

# SEEDBED

Second number for 1991  
Subscription: \$5.00 (U.S.)

Vol. VI, No. 2  
Editor: Sam Schlorff

SEEDBED is a publication focusing on church planting in the Arab World. Its purpose is to serve as a forum and channel of ideas and information useful to those involved in church planting in the Arab World. Subscription is by invitation, to those associated with the missionary enterprise. Nothing contained herein may be published except by permission. Correspondence, articles or book reviews should be sent to: SEEDBED, P.O. Box 96, Upper Darby, PA 19082 U.S.A.

SEEDBED is published four times yearly. Subscriptions in U.S. dollars should be sent to the above address; addresses of agents receiving subscriptions in Pounds Sterling and French francs will be supplied on request. Subscriptions begin with the first and end with the fourth numbers of each year.

#### IN THIS ISSUE:

THE MUSLIM WORLDVIEW: IMPLICATIONS FOR WITNESS, by S. Schlorff  
ISLAM AND THE CROSS OF CHRIST, by Chawkatt Georges Moucarry  
CONVERSATION TURNERS, by M.A.H.

**NOTE:** It has been some time since you received the last issue of SEEDBED which is now considerably behind schedule. You can expect to receive the remaining issues for 1991 at much more frequent intervals during the next few months until catch up. Renewal notices will not be sent to those whose subscriptions are to expire in 1991 until issue number three is mailed out.

**FORTHCOMING ARTICLES:** let me mention a number of articles in the pipeline that will be appearing in the next few issues: another article by Mr. Moucarry, a very informative article on the various Mass Media resources and their use in the church-planting process, another on the impact of videos, one or two on church planting tools or methods, a translation of an article from the Arab Press attacking what it calls "Christianizing" radio broadcasts beamed to the Arab world, and of course some more book reviews. We will also be introducing some resource publications and materials about which subscribers will want to be informed. Ed.

UNDERSTANDING THE MUSLIM WORLDVIEW - PART II  
IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN WITNESS

by Sam Schlorff

[The focus of Part I, which appeared in the last issue, was understanding the Muslim worldview. We saw that it centers in the idea of "submission" (Arabic - "Islam") to God as being the ideal for the God-man relationship. We also saw that the Islamic understanding of submission is shaped by five important assumptions. These are: the absolute transcendence of God and the essential goodness of man, which imply that man needs "guidance" and not salvation, God's provision of guidance in the Qur'an and Muslim traditions which constitute the very Law of God, His creation of a new social order, based on that Law, and a Heavenly culture for that community of submission. Part II concludes with the implications for Christian witness.]

All of this has important implications for us as Christians, not the least of which concerns the way we go about presenting the Biblical message to Muslims and defending it against their attacks. However, as I reflect on the evangelistic messages or writings addressed to Muslims that I have heard or seen, and the polemical or apologetic books written for them that I have read, it seems to me that in general we have not satisfactorily responded to the issues raised by the Muslim worldview, especially the ideology of the Ummah, in our presentation of the case for Christian theism.

Much of the evangelistic material that is available is quite useful. And there are some excellent apologetic works that address typical Muslim objections, e.g. the authenticity of the Bible, the crucifixion, etc. But what we have failed to do in any systematic way is respond to the issues raised by the Muslim worldview. We have failed to call into question its basic assumptions that are antithetical to the Scriptures and expose its inherent rebellion against God.

Reasons for our Failure to Respond

No doubt one reason for this failure is that such an undertaking requires a fairly good grasp of Islam and of Islamic history, which many Christians simply do not have. More important, however, is the tendency on the part of many Christians to equate apologetics with polemics--polemics like Pfander's classic known as the Mizan Ul-Haqq [Balance of Truth]. The thrust of this polemic was essentially negative; it attacked Islam's claim to have the final prophet and final revelation. Today, most of us tend to steer clear of this kind of approach. We have come to realize that one doesn't get very far with confrontation and polemic; one doesn't "win friends and influence people" by attacking them. And yet, people still "make judicious use" of the polemic because there is no good contextualized apologetic to take its place.

---

A third factor behind our failure to speak to the Muslim worldview, probably the most important of all, is our tendency in the West to focus almost exclusively on the spiritual aspect of the message. This is due to the influence of the concept of the "two realms"--the realms of Christ and Caesar, church and state, the sacred and the secular, the spiritual and the political. Although this distinction originated in Christian theology, it has become such a part of our Western cultural framework that it is now one of our unspoken, and often unrecognized, assumptions.

Notice the spiritual focus of the typical gospel presentation: the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, our need of redemption, the substitutionary death of Christ and His resurrection from the dead, the way of salvation, and the hope of heaven. These are the essentials, of course, but the gospel message has political and social implications that are important as well. In the West, however, we tend to ignore these implications in evangelism. This is possible because the two-realm distinction has become a part of our cultural framework. The advantage is that it helps us eliminate everything but the essentials.

There is a disadvantage, however. We have become so accustomed to ignoring the socio-political dimension of the gospel that we have become insensitive to its implications for our message. The problem is that in ideological societies, such as Islam, that do not distinguish the two realms, this opens the door to misunderstandings and to gross distortions of the Biblical message. In such circumstances, ignoring the socio-political implications of the gospel does a disservice to the cause of Christ.

A recent article in an Arabic Muslim magazine is a good illustration of what happens. The article attacks "Christianizing" broadcasts in Arabic beamed to the Middle East. In one place it complains that they "attempt to Christianize Muslims." This is of course true. But the article calls this "a totally immoral and despicable act no matter which standard we may use to appraise its nature." As if Muslims were not themselves trying to Islamize Christians and other peoples! Later the article does an about face and acknowledges that to "propagate one's own religion" is legitimate. Now, however, its argument is that "the Western missionary effort is part and parcel of an imperialistic invasion of our Eastern countries." His conclusion: "These efforts of the Christian missionaries are not really aimed at converting people to Christianity. Rather, their activities represent one aspect of a multi-faceted campaign launched by an aggressive Western imperialism to dominate our peoples and our countries."

Notice that what we consider to be a spiritual ministry has become a political activity. This is due to the fact that Islam does not recognize a separation between realms. The charge of imperialism is, of course, hypocritical; Islam is as imperialistic as they come. As we have already seen, the ultimate goal of Islamic Da'wa (missionary work) is to dominate the world by imposing an Islamic social order wherever possible. Certainly, the requirement that the Qur'an be read and recited, and liturgies performed, only in Arabic is a form of cultural imperialism.

So then the real reason Muslims see secret imperialistic designs behind Christian missionary work is that they themselves have imperialistic designs, and cannot conceive of mission without them. It is clear that such attacks are not concerned with truth; they are really disinformation campaigns aimed at confusing and distracting people from hearing the Christian message. In a way, the article is a tribute to the effectiveness of Christian broadcasting. The point that needs to be underlined, however, is that our habit of focussing on the spiritual aspects of the message, and ignoring its socio-political implications, puts Christian mission at a disadvantage in the Muslim context.

#### The Need for a Culture-specific Apologetic to Islam

This brings me to a major concern of this article: how does one correct the problem? What is needed is a contextualized apologetic that presents the case for the Christian worldview in relation to that of Islam. I am not talking about another general theoretical apologetic, but rather a culture-specific apologetic that responds specifically to the Muslim worldview. We need apologetic material that sensitively and tactfully calls into question and refutes those assumptions in Islam that are antithetical to the Scripture. And we need something that sensitively but firmly exposes the ideology of the Umma for the blasphemy that it is.

At the risk of being repetitive, it needs to be said that I am not calling for more polemic. The main problem with the polemic of the past is that it attacks Islam on the basis of debatable cultural questions (e.g. the marriages of the Prophet, various practices, etc.) but fails to challenge the basic assumptions that are at the heart of our disagreement with Islam. We already have more than enough of that kind of material.

The focus of this apologetic should be on clarifying the Christian worldview, not on the claims of Islam. It would nevertheless refer to the Islamic worldview because "what is new must be portrayed in such a way that it is possible to compare it at every point with the old" (J.H. Bavinck). It would include, for example, a defense of the Christian view of the two realms as it relates to Islam. It is necessary to make clear what the Christian vision is and is not with respect to the socio-political realm. It would thus not only provide a basis for disabusing Muslims of the notion that Christians have secret imperialistic designs on the Muslim world, but more importantly provide a springboard for the proclamation of the gospel itself.

To clarify what I mean by a culture-specific apologetic to Islam, I shall conclude by outlining one form such an apologetic might take, based on those aspects of the Muslim worldview already mentioned. Some key elements to be included in such an apologetic are mentioned, but the sky is the limit as to the ways in which a skillful writer could develop the argument.

Elements of a Culture-specific Apologetic to Islam

The Biblical doctrine of the Kingdom of God offers an excellent starting point for a Christian apologetic to Islam. Not only does it establish a kind of common ground with Muslims [e.g. the importance of submission to God], but it also helps us focus the discussion on basic assumptions, and it provides a framework for refuting those assumptions of Islam that are antithetical to the Scriptures. In the remainder of this article I shall outline some of the necessary elements of such an apologetic. I begin with a summary of the Biblical doctrine of the Kingdom, then draw out some implications with respect to the Muslim worldview in particular. I have omitted most Bible references to make this less cumbersome and lengthy, but a number of passages will readily suggest themselves.

A. The Biblical Doctrine of the Kingdom: it may be summarized in terms of two distinct phases as follows [See e.g. the classic Biblical-theological study of Riderbos, The Coming of the Kingdom].

1. The Kingdom of God in mystery (or provisional) form was introduced through the life, death, resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven of Jesus of Nazareth, "Son of Mary." These events show that He is the promised Messiah--the divine King anointed and appointed by God to rule the earth. The Kingdom is found only in mystery form in the present age; that is, it is spiritual in character and hidden in the hearts of those who are committed to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and who look forward to His return to inaugurate the Kingdom in its fullness.

2. The Kingdom of God will come in its fullness only at the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the age. When He comes back He will raise from the dead those who have been redeemed by His blood--who have committed their lives to Him. It is important to note that they are raised with incorruptible bodies--a new quality of life that is free from sin. At that time, he will set up His universal reign of justice and peace in a new heaven and new earth.

B. Implications for Witness to Muslims: following is a summary of points which I suggest should be included in a contextualized apologetic for Muslims. They will of course need to be developed and added to. But this nevertheless gives an idea of what is needed.

1. The main premise of the Biblical view is that to qualify as a "divine" social order (i.e. the Kingdom of God) a society must be ruled by God through Messiah, the divine King mentioned above. The Kingdom of God is a society in which the executive, legislative and judicial functions of government are thus in the control of God. It is clear that anything less than this, e.g. a society where any of these functions are in human hands, is ipso facto not a divine order.

2. Unless Divine Law is interpreted and administered by God, it is no better a basis for society than other legal systems. Law is "weakened by the sinful nature"; it cannot of itself bring about the perfect obedience required by God. When interpreted and applied by human judges, God's Law is no better than any other legal system; human beings are never perfectly righteous, equitable or just. More-

over, states based on religious law tend to be oppressive because they put human judges in the place of God. According to the Bible, the Mosaic Law was not given to justify mankind before God, but rather to expose the sinfulness of sin and the hopeless condition of mankind, and to point people to Christ who alone can atone for sin.

3. A social order based on Religious Law (Shariah) is intrinsically no better (or worse) than any other. Every attempt to establish such a system has fallen short of the ideal of a society living in total submission to God. It can be helpful to point out: 1) That the Hebrew nation had the Law of Moses, but this did not keep it from falling into such widespread idolatry and oppression that God had severely to punish it through exile. 2) That Christians at various times have also tried to set up a religious state, but this effort likewise came to nought. 3) That the early Muslim Community was a religious state based on Islamic Law, but it too failed as is evidenced by the fact that the Community went into decline.

It is appropriate at some point to raise the question: on what basis do you suppose that a return to Islamic law will solve the problems of the Muslim world today, when earlier that law could not keep the Muslim community from going into decline. One can affirm, on the basis of the principles given here, that the Ummah has never been and never will be a community of submission any more than any other social order. Such a utopic view of the Muslim community is only a formula for frustration, and more oppression and violence.

4. The basic problem with Islam is its reliance on religious law to transform society and make it submissive to God. It assumes that man has in himself the moral power he needs to live in submission to God, and that all he needs is a knowledge of God's law, i.e. "guidance"; it goes so far as to construe this to mean that the Muslim community, based on this "guidance," is superior to other communities. These assumptions are contradicted by the above-mentioned facts which give powerful support to the Christian view that man is sinful by nature. The doctrine of sin implies that all peoples and cultures are guilty before God and unable to do what pleases Him. Indeed, the very idea of a superior community and a heavenly culture is blasphemous from the Christian perspective; it debases and dishonors God by attributing to Him the actions of men, and it exalts man by making his judgments out to be the "Law of God."

5. As we communicate the gospel to Muslims, it is important to acknowledge that Christians, like all mankind, are by nature sinful and unable in themselves to live as God requires. Neither the church nor any other religious community can claim to be the Kingdom of God. In our zeal to help people experience liberation from sin we must be careful not to give the impression that Christians think they have arrived! That has sometimes been done. Unfortunately, it does not help the Muslim give up the myth of superiority and admit the truth--that Islam is not the superior social order it claims to be, nor will there ever be one until Christ returns. The eschatological dimension of the Biblical message is all-important here; the Kingdom of God has indeed come in mystery form in the person and work of Christ. God's promise of the Kingdom will not however be realized in a new social order until Christ returns and the redeemed are resurrected with an

---

uncorrupted body--free from sin. As "children of the Kingdom," they are nevertheless called upon to combat evil and injustice wherever they find it, and to try to make society more just and equitable. They are not, however, under any illusion that by their own efforts they will be able to usher in a new social order.

6. It may accordingly be affirmed that a separation between realms as concerns the exercise of political power is justified in the present age. The world we live in is a fallen world; mankind is NOT naturally "Muslim" (i.e. submissive to God), contrary to what Muslims would have us believe. No human being has the knowledge or moral perfection needed to legislate, interpret and apply the law with complete equity and justice. A "separation of powers" is therefore justified in the sense that it helps to protect society from the abuse of power that inevitably occurs when religion and state are one. I say "justified" advisedly. I am not aware of any passage in Scripture that teaches a separation of powers explicitly. It is not even indispensable to the church's existence in a society, as we tend to think. I would suggest, however, that Christians should be able to agree with Muslims in their conviction that every aspect of our life is sacred and to be lived before God in subjection to Him.

Let me conclude: it seems to me that an apologetic of this nature is needed for at least two reasons: it is needed on the one hand to refute the falsehoods that Muslims are propagating at the expense of the gospel, and also, perhaps more importantly, because the young churches being planted desperately need a Biblical perspective on these issues to help them survive. For this, we would probably do well to acknowledge the validity of many of the criticisms Muslims level against the West--its decadence, its abandonment of moral values, its greed and its ungodliness, etc. It is not our task to defend Western civilization, but it is our task to defend the Faith. Acknowledging the validity of such criticisms serves to underline the truth of the Biblical view of man. It also reinforces the truth that Islamic civilization is really no better than the West; it is just different. I recognize that a lot of weighty theological issues have been treated rather summarily in this brief essay, and that probably not all evangelical Christians will be completely comfortable with some of the views expressed. I nevertheless hope that it will be sufficiently suggestive of the riches of the Biblical materials on the subject that you will be challenged to become an apologist for the gospel in all its dimensions.

ISLAM AND THE CROSS OF CHRIST

by Chawkatt Georges Moucarry

[The following article, the text of a lecture given at an IFES conference held recently at Wheaton, Illinois, is published by permission of the author. Mr. Moucarry, of the Groupes Bibliques Universitaires in France, has written a new book, Un Arab chrétien face à l'Islam, which just came out in November.

Islam regards Jesus Christ as one of its greatest prophets. A number of Muslims have the name "Issa," the name given to Jesus in the Koran. The Koran testifies to the miraculous conception of Jesus by the virgin Mary (3:45-47; 19:16-22). This is why Jesus is often referred to as the "son of Mary." Just as Moses received the "Tawrat," David the "Zabur" and Mohammed the Koran, Jesus received the "Injil" (the Gospel). This book is a light and a guide for men (5:46). During his mission, Jesus was sustained by the Holy Spirit (2:87, 253; 5:110), whom Muslims generally consider to be the angel Gabriel. With God's permission, he performed numerous miracles, demonstrating that he was indeed a Messenger of God. Included among these miracles were healing of the sick and raising of the dead (3:49; 43:63)

The Koran confers a number of prestigious titles on Jesus. Among them are some which also occur in the Bible, such as "the word of God" (3:39) and "the Messiah" (3:45). As the Koran does not explain the meaning of these titles, Muslim commentators have given them various interpretations far removed from their biblical meanings.

Islam rejects the divinity of Jesus for a rather simple reason which can be summed up by the following alternative: either Jesus is the Son of God, in which case God is not One, or God is One and thus Jesus can in no way be His son. However, when we read the Koran, we see that it is refuting an incorrect understanding of the divinity of Jesus. According to this understanding, which is attributed to Christians, Jesus is the Son of God because of his miraculous conception (cf. 5:119); he is a man whom God has honoured by making him His Son (2:116; 6:101); lastly, he is one of three persons of a triad (4:171; 5:76) made up of God, Mary and himself (cf. 5:119). Clearly this is a long way from the Christian understanding of the divinity of Jesus and of the divine Trinity.

"No, they neither put him to death nor crucified him..."

Islam also rejects the crucifixion of Jesus, though for less clear reasons than his divinity. This rejection is based on a single Koranic text, which is confirmed by numerous texts of the Prophetic Tradition ("Sunna" or "Hadith"). This tradition constitutes the second foundation of Islam after the Koran. The text in question is found in the fourth Sura, entitled "Women." It is part of a long polemic directed against the Jews, who are accused, among other things, of putting to death many of the prophets, whose message they had rejected (4:155). Here is the text:

They (the Jews) maintain: 'We put to death Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, (who claimed to be) the Messenger of God'. They did not put him to death, nor did they crucify him but it seemed so to them. ... They certainly did not put him to death, but God took him up to Himself. God is powerful and wise. (Sura 4 "Women", verses 157-158)

According to Muslim tradition, at the moment when the Roman soldiers came to arrest Jesus, God intervened in order to save him from the sentence to which the Jews had condemned him. He took him up to Himself, while another man (Judas Iscariot according to some) was arrested in his place. God had in fact changed this man's appearance to make him look like Jesus. Neither the soldiers nor the Jews realized this, and this is why they wrongly believed they had crucified Jesus. This is how we are to understand the words "it seemed so to them"

Through this spectacular intervention on Jesus' behalf, God demonstrated at one and the same time His power and His wisdom. He showed His power by snatching His Messenger out of the grasp of his enemies who wanted to put him to death. He also proved that he was able to outsmart the Jews who had plotted against Jesus (cf. 3:54-55).

Still according to Muslim tradition, Jesus lives today in heaven with God. He will return at the end of time to exercise a second ministry on earth. As before, Jesus will preach monotheism, but this time he will be greatly successful. He will fight the Antichrist and triumph over him. He will establish a reign of justice and peace on the earth, which will last forty years according to some, a thousand years according to others. The Jews will believe in him and the Christians will be convinced that he is not the Son of God and that he was not crucified. Jesus will marry and have children. At the end of his life, he will die a natural death and be buried by the Muslims beside the prophet Mohammed. His death will give the signal for the general resurrection and the last judgment (cf. 43:61). In short, Jesus will be more than ever a prophet of Islam because he will lead all men to faith in God as Islam has always proclaimed it!

#### Why does Islam deny the crucifixion of Jesus?

The Koran gives no explicit reason which could explain why it claims that God did not allow the Jews to carry out their intention to put Jesus to death, when He let them do what they would to the prophets who came before Jesus. We are thus reduced to hypotheses when we seek to understand the reasons behind its denial of Jesus' crucifixion.

One of these hypotheses is the violent opposition of the Jews to the first Muslims. At Medina, which was the birthplace of the Muslim community, there were several Jewish tribes which did not adhere to Islam when it began to spread among the polytheistic Arab tribes in the city. This led to a force-based relationship between the two communities. In addition, the Jews were accused of plotting with the polytheistic Arabs in Mecca against the Muslims. The armed confrontation went in favour of the Muslims, who drove all the Jews out of

Medina. Could the extreme hostility between Muslims and Jews have led the former to reject all that the latter maintained? In this case, historic and religious reasons would be behind the Koran's rejection of Jesus' crucifixion.

But it is essentially religious reasons which seem to explain the Islamic position. If God intervened in such spectacular fashion on Jesus' behalf, this is because Jesus is not just any prophet. He occupies a privileged position among the prophets, a position comparable to that of Moses or indeed of Mohammed.

The pre-eminent position of Jesus is such that if God had abandoned him to his enemies, He would have gone back on His word, according to which He makes His Messengers triumph (40:51), as He does all who uphold His cause (22:40; 47:7). By coming to the aid of His illustrious prophet, God showed Himself faithful to His promise. If He had let the Jews triumph over Jesus by putting him to death, the prophetic mission of Jesus would have been called into question, and through Jesus, the very One who had sent him on this mission.

This explanation, which is based on a general Koranic principle, that is the faithfulness of God, is confirmed by the way in which the Koran refutes the Jews' claim that they crucified Jesus. The Jews claim to have put to death "Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, the Messenger of God." If the Jews had believed that Jesus was God's Messenger, they surely would not have sentenced him to death. They sentenced to death the man who said he was the Messenger of God. Now, the fact that they were able to put Jesus to death is the proof, according to them, that Jesus was not really the Messenger of God. Otherwise, how could God have allowed His Messenger to be put to death? The Koranic text opposes this argument with another argument which follows the same logic, that is, the impossibility of a great prophet being overcome by his enemies. As Jesus is indeed a very important Messenger of God, the Jews were not able to put him to death nor to crucify him. God rescued him out of their hands and took him up to Himself. Here we are faced with an alternative which puts Jews and Muslims in opposing camps: either Jesus is the Messenger of God and thus the Jews could not have put him to death, or else they did indeed put him to death and so he is not the Messenger of God.

Whether for historical, political or theological reasons, the Koran categorically denies the historicity of the crucifixion of Jesus: it quite simply did not take place. But Muslim theologians go further; they dispute the necessity of the cross, as well as its moral value. They dispute its necessity because, as they see it, man although a sinner, is not lost. He therefore has no need of salvation. God can grant man forgiveness for his sins by virtue of His sovereign will alone (cf. 16:40). He does not need a sacrifice to do so. They also dispute the moral value of the cross because man, as a highly responsible being must take responsibility for his actions and face their consequences (cf. 6:164; 99:7-8). Salvation by the death of a substitute seems doubly immoral to them: it amounts firstly to denying man's responsibility and secondly to condemning an innocent person.

---

Questions

- 1) Think about the different objections that Islam raises against the cross of Jesus. In your opinion, what is their importance, first from a human point of view, then from a Christian point of view?
- 2) Is there any similarity between the Muslim concept of Jesus and the concept of the Messiah that we find among Jesus' disciples in the Gospels? Consider the case of Peter in particular.
- 3) How did Jesus set about convincing his disciples about his death, before and after it took place? Can we follow his example in our encounters with Muslims?
- 4) Behind Muslim denial of the cross, there are on one hand the ideas of divine faithfulness, power, wisdom and sovereignty, and on the other the notion of human responsibility. Can we use these same principles to explain the cross of Jesus to Muslims? How?
- 5) What does the cross tell us about the character of God and man that is not found in Islam?

Comments

Here are several comments about the crucifixion of Jesus that can be useful in our discussions with Muslims.

\* Unlike the Koran which denies the crucifixion of Jesus with a single text, there are two whole chapters in each of the Gospels which recount this event using many details that only an eyewitness could know.

\* Jesus' own disciples were the first to refuse to accept the idea of their master being put to death. They were finally forced to accept it when the idea became a reality that they had to acknowledge.

\* The circumstances of Jesus' death revealed the cowardice of his disciples and especially of the "greatest" among them, the apostle Peter. Why would they have testified to an event which showed up their cowardice and recounted it so faithfully if this event had not taken place?

\* Jesus himself was terrified by his imminent death. There was nothing heroic about the Son of God when he was faced with the death which, by his own admission, he would have preferred to avoid. It would be more logical from a human point of view either to deny his death, or not to say that he is the Son of God.

\* Jesus' disciples would have more easily accepted him being taken up to heaven like Enoch and Elijah than they accepted his resurrection, which was a historically unprecedented event for them. Why did they believe in his resurrection rather than in him being taken up to God?

\* Even if all of Jesus' disciples were not present at his crucifixion, they all saw the scars on his body. He himself invited them to take note of these scars on the night of his resurrection.

\* The death of Jesus was foretold by the prophets and by Jesus himself well before it happened. It was not therefore an accident of history to which God responded by raising Jesus from the dead. Moreover, the resurrection of Jesus can be regarded as the act by which God gave him victory over his enemies, beginning with death, which is the true enemy of all men.

\* It was God's eternal will that was done through the historical circumstances of Jesus' crucifixion. Thanks to his death the salvation of man was accomplished. The cross of Jesus shows us God's love, His righteousness and justice, His power and His wisdom.

#### Bibliography

Kenneth Cragg, Jesus and the Muslim, Chapter 6 "Gethsemane and Beyond," pp. 168-188. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985.

John Stott, The Cross of Christ. IVP, 1985. French translation, La croix de Jesus Christ. Mulhouse, FRANCE: Grace et Verite, 1990.

---

#### CONVERSATION TURNERS

by M.A.H.

Many workers among Muslims have a great burden to share their faith with those among whom they have come to live, yet find that the course of their conversations does not often naturally lead to religious discussions. Prompted by their concern for these peoples' spiritual condition, they may desire to "steer" the conversation to religious topics, yet be at a loss as to how to do so.

On other occasions in daily life, such as riding in a taxi or dealing with a peddler, one would like to sow a seed or give a witness for Christ, but there is only a limited time of interaction in which to do so. Having at your disposal a few "conversation turners" can often allow you to use the encounter to share spiritual truth by opening the door for a religious conversation.

Some may feel that reliance on such an approach is contrived, canned, and counter to the leading of the Holy Spirit. This of course is possible, as may also be the case with Bible reading, prayer and many other matters in our spiritual life. But the possible danger does not invalidate its legitimacy. On the contrary, it is the Holy Spirit who is the impetus to bold and creative witness. In the book of Acts, the primary purpose of the anointing of the Spirit was to enable Christians to witness for Christ with boldness; when we are filled with the Spirit we feel a great burden to share Christ, even when there are no "natural opportunities". It is His presence within us that inspires us to guide, steer, lead or turn our conversations to discussions of a spiritual nature.

To "manipulate" the direction of a talk to a spiritual plane is not an act of dubious nature. It is rather an evidence of love for one's fellow man and concern for his eternal and earthly well-being. Note how the Master Teacher very deliberately directed a conversation about water with a Samaritan women to a discussion of living water (John 4). The blessing of God on this device is evident from the result--the salvation of an entire village!

The ideas presented below can be viewed as tools for your evangelistic tool box. As a carpenter adds to his collection of tools he is then better able to find one that is appropriate to the job he wants to do. With experience he is able even to fashion his own custom-made tools to get the job done. God has used many of the following conversation turners to open up hundreds of opportunities for me to discuss spiritual matters, or present a witness for Christ and allow a Muslim to accept a gospel portion. If God has gifted you as an evangelist, you may have little need for what follows. But to those whose evangelistic opportunities are more limited, I would encourage you to consider adopting or adapting some of the ideas which follow, at least until you develop more suitable ones of your own. On one occasion, Dwight L. Moody was approached by a man who criticized his method of evangelism. Moody replied, "I don't like it either--what's your method?" When his critic stated that he did not have one, Moody retorted, "I like mine better."

--Heaven Street: I was first introduced to the use of conversation turners by someone who had ridden in a taxi with Dr. Lionel Guernsey, and later related to me this veteran evangelist's conversation with the driver. Having asked him how many years he had been driving a taxi, Dr. Guernsey followed with the statement, "with so much experience, you must know nearly every street in the city." The driver's ego was soon deflated a bit when Dr. Guernsey asked him if he could take him to "Shaari'a al-Jenna" (Heaven Street). When the puzzled driver confessed that he did not know where it was, Dr. Guernsey told him that he was referring to the "street" or path that leads to eternal paradise. Such an approach typically leads to a discussion on how to get to heaven--the Five Pillars, good works and the way of salvation. Here are some other ideas you could try.

--Residence [for those who are foreigners in the country]: When asked if you are residing in your host country, you could reply: "No I'm a traveler--we're all travelers on the earth, aren't we? We live here 70 to 80 years and then arrive at our final destination--our eternal dwelling place."

--Nationality: When asked what your nationality is, say, "I'm from [your country's name] originally, but I now have another nationality that's even better than that. ... I am a citizen of the Kingdom of God. I do not say this from arrogance or self-righteousness; God bestowed this citizenship upon me as a gift!"

--Desire to Emigrate: You can tantalize someone who wants to emigrate with news of a fantastically beautiful country, everything one could want, justice, peace, etc. and it costs no money. The king has opened the doors to all who want to come--only there are some condi-

tions. After breaking the suspense by revealing that it is the Kingdom of Allah, read the conditions as found in the beatitudes, the sermon on the Mount, or in Matthew 18:1-9. One must become as a dependent child, submit to the reign of the King (Christ), etc.

--Occupation/work: "My occupation is teaching [business, etc.] but my work is to do the will of Allah whom I serve."

--Hot weather: "It's hot here, but do you know the hottest place in the world? He will guess several places to which you each time reply in the negative. When he finally gives up you answer: "Jahannem" (hell...whose fire is said to be 10 times hotter than fire on earth). You can follow up by advising that if one does not like such heat, one had better find the way to heaven, or you might give testimony to your assurance of salvation.

--Crowdedness: "This is a very crowded street! But do you know the most crowded street in the world?" Answer: the road to Hell! Read Matt. 7:13,14. "Many (billions of people) are choosing the road to destruction, while only a few are on the road to life." This passage could also be used in political discussions to show how not even democracy is a guaranteed solution for good government; often the majority are wrong and choose the path that leads to destruction.

--Need a flat in order to marry: Affirm that while it is necessary to have a place where one can go to at the end of the day, and we spend many years and much effort to obtain it, there is a flat more important than this--it's the one you will go to at the end of your life to spend eternity in. "Do you know for sure if you have such a flat in al-Jenna? Al Hamdu lillah, I do." Then read John 14:2,3.

--Life is hard! To one who complains about having to work two jobs or long hours to feed his family, etc., you can respond by asserting that we can't easily change our circumstances or quickly improve our economic prospects; the important thing then is to find a way to experience "rest" in the midst of difficult circumstances. "Al Hamdu lillah, I have found this rest." Here refer to Jesus' promise (Matt. 11:28-30) "come to me all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ..."

One can also suggest that the reason people are weary is because they are living on a materialistic level; the inner person is not strengthened by material things. Read Matt 4:4 or Luke 4:4 "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from God". People need spiritual food to strengthen their souls, the nourishment that comes from every Word from God. Emphasize that though Christ is the giver of the Injil (the gospel), He could not do without the Tawrah. On the contrary, he memorized it and quoted from it to overcome the devil's temptations. How much more do we need to know all of God's Word--not just part of it.

Illustrate this by referring to the virtues of beans (or the staple dish or bread of the country). As good as they are, if one were to eat nothing else one's health would suffer, because some nutrients one needs are missing in it. God has given us many kinds of food and we need more than just one kind. Likewise, he who reads only one

Book (in his mind the Qur'an) is like him who eats only beans. Then try offering him a copy of a gospel.

--The Fast of Ramadan: Ask your friend if he or she are fasting, and if so why; what is the purpose of fasting? Empathy for the poor may be a side-benefit, but if that is its primary purpose, then the poor need not fast; they feel hunger pains every day already! Suggest that the primary purpose of fasting is to free us from worldly affairs and allow us to pray in the best possible state, and to teach us to obey every word of God. Jesus' statement in Matt 4:4/Luke 4:4 is made in the context of his 40-day fast. In it he teaches us that obedience to God is life's most important issue; fasting simply reinforces this truth. When we feel hunger pains we are reminded that our real need is not for bread (which represents material things as well as food), but for spiritual food--every word from God--so that we can live by it. Here again, as discussed in the previous section, you can refer to Christ's example of memorizing the Tawrah to emphasize the importance of not neglecting any of God's Books.

--Children: When talking about your children or theirs, or how many they or you have, you might exclaim, "al-mal wal-banoon zeenit al-Hayaat id-dunya" (possessions and children are the adornment of the life of this world--a quotation from Sura 18 [the Cave]: verse 28). From there you can go in couple of directions:

a. The Zabur says that children are a gift from God (Psalm 127:2), that is, we have children by God's grace, not because of our merit. (A good man may not be blessed with children, while a wicked man might have many). State that you are of the opinion that the best things in life are those which come as gifts of God's grace--children, a good wife, and the best gift of all which is forgiveness.

b. Although children are a lot of work and a heavy responsibility, it is God's desire that we benefit from them, by learning from them important spiritual truths, e.g.

- Matt 18:1-9. We must become as little children to enter the kingdom of God (We are also severe warned against causing Jesus' "little ones" to stumble).

- Matt 7:7-12 If we are evil, and yet give good gifts to our kids, how much more will God give what is good (the Holy Spirit--Luke 11:9-13) to those who ask Him.

--Is Arabic difficult? "No, it's not difficult..., it is mustaHeel" (impossible)! Ha-ha! "Actually, there is a language which is much more difficult than Arabic, but the amazing thing about this language is that once you have learned it, you can communicate with anyone in the world with it--even if they never learned this language. Do you know which language I am referring to? It's the language of LOVE. The reason it's so difficult to learn is that there are no teachers, schools or institutes that teach it. Everyone wants to be loved, but who is willing to be first in sacrificing himself to give love. The only One who can teach the language of Love is God. We must experience God's love in such abundance that we can give it to others from the overflow of His love to us." One can then go on to discuss such

things as how to have this kind of relationship with God, what it is that keeps us from experiencing His love, how God demonstrated this kind of love in Christ.

--Are you a Muslim? One can often elicit this question by a generous use of such "Muslim" expressions as "al-Hamdu-lillaah" [Praise God], "in shaa' allah" [If God wills], and "Salaamu 'alaykum" [Greetings!], and the like. To such a question one might reply, "Yes, I am Muslim, but not the way you understand the term. I am Muslim according to the real meaning of the word, that is, one who surrenders his entire life to God. I am Muslim like Sayyidna Ibrahim, 'aleeh is-salaam [Abraham, peace be upon him], who was willing to sacrifice his son to God. Because he was completely surrendered to Allah, he is called Muslim. However, I am not Muslim, if you mean by that one who "prays the required prayers and then goes out and steals" [yisalli il-farD wa yumqub il-arD --an Arabic proverb]. Do you know that according to the Qur'an the disciples of Christ [al-Hawariyyum] are 'Muslim'?" Here you could state that you believe in one God and are surrendered to Him as the disciples were. Therefore, you are a Muslim according to the real meaning of the word, but not because "Muslim" is written in your identity card!

--Fear: Deliverance from fear is a felt need, especially among women. "I used to be afraid of everything, especially death, but Christ [Sayyidna al-mesih] came to free those enslaved to the devil by their fears. He gives me peace when I am afraid."

--Christmas Tree: When visitors to your home are seated near your Christmas tree, you might ask if they know why you have a tree. You could answer that the evergreen is a symbol of everlasting life which Christ can to give us. Or that the tree symbolizes the fact that Christ was born to take the curse of death for us by being hanged on a tree (Galatians 2:22ff).

--Easter [Eed al-qiyama - "Feast of Resurrection"]: "Do you know the story about why we celebrate Resurrection Day?" (Most think it is about Christ's Ascension to heaven, not His resurrection from the dead.)

It is hoped that the readers will experiment with some of the above "conversation turners," and come up with adaptations which are suitable to their own personalities and their situations as I did. By using others' "training wheels," I was able to ride the "Conversation Turner Bike" and eventually get the hang of it so that I could eventually do it myself, adapting, innovating and developing my own Conversation Turners with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

-----  
\*e.g. Sura 3 Imran vs.52: "The disciples of Christ said, 'We are God's helpers; we have believed in God and testify that we are Muslims.'" Note that translations of the Qur'an may not indicate that the Arabic word is "Muslims."

Pouch Key = AWEAS9991

For: MISS ANGELA PURSEY  
subscr thru 95

---