

# **The Menace of Islam: Its Theology and Practice**

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- I. The Foundations of Islam
  - A. Islam
  - B. Muhammad
  - C. The Quran
  
- II. The Theological Menace of Islam
  - A. Theology of Islam
  - B. Deceptive Similarities Between Islam and Christianity
  - C. Damning Differences Between Islam and Christianity
  
- III. The Menace of Islamic Practices
  - A. Islam—A Way of Life
  - B. The Sword of Islam
  - C. The Shield of Islam
  
- IV. Our Response to the Menace of Islam
  - A. Declare All the Counsel of God
  - B. All Things to All Men
  - C. A Field White Already to Harvest

## **I. The Foundations of Islam**

### **A. Islam**

Islam is a monotheistic religion believing in one god—Allah. Its followers are known as Muslims. Although its origins are in Arabia, the greatest number of Muslims are now found in non-Arab countries. There are over 720 million Muslims scattered throughout the world.

The teachings of Islam were proclaimed by Muhammad, an illiterate Arabian trader, who supposedly received a series of visions from Allah through the angel Gabriel from about 610 to 630 A. D. The message contained in these visions was committed to memory and later recorded in the Quran (Koran). Although, Muslims hold Muhammad in the highest esteem, it is offensive to Muslims to refer to them as Muhammedans.

There is a tradition that Muhammad predicted that his religion would be divided into seventy sects and only one of these would represent the true Islam. Today, the total number of divisions in Islam has gone far beyond seventy-eight, but each sect claims that it is the only true Islam.

The largest division is between the Sunni and Shiah sects of Islam. The Sunni sect is orthodox Islam and is strong in Arabia, North Africa, and the Mediterranean lands. The Shiah sect has the majority in Iran and Iraq, and several million in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Shiah are the ones who broke away from the original group and are the Protestants of Islam. They do not accept the first three caliphs as true leaders with the sanction of Muhammad. They believe, rather, that the true line continues through Ali, the fourth caliph, who was the son-in-law

of Muhammad. Both Sunni and Shiah base their faith on the Quran, but have entirely different books of tradition.

Since its inception in the seventh century, Islam has spread throughout the world. It is not only a religion, but a political and social system as well. With all of its many divisions and sects, and all the races and languages represented, it is difficult to obtain a single view of Islam. The view of Islam presented herein is a classical picture of orthodox Islam. In practice, the variations therefrom are limited.

From the standpoint of the Christian missionary, Islamic lands are undoubtedly among the most difficult fields of the world. In addition, they have been relatively neglected by the Christian church. Yet, nearly one-fifth of the world's population claim to be adherents of Islam. It is for them also that Jesus died and to them also that He commissioned His disciples when He said "Go ye." The need for our loving attention and proclamation of the Gospel to them is most urgent.

From a human standpoint, the work of a few Christian missionaries to the Muslim world seems hopeless as the outlook for the few disciples who faced the paganism and power of the Roman Empire. The task is as hopeless as that of William Schweppe in Africa or of John Plocher and George Adascheck in Apacheland. They began and carried on their task in the name of the Lord. With His power and under His guidance the WELS is beginning to bring the Gospel into the Muslim world.

## **B. Muhammed**

Muhammad was born in Mecca about 570 A.D., into the prominent Quraysh tribe. Muhammad was orphaned at six. His grandfather, formerly the custodian of the Kaaba and one-time head, of the Meccan commonwealth, took charge of his upbringing. When the grandfather died, his uncle was entrusted with Muhammad's care.

In his youth he worked as a shepherd and later rode with the camel caravans that carried frankincense and silk through Mecca to Syria. These travels undoubtedly brought Muhammad into contact with the Jewish and Christian beliefs of the tribes with whom he traded. Although uneducated, he gained respect as a businessman. At the age of 25, he married Khadija, a wealthy widow fifteen years older than he. This marriage gave him prestige and respect in Mecca, provided opportunities for participation in the civil councils, and leisure for contemplation. He frequently climbed to a small cave among the rocks of Mount Hira, just north of Mecca, to spend days in fasting and meditation.

In 610, at the age of forty Muhammad received the first of many visions on Mount Hara. The vision reputedly called Muhammad to be a prophet of the one true God, known in Arabic as Allah, a word closely related to the Hebrew word Elohim used for God in the Old Testament. The first declaration of his call was to his wife who became his first convert. He soon gathered a small but loyal group of followers to whom he recited the messages received in later visions.

Muhammad's preaching began to undermine Mecca's position as the center for an annual pilgrimage held in conjunction with a profitable trade fair. By condemning their deities, he offended not only the consciences of the Meccan leaders, but also their pocketbooks. The movement he was leading aroused strong persecution; yet, Muhammad persistently challenged the moral and social values governing Mecca under the powerful leadership of the Qurayshite oligarchy.

In the year 622, Muhammad and a trusted group of followers slipped away from Mecca and fled to the city of Medina. This flight, or Hegira, marks the year one of the Muslim era. Muslim years are counted A.H., or After the Hegira.

At Medina, as his movement grew rapidly, he became not only the spiritual leader, but also a legislator and a military leader. In Medina there were five tribes, two Arab and three Jewish. Muhammad united these tribes into a community of followers. He continued to have a deep resentment toward the people of Mecca and used his position of power in Medina to raid the trade caravans heading to and from Mecca. Finally in 630, Muhammad led a force of 10,000 in taking control of Mecca.

Once in Mecca, Muhammad destroyed the idols of the Kaaba, and pagan shrine of the Arabs. He retained the Black Stone as the most sacred relic of Islam and established the renewed Kaaba as the center of Islamic worship. With the destruction of the idols Muhammad destroyed the symbol of wealth and power of pagan Arabia. He established Islam as the sole religion of Mecca and himself as its only prophet. By the following year, 631, Islam had spread throughout Arabia and Muhammad was its undisputed leader.

By the time of his death in 632, Muhammad had seen the proclamation of his message spread from his immediate family through all the Arabian peninsula. Pagan idols had been destroyed and replaced with a belief in a single God. A land that had been torn by intertribal warfare was united by ties that made every Arab a brother in submission to the one God and His prophet Muhammad. Muhammad has rightly been judged the most influential Arab, and second to Jesus Christ as the most influential person in the history of the world.

### **C. The Quran**

At the core of Islam lies the Quran, considered to be the Word of God. To a religion that has no ecclesiastical organization, mystical ritual, or body of saints to aid the troubled soul, the Quran becomes the source of inspiration and refuge for the Muslim. The Quran is the Muslim's main reference not only for spiritual matters but also for the daily requirements of life.

The term "Quran" in a literal sense means "recitation," or "readings." Each chapter of the Quran is termed "surah" (literally, series). The sanctity of the Quran lies in the Muslim's belief that the text is the official word of God and of Muhammad as the appointed mouthpiece of God. Muhammad is alleged to have received the surahs from the archangel Gabriel over a span two decades.

The arrangement of the surahs does not follow a historical pattern. In fact, it does not seem to follow any consistent chronological or topical pattern. The surahs of the Quran are arranged according to length in descending order: The longest comes first and the shortest last, with the exception of the "Fatihah" (the opener) which is placed at the very beginning of the Quran. Surahs vary in length from 287 verses to 3. The longest surahs, which come first, relate to a period of Muhammad's role as head of the community in Medina. The shorter ones containing mostly his doctrinal teachings, came during his prophethood in Mecca; yet in the order followed by the Quran, they are found mostly in the later part.

A Jew or Christian familiar with the contents of the Bible would be struck by the Quran's dependence on it. With the exception of a few narratives purely Arabian in origin, all Quranic stories have their Biblical parallel. The many discrepancies between the Biblical and Quranic accounts indicate that Muhammad was less concerned with the details of the event and more concerned with the moral underlying them. He cited such narratives not to preserve them in the Quran for their own sake, but rather to support a point he wished to emphasize.

The inexact manner in which the Biblical events and personalities survive in the Quran suggests that Muhammad received his knowledge of these Biblical accounts either from uninformed sources or from informants whose views of their religion did not agree with the orthodox version of it. The motive, nevertheless, clearly shows through his narration of these accounts: to illustrate the main theme of God's great design for man, namely to reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

The main purpose of the Quran is two-fold: A call to belief in the one God, the supreme repository of all moral law and ethical guidance; and the establishment of the practical guides and laws necessary for organizing the believers into a coherent community that would assure the triumph of the religious force that called it into being. This dual aim falls into a sequential order: the pre-Hegira period, which was devoted to the task of making converts; and the post-Hegira dedicated to organizing the community of believers.

The one hundred fourteen surahs of the Quran were revealed over a period of twenty years. Many of the revelations were committed to memory immediately. Numerous others were recorded on various bits of parchment, palm leaves, smooth stones, and similar objects. Since Muhammad was illiterate, he entrusted the recording of the revelations to his aide, Zayd ibn-Thabit. When Muhammad died there existed no singular copy of the sacred text. Although many followers had memorized portions of the revelation, no one knew the complete message. In 657, twenty-five years after Muhammad's death, his former aide, Zayd, completed the official codification of the Quran.

It is possible that Zayd did not have access to all the previous versions of the revelation. There is also the possibility of simple inadvertent clerical errors in the process of recording. Since no devout Muslim would willfully attempt to tamper with the word of God, we must assume that the official Quran is an essentially faithful reproduction of the original message delivered by Muhammad.

The Muslim's extensive dependence on the Quran makes it the principal recourse both in the performance of religious duties and in the acquisition of basic knowledge. To the Muslim, the Quran has profound historical and literary meaning besides serving as his manual of prayer, code of religious and ethical well-being, his guide to social behavior and daily living, and a collection of useful definitions and maxims of practical value. It is a repository of historical knowledge as unfolded by God and revealed to the believers. It is indeed, the single most important influence upon the Muslim world.

## **II. The Theological Menace of Islam**

### **A. Theology of Islam**

"La ilaha illa 'I-Lah wa Muhammadan rasul al-Lah" (There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God) is the Muslim's profession of faith. The Shahadah (open testimony) expresses their belief in a monotheistic god who has been revealed to the world through His messengers of whom Muhammad is the last. This profession of faith serves as the cornerstone of Islamic theology. From it, all of the other doctrines follow.

### **Doctrine of God**

The Quran, like the Bible, assumes the existence of God and does not argue for it. It makes many references to nature and man's environment to support the existence of God.

It is God who hath ordained the night for your rest, and the day to give you light; verily God is rich in bounties to men: . . . It is God who hath given you the earth as a sure

foundation, and over it built up the Heaven, and formed you, and made your forms beautiful, and feedeth you with good things. This is God your Lord” (Quran 40:63 and 65).

Muslims believe in one God who is supreme, eternal, infinite, omnipotent, merciful, compassionate, Creator, Provider, just, sovereign, and omniscient. He exists at all times and His great power is in action everywhere in the world. He had no partner or son, and neither gives birth nor is He born. (Quran 112:1-5; 57:1-6; 59:22-24; 3:29; 11:6; 35:15; 65:2-3).

The attributes of God are seen primarily in His dealings with man, the highest of His creatures. Though God is supreme, He is also very close to the believers. He is viewed as being nearer to man than his jugular vein. He answers believers’ prayers and helps them. He gives them peace and happiness, knowledge and success, life and protection. He teaches man to be good, to do the right and to keep away from the wrong. (Quran 2:186; 50:16)

The justice and mercy of God are seen clearly in the Creation. In His justice God created an orderly world with everything in its proper place and given its proper function to perform. In His mercy, God created man in the most beautiful shape and provided him with all things for man’s benefit and use. The mercy and justice of God give the Muslim hope and peace for a reconciliation of the good and bad that occur during his life. (Quran 11:1-6; 3:29; 65:3)

The Islamic picture of God—omnipotent, just, merciful—is closely related to the Judeo-Christian religion and was a response to the pagan beliefs of the Arabs. Where the Arabs believed in a blind, inexorable fate over which they had no control, the Quran spoke of a powerful but merciful God. The staunchly monotheistic belief of the Muslims undoubtedly was influenced by the Jews with whom Muhammad came into contact—especially in Medina. It set them apart from the polytheistic practices of the pagan Arabs of Mecca and the Trinitarian views of the Christians.

## **Prophethood**

The concept of a messenger or prophet sent by God is an essential part of Islamic theology. The Quran mentions twenty-five messengers who were chosen by God to teach man and deliver His message at different times and places in history. These messengers include Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Muslims believe that all of these messengers were mortal, human beings endowed with divine revelations and appointed by God to deliver His message. Among these messengers, “Muhammad stands the Last Messenger and the crowning glory of the foundation of prophethood.”<sup>1</sup> (Quran 2:133-136; 3:89; 4:161-165)

In accepting Jesus as one of the many prophets of God, Islam rejects His divinity, crucifixion, and resurrection from the dead. It accepts His virgin birth and ascension into heaven as special miracles of God intended to identify Jesus as one of God’s special messengers.

Muslims claim that this does not degrade Jesus, but attributes to Him the high and proper status of a messenger of God. As shall be noted in a later section, they have no theological need for Jesus as their Savior from sin.

In keeping with their teachings regarding God’s prophets, Muslims accept the writings of all the messengers of God. The Quran makes special reference to the books of Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus (Quran 4:161). They contend, however, that prior to the time of Muhammad most of these writings were lost or corrupted, thus causing God to send His angel Gabriel with the divine revelation to Muhammad. The Quran, then is the only complete and authentic Word of

God revealing to man, through God's messenger Muhammad, God's will and the right way for man's life. (Quran 2:75-79; 5:13-19, 45-49; 6:91-93; 41:42-45)

### **Cosmology**

The Quran teaches that God created the world and everything therein in six days. (Quran 32:4; 41:8-10) The creation of all things occurs when God says "Be." (Quran 40:70) This is not unlike the Biblical description of the creation of the world found in Genesis. It should be noted, however, that the Quran gives much less emphasis to the six days of Creation than does the Bible. Most of the Quranic references to creation are of a continuing activity in the present. Thus God's creative power is regarded as being present in the origination of every living thing today. Moreover, the Quran stresses that God is the continuing provider and sustainer of all things and that it is under His governance that the world exists.

The Quran lays stress on the design and order in the universe to prove the unity of God. No gaps or dislocations are present because every created thing was endowed by its Creator with a definite and defined nature whereby it carries out the purpose of God. The universe has its own inherent laws of behavior which are endowed and strictly limited by God. God alone, who reigns unchallenged in the heavens and the earth, is unlimited, independent, and self-sufficient.

In order to serve Him in this vast universe, God created angels, jinn (singular jinni, "genie"), and man. (Quran 21:26; 55:13-14) The angels and jinn are purely spiritual and spend their lives in the service of God. The angels watch over men and record their deeds, call in the souls of men at death, and surround the throne of God singing praises to Him. The highest of the angels is Gabriel who brought the revelation of God's Word to Muhammad.

The jinn are sometimes referred to synonymously with the angels and at other times as separate creatures created from fire—rather than from clay as was man. (Quran 55:13-14) They are shadowy spirits who were associated with deserts, ruins and other eerie places. They could become either believers or unbelievers (Quran 72:11-14) and could, therefore, serve either to the welfare or detriment of the faithful Muslim.

Contrasted with the angels are the demons and their leader Shaytan or Iblis. According to the Quran, Iblis is an angel deposed for his pride in not worshipping man as decreed by God. (Quran 2:34-36; 7:10-20) He is allowed by God to tempt man, to urge them to evil, and to make evil deeds attractive to men. (Quran 17:61-64; 2:168-173) He has many demons who are assigned to unbelievers and prompt them to evil. (Quran 19:83-86; 23:97-99)

### **Man**

The Quran teaches that man was created from clay and enjoys a very high-ranking status among God's creatures. (Quran 2:30-34) Man alone has been given a rational mind and spiritual hopes. Man has been chosen by God to be His agent on earth. As such, man is regarded as a "dignified being, potentially capable of good and noble achievements."<sup>2</sup> (Quran 6:165; 7:11; 17:70-72, 90-95)

Islam contends that every person is born spiritually neutral. He has neither inherited sin nor inherited value. It teaches an age of accountability from which time man is responsible for his actions. Man has complete freedom of the will: free to commit sin and free to do good. (Quran 82:6-8; 41:46; 45:15; 53:32-42)

Man is to submit to the will of God and fulfill the purpose for which God placed him into the world. This special position in the world leads the Muslim to place great faith in the

potentiality of good among human beings. This potential for good and the faith in the mercy of God serves as the basis for their faith in the salvation of the majority of mankind.

### **Sin, Repentance, and, Salvation**

As mentioned previously, Muslims do not believe in original sin. They believe that at the time of Adam's first sin God forgave Adam, thereby negating the effect of Adam's sin upon his descendants and the need for someone else to atone for his sin. (Quran 2:35-37; 20:117-122) Muslims reject the atoning sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross as being contrary to God's justice and mercy as well as being contrary to rational thought.

All responsibility for man's salvation is placed upon man through the guidance of God. Man's actions during his life serve as a manifestation of his faith. A record of his actions is kept by the angels and the jinn who give a report to God on the Day of Judgment. This report evaluated by a merciful God determines whether a person will enter heaven or hell. Each person is completely responsible for his personal salvation thereby excluding any intercessory acts by one on behalf of another. (Quran 10:9-10; 18:28-30; 103:1-3)

Islam teaches that God does not hold any person responsible until he has been shown the Right Way. A person who has never been exposed to Islam is, therefore, not held responsible for not acting according to God's will. Such a person is only responsible for doing what his logic and conscience directed. Muslims who fail to spread the message of Islam will be held responsible for the ignorance and destruction of those who are ill-informed or uninformed (Quran 3:100-112; 16:102-125) Thus, every Muslim is expected to spread the message of Islam through every available means.

### **Eschatology**

The doctrines of the Last Judgment can be regarded as the second great doctrine of Islam—following the teachings regarding God. Islam teaches that on the Last Day the world will come to an end, the dead will be resurrected and a judgment will be pronounced on every person in accordance with his deeds. Those with good records will be assigned to heaven and those with bad records will be punished and cast into hell. (Quran 82:19; 20:100-112; 69:13-18)

The result of the judgment is either everlasting heaven or everlasting hell. There is no intermediate condition. Heaven is described as "a Garden" or "Paradise" in which the blessed enjoy luxuries of many kinds, above all of which is the vision of God. (Quran 76:12-22) Jahannam (gehenna or Hell) is a place where the pains of body and soul are united. The torments of hell are depicted with great imagery which is borrowed from both Biblical and Arabian references. (Quran 78:23-30; 10:27-38)

The Day of Judgment provides a final day of retribution for the virtuous and for those who indulged in immoral activities. Those who have been obedient to the Right Way, but have suffered as a result, will receive their final reward in everlasting bliss. Those who benefited as a result of their wickedness or have rejected Islam will receive their final recompense in everlasting hell. In the end, the justice of God will prevail. (Quran 18:50; 42:22)

### **Five Pillars of Faith**

The "Five Pillars of Faith" take the Muslim from the theoretical aspects of Quranic doctrine and move him to the exercise of his faith in his life. Some of these ceremonial obligations require daily activity; others weekly, monthly, annual; and one at a minimum once in

a lifetime. They include the Shahadah (open testimony), Salah (prayer ritual), Sawm (fasting), Zakah (alms-giving), and Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca).

The Shadah is the most repeated act of faith of the Muslim. The mere recitation of the phrase “I bear witness that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad is the messenger of God” makes a person a Muslim. They are the first words whispered into the ears of a baby and the last spoken by the dying. The average Muslim repeats the phrase at least twenty times a day.

Muhammad placed greater importance upon prayer than on any other religious duty. Salah, therefore, becomes an essential obligation of Muslim worship. Salah resembles public worship in that it contains the recitation of portions of the Quran, confession of faith, benediction, and of brief praises. The act of prayer is to be observed five times a day at dawn, midday, midafternoon, sunset, and nightfall. Although Islam has no clergy, the form and manner of the prayers are exactly prescribed and followed by the faithful Muslim.

The Sawm, or fast, is prescribed by the Quran so that the Muslim might “derive good from it.” (Quran 2:179-183). The Muslims follow a lunar calendar which may move the month of fasting—Ramadan—throughout the solar year. The Muslim is required to avoid eating, drinking, smoking, and sexual intercourse from sunrise until sunset each day during that month. The month of fasting is concluded with a great celebration on the first day of the following month.

The Zakah, or alms-giving, was originally an act of piety and love in which the faithful Muslim wanted to give back to God a portion of His blessings by aiding the poor. Later it became an obligatory tax in which two to three percent of the Muslim’s income is now required to support the needy and the elderly. The Quran specifies the collection and the distribution of the Zakah. (Quran 24:56; 57:18; 9:60)

The fifth pillar of faith is the pilgrimage, or Hajj, to the sacred monuments of Mecca. It is to be taken at least once in a lifetime by those who are physically able or can afford it. The principal points of interest of the pilgrimage are the well of Zamzam—traditionally the source of water provided by God for Hagar and Ismael (Genesis 21:17-20)—and the Kabah—House of God legendarily rebuilt by Abraham and Ismael on the spot originally built by Adam before the Flood. The Kabah contains the sacred Black Stone which is the only existing remnant of the altar upon which Abraham was to sacrifice Ishmael. Each year hundreds of thousands of Muslims from all over the world converge upon Mecca in accordance with the directives of the Quran (Quran 3:90-92). (For a more complete description of the Hajj, see *National Geographic*, November, 1978.)

## **B. The Deceptive Similarities Between Islam and Christianity**

The cursory discussion of Islamic theology which has been undertaken reveals numerous similarities between Islam and Christianity. This is understandable in light of the many contacts which Muhammad had with the Jews in Medina and with the Jews and Christians through his trade caravans. Biblical characters and events, and the monotheistic view of God, though distorted, bear witness to the Judeo-Christian influence upon the Quran. This striking similarity can be a most destructive menace to Christianity.

Pastor Theodore A. Sauer wrote of this aspect of the menace of Islam in a recent letter: Unfortunately, there is much confused thinking concerning Islam as it may be related to Christianity. People see the monotheism of Islam and assume that because Allah is one god that he is the God Who has revealed Himself in the Bible. I recall that during the second World War the United States soldiers going into North Africa were given

handbooks which stated that the Moslems living there worship the same God as do the Christians.<sup>3</sup>

The Islamic view of God has many points in common with the Bible's description of God. Both attribute to God the attributes of mercy, justice, omnipotence, omniscience, eternity, infinity and compassion. Both look to God as their Creator, Preserver, and Judge. Islam's monotheism is in agreement with the Bible's injunction that "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isaiah 46:9). These and other similarities can lead one to conclude "that the Moslems...worship the same God as do the Christians."

The Quranic references to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Jesus; and to events such as the Creation, the Flood, the Exodus, and the life of Jesus give further credence to the idea that the Quran is in agreement with the Bible. Such Scriptural references easily support the Islamic contention that the Quran is the final and authoritative Word of God revealed to clarify the distortions of discourses between Iblis and God, the Fall of man, and of the references to "the Book" of the Jews and Christians give additional support to the damning misconception that "the Moslems...worship the same God as do the Christians."

Islamic teaching fosters that idea through its publications. Dr. Hummudah Abdalati, formerly director of the Canadian Islamic Center, wrote:

Every known nation had a warner or messenger from God. These messengers were great teachers of the good and true champions of the right. They were chosen by God to teach mankind and deliver His Divine message...They were, with the exception of Muhammad, known as "national" or local messengers. But their message, their religion, was basically the same and was called *Islam*, because it came from One and the Same Source, namely, God, to serve one and the same purpose, and that is to guide humanity to the Straight Path of God...We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes; and that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and that which was given to all prophets from their Lord.<sup>4</sup>

In this context, Islam becomes the final and complete expression of God's Word which was revealed through His many prophets and finally through Muhammad. An approach such as this breaks down the initial barriers against its false teachings and disarms the unwary. The warning of our Lord "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8) is most appropriate when considering this menace of Islam.

### **C. Damning Differences Between Islam and Christianity**

Where the similarities between Islam and Christianity can be deceptively disarming, the differences are damningly destructive. The Islamic teachings about God, Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation will lead Muslim souls straight to hell. It is imperative, therefore, that these differences be delineated if we are to recognize the depth of Islam's menace to the world.

The Quran specifically denies the Triune nature of God.

Say: He is God alone: God the eternal!

He begetteth not, and He is not begotten;

And there is none like unto Him. (Quran 112:1-5)

They surely are Infidels who say, "God is the third of three:"  
for there is no God but one God: and if they refrain not  
from what they say, a grievous chastisement shall light on

such of them as are Infidels...The Messiah, Son of Mary, is but an Apostle; other Apostles have flourished before him; and his mother was a just person: They both ate food.

(Quran 5:78-79)

This denial of the Trinity flows out of Muhammad's attack upon the polytheism of the Meccan Arabs and upon his reliance on rationalization. The god of the Quran is, therefore, monotheistic and logical. In denying the Triune nature of God, however, it places itself in direct opposition to the clear teachings of the Bible (Matthew 28:19; 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11) and establishes a false god upon whom millions place their trust.

The God-man, Jesus Christ, and His redemptive work are central to the teachings of Christianity "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby, we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). It is here, and in the attendant teachings regarding man's salvation, that Islam most differs from Christianity. In the previously referenced letter, Pastor Sauer wrote:

There can be no doubt that Christianity and Islam are diametrically opposed...The basic difference, of course, is this that Christianity has a Savior, whereas Islam does not.<sup>5</sup>

A review of Islamic teachings regarding Jesus will clearly reveal the soul-destroying nature of the Quran and this basic difference between Islam and Christianity. The birth of Jesus is recorded in the nineteenth Sura, following this account of John's birth to Zachariah.

And make mention in the Book, of Mary, when she went apart from her family, eastward, and took a veil to shroud herself from them: and we sent our spirit to her, and he took before her the form of a perfect man.

She said: "I fly for refuge from thee to the God of Mercy! If thou fearest Him, begone from me."

He said: "I am only a messenger of thy Lord, that I may bestow on thee a holy son."

She said: "How shall I have a son, when man hath never touched me: and I am not unchaste."

He said: "So shall it be. Thy Lord had said: 'Easy is this with me;' and we will make him a sign to mankind and a mercy from us. For it is a thing decreed."

And she conceived him, and retired with him to a far-off place...

Then came she with the babe to her people, bearing him. They said, "O Mary! now has thou done a strange thing!

O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a man of wickedness, nor unchaste thy mother."

And she made a song to them, pointing towards the babe. They said, "How shall we speak with him who is in the cradle, an infant?"

It said, "Verily, I am the servant of God! He hath given me the Book, and He hath made me a prophet;

And He hath made me blessed wherever I may be, and hath enjoined me prayer and almsgiving so long as I shall live;

And to be duteous to her that bare me: and he hath not made me proud, deprived.

And the peace of God was on me the day I was born, and will be the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised to life.”

This is Jesus, the son of Mary; this is a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt.

It beseemeth not God to beget a son. Glory be to Him! When he decreeth a thing, He only saith to it, Be, and it is. (Quran 19:16-36)

Muslims believe that:

The mission which God entrusted to Jesus was not salvation through total atonement by blood sacrifice, but salvation by virtue of right guidance and self-discipline, by quickening the stagnant minds and softening the hard souls. It was to install the true religion of God and restore His revelations which had been misinterpreted and abused. In approaching those stagnant minds and hard souls, Jesus not only preached the word of God but also brought tangible Signs and performed “miracles” in support of his mission. Logical and spiritual as well as “supernatural” and extraordinary proofs were provided by God at the hands of Jesus to show those hard-hearted people the true path of God.<sup>6</sup>

In order to substantiate these teachings about the purpose of Jesus, Muslims quote the Quran:

And I (Jesus) have come to attest the law which was before me; and to allow you part of that which had been forbidden you; and to come to you with a sign from your Lord: Fear God, then and obey me; of a truth God is my Lord, and your Lord: Therefore worship Him. This is a right way.”

And when Jesus perceived unbelief on their part, He said, “Who my helpers with God?” The apostles said, “We will be God’s helpers! We believe in God, and bear thou witness that we are Muslims...”

These signs, and this wise warning do we rehearse to thee.

Verily, Jesus is as Adam in the sight of God. He created him of dust: He then said to him, “Be”—and he was. (Quran 3:45-51)

And when God shall say “O Jesus, Son of Mary: hast thou said unto mankind—‘Take me and my mother as two Gods, beside God?’” He shall say “Glory be unto Thee! It is not for me to say that which I know to be not the truth; had I said that, verily thou wouldest have known it: Thou knowest what is in me, but I know not what is in Thee; for Thou well knowest things unseen! “I spake not to them aught but that which thou didst bid me—‘Worship God, my Lord and your Lord;’ and I was a witness of their actions while I stayed among them; but since thou has taken me to Thyself, Thou has Thyself watched them, and Thou art witness of all things: (Quran 5:116-117)

As in the teachings regarding the nature of God, the Quran calls anyone who believes in the deity of Jesus an “infidel” and condemns them to hell.

Infidels now are they who say, “God is the Messiah, Son of Mary;” for the Messiah said, “O children of Israel! worship God, my Lord and your Lord,” Whosoever shall join other gods with God, God shall forbid him the Garden, and his abode shall be the Fire; and the wicked shall have no helpers. (Quran 5:77)

Although Muslims accept the virgin birth of Jesus and the miracles which He performed, they reject the Biblical teachings of His death and resurrection. They reject His crucifixion as being unnecessary because of the forgiving mercy of God and because it would have been illogical for God to have allowed His enemies to kill His messenger. They believe that Jesus was not crucified, but that God provided a means of escape from his enemies and raised Him to heaven as a sign of honor.

Contrary to these teachings of Islam are the clear words of God recorded in Holy Scriptures attesting to the deity of Jesus. Of the very name “Jesus” the angel of the Lord told Joseph: “Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for he shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Six hundred years before Muhammad began spreading these heresies, Peter spoke to all men—including the Muslims—with the inspired words of his Pentecost sermon:

Ye men of Israel hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: . . . therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:22-36)

The apostle, John, succinctly closed his Gospel with the statement of his purpose and testimony to the deity of Jesus. “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

The differences regarding the nature, person, and work of Jesus Christ clearly set Islam apart from Christianity. Closely related to these is the difference regarding the means whereby man is saved. Islam bases its hope for salvation upon a merciful God Who will forgive the sinful acts of righteous men. Christians also trust in the forgiveness of a merciful God, that forgiveness being meted out to man not because of his righteousness, but because of righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was; not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 4:22-5:2)

For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one: much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:15-17)

The Muslim’s view of a merciful God is incompatible with their faith in His justice. A just God could not tolerate the sins of Adam or our sins. A just and holy God would demand retribution

for the sins of every person. It is illogical to assume anything else. The Christian sees the mercy and justice of God harmonized in Jesus Christ. At one and the same time, God was reconciling the world unto Himself and receiving the just payment for man's sins.

Herein lies the great peace and comfort of Christianity's teachings regarding eschatology. Muhammad's graphic descriptions of heaven and hell, death and judgment brought fear and uncertainty to the Muslim-faithful. The reality and power of the resurrection of Christ Jesus brings hope and joy, peace and comfort.

God clearly and lovingly offers salvation freely to all those who believe in the atoning sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ, but He promises eternal condemnation to all who reject His gift of grace.

For God so loved the world, that he gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

### III. The Menace of Islamic Practices

#### A. Islam—A Way of Life

The very meaning of the word Islam—"submission to the will of God"—implies that it becomes a way of life for the faithful Muslim. In this respect, it is not unlike the place of Christianity in the life of the faithful Christian.

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. (I Corinthians 10:31)

The menace of Islam lies in its application to the social, economic, and political life of the regions under its influence and the impact which that has upon the spiritual life of the people living there.

The most comprehensive concept of Islam at the practical level is that of the *Shari ah* (right path). In religion, it is the right path leading to God. In a more comprehensive sense, it includes legal and moral principles, in addition to the Muslims' creed. The *Shari ah* consists of four "roots": the Quran; the Hadith, a collection of the *sunnas* (traditions) of Muhammad; the *Ijtihad*, logical reasoning on the basis of the Quran and the Sunnah; and the *Ijma*, consensus of opinion among the leaders. Those issues answered directly by the Quran or the traditions of Muhammad while in Medina and Mecca are considered closed cases. The solutions to other issues are determined through *ijtihad* and eventually institutionalized by *ijma*.

The *Shari ah*, when applied to the social, economic, and political realms, affects every aspect of the Muslim's life. The *Shari ah* determines the conditions and rituals for marriage, provisions for divorce, guidelines for rearing children, the content of the children's education, and most other aspects of family life. It provides for the collection and distribution of the *zakah* in order that the poor and needy are cared for. It binds the legal system to a code of laws based upon Islamic traditions and Quranic edicts. It is primarily in this area that Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi came into conflict with the fundamentalist Muslims in Iran in 1979. In his attempt to modernize Iran, he set aside much of the *Shari ah* and its influence upon Iranian society. This conflict between a modernized Iran and traditional Islam contributed to the Shah's demise.

The Quran and Hadith make frequent reference to the right of private property, necessity of labor, and honesty in business transactions. (Quran 55:7-9; 83:1-6; 6:165) In this respect, Islam stands in strong opposition to communism which poses a problem to the Soviet Union with its rapidly increasing Muslim minority (now numbering about 50 million) and its attempt to control Afghanistan. Islam also stands in opposition to much of western capitalism which it views as having exploited the poor and needy. If followed precisely, the *Shari ah* would have the

faithful Muslim follow an economic policy closely akin to that enunciated in Scripture (Matthew 6:19-34). He is encouraged to work, free to enter business transactions, handle and invest his possessions as a trust from God, and rely upon the fact that God is the ultimate provider of all that he has and needs.

The situation in Iran has provided a contemporary view of the *Shari ah's* influence upon the political life in an Islamic society. The Quran teaches that all authority and power belong to God (Quran 67:1) and that the ruler of a nation merely administers His affairs on behalf of the people as a trust from God (Quran 4:58; 5:20). It, therefore, requires a government and leaders who are in agreement with Islam so that they can accurately administer the words and will of God. The overthrow of the Shah and establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran implemented this ideal. The apparent confusion over the dispensation of the American hostages is a result of this "ruler-less" society and their attempt to determine an *ijma* for this situation.

The application of the principles of the *Shari ah* to international policies can lead to conflicts. The encouragement which the Ayatollah Khomeini gave to the Afghans (where the 97% majority Muslims are governed by the anti-Islam Communists) and Iraqis (where the minority Sunni sect overrules the majority Shia Muslims) has created considerable hostility in the Middle East. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is viewed as a clear and forceful rebuttal to the renewal of Islamic nationalism. The revival of hostilities between Iraq and Iran can at least partially be understood as a response to Iran's encouragement to the Shiite minority to overthrow the Sunni majority government.

The process of establishing legal, socio-economic, and political institutions leads to the formation of a community bound by tradition. It also has led to the development of a closely knit Islamic community. For inherent in the *Shari ah* is the concept of a community of the faithful. Since a faithful Muslim will submit to the will of God, he will expend his efforts on behalf of the welfare of others. This concept of Islamic brotherhood is supported by quotations of Muhammad and passages from the Quran.

"Whoever relieves a human being from a grief of this world, God will relieve him from a grief on the Day of Judgment."

"None of you is a true believer in Islam until and unless he loves for his fellow man what loves for his own self."<sup>7</sup>

O ye believers! fear God as He deserveth to be feared! and die not till ye have, become Muslims.

And hold ye fast by the cord of God, all of you, and break not loose from it; and remember God's goodness towards you, how that when ye were enemies, He united your hearts and by his favor ye became brethren;

And when ye were on the brink of the pit of fire, he drew you back from it. Thus God clearly showeth you his signs that ye may be guided;

And that there may be among you a people who invite to the Good, and enjoin the Just, and forbid the Wrong. These are they with whom it shall be well. (Quran 3:97-100)

The doctrine of *jihad* (holy war) developed as a corollary to the mission of the community. The purpose of *jihad* was not only to gain converts to Islam but also to gain control over the political and economic affairs of societies in order to run them in accordance with the principles of Islam. Individual conversions frequently occurred, however, as the inhabitants of conquered regions found adherence to Islam to be most expedient. The use of military, political, and economic power to spread Islam thus became an integral part of the *Shari ah*.

Although Islam claims to be the religion of peace and brotherhood, its Quran and history attest to its willingness to military, political, and economic power to spread its influence.

Fighting is prescribed for you, and you dislike it. But it is possible that you dislike a thing which is good for you, and that you love a thing which is bad for you. God knows and you know not. (Quran 2:216)

Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, and do not transgress limits: For God loves not transgressors. And slay them wherever you catch them and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith. But if they cease, God is Forgiving, Most Merciful. And fight them on until there is no more persecution or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God; but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression. (Quran 2:190-193)

Muhammad used *jihad* to recapture Mecca and bring the various non-Muslim tribes under control in Arabia. The history of Islam during the centuries following the death of Muhammad reveals the use of *jihad* in spreading Islam throughout northern Africa, southern Europe, and Asia Minor. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Western colonialism put Islam and *jihad* into decline. In the post-World War II era, *jihad* has arisen in a new context as an important tool in the renaissance of Islam.<sup>8</sup>

### **B. The Sword of Islam**

Since its beginning, Islam has been a challenge to Christianity. In earlier centuries, Islam was spread largely through the use of its military sword. During the past three decades, the “Sword of Islam” has taken a more political and economic appearance. A brief statistical review will illustrate the extent to which the Sword of Islam has been effective in the western world.

Western Europe:	24 million Muslims
South America:	1-1/2 million Muslims
Canada:	300,000 Muslims
United States:	2 million Muslims

This is minuscule when compared with the 70 million Muslims in Bangladesh, 74 million in India, 76 million in Pakistan, and 124 million in Indonesia.<sup>9</sup> It does, however, illustrate how effectively the Sword of Islam has carved its way into these nominally Christian areas. The revival of Islamic political and economic power has given birth to the “Renaissance of the Muslim Spirit”<sup>10</sup> and, hence, the spread of Islam.

The resurgence of political power saw an early thrust for pan-Islamic unity and more recently for Muslim nationalism. The drive for pan-Islamic unity began in 1945 with the formation of the Arab League. The league has been active in social, economic and educational fields and has been a leader in working for greater Islamic unity and cooperation in a wide range of issues. Other activities such as the International Islamic Economic Conference and the World Muslim Conference which have met annually since 1949, the Islamic Congress which was organized in 1953, and the Muslim World League founded in 1961 have worked to unite Muslims from all over the world to cooperate in the spread of Islam. The purpose of these groups is shown by the agenda of the conference of European Islamic Cultural Centres and Organisations funded by King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and held in London in 1973:

1. Calling to Islam through any means possible;

2. Helping Muslim communities protect their faith and find ways and means to liberate them from destructive alien ideologies.
3. Working for the welfare of Islamic communities by uniting small groups into larger groups, helping them discard sectarianism and develop their characteristics as a distinct community;
4. Noting all destructive criticisms against Islam and Muslim communities and providing effective answers;
5. Establishing cordial relations with other communities.<sup>11</sup>

More recently, Islamic political power has been centered in the formation of Muslim nations, such as Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, which attempt to use the Quran and *Shari ah* as their national constitution. With their emergence, Muslim nationalism has become the dominant political force in modern Islam. This movement has placed Muslim in charge of their lives and futures, and has reinvigorated their self-respect. This renewed self-confidence has provided new life to the modern concept of *Jihad*.

Islam's recovery of economic power has coincided with its regained political power. The dependence of Western nations on Islamic oil has provided Islam with the resources to dominate global economics for years to come.

This new economic power is full of implications for Muslims. On the physical side it gives them the ability to change their societies into modern nations almost overnight. On the psychological side it gives Muslims a strong sense of self-confidence. There is a new spirit of optimism which flows through every area of Muslim life.

This spirit of optimism funded by the vast quantities of petro-dollars has fostered the spread of Islam. A recent news article was headlined "Oil Money Now Spreads Islam."<sup>12</sup> It cited the three-month Festival of Islam held in London which was funded by two million petro-dollars. In addition, it noted the spread of Islam throughout Europe, the building of multi-million dollar mosques, and the establishment of the "Voice of Islam" short-wave radio station with its motto "Islam's struggle against atheism and materialism"<sup>13</sup> all funded by oil money.

The concept of *jihad* has become an important and vigorous force in Islam today. Motivated by the drive for political power and funded by the petro-dollars of Western nations, it gives renewed meaning to the "Sword of Islam."

### **C. The Shield of Islam**

As effective in spreading Islam as is its "sword," so effective is Islam as a shield isolating its adherents from outside influences. The Quran and the traditions of the *Shari ah* have long separated Muslims from the modernizations experienced in the West. In so doing, it also shielded them from efforts of Christian missionaries.

While the social, political, and economic *Nahda* (renaissance) has brought many and rapid changes to Muslims, the religious fervor is equally as strong in clinging to the ways of the past. Social reformers have directed their attention to community problems of every kind and political reformers have worked for pan-Islamic unity or Muslim nationalism. As frequently happens, however, these changes have produced a severe reaction in Islam. The backlash has swept across the Muslim world in the past five years. The call is ringing out to return to the old verities, and to strictly apply the literal interpretation of the Quran and *Shari ah* to the affairs of society. As noted previously, the fall of Shah of Iran was, at least in part, a result of this movement.<sup>14</sup>

Fazlur Rahman, a Muslim scholar, has observed:

The movement inspired by the initial modernist impulse split into two developments moving in two directions, one in the direction of almost pure Westernism and the other gravitating towards fundamentalism.<sup>15</sup>

The fundamentalist wave is moving strongly in reaction to all that has happened in the last three decades. More and more Muslims today are saying “it is time now to conserve the faith of Islam.”

As the fundamentalist wave gains momentum the “Shield of Islam” becomes a greater barrier for the Christian. Cultural differences are exaggerated. Language barriers become more difficult to overcome. Islamic traditions regarding marriage, the family, and worship remain foreign and poorly understood by the Christian missionary. Christian concepts of baptism, the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ, and the liturgical worship service remain outside the world of the Muslim. It becomes increasingly difficult to develop much less cross bridges between Islam and Christianity.

The “law of apostasy” has also contributed to the difficulty of gaining converts to Christianity. It is based on a passage from the Quran which was originally applied to pagan Arabs who became Muslim and then reverted back to paganism. Eventually, it was applied to any Muslim who became any kind of non-Muslim, including converts to Christ. If the death-sentence was not carried out physically, it almost always was socially and culturally. The former Muslim was expelled and shielded from any influence which he might have upon the people of his own culture.

Additional evidence of the growing effectiveness of Islam’s shield was the report from the 1978 North American Conference on Muslim Evangelization that “heads of 37 Muslim countries recently resolved to expel Christian missionaries from their lands.”<sup>16</sup> The resistance of the Indonesian government to the efforts of WELS to gain entrance for Pastor Robert Sawall is a close encounter of this kind. Surely the “Shield of Islam” has been an active deterrent to the Christianization of the Muslim world. “How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:14)

#### **IV. Our Response to the Menace of Islam**

The assignment of this paper did not include a dissertation on missiology nor do I intend to give one. We have previously received encouragement in this regard from the essays on the Great Commission. It would seem amiss, however, if we did not direct some consideration to the Christians response to Islam—especially as it pertains to our synod’s world mission activities.

##### **A. Declare All the Counsel of God**

When Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into the world, He charged them to “teach them all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). Our mission to the Muslims as to all people can do nothing less than to “teach them all things.” There is much thinking among missiologists that the Christian message to the Muslims should be watered down in order to make it more palatable, more in harmony with the Quran. This is in contrast to Christ’s Great Commission. In commenting on this passage, R. C. H. Lenski said:

“The idea that all we really need in order to be Christians is to embrace one or two central features of the Gospel is here shown to be highly dangerous. Jesus binds us to all that He has bidden us and not merely to one or two features.”<sup>17</sup>

In his valedictory to the elders at Ephesus, the apostle Paul showed that he had followed Jesus’ directive. He could tell them, “I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you” and “I have not

shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:20, 27). Throughout his epistles, Paul emphasized this thought (cf. Colossians 2:1-3 and 4:12; and Ephesians 3:19 and 4:15).

The primary point that we must keep before us in our response to the menace of Islam is that “we can in no way compromise or soften the message of God’s Word with its basic doctrines of Law and Gospel. In this respect our work among Muslims dare be no different from that which we do elsewhere.”<sup>18</sup>

## **B. All Things to All Men**

Jesus opened the eyes of the blind and made the deaf to hear. Peter spoke to the Jews of their history and the manner in which Jesus had fulfilled the Messianic prophecies. Paul preached to the Athenians about their unknown god. In these and other ways, the Gospel was brought to people where they were.

The apostle Paul spoke of his ministry in these terms in the first epistle to the Corinthians:

Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. (I Corinthians 9:19-23)

The Christian’s attitude in bringing the gospel to people in foreign lands and cultures must be the same as Paul’s. It is necessary for Christian missionaries to be “all things to all men” so that we “might by all means save some.” In modern terms, this comes under the heading of contextualization.

The concept of contextualization is not new. As noted, it was practiced by Jesus, and the apostles,

In definition:

It is the effort to understand and take seriously the specific context of each human group and person on its own terms and in all its dimensions—cultural, religious, social, political, economic—and to discern what the gospel says to people in that context.<sup>19</sup>

Applying the concept of contextualization to our mission to Islam, requires that we understand Islam, its history, its teachings, and its effect upon the socio-economic life of its adherents. We need to understand the ancient and modern conflict between Islam and Christianity. In so doing, we dare not generalize that all Muslims are the same. We need to understand these aspects of Islamic life as they pertain to the specific group with whom we are evangelizing. In short, we need to meet the Muslim where he is.

In developing strategies to effectively carry the Gospel to the Muslim world we will want to answer questions such as the following:

1. How can we capitalize on Islam’s concept of God and its high regard for Jesus?
2. How can we use the similarities between Muslim ideals and Christian ideals to call the Muslim to faith in Jesus Christ?
3. What is the essence of the Gospel and how can it best be communicated in the cultural contexts of the Muslim world?

4. How can we overcome the cultural and language barriers inherent in a proper understanding of concepts such as the Triune God and justification by faith?
5. How much of his culture can a Muslim retain and say with integrity, “Jesus is my Savior?”
6. Are there customs that are relatively neutral—practices that are not necessarily relevant to religious issues?
7. How can we strengthen the Christian convert from Islam while he continues to live in the Muslim world?
8. How can we minister to the Muslim living in non-Muslim cultures—especially the United States?
9. How can we better prepare seminarians and prospective missionaries to effectively work within the Muslim world?
10. How can we make better use of mass media—i.e. radio—to bring the Gospel to the Muslim world?

The foregoing list of questions is far from complete nor would the answers to questions permit one to devise a complete strategy for evangelizing the Muslim world. The questions, however, are intended to illustrate some of the concerns which we must have if we are to be “all things to all men...for the gospel sake.”

### **C. A Field Already to Harvest**

Jesus’ encouragement to His disciples to “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” had reference to the entire world. During this last quarter of the twentieth century it has special reference to the world of Islam.

Islam is a world in transition. The 720 million Muslims are scattered throughout the world. Muslims are not one people and Islam is not one religion. The rapid political, social, and economic changes are bringing reevaluations of Islam and its application to the lives of Muslim laity. More and more Muslims are traveling to the West and losing the support of their Muslim societies.

Muslim businessmen and students are increasingly eager to understand the philosophies of the Western world with which they are coming in contact. Enthusiastic response is being shown to courses in the Bible and Christianity. Such courses can provide the means through which Christians can sow the seed of God’s Word.

Western Christians are increasingly brought into contact with Muslims through the petrochemical industries. Christian businessmen, engineers, construction workers, and oil-field men are transferred to jobs in the newly developing fields in the Middle East. These contacts are opening doors to Christian witnessing which are formally closed to Christian missionaries.

The Lord has prepared the fields of the Muslim world for the sowing of the Gospel. It is now for us to respond to His call for workers in His field. The Muslim world needs Christian disciples with a love for Christ and for His people. Let us “lift up (our) eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.”

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<sup>1</sup> Abdalati, Hammudah, *Islam in Focus*, American Trust Publications, 1975, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Sauer, Theodore A., Personal Letter, October 31, 1980.

<sup>4</sup> Abdalati, *op. cit.*, p. 11-12.

<sup>5</sup> Sauer, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Abdalati, *op. cit.*, p. 156-157.

<sup>7</sup> As quoted in Abdalati, *op. cit.*, p. 124-125.

<sup>8</sup> Kershaw, R. Max, "The Comparative Status of Christianity and Islam in the West." *The Gospel and Islam*, p. 225-233.

<sup>9</sup> Bailey, Richard, "The Comparative Status of Christianity and Islam in the Sub-Continent," *The Gospel and Islam*, p. 308-319.

<sup>10</sup> Miller, Roland E., "Renaissance of the Muslim Spirit," *Christianity Today*, November 16, 1979, p. 16-21.

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<sup>14</sup> As quoted in Miller, "Renaissance of the Muslim Spirit" *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> Peters, George W., "An Overview of Missions to Muslims," *The Gospel and Islam*, p. 390-404.

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<sup>18</sup> Taber, Charles R., "Contextualization: Indigenization and/or Transformation," *The Gospel and Islam*, p. 146.

<sup>19</sup>