REACH OUT for more examples) make sure to bring the application and spiritual lesson across as indicated in italic typeface.

THE PEARL-DIVER

The Matchless Gift From God We Cannot Pay For

An aged pearl-diver, who lived at the East Coast of India, had decided to use the rest of his life in devotion to religion in order to prepare for the next life. His mind was set to go to the 'holy' city of Benares at the shore of the 'holy' Ganges river on his knees. He had been befriended by a Christian whom he invited for a farewell meal. It was the pearl-diver's only close friend. He seemed to have no other family. After the meal the pearl-diver disclosed his plan. The Christian friend tried to dissuade him, without success. "Your knees will open and you will die of infection", he warned. "If I die on the way to the holy Ganges, my soul will reap the merit", was the reply.

Later that night before the friend was to say good-bye, the pearl-diver moved a chest of drawers, shifted a mat on the floor which concealed a little hiding place. He brought out a small parcel and opened it by the oil lamp. It contained a pearl of exceptional size and beauty. "You are the only person dear to me", he said, "I want you to have this pearl!" "This is worth a fortune!", said the friend, "I cannot accept such a gift". The pearl-diver became very thoughtful and began to speak: "I had a son. He was the best pearl-diver along the coast. He could dive deeper and longer than any of us. One day we were diving together as usual. I was in the boat, he went down to break loose the shells, which I then opened. Then it happened. He spotted a very large shell deep down. He went for it, but it was fixed hard to the corals. He tried to lever it loose. Time ran out and he still tried. Eventually, after what seemed hours, he came up with it. When he breathed out, blood shot from his mouth. I pulled him into the boat, but he died in my arms. When I later opened the shell, I found this pearl. I could never sell it. It is too dear to me".

After some silence, the friend said: "This pearl is worth thousands. I like to have it, but I buy it from you. I cannot afford the real worth, but I will pay you one hundred pounds".

The eyes of the pearl-diver began to sparkle with indignation: "You want to pay me a lousy 100 pounds for something my son died for? No man can pay what it is worth **to me**. But I meant to **give** it to you ...".

"You see", the Christian replied, "you try to pay God for what His Son died for, namely your sins. Don't you think you offend God by trying to pay for something which is far beyond what we can offer?" The pearl-diver understood. He did not walk on his knees to Benares. Instead he accepted the gift of God, pardon for his sins.

This story will not need a lot of application. Just tell it and ask your friend: How will you respond to God's matchless gift?

THE BIG SWIM

How we can (or rather cannot!) save ourselves

God's holiness and righteousness and our human nature and walk of life are too far apart that we could bridge that gap! If God's standard for heaven is His holiness and righteousness, For this reason God would have to forbid any man to get there. We are totally depending on what He has done for us to reach heaven. Many Muslims are trying very hard to qualify - in reality in their own terms and by their own efforts - to go to heaven.

If we all had to line up along the East African coast (assuming this is our earth) to swim to India (assuming this is heaven), who will reach this destination? Some will drown as soon as they get into the sea. Others will swim through the surf and then drown. Some may swim 10, 20 or even 30 km. But certainly no one will reach India!

It is an insult to God to assume that we can qualify to be like Him and to deserve to live in His presence. Unless He qualifies us by cleansing us from all sin - and that He did in Jesus - we cannot expect to ever be in heaven. We can only accept what God offers, and not presumptuously prescribing to Him how he should save us from hell, as many do.

THE ARTIST OF VIENNA

Knowledge of the Truth is Not the same as Following the Truth!

A well known Austrian painter was commissioned by a church to paint the crucifixion scene. He had designed the lay-out, painted the background and then he filled in person after person after having selected the best suitable model for each. Now there was only one blank area on the canvas. It was meant for Mary Magdalene, the great sinner who had come to know Christ and had repented and followed Him.

It was the lack of a suitable model which inhibited the completion of the picture. The painter roamed the busy streets of Vienna in search for such a model.

One day he saw a begging Gypsy woman, and he knew: that is the model I am looking for. When she was approached, she consented to accompany the artist to the studio to see what was to be done.

To protect the unfinished canvas the artist had covered it with a veil. After the painting was completed, the veil was removed, and the Gypsy lady looked very intently at the picture for some time and then commented: 'That man on the cross must have been a bad criminal to deserve such a penalty!' 'No, no', countered the artist, 'to the contrary! This man never did anything wrong at all!'. Noticing the puzzled face of the woman he explained that this was Jesus, who died for the sins of others so that they might escape judgment and condemnation. 'Did he die for your sins too?', enquired the woman. 'Well, yes!', replied the painter, a nominal Christian. After another long look at the picture she looked at him and said, 'Then you must love him very much, I presume'.

For the first time the artist was aware that his religion was little more than a formality. He was deeply convicted and yielded his life to Jesus. After the picture was completed, he added the following text to it: "This I did for you! What will you do for me?"

SINCERELY BUT WRONG

Sincerity is No Substitute for Truth

The city of Chicago has gone through many calamities. Fire was among the worst. Once many people were trapped by the flames in a huge high-rise building. A woman on the balcony of the third floor caught the attention of the crowd of spectators as she stubbornly refused to jump to safety.

Finally the fire brigade arrived at the scene, a ladder went up, and one of the fireman reached her just in time. However, before she climbed down to safety she frantically gesticulated to her rescuer that she wanted to go back in. However, he had already disappeared in the next room engulfed by clouds of fire and smoke. Moments later he reappeared, placing a small bundle wrapped in a blanket into the arms of the anxious mother. As she opened the flame-singed rags her face was filled with horror: in her arms she did not behold her precious baby, but a doll which the fireman had mistaken assumed to be the child.

How could this have happened? Surely the mother had done her best to explain to the fireman that someone, probably her child, was in danger; and most certainly the fireman had sincerely believed that he had rescued the baby, never expecting to save the doll instead. Both of them had been absolutely sincere and serious about it, yet in reality the doll 'survived' while the baby perished in the flames.

As good and important as it is to be sincere in our search for life, sincerity in itself is not good enough. When considering eternal revelation, the question is not whether it is beautiful or received in sincerity, but whether it is true. When we want to get to a place, we should not ask whether the road offers beautiful scenery, but whether it is the road which leads us to our destination. The Truth is found in the Bible, for only in this book we have revelation confirmed by fulfilled prophecy.

"ANA-KUTSHI"

The Son of God

An illustration may help to clear the misconception a Muslim may have when he hears or reads the term "Son of God".

In the Malay language a lock is called "Kutshi", and a key an "Ana-kutshi", which literally means "Son of a lock". No Malay believes that one "Kutshi" mating with another "Kutshi" could result in the birth of an "Ana-kutshi". The word simply means that the key belongs to the lock - that you cannot open the lock without the key! The two are complementary and belong together. A lock without a key is incomplete, even useless.

*Similarly in Arabia a traveler is called a "Son of the road"; a local term well understood by the community. It is in this kind of term that Christians understand the Sonship of Jesus - He is **the** "key" - opening the Way to God.*

It is unbelievable that anyone would act so foolishly as in our story. And yet: isn't God's offer of salvation through His Son Jesus Christ considered to be the most incredible folly by millions of people around the world?!

THE JUDGE AND HIS FRIEND

Where Justice and Mercy Meet

A man was appearing in court for having embezzled a large sum of money from his firm. At the case, the judge realized that the accused was one of his best friends. This presented the judge with a dilemma. Being a friend of the accused, he was torn between the loyalty for his friend, and the demands of his office. Was he to condemn him to the imprisonment he deserved? Functioning as a just judge he could not let him go out free - it would be against the very law he had sworn to uphold.

In agreement with the law, the judge sentenced his friend to repay double the amount or go to jail for 12 years. The friend was devastated. He could not even have repaid part of the money he had stolen, never mind double the sum!

Later the door to the prisoner's cell was opened, and in came the judge. Not in his official robe, but in his casual clothes. He rebuked the prisoner, his friend, for having transgressed the law and assured him that the judgment was right. But then he nestled in his pocket, took out a piece of paper and handed it to his friend. It was the receipt for the fine the court had ordered his friend to be paid. So the punishment had been executed and the prisoner was released and taken home by his friend, the judge.

Righteousness and grace met at this point, just as 2000 years ago, when God in Jesus took the punishment we deserved - the death penalty - on Himself to redeem us from the eternal doom in hell.

SHAMUEL, THE CAUCASIAN PRINCE

Illustrating the Righteousness and Love of God

Shamuel was a Caucasian prince who lived about two hundred years ago. His people were constantly at war with the Turks. Once, he and his army besieged a Turkish city. As usual his mother accompanied him on his venture. One night he planned a surprise attack, but the enemy was prepared and awaited him. His secret plans had been betrayed. The battle was lost. In anger Shamuel announced that, if found out, the traitor would be punished with 100 lashes of the whip. In great secrecy another surprise attack was planned, but with the same result as the first. However this time the traitor was discovered. It was Shamuel's mother.

If he would have spared his mother, all his people would rightly judge that he was unjust. If he punished her, all would say: "Shamuel has no pity, not even for his mother!" For three days and nights he withdrew to his tent brooding on how to act rightly in this dilemma.

At long last he appeared. His army gathered expectantly. With deep emotion he addressed his people: "We lost two battles because of treason. Many of our men were killed. There is no excuse - the crime was committed and punishment must be executed according to my judgment - 100 lashes with the whip! Righteousness and judgment must be maintained".

His mother was led into the circle. She was pale and shivering with fear. The executioner lifted the whip - but before the first lash struck, Shamuel cried out: "Wait - she is my mother. I am her flesh and blood. I will take the punishment for her!". Removing his garment he stepped into the circle and commanded: "Executioner, you dare not strike me any less than you would have the true culprit. Do your duty". Lash after lash struck until he fell down, unconscious ... He survived, though, against all expectations.

This event, perhaps more than any other in history, fits the picture of Christ. He was God in a human body. He had and has to execute righteous judgment, but in His perfect love He took on Himself our - my own, your own - sin and suffered the cruel, but just consequences for our sin on the cross. He endured not only the cruel physical suffering, bad as that was, but the pure and holy God, took on Himself in Christ, all the shame and ugliness of our sin.

A RELATIVELY GOOD CULPRIT

Our 'Good works' can never make up for failure

Imagine a man standing before the judge in court for having stolen a car. What do you think the judge would answer, when that man would start telling him how many good things he has done in the past and would argue that because of these good deeds he should be pardoned and released.

The judge would answer: "While I appreciate the good deeds you have done, we here deal with your crime - the **bad** deed you did - and you will have to be punished accordingly!"

One day, when we stand before our holy and righteous God on the Day of Judgment. Because of His holiness and righteousness He will have to deal with our sins, and eternal condemnation is sure for those whose rejected God's offer of pardon, which will take affect when we gratefully, and with a truly broken heart, acknowledge and accept the One who died in our stead on the cross.

THE GREAT TURN

Illustrated by Christ Himself

*The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) is specially valuable for the Muslims, because of its emphasis on **God as a loving Father**, who welcomes his son back home in spite of his disobedience, arrogance, and selfishness. This parable also shows the difference between submitting to God as a slave or servant (as the Muslim seeks to do), and worshipping God as a reconciled son. The parable clearly shows that God is not content that we should live before Him as slaves. He wants us to be restituted to the status of sons. We are not told whether the older brother also accepted his father's invitation. God therefore leaves each of us free to accept or reject his invitation to live as sons who recognize him as Father.*

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus speaks of a man who had two sons. One went away with his part of the inheritance and wasted it in far places until it was all spent. Working in a pigsty "he came to himself". He seriously and honestly assessed his situation. He had an "after-thought". The Bible has this word translated as 'repentance'.

Our future depends entirely on a resolution, "I will (a) **arise** and (b) **go** to my father and (c) **say** to him: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, I am no more worthy to be called your son". All he wished was to be a servant of his father, instead of serving in a pigsty which had led to his near starvation. This resolution was very good indeed (perhaps we too have made such resolutions before). But it was not enough. The young man in our parable did not stop short of actually fulfilling his resolution: "He (d) **arose** and (e) **came** to his father".

Much to his surprise the father was looking out for him expectantly. Even more surprisingly, the father still recognized him. Earlier on, he rode away confidently, but his expectations of a successful, happy and fulfilled life did not come true. He returned as a filthy, stinking, scanty vagabond, yet his father ran to meet him, embraced and kissed him! The son could hardly stammer his confession, before his father (1) had **clothed him** with the best robe [covered his dirt], (2) **put a ring on his finger** [indicating his acceptance as a son again], and (3) **put shoes on his feet** [only free men were allowed to wear them]. Then (4) he **ordered a feast** to be prepared, for "this my son was dead, and he is alive again, he was lost and is found".

THE TRIUNE GOD

He Cannot be Understood in His Divinity by the Human Mind, but He Revealed Himself.

The concept of the triune God is based on divine revelation, and transcends the power of human reasoning. We must therefore be careful not to give the impression that we can explain the inexplicable.

Even so an allegory might help to expand our understanding a little.

Take a drop of water to a chemist for an analysis. He will tell you that it is H₂O. Take the same drop to a physicist and he will say it is a liquid.

Take a little ice and do the same. The chemist will maintain that it is H₂O; the physicist will say it is a solid. Now take a test tube full of steam - the chemist will give the same answer, but the physicist's reply will again be different. He will say it is a gas.

As water, ice or steam are consistently H₂O, in spite of all their physical differences, so God, in His diverse "appearances", is always God.

Perhaps we can liken the water, the originator and maintainer of life, to the Creator-Father; the ice - that which can be 'touched', to the Son of God who became the Saviour; and the steam, often unseen and unmanageable, yet representing great power, to the Holy Spirit who reveals God to all who seek Him and gives power to the believer to live righteously. Yet all three facets are God.

There are other analogies. Man consists of body, soul and spirit. Fire, light and heat are three yet one.

In the same way, mind, thought and speech belong together and yet are distinct from one another.

THE SACRIFICE

Illustrates God's Judgment, Condemnation and Pardon

From the time Adam and Eve had sinned in the Garden, animal sacrifices were appointed by God. These were intended to be pointers to the One Who was to come and offer Himself to die as the only and really valid great sacrifice for sinners. Christ already fulfilled all that a sacrifice symbolizes, and they were no longer needed after he had died on behalf of sinners.

This is why John the Baptist, when first seeing Jesus, exclaimed: "Look, the **lamb** of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). He knew from the prophets of old that Jesus would become the ultimate sacrifice. Isaiah had long before spoken concerning Christ: "All we have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was like a lamb led to the slaughter ... by oppression and judgment He was taken away ... He was cut off from the land of the living, for the transgression of

my people He was stricken ... it was the Lord's will ... to cause Him to suffer ... the Lord makes His life a guilt offering ... He will bear their iniquity ... He poured out (!) his life unto death ... He bore the sin of many" (Isiah 53:7-12). This was confirmed in the New Testament. Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1. Peter 3:18).

Especially during the time of Eid-ul-Adha when Muslims slaughter their 'qorban', this Gospel presentation can serve as a very appropriate illustration.

HALAAL OR HARAAM

Right or Wrong in God's Sight

The meaning of "Halaal" (lawful, clean) and "HARAAM" (unlawful, unclean) can be used to explain the biblical meaning of sin and the utter sinfulness of man. These concepts are not very easily understood by Muslims because of the great difference in their understanding of what sin is. To the Muslim sin is merely seen as a deviation from the right way. All one has to do is to return from this deviation to the right track. Sin can be cancelled by doing good. The Bible views it differently. It teaches that we are all sinners by nature. We are not sinners, because we sin, but we sin, because we are sinners. Sin and guilt are not redeemable by means of good behavior and deeds. We all need redemption from our sin (Romans 3:23-24). This concept can be explained to the Muslim using this illustration:

Ask your Muslim friend what he would do if, when going to the super market, he would find four different types of sausages to choose from. The first type has 50% beef and 50% pork. The next two have 75% and 90% beef and the rest pork. The last type only has a pork casing. Would he not choose to buy the last one with just pork skin? A faithful Muslim would immediately answer that all four types are "HARAAM". It makes no difference what percentage of pork it contains or whether it is only stuffed into pork skin. All the sausages contain pork and are therefore "HARAAM".

With sin it is the same. God says that all sin is "HARAAM". This makes us impure before God. Does it make any difference whether I am 80% sinful, or 50%, 20% or 10%? In the eyes of man it does matter. The person who is only 30% or 10% sinful is possibly considered a respectable citizen!

But in God's eyes all sins are "HARAAM" and the quantity of sin in our lives or how holy we are in the eyes of men makes no difference to Him. Before God we are all sinners and impure. Would God allow anything impure into His presence in heaven/paradise (Revelations 21:27)?

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