

THE
CHRISTIAN WITNESS
TO THE MUSLIM

BY JOHN GILCHRIST

VOL. II

A presentation of effective, practical ways of approaching, evangelizing, and caring for Westernised Muslims with answers to their objections to the Christian Gospel.

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JESUS TO THE MUSLIMS

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MATERIAL AND INFORMATION
FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL
TO THE WESTERNISED MUSLIM

The emigration of millions of Muslims to the West since the end of the Second World War has presented the Church with a unique opportunity to evangelize Muslims at its traditional doorstep. The task, however, requires a considerable degree of knowledge and wisdom as the field of Muslim evangelism is a special one which requires an informed approach. The author has sought to provide Christians who seek to witness to the Muslims in their midst with the kind of knowledge they will require to be truly effective in the field. This book serves as a companion volume to the author's first volume titled *Muhammad and the Religion of Islam*.

John Gilchrist has been involved in Christian outreach to Muslims for over forty years in South Africa. He has been extensively involved in reaching Muslims through door-to-door outreach and other ministries. Gilchrist has publicly debated many Muslims and conducted numerous lectures on how to reach out to Muslims in several countries around the world. He has authored eleven books on Christianity and Islam. His works have been translated into 20 different languages and published in 15 different countries.

Cover Picture: A painting of the scene of Jesus' transfiguration from a church built on the site on Mount Hermon in Israel.

PREFACE

Throughout the traditional world of Christendom, today more commonly termed “the West”, Muslim communities have become a permanent feature of the environment. Since the end of the last world war, countless thousands have emigrated from their homelands to settle in Europe and North America. Others have emigrated to Australia and other countries generally associated with the Western world. While in my home country, South Africa, Muslims from the Asian sub-continent have long been resident in sizeable communities throughout the land.

The Church has a situation it has never seen before, the whole world of Islam in miniature at its traditional doorstep. It has an opportunity to reach Muslims with the Gospel such as it has never enjoyed before. It possesses a number of advantages in the circumstances which it has not seen in its efforts to reach Muslims within the traditional world of Islam, namely North Africa, the Middle East, the Indo-Pakistani region, and South-East Asia.

This is one of the major reasons for the publication of this book. It is the conviction of many that the emigration of so many Muslims to the West, which has created such a new field of witness for the Church, can only be explained by the hand of providence. The potential for a broadly-based witness and thrust among the Muslims in our midst and, through them, to the Muslim communities of the world must surely be identified and acted upon. Christians and churches generally can now become directly involved in evangelism among Muslims and an open door has been set before us which we can only ascribe to the express will of God that we should seize the opportunities he has given us.

It is my persuasion that the work cannot be embarked upon without a conscious awareness of the issues involved and an adequate preparation for the task. If we are to realise it, we must identify the opportunities we have, be instructed in the whole subject of Muslim evangelism and effective methods of reaching Muslims with the Gospel, and finally know how to handle the usual Muslim objections to the Christian faith, its scripture, doctrines and beliefs.

We also need to be conversant with Islam, its beliefs and practices, its heritage, its founder and its scripture. For this reason I first wrote the companion volume to this book, *Muhammad and the Religion of Islam*, and published it in 1986. The present volume, *The Christian Witness to the Muslim*, seeks to canvass the field covered in the previous paragraph. I have begun by outlining the whole fact of the Muslim presence in our midst with its attendant opportunities and, in the second chapter, have set forth what I believe is the most effective practical method of reaching Muslims with the Gospel as evident in our lives and service. In the third chapter I have covered the whole subject of Muslim evangelism, the perspective we need on it, and what I believe is the Biblical model of cross-cultural and cross-religious witness.

As the mushrooming of Muslim communities in our home countries has been taking place, so the traditional Church has considerably receded and even within its realm voices have come forth seeking to turn away the Church from its Christ-appointed commission to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). The Church today, in particular the living eternal Church of Jesus Christ born of the Holy Spirit and - united in one body to the Father, dare not despise or overlook the opportunity and commission God has given us. With a bold sense of vocation and purpose we must penetrate the Muslim communities in our midst and bring them the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12).

A Christian mission that renounces the making of Christians has forsaken both its genius and its duty. Christ did not serve the world with good advice and no more shall we. (Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, p. 355).

The Muslims themselves have seen their presence in the traditional Christian world as a similar opportunity to Islamise those around them and they are going ahead quite vigorously with their own perceived task of winning the West to Islam. In the process they are equipping themselves for the battle and are acquainting themselves more than ever with the Christian faith and seeking means to contradict and refute it. A perceived threat to their identity as minority Muslim communities, scattered thinly among predominantly Christian societies, has also spurred them on to become more invulnerable than ever to Christian influence. We must not underestimate the task, nor must we avoid it. Never before has the Church enjoyed such an immense opportunity to reach Muslims with the Gospel as it enjoys now. We must press on so that the light may shine in Muslim hearts and so that many may become children of God and followers of his Son Jesus Christ, ready for a kingdom to be revealed in the last time.

The second major section of this book has been devoted to the whole subject of reaching Muslims with the Gospel and practical examples of how this can be done most effectively. All three chapters in this section have been given to ways and means of putting the Biblical approach to Muslims, discussed in principle in the third chapter, into effect.

Many books have been written on the subject of explaining the Gospel to Muslims and of Christian witness among them. It is a bold statement, but nonetheless a true one, that there has never yet been a book which informs Christians how to actually *preach the Gospel* in an Islamic context. All the books written thusfar on the subject since the inception of Christian missions among Muslims dating back to the beginning of the last century, notwithstanding their titles, do not actually tell one how to positively relate the whole substance of the Gospel to Muslims against the background of their own beliefs.

On the contrary, most of them deal principally with explaining Christian beliefs and doctrines to Muslims or cover the field of handling Muslim objections to the Gospel (so Bevan-Jones, *Christianity Explained to Muslims*). Others cover the subjects of points to be stressed and pitfalls to be avoided (so Harris, *How to Lead Moslems to Christ*), while yet others deal primarily with our attitudes and the spirit of our approach (so Dretke, *A Christian Approach to Muslims*). Some cover all these issues briefly but comprehensively (so Miller, *A Christian's Response to Islam*).

Not for a minute would I suggest that these works have missed the point or failed to deal adequately with their subjects. Some are excellent treasures in the library of any Christian seeking to know how to handle Muslims and their arguments. I stand by my statement, however, that there is no book which specifically shows the Christian how to witness effectively to Muslims by making the Gospel especially relevant to them as Paul made it to the Jews and Gentiles during his travels through Thessalonica, Athens and Corinth. I have endeavoured to do this in the second major section of this book, using Paul's approach as an example.

The whole of the fourth chapter is given to an analysis of the common ground between Christians and Muslims on the personality, faith and life of the great patriarch Abraham with the purpose of showing how effectively Christians can relate the whole of the Gospel to the principles we have in common and show how, by implication and by fact in Abraham's experience' these lead perforce to the Gospel. While addressing Christians at various meetings on the subject I have occasionally been asked to present my points in as simple a 1 point-for-point form as possible to enable the average Christian to understand and present them more easily. I have

deliberately avoided doing this in this book. While not against the suggestion in principle, it is my belief that Christians should make a real effort to come to grips with all that was really involved in the development of Abraham's faith and how this led ultimately to an anticipation of the Gospel, for then they will be best-equipped to effectively discuss the subject with Muslims. The whole chapter, therefore, has been given to canvassing the issue as a whole in the hope that Christians will be able to absorb its essence and thereafter be able to put its message into their own words and, where necessary, simplify it.

The last section of the fourth chapter has been given to a study of the common Muslim belief that the son who was to be sacrificed by Abraham was not Isaac but Ishmael. Although this belief is universal in the Muslim world today, there are evidences that early Muslim commentators were persuaded that it was Isaac and, although the Qur'an does not say which son it was, the study proceeds to show that the evidences that do exist in the early Islamic sources really favour Isaac.

This brings me to the fifth chapter where once again I have avoided setting forth a prescribed point-for-point method of witness. In this chapter I have covered the common ground between Christians and Muslims on the subject of Jesus himself, in particular those points of agreement between Christianity and Islam on the person and life of Jesus which, when analysed, can only lead to the conclusion that he was quite unique and far more than a prophet. The whole chapter is thus given to the uniqueness of Jesus as it appears in both the Qur'an and the Bible where these two books are in agreement. Once again the purpose of the chapter is to show how effectively Christians can preach the Gospel to Muslims against the whole background of their own beliefs.

The sixth chapter pursues the common theme, giving further examples of how a comparison between beliefs held commonly by Christians and Muslims can lead by implication to the Gospel, and it finishes with a brief assessment of the Qur'anic denial of the crucifixion and inherent weaknesses in the Qur'anic alternative. The first two sections of this chapter analyse the love of God as it is set forth in both the Qur'an and the Bible and the distinction between Adam and Christ, in particular how the latter superseded the former and brought relief from the effect of that one man's sin.

The third major section of this book deals with Muslim objections to the Gospel, in particular those objections that Christians are most likely to encounter in their witness to Muslims. I regret that I have only been able to cover the subject briefly in this book but do trust that the examples given and the answers offered will assist Christians in some measure to handle the usual obstacles that will be placed in their way. In time I will perhaps be able to write a comprehensive work on this subject alone and cover all the Muslim objections to the Bible and the Christian faith that we find in the writings of Muslim polemicists, but for the moment the limited treatment of the subject in this book will have to suffice as an example of the whole. I can safely say from personal knowledge and experience that there is no objection to Christianity which cannot be satisfactorily and adequately answered and the Bible itself I have always found to be the strongest resource we have to seek and find the answers to the questions that will invariably be put to us.

God has anticipated beforehand and given an answer in His Holy Word to almost every Moslem difficulty, objection and genuine doubt. (Harris, *How to Lead Moslems to Christ*, p. 84).

In the third chapter of this book I have dealt with the need to answer Muslim objections and why we should never avoid or evade them. Very often these are raised as a test of the Christian's credibility - does he really believe what he is saying and can he justify it? Evasion at this point will be fatal to the Christian's witness and the effect he desires to achieve. No matter what reasoning we may use, the Muslim will take any

avoidance of argument on the merits and credibility of our faith as a sign that we cannot really back up and vindicate what we are saying.

The Christian should avoid controversy wherever possible, but he must never leave the impression that Muslim arguments against the Christian faith are conclusive and irrefutable. He must be prepared to face them and reply in love. (Marsh, *Share Your Faith with a Muslim*, p. 82).

There is one principle at this point that I believe must be established. When argument about the merits of our beliefs degenerates into pure controversy or a quarrel the object of such argument will surely be lost. We need to see argument and debate about our respective beliefs as a supplementary means to the desired end - a witness to the Muslims of God's saving grace in his Son Jesus Christ. In other words we must use every occasion for argument as an *opportunity* to speak further on behalf of the Gospel and turn such occasions into a chance to witness yet more deeply to Muslims. In the seventh and particularly the eighth chapters of this book I have given a number of practical examples to show how one can use Muslim objections as a springboard for a further witness to them of the essence of the Gospel itself. Our objective must never be just to make a defence of our faith, it must be to pursue the claims of God on the souls of the Muslims and of his reconciling grace in Jesus Christ.

Islam is particularly calculated to put the Christian interpreter on his mettle since it forces him to a radical and patient expression of his faith. By the very vigor and cruciality of its objections, Islam compels the Christian to delineate Christ more deeply. The grounds of misunderstanding must be made the theme of more patient exposition. Every difficulty must be made an opportunity. (Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, p. 274).

The Christian evangelist to Muslims must also learn to be wise in his assessment of Muslim objections and to distinguish between those that are raised in a spirit of enquiry and those that are purely expressions of antagonism. Many Muslims are deeply prejudiced against Christianity for whatever reason and Christian love and charity do not demand that we pretend that many of the assaults we commonly experience against the Gospel are occasioned by anything other than the hardness of the human heart against God's revealed truth. Pilate rightly discerned that "it was out of envy" that Jesus was delivered up to him (Mark 15.10) and we do our cause no great service if we suppose that many of the attacks that are levelled by Muslim writers against Christianity are motivated by anything other than pure prejudice against the Gospel.

One must likewise be wary of Muslim attempts to reinterpret the Bible according to their own convictions and suppositions (and, I might add in all fairness, the similar efforts on the part of some Christian writers to reinterpret the Qur'an so as to make it teach the basic doctrines of our faith, such as the deity and crucifixion of Christ, even though these are flatly denied in the book).

Christians who believe the Bible to be the Word of God are far more likely to seek and find its true meanings than those Muslims whose minds are made up before they even read the book and whose only interest, so it appears, is to force the book to yield their preferred interpretations. Having already decided in advance what they believe the Bible *should* say, they endeavour to make its teachings correspond to their presuppositions as Syed Ameer Ali does when he flatly denies that Jesus ever taught that he was the Son of God in an absolute and eternal sense:

That Jesus ever maintained he was the Son of God, in the sense in which it has been construed by Christian divines and apologists, we totally deny. (Ali, *The Spirit of Islam*, p. 141).

No objective analysis of the words of Jesus in this respect as set forth throughout the Gospels and the first three chapters of Revelation can possibly yield any other interpretation than that which the learned Muslim author is at such pains to deny.

Another typical example of how the same author seeks to reinterpret the teachings of Jesus to suit his own Muslim presuppositions and thereby make them say what he feels they ought to say, rather than the real meaning they convey, is set out on the following page of his book:

His conception of the “Fatherhood” of God embraced all humanity. All mankind were the children of God, and he was their teacher sent by the Eternal Father. (Ali, *The Spirit of Islam*, p. 142).

Once again we have an interpretation totally inconsistent with the original intended meaning of Jesus’ words. The idea that Jesus taught that “all mankind were the children of God” runs contrary to his express declarations that it was only his own followers, a “little flock”, who belonged to the eternal Father as his children and to whom alone the kingdom would be given (Luke 12:32) and that those who refused to heed his words were, in fact, not the children of God at all but of the devil (John 8:44).

Such a line of reasoning against Muslim polemicists may seem harsh to some, but one only has to read through a selection of Muslim works on Christianity, such as those recorded in the bibliography to this book, to get the point. They simply testify to a fundamental reality:

Islam and Christianity are incompatible; they are different in ethos, in aim, in scope, in sympathy. (Gairdner, *The Reproach of Islam*, p. 171).

We should not therefore expect Muslims to write sympathetically about Christianity, still less to take any attitude other than that of opposition to our faith. Likewise we must be ready to face objections to the Gospel, to give a sound defence of the faith, and seek to use such objections as opportunities to present the Gospel to its detractors even yet more effectively.

A word or two about the bibliography at the end of this book. I have listed only those publications which relate to the subject of Christian-Muslim interaction. Virtually all the works on Islam itself that are quoted in this book are listed in the bibliography at the end of the companion volume to this book, *Muhammad and the Religion of Islam*. Once again all quotations in this volume from the Bible are from the Revised Standard Version and all those from the Qur’an, except where otherwise stated, are from Yusuf Ali’s translation. Although this translation is considerably defective and one which I cannot personally prefer over other far better works, I have nevertheless continued to use it as it is the translation with which Muslims in the West are most familiar.

I have been faced with a criticism of the companion volume that I should perhaps mention here as I anticipate it again in reaction to this second volume. I have been criticised for quoting certain authors with approval where it is known that I do not agree entirely (or at all) with their general standpoints and theology. Despite such differences I nevertheless endeavour to appreciate any expression of wisdom in the writings of those who assess Islam and the subject of Christian witness to Muslims and believe in giving credit where it is due. Perhaps it would be wise to say at the outset, nonetheless, that the quotation of any author with approval should not be taken as a sign that I side with the author’s general position on Islam and the subject of Christian evangelism among Muslims. My own position in this respect is, I do believe, abundantly clear *ex facie* the general contents of these two volumes.

Once again the date of each book in the bibliography is the date of the edition I have consulted. Where the date of original publication differs, and is known to me, this follows in brackets in each case.

We are aware that the paperback editions of this volume and its companion are not strictly suitable for study purposes. We have no objection to the re-binding of these editions in hard cover to make them more durable and serviceable.

Let me again say that this book has been written chiefly for Christians in the West who come into contact with Muslims, either through direct evangelistic efforts or through casual personal contacts. I have deliberately refrained from dealing with subjects like contextualisation and other issues which, so it seems to me, are not strictly relevant to the situation in the West where we have minority Muslim communities living among predominantly Christian majorities. Apart from the occasional reference to such subjects, I have endeavoured to keep away from them and confine myself to the issue which is immediately at hand, namely the evangelism of the Westernised Muslims in our midst.

A special word of thanks to those who have “laboured side by side with me in the Gospel” (Philippians 4:3) over many years, whose presence and fellowship have contributed substantially towards the knowledge I have gained by experience in this field, much of which I trust has been reproduced in the pages of this book. An ounce of experience is worth a pound of knowledge, the true proverb says, and this is especially so in the field of Muslim evangelism. This is one of the reasons why I have refrained from prescribing point-by-point methods of witnessing to Muslims, for each man’s effectiveness will depend largely on his own experiences as he becomes more and more involved in reaching Muslims with the Gospel.

I trust that this book will be a useful contribution towards the whole subject of Christian witness among Muslims, especially those who are now resident in the West, and that it will in some measure equip those who labour among them for the task. There are many who believe this is God’s day for the Muslims and, as more and more of them come out to confess the faith of Christ, let us be encouraged to persevere in our witness and fulfil the commission of Jesus to take the Gospel to all nations and seek to make disciples of them.

John Gilchrist
4th June 1987

PART ONE

WESTERNISED MUSLIM:
CHRISTIANITY'S NEW CHALLENGE

CHAPTER ONE

THE OPPORTUNITIES FACING
THE CHURCH TODAY

EMIGRATION OF MUSLIMS TO THE WEST

1. The Muslim Communities in the West.

Nothing happens by chance in this world. The hand of providence guides the affairs of men and the plans of the nations are subject to the control and foreknowledge of God. He accomplishes all things according to the purpose of his will and, while the migrations of men on earth can usually be attributed to natural causes, yet there always remain superior purposes in such activities which have their origins in the counsels of heaven.

Jesus Christ was crucified by men who wrongly condemned him for blasphemy and treason, yet it was “according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23), who purposed that this event should become the means of salvation for all who believe in him. Joseph’s brothers sold him into Egypt with evil intent, but God overruled their designs for good (Genesis 45:5-8). They chose certain means to destroy his life, but God intervened and used those very means to preserve the lives of many. It has rightly been said that all history is purely “His story”.

There are many natural ways of explaining the recent migration of hundreds of thousands of Muslims to the West over the past forty years. Most of them have either sought a better life in a world more developed and advanced than their own, or they have been lured to the West to fill the desperate need for manpower which arose from the last great war.

Today over five million Muslim emigrants live in central Europe while at least a further three million have now settled in the Americas. Until the last war no Muslim communities of any real significance existed in Britain, France, Holland or West Germany. For the first time, however, sizeable communities of emigrants and migrant workers now inhabit these lands.

It is reckoned that there are now (1983) nearly seven million Muslims in Western Europe, and there are also several millions in North America. Western statesmen have to sit around a table with Muslim statesmen, Western factory-workers find Muslims on the same assembly line, and Western school-children find Muslims among their classmates. This is the contemporary meeting of Islam and Christianity. (Watt, *Islam and Christianity Today*, p. 4).

Christians should immediately seek the superior designs of providence in such phenomena. We cannot ascribe such a comprehensive migration of so many followers of another major world religion purely to natural causes. The Lord’s own hand in this is clearly visible to those who have eyes to see.

Until recently the Christian and Muslim worlds remained largely oblivious of one another. We speak of the iron curtain and bamboo curtain today, but history surely shows that another veil has separated the nations of east and west for centuries and that veil has been drawn roughly over the Mediterranean Sea, separating the

Christian and Muslim worlds in a remarkable way. For ages these two worlds have lived in almost complete isolation from one another, divided purely by an expanse of water that is too small to be called an ocean.

It is a small world we live in, however, and, as people say, it is becoming smaller and smaller through technological and other developments so that today the veil has, to a large extent, been pulled aside. And through the gap thousands of Muslims have travelled to settle in foreign lands that until recently were largely closed to them.

But now the circumstances are taking a favourable turn. Muslims are migrating to America in a steady stream from different lands and for different reasons. There is no Islamic country whose finest young men are not found here. Lastly, a large number of enterprising people are also coming to it from the country where the Ka'ba is situated. (Nadwi, *Muslims in the West*, p. 89).

2. A Mission Field on the Church's Doorstep.

Many minds are trying to fathom the implications and portents of this new situation. Anxious souls in the West are predicting that the rising power of Islam will present a greater threat in the future than the forces of communism, while equally anxious Muslims are expressing the fear that the fledgling Islamic communities in the West will lose their identities unless radical steps are taken to strengthen those who presently are beyond the pale of *dar al-Islam* and its unifying power.

We who have the mind of Christ, however, see the whole matter in a different light. To us the world of Islam has, in a very important way, been brought to the doorstep of the Christian world. For the first time Muslims in considerable numbers have become neighbours, friends, co-workers and fellow-citizens with their national Western Christian counterparts. Not only so but, what is of supreme significance (for reasons which will follow later in this chapter), they have to a large extent foregone their Oriental culture and way of life and have, in a very short time, become thoroughly Westernised. Today we have a new kind of Muslim we never knew before - *the Westernised Muslim*. By the hand of God a new door has been flung wide open at the feet of the Christian Church in the West. Never before has such an opportunity for extensive, Church-based evangelism among Muslims presented itself to the established Christian world.

Muslims are travelling to the west for work and study. They are curious about the prosperity and influence of the many churches they see. Americans are finding that the "mission field" has moved into their neighbourhood. They are finding unexpected opportunities for dialogue and inter faith witness with Muslims in their own hometown. (Register, *Dialogue and Interfaith Witness with Muslims*, p. 62).

Out of every nation they have come. Two million Muslims now live in France - two for every Protestant. Most of them are Algerians and Moroccans though many others have emigrated from other Francophone states in Africa to the land of their former colonial masters. In the United Kingdom the same pattern has appeared. As the British left India in 1947 a similar migration of Muslims took place as that from Algeria when France conceded independence to the country in 1961. Up to a million Muslims originally from India and what is now Pakistan have settled in Britain. Over a million migrant workers from Turkey inhabit West Germany. Thousands of Indonesians have moved to Holland. In addition to these major shifts, thousands of others have moved to Europe as well. Arabs from every state in the Middle East now live, work or study in Europe. Iranians likewise inhabit most European countries as well as the United States. Malays,

East Africans, Nigerians - we could go on and on - are now to be found in significant numbers in Europe. How different this is to the situation in Europe fifty years ago when Islam's presence was negligible.

That situation has changed dramatically since the end of World War II. Islam has made a resurgence primarily in Western Europe. In part this is because of immigration, the importation of Turkish guest-workers to West Germany, the migration of North Africans seeking employment in France, and the immigration of Pakistanis, Indians and other Commonwealth citizens to Great Britain. As these Muslim citizens have put down roots and begun to feel at home in Europe, Islam has become the second largest religion of France (after Roman Catholicism); in West Germany it ranks third after Protestantism and Catholicism; there are more Muslims than Methodists in Great Britain. In 1978 there were 5,000,000 Muslims in Western Europe. (Fry and King, *Islam: A Survey of the Muslim Faith*, p. 33).

A world of Islam in miniature has sprung up in the West and a Muslim writer has observed that "the Muslims came to Europe by the hand of destiny" (Darsh, *Muslims in Europe*, p. 50). We cannot help but conclude, however, they were led unawares by a divine hand for a far greater purpose and reason. As one of the great prophets of old has said:

"I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps" *Jeremiah 10:23*

The Christian Church today has a far greater opportunity to evangelise this branch of Islam than it has to take on the whole tree. Many Muslim lands are deliberately closed to the Gospel while others are so far from predominant Christian influence that widespread effective evangelism is inconceivable. Yet here in the West God has provided a new door to the Muslim world. Here Christians by the thousands and whole churches can become involved in a ministry that, for nearly fourteen hundred years since Islam began, has largely been impossible. An opportunity has been laid right at the feet of the Church which hitherto could not be conceived.

The very uniqueness of this new situation compels us to see God's hand and will behind it. Surely, as so many believe who are involved in Muslim evangelism, this is God's day for the Muslims. Muslims from every Islamic land in the East have come to the West and the time is obviously ripe for a new form of ministry among them and a sustained witness from the whole Christian Church.

With the presence of so many Muslims in our midst in Europe, God has granted to us a new opening for Christian mission which can reach to areas of the world which might otherwise be closed to the messengers of Jesus Christ. (Goldsmith, *Islam and Christian Witness*, p. 152).

The scope for large numbers of conversions from Islam has clearly been created in the West and, not only does the Church now have a broadly-based opportunity to involve itself among Muslims, but it also has the chance to train converts from Muslim nations in its own environment and is able to send them back where Western missionaries often cannot go. In the next few sections we shall examine these opportunities in some detail, but before doing so, I wish to turn to my own country, South Africa, where a remarkable prototype of the present Western situation was created many years ago.

Update on Current and Projected Muslim Demographics.

Number & Projections of Muslim Populations by Pew Research			
	Muslims 2010	Muslims 2030	Muslims 2050
World Wide	1,599,700,000	2,209,270,000	2,761,480,000
European Continent	44,138,000	58,209,000	70,870,000
United Kingdom	2,960,000	5,060,000	7,760,000
France	4,710,000	6,100,000	7,540,000
Germany	4,760,000	6,120,000	7,000,000
United States	2,770,000	5,190,000	8,090,000
Russia	14,290,000	17,650,000	20,860,000
China	24,690,000	30,820,000	35,290,000
South Africa	860,000	1,180,000	1,580,000

SAMUEL ZWEMER'S VISION FOR SOUTH AFRICA

1. The Advent of Islam in South Africa.

During the seventeenth century the Dutch won control of what is now Indonesia as well as other parts of the East and some coastal ports of India. At the same time they established a small settlement at the Cape chiefly as a refreshment station for their ships sailing to the East. As the community expanded a number of Muslims were brought from Indonesia and those other parts to the Cape as slaves. Included among them were a number of political figures who were causing trouble in the Dutch colonies and who were accordingly banished to the Cape.

Some fifty Muslim men of prominence were brought to the Cape in the ship "Voetboog" in 1694. Among them was an exile, Shaykh Yusuf, who had been stirring up much opposition to Dutch rule in the East Indies. This group immediately set about establishing Islam in the colony and during the eighteenth century, as more slaves were brought from the East, Islam settled and became a prominent feature of local life in the Cape Peninsula.

Today there are some two hundred thousand Muslims in the Western Cape, known commonly as "Cape Malays", who are descended from those early expatriates. They have adopted the Western culture and speak English and Afrikaans as home languages, having lost virtually all contact with their original homelands and languages.

The Indian Muslims, who today number close on two hundred thousand as well, came to South Africa in similar circumstances. During the eighteenth century the British began to gain control of much of India and in the nineteenth century conquered the Cape Colony and Natal. Just as the Dutch had brought Muslim slaves to the Cape from their colonies in the East, so the British brought Indian labourers from India to work on the Natal canefields. Most of these followed Hinduism though a number were Muslims and Christians. Samuel Zwemer describes how these early labourers came to the province in those days:

In Natal, Islam entered from India about 1860, when large numbers of Indians, Hindu and Moslem, were imported as indentured labourers for the sugar plantations. Although at first they came for the sugar industry, their skill and enterprise opened up other avenues of employment. At present less than one-fourth are on sugar estates. Many are engaged in general farming work, on the railways, on tea estates, in coal mines or as domestic servants. They have their chief

mosques and settlements in Durban (six to eight thousand), Pietermaritzburg, Dundee, Newcastle, Umzinto, Stanger, and Port Shepstone. (Zwemer, *Across the World of Islam*, p. 246).

Shortly afterwards a number of Muslims, chiefly from northern India, emigrated independently to South Africa and settled as traders in the country. Their descendants today are distributed throughout the Transvaal and Natal as well as parts of the Cape. They too have adopted the Western culture and generally speak English as a home language, though many, particularly among the older generation, still speak Urdu and Gujarati fluently.

Today the Muslims number just over one per cent of the peoples of South Africa. For up to two hundred years they have been settled in the country and many are now from the fourth and fifth generation of those who first came here. Most of them have become thoroughly Westernised and communicate freely with their compatriots.

Thus there has been, for nearly two centuries in South Africa, a phenomenon which in the last forty years has become commonplace throughout the West. Significant Muslim minorities live in the midst of a predominantly Christian society. In most cases in the West the societies concerned have large Protestant majorities where the evangelical Church has been strongly established for a long time. In Europe and North America, for the first time, Muslim communities live within the traditional strongholds of the Christian Church and are at its doorstep. In South Africa, however, a prototype of this worldwide phenomenon first came into being nearly two hundred years ago so that the Westernising process has been complete for many generations. What significance does this hold for the Church in this age? We need to briefly examine certain statements made by Samuel Zwemer many years ago and events in his life pertaining to the South African situation to get a hint at the immense opportunities that this type of situation presents to the Church.

2. Zwemer's Visit to South Africa and its Effects.

Samuel Zwemer was one of the greatest missionaries ever to serve in the Muslim world. He was an American of Dutch descent and rightly became known as the "Apostle to Islam". Born in 1867, he was blessed with a long life great endeavours, and died in April, 1952.

He worked as a missionary in Arabia for sixteen years. He ventured all over the Middle East, speaking to Muslims of Jesus Christ, and distributing the Word of God to them. He visited Yemen, Iraq, India, Persia and Indonesia amongst others. He travelled all over North Africa. His vision for the Muslim world knew no bounds. He sought to discover, as far as possible, the spread of Islam throughout the world and the prospects of Christian missionary work in Muslim lands. The whole world of Islam was truly his parish.

He also wrote many books, conducted numerous campaigns all over Europe and North America to awaken concern in the Church for the evangelising of the Muslim world, founded the quarterly journal *The Moslem World* in 1911 and the *Fellowship of Faith for the Muslims* in 1915. There have been few missionaries in the world who have possessed his vision, zeal, faith and, above all, his love and concern for the people to whom God had sent him.

Most maps showing the spread of Islam in the world ignore South Africa altogether. This is hardly surprising for, as we have already pointed out, only one in about seventy-five South Africans is a Muslim and only one in every two thousand Muslims in the world lives in this country. They appear to be a negligible minority. Yet, when Zwemer wrote his book *Mohammed or Christ* in 1916, he devoted a whole chapter to *Islam in South Africa*. In 1929, when he wrote his book *Across the World of Islam*, he devoted another whole chapter

to the same subject. One of the chapters in this book was simply titled *Islam in North Africa* and the next *Islam in South Africa*. This seems logical enough until one considers that the Muslims of North Africa outnumber those in the country of South Africa nearly eight hundred to one. Zwemer obviously had a very special interest in the Muslims of this country and clearly saw good reason to devote more attention to them than their numbers would seem to justify. He also wrote a few articles in *The Moslem World* on the Muslims of South Africa. In one of his books he says:

This southernmost corner of the world of Islam is not without its own importance. (Zwemer, *Across the World of Islam*, p. 243).

His concern for South Africa, so obviously out of all proportion to the relatively small number of Muslims in this country, is proved all the more by the fact that when he came here in 1925 at the request of the major Protestant churches to address the many evangelical conferences held that year on mission work among Muslims, he did not allow himself a pleasant holiday in this country but travelled some six thousand miles throughout the sub-continent to discover the spread and numbers of Muslims in it. We know that Zwemer's vision was spread broadly over the whole Muslim world. Why, then, did he devote so much time and attention to the Muslims of South Africa?

Even after returning to Europe and North America he continued to give much attention to the situation here. In a brief biography on his remarkable life we read:

One of the chief results of Zwemer's visit was to awaken the churches of Europe and America to the extent of the Muslim problem in Southern Africa. The Apostle to Islam had travelled 6,245 miles during the campaign, and by census figures and careful estimates nearly three hundred thousand Muslims had been counted in the countries he visited. (Christy Wilson, *Flaming Prophet: The Story of Samuel Zwemer*, p. 71).

We believe that Zwemer found opportunities in South Africa that he discovered nowhere else in the Muslim world. Here alone he found Muslims scattered freely in a predominantly Protestant society, speaking the languages of the Christians, and adopting their culture. He saw great opportunities for developing sound friendships between Christians and Muslims in such circumstances and expresses his impressions very forcibly in these words:

The Moslems of South Africa are accessible and live in the midst of Christian communities. They are approachable and responsive to kindness in a remarkable degree. Many of them are strangers in a strange land and hungry for friendship. (Zwemer, *Across the World of Islam*, p. 255).

He devoted so much time and attention to South Africa because he saw circumstances in this land favourable to the cause of evangelism among Muslims such as he saw nowhere else in the world. Yet another of the phenomena which he noticed relative to the Muslims of South Africa, now settled in a Western environment, was the extent of their education and the opportunities which this likewise presented. In one of his articles he says:

A larger percentage of the people are literate than perhaps in any other section of the Moslem world. (Zwemer, "Two Moslem Catechisms (Published at Cape Town)", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 15, p. 349).

He was clearly impressed by the character of the Muslim community he discovered in South Africa and its remarkable accessibility in contrast with many of the closed Muslim societies in the traditional world of Islam. He did not specifically define his vision for this country but obviously saw tremendous opportunities for an effective form of evangelism among Muslims which he saw nowhere else.

Today the South African situation has become even more settled in its unique form and the Muslims of this country are more approachable today than they were in his time. This situation, however, has mushroomed all over the Western world and a universal opportunity to evangelise Muslims in a way hitherto impossible (and for over thirteen centuries at that) has been laid at the feet of the traditional Christian Church.

During the North American Conference on Muslim Evangelization at Glen Eyrie in Colorado Springs in 1978 Dr. Max Kershaw delivered a paper entitled *The Comparative Status of Christianity and Islam in the West*. He outlined briefly the distribution of Muslims in Europe and North America and analysed its character. A summary of the responses of the participants at this conference is most informing:

Many readers were surprised by this paper. They found it “astonishing”, “unbelievable” and “disturbing”. “Here”, our readers said, “is a group of Muslims at our doorstep a group in transition, away from the pressures for Islamic conformity of their home cultures - a group, in short that we must not ignore”. The facts presented, “must be viewed as both an opportunity and a major responsibility” (McCurry, ed., *The Gospel and Islam*, p. 235).

There is indeed a wide open door before the Church in the West the likes of which it has not known during thirteen centuries of Christian-Muslim inter-communication. In the next section we shall briefly consider five of the advantages which this phenomenon affords to the Church and in the last section of this chapter shall analyse the opportunity thus presented to Christians as a whole in the West to become involved in effective evangelism among the Muslim communities in our midst.

Many Muslim immigrants to the West desire to assimilate and embrace the ideals of the West. However, due to changes in technology, transportation, demographics, and more importantly, a declining Western morality, there are large pockets of Muslims in the West that are not assimilating as there was in 1980's South Africa. The writer of this book was reasonably forecasting that Muslim assimilation would continue to be experienced in most or all Western countries, but several factors have made that prediction now impossible. For example, the widespread usage of the internet (that was not available during the writing of this book) keeps many Muslims connected with their family and cultures back home. Making phone calls or even video calls is free compared to the 1980's when a phone call to the Middle East could easily have cost \$2.00 or more per minute. Also, commercial flights to the Middle East and Africa were much more expensive than current prices. Yearly trips back home is now routine as opposed to being treated as a once in a lifetime luxury as they were several decades ago. In South Africa, during the writer's time, the Muslim community was a small minority. In many cities in the West, Muslims are now a strong minority and some are even a majority. As a strong minority or majority these communities are able to exert political and religious influence on the surrounding cultures and especially those from Muslim countries. For example, Hamtramck, Michigan is the first city in America to be a majority Muslim city ("In the First Majority-Muslim U.S. City, Residents Tense About Its Future", Washington Post, November 21, 2015) and now with a majority Muslim City Council ("Hamtramck Elects Muslim-Majority City Council", Detroit Free Press, November 6, 2015). They have exerted their influence and broadcast their Mosque's call to prayer five times a day ("Hamtramck Residents To Hear Prayer Broadcasts", Click On Detroit, April 22, 2004) over loud speakers for the entire city to hear. In Dearborn, Michigan, influence over other Muslims is extremely strong. Our missionaries have spoken with many Muslims who are interested in the Gospel and/or assimilating into the West, but fear to do it because they are surrounded by a strong local Islamic community (99% Muslim Arabs). In England, Muslims have their own sharia courts that judge Muslims separately on family issues. As Western cultures move further from the Judeo-Christian values and morals they were founded on, it drives the Muslims to further separate themselves from the Western cultures and communities.

BROKEN BARRIERS AND WIDE-OPEN DOORS

1. The Adoption by Muslims of the Western Culture.

In our view the existence of Muslim communities in the West has provided the Church with a hitherto unparalleled Opportunity to engage freely in evangelising Muslims, and in this brief section we shall consider five considerable advantages which it now enjoys.

Firstly, Muslims in the West are gradually adopting the Western *culture*. Ever since the Industrial Revolution Western civilization has progressed so rapidly that, whereas it once struggled behind Islamic civilization in the days when Muslim culture reached its zenith, it has since outstripped it and left it far behind. An unfortunate side-effect of this progress has been the growth of so-called "permissiveness" and secularism so that the Christian Church has suffered in its wake. Nevertheless the rise of Western civilization has been set

against the traditional heritage of Christendom and it has been the chief cause of the decline of Islamic culture in recent centuries.

Despite its secularistic tendencies Western civilization and its attendant political and military power removed in a short time the threat that Islam had posed to central Europe for nearly a thousand years. It is surely apparent to all that our Western era has also passed its zenith and Muslim countries, which have only recently regained their independence from European colonial powers, are seeking once again to flex their muscles and re-assert themselves.

The enormous strides in the West in the last two hundred years, however, have probably ensured that the Islamic world will never again attain to the pre-eminence it once enjoyed, and no matter how far Western civilization recedes from its peak it has bequeathed to the world remarkable benefits, both in terms of material progress and the exercise of individual liberties. The Muslim world can only ultimately profit from an adaptation of these benefits into its own culture and as long as fundamentalism seeks to re-establish itself in the world of Islam, it can only struggle in the shade of Western progress.

Muslims in the West, keenly sensitive to the adverse effects of personal freedom in our society, in particular sexual licence, personal indulgence and irreligious materialism, publicly distance themselves from our culture. In private, however, they are, perhaps even subconsciously at times, adopting with open arms all the benefits that our culture has to offer. Millions have emigrated to the West in an unashamed quest for a “better life”. A Muslim writer, seeking to warn Muslims in the West against the inherent dangers (in his view) of a non-Muslim environment, nevertheless concedes:

Now the West is in a position openly to enforce its view point - a unique event in world history made possible by the phenomenal resources, military and economic, the West can dispose for the imposition of its culture on the rest of the world. An unparalleled achievement - even the most culturally and intellectually gifted peoples of past history could not establish such total and universal ascendancy. (Nadwi, *Muslims in the West*, p. 187).

In South Africa the Muslims have become thoroughly Westernised. Despite the very limited opportunities afforded to them under this country’s unpopular political system they have made great efforts to find their place in a land of great wealth and resources, and they have succeeded in an impressive way. Their standard of living is the equal of that of any other people in this country and it is not an exaggeration to say that they have reaped the benefits of Western civilization with an undisguised relish. The Muslims of North India and Pakistan would be astonished if they could see how the descendants of their former countrymen have prospered in this land, despite the limitations unfortunately forced on them even to this day.

In the process, however, they have become fully Westernised and have adopted the Western culture. Few Muslim homes are without a television set which uninterruptedly beams programs produced in the West. Most of the Muslim men wear Western suits and casual dress. Shopping is done in Western supermarkets, houses are built and furnished in the Western style, and education is completely Western in its character and intensity.

While this obviously benefits Muslims we must, as Christians, identify the advantages we have in this situation. The Western culture has grown out of a traditional realm fully Christian in origin and much of its heritage is Christian at heart. Amongst other things this includes individual rights, personal freedom and open democracy. Despite its advanced secularism much of Western culture can be identified with Christianity and the Church maintains its unopposed domination within its realm. To use a sporting term, the Muslims here are meeting us on our home ground and we have what is traditionally called “home-ground advantage”. The

culture of the West is still set against a Christian heritage and Muslims in our midst are exposed to a way of life which breaks down traditional barriers.

Christian missionaries to Muslim lands often have to prepare for the proverbial “culture-shock” and many have been limited in their effectiveness, either through failing to adopt the culture of those they seek to reach, or through unwittingly endeavouring to Westernise converts as though Christianity and the Western culture were synonymous. In the West, however, such problems dissipate almost entirely and as Muslims become Westernised, so the culture barrier breaks down and Christians discover immense advantages in being able to freely evangelise Muslims through methods and forms of witness developed and strengthened against the background of the Western culture.

2. Other Great Advantages Before the Church in the West.

Potential missionaries in Muslim lands not only have to prepare for a radical cross-cultural ministry but often have to spend many years learning a foreign language before they can seriously begin to witness to the Muslims to whom they have been sent. Even then it takes time to really learn the vernacular through constant conversation in the language.

In the West, however, this barrier is likewise breaking down. In South Africa most Muslims speak either English or Afrikaans, the home languages of those who first brought the Gospel to this country. Throughout the West the minority Muslim communities will likewise have to adopt the *languages* of their predominantly Christian societies and this also becomes an immense advantage to us, for we can converse freely with them in consequence without having to struggle in a foreign language. Furthermore we once again have “home-ground advantage” as it is *our* languages that they are learning: French, Dutch, English, German and the like - languages which have been the medium for the expression of great Christian works and writings and the definition of the basic doctrines of the faith since the Reformation.

Christians can thus witness freely to Muslims, not only in languages they are most familiar with, but also in tongue through which the finest development and growth of Christian faith and doctrine has come to be expressed.

As said already, the emigration of Muslims to the West must be regarded as providential and as we behold the growing number of advantages this phenomenon presents to the Church and the breaking down of traditional cultural, linguistic and other barriers, we need to heed the words of our Saviour:

“Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut”. *Revelation 3:8*

Since the process of decolonisation which followed the Second World War many Muslim lands, hitherto open to the Gospel, have become wholly or partly closed to it. In some countries the open preaching of the Gospel is a public offence punishable by law. To this day the clouds continue to darken and the ministry of the Gospel in Muslim lands is becoming more and more difficult. In the West, however, the situation has been reversed. The sun shines uninterruptedly as the Church finds itself presented with hitherto unknown opportunities to reach Muslims, and that right at its doorstep.

The third great advantage it has is the one Zwemer thus noticed particularly in South Africa, namely the *accessibility* of the Muslim communities in our midst. In past generations anyone wishing to evangelise Muslims had to prepare to travel to foreign lands where he would be far away from his home culture and environment. This still holds for all missionaries who prepare for service in Muslim lands. In the West,

however, the Christian evangelist can pursue his normal employment during the day, come home to his family for dinner, then venture out for a few hours of ministry among Muslims in the evening, before retiring to his home and family that night. There need be no disruption of his normal daily routine. The Muslims are within range of a home-based ministry and, because they form part of the Western environment, they are freely accessible. In comparison with many countries in the traditionally Islamic world, Muslims in the West can even be said to be vulnerable to an open Christian ministry.

This leads to the fourth great advantage we have, namely that Muslim *opposition* to the ministry of the Gospel is severely restricted in its potential in the West. Some countries, like Pakistan and Indonesia, have no official restrictions on Christian witness and yet even here social pressures and other forms of Muslim opposition limit considerably the ministry of the Gospel. In other lands opponents can rely on official support for their efforts to withstand Muslim evangelism, or at least be reasonably sure that the authorities will not interfere in such activity. In the West, however, Christians are not only freed from any danger of official restrictions but in most countries can be sure of official protection. The preaching of the Gospel is generally regarded as one of the inalienable personal rights of Christians in the West and a feature of the principle of freedom of religion which holds in all predominantly Protestant countries. This is one of our cherished Christian heritages in our Western culture and one which the Muslims in our midst cannot interfere with (especially as they enjoy much the same privileges). The doors are wide open, the call is to boldness, and the defences of those who would oppose us are accordingly considerably limited.

The fifth great advantage we enjoy is the potential for the Muslim *convert* to become fully settled in his Christian environment. In predominantly Muslim countries a convert to Christianity can find himself completely ostracised from his community. His opportunities for marriage and employment can be often blotted out once it is known he has become a Christian. This is the price converts from Islam have to pay in Muslim lands for their faith in Jesus Christ.

To some extent, the rejection of the convert can also be severe in the West. He may well be excluded from his family and his community and, no matter how much he may be able to adapt to his Christian environment, he will always feel the effects of being ostracised from his own community. Naturally therefore, one should seek to minimise this traumatic experience as much as possible to help the convert to remain acceptable to his own people.

Nevertheless, on becoming a Christian, he at the same time becomes more integrated with his overall environment. Christian marriage is open to him and employment facilities are undiminished. He can, as many have done, settle down thoroughly as a Christian in a predominantly Christian environment and society.

The doors are wide open, the barriers are being broken down, and the Church in the West has been presented with a golden opportunity to evangelise the Muslims in its midst. In our view, however, there remains one last advantage and, as it is the supreme one. We shall devote a whole section to it, in particular as it tends by its very character to suggest the most effective form of ministry which can be conducted among the Muslims in the West.

The majority of Muslims coming to the West are seeking freedom. However, there are some coming here to reshape the culture and society. Every year since 2004 Ministry to Muslims has given out Gospel tracts and DVDs at an Arabic Festival in Dearborn, MI. Many Muslims received these materials with joy and appreciation. But, in 2009, due to the influence of the local Muslim leaders over the city officials, (they are an active political minority; 40,000 out of a population of 98,000) the police stopped us from publically distributing Gospel tracts on public sidewalks. I, Pastor George Saieg, chose to fight for our first amendment right to share the Gospel. I fought for the right to freely share the Gospel on public property and in Dearborn. However, I lost in the local Dearborn court system. After that defeat, I appealed to a higher court and lost again. Finally, two years later, I appealed to the United States Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit and by God's grace we won. The only higher court after that would have been the Supreme Court, but the opposing side chose not appeal. Religious freedoms are still present in American and other Western countries, but they are constantly being challenged by Muslim activists who are aided by liberal judges eager to rid Western society of Judeo-Christian values.

MUSLIMS IN A CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT

1. An Opportunity for the Whole Church to Become Involved.

Until the emigration of Muslims to the West it was necessary to train and prepare individual missionaries for full-time service among Muslims in foreign lands. Efforts have been made to spread Christian influence through “tent-making” ministries where doctors, nurses, construction workers and others in normal secular employment in Muslim countries become involved in evangelising Muslims they chance to meet in their labours. To this day, however, it is still the general rule that missionaries have to be sent out, one by one, into full-time service in Muslim countries.

It would obviously be preferable to have the whole Church involved in such a ministry. It is extremely difficult for a handful of missionaries to make a serious impact on Muslim communities numbering hundreds of thousands. After surveying the extent of Christian missions throughout the Muslim world a Christian writer was led to conclude:

The command of Christ which summons us to be His fellow workers in seeking to win for Him the community of Islam is a call to the whole Church. The task is too arduous and immense to be left to the valiant efforts of little half-neglected groups representing but a fraction of the mighty Christian forces potentially available. (Addison, *The Christian Approach to the Moslem*, p. 311).

This perspective was written in 1942 shortly before the exodus of Muslims to the West. Despite its ideals, however, Christians generally can only pray for those working in Muslim lands and do all they can financially to support them. Further than this there is little more they can do to fulfil the call Addison makes to the whole Church.

Now, however, this very vision which he expressed has become a real possibility throughout the West. The whole might of the Christian Church can be marshalled behind a broadly-based outreach to the Muslims in our midst. It is quite unnecessary, indeed it would be shortsighted, to leave the evangelisation of Westernised Muslims to a few specially trained missionaries. An opportunity has arisen for Christians generally - even if they are only ordinary, average church members - to assume the burden of reaching Muslims for Christ. A time has come when large numbers of Christians can engage in direct witness to Muslim men and women.

It has become possible for thousands of Christians to witness to Muslims, to establish contacts, and to pursue them over a long period of time. No lengthy period of training is required to send out a strong lay-force among the Muslims who have become our neighbours. We do need to say that a reasonably sound knowledge of Islam will be required by anyone seeking to venture out among Muslims anywhere in the world as well as some training in communicating the Gospel effectively to them and an ability to answer their common objections. To that end, this book and its companion volume *Muhammad and the Religion of Islam*, have been written. Nevertheless, no extended formal training is required for large numbers of Christians to reach Muslims in the West. The door is open for a widespread, sustained effort on the part of the whole Church to reach Muslims for Christ. An experienced missionary among Muslims wisely observes:

A laity highly motivated and enthusiastic about their faith in Jesus Christ will be the key to effective outreach among Muslims. Resources should be directed toward the establishment of such a lay movement. (Parshall, *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism*, p. 174).

What has hitherto seemed impossible has, in a generation, become an obvious possibility (I venture to say timely necessity) namely, the evangelisation of Muslims by Christians generally in a broadly-based movement. Christians today are meeting Muslims in all walks of life. Some play in the same teams on the sports

field. Others work side by side in offices and factories. Yet others have Muslim patients in hospitals. Many have Muslim neighbours. After speaking at a church recently on the opportunities which we have to reach Muslims in a way until now has been virtually impossible, one of the congregation told me that he had been commissioned as an architect to design a local madressa and that he had been invited to lunch with the local imams. On another occasion a Muslim contact was referred to me by a Christian who had become involved in religious conversation with him during an overnight flight from Europe to South Africa. People everywhere tell of one or another form of contact with Muslims and express their awareness of the remarkable opportunities before us at this time to reach the Muslims of the West who now live in a predominantly Christian environment.

I go further to declare that it is not only possible for Christians generally to become involved in this work, but that I believe they have better prospects of success than missionaries who work full-time reaching a large number of Muslims with the Gospel. We believe that the effective evangelisation of the Muslims in our midst is chiefly reserved to the average Christian who, apart from being instructed in the basic tenets of Muslim doctrine and inter-faith Christian evangelism, need not be extensively trained for such a task. The key lies in the kind of ministry we envisage which I shall treat here briefly and expand in more detail in the following chapter.

2. Friendship Evangelism among Muslims in the West.

Most converts from Islam to Christianity in South Africa tell of individual Christians who led them to Christ through various forms of love and personal interest in and concern for their welfare. One told me of a Christian woman she had stayed with for some time who looked after her, befriended her, and did everything she could to help her. At the end of her stay the young Muslim woman left the house declaring she hated her and was tired of hearing about Jesus Christ and his love for men and women. "I could not forget her compassion and sincere concern for me", she later testified however, and it was not long before she too became a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. A Christian she has been for many years now, but she always attributes the chief influence in her conversion experience to the friendship, love, and acceptance she enjoyed from that one simple Christian woman.

That woman had never studied at a bible college and probably had only an elementary knowledge of both Islam and her own Christian faith. Yet she was able to lead a Muslim to Christ through her love, companionship and patience with her. We believe that the door has been flung wide open for thousands of Christians to do likewise.

Friendship evangelism is an all-embracing form of witness in which Christians are able to express their testimony in a comprehensive way. Not only can they spread the "good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12) over a sustained period of time to Muslims who become their friends but they can also share in their needs, fears, hopes, joys and sorrows and contribute to their welfare. It is our conviction and experience that it is through such caring and compassion that many Muslims are led to become partakers of the same grace they behold in these Christians who are ready to go out of their way to befriend them and meet them in their needs.

There are many times when Muslims, as a small minority in a Christian environment, will need the special kind of help that Christians, as members of the dominant society, alone can give. There will be numerous opportunities in the coming years in the West for Christians to establish friendships with Muslims and reveal to them the fulness of God's love in Christ. Christianity is not just the proclamation of the Gospel, though we freely acknowledge that this is the foremost expression of Christian witness and service. Christianity

is also the expression of social care, love and concern towards a needy world. Jesus not only went about “teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom” but he also spent much time “healing every disease and every infirmity” (Matthew 9:35).

We advocate friendship evangelism as the ideal form of ministry to Muslims in the West. It takes in the whole man, both in his spiritual and in his material needs. It enables Christians not only to proclaim their faith but also to manifest it. It is a ministry in which all Christians can share and we are persuaded that the effective evangelisation of the Muslims in our midst rests in the hands, not of individual missionaries endeavouring to reach thousands of people in a constant battle against seemingly insurmountable odds, but of Christians generally, even though they may only reach one or two Muslims over a long period of time. This in our view is the supreme opportunity that has been laid before the Church at this time.

Language barriers are breaking down, cultural gaps are being bridged, Muslims are becoming our neighbours, and the doors are being thrust open for us to reach them in a way until recently thought to be most improbable. Large numbers of Christians can now become involved in reaching Muslims for Christ and circumstances have made it possible for a highly comprehensive ministry to be exercised among them. If the Church is willing to recognise the opportunity God has graciously bestowed on it and if Christians will assume the burden of befriending and evangelising the Muslims they are now beginning to meet in all walks of life in the West, we will perhaps see a work of the Holy Spirit in Muslim hearts and a turning to faith in Jesus Christ such as, until now, was hardly thought possible.