

READING ROOM

VOL. 1 – 1

A SPIRITUAL BRIDGE

Dear Muslim Brother:

A blessed greeting.

God's mercy has willed to lead me on the straight way to Him. I thank the Lord, Almighty. As I tell you about His grace given to me, I ask Him to delight your heart as He delighted mine, and to shine His light on you as His light has shined upon me.

Before God guided me to Himself, I was lost and ignorant of the truth. I was deeply involved in sin and perversion.

My beliefs, thoughts and feelings about God, were like a desert, I walked stubbornly in its dryness until I was exhausted, without knowing where my feet were leading me. As I looked around me, I found nothing but despair, defeat, and pain.

In fact, I was in total darkness, but in my confusion I saw darkness as light, and in that condition I sinned sometimes arrogantly, and at other times ignorantly.

After walking in the desert and the darkness all my life, from childhood to middle-age, I stopped heavily burdened. I looked behind to catch a glimpse of my footprints on the sand, and saw a path of twisted steps. I realized that for my entire life I had not benefited my family, my community, my world, or even myself. On that desert sand I collapsed, my body wracked by misery and my soul tortured by loss. In my despair, I asked for death. In that very moment the great mercy of the Lord came to me. The Lord took my burden, lifted me up on my feet, and showed me the truth, the light, and the way to God. That day I came out from darkness to the light that fills my heart. Now I see my life journey guided by the Lord.

On that day, the Lord showed me the meaning of the Holy Scripture which says, "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet loses his soul?"

By God's grace I have found the true way of life. Now I can benefit my family, my community, and society by serving my Lord in the way that pleases Him and that fulfills His will in what he created me for. The Lord gave me hope, and true happiness. He has really given me a new life.

Brother Muslim, your soul is precious to me, yet it is more precious to the Lord. To the Most High I pray that He will save your soul as He saved mine, and that He will grant you what He granted me.

Please accept this humble gift, "DISCIPLES OF ISA," to build a spiritual bridge between you and us. J.M.T.

MUSLIMS WILL SEE THE LIGHT

This is a message to you, my Muslim brother, wherever you are from. I am a brother who was born and raised in Islamic lands, sucked the milk from a Muslim mother as you did from your mother, and was brought up by a Muslim father as you were by your father. As Islamic teachings and traditions guided you, so they guided me. Like you, I studied Islam, practiced its duties and rituals, read the Qu'ran several times, and memorized some of its chapters (suras). Like you also, I learned to glorify Islamic history and admire many who made it with their faith, struggle, and industrious work. With the Islamic nations, we lived together, you and I, your grandparents and my grandparents, in glory and humiliation, in wealth and poverty, in progress and retrogression. We know well, you and I, how much those nations suffered under the yoke of foreign occupation, at the hands of intruders and colonialists.

Like you, brother, I believe in the Muslims' right in a free and dignified life. I also believe that God, the Most High, will direct Muslims to the life they long for if they seek Him sincerely in the true way.

God's mercy will be sufficient to take His Word to every tribe and group of people in every corner of the earth, and it must reach Muslim lands.

He who follows the Word of God, will gain eternal life, which includes freedom from sin and death.

You, my Muslim brother, ought to hear the word of God and carry it to every Muslim in your country or in any place you meet a Muslim.

Think with me, brother, and meditate: Why has God allowed the Islamic peoples to pass through the difficult historical period that they are passing, reviving their heritage, searching for themselves, and trying to find the way to God?

These historical events could be the tunnel that Muslims started through a long time ago, and soon it may be that they will see the Lord's light at the end of the tunnel.

Pray with me, brother, that the Lord's light will appear to all Muslims.

WHO ARE THE BELIEVERS IN ISA?

Muslims' historical experiences with Christian states and institutions have not, for the most part, been positive. To the contrary, there were often bitter experiences, carrying the seeds of many negative relationships, and creating misunderstanding to what faith in Christ means. There are other factors that caused this misunderstanding to grow.

One of those factors is that Christ's message did not reach Muslims in its truth and fullness, due to strong and high barriers installed by Christian institutions and Islamic societies alike.

Another factor is that Muslims, have neither spiritually nor intellectually tried to understand the life and teachings of Isa.

Muslims consider themselves Muslims because they were born so, while belief in Isa requires a choice. It is a belief established upon freedom: you are free to believe in Isa, and your belief in Him shall free you from all the world's shackles.

A believer in Christ is not one who merely was born to Christian parents. Not everyone who says he is a Christian is a true believer.

The believer is one who follows the example of Christ's life and obeys God's eternal word.

Isa did not urge his followers to kill and shed blood. He did not command them to hate or be greedy, and he did not promise them pleasures of the flesh as rewards in heaven. He did not encourage lying or stealing. Yet we see these sins prevalent in all societies of the world, even Christian societies.

When we saw those who said they were Christians invading the Islamic world with military crusades, we really saw a people who were not followers of Christ's message.

When we saw colonialists conquer Islamic lands, we did not see true believers in Christ, but people of greed. Their "belief" was against what Christ taught his followers.

We also see moral permissiveness in countries that we assume to be Christian countries, thus we wrongfully relate permissiveness to Christianity. An honest look at those countries will make us immediately realize that permissiveness is spreading because they are not following the teachings of Isa. These nations are not true Christian nations, but there are true believers in those societies; they are followers of Isa and they fight the moral vices. These believers in Isa strongly speak out against sin and obey the words of Christ as he spoke them in the Injil:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Isa also said:

... “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

... “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person.”

... “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”

... “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”

... “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

... “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.”

... “If you abide in My Word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.”

These are Christ's sayings and teachings, and those who follow his teachings are the true believers.

Author Unknown

A PRAYER OF A MUSLIM WHO FOUND THE WAY

OMAR MAHDI

God, I have a mother and a father
And a wife, a son and a daughter.
Also I have a sister and a brother
A friend, a relative, and a neighbor.
I pray to you, my merciful God
That you forgive their sins
As you have forgiven mine.
And to you, Lord, lead them
As you lead me on the true way.
O Compassionate God, do not
Allow anyone of them to stray
From your guidance and truth.
Enable me God, to carry
To them from your grace
The message of light.
Before them I will be your witness
Calling them to the true worship
To your glorified name.
If one of them stays astray,
I will keep praying for him
Until your will in him is done;
and your will is what I obey.
You favored me, Lord,
with two families,
The family of faith
and the family of blood and land.
Lord, make the two families one.

THE ROAD TO SALVATION

Isa said:

... "And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears God's words."

... "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in me has everlasting life... and this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

No doubt when a pious Muslim seeks the face of God, he wants to know God and be close to Him.

He sincerely strives to walk on the road that leads to his Creator.

The pious Muslim indeed has fear of God, and he tries, with all his body and soul, to please Him.

In his seeking he follows what he had inherited from his fathers and ancestors.

When he became aware of life, he found his feet on a path which he thought was the true way.

Since then, he has not dared to stop for a moment to look in front or around. He dared not climb the walls surrounding his path.

If he would stop and look around, and climb the walls, then he would know that the road he is walking on has some similarities to the true way to God and salvation, but it is not the true way.

God has prepared the way for him from the beginning. It is a path that cannot be changed and will never change. There will always be different ways that resemble the true way, but lead to destruction. God's way may not always be the easy way, but it will always lead us to peace and happiness.

God's way is found in His Word. In the Holy Scriptures we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

That is what God's Word says about Isa. Isa, Himself said:

... "And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me."

Also He said:

... "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

... "I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

... "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

... "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." That is precisely

what Christ did. He gave His life for us. From His blood, He paid the price of our sins, and He gave us the road of salvation.

Should not we strive to be His sheep of which He said:

... “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.”

Will you, Muslim brother, hear Isa's voice as I heard it, and receive Him as your shepherd?

J. Mahmoud

THE BRIDGE: Prayer Friendship Understanding

For centuries there has been a sense of confrontation between Muslims and Christians. Clearly there has been a great deal of misunderstanding and misconception.

This is sad because Muslims and Christians have very much in common. In fact, they have many more areas of agreement than disagreement.

For instance, we agree on Allah, heaven, hell, angels, the resurrection and judgment. We agree on the importance of absolute submission to God. We agree that people can be possessed by demons (Jinn). We agree that Allah speaks to man through prophets and apostles. We agree on many things concerning Isa. For instance, he was miraculously born of a virgin, he was a prophet, and he performed many miracles.

We are in agreement in condemning immorality, drunkenness, drug abuse, and abortion. We agree that Allah created the world and all mankind, that He is all powerful. We agree on the importance of prayer, almsgiving and fasting. These are some of the many areas of agreement. The question then comes: If there are so many areas of agreement, why has there been so much disagreement?

It is true—there are important areas of disagreement in doctrine, but some of these are really misunderstandings. Just one example is the subject of the unity of God. There is far more agreement on this subject than disagreement, yet this has been a major point of misunderstanding for centuries.

We have seen the futility of debates, arguments, and confrontation. It is now time for a new approach. Since both Muslims and Christians believe so strongly in prayer, this could be the common denominator that we could use as a bridge to create an aura of friendship instead of hostility.

Recently I read a booklet entitled *ISLAM: BEYOND STEREOTYPES*. The author, a Muslim, pointed out how the media and other forms of communication had mistakenly stereotyped Muslims. The author was absolutely correct. My experience has shown that Muslims are not the evil people with hate and murder in their hearts as they are often portrayed by the media. On the contrary, Muslims are basically wonderful people who are seeking to find Allah.

Conversely, the word "Christian" often brings to a Muslim's mind Images of immorality, drinking, and violence as portrayed by the movie industry. To illustrate this point—Recently I was having a discussion with a Muslim in India. He said, "Christians just do not understand what Muslims believe." I agreed wholeheartedly.

However, I replied that the same could be said for Muslims as well. Most Muslims have not really tried to understand Christians.

For an example I referred him to the subject of the Trinity. Most Muslims seem to believe that Christians worship three gods, when in fact this very thought is totally repugnant to Christians. They tenaciously believe in one Allah, and only one. The Injil says in Mark 12:29 that the first commandment is "The Lord our God (Allah), the Lord Is one." The young Muslim was shocked and surprised to learn that Christians believe in, and follow, only one Allah.