

## *101 questions for Jehovah's Witnesses*

The Purpose of this Booklet

Many Muslims receive regular visits from Jehovah's Witnesses. The two religious groups are in constant doorstep dialogues. This booklet is an aid to the act of dialogue. *101 Questions to Ask Jehovah's Witnesses*

Jehovah's Witnesses are trained to deal with Muslims. In their handbook entitled *Reasoning from the Scriptures* they are taught what they should say to Muslims (see especially pages 23 and 24; 1989 edition). On page 24, for example, Jehovah's Witnesses are instructed to use the following strategy:

When the Muslim says what Islam teaches, ask him to show you the point in the Qur'an. (Wait while he searches for it). When he cannot find it, he may be more willing to let you speak.

This and other tactful strategies gives Jehovah's Witnesses an unfair advantage in dealing with some Muslims who are not equipped to explain their faith. The purpose of this booklet is to correct the imbalance. I feel that just as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society has taken the pains to teach Jehovah's Witnesses on how to overcome Muslims in discussion, the Islamic

Information Centre should likewise equip Muslims so that they should be at least equal to the task. Then we pray that God will let the discussions bear fruit. Through such discussions the truth, we pray, will become evident.

Another point. Jehovah's Witnesses come fully equipped with reading materials to give Muslims. And Muslims often accept such materials. As a result, long after the Witnesses are gone, their influence and teachings remain in the homes of Muslims. To be fair, Muslims ought to likewise present some reading materials to their visitors. Perhaps this booklet would serve as a beginning.

I doubt, however, that Jehovah's Witnesses would accept this booklet. My experience has taught me that Jehovah's Witnesses would not

accept anyone else's literature. This I find rather unfortunate. How does one learn anything new with a closed mind? Our visitors may feel that they already have

the truth and therefore need to search no more. But I think a closed attitude is a wrong one. Nevertheless, I hope that some of the Jehovah's Witnesses will prove me wrong by accepting this booklet. I hope they will also go one step further in composing a reply to the points I make here. I appreciate feedback.

So I expect, then, that this booklet will help Muslims feel more confident that they too have something to offer anyone who is prepared to examine things. Some of Jehovah's Witnesses may still be prepared to study a different view, because they read in their Bible the following passage:

Make sure of all things; hold fast to what is fine (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

They are instructed in that verse to check things out and then to hold on to what proves good. Notice that it cannot work the other way. You cannot

hold on to what is good unless you first test it out for yourself.

## **B**

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### **Why this Sort of Booklet?**

There are many booklets that explain Islam. Some of these are really excellent materials. However, the Muslim who is involved in a dialogue at his doorstep finds himself confronted with questions those booklets are not meant to answer.

This booklet will teach Muslims how to ask the right questions instead of struggling to find answers. It is a matter of reverse psychology. Respond to a question by asking another one. If Muslims can learn this technique they will be in a better position to explain

themselves when they are faced with persistent questions from their visitors.

Let us make it clear that the purpose of this booklet is not to attack or belittle the faith of the Jehovah's Witnesses. It is only a response to writings already published by Jehovah's Witnesses and given to lots of Muslims. One such writing is a booklet entitled *The Time for True Submission to God*, published 1982, in which they urge Muslims to become Jehovah's Witnesses.

Another such piece is a book entitled *Mankind's Search for God*, containing a section on Islam. In that chapter the true nature of Islam is distorted, but I don't intend to deal with that in this booklet. It is enough to note here that this book too has been left in many Muslim homes. Here I only intend to help readers to deal with such situations.

Yet another example is a colourful brochure written specifically for Muslim readership. It even takes on a Muslim appearance with a picture of a mihrab (an architectural design favoured by Muslims).

In short, Jehovah's Witnesses have gone to great lengths to convey their religion to Muslims. The time is now ripe for Muslims to repay that kindness by offering them the chance to understand the religion of God. The series of questions in here are designed to help the Witnesses to think more deeply about some of the matters they may have taken for granted. The idea is to ask the right questions to help them reach the right conclusions.

This booklet does not encourage a hostile attitude in dealing with people. The idea is not to bombard them with hard facts or dazzle them with puzzling questions, but rather to lead them gently to the truth.

Most of the questions in this booklet may be asked of any Bible teacher, not just Jehovah's Witnesses. However, this booklet is designed specifically for use with Jehovah's Witnesses.

Although most of the points relating to the Bible apply to almost any Bible, the points are being made specifically for the benefit of Jehovah's Witnesses, and all the Bible quotations are taken from the Jehovah's Witnesses' own Bible. The reason I make this distinction is

that the Jehovah's Witnesses have their own distinctive set of beliefs and this requires a different approach in dealing with them.

Other Christians, for example do not need to hear from Muslims that the Bible contains mistakes. They may already know that for themselves. Now, if you go out of your way to show people what they already know they may take offence to it.

With other Christians, therefore, the general approach should be to emphasize common beliefs and to explore differences in an extremely gentle fashion. Better still, you would leave aside differences and show a person the true teachings from God right in the Qur'an, God's final revealed Book.

However, such an approach does not work with the Jehovah's Witnesses. They are too overly confident that their belief is the only correct one. Any attempt to lead them to something else fails unless you can first get their attention and help them to rethink their present position.

Jehovah's Witnesses feel that their belief system is rock solid because of two reasons. Firstly, because it is based on the Bible which is the inerrant Word of Jehovah. Secondly, because Jehovah guides them to the correct interpretation of that book. So, we may as well start by discussing that book if we hope to get anywhere with them.

## C

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### **How to Begin an Exciting Series of Dialogues with Jehovah's Witnesses**

If you're like me, you see Jehovah's Witnesses all the time busy in their door-to-door preaching work. On the other hand, if you're not like me perhaps they knock on your door too. I have been denied such visiting rights.

I have no grudge against them. I love the Jehovah's Witnesses as fellow human beings. We are one family, all descendants of our

ancestor Adam. I feel they are, despite their hard work, heading in the wrong direction. I would like the opportunity to share with them my understanding of the truth, but I am deprived of this opportunity. Some of them have in the past suggested that if I wish to teach them anything I should go to their place just as they go around teaching other people. I took this as an encouragement, but when I asked for their address they wouldn't give any. They said I must find it as they go out and look for the homes of the people.

I admire the Jehovah's Witnesses for their sincerity and hard work for the sake of their beliefs. I also feel the same sort of compassion for them which the Caliph Umar felt for a Christian monk. He came across a monk in his cell showing all the signs of hardship that go with his monastic way of life. Umar (R.A.) shed tears when he saw this. When he was asked why he wept, Umar (R.A.) explained that according to the Qur'an some people will come on the Day of Judgement laden with good works and yet meet a dreadful end because they were on the wrong path. Compassion for this man made Umar (R.A.) weep.

I feel the same compassion, and the same need to help Jehovah's Witnesses learn the truth. Since they do not visit me anymore, I can only hope that if I share my information with you then you will be able to pass it on to where it is intended.

For starters, if you hope to make proper use of this booklet, you need to develop the kind of compassion I described above. Even if you don't have it, just assume that you have it and it will come naturally. That's the power of positive reinforcement. Assume a virtue and you will acquire it.

Now, with that correct attitude, begin to ask these questions of Jehovah's Witnesses and give them a chance to convince themselves that Islam is the truth.

## D

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### **How to Lead a Conversation in the Right Direction**

Jehovah's Witnesses receive some of the best possible training on the use of psychological techniques in dealing with their prospects. They will come to you trained and prepared to succeed in every meeting. But you, with the help of this booklet, can change all that.

The secret is to take control of the conversation. Let me show you how.

Jehovah's Witnesses will start by saying that they are speaking to people about the possibility of world peace, or some such matter of general interest. Then they will ask your opinion about the matter. But don't be fooled. Your visitors are not conducting an opinion survey. They are leading you in conversation the way they are trained.

If you are to get anywhere with them you have to be willing to seize control of the conversation. What you must do is reply with a question. That's right! A question. That will certainly break the conversation out of the mould which the Jehovah's Witnesses expect it to fit into, and help you to proceed on the track you are now being trained to follow.

When they ask for your opinion and give you time to speak they are preparing you to listen to them. Psychologically, once you have spoken you will feel that just as they listened to you with patience you must now return the courtesy. You will then have to listen to them telling you what the Word of God says about the matter. By this time, your position appears weak. You gave your opinion and they reply with God's teachings. Let's see how we can reverse this situation.

The first step is for you to realise that you don't have to give your opinion when they ask for it. So say something like this:

I am glad you asked. But I think the answer should come from God. Do you know where we can find God's answer to our problems?

There! That's how you do it. With only a few words you've turned the situation around. Instead of giving your opinion you have established that their attempt to seek your opinion was a misguided one. Furthermore, you've put a question to them. They must now tell you where God's answer is to be found.

If they say, "The Holy Bible," or whatever else they choose to call their

Bible, you are ready to ask a whole series of questions about the Bible. Now you can really teach them something.

If, on the other hand, they turn the question back to you, you have an option. Let me assure you at this point that you have nothing to lose no matter which option you choose. For example, if you decide to not answer the question you can turn the question back to them by saying something like this:

Well, I was hoping you would be able to come up with an answer, especially since you specialize in speaking to people on this subject.

If that doesn't get them to speak, don't forget that you can always ask them politely to leave you alone. You may say something like this:

Since you don't seem to have an answer for me, I would like to thank you for coming. Please come again when you have the answer. Bye for now.

At this point you may begin closing the door to show your firm resolve to end the conversation. As I have said, you lose nothing with this option. You gain! You maintained control and felt confident. You felt no anger, no frustration. Privately, you were having fun putting these proven techniques to work.

On the other hand, they lose. They lost time to visit you and accomplish nothing. They also lost some of the confidence they were charged up with when they left their kingdom hall.

And you haven't run out of options yet. When they ask you where you think God's answer can be found you may reply, "The Glorious Qur'an," if you feel confident that you can explain yourself further. Bear in mind that you can always learn more or obtain more written materials from your Da'wah Centre if necessary. Read, for example, *Common Questions People Ask About Islam*, or *Science in the Qur'an*. These will help equip you for the challenge.

Now, go ahead. Do your job of spreading Allah's message, and drop me a line to let me know how much success you are having.

## E

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### **Keep Your Cool**

If you are going to really do this job right you have to stay cool. Keeping your cool is an attitude that can be developed. It starts with realising that you cannot guide the people you are trying to convince. That remains for Allah to do. Your job is only to convey the message.

You may often find this task frustrating. But stick with it. Sometimes you will find it hard to understand why your visitors cannot understand your message. But persevere. Read below what Allah says:

See how We make the revelations clear to them, and see how they are turned away! (Qur'an 5:75)

You see? Even the Words of Allah, plain as they are, will not convince everyone. Much less the humble attempts we make. If you keep this in mind you will save yourself a lot of frustration and be in a better position to apply the techniques described in this booklet.

Now, the questions given here are to be used in a particular way for maximum success. Don't use them as sledgehammers to clobber your opponents. Use them as fly-swats to sting them a little and wake them up. In other words, use them gently. Give your visitors time to adjust to the new information you are offering them. You will open up new horizons in their thinking with the questions you ask them. Be patient with them while they take time to overcome information-shock.

At first they will resist any information coming from you as being from the devil. After all, how could you know anything more about the Bible

than they and their Bible teachers? So rather than give them the information in the form of statements of your own, ask them a question to stimulate their thoughts. For example, instead of saying "A is true," say, "Suppose someone says that A is true. How would you react to that?" This shifts the focus away from you and allows your visitors to think only about the question. As they struggle to come up

with an answer they will convince themselves of what you wanted them to learn.

Your disposition toward them is very important. You must show them that you have compassion for them, and you really want to help them. You must avoid every chance to ridicule them or their faith. So, do not take on the attitude of a prosecutor obviously trying to tie them up in verbal knots or to prove them guilty. Take the attitude of a sympathetic news reporter who is sincerely trying to understand the case for fair reporting.

Here is how this works. They say, "A is true." They are accustomed to hearing their opponents saying, "No, A cannot be true." But you are not their average prospect. You must rise above the situation by saying something like this, "If you say A is true, that leads me to conclude that B is also true since A implies B. Do you also believe B?" Now, if they are unable say, "Yes!" quickly, know that they are struggling to make sense of their own contradictions. There are many examples of A and B in the questions that follow.

Here is another pattern. Say, for example, "Previously you told me C and I understood you. Now that you are saying D, I would also like to understand, but since C and D are opposites I cannot believe them both. How do you explain this?" Let them deal with the contradictions in their own mind. What you are doing here is helping them to save face by allowing them to think for themselves. Don't tell them they

are wrong. Show them how to believe in their own minds that they are wrong.

They may agree with you and yet not admit it. Don't worry about that. Remember that they always come in pairs. If one of them shows inclination to agree with you, the other one will report him back at their kingdom hall as one who is now wavering in his faith. Even if they both agree with you neither of them dares to make the first move to reveal it for fear of what the other may think. So both will appear to maintain their position, but you ought to be satisfied that you did your best in presenting the truth. Rest assured that Allah has imbued these persons each with a conscience. When they lie in bed at night they may remember your words and secretly affirm true faith before they

fall asleep.

Again, keep your discussions cool. When you ask the following questions ask them politely. The tone of your voice should reflect courtesy. Let me explain it this way. Imagine for a mo

ment that you are a police officer. You have just arrested a dangerous criminal. Now, in your inner voice hear yourself saying to him, "Drop your weapon." Do you hear the force of your voice? That's a condescending voice — the voice of a powerful individual speaking to a powerless person.

Now for an exercise involving the right use of voice for your situation. Imagine yourself at the airport. You are ready to board your flight. But you don't know which way to find your gate number 39. So you approach a clerk and ask her politely, "Can you please tell me where I can find gate number 39?" Do you hear the sound of that question? That's the tone you should try to maintain when asking the questions in this booklet. Practice that tone of voice with this question: "What if I show you a verse in the Bible which claims to be not inspired?" Do the same with all the other questions. May Allah help you and me, and all those who call to His way.

**101 Questions  
to Ask Visiting  
Jehovah's Witnesses**

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*Five Questions to Get You Started*

1

**Is 100% of the Bible inspired by God?**

***Their Answer:***

They will say, "Yes! All scripture is inspired of God." They will also quote from the Bible where it says exactly that in Paul's 2nd Letter to

Timothy, chapter 3, verse 16 . They may then smile happily because they showed you the answer straight from the Bible.

### ***The Truth:***

The verse they show you is quoted without regard for its real meaning.

Few people really ever think before they quote. If they find something that seems close to what they believe there is no stopping them from quoting it. Let us see now what the passage really means.

To really understand the passage we

have to know who wrote it, what he meant by it, and what he expected his first readers to understand by it.

Who wrote it? Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Paul wrote that passage in a letter to his student Timothy.

What did Paul mean by `all scripture'? Did he mean `the whole Bible'? Many people assume so. But Paul did not say that. He did not say, "the entire Bible is inspired." He said "All scripture is inspired." So, back to our question. What did Paul mean by "all scripture"?

Some people may say, "But `all scripture' means `all scripture,' don't you understand?" Say, "Should I understand that the Hindu Scripture, the Buddhist Scripture, the Muslim Scripture, the Christian Scripture and all other scripture is inspired by God?"

They will say, "No, because Paul would not have meant all that." But that makes us ask again, "What exactly did Paul mean?"

If at this point they say, "The whole

Bible," this takes us back to the beginning of this discussion. Just say, "I feel that we are going around in a circle here. I have already shown that Paul never said, "The whole Bible."

Now you may need to help them understand that the verse they showed you was read out of context. By taking the verse in isolation,

they give it a different meaning than what the author had intended. To see the proper context, let us read the verse again, this time starting with the verse that comes before it. Here are verses 15 and 16:

<sup>15</sup> . . . from infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through the faith in connection with Christ Jesus.

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching . . . (2 Timothy 3:15-16)

Except where noted, all Bible

quotations in this study are from the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures; this is the Bible used by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Explain to them that if they look at the previous verse (i.e. 2 Timothy 3:15) they will realise that Paul was speaking to his student Timothy about the scriptures which Timothy knew from his infancy. It was definitely not the whole Bible. The whole Bible was not yet complete.

The Bible is made up of basically two sections. The first is called the Old Testament, and the second is called the New Testament. Many books of the New Testament section were written after Paul's death. Paul was not telling Timothy that Timothy knew from infancy about books which are not yet written, was he?

To show how many books Paul was not referring to here, ask your visitors to look at the Table of Books of the Bible which is shown in their Bible to

wards the back. In their usual pocket edition published 1984, this appears on pages 1546 to 1547. Now look with them at page 1547 which displays a list of the Christian Greek Scriptures. In that chart the approximate dates when these books were written are shown in the 4th column. The approximate date given for the writing of 2 Timothy is the year 65 C.E. (i.e. A.D. but contemporary users prefer C.E. instead of A.D.). Now we can see that many books were written much later than that. Consider this list of Books of the New Testament together with their approximate year of authorship as given on the same chart:

Revelation 96 C.E. (A.D.)

John 98 C.E. (A.D.)

1 John 98 C.E. (A.D.)

2 John 98 C.E. (A.D.)

3 John 98 C.E. (A.D.)

Obviously, Paul was not telling Timothy to hold on to the above books which did not exist at the time.

Furthermore many other books were

written too close to the year 65 C.E. for Timothy to have been familiar with them since his infancy. I leave this for you to explore with your visitors.

That scripture Paul was telling Timothy about was the Old Testament, which Jehovah's Witnesses call the Hebrew-Aramaic Scriptures. These ancient scriptures in the oldest form in which they exist today are written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Chaldee languages.

A problem, however, is that Timothy was familiar with that book not in its original languages, but in its Greek language translation (the translation of the Old Testament into the Greek language is called the Septuagint Version). That Greek translation was prepared about three hundred years before Christ to enable those who could not read Hebrew to still benefit from the scriptures. This is the version which the early Christians like Timothy were reading. And Paul was telling him to hold on to that book.

But is that a problem? Yes! A double problem. First, the translation disagrees with the original in many points. Which should we take as the inspired book — the original or the translation? This presents a dilemma. If the Hebrew original is inspired then the Greek translation is wrong. But if the Greek is wrong then Paul is wrong to call it inspired — unless Paul thinks that a book is still inspired even if it contains mistakes.

A second problem is that the Septuagint Greek version contains seven more books than the Hebrew version. These seven books are included in the Catholic Bible but not in the Jehovah's Witnesses' Bible. But they were included in the Scriptures which Timothy knew from childhood. And Paul said all of it is inspired.

If Paul is right here, then Jehovah's Witnesses are wrong. But if Jehovah's Witnesses are right, then Paul's words are wrong even though they are found in the Jehovah's Witnesses' Bible.

The truth is that neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament is 100% from God. But if you believe Paul, then you have to understand that Paul was saying only that the Greek Septuagint Old Testament is inspired. Paul did not say more than this, and it would be wrong to say you believe in the man and then put words into his mouth.

Many of Jehovah's Witnesses unknowingly do exactly that. They believe so much in Watchtower teachings that they assume those teachings must be found in the Bible. Unfortunately, the Bible often disagrees with Watchtower teachings. What we are discussing here is one example of this. Although the Watchtower teaches that the Bible is 100% inspired, the Bible says only that its Old Testament is inspired. The Bible does not say that its entire New Testament section is inspired. If Jehovah's Witnesses chose to believe what they believe, they must realise that it is a man-made teaching.

The Bible does not teach that the entire New Testament is inspired. And that is a very significant part of the Bible.

Nor does the Bible teach that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament is inspired. Paul's statement quoted above only proves that the Greek Version is inspired. But Jehovah's Witnesses do not follow the Greek Version because they realise it would make no sense to disregard the original and follow a translation. So they rightly choose the Hebrew text. But this choice disagrees with what Paul says in their Bible!

Help them out of this confusion. Tell them about Islam with love.

The Qur'an says that the entire Qur'an is from Allah (see surah 3:7).

**What if I show you a verse in the Bible that claims to be not inspired?**

***Their answer:***

There is no such verse.

***The Truth:***

There are many such verses. Here is an example which will become clear after you read the following two statements found in the Bible in Paul's letter to the Corinthians:

"To the married people I give instructions, yet not I but the Lord . . ." (1 Corinthians 7:10).

"But to the others I say, yes, I, not the Lord . . ." (1 Corinthians 7:12).

Notice that in the first statement Paul claims that the Lord is speaking. Jehovah's Witnesses believe Paul was telling the truth.

But how about the second statement? Here Paul is saying that the statement is his very own, and that the Lord does not say it. Would Jehovah's Witnesses please believe Paul in this statement too?

So that would mean that at least one verse of the Bible is not inspired. Then the Bible cannot be 100% inspired by God. Perhaps 99%, or 99.9% but not 100%. Agreed?

There are many other examples. Some books of the Old Testament claim only to be the words of a man, while others claim to contain words of God also.

Many New Testament passages claim to be the opinion of men. Check these out:

Luke said:

"I resolved also . . . to write . . ." (The Gospel According to Luke 1:1-

4).

Paul said:

"Now concerning virgins I have no command from the Lord, but I give my opinion . . ." (Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 7:25).

Paul said:

"Therefore I think . . ." (1 Corinthians 7:26).

Paul said:

". . . according to my opinion" (1 Corinthians 7:40).

Paul said:

"I certainly think . . ." (1 Corinthians 7:40).

Paul said:

"See! I, Paul, am telling you . . ." (Paul's Letter to the Galatians 5:2).

But some people do not want to see. Here lies the problem.

To save space, and to focus on the point we are making, I have not quoted the above verses in full. But the references are given so that you and your visitors can read them one at a time from the Bible. The same result will emerge. Many verses of the Bible claim to be from man but not from God. Do Jehovah's Witnesses believe these verses? If so, then how can they say that the Bible is 100% from God when the Bible itself says it is not?

They may say that the fact that the writers gave their opinion does not make a difference, because their teachings agree with the rest of the Bible. This is not a good argument, for that would mean that anything that agrees with the Bible is also inspired. There

fore if a Hindu writes a brief poem about the importance of charity that should be taken as inspired Word of God. Do Jehovah's Witnesses accept this?

Our point here is not that the opinions of men are good or bad. Paul and Luke quoted above may have been teaching even things which Muslims believe in. That does not make a difference. Many Muslim authors write about teachings which Muslims believe in. We do not call such writings inspired Word of God, do we?

Instead, we must stress with our visitors that if they believe Paul they must also believe him when Paul said that he was writing his own opinion; they must also believe Luke when he said that he was writing as a result of his own resolution. Luke did not claim to be inspired to write. Look again at what he said (quoted above).

The point we do make here is that human writings, no matter how good and how accurate, must not be attrib

uted to God. Let us keep the Words of God separate and distinct from the words of Man. Ask your visitors to read the following verses in their Bible:

"For the thoughts of you people are not my thoughts, not are my ways your ways," is the utterance of Jehovah. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Please, let us not confuse the thoughts of men for the Words of God.

Notice also that the letters which Paul wrote to various churches and individuals are part of the Bible. Help your visitors to realize that the letters which the prophet Muhammad (on whom be peace, and blessings of Allah) dictated to various kings and leaders do not appear in the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the Word of God. It does not contain any human writings, not even the inspired

teachings of Muhammad (pbuh) himself. The inspired teachings of Muhammad (pbuh) are found in separate books called hadith.

**Was Paul inspired when he said that all scripture is inspired?**

***Their answer:***

Of course!

***The truth:***

But how do they know? If you ask how they know that the Bible is inspired they say, "Because Paul said so." Now if you ask how can we trust Paul on this they say "Because Paul's words are in the inspired Bible and

therefore Paul's words are inspired too." This is circular reasoning.

It is like a witness who defends his countryman by saying, "All men from my country are honest." Then, when you ask why you should believe the witness, the witness replies, "Because I am a man from my country." Obviously, this circular reasoning will not convince a thinking individual.

On the contrary, we have already seen in the previous question that Paul said many things as his own opinion. When he said that all scriptures are inspired (2 Timothy 3:16) he may have been right. But how can you say so for sure?

**4**

**Did Paul know that his letters are part of the Word of God?**

***Their answer:***

Well, y-yes (actually, not sure).

***The truth:***

Most people have not considered this question. The letters of Paul were collected and later made part of the Bible without consulting Paul (Paul was, of course long dead by this time).

But Paul himself was quite conscious that he often wrote his own opinions (see question 2). In one case, Paul was even aware that he

made an error in one of his letters which is now part of the Bible.

Read the following passage:

I am thankful I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. As for the rest, I do not know whether I baptized anybody else (1 Corinthians 1:14:16).

It should be clear in the above passage that Paul made a mistake and then a correction. But the mistake and the correction both remain in the Bible, Obviously, we do not object to the correction, but what about the mistake? Is that the Word of God too? If you look at the passage again, you will notice that Paul made the following three statements:

(a) I baptized no one else but Crispus and Gaius.

(b) Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas.

(c) I do not know whether I baptized anybody else.

The mistake Paul made is his first statement that he baptized no one else except two persons named Crispus and Gaius. Then he recalled that he had also baptized the household of Stephanas, so he made this slight correction in his next statement. But the mistaken statement is still there. Is this inspired?

Paul's third statement shows that he is not sure of the facts:

I do not know whether I baptized anyone else (1 Corinthians 1:16).

You see, Paul is not sure who else he baptized. He cannot remember. He knows he needs to correct his statement further by adding more names, but he cannot remember who to mention.

So the first statement was a mistake. The second statement is a slight correction to the first. The third state

ment is an admission that the correction is not complete. All three

remain in the Bible. Are these Words of God?

Show them the Qur'an:

Have they not considered the Qur'an with care? Had it been from other than Allah they would surely have found therein much discrepancy (surah 4:82).

## 5

### **What happened to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians?**

#### ***Their answer:***

What do you mean? We have it right here in the Bible. Look!

#### ***The truth:***

They don't have it. What they show you is not the first letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians. In this very letter, Paul reminds the Corinthians that he had already written to them a letter before this one. Read verses 9 and 11 in the following passage from Paul's so-called first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 5:

9. In my letter I wrote you to quit mixing in company with fornicators . . .  
. . .

11. But now I am writing you to quit mixing in company with anyone called a brother that is a fornicator . . . .

Obviously, in verse 9 above, Paul is referring to what he had written in a previous letter.

In verse 11, Paul is making a change to his previous instruction. Compare below the following two instructions from Paul's previous letter and his so-called first letter:

COMPARE BELOW:

**Paul's previous instruction on  
this side**

**Paul's new instruction on this  
side**

In my letter I wrote you to quit mixing in company with fornicators . . . .

But now I am writing you to quit mixing in company with anyone called a brother that is a fornicator . . . .

What we are discussing here is not the change in instruction issued by Paul. I have spelled out the matter in detail only to equip you to deal with anyone who tries to say that even in verse 9 Paul is referring to his current letter. Some people will try to convince you that there was no previous letter. But now you know how to demonstrate this truth to such a person.

So, now, where is that previous letter? Obviously, it is lost.

Now, if someone believes that Paul's letters are the words of God, he or she has to also believe that some of the Words of God are lost forever. But will Jehovah's Witnesses believe this? Ask them to read this Bible verse.

The green grass has dried up,  
the blossom has withered;  
but as for the Word of our God,  
it will last to time indefinite (Isaiah 40:8).

How does this reconcile with the fact that one letter of Paul has disappeared?

Muslims understand that God can reveal a message and then allow it to be forgotten. But a Jehovah's Witness does not accept that belief. They think once revealed, always preserved. So they have to deal with this question. The loss of Paul's letter is a good indication that the recipients of Paul's letter did not take it as the Word of God. If they did, wouldn't they try to preserve it? Why did they let the Word of God disappear like that? Now someone may say that the rest of Paul's letter were preserved, and this proves that the people who preserved them regarded them as the Word of God. Let us not stretch things so far.

Firstly, no one knows how many other letters of Paul are really lost, and we still have no satisfactory answer for that problem. We have just stumbled upon evidence of one letter being lost. What other evidence will yet turn up? Secondly, people keep letters and other writings for all kinds of reasons. Perhaps people thought the letters of Paul contain important things. Others may have kept such letters with a view to refute the teachings they contain. We have not enough details to settle this matter, but we can safely conclude that just because someone kept some letters of Paul does not mean they took the letters as coming from God. They knew the letters were from Paul.

Show them the Qur'an:

Surely We have revealed the scripture (the Qur'an) and surely We are its guardian (surah 15:9).

Gently explain to them that God protects the Qur'an so that none of it will ever be lost.