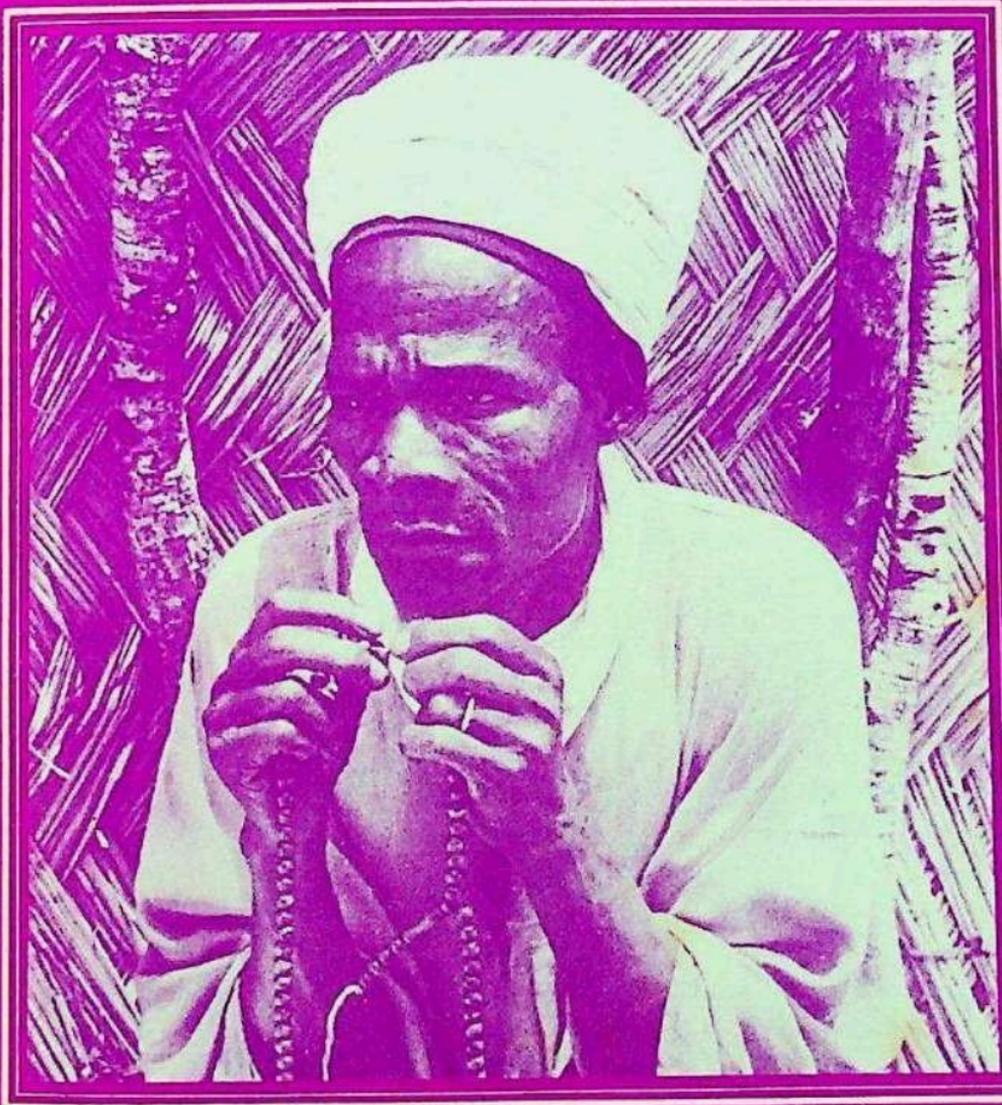


CHRISTIAN WITNESS



AMONG MUSLIMS

STANDARD EDITION



CHRISTIAN WITNESS AMONG MUSLIMS

**A Handbook written especially for
Christians of Africa (south of Sahara)**

AFRICA CHRISTIAN PRESS

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A booklet of questions and issues for discussion based on
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booklet is appropriate also for use as a correspondence course
and in theological education by extension programmes.

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PREFACE

How this book was written

The author of this book has discussed Islam with thousands of Muslims and Christians in Africa, south of Sahara. These discussions have been held in English, French and Yoruba, sometimes with reference to the Qur'an in Arabic, and sometimes with reference into other African languages.

As a result he has written this Handbook *for the ordinary Christian how to behave toward Muslims, and how better to witness to Jesus Christ to them.* The material of the book has been presented to Christians coming from The Gambia, Ghana, Dahomey, Nigeria, Cameroun, the Sudan. All have said that the lectures helped them in their witness to the Muslim, and, in return, their comments helped the author.

We do not mean that what is in this book is intended to witness to Christ among Muslims. Those who are following another way, with success, are not at fault. But for many Christians of Africa who need to witness to Islam, this book offers an approach that has already proved of value in various parts of Africa.

specialist to conduct the study, and let the Pastors message back to their churches.

2. Study it in a weekly church meeting, Sunday students' fellowship. The leader should have this H Every member of the class should have (at least) th version, and should read each week's lesson before the class, revise the lesson, discuss the questions set, chance for the members to speak of their experie Muslims.

3. There is a Correspondence Course based on th book. Write to P.O. Box 4045, Ibadan, Nigeria, for

4. If you are a preacher or broadcaster, bring so material into your sermons. Get extracts publish acknowledgment) in newspapers and church magazi

5. Go on to study more about Islam, both by lis your Muslim friends and by reading the books Appendix I, p. 86.

To Muslims who read the book, we apologize tha only a very short introduction to Islam, with emphas points which Christians most need to understand fuller account of Islam, we invite you to read *I Christianity, 90 Questions and Answers* by Abd-ul-M hope you will find that both books try to give a respectful picture of Islam.

To readers outside Africa, we point out that majority of Africans are deeply convinced of the reali and of religious faith. In many places, Muslims are enter into a frank religious dialogue with Christians. other places Muslims are difficult to approach, but i when we show a respectful interest in their religion begin - most generously - to open their hearts to u same time, in Africa as elsewhere, our dialogue n notice of the everyday needs of man, especially of the justice and reconciliation.

The basis of this book, with regard to Christian beli

the Bible is our supreme authority for faith and practice. Some important Christian doctrines have not been mentioned. This is only because the author has concentrated on what seems most helpful for the first steps of Christian witness.

With regard to Islam, many different opinions are found among Christians. This Handbook does not pass judgment or verdict on Islam. It simply assumes:

(a) that Christians should seek to understand, fairly and objectively, what Muslims believe and practise;

(b) that Christians should have the greatest possible respect and sympathy towards Muslims as persons and as subjects after God;

(c) that all men, no matter how devout and good, need the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Because so many people have helped in the preparation of this book, the author's name is not given. But you are invited to send comments or questions to The Director, P.O. Box 4045, Ibadan, Nigeria.

PART ONE

(Lessons 1-3)

HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD BEHAVE TOWARDS MUSLIMS

Lesson 1

NEW LOVE FOR MUSLIMS

TEXT: 'He who does not love does not know God; for who has loved his neighbour? Love is the love of God which is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us' (1 John 4: 8).

Right at the beginning, let us confess one of the failures of Christians. We have not usually shown much love towards the Muslims. In olden days some Christians fought wars against them. Now we no longer fight with swords, but some Christians still think it is their duty to battle Islam with hot argument and abuse. Some other Christians live more or less separately from the Muslims; they do their business, but they do not take one another as close friends.

i. Why we should love the Muslims

The main purpose of this lesson is to persuade you, as a Christian, that you should love the Muslims. Here are three reasons why you should do so:

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

(b) Jesus Christ said that the second commandment is 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' (Mark 12: 31). Wherever the Muslim is your neighbour, Jesus teaches you to love him.

(c) God loves all mankind, including the Muslims. He sends His rain on the just and the unjust; He sent Jesus Christ to die for the sins of all men.

for all. So we must love the Muslims, even if some seem to be our enemies (Matthew 5: 43-45; Roman

2. How shall we show love to the Muslims?

(a) *Be friendly.* Little by little, try to break down the barriers that separate Muslims and Christians. Start in the simple way of greeting and smiling. Pay visits to show your friendliness. Give respect to whom respect is due. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Pray for those in trouble. Be honest in business dealings. If a Muslim does evil against you, forgive him. If you have done evil to a Muslim, seek his forgiveness.

Show your love by co-operating with Muslims for the welfare and progress of your community. Islam and Christianity both call for justice and for compassion towards the poor and needy. There are many things that good Muslims and good Christians should do together.

(b) *Understand the Muslim and his faith.* Some people have thought that, to be a good Christian, you must convert all non-Christians. This is a mistake. (See Luke 6: 37.) You must be a better Christian if, while holding firm to your own faith, you show charity in your attitude to people of other religions. Note how charitable Jesus was to the Samaritans (Luke 9: 53-55; 10: 29-37; 17: 11-19) and to the Gentiles (Matthew 23: 8: 5-13).

The sincere Muslim has many things in common with a sincere Christian. He is struggling to do good and to avoid evil. He is sometimes lonely, disappointed, troubled, and facing death. He wants to know the meaning of life and seeks God as the answer to his problems.

So your love for the Muslim means that first you must understand him as a fellow-man; then, in order to understand him, study the religion which is precious to him. Do not study Islam with the aim of finding fault. Rather, look for good points and be glad about them.

(c) *Tell the Muslim about Jesus Christ.* Some people

understand the word 'love'. When we say, 'Christians love the Muslims', they think we are asking for a compromise. They think it means, 'Don't tell him anything about the Gospel, because that might offend him.'

That is not what 'loving the Muslims' means. It means the opposite; when you have something very valuable, you share it with those you love. If we really love the Muslims, we shall certainly want them to know the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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

SUMMARY

This book will help you to understand your Muslim neighbour. It will also advise you how to explain the Gospel to them. But the most important thing is for Christians to have an attitude of love towards Muslims. That will be the most powerful witness to Jesus Christ!

African proverbs say, 'What love cannot do, is not worth doing', and 'The person we love, his house is never far from us'. The Bible says, 'So faith, hope and love abide, these three remain, but the greatest of these is love' (1 Corinthians 13: 13).

FOR DISCUSSION AMONG CHRISTIANS

(a) Someone said, 'The Muslims of my area are so aggressive and proud, it is impossible for us Christians to love them. How would you answer? (Consider 1 Peter 2: 11-16; 3: 14-17.)

(b) Someone else said, 'The Muslims of my area are very different from us in race and customs, and we have little to say to them. So we cannot love them.' How would you answer? (Consider John 4: 7-9, 39, 40; Acts 10: 28, 29, 34, 35; 17: 23-28; 18: 27-28; 19: 35-41; 20: 19-21; 21: 28-30; 22: 30-31; 23: 6-11; 24: 13-15; 26: 10-18; 28: 16-17.)

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

(d) Someone said, 'If we admit the good points in Islam, like you told us, people will think it is just as good as Christianity. So we had better go on condemning it!' How would you answer? (Consider Matthew 7: 1-5; Luke 11: 14; 1 Corinthians 13: 4-6; Romans 5: 6-8.)

Lesson 2

OUR MESSAGE TO THE MUSLIMS

TEXT: *'For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake' (Corinthians 4: 5).*

First, stop and think. Have you met any Muslims the few days?

Have you shown love to any?

Now, we are going to study the above text in three parts. The first part tells us that:

1. We must not 'preach ourselves'

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

(b) 'Preaching' does not mean 'my religion is better than your religion', which is another kind of superiority feeling. The Christian preacher may have his private thoughts about other religions, which should be as generous as possible. These private thoughts are no part of his message, which is simply about God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

(c) Another wrong kind of 'preaching ourselves' is to always speak and never listen. Notice how Jesus listened to the woman of Samaria, and how Philip listened to the Ethiopian (John 4; Acts 8: 26-38). The good Christian preacher listens to his members. Even more, the preacher must

Muslims should *listen* to them to understand their deep thoughts and feelings. Then, when it is his turn to speak, he will be sensitive to his hearers and his message will be more understandable and attractive.

Unfortunately, very many people have this false idea that 'preaching' means thinking yourself to be superior. Accordingly, in this book we shall usually avoid the word 'preach'. Instead, we shall speak of 'giving a message' or 'witnessing to Christ' or 'explaining the Gospel'.

The text goes on to say that:

2. Our message is about Jesus Christ as Lord

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

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

(a) Muslims honour Jesus as a prophet, but they do not know Him as Lord and Saviour. They say He is not the Son of God.

(b) Muslims normally claim that Jesus did not die on the cross. (See Lesson 7.)

(c) Muslims do not call God Father. They say that God has no sons, and men are only His slaves or servants.

So these most precious truths of the Gospel – Jesus as Lord and Saviour, His cross and resurrection, God as Father – are not known in Islam.

Remember that the Jews in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost were already sincere religious men, believers in One God, but God inspired the apostles to tell them about Jesus as Lord and Saviour. In a similar way, devout and good as Muslims

Muslims are, God wants them to hear and believe the great things He has done for the world in Jesus Christ.

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

Finally, our text teaches that:

3. We must be the servants of those we preach to, for Jesus' sake

This reminds us again to avoid all sense of superiority. Jesus, our Lord and Master, stooped down to wash men's feet. What will you do, to be a servant to the Muslims?

Some Christians may still say, 'If we go so far in love to the Muslims, we risk compromising our faith. So we had better keep separate from them.' But listen to the apostle Paul: 'I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.' (Read 1 Corinthians 9: 19-23.) Of course, the saying 'all things to all men' can be misunderstood. It does not mean 'worship idols with the idolaters and get drunk with the drunkards'! You are not to do anything which is against your faith in Christ. You cannot, for the sake of 'love', deny Christ! Appendix III tells you, in some particular cases, how to 'draw the line' so that your love does not become compromise.

But apart from compromise, *do everything possible* to show love, to serve, and to let men know the salvation which is in Jesus Christ.

SUMMARY

In approaching people of other religions, there are two mistakes that Christians sometimes make. One is the mistake of being hostile and aggressive; this is forbidden by Jesus' command that we love our neighbour. The opposite mistake is that of compromising or keeping silent about our faith in Christ.

Because of love for the neighbour, the Christian must present Christ by deed and word to people of other religions.

FOR DISCUSSION AMONG CHRISTIANS

(a) Someone said, 'We should make the church perfect and unite all the denominations, before we can begin to preach to Muslims.' How would you answer?

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

(c) How was Jesus 'all things to all men'; with the Sadducees and with the Pharisees (Luke 5: 29-32; 7: 36-38; 19: 47)? Was this compromise? What was His aim?

(d) Sometimes it is hard to decide how far a Christian should go in love for Muslims, and where he must 'draw the line' to avoid compromise. Discuss any case where you find it difficult to decide. (See Appendix III, pp. 90ff.)

Lesson 3

THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE CHRISTIAN WITNESS

TEXT: *'And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will . . . come to know the truth' (2 Timothy 2:24, 25).*

Introduction

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

1. Not quarrelsome but kindly to every one

See also verse 14: 'avoid disputing about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers'. Often a Christian has set out to witness for Christ, but has ended up in a useless argument! How can we avoid this quarrelsomeness?

(a) *Avoid the attitudes which cause quarrels.* Do not aim at a debate in which we are trying to 'defeat' the Muslim. Do not argue to prove yourself right and the Muslim wrong. Instead, you should aim at a friendly discussion in which Christian and Muslim show a sincere interest in each other. Then in

this *kindly* way you will seek to bear witness to done for the world in Christ.

(b) *Avoid the subjects which cause useless quarrels.* Christians thought they could 'preach the Gospel to the Muslims', criticizing the Qur'an and the morals of Muslim society. This is quite the wrong way. It hardens Muslims against your message and they will not reply with criticisms of the Bible and Muslim society. (There is more about this in section (c))

(c) *Avoid the places where quarrelling is likely.* Do not start a religious discussion in a noisy public place. It is much better to have a quiet chat with a few people.

2. 'An apt teacher'

Here are some principles of good teaching.

(a) *Understand people.* To teach John arithmetic, not only understand arithmetic, you must also understand John. Study Islam to understand the Muslims' questions and listen to the answers.

(b) *Go from the known to the unknown.* Start with what Muslims already know about: One God; Jesus, Teacher, Healer; the last judgment; prayer; and so on. Lead on from there.

Do not normally *start* by speaking of the things which Muslims find offensive (as Trinity, Son of God). When you speak of these, show that you understand and sympathize with the Muslim objections. Say that you want their minds at rest. Assure them that we do not believe in gods, nor in God physically begetting a son.

(c) *Go step by step.* Keep to one point at a time. Do not mix many subjects together in his questions. Stick to the most useful subject; politely ask him to keep to this one, and come to the others later or on another day.

(d) *If you do not know, say so!* The Christian should not pretend to be a know-all. If you are asked a

cannot answer, say you will try to find out and bring the matter later.

3. 'Forbearing (patient), correcting his opponent with gentleness'

We do not mean you should consider all Muslims as opponents. But no doubt some will oppose your witness and show a misunderstanding of the Gospel. Then you have to deal with them, but *with patience and gentleness*.

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

4. 'God may perhaps grant that they will . . . come to know the truth'

Some Christians have said, 'It is a waste of time, we will never convert any Muslims, they will not listen.'

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

But we should never put limits to the power of God. No one can bring anyone to know the truth. Our task is just to be our witness, with prayer and with love, and then trust that God will do His own work.

In fact, very many Muslims are attracted by the message and not a few have fearlessly declared their faith in Christ. If Christians showed greater sincerity and love, what could happen?

5. At all times—pray!

Pray privately for your Muslim friend and for his faith. Pray for their health and welfare. Pray that God will enlighten them as they think over your discussion and as they read the Bible, that the Holy Spirit will touch their hearts and lead them to the truth.

Pray too for yourself, that your love may be genuine and that you will always be learning more of the riches of Christ.

FOR DISCUSSION AMONG CHRISTIANS

(a) In some areas, Christians find it hard to *start* a friendly religious discussion. Discuss how to do this.

Can you (in your area) start by asking a Muslim about his faith, e.g. the meaning of a ritual or festival? Can you encourage him to ask questions about Christianity? Can you comfort and advise him in suffering or difficulty, and so begin to show him of God's love? Can you speak of your regret that Muslims and Christians have so often been hostile or suspicious? Can you offer a scripture portion (or other Christian writing) saying you are happy to hear that Muslims too believe in the 'awrāt (law of Moses), Zabūr (Psalms) and Injil (Gospel)?

(b) What passages would you choose when you first invite a Muslim to read the Bible?

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

PART TWO

(Lessons 4-11)

HOW CHRISTIANS CAN UNDERSTAND THE MUSLIM AND LEAD MUSLIMS TO UNDERSTAND THE GOSPEL

Lessons 1 to 3 have described the general principles of Christian approach to Muslims. Now in Part Two (Lessons 4 to 11) we introduce you to what you may talk about in your witness among Muslims.

Each lesson will have five main parts.

1. Understanding the Muslim

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

2. Steps of Christian witness

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

3. Discussion with a Muslim friend

This suggests what you may actually say in your witness. Of course you will not repeat this message like a gramophone record! You will aim to discuss the material, encouraging your friend to make his own comments, and you responding to him.

4. Practical hints, dos and don'ts

These may be omitted or passed over quickly if you are short of time when the Handbook is used in teaching a class. It will be more important to spend time on the other sections.

5. For discussion among Christians

This is to challenge and inspire ourselves, as Christians, to make sure we really believe what we say and practise what we preach.

Where possible, the Christian should try to follow the order of these lessons in his discussion with Muslims. In general

the Muslim who has understood the Christian view of unity and love (Lessons 4 and 5), will be in a better position to think about Jesus Christ. When he has learned more of the life of Jesus (Lesson 6), he will be in a better position to understand about His death and resurrection (Lessons 7 and 8). When he understands Jesus as 'the Word of God' (Lesson 9), he will then be in a much better position to make sense of 'Son of God', 'Trinity' and 'Holy Spirit' (Lessons 10 and 11).

Of course, it is often not possible to be systematic, and one must be prepared then to take up any topic in which a Muslim friend shows interest.

Lesson 4

LOVE GOD — LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR

TEXT: *Jesus said, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength' (Mark 12: 29, 30).*

1. Understanding the Muslim

(a) *One-ness of God.* Muslims have a tremendous belief that there is no god but God (*lā ilāh illa-llāh*). According to Islam the greatest sin man can commit is to worship anything else beside God, to associate (or 'join') other gods with God. The purpose of human life is to worship God.

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

(c) *Do Christians worship one God?* Because these two things are so very important in Islam (the one-ness of God, and the performance of Ritual Worship), many Muslims are sincerely puzzled and even distressed about Christianity. They hear that we call on Jesus as Lord, and they see that we do not perform anything like their own Ritual Worship. Do Christians then actually worship the One God?

2. Steps of Christian witness

The first step in our witness is to reassure the Muslim that

we actually believe in one God, and are zealous for the will of God above all other things.

The second step is to share with him the teaching of that man's 'worship' or 'service' is, above all, *love towards God and loving our neighbour as ourselves*.

3. Discussion with a Muslim friend

Refer to the Muslim 'creed', *lā ilāh illa-llāh*. Ask about the use of this in Islam (for example, it is part of the Call to Prayer, as it is said in the ear of a new-born child).

Agree that God is One and that man should worship no one beside Him. Tell how someone asked Jesus Christ what the first commandment of God is the first and greatest. Ask the Muslim, 'What would you say?' Then tell him Jesus began His teaching by saying, 'The first is, Hear, O Israel: *the Lord our God, the Lord is one.*'

Yes, it is so important in Christianity that 'God is One'. Most Christians learn by heart the Ten Commandments, which God gave through Moses, beginning, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. *You shall have no other gods before me.*' (Exodus 20: 2, 3).

But what does it really mean, to worship only One God? To say it with the lips is not enough. Even Satan knows that there is One God. But he does not obey God.

Again, to bow down in a ceremony of worship is good, but it is not enough. People may bow down hypocritically. A proverb says, 'Every lizard prostrates; we don't know why, but one has a belly-ache.' Just so, men bow, but God alone knows their hearts; He knows who is sincere in worship.

True worship is to love God and to obey Him, in all things. When Jesus was telling the first and greatest commandment, He went on '*and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart. . .*' True worship of the One God means to love Him more than anything else; more than we love ourselves, our power, money or pleasures.

Jesus also told people the second greatest commandment. (Encourage your friend to say what he thinks is the second most important law of God.) Jesus said it is, '*You shall love your neighbour as yourself*'.

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

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

Especially we Muslims and Christians, I hope we may love one another more. Thank you for your kind welcome to me today. Can we meet and discuss another day?

4. Practical hints

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

(b) *Avoid controversy*. At this stage, you are not aiming to bring in such controversial questions as the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. But if the Muslim himself raises them, give a simple courteous answer, without raising a spirit of debate.

For example: A Muslim might say, '*But you Christians are worshipping three gods instead of One.*' You could reply,

we actually believe in one God, and are zealous for the will of God above all other things.

The second step is to share with him the teaching of that man's 'worship' or 'service' is, above all, *love toward God* and *loving our neighbour as ourselves*.

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Again, to bow down in a ceremony of worship is good, but it is not enough. People may bow down hypocritically. A proverb says, 'Every lizard prostrates; we don't know why, but one has a belly-ache.' Just so, men bow, but God alone knows their hearts; He knows who is sincere in worship.

True worship is to love God and to obey Him, in all things. When Jesus was telling the first and greatest commandment, He went on '*and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart. . . .*' True worship of the One God means to love Him more than anything else; more than we love ourselves, our power, money or pleasures.

Jesus also told people the second greatest commandment. (Encourage your friend to say what he thinks is the second most important law of God.) Jesus said it is, '*You shall love your neighbour as yourself*'.

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

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

Especially we Muslims and Christians, I hope we may love one another more. Thank you for your kind welcome to me today. Can we meet and discuss another day?

4. Practical hints

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

(b) *Avoid controversy*. At this stage, you are not aiming to bring in such controversial questions as the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. But if the Muslim himself raises them, give a simple courteous answer, without raising a spirit of debate.

For example: A Muslim might say, '*But you Christians are worshipping three gods instead of One.*' You could reply,

'Oh no, please, we wouldn't dare to do so, after commands to worship One God. Only we believe One God has made Himself known to man in three ways: as Creator, as Word and as Spirit. Anyway, it is One God upon.'

Or if asked, '*Why do you worship Jesus?*' answer: 'we worship the one and only God *through* Jesus because God so wonderfully revealed Himself to us. Of course, God is a mystery and hard to explain. But believe me, Christians can never think that Jesus is of a second god beside God!'

Often this short answer will satisfy your Muslim friend for the time being, and you can return to your discussion of love to God and love to neighbour. However, if he is ready to discuss the Trinity or the Person of Christ, do not try to do so. (See Lesson 10.)

(c) *Use familiar terms.* Sometimes use names and expressions which are familiar to Muslims: alMasīh (the Messiah), annabi 'Īsā (Prophet Jesus; Christians do believe Jesus a prophet, though more than a prophet); annabi Mūsā (Prophet Moses); Iblīs or Shaitān (Satan), etc.

(d) *Recommend the Bible.* Use the discussion to stimulate your friend's interest in the Bible. Speak about the Bible not argumentatively. Offer to lend a Bible or give a portion. Suggest passages which you know he would like to read, and talk about these next time you meet. Help him to find the place.

FOR DISCUSSION AMONG CHRISTIANS

(a) On what occasions do Muslims repeat, 'Lā ilāh illā Allāh'? Ask your Muslim friends, and find out all you can about what it means to them.

(b) What can we do as Christians to show that we worship God above all other things?

(c) Is there any particular way in which we are to love our neighbours as ourselves? How can we put it

Lesson 5

GOD IS LOVE — OUR FATHER

TEXT: *'And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, "This man (Jesus) receives sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost. . . .?"'* (Luke 15: 2-4, and the whole chapter).

I. Understanding the Muslim

(a) *'God is most great'*. 'Allāhu Akbar' is constantly repeated in the Muslim Prayer and in everyday life. After the one-ness of God, His greatness seems to be the most important thing in Muslim belief about God. God is far greater than our thoughts of Him, great in power and wisdom; nothing is to be compared with Him.

(b) *Does God love all men?* This is not so clear in Islam. On one hand, the Qur'an calls God 'the Merciful', and 'the loving'; on the other hand, the Qur'an repeatedly says that God 'loves' the good people and does not love the bad, e.g. chapter 3 verse 140 (or 134).

Different Muslims interpret this subject in different ways. Here we can only say that all Muslims have some idea of God's love, but not many will think of it in the way that Christians do. The Christian thinks of the love of God as it was revealed in Jesus Christ: 'God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.' This is

a strange idea to most Muslims. Only the Bible says 'God is love' (Romans 5: 8; 1 John 4: 8).

(c) *Is God our Father?* The Qur'an and Traditions, and old Muslim writers, never call God Father. Muslims say that this would mean a physical fatherhood; that is, that God actually had relations with a woman and begot children as men do. Such an idea is blasphemous to them, as it is to Christians. Also, many Muslims feel it is bringing God too low if we compare Him with a human being such as a father.

But in modern times, many Muslims (especially educated ones who have mixed with Christians) do accept that God could be called a Father as a metaphor (or 'comparison') and not in the physical sense.

2. Steps of Christian witness

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

3. Discussion with a Muslim friend

(a) *The love of God, revealed in Jesus.* In the time of Jesus Christ, people thought that a holy man, a religious leader ought to have nothing to do with the unholy ones; like the proverb that says, 'A man wearing a white cloth does not go into the palm-oil shop.' So people were astonished when they saw Jesus mixing with despised and sinful people and criticized Him for it.

Jesus explained His action by asking them to think about a shepherd. A shepherd may have ninety-nine of his hundred sheep safe at home, but is he content with that? No, if

one is missing, he will go out looking until he finds it. Then how happy he will be when the lost sheep is found (Luke 15: 1-7)!

Jesus did not only mean that He was a shepherd of men. He was teaching that *God* is the greatest Shepherd, who loves everyone, even the lost and the sinful. Of course, God's love for sinners does not mean that He likes them to continue in sin. His love means that He wants to save them from sin, and so He sent Jesus Christ into the world to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19: 10; Mark 2: 17).

(b) *God's love is like a Father's love (but far greater)*. Jesus went on to show the greatness of God's love by telling the story known as 'the Prodigal Son'. (See Luke 15: 11-32, especially up to verse 24.) Many Muslims find this a very attractive story. Find out if your friend has heard it and, if he has, encourage him to tell you about it. Show him where it is in the Bible or Scripture portion.

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

Jesus taught us, when we pray to God, to say 'Our Father who art in heaven . . .' (Matthew 6: 9). But please let me put your mind at rest about something. You Muslims always say that God couldn't be a father in a physical sense, in the way that human fathers come to their wives and beget children. Of course you are right. We can never think any such thing about God.

When Jesus taught us to call God Father, it was in the spiritual sense, to show the greatness of God's love. You know

even among men there are some we call 'father'; not that they begot us but because they care for us and we respect them (give an example). Much greater than the love of God, which Christians think of when we call Him Father.

(c) *The joy of trusting in God as Father.* We all have times of trouble, we suffer, we are tempted by evil, and are surrounded by enemies. At such times some people despair, thinking that He no longer loves them. If you look at the suffering of the world, you can begin to wonder, 'If God loves us, why does He allow this to happen?'

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

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

4. Practical hints

(a) If a Muslim raises the question of 'sons of God', try to give a brief, friendly answer and then if possible return to the main point of your witness. For example, 'Of course, we do not mean that God begot a child! Similarly, "sons of God" has a spiritual (not physical) meaning; it shows what love God has for us and the trust we have in God' (1 John 3: 1).

(b) Be ready with *illustrations* of a child's trust in God. For example, a little girl once went out in a boat on the sea for the first time in her life. It happened that her father was not one in charge of the boat. A great storm blew up, pe-

tossed here and there, many were shouting and weeping; but the little girl sat calm and smiling. Someone asked, 'How is it you are not afraid like the rest?' She replied, 'My father is in charge of the boat, and he knows I'm here.'

Our earthly fathers cannot always protect us, but we know that God is all-powerful. Christians believe the message of Jesus Christ, that God is our Father; through all the storms of life, we know that He is 'in charge of the boat' and He cares for each one of us. (In some areas, it would be better to tell this story about a boy. Where people have no idea of a storm at sea, tell the story about some other frightening situation, such as being in the bush at night.)

(c) In some languages, the word for 'love' may not be appropriate for speaking to Muslims of the love of God. Then you may begin by speaking of God's 'mercy'.

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

FOR DISCUSSION AMONG CHRISTIANS

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

(b) A good son is expected to copy the virtues of his father. Are we behaving as sons of the heavenly Father, showing His goodness in our lives? (For example, see Matthew 5: 44, 45.) An African proverb says, 'The praying mantis has given birth; now it is up to the child to learn to dance like his father!'

Lesson 6

THE LIFE OF JESUS CHR

TEXT: '... good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he all) ... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was (Acts 10: 36-38).

1. Understanding the Muslim

(a) *The Messengers of God.* Muslims believe that God revealed His will especially by sending Messengers to the world. At least Noah, Ishmael, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad are called both Messenger (rasūl) and Prophet (nabī). Muslims consider that all of these received scriptures from God and all preached more or less the same message. At the end of time they will witness against those who rejected their message.

(b) *Muhammad* is called 'the seal of the Prophets'. Muslims believe he received the Qur'an as God's final revelation for all mankind. Also the life and teachings of Muhammad are believed to give the perfect example for mankind to follow.

A few Muslims do seem to raise him to a supernatural status. But the orthodox Muslims insist that however great Muhammad was, he was still 'a man, of a pure human nature. He was neither a great god, nor a small god, nor an object of worship; we do not pray to him, but we pray to God for him' (Shaikh M Abd Allah Draz).

(c) 'Īsā (*Jesus*), ibnu Maryam (son of Mary), al-

Messiah), is mentioned in some ninety verses of the Qur'an and in many Traditions. He is called a Prophet and Messenger, a blessed and righteous one, honoured both on earth and in heaven, one of those close to God. The Qur'an described how His birth was announced by Gabriel to Mary, and how she conceived Him miraculously, while still a virgin. It says that He healed the blind and the leper and raised the dead. God gave Him the 'Injil' (Gospel) containing guidance and light. He gathered disciples who believed in Him as the Messenger of God. Many of the Children of Israel rejected Him, but God rescued Him. God will place those who follow Jesus above those who disbelieve, until the day of resurrection. Muslims honour Him with the titles 'the word of God' and 'the spirit of God'.

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

2. Steps of Christian witness

What a problem for us! Muslims honour Jesus in so many ways, but they seem to reject just those things which are the most important in our own faith: the divinity of Jesus Christ, His death on the cross and resurrection. How shall we meet the problem?

As usual, we advise you to go 'from the known to the unknown'. Do not begin by trying to prove that Jesus is God. A Muslim will almost inevitably misunderstand you and reject what you are saying. Even the disciples did not at first realize that Jesus was God, or Son of God. They had observed His life for many days before Peter was first enlightened to know who Jesus was (Matthew 16: 13-17).

So normally your first step of witness about Jesus will be to

encourage your friend's interest in the life of Jesus, especially in those events which are mentioned also in the Qur'an. As your friend grows in understanding of the words and actions of Jesus, he should see for himself that this is more than an ordinary man, more even than a great Prophet.

3. Discussion with a Muslim friend

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

Then in Lesson 5 we saw how Jesus made friends with sinners and outcasts. In this, He brought to the world the idea of God's love; that God loves sinners, that He is the heavenly Father who never stops loving any of His children.

From there we can go on to discuss the events in the life of Jesus which the Qur'an refers to:

(a) Ask your Muslim friend what he knows about the life of Jesus. Ask him to read or listen to the story of the birth of Jesus in Matthew 1: 18-25 and Luke 1: 26-56; 2: 1-7. According to the Qur'an, God says, 'We breathed into her of our spirit, and made her and her son a sign for the worlds' (chapter 21 verse 91).

(b) The Qur'an recognizes John the Baptist (Yahya) as a Prophet, and tells the story of his birth. Discuss John's life and lead to his testimonies to Jesus Christ, e.g. 'I baptize with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the one of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire' (Luke 3: 16).

(c) The Qur'an (chapter 3 verse 49 or 43) says that Jesus healed the blind and the leper and raised the dead, but does not give any details. Most Muslims will be happy to know

stories as Mark 1: 40-45 (the leper), Mark 10: 46-52 (Bartimaeus) and Luke 7: 11-17 (widow of Nain's son).

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

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

4. Practical hints

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

This Handbook is suggesting a gradual, step by step approach to the points of difference between Islam and Christianity. But we would like to make quite clear to our readers that we do not intend any kind of compromise or concealment of Christian beliefs.

(b) *Do not try to prove the Gospel from the Qur'an.* Another way in which some Christians have tried to end the differences is to claim that the Qur'an supports Christian belief. Thus it is possible, by cleverly twisting the meaning of some verses, give the impression that the Qur'an itself 'proves' the Trinity or the divinity of Christ, or even that He is Son of God.

But you must not do this, because it is misrepresentation: it annoys the Muslims (as we are annoyed if a Muslim misrepresents the Bible); and it confuses Christians, by givi

a false impression that the Qur'an says the same Bible.

(c) *Do not attack the character of Muhammad.* You are not the 'judge' over Muhammad or anyone else (Luke 12:17) and you only make Muslims angry and determined to defend Muhammad at all costs.

Again, *do not compare Jesus and Muhammad:* because (i) such a comparison is usually offensive to the Muslim – he feels you are justifying it to attack Muhammad; and (ii) the position of Jesus in Christian faith (as Lord and Saviour) is quite different from the position of Muhammad in Islam (as Messenger). Therefore comparison is misleading.

If you have to make any comment on Muhammad, it should be a favourable one, e.g. how he converted an idol-worshipping people to worship one God, or how he established unity and order among warring tribes.

(d) *Be careful how you 'argue' from the miracles of Jesus, especially the virgin birth.* Some Christians have claimed these as evidence that Jesus is God or Son of God. This creates an argumentative atmosphere. Also it is quite unconvincing to most Muslims because (i) other prophets also performed miracles and (ii) Adam also came into the world miraculously without a human father.

Notice that Jesus Himself never used miracles as evidence of His divinity (cf. Matthew 4: 6, 7). We advise you to stick close to the biblical witness, that the miracles were signs of the fulfilment of prophecy, and of the coming of the kingdom in Jesus Christ.

FOR DISCUSSION AMONG CHRISTIANS

(a) Our real difficulty here is that we ourselves are so ignorant in understanding the life of Jesus Christ. We know separate stories about Him, and we know John 3: 16 by heart. But are we able really to describe what His life was like? (Even in church, how many sermons are about Jesus?)

Practise giving a five-minute talk about Jesus; not

the doctrines of incarnation and atonement, but simply about what Jesus did and said on earth.

(b) Then give similar short talks about some of the individual Bible stories mentioned in the lesson. In each case, connect the story with Muslim belief; tell the story in a lively way; use the story to show what sort of person Jesus is, and how 'the kingdom of God is at hand' in His ministry.

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

Lesson 7

THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST

TEXTS: *Jesus said, 'The good shepherd lays down his life for sheep' (John 10: 11). 'Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15: 3).*

I. Understanding the Muslim

(a) *Did Christ die?* Many Muslims have heard a story that took Jesus to heaven just before the crucifixion, and that miraculously caused a substitute to be crucified in His place. They feel this gives more honour to Jesus than the Christian belief that He was crucified.

In opposition to this, Ahmadis claim that Jesus Himself was nailed to the cross (not a substitute), but He was taken down still alive; He recovered from His wounds and lived to the age of 120 years.

Thus, one way or another, most Muslims doubt whether Jesus died on the cross.

(b) *Does man need an atoning sacrifice?* Muslims readily admit that they are 'sinners', but the popular belief is that good works (such as Prayer, fasting and charity) can atone for a person's sins; even if these good works are not enough, 'God is merciful', and so the Muslim hopes that in the Day God may overlook his failings.

Thus, in this popular view, it is not obvious that there is any need for someone to die for our sins.

(c) *Does God need an atonement?* Islam emphasizes the absolute freedom of God. He does whatever He wills. 'When

decrees a thing, He merely says to it "Be", and it is.' So if God wants to forgive, He does not (in the Muslim view) need any atonement; He simply forgives.

2. Steps of Christian witness

Thus Christ's death for our sins, so precious to us, can seem really puzzling to Muslims. (Remember how difficult it was for Peter to believe that the Christ would die; Matthew 16: 21-23.) So your first step of witness is, very simply, to tell the story of the events leading up to the cross. Then let the meaning of Christ's sacrifice come naturally from the story.

Your witness should keep a balance of these three aspects:

(a) *What men did*: how they opposed Jesus and plotted to kill Him (Muslims do believe this).

(b) *What Jesus did*: how He made a voluntary, loving self-sacrifice, on behalf of men.

(c) *What God did*: how God planned and used the death of Jesus as a way of bringing forgiveness and cleansing to mankind.

3. Discussion with a Muslim friend

As an introduction, discuss the theme of 'self-sacrifice'. Find examples, from the history or legends of your own people, or tell the story of Damien. This was in the days when there was no cure for leprosy, and lepers were sent away to an island where they lived hungry, dirty, quarrelling and hopeless. Damien, a Christian pastor, went to live with them and cared for them. In time he caught the disease himself, and at last died of it. He gave his life for them.

Go on to tell how Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for us.

(a) *What men did*: Jesus brought peace, healing and forgiveness; He showed men the way to God. You might think that everyone would love Him! But the religious people were angry because Jesus said *love* was more important than the ritual laws; they condemned Him for mixing with sinners.

The self-righteous did not like to have their faults revealed and the powerful men did not like to have their power challenged. Even Jesus' disciples were ready to betray or desert their Master.

Just the same sins that spoil the world today were those that led men to plot to kill Jesus.

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

Why did Jesus the Messiah believe this? Hundreds of years before, the prophet Isaiah had written his vision of the 'servant of the Lord' suffering and laying down his life for the salvation of men:

'But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; . . . he poured out his soul to death, and numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors' (Isaiah 53: 5).

Jesus saw Himself as the fulfilment of this prophecy foretold that He would suffer and be killed (Mark 8: 31; 14: 24). He said that He came 'not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10: 45). He determined to sacrifice Himself even to death, in love for men and in obedience to God.

(c) *What God did:* some Muslims have argued that God could forgive men's sins without Jesus dying on the cross. We reply that God is a mystery, and it is not easy for man

say what God could or could not do. But Jesus Himself, and the Bible, bear witness that God chose this way of salvation: He made the death of Jesus to be the way for man to receive forgiveness and to be reconciled to God. God planned that Jesus should sacrifice Himself; Jesus freely offered the sacrifice; and Christians thankfully declare that He 'loved me and gave himself for me' (Galatians 2: 20).

4. Practical hints

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

(i) *It puts an end to all other atoning sacrifices.* Man feels his guiltiness as a stain, a defilement that separates him from God. The Children of Israel (and even pagans) have offered animal sacrifices in the hope of cleansing this stain. The Gospel says that it is the sacrifice of Jesus – offering His perfect life, in obedience to God, even to the shedding of His life-blood – that once for all cleanses our guilt and brings us to fellowship with God (Hebrews 10: 11-25).

(ii) *It assures us of our forgiveness.* Of course this cleansing from guilt is not automatic. We need to accept it by sincere faith, by trusting in Jesus Christ who died for our sins.

So the 'way of salvation' is not a matter of first trying to be righteous in order to make ourselves worthy of salvation; it is a matter of first coming as an unworthy sinner and accepting God's free forgiveness (Luke 18: 9-14; Romans 5: 1-11). What joy to know your sins forgiven!

(iii) *It reveals the horror of sin and the righteousness of God.* Some people might think, 'If God's forgiveness is free, we can commit any sin we like. God will easily forgive us!'

The death of Jesus Christ is a terrible warning against sin. See what man's sin did to Jesus! Sin deserves to be judged and punished. But God in His mercy allowed the suffering and judgment to be carried by His beloved Messiah. Through Christ crucified, God offers us forgiveness, but also shows us His righteousness (Romans 3: 21-26).

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

(b) *The Qur'an says* 'they did not kill him and they did not crucify him, but it was made to appear so to them' (chapter 4, verse 157 or 156).

It is usually unwise to make a direct attack on the truth of this verse. (How do you feel if someone attacks the Bible?) It is also unwise to try to prove the death of Jesus by reinterpreting verses of the Qur'an. (See the comments in section 1a on p. 41.)

But do point out that Muslims themselves are not sure what these verses mean. They give several different interpretations. (See section 1a of this lesson.) Some Muslim scholars interpret 4, 157 to mean 'they did not kill his soul or spirit', thus leaving it possible that the *body* of Jesus was crucified and killed.

(c) However, let your main emphasis be on what the Bible says. In telling the story, show how strong is the evidence that Jesus actually died. (Jesus foretold His death, Mark 8:31, etc.; Romans, Jews and disciples were eye-witnesses, Matthew 27:19-23:47-49; Mark 15:43-45; and the grave was sealed and guarded, Matthew 27:65, 66.) Emphasize the story of the Resurrection at Gethsemane, which some Muslims misrepresent by quoting only 'Let this cup pass from me' and omitting 'nevertheless not my will but thine be done'.

You may have to deal with the Ahmadi story that Jesus was taken down alive from the cross. The simple answer is that the story represents Jesus and the disciples as liars, who pretend that Jesus was risen from the dead when actually He had died at all. But the Qur'an declares that Jesus and His disciples were righteous and godly men. No true Muslim would call them liars!

(d) Do not rely much on the argument that because God is both just and merciful, it was logically necessary for His justice and mercy to be reconciled by an atoning sacrifice. Muslims are not usually impressed by this; for them, God

far above man's idea of logic and is not bound by any 'necessity'.

(e) In strict Islam, there is no idea of an atoning blood sacrifice. The killing of an animal at Greater Bairam festival is simply an act of obedience to God and generosity to men. However, many Muslims in Africa are strongly influenced by popular animist ideas, and may in fact feel that their 'sacrifice' is a kind of atonement for sin or a propitiation to protect from evil.

Try to understand whether the Muslims you meet are 'strict' or 'popular' in their outlook on sacrifice, and speak accordingly.

(f) Be careful with phrases like 'faith in His blood' and 'the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin'. We understand them spiritually, but many Muslims take them literally and so are needlessly offended. Explain, or use different language.

FOR DISCUSSION AMONG CHRISTIANS

(a) Practise telling the story of the events leading to the death of Jesus. Include in a balanced way the three aspects of what men did, what Jesus did, and what God did.

(b) In simple language which a Muslim could understand, say what the cross means to you personally.

(c) If you meet a person in severe suffering (physical or mental), how will you use the story of Jesus' death to comfort him?

Lesson 8

THE VICTORY OF JESUS CHRIST

TEXT: *'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead' (1 Peter 1: 3).*

i. Understanding the Muslim

(a) Many Muslims feel it would have been a shameful thing for the Messiah to be crucified. That is why they easily believe the story that God somehow saved Him, e.g. by putting a substitute in His place.

(b) The Qur'an teaches man to take refuge with Allah alone, against all evil powers. The well-known saying 'A'udhu billāhi mina-shaitāni-rrajīm' means 'I take refuge with Allah against the cursed Satan'.

There is nothing in the Qur'an to authorize the making of Quranic amulets and 'medicine', and the Qur'an actually forbids divination. But many African Muslims place tremendous reliance on these things, to the point where they are to be taking refuge in charms rather than with God. (This is true of some weak Christians!) Other Muslims condemn these practices.

(c) Some Muslims trust that Muhammad, or the saint who intercede for them in the Last Day. But many African Muslims (south of Sahara) have little faith in such intercession.¹

¹ *Islam - the Straight Path* (Ronald Press, New York), a 450-page book by the world's leading Muslim scholars, does not mention

rely for their salvation in the Last Day, either on the merits of what they have done in this world, or on God's mercy in 'overlooking' their sins.

2. Steps of Christian witness

We need to explain Christ's whole ministry, especially His death and resurrection, as a glorious victory over the powers of evil. Christ lives to intercede for us. Christians 'take refuge with God' by trusting in Jesus Christ.

3. Discussion with a Muslim friend

Throughout His life on earth Jesus suffered temptation from Satan, even as we do. Perhaps you have heard the story of the time when God first called Him to preach; He went into the desert for forty days, fasting and praying, and Satan tempted Him there. Satan took Him up a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment, and said, 'I will give you all this power, and all this wealth . . . if you kneel down before me.' Jesus drove him away: 'The scripture says, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him" ' (Luke 4: 5-7, 13, Today's English Version).

People of that time considered all sickness, especially mental illness, to be the work of evil spirits. One day in the house of God, a man with an evil spirit screamed out at Jesus. (Imagine something like this happening during the Friday Prayer!) Jesus simply spoke His word to drive out the spirit. The people were astonished and said, 'What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out' (Luke 4: 31-37).

At last Satan entered the hearts of men to make them destroy Jesus Christ. Men betrayed Him, jeered at Him, and crucified Him. But Satan could not make Jesus to do any evil. See how patiently Jesus endured, without anger or sin. Did He curse His enemies? He prayed, 'Father, forgive them.' He

intercession of Muhammad, except to say that 'No human being can be of any assistance in the Day of Judgment' (p. 106, cf. pp. 339-341).

laid down His life, willingly, to save the world according to God's plan. So His death on the cross was no defeat; it was a glorious victory over Satan (Hebrews 2: 14, 15; 12: 2). God raised Him from the dead, to demonstrate the power of God. God has made Christ to be Lord over all the 'powers and spirits', whether good or evil (Acts 2: 36; Romans 8: 38; Philippians 2: 8-11).

Jesus Christ then is alive, at the right hand of God. He has gone through the suffering and trials of human life, including death, for God to make Him our living Saviour. When we meet temptation, death and all evil works of Satan, we remember the Lord Jesus Christ and He brings us victory. He intercedes with God for us, both now and in the Last Day. If we believe in Jesus Christ, nothing can separate us from God's love.

'What, then, can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble do it, or hardship, or persecution, or hunger, or poverty, or danger or death? . . . No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us! For I am certain that nothing can separate us from his love, neither death nor life; neither angels, nor other heavenly rulers, nor powers; neither the present nor the future; neither the powers above nor the world below - there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord' (Romans 8: 35-39, TEV; also Hebrews 2: 17, 18; 4: 15, 16).

4. Practical hints

(a) We are not planning a direct attack against the Muslims. We are not using charms and divination. Many devout Muslims earn their living this way and they are not going to listen to our preaching. But we should give such a testimony to the blessings of trusting in God through Christ, that people will see the foolishness of wrapping Qur'an in an amulet, or swallowing stones, or making marks on sand. We may remind Muslims that their own religion tells them to take refuge with God alone.

(b) Some Christians have been afraid to use signs and

bols of our faith, in case people misunderstand them as magic. Any symbol can be corrupted into superstition. But we advise Christians of Africa to use symbols, and to teach carefully their meaning and proper use.

First the symbols instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ; baptism and the Lord's Supper. Let us administer them in such a way that they will be a strengthening of the church's faith, and a witness to outsiders (1 Corinthians 11: 26). There are other symbols we can use both for our own faith and as a witness: the Scripture text on the wall, the Bible displayed in the house; prayer together in the family and on public occasions; processions and a reverent posture in prayer.

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

Some Christians display pictures of Jesus Christ, as a reminder to trust in Him. We should make it very clear that we are not worshipping such pictures.

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

FOR DISCUSSION AMONG CHRISTIANS

(a) Are you trusting in things that hands have made? Have you a sincere testimony on this? (See Acts 19: 18-20.) Or are you taking refuge with God alone, through Jesus Christ? Do you believe that all evil powers can be conquered in Christ's name?

(b) Are we helping one another to overcome evil? Happy is the church where James 5: 13-20 is put into practice!

Lesson 9

JESUS, THE WORD OF

TEXT: *'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . all things were made by him . . . In him was life . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth' (John 1:1-14)*

I. Understanding the Muslim

(a) *God is One, and Most Great.* Remember that the central teaching in Islam is to worship other gods beside God. So do not be surprised if Muslims are suspicious of your teaching about Jesus Christ, wondering whether you are making a second god.

Also, although Muslims can think of God as 'ruler', the emphasis is that He is far above us, completely separate from man. So if you use language like 'God is like man' or 'Jesus is both man and God', they will think you are saying something impossible or meaningless; like 'the earth became sky'.

(b) *God speaks.* Islam teaches that God speaks (through angels or prophets). God's speech is His will, anything that He wants. Muslim theologians call the *speech of God* (Arabic: Kalām) is an eternal 'quality' of God. It was never created, but has been revealed to the world in the form of holy scriptures, especially the Quran.

This is something like the idea of John 1:1, which says 'the Word was with God', exactly the same. Roughly speaking, one can say

believes 'In the beginning was the word of God . . . and the word became a book.'

(c) '*Kalimatu-llāh*' (*the word of God*). This is a popular Muslim title for Jesus. 'God's Word which He sent to Mankind' (Qur'an 4, 171 or 169).

Muslims regard this 'word' as a created being, and its meaning is not exactly the same as 'the Word' in John's Gospel. But there is a similarity, which makes it easier to understand the title of Christ with Muslims.

2. Steps of Christian witness

Recall the previous lessons which show the uniqueness of Jesus. He lived and died as a man, and yet He did and said things which make Him different from any other man. Who is He?

We shall agree with Muslims that God speaks to mankind and we shall witness that the eternal Word of God came to the world as a human being, Jesus Christ.

3. Discussion with a Muslim friend

I am happy that you already know much of Jesus Christ. The Qur'an says He was born of a woman, just as we are, and ate and his mother both ate food'. Yes, the Bible too teaches that Jesus lived a real human life among men. He grew up as children do, He ate and drank, experienced joy and suffering and temptation (although never falling into sin) and became a great religious teacher and leader; Muslims call Him a Messenger and Prophet of God (*Rasūl* and *Nabī*).

Yet there is something more than this. Things happened in His life which make Him different from any other prophet. These lead us to believe that Jesus was a man, yes, but more than an ordinary man.

His miraculous birth was a 'sign to all mankind'. John the Baptist, himself a prophet, pointed to Jesus as someone greater than himself. Jesus announced, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand'; with His coming a New Age had dawned.

This New Age was the fulfilment of all that God had

ised through the prophets of Israel. Through people received their sight, lepers were healed, the dead raised to life; sinners were forgiven and converted. The poor, despised people heard good news of God. Jesus revealed that God is our loving Father. Man's first duty is not to observe a mass of religious rules, but *to love*, and to love his neighbour.

Men rejected Jesus Christ, took Him and killed Him, but that was not the end, and Jesus' death did not defeat Him. God made the death to be a sacrifice by which He bore our sins and gave us peace with God. God raised Jesus from the dead, in victory over all the powers of evil. Jesus lives! To those who trust Him, He gives a victory over evil.

After His resurrection, Jesus said these astonishing things: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. I am with you always, to the close of the age. In that Day the Lord Jesus Christ will be the Judge. He will crush all evil under His feet, and will fully establish the Kingdom of God the Father (Matthew 28: 18-20; 25: 31-46; 1 Thimothians 15: 24-28).

All of this is the clear testimony of our Bible, which is written on a different level from other men. But the Bible clearly teaches that God is One, and no other is to be worshipped beside Him. How then shall we describe Jesus?

Many, both Christians and Muslims, have found the answer in the first verses of John's Gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' A modern translation (Today's English Version) reads it like this: 'Before the world was created, the Word existed; he was with God, and he was the same as God.' This means that we read in the Bible of 'the Word of God' which does not mean another thing beside God. 'The Word' is God Himself in action.

John's Gospel goes on to explain who Jesus Christ is. The eternal Word came into the world, was born

as a human being, humbling Himself to our level, yet showing us the glory of God, and bringing us salvation. 'And the Word became flesh (a human being) and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth' (John 1: 14). Jesus Christ is the Word of God. Mention that Muslims also call Him 'Kalimatu-llah' - the word of God.

We are sorry that we Christians have sometimes given the false impression that we make Jesus into another being beside God. This is not what we mean. We mean that the eternal Word came to live a human life among men, as the Messiah Jesus. God so revealed Himself in His Word Jesus Christ, that we know God and pray to Him 'through Jesus Christ our Lord'.

By believing in Jesus, we put our trust in God. By honoring Jesus, we are honouring God's Word; we are honoring God (John 12: 44, 45).

4. Practical hints

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

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

(b) Muslims call Jesus 'the spirit of God'. We are glad that they give Him such honour. But Christians do not regard Jesus as a spirit! Nor is the Muslim idea of spirit the same as the Christian idea. (See section (a) on p. 65.)

(c) This Handbook has advised you not to get into controversies about Christian doctrine, but first to study the life and teaching of Jesus, with prayer that God will show your friends who Jesus is.

Now that we come to the direct question 'Who is Jesus?', we advise you to answer in the language of the Bible rather than in the language of church Creeds. Creeds were written to instruct Christians and to guard against heresies. They are much less suitable for explaining the Gospel to non-Christians. (ii) Many Muslims feel that the Gospel (especially the Gospels) has authority, and they want you to say if it is clearly based on the Bible.

Language such as 'second person of the Trinity', 'one substance with the Father', 'divine and human nature', 'Christ', is unlikely to be helpful in explaining you to a Muslim.

(d) So far in these discussions we have presented Jesus without once calling Him Son of God. This does not mean we are concealing or compromising on Christ's Sonship (next lesson.) It simply means that, in love for our Muslim friends, we want to start our witness with the language that they can more readily understand.

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

FOR DISCUSSION AMONG CHRISTIANS

(a) Practise telling who Jesus is, along the lines of the previous section and (for the moment) without calling Him 'Son of God'.

(b) As we think of the greatness of our Lord Jesus, let us remember His warning, 'Not every one who says, "Lord, Lord" shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven' (Matthew 23:13).

Lesson 10

SON OF GOD — TRINITY

TEXT: 'In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son . . . He reflects the glory of God and bears the very image of His nature' (Hebrews 1:1-3).

I. Understanding the Muslim

(a) In the Muslim view, to say 'Son of God' means to say that God physically begot a child, as we humans do. It would be blasphemy. God is so great, that if He were to create anything He has no need to come down to our level and take a wife. He simply says 'Be' and it is.

Many Muslims know, and recite in their daily prayers, chapter 112 of the Qur'an:

'Qul huwa-llāhu ahad, allāhu-ssamad. Lam yalid wa lam yūlad, wa lam yakun lahu kufu'an ahad': 'Say, He is One, God the eternal refuge; He begets not, and is not begotten, and there is none comparable to Him.'

Muslims feel deeply about this. Even if you explain that the concept of God (applied to Jesus) has nothing to do with begetting, many will still suspect that somehow this is dishonouring to God.

(b) However, some modern Muslims (including A. N. S. Williams) do accept that Jesus could be called 'Son of God' in a metaphorical sense. But they say that any righteous people can be called sons of God and so Jesus is no different from the others.

(c) If you tell a Muslim that 'Jesus is God', he inevitably misunderstand you. (Do we understand ourselves?) He may ask: 'Do you mean that when Jesus was born, God was born? and that when Jesus was (as you say) three days, God was dead? Then please who was lord of the world while God was dead?' These are fair questions, but rather hard to answer!

(d) When Muslims criticize 'Trinity' they usually have the idea that it means three gods, of whom Allah (God) is one, or that it means dividing God into three parts. (See *Qur'an*, chapter 5 verse 73 or 77, and verse 116.)

2. Steps of Christian witness

First set your Muslim friend's mind at rest. Christianity is much opposed as he is to the idea of three gods, and to having a physical son. Then take good-humoured examples from everyday life, and use these to introduce what we mean by Son of God.

3A. Discussion with a Muslim on Son of God

These subjects are more fully treated in *Questions Muslims Ask*, questions 27-34, and *Explaining the Gospel to Muslims*, pages 10-18 and 23-26. See Appendix I.)

(a) Give illustrations to show that when in everyday life men say 'son of something', they often mean it 'spiritually' (as in a parable or metaphor), and do not mean physically. Give examples: son of the road, son of a leopard, son of a thunder. Present these in a humorous way, not seriously. Emphasize that we speak of Son of God in a spiritual sense.

(b) Give illustrations from everyday life and from the Bible to show the relationship of son to father (apart from a physical relationship, which is excluded). Find interesting stories and experiences, to help to make the concept interesting. Lead to one or more of these points (*Questions Muslims Ask*, question 27):

(i) The son is the *'picture' of his father*. When we know the son we know what the father is like (Hebrews 1: 3; John 1: 18).

(ii) The son has the *closest knowledge of his father*, and knows his father (Matthew 11: 27; John 8: 28, 29).

(iii) The son is the *highest representative of his father*. He stands in the father's place and receives the honour due to the father (Mark 12: 1-9).

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

(d) Many Muslims will be partly satisfied by these explanations. But still, because of their tradition, they do not find it easy to give the title 'Son of God' to Jesus. You need not argue about it. If your friend finds it easier to think of Jesus as the Word of God or Messiah, be content for him to do so for the present. Trust God to make things clearer in time.

3B. Discussion with a Muslim on Trinity

(a) Show that Christians believe firmly in One God. Nothing is to be worshipped beside Him (Exodus 20: 3; Mark 12: 29).

(b) The Bible shows this One God revealing Himself in three ways: as Father, as Son and as Spirit. Or if your Muslim friend is finding it very hard to listen to the titles 'Father' and 'Son', you may say that God reveals Himself as Creator, Word and Spirit.

Say also that this does not mean God changed from one thing to another. He always exists in these three ways.

(c) Of course God is a mystery far above our thought. No Christian can explain exactly how God exists in three persons. (Neither will a Muslim claim to explain the nature of Allah.) But simple examples can help us to think about it.

Do not take as an example something which is so in three parts (an egg, with shell, white and yellow) as a misleading example and offensive to Muslims.

Better examples are of someone existing in three ways. So-and-so is a mechanic, a husband, a church member. He may meet him at work, at home, in church; all these are these three things, yet he is only one man. Similar examples are: *man*, who mysteriously exists as body, mind, and spirit; the *sun* which we see as a globe in the sky, as rays of light, and which we feel as warmth on the body.

Emphasize that you know your examples are imperfect. Examples do not prove the Trinity; they just help us to think about its meaning.

(d) The doctrine of the Trinity is simply the way we try to summarize what the Bible teaches about God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Rightly understood, this doctrine does not *defend* the unity of God.

For example, the Bible says that Jesus does things that no created being could do; He gives men the forgiveness of sins, He holds all authority in heaven and earth, He will be the judge on the Last Day. Someone reading the Bible may make the mistake of thinking Jesus is another god. The doctrine of the Trinity warns us against an incorrect understanding. It is the One God who reveals Himself in the Word; the Word lived as a man among men, Jesus Christ. So what Jesus does is not something apart from the Father. The acts of Jesus are the acts of God Himself.

(e) Acknowledge that talking alone cannot convey the truth about the Trinity and Son of God. God wants men to know Him through Jesus Christ. When we trust in Christ, we may understand Him maybe little by little, we shall understand the doctrine.

4. Practical hints

(a) Do not be annoyed with the Muslim for asking questions and for not being easily satisfied. Try to answer his questions.

Do not refuse to answer by saying, 'It is just a mystery'. Truly, God is a mystery. Nevertheless He has given us in the Bible many things that men can and should understand.

Be prepared to show texts of the Bible (especially from the Gospels) which reveal Jesus as the Son of God. But do not stop there; go on to explain the meaning.

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

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

(b) If a Muslim points out that other people than Jesus are called son of God, welcome the point. The Israelites as a whole (Hosea 11: 1), and Christians ('adopted' through God's mercy, Galatians 4: 4-7), are called sons of God. This means that they are called to know and obey God and to be His representatives in the world. (See section 3A(b) of this lesson.) But they do this very imperfectly; Jesus Christ alone is perfect in His Sonship.

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

The Christian belief that 'Jesus is God' is very hard to state in a way that will not be misunderstood. It does not mean that God was dead for three days! It does not deny that Jesus lived a real human life, but many Christians carelessly give the wrong impression. If you say that Jesus is truly God, you should also say that He is truly man.

In most cases it is unwise to press a Muslim to accept 'Jesus is God'. Instead, try to show how Jesus is truly God and Saviour, and leave God to give understanding of 'divinity'.

(d) Some Christians speak much about Jesus (Jesus' name, how to come to Jesus) and very little about God. This gives Muslims

the impression that we are making Jesus a substitute for God.

Bible texts emphasize that God sent Jesus (Romans 3: 25; 5: 8; 2 Corinthians 5: 19), and that Jesus is entirely to the glory of God (John 12: 28; 1 Corinthians 2: 11; 1 Corinthians 15: 28). Study the Bible and practise speaking with this emphasis on what God has done through Christ and on faith in *God* through Christ.

FOR DISCUSSION AMONG CHRISTIANS

(a) Practice speaking among yourselves about Jesus and Christ, in accordance with the suggestions above. Ask one another to find good illustrations. Remind yourselves that you are aiming not to argue about words, but to glorify Jesus; and that we ourselves always need to glorify Jesus.

(b) In the same spirit, practise speaking about

Lesson 11

THE HOLY SPIRIT — THE CHURCH

TEXT: Jesus said, 'The Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you . . . he will bear witness to me . . . he will convince the world of sin and righteousness and of judgment' (John 14: 26; 15: 26; 16: 7).

1. Understanding the Muslim

(a) Muslims use the title 'Spirit of God' or 'Holy Spirit' in a different sense from Christians; they take it to mean a created being, such as the angel Gabriel or Jesus Himself (Qur'an 19, 17; 4, 171 or 169). The Christian idea of the 'Spirit' being God is unknown in Islam.

(b) Muslims claim that Muhammad is the Comforter (Counsellor) whom Jesus promised in John, chapters 14 and 16. The Qur'an and orthodox Muslim teaching have never said that Muhammad is the Holy Spirit; but some modern Muslims do give him this title.

(c) Muslims think of 'Islam' primarily as submission to God, which is expressed by obeying a complete set of ritual worship and daily behaviour. They feel that the Christian religion ought to have a similar set of rules given by God through annabi 'Isā, and they are puzzled that we have a ritual and law which are compulsory for all Christians.

2. Steps of Christian witness

Tell how Jesus the Messiah promised and sent the

Spirit to His disciples. Then show how this is essentially the community of believers in Christ, governed by the Holy Spirit.

3. Discussion with a Muslim friend

Often a Muslim introduces the idea that Muhammad is the Comforter or the Holy Spirit. You will have to show that this is a misunderstanding of the verses in John 14 to 16. The Comforter of whom Jesus spoke is not a person but a Spirit; not seen by the world, but dwelling with the disciples Peter, Thomas and Philip 500 years before Christ was even born (John 14: 16, 17).

But do not make it your main aim to prove the Muslim wrong. Make it your aim to witness positively to the experience of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Alternatively, you might introduce the subject of the Holy Spirit by discussing *power*. Everyone wants power to get power for evil or selfish purposes. You are to witness the power of God to fight against evil; the evil of the world and the evil of our own hearts.

When Jesus the Messiah was killed by His enemies and buried in the tomb, His disciples were broken and hopeless; they had no power. But by the mighty power of God, Jesus rose from the dead, He showed them His feet ('it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a man has flesh and bones as you see that I have'). He told them that 'repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations . . . you are witnesses' (Luke 24: 47).

Those few, simple disciples had no learning, no political authority. How could they preach to the world? Jesus promised they would be 'clothed with power from on high'.

Soon afterwards, on the day called Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to them. They recognized it as the power of God; the *Spirit*; that is, the presence of God Himself dwelling in their hearts. They had already known God to some extent.

God filled their lives with His divine energy. They prayed with power; God answered their prayer with miraculous healing; and they were united in a wonderful fellowship of love and joy. They preached fearlessly that all men should repent of sin and believe in the risen Jesus Christ and receive this same Holy Spirit. The number of believers increased rapidly, and this was the beginning of the Christian church. Read with your friend the exciting story in the Acts of the Apostles, especially chapters 2 to 5.

Try to show that the Christian church is not a set of people who follow the same particular ritual or observe exactly the same laws of daily behaviour. It is a fellowship of people who believe in God through Jesus Christ; it is a fellowship created and guided by the Holy Spirit.

Different members of the fellowship are equipped by the Holy Spirit with different 'gifts'; just as the parts of the body have different functions. Some preach, some teach; some have great faith, some have power to heal the sick; some are administrators, some speak with tongues. Every believer great and small has some gift of the Spirit, which contributes to the common life of the church.

Yet there is one gift which all should have – the power of love (I Corinthians 12 and 13). The church should be a fellowship of people who love one another (and love the world outside as well), because God through Christ has so loved us. We should be people who readily forgive one another (and forgive those outside), because God through Christ has forgiven us (I John 4: 10, 11; Ephesians 4: 32).

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

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

side of our human nature, our immoral and idolatry and witchcraft; quarrelling, fighting, and selfish ambition; splitting the community into sections; drunken revelling (Galatians 5: 19-21) belong to Jesus Christ try to put to death the old nature. The Holy Spirit has given us a new life. Live and pray under the guidance of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 8: 2, 11, 26).

4. Practical hints

(a) Muslims know that we do not fully live up to the Christian ideal. Nevertheless, it is part of our witness that we confess our faults and speak of what we are aiming to achieve with God's power.

(b) Apply Galatians 5: 22 to your behaviour. Are you going to them with 'love, joy, peace, gentleness . . .'? If not, you are failing.

(c) Where Muslims know of 'speaking with tongues' they are likely to be puzzled by it, since in their religion everything is done according to rule. Point out that 'those who speak with tongues do nevertheless worship God in order'. There are rules to govern 'tongues' (1 Corinthians 14: 27, 28, 40).

FOR DISCUSSION AMONG CHRISTIANS

(a) Which of the 'works of the flesh' (Galatians 5: 19-21) is your greatest problem in your Christian community? Which fruit of the Spirit do you most need to have more of? Discuss together about it.

(b) What do you feel is fundamental to the Christian life? Do you think of the church as an organization to be administered, and a place to go to for help? Or do you know it as a living fellowship where Christians help and encourage one another?

Is the Christian life mainly a set of laws to be followed? Above all, 'God's love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit'?

PART THREE

(Lessons 12-13)

**HOW TO HELP A MUSLIM
WHO IS SERIOUSLY
INTERESTED IN THE GOSPEL**

In the final two lessons we shall think especially of the Muslim who is really interested in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If he is thinking of becoming a Christian, or perhaps he has begun to believe in Christ. We shall call him, for short, an *enquirer*. What special help does he need to understand and follow the Christian way?

Each time we shall take (a) a theme in Islam; (b) the same theme in Christianity; then we shall say (c) how to help the *enquirer*.

At the same time, we hope that these lessons will increase good understanding between Muslims and Christians in general.

Lesson 12

BIBLE-STUDY AND PRAYER

TEXT: *'They spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers' (Acts 2:42, TEV).*

BIBLE STUDY

I. Scripture in Islam

The Muslim idea of Scripture is different from the Christian idea. So the Muslim enquirer needs special help to know how to study the Bible.

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

(b) They believe that it did not come from the mind of Muhammad, but that it is God's eternal speech sent down from heaven through the angel Gabriel.

(c) Islam has codes of law (based on Qur'an and traditions) to tell the Muslim exactly how to behave in life and worship. Therefore most Muslims in Africa (south of Sahara) do not feel it very important to study the Qur'an for themselves, they just need to be taught the codes of law.

(d) So Muslims recite the Qur'an with quite a different attitude from the Christian's idea of Bible study. (See below.) The recitation of the Qur'an is mainly a way to praise God for sending down His revelation and to express their reverence and obedience.

2. The Bible in Christianity

(a) To the Christian, the supreme revelation is not a book, but the person Jesus Christ. He is the eternal God, the Mediator between man and God.

(b) But to enable us to know about Jesus, God inspired men to write the Scriptures which tell the story of Jesus' life and teaching, but also his life beforehand in the prophets, in the history of Israel, and afterwards in the life and preaching of Jesus.

Christians do not believe that revelation must come 'straight down from heaven' without going through the mind. That may happen. But equally God can give wisdom by His thinking and experience of men, so that what they write will come through their conscious mind, and is truly a revelation from God. So Christians believe that the men who wrote the Bible did so by inspiration of God. We trust in the Bible as 'the Word of God', leading us to believe in Jesus who is (in an even greater sense) God's revelation of His eternal Word.

(c) Therefore Christians do not think that the Bible is mainly to be recited! It is there, in our own language, to be studied and understood. As God inspired the Bible, so He speaks to those who read it today. By His guidance He gives us rules of conduct and examples of God's judgment. Above all, the whole Bible bears witness to Jesus, and so deepens our trust in God through Him.

Everything in the Bible must be read 'in the light of Christ'. We do not literally obey all of the Old Testament because Jesus has perfected the revelation. (*Muslims Ask*, questions 9 and 10.)

3. Helping the enquirer

The enquirer needs your help to understand the Bible. It means to Christians. Many things that you have known since childhood will be strange and new to him. Please

reading the Bible with him. Explain section 2 above. Lend an introductory Bible study book, and enrol him in a Bible reading scheme. Let him see the Bible being treated reverently by Christians.

PRAYER

1. The Ritual Prayer in Islam

(a) As with Qur'an recitation, the Muslim Prayer is a ritual which must be exactly performed, in Arabic, to express obedience and praise to God. To know the meaning of the words seems to be less important; the important thing is to perform it correctly.

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

(b) The words of the Prayer are mainly praise to God, taking refuge with God, asking blessing upon Muhammad, Abraham, and greeting the fellow-worshippers.

The Prayer may include a request to be forgiven and saved from the fire, but there is no detailed confession of sin, as in Christian worship. Intercession for others may come after the Ritual Prayer, but Muslims commonly think of intercession as the superior praying for his inferior.

(c) In theory, *women* should observe the ritual laws as men do. But in many parts of Africa it is taken for granted that women will not perform the Prayer and will not attend mosque.

2. Prayer and worship in Christianity

(a) The Christian does not think of prayer primarily as 'performing a ritual'. He thinks of it more as a conversation with God. We hear God's word in the Bible, and we respond in our prayer and our everyday obedience. We speak in the language we know. We may use set words, or simply open

hearts and speak, humbly, as sinful men before God, yet confidently like a child speaking to his father.

This Christian way of prayer is distinct, in that it is 'in the name of Jesus Christ'; that is, we dare to speak to God because God has first approached us, revealed Himself to us, and revealed Jesus Christ. We speak to God, because we know that He loves us and seeks our good.

We do not pray to 'make use of God'; we pray that God will make use of us, and make us useful to our fellow-men.

(b) In our prayer we express:

our *gratitude* ('thank You, God') for everything that God's day brings, for all God's gifts, of health and material things, as well as the love of friends (Psalm 103).

our *penitence* ('forgive me, God') for all evil things and all actions which may have harmed someone (James 5:16).

and our *petition* and *intercession* ('please, God, do this for me and for others'). We put out our wants before our Lord, as a child tells his father what he is and what he needs (Matthew 7: 7-11). We trust in 'Thy will', because God knows best what is good for us.

(c) Women have a full share in Christian fellowship. Often the Christian women are more energetic than the men!

3. Helping the enquirer

The informality of Christian prayer can be very attractive to a Muslim; but also it can be very attractive. At least one Muslim began to be interested in the Gospel because he first heard Christian extempore prayer. Express your informality, as 2a and 2b above, and give the enquirer the opportunities of being present at informal Christian prayer in the family, in sick-visiting, etc.

There is also more formal worship in Christianity. The enquirer will be interested in this because it is different from his experience in Islam. Tell him what you 'recite' in your prayers. It may be the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, or some other prayer. Everyone joins in singing hymns, to express our

in worship. The Lord's Supper (Holy Communion) is interesting to many Muslims because it is a sort of ceremony performed in obedience to the command of Jesus (1 Corinthians 11: 23-26). Emphasize that in this service (and in all our worship) we celebrate a *risen* Christ, One who grants pardon and victory, and is the living Way to God.

FOR DISCUSSION AMONG CHRISTIANS

If a Muslim moves among Christians and attends Church worship, what will he find? Try to 'look through his eyes' at your church and your Christian fellowship.

First, will he find what he is accustomed to in Islam: reverence; much praise to God; proclamation of the Oneness; and everyone participating, involved in the worship?

Secondly, will he find the things that are somewhat lacking in Islam: an emphasis on understanding the Scriptures and prayer; a sense of personal conversation with our heavenly Father; earnest intercession for the needs of others; and the great saving acts of God?

Or will he find the preacher giving a monologue over the heads of an inattentive congregation? Unintelligent gathering of lessons and prayers and a sermon full of moralizing, omitting to proclaim God's judgment and mercy in Christ?

Lesson 13

JOINING THE CHURCH

TEXT: ‘ “Brethren, what shall we do?” . . . “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit . . .” And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved’ (Acts 2:37-47).

I. The community in Islam

(a) *The meaning of ‘being a Muslim’.* Most Muslims do not feel that ‘being a Muslim’ means primarily particular beliefs or doctrines. They feel primarily means *belonging to a certain community*. In this Islamic law governs (more or less) the worship, the customs, the trade and even the politics. Every certain style of politeness and cleanliness, even an Arabic name, everyone joins in the fast and festival; everyone wears the same style of clothes; all show the solidarity of the community.

(b) *The horror of apostasy.* The community is horrified if a member leaves Islam to join another religion! They feel that the man has made a private decision of his own; they feel he has become a sort of ‘traitor’ who has betrayed a rival community. Orthodox Muslim law said that an ‘apostate’ (a convert from Islam) should be killed. This was not usually done, but the apostate was usually driven out or at least ridiculed.

(Christians must confess that in the past we have persecuted apostates and heretics in a similar way.)

(c) *The growth of tolerance.* At the same time, there has always been a tradition of tolerance in Islam. The killing of an apostate is not based on the Qur'an. The Qur'an says, 'There is no compulsion in religion' (chapter 2 verse 257). It also pays great respect to the religions of the people of the book' (Ahlu-l-kitāb = Jews and Christians) and does not regard them as idolators (Kāfirūn).

Nearly all Muslim nations have accepted the United Nations Charter, which declares freedom for individuals to profess their religious belief. Many Muslim communities in Africa do not fully grant this freedom to their members, but more and more Muslims are coming to regard choice of religion as a personal matter which the individual can decide for himself.

2. Fellowship in Christianity

(a) *The meaning of 'being a Christian'.* It is interesting to ask a group of people what they think 'being a Christian' means. Some will think it means 'going to church', or even 'going to school, learning English, and wearing European clothes'. Others will say it means 'being loving and kind'.

Certainly a Christian should go to church and should be loving. (Just as certainly, knowing books and wearing traditional dress do not make a Christian!) But the essential meaning of being a Christian is:

- (i) to have a *personal trust* in God through the Lord Jesus Christ; and
- (ii) to be in *fellowship* with others who have a similar trust.

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

Formalism: that is, relying too much on the outward form. To be a real Christian is not that you were born in a

community, or that you follow certain customs even that you perform a certain religious ritual. real Christian means that you have a *personal* through Christ.

Individualism: that is, thinking that faith is an individual thing, 'just between you and God', and no need for a Christian to join a church fellowship. Faith is something that you personally must have but it is also something that you should have with other believers. To be 'born again' is to be born into a family! A Christian is a member of the Body of Christ.

'What we have seen and heard we tell to you, and you will join with us in the fellowship' (1 John 1:3; also Mark 3: 33-35; 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27; and 2: 13-19).

Perfectionism: that is, thinking that a man is not a Christian until he is more or less perfect - perfect in knowledge of Christian doctrine, perfect in obedience to commandments, perfect in overcoming all his sins. No! The man who trusts in God through Christ at once is a Christian. He has entered the fellowship and the new life in Christ. His understanding of Christianity may still be weak, his morality may still be doubtful. But our Gospel is the good news of grace for sinners, and we must trust that by grace (with the help of the Christian fellowship) he will grow in knowledge and in Christian character. See Ephesians 2: 8-9; 5: 8; 14: 1, 10-13; Galatians 6: 1, 2; and Matthew 23: 1-12.

(b) *The loving fellowship*. Jesus said, 'By this you will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another' (John 13: 35). Paul explains further, 'You are loved by God; he loved you and chose you for his own. Therefore, you must put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Be helpful to one another, and forgive one another as the Lord forgives you' (Colossians 3: 12, 13, TEV).

(c) *The outreaching fellowship*. The church sometimes makes the mistake of hiding away from the world, in order to

its power, its customs, or its purity, for fear of being 'contaminated'. The church sometimes adopts a particular discipline as a sort of 'wall' to defend itself from the world.

We know there are real dangers and problems for Christians in mixing with 'the world', including the Muslim world (see Appendix III.) Nevertheless, the church must reach out in service and in witness. Jesus said, 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28: 19). He said, 'I do not pray that you should take them (the disciples) out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one . . . As the Father has sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world' (John 17: 15-19).

3. Helping the enquirer

(a) *Build bridges of love.* Try to break down the feelings of hostility between Muslims and Christians as two hostile communities separated in dress, custom and place of residence. Remember the advice of sections (a) and (b) on p. 14.

First, this is the way to 'love our neighbour'. Secondly, in this way the Muslims will come to respect some Christians as friendly and godly people. Then they will more readily be tolerant towards any Muslim who shows interest in the Christian faith.

(b) *Emphasize sincerity.* Let devout Muslims know that even though you do not share their belief, you respect their sincerity. Discuss with them the fact that God is not pleased with people who profess a religion insincerely. This leads to the following thought: if we compel a person to profess what he does not really believe, we are forcing him to be insincerely or hypocritically. There should not be any coercion in religion.

Also, to your enquirer, emphasize sincerity. Let him know that you are not trying to get converts at any price. You are presenting the Gospel in the hope that people will freely and sincerely put their trust in Christ.

(c) *Love the enquirer.* Inspire the church to love the enquirer well. The Bishop of the Anglican Church in Iran

himself from a Muslim family, says, 'Most of those who know who have followed Christ have done so because of a sacrificial life and sustained love of some Christian. To love means:

Understand him: 'Put yourself in his shoes'. The way his Muslim community may be putting pressure on him. Do not expect him to be a perfect Christian right away.

Pray for him: and pray with him. Visit him and give him a warm welcome to your homes as well as to your churches. If church services are not held in his language, try to form a group (however small) worshipping in his language.

Help him: but help him in such a way that you do not lose his independence. If he has lost his job or property because of his conversion, help him to become self-reliant. In many cases it is better for him not to get a job with you. This can be a strain on him, and can make other Muslims doubt his only professed conversion to get the job.

If he is employed by the church or mission, let it be work that gives him as much responsibility and respect as possible. All matters should be handled in close consultation with other Christians, and not by a pastor or missionary only.

(d) *Teach the enquirer.* Help him to understand the Christian belief and practice, not only for his own sake, but to be able to answer questions and criticisms from other Muslims. This can be done through the teaching of this book, especially the section 'Discussion with a Muslim friend' in Lessons 4 to 6. Emphasize the place of fellowship in Christian faith (section 6). Tell him the church is made up of 'pardoned sinners' and not of 'perfect saints'. This will encourage him to feel welcome and will warn him not to be too disappointed at the church. Prepare him to witness and to face possible opposition. (Matthew 5: 11, 12; Mark 8: 31-38; 1 Peter 2: 12)

ABOUT BAPTISM AND PROFESSION OF FAITH

Both the enquirer and his Christian friends must

seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit about the time for profession of faith and baptism.

It is a normal and needful part of the Christian to declare one's faith and to be baptized. The 'secret believer' who tells no one of his faith is missing some of the riches of the Christian life. The believer who professes faith without being baptized is in a happier position, still misses a very great blessing.

I. Practical difficulties

Nevertheless we have to look sympathetically at the practical difficulties.

(a) Generally it would be wrong to baptize a minor without the consent of his parents. Decision as to the age of maturity when the youth can act independently depends on the customs of your society.

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

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

On the other hand, it is understandable if such a man wishes to become well grounded in his faith and Bible knowledge before he exposes himself to the criticism and persecution of his fellows. It is understandable if he wishes to become financially independent first. It may also be wise to postpone his baptism for a year or two; he can go on working in his Muslim society instead of being at once converted; thus he might win his family and some age-mates to be baptized in a group. Or at the least the Muslims might be more tolerant of his conversion.

Nevertheless, there is a tremendous danger of postponement. Cut off from fellowship and means without the challenge of witnessing, the man's faith will dim. After a certain point it is usually better to be baptized and join the church, even if this means being cut off from his Muslim society. We must pray for the Holy Spirit to indicate to the man himself what the right time is. Christians must surround the enquirer with Christian fellowship both before and after his open confession and baptism. At his baptism, there should be at least one sponsor who takes special responsibility to guide and encourage him.

2. Church regulations

(a) A different difficulty is where the Muslim converts desire baptism, but church regulations do not allow it.

Some churches have regulations that a convert must attend classes for a long period, perhaps two years, before being baptized, and a further period of classes before being admitted to the Lord's Supper. Sometimes the convert is refused baptism until he learns to read.

The intention is to guard against the indiscriminate baptism of people who do not really know what Christianity is. But such regulations are often inappropriate in the case of a convert from Islam, and in some cases a Muslim convert to Christ should be given baptism very early in his life.

Imagine a Muslim who has been reading the Bible for some period and at last decides to stand for Christ in sincerity. His sincerity is undoubted and he is prepared to be cut off from his Muslim community. To tell him that he must attend some years of baptismal classes would be a discouragement to him. It would also seem to be a misunderstanding of the meaning of baptism. Baptism is not a sign that one is a 'perfect saint'. Rather, it is a sign that one is a 'pardoned sinner' who has *begun* a new life in Christian fellowship.

(b) A much more difficult issue is when a Muslim more than one wife comes to faith in Christ. Should he give up all but one wife away in order to be baptized? Or should he be baptized without baptism and the Lord's Supper, in order to keep his wives? Or (in this special case where a man was a polygamist before he came to Christ) should the church give him baptism?

On the one hand it is important to maintain the sanctity of Christian marriage; on the other hand it is important to provide the means of grace to the new believer. We advise that churches should honour whatever regulations your church has. But it is not wrong for a church to seek fresh guidance in its regulations, prayerfully, in the light of Christ and of changing circumstances.

PRAYER

O God, pour out Thy blessing on the peoples of the world. Grant that these, who always proclaim Thy greatness, may know the greatness of Thy love revealed in Jesus Christ. Forgive us that so little of Thy love has reached the Muslim world through us.

Take away from us our pride and our coldness.

Help us to understand them; help them to understand the Gospel.

And if any of us should suffer at the hands of Muslim persecutors, help us to overcome evil with good.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Appendix I

BOOKS TO READ

For further study of Islam, read:

Islam and Christianity, 90 Questions and Answers, by Ahmad Raza Khan, Raza Library, 100, ul-Masih; Daystar Press, P.O. Box 1261, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Notes on Islam (with Correspondence Columns), by VanGerpen; SIM, P.M. Bag 9, Jos, Nigeria.

Islam, by J. A. Williams; Washington Square Press, New York (an anthology of Muslim writings).

Cardinal Principles of Islam, by Rahman Ali; Islamic Publications Bureau, Box 3881, Lagos, Nigeria.

For a Qur'an translation, buy either:

Meaning of the Glorious Koran, by Pickthall; Penguin paperback, New York, or *The Qur'an Interpreted*, by M. M. Ali; UP (World's Classics).

For further study of the Christian witness, read:
Explaining the Gospel to Muslims, by J. Cross; Cross-Cultural Press, London.

Questions Muslims Ask, from Box 143, Tema, Ghana; Cross-Cultural Press, 4045, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Design of My World, by Dehqani-Tafti; Lutetia Press, London.

Christianity Explained to Muslims, by L. B. Meyer; Christian Mission Press, Calcutta, India.

These books are fairly simple, cheap, and widely available in Africa. If you cannot get them locally, write to The Director, P.O. Box 4045, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Appendix II

AN OUTLINE OF ISLAM

'Islam' means 'submission to the will of God'. A Muslim is one who submits to God. So in a sense, all the Prophets proclaiming one God, and their followers, have been Muslims. But in everyday speech, a Muslim means one who submits to the will of God *as revealed in the Qur'ān*, and who regards Muhammad as the Messenger of God.

Muhammad was born at Mecca about AD 570. In this Arabia the great majority were idolators. However, there were some Jews and Christians, and even the idolators believed in a supreme God, Allāh. From about AD 610 Muhammad began to receive (as he believed) revelations sent down from God through the angel Gabriel. These revelations continued from time to time for the next twenty-two years, and were eventually gathered together to form the Qur'ān. Muhammad began to preach that man must give thanks to Allāh for all things, worship nothing beside Him, and do good in preparation for the last judgment.

A small community of believers was gathered, but they were persecuted by the Meccans. So in AD 622 Muhammad and his followers emigrated to Medina. Here he was no longer of a religious minority, but the ruler of a city. His revelations now laid down rules for the whole life of the community, not only its religious ritual, but also the laws of commerce and warfare, the administration of justice, and the rules of courtesy.

More and more Arabian tribes accepted Islam as

and Muhammad as ruler, until in AD 630 even
submitted. In AD 632 Muhammad led the p
Mecca, preached his 'farewell sermon', and died

Islam spread rapidly. Within 100 years of M
death the whole of North Africa was under Muslim
present day about one seventh of the world's po
Muslims, probably some 550 million people. A q
world's Muslims live in Africa. Muslims in Af
Sahara probably total 70 millions.

The following extracts from Muslim writings
idea of Islamic belief and practice:

The pillars of Muslim practice

'The Messenger of God (blessing and peace upo
"Islam is built upon five pillars:

- (1) the SHAHĀDA – bearing witness that the
but Allāh and that Muhammad is the Messenge
- (2) SALĀT – performing the ritual prayer;
- (3) ZAKĀT – paying the ritual alms;
- (4) SAWM – the fast in Ramadan; and
- (5) HAJJ – pilgrimage to the House (Ka'ba)
an perform it." '

The articles of Muslim belief

- (1) In Allāh
- (2) and in His angels
- (3) and in His Scriptures
- (4) and in His Messengers
- (5) and in the Day of Resurrection
- (6) and in Destiny, and the decreeing of its
evil by Allāh Most High.

Muslim morality

Some of the early Muslims fled to Ethiopia
Christian king treated them kindly. This is h
plained Islam to him:

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

'He forbade us to commit abominations or tell lies, not to devour the property of orphans or to slander chaste women. He commanded us to worship Allāh alone and not to associate anything with Him and he gave us orders about prayer, almsgiving and fasting. So we trusted him, believed in him and followed that which he brought from Allāh.

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

Muslim Prayer

The opening chapter of the Qur'ān (the Fātiha, recited at every Prayer time):

'Praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds,
The Beneficent, the Merciful,
Master of the Day of Judgment,
Thee alone we worship; Thee alone we ask for help;
Guide us in the straight path,
The path of those whom Thou hast favoured;
Not the path of those with whom Thou art angry
nor the path of those who go astray.'

The closing verses of chapter two of the Qur'ān:

'Unto God belongs whatever is in heaven and whatever is on earth. Whether you make known what is in your minds or conceal it, God will bring you to account for it. He forgives whomever He wills.'

will and punishes whom He will. God is powerful in all things. . . .

'God does not impose upon a soul more than its credit is what it has earned, and against it deserved. Our Lord, condemn us not if we forget our mark. Our Lord, lay not on us such a burden as thou lay on those before us. Our Lord, do not burden us if we have not strength to bear, but pardon us and have mercy on us. Thou art our Protector and our Victory over the unbelievers.'

Appendix III

HOW TO LOVE WITHOUT COMPROMISE

'All things to all men'

Paul wrote that he became all things to all men, to the Jews, as a Gentile to the Gentiles, in order to bring about their salvation.

In what sense can a Christian become 'as a Muslim Muslims'? It does not mean you disguise yourself and pass to be a Muslim; that would be dishonesty. But you should show a humble and loving spirit. For example, as a Christian you do not observe the Muslim fast, but if you were visiting a Muslim household during the hours of fasting, you would ask for food and drink. Even in your own house, you would avoid eating and drinking in the presence of a visitor who is fasting. Again you would not urinate standing up, while in the presence of Muslims. Muslims regard this as an unhygienic practice. They squat to urinate. Think of other examples.

Where to draw the line

Sometimes it is not easy to draw the line between love and compromise. We are going now to discuss some practical problems. The answers may be different according to the situation where you live and so this book can only give some hints. We leave you, together with your Christian neighbours, to seek the further guidance of the Holy Spirit.

1. Marriage between Muslims and Christians

In some areas, a man may show his friendship by giving his daughter in marriage to his friend. In some other areas, young people are increasingly deciding for themselves to marry. Young Muslims and Christians naturally meet and are attracted to one another.

We are asking Christians to show love to the Muslims. Does this mean that it is all right for Christians to marry Muslims?

Hints:

(a) Let us be clear about the Muslim law of marriage. Muslim law *permits* a man to have up to four wives at the same time, although it does not compel him to have more than one. According to hadith (tradition) Muhammad considered polygamy as most hateful to God, but in fact Muslim law

it easy for a man to divorce a wife (and hard for a woman to divorce a husband). The Muslim form of marriage does not prescribe a life-long union.

(b) In this modern age many Muslims have turned to the Christian outlook on marriage and family. In the Muslim world outside Africa polygamy is still common. A great majority of Muslim women are no longer secluded. But in many parts of Africa these customs are still prevalent and there is still a big gap between the Muslim and Christian conceptions of marriage, family life and the status of women.

If a Christian girl is given in marriage to a Muslim in these areas, it is likely she will sooner or later become secluded to a lower status than Christian women. She will perhaps be secluded or easily divorced. If so, her parent cannot be happy about such a marriage.

(c) More seriously still, will the Christian girl be able to keep his/her faith? Muslim parents may encourage a Muslim to take a Christian wife and he need not convert to Islam (though the children will be brought up as Muslims). But in many areas it is likely that pressure will be put on her to make her become a Muslim. Are we content for a Christian girl who has trusted in God as Father and in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, to enter a marriage where she will be required to renounce this faith?

(d) It seems that we must 'draw the line' between friendship with Muslims and marriage. In our Christian friendship with Muslims we must tell them kindly that Christ is so precious to us, we could not marry our children into a home where Christ is not known as Lord.

(e) Where young people follow their own choice, we cannot expect them to give blind obedience to their parents who say, 'Don't marry a Muslim'. Rather we must give them study and education to make clear the facts of Islam and Christian faith and the Muslim and Christian views of marriage. We must lead our Christian young people to their personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. If they will want to marry someone who shares

and if they happen to be attracted to a Muslim friend, will surely try to lead the friend to Christ.

2. Meat of the Bairam Festival (also called 'Īd-ul Kāfir', 'Īd-ul Ad-hā, Tabaski, Layya or Ileya)

If Muslims invite Christians to eat their meat at this festival, should the Christians eat it? If we eat it, will it be a compromise of our faith? If we refuse to eat it, will the Muslim be offended and believe that we have no love for him?

Hints (read first Romans 14: 1-23 and 1 Corinthians 8: 1-13):

(a) At present there is a difference of opinion among Christians on this issue. Perhaps what is right in one situation is not right in another. Let Christians not judge one another, but each one seek God's guidance. (See Romans 14: 3-4)

(b) To the strong Christian, meat in itself is just food, and it makes no difference to us what has been done to it, provided it is hygienically clean. (See Romans 14: 14, 15; 1 Corinthians 8: 4, 8.)

(c) 'Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak' (1 Corinthians 8: 9). 'All things are indeed clean, but it is wrong for any one to cause others fall by what he eats' (Romans 14: 20).

(d) So we must ask, in each situation, 'What impression will be made on the weaker Christian by my eating, or not eating?' Let us add, 'What impression will be made on the Muslim?'

Is the meat regarded merely as a sort of social feasting offered in simple generosity? If so, it may be that Christians are right to partake of it.

Or is it (in your area) regarded as a participation in the Muslim faith? *Is the shedding of the animal's blood regarded (in your area) as a kind of atonement for sins, or as a protection against evil powers? If so, the Christian probably refuse it. He believes that Christ shed His blood once for all, for the sins of the world, and he fears to g*

impression that he is seeking any other s
Christ's.

(e) If a Christian does decide to refuse, h
with love, politely, and with apology. Expla
so that the Muslim will not be embarrassed b
Show love in every other way and accept any a

If the Christian does refuse politely, the M
not take offence. We do not ask him to eat our
we know it will offend his conscience. We can
also to respect our conscience.

3. Eating together

If you want to draw near to Muslims in love, y
eat together sometimes. But will the Muslim
In some places Muslims refuse to eat the m
slaughtered by Christians, and the custom ha
Christians always calling a Muslim to slaughter
Then Christians begin to ask, 'Is Islam the sup
when only a Muslim can kill animals?'

Hints:

(a) Wherever Muslims are numerous it is li
sold in the market will be slaughtered by Mu
We do not object to that.

(b) But what of meat that a Christian has s
his own private use? It seems that Muslims wh
it are acting on prejudice and not according to
For the Qur'an (5, 5 or 7) says, 'the food of the
Book (Jews and Christians) is lawful for you
is lawful for them'. Mālikī law, which gove
conduct in West Africa, teaches that Muslims
killed by Christians, provided that the name of
over it, and it is properly slaughtered by cutt
so that all the blood runs out (but not cutting th

It is good for a Christian who may have L
to observe these rules in slaughtering his ow

we may respectfully ask Muslims to put away their prejudice against eating with us.

(c) Of course you will not ask a Muslim to eat or drink what is prohibited to him, such as pork or intoxicating drinks, and you will not invite him to eat or drink when he is fasting.

4. Spending money

In many areas, it is the custom to show friendship by entertaining, and by exchanging gifts at ceremonies. Sometimes this is done in an extravagant way and people get into debt in order to make a big show of their generosity.

Hints:

(a) The Christian is taught to avoid debt and to be a steward of his possessions. He should use them for the Lord's work and for good purposes, such as decent clothes and nutritious food for all members of the family, and education for children. The Christian should not neglect these for the sake of a show of generosity. How then can we demonstrate friendship to Muslims?

(b) The Bible teaches, 'As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith' (Galatians 6: 10).

We have a special duty to help fellow-Christians, but our well-doing should not be to Christians only. Let us include *some* Muslims in our generosity; but keep your entertainment to what you can really afford. If you can only afford to meet on friendly terms with one or two Muslims, do not be ashamed. Pray earnestly to God to bless those friendships so that the light of Christ will shine through you.

5. Praying together?

If we draw near to Muslims in friendship, we shall of course respect their religious devotion and their search after truth. But can we pray together with them? Again, the answer is different in different situations, and we give only some hints

Hints:

(a) It is not possible for Christians to join in and words of Muslim Salāt (Ritual Prayer and First, we do not know how to do it. Secondly, prayer seem directly opposed to Christian faith. Muslims frequently recite the chapter of the says 'God has no Son', and they understand the diction of the Christian's faith in Christ. A C join in and say amen.

(b) Sometimes at national or social ceremonies and Christian leaders are asked to offer prayers. Listen reverently to the Muslim prayers, but do not to copy any actions. The Christian prayers should be in language which the Muslim is likely to appreciate.

(c) Sometimes Muslims and Christians may have a friendly discussion of the two religions. It is best to pray for God's guidance at such a meeting. It is best to stand for silent prayer at the beginning of the meeting.

6. Muslim amulets and drinking 'Quranic

The wearing of amulets and the drinking of ink from Qur'an-boards are very common practices in Islam, as also is divination. But these practices are nowhere mentioned in the Qur'an, and some Muslims are strongly opposed to them.

The Christian knows that nothing can separate him from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ. He believes that God is sufficient for all things and so he has no need of amulets or divination.

We may have 'reminders', such as Scripture on the walls to remind us to trust in God; *but our trust is in God and not in the magic power of the writing!* It is a sign of weak faith if Christians seek amulets or divination from the Muslims. (See Lesson 10)

This book has been written to help the ordinary Christian to know how to behave towards his Muslim neighbours and how to witness to Jesus Christ among them. For many Christians who need help in the face of Islam this book offers an approach that has already proved its value in various parts of Africa.

It assumes that Christians should seek to understand, fairly and objectively, what Muslims believe and practise. It urges that Christians should have the greatest possible respect and sympathy towards Muslims as persons and seekers after God; but stresses that all men, no matter how devout and good, need the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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