

POWER ENCOUNTER WITH THE SPIRIT WORLD: THE SUPERNATURAL IN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

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1. Introduction

Miracle and the supernatural are part of the cosmologies of both Christianity and Islam. T.C.Hammond noted in his book *In Understanding be Men* (IVP, 1979 p. 66): ‘The Bible depicts God as sustaining and governing the whole natural order, and does not draw a complete distinction between his normal Providential direction and His miraculous activity.’

At a Keswick Convention meeting entitled *Coming and Going* on 17 July 1993 the Rev Dr Donald English expounded Mark 3:13-19. After talking about the delegated authority to cast out demons, he said: ‘Do not limit signs and wonders to the particular things that we see happening in the New Testament. Signs and wonders are moments when God does something through his people, which causes the rest to say: “What is the explanation of that?”’

1.1 The greatest miracle in Islam

The greatest miracle in Islam is the Qur’an. According to early Sunni theologians, God has an eternal essence and seven divine attributes. One of these attributes is speaking. A speaker must have speech. The Qur’an is the speech of God in his eternal quality of being a speaker. It is the eternal speech of the eternal God. The Qur’an as the word of God is neither identical with his essence nor separate from it. The prototype of the Qur’an is in heaven written

in Arabic on the 'preserved tablet' (Surah 85:22). This is the 'mother of the book' (Surah 13:39). It was revealed by the angel Gabriel piecemeal to the prophet Muhammad who wrote it down or got it written down. The eternal God has thus revealed his will to man in the eternal book. The purpose of this revelation was that man might know God's requirements and instructions and obey them. Man was created to worship and obey God (Surahs 51:56 and 11:7).

1.2 The greatest miracle in Christianity

The greatest miracle in Christianity is the resurrection of the incarnate, living word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The eternal God revealed himself finally to man in a person who is the eternal, living word Jesus Christ (John 1:14). The purpose of this revelation was that Jesus might be revealed in the world and to the believer (Galatians 1:16) and that he might know God (2 Corinthians 4:6). Commenting on this last verse, Professor R.V.G. Tasker wrote: 'Conversion was to Paul a miraculous new birth, a constantly recurring display of God's creative and redemptive power. The only adequate parallel to the penetration of the darkness of the sinful human heart by the kindly light of God's grace was the dispersal of the darkness that originally covered the face of the deep by the divine fiat "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3).'

1.3 Revealed religion and folk religion

At some points, the religions which claim to be revealed - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - degenerate into folk religion. The serpent of brass was made by the prophet Moses at God's command in the wilderness as described in the Jewish scriptures (Numbers 21:4-9). Obviously the people of God did not want to throw away the serpent of brass and the Jewish people probably took it with them on their travels as a reminder of God's great deliverance of them from

the snakes in the wilderness. Then gradually, perhaps, they started to venerate it and eventually it became an object of worship and incense was burnt to it. During King Hezekiah's reformation it was seen for what it was - rubbish - and he destroyed it (2 Kings 18:4).

Later in the Old Testament record, we find the prophet Jeremiah was ordered to condemn the mechanical reliance of the people on the presence of the Temple of God in Jerusalem. In the name of God Jeremiah rebuked his seventh century fellow-townsmen because they regarded the presence of the Temple in their city of Jerusalem as an automatic insurance policy guaranteeing their safety and that of their city against their enemies. It did not occur to them that their spiritual backsliding could bring them under the judgment of their righteous God and that he about to use their enemies as his instrument of judgment (Jeremiah 7:1-8).

In the New Testament, Dr Luke chronicles events which undoubtedly related to folk religion. There is the account of the woman who found healing by touching the edge of Jesus' cloak (Luke 8:43-48). Jesus was aware that power had gone out of him. When the woman later identified herself as the one who touched him, giving her reason, Jesus said: 'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace'. Jesus does not condone the folk religion and makes it clear that it is no magical healing although it is miraculous. The meticulous Dr Luke records in the Acts of the Apostles how the people after hearing Peter preach laid their sick on beds and mats in the street so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by (Acts 5:14-16). There must have been superstition behind this but there was also faith not so much in Peter but in the God of Peter. We read that all who came were healed. Similar happenings are recorded about Paul again in the context of teaching and preaching (Acts 19:10-12).

Christians today sometimes wrongly think that a Bible under the pillow or a cross around the neck will give them protection. If God

does protect them, it will be out of his mercy and because of their faith in him. The Bible or the cross may remind the owner of God but there is nothing mechanical or magical that these items contribute and the owner's use of them can hinder faith as well as help it. Folk Christianity is very evident in the Philippines and in South America but can be found in every continent.

In Judaism, Christianity and Islam practices sometimes show deviations from the ideal as set out in their respective scriptures. Each at different points reverts in varying degrees from the revealed to the natural. There are magical uses of the names of God. Bibliolatry or the worship of the book and bibliomancy or the magical use of the book replace the proper reading of the inspired books. Charms and excessive veneration of saints replace reliance on God in both Christianity and Islam. Not only the illiterate and untaught are involved. Benazir Bhutto in her autobiography *Daughter of the East* relates that before leaving Karachi in 1969 (p. 45):

I stood in the carved wooden doorway... while my mother passed my new Holy Qur'an over my head. I kissed it. And together we left for the airport to fly to the United States.

Before her father's execution he had urged her (p. 142):

Go to pray at Lal Shahbaz Qalander ... I never got there last Eid'. Lal Shahbaz Qalander. One of our most famous saints. My grandmother had gone to pray at his shrine when my father became very ill as a baby and nearly died. Would God be able to hear a daughter's prayer for the same person?

Bill Musk in his book *The Unseen Face of Islam* gives many descriptions of the folk practices of ordinary Muslims. It is the supernatural in the practice of folk religion that absorbs the attention of many Muslims. Out of the mass of material I propose to stress that in which I have had some personal experience.

2. Brief description of what I have observed of the supernatural in Islam

2.1 Miracles at shrines

I once went with Dr Bruce Nicholls and a group of students to the shrine of Sufi Qamar Ali Darvesh at Shivapur, a village near Pune in India. We watched the phenomenon of the levitating rocks. Two large round boulders lay close to each other. We saw the larger weighing about seventy kilogrammes raised through the power of the saint to a height of nearly two metres. Eleven men using only an index finger each called in unison on the name of the saint and so raised the boulder for several minutes. Muslims, Hindus and Christians come in their hundreds each day to the shrine partly because of this miracle and partly to find healing through using the water of the nearby spring and by praying to the saint.

In my estimation such miracles and such healings do not come from God. Here I would endorse what John White says in a recent book (John White, *Greater than Riches*, IVP 1992, p. 55):

Demonic power is nothing more than divine power corrupted. Water that is dangerously polluted does not cease to be water and may still look like, and even sometimes taste like pure water. So devilish miracles will deceive “even the very elect”. Satan will appear “as an angel of light”. Hell’s power will, however, be progressively enslaving and end in death and destruction, while God’s power will be redemptive, vivifying, cleansing, freeing and restorative.” (2 Corinthians 11:14)

Many people have problems grasping that what is or appears miraculous may have a source other than God.

2.2 Exorcism

In Muscat, the capital of the Sultanate of Oman, I have heard Muslim exorcists at work for hours in the evening and earlier part of

the night casting out evil spirits. To listen to the chanting of the exorcists and the shrieks of the afflicted is an eerie and chilling experience.

Many Muslims and Christians fall into the trap of trying to manipulate and control God rather than be controlled by him. Sometimes they are not so much trying to manipulate God as to contain Satan and evil spirits and/or *jinn*. The Qur'an states that God created *jinn*: 'I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship me'. (Surah *The Winnowing Winds* Q 51:56) Some *jinn* behaved in a malevolent way while others remained good influences. The respected Pakistani theologian Kausar Niazi writes:

That the Jinns enter the body of human beings, take possession of them and reduce them to a non-plus is so positively true that, apart from arguments, it is upheld by experience also. The writings of innumerable doctors of theology are full of narrations how they, with the aid of the Divine word, made the Jinns flee from the bodies of the possessed. Even in these days, a very pious scholar told the present writer that his wife had been ailing for many years. She underwent spasms. No amount of treatment could cure her. At last a person well versed in occult sciences was consulted. He told him that her ailment was a Jinn's mischief. Afterwards whenever she fell into a spasm, he recited the Qur'an. Slowly she began to recover and was finally delivered from the affliction. During moments of convulsion, the Jinn often talked to the pious man. He knew *Qasida Burda* by heart and could recite it nonstop, though the woman knew little about the *Qasida*. Once he asked the Jinn to give a proof of his existence. Suddenly a fresh and fragrant cardamom bough fell into his lap.' (*Creation of Man*, pp.48-49)

2.3 Amulets or charms

Amulets containing verses of the Qur'an are worn round the neck as a form of protection in warding off evil. As an extra insurance Muslims wear amulets in the same way as many secularly minded

people wear lucky charms. Each group of verses in the *Qasida Burda* mentioned above is used as an amulet for particular purposes. Al-Bajuri, a famous commentator on the poem, says of verses 105 - 115 that if a man has a quarrel with a friend, and writes these verses on a lion's skin and puts it in the fold of his turban and then enters his friend's presence in silence his friend will open the conversation in a friendly fashion. (see Ritchie p.18)

The ninety-nine names of God are also often used as magical incantations. For example, about the name *Al-Halim* it is said that no blight or harm will affect a farmer's crop if he writes this name (*Ya-Halim* which means *O Forbearing One*) on a piece of paper and puts it with the seed he has sown. Fear of the evil eye and the elaborate precautions against satanic influences are further evidences of this type of popular religion. Murray T. Titus in his book on *Islam in India and Pakistan* (revised reprint 1959) in a chapter on saint-veneration wrote about the widespread belief in the powers of saints to heal and perform miracles:

The graves of saints are visited by litigants seeking victory in law cases; by the farmer who lost a horse; by the woman who desires a child; by the father who seeks healing for his sick boy; by the merchant who desires prosperity in business; by the hunter who wants a lucky day; by the gambler, and even by the their.' (p.138)

According to Dr Bill Musk's book *The Unseen Face of Islam* published in 1989 it would seem that not much has changed in this area.

Fatima Mernissi recounts in her superbly written recent autobiographical account of her girlhood in Morocco entitled *The Harem Within* how after she and her brother Samir had witnessed the blood-soaked corpses of people massacred at mosque prayers being brought home to their house. Understandably, the four year-olds suffered from nightmares. 'We had to take you to the Moulay

Driss sanctuary many Fridays in a row to have the *sharifs* (holy men) perform protection rituals over you, and I had to put a Koranic amulet under your pillow for a whole year before you slept normally again'. (p. 24)

2.4 Relics

In the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore, Pakistan, I have visited the exhibition of twenty-seven relics, which attracts both Sunnis and Shias. One can see displayed behind glass Muhammad's walking stick, three of his sandals, his underwear, his banner with magic squares on it, Fatima's handkerchief and prayer-mat, and dust from the battle-field at Karbala. Some of the viewers get as near as possible to the relics by rubbing the glass with their hands and then rubbing their faces to transfer the blessing from the relic to themselves. Others especially the Shias are moved to tears as they see the dust from Karbala where Ali's son Hussain was martyred. Kausar Niazi in his book *Islam our Guide* writes (p. 185):

According to a Tradition of the *Sahih* of Bukhari, 'Uthman reports that the mother of believers, Umm Salamah, had with her a few hairs of the Holy Prophet which she had preserved in a silver tube. If someone fell a victim to an evil eye or suffered from some other disease, one went to her. She put the hair in water and the sick person was asked to drink the water, after which he or she recovered from the disease.

2.5 Harmful magic

In one Punjabi village in Pakistan, my two companions and I experienced the full force of the practitioners of magic with their evil intentions. I have described this in my book *Christ Supreme over Satan*. Each evening after a day of ministry in other villages we returned to the one-roomed house, which we had been lent, and which was our base for ten days. We ran an evening service for

the Christian community, about twenty of whom came and sat in the courtyard. Beyond the courtyard in the village square hidden by the darkness up to two hundred Muslims used to listen in - a silent, voluntary, hidden congregation. It was this that probably enraged the practitioners of magic. Sudden illness, nightmares, shapes in the darkness, a scorpion at the head of the bed, strange knockings and peculiar bloodstains with unnatural patterns - all this and more. God demonstrated his power by instant healing, keeping one of the three of us always watching and praising God. I saw a wall of light marking a compound across the square. It turned out to be a home where devil worship was practised. We called to challenge the family to repent and turn to the Living God. Fear was banished as we all prayed together. (Zechariah 2:5) Over the next few months various individuals in this extended family became true believers in God and experienced his salvation in Jesus.

2.6 Demon infested buildings

I have stayed in quite a number of buildings that Muslims claimed were inhabited by evil spirits. Our experiences confirmed these claims. Sometimes missionaries years ago purchased buildings cheaply as they were said to be inhabited by evil spirits and people were afraid to live in them. I know of several such buildings in different countries. Some of these early missionaries did not believe what was told them about the buildings and failed to ask for their cleansing through the power of the name of Jesus and his blood. They may have dedicated the building but first they needed to know that it was cleansed.

2.7 Note on the attitudes of the Qur'an and Hadith to folk practices.

The Qur'an condemns witchcraft (Surah 113:4). However, it makes no categorical condemnation of the occult such as is found in the Bible in Deuteronomy 18:10-12. The Qur'an even hosts some of the animistic practices prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia, eg. Surah 56:75 where there is a reference to astrology. The adoration of the sun and moon is forbidden in the Qur'an (Surah 41:37). 'And among His signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Bend not in adoration to the sun or the moon, but bend in adoration before God who created them both if you would serve him.' After over forty years of living, working and travelling in the Muslim world I have concluded that Qur'anic Islam and folk Islam are inextricably linked especially in that the Qur'an seems to host animism while the *Hadith* literature seems sometimes to endorse many folk practices. Unquestionably there is evidence of Satanic activity in folk Islam as in all folk religion with its animistic underlay. We need to pray for the breaking of the bonds and the release of the captives from among the people of the mosque and the shrine. In seeking to minister to Muslims we are involved in specific areas of spiritual warfare.

3. The Christian response to and encounter with the evidence of supernatural activity in Islam.

3.1 Spiritual Warfare

First, let us define spiritual warfare. It is warfare against Satan who certainly manifests his power in counterfeit miracles, the supernatural and the occult. But Satan's use of the supernatural is only part of his strategy. The New Testament gives more emphasis to Satan's attack through human frailty than to his use of the supernatural (Galatians 5:19-21). All Christians are, therefore, in-

volved in spiritual warfare. It is not a warfare that focuses only on the supernatural manifestations of evil. Bearing this in mind, we can turn to the Christian response to evidence of supernatural activity in Islam.

3.2 Healing and prayer

Both Christians and Muslims are people of prayer. Sick Muslims are often grateful for the prayers of their Christian friends. I have prayed individually and in family groups with hundreds of Muslims after asking their permission to pray for them in the name of Jesus the Messiah. Generally, I begin with praise of God. Then I thank him for his love and then pray for the patient by name sometimes quoting the words of a prophet eg. Isaiah 53:5. If the patient is not healed it is no dishonor to the name of Jesus and if he or she is healed the Muslim is generally open to learning more about Jesus. Sometimes illness is directly satanic in origin as it was in the case of Peter's mother-in-law when Jesus rebuked the fever and she was immediately healed (Luke 4:38-39). Jesus has given us authority to deal with illness of satanic origin in a similar way in his name. The satanic element in illness can be eliminated the most easily. Strangely, Christians from the West often consider it as the last option. Often the reasons for illness are complex. Sometimes healing comes through prayer and treatment. In this too Jesus gives us an example (Mark 8:23-25). Healings often give further opportunities for sharing the gospel with the patient and the family.

3.3 Exorcism

The crucial matter in exorcism is diagnosis. Without being sure that exorcism is needed, it is unwise to proceed. Generally, it is wise to work with two or three others in a team. In my contribution to *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road* I have dealt

with the subject in some detail - in chapter 17 entitled *The practice of exorcism and healing*.

However, here is another case study that occurred after I wrote that chapter. I was visiting a small Christian hospital in Egypt. The Egyptian Medical Director of the hospital had invited me for a few days to give some Christian teaching. When I arrived, he also requested me to help by joining the small team involved with a demonized nominal Christian woman. The team comprised of the husband who was a committed believer, a psychiatrist and the medical superintendent himself. We met the woman that evening in the church. I asked to be allowed to interview her through a translator and make my own diagnosis. It soon became apparent that she was not yet 'born of the spirit'. I tried unsuccessfully to help her see her need of Christ and his saving power.

After a while, I told the translator that I would pray for her but in English so there was no need for him to translate. She knew no English. I prayed aloud for about ten minutes but when in my prayer I quoted Isaiah's words about the cross of Christ "by his stripes we are healed", the woman who had been quiet and normal until this point lost all self-control and behaved in a demented manner. Her husband and the doctor carried her from the pew to the chancel and it took three people to hold her down. I was convinced that their diagnosis was correct and that she was demonized. The demons, and there were several, could not stand the mention of the blood of Christ. I then tried to find out how and when they had entered her. I asked if she had ever been to a shrine. Apparently, her parents had taken her on one occasion for some specific spiritual purpose. Her trouble seemed to have dated from then. We struggled with her and the evil powers for three hours each evening. She was not delivered during my visit but some months later I heard of her deliverance and of her new life in Christ. Praise be to God.

3.4 The cleansing of buildings

Muslims sometimes refuse to rent buildings for their own use which they perceive to be the dwelling place of evil powers. Spirits generally inhabit a particular part of a building. The cleansing of a building by the power of Christ can be a convincing testimony to Muslims. It should also be noted that Christians have sometimes undermined their own ministries by not cleansing a building before dedicating and living in it. We may never know what has occurred on the land on which a house is built, nor in what ways the builders have appeased evil spirits as they built. Maybe they made an animal sacrifice before laying the foundations. Sometimes previous owners or tenants have practiced magic or some occult activity. I was involved in the cleansing of a house in which a fortune-teller had lived for some years. There were weird markings in paint in unexpected places and a feeling of oppression in certain areas of the house. It is interesting that the next tenant who was a Christian who knew nothing about the history of the house and the service of cleansing remarked how the house seemed so full of peace and the presence of the Lord.

Sometimes a place is influenced adversely by the environment or those who visit. A quiet service of cleaning including casting out, praise and prayer might be needed. Recently, one of my friends wrote: 'The house-warming we discussed took place two days ago. Alan, our Rector, prayed so beautifully, thinking first about houses Jesus was invited into in the New Testament. Then he went on to think about not only my house, but all the houses in the Avenue. There were fourteen of us, just enough to sit comfortably...Although not many of my neighbors were there, I have a lot of openings into houses as a result.' Here is an ancient prayer of the church for the exorcism of places:

God, the Son of God, who by death destroyed death, beat down Satan quickly. Deliver this place (room, house, church) from all

evil spirits; all vain imaginations, projections and all deceits of the evil one; and bid them harm no one but depart to the place appointed for them, there to remain for ever. God, Incarnate God, who came to give peace, give peace. Amen.

3.5 Visions and dreams of Christ

There are many accounts of Muslims having had visions or dreams of Christ. Seppo Syrianen, in his limited survey in Pakistan, discovered that the hearing or reading of scripture, the love of Christ seen in a person and visions or dreams of Christ were the three main influences in bringing Muslims to Christ. Over half of those he interviewed had such visions or dreams. We can pray for Muslims to have visions or dreams of Jesus the Son of God. One veteran missionary to Pakistan wrote in a prayer letter dated March 2, 1994: 'The 27th night of the month of Ramadan or Ramzan is very special to Muslims. They ask God for special revelations that night. He sometimes appears to some of them telling them about Jesus, the Lamb of God.'

According to one recent report, at least 35% of all recent Turkish conversions were in response to dreams and visions of Jesus as the Son of God. In many other Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia, the birthplace and heartland of Islam, people have had dreams in which they are instructed to search for and read the Christian scriptures. It has been noted that when they have found the written Word (often in remarkable ways) the dreams and visions cease. We need to be prepared to meet people who have had visions. If someone came to you and said that he or she had had a vision of Christ, what would you say? The main point is not to try and establish whether the experience is from God or some other source but to point that person to the Jesus of the Bible. The real Jesus is to be found in the scripture.

3.6 Amulets or charms

Charms generally contain the names of God, or verses from the Qur'an or their numerical equivalent. Charms can also be eaten or drunk and sometimes increase the person's bondage to Satan. Even Christians can be enslaved unwittingly. eg. from Multan. I sometimes ask someone wearing a charm round the neck what is in it and on hearing that it a verse I ask whether the wearer thinks that God prefers his word around our necks or in our hearts. The answer is always in our hearts. I then offer to teach a word of God to put in the heart eg. Romans 5:8. "God commends his love toward us in that while we yet sinners Christ died for us". I have never met a Muslim women to whom I quoted this verse who was worried about its theology ever after I had explained it carefully.

3.7 Spells, curses and the evil eye

Several of my committed Christian friends have been severely affected by curses or spells put on them by Muslim acquaintances. I recall one account from a small Tunisian town and another from Karachi, the largest of Pakistan's cities. The effects are generally in the form of illness and depression experienced for months or even years until the person afflicted or someone else has detected and broken the spell or curse by Christ's power. Generally, some one with a spirit of discernment is able to help. Nominal Christians as well as Muslims are engaged in putting curses on their enemies or employing a practitioner to put spells on people, as I have discovered during the last four years of living in a mainly Greek Orthodox country.

Alfred Guillaume in his useful book *The Traditions of Islam* mentions that the *Hadith* or Traditions contain a very large number of allusions to pre-Islamic animistic practices. He quotes 'Auf b. Malik Al Ashja'i who says (p. 119):

We were in the habit of using spells in the time of ignorance, and we said: "O apostle of God, what is your opinion of them?" He replied: "Show me your spells. There is no harm in a spell in which there is no taint of polytheism (*shirk*)".

Many Muslims in many lands are afraid of the evil eye. We can share how God helps us to deal with fear and how he guides us with his eye (Psalm 32:8). Spells and the influence of the evil eye cannot prevail against the power, the name, and the blood of Jesus. A committed Christian friend of mine met a Muslim woman who told her the following story:

We had a lovely new car that someone wanted to buy from us. They came round one day and desperately tried to persuade us but we would not sell it. A few hours after they left the car was involved in a serious accident and destroyed. It was because of the evil eye.' In a second instance another woman told her: 'My sister had been ill for quite some time and no one could find out why. One day someone suggested that it was the influence of the evil eye. She said that if we burn red chilies then the effects of the evil eye would be reversed. I didn't believe it but my mother said we had nothing to lose so we burnt red chilies. My sister got better straight away.

People wear charms as protection against the evil eye, and also make negative comments about, for example, a child's grace and beauty so as not to arouse the jealousy which may cause someone to look with an evil eye on the child. The committed Christian can share how Christ is willing to deal with jealousy in our heart. He can give us through his blood a clean and new heart (Psalm 51). As the good Shepherd He watches over and protects his sheep. He can also break the power of the evil influence as he came to set the prisoners free.

3.8 *Binding the powers of Satan*

The exercise of our Christ-given authority sometimes frees the way for the proclamation of the gospel and the practitioners of harmful magic can be rendered ineffective (Matthew 18:18; Mark 3:27).

3.9 *Standing in the evil day*

In spiritual warfare to stand is to overcome (Ephesians 6:10-19).

4. Conclusion

4.1 Renouncing the devil and all his works was often part of the early baptismal formulas of the church. In some places, baptism was followed by the administration of the oil of exorcism. The lack of such a deliberate renunciation of the devil may account for why some converts revert to Islam. They were never fully set free.

4.2 Teaching always, and signs and wonders sometimes, should be the general pattern of our ministry as it was for Paul (Romans 15:18-19).

4.3 The guidance, filling and anointing of the Holy Spirit are the requisites for an effective ministry to Muslims and all people. We rely not on our methods and rituals but on the power of the living, triune God.

4.4 The power of the word of God in spiritual warfare. The God of the Bible is a God who speaks (Hebrews 11:3 and 2 Corinthians 4:6). The eternal and incarnate Word is Jesus, the messenger and the message (John 1:1,14). In the parable of the seed, 'The seed is the word'. The 'word' here is *logos*. *Logos* is used 330 times in the New Testament. The other Greek noun for 'word' is *rhema*, which is used 70 times, can mean an utterance, matter, topic,

command, or saying. For example, ‘the sword of the Spirit is the *rhema* of God’ in Ephesians 6:16 - a defensive and offensive weapon. Here are some examples of the use of scripture in particular situations of spiritual conflict:

A. Scripture in praying for the sick (Isaiah 53:5)

We do not just pray ‘heal Mary’, but under the guidance of the Holy Spirit we quote a particular scripture relevant to her situation. This is probably why healing services are often deliberately held after communion services. In the celebration of communion *rhema* has been uttered ‘this is my body...’ See also James 5:15.

B. Scripture in combating fear

‘Fear not...’. The Bible is full of commands to ‘fear not’. As kings and priests unto God (Revelation 1:6) we can use the word of God with authority as David did in his contest with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:45).

C. Scripture in resisting spiritual assault

See Matthew 4:4 and Deuteronomy 8:3 in the Septuagint LXX. We see clearly how Jesus used scripture in his conflict with the Devil in the wilderness after his baptism. We can do likewise.

D. Scripture intercession and in praise

The early church made much use of scripture in intercession, applying it to current events and experiences and incorporating it in their prayers (Acts 4:25-26). The people of God also used scripture in their praises. “God in whose word I praise.” (Psalm 56:4).

E. Scripture in house cleansing

The Christian’s home or ‘must ever be holy ground, even although all around be evil, for the Embassy is privileged land and here the Ambassador enjoys extra-territorial rights’ wrote two famous workers for God, Mildred Cable and Francesca French, in their

book *Ambassadors for Christ*. (pp. 152-154, extract from the chapter entitled *The Splendour of the Embassy*).

F. Scripture in exorcism of evil spirits

Evil spirits cannot stand against the power of the word of God, the praise of God, the power of the name and blood of Jesus. The use of scripture is an integral part of our authority in exorcism (Isaiah 50:4). If we are not grounded in Scripture, we will be hampered in applying it in our spiritual warfare.

5. Suggested questions for group discussion

5.1 What biblical evidence is there that unbelievers from various backgrounds need release from bondage?

5.2 How do we apply this in our ministry to Muslims today?

5.3 Why is the declaration of Christ as the liberator generally more meaningful to the Muslim than is the promise of the assurance of the forgiveness of sins?

5.4 Why should we be praying for Jesus to reveal himself in visions and dreams to Muslims?

5.5 If a Muslim came to you describing a vision he or she had had of Jesus, what would you say to him or her?

5.6 How should we prepare ourselves to pray for Muslims in their presence for healing or some other critical need?

5.7 In what ways do we need to seek God's protection before becoming involved in power encounters of any sort?

6. Brief Bibliography

Note: a courtesy visit to your local mosque will be very instructive. Generally, the mosque authorities will receive you well and explain their point of view. They are generally generous in giving literature in the local language and in English. Sometimes they have a book-stall with inexpensive materials. Acquiring such primary material will help us understand our neighbours better.

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