

# **Christian Witness to Muslims: Effective Approaches and Care for Muslim converts to Christianity**

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## **Introduction**

Islam has experienced unprecedented exponential growth right around the world in the last few decades. It has made serious inroads in about any and every part of the world and shows no sign of relenting. Its voice is heard from all corners of the globe far beyond its traditional enclaves. Not even the negative publicity from the world's main line electronic media news outlets have significantly negatively impacted its advance and growth. How has this happened? What is at play? Many people seem surprised if not alarmed while others still continue to dismiss it as a little religion clamouring attention when in fact an empty bag of wind. But is it so? This paper focuses on how best to engage the religion as it finds a home in traditionally Christian contexts. Additionally, the paper proffers suggestions on how Christians could best connect with Muslims in order to win them over to the Christian faith.

## **Why Muslim Evangelism?**

Arising from what has been mentioned in the introduction, why bother about Islam evangelism and what is the explanation for the unprecedented growth or spread despite the apparently negative publicity (Lewis 1990)? Islam is daily in the press and often connected to all manner of negative things. Despite this negative publicity, Muslims claim that their religion is of Peace. Esposito (2002) claims that the vast majority of Adherents are genuinely peaceful and as surprised when they hear or read of atrocities committed in the name of the beloved religion. Christians and others dread to have direct contact with Muslims imagining that the next event will be an explosion of untold proportions, with colossal loss of lives.<sup>1</sup> Besides, Islamists do not seem to fear death, if anything, look forward to it! How can one handle a person who is ready to die for their cause at whatever cost? What is inherent in the religion that propels people to stick to such a religion? Well, these and other questions are the very reasons why people must seek to study and understand Islam to determine if indeed it is what it claims to be, Peaceful<sup>2</sup>. Further, there is need to grasp what exactly what the religion is about, what triggers conflict and how best to mitigate conflict or tension when it arises. In the free world, how best should Muslims be treated? How should the Prophet and what he stood for be best treated so that Muslims and others may live side by side in harmony as they have done for the long Islamic History? Now that Muslims are spreading all over the world and presently found everywhere, how can they be accorded the dignity they deserve let alone won over to Christ?

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<sup>1</sup> Before knowing what I now know, I too dreaded any and every Muslim as evidenced by my lack of peace when I once boarded an international flight having adherents in traditional garb on board that periodically engaged in *salah* along the aisle. Through-out that flight I kept one eye open just in case. But that was needless!

<sup>2</sup> John Esposito Great Religions: Islam, (Georgetown University course material).

This is only possible if the religion itself, its theology and psychology are understood by the Christian Apologist. This paper explores some of these key questions, though not in detail. If a person seeks to have a detailed treatment, we recommend a reading of Gilchrist's volume: *Christian witness to Muslims*, an excellent treatise. So, Why Muslim Evangelism? Simple, they are right at our door step!

### **The advance of Islam in recent years: a short history**

Islam was hatched in the seventh century (CE) when the Prophet Muhammad received a series of Revelations for a period of 23 years (i.e. 610-632). He lived in Mecca and at age 40 (while in reclusive meditation at the *Hira* cave) had the first encounter with Allah which would lead to his being the Founder of Islam<sup>3</sup>, the final religion to replace all others that preceded it. Muhammed claimed to have been the long expected Prophet after Jesus<sup>4</sup> and thus, begun spreading his faith in different modes including raiding, conquests, murder among others. These actions were precipitated by successively intermittent revelations received over time by the Prophet from Allah through the agency of Angel Gabriel. In the early years (i.e. after 610 AD), the revelations prohibited violence but with time, and rising opposition, violence/self-defence were not only allowed but expected of Muslims in the *Jihads*<sup>5</sup>. The Prophet died in 632 AD leaving behind a religion that would outlive him many centuries hence. Islam is with us today and arguably the fastest growing religion<sup>6</sup>. Some place the estimates at 2.9% against Christianity's 1.9%. But how did Islam spread and what were its exploited routes? Islam commenced in the Middle East (Arabia) and soon spread to the West and East in a very short time<sup>7</sup>. Soon, Jerusalem was conquered as the religion spread all the way to the Southern parts of Europe (France and Spain) when it faced momentary setbacks following the several waves of crusades waged by the Roman Catholic Christians. It spread to the East, entering India and onward to China and Malaysia (i.e. Indonesia or South East Asia) where we have the largest global concentration of Muslims<sup>8</sup>. Towards the South, it made inroads into Africa all the way to West Africa and now has a relatively strong presence in South Africa. After some time, it continued its advance into Europe and then crossed the Atlantic into North America and continues to spread. Virtually, Islam has spread its tentacles right across the world at the present time. But how has it spread? What strategies, if any has it exploited to have a global presence? A number of suggestions come to the fore as posited by Gilchrist (1987) among others.

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<sup>3</sup> Although most Muslims object to this assertion claiming that he was merely a messenger rather than the founder akin to Jesus or Buddha or some such religion.

<sup>4</sup> Muslims refer to Deuteronomy 18:18 and John 14-16 passages to justify this claim but a careful objective reading of these respective passages points to Jesus rather than Muhammad.

<sup>5</sup> The word '*Jihad*' carries several connotations in Islam including Struggling with evil/sin or physical warfare against the infidels in defense of Islam.

<sup>6</sup> John L Esposito, *Ten things everyone needs to know about Islam*, Oxford University Press, (2002) p 1.

<sup>7</sup> John L Esposito, *Great Religions: Islam*.(course material for George Town University 2003).

<sup>8</sup> John Gilchrist *The Christian Witness to Muslims* The Centre for Religious Debate (1988), preface; <https://www.answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/Vol2/index.html>.

First, Islam has spread by migrations that have taken place. The Western world has proffered happier higher quality life being a safe haven for many people including Muslims having found love and safety in the West. As Muslims spread, they have carried their religion with them. Second, Globalization and its attendant effects such as developing a global village, has made the world smaller and cultures interacting<sup>9</sup>. The initial culture shocks soon give way to harmonization, relativity, diversity, accommodation and acceptance. The previously held strongly perceptions or stereo types have given way to dialogue, toleration and syncretism. In the third place, Human rights have given Muslims a voice rather than in the past when they were an oppressed people in their native traditional enclaves or by the colonizing west<sup>10</sup>. Democracy, although frail in strictly Islamic contexts<sup>11</sup> has helped people have a voice on the global stage as well as places where they choose to live. Fourth, the social media, Cable News networks, print media, technology among other factors have consistently had or helped Islam in the news whether for good or bad. Whatever one's take, the mention of Islam has made people aware of its existence and in some cases venture to know more about it at times resulting in reversion. Sixth, the Ottoman Empire, before its demise in the Turkish territory (i.e. between 1918-24) did much to advance the cause of Islam, including Science. Islam has not been idle as it has invested heavily in Apologetics and awareness (i.e. *Dawah*) campaigns. Muslims have created institutions that protect and advance Muslim interests in about every context. Since a number of them are wealthy, they engage in Philanthropic activities including developmental projects, individual empowerments among others in different contexts around the world. These efforts have done much to raise the image and profile of Islam<sup>12</sup>. Lastly but not the least, Islam in its essential nature, has practices that must be religiously observed by all. Two of these are Jihad (greater Jihad)<sup>13</sup> and alms giving. Where Islam cannot take over by force, it uses the human kind approach of alms giving especially to poor contexts. This has worked wonders in many places. Usually, Muslims will look out for each other to help one another because works are part and parcel of one's eligibility for salvation let alone being regarded a good Muslim. In Zambia, Alms attract many people as poverty seemingly can now be alleviated in some households, so it appears in the short run. A further approach is the marriage strategy. Initially, the Qur'an prohibited Muslim men marrying non-Muslim women<sup>14</sup> but this was relaxed in later revelations that which allowed

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<sup>9</sup> Manfred B Steger, *Globalization: A very short Introduction*, Oxford University Press (2003); Charles Hill, *International Business*, MacGrawHill.

<sup>10</sup> Such as Britain over the Middle East or India.

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly some Muslim thinkers argue that Islam is actually the bedrock of Democracy except distorted by faulty traditional interpretation of the Quran or Hadith finding its way in Islamic Jurisprudence. Admittedly, this claim is extremely hard to spot in the said sources.

<sup>12</sup> An example from the Zambian context in 2020. When the Covid 19 pandemic struck, Muslims swiftly swung into action, donating and doing all sorts of philanthropic works indirectly projecting the Islamic flag. The Muslim community did a commendable, may we say, remarkable job. Although if asked directly about their Missional intensions, Muslims deny claiming they are doing a genuine good work as enshrined in the religions' DNA. In effect that is a form of *Dawah* or even *Jihad*.

<sup>13</sup> This form of *Jihad* points to the struggle against evil, sin or infirmities in one's body. This is the peaceful kind of *Jihad*.

<sup>14</sup> John Gilchrist, *Facing the Muslim Challenge* (1999), Life Challenge Africa.

such unions on condition that all offspring would all be Muslims. This is the peaceful population strategy being currently utilized in many African countries including Zambia. Finally, a Muslim girl can never marry a non-Muslim man thereby curtailing any off spring that may potentially be Christian, for instance. Before people realise it, Muslims become a bigger majority and turn the democratic tables!<sup>15</sup> That appears a smart move, because Islam allows Polygamy. How polygamy is tolerated without some form of initial Adultery is difficult to explain but the Qur'an, as we have it today, allows up to four wives married to one man<sup>16</sup>. Adultery is punishable by flogging not by death as was the case in the by the Mas'ud codex<sup>17</sup>.

### **Who Should be Involved in Muslim Engagement?**

When Jesus gave the great commission recorded in Matthew 28, he directly spoke to his 11 Disciples but in effect, he was speaking to all Christians of all ages and times as long as the second coming of Christ tarries. The mandate was to spread the gospel, ensuring people believed and in the process teach, train and baptise converts in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This commission still stands today irrespective of the times, context or circumstances. Christians sin when they do not share the gospel to all people, regardless of who they may be or hail from. Muslims are included in this bracket of humans created in the image of God. The Christian must win all people irrespective of the threat or potential dangers lest we allow religions like Islam to take over the world. Having said the above, Christians do themselves a great favour if they equip themselves to competently engage Muslims, who are often better informed about their indigenous faith as well as Christianity<sup>18</sup>. Part of the equipping is to read up on Islam, know relevant passages of the Qur'an as well as its world and some world history, particularly Historical Theology. Next, Christians should know how Muslims think and view the Bible, Jesus and a general world view/psyche that regulates their thinking. Lastly, the saints must know how to engage Muslims, what to avoid as well as points of contact in a mutually respectful but effective manner. The Christian has no option but to foster the great commission.

### **How Best to Engage Muslims**

As earlier suggested, Muslims can be engaged in various ways. It is interesting to know that even they look forward to opportunities where they could equally profitably engage with other religions peradventure they may win some to the fold. Gilchrist (1987) offers some useful insights on how Muslims could be engaged. We highlight some of these in this paper. First, Christians must know that God expects them to evangelise all people regardless of their background, religion or ethnic heritage. Genealogy is immaterial. Muslims need the gospel as well by that token. Second, Gilchrist

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<sup>15</sup> Remember the story in Exodus 1 & 2 where the Hebrews grew in number threatening the natives. Muslims exploit this silent but effective strategy.

<sup>16</sup> Q 4:3-7;

<sup>17</sup> John Gilchrist, *The Muslim Challenge* (1999); Michael Cook, *The Koran: A very short introduction* (New York: Oxford University press 2000); Some *surahs* are reported to have been lost and thus not a part of the present canon, one was eaten by a Goat while another was omitted and lost. Anthony in his paper: "" makes this claim.

<sup>18</sup> John Gilchrist, *The Christian and Muslim Evangelism* (1985).

says Christians must know as much about Islam, as earlier suggested in an earlier section. Ignorance does not help anyone. Knowledge both emboldens and opens doors for the Christian. Third, the Christian must demonstrate genuine love and care for Muslims. Practical Christianity does wonders in the long run. Inconsistency puts Muslims off. Fourth, Christians must treat Muslims with respect and concern as people created in the image of God. Fouad Elias Accad (1997), a seasoned hands-on life-long expert Muslim scholar, strongly advocated for this approach and in fact went further to suggest that converts needed not leave or change their native culture at all, in that way, less offence resulted. While he had a good point and motive, not all his recommendations fully resonated with the majority of scriptural witness. That said we learn from this venerable Lebanese Arabic saint. Samuel Zwemer<sup>19</sup> equally presents a potent approach in his books *Arabia: Cradle of Islam* and *Islam: A Challenge to faith*, both great reads<sup>20</sup>. Fifth, Christians must be careful what they say and how they say things in relation to Islam. The Christian must never be brash, condescending, and coercive or insult the Prophet for instance for this immediately closes doors. Sixth, the Christian must ensure they build rapport and thus engage in genuine discussions in matters even beyond religion. Gilchrist gives an example of how he connected and made friends with a Muslim, through football! Those are good points to exploit as long as they are good, ethical and mutually building. Seventh, Christian should put up a well-reasoned, thought out argument in relation to Islam and Christianity. Muslims get pleasantly surprised if a Christian demonstrates knowledge of the Qur'an. This is yet another effective bridge. Eighth, know history, the development of the sacred texts for both religions and the commonly asked questions from Muslims including argument points. Often, the question of the Trinity or the alleged tampering (i.e. corrupting or *Tahrif*) of the Christian scriptures will pop up<sup>21</sup>. The Christian must be ready to respond, with gentleness and respect as Peter exhorts the Christians in I Peter 3:15.

### **Factors to Watch Out For**

When interacting with Muslims, Christians need to watch for the following, some of which have already been highlighted in a previous section. They are repeated here for clarity and emphasis:

1. Never insult, belittle or demean the Prophet. In fact insulting any prophet for that matter is a highly emotive matter worse for the prophet Muhammad himself. Several examples come to mind with attendant sharp reactions including the Charlie Hebdo magazine sagas, Salman Rushdie's *Satanic verses* publishing among others. If you insult the prophet, you might as well forget about profitably engaging with Muslims as everything else gets clouded by the perceived blasphemy.
2. Always be factual and accurate.

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<sup>19</sup> An extremely well-travelled gentleman in Global Muslim contexts as well as actual on site mission work in Arabia where his two daughters are buried.

<sup>20</sup> These works by Dr Samuel Zwemer accessible in digital form at:  
<http://www.muhammadanism.org/Zwemer/>.

<sup>21</sup> Abdullah Saeed, "The Charge of Distortion of Jewish and Christian Scriptures," *The Muslim World* # 92 (Fall 2002): 419-436.

3. Be patient with Muslims. They can be vexing at times as they repeatedly ask some questions, perhaps already responded to.
4. After a Muslim converts, the Christian should know the accruing implications which may include rejection, ostracizing, job loss and even death (honour killing?) in certain contexts! The Christian community should be intentional in offering genuine support for such a convert lest they turn back “to Egypt”, on economic grounds!
5. Know as much about the Qur’an, its development and how it is treated. A hind deep knowledge and appreciation of the Christian scriptures is a must before venturing into Muslim apologetics though for evangelism purposes, sufficient knowledge of the biblical metanarrative is strongly enjoined.
6. Be kind and benevolent to the Muslim. Show mercy, kindness and love to them.
7. Answer their queries and never shy away or despise them. Where unclear, be honest but be sure to return with an answer.
8. Know about the gnostic gospels (i.e. Thomas, Barnabas etc.) as well as the basic Islamic tenets and practices.
9. Never force your opinions or religious convictions on them or they may enter the defensive mode.

As can be seen, the Christian will be more effective if they intelligently, lovingly and consistently share the good news. Effective strategies are key because the Muslim is equally armed with potent manoeuvres to win anyone over. Muslims are often good at argumentation and derive immense pleasure when they win an argument.

### **Caring for Converts from Islam**

Once a Muslim converts, a lot of things change. In addition to the inner life radical transformations, their external situations change too as this is such a huge paradigm shift affecting their entire life, all pervasive may we say. First, their view of God changes from an Impersonal to personal. Their view of Christ changes from a mere human prophet to God. Their perception of the Holy scriptures and/or Biblical narrative changes from the corrupted Qur’anic version to the authentic story line. Their dress, if outside the traditional context, may probably have to change as will their practices. Most of all, their world view, relations and prospects radically alter. For instance, they will be rejected by family and friends and in some cases, face the danger of imminent death or lose friends and certain privileges they once enjoyed whilst they walked the Islamic path. The way they do business or communicate with others may change as well. Their reaction to sin and its penalty in relation to the grace of God will equally be affected. So, so many changes will need to be adjusted to! It is literary a Titanic sea change, threatening to overwhelm a soul!

The Christian community must therefore be ready for such eventualities so that they could be a buffer or supportive safety net to help the novice surmount this steep transitional learning curve. For instance, in the event a lady/female converts, even their self-view will have to change, from being passive and reclusive to taking up challenges and opportunities that the glorious gospel

proffers. They will be free from inhibiting cultural, Hadithic or Qur'anic dictates about education, roles in society or even choices as to whom to marry for instance. The Christian Church does well to not only counsel but practically demonstrate how one could transition to the new found life in Christ. Sadly, many Christian communities are weak on this score but definitely an area of growth.

### **What others have said about Muslim engagement**

John Gilchrist (1987) has done the Church great service by his insightful writings. He seems to deeply understand Islam and how it works. In his book *Christian Witness to Muslims*, Gilchrist highlights very key aspects often ignored by many writers. He not only demonstrates what Christians ought to know but also How Christians should effectively engage Muslims in evangelistic or apologetic discussions. He highlights the fact that Christians in the West (and now all over the world) have no option but to engage Muslim migrants to their once predominantly Christian contexts. A great aspect of Gilchrist's book is that he ably guides the Christian community on how to care for convert to Christianity away from Islam and what converts often go through. Michael Cook (2000) in writing about the Koran highlights the fact that Muslims hold the *Mushaf* or written scripture in very high esteem minding how it is handled. Cook further states that the Koran is not logically written as in prose but somewhat poetic and sermonic in nature. This is where its genius lies, he claims. Further, he mentions that Islam is the religion whose adherents practice and do things in some kind of unison such as Alms giving, pilgrimage and a host of others practices not to mention the dressing. Dr Cook seems to delight in the religion, some form of helpful romantic attachment.

### **Take Home Lessons From Muslim Engagement study**

Several lessons can have been harvested from this consideration of Islam. We present these in point form though not in any logical order:

- i. The Qur'an is viewed as perfect and directly from God through the Angel Gabriel. This was revealed to the unlettered Prophet Muhammed. Although this claim is parroted all over, it is not true because the Qur'an has been edited over time as well as not as complete as people claim. An example is the absence of the Adultery verse. Further, the Qur'an records what are known as the 'satanic verses' by which Muhammad claims to have been momentarily misled by Satan.
- ii. The Qur'an was initially revealed in 610 AD through trances and would later be collated to make a canon 644-656 AD.
- iii. Several codices existed at the time *Uthman* decreed that a standard text be collated by Zaid to the exclusion of other more credible texts by credible men like *Mas'ud*.
- iv. The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic (sacred language) and most Muslims oppose its translation into another language. They claim that it becomes corrupt and thus ceases to be a Quran. They have a point citing inadequate dynamic equivalence and loss of some intonations across translations. On the other hand, this locks the text in an ancient Semitic language.
- v. The Arabic Qur'an is treated with utmost care and should never be in the possession of non-believers.

- vi. The word '*Islam*' means submission and a Muslim is thus one who submits to Allah and his religion.
- vii. Muhammed is Islam's prophet, reputed to be the last Prophet in the line of many of which Jesus (*Isa*) is believed to be one of them.
- viii. Christians need to know how best to interact with Muslims lest they make fatal mistakes or drive them away.
- ix. Muslims are now everywhere and at doorsteps.
- x. When interacting with Muslims, Christians need to be well versed, demonstrate love, equipped and ready to engage in logical and persuasive talks. Muslims are ready to engage in debate if they think they will win, which they confidently affirm.
- xi. Christians should rather engage in helpful dialogue not necessarily to win a debate but convert. They do this with love, decorum, courtesy, concern and genuine care.
- xii. John Gilchrist appears to know how best to connect with Muslims. Christians need to investigate how to proceed bearing in mind several issues such as what they believe, internalise their own Bibles as well as some aspects of Islam so that they are not caught off guard by the opponent.
- xiii. Christians should show due courtesy and never insult or demean the Prophet. As earlier intimated, love is the badge of Christianity which Muslims need to see (John 13:35) by which they are often disarmed.
- xiv. Islam has dual aspects to it both Religious and Political. In Islam, the divide between secular and Spiritual does not exist. Christians tend to have a dichotomy resulting in the separation between Church and State.
- xv. The concept of '*Christendom*' does not appear to have been in Christ's mind when he gave the great commission. Although it may have had its advantages, it cannot be justified except classified as a human construct.
- xvi. The Christian must know Church history to act and respond correctly in each current context.
- xvii. Gilchrist suggest that the apparent unity among Muslims is not always genuine, organic but plastic.
- xviii. MacDonald claims the following: "*The truth is that Islam is more broken than even Christendom.*" It depends when this declaration was written.
- xix. Christianity has many denominations right across the world. Muslims make much of an issue about this pointing to the varied texts-versions of the Bible. The good part however is that Christians are agreed on the fundamentals. They may differ on practice and emphasis/traditions but the core issues are the same. Doctrinal divides also exist but rarely resulting in blood shed among saints.

- xx. Interestingly, Islam also has many sects within it too. Islam with its Qur'an has experienced similar disintegrations or divisions based on several factors including historical succession tussles, canon interpretation or views of the traditional sources. So the claim that Islam is united while Christianity is disintegrated is false. The rifts within Islam can be so bad, bloody and at times to the point of killing or rejecting the other. We have in mind the *Sunni*, *Shia*, *Ammadiyah* and *Sufi* Muslim sects among others. MacDonald makes the claim that Islam is more fragmented than Christianity though on the outside appears one perfect unit.
- xxi. It is worth noting that Muslims try to associate Christianity with pagan religions in an attempt to discredit it but alas, things often backfire. In fact any two Muslims often (not always) have conflicting views on Jesus and Muhammed in relation to other pagan religions.
- xxii. Gilchrist claims that Mariyah, Muhammed's Christian wife from Egypt could have given him the gnostic gospel which he believed.
- xxiii. Islamic scholars will generally not stop at anything to give Christianity a bad name. They attempt to connect it to paganism but Christianity is unique from the rest.
- xxiv. Muslims object to the Atonement suggesting that Jesus never taught it. They hold that God can only be pleased by obeying the commandments which is erroneous of course! Christians should grab the opportunity of objections to preach Christ.
- xxv. Muslims claim that works/obedience not faith justifies one. That explains why they deny the atonement opting for a humanistic anthropology.
- xxvi. Jesus claimed to be the Good shepherd<sup>22</sup> and thus essentially good not just a guide of sorts. He further sets sinners free to live a holy life that is pleasing to God<sup>23</sup>.
- xxvii. Muslims claim that belief in the atonement leads to licentiousness. This is hardly true because a Justified soul will glorify God out of a thankful heart. Jesus, by His death on the Cross redeemed Mankind.
- xxviii. The Bible talks about humanity in sin and needing a saviour. Jesus is the answer to the fall in Adam. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit is essential to conversion unlike other beliefs of men. The Qur'an rejects the idea of the fall<sup>24</sup> in preference for works.
- xxix. God's word has revealed the Holy Trinity composed of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Islamist reject this truth and make much of an issue. Islamic Scholars link it to Tri-theism. The Christian need not fear asserting the doctrine.

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<sup>22</sup> John 10:11, 14.

<sup>23</sup> John 8:32, 36.

<sup>24</sup> Or original sin.

- xxx. Muhammed perhaps had access to the Gnostic gospels where he got the wrong notion about Christ and His nature among other truths as earlier hinted at.
- xxxi. The Roman Catholic Doctrine of '*theotokos*' could have contributed to Muhammed's mistaken view of the Trinity Doctrine.
- xxxii. The Qur'anic texts that suggest that Mary is part of the Trinity<sup>25</sup>. Clearly, the Qur'an has misrepresented the Trinity as composed on Mary, Father and Son (Jesus).
- xxxiii. Muslims will seek to discredit the Hebrew and Christian Scripture with alleged apparent errors within the Bible when the Qur'an itself is full of 'errors' itself. Christians should take advantage to preach Christ rather than be detracted. They claim the Bible has over 50,000 errors! They point to the Genealogies and alleged additions to Mark's gospel as proof for this claim. Christians should keep the focus in the right places!
- xxxiv. Muslims deny and reject the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus based on Surah 4.137 but the same Qur'an is vague of who actually was crucified. There are theories in Islamic camp about this matter, some contradicting each other. However, facts and history state that Jesus was indeed crucified on the cross and rose from the dead for our Justification<sup>26</sup>. This is yet another contact point for gospel witness.
- xxxv. The arguments against the crucifixion in Islam go as follows: 1. Jesus was crucified but did not die but escaped to India and died there (swoon theory). 2. Jesus was not crucified but a look alike was instead (substitution theory). 3. Jesus died but did not rise from the dead. People went to the wrong tomb. 4. Jesus was taken up to Heaven in bodily form escaping from crucifixion. Jesus will come again to die...though some Muslims object to this view stating that Jesus must have died but will be raised at the last day. 5. The Qur'an is vague about Jesus' crucifixion, death and resurrection, leaving room for speculation. Muslims are torn as to what to believe or accept as authentic truth.
- xxxvi. The Qur'an acknowledges the plot to kill Jesus but is silent on his actual death or resurrection. Only one passage in the Qur'an denies the crucifixion<sup>27</sup>.
- xxxvii. The Genesis account of Adam and Eve approximates to what the Qur'an teaches<sup>28</sup>; this is a contact point for Christians to Muslims.
- xxxviii. The fall is acknowledged in the Qur'an though sin is not taken as seriously devastating as in the Bible. In the hadith, Muhammed appears to have acknowledged universal sinfulness.

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<sup>25</sup> Surah 5.119

<sup>26</sup> Rom 4:25

<sup>27</sup> Surah 4.157

<sup>28</sup> Although some there are some detail variations between the narratives which the saint should be aware about.

- xxxix. God is love, which attribute is absent in the impersonal Muslim deity<sup>29</sup>. This is a contact point for Christian evangelism. The Qur'an rejects the idea of God's love to sinners in Surah 6.141. The Christian God is relational and thus calls Christians His Children. This concept is absent, if not offensive in Islam.
- xl. The Miracles of Jesus and his ability to give life prove that he is uniquely divine. The Qur'an acknowledges Jesus' ability to give life. Muhammed never performed any tangible miracle (though some try to refer to the Hadith for argumentation or at best claim that the Qur'an itself is *THE* miracle!).
- xli. The titles attributed to Jesus in the Qur'an include: Messiah (*Mashir*), Spirit of God and word of God. These are contact points for Christians to Muslim witness. The gospel can be preached to Muslims by using the title 'messiah'. It is only used in later Surahs, probably when Muhammed received more light about Jesus or the Christian Faith. Interestingly, the Qur'an never defines what 'messiah' means. Could it be that Muhammed used a term he did not fully understand? Jesus is called '*Isa*' in Islam.
- xlii. The subject relating to the sacrificial son is controversial and emotive. Contextual evidence however suggests that Isaac rather than Ishmael is intended because of the following: 1. Ishmael is never once mentioned in the immediate context 2. Hagar is never mentioned as Abraham's wife but Sarah 3. Isaac is agreed in both sacred books as the son of Promise.

### Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that a grand opportunity is right at the door step of the Christian because the Muslims have migrated from their traditional jealously protected enclaves. If the Christians do not arise to the occasion, the Muslims will definitely make unprecedented inroads right across the world. Today, Islam is the second largest religion but not for long as it may eventually emerge the largest in the not too distant future. The choice is squarely in the Christian's lap and urgently so.

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<sup>29</sup> Although Scholars like Fazlur Rahman hold a contra opinion: *The Major themes of the Qur'an* (University of Chicago), p 2 & 3.

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