

Reflections on Islam

Lesson 36

A Muslim Brother

Week 8, Monday

As a Muslim starts doing anything, there are two things he says (*both said in Arabic; only English translation are given here*): "God, protect me from the devil that You have driven out from Your presence." And, "In the name of God, who is most merciful and beneficent." Muslims basically are religiously biased people. In everything they do, they try to keep in focus the existence and presence of God.

The Concept of Sin in Islam

I was asked to reflect on Don McCurry's lectures and then to present some of my thoughts. The things I noted in Dr. McCurry's presentation include: "The reality of sin is not present in Islam. Islam does not believe that man is basically sinful." That probably would be correct in some ways. But there is this thought of *nafs*, meaning the *self*: that by ourselves we cannot do anything. That concept is not very well developed in Islam, but the thought is still there. Even Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran talked about it, that human beings are basically led by the *nafs*, the self. This is against what God wants people to do or to be.

The Qur'an also says that at the birth of every child Satan touches him or her. So, there is that concept, that little bit of reference to sin. Someone else might look into these things and make a scholarly study of what Islam really says about sinfulness. One thing to note is that in this touching of every child by Satan, only Jesus and Mary were not touched. The sinlessness of Jesus—and, of course, also of Mary—is presented in that verse.

Salvation in Islam

One of Don McCurry's other comments was that Muhammad (*Sm* - the first and last letters in the Arabic word for *peace* are an abbreviation for the phrase *Peace Be Upon Him*, which is used to honor Muhammad; here it is written only the first few times his name occurs, in order to save space, rather than after each occurrence, as is the norm.) gave a bundle of laws, so that by keeping the law we can save ourselves. For example, if we don't fast one day during the month of fasting, maybe we can feed some 60 poor people, 60 beggars, instead and thus get around our not keeping the law about fasting. Now, he is correct. There are a lot of laws, a lot of legalities: if you did this, then do that, and so forth. But, at the same time, if you ask a Muslim, "Can you go to heaven by keeping all the laws? Can you do it? Can you be sure that you can do it, if you count everything?"—he will tell you that he does not know.

He will tell you that ultimately God may accept somebody in an inkling, in a moment. Someone else, who has tried his hardest all his life—maybe even, as the stories say, millions of years (if he has that many years of life!)—even he cannot be certain that he will be with God. Muslims do not have that certainty. You cannot be sure. It is God who decides. Heaven can be opened to somebody who, we feel, is so horrible; and yet he may be acceptable to God. In an instant, something he does or says, or some change that occurs in him, may cause God to accept him then and there. That concept exists in Islam.

There is *high Islam* and *low Islam*. There are the

legalities and the popular beliefs. However, every Muslim believes that you cannot be sure of heaven. Only God knows; and God accepts people based on His own decision. He will accept people whenever their heart is right. Maybe someone has even killed many people. There are many stories about people that were robbers and murderers, who ultimately became saints of God. The concept that salvation—heaven—is *earned by doing* is there to some degree. But at a deep level most Muslims would say that God accepts a person anytime He wants to. It depends on his change of heart.

Muhammad, Prophets, and Saints in Islam

Another comment was made regarding what the Qur'an says about Muhammad (*Sm*). It said first that he is a prophet, a *rasul*; then that he is the Seal of the Prophets. First it said that he is along the line of Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus; then that he is the Seal of the Prophets. The Qur'an amply presents the fact that Muhammad is only a *warnar*, only a prophet, only a *rasul* ('sent one' or apostle in biblical terms). The Seal of the Prophets idea is also there, as is the Last Prophet idea.

Yet at the popular level, many people still believe in a lot of other special individuals called *saints*. People go to learn from them and think that God gives them special revelations. In some Muslim countries, the vast majority of the people believe in some kind of *shaykhs* or *pirs* (saints). People go to them, thinking they are receiving revelations from God and that therefore they need to learn from them. They believe that God speaks in dreams, and thus if they have a dream they will try to get an explanation from a saint. They ask: "What was this dream? Was God telling me something?" They feel that God is constantly trying to say something to them personally. But, despite this popular reliance on saints, Islam says that Muhammad (*Sm*) is the Last Prophet, the Seal of the Prophets.

Another remark made about Muhammad is that he said: "Follow me." As I heard that remark, I suddenly remembered Paul said: "Follow me, as I follow Jesus." It is not as if it is wrong to say "Follow me" if you have a good example to demonstrate, as Paul did.

Attitudes Toward Islam and Muslims

As people look at Islam and Muslims, there are various viewpoints. There are the scholars who are just trying to do a neutral study, trying to understand and present Islam as it is. But then there are people who definitely have an attitude of attacking Islam. I was reading *The Islamic Invasion* by Robert Morey. Some of the things he said were perfectly okay, but it was just his attitude that was of concern to me. Sometimes when I see this attitude, I wonder why the person is writing like this. If we as Christians say everybody has sinned and come short of the glory of God, then we know we are as bad as the Muslims are; aren't we? Or do we say we are good, we are okay? We are *not* all okay. If there are problems there in Islam, there are problems here with us Christians also. So I would say that our attitude towards Islam and Muslims is very important.

Dr. Winter: I would just point out that to put Hindus and Muslims in the same category is just an incredible misunderstanding.

Speaker: I would agree with that: it is an incredible misunderstanding. Hindus have 330 million gods! I was here one day when a seminary graduate was presenting Hinduism. I was listening to him. I grew up in a village where there were no Hindus, but near our village there were Hindus, and I had three Hindu friends. All my life I had very close relationships with Hindu friends. Of course, I did not understand their religion very much. They would tell me stories of lots of things. I cannot tell you all the stories about the Hindu gods and goddesses, all their relationships, all their sex life, the incarnations, and all kinds of things that become so complicated you cannot sort out anything. So to compare Islam with Hinduism would be very difficult for me. Muslims view themselves as believing in *one* God. This is very different from Hinduism.

Emic and Etic Views of Islam

As I present my understanding of Islam to you, let me use two words that are terms employed by anthropologists: *emic* view and *etic* view.

Dr. Winter: These terms are widely used nowadays in anthropology and in linguistics, and were invented by Kenneth Pike, one of the founders of Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Speaker: I have been through both of these views and have come to a third view of Islam. I have been an *emic* person. I was one of the Muslims who said: "We are right!" But then I came to another position, where I said: "We are all wrong! Muslims are all wrong." And now I have come to a third position—perhaps I should call it my "Pauline view." I was reading Paul and how he looks at other religions. I have come to a similar view toward Islam, as I will explain shortly.

As I talk about Islam, I speak of it from an insider's perspective and also as someone who criticized it at one time. Most of us Muslims do that. Sometimes when we are young, as we are growing up, we try to rebel and say that everything is wrong. But then you come back and say, No, everything isn't wrong; there are a lot of good things in what we have.

The *emic* view is the insider's view. The person who stays inside the culture is seeing it one way. The *etic* view is that of the person who looks at it analytically, from the outside. Those are the two views. In order to really appreciate what goes on, you probably need both of these viewpoints, to understand what actually is the reality. Each viewpoint brings out some facets of reality.

We know that in the Bible God blessed Ishmael, when Abraham was concerned about him and said, "Let Ishmael live before You." He still wasn't sure that God was going to give him another son (through Sarah). He laughed and fell prostrate, as Muslims do; and in his mind he was saying, "That is an impossibility, God! I am 100 years old and Sarah is 90 plus!" And so he said, "Let Ishmael live before You. With Ishmael, I am okay." And God said, "Yes, Ishmael: I will bless him." So Ishmael received a blessing.

God even blessed Hagar. Hagar was met by God's angel. God had to deal with that situation. As Dr. Winter says, "We have to consider that *in every situation God is*

doing something." Sometimes we view the situation and say that is Satanic, that it is of the devil. But in every situation, I think that God has something else there, too. Muslims have this view, that *nothing* happens without God's permission. Christians also believe that Providence supervises everything. So even if bad is happening, God knows it and He allows it to go on for a time; but He has another purpose behind it.

Do you view situations like that? Even when you see demonic works happening, and you wonder why? Like what is happening in Bosnia now. I wonder about that. How could all those people be killed like that, and raped and all that? And of course, unfortunately, the Muslim view is still being formed about Christianity based on their understanding of what the West does: the "Christian West"—powerful America—is still not responding to the desperate situation of the Bosnian Muslims. They are talking about allowing another ten days. Think of those ten days! The Christian Serbs are probably saying, "If we only have ten days, let us make the best of those ten days!" And every Muslim is in fear of his life.

Paul's Approach to Other Religions

The Pauline view I would like to present is found in 1 Corinthians 13:8-12. Here Paul says that everything we see, we only see partially. One thing that we need to come to realize is that we are only viewing one position; but there are other ways to look at the same things. Paul says even the prophecies will pass, knowledge will pass, everything will pass away; nothing will stay.

I hope our viewpoint is like that, as we try to understand situations. If we have a viewpoint presented to us, we know it is only one of the possible viewpoints. This morning I woke up and thought, "If anybody could present a complete, correct viewpoint, maybe Ph.D. dissertations on that topic would cease from then on, because they keep on doing dissertations on the same subject." Differing viewpoints. So we see that nobody is able to say perfectly what a situation is like. And Paul is correct: we see only partially.

Another viewpoint that Paul presents is found in Acts 17:22-23 and 28, where he really appreciates the Athenians. First he says that he was disturbed with all their idols. But when he was taken into the city square to dialogue with them, to argue with them, he says, "I see that basically you are really a religious people, a good people. You have been looking for God." In verse 28, he even quotes one of their prophets, "as one of your prophets says, we are His offspring."

In order to present the Gospel, I think our model is Paul. Paul doesn't seem to argue about their understanding or say "Your understanding is all wrong. Correct it!" Rather, he says, "Go on from here. If you have this, then from here you need to go on to something else." So, I would hope that any of us that are interested in presenting the Gospel to another people, especially to Muslims, would go on from whatever understanding they have, to building it up further.

Background on Muhammad and Early Islam

It's probably necessary to discuss the history of Islam, a short introduction to Islam. I think you'll do that later in your study program. But here I want to mention a few points of misunderstanding.

Remember that Muhammad was born in AD 570, an orphan; after his mother conceived, his father died. 'Abd Allah was his father. Then his mother died when he was only 6 years old. He was raised by his grandfather and then his uncle. And there was a lady involved in his life, whose name was Halimah, his godmother, the one who mothered him when his mother died.

As he was growing up, Muhammad was trying to be a good person. He really was a good child, because they gave him the name *al-Amin*, the Father of the Faithful. This man, who started a new religion—a faith now claimed by one-fifth of the world's population—you could not say he was a bad person. I have heard Christians say, "Oh, Muhammad was a sensuous person," because he had 13 wives. But I've heard other views that said, "No; just think of David, just think of Solomon. Think of Abraham, who married even after he had Sarah. He had two wives when he was 100 years old!" I read that he had other wives, too, later.

So in the case of Muhammad and the way he married, you have to understand what happened. That marriage to 13 wives was after the Battle of Uhud. He fought many battles, but three of them are very famous. Uhud was the one where the Muslims were defeated. Many, many men were killed. Then many Muslim women were without husbands, and there were children and orphans. So it is in that context that it says in the Qur'an: "Adopt the orphans into your families, as your children. Treat them like your own children." Then it says, "But if you cannot adopt children whose fathers are dead, as your own children, then at least marry their mothers." That way you are providing for the women who would be without support, and then you are able to provide for their children. Muhammad is trying to say, "Do the things for these orphans that should be done for your own children."

And so he says—the Qur'an says— "One, two, three, four. If you want to marry, you can marry: one, two, three, four." It doesn't say four; it says: one, two, three, four. But it gives a condition here: to treat all equally. Every wife: you have to love them all equally! And, of course, Islam will go on to say—and most Muslim scholars say—it really is prohibiting polygamy because, humanly speaking, it is not possible that you have four wives and love all of them equally well. You will always love someone better than somebody else. That is the Islamic viewpoint. These days Muslims say: "No, it hasn't been said that you can have four wives. Rather, it says that you *cannot* have four wives, because the conditions under which you are supposed to have them you can never fulfill, and so you would violate the Qur'an."

So, as I said before, for every situation there is the viewpoint of the outsider (an etic view) and that of the insider (an emic view), and both are trying to interpret what is going on and what has been said.

When Muhammad was born, Saudi Arabia was in what Islamic history has called an Age of Darkness: *jahiliyyah* means darkness, gross ignorance—Days of Ignorance. The order of the day was fighting each other: each tribe was fighting the other tribes, and there was blood feuding going on generation after generation. In every battle, if one tribe was defeated, then the victors would carry away their women as loot. So, when a girl child was born, the fathers had a tendency to throw her

out on a hill where she would die. The family was afraid that if there were a war, their girl would be taken away; so it was better to let her die before she even grew up.

This was the situation Muhammad came into. That was how the Quraysh were living at that time, the several tribes there in Makkah (Mecca). What did Muhammad do? He tried to present in that situation the best possible view of things. He reformed that society and he brought them to such a high position that at one time they conquered about half of the world. They became a civilized nation, and they even spread as far west as Spain. So, the achievements of this man are not to be forgotten.

Muhammad was called illiterate because he could not read and write. Someone questioned that statement the other day, saying that Muhammad signed a document allowing the Christians to live peacefully with Muslims. There is a view that maybe he was not completely illiterate; but Muslims will not agree with that view and will claim he was truly illiterate. I understand why they will not agree with the other viewpoint, for in our situation we say our literacy rate is 25%, and that includes the people that can barely scratch their names—they know nothing else. A person like that doesn't know what he is writing; he just knows how to make his signature. Maybe Muhammad also did something like that. He may have signed his name just the way we have some of our people sign it. They will put an impression of their left thumb if they are men, and of their right thumb if they are women. Or they will write their name: they know how to write it, but they can't spell it, they may not even know what letters they are writing.

Because Muhammad was so honest, he was involved in business for a woman, Khadijah, who was quite a bit older than he. She was very rich, and he used to do business for her and, apparently because of his honesty, she married him. She was his first wife and as long as she was alive he didn't have any other wives. He was basically a poor person until after his marriage to Khadijah, when he became very rich because she owned a lot.

Muhammad and Christian Teaching about God

Muhammad presented a view of one God: *Allah*. Now, there are various views about Allah. I saw in Morey's book that people say *Allah* is the name of one of the pre-Islamic Arab idols. For example, Muhammad's father's name was 'Abd Allah. 'Abd means servant; therefore, *Servant of Allah*. There have been many papers written about the Muslim God and the Christian God, saying that they are not the same God. It is an unfortunate way to look at it, because then we would have to say that God, *Theos*, and the Hebrew *Yahweh* are not the same. Then you would have to use only *Yahweh*, or only *I am*. But Christianity has many names for God. In India they say *Ishwar*, which is the name of one of their idols. *Theos* is the name of a Greek idol, a pagan god. So, anyone who tries to say the Muslim *Allah* and the Christian *God* are not the same has a misconception. We cannot really name Him. Sometimes the Bible says He is *Yahweh*, or *Jehovah*, or *I am that I am*.

Dr. Winter: Isn't it true that the Christians that Muhammad was in contact with, the Syriac Christians, already used the word *Allah* for God? In that sense, he was literally using the same word that the Christians

used with whom he had contact.

Speaker: That is correct. Syriac Christians were already using *Allah* as the name of God.

Dr. Winter: They used it for 600 years before Muhammad did.

Speaker: Right. Muhammad's learning about faith had been from Christians, too. When he used to go to Syria to do business for Khadijah, he used to spend his time with Christian monks. He was taught by them. Islamic history records that one of the monks said that this person would be a really great man one day, this man who comes and spends time with us. A kind of a Christian prophecy developed, with Muhammad becoming a great man one day. So quite a bit of his learning was from Christians.

His practice was to go into a cave and meditate. He used to withdraw, with his whole family sometimes, and go for meditation. Some have said that a Christian monk also used to be at that place and probably told him a lot of things. He would come out, and sometimes he would remember some of the things. At other times he would not remember some of the things.

So, when Muhammad presented God, he presented a view of *one transcendent God*.

Seven Muslim Beliefs

It would probably be good now to look at what Muslims believe. Muslims have seven main beliefs: Five Pillars and Seven Beliefs.

Belief 1: I believe in one God—one invisible, omnipotent God.

Belief 2: I believe in all the angels.

Belief 3: I believe in all the books that God revealed through prophets.

Belief 4: I believe in all the prophets—all God's prophets.

Belief 5: I believe in the final Judgment Day: a final day of reckoning between God and man.

Belief 6: I believe that nothing happens without the permission of God.

Belief 7: I believe in the death and resurrection of all.

Every Muslim child is taught these seven things that he must believe. Do you find any problem with these beliefs? Are they okay, or will Christians say something else instead of those seven things? Are these part of Christian faith or not?

Comment from the floor: Probably #2 and #3 would have to be defined. What is "belief in all the angels"?

Speaker: Do we believe in spiritual beings? in angels? God has angels.

Question from the floor: Would this include demons too? Would this include the devil?

Speaker: No. Muslims separate demons as *jinn*. They say there are many types of creatures. Angels are special, and Satan is part of the angelic host. Islam differentiates between angels, humans, and *jinn*: *insan* is *human being*; *jinn* are spiritual beings but not angels; and then there are *angels*, that are already with God. We are each supposed to have two angels: one sitting here on this shoulder and one sitting there on the other. One keeps records of all your good deeds and one keeps records of all your bad deeds. Every person has angels around him. You are supposed to believe in angels.

Comment from the floor: So, if you believe in angels in the Muslim context, that means you trust the

angels for what they are going to say. In the Christian context, Paul says we need to test the spirits to see if what they are saying is really from God or not, because as far as the hierarchy goes there would also be fallen angels.

Speaker: Muslims believe that angels can sometimes speak to you. Angels can appear in the form of human beings, and you can test some of them. That is correct. No problem with that.

Five Pillars of Islam, and Belief in the Miraculous

Comment from the floor: I am really puzzled about the Ka'bah. Obviously this is a very simple question, but it is raised because everyone wants to go to Mecca and go around the Ka'bah and touch it. Yet this is not one of the Seven Beliefs. What is this Ka'bah, and why is it so essential, even though they say nothing about it in the Qur'an or in their beliefs?

Dr. Winter: It is like the shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, or like in the Philippines: this voice said the Virgin was going to reappear, and a million people were gathered down there! We have similar practices in Christianity.

Comment from the floor: Yes, but we consider that heretical, whereas this is not considered heretical by any of the Muslims.

Dr. Winter: Catholics don't consider it heretical.

Speaker: The Ka'bah falls under the Five Pillars of Islam, the kind of five *do-ables*: what one has to do. The Seven Beliefs are kind of a statement of faith: what do I believe and what don't I believe.

The Five Pillars of Islam are:

Pillar 1 is the *shahadah* or *creed*, again a statement of faith: "There is no God other than God, and Muhammad is His prophet."

Pillar 2 is to perform *salat*, or *prayers*, five times a day.

Pillar 3 is fasting, a month of fasting: *Ramadan*.

Pillar 4 is *zakat*, or in the English translation it is called *alms*. I would like to say it is more like a tithe. Of course, it is not the same as a tithe, because a tithe is on all that you earn; but *zakat* is figured after you have taken care of your needs: you are supposed to give 2.5% of the savings you have left. It is not 10%. And if you have no surplus, you don't do it.

Question from the floor: Do most Muslims give this, or have money to give?

Speaker: Most try to give it. For instance, if wives and daughters have golden ornaments they are supposed to weigh and count and then give out against that. And they do. My brothers do it. A lot of people do. It is not given to the mosque, but to poor people. You can give it to poor relatives or to anybody that is poor. Not to the mosque; just to the poor.

Dr. Winter: What do you give to the mosque? Anything?

Speaker: You go out to the mosque and sometimes there is a mosque committee which is responsible for upkeep of the mosque and paying the *imam* ('priest' or leader) of the mosque. Normally, that is how it is done, or used to be done. But now we have learned from the West how to do fundraising and now we can get grants. Previously, it would be like our family saying, "We will give so much grain for the mosque." Sometimes the mosque has students and they will send out their stu-

dents to collect grain and whatever else people will donate. The rich men will give money. Some people believe that there is merit in taking care of the mosque, that God is happy about that. So people that are rich will donate money to build the building or whitewash it or do any of the upkeep needed. It is a kind of voluntary thing.

The tithe does not have to go to the mosque. It can. If somebody says he wants to give it to the *imam* (the leader), he can, but it is not compulsory. You do have to give it to the poor. One way in which Islam is speaking like the Bible is in talking about taking care of the poor. So you are supposed to give to the poor any of those things God is asking you to give. It doesn't say you have to give it to the mosque or the *imam*.

Question from the floor: Is the *imam* the only paid worker in the mosque?

Speaker: Yes. He is the only one.

Pillar 5 is the *Hajj*. That is, going to Mecca and the Ka'bah once a year.

This is only applicable to the rich person. The poor person who cannot do it is not required to. The fourth and fifth Pillars are only applicable to the rich. People who can do #4—*zakat*—giving this extra from their surplus, may not be able to go on the *Hajj*, too. The *Hajj* is something that is not absolutely necessary. It is one of the Five Pillars, but many people never do it. The rich do it. And it has come to be thought that if you can do it once in a lifetime, your sins may be forgiven, if you have been there and you have performed the *Hajj* and have kissed the black stone in the Ka'bah.

Question from the floor: What is *Jihad* ?

Speaker: Many people think *Jihad* is fighting and killing, but the real meaning of *Jihad* is to *strive for good things* . Islam is trying to reinterpret it. These days if you hear a television broadcast on Islam in an Islamic nation, you will hear that *Jihad* means striving for good things.

Islam has a lot of stories about whom you can kill and whom you cannot kill. You cannot kill when you are angry. It is prohibited. It is said that Ali, who was one of the four caliphs, was in a war at one time, and he had an enemy under him and was ready to kill him. The enemy spat on his face. So Ali just got up and said, "No, I can't kill you anymore, for I am angry because you spat on my face. If I kill you now, God will hold me responsible. I was going to kill you, because you are against God. But now I cannot, because you spat on me. So I cannot kill you." It is said that the enemy became a Muslim after that.

Comment from the floor: To go back to the Ka'bah for a moment—not to be critical, since we have similar things in some forms of Christianity. But it seems contradictory to me that they reject all the idols, and yet they are treating this black stone as if it is a savior.

Speaker: Sometimes in popular faith people who are not highly educated just have all of these feelings. So, it is part of the popular faith that if you kiss *hajar aswad* , the black stone in the Ka'bah, you will become sinless. In high Islam, if you went to the theologians, they will say it doesn't happen like that; they will interpret it differently. They will say it is for creating unity among Muslims. It is a symbol for creating unity. They are not coming to worship that stone. They are coming to wor-

ship God.

Their belief is that this Ka'bah was built by Abraham. Hagar was banished from her home, Sarah's home, and was sent away. Muslims say she was sent away to Mecca. The Muslim historians will say that Abraham used to go and meet Hagar and her son Ishmael there. Ishmael and Abraham built the Ka'bah as a house of worship for God. It later degenerated into a temple where there were many, many idols. Muhammad cleared out all the idols when he entered it after returning from Medina. The first thing he did when he entered the Ka'bah was to throw all those idols out of that house and make it a place of worship of the one true and invisible God.

So when Muslims go there, they are not worshipping that black stone; neither are they worshipping that house (the Ka'bah). They believe that it was built by Abraham, and God is specially present when they go there as a whole community. They think that God is going to listen to them. They think that God is present in a special way because Abraham and Ishmael were there. So they think they are following an Abrahamic faith in going there.

Now, popular faith says if you have been there and have kissed *hajar aswad* , the stone, your sins are forgiven—that is in some ways syncretistic. But Islamic theologians will not agree with that belief. Some of the theologians will not kiss the black stone.

Question from the floor: So, the black meteorite stone just meant that God wanted to recognize this as a special place? Where did this black stone come from?

Speaker: They say that the black stone was the first stone laid by Abraham in building the Ka'bah. Others say the stone used to be inside the house and that it is paganistic. I cannot tell you much about the origin of the stone. I have not really inquired into it.

Dr. Winter: It is a strange stone, and that is why people thought there must be something special about it. It was probably a meteorite, and for that reason there are not a lot of them around. It is not part of a great geological stratum. It is just an absolutely unique stone. People began to think there was something special about this stone, and eventually it became a drawing card. And, like Lourdes in France or Fatima in Spain or the apparition in the Philippines, a popular religion developed around it.

Question from the floor: Do the theologians of high Islam preach against kissing the stone? Do they call it syncretistic and say it is wrong?

Speaker: I have not heard that. But sometimes on television these days in Islamic nations where the television programs are controlled by governments, the governments present a lot of programs on Islam. They started teaching against many of these things. But under popular pressure—the government is also afraid because of the huge masses of people that have all these misconceptions—they suddenly toned down some of this teaching, because the popular faith people cannot handle all this high Islamic teaching.

Question from the floor: But there are people who do believe this is like worshipping an idol?

Speaker: Right.

Dr. Winter: It is like in Christianity. You very rarely hear a preacher saying baptism doesn't save anybody. Now and then they talk about justification by faith and

they say, "You know, it doesn't matter whether you get baptized or not." But in my whole life I've never heard that more than once or twice, that it does not actually matter whether you are baptized or not. But we say, "No, No! Jesus said to be baptized. If you reject Jesus, you can't be saved." So, essentially, baptism doesn't save you, but if you don't get baptized you will be lost. So you go round and round and round on a thing like that; and frankly most Christians just shrug it off and say, "Well, sure; let's get baptized, but let's make sure that they have a spiritual understanding of it," and so forth.

The fact is that we do not contradict popular ideas very often. For example, infinity. Or, let's even take a phrase like the *Old Testament*. How many times have you heard anyone say that *Old Testament* is not a biblical phrase?—as Kaiser is so bold to do; and he only timidly mentions it once. But he actually entitles his book *Toward an Old Testament Theology*. High Christianity would reject the idea that this is the *Old Testament*; but how can Christianity do without an Old Testament? So, there is also this contrast, even within Christianity, between the high and the popular view.

Question from the floor: I just wondered, of all the Muslims living now, what percentage have already or are likely in their lifetime to be able to make the Hajj?

Speaker: I don't know the percent, but very few really. You have a limit from each country. If you say one billion people in the world are Muslims, every year the government of each country is given a quota, so that there will be an estimate of the needed facilities at any given time. You do the Hajj only at a specific time; for instance, the 30th of May or the 3rd of June. I talked to my daughters and they say it is the 2nd or 3rd of June this year. During the *Id* (festival) when they make this animal sacrifice, that is the time you are supposed to go there. That is the only time for the Hajj: once a year, on that specific date. Therefore, you can see that many people want to come at that time, and every government now has limitation quotas given by the Saudi Arabian government. Iran can send so many. India will send so many. So many Indonesian Muslims can come. So numbers are given to each country. There is a minority allowed from every country. Take Saudi Arabia, for instance: they live close by, so probably everybody from there can do it. Only a small percent of persons from outside that territory can go.

Question from the floor: Do you think you would ever go? And if so, why?

Speaker: Well, I am a believer in Jesus Christ, and I don't believe in any of that. But I have a friend who is like me: he also believes in Jesus Christ, but he says he will go once at least, because he wants that name *Hajji*, *Al-Hajj* before his name. He said, "Nobody then can tell me that I am short of anything. If I present Jesus Christ, they cannot say, 'Hey, you are a Christian. I don't want that talk.' So I will become *Al-Hajj* so and so."

Comment from the floor: Sort of like Paul being able to say he was a Pharisee.

Speaker: Right. So there are people like that. If I can go there, I would like to go; and probably I can. But who wants to write *Al-Hajj* before their name? I don't.

Comment from the floor: It is something like the Jews going to Jerusalem. And in one sense, the black

stone would be like the wailing wall, wouldn't it?

Speaker: Yes, you can probably compare it to that. But the biggest thing about the Hajj is creating unity among Muslims: that Muslims from around the world are coming together at one time in one place, to show the impact of saying, "We are Muslims!" So we go there from every country. And when these Hajjis return, crowds of people come to listen to them. "What happened? How many people came from where? How did they look?" A lot of things to say. It creates a kind of a feeling in building a community, building a unity among so many diverse populations from so many different countries. I think it presents a unique opportunity to bring them together.

Comment from the floor: Kind of like Lausanne I and Lausanne II.

Speaker: Right.

Islam and Christianity

Dr. Winter: There is an island in the north of Indonesia, where every last person on the island is a Muslim. This is fairly recent Islam, because Islam got there after Christianity got to Indonesia. They have one mosque for every single day of the year: 365 mosques. There are only about 140,000 people on the island; but every single person on that island who is an adult has made the Hajj. They are very sophisticated people. They read the *New York Times* and they have fax machines. This is a very, very up-to-date bunch of people. They are university-trained people, who are familiar with Harvard and Oxford and so forth. Interesting island, right?

I read about this island in *Mission Frontiers*. I didn't see the article until after it was published. But the writer of this article was writing as if these were just absolute pagans. "Isn't it terrible that Islam has such a *hold* on their hearts and minds?"

Frankly, you would think this would be an ideal location for people to read the *Injil* (the Gospels), to follow through on the ramifications of their faith, and to find out more about Jesus Christ, and to build on that background. But, No! The writer of the article (a missionary) talked as if you were just starting from scratch with these people.

Now, I would look at it like you had come to some kind of an island off the south coast of India, that is solidly Catholic: 100% French Catholic. Also, it has a higher divorce rate than the United States even, and again has about 140,000 people. Well, you would say, "You believe the Bible? So do we. Let's study it together." Wouldn't you? You wouldn't say that the Bible is bad and the Pope is bad and everything else is bad. You would try to build on what it is they believe, that was valid.

I just feel there is a great deal of misunderstanding in our relationship to other forms of Christianity. And, of course, *I consider Islam another form of Christianity*—an Eastern form of Christianity, which is very defective, just like every other form of Christianity is very defective.

There are all kinds of back-and-forth arguments between the philosophers in each of these traditions: the Shi'ites and the Sunnis and the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics; and they kill each other over their differences. Talk about the Hajj. The Crusades, you know,

were focused geographically and they swept East. When they went through Istanbul, that beautiful Hagia Sophia cathedral—they just tore it apart and killed a lot of the people, because they were like the Croatians killing the Serbs. The people in Istanbul were Serb-type Christians, that is to say Orthodox, and the Crusaders were Catholic-type Christians, that is to say Western. So they killed each other. All over the Holy Grail. What a bunch of nonsense! There wasn't even such a thing to be found!

Meanwhile, we talk about the Hajj. How many Christians go to the Holy Land every year? The early Muslims prayed toward Jerusalem; later they started praying toward Mecca, but we are the ones who gave them the idea of a holy place to pray toward. We Christians are the ones who gave them that idea.

We Christians gave them a horrid view of God—a tri-theism—which Muhammad was wise enough to reject. It was *heretical* Christians he was in touch with. It isn't as if he took pure Christianity and mixed paganism with it. He ran into a very messed-up form of Christianity and actually improved it by rejecting the tri-theism of the Christians, as he understood it. And we as Christians today reject that same theology; so in that sense, he was agreeing with us on that particular point.

The Qur'an and Islam

Speaker: Let us come to the point of *the Qur'an and Islam today*. In Don McCurry's presentation, I was hearing that Muhammad said such and such. Let's look at the Qur'an first.

The Qur'an was given, Muslims believe, as the *direct* Word of God. God spoke through Gabriel, who spoke to Muhammad. He got it by heart, and he came out of the cave and recited it to his disciples, and they wrote it down. The Qur'an was not in written form when Muhammad died. It was in many different places on many pieces of paper. It started to be collected at the time of the second caliph, Umar. At the time of the third caliph, Uthman, the Qur'an was being recited in at least four different ways; some say maybe seven different ways. For the same verse, some said one thing and some said another thing.

Uthman felt he had the duty to correct that. So he got everything that was with the wife of Muhammad, A'ishah. He kept that one as the authoritative version and destroyed everything else. He even had some of the *hafiz* (those who know the Qur'an by heart—the Qur'an used to be recited more)—he had many of the *hafiz* also killed, because they recited it differently than what was written. As a result, he also was killed when he was reciting the Qur'an inside a mosque. A Muslim would never do anything like that. But some fanatic believed that Uthman was doing a disservice to Islam, that he was destroying Islam; so they killed him inside the mosque while he was reciting the Qur'an. Although the Muslims would say, "No, the Qur'an remained in the form that it was originally, and God protected it," there is evidence that it was being recited in different ways and one person had to correct it. The result was that he was also killed in that process.

So, the Islam that you see today really was developed 300 years later than Muhammad, after he was dead. I have this Qur'an here. As with any religion, you have mythologizing. You have the true, pure form of religion,

and then it degenerates into many mythologies about what it was and what it was not. When Muhammad died, Umar (who later became the second caliph), the strongest man among the believers, said, "If anybody says Muhammad died, I will kill him." He was so angry that he said, "Muhammad cannot die."

Then came Abu Bakr (who became the first caliph, successor to Muhammad) and he heard this going on inside the mosque, with all these people there and Umar saying that Muhammad can never die, he is only sick. Abu Bakr came and recited a verse from the Qur'an, which said, "Muhammad is only a man. 'If Muhammad dies, as other men die, would you that believe in Me discontinue believing in Me?'" (God is saying that.) For Muhammad had died. Then Abu Bakr said, "Anybody that worshipped Muhammad, for him Muhammad is dead. But anybody that worshipped the one true God, Allah, for him Allah is alive. Allah never dies."

So, you can see the evidence of mythologizing about Muhammad that was always going on, that Muhammad is this or Muhammad is that.

Dr. Winter: I am sure you are shocked at the idea of someone being killed who was repeating the Qur'an slightly differently. In the Christian tradition, hundreds of years before Muhammad was born, they had these Councils, and the Bishop of Alexandria would go to a Council. And there was what they called popular religion. In Charlemagne's day, which was about 200 years after Muhammad, for example, in the streets of Istanbul when people bought vegetables they would ask, "Well, do you believe in the *filioque* clause? This was the difference between the West and the East. It was a key difference over there: whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father, or whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Son. It was a technicality. Charlemagne wrote a long theological paper on that subject, and they argued about this in the streets. In the Low Countries, slightly different points of Calvinism would lead to race riots and mutilation of people in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Going back, now, to the fourth and fifth centuries, a bishop in one case came back from one of these Councils. The people heard how he had voted. In order to produce some kind of unanimity in the former empire, he had agreed with these other people. When he walked into his cathedral, the mob set on him—the believers—and just tore his arms and legs off, and let him bleed to death as a bloody torso. This is the way Christians acted in similar circumstances.

Then you say, "But they weren't real Christians." So you can say of some of these things that happened in Islam, they weren't real believers either. In other words, in every major religious tradition you have high-minded, sensitive people, and you have brutish, popular forces; the parallel again is there.

Speaker: So Muhammad probably is not responsible for many of the things Muslims say he is. To me, it is not right to say what Muhammad claimed for himself; we do not know whether Muhammad really claimed it about himself. *Now* people say he claimed something; but we really don't know what Muhammad said about it.

What I normally do in training in Christian communications with our people, I would have three or four people, and I would tell the first man, "Read this message; then tell it to the next person, and tell him to

repeat it to the next, and then repeat it to the next." You get to the fourth or the fifth man to come back and say what was written, and he will say something completely different. You never say the same thing: you pass it from person to person, and you never get back the same thing.

So, just think: What Muhammad said or did, they are trying to determine 300 years later. "I heard my father say that he heard his grandfather say, Muhammad did such and such or said such and such." That is how the *Hadith*, the tradition, was written. So when we discuss these things, we tell our believers—the people whom we call believers, who believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior and Redeemer and their personal Savior—we tell them that whatever is said in the *Hadith* we are not going to discuss, because there are a lot of contradictions among *Hadith* traditions. We mainly like to stay to the *Qur'an*.

The *Qur'an* is divided into two main parts: the *Sura-e-Makki* and the *Sura-e-Madani*. *Makki* refers to Mecca. In *Sura-e-Makki* are the things that were revealed to Muhammad while he was in Mecca, before he went to Medina. When he was presenting the view of only one God—the true, invisible, omnipotent, one God, a lot along the line of Christianity—his own people were trying to kill him. They were saying that he had become a challenge to their own authority. So he had to run away and save himself by going to Medina. In Medina there were Christians and there were Jews that sheltered him.

When the Muslim believers were badly persecuted in Mecca, Muhammad asked some of them to go to Ethiopia. Ethiopia was a Christian country, and so, many of the believers went to Ethiopia, to the Christians, because their faith was similar. He said, "If you go to them they will protect you." So Muhammad, in my mind, was presenting Christianity as we believe today. He told his people to go and be with them. "They are like us; they will save us, they will help us." The Ethiopians did keep them and housed them, gave them shelter. *Sura-e-Makki*, then, were things that were said in Mecca.

Sura-e-Madani refers to Medina, the other major city of Islam. Muhammad went there to save his own life—from Mecca to Medina. Things that were revealed in Medina are called *Sura-e-Makki*. You can see some variations there. For instance, in *Sura-e-Makki* the Christians and those that believe in one God, like the Jews, have no fear on the Last Day. Christians are your best friends. Everything about Christianity is good in *Sura-e-Makki*. In *Sura-e-Madani*, you have differences: there the Christians are your worst enemies! That is still in *Sura-e-Madani*. Historically, this happened because at first, the Christians are helping them; even the Jews are helping the Muslims. They are saying, "Okay, this man is trying to present the true religion to his people." So both Jews and Christians befriend him. But when he goes to Medina and he becomes a little more powerful, and they see that the power is now going to go away from them to this new group that is coming up, they start opposing him. They start, in many ways, to try to fight him. Therefore, the view of those people as being friendly is changed to them becoming enemies.

Some feel that if the Christians had stayed close to Muhammad and helped him more, instead of challenging him, there would have been only Christianity. As

Dr. Winter said, *Islam is a form of Christianity*. And I strongly believe that.

My View of Islam

How do I look at Islam? As an emic person, and at one time etic, and then again with a Pauline view. I think Islam is a post-Judaism and post-Christianity religion and, therefore, quite similar to Judaism and Christianity. I would go as high as claiming at least 80% similarity between the two.

I believe Muhammad was a great missionary, a charismatic leader. He was trying to reform his own community. He gave them faith in the one invisible God. He gave them the faith that they must believe the other Scriptures. He told them all about the prophets: Abraham, Adam, the creation story; and sorted it out for them. There are some problems there, but basically he said the same thing about God creating Adam.

In our work, we tell our people: Never disrespect Muhammad. We always say *Hazrat Muhammad*, calling him honorably, "Sir"; and then, *Peace be on him (Sm)*. It is an expression that is used for all prophets.

I believe that there are quite a few misconceptions in Islam, but I do not believe that Muhammad is responsible for that. The *Qur'an*, even after it had been tampered with, has enough evidence that he was trying to present the one true God.

He also was trying to present Christ as an incarnation of God. Why do I believe that? I will show you a *Sura* (chapter) here: *Sura 43* verse 57 and 58. "And when the son of Mary is quoted as an example, behold the folk laugh out and say 'Are our gods better, or is he?' They raise not the objections save for argument. Nay, but they are a contentious folk." God is complaining to Muhammad that when Jesus is presented, people laugh and they say, "Are not our gods better than he?" They are a contentious people.

Why is Jesus being compared with *gods*? He is not being compared with prophets. He is not being compared with anything else. The word here in 57 is *aliha tuna*. *Ilah* or *aliha* is 'one we worship'. So they are saying, "Are not our worship-ables, better than he?" Whatever was being said here gives me a picture that he was trying to present Jesus as someone that was worthy of our praise and worship. But people are saying, "Nay. We have others, we have our gods. They are okay." God is complaining about that to Muhammad. They are a contentious folk. They only like to argue and don't accept anything.

So there are evidences like this that Muhammad probably presented Jesus like we present him. When Uthman took over, we don't know what else happened.

Sacrifice in Islam

Now the issue of *blood*. One thing that Don McCurry referred to was blood shedding because some people put their finger in the blood and put it on their lips. There is a great division among the Muslims between the Shi'a and Sunni. The Sunnis are the 90% majority of the Muslims and Shi'as are about 10%. Shi'as believe that spiritual leadership in Islam comes through family ties, so they disregard the first three caliphs (successors to Muhammad). After Muhammad's death there were three caliphs: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman; and then came Ali. Now Ali was the first cousin of Muhammad and he

became one of the earliest believers. He married Muhammad's only daughter, Fatima. Therefore, the Shi'as say that the mantle of spiritual leadership should go from Muhammad directly to Ali, who is his first cousin (blood-related) and who is also the husband of his only daughter.

The Shi'as also hold the view that you have to suffer for religion; hence, the story of Muharram. If you have been to Islamic nations, in places where Shi'as live, in the month of Muharram you will see that people are out on the street, beating their bodies with knives and whips and hurting themselves, bleeding all over. And they call out, "Ya, Husan! Ya, Husayn!" These are the names of the sons of Ali (grandsons of Muhammad). Husayn died in a battle with the opposition. Shi'ites believe that on the Day of Judgment the blood-soaked cloth of Husayn will be put there in favor of people that are being saved, that are going to go to heaven. The issue of blood, the issue of sacrifice exists.

Don McCurry referred to the story in the Qur'an when Abraham was asked to sacrifice his only son. Of course, Muslims generally believe it is Ishmael. But I can prove from the Qur'an that it was Isaac. God says in the Qur'an, "We saved him by a mighty sacrifice, by a magnificent sacrifice (*qurban-el-azim*)." When I discussed this with our people, I say: "What is this 'magnificent sacrifice?' Is it the sheep or goat that Abraham found and then sacrificed? Was that 'magnificent' (*azim*) in the sight of God? These days we can buy a goat or sheep for sacrifice. Some rich people pay thousands of dollars to buy an animal for sacrifice! So that could not be a magnificent sacrifice in the eyes of God. God has something else in view."

So, there are references in the Qur'an showing that a sacrifice (*qurban*) is needed.

Again, the view of *spotlessness*: a spotless lamb. The Jews had this view and Muslims have the same view. When they go to look for their sacrificial animal, they are supposed to see that it is not lame, that it has all the teats, that it is of the right age. If it is a she-goat or a cow, then you are supposed to make sure it is not pregnant. All of these things are properly tested. So the idea of a spotless sacrifice is there in Islam.

So, if we stick with Islam as it is presented in the Qur'an, we can present Jesus Christ from the Qur'an.

Jesus Death in the Qur'an

Let us come to this issue of *contextualization*. I believe that Islam is one form of Christianity, and it is easier to deal with Muslims and present Jesus Christ than it is to deal with Hindus or Buddhists or anybody else. They have the same view of God that we have. They have the same faith that Jesus is alive today and that He will return on the Final Judgment Day. They believe that He is one of the four major prophets in addition to Muhammad. These major prophets are: Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and Muhammad. Jesus is also called the *Word of God* in the Qur'an: *Kalimat-ullah*, 'Word' of Allah. It is one of His names. The way Jesus was born, as we understand it, is accepted by Muslims as true.

The problem in the Qur'an is that people say Jesus did not die. Again, it can be proven from the Qur'an that He *did* die. This is found in the third Sura, verse 55.

God is telling Muhammad, "Allah said, 'Oh, Jesus! Lo, I am gathering thee and causing thee to ascend unto Me, and I am cleansing thee of those who disbelieve, and am setting those who follow thee above those who disbelieve, until the Day of Resurrection.'" So, the Christians are set above everybody else until the Day of Resurrection. "Then unto Me ye will return and I shall judge between you and that wherein you used to differ."

Here God is saying, "I will take you to Me." This translation says, "I am gathering thee and causing thee to ascend unto Me." The Arabic word used here, *muta-waffika* [translated as 'gathering'], is related to and has the same root as the word for *death*. I have seen only one translation that says, "I am going to cause you to die." The word itself is *death*.

The problem is that when the Islamic scholars interpreted it, they said, "No, it was not death," because there is another verse that says, "The Jews say that they killed Jesus, but they could not kill him. It only appeared to them that they killed him. But I hold the key to life and death." (God is saying that.)

Some Muslims scholars are trying to argue that if it 'appeared' that He died, and yet He did not really die, then He was not really crucified. Therefore, God took Him up alive. So they have a story built around it, to the effect that Jesus was locked inside a room, and the next morning Pilate asked Jesus to be brought out. Judas went to take Jesus out. But during the middle of the night God had taken Jesus to Him. When Judas came and opened the room, there was nobody there. He returned to tell them that He was not there. In the meantime, his appearance changed to that of Jesus. People then said, "That is Jesus! Get him!" Therefore, Judas was crucified instead of Jesus. The reason for this story is that they are trying to think this through: if it only 'appeared' to them that Jesus died, then He did not really die.

The other thing that they are thinking is that God is omnipotent. He is so powerful that He can do anything. So, when there is someone who is so faithful and so good—as no other prophet has ever been—how could God allow that man to suffer like that? They think that it only appeared to the Jews that Jesus was dead, but He really wasn't dead.

It says that God took Jesus. If the word that Muhammad quoted in the Qur'an, *muta-waffika*, really means *death*, then God is saying, "I am going to give you death, and I am going to raise you up to Me again." That is what God did, isn't it? Jesus died and He rose on the third day. It is there in the Qur'an: the Arabic word which is used implies death.

But the scholars are trying to argue about it and say that it is *not* death; it is only fulfilling his time, completing his mission, and taking him up to Him. So, they differ. But if you use a concordance of the Qur'an and look up the word used here, *muta-waffika*, and see how many places it appears and how it is translated, you will find that *other than this one place, everywhere else it is translated as death*. It is only in *this* place that they want to translate it differently. I have only seen one scholar translate it as: "I am going to cause you to die." In all other versions, it is always translated as something else.

This is in the Qur'an Sura 3, verse 55. This is *Sura-e-Madini*. But, if you study the Qur'an and any of the

good translations, you will find that some of these verses belong in other places, but they have brought them in here. That is because they felt it fit more logically here than anywhere else. Not all of the verses in *Sura-e-Madini* are from Medina. In *Sura-e-Makki*, not all the verses are from Mecca. In the Qur'an it says that some believe this Sura was revealed earlier at Mecca.

God as Understood by Muslims and Christians

One more view I wish to present is that Christianity will improve its own understanding of God by being informed by Islam. Now I hear people are talking more about *one* God. In 1963, when I first became a believer, I had misconceptions; I could not completely understand the Christian teaching about God. Just recently, about three months ago, I met a Christian in a meeting who still believes that the Christian God is three separate deities. The word used was *three persons*, but as he was trying to put this in his own language, he said, "No, it is three gods: the Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit." The Western missionaries taught him the three personhood of God and he thinks the Gods are three. This is a Christian person. There were others who said, "Don't argue with him; he doesn't understand it." You can see the misconception that is being created.

Islam challenges us to *one* God. Yesterday I was in the Church on the Way. The pastor, Jack Hayford, was presenting the One God view: the motherhood of God and the fatherhood of God, and how, as we try to understand, we have gone in directions that lead us away from the true Scriptural faith to something that we imagine. We say a word, and that word conjures up a picture in our mind, and we think God is like that. Therefore, some Christians get the view that God is three.

Islam says, "Say not three." By saying *triune* we are causing people to go in directions they do not understand. That is why the Qur'an says, "Say not three." How can I understand a triune God? Is that three? Is that one? We have a hard time conceptualizing the fact that God remains One.

For a Muslim, it is not impossible to think that God became man. When we present it, I say two things to a Muslim. I say, "God is one God. How many gods do you believe in?" "One God." "I have something in my hand and say, 'This is one, right?' I give it to you. Do I have it?" "No, you don't have it." "So, one minus one is equal to zero. Is God present here even as I am talking?" "Yes, He is present." "Then He is not there in heaven?" "No, He is there in heaven." "How can He be, if He is one God? One minus one is equal to zero. If He is going to be present in this classroom, then He cannot be anywhere else now." "No, He can be!" Muslims believe that He can be everywhere at the same time.

So I say, "Okay. The one God—He is *one*, always one. But it is not *our* one. It is not our numerical, or human, *one*. We have to go above humanity to try to understand God." The Muslim has no problem with that. God can be everywhere at the same time: among the angels, among human beings, in His other creations, in the hearts of all. That is okay with Muslims. So I say, "Then is it possible for God to become man?" They will say, "Yes, sure!" "And it is also possible for Him to remain as God, too?" They say, "Yes. He can do all of that."

One of their problems is thinking that if you say God became man, then there is no God. I will ask, "Is it impossible for God?" They will say, "No, it is not impossible." Then I ask, "Then, why do you say that He can't do that? Why do we argue and say He cannot do that? Because the Qur'an says the Word of God, the Spirit of God, became man. And yet we are arguing and saying, 'No, it was not God.' But God did it."

Presenting Christ to Muslims

The Qur'an helps us in presenting the Gospel. For one billion people, the Qur'an will help them to find Jesus Christ, if we can present it—if we can know how to use this book—like Paul did. In my viewpoint, instead of trying to critique and criticize like an academician, saying, "This is wrong," and, "They have it all mixed-up; they have it all wrong"—I think we need to build on what they have, from what they understand. From this point on, help them to go further. Any educator would say that with adult education, you have to start from the known and move towards the unknown. You cannot start with unknown things.

What we have found out is that our people are able to easily conceptualize Jesus Christ and accept Him as presented in the Scripture, the Bible, and believe in Him. But it is very difficult for them to become *Christians*. This is because Christianity and Islam have a history. To every Muslim, the term *Christian* is the term that in some way identifies an enemy to Islam: an enemy to everything they stand for.

Therefore, in our work, we are what we are: we are *Muslims*, we are born into that situation. We are Muslims, but we need Jesus Christ.

I see that most Muslims are able to accept that. But we have to shun debating them and proving that they are wrong. We also can be wrong. We, as Christians, go to debate with them, and we cognitively and logically try to prove our point, and it does not work with them. You can win the argument, but you lose a friend. In evangelism, in trying to present the Gospel, you don't try to win an argument.

Our view, therefore, of how to present Jesus Christ to Muslims needs to be re-evaluated. Islam needs to be re-evaluated. I know that at the popular level there are all kinds of misconceptions. But there are all kinds of helpful things. God has kept them there. There are truths hidden among all of those things. So we need to dig out the truth there. In every situation, the truth of God is mixed up. Like Jesus said: the tares and the wheat grow together. It is the same situation. The tares and the wheat are together. If we want to truly evangelize, truly present Jesus Christ to Muslims, we have to try to separate tares and wheat.

And it's not difficult. Islam is a form of Christianity. It is not comparable to any of the other religions. It is only comparable to Judaism and Christianity. Exclusiveness is there. People have said that it is very difficult to present Christ in Hinduism because they can easily accept Jesus Christ and put Him up on their shelf among their 330 million gods. One more is added. There is no problem with that at all. But Islam will not do that. When it accepts the Gospel, it truly accepts it as it is. And it is presented in the Qur'an, too.