

KINSMEN of ABRAHAM

Fourth Edition



Understanding Islam

By Rafique

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The Historical Background of Islam	2
The Prophet of Islam	4
The Teachings and Practices of Islam	8
A. The Teachings of Islam	8
1. God (Allah)	8
2. The Lord Jesus Christ	9
3. The Holy Bible	11
4. Judgment and the Future State	12
5. Mohammed	13
B. The Practices of Islam	13
1. Belief	13
2. Religious Practice	13
The Spread of Islam	19
The Arab Muslim World (Charts)	24
The Challenge of Islam	26
A. Radio Broadcasts	26
B. Correspondence and Literature	29
C. Personal Contacts	31
D. Golden Rules	32
E. Ways to Help	33
Helpful Sources of Information	35
Epilogue	36

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Fourth Edition, 2003

Kinsmen of Abraham

INTRODUCTION

Strange and sad as it may seem, it is nevertheless true that the majority of Abraham's kinsmen are not Christians. In fact, they are not even nominal Christians. They hold a religion which at first glance appears to be similar to Christianity, but in reality is the farthest from it and most vehemently opposed to its cardinal teachings. This is the religion of Islam, whose adherents (called "Muslims") now extend from China in the east to North America in the west, and from Russia in the north to the tip of Africa in the south.

Islam is the only religion permitted to be practiced in some African and Asian countries, and the second most widespread religion in France, Belgium, Holland, and England. Magnificent mosques with their tall minarets are now found in practically all the large cities of the so-called "Christian" world.

A few decades ago the Western world gave little or no thought to the Muslim countries. Today the Muslims are among the key figures politically and economically.

What is Islam, and how did it begin and spread? From where did its prophet get his information? What is our responsibility towards the Muslims, and how can we help to discharge it? As followers of Christ, we cannot ignore or feel indifferently about these important questions.

This booklet is intended to be a simple, brief presentation for those who know little or nothing about Abraham's kinsmen. Included at the end is a list of helpful sources of information recommended for those who wish to pursue this subject further.

Yours by His grace,
Rafique

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ISLAM

Mohammed, the prophet of Islam, was born about 570 A D. on the Arabian Peninsula in the present country of Saudi Arabia at Mecca, a city some forty miles (sixty kilometers) east of the Red Sea port of Jeddah. At that time Mecca was a trade center which sent caravans to the neighboring countries, one of which was Syria to the north.

Mecca itself was in a bare and dry area, whose heat in the daytime was unbearable. There was a great contrast between the two classes of people inhabiting Mecca. One either belonged to upper-class Mecca and lived comfortably, maybe even luxuriously, or one was so poor that he could die of hunger. Many of the poor committed suicide in order to avoid the agonies of death from hunger.

We must not think that the people of Mecca were all ignorant, illiterate Bedouins—far from it. Mecca had a literary center (the Okaz Fair) where poets gathered to recite their beautiful poems and exchange information. The Arabic poetry of the pre-Islamic era is among the best ever written. The writings of Ali Ibn Abu Taleb, Mohammed's first cousin (in whose father's home Mohammed grew up as an orphan, and who later became Mohammed's son-in-law, and later still became the fourth caliph, i.e. Mohammed's successor) are an example of the high literary quality of that era.

Mecca was also the religious capital of Mohammed's people. His tribe, the Quraish, was the ruling tribe and the most influential economically, politically, culturally, and religiously. The existing religions of Mecca had a significant influence in shaping Mohammed's thinking. Both Acts 2 in the Bible and also secular history tell us that there were Jews in Arabia at that time. Although their main interest was in commerce, they often had religious discussions with the native people, who considered the Jews to be their cousins.

There were also some Christians of the Ebionite sect. The Ebionite teachings denied the deity of Christ and His sacrificial death, but admitted His virgin birth and His sinless life.

They relied upon "the Gospel according to the Hebrews," which is a corruption of the Gospel of Matthew from which they removed many portions and added some of their own views. They also quoted portions from the Pentateuch. Their religion emphasized fasting, prayers, and almsgiving. They strongly denounced polytheism or any semblance of it.

Some of Mohammed's relatives were among these Ebionite Christians who, though they were pious and devoted, were heretics doctrinally. Mohammed spent many hours and days in religious devotions with them in the cave of Harraa. Today some Muslims deny these facts concerning Mohammed's relatives, even though they are recorded by several of their own early historians. At any rate, this information should not be used in a discussion with Muslims, as it will close the door of communication with them.

Another small heretical group, known as the Miriamites, claimed that the Trinity consisted of the Father (*Allah*), the Mother (Mary), and the Son (Jesus). Mohammed must have known that Christians did not believe in such a Trinity, as he was acquainted with many pastors and priests in Syria. Later, however, when many Christians refused to follow him, he accused them of this blasphemy.

Besides these minority groups, many Arabs acknowledged the existence of the true God, *Allah*, but worshiped many lesser deities. Multitudes of these idol worshippers came to Mecca to visit the venerated shrine Al Kaaba.

In neighboring countries at that time, Christianity was deteriorating. Sects such as the Nestorians appeared and were not resisted. Quibbling and even dissension were prevailing and veneration of relics and images had almost replaced the original true and pure worship by the power of the Holy Spirit.

These factors, as well as many others which will be considered in the next chapter, had great effect on the Arabian orphan who became the founder of Islam, namely Mohammed *Ibn* (son of) Abdullah, Ibn Abdel Muttaleb, Ibn Hashem, Ibn Abd Manaf, Ibn Qosay—Qosay being the father of the tribe of Quraish, the ruling tribe of Arabia.

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM: MOHAMMED IBN ABDULLAH

Mohammed the son of Abdullah was born in Mecca around 570 A D. His father's name indicated clearly that the worship of Allah was well-known in Arabia before Mohammed was even born, for *Abdullah* means "servant of *Allah*." Mohammed's father died before he was born, and his mother Amina died when he was six years of age. He was left as an orphan under the care of his grandfather, Abdel Muttaleb, who is said to have been an intimate friend and a distant cousin of an Ebionite Christian pastor, Waraqa Ibn Naufal. Mohammed later spent many hours with Waraqa in the cave of Harraa in prayers, meditation, and religious devotions. The woman who nursed the little orphan is said to also have been an Ebionite Christian.

When he was about eight years of age, Mohammed's grandfather died. and his uncle Abu Taleb took care of him. Abu Taleb was a kind man who cared for his brother's son and treated him affectionately. But he had more children and less money than some of Mohammed's other uncles, one of whom was quite wealthy. Mohammed hated his rich uncle Abu Lahab, and the Quran contains verses which condemn him.

When Mohammed was only thirteen years old, Abu Taleb suggested to his nephew that he begin traveling with some of the caravans in order to earn some income. As a result, Mohammed experienced the hardships of desert life: long hours of traveling—sometimes on foot, other times on camels—the severe heat in the daytime, and the chilling cold at night. Undoubtedly he wondered what it would have been like had his father not died. Could he have become the head of the Quraish, and the most prominent figure in Mecca?

As a result of his travels, he came in contact with many Christian priests and monks. One of them, treated him for an eye ailment. He learned much from them about Christian teachings. This influenced some of his own teachings, and in the earlier period of his claimed apostleship caused him to be

kind towards Christians, especially priests and monks. Some of the quranic verses clearly show the regard he had for Christians. This attitude, however, was later greatly reversed.

Another significant result of Mohammed's travels was that he saw life outside the Arabian Peninsula. He saw rich fields and green meadows, gardens and rivers, and he contrasted these with the life of the poor of Mecca, who often buried their children alive to spare them the agonies of dying of hunger.¹

When Mohammed was a young man in his early twenties, a sudden unexpected change in his circumstances took place. He was admired by one of the wealthiest and most influential women in Mecca, a woman for whom he had worked, and she desired him for a husband. She had been widowed twice and had many children, and she was at that time about forty years of age. This woman was Khadija, a distant cousin of Mohammed's as well as a first cousin of the Ebionite Christian pastor Waraqa who used to fast and pray with Mohammed's uncle and grandfather.

By means of this marriage, Mohammed became a respected member of the upper class of Mecca. Suddenly the poor orphan had become a rich man. He continued to travel and to manage Khadija's immense wealth. He also associated a great deal with the Ebionite pastor Waraqa, who taught him about religion. As would be expected, he emphasized to him the need for religious zeal and fasting, and charity to the poor. Doctrinally, he was monotheistic, but he denied the teachings of the deity and sacrificial death of Christ.

One day when Mohammed was about forty years of age, he was worshipping in the cave of Harraa, when he had an experience which puzzled and confused him. He was not sure whether it was a demon or an angel who had spoken to him, but Khadija assured him that it was the angel Gabriel. Pastor Waraqa told Khadija that God, who had called Moses before, was now calling Mohammed to be His spokesman. Since Waraqa was close to one hundred years old at this time, he was probably anxious to find a successor.

It is said that at first Mohammed was quite frightened by these encounters, so that he sought help. But more and more

Khadija and heretical Christians, especially Waraqa, encouraged him and convinced him that God had a special mission for him. They said he was going to unite all the Arabs as well as the Christians and Jews into one monotheistic faith, the faith of Abraham.

The fear Mohammed had was, no doubt, from an awareness that there was a power greater than himself behind these strange occurrences. Yet at the same time he saw an opportunity to fulfill his dream of rallying the Arabs around himself and of becoming a religious leader who would introduce justice and a measure of equality to their lives.

At one time Mohammed felt his mission would fail and considered giving it up.² But finally when he did not succeed in Mecca, he went to Medina, where he met with more success. Later, when he returned to Mecca, more and more tribes rallied around him.

During his last twenty years he gave his people the Quran as well as his other utterances, which are called *Al Hadeeth*, and are authoritative in all legal matters. Once he claimed to have been miraculously transported at night from the mosque at Medina to the mosque at Jerusalem (*Al Quds*) on the back of a white horse (*Al Barraq*—glistening or lightning) and then taken to paradise, where he saw Abraham, Moses, *Isa* (our Lord Jesus Christ), and others. There, Moses advised him and helped him to petition Allah to reduce the required number of prayers from fifty to five a day.

Mohammed died (some claim he was poisoned) about the year 632 at the age of 62. Before his death, Islam had become the religion of the Arabs. He was asked on his deathbed about a few who did not accept Islam. His reply was that they either become Muslims, leave Arabia, or be killed: "There is no room for two religions in the island of the Arabs!" Mohammed had no mercy on anyone who embraced Islam and then returned to his previous religion. And Islam still does not.

Many of the early quranic verses condemned the rich, but later this criticism was watered down, probably to accommodate Mohammed's many wealthy supporters. His earlier attitude toward the rich had angered many of the influential

people of Mecca. However, some of the most influential men joined him, such as Abu Bakr and Omar Ibn Al Khattab, who became caliphs after Mohammed's death.

Between age forty—when he made his claim of being the apostle of Allah and the last and greatest of His prophets—and the time of his death at age sixty-two, he had married many wives and concubines (some proudly claim more than ninety).³ He also fought several battles and gained great spoil, most of which he gave to his followers as rewards for obeying him. He is also reputed to have given much to the poor.

Historians have a great deal more to say about Mohammed. The interested reader can find much information in other works on this subject. As to his moral character, when asked about what he liked most in this life, Mohammed is reported to have said: "Three things appeal to me most in your world: perfumes, women, and the joy of prayer."

¹ Burying female newborn babies alive (*waad al banat*) was common in pre-Islamic Arabia, but Islam abolished that practice.

² Early Muslim historians record that Mohammed at one time included in the Quran veneration of three pagan Arabian gods (*Al-Lat*, *Al-Uzza* and *Manat*) after verses 19 and 20 of Sura 53. However, he later claimed that the angel *Jabril* (Gabriel) told him that these verses were from Satan. This is the basis of Salman Rushdie's ***The Satanic Verses***, a blasphemous book which Christians cannot condone. The incident of the "satanic verses," however, is a fact, though most Muslims are unaware of it.

³ Mohammed did not marry other wives during the life of Khadija, his first wife who elevated him in society. After her death, however, he married at least 12 wives—almost a new wife every year. The others were concubines.

THE TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES OF ISLAM

A. The Teachings of Islam

The two sources of the teachings of Islam are The Quran and The Tradition (*Al Hadeeth*—the sayings). Muslims seldom pronounce these words without adding an adjective. Thus they say, “*Al Quran al kareem*,” meaning the honored Quran, and “*Al Hadeeth al shareef*,” meaning the noble sayings (of Mohammed). Both sources are considered to be infallible. However, there are important differences between the two.

The Quran, they affirm, was written in heaven on plates before creation. It was given to Mohammed at intervals, and his own will or consciousness had nothing to do with it. He was only a tool. The Quran contains many Old Testament stories, but often in a very warped form. Although after the death of Mohammed there was some disagreement as to what was genuinely part of the Quran and what was not, this was soon settled by the Caliph Othman (the third Caliph) and his sword. Aisha, Mohammed’s wife and the daughter of Abu Bakr (the first Caliph), revealed that they threatened to kill those who quoted certain verses which she had heard her deceased husband assert were quranic verses.

These arguments have been put to rest, and there is now, for all practical purposes, a universally accepted Quran among Muslims. Such, however, is not the case with the tradition. There is still much disagreement as to what is genuine Hadeeth and what is not. This is one of the matters of contention between the Sunnis and the Shiites.

It is important to remember that Islam does not only consist of religious teachings on spiritual matters, but includes many social and legal matters, such as penalties for certain crimes. laws of inheritance, matters of marriage and divorce, as well as many other issues. In this booklet only the main religious teachings of Islam that one needs to know in order to gain rapport with a Muslim will be considered.

1. God (*Allah*). Islam emphasizes that there is only one God. *Allah* is the Arabic word for God and is similar to the

Hebrew *El* and *Elohim*. It is a common mistake among Westerners to say that Muslims worship *Allah* and Christians worship God. *Allah* is God, and the Arabic-speaking Christians address God as *Allah*. Muslims commonly state that God has ninety-nine names. These are adjectives describing His attributes, such as “the Merciful,” “the Powerful,” “the Rich,” “the Revenger,” etc. Although they are basically sound in this matter, those descriptions of Allah are deficient. They do not realize that God is love, nor do they know Him as the Father of true believers; and of course, they do not know Him as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is viewed as being at a distance from man, a despot who may or may not decide to show mercy to man, in the same way man might decide whether to have pity on an insignificant animal or to let it die. Yet it must be emphasized that Muslims speak very reverently of Allah, the only true and living God, the God of Abraham and of Ishmael and Isaac and their descendants.

It should be remembered, as we have previously mentioned, that the Arabs worshiped Allah long before Mohammed’s time. The name of Mohammed’s father, Abdullah, is one proof of that. *Abdullah* means “servant of God.” It is the title James uses for himself in opening his epistle, saying, “James, a servant of God” (*Yacoub Abdullah*). Many pre-Islamic poems also speak of Allah as the only God (*Elah*). However, before Mohammed’s time they worshiped other gods along with the one true God, Allah. This polytheism is mainly what Mohammed at first fought against, being encouraged in this by some Christians of the Nestorian and Ebionite sects.

2. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh, is referred to by Muslims as *Isa* (pronounced “Eesa”), the son of Miriam. While the Arabic-speaking Christians call God *Allah*, they never call Jesus *Isa*. They call Him *Yasoo*, meaning “Jehovah the Savior.” Recently, some evangelists have used the name *Isa* in speaking to Muslim Arabs, but in my opinion this should be avoided.

Muslims believe that Jesus was a man, a good prophet, but they strongly denounce the doctrine of Christ’s deity. They consider such teaching to be blasphemy and a form of poly-

theism. Furthermore, they consider it an insult to God to speak of Him as having a son, as though He must have had a wife. It is interesting to note, however, that Muslims do teach that Christ was born of a virgin. The Quran presents this fact very clearly.

It is important to realize that these views of Christ did not originate with Islam, but were actually the teachings of the heretical Christian sects in the Middle East, such as the Ebionites with whom Mohammed and his uncle and grandfather had close contacts. It should also be mentioned that these people were not known as Christians, but as *Nasara* (taken from "Nazarenes"). Thus, the Muslims are technically correct in denying that Mohammed got his information from Christians, or that there were Christians in Mecca at that time, since there only existed this sect with a corrupt form of the Gospel of Matthew known as "the Gospel according to the Hebrews." For this reason, one does not find any reference in Islam to the writings of Paul, Peter, or John. Some of the early fathers have written condemning this heretical "gospel." There were, however, some Christians in Arabia and the neighboring areas whom Mohammed knew, and with whose basically sounder teachings he was familiar.

Mohammed spoke very highly of Christ, and mentioned in the Hadeeth that He was the only man who never sinned. It is certainly interesting to note that this fact has been the consistent testimony of Christ's enemies: the Jews, Pontius Pilate, and Mohammed Ibn Abdullah.

The Quran also admits that Christ performed more miracles than anyone else, that He raised the dead, and knew the thoughts of men. Mohammed never made similar claims for himself. Another interesting fact about Christ recognized in Islam is that He is alive and will come again to this earth. The Quran denies, however, that Christ died on the cross, claiming that the Jews crucified someone else, thinking he was Christ.⁴

To the Muslims it is unthinkable that God would permit the Jews to kill such a good prophet. A recent Muslim writer mocked Christians for protecting or defending the Jews of

Israel, stating that Christians are abnormal since they love those who insulted and killed their god. Muslims are also disgusted by the Christian teaching about the cross. Thus they too, like their cousins the Jews, “stumbled at that stumbling stone” (Rom. 9:32).

In summary then, the Muslims believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, performed many outstanding miracles, is alive in heaven, and will come again to the earth to kill the deceiver, the Antichrist, and force all mankind to become Muslim; then he will die and rise again.

The Arabic word for the Christ is *Al Maseeh* (the Messiah). They often refer to Him as *Sayyedna Al Maseeh* (our Master the Christ). This is the title often used in speaking about Him with a Muslim. A quranic verse describes *Al Maseeh* (Christ) as a “word of God” and as “His Spirit.” Although the Quran does not elaborate on these titles, they are helpful in initiating a discussion with a Muslim concerning the Person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

3. The Holy Bible. The Quran refers to the Bible as “The Book,” and calls the Jews and the Christians “The People of the Book.” It admits that the Bible was given by God. The references in the Quran speak mostly of the books of Moses (called *Al Torah*), the Psalms (called *Al Zaboor*), and the gospels (called *Al Injil*—from evangel). The Quran approved of reading the Bible, and in fact told Mohammed that if he were in doubt as to what was given him (i.e. the Quran), he should check it in the Book (i.e. the Bible)! This, of course, caused serious problems later on when many contradictions were found between the new religion and biblical teachings. Muslim expositors then claimed that the Bible has been completely corrupted and is not trustworthy. They add that it is not needed anyway since they now have the Quran. A quranic verse is quoted which they claim indicates that the Bible has been changed. That verse, however, could only mean that some (Jews) misinterpreted, misquoted, or quoted out of context what the Scriptures said.

Many Muslim interpreters find this whole subject very embarrassing, for if the Bible was changed, the question that

naturally follows is: When? If it had been changed before the Quran was given, why did the Quran endorse it? On the other hand, if the Bible is supposed to have been changed later on, meaning after the seventh century when the Quran was given, this argument fails since there are copies of the Bible available from much earlier time periods, such as: 1) the **Codex Vaticanus** in the Vatican Library which dates back to the early part of the fourth century; 2) the **Codex Sinaiticus** which dates back also to the early part of the fourth century and is now in the British Museum; 3) the **Codex Alexandrinus** which dates back to the fifth century and is also in the British Museum.

Furthermore, the Bible had already been translated into several languages when the Quran appeared. And finally, it is unthinkable that Jews and Christians could have agreed together on the manner of changing the Old Testament. Obviously, the assertion that the Bible was corrupted is very difficult to maintain, so that the manner in which the Quran speaks of the Bible is really very helpful in approaching a Muslim.

4. Judgment and the Future State. Islam teaches that there will be a day of judgment for all mankind. The good works and the bad works will be put in the balances, and whichever is heavier will determine one's fate. The unbelievers, of course, will all go to hell. The Quran states that the "People of the Book" (the Jews and the Christians) have nothing to fear if they obey the teachings of the Book (the Bible). But later quranic verses denounced them and considered them the same as the Infidels, the polytheists, and the idol worshippers. Since Muslims believe that the true Bible no longer exists, they do not believe that the "People of the Book" exist either. Muslims will go to Paradise if their good works exceed their evil ones. There is, of course, nothing new about such teachings, for the majority of so-called Christians have similar illusions.

It has been correctly stated that there are really only two religions. One religion teaches salvation by grace alone through faith in the finished work of Christ. The other religion teaches salvation through works and religious activities.

Thus, the only differences among Islam, false Christianity, and other religions of man are in the kinds of works and religious activities prescribed.

Paradise, in Islam, is a place of beautiful trees, delicious fruits in abundance, underground rivers, rivers of wine, comfortable cushioned sofas—essentially everything that was lacking in the Arabian desert. It also has beautiful women without number, the details of which we shall not provide. One certain way to get to Paradise is to die in a holy war (a *Jihad*).

5. Mohammed. A cardinal doctrine in Islam is that Mohammed was the apostle of God and the last and greatest of His prophets. Anyone who claims to be a prophet after him is an imposter and a heretic. The Ahmedeyya sect is therefore considered a cult by most Muslims. The Quran states that Mohammed sinned, but all his sins were forgiven. Some zealous fanatics ascribed to him great things, such as being “the light of the throne of God.” The Sunnis (the majority group) consider this as approaching blasphemy and view him only as a prophet and apostle.

B. The Practices of Islam

Two things are required in order to be a true and faithful Muslim:

1. Beliefs: to believe in *Allah* (God) and that He is the only true God; to believe in His books, His angels, and His prophets (the last and chief of whom was Mohammed), the resurrection, and the day of judgment; and to believe in the predestination by *Allah* of both good and evil.

2. Religious Practices. There are five essential practices known as the corners or pillars of religion. These are: a. The Testimony (*Al Shehadah*); b. Prayers (*Al Salat*); c. Fasting (*Al Soam*); d. Almsgiving (*Al Zakat*); e. Pilgrimage to Mecca (*Al Hajj*).

a. The Testimony (or confession) includes the following words: “I testify that there is no God (*Elah*) except God (*Allah*); and that Mohammed is the apostle of *Allah*.” Once a

person utters this confession, he is considered a Muslim. If two people state that a person has made this confession, that person legally becomes a Muslim, and if he recants he becomes an apostate whose sentence is death. Accordingly, no man should take this matter lightly.

Henry Martyn, sometimes known as the man who wanted to burn out for Christ, was told in Arabia, "You had better say that there is no God but God and that Mohammed is His apostle." In spite of the great danger he was in, he bravely answered: "There is no God but God, and Jesus Christ is His Son." Christians are, of course, in full agreement with the first half of *Al Shehadah* (the testimony). While strongly rejecting the second half, they acknowledge the sincerity of the many who utter it.

b. Prayer. There are five obligatory prayers per day: 1. at dawn (*al fajr*); 2. at noon (*al zuhr*); 3. at mid-afternoon (*al asr*); 4. at sunset (*al maghreb*); and finally 5. at nightfall (*al ashaa*).

Prayers must be preceded by a ceremonial cleansing, of which there are different kinds. The most commonly used is the one known as *Al Wadoo*. This consists of washing the face from the forehead to the chin and as far as the ears; washing the arms up to the elbows, and the feet to the ankles. More minute details are included, depending upon whether one is Sunni, Shiite or another sect. There are other forms of ceremonial cleansing such as *Al Ghusl*, which includes complete bathing, rinsing of the mouth and nostrils, and other details which space prohibits our entering into.

Prayer may be made by an individual anywhere, but whenever possible, prayers in a mosque are considered to be more meritorious. It is not at all uncommon in Muslim countries to see men praying in a corner in the street, in the railroad station, in the front yard of a building, in a government building or in a public place.

Prayers in a mosque are preceded by an announcement from the minaret called *Athan*. The *Athan* consists of loud melodic chanting of the phrases *Allahu Akbar* (God is great) and *Al Shehadah* (the confession) in Arabic, even in non-

Arabic-speaking Muslim countries, followed by exhortations to prayer, such as "Prayers are better than sleep."

Prayers should always be made in the direction of Mecca.⁵ The word *Qibla* means "towards or in the direction of," but has now come to mean "towards Mecca." For example, southern Egypt is known as *Quibi* because Mecca is south of Egypt. This is an example of the role of his religion (Islam) in every aspect of the Muslim's life. For this reason, the Muslim is not to be approached about his religion in a light-handed manner.

In every mosque there is a place called *Al Mihrab* which indicates the direction of Mecca and is the location of the pulpit from which the Friday oration is given.⁶

In his prayer, the Muslim always includes certain phrases such as "*Allahu Akbar*" and "*Al Shehadah*," and requests mercy for Mohammed and his household and his descendants, like the mercy shown to Abraham. Also, during prayer the Muslim assumes different postures: from standing to kneeling, to bowing to the ground, to kneeling and touching the ground with the forehead. Prayer is concluded by raising the hands to the level of the shoulders, making final requests, and then drawing the hands over the face and chest, as if to appropriate the blessing to his whole being.

c. Fasting in Islam includes abstaining from food, drink, smoking, and sexual relations from sunrise until sunset. Fasting is obligatory during the month of Ramadan. Since the Islamic year is a lunar one, consisting of twelve alternating months of thirty and twenty-nine days, it is shorter than our calendar year. For this reason, the month of Ramadan may fall in the summer when fasting becomes a rather severe trial for one's mood, as well as for his health. Exempted from fasting are children and the mentally retarded. The sick and those on a journey may postpone it, but must keep it at another time.

In some Islamic countries, not to fast during Ramadan is a punishable crime. One known convert from Islam to Christ was sentenced to six months imprisonment for not fasting. His court-appointed lawyer asked him to use sickness as his

defense. The dear brother in Christ refused to do so, testifying of his faith in Christ and preferring imprisonment and the loss of his job to telling a lie and denying his Lord. The Lord rewarded him for his faithfulness by keeping his good job available for him immediately upon his release from prison. He will reward him yet more, and fulfill His promise: "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 10:32). Can we ignore such and forget to pray for them?

The fast of Ramadan is observed very rigidly, and is rendered invalid by such minor things as swallowing a drop of water while rinsing the mouth, or a piece of food larger than a grain of wheat remaining between the teeth. Even medicine administered to the ear, the nose, or a wound in the head may make the fast invalid. There are specified penalties for certain cases of breaking the fast of Ramadan, such as fasting at another time, feeding a poor person two meals a day for sixty days, and the like.

d. Almsgiving. There are two kinds of almsgiving in Islam. One is known as *Al Zakat*, and under normal circumstances is required of every Muslim of age. The other is known as *Al Sadaqa*. This is the word used for "alms" in the Arabic Bible in the opening verse of Matthew 6. *Al Sadaqa* can be said of any kind of offering, though most often it refers to gifts given at the annual festival at the end of the month of Ramadan.

As mentioned already, *Al Zakat* is a legal requirement in Islam. It is required of every free Muslim who possesses a certain specified amount of property. The rules of *Al Zakat* are intricate. For example, one is to give one sheep out of the first one hundred twenty, two for the next eighty, and one for every hundred after that. The money collected from *Al Zakat* is used for specific purposes, such as for the poor and needy, to help a slave gain his freedom, or to enable a poor person to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. It may not, however, be used for building a mosque.

e. Pilgrimage to Mecca. This is required from every Muslim who is able. The word "able" is said to mean "able to

afford transportation and food for the journey.” Mohammed, it is said, declared that every Muslim should make this trip at least once in his lifetime, and that extra trips will gain him extra merit. This pilgrimage is not to be made at just any time a person wishes, but must be during the latter part of the Muslim year,⁷ and thus it too falls in different seasons. The pilgrimage is called *Al Hajj* and the one making it earns the privileged title of *Haaj*.

There are many rules associated with *Al Hajj*. The person must wear special seamless clothes. He must stand on Mount Arafat, and he must circle *Al Kaaba* seven times. During this very important part of the pilgrimage, the pilgrim is expected to kiss the highly venerated Black Stone. *Al Kaaba* means “the cubicle.” It is an ancient shrine which the Arabs, before Islam, visited for religious worship, and where they had their many gods. The Muslims claim that it was built by angels at the dawn of history, and that Abraham and his son Ishmael rebuilt it and venerated it. The Black Stone, it is claimed, fell from the sky, or from Paradise. It has been an enigma for many to explain how a religion that condemns venerating objects permits—yes, even commands—this pagan practice. Some believe that Mohammed did this as a compromise to appease the religious leaders of Mecca who were from his own tribe of Quraish. It is said that the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, when kissing the Black Stone, said, “Of a truth, I know that you are nothing but a stone and can do no good or harm. Had I not seen the apostle of Allah kiss you, I would never kiss you.” Some attribute this statement to the second Caliph, Omar Ibn Al Khattab.

There are other rituals required during the pilgrimage, including throwing stones at a certain pillar symbolizing Satan, and visiting the tomb of Mohammed at Medina. One who accomplishes every aspect of the pilgrimage is called a *Haaj*, and is considered to be a person who has attained more holiness than others. It is said that Mohammed told his followers that upon completing such a pilgrimage, a Muslim is forgiven all his sins and is as guiltless as when he came out of his mother’s womb.

A brother in Christ who was a convert from Islam related

that he used to envy those who had attained this distinction until he observed that his friends, relatives, and neighbors who returned from the pilgrimage were not any better than they were before making it. He also noted that the tourists who came to his city from Mecca and Medina were sinners just as much as those from other parts of the world. This caused him to be disillusioned about the whole matter. Finally, in his long search for the truth, during which he considered eastern mystic religions, evolution, communism, and other philosophies, the Lord led him to another brother, also a convert from Islam, who “explained to him the way of God” (Acts 18:26). These two brothers now serve the Lord in their country which is 99% Muslim.

In summary then, a Muslim is one who has testified that there is no God but *Allah* (God), and that Mohammed is His apostle. His duties include prayers five times daily, fasting throughout the month of Ramadan, almsgiving (*Al Zakat*) in a prescribed way and for specific purposes, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his lifetime if he is able. One who performs these duties and whose good works outweigh his evil ones may hope to go to Paradise where he will enjoy good food and all sensual pleasures. However, it is generally taught in Islam that no one except martyrs will go to paradise directly, but must go to hell first for a period of time. And only Muslims will eventually leave hell and go to paradise.

Have we no good news to tell these souls about the Son of God who came from heaven for them?

⁴ There are certain statements in the Quran which suggest an admission of Christ's death, and this poses a difficulty to Muslim interpreters.

⁵ At first, prayers were made towards *Al Quds* (Jerusalem), but that was later changed to the direction of Mecca.

⁶ Friday is the holy day of Islam, just like Saturday for the Jew and Sunday for the Christian.

⁷ However, a person may go to Mecca more than once a year and be considered even more religious.

THE SPREAD OF ISLAM

The last two years of Mohammed's life were spent in Medina and were years of complete triumph. His few remaining opponents surrendered to him and to his religion, thus fulfilling his dream of uniting all Arabia in the faith he had founded. Had he lived another decade, he would have seen Arabia as a great empire. When Mohammed was young, Arabia was just a desert inhabited largely by different idol-worshipping tribes, but when he died on June 7, 632 A. D. it had become an organized state, a nation with one monotheistic religion.

Upon his death Abu Bakr became the first Caliph. The official title was *Amir al Muminin* (Prince, or commander, of the faithful).⁸ At Mohammed's death, many Arab tribes which had accepted Islam only superficially, rebelled and marched toward Medina. Abu Bakr sent his most ruthless general, Khalid Ibn Al Walid (known in Arabic history as the "Sword of God"), who defeated them and forced them back into Islam. Some of the Arabs living in Syria at that time rejected Christianity and the Byzantine rule. Abu Bakr helped them and those rebelling in present-day Iraq by sending his starving Bedouin soldiers to help in the rebellion. His words to his troops were: "Be valiant; die rather than yield ... compel the rest of mankind to become Muslims or to pay us tribute. If they refuse these terms, slay them."

After Abu Bakr came the Caliph Omar Ibn Al Khattab. Conquests came very rapidly. In 635, Damascus was taken; in 636, Antioch; in 638, Jerusalem. In less than ten years after the death of Mohammed, Syria, Persia, and Egypt were conquered. Arab wealth grew rapidly, and the nobles of Quraish built palaces and lived luxuriously. The religion which at first had proclaimed that the poor would enter Paradise five hundred years before the rich, now had a new motto: "Allah has many spoils" (for those who fight His wars).

Islam continued to spread for many reasons. Firstly, the soldiers were made to believe that if they died in the holy wars (and it seems that all their wars have been labeled holy),

they would immediately enter Paradise with all its pleasures. Secondly, most of the soldiers, at the beginning at least, were poor, hungry Bedouins who were used to risking their lives for food. For example, when the Caliph Omar received word that Persia was in chaos and was ripe for conquest, troops were sent bearing a message to the Persian governor which read: "Accept Islam and thou shalt be saved (Arabic: *Aslem Taslam*—a phrase which the writer has heard from Muslims many times); or else pay tribute. ... A people are already upon thee, loving death even as thou lovest life."

The decline of nominal Christianity was a third reason Islam was accepted so readily. Many false teachings concerning the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ had been spreading; the salt had lost its saltiness in many places. Therefore, "because they did not receive the love of the truth ... God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie" (2 Th. 2:10-11). The atrocities of the Byzantine Empire are another factor. Many in the Middle East welcomed the new invaders, hoping they would be treated better. And finally, many were deceived by the superficial (but not real) similarities between Islam and the little they knew of their own religion.

The following century witnessed the most astounding spread of Islam, from the inhabitants of India to the Atlantic Ocean. In Egypt, many held to the Christian faith despite great difficulties. In the remaining part of North Africa, however, the Christians were literally wiped out. This is the same area where Augustine and other great men of God had labored during the preceding few centuries. The Berbers of North Africa embraced Islam, and the few who resisted vanished. In fact, it was primarily the Berbers, rather than the Arabs, who first carried Islam to Spain.

It must be stated, however, that the Islamic Empire was not only occupied with spreading Islam; it also contributed much in the areas of art and science. The Taj Mahal in India, the Mosque of Omar in Jerusalem, and the Al Azhar University in Cairo are only a few examples. In southern Spain, every day of the year thousands of tourists go to visit the Alhambra in Granada, the Alcazar and La Giralda in Seville, and the

mosque in Cordoba. The history of the Arab rulers in Spain is very rich and teaches us many lessons. One of these lessons was expressed by the Babylonian emperor, Nebuchadnezzar in these words: "that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men" (Dan. 4:17).

Muslim caliphs, kings, and rulers were all religious people, even if cruel or licentious. That is, they always spoke with respect concerning God (*Allah*) and religious matters. One of the great Arab rulers and conquerors in Spain had this phrase graven in many areas of his palace: "There is no conqueror but *Allah*." In contrast, nominal Christians often make disrespectful remarks about our Lord Jesus Christ. Is it any wonder that the so-called Christian world is losing ground? The warning the apostle Paul gave is truly apropos: "Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either" (Rom. 11:20-21).

Nor were all Arab monarchs vain people who gave no serious thought to the true meaning of life. Abd El Rahman III, who ruled in southern Spain in the tenth century, assumed the title of "Commander of the Faithful and Defender of the Faith." At his death, he wrote in his own hand, saying: "I have now reigned above fifty (Mohammedan) years in victory or peace. ... Riches and honors, powers and pleasures have waited on my call; nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation, I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot. THEY AMOUNT TO FOURTEEN (emphasis added). O man! place not thy confidence in this present world."⁹

The above account was given neither to glorify the Arab Empire, nor to condemn it. The purpose is to let him who wishes to be of help to these dear people know that he is not dealing with backward and uncivilized people, but with people who have, humanly speaking, a great heritage of which they can be proud. Furthermore, having grown up in a predominantly Muslim society, the writer can attest to the fact that many Muslims are much more trustworthy than many so-called Christians.

To conclude then, Islam led the world between the years 700 and 1200 A.D. As it began to experience a gradual decline, an awakening began in the so-called Christian world of Europe.¹⁰ Yet, wherever the religion of Islam had been accepted, it remained even after the European conquests of the Muslim world. Only in Spain was Islam abolished. The great mosque in Cordoba is still there for tourists to see, but a Roman Catholic church has been built inside it, full of statues and images—that which Muslims hate most.

Many times, when the Arabs invaded “Christian” countries and saw the statues and images, they wondered whether these people were truly Christians and followers of Jesus Christ, or pagans. Is there not much reason for us to be humble? Furthermore, when Western nations occupied Muslim countries, their main purpose in doing so was material. However, there have always been a few faithful missionaries, many of whom have suffered greatly for the cause of Christ.

There has been a definite awakening, both religious and nationalistic, among Muslims in the last few decades. Countries like Iran and Libya, which in the first half of the twentieth century had no political influence, are now very important in the political scene. This, no doubt, is in preparation for the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38 as well as other prophecies. North African nations have expelled the Italian, French, and Spanish colonialists. The British have no more authority in Egypt. Muslim nations are free nations, and some of them have great wealth. Oil-rich countries are spending much money to build mosques and Islamic centers in the western world. Islam is now the second largest religion in France, Belgium, Holland, and England.

It is estimated that there are more than 1.25 billion Muslims in the world.¹¹ This number is increasing very rapidly. Of these, about 265 million are Arabic-speaking. The table on page 24 identifies the Arabic-speaking countries of the Muslim world, (and on page 25 the non-Arabic-speaking Muslim countries with their official languages), their population, and the percentage of Muslims in each country as of 2000. Today these figures are even higher.

In addition to those listed, there are many other countries in Africa, such as Nigeria, where Islam is spreading. This is likewise true for many countries in Asia, such as Malaysia. There are about 25 million Muslims in China, 125 million in India, and millions more in the Soviet Republics.

Finally, there are millions of Muslims in Christian countries. It is estimated that there are more than 37 million Muslims in Europe, almost 6 million of these in France. Many of them have heard the gospel and some have received the Lord Jesus Christ, and "to them He gave the right to become children of God" (Jn. 1:12).

The Muslim population in Great Britain is skyrocketing. This is not a result of immigration only, but because many British people are being converted to Islam. There is an institute in the northern part of England to train Muslim missionaries! The Arabic periodical *Al Jihad* has offered generous scholarships by Libya and Iran to train missionaries for spreading Islam in the Christian world.

Islam is also growing in the United States, where there are now more than 4 million Muslims. There are over twenty mosques, Islamic bookshops, and Islamic centers in Philadelphia alone. There are many Islamic activities in almost all the large cities in the United States. Money for these things is provided by countries which forbid Christians to build a church or even enter with a Bible. To evangelize in those countries is punishable by imprisonment or worse. It is obvious that the so-called Christian countries care more about their imports and exports than about being the light of the world and the salt of the earth. How can they do otherwise when they themselves are so sadly turning away from the faith once delivered unto the saints?

Now the question arises: What can we do? The next chapter is an attempt to answer this question.

⁸ This title is still claimed at times by certain Arab monarchs who are descendants of Mohammed, or from his tribe.

⁹ *Al Maqqari*, Ahmed Ibn Muhammed, **History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain**, ii, p. 146, quoted in Will Durant's **The History of Civilization**, iv, p. 293.

¹⁰ Reference should be made at this point to the Crusades, those wars which began near the end of the eleventh century and lasted for two centuries. Atrocities were committed by both sides, the cross lost its true meaning, and the swords of cross and crescent were indistinguishable. The goal of the Crusaders (to deliver Jerusalem from the hands of the infidels) failed, and Jerusalem fell into the hands of Muslim Mamelukes who became more intolerant of Christians. However, I believe Westerners exaggerate the effect of these wars on today's Muslims with regard to evangelism; for most Muslims they are either totally unknown or belong to the forgotten past.

¹¹ All statistics from **Operation World**, by Patrick Johnstone, Robyn Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, ©2001, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 49530.

Countries of the ARAB MUSLIM World ¹¹

COUNTRY	TOTAL	MUSLIM	Percent
	Population	Population	MUSLIM
Algeria	31,471,278	30,426,432	96.7%
Bahrain	617,217	508,031	82.3%
Chad.....	7,650,982	4,208,040	55.0%
Comoro Islands.....	592,749	581,309	98.1%
Djibouti	637,634	598,738	93.9%
Egypt	68,469,695	59,239,980	86.5%
Iraq.....	23,114,884	22,386,765	96.8%
Jordan.....	6,669,341	6,415,239	96.2%
Kuwait.....	1,971,634	1,723,800	87.4%
Lebanon.....	3,281,787	1,961,196	59.8%
Libya.....	5,604,722	5,408,557	96.5%
Mauritania.....	2,669,547	2,665,276	99.8%
Morocco	28,220,843	28,178,512	99.9%
Oman	2,541,739	2,355,175	92.7%
Palestine	3,391,000	2,935,590	86.6%
Qatar	599,065	475,837	79.4%
Saudi Arabia	21,606,691	20,057,491	92.8%
Somalia.....	10,097,177	10,092,128	99.9%
Sudan.....	29,489,719	19,168,317	65.0%
Syria.....	16,124,618	14,563,755	90.3%
Tunisia	9,585,611	9,553,020	99.7%
United Arab Emirates.....	2,441,436	1,597,920	65.5%
Yemen.....	18,112,066	18,099,388	99.9%
TOTALS/AVG	294,961,435	263,200,496	89.2%



The Arabic-Speaking World

NON-ARABIC-Speaking MUSLIM Countries ¹¹

COUNTRY	Official Language	TOTAL Population	MUSLIM Population	Percent MUSLIM
Afghanistan	Pashto, Bari	22,720,000	22,241,015	97.9%
Azerbaijan	Azerbaijani	7,734,015	6,471,050	83.7%
Bangladesh	Bangla	129,155,152	110,556,810	85.6%
Bosnia	Bosnian	3,971,813	2,385,471	60.1%
Brunei	Malay, English	328,080	211,185	64.4%
Burkina Faso	French	11,936,823	5,968,412	50.0%
Gambia	English	1,305,363	1,159,162	88.8%
Guinea	French	7,430,346	6,346,259	85.4%
Indonesia	Indonesian	212,991,926	171,032,517	80.3%
Iran	Persian	67,702,199	67,038,717	99.0%
Kazakhstan	Kazakh	16,222,563	9,814,651	60.5%
Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyz, Russian	4,699,337	3,669,242	78.1%
Malaysia	Malay	22,244,062	12,901,556	58.0%
Maldives	Dhivehi	286,223	284,534	99.4%
Mali	French	11,233,821	9,773,424	87.0%
Niger	French	10,730,102	10,471,507	97.6%
Pakistan	Urdu	156,483,155	150,349,015	96.1%
Senegal	French	9,481,161	8,729,305	92.1%
Sierra Leone	English	4,854,383	3,398,068	70.0%
Tajikistan	Tajik	6,188,201	5,538,440	89.5%
Turkey	Turkish	66,590,940	66,351,213	99.6%
Turkmenistan	Turkmen	4,459,293	4,095,415	91.8%
Uzbekistan	Uzbek	24,317,851	20,305,406	83.5%
TOTALS/AVG		803,066,809	699,092,374	87.1%

THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM

In Romans 1 we learn of man's greatest problem, God's solution to the problem, and the believer's responsibility. The problem is that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." The divine solution is the gospel of Christ, "for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." Our responsibility is expressed in Paul's words: "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians ... for I am not ashamed of the gospel;" and in saying, "as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel." He expressed this in powerful terms when he said, "Nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Rom. 1:14-18; Acts 20:24).

Since most Muslim countries strictly forbid open evangelism, it is necessary to seek special ways to reach the Muslims for Christ. Outreach to Muslims may be divided into three categories: 1) radio, TV and Internet presentations, 2) correspondence and literature, and 3) personal contacts.

A. Radio Broadcasts

Radio is the most effective method of taking the gospel to countries where evangelization is forbidden. There are now radio stations broadcasting to every part of the world! A few Christian organizations are broadcasting the gospel as well as Bible studies in Arabic to the Arabic-speaking peoples in North Africa, the Middle East, and southern Europe. This, in many cases, is very expensive. Powerful broadcasting stations charge over one thousand dollars for every half hour. There are some shortwave stations, however, which charge much less, but these cover less area and their transmission also is less powerful.

Most young people in those countries like to listen to broadcasts from outside their own lands. It is not unusual to see a lad in the deserts of Mauritania carrying his transistor

radio while riding his bicycle or his camel. They see the radio as the primary means of connecting them with the outside world.

The response to the radio messages varies widely:

1. Some write insulting letters warning us and admonishing us to repent and to join their religion. To these we send thank-you notes commending them for their care and zeal and inviting them to join us in studying the Word of God. A sixteen-year-old youth who wrote such a letter several years ago is now serving the Lord full time in spite of the great danger he is exposed to in doing so.

2. Others write asking for material help, such as money to buy a radio to be able to hear the programs regularly, or to buy a bicycle because it is too far to the home of a friend who has a radio.

3. Still others request assistance to leave their country in order to get a job, to be able to confess Christ without fear, or simply to meet other Christians. All these groups should also be answered with wisdom, explaining the exact purpose of the broadcast and our limitations, promising to pray for them, and then fulfilling that promise. We must not forget that many of them are sincere in their requests. At any rate, we must maintain the contact with them.

4. There are those who write to disagree, but with a desire to discuss. Most common among the questions they raise are those concerning the Trinity, the deity of Christ, how God can have a Son when He does not have a wife, what the term "Son of Man" means, how we view their religion, whether the Bible has given any prophecy about their prophet, and the like. There is, therefore, a great need for good, clear, uncomplicated answers to these questions. Most of all we need to pray that the Lord may open the eyes of their understanding. It is this writer's desire that gifted Christian teachers would prayerfully consider helping in this need. There are those who will gladly translate what they write into Arabic.

5. There are those, too, who write because they admire the morals of this religion of which they have previously heard, but about which they know practically nothing. Occasionally,

some think of it as an explanation of their own religion, because they have never known the teachings of their religion, but only its name and the name of its prophet. We pray for these people and introduce them to the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We should never begin by asking them to leave their religion, for they must first meet Christ before they give up anything.

Occasionally, we receive amusing letters from this group, such as the one from a man in the Ivory Coast who asked us to describe to him the kind of clothes that Jesus wore and to send him such an outfit, because he had decided to wear the same type of clothes. This afforded an opportunity to tell him what God really wants and what he freely offers to man.

6. The most common response, however, is that of a desire to know more about Christ and His teachings. Different Christian broadcasters receive hundreds of letters every month containing statements such as: "I have heard your program for the first time a few months ago and have been listening to it regularly since. I want to know more about Christ. I have read the Quran many times, but I have never found a statement like 'Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' I wish everybody in my country would hear that. For the first time I am finding the true meaning of life, of peace, and of salvation." If one would collect all these letters, they could make large and interesting volumes.

7. Finally, there are those who write to tell us that they have received Christ as their Lord and Savior. The interval between hearing the gospel for the first time and making a true decision from the heart to receive Christ and to renounce all others is sometimes as long as a year. Many such individuals describe to us the agony of soul they have gone through as they discovered that what they have been cherishing so long and have been trusting in before, was all false. They also tell of the great joy of knowing the forgiveness of sins and peace with God. To read their letters is one of the most rewarding and truly thrilling experiences.

B. Correspondence and Literature

Each person responding to the radio broadcast is sent a courteous letter thanking him for his reply and explaining our desire to help him in studying the Word of God and knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. With this, he is also invited to begin a Bible study course. As a rule, the first lesson is sent as a sample. It must be remembered that sometimes mail is intercepted by the postal service in those countries, and thus if no reply is received, one may have to write more than once. This is true of letters, study courses, books, and magazines—of any mail.

Literature and correspondence include the following services, which must *all* be offered *free of charge*:

1. Personal letters showing the spirit of love as well as the respect we have for every human being. This first letter has great effect on the person receiving it. Even if they began by cursing us, we must remember that we are to “bless and curse not ... not rendering evil for evil, or insult for insult; but giving a blessing instead” (Rom. 12:14; 1 Pet. 3:9). Under no circumstance should we insult their religion, their holy book, or their prophet. This initial letter is essentially a note of thank you and welcome. If the one writing has raised questions or asked for certain explanations, we must answer in a brief, clear way and promise to send more information if he so desires.

As mentioned previously, there are certain questions that are asked frequently. The most common of these concern the tri-unity of God and the deity of Christ, as well as His being the Son of God and the Son of Man. It is amazing how all difficulty disappears when one receives Christ as Savior. In responding to these questions we must neither evade the issue nor use explanations that are not scriptural. God cannot be explained; He must be believed. Preparing good answers to these questions is a very important part of this type of work.

It must be obvious that good record-keeping and good filing are absolutely essential in this part of the work. Man may not think much of “mere office help,” but God is not unrighteous

to forget this tedious work and labor of love. A knowledge of the Arabic language can be of real help in much of this work.

2. Bible study courses. The great majority of those who respond to the radio broadcasts have no previous biblical knowledge at all. Occasionally some letters are received from nominal Christians in the Middle East or Europe, but even of these the majority have very little biblical knowledge. The Bible courses therefore must begin in a very simple way. Usually one of the four gospels is the subject of the first course. The student is sent a copy of the gospel, a brief outline with short comments, and questions. The student keeps the gospel and the outline and comments, and returns his answers to be corrected. The corrected answers are then sent back to him along with the second course. Divine guidance and much wisdom are needed in preparing the courses and in correcting the answers.

What a joy to read many of the comments sent by students—and what a challenge! A nineteen-year-old girl wrote to say that since receiving a copy of the Gospel of Luke she memorized it completely, and was waiting daily for other portions of the Bible. She requested that, if possible, two courses be sent each time and hoped that the intervals between mailings be shortened. I wonder how many nineteen-year-olds, or older people among us, have ever memorized a gospel!

3. Literature. Besides the courses, booklets or pamphlets are sometimes sent as a reward for finishing a course. At times they are sent as a reply to certain questions. Many students request materials on a specific subject. By far the largest number of these requests are for information on the person and teachings of Christ Himself.

Larger books, such as commentaries, expositions, and devotional books are sent to the more advanced students. These are known believers who have followed the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully, often have been persecuted for His name's sake, and are teaching and leading others. Because such books are likely to be intercepted by the postal authorities, they are usually hand-delivered by individuals.

There have been several requests to provide a home library

in each major city in those countries where it is forbidden to sell books of this nature. This holy desire is now being fulfilled, though regrettably at a slow pace. Truly, what a blessing it is to us to have freedom to possess such books without fear of the authorities, but what an even greater blessing it would be to provide others with the same opportunity. The labor and expense connected therewith are well worth it.

There are also good Christian magazines in Arabic produced in the Middle East. These can be sent in a regular letter—if not the whole magazine, then at least a small portion each time.

4. Audio cassettes. A more recent method of providing good teaching is by cassettes. A cassette can be duplicated in private homes. Also, a group of believers can listen to it at the same time, and can then pray and discuss it together. This method has been well received and should be used more frequently. Again, cassettes should not be sent through the mails but should be taken in by individuals.

C. Personal Contacts

Until a few decades ago, missionaries were able to go to many of the Muslim nations and preach the gospel. The histories of such men as Henry Martyn (1781-1812), Benjamin Pinkerton (1838-1890), and Samuel Zwemer (1867-1952) are full of rich blessing to those who wish to follow their faith and consider the outcome of their conduct. There have been many others, of course, whose names are in the “Book of Life” (Rev. 20:15). These were men who did not count their lives dear to themselves so that they might finish the course and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). To them, to live was Christ and to die was gain. For it must not be imagined that the fact that missionaries were permitted to enter those countries guaranteed them protection from the fanatic people.

At any rate, today most Muslim nations do not grant admission to missionaries. Personal contacts therefore are accomplished in one of two ways—by living in the country through long or short-term employment, or by visiting as a tourist.

Employment is especially available to Westerners who possess certain qualifications, such as skills in industrial sciences, medical sciences, teaching, etc. Although they will enjoy considerable freedom, they must be careful in approaching the nationals. Muslims generally like to discuss religious matters, but some are very fanatic, so that one has to exercise caution and wisdom. True Christianity should be exhibited in one's way of life, not just by doctrinal discussions. Many are won to the Lord through the exemplary life of believers.

Visits as tourists also can be helpful in encouraging believers in Muslim countries. The visitor can hold Bible studies with small groups, do some counseling and exhorting, and study the specific needs. He will have an opportunity to evaluate the kind of services that are needed most. He can also take with him some books and cassettes, a very limited number at any one time.

Some Christians have faithfully served the Lord through follow-up visits on a regular basis. These are mainly national converts who have taken up residence in a Western country and who go back to visit their homeland two or three times a year for that purpose. Such visits have proven to be of great value.

D. Golden Rules for Contacts

There are some golden rules regarding personal contacts:

- Most importantly, speak with respect when you refer to their religion, their Quran, their prophets, or their traditions.
- Make it clear that Christians do not believe that they are better than Muslims, but rather that the fate of the unregenerate nominal Christian is worse than that of a pagan (2 Peter 2:20-21).
- Cultivate personal friendships with those to whom you witness. Invite them over for a cup of tea, listen to their personal problems if they wish to share them with you, and show them that you care about them as fellow human beings.

- Do not defend the loose morals of the Western world, but condemn them and, if the subject should come up, show that the Bible has predicted this decline and warned of God's judgment upon apostate Christendom.

- Quote freely from the Bible, asserting that it is the Word of God. There are infallible proofs that the Bible has not been changed, and there are Muslim scholars who admit this. The Word of God is the incorruptible seed by which one is born again. Offer your Muslim contact a copy of the Bible, or a portion of it, in his own language. Many Muslims like to have it, though often only secretly.

- The most important subject for discussion is man's sin and his need for a Savior, for he cannot save himself. Do not be distracted into other subjects, and do not go into politics or defend so-called "Christian" countries.

- Be a good listener. You do not need to give long discourses; a few words by the power of the Holy Spirit have greater effect than any long logical explanation. Do not get into an argument; you may win the point, but lose the person.

- Just as you show respect to their religion, so you must show respect to your own: do not put the Bible on the floor or on a table with a cup or glass on top of it. Sit respectfully and show reverence while discussing religious matters. Christian women who may be present should be dressed in a conservative and modest way and should not try to outsmart their husbands. Let all things be done decently and in order.

- When speaking to an unbelieving Muslim, it is decidedly better not to do so in the presence of any other Muslim.

- Above all, *pray* and *persevere*.

E. Ways to Help

It is obvious from the preceding that the opportunities in this work are unlimited. The question truly is not so much, "Who can help?" but "Who is willing to help?"

Although knowledge of the Arabic language is an advantage, there are many opportunities to help, even for those who do not know the language. There are Arabic-speaking Christians who are willing to translate letters or articles written by English-speaking brethren.

The following are just a few examples of areas in which help is always needed:

- Organization and research
- Secretarial work such as typing, filing, record-keeping
- Preparing simple, clear, scriptural answers to questions
- Preparing simple, clear messages for the radio
- Preparing Bible correspondence lessons
- Correcting answers to correspondence lessons
- Providing literature
- Help in taking books or cassettes into the country
- Personal contacts

Finally and most importantly, we need those who, like Epaphras, would be laboring fervently in prayers. Special subjects for prayer include: prayer for the workers, prayer for the radio audience, prayer that the mail might reach its destination, and prayer for the safety of the believers. We should pray for courage both for the missionaries and for their converts. Let us pray also for the governments of these countries. And pray for the financial needs of such work, being willing to deprive ourselves of some of the comforts of this life (of which most of us have too much anyway) in order to fulfill our Lord's command—a command which must be very dear to the heart of every person who has known His grace.

HELPFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- **Arab World Ministries**
P.O. Box 96
Upper Darby, PA 19082, USA
Website: www.awm.org.
- **Centre for Young Adults**
P.O. Box 83
CH-4019 Basel, Switzerland
Website: www.the-good-way.org.
- **Fellowship of Faith**
P.O. Box 221, Station J
Toronto, ON M4J 4Y1, Canada
Website: www.answering-islam.org.
- **Gospel Missionary Union**
10,000 North Oak
Kansas City, MO 64155, USA
Website: www.gmu.org.
- **Grace & Truth, Inc.**
210 Chestnut St.
Danville, IL 61832, USA
Website: www.gtpress.org.
- **South Asian Friendship Center/Bookstore**
P.O. Box 607673
Chicago, IL 60660, USA
Website: www.safcbookstore.com
- **Voice of Preaching the Gospel**
P.O. Box 15013
Colorado Springs, CO 80935, USA
Website: www.vopg.org.

EPILOGUE

Apology and Invitation

This booklet was written for Christians who love their fellow man regardless of his race or creed and who, like our God and Father, want all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. This book was not written for Muslims. Should it, however, be read by a dear Muslim, I beg him to kindly consider the motives behind this endeavor.

True Christian work has always been to help our fellow man, whether by building schools and hospitals, or by sending relief help in cases of national disasters. It is obvious to anyone who wishes to judge fairly, that this work has never been for material or political gain. What then is its motive?

It is the love of God. God sent the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Savior of the world. Christ went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, and He commanded His followers to do the same. He never commanded them to fight unbelievers, but to love their enemies and to pray for those who persecute them.

We are all sinners and can only be saved by God's grace. True Christians do not claim to be better than others. I have had many good, sincere Muslim friends whose acquaintance I cherished and whose excellent manners I admired. But we are all sinners, and we all need a Savior. God sent Christ to be that Savior. I would wholeheartedly extend a friendly invitation to all who read this book to receive Him as their personal Savior.

If any statement in this booklet seems unfair to Islam, please allow me to tell you that I have brought nothing on my own but that which historians, mostly Muslim historians, have written. But best of all let us read the Holy Bible (which the Quran endorsed) and find out for ourselves. May God bless you, my dear friend.

Rafique

Kinsmen of Abraham

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