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## THE MUSLIM FAITH AND THE CHRISTIAN CONTRAST

*Lilly A. Takona*

*Evangelism is very difficult if the one evangelizing does not know the worldview of those whom he is evangelizing. Muslims are a growing power throughout Africa. They may be our neighbours or owners of the businesses in our community. Christians need to know what Muslims really believe. Lilly Takona discusses the various contrasts between the Muslim faith and Christian belief with great accuracy.*

A little more than a century ago Africa was unreached with the Gospel of Christ. A century later, Africa has been referred to as the continent with the fastest growing church. The entire sub-Saharan Africa is now a field where opportunity invites the proclamation of the Word of God.

But what about the Muslims? These millions, where are they going? What is to be their future? What is to be their condition in the world beyond the grave?

Islam is a growing religious force which aims at establishing regulations and rules for every department of an individual's life, and seeks to conform the person to the will of Allah. Like Judaism's law, regulations and rules in Islam are beyond human ability to keep and observe perfectly

The Old Testament laws were fulfilled by Jesus in a flawless manner because he was the Son of God. The New Covenant and the plan of life established by God after Christ's death makes men the recipients of the Holy Spirit, and temples of the living God through faith (1 Cor. 3:16).

This relationship superseded the Old Testament mode of fellowship and communion, enabling the Christian to live a life pleasing to God because Christ becomes the Christian's life. These truths found in the Bible are foreign to Muslims and are abhorred because Mohammed promulgated the idea that he

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was the greatest of the prophets.<sup>1</sup> The message in the Quran is accepted by Muslims, even though it is little understood. The Quranic instructions are believed to be the very words of God.

In a lay conference several years ago, sponsored by the division of Christian-Muslim Relations of the National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCCK), most participants expressed a state of being confused and having vague concepts of the Muslim doctrines. This requires further clarification and insight into Islamic beliefs. Until Islam is understood clearly, the spiritual needs of the Muslims will not be met. Furthermore, the witness of the Christian may not be pertinent and effective. As Muslim beliefs are explained, the uniqueness and superiority of the Christian faith become apparent and the weaknesses and vulnerability of Islam become evident.

### **MUSLIM DOCTRINE OF GOD: AND THE CHRISTIAN CONTRAST**

The first clause of the Muslim creed reads: "There is no god but Allah."

The Trinitarian belief as found in the Bible is contradicted by the doctrine of the unity of God as explained in Muslim dogma. Several statements are often quoted in support of the Muslim protest against the doctrine of the Triune God. These include:

Lo! Allah pardoneth not that partners should be ascribed unto Him. He pardoneth all save that to whom He will. Whoso ascribeth partners unto Allah hath wandered far astray.<sup>2</sup>

They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. The Messiah (himself) said: O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Lo! Whoso ascribeth partners unto Allah hath forbidden Paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evil doers there will be no helpers. They surely disbelieve who says: Lo! Allah is the third of three; when there is no God save the one God. If they desist not from so saying a painful doom will fall on those of them who disbelieve.<sup>3</sup>

Theological difficulties grow out of the Muslim concept of God. Allah is a transcendent, sovereign being, the absolute First Cause of everything, completely self-sufficient, unaffected by His surroundings and thus incapable of

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<sup>1</sup> Quran: Suratul Al-Ahzab (*The Clans*) 40.

<sup>2</sup> Quran: Suratul An-Nisa (*Women*) 116.

<sup>3</sup> Quran: Suratul Al-Ma'idah (*The Table Spread*) 73.

being altered by any being or agent. He is transcendent above all events in time and space. Allah's transcendence completely separates him from His creatures, making it impossible to know God or to have a personal relationship with Him.

Muslims do not understand that the doctrine of the unity of God is a central truth of biblical thought and Christian theology. Basic to all prophetic teaching of the Old Testament are the words of Moses: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, *the Lord is one*. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:4,5). Jesus quoted these words and declared, "This is the first and greatest commandment" (Matt. 22:38). Indeed, Moses' words in Deuteronomy 6:4,5 were not additions to the ten commandments but an exposition of the first commandment given by God on Mount Sinai and written in Exodus 20:3. "You shall have no other gods before me [or besides me]." The apostles in the New Testament echoed their firm belief in the unity of the one true and living God (I Tim. 1:17).

Belief in the Trinity of God developed from two facts in history: the apostles and early disciples had confronted the person of Jesus Christ whom they believed to be the Son of God, and they witnessed the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost and manifested in the early church. Yet these same Christians believed fully that God is one.

Through the person of Jesus Christ men were brought into God's fellowship. Thiessen in his *Lectures in Systematic Theology* quotes Boettner, saying,

If there were not trinity, there could be no incarnation, no objective redemption, and therefore no salvation, for there could be no one capable of acting as mediator between God and man.<sup>4</sup>

The birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ provided the perfect redemptive plan of God for man. Following His ascension, God gave the Holy Spirit to dwell within the believers, in order that He might guide them into all the truth, and disclose to them what is to come (Jn. 16:13).

The orthodox Christian church does not believe that there are three gods but that the only true and living God is One in his Being or essence and Three in Persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The one God is found

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<sup>4</sup> Thiessen, Henry Clarence. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, revised by Vernon D. Doerksen (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1960) 9.

equally and identically in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

Instead of arriving at his theology through the mind of Christ, as revealed in the Gospels and developed through the Epistles, Mohammed went back to natural theology, and his refusal to accept the deity of Christ blinded his mind and heart to the knowledge of the truth of the Trinity.<sup>6</sup>

### **MUSLIM DOCTRINE OF THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN CONTRAST**

Muslims have a high regard for Jesus as one of the great prophets of Allah. However, they consider it blasphemous and repugnant to accept Him as the Son of God. Such acknowledgment would cut across the unity of God, the most fundamental doctrine of the Muslims.

The Quran repeatedly calls Jesus the "son of Mary."<sup>7</sup> Mohammed spoke of him as Mary's "pure son."<sup>8</sup> But he understood Jesus to be "son" only in a physical sense.<sup>9</sup> His incarnation is completely foreign to both Mohammed and his followers.

Their dogma further repudiates the idea of God having a son in many emphatic statements and gives condemnation to those who adhere to such blasphemy:

And they (Christians) say: The Beneficent (Allah) has taken unto Himself

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<sup>5</sup> The so-called Athanasian Creed sums up the orthodox Christian view of the Trinity as best as human beings can verbalize the mystery of the God-head.

Following is an abbreviation of the Athanasian Creed:

"And the Catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.

For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit"  
[Keeley ed. *The Lion Handbook of Christian Belief* (Herts, England: Lion Publishing, 1982)171.]

<sup>6</sup> Zwemer, Samuel M. *The Moslem Doctrine of God* (New York: American Tract Society, 1905) 109.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Suratul An-Nisa (*Women*) 156; Suratul Al-Maryam (*Mary*) 34.

<sup>8</sup> Quran: Suratul Al-Maryam (*Mary*) 19.

<sup>9</sup> Jones, L. Bevan. *The People of the Mosque* (Calcutta: YMCA Pub. House) 267.

a son assuredly ye utter a disastrous thing. Whereby almost the heavens are torn, and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in ruins, that ye ascribe unto the Beneficent that he should choose a son.<sup>10</sup>

Muslims abhor the Christian doctrine of the "Sonship" of Christ, because in speaking of Jesus in this manner, it denounces the Quran. To associate a partner with God is an unpardonable sin.

The sonship of Christ makes clear that there is essential identity between the Father and the Son. According to the Scriptures, Jesus said:

Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. (Jn. 14:10).

In his paper presented at the International Congress on World Evangelization, held at Lausanne, Switzerland in 1974, Saphir P. Athyal states:

The whole structure of Christianity and all its claims stands or falls with the validity of its belief in the person of Christ. If the Gospel records about him are not entirely true, and if Christ is not really what he claimed to be, then there is nothing left of Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

It is in Christ that man meets God. "No one has ever seen God, but God, the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" (Jn. 1:18).

Athyal continues:

.....if we carefully examine the claims of Christ, we see that obviously no man can make such claims unless he is really God or has a mad delusion about himself.<sup>12</sup>

Based on the Gospels the Christian belief never looks upon Christ as the son of God in a physical sense. This is the conception of Islam, with regard to the inconceivability of God having a son. The Quran has no sonship except in a physical sense.

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<sup>10</sup> Quran: Suratul Al-Miriam (*Mary*) 88-92.

<sup>11</sup> Athyal, "The Uniqueness and Universality of Christ," *The New Face of Evangelism*, edited by C. Rene Padillah (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1976) 63.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* p. 63.

Muslims and others misunderstand the “sonship” of Christ because they do not understand the Semitic (Jewish) understanding that lies behind the New Testament. “What underlies the conception of sonship in Scriptural speech is just ‘likeness’; whatever the father is that the son is also”.<sup>13</sup> To speak of Jesus as the Son of God is to emphasise his *equality* with God, according to Semitic understanding. When speaking of the “only begotten Son” (Jn. 1:14; 3:16-18), the emphasis is on “the absolutely unique consubstantiality” with the Father. The Father and the Son are of the same “substance” or essence.

The Gospels clearly teach this. When Jesus mentioned to the Jews, “My Father is always at his work...,” the Jews picked up stones to kill him because “he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God” (Jn. 5:17-19). We can see in this incident that in the minds of the Jews, the Father-Son relationship stressed the equality of the Son with God the Father, not his subordination or origin in time.

According to the New Testament revelation, Jesus Christ is the Word who was “with God” and “was God” (Jn. 1:1). God the Father sent the Son (Jn. 3:16) who was conceived by the power of God the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20).

Paul underlines this truth in Romans when he writes:

...regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 1:3-5).

Bernard Ramm, in his book entitled, *Special Revelation and the Word of God*, states:

The attitude, actions, and dispositions of Christ so mirrored the divine nature that to have seen such in Christ is to have seen the reflection of the divine.<sup>14</sup>

The greatest controversy in the dialogue between Christians and Muslims is that which arises from the Christian belief in the divinity of Christ. In

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<sup>13</sup> Warfield, Benjamin B. “Trinity” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1939).

<sup>14</sup> Ramm, Bernard. *Special Revelation and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1961) 112.

the opinion of the Quran, it is "blasphemy and unbelief."<sup>15</sup>

A careful study of the Quran reveals that this Christian doctrine is contradicted in many verses. For example:

They indeed have disbelieved who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. Say: Who then can do aught against Allah, if He had willed to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother and everyone on earth? Allah's is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. He createth what he will, and Allah is able to do all things.<sup>16</sup>

And when Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Didst thou say unto mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah? He saith: Be glorified! It was not mine to utter that to which I had no right. If I used to say it, then thou knowest it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy mind. Lo! Thou, only Thou are the Knower of Things hidden.<sup>17</sup>

In the above quotations, it becomes obvious that Islam as taught in the Quran does not understand the Persons in the Trinity. Christian theology does not teach that God is Christ, rather Christ is God. Secondly, orthodox Christianity has never included Mary in the Trinity.

### **MUSLIM DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE AND THE CHRISTIAN CONTRAST**

Chanted recitations of the Quran can be heard everywhere in Muslim lands. Miniatures of their sacred book are worn as charms to ward off evil and sickness. Often, promises of blessings are given to those who will memorise specific portions of the book, for the very words of the Quran are believed to have been uttered by God and inscribed from all eternity on a preserved tablet near the throne of Allah.<sup>18</sup>

These utterances were sent down in the "night of power," the sacred month of Ramadhan,<sup>19</sup> and were later revealed to Mohammed on various

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<sup>15</sup> Al-Fadi, *The Christ in the Gospel and the Quran* (Beirut, Lebanon: Markaz Esh Shabiba Center for Young Adults, n.d.) 31.

<sup>16</sup> Suratul Al-Ma'idah (*The Table Spread*) 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid* 116.

<sup>18</sup> Quran: Suratul Al-Buruj (*The Mansions of the Stars*) 22.

<sup>19</sup> Quran: Suratul Al-Qadr (*Power*) 1.



occasions. The Quran is the basic structure of the Islamic faith and is said to be "alive as the universe is alive."<sup>20</sup>

The Quran speaks about four kinds of Scriptures given by God to humanity. The *Tawrat* (Pentateuch) given through Moses; the *Zabour* (The Psalms) through David; the *Injil* (Gospels) through Jesus; and the Quran through Mohammed.

An examination of the Quran reveals that Mohammed seems to have had respect for the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the Gospels and to have felt that they were of divine origin. "He sent down the *Tawrat* and the *Injil* for the guidance of mankind."<sup>21</sup> There are a number of passages in the Quran referring to the different biblical writers and claiming most of the pre-Islamic prophets from Adam to Jesus. "Lo! We inspired thee (Mohammed) as we inspired Noah and the prophets after him."<sup>22</sup>

In the same Quran are references that imply various alterations and inclusions made in the Bible. As such they are corrupt and are not to be regarded on the same level as the Quran. Some of them (Jews and Christians) heard the word of God and then, after they had understood it, perverted it and knew they did so.<sup>23</sup>

This corruption, for which the Jews and the Christians are charged, is explained by Jones, who quoted a Muslim commentary on the Quran. This commentary explains corruption to mean the interpretation or meaning given orally.<sup>24</sup>

Much of this so-called perversion of the Scriptures centres around the prophecies regarding the Messiah for whom the Jews were waiting. Mohammed attempted to prove that he was the one of whom those Scriptures were written. But this was strongly denied by the Jews. Prophecies were made against the Jews because of their failure to accept Mohammed as the prophet of Islam.

The Jews and early Christians were suspected by the Muslims of altering the text of the *Tawrat* and the *Injil*. But in the opinion of eminent doctors

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<sup>20</sup> Zafrulla-Khan, *Islam: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962) 86.

<sup>21</sup> Quran: Suratul Ali-Imran (*The Family of Imran*) 71,72.

<sup>22</sup> Quran: Suratul An-Nisa (*Women*) 163.

<sup>23</sup> Quran: Suratul Ali-Imran (*The Family of Imran*) 71,72.

<sup>24</sup> Jones, L. Bevan. *Christianity Explained to Muslims* (Calcutta: YMCA Publishing House, 1952) 9.

and theologians it was not possible to corrupt the text, because those Scriptures were generally known and widely circulated, having been handed down from generation to generation.<sup>25</sup>

It is apparent that one of these sacred books must be false. The educated Muslim realises that he must accept the witness in the Quran to the Bible or deny the Quran itself. Strong prejudices and assertions are ingrained in the Muslim's thinking, opposing the inspiration of the Bible and the validity of Christian teachings.

### **MUSLIM DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS AND THE CHRISTIAN CONTRAST**

Rarely is it possible to find a school of philosophers or scientists, or members of a political persuasion, constantly repeating that their leader was put to death by the government for being a threat to the laws and order of the land. Yet this is what Christians do. The subject of the cross of Christ is central to Christianity. The centrality of this theme may be illustrated by its position in the Christian confessional statement of faith.

The cross is the centrepiece of the Apostles Creed: "...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified....." In the Pauline epistles, Paul refers repeatedly to the death of Christ. Included in his expressions are references to his blood (Rom. 3:25; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20), his cross (I Cor. 1:17, 18; Gal. 5:11; 6:12-14; Eph. 2:6; Phil. 2:8; Col. 1:20; 2:14), his death (Rom. 5:6ff.; 8:34; 14:9, 15; I Cor. 8:11; 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:15;), and his crucifixion (I Cor. 1:23; 2:2; Gal. 3:1).

Throughout the history of the church, the cross has been placed at the centre of that redemptive act of God by which he restores rebellious men to fellowship with himself. In his *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Henry C. Thiessen writes:

.....Christianity is distinguished from all of them [other religions] by the importance it assigns to the death of its founder. Take away the death of Christ as interpreted by the Scriptures, and you reduce Christianity to the level of the ethnic religions. Though we would still have a higher system of ethics, were we to take away the cross of Christ, we would have no more salvation than these other religions. Take away the cross, and the heart of Christianity is gone. The subject of apostolic preaching was Christ and him crucified....<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid* (as quoted from the Mohomedan Commentary) 9.

<sup>26</sup> Thiessen, *op cit.* 230, 231.

Muslims debate the death of Jesus extensively. In Madinah, between the graves of Mohammed and Abu Bakr, there is a space reserved for Isa Ibn Maryiam (Jesus the son of Mary).<sup>27</sup> The Sunni Muslims<sup>28</sup> deny the crucifixion of Christ, claiming that he was taken to heaven alive. Someday he will return, be killed and occupy this grave space.

The Quran makes reference to the death of Christ in this manner:

And because of their saying: We slew the Messiah Jesus son of Mary, Allah's messenger - They slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them; and Lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain.<sup>29</sup>

Muslims are at variance concerning the death of Christ and the interpretation of this *aya* (verse). A Pakistani, Mohammed Munir in his *Islam in History*, outlines four Islamic theories of the death of Christ.

- a. That Jesus did not die on the cross, and that he is alive in the fourth heaven from where he will descend on the earth before the Day of Resurrection, his appearance being one of the signs of the approaching Day. The relevant verses of the Quran including verse 158 (156 in some versions) of chapter IV are interpreted to mean that a phenomenon of Jesus' death on the cross was in the nature of an optical illusion and that in fact God lifted him up toward himself where he was still alive...<sup>30</sup>
- b. That Jesus did not die on the cross, was taken off the cross and tended by his disciples and cured of his wounds after which he came over to Kasmir where he died a natural death, that the person who was promised to appear with the attributes of Jesus, the promised Messiah, and that was Mizra Ahamad Ghulam of Gadiani;
- c. That Jesus died on the cross but that he will rise from the grave before the Day of Resurrection;

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<sup>27</sup> Bethman, Erich W. *Bridge to Islam: A Study of the Religious Forces of Islam and Christianity in the Near East* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Association, 1950) 70.

<sup>28</sup> Quran: Suratul An-Nisa (*Women*) 156.

<sup>29</sup> Quran: Suratul An-Nisa (*Women*) 156.

<sup>30</sup> Munir, *Islam in History* 187, 189.

- d. That Jesus died on the cross and that he will not at all appear, neither he in person nor anyone like him.

Of the four, the widely accepted view (with various modifications) is that he did not face death. The Jews wanted to kill him, and indeed thought they had killed him. God, however, saved him from the plot, took him up to heaven, and stamped his likeness on a treacherous Jew who was apprehended and crucified instead of Jesus.<sup>31</sup>

The phrase, "It appeared so unto them," is also translated "but they had only his likeness,"<sup>32</sup> indicating that another person appeared as Jesus and was crucified. The Muslim thinks that for Jesus to have died such a death would have brought the curse of God upon him; such would have been impossible for a prophet of God.

Following his ascension to heaven, he was sent down again to comfort his mother and his disciples. And, he was taken up again to heaven where he is now.

Muslims of the Ahmadiyya sect oppose this belief. They accept, however, that the Quran denies the death of Jesus on the cross but not the act of being hanged there. Mohammed Ali claims that Jesus did not stay long enough on the cross to die. After falling into an unconscious state, the Jews removed him from the cross and laid him in the tomb after which he came out alive and showed himself to the disciples. He went to the ten lost tribes of Israel in Afghanistan and Pakistan (cf John 10:16). At the ripe old age of 120 years, Jesus died a natural death. His grave to this day is located in Cashmere.<sup>33</sup>

Muslims holding this position support the common swoon theory among liberal theologians whereby Jesus did not die on the cross. He was taken down in a swoon and placed in the tomb by his disciples.

In his discussion of the nature of Christ's resurrection, Thiessen writes:

The theory that Jesus did not actually die, but that he merely fell into a swoon from which the cool air of the tomb and the spices revived him, is

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<sup>31</sup> "Women," *The Koran*, Translated from the Arabic by J.M. Rodwell (Dent, London: Everyman's Library, 1968).

<sup>32</sup> Bethman, *op cit.* 70.

<sup>33</sup> Mohammed Ali, *The Holy Quran* (Lahore, Pakistan: The Ahmadiyya Anhaman Isha'at Islam, 1974) 582-3.

a gross perversion of the plain meaning of biblical terms. That Christ actually died, is evident from the fact that the centurion and the soldiers declared him to be dead (Mk. 15:45; Jn. 19:33); that the women came with the expectation of anointing a dead body (Mk. 16:1); that blood and water flowed from his opened side (Jn. 19:34); that his disciples assumed he was dead and his resurrection greatly surprised them (Matt. 28:17; Lk. 24:37ff); that he did not appear to his disciples on the third day in a weakened condition, but as a mighty conqueror of death; and that Christ himself declared that he was dead but is now alive forevermore (Rev. 1:18).<sup>34</sup>

If Jesus did not then die, why did the Christians believe that he did? Mohammed Ali explains this by showing that the death of Jesus is central to Christian theology. He states:

Similarly, if the Christians do not believe in it [death of Jesus on the cross], then the doctrine of atonement becomes untenable and the entire fabric of Christianity crashes to pieces. So both these peoples [Jews and Christians] go on sticking to this absurd and unfounded belief in the face of all reason and all established fact of history.<sup>35</sup>

The Bible explains the crucifixion of Christ in vivid terms while showing that his crucifixion was voluntary ("The Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" Gal. 2:20). Jesus purposed to do the Father's will by meeting the demands of a Holy God for redeeming sinful man. By Jesus' death on the cross, a propitiation was provided as the perfect sacrifice for sin. Christ's atonement was sufficient for all (1 Tim. 2:6). It is sufficient for those who believe (Jn. 1:20).

In his book, *The Cross of the Messiah*, David Brown writes:

The Messiah believed that his death would establish and guarantee a new covenant between God and his disciples, creating for man the possibility of a new relationship to God of trust and obedience. More than this, he believed that by his life and death he was winning victory over Satan and the powers of evil which would bring freedom and new life to those who followed him.<sup>36</sup>

Provision has been made for the most bigoted Muslim, but he must

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<sup>34</sup> Thiessen, *op cit.* 244.

<sup>35</sup> Mohammed, *The Religion of Islam* (Lahore, Pakistan: The Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, 1936) 585.

<sup>36</sup> Brown, *The Cross of the Messiah* (London: Sheldon Press, 1969) 55.

appropriate the blood of Christ for his sinful nature as the only atonement for his soul's salvation.

### **MUSLIM DOCTRINE OF SIN AND THE CHRISTIAN CONTRAST**

Allah forbids sin but has not provided the way of victory over it. Sin is not thought of in regard to the nature of man but is associated with the breaking of rituals. Muslims divide sin into two categories, 'greater sin' and 'lesser sins.' Observation of the ritual prayers, confession of the *shahadah*, and other similar traditions help one to attain righteousness.<sup>37</sup>

However, the Bible presents sin as that basic nature found in every human being which makes man naturally rebellious and filled with animosity toward divinity. The atonement for man's sin was accomplished by the death of the perfect sacrifice, Jesus, the Son of God. The blood of Christ has a cleansing quality for all who will believe and accept this substitute and sacrifice.

The work of Christ on the cross was essential for man's salvation. God can not pardon sin merely on the grounds of the sinners' repentance. For if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer in the Old Testament only provided ceremonial cleansing, something much more was needed. "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death" (Heb. 9:14).

In his unpublished manuscript, *The Quran: A Bridge to Christian Faith*, Fuad Accad, a Protestant minister in Lebanon, writes:

Unfortunately the Muslim has no idea, not even the slightest, about what all these important acts of a loving God should mean to him and to his eternal salvation. He reads his Quran over and over, marvelling at this heroic act of surrender on the part of Abraham, the father of the faith, without giving much attention to the part God played in it. Moreover, they celebrate this event every year, with great pomp, at 'Eid Al Adha' (Feast of the Sacrifice) -- killing hundreds of thousands of sheep throughout the world but especially at Arafat in Mecca; for this feast falls on the tenth day of the pilgrimage, when hundreds of thousands of

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<sup>37</sup> Quran: Suratul Al-Hud (*The Tribe of 'Aed'*) 114.

pilgrims are there.<sup>38</sup>

The despondency and bankruptcy in Islam is woefully illustrated by Jones who quotes a correspondent from Lahore in *The Light*,

I am a girl of twenty, and from the age of twelve I have done every sin that you can think of. In fact I have tasted of every leaf of the tree of life. Alas! there is nothing left from me but hell when I die. I ask you sincerely, what am I to do to be saved? I have put this question to a priest. He told me to repent, but the truth is I cannot repent, as what I have done I have enjoyed doing, though it was a sin. Now will you advise me what I am to do so as to be saved from hell?<sup>39</sup>

The response from the editor stated:

Turn a new leaf. Lead a righteous life henceforward. This alone can wash off past sins. This is the only true atonement. Sins are washed off, the Quran assures us by good deeds and these alone.<sup>40</sup>

To Islam, salvation is attained by works alone. As such, each man shall be judged according to his deeds. What a tragic need for the throngs of Muslims who remain captive to the hopelessness of Islam.

The Bible holds that sin is universal in the human race. It traces the historical, continuous retrogression of the human race from an original God-consciousness to the point where it could be said, "there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside ...." (Rom. 3:10-12). The universal presence of death, which came as the result of sin, further proves the prevalence of sin in every human being.

## CONCLUSION

Since God is the key Person in man's relationship with eternity, and all men are sinners, man is really without hope before his Judge. Yet, God has provided a means of salvation, which is contained in the gospel which Christ commissioned the church to preach.

The basis of salvation is faith -- the committal of the whole personality to an object of faith who is capable of satisfying the just demands of God. That

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<sup>38</sup> Accad, Fuad. *The Quran: A Bridge to Christian Faith* (Unpublished Manuscript, n.d.) 7.

<sup>39</sup> Jones, *People of the Mosque*, p. 264.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p. 165.

object is the person of Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ is completely removed from the realm of works, so that, while condemnation moves on the principle of works, salvation proceeds on the principle of grace. The faith principle, with the person of Jesus Christ as its object, is a concept exclusive to the gospel and salvation is by no other way.

If salvation is through faith in Christ exclusively, and the truth is contained only in the gospel, the communication of the gospel becomes a topic of primary importance. How should the gospel be presented to Muslims so that they may believe in Him?

An examination of Paul's letter to the Romans (see Rom. 10) with allied passages, and a brief notice of Paul's personal ministry, indicates that God ordains human messengers to proclaim the Good News. God has, apparently, confined himself to that method of communication.

Mohammed Amir Alam in his book, *Islam and Christianity*, writes: "Islam ..... states that to man only man can be a guide, an example. No angels and never God himself have been, will be or can be fit models for humanity."<sup>41</sup>

Paul stoutly defends both the dignity and necessity of human agents, and seems never to have considered the possibility of any other means of sending the news abroad. Muslims, like any other group of the unevangelised, are under hopeless condemnation as sinners. Terms such as "death," "judgement," "eternal destruction," "punishment," and "vengeance," are commonly used in the Bible to designate the penalty of sin. This price can only be removed through the acceptance of the work of Christ on the cross by faith.

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<sup>41</sup> Alam, Mohammed Amir. *Islam and Christianity* (Calcutta: Oriental Printers and Publishers Ltd., 1923) 125.