

PRESENTING JESUS TO MUSLIMS: A SUGGESTED APPROACH

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Islam, like Christianity, is a growing religion. From the Arabian Peninsula to the north and east parts of Africa, and from the Balkans to the whole of the Near and Middle East to China and down to the East Indies, Muslims are promoting their religion.¹ Islam has rapidly grown to become the second largest religion, with more than one billion followers,² or about one-fifth of the world's total estimated population today.³

The growth of Islam presents a challenge to Christian missions in many parts of the world. In Africa, Islam is making converts faster than Christianity.⁴ It is reestablishing its Islamic values, practices, institutions and laws in Muslim countries.⁵ Many Muslims now live in large cosmopolitan centers like Amsterdam, London, Paris, Sydney, Toronto, Los Angeles and New York.⁶ There are more Muslims than Methodist Christians in the United States now.⁷

One of the biggest obstacles that prevent Muslims from accepting Christianity is that Christianity teaches that Jesus is divine as well as human, and that He died

¹Hamilton A. R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism: An Historical Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 19-22.

²Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 9.

³The world's total estimated population in 1996 was about 5.8 billion, of which Muslims numbered about 1.1 billion. David B. Barrett, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1996," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20 (1996): 25.

⁴J. Herbert Kane, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission: A Panoramic View of Missions from Pentecost to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 51.

⁵Islam also is recreating an Islamic social order or government based on *sharia* (Islamic code of laws). It is known as the Islamic resurgence. Chandra Muzaffar, *Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia* (Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Fajar Bakti, 1987), 2, quoted in S. Batulamai, "Response to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia," *Asia Journal of Theology* 3 (1989): 4-6.

⁶William J. Saal, *Reaching Muslims for Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1993), 23.

⁷Geisler and Saleeb, 9.

on the cross.⁸ Muslims believe that Jesus was merely a human being and He did not die on the cross.

Various approaches on how to share the gospel with Muslims have been suggested. The oldest one is a polemical approach. In this approach, Muhammad was branded as a liar and an impostor.⁹ But the polemical approach fails to bring Muslims to accept the person of Jesus Christ, including His divinity, because Muslims are offended by this approach.¹⁰

Another approach is dialogical in nature. It attempts to find the similarities between Christianity and Islam. In this approach, Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, and the Quran, the holy Book of Islam, are appreciated. But this approach does not persuade Muslims to come to Jesus as the only Savior, because the aim of dialogue is conversation only, not conversion.¹¹ The main purpose of this approach is to find a point of understanding with Muslims, not to convert them.

The latest approach for sharing the gospel with Muslims is an attempt to understand the worldview of Muslims and then express the truth of the gospel in

⁸There are six obstacles that prevent Muslims from accepting Christianity: (1) according to Islam, the Quran is more authoritative than the Bible; (2) Islam denies the deity and the crucifixion of Christ; (3) a person can convert to Islam but not from Islam; (4) to convert to Christianity is to become an apostate from the faith of Muslims and a traitor to one's country; (5) Islam is a religion that permeates all of life and is practiced more in public than in private; and (6) Islam still has the memory of the Crusades. Kane, 114-17.

⁹Heikki Räisänen, "The Portrait of Jesus in the Quran: Reflection of a Biblical Scholar," *Muslim World* 70 (1980): 122.

¹⁰A debate with a Muslim scholar about the person of Jesus may be found in Anis Shorrosh, *Islam Revealed* (Nashville: Nelson, 1988). Shorrosh did not report whether or not the Muslim converted to Christianity. An attack against Muhammad the prophet and the Quran is found in Robert Morey, *The Islamic Invasion* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1992). It has made Muslims angry because Muhammad and the Quran are very sacred to Muslims.

¹¹George N. Malek, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue," *Missiology* 16 (1988): 279-86. James P. Dretke, *A Christian Approach to Muslims: Reflections from West Africa* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1979), discusses how, as a missionary in West Africa, he practiced the dialogic approach with Muslims, especially in Ghana. In this approach, Dretke expresses appreciation for Muhammad the prophet and suggests that the Quran makes a useful point of contact. In this dialogical approach, twelve doctrines which are held in common by Christians and Muslims are compared. See Badru D. Kateregga and David W. Shenk, *Islam and Christianity: Muslim and Christian in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980). For example, comparisons are made between the Quran and the Bible, and between Muhammad and Jesus. However, the comparative study cannot explain how Muslims think. To them, the Bible is corrupted but the Quran is perfect. Furthermore, Jesus is the prophet of Israel only but Muhammad is the prophet of mankind. The comparative study in the dialogue approach does not win Muslims to Jesus.

forms and terms that can best be understood by them. This approach may have the most potential for penetrating the Muslim world, but it may lead to syncretism.¹²

In line with this approach, this paper seeks to understand the Islamic view of the person of Jesus and then express the truth of Jesus Christ in terms that can be best understood by Muslims. It discusses the life and titles of Jesus, then suggests a biblical model for sharing Jesus with Muslims.

The Life of Jesus

Muhammad had a high regard for Jesus. This is evident both from the accounts of Jesus' life as well as the titles which are used in the Quran. There, references to the person of Jesus are found in fourteen *suras* or chapters, totaling ninety different verses: four *suras* were written during the Meccan period and ten were written during the Medinan period.¹³

In the Quran, the life of Jesus is linked with miraculous events such as His birth, His works, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and His return.

The Birth of Jesus

The Quran speaks of the birth of Jesus through the Virgin Mary. Sura 19:18-22 states that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and said, "I am only a messenger from thy Lord to announce to thee the gift of a holy son." Mary responded, "How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?" The angel replied, "So it will be; Thy Lord said: 'That is easy for me, and we wish to appoint him as a sign unto men and a mercy from us.' It is a matter decreed."¹⁴ So Mary conceived Jesus, and she retired to a remote place.

¹²Don M. McCurry, "Cross-Cultural Models for Muslim Evangelism," *Missiology* 4 (1976). See further idem, "Contextualization: Indigenization and/or Transformation," in *The Gospel and Islam: A 1978 Compendium*, ed. Don M. McCurry (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1979); Phil Parshall, *New Paths in Muslim Evangelical Approaches to Contextualization* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982).

¹³The Quran is the collection of revelations which consist of 114 *suras* (chapters) and 6205 verses, and about 78,000 words. Murteza Mutahhari, *Revelation and Prophethood* (Tehran: Foreign Department Bonyad Bethat, n.d.), 65. The Quran is divided into two periods: the Meccan period and the Medinan period. The first comes from a time when Muhammad had to cope with much resistance to his message from the people in Mecca. This resistance was focused on his message about the resurrection. The Medinan period covers a time during which there was increased tension and hostility toward the Jews, but less toward the Christians. See Roelf S. Kuitse, "Christology in the Quran," *Missiology* 20 (1992): 357.

¹⁴*Roman Transliteration of The Holy Quran with Full Arabic Text*, English trans. A. Yusuf Ali (Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1991).

Many Christian scholars state that the Quran supports the Christian teaching that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary and His birth was different from that of any other human being. This implicitly suggests the divinity of Christ.¹⁵

However, in order to stress the humanity of Jesus, Muslims teach that the birth of Jesus was similar to the creation of Adam. This belief is based on Sura 3:59: "Jesus is like Adam in the sight of God. He created him of dust and then said to him, 'Be,' and he was."¹⁶ Muslims maintain that "God demonstrated omnipotence by creating Jesus in the womb of Mary without a father's involvement. Even more miraculous, however, was the creation of Adam without father or mother."¹⁷

Nevertheless, the Quran speaks of the nature of the birth of Jesus in Sura 19:21, pointing to His divinity. It states that Jesus is "a sign unto men and a mercy from God." Since the Quran was written in a Semitic culture, parallelism consisting of two statements of the same thought is found in this verse.¹⁸ Thus, the phrase "a sign unto men" is parallel with "a mercy from God." It means that His birth is a sign of God's mercy to humanity.

The Works of Jesus

The Quran speaks of miracles performed by Jesus. All miracles that are attributed to Jesus are summarized in Sura 5:113:

When God saith: "O Jesus Son of Mary, Remember my favour unto thee and unto thy mother; how I strengthened thee with the Holy Spirit, so that thou spokest unto mankind in the cradle as in maturity; and how I taught thee the Scripture and Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel; and how thou didst create of clay as it were the figure of a bird, by my permission; and didst breathe thereon, and it became a bird by my permission; and thou didst heal one blind from his birth, and the leper, by my permission; and when thou didst bring forth the dead, by my permission."¹⁹

¹⁵J. Elder, *The Biblical Approach to the Muslim* (Houston: Leadership Instruction and Training International, n.d.), 51, states that "the Quran accepts the truth that Jesus was born of Mary apart from a human father. He was born by direct creative act of God." C. R. Marsh, *Share Your Faith with a Muslim* (Chicago: Moody, 1975), 46, affirms that "no other was ever born as He was. . . . He was born by the power of God (*qudrat Allah*) apart from the intervention of a man." Robert J. Wieland, *In Search of the Treasure of Faith* (Africa: All Africa Publications, n.d.), 100-101, adds, "Jesus' birth was different to that of any other human being. . . . He is called *al Manzul*—he who descended."

¹⁶Kuitse, 357.

¹⁷Paul Varo Martinson, *Islam: An Introduction for Christian*, trans. Stefanie Ormsby Cox (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1994), 185.

¹⁸Giulio Basetti-Sani, *The Koran in the Light of Christ: A Christian Interpretation of the Sacred Book of Islam* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1977), 70.

¹⁹Abdiyah Akbar Abdul-Haqq, *Sharing Your Faith with a Muslim* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1980), 101.

Many Christian scholars believe that the Quran's record of miracles performed by Jesus point to His divinity. For example, although Roelf S. Kuitse says that the story of the child Jesus giving life to birds made of clay is not biblical but a story in the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas, he demonstrates that many words used in the story are also used in the account of the creation of Adam according to the Quran:

Sura 3:49: Jesus makes; Sura 6:2: God makes. . . . Sura 3:48: Jesus makes from clay; Sura 6:2: God makes from clay. . . . Sura 3:49: Jesus breathes into it; Sura 32:9 God breathes into it. . . . The Arabic imperative *kun* (be) used in the creation story (Sura 3:47) is also used in the story (*kun fa-yakun*).²⁰

Fuad Accad, a Muslim convert to Christianity, compares the story of the child Jesus and the creation story of Adam to show Jesus as the Creator and hence, divine.²¹ Abdiyah Akbar Abdul-Haqq, also a Muslim convert, adds that "the story of Jesus making birds out of clay makes a significant point about His divinity."²²

But Muslims maintain that many miracles Jesus performed were done only by the will of God, not as a proof of His divine nature. For example, Ishaq Husaini, a Muslim scholar, states that "all the miracles Jesus produced" were done only "by the will of God."²³ Muslims believe that Jesus performed more miracles than any other prophets.

The Death and Resurrection of Jesus

The Quran speaks of the death and resurrection of Jesus in Sura 3:55; 4:157-58; and 19:33.²⁴ But Muslims deny the death of Jesus based on Sura 4:157-58:²⁵

The Jews said, "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary." But Muhammad said, "They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but so it was made to appear to them. . . . God raised him up unto Himself; Allah is exalted in power and wisdom."

Muslims believe that it was impossible for such a good man as Jesus to die on the cross. God would have saved him from such a terrible death. They believe that God took Jesus to heaven just before the crucifixion and that a substitute, perhaps

²⁰Kuitse, 358.

²¹Fuad Accad, "The Quran: A Bridge to Christian Faith," *Missiology* 4 (1976): 334.

²²Abdul-Haqq, 97.

²³Ishaq Husaini, *Christ in the Quran and in Modern Arabic Literature* (n.p., n.d), 3, quoted in Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus in the Quran* (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), 83.

²⁴In Sura 3:55, Allah says: "O Jesus! I will take thee [in death] and raise thee to Myself and clear thee of those who blaspheme. I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject faith, to the day of resurrection." Sura 19:33 states that Jesus said, "Peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day I shall be raised up to life again."

²⁵Elder, 53.

Judas, was crucified in His place.²⁶ But a certain sect of Islam, the Ahmadiyyah, holds that Jesus was crucified but did not die on the cross. He was taken down in a coma and subsequently revived and traveled to Kashmir, where he finally died.²⁷

Muslim commentators are not in agreement about the substitute. The candidates for this individual have ranged from Judas to Pilate to Simon of Cyrene or one of Jesus' close disciples.²⁸

Accad suggests the possibility of harmonizing Sura 4:157-58 to the death of Jesus on the cross, as follows:

It was not the Jews themselves who crucified Jesus, as this was not permissible to them. They caused the Romans, who were the masters of Palestine then, to do it for them. It was God who planned this crucifixion according to the Old Testament. The Jews were not able to slay him, because "God raised him up unto himself," after His death and resurrection.²⁹

The Ascension and Return of Jesus

The Quran speaks about the ascension of Jesus in Sura 4:158. Muslims believe Jesus is now in heaven and has access to the throne of God:

Muhammad, on his night journey to the seventh heaven, met Jesus in the second heaven and was introduced to him by Gabriel; whereas others of the fathers were in a higher place, for instance, Joseph in the third heaven, Aaron in the fifth, Moses in the sixth, and Abraham in the seventh heaven.³⁰

The Quran, in Sura 43:6, also implicitly makes a singular reference to Jesus in connection with the coming judgment. It states, "And Jesus shall be a sign for the coming of the hour of Judgment. Therefore have no doubt about the hour, but follow ye Me: this is a straight way."

Islamic tradition says that Jesus will descend on a mountain in the Holy Land, near Afiq. He will kill *Al-Dajjal*, the AntiChrist, with a spear. Then Jesus will go to Jerusalem to worship in the Islamic manner; thereafter He will kill the swine, destroy the churches and synagogues, and kill all Christians who do not believe in Him. From that time on there will be only one faith on earth. Jesus will reign for forty years and die and be buried in Medina beside Muhammad.³¹

²⁶Marsh, 54.

²⁷Michael Nazir-Ali, *Islam: A Christian Perspective* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1983), 17-18.

²⁸Geisler and Saleeb, 65.

²⁹Accad, 340.

³⁰Erich W. Bethmann, *Bridge to Islam: A Study of the Religious Forces of Islam and Christianity in the Near East* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), 60. Tradition says that Muhammad's journey occurred in A.D. 621. See Geisler and Saleeb, 73.

³¹H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, "Isa," *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam* (1974), 173-74.

The Titles of Jesus

The Quran gives a greater number of honorable titles to Jesus than to any other prophet.³² It refers to Jesus, for example, as a “Prophet,” an “Apostle,” a “Servant,” a “Sign and Mercy,” an “Example,” a “Witness,” “Blessed,” One who “held honor in this world and the hereafter,” and “Nearest one to God.”³³

Other quranic titles for Jesus, such as the “Word from Allah,” the “Spirit proceeding from Him [Allah]” and the “Messiah,” may imply the divinity of Jesus.³⁴ These three titles are discussed below.

The Word from Allah

The most exciting title given to Jesus in the Quran is the “Word from Allah.” It is found in Suras 3:39,³⁵ 3:45,³⁶ and 4:171.³⁷ Some scholars think that the Quran’s statement that Jesus is the “Word from Allah,” means that He *is* the “Word of God” who became the “Son of Mary.”³⁸ In addition, since the Quran was written in the Semitic culture, the title “Word from Him [Allah]” in 3:45 is parallel to Jesus Christ who “held honor in this world and the hereafter” where these titles appeal to His divinity. The name “Jesus Christ” is parallel with “Son of Mary” in connection with the birth and humanity of Jesus. Thus, Sura 3:45 essentially states that Jesus is the Word of God who became a man through the Virgin Mary.

However, Muslims believe that God does not reveal Himself to anyone in any way. He reveals only His will.³⁹ Therefore, most Muslim scholars argue that the “Word from Allah” did not become flesh but became a book, namely the Quran.⁴⁰

³²Parrinder, 16.

³³Ibid., 30-54. See respectively Sura 2:136; 3:45; 4:159,171; 19:21,30,31; 43:57.

³⁴Sura 3:39,45; 4:171.

³⁵Sura 3:39 states that the angel Gabriel said to Zecharias, “Allah doth give thee glad tidings of Yahya [John], witnessing the truth of a Word from Allah [God].” In this verse, the angel told Zecharias about the mission of John, his son, namely, to witness, or to confirm the “Word from Allah.”

³⁶Sura 3:45 claims that the angel Gabriel came to Mary and said: “O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: His name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the hereafter and of those nearest to Allah.”

³⁷Sura 4:171 says, “Christ Jesus the son of Mary was an apostle of Allah and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him.” In light of this verse, the expression “Word from Him” in 3:45 is equal to “His Word.”

³⁸Thomas J. O’Shaughnessy, *Word of God in the Quran* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1984), 9.

³⁹Phil Parshall, *The Fortress and the Fire* (Bombay: Gospel Literature Service, 1975), 112.

⁴⁰Frank K. Flinn, *Christology: The Center and the Periphery* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 106.

For them, “The great theophany of Islam is the Quran.”⁴¹ As one writer expresses it,

The Quran was more than a book. It was a faithful reproduction of the original scripture in heaven. To this heavenly copy, it is not implausible to hold, was transferred the Christian concept of the uncreated Word of God, the Logos, which was later applied by the orthodox to the Arabic copies of the Quran.⁴²

Other scholars, such as Al Tabari (d. A.D. 932), Zamakshari (d. 1144), and Al Baidawi (d. 1286), believed that the “Word from Allah” referred to Jesus, but only as a created being.⁴³

The Spirit from Allah

Another title given to Jesus in the Quran is a “Spirit proceeding from Him[Allah]” (Sura 4:17). It is more supreme than any title given to other prophets. In the Quran, Adam is called the “chosen of God,” Noah is the “prophet of God,” Abraham is the “friend of God,” Moses is the “spokesman with God,” and Muhammad is the “messenger of God.”⁴⁴ But some Muslims believe that the Spirit from God is a created spirit, while others explain that it is the angel Gabriel.⁴⁵

This view on the Spirit from God is ambiguous. Sura 21:91 suggests that the Spirit from God is neither the angel Gabriel nor a created spirit, but it pertains to God: “And remember her who guarded her chastity. We breathed into her of Our Spirit, and We made her and her son a sign for all people.”

The Messiah

The Quran speaks of Jesus as the “Messiah” eleven times.⁴⁶ One of them is found in Sura 3:45:

Behold! The angel said: “O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: His name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the hereafter and of those nearest to Allah.”

⁴¹Frithjof Schuan, *Understanding Islam*, trans. D. M. Matheson (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972), 43.

⁴²M. S. Seale, *Muslim Theology* (n.p., n.d.), 66, quoted in Abdul-Haqq, 69.

⁴³O’Shaughnessy, 13-17.

⁴⁴Parshall, *New Paths*, 140.

⁴⁵Michael Nazir-Ali, *Frontiers in Muslim-Christian Encounter* (Oxford: Regnum, 1987), 32.

⁴⁶Parrinder, 30.

Abdul-Haqq points out that Muslim scholars believe that the word “Messiah” is derived from the Arabic word *Saha*, meaning “to travel.” Jesus was called Messiah because he had traveled much. But other Muslim scholars such as Baidhawi and Zamakshari reject this derivation, stating that the word was foreign to the Quran.⁴⁷

The word “Messiah” means “the anointed one.” Abdul-Haqq claims that the meaning of Messiah is found implicitly in Sura 2:87, where God said, “We gave Jesus the son of Mary clear signs and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁸

To conclude, the Quran speaks of various aspects of Jesus and of His titles which reflect Muhammad’s knowledge of both the humanity and the divinity of Jesus. The Quran confirms the existence of the Virgin Mary, the unique birth of Jesus, His miracles, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and His coming judgment. The Quran also confirms that Jesus was the “Word from Allah” who became the “Son of Mary.” He was the “Messiah” who was anointed by the Holy Spirit. And He is the One who “held honor in this world and the hereafter.” These Quranic teachings about the person of Jesus can be used as a bridge to approach Muslims. The following section suggests how to share Christian teachings about the person of Jesus with Muslims by using these teachings.

Matthew’s Model

To share the person of Jesus with Muslims, Christians should follow what the disciples of Jesus did in the past. The disciples had a hard time witnessing to the Jews, who did not accept the divinity of Jesus because they were strictly monotheistic people. Therefore, Christians can learn from the disciples how to approach monotheistic people such as Muslims. This study suggests Matthew’s model for sharing Jesus with Muslims, which starts with the humanity of Jesus and moves to His divinity.

From the Gospel of Matthew (16:13-17), we learn that it is not easy to share the person of Jesus, which includes His divine nature, with monotheistic people. In this sense, it may be easier to share the person of Jesus with Gentiles than with Jews. Indeed, Matthew points out that when Jesus was born, the Magi from the East searched out the birthplace of Jesus and came to worship Him, but the Jewish leaders did not show any interest.

To approach the Jews, a monotheistic people, Matthew first introduces Jesus as the son of Abraham and David (Matt 1:1). Matthew evidently believed that his introduction of the person of Jesus would not offend the Jews because they believed themselves to be the descendants of Abraham and they admired King David, Israel’s most famous monarch. Matthew was aware of the beliefs of his audience when he started with the humanity of Jesus. Indeed, he is following the

⁴⁷Abdul-Haqq, 82.

⁴⁸Ibid., 84.

advice of Jesus: "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (10:16).

Matthew introduces the divinity of Jesus united with His humanity by stating that through the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary gave birth to a son named Jesus (1:20-21) or Immanuel, which means "God with us" (1:23). When Matthew introduces Jesus' divinity to the Jews, he points to the fulfillment of the OT prophecies concerning His unusual birth and the presence of the Holy Spirit. By doing this, he shows the necessity of examining the Scriptures, namely the OT prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. This is vital in sharing the doctrine of the divinity of Christ with monotheistic people.

Matthew indicates that Jesus first used the title "Son of Man" to introduce Himself to the Jews (8:20). Afterwards, Jesus demonstrated His miraculous works such as healing the sick, raising the dead, and driving out demons. He then introduced Himself as the "Son of Man" who has authority on earth to forgive sins (9:6). After His resurrection, Jesus introduced Himself to the disciples as the One who has "all power . . . in heaven and in earth" (28:18). It is important to note that Matthew was a Jew, a monotheistic believer, yet he came to believe that Jesus was God who became a man.

Matthew started with the humanity of Jesus, moved to His divinity, and then shared the person of Jesus with the Jews. That is Matthew's model.

This study suggests that Christians working with Muslims should follow what Matthew did. They should begin with the humanity of Jesus in sharing Christ with Muslims. They should communicate the person of Jesus beginning with what Muslims already believe about Jesus.

Muslims believe that Jesus is the "Son of Mary," which shows that He is human. Thus, by way of introduction, Christians may start their dialogue with Muslims with the humanity of Jesus. They may use the title "Son of Mary" instead of the title "Son of God" in the initial stages of the dialogue, because the title "Son of Mary," is familiar to them since it is mentioned several times in the Quran. Christians may also use the Quran wisely from the beginning to explain Jesus as the "Son of Mary." Though Muslims believe the birth of Jesus was similar to the creation of Adam, Christians can stand together with Muslims in terms of the procreation of Jesus. Christians can show verses from the Bible about the birth of Jesus and the creation of Adam to demonstrate the significance of the birth of Jesus.

Muslims believe that Jesus was a prophet. Prophets, according to Muslims, are not ordinary men. Muslims believe that Jesus performed many miracles. Yet they admit that unlike the prophets, Jesus is never found confessing sins or praying for forgiveness either in the Quran or in the Bible.

Muslims believe that Jesus is in heaven now and that He will return to this earth for judgment. Christians can invite Muslims to believe in Jesus because, in biblical teaching, Jesus will return to save people who believe in Him. It is important to note that most Muslims are uncertain of their salvation. The doctrine

of the Second Coming of Christ is important to help Muslims open their minds about Jesus' coming to save people who believe in Him.

As to the death and crucifixion of Jesus, while some Muslims believe that Jesus did not die on the cross, others believe that He did. The Quran points out both His death and resurrection. Christians can explain that the divinity of Jesus did not perish on the cross, but Jesus as a human being died on the cross. They can emphasize that the person of Jesus is more than human by pointing to the titles of Jesus in the Quran which reflect His divinity. These include Jesus "the Messiah," who "held honor in this world and the hereafter," the "Spirit from Allah," and the "Word from Allah."

Christians can explain the divinity and the humanity of Jesus in the Quran where it refers to the "Word from Allah" who became the "Son of Mary" (Sura 4:171). At this point, Christians may review quranic and biblical teachings ranging from the birth of Jesus up to His Second Coming. Finally, they can invite Muslims to accept, by faith, the person of Jesus, which includes His divinity.

Some Practical Suggestions

We may now consider some practical suggestions that are needed in sharing Christ with Muslims:

1. Christians should be aware that to approach Muslims is not an easy task. For that reason, Christians must have a good relationship with God as well as with Muslims.
2. Christians should properly understand the biblical teaching of the person of Jesus before they share the gospel with the Muslims. They should also believe that Jesus is God and man in one person, eternally.
3. Christians should study the quranic teachings about Jesus in order to bridge the gap between Muslims and themselves in understanding the person of Jesus. They can share the person of Jesus with Muslims by pointing out how quranic teachings about Jesus compare with biblical Christology.
4. Christians should understand the Muslim view of the person of Jesus and the Islamic concept of God in order to share the person of Jesus in terms that will not be offensive to Muslims. Christians should begin on the basis of what Muslims believe about Jesus.
5. Christians should show respect for the Quran when they study the person of Jesus with Muslims. They must hold it properly and place it properly, because Muslims believe that the Quran is the exact Word of God.
6. Christians should never attack Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, nor the Quran, the holy Book of Islam. Muslims believe that both the life of Muhammad and the holy Book of Islam are key elements for the ideal Muslim.
7. Christians should be good neighbors to Muslims because Muslims have a high regard for good Christians. Being a good neighbor will help to break down walls of prejudice.

8. Christians should encourage and lead Muslims to read the Bible and give opportunity for the Holy Spirit to speak to them. Many Muslims have come to believe in Jesus because of reading the Bible.

9. Finally, Christians should explain the importance of prayer and faith for accepting the person of Jesus, which includes His divinity. Just as Christians accept the divinity of Jesus by faith, Muslims also can accept the divinity of Jesus by faith.