Andreas Bsteh (Ed.)

Islam
Questioning Christianity

Lectures – Questions – Interventions

Ludwig Hagemann
Adel Th. Khoury
Annemarie Schimmel
Rotraud Wielandt
Hans Zirker

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In general we quote the Qur'ān from: Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān. Text, Translation and Commentary.* Beirut – Cairo, ³1938.

The relevant names and technical terms are, as a rule, rendered according to *The Encyclopaedia of Islam.* 12 vols. Leiden etc., 1960–2004 (= EI²).

Preface

Islam and Christianity are two major religious, cultural and social forces in our world. About half the world population is either Christian or Muslim believers. Their religious communities are not only present in certain segments of humanity but constitute, in modern terms, global players.

Their responsibility for the future development of our world, which they share in various ways with all other religious and non-religious traditions and ideologies, is therefore of high importance. First of all, they should feel called together to keep mankind's religious resources alive, so that the garden of our world does not turn into a desert and man is prevented from becoming a one-dimensional being that loses his relation to the mystery in him, in the depth of his existence, and above him, in the beyond of all worldly being, that is to God, who is the Lord of history and who will call us to give account for what we have done or left undone in our earthly lives.

At the same time, it is necessary to promote a sense of joint responsibility in our world in the face of all the various earthly concerns, first in our own communities and then quite in general. God wants us to solve the problems in the fields of agriculture and technology, medicine and economic affairs, ecology and handling of resources, and so forth, but today and in the world of tomorrow only joint actions will be able to respond to these issues that face humanity.

But how can we gain common ground after centuries of manifold rivalry, misunderstanding, fighting and mutual suspicion? There seems to be no other way than to define our various identities no longer against each other but towards each other, and to open them up to each other. For this reason, Christian theologians asked well-known experts in Islamic studies to explain the religious, cultural and social aspects of Muslim identity as they were originally established and historically developed, and to give them the opportunity to reflect for themselves on the Christian faith in encounter with these tenets of the Islamic faith tradition.

"Islam Questioning Christianity" is therefore the title of the first volume on the encounter of Christian faith with Islam. The figure of Muḥammad, whom Muslims believe to be "the Seal of the Prophets", and the Qur'ān as the ultimate Word of God, human responsibility for the world as seen by

Muslims, Islam as religion, society and culture, and the experience of transcendence in Islamic mysticism, are some of the subjects dealt with in this book by scholars of Islamic studies. Each lecture dealing with one of these central aspects of the Islamic faith is followed by extensive discussion. This tries to clarify many of the questions Christians raise in the encounter with Muslims and deals with the historical dimension of the Islamic tradition, opening up significant, deep insights into the spiritual world of Muslim mysticism, prayer and devotion. This evokes a constant response by Christians, who want to achieve a better understanding, who are critical in their attitude and at the same time empathetic, who want to learn and open up as Christian believers to their contemporaries, who search for possibilities of lived commonality in dialogue and joint responsibility in the face of all the problems in our present world.

The outcome of this way of dealing with one of the major challenges and tasks of modern times is presented in this first volume. It is deepened in the second volume which, methodologically, begins the other way round, with Christian theologians and philosophers presenting the thoughts which they hold to be important in the encounter with Islam and, by doing so, opening up a wide platform for discussion with all the participants in the symposium.

From their experience in the field of dialogue with believers of other faith traditions, the St Gabriel Institute for Theology of Religions developed this preparatory initiative to foster a genuine encounter of faith with faith. These reflections *in the anteroom of dialogue* are intended to help prepare the soil for a fruitful dialogue between Christians and other believers on the basis of their commonalities and differences in faith.

From the very beginning, it was Professor Adel Theodor Khoury who joined and encouraged us in this project. We are most grateful to him and to all who made it possible, in particular to all the speakers and participants in this initiative, who together elaborated its original outcome and were ready to revise and authorize all the texts that had first been published in the German edition of this book. After its publication in Arabic[1],

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[1] A. Bsteh – A. Th. Khoury (eds.), *al-Islām yusā'il al-masīḥīya fī šu'ūn al-lāhūt wa-l-falsafa* (al-Masīḥīya wa-l-islām fī l-ḥiwār wa-t-ta'āwun; 13). Jounieh, 2000; A. Bsteh – A. Th. Khoury (eds.), *al-'Aqīda al-masīḥīya fī liqā' ma' al-islām* (al-Masīḥīya wa-l-islām fī l-ḥiwār wa-t-ta'āwun; 16). Jounieh, 2002.

the English translation of these two volumes on Christian-Muslim dialogue was carried out by Mrs. Ingeborg Bogensberger in Vienna in cooperation with Ms. Carol Bebawi in Birmingham. The editor wishes to express his heartfelt gratitude for their admirable and most careful work.

In close cooperation with the translators, the editor tried his best to guarantee, sentence by sentence and word by word, that the English text comes as close as possible to the text of the German edition, without being able once again to submit all these translated texts to their authors. Therefore the responsibility for the fidelity of the English texts to their original presentation rests with the editor, in close cooperation with the translators.

More than 40 years have passed since the Second Vatican Council promulgated its *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions "Nostra aetate"*. Its sincere pastoral concerns in the face of the emerging new global order in our world inspired the Fathers of the Council to take a stand on the relationship to other religious traditions. The increasing contemporary relevance of this document, whose third chapter expressly refers to Muslims, is beautifully and somewhat prophetically mirrored in its preamble:

"In our times, when every day men are being drawn closer together and the ties between various peoples are being multiplied, the Church is giving deeper study to her relationship with non-Christian religions. [...] For all peoples comprise a single community, and have a single origin, since God made the whole race of men dwell over the entire face of the earth. One also is their final goal: God."

The joint endeavours of those who were originally engaged in this project and those who have now cooperated to make it accessible to the English-speaking world are intended to serve these very aspirations.

Andreas Bsteh, SVD

St Gabriel, March 2007

The Books of the Bible

Quotations from the Biblical scriptures are taken from: *The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments. New Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition. London, 1993 (repr.).*

Old Testament

Genesis	Gn	Obadiah	Obad
Exodus	Ex	Jonah	Jon
Leviticus	Lv	Micah	Mi
Numbers	Nm	Nahum	Na
Deuteronomy	Dt	Habakkuk	Hb
Joshua	Jos	Zephaniah	Zeph
Judges	Jg	Haggai	Hag
Ruth	Ru	Zechariah	Zech
1, 2 Samuel	1, 2 Sm	Malachi	Mal
1 Kings	1 (3) Kgs		
2 Kings	2 (4) Kgs		
1, 2 Chronicles	1, 2 Chr		
Ezra	Ez	

New Testament

Nehemiah	Neh	Matthew	Mt
Tobit	Tb	Mark	Mk
Judith	Jdt	Luke	Lk
Esther	Est	John	Jn
1, 2 Maccabees	1, 2 Mc	Acts	Ac
Job	Jb	Romans	Rm
Psalms	Ps	1, 2 Corinthians	1, 2 Cor
Proverbs	Prv	Galatians	Gal
Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth)	Eccl	Ephesians	Eph
Song of Songs	Song	Philippians	Phil
Wisdom	Wis	Colossians	Col
Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)	Sir	1, 2 Thessalonians	1, 2 Thes
Isaiah	Is	1, 2 Timothy	1, 2 Tm
Jeremiah	Jer	Titus	Ti
Lamentations	Lam	Philemon	Phm
Baruch	Bar	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Ezek	James	Jas
Daniel	Dn	1, 2 Peter	1, 2 Pt
Hosea	Hos	1, 2, 3 John	1, 2, 3 Jn
Joel	Jl	Jude	Jude
Amos	Am	Revelation (Apocalypse)	Rev

Muḥammad – And the Claim that He Was the Last of the Prophets Sent by God

Ludwig Hagemann

Introduction: Muḥammad, the proclaimer of Islam

The Arabic word *islām* means surrender to God or submission to his will. According to the self-understanding and claim of Muḥammad, the proclaimer of Islam, the word of God was spoken to humans in a final manner, and in the Qur'ān, the Muslims' holy book, it found its binding literary expression.[1]

The fundamental profession of faith is: "There is no god besides God, and Muḥammad is His messenger."[2]

In this paper we shall try to show how Muḥammad saw himself and how he attempted to justify his claim to be a prophet and messenger of God as well as the conclusion and culmination of the history of the prophets.[3] For this the most important source is the Qur'ān. More than all other extensive sources of tradition on the life and work of Muḥammad, the Qur'ān is a source of special immediacy and authenticity, insofar as it reflects the story of Muḥammad's life step by step:

- as the story of a man who searches for God and finds Him in the experience of his own vocation;
- as the story of the religious personality in Mecca, who gathers a community of believers around himself; and finally
- as the story of the religious-political leader of Medina, who founds the Islamic theocracy.[4]

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[1] Cf. L. Hagemann, "Der Islam in seinem Selbstverständnis und Anspruch", in: W. Wanzura (ed.), *Moslems im Strafvollzug* (Handreichung; 3). Altenberge, 1982, pp. 44–64; A. Th. Khoury, *Der Islam. Sein Glaube – seine Lebensordnung – sein Anspruch* (Herder/Spektrum; 4167). Freiburg etc., ²1993.

[2] Cf. P. Heine, art. "Glaubensbekenntnis", in: A. Th. Khoury – L. Hagemann – P. Heine, *Islam-Lexikon.* vol. 2 (Herder/Spektrum; 4036). Freiburg etc., 1991, pp. 305 f. (lit.); A. Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger.* Chapel Hill, 1985.

[3] As to structure and content we follow our expositions in: L. Hagemann, *Propheten – Zeugen des Glaubens. Koranische und biblische Deutungen* (Religionswissenschaftliche Studien; 26). Würzburg etc., ²1993. Footnotes and references added are new.

[4] Cf. A. Th. Khoury, *Wer war Muḥammad?. Lebensgeschichte und prophetischer Anspruch* (Herder Taschenbuch; 1719). Freiburg etc., 1990; R. Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran. Geschichte*

For us this systematic and at the same time chronological division into three parts implies the methodological approach of our analysis, i. e., proceeding from the Qur'ān as a historical source, we want to attempt to show, or rather trace, Muḥammad's awareness of his prophetic mission. This is attended by difficulties that are by no means insubstantial: in the first place today's arrangement of the Sūras of the Qur'ān no longer shows their original chronological order: the 114 Sūras seem to be arranged only schematically in order of length, the longest coming first and the shortest last.[5] In addition, without knowledge of the historical circumstances and contexts, neither the Qur'ānic announcement as a whole, nor many of its details and allusions to the environment, can be understood.

Just as it is impossible to write a comprehensive biography of Jesus on the basis of the New Testament data and contemporary non-Christian sources, it is impossible to present a comprehensive portrayal of Muḥammad's life from a merely historical perspective. For, along with the historical story of Muḥammad's life handed down in the Qur'ān, his own faith in being called and sent by God is also included; his conviction later translates and interprets historical data.[6] Moreover, popular stories about Muḥammad, which began early, tried to close historical gaps.[7] Nevertheless, as far as the Qur'ān is concerned, we are in the fortunate position that in general his statements can be considered as 'ipsissima vox' of Muḥammad.

und Verkündigung des arabischen Propheten. Stuttgart, [7]1991; W. M. Watt, Muhammad at Mecca. Oxford, 1953; id., Muhammad at Medina. Oxford, 1956; id., Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman. London, 1961.

[5] Cf. R. Blachère, Le Coran. Traduction selon un essai de reclassement des sourates. 2 vols. (Islam d'hier et d'aujourd'hui; 4/5). Paris, 1949–1951; R. Bell, The Qur'ān. Translated with a critical re-arrangement of the Surahs. 2 vols., Edinburgh, 1937–1939.

[6] Cf. T. Andrae, Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde. Stockholm, 1918; id., Mohammed. Sein Leben und sein Glauben. Göttingen, 1932, Reprint: Hildesheim, 1977; R. Arnaldez, Mahomet ou la prédication prophétique. Paris, 1952.

[7] Cf. H. Fuchs, art. "Mawlid," in Handwörterbuch des Islam, edited by A. J. Wensinck – J. H. Kramers. Leiden, [2]1976, pp. 468–471; cf. by the same author (et alii) the relevant article in EI[2], vol. VI (1991), pp. 895–897; A. Schimmel, op. cit. (fn. 2); G. Mensching, Leben und Legende der Religionsstifter. Darmstadt, s. a., pp. 131–174.

1. Muḥammad's origin

At the age of forty, says the Islamic tradition, Muḥammad, the proclaimer of Islam, received those experiences which were afterwards to determine his life.[8]

Born in about 570 A. D. in Mecca, in modern Saudi Arabia, he belonged to the tribe of Quraysh. His clan was that of the Hāshimids. The name of his father – who died shortly before or after Muḥammad's birth – was 'Abd Allāh. His mother was Āmina bint Wahb. During the first years of his life he was, according to the custom of that time, entrusted to the care of a Bedouin nurse. His mother died when the child was six years old. The young orphan was taken care of by his paternal grandfather 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. After the latter's death, Muḥammad, at the age of eight, was entrusted to the care of his paternal uncle Abū Ṭālib who was the new head of the clan and, like most men in Mecca, a merchant. Muḥammad grew up in his house, until, at the age of 25, he married a wealthy widow named Khadīdja, in whose service he worked as a caravan guide. For him this marriage was a substantial social advancement. Later the Qur'ān refers to this as a divine favour granted to Muḥammad: "Did He not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter (and care)? And He found thee wandering, and He gave thee guidance. And He found thee in need, and made thee independent." (Qur'ān 93,6–8).

2. The socio-cultural milieu: a changing society

The society in which Muḥammad grew up was, to put it simply, a society in transition: from a nomadic to a settled way of life, from the tribal collective towards individualism, from polytheism towards monotheism. The ancient Arab religion with its world of gods, ideas and concepts was the actual religious milieu.[9] The centre of religious life in Mecca was the Ka'ba, where the deities were believed to dwell. At the pinnacle of this Old-Arab

[8] Cf. F. Buhl – (A. T. Welch) et al., art. "Muḥammad", in EI[2], vol. VII (1993), pp. 360–387; F. Buhl, Das Leben Muhammeds. Darmstadt, [3]1961; Ibn Isḥāq, Das Leben des Propheten. Germ. transl. by G. Rotter. Tübingen etc., 1976; A. Th. Khoury, op. cit. (fn. 4) pp. 17 ff.; H. Stieglecker, Die Glaubenslehren des Islam. Paderborn etc., [3]1983, pp. 338 ff.; W. M. Watt – A. T. Welch, Der Islam I (Die Religionen der Menschheit; 25, 1). Stuttgart, 1980, pp. 47 ff.

[9] Cf. L. Hagemann, Christentum und Islam zwischen Konfrontation und Begegnung (Religionswissenschaftliche Studien; 4). Würzburg etc., [3]1990, pp. 27 ff. (lit.); H. Busse, Die theologischen Beziehungen des Islams zu Judentum und Christentum. Grundlagen des Dialogs im Koran und die gegenwärtige Situation. Darmstadt, [2]1991, pp. 8 ff.

polytheism was a kind of 'High-God', *Allāh* (from: *al-ilāh* = the God); the Qur'ān testifies that before Muḥammad's proclamation Allāh was already known to the Arabs and venerated by them: "If indeed thou ask them who has created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon (to His Law), they will certainly reply, 'Allāh'. [...] And if indeed thou ask them who it is that sends down rain from the sky, and gives life therewith to the earth after its death, they will certainly reply, 'Allāh'. [...] Now, if they embark on a boat, they call on Allāh, making their devotion sincerely (and exclusively) to Him; but when He has delivered them safely to (dry) land, behold, they give a share (of their worship to others)!" (Qur'ān 29,61–65; cf. 39,38; 31,25).[10] Qur'ān 12,106 formulates briefly and precisely: "And most of them believe not in God without associating (others as partners) with Him!" Belief in Allāh as the highest God did indeed exist, but like the High-Gods of other religions he was held to be remote with no decisive influence on the everyday life of the Arabs.

However, there were, in addition, other religious influences whose traces can be found in the Qur'ān. The Jewish settlements in pre-Islamic central Arabia – in Medina the Jews comprised about half of the population – had already had a long history. What distinguished them from the others was their adhering to the Jewish religion, so that Jewish ideas were bound to exercise an influence on the environment of that period.

And finally the Christians have also to be mentioned – Monophysites, Nestorians, and various sects – whose religious doctrines certainly made their mark on the Qur'ān. Before Muḥammad, individual women and men had already opted for monotheism, without converting to Judaism or Christianity. In search of a new religious orientation, they had discovered monotheism, but had remained on their own (Ḥanīfs).

It was in this spiritual and religious environment that Muḥammad grew up. Until early middle-age he shared his Meccan contemporaries' religious convictions, which had been handed down from generation to generation. His faith was that of the people in his country. It is certain that he would have heard of Jewish and Christian beliefs. Caravans, merchants and traders who frequented the important markets as well as the festivals held in Mecca, which attracted people from the surrounding area, had turned his hometown into a melting-pot of heterogeneous religious concepts, a spiritual crossroads between Syria in the North and Yemen in the South.

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[10] Quoted from: A. Y. Ali, *The meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān. Text, Translation and Commentary.* Beirut – Cairo, ³1938.

3. Inward change: experience of vocation and mission

A turning point occurred in the life of Muḥammad at the age of 40 and from time to time he began to withdraw to Mountain Ḥirā', to live there in solitude. He was drawn to give himself up to contemplation by a desire for the religious life, which had grown insipid in Mecca as a result of being dominated by trade and commerce and buried under the profit-making aspect of pilgrimages that coincided with annual markets and fairs. The decline of Old-Arab polytheism, which at that time was obviously no longer of any deep relevance, as well as the growing influences of Judaism and Christianity had their effect on him and after several years of a life that was withdrawn and at times solitary, he presented his new message of salvation to the public. He put forward a revised and new religious orientation not only for himself like the earlier individualistic Arab Ḥanīfs[11], but also for his Meccan fellow citizens and ultimately for all Arabs. He felt generally responsible for all people and believed he was called to hand on his knowledge about divine truth to his compatriots, just as he knew himself guided by God (cf. Qur'ān 93,7).

3.1 Vocation

"*iqra*' – Proclaim! (or Read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher [...]!" Muḥammad had received this call, as it is expressed in Sūra 96,1, which is considered to be the earliest Sūra. In a cave in the mountain of light near Mecca, he received, according to the interpretation of the Qur'ān and the Islamic tradition, this call as his prophetic vocation. The term *iqra*' expresses an essential characteristic of Muḥammad's self-understanding. He was to consider it his task to recite holy texts to the people of his country, 'recitals' – this is the meaning of the term Qur'ān – which were finally gathered together to become a great collection, the Qur'ān itself.

3.2 Mission

"Arise and deliver thy warning!" (Qur'ān 74,2). With the introductory word from Sūra 96, Muḥammad saw himself called to be a prophet; the order "Arise and deliver thy warning!" was to designate him the messenger of God. Innumerable verses in the Qur'ān tell of this mission.

There has been much discussion concerning Muḥammad's state of mind when he received his 'revelations'. Apart from the opinion generally held

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[11] Cf. in this context W. M. Watt, art. "Ḥanīf", in *EI²*, vol. III (1971), pp. 165 f.

by Muslims, according to which Muḥammad received his revelations while asleep (cf. Qur'ān 8,43; 48,27 [the term *ru'yā* is mostly interpreted by the commentators as nocturnal dream]), the Qur'ān and the traditions refer to other states of mind, e. g. to visions (Qur'ān 17,1.60; 53,2–18) or apparitions of Ḏjabrā'īl (Gabriel).[12]

4. Muḥammad and his prophetic claim

From approximately the year 612, Muḥammad appeared in public in his home-town of Mecca, claiming to be called by God and sent to present the revelation of God to his compatriots in their own Arabic language. He sees the specificity of his mission in announcing the revelation of God to his fellow people in Arabic. The core of his message consisted of various eschatological pronouncements, in which a warning was given, and the inexorability of divine reckoning in view of the declared approaching judgement of God (cf. Qur'ān 101; 99; 100; 81,1–14 etc.), as well as a call to faith in God as the one and only and almighty Creator.[13]

As a result of his appeals Muḥammad encountered the opposition of his compatriots. In their eyes the fabric of the society was threatened by the rejection he called for of the polytheistic cult, which was concentrated particularly in Mecca around the shrine of the Ka'ba and created substantial incomes, and the warning of God's imminent punishment. The result was a confrontation.

4.1 First reaction of the Meccans: rejection

Muḥammad's compatriots contested his claim to be the messenger of God and denied the genuine character of his divine mission: they took him for a common soothsayer (cf. Qur'ān 52,29; 69,40.42 f.) and demonic poet (Qur'ān 52,30; 69,41; 36,69 f.), accused him of sorcery (Qur'ān 38,4; 37,14 f.), considered him to be possessed (Qur'ān 25,8; 17,47; 23,70 f.; 68,2), and branded him the devil's tool (81,25; 26,210–212). When in the year 615 the opposition to Muḥammad increased, a group of his followers fled into Christian Abyssinia, though they returned some time later.

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[12] Cf. R. Blachère, *Le problème de Mahomet. Essai de biographie critique du fondateur de l'Islam.* Paris, 1952, pp. 38–42; A. J. Wensinck, art. "Waḥy", in *Handwörterbuch des Islam*, op. cit. (fn. 7) pp. 784–787; B. Carra de Vaux, art. "Ḏjabrā'īl", in *ibid.* pp. 100 f.; F. Buhl, art. "Muḥammad", in *ibid.* pp. 519 ff.

[13] Cf. R. Paret, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) pp. 69 ff.

4.2 Claiming the legitimation of the prophetic mission

In spite of his compatriots' rejection, which was disappointing to him, Muḥammad's sense of mission remained unshaken: "And We certainly know that there are amongst you those that reject (it). But truly (Revelation) is a cause of sorrow for the Unbelievers. But verily it is Truth of assured certainty. So glorify the name of thy Lord Most High." (Qur'ān 69,49–52).

But the Meccans did not give in. They demanded authenticating miracles to confirm Muḥammad's mission: "Yet they say: 'Why are not Signs sent down to him from his Lord?' Say: 'The Signs are indeed with God: and I am indeed a clear Warner.'" (Qur'ān 29,50; cf. 6,37.109; 17,90–96). So why did God not authenticate Muḥammad's mission through signs and miracles? The answer: "And We refrain from sending the Signs, only because the men of former generations treated them as false: [...]" (Qur'ān 17,59).

The contention was that even a first-hand experience of miracles would not be enough to prove to unbelievers the truth of the proclaimed message, and that miracles did not necessarily lead to faith, as is shown by the history of the earlier prophets. On the contrary, people continue in their unbelief (Qur'ān 6,7).

4.3 The warrant for Muḥammad's prophetic mission

Muḥammad considered himself a mortal like all others: "Say: 'I am but a man like yourselves, (but) the inspiration has come to me, that your God is One God: [...]" (Qur'ān 18,110). He was only the messenger of God and no more; his task was to announce the revelation given to him by God. He would impart to his compatriots the knowledge he received through the mercy of God; he was but a warner: "Thou art no other than a warner. Verily We have sent thee in truth, as a bearer of glad tidings, and as a warner: and there never was a people, without a warner having lived among them (in the past)." (Qur'ān 35,23 f.). Performing signs and miracles was not part of his mission.

4.3.1 The Qur'ān as sign of authentication

And yet there is one miracle through which God authenticated Muḥammad's mission[14], which is the Qur'ān itself. "And is it not enough for them that We have sent down to thee the Book which is rehearsed to them? Verily, in it is Mercy and a Reminder to those who believe." (Qur'ān 29,51). Sūra 17,88 formulates it thus: "Say: 'If the whole of mankind and Jinns

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[14] Cf. H. Stieglecker, *op. cit.* (fn. 8) pp. 371 ff.

were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support." God alone, the one and only author of the Qur'ān, could bring about such an inimitable work. The linguistic unsurpassability of the Qur'ān itself thus becomes the criterion for the credibility of its content (verbal inspiration[15]) and at the same time authenticates Muḥammad's truthfulness. The Qur'ān itself is the great, continuously present sign, the "everlasting miracle"[16] validating Muḥammad's legitimacy and authority. The most persuasive miracles are the revelations of the Qur'ān themselves, which are therefore called "signs in the hands of God" *(āyāt)* (cf. Qur'ān 29,49; 7,203). "Let them then produce a recital like unto it, – if (it be) they speak the Truth", demands Muḥammad in Qur'ān 52,34. But his opponents' inability revealed his truthfulness and credibility – his compatriots were not able to create even one Sūra of the same quality.

Thus Muḥammad attempted to establish and defend his claim to be the messenger and prophet of God, referring to the earlier history of the prophets and the unsurpassability of the Qur'ānic revelation.[17] The agreement of his message with the authentic proclamation of the earlier revealed Scriptures – Torah and Gospels – was to be seen as a further argument.

4.3.2 Agreement with the "People of the Book"

Muḥammad saw himself and his message as being in continuity with the Biblical tradition. The holy Scriptures of the Jews *(tawrāt)* and Christians *(indjīl)* are considered in Islam as sent down by God upon Moses (Torah) and Jesus (Gospels), so Jews and Christians are called "People of the Book"[18].

While Muḥammad himself considered his message's agreement with the Biblical revelation as a sign of the truth of what he declared (cf. Qur'ān 10,94), his compatriots had various reservations.

They said:

"And they say: 'Tales of the ancients, which he has caused to be written: and they are dictated before him morning and evening.'" (Qur'ān 25,5).

"[...] 'It is a man that teaches him.'[...]" (Qur'ān 16,103; cf. 25,4).

"[...] 'Thou hast taught (us) diligently,'[...]" (Qur'ān 6,105).

[15] Cf. Qur'ān 2,23; 10,38; further 11,13; 28,49; 52,34.

[16] H. Stieglecker, *op. cit.* (fn. 8) p. 372.

[17] On the teaching of *i'djāz al-Qur'ān,* the inimitability of the Qur'ān, cf. H. Stieglecker, *op. cit.* (fn. 8) pp. 372 ff.

[18] Cf. Qur'ān 2,105.145 f.; 5,16.21, etc.

Muḥammad's pagan compatriots took the Qur'ān's textual agreement with earlier Scriptures as proof that the knowledge revealed to him did not come from God, but was borrowed from earlier messages. This is how their criticism "[...]'Thou hast taught (us) diligently,'[...]" (Qur'ān 6,105) should be understood. The Arabic verb *darasa,* to study, in the Qur'ān always means 'to study the holy Scriptures', but this only applied to the "People of the Book" (cf. Qur'ān 7,169), and particularly to the rabbis (cf. Qur'ān 3,79). Since the pagans had previously had no Scriptures[19], this task was unfamiliar to them, as attested in Qur'ān 6,156: "Lest ye should say: 'The Book was sent down to two Peoples before us, and for our part, we remained unacquainted with all that they learned by assiduous study.'"

In response Muḥammad categorically rejected the reproaches and insinuations made against him (cf. Qur'ān 25,4.6). The assumed informer alluded to by the opponents did not speak Arabic; the Qur'ān, however, was in the Arabic language.[20] Before he received the Qur'ānic message, he "wast not (able) to recite a Book" nor "to transcribe" any (Qur'ān 29,48). Until then he "knewest not [...] what was Revelation and what was Faith." (Qur'ān 42,52). Therefore what was essential for him was to follow what had been revealed to him by God (cf. Qur'ān 6,106).

5. Muḥammad as "the Seal of the Prophets" and Islam as the only true religion

When the persecutions in Mecca intensified, Muḥammad moved in 622 – this date marks the beginning of Islamic Time – with about 70 followers to Yathrib, later called Medina *(madīnat an-nabī,* i. e., city of the Prophet). This emigration, the *Hidjra,* had far-reaching consequences for him and his followers, who had made his faith their own.[21] The population of Medina quickly accepted his teaching. The growth of his community meant that he soon became the centre of the city's social and political life and the responsibilities of the social and political leader of a community also devolved upon him. The welcome he was given there did not mean, however, that all groupings accepted the genuine character of his prophetic mission. The Jews and the Christians – in the Meccan period very re-

[19] Cf. *ibid.* 68,37; 37,168; 34,44.

[20] Cf. *ibid.* 16,103; 42,7, etc.

[21] On the "Hidjra" cf. the homonymous article by W. M. Watt, in *EI²,* vol. III (1971), pp. 366 f.

spectfully called "People of the Book", since they were not prepared to acknowledge his prophetic mission, were in the course of time caught in the cross-fire of his criticism.[22]

The fact that Abraham was for Muḥammad, setting aside Judaism and Christianity, the founder of the primeval Islamic religion led to Muḥammad clearly distancing himself from the faith of the Jews and Christians and proclaiming the autonomy of Islam. The religion of Abraham, *millat Ibrāhīm*, was declared to be the only true monotheistic religion and had therefore to be followed.[23] For Muḥammad, Abraham was the first Muslim. He ascribed to him and his son Ishmael the building of the Kaʿba in Mecca as the shrine where the one God would be worshipped.[24] From now on prayers should be directed not towards Jerusalem but towards Mecca with its religious centre, the Kaʿba. For a long time Muḥammad saw himself as the prophet and messenger of God sent to the Arabs, but he eventually became aware that his mission was not to remain regionally limited: "Say: 'O men! I am sent unto you all, as the Apostle of God, [...]" (Qur'ān 7,158; 34,28). According to his self-understanding, having first been an Arab prophet, he later became an apostle for all peoples: he declares: "The Religion before God is Islam (submission to His Will): [...]" (Qur'ān 3,19).

Concerning his mission, he considered himself to be not only in agreement with the earlier messengers, but also "the Seal of the Prophets" (Qur'ān 33,40). In the religion willed by God he had brought the ultimate form of the faith, had superceded all previous forms and transmitted to the human race the unsurpassable and definitive revelation of God. Thus Muḥammad understood himself to be the culmination and conclusion of the history of the prophets.

[22] On the Jews cf. J. Bouman, *Der Koran und die Juden. Die Geschichte einer Tragödie* (WB-Forum; 53). Darmstadt, 1990 (lit.).
[23] Cf. Qur'ān 12,37 f., 16,123; 6,161; 4,125; 3,95; see H. Busse, *op. cit.* (fn. 9) pp. 62 ff.
[24] Cf. L. Hagemann, *op. cit.* (fn. 3) pp. 53 ff.; H. Busse, *op. cit.* (fn. 9) pp. 88 ff.

Questions and Interventions

criteria for prophethood

Who actually is a prophet? What distinguishes a true prophet from a false one?

ZIRKER These questions raise difficulties for Israel as well as for later theology and it becomes even more complicated when Islam is included.

If one accepts phenomenologically, without any theological evaluation, the prophethood of such figures as Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah, with their claims and concerns as prophets, then, without doubt, one also has to acknowledge that Muḥammad was a prophet.

The problem of who should be considered as a true or a false prophet raises the issue of what constitute the criteria for a prophet. One can certainly not allow this to be determined merely by the self-definition of one who publicly declares himself to be a prophet. Neither can one simply argue from the side of God. Being accepted as a prophet also implies a community who say, "For us he is a prophet."

criteria for the genuineness of Muḥammad's mission

RIEDL Did Muḥammad ever make a claim similar to Jesus' saying: "You must believe me when I say that [...] or at least believe me because of the works themselves." (Jn 14:10–12)?

KHOURY No he did not, since the basic premise of the Qur'ān is that the words in it are not the words of Muḥammad but the words of God. So, in the Qur'ān there is basically only one appeal: obey God and obey the Prophet. Only later, in Islamic theology, does the question of the justification for this appeal arise: the evidence that Muḥammad is a prophet lies in the effectiveness of his message. Nevertheless, there is already in the Qur'ān itself an implicit approach towards convincing people of the message's genuineness: this relates above all to the establishment of monotheism in opposition to polytheism through the Qur'ān's assertion that there cannot be several creators, since this would lead to chaos in the whole creation. Therefore only one can be perfect and almighty. And if God is almighty, he does not depend on others for help.

For some time it was the outward criteria that were successful in making the case for the genuineness of the prophetic mission – after the first battle was won against the Meccans in 624 it was said: God granted us support against our enemies, so we have the true religion. By this logic, the defeat in the following year brought a great crisis, but the defeat was seen as God's test

of whether the believers would stay faithful to him. At this moment, success as a criterion for Muḥammad's prophetic mission was problematic. This same criterion was to be revived again later in relation to the mission of Muḥammad, who increasingly succeeded, in the course of time, in consolidating and expanding his community. As in Christian apologetics, reference is made to the fact that the beginning of the Islamic community, which was to develop into a world religion, was characterized by weakness. In any case, (outward) success is less an argument for the truth of Islam than for its claim to establish a law and enforce it. Success, which provides Islam with greater opportunities to enforce its laws in proportion to the expansion of its sovereignty, has always to be renewed and sustained.

An important argument for the genuineness of Muḥammad's mission is a certain kind of development in legislation: on the one hand Muḥammad refers to the fact that there is a continuity between his legislation and that of Moses and Jesus; but just as Jesus affirmed the Torah, and at the same time took the liberty of going beyond it in order to re-orientate legal norms to account for the changed situation of the people of his time, so Muḥammad does the same. What is new in the legislation he brings and what makes him the founder of a religion, like Moses and Jesus, lies in the golden mean between the strictness of the Torah and the great gentleness of the Gospels, which, though they introduce norms, in practice leave man too much in the dark concerning what he is in fact supposed to do here and now in a concrete situation.

SCHIMMEL For the Muslim, Muḥammad is in fact the prophet of equilibrium, standing between the strictness of Moses and the gentleness of Jesus and keeping the balance.

differentiation between 'prophet' and 'messenger'

BARTH In which sense is the term prophet applied with respect to Muḥammad?

KHOURY The Qur'ān differentiates between two terms, prophet *(nabī)* and messenger *(rasūl),* but this differentiation is not as clearly made in the Qur'ān as it is later in the Islamic tradition, where this differentiation becomes general usage. Prophets are people who, being commissioned by God, have a message to bring whereby they may also intervene in a particular historical situation of their people. This understanding is more or less identical with the general concept of prophet in all religions.

Messengers, on the other hand, are people who, in addition to the oral message, also leave a form of that message fixed in writing. In the understanding of the Qur'ān, this is the case with Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad. In the Qur'ān itself Muḥammad is called prophet as well as messenger.

God and prophet

ZIRKER In the Old Testament the prophet appears in public claiming to be a messenger and the subject behind what he communicates is the ego of the prophet. At first he speaks himself and only later does he say: "It is the Lord speaking", thus bringing God into the action. In the Qur'ān it is the other way round: God brings the prophet into the action. When the Qur'ānic text says, rather often: "Say to them", it is a formula implying a messenger, but it is God who makes Muḥammad speak and tells him what to say, thus bringing the prophet into the action.

VANONI There is a question of whether this difference should be emphasized so distinctly. With regard to the problem of the nature of revelation, the situation is very multi-levelled indeed. In the Old Testament prophecies, for instance in Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and later Jonah, before "Thus says the LORD", there is the commission: "Go to them, speak and tell them, Thus says the LORD" (cf. Jer 28:13; Ezek 3:11). Might it not perhaps be necessary to investigate more deeply the difference between the understanding the former prophets had of their prophethood and the understanding Muḥammad had of his?

Qur'ānic revelation and history

PRENNER How is it possible to correlate, and also to perceive and understand in its whole historical context, not only the personality of Muḥammad, his whole life, and how it developed, as we are used to seeing it, but also the Qur'ān, with the Islamic concept of Muḥammad as the mouthpiece of God – a concept underlined in the proposition that in Ramaḍān, at a single point in history as it were, the Qur'ān was sent down to him.

SALMEN How can one find an approach towards the Islamic understanding of history? How can one imagine the way a 'sense of history' developed in Islam?

SCHIMMEL The Islamic sense of history is completely oriented towards the Prophet. It is difficult to find a bridge from the European or Western historically oriented view of Islam to the Islamic one. But a key function for understanding what it is that moves Muslims in their faith, is the centrality of the figure of Muḥammad who completely embodies prophethood. There is no doubt that the criterion for a prophet in the definition of Söderblom, Heiler and van der Leeuw's phenomenology of religion applies to him: that, despite resisting, he is forced by God to speak (cf. Sūra 96), that the content

of his message is the one-and-onlyness and sovereignty of God and that he commits himself to seeing to it that humanity also takes care of the poor, the weak, and the sick.

Proceeding from the concept that Muḥammad is the mouthpiece of God, Islamic theology from the beginning developed in two different directions: one placed the Qur'ān at its centre, and the other, in which popular Islam tends to find expression, stresses the importance of Muḥammad as the Prophet bringing salvation. In fact, from very early on, as a result of the passage in the Qur'ān in which Muḥammad is called "[...] a Lamp spreading Light – *sirādj munīr*" (33,46), the teaching of 'Muḥammad's light' developed.[1] The concept of the primeval light of Muḥammad, the first that God created, is to be found as early as the end of the 8th and then in the 9th century, and a non-Qur'ānic word of God has been handed down which says: "If there had not been you, I would not have created the worlds – *laulāka, laulāka, mā khalaqtu l-aflāka.*"[2] Thus, Muḥammad more and more becomes the one towards whom the understanding of faith is oriented.

For the pious Muslim, the announcer of the message and the message itself are surrounded by light, guiding from darknesses into the light of God. There have always been theologians for whom Muḥammad ranks second after the Qur'ān, but it is he whose birthday is commemorated. As the birth of the Redeemer often is in the history of religion, his birth is surrounded by apparitions of light, just as the night in which the Qur'ān was revealed for the first time is also, according to popular Islamic belief, replete with light. And the pious often withdraw into a mosque or a hermitage, hoping to see that light on the night of 27 Ramaḍān.

For most Muslims, their relationship to Muḥammad is so close that for them he is not dead, but alive, appearing to them in their dreams and guiding them, in a way that a non-Muslim can hardly imagine, and accordingly he is greatly venerated. Muḥammad's lifetime is therefore the best of all possible times and what we today call fundamentalism is the ever new attempt to organize the world as the Prophet wanted it. This explains Islam's sense of history as a whole.

SALMEN Is it ideal in the Islamic understanding only in an exemplary sense or does it also have a theological importance, which might help us arrive at an understanding of Muḥammad? In the Christian context, for instance,

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[1] Cf. Tor Andrae, *Muhammad: The Man and His Faith.* London, 1936; A. Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger.* Chapel Hill, 1985.

[2] B. Furuzanfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī.* Tehran, 1955, no. 546.

it is accepted that "when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son" (Gal 4:4). Here the fullness of time is certainly an interpretation based on the coming of Christ. Is anything comparable said of Muḥammad?

the prophet as a symbol of the community

The following question was mentioned, but not dealt with further:

DUPRÉ How far does the figure of the prophet have to be seen as the symbol of a certain religious community? And what is the relation between the mission of the prophet, implying his confronting the community, and his function as a figure symbolic of his community?

✦

the prophet as a man in search of God

DUPRÉ The fundamental assertion of Muḥammad's message was the assertion that there is no god beside God. If one considers polytheists to be people who forget God, who forget what religion and religiousness are really concerned with, then the prophet would be someone in search of God, living among them. By the same token, people who call themselves monotheists are constantly in danger of forgetting God and of no longer being aware that they believe in a God, for example when they equate their concept of God with God himself.

Muḥammad – the last prophet

RIEDL What is Muḥammad's claim to be the *last* of the prophets founded on? After all, Islam knows of a tradition of prophets from the beginnings of humanity's history and extending, via Abraham, Moses and Jesus, up to Muḥammad. So why does it end with Muḥammad?

a relative absoluteness

KHOURY Leaping from the continuity of the line of prophetic vocations to the claim that Muḥammad is the last, according to the Islamic understanding, has to be seen as a 'claim of relative absoluteness'. For Islam continues to consider Judaism and Christianity as part of the Islamic tradition; according to the Qur'ānic message, they have simply lost their universal validity. What Islam rejects in Judaism and Christianity are those elements that were not contained in their original message, but were added later as excesses: as far as Christians are concerned, it is above all their assertions concerning the Trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ and his role as Redeemer. These elements are seen as being in contradiction to the pure monotheism of Abraham. Thus Islam's claim of absoluteness is on the one hand based on the Qur'ānic message, but beyond that, it is also based on its understanding

of the Law. For, the Torah and the Gospels are considered to be not only monotheistic messages, but also a body of law: there is already a development from the Torah towards the Gospels – from a good law towards a better one, as it were – and then the Qur'ān brings its ultimate, i. e. its perfect, form. This is the implicit reason why Muḥammad as the prophet of this Qur'ānic message is necessarily the last prophet.

the last prophet – self-definition and history of interpretations

DUPRÉ, RABERGER In view of the Islamic understanding of Muḥammad as the last of the prophets, the seal of the prophets, is there a differentiation to be made between how he understood himself and how his person was interpreted in the later Islamic tradition?

In this context it seems worthwhile to note this question, although it was not directly followed up.

prophet of the 'Last Days' and 'last prophet'

VANONI If, in the sense of the Islamic tradition, Muḥammad understands himself to be the last of the prophets, should this not be differentiated much more clearly than it is usually from the concept of the prophet of the Last Days? And how far is this differentiation important, especially for Christian-Muslim dialogue, in view of the fact that Jesus makes his first public appearance as a prophet of the Last Days and so the question of how far Jesus too understood himself to be 'the last prophet', should perhaps be examined more closely. A juxtaposition between Christianity with Jesus claiming to be the last prophet, and Islam with Muḥammad claiming to be the last prophet would then definitely seem problematic.

Muḥammad – promised by Jesus?

WISSE In the encounter with Muslims, the reference to the Paraclete in Jn 14:16 is often mentioned. How exactly do Muslims interpret this promise, when they say that Muḥammad is the promised one?

SCHIMMEL In the Islamic understanding, when it refers to the Paraclete, the New Testament predicts the coming of Muḥammad. According to Sūra 61,6 Jesus himself announces a messenger who will come after him, whose name is Aḥmad, the Praised One – one of Muḥammad's names (reading *perikleitos,* the Praised One = Aḥmad, instead of *paraklētos,* the counsellor).

after Muḥammad no new prophets

VIRT How would a Muslim believer, when visiting the first temple of the Mormons in Salt Lake City, react to the fact that a new prophet appears in public, claiming now to announce the pure word of God?

SCHIMMEL For a Muslim it is unacceptable that another prophet should come after Muḥammad. This is why the Bahā'īs are so severely persecuted, because they have a religion of their own that relates to Islam as Christianity relates to Judaism. The Aḥmadiyya too, which is not a new religion, but whose leader Mīrzā Ghulām Aḥmad (1835–1908) made somewhat unclear remarks on the 'prophetic' inspiration he received, was declared un-Islamic in 1974/75. Although in some countries it did much more for the spread of Islam than orthodox Islam, nevertheless, because of the prophetic claim of its founder, it was finally excluded from the Islamic community – a very rare instance of such a thing.

On the other hand, some of the great mystic leaders made claims which, to the expert, do not sound quite so modest and in which one might say they bordered on heresy, but, since they did not make any claim to prophethood, their doctrines were accepted. The fact that no new prophet can come has to be deduced from the concept "*khātam an-nabiyyīn* – Seal of the Prophets" (Qur'ān 33,40). It was established from the beginning, and has never been disputed.

Jesus the black light, Muḥammad the green light

Jesus is held in high esteem, but he is only the last but one of the prophets. In some branches of Islamic mysticism this has been very interestingly developed: the five or seven great prophets are symbolized by means of colours, by means of appearances of light, which the mystic sees in his trance. Jesus is the black light, the light of the absolute extinction of everything worldly, complete spiritualization, the light that hides and leads man into ecstasy. If one has gone through this, one arrives at the emerald mountain, at the green light, which is the light of Muḥammad, because then, being transformed, one returns again to the world. Thus, in a certain sense, Jesus represents the highest, in absolute spirituality, no longer related to matter. But one cannot stay there; in Islamic mysticism one has to turn back towards the earth.

Biblical understanding of the prophets and Muḥammad's self-understanding

VANONI A thorough theological examination of the question 'What is a prophet?' seems necessary, particularly in the encounter with Islam. The traditional image of the prophet as a man who knows what God reveals to him and passes it on exactly as he receives it – up to Jesus or the last apostle, in Christianity and Islam respectively, with whom the history of the prophets has then reached its end, is not enough. The problem of the false prophet has not yet been

settled in Biblical theology. Should there actually be no more prophecies after the Christian revelation, or is there not also in our times – in our own religion and in the other religions – something like prophecy? If we want to encounter Muḥammad with his prophetic claim, we must after all learn more about the image of the prophet in our own Christian tradition. One would therefore have to juxtapose Muḥammad's self-understanding as a prophet with our Biblical understanding of what a prophet is – then one might arrive at the conclusion that he is a prophet, but in a different sense from that in which he understood it; the contradiction would then present itself differently from the way it appears at present.

should Muḥammad rather be understood against the background of his own historical context?

HORN   Would it not be advisable to try to understand Muḥammad against his own background? Of course, originally he does not live within the frame of Christianity, but comes from his own historical context. Why not leave him in that context and, also for the sake of our own understanding, let him positively fulfil his prophetic task there? Should one not, instead of trying to integrate him into the Christian history of salvation, rather position him within the 'general history of salvation' or whatever name one may give to it?

what does 'general history of salvation' mean?

DUPRÉ   In both Christianity and Islam, the meaning of 'the general history of salvation' seems to me to be a decisive question because our discussion about prophets and prophethood takes place in practice in that context.

ZIRKER   The term 'history of salvation' is not very old in Christian theology, and nor is it of Biblical origin. In the self-understanding of Islam it does not exist at all. The various revelations that occurred in the course of history are, in the Islamic view, basically identical and in this respect there is no history of knowledge either. In fact in the Qur'ān it is not clearly discernible whether David lived before Moses, or whether Noah came before or after them. There are repeated individual breakthroughs of the word of God. When the Qur'ān speaks of prophets, it refers to Jesus, John the Baptist, David, and Moses, and in a certain sense Adam; but the great prophets of our Scriptures, such as Jeremiah and Isaiah, do not figure in the Qur'ān.

Muḥammad – a prophet who surpasses all others?

Accordingly, the figure of Muḥammad is not understood in the context of history, which implies progress and the possibility of being on the way towards an even greater insight. Muḥammad does not surpass Jesus or Moses in the sense of being a development in the history of salvation or the history of knowledge. In this respect he is not a prophet who surpasses the others. However, in another respect he does – in the sense that he guarantees the message. From now on the ultimate revelation is the Book, which exists in an unchangeable, pure form, and which is not handed down via the tradition of history. Muḥammad has the Book – this is what is decisive. Otherwise it would simply be an arbitrary decision to pick a time to establish an end by declaring a final prophet.

... and for the Christian faith a post-Christian or a pre-Christian prophet?

Seen from the perspective of the history of salvation, in the Christian understanding, is Muḥammad to be conceived of as a post-Christian or a pre-Christian prophet? If he is regarded as a post-Christian prophet, an attempt must first be made to understand whether and in what sense this is an acceptable approach, for what would be the benefit if an individual theologian found this conceivable, but the Church did not follow suit? Or is he, on the other hand, to be understood as a pre-Christian prophet, as is found, for example, in Thomas Ohm[3] or already in the 19th century in Johann Adam Möhler[4]? But this does not seem to do justice to the Qur'ān which is, to an important extent, looking at Christianity and confronting it with its failures. Indeed, in its critical discussion of Christianity, the Qur'ān refers not only to the formula 'Jesus the Son of God', but also to the fact that the community of the Christians were divided and had not stayed faithful to their origin. Therefore, if the Qur'ān so strongly reflects the context of encounter with Christianity, this may imply a substantial amount of prophetic criticism of Christianity, not only of its moral conduct, but also of the history of its dogmas, and the resulting social consequences.

the historical question

DUPRÉ   How does Jesus appear in his public ministry? Does he conceive of himself as being the final one in the line of those who were to come? And what about Muḥammad? Traditionally, he is the 'Seal of the Prophets'. But Muḥammad as the one to whom the revelation came – how is his own historical self-understanding identified with this?

inward criteria of genuineness

KHOURY   When Muslims believe that Muḥammad was authorized by God to bring the final message, the question of the criteria for the genuineness of prophetic

[3] Th. Ohm, *Machet zu Jüngern alle Völker. Theorie der Mission.* Freiburg, 1962, pp. 151–154.
[4] J. A. Möhler, "Ueber das Verhältnis des Islams zum Christentum", in: id., *Gesammelte Schriften und Aufsätze,* edited by Joh. Jos. Ignaz Döllinger. vol. 1. Regensburg, 1839, pp. 348–402.

missions necessarily arises. On the basis of thorough research, working from the Old Testament, from the New Testament, and the earlier Fathers, I have found no positive criteria which are absolutely valid and applicable. As a negative criterion, the Old Testament shows that whoever preaches against God, or denies him, cannot be sent by God. Now, for us Christians, there are binding articles of faith concerning Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Trinity and Jesus Christ's role as Redeemer. Muḥammad, however, declares these assertions to be errors and rejects them, which indicates that a negative assessment should be made of him. As long as the relevant statements of the Qur'ān are understood by the Islamic tradition to be a rejection of these binding tenets of Christian faith, it does not seem possible for a Christian to accept Muḥammad as a prophet authorized by God. There remains the question of whether these Qur'ānic assertions have to be understood in this way. If so, the only remaining possibility is to accept his prophetic role, but not his absolute claim to prophethood, which would require obedience and faith with reference to all the claims of his message.

SCHIMMEL If Christians, when asked by Muslims, were to acknowledge Muḥammad as a prophet, it would be a great step towards understanding and would make Muslims very happy, without the Christians themselves thereby 'becoming Muslims': for in order to become a Muslim one has to pronounce the whole Islamic declaration of faith.

consequences of acknowledging Muḥammad as a prophet

KAHLERT But then we would have to explain our reservations – that we are using the term 'prophet' in a general religio-phenomenological sense only, not accepting Muḥammad as the 'seal of the prophets'.

WOLBERT If we, as Christians, acknowledged Muḥammad as a prophet, there would be no reason for us not to accept others as well, such as the founder of the Bahā'ī religion.

KHOURY Is Muḥammad, for Christians, a prophet who, being authorized by God, proclaims a revelation of God which, according to the words of Paul, one has to obey in faith? Here it has to be borne in mind that he, like the very great prophets, appears in public claiming that he brings the new revelation, which, insofar as it contradicts what came before, cancels it and demands the obedience of faith to what is new.

obedience in faith to the message, Muḥammad proclaims?

Furthermore, concerning the question of a prophet's acceptance as a criterion for the legitimacy of his claim, two aspects have to be differentiated from each other:

acceptance as criterion

whether the acceptance or the history of his ministry is for us only the reason to deal dogmatically and theologically with the figure of a prophet, or whether his acceptance is itself a sustainable argument for the genuineness of his mission. It is clear that we would not have to deal with Muḥammad had he not been successful, but success is after all no criterion for genuineness – or is it?

SCHIMMEL With reference to the prophetic mission of Muḥammad, it has to be kept in mind that for Muslims the Prophet Muḥammad is not only the Prophet, but he also has a quite different dimension: he is the 'non-erudite', through whom the divine word comes in pure form. For Christian thinking, the challenge is more to compare Muḥammad not so much with Christ, but with Mary, as is done in Islamic theology. Just as Mary had to be a virgin so that the word of God could become man in her, so Muḥammad had to be *ummī*, illiterate in order for the divine word to become a book.[5] Apart from the historical truth, we are here concerned rather with what the community feels about Muḥammad and how they interpret him.

Muḥammad as ummī, like Mary as virgin

KHOURY A question that seems theologically important is what would have to be done if, in the message of Muḥammad – which he proclaims with the assertion that it is authorized by God as the final revelation which must be accepted not only in individual points, but as a whole – there were a clear contradiction between parts of it and the binding doctrine of Christian faith. In these circumstances, could we as Christians continue to say that Muḥammad was a prophet in the Islamic sense, or do we then make various stipulations in order to be able to declare him a prophet, but not in the way Muslims mean it? We would always have to express clearly what is meant if there are those who say Muḥammad is a prophet for us Christians too – or if there are others who say for us he is no prophet. In a theological dialogue the issue must not be strategic considerations: how convenient it would perhaps be if the Muslims heard us say this or that, or how far we could please them with it. If we really speak in a theologically responsible manner, we must say what we believe, not what the other would like to hear. In any case, Muslims for

Muḥammad a prophet for Christians as he is a prophet for Muslims?

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[5] Cf. A. Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger.* Chapel Hill, 1985, and Tor Andrae, *Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde.* Stockholm, 1918.

their part, and rightly, do not try to please us by saying that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, because in their theology and in their faith they cannot justify it. We should really hold a dialogue of truth, in all sympathy and openness for one another, but not for politeness' sake.

concept of prophet appropriate for defining the relation between Christianity and Islam?

BARTH The question arises of whether the concept of prophet is actually so very appropriate for defining more closely the relation between Christianity and Islam. For, on the one hand, the concept of prophet itself – from the perspective of the phenomenology of religion – is historically conditioned and undergoes historical changes. In the New Testament, for instance, the concept has a profile completely different from that of the Old Testament.

On the other hand, with reference to Islam, there is the question of whether Muhammad as prophet is really understood on the basis of a previously clearly defined concept, or whether the concept of prophet can only be unambiguously defined by taking Muhammad as a starting point.

Therefore the assumptions underlying this concept have to be kept more carefully in mind. We must either (from a historical perspective) establish the criteria for founding a religion, or (from the perspective of systematic Christian theology) determine the definition of revelation.

ELSAS Seen from the viewpoint of the historian (in view of the fact that much of what is Judaeo-Christian evaporated as Christianity moved into the world of Graeco-Roman culture), could the prophetic mission of Muhammad be considered as recalling what Moses and Jesus said in their own times, and consolidating it once more in order to bring together what is really meant by God's economy of salvation? Would such a perspective not be compatible both with the self-understanding of Islam as a middle way between Moses and Jesus, and with the possible Christian understanding of a 'post-revelation', recalling what was once alive in the Judaeo-Christian tradition but has now been lost?

Muhammad – prophet for his Arabic compatriots?

PRENNER And could Muhammad's prophetic mission not be the task given to him of proclaiming in Arabic the messages of Moses and Jesus to his Arab compatriots, who were not yet familiar with them in their own language, so that on the Day of Judgement they would have no excuse?

SCHIMMEL The Qur'ānic message was in fact first sent to those who as yet had no Scriptures, the *ummī*s. Then, however, there is the further devel-

opment, as expressed in Sūra 21,107: "We sent thee not, but as a Mercy for all creatures", with which the call to spread the message to all people is given, the claim of mission. This is also what makes the position of the Arabic language so central in the world of Islam, because, according to Muslim faith, there is no other way to write down the word of God in a pure form.

mission of Jesus and mission of Muhammad – two expressions of one revelation?

DOGAN Could one see the various prophetic missions, including those of Jesus Christ and Muhammad, as different expressions of one monotheistic revelation and hold accordingly that in the case of both it is basically the same revelation, only on two historically different levels? And so is there possibly, in the Christian and in the Muslim revelation, one revelation proceeding from the one God?

SCHIMMEL The answer of many Muslims would be what a Turkish mystic once said: "Look at the sun: today is Sunday, tomorrow Monday; it is always the same sun. Is there written on it: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday ...? There is only one sun, and it manifests itself afresh every day." We give different names to the days, but it is always the same sun. And a saying ascribed to Muhammad, is: "The ways towards God are as many as the breaths people take."

"He is God, the One – Join not Any Partners with Him!"

Hans Zirker

With the two citations of the Qur'ān quoted in the title – profession and command (Sūra 39,4; 4,36, etc.) – Islam simultaneously distances itself from the polytheistic world and from the Christian-trinitarian faith.[1] In some respects this fact makes understanding harder; it is, however, all the more urgent that both sides are always kept in mind, related to one another but differentiated from each other.

1. 'Allāh'

In volume 6 of "Beiträge zur Religionstheologie", edited by the Faculty of Theology St. Gabriel, a discussion about inter-religious dialogue is documented, in which considerations are included about the extent to which the religions might converge concerning the naming of God. In this context, symptomatic hesitations appear: "Of course, the name Allāh is often used like a proper name for the God of the Muslims, and from that point of view it might cause confusion among the Christians in Arab countries, if one suddenly used this name as a Christian way of naming God."[2] Whatever the significance of 'suddenly', it is assumed here that this terminology could not be used without confusion resulting; but if one opens Arabic Bibles, one finds that they begin in their own language: "In the beginning when Allāh created the heavens and the earth" (Gn 1:1) and they profess with Paul that when the "end" comes, "Allāh may be all in all." (1 Cor 15:24.28).

The misunderstanding that the name 'Allāh' is specifically Islamic is also supported by publications in Islamic studies: it is there above all that one reads of this term's being rooted in the history of religion in the ancient

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[1] Moreover, with its monotheistic profession, Islam distances itself even from the Jews who, according to Qur'ān 9,30, say: "The Jews call 'Uzair [Ezra] a son of God, [...]": but this will not be dealt with here in any further detail.

[2] W. Pannenberg quoted by: A. Bsteh, "Dialog aus der Mitte christlicher Theologie. Die Gesprächsbeiträge zur 5. Religionstheologischen Studientagung St. Gabriel. Versuch einer Zusammenfassung", in: id. (ed.), *Glaube, der Begegnung sucht. Ein theologisches Programm* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 6). Mödling, 1992, pp. 65–140, here: p. 110.

Arabic cultures, where Allāh was a 'High God', who, beside and below him, had the female al-Lāt and other gods and goddesses; in contrast, in the relevant chapters of these publications about Jewish and Christian communities in Arabia, there is little reference to the way in which God was spoken of there.[3] So the cultural relationships are misrepresented. The assertion of the Qur'ān to the "People of the Book": "Our God and your God is One" (Qur'ān 29,46) also has a lexical basis. Incidentally, Syrian Christians were already speaking of 'Alāhā'. This is also important, for even though it can hardly be seen as the direct etymological root of the Arabic word Allāh[4], the linguistic identification has always been obvious.

2. The ethical dimension of monotheism

The proclamation of the oneness of God in the Qur'ān is very closely linked there with the statement that man's responsibility before his Creator is inescapable and that he will have to give account of himself when being judged by him. Nobody should rely on other authorities being able to defend him against this God. The unbeliever designs an illusory future for himself: "They call on such deities, besides God[5], as can neither hurt nor profit them: that is straying far indeed (from the Way)! (Perhaps) they call on one whose hurt is nearer than his profit: evil, indeed, is the patron, and evil the companion (for help)!" (Sūra 22,12 f.). On the Day of Judgement the question will be asked: "Why then was no help forthcoming to them from those whom they worshipped as gods, besides God, as a means of access (to God)? Nay, they left them in the lurch: but that was their falsehood and their invention." (Sūra 46,28).

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[3] Cf. for example R. Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran. Geschichte und Verkündigung des arabischen Propheten.* Stuttgart, [5]1991, pp. 16–20: "Arabische Götter", besides pp. 12–14: "Jüdische Kolonien", pp. 14–16: "Christliche Missionierung"; on the other hand: W. M. Watt – A. T. Welch, *Der Islam. I Mohammed und die Frühzeit – Islamisches Recht – Religiöses Leben* (Die Religionen der Menschheit; 25,1). Stuttgart, 1980, pp. 43–46: Die mekkanische Religion und der "Hochgott", before pp. 46 f.: Die älteren monotheistischen Religionen.

[4] Cf. L. Gardet's art. "Allāh", in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam.* vol. 1 (1960), pp. 416 f., here: p. 416: the derivation from *al-ilāh* is "the most likely etymology", that from *alāhā* "another suggestion".

[5] *"min dūni llāhi"* is here often translated as: "in the place of God" or in a similar exclusive way (e. g. by R. Paret); yet, this does not do justice to the facts in the history of religions. Cf. 5,119, where the additive translation is inevitable: "Apart from/besides God" the Christians have added Jesus and Mary as gods; and these formulations would also have to apply in the other passages (cf. M. Henning's translation concerning the verses 22,12 and 46,28, to which we refer here and in the following).

So the monotheistic profession is not merely an assertion about the being of God. It is also from the beginning a statement about man. The truth of this faith is therefore not just based on the simple proposition: there is only one unique God. Like the Judaeo-Christian faith, Muslim faith is sure that the whole world, the history of all peoples and the life of every individual being are in the hand and in the mind of one single power; no space and no time are outside it, or can oppose it. "To God belong the East and the West: whithersoever ye turn, there is the Presence of God. For God is All-Pervading, All-Knowing." (Sūra 2,115). Accordingly, reality cannot fundamentally be governed by limitation and discord, contradiction and rivalry, but is founded on a comprehensive order, the unity of a one-and-only will.

In view of all this, according to the Qur'ān the seriousness of human responsibility and the unity of the world is not guaranteed if several gods are posited. In their multiplicity they may oppose each other, contest the respective spheres of their influence, and thus ruin their own power. "If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides God, there would have been confusion in both! But glory to God, the Lord of the Throne: (High is He) above what they attribute to Him!" (21,22). "[...] nor is there any god along with Him: (if there were many gods), behold, each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have lorded it over others! [...]" (23,91). This idea entered into traditional theology as 'the proof of a mutual impediment': "For, if other gods had been with him, there would have been controversies on how to be the Lord of the world, contests on the course of heaven and earth, on the orbits of the sun, the moon, and the stars, and the calculation of the day, the night, and the hours. But since all this works harmoniously, it proves that the universe has a wise and all-knowing Lord, whose rule is contested by nobody and whose calculations are contested by no-one."[6]

Here lies the pragmatic importance of monotheism. It is the sense also of the famous 'Throne verse' of Sūra 2, for Muslims one of the most well-known passages of the Qur'ān: "God! There is no god but He, – the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there can intercede in

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[6] F. Kholeif, "Der Gott des Korans", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Der Gott des Christentums und des Islams* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 2). Mödling, [2]1992, pp. 69–82, here: p. 72, on *dalīl at-tamānu'*. On argumentations concerning Sūra 21,22 and 23,91 in Islamic theology cf. also T. Nagel, *Die Festung des Glaubens. Triumph und Scheitern des islamischen Rationalismus im 11. Jahrhundert.* München, 1988, pp. 122 f.

His presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) Before or After or Behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory)." (2,255).

Thus, Sūra 3,18 links professing the one God with trusting that through him the world of man will attain social concord: "[...] That is the witness of God [...] standing firm on justice. There is no god but He, the Exalted in Power, the Wise." Consequently for Islam the profession of the one God has an eminently political dimension: since God is one, humans are obliged to establish and to preserve unity, ultimately in the perspective of the most comprehensive aim of arriving at an undivided humanity. According to Muslim conviction, faith in the one God demands the ultimate acknowledgement of one unanimous authority in worldly as well as spiritual contexts; what follows as a religio-political consequence from the profession: "[...] The Command rests with none but God: [...]" (6,57) is: "O ye who believe! Obey God, and obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to God and His Apostle, if ye do believe in God and the Last Day: that is best, and most suitable for final determination." (4,59).[7] Therefore, in the programmatic issue 'unity – tawḥīd'[8] perceptions of God and of the social and ultimately even the political conditions of our world become one.

3. Condemnable multiplicity

Anyone who 'associates' another with God at the same time supports the particularity of his own special group; he does not want the one 'house of peace', but disunity. "Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could turn you (people) back to infidelity after ye have believed, from selfish envy, after the Truth hath become manifest unto them: [...]" (2,109) – "And they say: 'None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian.' Those are their (vain) desires. Say: 'Produce your proof if ye are truthful.' [...] The Jews say:

'The Christians have naught (to stand) upon; and the Christians say: 'The Jews have naught (to stand) upon.' Yet they (profess to) study the (same) Book. Like unto their word is what those say who know not; but God will judge between them in their quarrel on the Day of Judgment." (2,111–113).

It is part of the special theological importance of Islam that it looks back at the christological controversies in the early history of the Church, perceives their effects, and makes deductions. To the claim and command of Jesus "Verily God is my Lord and your Lord: Him therefore serve ye: this is a Way that is straight", the Qur'ān directly adds the statement: "But the sects differ among themselves: [...]" (19,36 f.). With the mission of Jesus, God said to the Christians: "Verily, this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve me (and no other)." (21,92; very much like 23,52); in contrast again comes the historical reality: "But (later generations) cut off their affair (of unity), one from another: [...]" (21,93); "[...] each party rejoices in that which is with itself." (23,53).[9] The disunity among the People of the Book, which, at the time of Muhammad, was particularly obvious in the controversies concerning the right understanding of Jesus, was the heavy price exacted by encounter with Christian dogma which was unable to unite Jews and Christians or even Christians among themselves.

Where Jews and Christians do not insist unequivocally on the oneness of God as radically as the Qur'ān, the latter sees them under the spell of polytheism and all its consequences, including especially the social ones. The most sweeping reproaches concern the Christians: "They say: 'God hath begotten a son': Glory be to Him. – Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: everything renders worship to Him." (2,116) – "They do blaspheme who say: 'God is Christ the son of Mary' But said Christ: 'O Children of Israel! Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.' Whoever joins other gods with God, – God will forbid him the Garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help. They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One God. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them." (5,75 f.); "[...] and the

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[7] On the connection between monotheism and political rule cf. T. Nagel, *Staat und Glaubensgemeinschaft im Islam. Geschichte der politischen Ordnungsvorstellungen der Muslime.* vol. 2 (Bibliothek des Morgenlandes). Zürich etc., 1981, p. 101 (with reference to verse 21,22 of the Qur'ān already quoted).

[8] Cf. from contemporary Islamic theology, above all the text by M. 'Abduh, *Risālat at-tawḥīd.* Cairo, 1897, engl. transl. by Isḥāq Musa'ad and K. Cragg, London, 1966: *The Theology of Unity.*

[9] Cf. the remarkable agreement with Kelsos' criticism of Christianity – in the descriptive summary of N. Brox, art. "Häresie", in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum.* vol. 13 (1986), pp. 248–297, here: p. 271 (with reference to Orig. c. Cels. 3,10.12.14): "Jeder will rechthaberisch und ehrgeizig einen eigenen Anfang haben." [Obstinately and ambitiously, each one wants to have a beginning of their own.]

Christians call Christ the Son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the Unbelievers of old used to say. God's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!" (9,30). The differentiation which is sometimes made between polytheists as 'unbelievers' and the Christians and Jews as 'disbelievers'[10], is not justified in this context: both practise '*shirk* – association'.

Thus, according to the conviction expressed in the Qur'ān, the beliefs of the Christians are not ultimately different from those who think that God would have intercourse with a woman in order to have a child. Sūra 6 says about the polytheists: "[...] and they falsely, having no knowledge, attribute to Him sons and daughters. [...] To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: how can He have a son when He hath no consort? [...]" (v. 100 f.). In the Qur'ān there is not the slightest indication that the Christian teaching about the Son of God should be disassociated from the mythological idea of sexual intercourse. In both cases the result is multiplicity and that is an end of the matter.[11]

In contrast to this a wider margin for possible interpretation is considered by the medieval Muslim theologian al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) in his "Argumentation against the deity of Jesus"[12]. He accepts that in the New Testament Jesus called himself 'Son of God' (in this case he reads the New Testament texts as historically accurate sources). However, he states that Jesus meant this 'metaphorically', not in its 'superficially literal sense' like the Christians. According to Muslim law, Muslims are forbidden in principle to speak of God and man as if there were a family relationship between them, even metaphorically: "But Jesus also is the Lord of a *sharīʿa,* and each *sharīʿa* is distinguished by special regulations."[13]

The fact that already the Qur'ān puts to the Christians a linguistic usage in which the divinity of Jesus can no longer be seen together with his hu-

manity, is shown in Sūra 5,78: "Christ the son of Mary was no more than an Apostle; [...] His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food. [...]". When confronting the Christian position, the non-divine character of Jesus as well as of Mary is to be emphasized – and for this it seems sufficient to point out their human characteristics. Accordingly, al-Ghazzālī refers to Jesus' "language, exhaustion, hunger, thirst, sleep, growth in his mother's womb, and his suffering pain – in their opinion – when he was crucified and said: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" And al-Ghazzālī deduces: "All this is not compatible with the deity."[14]

Sūra 5,119 f. where Jesus himself is called to account by God also belongs to this context: "[...] 'O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, 'Worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of God'?' He will say: 'Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, Thou wouldst indeed have known it. [...] Never said I to them aught except what Thou didst command me to say, to wit, 'Worship God, my Lord and your Lord'; [...]". Rejecting this trinity, Jesus professes himself to be a Muslim.

In view of these arguments, one could of course take the easy way and find in them direct proof that Muḥammad, without any knowledge whatsoever of the Christian dogma, fell into massive error: "The doctrine of the Trinity is obviously misunderstood in the sense of a doctrine of three gods and therefore rejected",[15] for it is a matter of fact that this triad is not the Christian Trinity. We do not know whether the Qur'ān was in fact rejecting conceptions that had actually spread among certain Christian groups at the time of Muḥammad and affected their religious belief, but neither is there any room whatsoever for any other kind of trinity.

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[10] Cf. A. Th. Khoury, *Toleranz im Islam.* München, etc. 1980, p. 31.

[11] Therefore, the translation of the term "*mushrikūn*" as those "who associate" is misleading; cf. *Der Koran.* Übersetzung von R. Paret. Stuttgart, 1979 (revised pocket edition). Christians and Jews also belong to this group.

[12] Abū-Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī, *ar-Radd al-djamīl li-ilāhiyyat ʿĪsā bi-ṣarīḥ al-indjīl* (written between 1095 and 1105). In the following I translate according to an Arabic-French edition: *Al rad al jamil li ilahiyat issa bi sarih al injil. Réfutation excellente de la Divinité de Jésus Christ. Contestation de la Trinité et Fondement théologique du dialogue islamo-chrétien. Par l'imam Abou Hamed El Ghazali.* Paris: Radio du Monde arabe, 1988. Cf. also F.-E. Wilms, *al-Ghazālīs Schrift wider die Gottheit Jesu.* Leiden, 1966 (partly quoted in *Jesus der Offenbarer* (Texte zur Theologie: Fundamentaltheologie; 5). ed. by F.-J. Niemann, Graz etc., 1990, pp. 118–120).

[13] *Ibid.* 25.

[14] *Ibid.* 18.

[15] H. Waldenfels, *Kontextuelle Fundamentaltheologie.* Paderborn, 1985, p. 35. Cf. G. Riße, *"Gott ist Christus, der Sohn der Maria". Eine Studie zum Christusbild im Koran.* Bonn, 1989, pp. 213 f.: "Eine genaue Kenntnis ist ihm jedoch nicht zuteil geworden, so daß er insgesamt eine unklare Vorstellung von der christlichen Trinitätslehre und damit verbunden von dem christlichen Gottesbild hatte. Aus Unkenntnis der christlichen Trinität hat Muhammad selbst die koranische Trias Gott–Jesus–Maria (Vers 116 [von Sure 5]) geschaffen." [Yet, he was not provided with an exact knowledge, so that on the whole he had an unclear idea of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and, connected with it, of the Christian conception of God. Not knowing Christian Trinity, Muhammad himself created the Qur'ānic triad God–Jesus–Mary (5,119)]. – Somewhat more tentative is the statement in *Texte zur Theologie,* ed. by W. Beinert et al., *Fundamentaltheologie 5,1: Jesus der Offenbarer I,* ed. by F.-J. Niemann, Graz, 1990, p. 112, that "Mohammed vermutlich die Trinität als Tritheismus mißverstanden hat und als die drei christlichen Gottheiten Vater, Jesus und Maria angesehen hat" [that Muḥammad probably misunderstood Trinity as tritheism and saw Father, Jesus and Mary as the three Christian deities].

What is theologically decisive is that Christianity, with its development of Christology – and the myriad controversies about it, also noted by the Qur'ān – did not succeed in speaking about the presence of God in Jesus Christ in a way that would have prevented the charge of polytheism from being made at all.

4. Absolute transcendence

The radically one God is at the same time absolutely beyond all worldly reality. He is close to us, but we have no access to him. He lets us have his orders, but does not communicate himself to us; for nothing of this world could communicate him to us. He turns towards the believers as those "whom He will love as they will love Him [...]" (5,57)[16]; yet, this does not abolish the distance between God and man, between Creator and creature, in a community including both.[17] (The absolute, unbridgeable opposition between Creator and creature will certainly have to be seen in the context of "the experience of transcendence in Islamic mysticism".[18])

The world being thoroughly dependent on God, God confronts it in complete self-sufficiency: "O ye men! It is ye that have need of God: but God is the One Free of all wants, worthy of all praise." (35,15; like 47,38).

However, those who associate something or someone with God think they may approach him. Therefore the Qur'ān emphasizes: "Say: if there had been (other) gods with Him, – as they say, – behold, they would certainly have sought out a way to the Lord of the Throne!" (17,42). But this way is denied to them.

We may/not even allow our mind to associate anything with him by way of metaphor: "Invent not similitudes for God: for God knoweth, and

ye know not." (16,74); but: "God doth set forth Parables for men" (24,35). All revelation provides us with language about him, which is reliably sufficient for us, without our knowing how it applies to God.[19] Therefore Ibn 'Abbās (died 688) begs and implores: "Think about everything, but do not think about the nature of God!"[20] And in this century the renowned Muslim theologian Muḥammad 'Abduh also recalls what the Prophet commanded – "even if it should not be genuine": "Think about the creation of God, but do not think about His nature, otherwise you might perish."[21]

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[16] Cf. A. Falaturi "Der Islam – Religion der Raḥma, der Barmherzigkeit", in: id. et al. (eds.), *Universale Vaterschaft Gottes. Begegnung der Religionen* (Veröffentlichungen der Stiftung Oratio Dominica: Weltgespräch der Religionen; 14). Freiburg etc., 1987, pp. 67–87; H. Zirker, "Die Hinwendung Gottes zu den Menschen in Bibel und Koran", in *Una Sancta* 43 (1988) 229–238; id., "Das Heil des Menschen im Islam", in *Geist und Leben* 63 (1990) 293–304.

[17] This only seems to contradict the often quoted word of the Qur'ān in Sūra 50,16 which determines the relationship of God towards man: "[...] for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein". The context of this sentence shows clearly that here the issue is not the tenderness of a personal relationship, but the exact observation of what every individual thinks deep down in his heart, so that he can also be called to account for it: "It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: [...]. Not a word does he utter but there is a sentinel by him, ready (to note it)." (50,16.18).

[18] Cf. the article by A. Schimmel on "The Experience of Transcendence in Islamic Mysticism" below, pp. 153–162.

[19] On the controversies concerning the problem of the effectiveness of religious language cf. J. van Ess, "Göttliche Allmacht im Zerrbild menschlicher Sprache", in: *Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph* 49 (1975–76) 651–688; H. Stieglecker, *Die Glaubenslehren des Islam*. Paderborn, ²1983, pp. 23–96: "Die Prädikate Gottes".

[20] Quoted with F. *Kholeif, op. cit.* (fn. 6), p. 70.

[21] M. 'Abduh, *op. cit.* (fn. 8), p. 53.

Questions and Interventions

WISSE Monotheism as it is proclaimed in Islam is characterized by the confrontation with the polytheists, but at the same time also with Christianity. From a historical perspective, in what way was the strict monotheism of the Qur'ān in fact a reaction to the christological and trinitarian doctrines of Christianity, and more specifically to the christological controversies that split Christianity into different churches?

KHOURY Muḥammad knew about the schisms within Christianity existing in his time, and especially about Nestorianism and Monophysitism. To all intents and purposes he argues against Nestorianism in the sense of a Monophysitism which recognizes only one nature in Christ – that is the human – and in addition he rejects the great doctrines of the Councils of the orthodox Church. There is much to suggest that in the Qur'ān monotheism is acknowledged as the basis of Islam, Judaism and Christianity and is seen as a means by which the schism between the three monotheistic religions may be overcome.

HORN With regard to the situation within Christianity at the time of early Islam, it seems it is right to consider that in the period when Muḥammad lived, the Council of Nicaea was already generally accepted so that a fundamental unity existed on the basis of this Council. Later discussions referred to the christological question, more specifically to the Chalcedonian doctrines of the two natures in Christ. Dramatic distortions existed in the polemics dominant at that time, resulting from the difference between the popular understanding of the Council's tenets and the genuine and serious theological discussions. In any case, the 'monophysites' wanted to adhere to Nicaea, as did Nestorius. Within the polemics of that time there were of course very fierce controversies – which escalated when they led to substantial distortions at the level of popular belief, and the well-known separations resulted as a consequence. However, at that time there was no dispute about professing Jesus to be the Son of God. This doctrine was the uncontested basis of the faith of all the various groupings. The question therefore arises of whether the Nicaean definition was in fact presented at that time with such drastic distortion and popularized in an erroneous and polemical way. This should be the subject of careful scholarly examination.

ZIRKER Whatever the case, there is much to support the view that Christianity at that time did not define itself so much in terms of some distorted popular creed, but rather had not reached a unanimous consensus about Nicaea. Nicaea was the basis, certainly – but there was no unanimity as to its interpretation. As a result of this lack of unanimity, not only were individuals such as Arius and Nestorius condemned, but whole Christian traditions were excluded, which then continued to exist. Thus, when Islam at the time of Muḥammad conquered North Africa, the Monophysite Churches welcomed it as liberating them from the Christian emperor and the doctrinal domination of his church. The position of the Nestorian Churches was similar, and they continue to exist until today. Thus Muḥammad was facing a Christianity which was in disagreement about the interpretation of Nicaea not only when it came to popular distortions, but also at the highest level of conciliar debate, a Christianity disrupted in the turmoil of these disputes and existing in a state of on-going conflict. And this experience of the history of our dogmas is reflected in the Qur'ān.

✦

IVANČIĆ Did not the profession of belief in the one God initially unite all the Arab tribes, so that there came into being in the world a great brotherhood of those who were united in the Islamic faith? Is the saying not true: since there is only one God, there must also be one people?

SALMEN And what should be the concrete social form of this unity? What kind of governing authority should there be?

SCHIMMEL This is a problem with which Muslims have been very concerned in recent times. The statement that the unity of God is reflected in the community of those who believe in him has resulted over the centuries in our seeing Islam as a monolithic block, without taking sufficient notice of its variously developed expressions. It is interesting that Iqbāl (1877–1938) in 1910 noted in his diary that Muslims (at that time under the domination of the British Empire) had the task of being witnesses to unity: one God, one direction of prayer, the Ka'ba, one final Prophet, one Qur'ān, and one universal community. This is how he saw unity reflected in the organization of society.

But what form should this unity in society take? This is the enormous problem Muslims are struggling with especially at the present time. It should not be a theocracy, because with the death of the Prophet the revelation came to

an end and since then there have only been the normal legitimate Caliphs. In addition, there is the division of the *umma* between Sunnīs, who consider the teachings related to Muḥammad to be the most important – his personality, his tradition and the community of believers – and Shīʿīs, who have supported the principle of succession – that only one who is a direct descendant of Muḥammad through his daughter Fāṭima and his son-in-law ʿAlī can be the legitimate head of the community. And for these reasons the Shīʿī form of the state is so very different from the Sunnī ideals.

In only one Shīʿī sect, the Ismāʿīlīs, the Agha Khān Ismāʿīlīs, can we really speak of a theocracy, since the Agha Khān is considered to be the manifestation of what is divine and exercises absolute power over his followers. This is the only group in Islam – unless we also include perhaps the Bohorās, the other group of the Ismāʿīlīs, where something like a sacred kingship, a holy government, has ruled over the centuries.

ELSAS At this point we can also certainly refer to the two Qurʾān quotations in Mr. Zirker's lecture: "That is the witness of God, [...] standing firm on justice." (3,18); and: "O ye who believe! Obey God, and obey the Apostle, [...]" (4,59). These two verses certainly indicate what is special about the Islamic understanding of democracy: *shūrā* (consultation) takes place in a joint meditation on the word of God, not by balancing against each other all kinds of thoughts and opinions, but only by weighing those thoughts that are oriented towards the word of God set down in the Qurʾān. This is the source of justice. It has always been understood that in this way all have equal rights, and it is only he who is most pious who is closest to God.

it is God who enforces justice

SCHIMMEL This is why the Khāridjites also said as a counter-argument against the legitimist Shīʿīs: the most pious one among you shall be Caliph, even though he were an Abyssinian slave.

monotheism and solidarity of people

OTT To what extent does the Qurʾānic message speak of a greater proximity of man to God, which then takes expression in a more intensive solidarity between humans – for all will be judged on the Last Day, since they are all united in their conscience because together they are all bowing before God? In great contrast to the remoteness of God in pre-Islamic times, when the Arabian tribes only invoked him in situations of extreme crisis, does not this greater proximity to God ultimately imply a greater proximity between us than we generally assume, and may we not perhaps see a bridge between our fundamental Christian idea concerning the self-communication of God, on the one hand, and Muḥammad's original motivation, on the other?

KHOURY Monotheism should actually have led to a universal solidarity between people and it is interesting that this is not stated in the Islamic position, which speaks only of a graded solidarity: with the fellow believers the solidarity is absolute, with the Jews and the Christians there is a partial solidarity, and with the unbelievers there is none. A religious community – in this case the Islamic community – must be asked what are the conclusions they themselves deduce from certain of their religious tenets. In the realm of politics, the conclusions we deduce from monotheism are not the same as those deduced by Islam.

unity of the umma and the various factors disturbing this unity

BSTEH P. The general question remains of how far it is possible to see the believing Islamic community as a community united in itself, over and above the harmonious order established in creation by the one God. How should we explain the alienation that invades creation through sin, and how can unity be restored, and what role does the Qurʾān have to play in this? And finally, how can we see the understanding of angels and *djinn* as an agent of unity?

SCHIMMEL Islam always considers that angels and all the spirits are God's creatures and that they have protective functions. Every human being is accompanied by angels; the writing angels sit on our shoulders and write down everything we say. Thus at the Last Judgement everything will be perfectly recorded. And the *djinn* are made of fire and may be good or evil; they are small intermediate beings between the spirit world and ours.

Neither must we forget that Iblīs, the devil, who is also made of fire, never appears as the opponent of God, but only as the seducer of man. This has to be very strongly emphasized. He has no independent function as in Zoroastrian dualism. He is God's creature, whose function in the world is to remind people constantly that man is weak, and man is called, as a Ḥadīth says, to resist him by spiritual warfare and finally overcome him at the end of time. All these creatures are simply subject to the command of God. They constitute no ground for arguing against the concept of unity. If the angels functioned independently, it would be a different matter, but it is God who sends them. Thus Gabriel is the one who instructs the prophets in their particular missions; it is he who puts the word, namely Jesus, into Mary, and who brought the word of God, namely the Qurʾān, to the Prophet Muḥammad. They are all ministering spirits in the service of God. This is how the Muslim sees it.

WOLBERT The question of inculturation is also part of the problem of unity and diversity. It was often the case in the history of Christianity that the form of the religion developed in the culture of one religious community was 'exported' into other cultures. Is this also the case with Islam? How far, for example, do non-Arab Muslims experience it as a problem that Arabic is so dominant in Islam?

SCHIMMEL In Black Africa the problem was not so strongly felt as, for example, in Turkey or in India. One of the reasons for Atatürk's reform was that this Arabic heritage did not seem to fit in with the Turks. And A. A. A. Fyzee, one of the leading Indian Bohorā-scholars, among others, spoke very distinctly against overemphasizing this Arabic element.

If one thinks of Indian Islam, it is interesting that two main currents have always existed side by side since the Muslims came to India in 711 (at first to what is today South Pakistan and then from the year 1000 onwards to Bengal and the Deccan). First there were the immigrants whom I always call Mecca-oriented, people who were proud of their non-Indian origin and ancestry and who always saw themselves as members of the *umma* transcending national borders. They called themselves the *ashrāf,* the nobles, and looked down on the recently converted Muslims, the *adjlāf,* the lower classes. In addition, there was the mystical, popular Islam, which was receptive to the influence of Indian traditions, and much more tolerant. It is possible to trace these two currents in the history of India up till the present day. Iqbāl was somebody who always placed Arab culture, whose centre is Mecca, in the foreground of his thinking, whereas Abū l-Kalām Azād, who opted for India in the 1947 division of the subcontinent, is the prototype of a mystic for whom Islam and India are inseparable. Although he had an Arab mother, he never regarded things Arab as a really important ingredient of Islam.

There are both possibilities, particularly in India, but also in certain currents in Iran and in Turkey, where again one encounters the feeling that there is no need to imitate the Arab Muslims in everything one does. Then one's own culture is played up and there are constant ups and downs of both attitudes.

PESCHKE What about safeguarding unity within the Muslim religious community? In the course of history, has it not been exposed to schisms and controversies quite similar to what has happened to Christianity?

ZIRKER It certainly is a trauma in the Islamic experience that, in its programme for unity, Islam has not been able to maintain the unity of its own religious community. Muslims themselves would interpret this as a failure of their community. Grief over this goes back to early Ḥadīths, which relate, for example, that towards the end of his life Muḥammad walked in the cemetery declaring the blessedness of the dead because they did not have to see the shadows rising, the shadows of *fitna,* of conflict, of contests between themselves, which he saw arising.

Yet it is important to observe the differences between the historical causes of schisms in Christianity and in Islam. Controversies about dogmas, such as took place in Christianity, are alien to Islam: indeed, in Islam there was no comparable history of Councils and neither is there an official teaching authority. Dogmatic controversies, like that about the divine attributes or the debate over whether the Qur'ān was created or uncreated, did occur, but they only caused schisms when they touched the position of the Caliph. Doctrinal controversies are far less numerous than political ones. For example the great differences between Sunnī and Shī'ī Islam, and within the Shī'a, were not essentially about interpretations of the Qur'ān. The central question was about who should be the rightful successor to Muḥammad in the ruling of the community.

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WISSE Is a new way of speaking about God not necessary today in order to open up in a new way to the people of our time the content of our faith, our thinking and our speaking of God? Is our own present situation not comparable with that of the Muslims when they have problems with our speaking of the "Son of God"? Is it not very necessary to discover anew the metaphorical nature of every statement about God and its symbolic meaning?

OTT What does a statement like "Jesus Christ is the Son of God" mean today to people who are not used to the language spoken in the Church and cannot work through all the subtle theological deliberations necessary for the inward understanding of that assertion? We probably have to admit that, although we use the language of tradition, with regard to fundamental Christian doctrines – like the Trinity and the Incarnation – we are facing a clear challenge today in trying to make them understandable speculatively, kerygmatically, and spiritually.

BARTH In this context can the apophatic thinking of the Eastern Church be seen as having an important bridge-building function? Have we not rather lost sight of the fact that trinitarian thinking in particular has to be pursued in mindfulness of the prohibition of images and that professing Trinity and the prohibition of images have a mutual correspondence? Indeed in everything that can be said about God, awareness of what remains inexpressible and essentially a mystery is crucial. For on the one hand, as a Christian I may profess the Trinity, but on the other hand I must bear in mind what the limitations of human language entail – what can be expressed in human language and what is always infinitely greater than it.

LEUZE So it is not simply a matter of saying that professing Jesus to be "Son of God" is the barrier between us and the belief of Muslims just because the Qur'ān forbids the use of this expression. If we really ask ourselves what we mean when we say "Son of God", we shall have to interpret this formula – and might this not include to some extent approaching the christology of the Qur'ān, even though the expression "Son of God" is rejected there?

what do our concepts really mean?

KHOURY In fact, in our encounter with Islam we are challenged to clarify our concepts and to say what we really mean if we use a certain formulation in order to express our faith. This challenge is particularly urgent with reference to the fundamental declaration of faith in one God, in view of the Qur'ānic offer addressed to Jews and Christians in Sūra 3,64: "Say: 'O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; [...]". Monotheism as the foundation of the three monotheistic religions was therein meant to be affirmed, the dogmas of the Councils rejected, and at the same time a way found to overcome the great schisms of Christianity at that time, above all those of Nestorianism and Monophysitism.

attempts of Christian theology

The question of a relevant clarification of the concepts, especially what we mean when we declare "Jesus is the Son of God", has not only arisen today; from the very beginning Muslims confronted Christian theologians with it. And the latter have tried very hard to face this challenge, sometimes with good success. They have pointed out where the reproaches of Islam are mistaken because we do not believe what we are accused of believing, and they have tried to analyse and make understandable what Christian faith really professes. Today this is also our task and it is all the more difficult if we are to speak adequately not only about God, but also about the Trinity, about the deepest mystery of God. Not only the whole history of theology, but also the various statements of the Councils testify to constantly renewed attempts to speak adequately about God, although we know that he remains beyond the grasp of our language.

open questions of Islamic theology

Muslims also experience the problem of having to speak about God in the language of man. If they want to say more about God, than simply "there is no god besides God", they get into the same trouble. This difficulty became especially concrete in the so-called controversy over the divine attributes, which arose from the Qur'ān's positive statements about God – that God sees everything, hears everything, is compassionate, etc. – and the question of how one is to understand these qualities: whether in his nature God is multifarious, whether these qualities are added to the nature of God, and if so, what is the relationship of these attributes of God with his nature. In various schools there are numerous treatises and tracts on this topic. Since the 10th century Islamic theology has held the opinion that the Qur'ānic expressions about God's qualities have to be accepted without asking how these various attributes are to be seen in relation to the nature of God. It all speaks of the richness of the divine nature and only in the language of the Qur'ān can this richness be articulated.

However that may be, it cannot be said that Muslims have not developed any theology or have not dealt with it at all. While in contemporary Islam, theology is cultivated less because nowadays in the Islamic world political questions are more topical, the fact still remains that in the Middle Ages Muslims made great efforts to practise theology. Their works read just like those of a Thomas Aquinas and other classics of medieval times. It is basically the same language – above all that of Aristotle – that they use, in order to deal with various theological issues, and not least to defend monotheism against the manner of the Christians' speaking about Jesus Christ and the Trinity.

it is God who has to bring himself closer to us

ZIRKER In this problematic field of finding a legitimate way of speaking about God, a fundamental question for Islam is the way in which it is possible for man to approach God. Even though Islamic faith speaks of the great proximity of God – the expression that God is nearer to us than our jugular vein (cf. Qur'ān 50,16) is often quoted in this context – it is always a proximity from God's side. This also applies to the linguistic domain: just as it is impossible and prohibited for man to make a picture of God, for

God it is possible to approach man, to speak in parables about his divine being, and to make us familiar with it.

Concerning the question of the purpose and role of religious language, an important criterion for Islam is the extent to which it is capable of serving and strengthening the community. For Islam the way in which Christian faith speaks about God in the language of the Councils is counterproductive: speaking in a way that disrupts the religious community so profoundly, as happened through the language of the Councils, cannot be legitimate.

the language of prayer

On the other hand, the language of prayer, as a door opened by God for turning towards him, is of great importance in Islam. It is one of the pillars of Islam, and in it God is available for man. God listens to the call of the caller turning to him in the language of prayer. He is the compassionate listener turning towards man. Seen in this way, language refuses to speak and to think *about* God, but opens up the possibility of turning towards him in prayer and calling him.

tasks in the encounter

Should the encounter with Islam not call to the mind of Christians how very much all our speaking about God and man is metaphorical and analogous? Could it not motivate us anew to reflect critically on the way in which every theological position that makes a binding assertion relativizes it again, because each of these positions is historically conditioned? In view of our own history of the Church and its doctrine, are we sufficiently aware of how problematic it is, in these circumstances, to have quite firmly established the acceptance of linguistic formulations on christological issues as a condition for membership in the Church and to have them sanctified in liturgical norms?

Conversely, when listening to the word of God, the listener is always personally engaged, with his concrete capacities and conditioned ability to understand. There is no such thing as the pure word; it is always only the 'heard word' into which the world of the listener – the individual and the religious community – enters, with the patterns of thinking and feeling which we in our understanding necessarily introduce into what we are hearing. From this also results a challenge for Muslims, to perceive Christianity more clearly in the concrete historical development of its faith, to do more justice to what Christian theology is in its attempt to understand, always implied in the personal and communitarian listening to the word of God, and to consider what was in fact said at the Council of Nicaea, or

indeed what was not said. It is a challenge to be more careful in judging what Christians actually mean or believe or say theologically.

God as Mystery

OTT God as Mystery, is this not the most believable, credible, and also apologetically most compelling name for God? God as the ineffable, the holy mystery. If we speak of multifariousness, our language is mythological. If we speak of the one which encompasses us, we use the language of faith, of dedication to the mystery. In this respect, there are impressive testimonies in Christianity, such as the axiom "finitum et infinitum non sunt sub numero – the finite and the infinite cannot be counted", or the "Non-aliud", the name for God proposed by Nicholas of Cusa: which means that beside him, the One, there is nothing that could limit him.

ZIRKER The axiom "individuum est ineffabile" goes without saying in medieval theology and philosophy and is also incontestable for contemporary linguistics. Predication always demands subordination into categories in which other things are already included. Hence: in fact God is ineffable. What we predicate of him rests on the fact that he provides us with language.

In the draft of the Vatican II *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, the passage concerned with the faith of Muslims contained the statement: they believe in a personal God. However, the advisers of the Council rightly referred to the fact that this statement would transgress the language of the Qur'ān: God is not 'person', he is not 'personal'. Following a word in the Qur'ān, the expression finally chosen was: he is the "living and enduring"[1]. God is ineffable because of his unity and oneness, but he gives us a language for our use. Where we transgress it, our arbitrariness interferes.

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about the necessity, in faith, to listen to one another

KHOURY Every religion should be understood in the way the followers of that religion understand it. Just as Christians, when they speak about Islam, have to ask Muslims how they understand their faith, Muslims should be open to hear how we as Christians understand our faith.

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[1] Vatican II, *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions "Nostra aetate"*, art. 3: "[...] Deum adorant viventem et subsistentem [...]".

Once in a dialogue with a Muslim where there was this openness, he was able to agree that it is the intention of Christian faith to live by faith in the trinitarian God within the framework of a monotheistic belief and profession of faith in God. Whether then our theological explanation that there is no contradiction between monotheism and the trinitarian concept of God in fact succeeds and can persuade others, is another question and can remain open. However, it is already a major step to concede to Christians that it is their intention to include nothing in their faith that contradicts monotheism. On this particular occasion, this was agreed by the Muslim, who also acknowledged the fact that the history of Christian theology clearly shows at least the intention and the endeavours made by Christians to find an appropriate language.

In these circumstances it should be possible not to accuse Christians of polytheism. The seemingly contradictory assertions of the Qur'ān could then be interpreted as a reproach addressed not to the great Christian Churches, but to the sects, which were not so careful in their thinking and their use of language.

Such an understanding approach towards each other is of course at present rather the exception. The predominant attitude among Islamic thinkers and theologians is that they are convinced that they may and must not permit thinking or speaking about it, for that might already include the beginning of a danger to monotheism. At least this is the characteristic view held by the theological school of the Ashʿariyya since the 10th century: they only use the language of the Qur'ān and shrink from seeking a deeper understanding of what they have heard. However, in such circumstances it is not always easy to build bridges towards Islam, if no ways can be found to convey to Islam that, because of the richness intrinsic to God's nature, we profess a 'differentiated monotheism', different from what we would then call the 'non-differentiated monotheism' of Islam.

in faith monotheistic – in theology exposed to polytheism?

ZIRKER   About the question of whether we Christians are seen as monotheists by Muslims, there is an interesting statement in a text written in a rather popular style by a German Muslim[2], which is distributed by the Islamic Centre in Munich. In it there is a warning against wrong arguments against Christians, which says that, with regard to the Christians with whom one has to do here, one has to proceed on the basis that they are monotheists. This text, written for the everyday use of Muslims, speaks of difficulties which Christians have with their trinitarian faith in God in their dialogues with Muslims, and also among themselves; yet they do want to be monotheists. This would be an important step forward: to convince Muslims that Christians in their faith are in fact monotheists, even though they, as Muslims, cannot share their Christian theology, because in doing so they could fall victims to the danger of polytheism.

does consistent monotheism lead towards a trinitarian way of thinking?

LEUZE   In the dialogue with Islam, should we not refer more precisely to the theological attempts to achieve an understanding of the Trinity as the fruit of a consistently understood monotheism? In a lecture at a Christian-Muslim meeting here in St. Gabriel, Karl Rahner once presented the argument: if one thinks monotheism consistently and radically, this in fact leads towards a trinitarian way of thinking.[3] Pannenberg's deliberations are of a similar kind. Could one not see this as a promising point of departure for a fruitful dialogue with Islam? If this argumentation in fact were supportive, might it then not appear to be a way of thinking possible for Islamic theologians? Conversely, Islamic theology keeps emphasizing unity, but is it really so easy to think of God as the one God?

OTT   God reveals himself to man, and this communication has logically to be accessible to the mind of the addressee. God's truth has to become acceptable and internalizable for man as addressee of the attention given. Because of this basic anthropological dimension and because God reveals himself to man in this way, it may be concluded that God in himself must be like this, for after all he communicates himself like this; the Trinity of the economy of salvation is the immanent one. Whoever tries to unfold Trinity speculatively, moves on a razor's edge between two fundamental heresies, those of tritheism and of modalism. Since tritheism is utterly mythological, a slight leaning towards modalism is still preferable: e. g. in the model of Indian Christians, understanding *sat* (being) – *cit* (consciousness) – *ānanda* (bliss) as a Brahmanic expression for Trinity; or in Saint Augustine's speculation about Trinity, the idea: the lover – the beloved – love: all these are basically monotheistic-modalistic explanations. Perhaps the Trinity is the consistent evolution of a radical monotheism.

[2] S. Ibrahim Rüschoff, *Da'wah unter Nichtmuslimen* (Schriftenreihe des Islamischen Zentrums München; 11). München, 1983.

[3] K. Rahner, "Einzigkeit und Dreifaltigkeit Gottes", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Der Gott des Christentums und des Islams* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 2). Mödling, ²1992, pp. 119–136.

BARTH On the catchword 'unity' and here again on the question of what are the philosophical implications of the respective concepts of unity: unity can be defined as seen from the outside, in which case it means that the one is totally independent of all the others. This understanding is obviously in the foreground in Islam. If, however, unity is defined as seen from the inside, then it would be imaginable to conceive of this unity as a dynamic unity constituting itself from various elements. This understanding corresponds more to trinitarian thinking.

unity towards the outside – unity towards the inside

IVANČIĆ If one is searching for a bridge which could mediate between the Christian understanding of Trinity and the Muslim conception of unity, would the idea not suggest itself of speaking not so much about the Son but rather about the Word, since, for Muslims too the 'blessed word' is in the heavens and it was Gabriel who conveyed this word to the world? They also say prayers and give the blessing using the Qur'ān.

speaking more about the Word than about the Son?

RIEDL In the New Testament there is not only the statement that God is the Creator, but also the statement that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16). Now, it is the nature of love to give itself, but where there is infinite love, it should give itself into an infinite vessel, and this cannot be the creation, because the creation is finite. Does the Qur'ān also have such fundamental statements? There cannot be three creators, but love breaks up such a monistically understood being.

'must' love give itself?

KHOURY Opposed to a 'must', in Islamic theology there is just a 'God wants to make himself known'; he wants to announce his truth – he does not need to.

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PESCHKE In this context, would one not have to put more emphasis on the fact that Christians as well as Muslims speak about God in the language of symbols: in the Qur'ān, when God is spoken of as Lord, King, Creator, or in the New Testament when God is spoken of as Father? Even though the symbols are different, this does not change the fact that we both have symbols about God. The difference between the two assertions of faith is then perhaps not so great.

speaking about God in parables

ZIRKER This rightly refers to the fact that there is a difference between speaking about the nature of God and speaking about the language we use when we speak about him. It makes it clearer that we necessarily speak about God in parables or in analogies. It would therefore be important in dialogue with Muslims that we make clear that, when we call God 'Father', when we call Jesus 'Son', we are aware of the fact that this is speaking in parables. And if the Muslims could trust that it is really understood like this by us, it would be a great step forward. They would then of course also like to know which parables we must not use in our speaking about God.

VANONI Apart from the fact that the important people in Islam are not the theologians but the jurists, it is not the task of theology in Islam to discover and expose the nature of God: it thinks about everything, but not about the nature of God. It is God's speaking in the Qur'ān, the language provided for us by God, that does this. As for the theologians, it is their task above all to present arguments justifying Islam and to give apologetic assistance to the community for itself and for its self-assertion towards the outside.

task of Muslim theology

VANONI Nevertheless, in the encounter with Islam, we have sincerely to face the question of whether we really have remained monotheists and whether Christianity's divisions are not a serious argument against this. In this context after all reference has also to be made to the fact that a theoretical monotheism can become militant. This danger became of topical interest in the history of Christianity, and this has also been the case in the history of Islam. In pre-Christian Old Testament history there are facts to be taken into consideration in this repect. How were things before theoretical monotheism developped? There was not only polytheism, but there was also the so-called monolatry or practical monotheism. Here the beautiful words from the Song of Songs are to be called to mind, when the young man says: "There are sixty queens [with Solomon] and eighty concubines, and maidens without number. My dove, my perfect one, is the only one [...]" (Song 6:8 f.). And Israel professes "The LORD is our God, the LORD alone" (Dt 6:4). The text does not say: "The LORD is one". It would benefit both sides not to forget this monolatrical element: we may say that there is but one; but we need not fight for it either – just as a lover does not have to kill all other women if he believes that his girl is his only one.

the dangers of theoretical monotheism

ZIRKER Do the one God and the one community not also demand one authority, one leadership? Is there not in the end a tendency towards totalitarianism?

theocracy or theocentrism?

DUPRÉ One could also formulate the question like this: is the issue theocracy or theocentrism? Would theocracy not have to be understood as that

form of sovereignty in which unity is created by means of power, whereas theocentrism would include that formative energy in society which lets unity grow from dedication to God, from relatedness to God, allowing room for unity in diversity – ethically and dogmatically?

RABERGER   Obviously, the idea of unity is substantially connected with a possible development into ideology. The controversy concerning this problem started in 1935 with a study presented by Erik Peterson[4], dealing with the consequences in the fields of politics and the history of ideas of Aristotle's quoting (in the *12th Book of Metaphysics)* from the *Iliad* (II 204 f.: "Polyarchy is no good, one be the sovereign"). The history of dogma has no small role in the historical outworking of this quotation: the Byzantine Emperor tried time and again to interpret monotheism subordinationistically, in order to exclude criticism of unity, power and violence, based on trinitarian thinking. In this sense monotheism may establish itself as a conception of the sovereignty of the one, who has power over all.

monotheism in danger of ideology

VANONI   From the perspective of belief in the Creator, which both religions share, it would be possible to deduce a responsibility to live peacefully together, a responsibility for peace, which cannot exist without justice either in Christianity or in Islam. Actually it would not be necessary to enforce by means of violence the unity of society and co-existence between people. Accepting that God is God would also imply that man is not God. As in the Old Testament the Pharaoh who assumes divine omnipotence saying, "The Nile is mine, and I made it" (Ezek 29:9), is told: "No, you are no god!" And each of us is no god. This means, however, that we do not have to save the world and we do not have to impose the truth – we should act within the human context. Is this not, by implication, common ground for the two religions?

God alone is God, or: no man is God

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BSTEH A.   From the time when Islamic history began, when it was said that the Christians contradicted each other because they were divided and split, there also began a history of similar disagreement and rupture in Islam. But there was also a great diversity of good things. Does this not chal-

the unity of God and the diversity of creatureliness

lenge us to distinguish more carefully in the history of our own faith between what may be a bad and what may be a good, and thoroughly legitimate plurality on the level of created things vis-à-vis the boundless infinity of God? Unlike polytheism, monotheism does indeed see reality as founded on one ultimate principle, which is infinite because it does not have to share ultimate reality with another primeval being, equally eternal, but independent and confronting it and so necessarily limiting it.

Does monotheistic faith therefore not have to be particularly sensitive to a quite legitimate plurality of created things, difficult as it may often be to differentiate this from an improper plurality based on wrongful dissent and schism? If God is the one, ultimate creative principle of infinite richness, everything that springs from this richness can only reflect it in a rich diversity. To put it more precisely, if the unity of God is to be reflected in the unity of human society, must this not, from the start, in view of man's finiteness, only be a unity within a multi-hued social diversity?

Then the encounter with Islam and its eventful history could particularly raise again for Christian faith the question concerning its own history, including both the wrongful schisms and, even more, the good diversity appropriate to created things, and the challenge to reflect about it. Does not looking into the history of religions always renew the motivation to reflect on how the holy origin of the great religions was always far richer and greater than humans have in fact been able to actualize?

There has certainly been, until the present time, a wrongful division – where one rises up against the other, like Cain and Abel. Yet, the fact that God himself creates every human being as a unique creature for himself, points to the fact that unity in the creation can only grow from the harmony of diversity. So it seems to make sense to think of being able to reflect the unity of God not in uniformity, but only in allowing all the multiple colours and diversity of creation to converge as in a mosaic.

SCHIMMEL   Ibn ʿArabī speaks of *waḥdat al-wudjūd* and *kathrat al-ʿilm*, unity of divine existence which is absolutely indivisible, and multiplicity of knowledge. However, the innumerable divine names – officially there are 99, but there are infinitely many more – have their effect on the creation. On the day of creation they broke into contingent being and they continue to exercise an influence on everything created. These innumerable names are reflected in the creatures just as light is reflected in pieces of glass and the pieces of glass, which represent contingent being, only become visible and tangible by our seeing in them the colours of the light which they reflect. Thus the ab-

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[4] E. Peterson, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum.* Leipzig, 1935.

solute unity of God and the prodigious diversity of creation undeniably belong together and the unity of God is reflected in billions and trillions of minute mirrors, each of which in its own way shows a way towards the One. This is a very beautiful picture, and it became well known in later Islamic mysticism, that is after the 13th century. But then some words of warning were added: many people see only the back of the mirror, that is matter, forgetting that it is the front which reflects the splendour of God.

one God for all humans

BSTEH A.   From the perspective of a faithful Christian theology, are there any objections to stating that it is an indisputable fact for us that there is only one God and that this God can only be one for all human beings, whether born or unborn, of every kind, and that we all believe in one God even though this God, according to the faith of Muḥammad, is the God who entrusted to him the Qur'ān as his ultimate word and for us Christians, according to our belief, he is the one we encounter in Jesus Christ? And should not our whole search, together with the followers of other religions and ideologies, be directed towards contemplating the mysteries of this one God in humility, purity and responsibility?

'God' in the context of a trinitarian language

WOLBERT   If we speak of God without defining him more precisely, should we not, as Christians, be aware of the fact that we are actually addressing the Father, rather than God in his trinitarian nature? Should not our awareness of this be particularly and openly noted in the dialogue with Islam?

ELSAS   This is sometimes done already, but care should be taken that in this context we do not isolate the Father from the other persons of the Trinity in such a way as to revive Muslims' suspicions of tritheism. And apart from this danger it is certainly very important that Christians and Muslims can speak unitedly of the Creator.

the one God and the question of Christians and Muslims praying together

KAHLERT   If God, for Christians and Muslims, and for all human beings, is one and the same, what is the consequence for the expression of faith in prayer? Is it possible for Christians and Muslims to pray together? In view of the current general state of mind among Christians and Muslims, a positive answer to this question does not yet seem appropriate. However, would we not be failing our own monotheism, if we said that the God of Muslims is another God? Or should we say that it is a man-made idol?

WOLBERT   Would Evangelicals have the same objection to shared prayer with Jews?

KAHLERT   In general not, but in the area of Christian-Muslim encounter, theological experts on the Christian side have recently expressed serious reservations.

BSTEH A.   Is it not necessary to distinguish the question of whether Christians and Muslims can say prayers together from the question of whether they believe in one and the same God? God, in whom both Christians and Muslims believe, is one, since there is but one God. The sources of prayer, however, are the concrete, and in fact very different, faith traditions of Christians and Muslims repectively. When Christians in their prayers express their faith, are not contents implied that are simply different from those Muslims express in their praying? Would not a certain uneasiness arise, if the practice of shared prayers gave the impression that Christians and Muslims in fact mean the same when they say one and the same prayer together? Would our own honesty and respect for the different tenets implied in a Muslim's and a Christian's prayer not suggest that each one in his own way, according to his faith, should pray to God, the one God of all humans? Do shared prayers not presuppose a common faith and would not praying together, when the content of the prayers is not held in common by those who are praying, give a wrong impression?

SCHIMMEL   I often read to my Muslim students in Ankara from Christian song books. When, for instance, I translate Paul Gerhardt's "Befiehl du deine Wege" [Order the ways that are your own], every Muslim can join in praying this text without hesitation, and I think that especially in this respect a mutual approach really can be practised, and that particularly in praying we get closest to one another.

There is a version of the Lord's Prayer which is handed down as a Ḥadīth. There is hardly anything to prevent a Muslim from praying the Lord's Prayer – and a Christian may well join in praying the Fātiḥa (Sūra 1), asking to be guided to the straight path. Its content is the praise of God, and it does not even refer to the Prophet. Apart from this, when one looks for instance at the collected prayers aṣ-ṣaḥīfa as-sadjdjādiyya (they have recently been published in a very beautiful English translation), there is much that can be prayed by any Christian or Jewish believer. Nevertheless, this is of course a question of one's own personal approach and understanding, and in this respect all our ways are somewhat different from one another, since the ways to God are as many as the breaths people take.

ELSAS Should not the fact that Jews, Christians and Muslims use the same name for God make us heedful in our thinking? Is there not something in this that expresses in a special way their particular homogeneousness – within the great mysterious commonalities of the religions? Does Muḥammad not belong more closely perhaps than Buddha to the Old Testament prophets and Jesus Christ?

BSTEH A. God is the one, all-embracing reality in whose presence everything has to be understood, because in him lies the truth of everything, and because in him everything lives and exists. However, where it is a matter of concrete human affairs, we understand many things very differently from each other. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, but if they go and put this prayer into the mouth of people who do not understand the spiritual path as they do, as disciples of Jesus, what will happen? This is a different matter from what was meant when we mentioned the name of God that we use in common because there can be only one God.

✦

Muslims, and the *mushrikūn* who associate something with God

ZIRKER For Islam, the real contrast is not between Muslims and polytheists, but between the consistent monotheists who are the Muslims, and those who associate something with God, the *mushrikūn*. Among these are included not only polytheists but also Jews and Christians. Although it is clear that Christians were once faithful monotheists, they are so no longer.

danger to monotheism by practice – including that of the Muslims

MEIER In the Qur'ān, on the one hand Christians are contrasted with polytheists because in principle they practise monotheism, but on the other in their practice they have fallen victim to corruption by association. The fact that pure monotheism can be corrupted by the practice of the believers also arises repeatedly within the historical operation of the Qur'ānic revelation. From the beginning, the various Islamic reform movements have spoken out against it – you Muslims, you yourselves practise *shirk* – and, up to the so-called fundamentalist movements of today, have fought against it.

ZIRKER When it is said that from an Islamic point of view Christians in their practice have corrupted monotheism, this 'practice' also includes the history of Christian dogma.

has Christianity in the course of history remained true to its origins?

VANONI Perhaps in the case of Christianity, the origins were not intended to develop as they did in practice. Karl Rahner, for example, has recently pointed to the fact that modern lip service, a mere repetition of formulas, may be heretical, because the original meaning is no longer alive in it. So it is important for us Christians, particularly in the situation of our encounter with Islam, to reflect anew on our origins and investigate how monotheism in fact is borne witness to in the documents of our faith and in the history of our Christian tradition. When in the history of Christian faith here and there we really do seem to have had several gods – and this does not appear to be an altogether imaginary charge – then we cannot accuse Muslims of misunderstanding us.

which experience has led Christians towards what Muslims consider 'association'?

BARTH Whenever Christians are accused of associating something with God, there is an implied question: according to the Christian conception, what in fact is it that is 'associated'? Professing Jesus as the Christ did not come about without good reason. After all it was not simply our idea to develop a trinitarian faith; it was an experience, a concrete encounter with the person of Jesus, that led to it. How should we speak about the moment of encounter, which Christians experience with this Jesus of Nazareth which leads them to say: "For us he is the Alpha and the Omega!", without immediately appearing to be 'anti-monotheistic'.

Islamic problems concerning the unity of God

LEUZE Though unity is always stressed in Islamic theology, nevertheless perhaps the fact is not sufficiently taken into consideration that it is not at all easy to think of God as the one God. Do not the controversies about whether the word of God should be considered to be as eternal as God, and whether it is created or uncreated, show that there is also a problem for Islam here? And is the difference between this word and the Logos, who, according to the Gospel of John, is God for us, really so great?

✦

'inlibration' of the word of God in Islam

WOLBERT What bearing does the question of the nature of the Qur'ān have upon the understanding of the absolute transcendence of God? After all one could ask, how come that God can suddenly speak Arabic? If one understands the Qur'ānic revelation in the sense of a verbal inspiration, does this not lead to the assumption of some kind of incarnation?

SCHIMMEL   In that case one can, with Harry Wolfson, speak of an 'inlibration' in which, for the Muslim, there is an inherent question similar to that of 'incarnation' for the Christian. The controversies on the position of the Qur'ān, about whether it is created or the uncreated eternal word, which shook the Islamic world in the late 8th and early 9th centuries, were in complete parallel with the christological controversies in the Near East. Here an absolute parallelism is to be noticed.

For the Muslim the Qur'ān, the Arabic text between the two covers of the book, is the actual tangible word of God, and there is a *ḥadīth qudsī,* a non-Qur'ānic word of God, which says: whoever recites the Qur'ān, it is like talking to me and I myself talking to him. It is really the whole sacramental quality of the Qur'ān, which the Muslim feels, and I think this is what one should always bear in mind. And with the term 'inlibration' we are already approaching the matter a little more closely. There are also a number of Muslim prayers, which the Christian cannot pray, in which the believer asks for the protection of God, for this and that in extensive litanies – *bi-shān qur'ān:* through the Qur'ān, through the grace of the Qur'ān ... – just as the Christian believer prays. There is also another form in honour of Muḥammad. But these prayers for the sake of the Qur'ān, through the Qur'ān, have been extremely widespread, from the Middle Ages until today.

man and book

ZIRKER   The comparison, which puts our Biblical experience – Jesus Christ as the Son of God – on the level of the experience of the Qur'ān as the Word of God, is appropriate. Muslims immediately admit this parallelism saying that it is not Muḥammad, but the Qur'ān, that we place on the level on which you, not we, interpret Jesus Christ. But, then they emphasize the difference which cannot be overcome: where we Christians see a human being, they see a book. This sounds like an advantage for us: a human being is something quite different from a book, a Scripture. However, then the Muslims say: but you do not have the living human being, you have only memories – memories only in the form of sacraments (flesh and blood, bread and wine), dogmas, and the magisterium; we have the Book, we need no magisterium, no sacraments, we need not speak of a mystery, we have no Nicaea integrated in one way or another; we have the Book, which has not been historically compiled in the way of tradition, but is the Word of God: this is what we need, this is what we read. Therefore we Christians cannot pass it over quite so easily by saying: we have the human being, they have (only) a book.

✦

a self-sufficient God?

VIRT   Allāh confronts the world in complete self-sufficiency. How does one think in Islam about a person circling as it were within himself, neither needing nor living in any relationship?

'deus absconditus' and 'deus revelatus'

SCHIMMEL   This question has been raised repeatedly in similar ways throughout the history of religions. At issue is the 'deus absconditus', who is often, however, also the 'deus revelatus'. "I was a hidden treasure and wanted to become known; therefore I created the universe – *kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan*"[5]. Over the centuries, this *ḥadīth qudsī* has been the key sentence of Islamic mystics. It is true, God is a *deus absconditus,* who simply cannot be grasped and does not need us – a hidden treasure. Yet, the idea that God from time to time wants to reveal himself plays a very important role in Islam: that he wants to be known and therefore created the universe. For Rūmī, a God, who did not take care of the world and its concerns would be a miserable God. There are both aspects of God. Above all, it is prayer that God hears and to which he responds, as is often said in the Qur'ān: call me and I will answer. If they ask you about me, say: *anā l-qarīb,* I am close to you, I hear the prayers of him who calls me (cf. also the Qur'ānic verse 50,16). God wants to be in relation to his world.

✦

approaching God, community with God?

DUPRÉ   Is there a conflict to be found between a Christian and a Muslim understanding of the idea of 'approaching God'?

ZIRKER   In questions like: are we children of God?, can God be our Father?, is Jesus the Son of God?, there is already too much of an 'approach', of an inadequate familiarity implied. According to the Islamic understanding, it is always God who approaches – as when it says in the Old Testament that God enters into a covenant with his people, that God makes his way towards his people, walks together with his people. It is the face of God that shines above us. However, God and man are not bracketed together. Even if it is said that he loves them and that they love him, from the perspective of the Qur'ān this never develops into a love relationship. Or, if it is said, I enter into a covenant with you and you enter into a covenant with me, this never becomes: 'we share a covenant'; no, they remain always two

[5] B. Furuzanfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*. Tehran, 1955, no. 70.

obligating relations that can never be made one. Here there are after all strong differences from the Biblical understanding of God and man.

DUPRÉ   Here I do not think of a speculative question. I think primarily of Muḥammad, the *ḥanīf*, who is in search of God and then discovers God as the one-and-only-one, who hears God and perceives him as the angel reveals him. I have the feeling that here a fundamental relation does break through.

ZIRKER   A relation, certainly, and a fundamental one too, but no approaching is implied.

DUPRÉ   What sense does it make then, to speak about 'approaching' at all? It has always already happened.

ZIRKER   No. There is no relation of community. To put it more distinctly: according to the Qur'ān (mysticism transcends it), it is the target of man, the target of his hope, to get into the gardens of paradise (not to heaven), in order to be a human being there among other human beings without lies, falsehood or disunity, partaking in the eternal feast.

'father' as denoting God in his relation to the world

VANONI   In order to guarantee the transcendence of God, the Old Testament-Jewish tradition treats the term 'father' very cautiously. In their religious ideas, the religions existing in Israel's environment combined many mythological elements with the concept of God (and the gods), particularly concerning his function as Creator: the gods father the world, the world grows from the deities' sperm, they appear as physical fathers of the humans, etc. In order to avoid going down this road, the Old Testament may at first employ the term 'father' very seldom only. Then it attempts, nevertheless, to introduce the idea of fatherhood into the relation of God towards the world by means of words like: he is the redeeming kinsman, as a member of the family the one who is responsible for his family, who meets the need of people who get into trouble. It has also to be more clearly realized that the term 'father' for God is used in an analogous, not a univocal sense. Finally, in view of Islam's aversion to speaking of a family relation between God and man, Christians should ask themselves whether they are after all sufficiently aware of the danger of diminishing God when applying the term to him.

'son of God' and other dangers of monotheism

KHOURY   Every identification of a human being as a son of God, even in a metaphorical sense, appears to the Qur'ān always as an immediate threat to monotheism and is rejected. When it is stated in Sūra 9,30: "The Jews call 'Uzair a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the Son of God. [...]", it is said further on that both are wrong assertions which endanger monotheism. In addition, however, the Qur'ān also sees monotheism as endangered by the practice of Jews and Christians: "they take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of God" (Qur'ān 9,31). With this the excessive power of Church structures and of the Rabbinate, who exercise a kind of sovereignty over people as if they were God, is rejected, because it implies a usurpation of God's omnipotence, and a danger to monotheism in people's everyday practice.

OTT   Does that mean then that the idea of humans being the children of God cannot be retained?

KHOURY   The Qur'ān repeatedly negates this notion. There is nobody in this world who can approach God as a child; he can do so only as a servant. Among the 99 names of God, which correspond to the various qualities of God, there is none to be found in the Qur'ān with the sense of the two assertions important for Christianity, that God is father and that God is love. It is true that God loves human beings who are good, pious, etc. But a mutual love between God and man, like that between a child and a father, is suspect and, in contrast with mysticism, is not given any attention in orthodox Islam.

a human being – the symbol of God's proximity?

ZIRKER   Might it seem appropriate to us Christians to understand Jesus as the symbol of God's presence? And could Muslims agree with our asserting this? Understanding Christ as an intense, for us perhaps unsurpassable, symbol of God's proximity – this could indeed be a legitimate interpretation for people like us, used to Christian theological thinking; perhaps in dialogue this would have to be expressed in a form more understandable than this short formulation. Yet, would it not perhaps be easier to convey in this way what we mean, even though Muslims might not be able to appropriate the expression? It would seem hardly possible for them to see in a human being a symbol of God's proximity. For man is always tempted to seek approaches towards God and to strive for ways of mediation, to be placed close to God, at the side of God, perhaps even to be seated at the right hand of God, as it says in our creed. This however leads to *shirk*, to association. Nevertheless, perhaps we can at least make them understand us better on this level.

God's signs for man *(āyāt)*

SCHIMMEL   It is God who gives man the opportunity to recognize him; he shows man his signs *(āyāt)* in the created world and in the soul of people. "Soon will

We show them Our Signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth), and in their own souls, [...]" (Qur'ān 41,53). For me this is one of the key verses of the Qur'ān, and in at least 150 passages where the word is used, it is said again and again that there are these signs and that they are here for man to recognize God, and above all his divine will. They are signposts for believers and only unbelievers do not acknowledge them.

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KHOURY Christian-Muslim dialogue, particularly when it deals with faith in the one God from the different perspectives presented here, constantly shows how necessary it is to be always in search of new approaches and to make the insights gained into one's own faith understandable to others too. It will not do simply to repeat what was thought and said in the past and quite often in totally different contexts. But in all this it should be clear to us that there also exists another form of theologically relevant shared spiritual awareness, beyond and in spite of doctrinal disagreement.

> always to
> set out anew
> on the way

The World is His Creation:
On the Relation between Transcendence and Immanence

Ludwig Hagemann

1. God – the world – man: Qur'ānic statements

At the heart of the Islamic experience of God is faith in the one and only God, which is proclaimed daily in public in the first part of the _shahāda_: "I testify that there is no god but God [...]." Islam gives such weight to the oneness of God that it rejects and condemns anything that could imply any threat, no matter how remote, to the unique divinity of God.

1.1 There is nothing whatever like unto Him (Qur'ān 42,11)

The Qur'ān time and again emphasizes God's absolute superiority to the world, his unattainable transcendence: "[...] for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory)" (2,255)[1], "No vision can grasp Him, [...]" (6,103), indeed "[...] there is nothing whatever like unto Him, [...]" (42,11). This perception of God's nature being infinitely different from worldly reality has far-reaching consequences: beyond the strict prohibition of images in Islam, the question arises of how access to God can be possible at all. If God, in his nature, is so inaccessible – the Qur'ān says: even though God allows man to recognize him, he remains unseen (57,3) – and if he totally withdraws from human knowledge, how can God then, in whatever way, be experienced by man?[2] In addition, the question also arises of his relation to the world, which is his creation.

1.2 The world is his creation

The doctrine of the One and Omnipotent Creator-God is part of the core assertion of Muḥammad's message. God created the heavens and earth, the world and man.[3] "Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds",

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[1] Cf. Qur'ān 20,114; 23,116.

[2] Cf. A. Falaturi, "Wie ist menschliche Gotteserfahrung trotz des strengen islamischen Monotheismus möglich?", in: A. Falaturi et al. (eds.), _Drei Wege zu dem einen Gott. Glaubenserfahrung in den monotheistischen Religionen._ Freiburg etc., 1976, pp. 45–59.

[3] Cf. for example Qur'ān 29,44; 46,3.

says the opening Sūra of the Qur'ān.[4] "[...] Is it not His to create and to govern? Blessed be God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds!"[5] Repeatedly, the Qur'ān reminds man that God is the originator and creator of every being: "To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: when He decreeth a matter, he saith to it: 'Be,' and it is."[6] Within the creation, man is the sign, *āya*, of divine omnipotence and compassion: "It is God Who has made for you the earth as a resting place, and the sky as a canopy, and has given you shape – and made your shapes beautiful, – and has provided for you Sustenance, of things pure and good;– Such is God your Lord. So Glory to God, the Lord of the Worlds!"[7] Everything created is oriented towards man[8]: the sun and the moon are made to calculate time[9], the day is made so that we may work for our livelihood, the night is made for rest[10], indeed, "Verily God is Full of Grace and Bounty to men. [...]"[11]. Everything that God created is good[12]; he is "the Best of Creators"[13]. Therefore, whoever understands the signs, *āyāt*, of the universe – they are "signs for men endued with understanding"[14] – will acknowledge God and worship him, for all creaturely beings are signs of him, the one Creator[15]. "Such is God, your Lord, the Creator of all things. [...]"[16]. He is the only one existing and enduring by his own nature; every creaturely being is transient: "[...] Everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face. [...]"[17].

1.3 Man: God's gerent and servant

The special importance of man, whom God obviously distinguished from all other creatures[18], is expressed in the Qur'ān by his designation as *khalīfa,*

[4] Qur'ān 1,2. – Cf. on the concept of 'creation' A. Th. Khoury, *Der Islam. Sein Glaube – seine Lebensordnung – sein Anspruch* (Herder Taschenbuch; 1602). Freiburg etc., 1989, pp. 96 f.; J. Bouman, *Gott und Mensch im Koran. Eine Strukturform religiöser Anthropologie anhand des Beispiels Allah und Muhammad* (Impulse der Forschung; 22). Darmstadt, 1977, pp. 11–16.

[5] Qur'ān 7,54.

[6] Qur'ān 2,117.

[7] Qur'ān 40,64.

[8] Cf. Qur'ān 36,71 f.; 16,80 f., etc.

[9] Cf. Qur'ān 55,5.

[10] Cf. Qur'ān 78,9–11.

[11] Qur'ān 40,61.

[12] Cf. Qur'ān 32,7.

[13] Qur'ān 37,125.

[14] Qur'ān 20,54, etc.

[15] Cf. Sūra 21,30–33; 27,86; 36,33–40; 51,20 f.; 20,53 f.; 26,6–8; 12,105; 29,44, etc. – Cf. J. Bouman, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) p. 11, fn. 1.

[16] Qur'ān 40,62.

[17] Qur'ān 28,88.

[18] Cf. Qur'ān 17,70.

which means successor, gerent, deputy, trustee[19]. In this context the Anglican theologian Kenneth Cragg has pointed to the fact that the Bible speaking of man as being God's image here in many respects has its Qur'ānic correspondence and equivalent.[20] As God's trustee on earth, man has a special responsibility. Again the Qur'ān always speaks of God providing man with the earth and all the possibilities it offers – yet only temporarily: for, according to the Islamic understanding, the earth will "be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood – for a time."[21] The eschatological dimension suggested here also implies the responsibility for the coming generations; for every human being will be called to account for what he does or does not do here and now or, in Qur'ānic terms, "for a time" he is on earth.[22]

Because everything God created is good, man must not ruin the creation temporarily entrusted to him, but must deal with it responsibly, in order to preserve it for posterity as God wants it to be.

Yet, the Qur'ān also acknowledges man's weaknesses: man was created weak, it says in Sūra 4,28, and this despite his being chosen as God's trustee on earth. He is not steadfast in himself, but rather is inconsistent and fickle: full of hope and optimism on sunny days, desperate and pessimistic in hard times.[23] Even worse: despite all the favours shown to him by God, man is ungrateful: when evil befalls him, he is loud in prayer, but once the danger is over, he turns away and holds back.[24] Therefore the warning is addressed to him: "[...] 'Short is the enjoyment of this world: the Hereafter is the best for those who do right: [...]".[25] For: "From the (earth) did We create you, and into it shall We return you, and from it shall We bring you out once again."[26] Here man's total dependence on God's creating power is expressed: although God's trustee, man is – be he ever so fickle – dependent on his origin, the Creator, who called him to life and who can recall him whenever he wills.[27]

[19] Cf. Qur'ān 2,30 ff.; 7,10 ff.; 15,28 ff.; 6,165; 39,71 ff. – J. Bouman, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) pp. 184–189; J. Black, *The Dominion of Man. The Search for Ecological Responsibility.* Edinburgh, 1970, pp. 50 f.; M. Tworuschka, *Islam.* Göttingen, 1982, pp. 43 ff.

[20] Cf. K. Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur'an. Chapters in Reflection.* London, 1973, pp. 93 ff.

[21] Qur'ān 2,36.

[22] On eschatology cf. L. Hagemann's "Eschatologie im Islam", in: A. Th. Khoury – P. Hünermann (eds.), *Weiterleben – nach dem Tode? Die Antwort der Weltreligionen* (Herderbücherei; 1202). Freiburg etc., 1985, pp. 103–120 (lit.).

[23] Cf. Qur'ān 30,36; 41,49.

[24] Cf. Qur'ān 41,51; 17,67.83; 16,53–55, etc.

[25] Qur'ān 4,77.

[26] Qur'ān 20,55.

[27] Cf. L. Hagemann, *op. cit.* (fn. 22) pp. 103–120; id., "Sterben und Weiterleben aus islamischer Sicht", in: H. Waldenfels (ed.), *Ein Leben nach dem Leben?. Die Antwort der Religionen.* Düsseldorf, 1988, pp. 67–81.

Since man, at all times, has to be ready to be recalled, i. e., ready for his death, he cannot and must not unrestrainedly exploit the creation of God which is entrusted to him; if he wants to fulfil rightly his time-limited mission within the creation, he rather has to act in a way that will enable him to face the inescapable judgement of God.

For as well as being God's trustee, man will always also remain his servant, 'abd – a term often found in the Qur'ān: "Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to (God) Most Gracious as a servant."[28] As the servant of God, 'abd allāh, man is always dependent on his Lord, whose commandments and prohibitions he has to observe. Because his Lord is "never unmindful of (Our) Creation"[29], in keeping with his nature as the servant of God, man is obliged to live in harmony with God's creation and not to elevate himself as its Lord. For there is only one who is the Lord: God, its Creator.

2. God turning to man in revelation and creation

2.1 The Qur'ān expressing the will of God

As a matter of course the attention of God finds expression in the introductory words of the individual Sūras (with the exception of Sūra 9): "In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful." The initiative comes from God. In Sūra 96,1–5, the first revealed text, God introduces himself as the creator and teacher of man: "Proclaim! (or Read!) In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, who created – Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, – He Who taught (the use of) the Pen, – Taught man that which he knew not." This "relationship with man, established by God"[30] derives its ultimate binding force from the Qur'ān. It is in the Qur'ān as the definitively valid expression of God's will that man finds that right guidance, hudā, which comes from God himself and assures man of the right path to God. Whoever submits to the prescribed norms of action can be sure that God, who called man to life, will accompany him in his providence throughout his lifetime and not forsake him when his life approaches its end.

2.2 The creation as the sign of God's omnipotence and compassion

According to the Qur'ān, the miracle of the creation betokens God. In it his omnipotence – "[...] When He decreeth a matter, He saith to it: 'Be,' and it is." (Sūra 2,117) – and his compassion find their expression. In the creation, too, God's care for man is shown. For God did not call the world and man into being once and for all, in order to leave them then to their fate. On the contrary: he accompanies his creatures with his providence. "He does it incessantly, for, at any time, he continues his creative activity".[31] In all creaturely beings God can be discovered as the creatively grounding and maintaining cause. Conseqently the relationship of God with the world is not only determined by his transcendence, but also by his immanence. God is not only the distant, transcendent God, but also the near, present God; he is nearer to man "than (his) jugular vein", says the Qur'ān (50,16).

If God is the only agent, what about man's free will? The Qur'ān gives no decisive answer to this question, and the schools which have developed in the course of time, such as Djabriyya, Mu'tazilīs, or the Ash'arīs, offer various solutions to the problem. Today the majority of Islamic scholars affirm man's free will.[32]

3. The destination of creation: submission to God

Man's free will is not only a prerequisite for his being once called to account for what he does and omits to do on earth; it is also a prerequisite for the meaning and the purpose of creation to be fulfilled: "I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me." (Qur'ān 51,56)[33]. Worshipping God, completely submitting to his will, is the ultimate destiny inherent in the creation. Thus the Qur'ān says: "So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the Faith: (establish) God's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by God: [...]" (Sūra 30,30). Living in harmony with creation thus means living in Islam, in other words, submitting utterly to God and his will, being the servant of God.

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[28] Qur'ān 19,93, etc.

[29] Qur'ān 23,17.

[30] Cf. J. Bouman, op. cit. (fn. 4) pp. 11 ff.

[31] A. Th. Khoury, "Was ist Gott für den gläubigen Muslim?", in: A. Th. Khoury – P. Hünermann (eds.), Wer ist Gott? Die Antwort der Weltreligionen (Herderbücherei; 1079). Freiburg etc., 1983, p. 76.

[32] Cf. H. Stieglecker, Die Glaubenslehren des Islam. Paderborn, ²1983, pp. 101–111; L. Gardet, Dieu et la destinée de l'Homme. Paris, 1967; W. M. Watt, Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam. London, 1948.

[33] Cf. A. Falaturi, op. cit. (fn. 2) pp. 51 ff.

4. Resumé

Although God is superior to, and his nature is different from, the world, he is not a distant God, who is withdrawn from the world and does not turn to his creatures. On the contrary: he is the "Protector of those who have faith" (Qur'ān 3,68) and he alone can offer a friendship that saves (cf. Qur'ān 18,44). This means that the absolute transcendence of God is not weakened by his presence-in-the-world through revelation and creation and his acting in favour of the world in his divine providence, but is correlative to his immanence. The transcendence and immanence of God do not abolish each other; they are rather grounded in the kindness and mercy of God, which are creative and support everything that is.

Man and His Ranking in the Creation:
On the Fundamental Understanding of Islamic Anthropology

Rotraud Wielandt

Sources of Islamic anthropology

If we are to reflect on the fundamental understanding of Islamic anthropology, the question that has to be clarified first is: where is this fundamental understanding articulated and to which sources should we refer if we want to describe it? There is no doubt that, for Muslims, the text of the Qur'ān is the indispensable normative basis of their concept of man. Nevertheless we cannot adequately comprehend the understanding of man in Islam only by considering the explicit utterances in the Qur'ān concerning man. For Islamic anthropology has always developed from Muslims' interpretation of the Qur'ān, and, in the course of history, this did not always lead to the same conclusions. Hence, if grasping Islamic anthropology is expected to enable us to hold a better dialogue with contemporary Muslims, then it is important not only to follow the text of the Qur'ān in itself, but also to take into account how the understanding of the Qur'ān has developed up to now. This understanding of the Qur'ān is a process and historically changeable. Some remarkable new emphases have emerged during the 20th century particularly concerning anthropology, and these will be taken into account in the following presentation.

Man as a creature and object of God's providence

According to Islamic belief, as established in the Qur'ān, man is – and this is generally known – the creature of God. However, what exactly does this mean?

In the Qur'ān the idea is strongly emphasized that man owes his existence, i. e., every single moment of it, to the creative act of God. This not only in the sense that God once, at the beginning of human history, called the human species into being. Rather, in the Qur'ān the conviction is expressed that every individual human, in his ontogenesis, directly originates in the creative act of God, and that not only does every human being receive

his/her life as a gift of God, but that beyond this God is the direct originator of the various stages in the development of every human individual in his/her pre-natal existence. For example: "Man We did create from a quintessence (of clay); then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature. [...]" (Qur'ān 23,12–14). The process is similarly described in several other passages.[1] The fact that man already owes himself to God before his birth in all the individual phases of his development points, according to Qur'ānic understanding, to how much attention God has particularly given to this creature from the beginning, and how skilfully he has created him/her.

Beyond this man is, according to the Qur'ān, during his whole life on earth, the object of special divine care. God arranged the world in such a way that man has in it at his disposal everything he needs in order to live. On the one hand this applies to nature, whose elements are arranged in such a way that man derives from them food, protection from the inclemency of the weather, units of time, and other necessary things. And there are also other objects of human need, which we would, from our perspective, hardly attribute to God's creative power. Thus it is said, for instance, that God made houses for people to dwell in, tents easy to handle, and also shirts to protect them against heat.[2] Furthermore, in the Qur'ān God is apostrophized as the teacher of man, who taught him, among other things, to use the pen.[3] Thus we are here confronted with a concept of creation that is, in comparison with the Old Testament, more comprehensively understood, inasmuch as it considers many things which we normally count among the achievements of human civilization to be the result of God's activity as Creator.

The special status of man among the creatures

It is also clearly stated in the Qur'ān that God gave man a special standing among his creatures. In verse 70, Sūra 17, God says for instance: "We have honoured the sons of Adam [wa-karramnā banī Ādama] [...]; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our Creation." In the course of history Muslim exegetes have developed various ideas about what exactly is meant here by "special favours". Today the dominant view among them is that this means that God himself, from the first, invested man with a particular dignity by virtue of his being human, prohibiting degrading treatment by other humans.

In addition, the Qur'ān also contains many other references to this special status of man. Thus for instance, at the beginning of human history, the angels were ordered by God to prostrate themselves before Adam. All of them did so except Satan, who refused to prostrate himself because he considered himself to be a nobler creature than man, whereupon he was immediately cursed and the curse was to remain on him until the Day of Reckoning.[4] Furthermore, the Qur'ān narrates that the angels had raised objections to the position God wanted to give to man on earth, because they foresaw that this creature would make mischief there. According to the Qur'ān, God then put the angels to shame for the sake of man, by teaching Adam the names of all things and afterwards asking the angels to tell him these names, whereupon they had to admit their ignorance.[5] This means that every creature has the standing God gives it and since it was God's sovereign will to give man an exalted position, even the angels have to accept it.

Man as the servant and witness of God

Why, in fact, was man granted this exalted position? God created man, this the Qur'ān maintains unmistakably, not simply "in jest" – 'abathan[6], but because of a calling he has to follow: man is to serve Him, to be His servant, 'abd. For Islamic anthropology, the destiny of man to be God's servant or God's slave is so fundamental that in Arabic religious language the word 'abd, 'servant' or 'slave', has often been and is still used as a synonym for 'human being'. For those who grew up in the Christian tradition, the idea that the relationship between man and God is to be understood primarily as that of a slave towards his master, is in general not accessible without difficulty. For Christians it would be natural to judge this concept in the light of the Pauline contrast between slaves and children of God, as expressed in

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[1] Concerning them see R. Paret, *Der Koran. Konkordanz und Kommentar.* Stuttgart, 1971, p. 353.

[2] Sūra 16,80 f.

[3] Sūra 96,4.

[4] Sūra 38,71–78, and 15,26–35 alike.

[5] Sūra 2,30–33.

[6] Sūra 23,115.

Rm 8:15 and Gal 4:7. This antithesis establishes for Paul, and hence in the consciousness of Christians, a parallel with other antitheses, especially that of the law on the one hand, and freedom and grace on the other, whereby the law is taken as a burden, a heavy yoke, forced onto man. From the Qur'ānic perspective, however, understanding the law in this way is unacceptable. Seen in the light of the Qur'ān, the divine law in itself is grace, insofar as it shows man the way he should follow according to the will of God for his own best interest in the world and for his eternal salvation; this law frees man from his insecurity about how to orient himself in this world in order to attain his well-being in this world and his salvation in the next. Hence, being allowed to be God's slave who fulfils the revealed law is, in Qur'ānic terms, completely a reason for joy.

According to the Qur'ān, man as the slave of God is also called to bear witness to God in the world. Contemporary Islamic theologians usually base this mission on Sūra 7, verse 172, a passage of the Qur'ān recorded in the annals of history as "the verse calling to bear witness – āyat al-ishhād". Here a scene is portrayed which, according to the Qur'ān, took place after the creation, but before the beginning of human history: God makes all the descendants of Adam who are still to be born appear before him and calls them to bear witness that he is their Lord; they do this, whereby a primeval pact is concluded, henceforth obliging every human being to bear witness to God. The idea that man is by nature called to bear witness to the one God is strongly emphasized in the work of the Moroccan philosopher Mohammed Aziz Lahbabi, *Le personnalisme musulman* (Paris, 1964), as the fundamental principle of Islamic anthropology and is developed in view of its ethical consequences.

Man as the vicegerent of God

Furthermore man is, as contemporary Muslim theologians in general assume on the basis of an appropriate exegesis of Sūra 2, verse 30, destined to be God's vicegerent on earth. In the Arabic original of the Qur'ān, God says to the angels: "I will create a *khalīfa* on earth." The Qur'ānic term *khalīfa* has a double meaning. It can mean 'successor' and 'vicegerent'; if it is to be understood in the sense of 'successor', then comparable passages within the Qur'ān, showing other derivations of the same linguistic root, suggest the conclusion that, according to the original meaning of the text, what would most probably be meant is that man would succeed crea-

tures of a different kind, which have since disappeared.[7] In the Islamic tradition both interpretations, 'successor' and 'vicegerent', had been considered for a long time, as for instance still at the end of the 19th century by the Egyptian reform theologian Muḥammad 'Abduh, well-known as a Qur'ān commentator. Generally speaking, however, a far-reaching consensus has developed among Muslim theologians that in Sūra 2, verse 30 *khalīfa* means 'vicegerent', i. e., the vicegerent of God on earth.

Man as vicegerent is seen again in the context of another Qur'ānic statement on man, which is to be found in Sūra 33, verse 72: after God had offered the *amāna*, i. e., 'the good to be entrusted', to various other works of his hands – the heavens, the earth and the mountains – which refused to accept this good, man alone was bold enough (it is implied there) to receive it. But what is this *amāna*, this entrusted good (as one has to ask with hindsight) whose acceptance distinguished man from all other creatures? In the course of the centuries this question has occupied Qur'ānic exegesis intensely. Medieval Qur'ānic interpreters in particular proposed two interpretations: they identified the entrusted good either with obedience to the commandment of God (which man willingly accepted), or with commitment, *taklīf*, to the norms of the Islamic law, the *sharī'a*. In the course of the 20th century, however, another interpretation has come to the fore, namely that the *amāna* accepted by man, i. e., the good entrusted to him by God, is freedom of moral decision. This idea was first rigorously elaborated by Mohammed Iqbāl, the Indo-Muslim philosopher, in his famous *Six Lectures on the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1930).[8] It was then taken up by many other Muslim thinkers and supported in public, so that in contemporary Islam's concept of man it has found fairly general acceptance.

According to all the characteristics of man mentioned above and in keeping with his position in the world, it is also unquestionable in the Islamic perspective that the special dignity given to him by God is due to every human individual. It has to be kept in mind that this is completely a 'dignity without deserving', and it is usually associated with the term 'dignity of man' in Western philosophy of law, which means a dignity man does not have to earn by special achievements in fulfilling his duty, but

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[7] Cf. in this context R. Paret, "Signification coranique de *ḫalīfa* et d'autres dérivés de la racine *ḫalafa*", in *Studia Islamica* 31 (1970) 211–217.

[8] Printed Delhi, 1974, p. 95.

which is rather part of his human constitution given by God and inherent in it.

According to Islamic understanding, how has God equipped man, who is distinguished by this dignity, for playing his special role in the world? This question will be dealt with necessarily briefly here by reference to two fundamental problems, one of which has been vividly understood and discussed in the Islamic tradition itself, while the other arises initially from the perspective of the Christian observer, and not to the same degree from within the inner Muslim perspective.

The problem of freedom

One of these two fundamental problems is that of human freedom. Widespread and often very differentiated controversies took place, especially in the first centuries of Islamic theology's development, concerning the question of whether, as to their moral quality, the deeds of man are predestined by God or whether they are a matter of man's free will. In the early 'Abbāsid era, in the late 8th and the 9th century of the Christian era – partly thanks to the support of the rulers – the rationalist theology of the Mu'tazilīs dominated for some time. They held the opinion that one had to proceed on the basis of the moral freedom of man; only on this assumption could the justice of God at the Last Judgement be affirmed, because otherwise God would hold man responsible for deeds for which he could not be blamed, since they would after all be determined in their quality by God himself. Among the majority of religious thinkers, however, – with the exception of the Shī'īs – the opinion became predominant after the 10th century of the Christian era, particularly through the influence of the theologian al-Ash'arī and his school, that the deeds of man are ultimately predestined by God. Until the late 19th century this opinion remained in general uncontested in Sunnī Islam. Since the early 20th century, however, even among Sunnī thinkers, one may observe a tendency to reaffirm man's freedom of will and action and only to consider as predestined by God clearly unavoidable critical occurrences such as incurable diseases or natural catastrophes.

This change towards a new affirmation of man's freedom was supported by the longing for an activist political ethic, more and more felt during the colonial period: an increasing number of Muslims strongly desired to shake off the rule of the European colonial powers, to which the major part of the Islamic world had been subjected since the middle of the 19th century. Motivating oneself and others in this direction would, however, hardly have been possible given the premise that the conduct which brought to the Europeans their supremacy, as well as one's own failures, implying one's own inferiority, were simply predestined by God. One rather needed a paradigm for the explanation of human actions which could nourish the hope that it was possible to change the given political constellation in favour of the Muslim side by taking one's own stand to regain self-determination. In this context the affirmation of man's free will and his freedom of action was obviously more appropriate than a comprehensive belief in predestination, which, in that situation, could have easily resulted in resignation.

Man's capacity to be good

The second problem that we shall mention here concerning man's qualification for playing his special role in the world is his fundamental capacity to be good. This seems to be particularly important from the perspective of Christianity, since the Christian tradition is based on the belief that man's capacity to be good is deeply flawed, specifically by the phenomenon of original sin. In many passages the Qur'ān certainly speaks of man's weakness, reproaches his tendency to be ungrateful towards God and forgetful of God's bountifulness; it records that man tends towards self-glorification, but then again often falls victim to pettiness; he is further characterized as belligerent. In the Qur'ān and in the later Muslim religious awareness, sin in these and other forms is a reality taken all in all very seriously as offence against the revealed will of God.

In all this, however, in the Qur'ān and in Muslim belief, it is always assumed that with the help of God sin can in principle be avoided by man, or, if it does happen, that its consequences can be overcome by man's being penitent and God's mercy extending towards him. The perception of a fall that permanently impairs the whole of mankind in the capacity to be good does not exist in Islam; consequently, there is also no need of a magnanimous salvific initiative by God in history, beyond his fundamental readiness to forgive every penitent sinner as long as he lives. The individual human being's sin, if repented of in good time, merely retains this episodic character which in the Qur'ān also characterizes Adam's sin – he repented, God mercifully turned towards him again and, apart from the loss of the amenities of the Paradise garden, everything was as it had been before.

The Qur'ān certainly mentions that the human soul tends towards proposing wicked deeds or talking man into them: "[...] the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil [...] – *inna n-nafsa la-ammāratun bi-s-sū'*" (Sūra 12, verse 53), but according to the Qur'ān, man need not give way to the temptation emerging from his own soul; he can very well resist it, by remembering the commandment of God, and thus consistently refraining from sin. Man's capacity to be good is clearly therefore on the whole seen more optimistically in Islam than in Christianity.

Questions and Interventions

amāna – a key concept of Islamic anthropology?

BSTEH P. What is the importance ascribed to the breath, which God, according to Qur'ānic tradition, breathed into man? And is not *amāna,* in Islamic anthropology as a whole, to be seen as a key concept?

SCHIMMEL This is certainly to the point. Over the centuries, Muslim theologians have repeatedly tried to define more closely the scope of the concept *amāna.* On the one hand, as Mrs. Wielandt said, it enables man to act from within in accordance with the divine law which man received from God. To many mystics *amāna* means the capacity to love God. This understanding is part of the mystic tradition.

To Iqbāl this concept means human freedom. In a certain sense it is also understood by him as the principle of individualization, as man's capacity to develop himself to the highest level possible – which, in Islam, is indicated through the various stages of the development of the soul; through the *amāna,* man is able to develop all his innate talents, in order to reach a high level where God immediately grants him the grace to ask questions and receive answers.

of God's breath in man

In the passage where the breath of God is mentioned, which he breathes into man when he creates him (15,26–29; 38,71 f.), the Qur'ān certainly speaks of the special role of man, which is given to him at the creation: this breath of God is indeed most important, whether it is understood as acceptance of the law, as love, or as individualization, or as human freedom and dignity.

man – exalted above all creatures

If God says that he breathed his breath into Adam, then it means that man bears within himself part of the divine nature, and it is precisely the fact that man is granted the divine breath which exalts him above all other creatures. First the angels refuse to fulfil God's commandment and to prostrate themselves before the newly created Adam, but then they do so after all, with the exception of Iblīs, who says, *"anā khayrun minhu –* [...] I am better than he [...]," because he was created from fire, whereas Adam was created from clay (Qur'ān 38,76).

Iblīs – he who does not prostrate himself before man

Even so some mystics saw the refusal of Iblīs, Satan, to prostrate himself before Adam as complying with the eternal will of God that nobody should bow down to a created being. In this Iblīs was the only one who

stayed true to absolute monotheism. But by disobeying the order of God to prostrate himself before Adam he was unfaithful only to a specific word of God spoken at a specific moment in time. A part of Islamic mysticism therefore sees him as the great lover, the great obedient one.

In general, however, Iblīs appears as the representative of a one-sided imitation, because he only saw the form of clay and not the divine spark, and it is his great sin not to have recognized the divine element in man.

chance of and danger to man But why did the whole creation, with the exception of man, refuse to accept this *amāna* and act accordingly? Why did God not burden the lion and the elephant, who are much stronger than man, with these laws? Why are gazelles not punished for their deeds, why do they not have any responsibility before God? This is the problem that continuously occupied Islamic theology.

Yet it is also interesting that in this context (33,72) the Qur'ān says about man, "[…] he was indeed unjust and foolish". This means that, although man had negative qualities, God granted him the grace of this *amāna* and thus gave him the chance, as far as it is possible for him, to develop upwards. This is one of the interpretations to be found in modern Islamic theologians: in spite of man's inborn weakness, God took the risk of entrusting all this to him. *amāna* derives from the same root as our amen. It is something connected with faith, *īmān*, fidelity, and trust: entrusted good received in faith.

This strange double position of man as a creature created from clay, endowed with all the possibilities to be good or wicked, is very impressively expressed in a brief sentence of Mawlānā Rūmī. At the beginning of a chapter of his prose text *Fīhi mā fīhi* he says: one took the wing of an angel and tied it to the tail of a donkey. This means, man can, if he is good, ascend higher than the angels, and if he is wicked, fall deeper than the animals. For man is the only creature endowed with so much free will that, if he is striving in the ways of God, he can develop higher, can become higher than the angels, who are immobile in their perfection and cannot develop any further. If, however, he gives way to the wicked, beastly possibilities that are intrinsic to him, he falls deeper than the lowest animal. Therefore it is said in Sūra 95: "We have indeed created man in the best of moulds, then do We abase him (to be) the lowest of the low" (vv. 4 f.).

man as the image of God? **LEUZE** Although in the Qur'ān (as in the Old Testament) man's special status is mentioned, nevertheless man is not spoken of as the image of God. Does this arise from the general view held in Islam that the distance between God and man is too great for an assertion of this kind to be possible, or is this merely accidental?

WIELANDT In the Qur'ān the term 'God's image' is not to be found. Nevertheless, in the Islamic tradition it is not completely absent, although in the Hadīth it is only supported by an authority which in the Muslim view is not classified as the most trustworthy. The reason for this can be seen in the fact that in the concept 'image of God' the temptation could be inherent to blur the borderline between creature and Creator which is so strongly emphasized in Islam, and to present man as god-like, which could call into question the uniqueness of God.

not image but *khalīfa*, the vicegerent of God Structurally, in Islam the same position is in fact held by the concept 'vicegerent of God', which has become more prominent theologically, although with regard to its concrete consequences, the difference is not that great. For example, contemporary Muslim theologians interpret man's being the vicegerent of God as meaning that man has to manifest exactly those qualities towards his fellow humans which God manifests towards man, above all justice and mercy, so then one is not too far away from the concept of 'image of God'.

as a *khalīfa* also co-creative? Particularly in the 20th century, for instance in Iqbāl, the understanding of man as the vicegerent of God, as a *khalīfa*, gets associated with the idea that it implies a participation in the Creator's creativity. Alongside the strong need that is felt to emphasize the creative power of God, the idea of a co-creative activity on the part of man in the whole process of creation is articulated in various ways in the Islamic tradition, when it is said, for example, that when plants are cultivated and animals reared, God has created this or that plant etc. through the hands of man. Thus God allows man to participate in his work, the creation.

created in his image **ZIRKER** Islamic exegesis has repeatedly taken up the Hadīth in which it is said that Muḥammad spoke about God having created Adam in his image.[1] One may ask how far the interpretation has gained acceptance that 'in his image' in fact means in Adam's image: God designs an image of Adam and creates him according to this image. In any case, *khalīfa*, the vicegerent of God, is not

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[1] For instance, al-Ghazzālī, *Die Nische der Lichter.* Hamburg, 1987, A 62.

essentially the same as the image of God, since a very different being, which is not created in the image of God, could also be the vicegerent of God.

khalīfa –
vicegerent and/or
successor?

WIELANDT Qur'ānic usage of the term *khalīfa* is open to both interpretations: vicegerent and successor. The term *khalīfa* itself and verb forms derived from the same root are to be found in several passages in the Qur'ān.

For some of them the meaning 'vicegerent' can be assumed. In some others, however, *khalīfa* evidently seems to be understood in the sense of 'successor', for instance, when it is said that formerly there were creatures similar to the *djinn*, who, because of their sins, were swept away by a divine Judgment and were replaced by other creatures – whereupon the latter became the *khalīfa*s of the former.

and the level of
practice?

KOPECKY What about the concrete practice of human actions against the background of this 'dogmatic' view of man as *khalīfa*? For instance, if a human being, through what he does, destroys the creation of God?

WIELANDT From the perspective of Islamic theology there is no reason whatsoever to consider that any conduct of a human being can be justified on the basis of his position as *khalīfa*. The human individual rather has to decide freely whether and how adequately he does or does not carry out his *khalīfa*-role in his moral conduct.

man created to
glorify God?

RABERGER Did God create man for the sake of his divine glory or did he create man for the sake of man? Was man created as the servant of God or as human being for the sake of his own dignity?

servant with God
as his sovereign
– free from
worldly powers

ZIRKER God needs no creature, and being absolutely without any need, God does not even create man for his own glory. It was simply an act of his free will. Why then did he create man? It may seem that there is no need at all for man to speculate about it, since it is God who created him and not he himself. There is no doubt, however, that human beings are created to share life with each other in a humane manner. Since man is created as the servant of God, this opposes the claims of any other sovereigns who may exist. Man is a servant because he is subject to the sovereignty of God – freed by him from all other powers who also want to be sovereigns. A caliph who does not understand himself to be an administrator of the word of God, would to the same degree also have no claim to sovereignty over his subjects. Since a servant's subjection to the sovereignty of God in this sense means his emancipation from all other claims to sovereignty apart from God's, it also implies fundamentally a right to resist if another worldly power demands something that is against the will of God and against his laws. In the discussions about this that have taken place in the course of history, however, it was also put forward that a bad caliph is still always better than a state of anarchy.

'abd – expression
of highest
position possible

SCHIMMEL For a Muslim, understanding man as the servant or slave of God does not imply any degradation, but on the contrary describes the highest possible position that a Muslim can attain. Theologians as well as mystics did not tire of referring to this. Indeed, the term *'abduhū*, servant of God, is to be found twice in the Qur'ān, in both cases applied to the Prophet; in Sūra 17, verse 1: *"subḥāna lladhī asrā bi-'abdihī*– Glory to (God) who did take His Servant for a Journey by night [...]"* (an allusion to the Prophet's journey to the heavens), and the second time in Sūra 53, verse 10, where again in the context of a visionary experience Muḥammad is called *'abduhū*.

From both these Qur'ānic passages, mystical theology deduced that *'abduhū*, servant of God, is the highest rank a human being can attain, for it is specifically in the context of these two visionary experiences that the Prophet is given this title. In Islam, however, this led to the very important distinction that Muḥammad, although in the context of mystical piety he again becomes a logos-like figure, is not acknowledged as being a son. Thus, even for the Prophet, the highest term that can be applied to him remains 'slave of God'. Even at the moment of the highest visionary experience, the slave always remains the slave, and the Lord remains the Lord. According to Sūra 53,8 f., man can certainly approach to within two bows' lengths of God, or, if the word refers to the two halves of the bow, to within one bow's length, but, any thought of a unity of their natures or of being a son of God is excluded in this passage by emphasizing the term *'abduhū*.

When speaking of the concept of man in Islam, great emphasis should be laid on this *'abd* and *'abduhū*, which is so central in Islam. How far this is from implying a degrading meaning emerges also from the frequent use in the Islamic world of proper names with *'abd*, like *'Abdallāh*, the servant of God, *'Abdarraḥmān*, the servant of the Merciful, etc. In fact all 99 names of God can be used in this way with *'abd*. For the believer a certain relationship is then established between the particular human being and God, because one hopes that the person who calls himself the servant of the

Compassionate will also receive something of the compassionate character of God, and the same applies to the other names. Thus the word 'abd, also in its feminine form ama, plays an extraordinary role in the whole structure of Muslim thinking.

the dignity and role of women
DOGAN The Qur'ān speaks of man as the creature of God and it speaks of his dignity and his destiny to bear witness to God. In this context is 'man' to be understood as an oriental term for the 'male', or is the dignity of the female on the same level as that of the male and can she too bear witness of God? Does the Qur'ān mention an Eve?

SCHIMMEL Although Eve is not referred to by name in the Qur'ān, she is certainly assumed to exist. And according to the original Islamic understanding, Adam and his wife ate at the same time from the fruit that Satan made appear pleasant to them. Thus they both have an equal share in the primordial sin. The Semitic term for man – and this also applies to Persian – is not a generic name, but 'the man' is the man of God, the one who strives on his way towards God. That this happens to be masculine does not prevent women from being included as well. There are many passages in mystical literature where such statements are frequently quoted, in which the subjects are pious women. We may refer to a Qur'ānic text: "[...] They (i. e., the wives) are your garments and ye are their garments. [...]" (Sūra 2,187). Garment means 'alter ego'. Thus exchanging garments means exchanging personality. If not only are women a garment for man, but men are also a garment for women, this shows rather distinctly that the woman has the same role. She certainly has the same duties, such as saying prayers, giving alms, fasting during Ramaḍān, and the pilgrimage. She is equally responsible and will equally be called before the Judgment of God. And just as she is bound to fulfil all the commandments, she can of course also bear witness.

ZIRKER In the perspective of the Qur'ān the dignity of the woman is, in general, seen as equal to that of the man. Unlike the Biblical tradition, there is not in the Qur'ān that particular cause for disregarding woman: the statement that in paradise the serpent seduced the woman first and man only through the woman. This played quite a considerable role in the Christian tradition, especially in medieval ethics, and here and there also entered into the Islamic tradition, but it is not to be found in the Qur'ān. The serpent – Iblīs, Satan – addresses both, Adam and his wife, equally.

IVANČIĆ Why did God create the man and then the woman? And are they both vicegerents of God?

WIELANDT Similar to the Biblical tradition, the Qur'ān says: God did not want humans to be alone and for this reason he created them with the capacity to have a family. And similar to the Jewish-Christian tradition, in the Islamic tradition the man is the human prototype. The idea that women are also vicegerents of God has so far found rather little expression.

the woman – a witness to God
With regard to the question of whether woman can also bear witness to God, it has basically to be answered in the affirmative. In the Islamic tradition there are even most impressive examples for this, of which the female mystic Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya is only one example. In the context of social development – as here in Europe – this role of the human being as a witness was initially applied to the man because, as has been said before, he is considered as the human prototype. But there is no obstacle in principle in Qur'ānic anthropology to attributing to the woman the same role within the frame of her capabilities.

... and the social reality
What then about the dignity of woman, as it is established in the creation, and about the concrete disadvantages, for instance in Islamic law or the social reality of Islamic countries today? Concerning the attempt of Muslim authors to prove that there are in principle no objections to the dignity of woman as a human being, the question does ultimately have to be raised of whether the problems broached here have really been solved in Islamic anthropology. In fact, do we not have to raise the question of whether a Qur'ānic assertion like the statement that in principle women have a status below men (2,228; cf. 4,34) can really be understood to mean equal human dignity?

The fact that social reality actually lags behind fundamental norms in many respects has also been widely discussed on the Muslim side, and the underlying reality is nothing new for Europe too. The relatively equal rights granted to women, as we experience it in the Europe of today, is without doubt a very recent development. So it is only fair to concede to Muslims that such a development presupposes certain social conditions and takes time. Muslim apologetics, by the way, have often tried to demonstrate that the regulations in Islamic law concerning the situation of the woman, as they have developed since medieval times, do more justice to her rightly understood needs than anything else to be imagined in the field of law and that there are no objections in principle to the human dignity of women. Apart from this, it seems generally worth reflecting on whether and to what extent our own social conditions should be considered as the standard for a world-wide ideal.

SCHIMMEL   Going through centuries of Islamic literature in the various languages, one finds that there are many women who not only played an important role in the general development of culture, writing, the arts, etc., but who are also venerated as saints, as for instance Rābiʿa of Baṣra (died 801), who is to be seen as the first woman who taught the pure love of God in Islamic mysticism. In this respect woman really has equal rights, and on the day of the primordial covenant, when God said to the human beings who were not yet created: "*alastu bi-rabbikum* – 'Am I not your Lord?'", and they replied: "*balā shahidnā* – 'Yea! We do testify!'" (Qurʾān 7,172), there were of course just as many uncreated women present as there were men.

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<div style="float:left">on the concept
of conscience</div>

VIRT   Is there in Islam something like an elaborated concept of conscience?

SCHIMMEL   The answer to this question is absolutely in the affirmative. Referring, for example, to the works of Muḥāsibī, an orthodox mystic of the 9th century, one finds a detailed doctrine on the soul's development and on *an-nafs al-lawwāma* (Sūra 75,2), a term which we can best translate as conscience: that is the reproaching soul, the soul that reminds humans that they have sinned or could sin, until they finally reach the stage where they have attained "*an-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna* – the soul that returns to God, joyful and pleasing to his sight" (Sūra 89,27 f.), where they act in harmony with God. The idea of the conscience and of being responsible for one's own sins can also be deduced from the Qurʾān. It is always said that man repents because he knows that he has acted against what is best for him, and there is a word that, from early on, has been attributed to the Prophet, "*istafti qalbaka* – ask your heart for a counsel's opinion": when the heart is calm, it is good, when the heart is worried, it is bad. Thus the idea that the heart of man is the ultimate sensorium to discern between what is good and what is wicked is rooted in Islam from its very early days.

<div style="float:left">freedom of
religion in Islam?
freedom of
conversion?</div>

DUPRÉ   Other religions are of interest in the history of religions for the very reason that they exist. However, an interreligious dialogue, from theological-philosophical perspectives, gains importance in that truth, freedom and dignity get in touch. And in my view the chance of this getting in touch is closely connected with my opportunity to be who I think I have to be on the basis of what my conscience decides and the insight I have reached. So the question arises: having to be also means being allowed to convert oneself, having to convert oneself. Within the frame of Islamic anthropology, how does one have to see the idea or the possibility that somebody converts to Christianity? From the Christian point of view it is certainly the same problem as how one has to see the possibility that somebody wants to convert to Islam. Yet, I would like to know what this looks like from the other side. And do I not also gain from the answer to this question one of the fundamental criteria for judging the possibility of an inter-religious dialogue and shared reflections?

WIELANDT   The problem of being allowed to convert from any religion to any other, or in other words, the problem of religious freedom, is judged differently by contemporary Muslims. There is a frequently quoted Qurʾānic verse: "*lā ikrāha fī d-dīn* – Let there be no compulsion in religion [...]" (2,256). Nevertheless it is a fact that in Islamic law, as it has gradually developed since the early Middle Ages, a conversion from Islam could not take place without possibly life-threatening sanctions. However, it has to be accepted that quite a number of contemporary Muslims say that this was a protective measure which, based on certain Qurʾānic ordinances, entered into the system of Islamic legal thinking in a situation when the Islamic religious community was still exposed to strong threats from without. In a situation where this is obviously no longer the case, individual conversions could now be allowed without any sanctions being imposed. In the public opinion of Islamic countries such conversions are still a great problem and not simple to make, even from a social perspective.

The problem can be finally resolved only if it is settled on the level of reasoning. And this is what some contemporary Islamic thinkers try to do, as for instance Mohamed Talbi who asks quite clearly: "What exactly is the faith that God wants man to have?", and gives an equally clear answer: "Also according to Islam this can only be the self-willed faith."[2] According to Talbi, a faith that is not self-willed but imposed, is no faith at all. Because God wants man to have only a self-willed faith, he has basically also set him free to follow what in God's view is an error, which may happen, and subsequently man cannot forcibly prevent his fellow man from converting to a religion such as, for example, Christianity. But this position is very far from being shared by everyone today. It was only meant to indicate that arguments of

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[2] See in this context e. g. M. Talbi's essay "Islam et occident au-delà des affrontements, des ambiguités et des complexes", in *Islamochristiana* 7 (1981), above all pp. 68 f., and his lecture held in March 1986 in Tübingen "Religionsfreiheit – eine muslimische Perspektive", in the meantime printed in: J. Schwartländer (ed.), *Freiheit der Religion. Christentum und Islam unter dem Anspruch der Menschenrechte*. Mainz, 1993, especially pp. 58 f.

this kind do exist and meet with a certain amount of approval. The question is, how many can follow them and against what background.

Whether this position gains ground is not of course only a question of intellectual development, but also a question of the political and social conditions in which the principle is advocated. Whether one likes to see conversions from one's own religious community, or at least tolerates them even if they are not wanted, very much depends also on whether, for example, one is aware of being threatened by non-Islamic powers or authorities, and one may assume that the less this is the case, the more probable it is that an appropriate way of dealing with the principle of religious freedom in the Islamic world will develop more widely.

worried about the salvation of non-Muslims?

KAHLERT   Although there is no compulsion in religion, nevertheless one finds in the Qur'ān threats about the Day of Judgement for those who do not walk in the path of Islam. Should a non-Muslim expect his Muslim partner in dialogue to be very worried about his eternal salvation?

SCHIMMEL   He most certainly is. Every Muslim, simply because it is his or her persuasion that he or she has in his hand the final word of God, is interested in persuading his or her fellow men/women, so that they do not fall victim to the wrath of God. So there is no doubt that it is correct to say that by his or her very nature every Muslim is a missionary and that it is not easy to find the right way of dealing with what is basically so well meant and presented with much persuasion.

on the task of 'ratio' in Islam

BARTH   In some respects Islam seems to be very rational. One finds that it excludes various intellectual difficulties which Christianity expects people to accept, for example, concerning the fall of man and the doctrine of the Trinity. The result is a concept of man that is relatively easy to accept. What is the position of human rationality in Islam?

WIELANDT   In fact, in the Qur'ān many appeals are made to human reason, for example with reference to the signs of God in nature, which should make man sure that he owes everything he is and has to a creator God.

Yet it has to be underlined that the 'reason' which is appealed to here is not identical with the 'logos' of Aristotelian philosophy, or with the 'ratio' of the European Enlightenment. This is somewhat blurred when contemporary Muslims use these terms and say, "Come and see: in principle, modern rationality is already called for in the Qur'ān." This is not quite so. In Islam, an emphasis on the rational nature of man only started to play a

greater role subsequent to the reception of the philosophy of antiquity, which, on the level of theology, was then introduced by the theological school of the Mu'tazilīs.

human ethics vis-à-vis the divine will

VIRT   In Islam there is only one criterion for human actions, and one alone to which man is responsible: the will of Allāh. In the whole of Christian tradition, there is the problem of a voluntaristic and a rational ground for ethics. What about the Islamic tradition in this respect? As a standard, is there one who simply wants something to be done – or is the standard that God wants what is good and allows man too to recognize and experience this? How far can one, or can one not, therefore speak of a voluntarism in Islam? And is the will of Allāh always the same, so that the problems arising from the knowledge of Allāh's will only exist on the side of man, or is there something like vivid spontaneity in the will of Allāh, who reacts and responds to what his people do?

SCHIMMEL   As far as the will of God is concerned, it is certainly always oriented towards man's well-being. God gives the law in order to show man the right path. The tension between God's eternal knowledge of what is good and right and his will that this is also done on the one hand, and the human attempt to accord the small human will with it on the other, is a problem with which Muslims have struggled until today. So there is no definite, classical answer to this question.

But Muslims will always be deeply convinced that the will of God is always directed towards the benefit of man, even though one does not understand it, and it is particularly this acceptance of a fate and a will that is not understandable which is characteristic of unreflected Muslim piety. If one lives and works with Muslims, one finds there a deep and sincere kind of religious attitude that puts one to shame. It is simply the feeling and the readiness to give oneself completely up to the will of God and this not to something that has been decreed mechanically and unchangeably; it is somewhat trusting as the child trusts in the father's will, knowing that the father wants his/her very best. Fatalism – and Islamic thinkers knew this very well – can also lead to laziness and even to blaming God for our own faults, because he made us in this way. But fatalism in Islam is an inward frame of mind that allows me to take a deep breath after an experience of hard luck, saying: God has willed it in this way, I accept it more or less gratefully. When a Muslim is asked how he is and answers: "Praise be to God for everything there is and wherein I am", one should know that he is having a rather hard time.

WIELANDT On the question of the background to the revival of the idea of human freedom, especially free will and freedom of action, and its relation to the doctrine of predestination since the late 19th and the 20th century: this development certainly has much to do with the experience of the colonial period and how this situation presented itself in large parts of the Islamic world. They had passed under the political, economic, and also partly cultural supremacy of European powers and were at first facing their representatives in a situation of great powerlessness from which they wanted to free themselves and move towards more self-determination. Such a process of self-liberation, which of course presupposes changing conditions in one's own country in order to be able to mobilize support, is only possible on the basis of relatively activist ethics, capable of motivating man to change his situation by telling him: try and tackle it, and then you will manage. Such a challenge to tackle things can hardly be founded if we say that ultimately everything is predestined by God. For then it would also be logical to think: if the Europeans dominate us, it must have been ordained by God, for whatever reasons. From this need for an activist ethics aiming at changes, and also from trusting in the human capacity to achieve changes, the idea of human freedom certainly gained a new immediacy.

In addition, through contacts with modern Europe they had come in contact with a civilization in which, since the Enlightenment, the idea of human freedom, the human capacity to shape things by means of one's own reason and morals, plays a great role, and it is obvious that it is much easier to attach oneself to this Enlightenment mentality which operates on the basis of human freedom and autonomy if one works with an assumption of human freedom than if one works with an assumption of predestination. Both factors played an important role as catalysts in this change.

revival of the idea of human freedom in the 19th and 20th centuries

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KHOURY For Islam, the dignity of man is not merely abstract, as is rather the case in Western culture, but is defined very precisely and concretely through positive ordinances of God. It is out of his free will that God granted this dignity to man. And beyond that God also determined the form this dignity should take in its practical application; so it cannot be understood independently of God's concrete precepts intelligibly stated in the law and the Qur'ān. It follows that it is not permitted freely to deduce consequences from this concept, as if the dignity of man were a general abstract notion.

human dignity – its concrete definition

WIELANDT The explicit acceptance of the concept 'human dignity' in Islamic theology and philosophy is doubtless a relatively new experience. Under the influence of European and American thinking, there is an interest in emphasizing that humans have such a dignity innately through their being created by God. It is certainly not unreasonable to establish points of contact with such a concept in the Qur'ān, and attempts to unfold and understand more what it embraces and what are the consequences to be drawn from this concept have increasingly occupied Islamic theology and philosophy in the 20th century.

a relatively new experience

Very traditionally oriented theologians speak of 'human dignity', but they often show that they have not really made this concept their own, or even considered how this would be possible in the perspective of the Qur'ān, in the way suggested above. For they link the dignity of man with the previous performance of his duties by saying that this dignity is only granted to man to the extent that he fulfils the commandments. An interpretation of this kind, however, contradicts the concept of human dignity.

previous performance of one's duty – precondition for 'human dignity'?

In this context reference has also to be made to the well-known fact that where Christian traditions were operative, the development of the concept of human dignity and human rights as it has taken place today is not only a very young phenomenon, but even one that to a very large extent emerged against the official theology of the main churches. One may here recall for instance the part played in the development of this concept by the members of the sects in the Reformist tradition that emigrated to America.

BSTEH A. According to the Islamic faith, man owes his existence utterly and completely to the creative will of God, but it is especially in the context of Islamic anthropology that we are reminded constantly of how very dense and living is the relation of Islamic faith to the mystery of the Creator and the creation. What Christian faith also perceives as the all-embracing mystery of the world's origin is continuously in danger of unacceptably receding into the background in the face of the mystery of redemption – as far as the extreme heretical concept of Marcion that the (wicked) creator God of the Old Testament is other than the (good) God working redemption in Jesus Christ. Particularly in the encounter with Islam, should not Christian faith feel challenged anew to raise the question of whether, in its

man owes himself to God

theological endeavours, the creation as the primordial reality of the world is taken sufficiently into consideration, particularly since this primordial relationship of the world with God the Creator should also be seen on a profound level as the key to a proper understanding of the mystery of salvation, which is the 'new creation'?

commonness and difference in understanding the creation And does not what has been said here also make clear that one would not be well-advised to speak too easily about agreements and disagreements in the juxtaposition of Christian and Islamic faith? Is it not, on the one hand, the mystery of the creation which, in a very special way, characterizes a commonness in the faith of Christians and Muslims that is so profound that all differences may rightly be seen as embraced by it? And, on the other hand, is not a difference inherent in this commonness whose imprint is found in all the commonness? In the light of the faith shared by Christians and Muslims that it is God who created the world and that there is nothing in the world that was not created by him, is there not a deep agreement between Christian and Islamic faith to be achieved and at the same time a differentness which also refers to the whole understanding of the creation? After all, the creation, in the understanding of Christian faith, has its deepest truth in Christ, who is "the image of the unseen God", "the first-born of all creation", for "in him were created all things in heaven and on earth", and because God wanted "through him to reconcile all things with him, everything in heaven and everything on earth, by making peace through his death on the cross" (Col 1:15–17.19 f.; cf. Eph 3:9–11, etc.).

WIELANDT Indeed, in Christianity the idea of salva-
creatio – salvatio tion could be more closely interwoven in reflections concerning the creation. In other words, there is in the first place a question to be addressed to Christian theology of whether this demarcation – in Islam accentuating the creation, in Christianity accentuating salvation – can be maintained in this way.

OTT If we accept the strict separation of 'creatio' and 'salvatio' which is usually made, this makes a clear difference of emphasis between the Islamic and the Christian understanding of faith. The question is only how far in fact this separation has to be enforced. 'Creatio continua', 'salvatio continua' – in God everything is one, says Nicholas of Cusa. God's resting and God's moving are one, God's willing and God's seeing are one, they cannot be separated from one another. Here we get into deep areas in our own tradition too, where these differentiations suddenly become somewhat questionable.

BSTEH P. To what extent does the experience of creation, which evokes the primary response of thanking and praising God (which is most probably also the determining element in the Islamic relation to God), come about only through the word given, i. e., by means of the ultimate law instilled at the origins of the world? Cannot also the experiences of man, who goes astray and dissipates himself in the creation and therefore ends up venerating many idols, be gathered up again but by a real experience of unity, which is also mystically communicated through the commandments? Is there not a real link to be seen with Judaism, where precisely this element is particularly emphasized, as well as the difficulty concerning human freedom in the sense of independence and personal freedom which tends to remain apart from this mystical experience of God?

experiencing creation through the ultimate law, which is instituted at the origin

it is the one God who works everything **ELSAS** Pondering on the fact that creation and revelation belong together and form a given unity, one can after all draw Islam and Christianity nearer to each other. Humans perceive the signs in the creation and at the same time they are recipients of additional signs interpreting this – in the form of the Qur'ān or in Jesus Christ as the sign of God. Thus far creation and salvation are not opposed to one another: everything is worked by one and the same God; in every single action the creative acts of God are performed – and in the Christian understanding it depends on man's getting down to initiatives of faith, similar to his depending in Islam on professing the One God, which of course has to be followed by deeds.

SCHIMMEL A little story of Rūmī expresses very beautifully that this faith is not something simple, but denotes an enormous energy and self-giving on the part of man. He tells in *Fīhi mā fīhi*[3], that people heard rumours speaking of a very beautiful and strong lion in the brush. They came from all over the world, saw the animal and stopped in fear because they thought, if we approach one step more closely, he will devour us. Only one of them went up to the lion and stroked him tenderly and the lion became quite gentle. And Rūmī says: it is the same with faith. We are afraid of believing and of giving ourselves up completely, but if we make one step towards God, then we see how much more simple everything is and then God is merciful towards us.

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[3] A. Schimmel, *Von allem und vom Einen*. München, 1988.

is there an analogy to the Holy Spirit in Islamic anthropology?

BARTH   Christian anthropology is expressed in terms of relation not only to the Creator, but also to the Redeemer and to the working of the Holy Spirit. Is there in Islam some analogy, something one could relate to this?

WIELANDT   In the Qur'ān one does find the expression 'holy spirit' (Sūra 2,87; 2,253; 5,113; 16,102), but there it obviously means something different and so might be initially disregarded. However, there is much to support the view that structurally there is in the Qur'ānic proclamation and in later Islamic faith an equivalent: the concept of divine guidance on the right path, *hudā*. By means of this energy God is at man's side, helping him to recognize which path he is to tread towards his own salvation. This divine guidance, however, is not understood as a distinct person in God, but as an energy of God, helping man orient himself towards God and in his actions.

BARTH   Could one explain to Muslims in this way what Christians mean when they speak of the 'Holy Spirit'?

WIELANDT   The explanation that 'Holy Spirit' means 'God is with us' is quite accessible to Muslims, but of course it does not fully and completely express what Holy Spirit means to Christians.

GLADKOWSKI   Is it in fact methodologically admissible to compare the two terms – *hudā*, as energy, and Holy Spirit with one another in this way?

WIELANDT   If one wants to make comparisons and set up analogies at all, there is no other way but by attempting to find umbrella terms. They may then perhaps not quite render the full sense of what one or the other side means in their own usage of the term. As for the case in point here, from the Christian perspective, at least it does not seem a priori to be wrong to refer to the Holy Spirit as energy.

OTT   From the viewpoint of systematic theology, trying to understand the Holy Spirit as an energy could not be excluded a priori.

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human efforts and divine mercy

SCHMATOVICH   Does Islam think of religiousness as expressed through human efforts alone or also as the renewal of man from within?

WIELANDT   From the Islamic point of view, there are no alternatives of this kind. On the one hand – in contrast to Christian faith – it is not, according to Islamic understanding, crucial that a new man should come into being, because man a priori is not so much in need of being renewed. On the other hand, one cannot say either that the concept of religiousness expressed through human efforts is completely adequate in Islam, because human efforts remain imperfect, still leaving things to be desired; therefore the mercy of God is needed to come and meet us, for nothing human can succeed unless there is divine support.

OTT   If one thinks of the phrase 'giving oneself to God', one may ask: is there in Islam this idea of giving oneself completely up to God in a way somehow comparable with the 'faith that justifies' as in Paul or Luther?

WIELANDT   It is not the act of giving-oneself-to-God which justifies man, but man is conceived of as being just if he acknowledges the fundamental relation given between God and man, in the sense that man simply experiences the consequences of what was already there beforehand.

OTT   In a similar way, in the Protestant tradition, faith is not seen as a justifying work of man: faith is not a work of man which he can ensure he does rightly. Faith is in fact leaving things in the hands of God. And there is no 'securitas' of faith, but a 'certitudo'.

the problem of grace and freedom

OTT   Just as it has already become clear in the context of speaking about the uniqueness of God that Christians have not yet come to terms with the fundamental dogmas of their faith, but have to deal with them again and again, in the same way the problem of grace and freedom or freedom and providence is also a much discussed problem in our tradition, which similarly has not been resolved.

Where are the differences between Christians and Muslims in their discussion of this problem? Are there not problems of a very similar kind in the Islamic tradition? We may think, for example, of Martin Luther, who in *De servo arbitrio* speaks about man being free compared to a piece of wood or a stone (otherwise one would not speak of 'voluntas' but of 'noluntas' as he says in a pun), but not being free to achieve his salvation; or, for instance, also of the statements of the Church: that everything happening in us happens by the grace of God; that every prayer we put to God is infused into us by him.

This interlinking of grace and freedom, of divine operation and human freedom, which does not abolish human freedom, but perhaps rather activates it, is a strange problem that so far has not been resolved and which, at first, cannot be grasped by our somewhat too 'mechanistic' reason. Has the Islamic discussion arrived at a comparable point?

WIELANDT   There are certainly different emphases. First, the Islamic faith would also say that man is not free to achieve his salvation, and, if he does

attain salvation, he owes it to the grace of God. However, the original ground of this grace, which enables man to attain salvation, would be identified as being creation, perhaps supported by a later revelation. On the Christian side, one would here think of creation and redemption. Here there seems to be a fundamental difference.

A Muslim starts from the belief that in the perspective of creation man is made in such a way that, with divine assistance – especially if, in his faithfulness to the will of God, he is supported by the mission of the Prophet – he can achieve his salvation by acting in such a way that he has a chance of being accepted at the Last Judgment.

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the concept of love in Islam

WISSE The main commandment of Jesus is love. This early Christian motif is like a thread running through the Gospels. Is it also to be found in the Qur'ān or is there something corresponding to it?

WIELANDT In Islam love is in fact different from love in Christianity; it is not the central term for the understanding of God, nor is it the central value in Islamic ethics. Nevertheless, in the Islamic tradition, and above all in mysticism, there is no shortage of attempts to speak of love between God and man.

The fact that this central importance is not attributed to love does not mean that, according to Muslim faith, God may not show impulses and attitudes towards humans, such as mercy and care, which from a Christian perspective are very closely linked with love. Here although a Muslim would not in the first instance speak of love, to all intents and purposes his image of God amounts to something similar.

The same applies to the level of ethics concerned with human relations. Here, besides the concept of justice, the concept of mercy between people plays a great role. Furthermore, great importance is also attached to the concept of brotherliness, primarily referring to the community of believers, but also, depending on the individual speaker's magnanimity and according to the context, extended to other people. It is perfectly correct to say too that among Muslims there is neighborly love, or what we would call so in this context, but in Muslim understanding, it is not the core of the matter.

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where does evil and suffering come from?

WIELANDT In view of the fact that, according to Muslim faith, God is the Creator of all things, the great problem arises of the origin of evil and the suffering people experience in their lives which they can neither under-

stand nor explain. In the course of history, this question has occupied Muslim theologians intensively.

according to the understanding of theologians

Efforts made to conceptualize this problem and approach a solution have centered around two points: on the one hand around the idea of God's omnipotence as the Creator, so that absolutely nothing can be imagined that would not have to be traced back to God; therefore even what is wicked also has to come from him, although in a way which we perhaps do not understand. The other point of departure is the idea of God's Justice. If God is to be just, he cannot be responsible for the wicked things people do, for otherwise he would punish them in the Last Judgment for something he did himself and this would contradict the concept of justice.

The inclination to give priority to one or the other point of departure in attempts to solve the above mentioned problems has, in the course of history, been subject to certain fluctuations. The rationalist theology of the Mu'tazilīs, at least some of them, was inclined, for the sake of the justice of God, to trace evil ultimately back to man's refusal to obey, but then the question arises of whether this is not simply a shifting of the problem; for how could man ultimately owe his capacity to be disobedient, like everything else, to the creatorship of God? In Sunnī theology, over the centuries, the dominant position came to be that ultimately evil in one way or another comes from God. Now, in the 20th century, in line with the stronger emphasis on the ethos of man's free will, there is an increased tendency to search for an origin of evil beyond man.

Along with many others who reflect on God and human life, Islamic and Christian theologians, particularly in this context, confront an unresolved paradox. Here is an issue about which Muslims and Christians, if they want to be honest, have to continue to reflect on together.

in the assertions of the Qur'ān

As is well known, in the Qur'ān evil is traced back to the refusal of one of the angels to obey God's command to prostrate themselves before Adam. As a result this angel was condemned and ever since, as Satan, has been the seducer of man.

The fall of man, as it is portrayed in the Qur'ān, is something that has only an episodic character and can hardly be compared with the Christian concept of a 'peccatum originale'. Adam and Eve do something that they should clearly not have done, and therefore they fall from the grace of God. Then, however, they repent, and God in his grace turns again towards them. This

event certainly refers to mistakes people may generally make in their lives, but it does not implicate all future human beings. Nothing suggests that through it their nature would be disabled insofar as their capacity to be good was concerned. And therefore, according to Islamic understanding, there is no reason for the all-embracing action in the history of salvation that Christianity expresses in its doctrine of redemption.

The problem of the origin of evil and suffering is variously presented in the Qur'ān, and the various types of statement about it may even be partly, in a historical perspective, ascribed to certain phases in the life of the Prophet. Thus, for instance, one may consider a text which certainly dates from the last period of Muḥammad's activity in Mecca, when, to his great sorrow, he found no receptive audience for his message among the pagans living there. It says, "[...] Now God leaves straying those whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases [...]" (Sūra 14,4 and several parallel passages). This is a response to his experience of being unable to accomplish anything with these people and to the question of the reason for this and why they were so obstinate. There are also, however, numerous Qur'ānic verses which clearly assume that sin is man's own decision, not decided by God in this way.

KHOURY On the question of the origins of suffering, my
the origins of
suffering
own Qur'ān research suggests the following answers:
A first source is the devil. After he was driven away from paradise, he swore to God: "I will lie in wait for them on Thy Straight Way: Then will I assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left [...]." (Sūra 7,16 f., cf. 7,63 f.; 15,39; 38,82).

A second is man himself. In the Qur'ān, there is the complaint that the land and the sea are full of evil proceeding from the sinfulness and wickedness of humans (cf. Sūra 30,41).

A third source is God, who may punish man for his wickedness and sin or ordain suffering for man to test his steadfastness (cf. Sūra 2,155–157; 3,186; 29,2 f.).

WIELANDT The last questions certainly remain open. Why did God allow all this to come about: did he have to condemn the devil because he refused to prostrate himself before man? Why does God permit man to act in a way that causes suffering? And does God owe it to himself to punish man with suffering – would there not be other alternatives to guide man towards where He wants him to be? In brief, the problem is not finally resolved even when we rightfully bring out these very important Qur'ānic issues.

KHOURY Concerning this question, which cannot be answered once and for all but can only raise endless pointers towards a final answer, reference should also be made to the fact that in the Shī'ī tradition suffering is characterized as redemptive and salvific.[4]

VANONI The Bible also says that God shares man's everyday life, and the Old Testament may add: "I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the Lord do all these things." (Is 45:7). In this context, Christian theology should also be ready in its questioning and searching to integrate the book of Ecclesiastes and so be able to integrate into the teachings about the creation questions which one otherwise tends to avoid asking, for instance the question about what God has to do with evil and suffering in the world.

BSTEH A. In the understanding of the Christian faith
creature and
child of God
man's createdness is not diminished by his being elevated towards God, or allowed to approach God. As Paul says: "[...] What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" (1 Cor 4:7). The closer man gets to God, the more he becomes one who accepts himself as a creature given by God. For Christian faith, the idea of man being the child of God must not detach itself from this primordial concept, which embraces everything that is not God himself, i. e., not detach itself from the truth of being God's creation. Being the child of God and being the servant of God are to be understood as two realities not competing with one another, but growing together. To reflect this, the one within the other, and then again to make oneself aware of the fact that the mystery of salvation has its primary point of reference not in sin, but in God's original vision of his creation, would be of great concern in the encounter with Islam and should be a fruitful line of discussion.

BSTEH P. The relationship of man with God in the
Jesus as
servant of God
Christian perspective, expressed in the concept of the slave or servant of God, makes us very much aware of the moment of God's love: it is a relationship that is to a high degree even characterized by being broken by submitting to the will of God, by sacrifice, by man's giving himself up in his accepting the will of God and setting aside his own. So the concept of the servant can be very appropriate for an understanding of Jesus. It can even be revitalized through this un-

[4] On this topic cf. Mahmoud Ayoub in his dissertation: *Redemptive Suffering in Islam. A study of devotional aspects of 'Āshūrā' in Twelver Shī'ism* (Religion and Society; 10). Den Haag, 1978.

derstanding Jesus. If anyone was a servant of God, he was, fully conscious of "not my will but yours be done" (Lk 22:42); and this is not an expropriation of man, but his giving himself up in love, which includes sacrifice and death. This awareness should be intensively cultivated. There is inherent in it a precious moment which is also acutely brought home to us by Islam. This broaches a foundational concept which may bring Christians and Muslims very much closer to each other in their faith.

SCHIMMEL This interpretation is a great leap forward.

BSTEH A. Here we may particularly think of one of the oldest hymns to Christ in the Letter of Paul to the Philippians, in which the form of a slave, of a μορφὴ δούλου is mentioned, in which Jesus fulfilled his humanity in giving himself up in death (Phil 2:6 ff.).

ELSAS There are other points of influence too, which one can also discover anew if one again takes Judaeo-Christian theology more into account. The concept 'slave of God' here certainly plays an important role. If it is correct that in Islam there is no longing for a far-reaching act of redemption, Christianity and Islam can still be brought closer to each other if one bears in mind that, in the understanding of both, creation and revelation belong together, forming a mediated unity. Man perceives the signs of God in the creation and at the same time receives supplementary signs interpreting them in the form of God's revelation, which takes place in the configuration of the Qur'ānic verses and also in Jesus Christ as sign of God. Thus far creation and redemption are not opposed to one another, but everything is worked by God.

WIELANDT Understanding Jesus as a slave of God could in fact in certain aspects also be accessible from an Islamic point of view, if the issue is submitting to God in obedience, yielding to his will. But the way in which this is performed in the life of Jesus, as recorded in the New Testament, and also the concrete reasons given for it, are quite hard to reconcile with the Muslim view, for instance in the moral approach of not-defending-oneself when one could defend oneself, or the concept that the salvation of humanity as a whole has to be worked through the self-sacrifice of a human being, which after all is the ultimate reason for this obedience. So this may bridge part of the gap, but there is a shortfall.

VANONI In the broad understanding of the word 'abd, the various connotations it has in Arabic will have to be kept in mind as well as the Hebrew and Aramaic (particularly relevant for understanding the historical figure of Jesus) and Greek, where the terms corresponding to 'abd can either mean child or son, and also lamb.

WIELANDT But common elements can still be found in this variety. If the New Testament speaks of Jesus as "the Son of Man" who came in order to serve, the servant element here can certainly be seen as a common thread.

SCHIMMEL The text in Sūra 5,75 which says that Jesus did not call himself Son, but that he was only a servant of God, could be seen as a conceptual bridge as touching the motif of the slave of God. How far this could be accepted within the Christian understanding would remain to be pondered. When Islam considers the concept of 'abduhū, slave of God, to be the highest designation, it clearly implies its difference from the Christian understanding of Jesus as the Son of God, for Muḥammad, even in his highest glorification, when he becomes as it were the most perfect human being, the insān al-kāmil, the ideal type, almost the logos, is always still 'abduhū, 'his servant'.

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on the Islamic understanding of the history of mankind and of the world

BSTEH P. There is without doubt a close connection too between the concept of man and that of the history of mankind and of the world as a whole. One often gets the impression that because, according to Islamic understanding, the law and the word of God are enacted as eschatological realities, the perspective of what is coming is introduced in an ahistorical way and that therefore the creation and the Eschaton are often understood actualistically. Is there not, by contrast, in the context of the creation, an obligation on man, willed by God, to unfold his history, and does man not accept full responsibility for his own nature as a gift only by unfolding his own self, his own nature as it were, as a reality that cannot be lost? One is concerned at hearing how often history is left aside (history, not understood here in the specifically Christian sense as history of salvation, but as history of the world and of mankind) when the history of the world and of mankind is in the end to be understood as a reality with which man is credited by God and which still remains to be unfolded by man.

SCHIMMEL This would again take us back to the primordial covenant [see above p. 90], where humans are put under obligation to bear witness to God, so that on Judgment Day they will not be able to say, "we did not know it." And what happens in history is man's field of engagement. In the Qur'ān and in the history of the Prophet, man is given the paradigms for it, and he has to see to it that he unfolds the gifts he has received as well as possible, so that on the Last Day, when he has to render account, he

will not stand there utterly unhappy. In the mystical movements especially one encounters the concept that, since everything was originally with and in God, at the end of time there will be a return into the undifferentiated divine being where then – 'Aṭṭār calls it 'the box of unity' – there will be no differences any more. In this rather cyclical world view, which is to be found in mysticism or in some of the <u>Shīʿī</u> traditions, everything in fact has its beginning in God, it passes through the world and returns to God, thus completing the circle.

Besides the merely lineal concept of history, which is in general considered to be characteristic of Islam, there is in fact a cyclical concept too, starting out from the moment when God spoke the word *kun!, it shall be!,* and bound the whole reality to His role as the Lord of the creation, until the moment when the Judgment (with punishment and reward) will take place – an end which, however, for many mystics ultimately leads into the undifferentiated divine being. Both concepts exist alongside one another in Islam. As it says in Sūra 28,88, "[...] Everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face. [...]", 'face' meaning the nature of God. And in Sūra 55,26 f. it is said again, "All that is on earth will perish: but will abide (for ever) the Face of thy Lord, [...]". This means that in the end again God alone will remain and the creation will be no more.

Human Responsibility for the World as Seen by Muslims

Rotraud Wielandt

Responsibility for the fulfilment of God's will

We have already considered the concepts which ascribe to humankind a privileged position in the world and are either explicitly expressed in the Qurʾān or derived from it in interpretations.[1] According to Islamic faith, this also implies a special human responsibility for the world.

How far should this be perceived as the responsibility of the individual human being as well as of the whole community of believers? Is the individual only expected to be concerned that his/her own conduct be in accordance with the will of God, and have the community of believers done their duty if everything within the community happens according to God's will? If the individual and the community did not strive for something beyond that, they would clearly fall below the Qurʾānic ideal. For, according to the Qurʾān, they do not only have responsibility for their own good behaviour, but also for the acceptance of the will of God in the human world around them. The principle of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, *al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-n-nahy ʿani l-munkar,* is asserted in the Qurʾān itself, which even defines the Islamic religious community's identity precisely by applying this principle. "Ye are", says Sūra 3, verse 110, "the best of Peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in God. [...]"

Enjoining and forbidding in this context does not only mean declaring that actions are enjoined or forbidden according to the will of God; rather, enjoining means here to actively guarantee the fulfilment of God's will, and similarly forbidding means actively to fend off what contravenes it. The obligation to be engaged beyond one's own person and even beyond one's own religious community on behalf of what is willed by God has not been consistently taken seriously in the historical practice of Islam, even though it is one of the fundamental requirements of the Islamic religion. It was par-

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[1] See the preceding lecture: "Man and His Ranking in the Creation: On the Fundamental Understanding of Islamic Anthropology", pp. 75–82.

ticularly emphasized in the theology of the Mu'tazilīs already mentioned, but apart from them, it is also accepted in Islam more generally.

Personal responsibility for the recognition of the will of God

In order to be able to bring about the acceptance of the will of God beyond one's own person and possibly even beyond one's own religious community, one has first to know what it is. How can man discover this and how far does God allow the responsible exercise of human insight? Profoundly different understandings are possible, especially concerning the concept of man as the vicegerent of God. As we have seen, this has been used as a key anthropological concept by contemporary Islamic theologians on the basis of an exegesis of Sūra 2, verse 30, and has become commonplace only in the twentieth century. The vicegerent may be understood as an agent, simply executing a fixed number of ready-made orders given to him by the one he represents. But one may also, for instance, imagine the vicegerent to be authorized to decide, according to circumstance, what should be done, following the intention of the one he represents.

The question of how far man, as the vicegerent of God, is authorized by him to discern repeatedly among the current possibilities what is in accordance with the will of God, has been and is answered very differently by different Muslims; the various viewpoints are closely connected with how the relation between revelation and reason, and also the relation between norms of actions prescribed by God and the changing circumstances of human life, are understood. Two different basic approaches may be differentiated. One proceeds from the idea that the will of God is essentially given once for all in explicit norms, which – complemented by a number of specified implied consequences derived from them by following established methodological principles – are valid for all times and only have to be carried out by man. Over many centuries, the first and foremost expression of this view for Muslims was the Islamic law, traditionally mostly conceived of as a static concept, valid once and for all as a binding formulation of the will of God, on the basis of the explicit norms of the Qur'ān and the tradition of the Prophet *(ḥadīth)*. The second fundamental approach, systematically developed by some Muslim thinkers in the more recent past, has its source in deeper reflections on the Muslim awareness of the possibility that norms should keep in step with changing political and social realities as they arise, even in Islamic countries, par-

ticularly under the influence of modern Europe. This view mainly emphasizes the idea that man, as God's vicegerent, has the task himself to develop specific norms in keeping with his time and situation, which are congruent with the guidelines of God's will laid down in the Qur'ān. In order for this to be done well, hermeneutics are needed to explain how concrete norms for very definite situations can be deduced from the general aims of God's will found in the Qur'ān.

Here two examples may be briefly mentioned of how Muslims – although so far only few of them – have during recent decades tried to find a carefully considered solution to the problem of such hermeneutics.

One is the work of the Moroccan scholar 'Allāl al-Fāsī, who became best known in Europe as the leader of his country's struggle for independence against the domination of the French protectorate, but with whom we are here first and foremost concerned as the author of *Maqāṣid ash-sharī'a al-is-lāmiyya wa-makārimuhā* (The Noble Intentions and Characteristics of Islamic Law) published in 1963. Al-Fāsī was deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition and had – and this is significant for his spiritual orientation – received his education within the sphere of the Mālikī school of law, which had already developed special models concerning the adaptation of the *sharī'a* to changing historical conditions since the later Middle Ages. In the book referred to, al-Fāsī argues that, strictly speaking, the primary subject of revelation is not individual norms of, for instance, a legal kind, like the stipulation that aggravated larceny shall be punished by amputation of the thief's hand, and intentional killing, if the victim's relatives do not forgive or are not satisfied with being paid blood money, by revenge. Rather, the primary subject of revelation is God's intentions, for example, of protecting property and life by means of such norms. The specific individual norms given in the Qur'ān were only intended as a means of implementing these supreme divine intentions in a concrete historical situation, and man, as the vicegerent of God, has always to ask himself anew, in his particular present, how these intentions of God are now best to be realized. In this context he may legitimately arrive at the conclusion that, in the changed contemporary conditions, completely different detailed norms from those contained in the Qur'ānic text may be more appropriate to bring about the higher intentions of God.

The second example is Fazlur Rahman, a scholar of Pakistani origin, who developed the same basic hermeneutical idea in his book *Islam and Modernity, Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition,* published in 1982. According to Fazlur Rahman, Qur'ānic legal prescriptions as such are not

valid for all times. Rather, they are concrete answers, derived from general principles valid for all times, to concrete problems of a particular time. Man's norm-finding has therefore to proceed in the following way: first, I have to ask myself to which concrete problem the Qur'ānic legal norm gives an answer. Second, I have to discover the general principle followed in this process. Thirdly and finally, I have to work out how, on the basis of this general principle, the concrete problems of our times, which are possibly not identical with those existing at the time when the Qur'ān was revealed, may be resolved.

Examples of fields of responsibility in the world

These two examples show that in the Islam of our times there are certainly voices addressing norms for actions willed by God which do not simply give humankind the role of passive obedience, but to a considerable extent call for the independent acquisition of knowledge. According to Muslim understanding, which are the areas of life in which human responsibility must now be brought to bear, and what are the specific issues? The conciliar process of recent years has brought to public awareness a triad of tasks that should take priority in human responsibility for the world: justice, peace and the preservation of creation. It may therefore be worthwhile to reflect on how this triad is rated in contemporary Islam. This is certainly not to imply that this triad is an exhaustive expression of everything for which humankind may legitimately be seen to have responsibility in the world, and to which priority can or should be given; there are still other concerns – especially from the perspective of people in the Third World. When we consider below how far guaranteeing justice, peace and the preservation of creation may be considered in the view of Islam to be entrusted to man in a specific way, we shall do so in order to examine only one aspect of the practicability of an interreligious dialogue on man's responsibility for the world which has been recently offered for discussion on the Christian side. That being understood, what can Muslims derive from their religious convictions, rooted in the Qur'ān, with regard to efforts that can be made in these three areas of responsibility?

Preserving creation

Let us begin with the preservation of creation, the last heading of the triad produced by the above mentioned conciliar process. Is there an Islamic basis for this call? Can we see Islamic approaches towards an ethos concerning the environment? It seems necessary to formulate the question thus tentatively. To ask whether there are instructions in the Qur'ān for protecting the environment would be a-historical and from the European-Christian point of view not sufficiently self-critical. The awareness of the need for the deliberate protection of the environment and the establishment of norms in this regard is very recent. In the highly industrialized Western world it did not develop till the last quarter of the 20th century, when the imminent catastrophic consequences of continuing an inconsiderate process of development at the cost of consuming the natural basis of human life began to be foreseen. It cannot therefore be expected initially that the Qur'ān, which was proclaimed almost 1400 years ago in completely different living conditions, could already have dealt with this topic. Yet it may very well be said that the Qur'ān, and the Islamic faith based on it, offer important approaches towards an ethos of handling our natural environment prudently.

Several passages in the Qur'ān emphasize that the whole creation has been subjected to man. Thus for instance Sūra 31, verse 20 asks the question: "Do ye not see that God has subjected to your (use) all things in the heavens and on earth, and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, (both) seen and unseen? [...]". Verses 32 f. of Sūra 14 develop the same fundamental idea further: "It is God Who hath created the heavens and the earth and sendeth down rain from the skies, and with it bringeth out fruits wherewith to feed you; it is he Who hath made the ships subject to you, that they may sail through the sea by His command; and the rivers (also) hath He made subject to you. [...]". Verse 14 of Sūra 16 refers to catching fish and diving for pearls: "It is He Who has made the sea subject, that ye may eat thereof flesh that is fresh and tender, and that ye may extract therefrom ornaments to wear; [...]". But these statements already imply an intrinsic limit to the exploitation of the environment, for they suggest that the works of God's creation they refer to shall, according to the Qur'ān, serve as the basis of all human life as long as there are human beings on earth, and not only for a certain generation of people. It thus follows that the creation should be dealt with in a way that will retain its usefulness for the generations to come.

Beyond this, the Qur'ān repeatedly appeals for moderation in the use of the good things God has provided for man in creation. Thus, for instance, in Sūra 6, verse 141, he immediately adds to the permission to eat

of the manifold fruits of the earth the warning: "[...] But waste not by excess: for God loveth not the wasters." Of course such a warning against being prodigal does not yet define a clear limit to exploiting natural resources that would be easily applicable, but it does indicate that the permission is not boundless. Numerous other passages in the Qur'ān make clear that God subjected creation to man in order to satisfy human needs. Exploitation of creation arbitrarily, beyond the satisfaction of legitimate needs, could therefore not find justification in the Qur'ān.

A further limitation on man's right to make use of creation can be inferred from the fundamental Qur'ānic assertion, "To God doth belong the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein" (Sūra 5,123), and similar passages. God's sovereignty over the whole creation, a term whose Arabic root also has the connotation of 'right of property', implies that man cannot and may not arbitrarily dispose of it. A contemporary Muslim theologian explains this Qur'ānic verse thus: "As to man's sovereignty (namely over the creation), it is possession limited in time and space, and a right of use and care (ḥaqqu ntifāʿin wa-riʿāyatin) which includes taking responsibility"[2].

This should make clear that there are indeed starting points for an approach towards an Islamic ethos of the environment. However, Muslim thinkers have, as yet, hardly begun to develop such an ethos systematically. When more substantial advances will be made depends on when awareness of ecological problems becomes more widespread and, for obvious reasons, this is not yet at the forefront of the interest of the wider population in Islamic countries: there, for the time being, the problem felt to be more urgent is how to catch up with the industrialization and prosperity of the Western world and so overcome the mass-poverty of their own people. It is easy to understand that in such circumstances the call for responsible handling of the environment is paid less attention, although, for example, the problems of unrestrained air pollution from car exhaust and uncontrolled disposal of increasing amounts of garbage in the metropolises of the Near East as e. g. in Cairo and Istanbul, are such that they have attracted the attention of Europeans travelling there.

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[2] ʿAbdarraḥmān b. Ibrāhīm al-Maṭrūdī, *al-Insān, wudjūduhū wa-khilāfatuhū fī l-arḍ fī ḍawʾ al-qurʾān al-karīm (Man – His Existence and His Being the Vicegerent of God on Earth in the Light of the Glorious Qurʾān)*. Cairo, 1990, p. 368.

Justice

Another heading of the conciliar process, 'justice', denotes a further area of human responsibility for the world. That human beings should be just is enjoined upon them in the Qur'ān in many ways. Here humankind's calling to be just is, in the Qur'ānic passages where it is more closely specified by the context, defined pre-eminently in two ways. On the one hand it corresponds to conduct which might be called 'impartiality' in its widest sense; it appears, for example, in pronouncing impartial judgements or in mediating between parties in a conflict[3], in maintaining equality between one's wives[4] or in not letting oneself be tempted by emotional preference for one's relatives, or by personal sympathies or antipathies, to show favor or disfavor to anybody.[5] On the other hand, justice consists in giving everyone his or her due, and especially in business matters, by giving just weight and full measure.[6] The importance of these two fundamental forms of justice, on the one hand impartiality and on the other giving everybody their due[7], is additionally emphasized in the Qur'ān by the characterization on a higher level of the acts of God on the Day of Judgment: he judges uncorruptibly, has human deeds weighed most accurately and gives to everyone what he/she has earned in the form of reward in paradise or punishment in hell.

In pre-modern Islamic tradition the enactment of the *sharīʿa*, as it had been implemented since the early Middle Ages, was considered over the centuries to be the quintessence of a just political and social order. Contemporary Islamic fundamentalists accordingly see the re-enactment of the *sharīʿa*, wherever it has been replaced by secular legal norms after the Western pattern, as the main tool of re-establishing justice. Here many of them consider a particular segment of the traditional Islamic law, namely the drastic corporal punishments based on Qur'ānic ordinances for some particularly serious trespasses (the so-called *ḥadd*-punishments), as for instance amputation of hands for aggravated larceny, as such an extraordinary example of communitarian justice that the impression is not rarely

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[3] See for example Sūra 5,9 and 49,9.
[4] To be deduced from Sūra 4,3 (cf. Sūra 4,129).
[5] See Sūra 6,152 and 5,9 (cf. also 4,135).
[6] See for example 6,152; 21,47; 55,9.
[7] In the Qur'ān, the first of the two, impartiality, is obviously rather associated with the term 'adl and the related verbal forms, the second, giving what is due, rather with the term qisṭ and the related verbal forms.

given that the implementation of these penalties would instantly establish the ideal state of society willed by God. Today, however, even among fundamentalists it is by no means beyond dispute whether the _sharīʿa_ in its historically stated form can still be in every respect the best guarantee possible for the just order willed by God. In one way or another, some of them support a new interpretation of Islamic law, which still directly refers back to the Qurʾān and above all the Sunna, the normative statements and exemplary acts of the Prophet handed down in the Ḥadīth. Muslims critically confronting fundamentalism, however, generally advocate the position that a just political and social order does primarily consist in applying either the historically stated or the somehow newly interpreted _sharīʿa_, but that it has to be brought about primarily by making the general principles of Islamic ethics permeate public life ever more strongly. From this perspective, the Islamic character of the law is then assured only insofar as the body of enacted laws is referred back to the basic norms of Islamic ethics and understood as the criterion of justice.

Ultimately, both camps are confronting the same need to define the real substance of what is just according to the will of God by inferring it either from the _sharīʿa_ or from the general guidelines of Islamic ethics. And they tend to answer these questions in a more or less identical way, namely by identifying a more equal distribution of property and income as a priority characteristic of the justice called for by the Islamic religion. In view of the stark contrast between the poverty of the vast majority of the population and the wealth of a small minority which exists today in many countries in the Islamic world, it is understandable that this priority is emphasized. In this context, the justification of private property is usually not called into question even by those who call themselves Islamic socialists. They simply emphasize strongly the socially binding character of private property in the conviction that certain basic needs of all citizens must be supplied by the community insofar as the citizens are not in a position to meet these needs by their own work.

Among citizens of Western democracies compliance with those human rights with which they are familiar is generally accepted as a basic requirement for a justly organized community. On the basis of the prevailing understanding of justice described above, contemporary Muslim authors are mostly readily conversant with the social human rights, such as the right to sufficient food and clothing, education, protection of mothers, etc. However, the affirmation of bourgeois-liberal human rights, such as freedom of movement, assembly, speech, religion, etc. is generally a source of much greater difficulty, especially for those Muslims who hold strongly traditional or fundamentalist opinions. They are mostly persuaded that the absolute truth given by God can be appropriated in political life by its protagonists, the believers, directly and unaffected by possible limitations of human understanding, and that it is therefore necessary and legitimate to limit the potential activities of those who think differently. Furthermore, the connection between justice and equality, which goes without saying in Western democracies, can generally not be implemented by Muslims of this persuasion. Rather, they consider justice to be that state in which everyone receives what is due to him or her, and what is due is measured mostly according to the traditional concepts of the _sharīʿa_ based on the Qurʾān, in which women and non-Muslims are in fact not given a position of equal status with Muslim men in the community.[8]

On the whole, we must affirm that taking care of establishing justice is part of man's responsibility for the world, corresponds to the Qurʾānic understanding, and is altogether affirmed in contemporary Islam. Nevertheless, how justice is concretely understood in this context deviates noticeably from the scope this concept usually includes at present in Western democracies.

Peace

Finally, a word on peace as the third area of human responsibility for the world. The Christian assessment of Islam's capacity for peace and readiness to promote peace has traditionally been very negative. We may think particularly of the historical consequences of the view rooted in medieval Islamic law that, in order to bring about an established order in conformity with the will of God Muslims are obliged to spread the rule of their own religious community throughout the world and with it the enforcement of the _sharīʿa_, accomplishing this by means of a war of religion, _djihād_, if necessary. In this view all parts of the world not yet subjected to Muslim rule are, until they submit to Islamic government, permanently regarded as the 'house of war – _dār al-ḥarb_', meaning an area open to Muslim wars of conquest.

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[8] The same applies to slaves, but they play a minor role in Muslim authors' reflections on human rights issues since the problem of slavery is mostly considered to have been overcome in practice.

During the twentieth century this concept of _djihād_ experienced a revival, first within the Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt and then during the past 30 years in some other sections of the fundamentalist camp. But the majority of Muslims dismissed the idea long ago or never shared it. As early as the Islamic Middle Ages, a spiritualized concept of religious war emerged, when some scholars defined and recommended the struggle of believers against their own lower instincts as the 'greater _djihād_'. Contemporary Muslims, having definitely distanced themselves from the idea of enlarging the dominion of their religion by violent means, often refer to this spiritualized interpretation of _djihād_, explaining that religious warfare understood as spiritual struggle is the only _djihād_ that should be supported in our times.

Moreover, Muslim intellectuals have repeatedly spoken out, particularly in recent times, to persuade their fellow believers that unless the ability is developed to live together peacefully even when religious difference is deeply rooted, human life in the world as we have come to know it will be altogether impossible in the long run. For them, it is clear that it is no longer in Muslims' own interests simply to exclude themselves, in the name of the absolute claim of their creed, from a growing community of peoples who are making efforts towards cooperation beyond the boundaries of culture and religion, and the limitation or prevention of military conflicts. Thus, a thinker such as the Egyptian Ḥusayn Aḥmad Amīn, for example, calls today for an ethos of peacefully maintaining religious difference and for dialogue aimed at mutual understanding not only between followers of different religions, but also between believers and non-believers.[9] Such voices are not the most audible in the Islamic world at present, nor do they represent the majority of opinion found in books or the mass media and they are therefore not often heard in Europe. But they show that a considerable level of agreement between Muslims and non-Muslims can certainly be attained on peace as an area of human responsibility for the world.

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[9] See here particularly his article _'Ani t-tasāmuḥ ad-dīnī (On Religious Tolerance)_ in his omnibus volume _al-Islām fī 'ālam mutaghayyir (Islam in a Changing World)_, Cairo, 1988, pp. 167–176.

Questions and Interventions

the theoretical question of establishing Islamic precepts

MEIER Is the theoretical question being raised in the Islamic world today of how can we find an Islamic justification for solutions to modern problems? Is this theoretical question of establishing precepts even more important than the practical question of how to solve particular concrete problems?

WIELANDT This raises Islam's current problems of identity: nowadays in the Islamic world what has priority is not finding practical precepts, but the theoretical justification for the establishment of an Islamic regime. The present situation in the Islamic world as a whole is characterized by a sense of alienation and especially of Islamic identity being threatened by the domination of Western civilization. During the colonial period substantial openness to this civilization had been necessary because survival was not possible without a certain assimilation of its technical achievements. However, the further this adaptation went, the more acute the problem became: were Muslims still themselves and what could they do to remain themselves in future? The answer would certainly be based on the values they considered inherent in their own religion and culture.

Often the impression is given that although everyone insists on the establishment of social justice according to Islamic principles, for those who support this agenda, the flag that is flown over it all is more important than what is proposed in practice. This shows that what is vital is the clear Islamic-ness of the project. When this is established, the practical details may not be so very different from what Western people want to implement for themselves. There remain some substantial borrowings, such as the concept of democracy and the social obligation implicit in the ownership of property, that have to be Islamized. These are far-reaching concepts, taken over from the West while Westernization is at the same time rejected. An Islamic justification for them must be found in order for Islamic identity to be preserved. It is like somebody who knows he has to cross the Atlantic; he can choose between several ships and prefers the ship flying the flag of his own country to that of a foreign nation. Similarly, contemporary Muslims would rather sail under the Islamic flag and not under that of the West. This is just to illustrate the psychological predicament, which shows that the first priority is to justify the intended solution theoretically as Islamic.

MEIER Is the area of natural law helpful in finding practical Islamic ethical precepts? For example, our secular constitutional law has as its highest ethical principle the dignity of man. On the one hand, through natural law, this agrees with the secular understanding of ethics. On the other, every theologian can also understand it as being consistent with a specifically Christian ethic.

WIELANDT Actually there is in traditional Islam no particular thinking on natural law. About the tenth century A. D. there were the germs of a theory about it among theologians of the rationalist school already mentioned several times, the Mu'tazila, which has mostly been driven out of the Sunnī school of theology. Among other things, the Mu'tazilīs were concerned with clarifying the question: does one need a revelation in order to recognize what is the will of God or what is good, or are there basic precepts which one can recognize without revelation, by virtue of one's own reason and humanity alone? The Mu'tazilīs strongly affirmed the latter. There were even representatives of this school of theologians who said that simply as a human being one has the ability to perceive everything relevant for making ethical judgments. Revelation is needed, essentially, for knowledge of religious duties. Without the divine revelation, for example, one would not know about fasting during Ramaḍān and so one would fall from the grace of God. But basic ethical questions can, according to some of the Mu'tazilīs, be answered by virtue of natural human reason.

Much later this concept was taken up again in the Islamic world, specifically when some of its leading thinkers, shortly after the turn of the 18th century, came into contact with the concepts of the European Enlightenment. An example is the 19th-century author aṭ-Ṭahṭāwī, the Imām who accompanied the first Egyptian study mission to Paris: he was a man of great erudition and later wrote a number of important books. Regardless of the fact that he was a traditionally educated Islamic theologian, he became a leading figure in the field of education in Egypt and elaborated forcefully in his works the idea of certain norms of behaviour being given by natural law and recognizable simply by human reason. There is no doubt that he was ultimately motivated by European Enlightenment ideas, which he got to know in Paris. But he was able to relate them to certain assertions in the Qur'ān by pointing to the fact that the latter appeals to human reason. In this way he thought to deduce from the Qur'ān itself the principle of finding precepts simply by means of natural human reason or through reflection on human nature.

In this context the question may also be raised about freedom for practical human reasoning, and how absolute is the call for a system willed by God, which was, for instance, formulated by the _sharī'a_ in the Middle Ages. Does it lead to the fundamental assumption that with this system everything is exhaustively settled as it were, so that, no matter what problems people have to resolve, they should only be called to keep the ordinances given by God? Or is there space where man can and should, by means of his reason, find out himself which is the right way to act?

In this regard it must be said that, contrary to the views of some contemporary orientalists, the medieval Islamic understanding of the law was less absolutist than that of today's fundamentalists in Islam. It seems that even in the most traditionalist of the schools of law that developed in Islam in the Middle Ages, the idea did not exist that all problems and every individual question have already been resolved and answered either directly by divine revelation in the Qur'ān or through the words of the Prophet or through the _sharī'a_ derived from them. For example, Ibn Taymiyya, the great jurist and theologian, who died in 1328 and is often claimed by today's fundamentalists as their 'patriarch', practised a characteristic combination of, on the one hand, strict commitment to the divine norms he considered existed, and, on the other, liberality, to use a modern term. This meant that he insisted on implementing absolutely the norms that existed in or could be deduced from the Qur'ān and Sunna, while at the same time maintaining the principle that, for example, the state should not claim there were ordinances where no ordinances exist in these sources, and that it should not lay down any religiously-based obligations which could not be proved to be set out in the Qur'ān and Sunna. Saying that existing religious ordinances must be followed unconditionally, but at the same time that where none had been revealed they could not be invented, cannot be called absolutism.

While contemporary fundamentalists in general make the absolutist claim that fully worked out Islamic solutions exist for all problems and one has only to look carefully to find which of them corresponds to a given problem, in fact one discovers that the supporters of this claim are hard-pressed, in cases of specific problems, to provide practical measures that justify it. For instance, if the question at issue is what the constitution and economic order of a state should look like in practice, their practical reasoning is engaged, while at the same time, at least theoretically, the claim is maintained that in fact all necessary solutions are at hand.

However, this absolutist solution is affirmed by only some Muslims today. Others express the view, following for example the Qur'ān commentary of the late 19th – early 20th century Egyptian reformist theologian Muḥammad 'Abduh, that divine revelation prescribes only the core of central religious truths, religious regulations, and fundamental principles of ethics and law, while the detailed settlement of worldly affairs is left to the reason of the believers. According to this view, there is indeed wide scope for the exercise of practical reasoning, and faith expresses itself, apart from dogma and ritual, primarily in a certain basic attitude towards God and one's fellows, and human beings themselves can and must be responsible for deriving from it the necessary guidance for their conduct in the practical problems of life.

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foundation and aim of the _sharī'a_

CHMIEL The foundation and aim of the law in Christianity is the love of God. What is the foundation of the _sharī'a_? The Biblical law is both anthropocentric and theocentric. Is this a point from which to approach dialogue?

KHOURY It is the aim of the _sharī'a_ to establish a just social and political order in society and state and international relations. Whether the _sharī'a_ can in fact achieve this aim is a subject of discussion between Christians and Muslims. In this context the issue is primarily whether a _sharī'a_ legislation is capable in practice of establishing a truly just order if it is not flexible enough constantly to adapt and accommodate to the ever changing conditions of life. This question is addressed above all to the fundamentalists or traditionalists, who hold the opinion that there is but one duty: that of obedience to the order of God, which has, over time, been elaborated from the original sources of Islam – the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth.

However, here it would be important always to remember that this _sharī'a_ is no monolithic block. For each of its judgments has been explained in various ways by the scholars, and on every point the schools have different opinions, which are all considered legitimate and orthodox within Islam, so that a Muslim is free to follow one or the other, according to circumstances, in order to find the solution to the problem at hand. He is not obliged to adhere to a particular school, but can follow one or another. He may, in a certain matter, follow one school and then, in another matter, follow another. The fact that God in the process of transmission gave varying detailed instructions on different questions is to be seen as a sign

of his mercy. The question of how these given instructions are to be applied depends on many variables. A difficulty may arise, however, if it is claimed that beyond these stated solutions given by the various schools, there is no possibility of making free decisions. The application of relevant hermeneutic methods, which would be necessary here to find a way out of the impasse of the classical system and into new paths, is still practised only by a minority in contemporary Islam.

WIELANDT If, from a Christian perspective, one says that love is the aim of the law and, from an Islamic perspective, that it is the establishment of an order willed by God, one may do so with a certain proviso. But definitions of this kind, which establish the difference between the intentions of either side, often give a limited picture. As already mentioned, there is certainly, according to Islamic faith, an impulse of divine mercy in the order God wills to be established on earth. Mr. Khoury has rightly referred to the fact that efforts towards developing hermeneutics that would allow relatively more flexibility in dealing with the precepts of the _sharī'a_, as well as withdrawing the concept of a _djihād_ directed towards outsiders, are not necessarily a concern of the majority. Indeed, with regard to _djihād_, it can be maintained that it is now no longer widely held that a religious war really has to be waged against those who think differently. Here we are not speaking of the attitude of a small minority.

As for approaches towards developing hermeneutics, it is certainly true that this is today a concern of only a few people. Nevertheless it is not correct to say that Muslims are not capable of it. Within Islamic religion there is the dormant potential for such possibilities. It has so far been taken up by only a few, but it is there. It is important to know this in order correctly to assess the possibilities for dialogue and future development, without indulging at the present time in illusions that such hermeneutic approaches could become the dominant subjects taught at al-Azhar in the near future. That is a completely different issue.

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about the scope of the _sharī'a_

VANONI Raising the question of the aim of the law may lead to another about its scope. As an example: according to the Biblical tradition, the law was only given after the Exodus, which means that it was only valid for those who had been liberated. They had to abide by the law, but those who were still in Egypt did not. This in turn raises a question for Christians: what has been our attitude towards the Ten Commandments and towards preaching them?

Have we not imposed them on minors? And my question to the speaker is: what about the scope of the law in Islam? Does it apply to all Muslims without distinction, or are there differentiations between one case and another such that it does not apply to all, and are there extreme circumstances in which it would not apply at all?

WIELANDT One can certainly not say that the law is applied in all circumstances. Caliph 'Umar, one of the great exemplary personalities of early Islamic history, is said during a period of famine to have abolished the *hadd*-punishment of amputation of the hand for theft, a decision which has become an accepted rule. This had happened against the underlying consideration that a precept like this, according to which one must not take anything that appears to be someone else's private property, can only apply if everybody's most basic needs have already been satisfied. The validity of the law is thus assumed to depend on certain social preconditions. And such is also often the argument of contemporary Muslims who say that considering the *sharī'a* to be the law in effect is actually making a false assumption. This Islamic law, especially the *hadd*-punishments, is actually a concept for an ideal society, where the most relevant problems have been resolved. This, however, is today still very far off. Therefore a discussion of this issue could at best take place if we were closer to such an ideal society than we are now and after the most pressing social problems have been settled.

So the universal principle that man is bound to abide by the precepts given by God presupposes that the divine guidance for human conduct is not necessarily contained in form of the specific historical *sharī'a* or particular Qur'ānic legal injunctions in place since the time of Adam. According to the Islamic understanding, divine guidance for humankind in the form of prescriptive revelations runs throughout history, but with the recognition that there will be, to a certain extent, an adaptation to the historical situation.

KHOURY The question raised here is very important for the special situation of Muslims living in the Diaspora. In the tradition of Islamic law, two main points should be mentioned here:

One principle, already embodied in the Qur'ān, says: anyone subject to coercion is exempt from commands and prohibitions of the *sharī'a*. This applies to anyone who becomes a believer in his heart, but is compelled by external circumstances to declare himself a non-believer. If he does so, God is most forgiving, and he will be forgiven. From this the principle has been derived that commands and prohibitions do not apply in situations of coercion.

The second principle, which goes back to Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 767), the founder of the largest Muslim school of law, the Ḥanafī legal tradition, says: Muslims living abroad are not bound by the commands and prohibitions of the *sharī'a*, until they return to their own country. This would mean that the *sharī'a* only applies where the governing authority is Islamic, and not elsewhere. This concept has not been accepted as applying comprehensively, but has been restricted by the majority to the implementation of the penal code. This means that the majority assume that the *sharī'a* applies wherever Muslims live, with the exception that the penal code enforced is that of the governing state authority.

SCHIMMEL The whole concept of freedom within obligation – not only in the legal but also in the ritual domain – can be derived from the Qur'ān. In Islam it is laid down very precisely to whom and in which circumstances a particular duty applies. And Mr. Khoury has rightly referred to the relevance of this question for Muslims living abroad.

There is first the question, already mentioned, of *taqiyya,* hiding one's true religious profession, which has an absolutely legitimate place in Shī'ī Islam, so that one need not say one is a Shī'ī if one is in a Sunnī or other non-Shī'ī area, or if one reasonably fears that it may give rise to danger. This has become typical of the Shī'ī tradition.

In addition there is the whole question of *dār al-islām* (the land where Muslims rule) and *dār al-harb* (the land of war, where there are no Muslims), and what happens if an Islamic country, largely inhabited by Muslims, passes under foreign rule (as was the case in India)? The problem of establishing law under British rule was very much laboured over by theologians in India. Some, for example, were of the opinion that in this situation the Friday prayers were invalid and therefore not only need not be performed, but even should not be performed, while others held that the prayers could somehow be performed, even under British rule.

In our times, when there is the great problem of the millions of Muslims who live in non-Muslim countries, the whole issue has of course escalated further. The question is, who nowadays keeps to the classical tradition, according to which the Friday prayer should not be performed in a state with a non-Muslim majority, for example in the United States or in Germany? Some Muslims in America have found a very ingenious solution: when asked whether they can live under non-Islamic rule and still lead a good life, they say: yes, we feel exactly like those who fled with the Prophet and emigrated with him to Medina, which was not yet Islamic. In the same way

we emigrated from our home country to America, which is not yet Islamic either.

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<table>
<tr><td>justice and
'holy war'</td><td>IVANČIĆ   In connection with the term 'justice' we should also examine the concept of 'holy war', and what it may mean that the Muslims in an Islamic state</td></tr>
</table>

want to exercise all the rights of the _sharīʿa_. In these circumstances, are people of another faith expected to leave, even though the People of the Book – the Jews and the Christians – may be granted more 'rights'? What is the opinion of traditional and modern Islam about this?

KHOURY   The questions raised here will be dealt with in the final lecture of this Symposium.[1] Although we must be patient when it comes to issues of difference between us Christians and Muslims, we should still hope that the theory of the holy war, as it was developed into an official doctrine in the Middle Ages, will be abandoned, and not only in isolated circles. One would feel much better if, for instance, the Azhar University would officially distance itself from this doctrine.

<table>
<tr><td>on the concept
of _djihād_</td><td>WOLBERT   How far does the example of the Prophet play a part in the question of peace and military options?</td></tr>
</table>

SCHIMMEL   It will not be simple to achieve a comprehensive peace. But in this whole complex of questions, what Mrs. Wielandt referred to at the end of her lecture [see p. 115 f.] should be taken into consideration: _djihād_ is essentially man's striving in the way of God. There is no Arabic term for 'holy war'. This is a completely wrong translation of _djihād,_ which crept in, even though it is now used by Muslims themselves.

The 'greater _djihād_ – al-_djihād_ al-akbar', is the struggle against oneself, against the lower impulses of the soul, against 'one's baser instincts', it is struggling for the good, which is done to improve one's own soul. From the 8th century onwards this concept of _djihād akbar_ began to play a more important part than many of the other struggles. Very many of these other wars were not, after all, waged for religious reasons, but simply out of eagerness for plunder, although, according to the Qur'ān, this is not permitted. Most political developments have unfortunately sprung from these motivations. Tīmūr Lang, for instance, the aggressive and brilliant Central-Asian war-lord (d. 1405), and his successors cannot really be called de-

fenders of Islam as such. They devastated even Islamic cities and countries, although they were Muslim princes. This has nothing to do with the Islamic concept of _djihād._ They were in fact struggles for power.

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<table>
<tr><td>_zakāt_ as a means
of just distribu-
tion of property</td><td>ELSAS   It has been said that in Islam today the just distribution of property is a priority. This is certainly also connected with the colonial period and the debate on human rights, which is today extended to the question</td></tr>
</table>

of how far whole peoples have rights which may be pursued. This issue of collective human rights is something new in the current discussion, and is a question addressed to us Christians. Can it be integrated into our Christian theological thinking? And this is obviously also linked with the understanding of _zakāt_ in Islam.

SCHIMMEL   Here we must agree. Both Islamic and non-Islamic thinkers, such as Louis Massignon have said that the poor-due, _zakāt,_ is the best middle course between capitalism and communism.

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<table>
<tr><td>human rights
and the rights of
God in Islam</td><td>BSTEH P.   In speaking about human rights and democratization there is a tendency constantly to think of the French Revolution and lose sight of the American tradition, following on from Magna Carta. The former bore</td></tr>
</table>

the imprint of a very theoretical dilution of Enlightenment ideas, and in our time has led to the reactions of nationalism and a recurrence of fundamentalisms, etc. But the latter is much more characterized by an awareness of history, of a human pragmatism as it were. Should we as Christians not prefer to follow much more our own Christian tradition and be aware that what is holy in man and has to be protected, this 'sacrum', lies in the inalienable dignity of man which is granted by God himself and given in the primal proximity and experience of God, which becomes possible in the actualization of human existence?

WOLBERT   We have heard that there is the draft of an Arab charter of human rights which, however, remained in draft-form, but on the other hand there are indications that some Muslim authors are of the opinion that the best expression of human rights is in the Qur'ān. It may also be that Arab human rights develop into collective rights of the Arab people.[2]

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[1] See below chapter 10 "Polytheists, Jews and Christians", pp. 329–341.

[2] Cf. L. Kühnhardt, _Die Universalität der Menschenrechte_ (Schriftenreihe/Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung; 156). Bonn, [2]1991.

WIELANDT   The question of the relation between human rights and the rights of God is being discussed in contemporary Islam. On the side of the more traditionalist wing, as represented by Saudi-Arabian scholars, there is the tendency to say that in principle the rights of God, in the sense of explicit precepts partly contained in the Qur'ān and partly found in the form of _sharī'a_-regulations formulated later, have priority over human rights. On the other hand there are also contemporary Muslims saying that this cannot be, because it is against the basic principle of human rights, which is that human rights are by definition rights due to human beings simply by virtue of their humanity.

If it was God's will to grant humankind a particular dignity and rights are consequent on that dignity, then he must also have willed these human rights. Therefore, there can be no conflict, logically, between explicit precepts, found, for example, in the Qur'ān or the _sharī'a_, and human rights. If such a conflict seems to exist, it must have arisen from the interpretation, so what used to be taken as an explicit precept has now to be understood differently. This approach also solves to a certain extent the problem of how to link, on the official level, the idea of human rights with traditional religious law.

On the question of whether we Christians should not also start to link the concept of human rights more with our own religious tradition, following the American practice rather than the human rights ideas of the French Revolution, whose orientation was strongly critical of and even hostile to religion in general and the Church in particular, there are various opinions. We may recall the decisive role played by sectarian Protestants who emigrated to America, in formulating modern human rights, specifically because they intended that the system in their new community, despite their differences, should establish freedom of religion for them.

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'dignity regardless of worthiness'? on the death penalty and other aspects of Islamic penal law

VIRT   Man received his dignity from God, and this dignity is the basis of all human rights. In the Christian tradition as understood by Thomas Aquinas, man can forfeit his dignity and with it also his right to live. This was a central argument used to justify the death penalty. How does Islam see this? Is there in Islam too a 'dignity regardless of worthiness'? Can man, to whom Allāh has given his dignity, be denied the right to life, the supreme good?

WOLBERT   Although Christians have held the view of Thomas Aquinas, it still remains highly problematic from a Christian point of view, particularly considering the comparisons frequently made to illustrate it: that a man who did something wicked should be removed like a diseased part of the body. Comparing an individual human being with the diseased part of a body is contrary to the Christian concept of a human dignity granted to man by God which prevents the individual from being defined on the basis of his function in society.

VIRT   This is exactly the question addressed to Islam too in connection with the idea of a dignity regardless of worthiness, which keeps coming up in this context. Why is Islam so quick to sentence people to death or to sever parts of the body, as is repeatedly done today in various countries? Is this authentic Islam or does it happen only in situations of emergency? How should we understand this, if we compare the Qur'ān with what actually happens in Sudan, for example?

SCHIMMEL   Although I am not a specialist in Islamic law, I offer the following statements as personal opinions that may contribute to the discussion of this issue.

First, the death penalty and all other Islamic penalties may only be carried out after detailed investigation: thus adultery may only be punished when testified to by four witnesses of good character. If they cannot describe the act of adultery in detail, the adulterer or the adulteress can still deny the charge and they cannot then be punished according to Islamic law. In addition, such a sentence has to be pronounced by a _qāḍī_, which is a rare occurrence. Moreover, the _sharī'a_ also provides that the culprit will not incur the death penalty or any other penalty, if the family of the victim forgives him or if, in certain circumstances, he declares his readiness to pay blood money.

There are also many ways to prevent the severest punishments. In addition, Islamic law has always attached great importance to differentiating between crimes committed against human beings and crimes committed against the rights of God, which are subject to the authority of God alone.

Moreover, it must always be pointed out that in Islamic law a double system is often in process, because besides the _sharī'a_ there is also customary law, the local legal system, which has, over the centuries, always been applied alongside the _sharī'a_. We can read, for instance, that in the early Middle Ages penalties were inflicted in Egypt which would have shocked the _sharī'a_ judges, but which were nevertheless inflicted by the Sultan or

by whoever was the ruler, on the basis of a very specific legal system, which he developed over time. Or, to give an example from our own times, when the new Pakistani state was founded, a journalist was flogged because he had criticized the government or done something undesirable. The answer to the question of how this was possible and where it could be found in the *sharīʿa* was that it had not happened on the basis of a rule of *sharīʿa*, but had been taken over from British law and implemented in this or that particular case. In contrast, there are possibilities of mitigating the most severe punishments by legal interpretations and tricks. Islam has often fallen into disrepute because we do not know about these possibilities of mitigating punishments and only look at the worst outcomes, which are often not in conformity with the *sharīʿa*.

In principle, nothing can be said against the idea that somebody who has violated the right of another, who for example kills someone or unlawfully usurps property, has to be punished. Then the comparison with the human body's diseased part only means that others in the community have to be protected from evil doers.

BSTEH P.   As for the situation in Sudan, the way Islam has developed there seems to be particularly aggressive. In addition, as Mrs. Schimmel has just said, some elements seem to have been taken over from African tribal laws, which sometimes include the custom of sentencing immediately people who are caught in the act of committing a crime.

WIELANDT   As for the compatibility of the death penalty with human dignity, it must first be pointed out that the death penalty is a problem not only in relation to human dignity and not only for Islam. Thus, in the new Catholic world catechism, the permissibility of imposing the death penalty is retained for certain extreme cases.

From an Islamic point of view, it may be said that in principle the permissibility or prohibition of the death penalty seems to be decided less by the concept of human dignity in general, and more by the question of whether human life may ever be placed at the disposal of men, be it only as an exemplary sanction. A passage in the Qurʾān says: "[…] if any one slew a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole people: […]" (Sūra 5,35). The restrictions contained in this verse do not allow it to be read as a general prohibition of killing or, therefore, as a prohibition of the death penalty, although some contemporary Muslims do read it in this way. But, there are other assertions in the Qurʾān which clearly show that the extinction of human life as a

sanction is permitted. So no absolute prohibition is to be inferred from the Qurʾān and extensive deliberations would be needed in order to reach that conclusion.

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whoever kills one human being kills all mankind

DUPRÉ   In view of the Qurʾānic statement quoted above: he who kills one human being kills all mankind, one may rightly ask how far every human being is also at the same time a representative of mankind as a whole, an idea which, within Western philosophy, for instance with Kant, holds a very respected position. How far does this express authentic Islamic thinking about the concept of mankind?

WIELANDT   There is an unrelieved tension between the central idea of this Qurʾānic assertion and other assertions in the Qurʾān. For instance, the Qurʾān also contains legal regulations for conducting a vendetta. Here heterogeneous elements seem to have been amalgamated from different strata of tradition and from various stages of development of a social ethos, which have not been balanced with each other through discussion. Today people usually proceed selectively, according to the basic position they hold and what they want to stress. Excluding the restrictions implied, the statement quoted above is employed when the intention is to underline the primary and absolute worthiness of human life to be protected and the dignity of every individual which must not be violated. Yet if somebody argues from another situation of need, he proceeds differently. There is certainly important potential here, but so far in this context there has been no clarification of what should be the principle that is given priority.

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retribution and forgiveness

WOLBERT   Concerning the issues of retribution and forgiveness, we certainly have to be careful not to speak in general terms, that is without taking into consideration the specific historical background. Where, for instance there is a penal law in force, such that not the person affected but a neutral authority reacts to an injustice done, forgiveness and the consequent obligations are something very different from what happens when there is a vendetta, which after all has not only individual, but also social relevance and which in our own context is dealt with by the penal law. From this perspective, one has to be very careful in assessing such statements and only attempt it against the relevant social background.

WIELANDT   Under certain social conditions, when there are no authorities guaranteeing rights in any other way, the vendetta has a very different relevance from when such authorities do exist. And under the latter conditions it is of course considerably easier to give up the practice of vendetta.

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separation of powers in the context of Islam

DUPRÉ   For the order of our whole world, to the extent that it does function reasonably, the separation of powers is of decisive importance. The conflicts we cannot settle today partly arise from the fact that separation of powers has not yet been fully established in these situations. How does this look now in the context of Islam?

The separation of powers did not drop to earth from heaven: it is a product of the way we understand ourselves and creation, and this has something to do with differentiations, and how diversity can persist in unity and unity in diversity. However, it also touches very directly upon political problems, when the *umma,* as a religious entity, at the same time claims the right to order the affairs and conditions of government.

WIELANDT   Traditionally the concept of a separation of powers is alien to Islamic state law and the Islamic concept of the state. According to the medieval understanding of the state, the only legislator is God, who is the sovereign and the source of law in the state. For practical reasons a certain measure of customary law can additionally be integrated into the system and, for reasons of tactical pragmatism in politics, certain decisions may be made at the discretion of the sovereign, for example, in dealing with public order offences, but the ideal is that God is the only source of law. This means that there need not be any legislative power in the state besides God, and the authority of the state, as its function was conceived in the Middle Ages, is both executive and judicial. The earliest Caliphs were appointed with responsibility for enforcing the precepts of religious law, and at the same time for implementing legal judgments. But in political life in practice, various specializations emerged: there were *qāḍīs* who implemented legal judgments, market inspectors who had certain police functions, and many different kinds of armed forces supporting the ruler in carrying out decisions that were made. Eventually all these officers, whether *qāḍīs,* market police or any others, were appointed by the ruler. This means that the power of the state is both judicial and executive, and the idea that mutual control, or these authorities' independence of one

another, is necessary to prevent corruption, has not been developed. Even in the 19th century, when constitutional ideas from Europe began to be accepted and the idea began to spread that every state needs a constitution which the citizens can invoke, the concept of separation of powers was not directly taken on board. At first the idea was simply that a secure legal system should be established in which what everybody may or may not do is guaranteed. This did not require a separation between the judicial and the executive, and serious consideration of this question has only taken place recently.

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possibilities of a pluralism of opinions

ELSAS   In connection with the principle of *zakāt,* we can rightly emphasize the necessity of a just distribution of property (see above p. 125). Could we similarly link balance between different opinions with the principle of *shūrā?* Are there not Islamic thinkers who take the view that divergent opinions should be taken into account as justly as possible, supporting the legitimacy of a pluralism of opinions, and who even support a secular state, pointing out that Islamic principles are not as endangered today as they were in the early stages of Islam, so divergent non-Muslim opinions could and should also be integrated?

WIELANDT   The possibility of allowing opposition in the state, or a pluralism of opinions which may be articulated on the political level in a multi-party system, is still problematic. Most supporters of the reintroduction of the Islamic state are very sceptical of the multi-party system. They are afraid that it may lead to a dissipation of the energies of the *umma* and that too much inner dissension could endanger coherence. And some of the people would be prepared to admit such a system only if there were a guarantee that not much change would result from it. In their ideal picture, there is an Islamic majority opinion which will support clear solutions – and then one may ask what opposition there could be. But, practically speaking, there is no chance of establishing an open multi-party system in which the outcome of decision-making procedures is uncertain and where votes – in matters of principle as well as practice – may bring about one of several results. This is a concept for which support has always been, and remains, minimal.

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MEIER What is Reinhard Schulze referring to, when he says that there was an authentic Islamic Enlightenment?[3]

WIELANDT Schulze's thesis says that on the one hand there were internal Islamic approaches towards an Enlightenment, but that on the other – and this is not quite the same thing – there were also within Islam tendencies towards secularization. By the way, he is not the first to hold this view.

One can certainly say that within Islamic tradition there was already a form of rationalism and also that there was a revival of such ideas in some parts of the Islamic world shortly before the massive influence of European culture. In different contexts reference has also been made to the fact that there are indeed certain Islamic approaches towards Enlightenment thinking.

When the law, insofar as it is articulated in specific legal precepts, is basically a matter of divine authorship, and God is therefore revered as the legislator for the Islamic state, this does not mean that everything in the state is seen de facto as ordained by God alone. Besides *dīn*, the system given by God which includes this sphere of law, there is, according to the understanding of Islamic law as it has traditionally developed, an area called *siyāsa*, practical statesmanship, which is subject to the changing requirements brought about by specific situations, and in which the ruler and those appointed by him in turn are authorized to establish regulations. The basic idea is that this *siyāsa*, this practical statesmanship, should serve the higher aim of realizing the system willed by God, but at the same time the assumption is that there are areas in which the ruler and those appointed by him may lay down detailed regulations at their own discretion, albeit the exercise of this practical statesmanship has no authority over what is clearly prescribed by God; revealed precepts may not be simply overruled by practical measures instigated by the statesmen.

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IVANČIĆ What about agreement between scholars, the *idjmāʿ*? What is its relevance for doctrine and faith? And how are the different schools to be assessed, when they often hold very different views, whether they are in Egypt or in India?

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[1] R. Schulze, *Menschenrechte in der islamischen Diskussion* (Arbeitspapiere des Instituts für Internationale Politik; 12). Wuppertal, 1991.

KHOURY *Idjmāʿ* means agreement, consensus; according to its etymology, it should mean the agreement of all jurists on the answer to a certain question. As an Islamic principle, understanding *idjmāʿ* may be based on an assertion by the Prophet that God would not permit the religious community as a whole to agree on an error. In practice, however, the agreement of all jurists is not possible, so in its ideal form it remains theoretical, but in order to achieve a certain level of agreement, consultations may be carried out by presenting a question to the scholars and asking them to declare their opinion about it. If in this context, the majority are in general agreement, then the Muslim or the Islamic community can accept the answer in good conscience. In keeping with this tradition, in Sunnī Islam four main schools have developed which broadly agree on fundamental issues, but hold different opinions on many precise details.

The most widespread school, which is predominant in non-Arab Islam, is the Ḥanafī, which is the most liberal. Ḥanafīs do not feel bound to the morals and customs which developed in Medina. They say that they have to apply their common sense in order to find right solutions. In contrast, the Mālikīs look to the tradition of Medina. The third school, the Shāfiʿī, tries to systematize Islamic law, finding the reasons for things from which general principles can be developed, while the smallest school, the Ḥanbalī, is strict and conservative, but very active, because Saudi Arabia is supporting its spread worldwide. Its influence does not so much result from the strength of its arguments, as from the political influence of Saudi Arabia.

As for the influence of Islamic legislation in the various countries of the world, one has to differentiate between 'Islamic countries' and 'countries of the Islamic world'. The 'Islamic countries', currently for example Saudi Arabia, Iran, or Sudan, are countries which are governed according to Islamic law. By 'countries of the Islamic world' those countries are generally meant where the majority of the population are Muslims, but where the legislative system is not Islamic. Legislation in these countries is a mixture of Islamic tradition and modern legislation, so that the façade is Islamic, but not the state apparatus as such. There are a few exceptions, like Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, which are ruled by a secularist regime, where there is theoretically separation between state and religion.

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ELSAS For Islam the understanding of humankind and their status in the creation results, on the one hand, from the fact that they are creatures of God, sharing with all creatures a fundamental right to life, and, on the other, from the particular dignity granted to them as human

the status of humankind in creation as a whole

beings, breathed into them by the Spirit and linked with responsibility. In the understanding of Islam, does the importance of being granted the breath of the Spirit not rank in importance below the createdness humans share with all other creatures? For example, it says in a Ḥadīth that someone will be admitted to paradise simply because he raised water with his shoe from a well beside which a dog lay dying of thirst, so that the dog could drink, even though dogs are generally considered unclean.[4]

VIRT This problem is frequently discussed in the context of the ecological debate. In the Christian tradition, emphasis always used to be placed on what differentiates man from the rest of the creation. In contrast, the focus is now more on continuity, the fundamental trait of being created, which humans share with all other creatures. However, we discover in this discussion that there are hardly any starting points in the Christian tradition, and we refer to a few assertions by St. Augustine and the medieval mystics, and St. Francis of Assisi speaking of the creatures as his brothers and sisters. Being aware of this obvious lack in the Christian tradition, we may ask whether in Islam there is some sort of 'spirituality of creation', in which the continuity between man and all other creatures is alive – what in fact Francis of Assisi expresses when he calls his fellow creatures brothers and sisters.

creation gifted with praising God

SCHIMMEL To attribute such a sense of continuity to Islam may be going too far, but if we go back to the Qur'ān, we see that every created being praises God in its own language. The birds and the blossoms of plants, each praise God in their own way, and humankind then expresses praise in words. This praise of God permeates the whole creation, from the gnat and the green leaf up to the human, and also explains the wealth of Islamic poetry. In each voice, singing even the smallest praise, whether it arises from a flower or in the song of a gnat, the tiniest of all animals (which also appears in the Qur'ān as a parable: Sūra 2,26), everywhere one who perceives more

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[4] Cf. *So sprach der Prophet. Worte aus der islamischen Überlieferung*, ausgew. und übers. von A. Th. Khoury (GTB; 785). Gütersloh, 1988, nr. 714.

deeply sees the parables and hears the praise of God throughout creation. The visionary experiences of the mystics describe this in wonderful language, as for example in the great cosmic prayers of 9th century Egypt, in which the voices of the birds, the rustling of the leaves, the murmuring of the brooks, are all but one voice, one single choir, praising God's omnipotence. Many examples from literature could be quoted, from the Qur'ān up to the literature of our time, for example in Pakistan or Turkey.

This needs to be strongly emphasized because for some time, in the ascetic tradition which developed in the early 8th century and had a strong impact on Islamic mysticism, the world is portrayed as something absolutely useless, and even harmful (comparable to the "Milady world" in the Middle Ages).

entrusted to man so that he may not corrupt it

On the basis of the Qur'ān, however, the world is seen as a reality entrusted to man by God: "Do not mischief on the earth, after it hath been set in order, [...]" (Sūra 7,56). And every creature is a sign, *āya*, pointing to God and expressing in its own language the praise of God. Proceeding from this continuity in the praise of God, there may again be starting points for coping with modern issues like preserving the creation, and the environment.

and every creature is singing His praise on its own

BSTEH P. Is the praise of creation offered by the praising human being, or does the bird, on its own, express the praise of creation?

SCHIMMEL According to a beautiful 13th century verse by Saʿdī, every blade of grass and every leaf on the tree is a tongue occupied in praising God, and a 15th century Persian author writes that the angels sang this verse for a whole year before the throne of God, because it expresses the truth so beautifully.

Rūmī, for whom the whole of life was a mystical dance, a ring dance around the sun, described the creation as one single dance. According to him, non-being, when it heard the divine call: "[...] Am I not your Lord [...]?" (Qur'ān 7,172), was so enthralled that it hopped out of its non-being and became things, flowers and trees. As he once said in an ecstatic poem: even the evil spirits dance when they are in love.

yet man does not recognize the signs

ELSAS But the nature of humankind is in fact ambiguous in view of the human inclination to bloodshed; the angels speak a warning, but God wants human beings nevertheless (cf. Qur'ān 2,30).

SCHIMMEL ... and believes in his possibilities. The tail of a donkey and the wings of an angel, mankind has both (see above p. 84). "And everything bears witness for man showing him that God is One." The Qur'ān frequently speaks of these *āyāt*, of these signs of God, whether they are the voices of the birds, or the opening of the blossoms and the grass after rain. But most people close their eyes to them and do not recognize them.

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anthropocentric attitude — **OTT** What we heard in the lecture on the subject 'preservation of creation', following the topics of the European Ecumenical Assembly "Peace with Justice" 1989 in Basle [see above pp. 110–112], sounded very anthropocentric. Hence the question arises: do we safeguard creation only to preserve it for our descendants, so that they will continue to find and enjoy fresh air, clean water, and a variety of species – or do we also preserve creation as our direct responsibility before the Creator himself to respect it as he made it, as it is? In Islam there seem rather to be rudimentary indications that we should understand creation as being subjected to the service of humankind: we may make use of it, though not egoistically, but always responsibly with a view to the coming generations.

KHOURY As became clear in Mrs. Wielandt's lecture, it is essential in Islamic belief that God alone is the Lord of his creation. So the question is: within the frame of this vision, what is the role of humankind in the preservation of creation? We are responsible before God *and* future generations. For, according to the Qur'ān, mankind is the vicegerent of God, not only one generation, but humanity as a whole, for generation after generation. Thus our responsibility is grounded not only upon solidarity between humans, but also upon the task set for us by God to put this world to use, generation after generation. Nobody has the earth at their disposal, but "[...] On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood for a time." (Sūra 2,36; 7,24, etc.); then humankind will be called to render account at the end of time for what we have done with God's creation.

preservation of creation — As to the question of what the preservation of creation means in Islam, two passages in the Qur'ān are informative. One says: "He Who created the seven heavens [...]: no want of proportion wilt thou see in the Creation of (God) Most Gracious. So turn thy vision again: seest thou any flaw?" (Sūra 67,3). It is in line with the purpose for which it was created. This indicates a harmony between God's creation and humankind.

In another text a reproach is addressed to the Meccans, the polytheists, because they changed the order of the creation (cf. Sūra 4,119). At that time the issue was about their treatment of animals, in which the Qur'ān reproachfully saw a change in the created order.

Since humankind was entrusted with creation which "will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood – for a time", for Islam the question arises immediately of how far humans really have discretionary power of disposition over the creation, since God said: you shall not change the order of God's creation (cf. Sūra 4,119; 7,56.85).

Thus, in every work God entrusts to humankind, the latter's relatedness to God and his order has always to be considered, though the Qur'ān does not specify in detail where the limits of exploitation should be set.

✦

Muslims, Christians and the 'conciliar process' — **MITTERHÖFER** Are Muslims, like Christians who take up the 'conciliar process'[5], also exposed to strong criticisms? Or is it different for them, since the Islamic world, unlike the West, need not feel a comparable sense of guilt about creation, because it did not develop this ideology of domination which has exposed creation to exploitation and destruction?

WIELANDT Muslims who support one or other of the leading ideas of the 'conciliar process' do indeed have to be prepared to face strong criticisms. This arises, for instance, when in the face of the current widespread wave of fundamentalism, rather than taking a position of confrontation and promoting a basically anti-pluralistic attitude, someone asserts in public that efforts have to be made towards peaceful co-existence with the West. Only a minority has the courage to say that a confrontational attitude will only plunge the world into catastrophe.

Christian theology is reproached for being unable to prevent the misinterpretation of the call to "fill the earth and subdue it", as carte blanche to exploit creation arbitrarily, regardless of its destruction. Islamic theology, however, really does not find itself confronted with such a reproach. This may have something to do with the Qur'ān not saying, "subdue the earth!" but rather, "God has made subject to you (men) all that is on the earth" (Sūra 22,65; cf. 31,20 and related passages), which, as it is worded, tends less to allow the impression that we should take hold of creation, but rather

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[5] Cf. above pp. 110–116.

that the share of the world due to humankind is already granted by the Creator, and so is kept within bounds. Finally it is obvious that Muslim theology has so far not been very concerned with environmental problems. It was only when the oilfields were set on fire in the Gulf War that many people, including serious theologians, began to ask whether Muslims were permitted to do this. In this context many Azhar scholars expressed the opinion that to act in this way was an offence against the will of God, for the earth, as God gave it to humankind, is good, and it would be extremely reprehensible if people caused disaster on earth by destroying its resources.

HORN In this context, has mention not also been made of the fact that respectful moderation is not only based on the needs of man, but also on the earth's bearing the glory of God and having the task of reminding man of God? Would this not create an attitude of respect towards the world, grounded in its relation to God and not so much on the needs of man?

not only for the sake of man but also for the sake of God

WIELANDT There is much to support the suggestion that the idea of nature as a reminder of God could play a role in environmental ethics; so far, however, little use, if any, has been made of it. According to the Qur'ānic understanding, nature is an incomparably wonderful construction, and if man abuses it destructively, the result may be that one day this may no longer be apparent, and creation will no longer bear the imprint of God, as it were.

ZIRKER Here we may well recall that in the Western history of ideas there has been the concept of the two books, the book of nature and the Scriptures. Similarly, also in Islam, the world appears full of signs – and 'sign' is also the word for the verses of the Qur'ān.

PESCHKE In considering these problems, should we not take more into account that they do not yet have a long public history and were triggered by a relatively new situation, caused last but not least by the enormous population growth. The Holy Scriptures conceive of man more as an administrator, as it says in Genesis, chapter 2: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it." (v. 15). Ideas of an exploitative attitude towards creation are today more to be traced back to the rationalism of Descartes, who distinguished between a "res cogitans", which is man, and a "res cognita", which is the whole material creation at man's disposal, and then to Newton who, with his concept of physics, justified man's total

relatively new problems

domination of the material world. So, historically speaking, Islam as well as Christianity are still adolescents when it comes to dealing with the issue of preserving creation.

VANONI In general the problems we are discussing here seem to lie more in the history of the reception of certain original statements of faith than in the texts themselves. An example is the commandment to keep the Sabbath, which is not based simply on the idea that people should do nothing for a whole day in order to be able to go on working afterwards, nor originally on a social consideration for the welfare of slaves (this was a later rational justification). Rather, behind this commandment, which through an additional commandment in the Book Exodus (34:21) also applies to the time of sowing and even to the time of harvesting, there is a theological reasoning, a testimony to the believer's conviction that people who have faith in God can afford to rest one day a week even at the cost of harvesting less. From a Biblical perspective, this commandment to keep the Sabbath, which Jesus certainly did not abolish, is reflected in the advice given in the Gospel to look at the birds of the air and the lilies of the field which neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, "and yet your heavenly Father feeds them" (Mt 6:25 f.). This is a reproach for the way the commandment to keep the Sabbath has been received: Christians should live according to the attitude behind it, and it should guide them towards not becoming slaves of work to the extent that they reach the limit of the resources available.

on the reception of original assertions of faith

Another example of problems which may be inherent in the way original statements of faith have been received, is the problem of Genesis 1 already mentioned: the translation 'You shall subdue the earth' is incorrect. It should rather be: "You shall take possession of the land!" (v. 28). The priest-text in which this statement is found was written at the time of the Exile with the purpose of creating stability in the face of a pluralistic confrontation: God wants order; he establishes a cosmic house in which there must be room for all; and each people may take possession of their land. This would actually be compatible with an understanding of justice in the sense of a just distribution of goods. To translate this into our times is not easy. Whatever the case may be, it is important to maintain the theological reference backwards in this whole matter of the preservation of creation. After all, it cannot mean that we tiny worms

according to the example given in Genesis chapter 1

should imagine we have to tidy up the whole mess, not least because, just like our ancestors in their time, we are actually unable fully to foresee the consequences of what we are doing today. If anybody preserves creation, it is God. And it is in this perspective that we have to approach the problem, not out of the obsessive idea that we should know precisely how to prevent the earth from plunging into disaster.

Does Islam also have these problems of interpretation – that today we confront difficulties that arise little, if at all, from the original statement of faith, but rather from a wrong interpretation which a religious tradition has maintained for a more or less long time? And does Islam also have an attitude towards work and the times when people should rest from work that is not primarily based on social and labour-economical considerations, but rather on the theological proposition that one who believes in this Creator can peacefully do this or not do it, because the land really belongs to the LORD?

In summary, can we and Islam share the fundamental view that the task is to come to terms theologically with three issues – preserving creation, establishing justice and achieving peace?

different development in Islam

WIELANDT   On the Christian side, it is certainly the long history of assertions based on Genesis 1 that has caused a problem and not the text itself. Even if the text had said, "subdue the earth!", at the time of early Israel it could not have meant what modern industrialists have made of it. The Islamic side does not have the same problem of wrong interpretation, because there was not the same development in the means of production which might have driven religious people to provide justifications for arbitrary exploitation of the environment.

faith in God and attitude towards labour

The question of whether, on the Islamic side, faith in God leads to a different attitude towards labour, is rather less reflected on the theological level than it is in popular religiosity and piety, where there is the belief that God takes care of man and that life is possible for him not only because of what he himself can produce; this may sometimes reach a critical extreme, as when somebody has fifteen children without the means to support them.

One might therefore say that the issues related to the 'conciliar process' are quite accessible to both sides. From the Islamic point of view, the most relevant issue is justice rather than environmental concerns because, on the one hand, there is a long tradition in Islam of reflection about problems of justice, and on the other, the problem of social justice in the Islamic world,

which mostly belongs to what we call the 'Third World', is felt to be so pressing that there is a strong motivation to consider these issues.

expropriation as a means of social justice?

KLOSE   In this context, is the possibility also raised of expropriation of private property?

WIELANDT   In fundamentalist circles, for example within the left wing of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, at that time under the leadership of Sayyid Quṭb (executed in 1966), such questions were raised; sometimes the expropriation of vital resources was considered as a possible solution in extreme cases, for example the expropriation of land and watercourses to guarantee minimum provision for the smallest farms. However, they are very cautious about making private property available for public disposal.

In a broader sense, however, there are certain points of contact in the Islamic legal tradition with the idea that vital resources should in principle be public property.

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why put the blame on the Christians?

RABERGER   It would be interesting to trace the question of when Christians were first blamed over the creation issue for their use of the frequently quoted "subdue the earth!" Was it not before Vatican II that, particularly with reference to this text, the attempt was made to blame Christian theology for world oblivion?

LEUZE   The monotheistic religions share the fact that they attribute to man an exalted position in creation. They do not give weight to integration with nature to the extent to which it is found in Eastern thinking. And it is not long ago that we proudly pointed to the fact that, in the history of ideas, the development of technology actually happened in the wake of Christianity.

So, why did these environmental setbacks happen particularly in the areas traditionally dominated by Christianity? After all, the Qur'ān also says that God calls man to rule responsibly, but these developments have still, historically, had worse consequences where Christianity was active. Or were other factors at work in areas of Christian dominance?

less a question of religious theory than of concrete practice

KHOURY   One simple reason why Christianity rather than Islam has been blamed for damage to creation may be that it was the Christians who developed the science and technology with which to exploit it. If the Muslims had made this advancement, they would prob-

ably have had no greater awareness of the need to be careful with creation. Perhaps the exploitation of creation is less a matter of religious theory than of concrete practice. There is no evidence that people deal with creation differently from each other if they have the relevant tools and means. Before technology was developed, peoples who had converted to Christianity did not treat creation differently from others. Indeed not a few people consider that the call to protect the environment today is a Western imperialist intervention intended to prolong the dependence of the non-Western world on the West.

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BSTEH P. Are we not right to have the impression that Islam sometimes tends too quickly to assume that the natural order as we see it now is as God ultimately intends it? And should this not make Christians ask themselves to what extent they, as they understand their Christian calling and define their way of faith, should not in fact combine both – the preservation of the natural order *and* the freedom granted to us to shape and change it? Does Christian faith not imply an explicit claim to have a mission and a sense of being liberated into an arena where God is beyond our understanding, but where we are given the task of opening up the mysteries in the created order which already exists and in the order of salvation which is still to be realized among peoples on the path of faith?

preservation of creation and the call to develop it

OTT Among Christians, an awareness of being responsible for the world seems to be increasing, and beyond that a readiness also to see this as a responsibility in which the religions can share and cooperate. Can this idea also find a sympathetic understanding among Muslims?

the religions' shared responsibility for the world

KHOURY Muslims are ready to cooperate within this framework of common responsibility for the world because, as we have already seen, for them practice ranks in principle above theory, so they ask not so much, "What shall I believe?" but rather, "What shall I do?" Some years ago, the Secretary General of the Islamic World Congress was the President of the World Conference of Religions for Peace.

At the same time, there are differences of emphasis: when Christians speak of these issues, they want to include political action, while still proceeding on the basis of the secular separation between practical politics and religious proclamation, which, in classical Islamic theory, remain a unity.

In these endeavours towards peace and a solution of the great problems of the world, it seems important not to build up alliances against atheists or communists, or develop militant strategies against others, but to be open to cooperation with all who are ready to engage in the service of a peaceful future for humanity.

WIELANDT On the question of how well developed among Muslims is the awareness of the religions' shared responsibility for the world, as it has been recently expressed by Hans Küng in his book *Projekt Weltethos*[6], which presupposes that such an awareness should exist, it has to be acknowledged that, generally speaking, there is still a long way to go, both in Islam and in Christianity. There are Muslims today who are absolutely aware of the religions' joint responsibility: a number of Muslims cooperate for instance in the "World Conference of Religions for Peace". The fundamentalist camp of contemporary Islam, however, entirely rejects this approach to the other religions that exist in the world, and acts on the basis that Muslims should feel responsible for the world in the sense of spreading and eventually establishing their version of faith. The idea of meeting with Christians, Jews or Buddhists and reflecting together on how, for example, to maintain or reestablish peace is, as already said – and unfortunately not only there – more or less remote.

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ZIRKER In these questions which have so much to do with politics, what is the status of theologians' opinions? Is it not a very different group of people, like physicians or technicians, who are consulted for their views? How far did theologians who took up ecological questions at the time of the Gulf War, really do so because they had an interest in these issues, and how far were they motivated by political considerations connected with a particular regime?

spokesmen of a new responsibility for the world in Islam

WIELANDT There is no doubt that theologians suffer a loss of credibility when they allow themselves to be involved in the religious justification of specific political objectives, and this limits their effectiveness as religious leaders. Today the Islamistic wing is in fact led to a large extent by physicians, pharmacists, engineers, etc. who, though religiously committed, are theologically uneducated. An Egyptian sociologist describes them with an

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[6] English edition: H. Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*. New York, 1991.

apt expression: 'the trained uneducated', which means people who have not been theologically educated to make distinctions of a subtle kind, but who have technical know-how and are able to appeal to wider circles of the population. There are also, of course, some theologians and influential preachers who have made themselves known as fundamentalists.

As for the more modernist-oriented side of the inner-Islamic spectrum of opinions, it is striking that it is not primarily the academic theologians who influence the development of opinions. The really exciting new theological approaches come today from historians, scholars in the field of literary studies or educationists, who in various publications focus on religious subjects.

RABERGER   This is interesting. If we look at theological innovations within Catholic Christianity, we also find the momentum coming not so much from academic theology, but more especially from philosophy, sociology and philosophical anthropology.

| as everywhere, a matter of the minority | **KHOURY**   Finding and treading new paths is in Islam too something not done by the majority, but by the few, who begin from a knowledge of classical Islam and try to indicate new ways that could lead towards freeing |

the bottleneck of the classical system and so opening up new possibilities of understanding for dialogue with the non-Muslim world. These new approaches are not introduced into Islam from the outside, but develop – perhaps spurred on by external influences – from within Islam. As already mentioned, this group of open-minded intellectuals in the Islamic world is few in number and their potential influence is also limited by the fact that the Islamic world today is in search of a new identity and some things will only be possible if calm returns to the situation.

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| fear of YHWH – self-glorification of man – _shalōm_ | **VANONI**   From the Biblical point of view, fear of the LORD is relevant for man's responsibility towards the world in which he lives. Here it is not so much an attitude towards God that is at stake, but rather that, |

being responsible before God, one should do nothing wicked in the world (cf. Job 1:1). And in connection with the fear of the LORD we think of arrogance, illustrated in the story of the tower of Babel, which raises the fundamental question of whether humans _may_ do everything they _can_ do, which is also a question to be presented to Islam.

The other theme to be mentioned here in the context of fear of YHWH is _shalōm_. A study of all the passages concerned with _shalōm_, and in the New Testament with εἰρήνη, which are related to God, has shown that they agree on one essential point: the peace of God is his forgiveness, and if people are to live the peace of God and hand it on, then they have to be ready to forgive. If one takes the Bible as a process of learning, one finds in it a growing awareness that peace is not something one can enforce. There is of course David, who makes _shalōm_ by means of war. But then there is the figure of the suffering servant, of whom it is said that he was offered for our _shalōm_ (cf. Is 53:5–10). If we look for a thread in the Biblical statements about _shalōm_, it becomes increasingly clear that, on God's side, it is grounded in his readiness to forgive, and that man in turn must allow himself to be infected by this readiness to forgive.

Does the concept exist in Islam too that Allāh's readiness to forgive should also be found between humans?

| man may not do everything he can do | **WIELANDT**   The question of whether people may do everything they can do should be answered with a definite no, as we already find in the Qur'ān. According to the Qur'ān, there are many things humans can do |

which may be harmful for them and not in keeping with the will of God. Concerning the things we can do, we should always ask ourselves specifically: Am I in this respect keeping the right balance and is the use I am making of my possibilities in accordance with the will of God?

| the relation between peace and forgiveness | As for the relation between peace and forgiveness, or reconciliation (to use a more Christian term), it has first to be said that in Islam 'reconciliation' is not a vital concept to the extent it is in Christianity, where, even |

with regard to structure, it plays a more important role: the Christian view presupposes a very different need of reconciliation between God and man than does Islam, which again is linked with the very different assessment of sin. Nevertheless, Islam does teach that forgiveness from God is to be sought partly because he is called the one who forgives. As the vicegerent of God man should, in general terms, practice in relation to his fellow beings those traits of character which are also outstanding attributes of God, such as justice, mercy and forgiveness.

This also has consequences on the level of legal precepts, and this is clear also in the Qur'ān. For example, the Qur'ān regulates punishment for certain physical assaults and types of killing, which in the first instance clearly

represents an exercise of restraint in comparison with what is known about the customs in early Arab society. This includes restriction of the right of vendetta. However, one also finds it clearly asserted in the Qur'ān that in the case of doubt it is better to refrain from vendetta altogether and accept sin-offerings instead. And this principle has been elaborated in Islamic law, which we should describe as a preference for pacification by renouncing one's right to recompense and forgiving.

WISSE   The human role as vicegerent is linked with the call to imitate the qualities of God. Can this be compared with words from the Sermon on the Mount: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Mt 5:48)?

WIELANDT   There is certainly an analogy: humankind is called to emulate the perfection of God, well aware that it can never be achieved, but accepting it as the aim.

WISSE   If we are not only speaking of preserving creation, but also of relating to it with reverence, we can see this attitude prefigured in St. Francis' "Song of the Sun" which not only calls the creatures to praise God by simply existing, like Psalm 148, but which enters into a brotherly and sisterly union with them in order to learn with them and through them, not only to exist before God, but to consciously do this in praise of God, on the basis of their and our relation to God. In any case, the task of leaving to the coming generations a world that is not exploited, in which one can live humanely, does not seem to be something that we humans can fulfil on our own. Rather, in itself and through all human endeavours it remains a gift of God – just like the efforts made towards what the Old Testament calls _shalōm_.

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readiness to forgive in Islam

KHOURY   When Islam speaks of forgiveness, which Muslims should practise in imitation of the forgiveness of God, we may consider the fact that Islam here distinguishes three steps.

First: It is your right to return evil for evil.

Second: It is better to renounce this right, making concessions to one's brothers in the faith, and to be satisfied with blood money.

Third: Finally, it is better still to return good for evil. If one does this, one has won over one's enemy (cf. Sūra 41,34; 23,96; 28,54; 13,22).

Therefore in Islam there is not only readiness to forgive but also a call to do more than merely renounce retaliation. This seems to be restricted to 'brothers and sisters'. Or is it in fact to be extended beyond the Islamic community, and is Islamic solidarity not only with Muslims, but also with all the people in the world?

also beyond one's own fellow believers?

WIELANDT   The question of the scope of brotherhood in Islam, and whether it extends only to fellow believers or also to non-Muslims, is of fundamental importance, especially for the current world situation. There are, even already in the tradition of the Prophet, starting points for extending this concept, for instance in form of ethical precepts about neighbourliness or simple humanitarian precepts, which it is repeatedly reported that the Prophet observed towards followers of other religions. For instance, at the funeral of a Jew his conduct was as befits any compassionate person mourning the dead, simply because he was a human soul like any other. These do seem to offer possibilities of extending Islamic solidarity, and they have been elaborated further, for example in Islamic mysticism. In the mind of very many contemporary Muslims, however, it is still fellow believers who have the first right to such solidarity.

✦

compromises for the sake of peace?

DUPRÉ   Many of our problems arise from a sense that in the end we cannot renounce the truth and prefer to endure discord rather than make concessions on issues of truth. On the other hand, history shows us how Muslims have dealt with questions of this kind and have often made compromises that surprise us. So the question arises here of how far the art of compromise is understood in the Islamic tradition as serving peace.

WIELANDT   The Islamic tradition has been generally characterized by an attitude that preferred enduring discord for the sake of truth. This of course presupposed a historical situation where it could be assumed that by such a policy it would be possible ultimately to push through one's own agenda before the world came to an end.

In the Western world the majority today work on the assumption that the chance for humanity as a whole to survive with dignity is not very great without readiness to make compromises for the sake of peace, rather than risking conflict, even for the sake of truth. In contrast, many contemporary Muslims still argue that they have the truth, and for the sake of this truth a certain amount of conflict may have to be settled through violence. Others, who of course are less vociferous today, hold the view that one has to be ready for compromises in controversies where different truth-claims conflict, and one has to expect that nobody will emerge victorious.

MEIER If we think of relating the two concepts, peace and justice, and bear in mind that no peace is possible without justice, the question arises of the possibility of cooperation between movements inspired by a Christian theology of liberation and similar movements in Islam.

liberation theology and similar movements in Islam

WIELANDT The question of a possible analogy between liberation theology, as it is to be found, for example, in Latin-American Christianity, and Islamic activism, raises an interesting point.[7] There are indeed similarities, not least with the <u>Shīʿī</u> position, which should be considered in this discussion. Concerning for instance the ideological background of the Islamic revolution in Iran, particularly the ideas of the philosopher ʿAlī <u>Sharī</u>ʿatī (d. 1975), there is no doubt that a significant role was played by concepts such as that Islam in principle means siding with those who are socially deprived and oppressed, and that there is a religious obligation to establish an order that abolishes existing privileges. This was one of the dominant concepts of the revolution.

However, there are also attempts by Muslims explicitly to join Latin-American liberation theology, like that put forward by Ḥasan Ḥanafī, a philosopher teaching at the University of Cairo, and author of many books largely aimed at emphasizing the social-revolutionary character of Islam. Ḥanafī expressly holds the opinion that, as he understands Islam, elements of an Islamic liberation theology are inherent in it. In his view, Islam is a message aimed at the liberation of the oppressed or socially underprivileged and that the need is to develop further this inherent aspect of Islamic tradition. Ḥanafī sees himself as belonging to the Islamic left.

Yet, it has to be said that, as he himself concedes, there has not been much response from other representatives of the Islamist left-wing to his attempt to position himself explicitly in the same line as Latin-American liberation theology. Firstly, this process of identification would presuppose a knowledge of what liberation theology really means in the Latin-American context, which followers of left-wing Islamism have not always had. Secondly, this is something Christian, and now, as ever, it is difficult for contemporary Islamists to identify with a theological movement within Christianity, even

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[7] Cf. K. C. Abraham, "Socio-Political Pluralism and Global Solidarity. A Liberational Perspective", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Peace for Humanity. Principles, Problems and Perspectives of the Future as Seen by Muslims and Christians*. New Delhi, reprint 1998, pp. 229–245, here: pp. 240 ff.

though they see themselves as social revolutionaries. An obvious question in this context would be whether solidarity between Christians and Islamists holding similar positions could or perhaps already does exist in Islamic countries, especially in view of shared social problems that often exist there.

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BSTEH A. Does not Islam today, in its fundamental religious concern, contain a question addressed to us Christians, of whether our 'autonomous ethos' is still a

'autonomous' and 'religious' ethos

'religious ethos', and to what extent secularization has in fact led towards paganization and a conforming of our behavior to the world, as Paul says (cf. Rm 12:2)? On the one hand, if we look at human history, we are alarmed when we see the atrocities that Christians, Jews and Muslims in particular have attributed to the will of God in order to justify particular objectives that had nothing to do with God, and when we consider the doctrinal risk we run if we ascribe to God whatever claims, commands and prohibitions we wish. On the other hand, the history of events past and present also shows the dangers threatening when people declare themselves to be ethically autonomous. To what extent is Islam, with its fundamentally religious understanding, prompting us Christians to discover whether our ethical orientation is sufficiently integrated into the will of God?

WOLBERT Some statements in Islam at least sound as if a theonomous moral positivism is being asserted, by claiming that what God ordains must be good. In our own tradition it is Ockham who comes to mind. He goes as far as to say: If God orders us to hate him, we must do it. Thus, if good is only what God expressly ordains, it follows that we can only actually know what is good through revelation and consequently a *lex naturalis* cannot exist. If we find that Ockham the philosopher says something different on this question from Ockham the theologian, we may ask whether there is a similar problem in Islam and whether those who have understood the problem may not also sometimes contradict themselves. And concerning the will of God, the question always arises time and again, how do we really come to know the will of God and what are the respective roles in this of revelation and reason.

BSTEH A. For the Muslim, conforming himself to the will of God is the constant fundamental concern of his life in the faith. He knows that as a human being he has to walk his way, and he knows from his experience that he will go astray if God does not show him the way. According to the various stages of divine guidance, above all in the laws given by Moses

and Jesus, man has now been given the Qur'ān as final guidance. And the Muslim is infinitely grateful to be allowed to live as one entirely dedicated to the will of God; but, when he comes to our distant countries, he has the impression of being confronted with a paganized ethos, a world where hardly anyone asks about the will of God.

WOLBERT Some decades ago, some Christians would perhaps also have simply said: I do the will of God expressed in the Decalogue. This is not a problem as long as the subject matter is well known, and as long as the tradition conveying it is not called into question. But now, when new issues arise because of new situations – what about property today? what about sexuality? etc. – then there are questions that can no longer be answered by simply trusting in the will of God. This is the problem in our society and Muslims will probably not be able to find different answers to these questions either.

VIRT Is this process of discernment, which has become a challenge to us through the problems of modern times, also present in Islam, at least at an initial stage, and are there bridges of understanding?

SCHIMMEL Although I cannot answer that comprehensively, it must be recognized that the Muslim certainly tries to cope with this problem. As long as he is confronted with the West and so-called paganization, his attitude will be one of defence, because he simply cannot understand how one can behave in this way when God has commanded differently. And it will always be a problem in the dialogue with Islam that for somebody living in the late 20th century in our society, it is extremely difficult to empathize with the Muslim believer's absolute certainty about God.

Then, the whole complex of the path metaphor in classical Islam seems to mean much more than our simply saying *sharī'a* or 'the will of God'. After all there is not only the *sharī'a*, the main path on which everyone has to walk in order to arrive safely at the source of life, from which we can draw all our life; for Ṣūfism there is also the narrow path, the *ṭarīqa*, which, although a little more difficult, is also very effective. It is simply the sense that one is guided within the multitude of phenomena, and even in the desert of paganism, if one remains true to the way. Perhaps this gives a better explanation of why it is so difficult for conservative Muslims to align themselves with the new world and how things are organized over here. They keep walking along the ordained path believing that this is the best way of overcoming the dangers of this world and this may after all also be an explanation of why they hesitate to take on board concepts which are so familiar to us.

BSTEH A. If we Christians had a more living understanding of the reality of creation, we would be more intensely aware of the responsibility given to us by God and for which we must answer to God, and of the fact that we have to bear it ourselves and not shift it onto God. It is God who, as Creator, sets man free to be responsible before Him. If we experienced this as something more living, we could say more convincingly that for us the way man walks is one of a rightly understood autonomy and for us this means nothing less than accepting the responsibility that God, by creating us and allowing us to share his Spirit, wants us to assume.

SCHIMMEL This is a very fine way of looking at personal responsibility and it is the view of many philosophers that man really is, as the tradition says, kneaded by the hands of God and provided with the Spirit of God in order to bear, in his special position, a special responsibility. Here we again touch on the topic of free will and predestination, which has occupied numerous Islamic thinkers so much, especially in the mystical tradition. When dealing with it, they have repeatedly referred to the fact that the idea that everything is predestined may make man shift his responsibility – even for his sins – onto God. On the other hand, it is emphasized that everybody is responsible for his deeds and, as the Qur'ān says, will see on Judgment Day the good and the wicked deeds he did, be they as tiny as a grain of mustard (cf. Sūra 99). In the words of Muḥammad, "Ask your heart for a counsel's opinion, then you will find what is right", Islam maintains that it is through the heart that man is closest to God, not the intellect and not the soul, but the heart – the actual point where God and man touch. And if the heart says something is good and allows it, it means that man is walking on the right path.

The Experience of Transcendence in Islamic Mysticism

Annemarie Schimmel

About 1100 years ago, around the year 890 of the Christian era, al-Kharrāz, a mystic in Baghdad, said, "God alone has the right to say 'I'!" Here we have a further development, an extreme expression of Islamic monotheism. The Profession of Faith says, "*lā ilāha illā Allāh* – There is no god but God", and this was soon understood in the sense of, "there is no agent except God", for all actions, every activity, proceeds from him. Yet, at the time of al-Kharrāz, with whose proposition we began, it was already being said, "Nothing exists except God." God is the only one who possesses true existence, and for this reason he is also the only one who can say 'I'.

This means that when a man says 'I', he is already a polytheist, for he postulates the existence of another than God. In order truly to profess his faith without 'associating', man has to attain *fanā'* (extinction) – "das Entwerden", as one can say using the beautiful Middle High German expression, so that God as it were professes his oneness with his own work. This is the classical position of Ṣūfism, Islamic mysticism, with regard to the concept of God.

1. Ṣūfism

I think we should first give an outline and brief summary of the history of Ṣūfism, for the details of the development of this multifacetted mystical movement are perhaps not so very well known to many.[1]

'Ṣūfism' – derived from the word *ṣūf,* 'wool' (although some have wrongly attempted to derive it from the Greek *sophos)* – begins, as the reference to the woollen garment shows, as an ascetic movement in which the ritual

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[1] Cf. T. Andrae, *In the Garden of Myrtles.* Trans. B. Sharpe. Albany, NY, 1987 (an excellent introduction to early Islamic mysticism); A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam.* Chapel Hill (University of North Carolina Press), 2002; C. E. Padwick, *Muslim Devotions.* London, 1960; Ch. L. Eaton, *Islam and the Destiny of Man.* London, 1985; S. Murata, *The Tao of Islam.* Albany, NY, 1991 (a novel interpretation of Islam and its two aspects, very stimulating); M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam.* Lahore, 1930, several reprints; A. Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing. A study into the religious ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal.* Leiden, 1963, repr. Lahore (Iqbal Academy) 1989; id., *Muhammad Iqbal. Prophetischer Poet und Philosoph* (Diederichs' gelbe Reihe; 82). München, 1989.

duties of Islam are deepened to counter, as it were, the increasing secularization that made itself felt in the wake of Islam's expansion in the early 8th century. Recitation of and meditation on the Qur'ān played a particularly central role in this movement. In one of his beautiful books, Père Paul Nwyia refers to the fact that one can even speak of a *Coranisation de la mémoire*[2]: man as a whole, his complete memory, is replete with the Qur'ān, with the divine word, so that he can see everything there is in the light of a Qur'ānic expression. (Hence the enormous influence of Qur'ānic formulas, assertions, and metaphors even in the everyday language of Muslims.)

Under the influence of the mystic Rābi'a of Baṣra (d. 801), the concept of the pure love of God is then introduced: God is not to be worshipped out of fear of hell or hope of paradise, but for the sake of his inexhaustible beauty and love. In the following centuries this idea of the pure love of God permeates Islamic mysticism, and it has remained till today one of its most important principles, if not its central theme.

In the decades after Rābi'a, an extremely refined mystical psychology develops, which tries to encompass the most hidden movements of the soul and considers it to be the foremost task of human beings to struggle against their lower self, their passionate soul – *nafs*: this is the true, the 'greater *djihād*', the 'struggle in the way of God'. Nevertheless, the baser human qualities are not to be destroyed, but re-formed. Mrs. Wielandt has already referred to the expression, "to mature into the qualities of God", to imbibe them, as in the phrase *takhallaqū bi-akhlāqi llāh*. This means transforming every small human weakness one overcomes into a higher quality, changing one's fury into zeal for God, one's sensual appetites into longing for the suprasensual, until one is as perfect as he/she can possibly be. Can one not train even an obstinate horse eventually to carry its rider at full speed to the goal? And is the converted master-thief not later the best policeman because he knows all the tricks of the thieves? So it is too with the *nafs*. Though of course the perfection of the one who treads the path is always limited, for "there is no perfection of which there is not one that is greater in God."

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[2] P. Nwyia, *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique*. Beirut, 1970.

2. The *dhikr*

There is a means by which the constant education of the soul is carried out: *dhikr*, the 'mentioning of', the 'remembering of' God. As the Qur'ān says, "*a-lā bi-dhikri llāhi taṭma'innu 'l-qulūb* – [...] for without doubt in the remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction" (Sūra 13,28). This remembering of God, which the Qur'ān frequently urges, was at first meant very generally, but in Ṣūfism it became an extraordinarily refined attitude of the soul, a spiritual exercise. There are for every human disposition, for every level at which a person is, certain formulas which he/she should repeat, and the wisdom of the spiritual director is revealed in the formulas he gives to the man or woman who is his disciple, for the many thousandfold repetition of a word – such as the name Allāh, one of the ninety-nine most beautiful names of God, or of the profession of faith – may have not only positive, but also negative effects, if wrongly applied.

The *dhikr* of the Most Beautiful Names of God is particularly important, for through the names one can draw near to God. The Qur'ān speaks in general about the Most Beautiful Names of God and refers to a whole series of them, and theology has established their number at ninety-nine, each of which has a certain efficacy. For what happens to the soul if one repeats the name '*wadūd* – loving one' ten-thousand times a day is very different from what happens if one repeats '*yā qahhār* – O conqueror'. The *dhikr* is one of the most important aspects of the mystical life, and the names do not only play a role in the personal relationship of man with God, but also in the way creation is perceived. One of the names considered to be central is '*al-ḥaqq* – the truth, the reality'.

It is no coincidence that the first period of Islamic mysticism may be defined by and seen to culminate in the famous saying of the mystic al-Ḥallādj: *anā 'l-ḥaqq*.

3. al-Ḥallādj

This mystic, famous for his extraordinary asceticism and courageous prayers[3], was executed in Baghdad in the year 922, because he is alleged to have said: "*anā 'l-ḥaqq* – I am the Absolute Truth". This was interpreted as 'I am

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[3] See Al-Halladsch, "*O Leute, rettet mich vor Gott*" (O People, save me from God). Introduced and edited by A. Schimmel (Herderbücherei; 1240). Freiburg etc., 1985.

God', for *ḥaqq* is the innermost name of God and in later mysticism became the term typically used for 'God' in all his majesty. If we remember that al-Ḥallādj's compatriot, whom I quoted at the beginning, declared a few years before that God alone had the right to say 'I', we understand why al-Ḥallādj's assertion was seen as a claim that he had been 'deified', attained complete union with God – a perception that went far beyond what normative theologians were willing to tolerate. But al-Ḥallādj's cruel execution took place more for political reasons: for the famous assertion is found in one of his writings but was perhaps never made public. The words *anā 'l-ḥaqq* have nevertheless permeated Islamic mysticism over the centuries and have been quoted in the Persian, Turkish and Indo-Muslim literature until today, not only in a religious context: numerous poets and rebels knew that one must not pronounce the 'truth' in public and shock the establishment, as al-Ḥallādj did – the end of which is death on the gallows. But it was precisely this death that made al-Ḥallādj (often called by his father's name Manṣūr, 'victorious') such a frequently remembered figure. The debate about him has been endless: was he a heretic who overstepped the limits set by the law? Was he a deeply-believing searcher, who brought faith to its logical conclusion ("let the One alone be the One" by detaching oneself completely from oneself) – or what was he?

Louis Massignon dedicated his whole life to finding out about this enigmatic figure.[4] However, there are also many critics, even among the Ṣūfīs, who consider al-Ḥallādj's assertion a sin, because he articulated the mystery of union – and what lover would be allowed to boast of his union with the beloved? Such a 'declaration of the mystery' deserves punishment, and so the Ṣūfīs developed a cryptic language permitting them to allude to the inexpressible in 'harmless' symbols.

4. The further development

With al-Ḥallādj Ṣūfism acquired its first martyr, who was later followed by several others, but even so most of the Ṣūfīs tried to show that Ṣūfism was basically compatible with the orthodox position, and in fact only deepened the orthodox approach. This movement culminated in the works of al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111), who intertwined Islamic orthodoxy with a milder mysticism thereby making it accessible to mainstream believing communities.

Simultaneously, however, new forms developed. Ṣūfism, which in its earliest period had been inspired in various ways through contact with Christian ascetics in the Near East, was also touched by many other influences. In the early period Jesus appears as the true messenger of the love of God; then later we find Hellenistic elements and certain Buddhist ideas; Indian as well as gnostic ideas are also introduced, so that from the tender plant, which had sprung up in the soil of the Qur'ān, there grew a mighty tree with a great variety of blossoms and leaves, in which strange birds sometimes settled to build their nests.

At this time – that is in the 12th century – we find that small cells of novice mystics who had till then gathered around their master, developed into formal orders or brotherhoods. These orders *(ṭarīqa)* soon grew into widespread organizations whose members contributed in the following centuries more to the spreading of Islam than the orthodox theologians or the Muslim princes and their armies.[5]

5. Ibn 'Arabī

In the 13th century, when the Mongol hordes devastated wide areas of the Islamic world, a great systematization took place through Ibn 'Arabī, who died in 1240 in Damascus and to whom practically all later theoretical systems can be traced.[6] His doctrine of '*waḥdat al-wudjūd* – unity of being' was identified in many writings of mainstream Muslims, as well as European orientalists, as pantheism or 'monisme existentiel'. Only in recent times have new studies shown that the Spaniard's extremely refined visions, which were systematized by his disciples, were not in fact pantheistic in the classical sense.

It is nevertheless understandable that the form of mysticism initiated by Ibn 'Arabī was felt to be pantheistic, especially since it was often only known in its shortened form, which, in the Persian-Turkish-Indian world, was expressed by the simple phrase "*hama ūst* – everything is He". But here we

[4] L. Massignon, *La Passion d'al Hosayn ibn Mansour al-Hallaj. Martyre mystique de l'Islam, exécuté à Bagdad le 26 Mars 922*. 2 vols. Paris, 1922; enlarged new edition in four volumes, Paris, 1976, English translation by Herbert Mason, *al-Ḥallāj. Mystic and martyr of Islam*. Princeton, 1982.

[5] Cf. Th. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*. London, 1896, several reprints (a survey of the spreading of Islam, mainly by mystical preachers).

[6] Cf. W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*. Albany, NY, 1988 (the best introduction to the thought of Ibn al-'Arabī).

must refer to the original thought of Ibn ʿArabī which leads into our topic – the knowledge of God and the experience of transcendence.

For Ibn ʿArabī and his faithful interpreters the essence of God is inexpressible and unattainable; it is the 'deus absconditus', who can never be reached by human minds and hearts because he cannot be conceptualized. He is beyond thinking and not-thinking – hence one approaches him by the 'via negationis' and one knows that 'nothing is equal to him'.

On the other hand the divine being must communicate with the world, for he has created it and maintains it. So Ibn ʿArabī invented a wonderful myth which was perhaps already in the air, because the phrase on which it is based had been known among the mystics for a long time: it is the alleged word of God outside the Qurʾān: "*kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan* – I was a hidden treasure and wanted to be recognized, therefore I created the world."[7] In Ibn ʿArabī's system the world is seen as the sequel to the divine names, longing to come into being – and, as the human being breathes out, the divine being, the ineffable essence, breathed out the names. The universe is formed out of the reflection of the names which affect the contingent being, and every being finds its way towards God through the name which dominates it, or influences it. Thus the whole world is a millionfold mirror, like tiny fragments of glass reflecting the divine being as it may be sensed through the mediation of the names.

6. The role of the Prophet

We must not forget another development that was not yet prefigured in early Ṣūfism, but which had already become increasingly important in the first centuries, and that is the role of the Prophet.[8] Muḥammad appears as the first being created by God. His light, the 'Muḥammadan light' is as it were comparable to the 'Logos', though it is made, not begotten.

Whereas in the earlier period it was the hope of the mystics to attain union with the divine being, by their ascesis and their loving dedication to God, and to draw near to the Creator by renouncing their small human ego (al-Ḥallādj may be an example of this), this path now changes: it is no longer the aim of the mystic to become completely one with the divine being (this may only be possible after one has died, when the drop returns to the ocean); it is his task to pass through the various levels that make up the universe, the various levels of revelation, from multiplicity towards unity and finally to find peace through union with the *ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*, the 'primeval Muḥammad principle'.

There is, of course, an enormous difference between this and the former ecstatic, spontaneous mysticism. It is now a matter of *'irfān* – 'gnosis', which in its simplified and theologically abbreviated form influenced the whole mystical tradition from then on. Even though loving devotion, ecstasy, continues to play a role, the true path is the path of gnosis, the path of knowledge, and union with the Muḥammad principle is attained by entering more and more deeply into the mysteries hidden behind the seventy thousand veils that separate God and man.

7. Mysticism in the song of the poets

All these experiences were set out by the Ṣūfīs in innumerable theoretical works. The actual mystery of union, however, the experience of divine love, cannot of course be expressed in theoretical and theological formulas, and it took the poets to speak more closely of the mystery. Especially in the Persian world, the poets again and again sang of the mystery of loving union in short, concise *ghazal*s, in lyrical verses, and in great epic works. It is this mystical poetry which allows us to perceive more about the inner life of the heart than all the erudite treatises.

The heart, polished by the constant recollection of God, and also often gifted with various experiences of light on the path, becomes a mirror, where the divine beloved can be reflected. There is a wonderful little Persian booklet, the *Sawāniḥ* of Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī (d. 1126)[9], in which this mirror mysticism is intimated most beautifully but in words almost impossible to translate. By being mirrored in the heart of the lover, the beloved is actually even closer to the lover than to himself. The only gift one can bring to the beautiful Yūsuf – the very essence of divine beauty – is a clear mirror, the pure heart.

There are other symbols which suggest the mystery of union, and the experience of the divine. There are for instance the great poetic works of Farīduddīn ʿAṭṭār, the "Conference of the Birds – *Manṭiqu ṭ-ṭayr*", and the

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[7] B. Furuzanfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*. Tehran, 1955, no. 70.

[8] Cf. A. Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger*. Chapel Hill (University of North Carolina Press), 1985.

[9] In the German translation of R. Gramlich: *Gedanken über die Liebe*. Wiesbaden, 1976; *Inspirations from the World of Pure Spirits. The oldest Persian Sufi treatise on love*. Translated from the Persian with a commentary and notes by Nasrollah Pourjavady, London, 1986.

Muṣībatnāma[10], in which he tries to indicate the path of the soul in two allegories that seem opposed to each other.

The Conference of the Birds – perhaps his most famous work – tells of the thirty soul-birds (the soul-bird being a primeval religious symbol). Under the guidance of the hoopoe, who once brought the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, they set out on pilgrimage to the Sīmorgh, the king of the birds, who lives on the mountain at the end of the world. They wander through seven valleys – seven being the number of mystical progress, which is also often found in Christian mysticism (as in Ruysbroek for instance), and on the long, hard journey there the hoopoe refreshes them with stories.When they reach the mountain at the end of their wanderings, they search for the Sīmorgh and suddenly realize that they themselves (sī morgh – 'thirty birds') are identical with the Sīmorgh: the individual souls are identical with the source of all souls, with God. And after the journey towards God is finished, the journey in God begins, which is beyond any description.

Whereas here 'Aṭṭār describes the 'path upwards', in another epic, the Muṣībatnāma[11], he reports on the 'path downwards': he describes the forty days of lonely meditation which the Ṣūfī has to undergo once or several times, and how every night he asks another being how and where God may be found, but they all say, "quaere super nos – we ourselves are searching for Him who is higher than all." However, in the end the Prophet advises the searcher to dive into the "sea of his own soul" and to find God in the ocean of the soul, like a precious pearl which can only be found by those who undertake to tread the hard path.

Perhaps such metaphors give us a slight idea of what awaits the mystic on his path and what he experiences at the end. The metaphors used are, of course, often not accessible to logic, because the mystery of union can only be spoken of in paradoxes. This is why there are so many paradoxical sayings among the 'Apophthegmata' of the Ṣūfī fathers, as in the popular poetry of unpretentious mystical singers, where space and time completely lose their meaning because there only the divine time now reigns, 'the Now', as the mystics say, a time that is pure presence.

'Aṭṭār spoke of the ocean, the infinite, divine ocean, where the soul finds the pearl it has been longing for. On this ocean the creatures disperse like flecks of foam and are re-absorbed into the sea when they hear the call from the deep. This is one of the metaphors favoured in mysticism. The story of the nightingale singing of the rose, longing for the primevally everlasting rose-garden; the story of the reed-flute, cut from the primevally everlasting reed and now singing each of its plaintive melodies in longing for its homeland, as Rūmī says at the beginning of the Mathnawī – these metaphors and many others have permeated all the mystical poetry of Turkey, Iran, Muslim India and to a certain extent the Arab world too, trying to hint at the unutterable mystery that al-Ḥallādj unwisely articulated. For what the mystic experiences when he is united with the divine, where the nunc aeternum reigns – this mystery can in fact only be revealed in death. The great Indo-Muslim poet Mirzā Ghālib (d. 1869) rightly says:

"The mystery that bears your heart – it will be no sermon:
On the gallows you can say it. But on the pulpit? No!"

Whoever utters the mystery of union with God will have to pay with his life for it.

Let us return once again to the concept of 'unity of being – waḥdat al-wudjūd', which is so often misunderstood. In mystical theology this unity of the divine being is juxtaposed to kathrat al-ʿilm, the multiplicity of knowledge. As to his nature God is one, but his knowledge, which is infinite and incalculable, is reflected in the creatures, on whom his innumerable names have their effects – and through these names we can draw slightly nearer to him.

Rūmī (d. 1273)[12] takes up the story of Yūsuf and Zulaykhā, Joseph and the wife of Potiphar, as it is told in Sūra 12. For him, as for many other poets, Zulaykhā becomes the symbol of the human soul: for 'nafs – soul' is a feminine noun in Arabic. Zulaykhā is longing for the eternally beautiful Yūsuf, and in everything she says she is alluding to him:

"When she said, The wax is softened by the fire,
this meant: My beloved is very fond of me,
and if she said, Look the moon is risen;
or if she said: The willow bough is green;
or if she said, The leaves are quivering mightily;
or if she said, The rue-seed is burning merrily …

[10] Cf. the beautiful translation into French by Isabelle de Gastines, Le Livre de l'Epreuve. Paris, 1982.

[11] See above fn. 10.

[12] Cf. A. Schimmel, The Triumphal Sun. A Study of the Works of Jalaloddin Rumi. London etc., 1978; W. C. Chittick, The Sufi Path of Love. The Spiritual Teachings of Rūmī. Albany, NY, 1983; Maulānā Jalāluddīn Rūmī, Mathnawī-yi maʿnawī, ed. and transl. R. A. Nicholson. 8 vols. London etc., 1925–1940.

or if she said, How auspicious is Fortune;

or if she said, Give the furniture a good dusting; …

or if she said, The loaves have no salt;

or if she said, The heavenly sphere is going in the contrary direction; …

If she praised, t'was his caresses,

and if she blamed, t'was separation from him (that she meant).

If she piled up a hundred thousand names,

her meaning and intention was always Joseph …"

"She concealed his name in all other names"; for, even though she cannot reach his being, she still calls him by the names in order to come closer to him. Thus the name of the divine beloved becomes the bread in famine, the fur in wintertime – everything means him, because he is the path leading towards God.

Rūmī describes in the parable man's continuous longing for God and the impossibility of reaching him in his inner-most being without sacrificing oneself. This parable we find for the first time in al-Ḥallādj and we know it in German literature through Goethe's *Selige Sehnsucht* (Blissful Longing):

"And at last, longing for the light,

you butterfly, were consumed by the light …"[13]

The butterfly, circling around the candle that it first sees from afar, then feels its warmth and finally, longing for it full of love, throws itself into it to be completely annihilated in it, will in death find a new life on a higher level.

This parable, which al-Ḥallādj wrote down in his small *Kitāb aṭ-ṭawāsīn*, became in Islamic mysticism one of the most favoured metaphors for man's being consumed in the divine, for the union that can only be attained in death or in mystical death, in giving oneself up absolutely. And so Rūmī writes that man constantly searches for God and wants to throw himself into him; if he does not want to do this, he is no real human being. And God always shines like a candle, and if he did not want to consume man in this fire, he would not be God. Thus all life bears the imprint of this indissoluble attraction, whose mystery none can understand but the loving heart.

about the origin of Islamic mysticism   **PRENNER** Is there a genuinely Islamic origin in Islamic mysticism? And how far has Islamic mysticism been influenced in its origin by Christian elements?

SCHIMMEL Formerly there was the tendency to call Ṣūfism an exotic plant in the barren sand of Islam, as a 19th century book says. It is the great achievement of Louis Massignon to have shown that early Islamic mysticism developed from meditation on the Qur'ān. Many texts in the Qur'ān provide an incentive, for example Sūra 50,16: "[…] for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein"; Sūra 55, ar-Raḥmān, which records the visions of the Prophet (cf. Sūra 17,1 and Sūra 53,1 ff. in which, according to the Ṣūfī understanding, Muḥammad's ascension into the divine presence is spoken of), etc. Eventually it was Rābiʿa of Baṣra (d. 801), the great mystic who (according to sources now known) first made Muslims aware that the word love is also mentioned in the Qur'ān, i. e., in Sūra 5,57, where it says: "Soon will God produce a people whom He will love as they will love Him". The whole development of early mysticism is in fact a struggle to legitimize the concept of love against an orthodoxy which is of the opinion that love of God means only obedience to God, and a readiness to do everything to fulfil his will. At the time of al-Ḥallādj (d. 922) the mysticism of love in what we may call its classical form was already widely accepted, such that it became so central in a later period that in Persian for many centuries the love of God was only spoken of in very concrete metaphors.

During the first two centuries of the Hidjra, asceticism and seclusion in Islam were very strongly influenced by Christian monks and hermits. On this topic there is a book by Tor Andrae[1], which describes this precise period before al-Ḥallādj, and the encounter between the early ascetics and the hermits in a whole collection of stories based on Arab sources.

Islamic mysticism and the Prayer of the Heart in the Eastern Church   **BARTH** Are there more detailed and specific findings on the connections between Islamic mysticism and the Eastern Church's Prayer of the Heart?

SCHIMMEL In this connection, we may first consider 'thinking of God', the *dhikr*, in which breathing also plays a major role, which was firmly established by the early 8th century.

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[13] Cf. A. Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun* (see above fn. 12), pp. 350 f.

[1] T. Andrae, *In the Garden of Myrtles. Studies in early Islamic mysticism.* Albany, NY, 1987.

The form in which the _dhikr_ is prayed proceeds from the assumption that mentioning one of the names of God polishes the heart until it becomes a flawless mirror. This was increasingly elaborated and from the beginning of the 12th century became a very important factor in the development of the great Ṣūfī-orders, particularly the Kubrāwiyya and the Naqshbandiyya. On this topic there is an interesting book, _Miftāḥ al-falāḥ_ by Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, who died in 1309 in Egypt, which has now also been published in English.[2] The author describes the special influence emanating from each of the names of God towards everybody who invokes it in the _dhikr_, and says that some people may not recite a specific name, because it would have psychic or physical effects too strong for them.

For example, a young woman I know was given a name by her mistress, _shaykha_, which caused severe swellings on her arms, hands and feet; in her despair, she turned to a wise old man, _ḥakīm,_ who asked her: "Did the mistress give you such and such a _dhikr?_" When she said yes, the wise man gave her the following advice: "Then go to her again and ask her to give you another one, so that you will be healed again." She had suffered a reaction to repeating _(dhikr)_ thousands of times a certain name, which was much too powerful for her.

And as for the Jesus Prayer in the Eastern Church, it may well be that there were certain connections – and in a later period an Indian influence was also added. The breathing techniques are to be found most strongly in the _dhikr_ of the profession of faith, whose first part expresses _lā ilāha_, "there is no god", and whose second part says _illā llāh_, "but God". The classical practice is to say _lā ilāha_ when breathing out, because this indicates that everything that is outside is not God, and _illā llāh_ as one breathes in again, thus bringing the world back to unity. This is a very effective _dhikr_-formula; one finds it expressed very well in the thoughts of Ibn ʿArabī, who speaks of the creation as God's breathing out, which is again and again, in an inexplicable exchange, taken into the deity and then 'breathed' out again. Thus for Ibn ʿArabī and his school the creation is a constant process of exchange in infinitely small units of time which we do not notice at all, so that for us it seems to be a continuity.

ZIRKER It would be good to have much more precise knowledge about the connections, proximity and distance of mysticism in Islam in relation to Christianity. With regard to distance and proximity, the question of a direct

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[2] _The Key to Salvation. A Sufi Manual of Invocation._ Trans. by Mary Ann Koury-Danner. Cairo, 1996.

influence may arise: for instance, are there in Islamic mysticism clear elements of an incarnational theology or eschatology different from perceptions based on either the Qurʾān or traditional theology (which indeed know of no union with God in the hereafter, but only of an ideal community of humans in the gardens of Paradise)? In addition, we have always to consider how far something Christian may be encountered here 'accidentally', that is without any verifiable historical explanation. The case of Massignon illustrates this problem very well, when he dedicates his studies to al-Ḥallādj in a way that shows he believes he can identify with al-Ḥallādj's thinking without stepping beyond the bounds of Christianity.

✦

KHOURY The first period of Islamic history, the Meccan

the main stages in the history of Islamic mysticism

period from 610 to 622, when the Last Judgement was believed to be imminent, is characterized by otherworldliness and the conviction that the world beyond is more important than this world. This encouraged a corresponding ascetic frame of mind. Then, in Medina, the additional need was felt to secure the earthly life of the community. In the light of this new emphasis, there was a corresponding turning towards the world on the part of the believers. The world is not to be condemned: it is God's good creation. God has given it to us. We may indulge in it, make use of it, accept it in gratitude. And Muḥammad says, like Paul, one should not forbid the good things God has given to us; this belongs to the order of his creation.

Since then there have always been these two orientations. Over time, the tendency to turn towards the world has predominated. The Islamic community has not become a mystical group, but constituted itself as a political society. But the other line, that of asceticism, of otherworldliness, has persisted. There are pious Muslims who continue to follow and develop it.

from asceticism to mysticism

The second period brings a transition from asceticism to mysticism. At first the ascetic movement resulted in people's following a number of practices, which are also known in the Christian tradition: fasting, reducing hours of sleep, absolute purity of lifestyle concerning food and drink – including extremes which are also to be found in Christianity among the stylites, for instance. Instead of the focus being constantly on the human person, with his passions and all his behaviour and with the attempt to control and restrain them by means of ascesis, it is now on God. This characterizes the transition from asceticism to mysticism, the turning towards the fear of God,

trust in God, and complete dedication to his will, which is the true meaning of the word *islām*. Apart from some exaggerated behaviour patterns based on a wrong understanding of trust in God, which sometimes made people believe they should not take provisions of food for a journey, and not allow medical treatment during illness, because, after all, one's life is in the hands of God, a central position is now given to the text: "[...] call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts) [...]" (Sūra 7,56); the emphasis is on fearing God and doing his will, and even more on trusting in God and putting one's life in his hands.

the two classical paths of mysticism   Then follows the third stage, the period of the full development of mysticism. The representatives of the two classical paths of mysticism are Bāyezīd Bisṭāmī (d. 874) and al-Ḥallādj (d. 922). Bāyezīd Bisṭāmī is the great master of meditation and *fanā'* ['annihilation from human qualities' in God: see also above p. 153]. His path consists of three parts: the first leads to withdrawal and separation from the world; the second is characterized by the believer's withdrawing from himself and renouncing his will in order to be free for God – the 'self-annihilation'; and in the third there is God alone, the human person disappears, and only God is left – the union. In his mystical experience, Bisṭāmī became obsessed with transcendence. He was continuously in search of God, knowing that he could not find God unless he himself disappeared, dissolved. Yet, when once asked by one of his pupils: "When do I reach God?", the question seemed to sadden him and he replied: "You miserable one, can God ever be reached?" For him this implies an irremovable tension, an unresolvable paradox: the continuous search for God and for union with him – and the ever deeper certainty that God cannot be reached, and is always the one beyond, never attainable by man. This tension persists throughout the history of Islamic mysticism. It is in the metaphor Mrs. Schimmel mentioned, the metaphor of the birds that are migrating and in the end discover that they are identical with the divine bird, and yet, at the moment when the soul's being one with God is discovered, 'the journey in God begins'. Thus humans, travelling in search of God, discover that something divine is inherent within them, the capacity to reach God – but in their union with God they make the discovery that it is 'an endless journey', and that for them the tension between reaching God and his transcendence is irremovable.

However, it is actually al-Ḥallādj who is the mystic of the love of God, searching God not by straining his thoughts, his intellect, and his reason,

his whole consciousness, but by awakening and setting in motion his affective energies. God alone shall possess the heart of man, so that man then loses his self-awareness and dissolves in God. Then, in this state, man is heard to utter the saying Mrs. Schimmel has quoted: "I am the truth – *anā 'l-ḥaqq*", or the other saying: "Inside my gown there is God" – paradoxical utterances, which were then (mis)understood as blasphemies and led to al-Ḥallādj being sentenced to death.

al-Ghazzālī and Ibn 'Arabī   After the difficulties with orthodoxy raised by the mystical movement, a period of 'hidden mysticism' had to follow, until al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) established mysticism's rightful place within Islamic theology as a whole. However, the mystics no longer spoke of their experiences directly, but rather in the language of symbols. This is the time of Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240), when the mystics withdrew into esoteric circles, which no longer belonged to Islamic public life.

This fourth stage in the history of Islamic mysticism begins at the end of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th. In this period theories develop about the encounter with God – attempts to name the stages of encountering or experiencing God which one has to pass through in order attain the experience of union with him. They are the first attempts to deal comprehensively with these various experiences, until Ibn 'Arabī, who developed a theory of mysticism, characterized as *waḥdat al-wudjūd*, unity of being (or of existence), which is essentially the unity of God, of which everything else is but the reflection.

To date, besides individual mystics, there are also brotherhoods in which mystics come together, like communities of religious orders. A special characteristic of the spiritual life of these communities is without doubt the practice of *dhikr*, the continuous remembering of God, of which Mrs. Schimmel has already spoken. These brotherhoods have contributed much to the spread of Islam, particularly the brotherhoods in North Africa. Historically speaking, the strongholds of Islamic mysticism are the traditions of Iran and Turkey, and later India and Pakistan, where mysticism was also accepted as part of theology; this is still true today, whereas the mystical movements are of less importance in the Arab world, where we still find small groupings, orders and brotherhoods.[3]

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[3] Cf. A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill, NC, 1975, and C.-G. Anawati – L. Gardet, *Mystique Musulmane. Aspects et tendances – expériences et techniques* (Études musulmanes; 8). Paris, ³1976.

about the specific character of Islamic mysticism **OTT** Today reference is often made to Karl Rahner's saying that the Christian believer of the future will be a mystic or he will not exist. This again raises the question of a possible commonality between Christian and Islamic mysticism and their specific characteristics.

SCHIMMEL The specifically Islamic elements in the mysticism of Islam, especially in classical Islam, lie first in its absolute turning towards the principle of unity. Mr. Khoury rightly mentioned that Louis Massignon spoke in this context of a special monism, a "monisme existentiel". The principle of *waḥdat al-wudjūd,* the unity of existence, is extremely hard to explain to an outsider. Of course one tends to interpret sentences like, "I am the one whom I adore", pantheistically or monistically like the older generation of Orientalists, such as H. S. Nyberg in his *Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-ʿArabī* (Leiden, 1919) or H. H. Schaeder, who categorically rejected Ibn ʿArabī, because he, like many Muslims, believed that in Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of *waḥdat al-wudjūd* the whole intellectual progress of Islam had been abandoned.

unity of the divine being – variety of divine knowledge We know however, thanks to the research of William C. Chittick[4], to whom we owe the best studies on Ibn ʿArabī, that one should not use *waḥdat al-wudjūd* in such an absolute sense. It means the unity of the essence of God, the unity of the 'deus absconditus', who can never be attained. This unity of the being of God goes side by side with the variety of divine knowledge, *kathrat al-ʿilm,* which is reflected in the creation of the world in its manifold forms. It is interesting that, more than a century before Ibn ʿArabī, this formulation is already to be found in Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī (d. 1126) whose study on pure faith in God was published by R. Gramlich a number of years ago (Wiesbaden, 1983). There, exactly the same paradox is to be found between the unity of the divine being and the variety of divine knowledge, that is, the things which God knows and which have manifested themselves in creation, the contingent beings which, through the divine names, become real, at least temporarily.

It is quite clear, however, that such thoughts, except when taken up by eminent philosophers and thinkers, can easily lead to pantheistic formulations. It is worth noting here that in Persian poetry even before Ibn ʿArabī, for example in ʿAṭṭār, who died twenty years before him and had never heard of

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4 W. C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge.* Albany, NY, 1989.

him, the expression "*hama ūst* – everything is He" is to be found in several poems (not so much the epics, but in lyric poems). This idea that everything is He is very strongly stated in Persian poetry and has repeatedly found expression in Turkish and also in Indo-Persian mystical lyric poetry. In addition, later Indo-Muslim mystical poets assert in their ecstasy that indeed everything is He, whether Pharaoh or Moses, al-Ḥallādj or the judge who sentenced him to death. All is one, including Abū Ḥanīfa, the great jurist, and Hanuman, the great helpful Ape of the Indian tradition. *Waḥdat al-wudjūd* is thus a matter much more complex than anything that can be described by the simple term of pantheism or monism.

Muḥammad, the 'perfect human being' Secondly, in the late Middle Ages, the specifically Islamic element in Islam's mysticism lies in the role attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad by Ibn ʿArabī, in that the former is seen as the 'perfect human being', *al-insān al-kāmil,* within whom as it were all possibilities of the creation inhere and to attain whom is the highest target of the mystic. Thus the object of his search is no longer so much the divine unity, the *deus absconditus,* but God as he revealed himself in the creation through the creation of Muḥammad's light. This seems to be of extraordinary importance, especially as it concerns the role of the Prophet in mysticism. In the treatises that were written after the 13th century, there is a precise categorization of the hierarchies, or the levels, on which the divine reality reveals itself: from the level of unity, depicted in the dot, towards a further unity, symbolized by the letter *Alif* – a vertical line serving as diameter of the circle – and then in the plurality which we can perceive with our eyes. In this tradition, which became the predominant one, the task of the mystics is to ascend via the various stages of the individual Qurʾānic prophets and, if they are very successful, to attain union with the *ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya,* the Muḥammad-reality, or the archetypal Muḥammad.

the path of the mystical stages The mystics in their mystical wanderings characteristically differentiate between various stages typified by the various prophets. Thus they might speak of one mystic being on the level of Moses and another on the level of al-Khaḍir, the mysterious guide of Moses, and here conflicts of understanding may sometimes arise between individual mystics. This progression through the stages of the seven foremost prophets is a path typical of later mysticism, and the reference to the ladder that climbs eventually to the *ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya,* seems very important.

the path of the Naqshbandīs There is however also another approach, that of the Naqshbandiyya, an order founded in Central-Asia which was then reformed by Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624) in India in the early 17th century. On this path, the stages of preparation in which one subjugates the lower instincts play no major role; instead one moves immediately to the upper levels, trying to establish an ever closer relation with God by developing one's psychic, subtle body, and then returns to the world in order to operate there exactly like the Prophet who, after the initial experience of the divine revelation, turned towards the world. So too the Naqshbandīs, on their path, try to practise the ideal of the 'prophetic religion' in their mystical lives, insofar as the target, for them, is not union with God, but the actual effectual energy gained from this union, which they then apply in the world. As a result the Naqshbandīs become an outstanding political power, which spread in India and Turkey, as far as America in one direction, and as far as the Philippines in the other.

✦

Muḥammad as a mystic? **KOPECKY, IVANČIĆ** What personal impact did the mystical experience have on Muḥammad himself? Did he not continue to have mystical experiences as he lived out his vocation, when he withdrew from society and spent his nights on Mount Ḥirā'? Did he not see Gabriel and was it not his conviction that he had received a message from God?

KHOURY We have no substantiated knowledge about him. We know that the Islamic tradition has made him an example, a model of mysticism. Some kind of pre-existence has been ascribed to him, and he is held to play a very prominent role in the stages of ascent towards God. The stages of ascent progress further and further away from the affairs of this world, and finally, before man encounters or attains God, he reaches this 'light of Muḥammad', the *nūr muḥammadī*, and there the level of experiencing God begins for him. Such are the speculations of the later mystics, especially Ibn 'Arabī. He wrote a whole commentary on the Qur'ān from a mystical perspective: *al-futūḥāt al-makkiyya,* which contains speculations based on the Qur'ān, although not specifically found in the text. We do not know what Muḥammad himself experienced. Islamic tradition speaks of a heavenly journey, the *mi'rādj,* going up to the throne of God. There Muḥammad is said to have received the fundamental revelation of the Qur'ān. But, since he had this encounter with God and was repeatedly instructed by God, the mystics of Islam think that Muḥammad, as Prophet,

received the light of God. This was his special status. Generally the prophets rank higher on the Islamic path than ordinary people or simple objects, and among them, Muḥammad is the highest.

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Muḥammad and Jesus in Islamic mysticism **MITTERHÖFER** Jesus is also seen as a hero of the love of God. Does Jesus rank as a mystic in Islam and does he have a status that could somehow lead towards mysticism?

ZIRKER With respect to the Prophet, it is initially surprising that in this context of mystical piety the terms 'Muḥammadan' and 'Muḥammadan believer' are in use among Muslims and were also mentioned in Mrs. Schimmel's lecture. We are always warned, and rightly so, against using the term 'Muḥammadan people'. Muslims, when they hear us say 'Muḥammadan', feel undermined, or at least that the one who uses this term is in fact uneducated; it also implies for them a form of disrespect. This is one thing.

Yet, and many Muslims do not know this either, within Islam, in the context of mysticism, one may also speak of the *tarīqa muḥammadiyya,* the Muḥammadan path. Muḥammad here becomes the primary figure, where and wherein God reveals himself. In this context even Muḥammad's pre-existence is sometimes spoken of. Thus, in this very daring language, Muḥammad can become that place within humanity where God communicates himself, and the Qur'ān almost seems to disappear; or the Qur'ān is understood as the Muḥammad event, so that the separation between the Qur'ān, the word of God, and the unlearned Prophet seems to be gone. In the unlearned Prophet the radiance of God and the truth of God come to shine. These are certainly very daring thoughts and experiences within Islam.

Something similar also happens with Jesus. Does one say, "Jesus the mystic"? It is clearer to say that Jesus is also the place where the divine radiance comes to shine and to which the mystic moves. But it would also fit in with this system to see Jesus as a mystic, one who finds himself completely absorbed in God. On the basis of such formulations, one may occasionally ask Muslims: Why are you shocked by our speaking of incarnation, if in the Islamic tradition there are such ways of speaking? But the reply is often that ultimately this is not authentic Islam.

On the whole, Muḥammad's role, even in Islamic mysticism is always tied to the role of God's messenger to whom it was granted to communicate the Qur'ān to humankind. At the same time there is also always seen in him the form of the *ummī,* the unlearned, who, for his part contributes

nothing at all to his mission of delivering the Book of God – a role, which is compared with that of the Virgin Mary with reference to her mission to be the mother of Jesus.

Similar to Mary who is, according to Catholic doctrine, free from sin, conceived immaculate, full of grace, the figure of Muḥammad is also considered free from error, insofar as the authentic Ḥadīths are all considered to be free from error, although these received elements of the Prophet's history are human, not divine words. There is a technical term for this, ʿiṣma, which one could perhaps translate as: being kept from error and sin, safe from them, being a fortress of defence against them. This was then developed extensively in Islamic mysticism. Muḥammad is seen as the radiant place, where man is perceived as a manifestation of God – completely incompetent in himself, yet in union with God in such a way that, at the same time, he is also divine. This even extends to the idea of pre-existence, the idea that the whole world is created in Muḥammad, even through him, so that he represents the great original idea of man. It is here, in a particular way, that the line which separates the Sunna from the Shīʿa and Arab from non-Arab Islam, becomes operative.

development of Islamic mysticism in the Persian, Turkish and Indian traditions **SCHIMMEL** While earliest Islamic mysticism, up to al-Ḥallādj and his successors, was completely oriented towards God, in the tenth century little by little there appears the figure of the mystical beloved as a human personality. They began to see – parallel to Joseph as the ideal of absolute beauty – a human being as the image, the "flash of light", tadjallī, of the absolute beauty of God, and for this reason later mystical poetry becomes love poetry, in which the metaphysical and the real levels permeate each other in such a way that it is practically impossible for an outsider to see whether the subject is a human lover or the divine lover. For it was said: al-madjāz qanṭarat al-ḥaqīqa, the metaphor is the bridge to what is true; so that worldly love, specifically, unfulfilled, platonic love for a beautiful person, is seen as the bridge to learning the love of God.

This is a form of mysticism that unfolded to a particular extent under the Persians. If proper attention is paid to this phenomenon, it becomes clear why in European Oriental Studies as well as in normative Islamic theology there was such an aversion to mystical poetry. It seemed, after all, to introduce the danger of a forbidden incarnationism. Here more than ever the problem was posed: can God appear through ḥulūl, choosing a human body as his dwelling place; is it really legitimate to take a human body, a human being, a young boy, a youth, as a manifestation of divine beauty? There are apocryphal Ḥadīths attributed to the Prophet, such as: "I saw my Lord in a most beautiful shape"; and once, "[...] in the shape of a beautiful youth wearing his cap tilted", which offered the Persians infinite possibilities for playful thinking. And those who are unaware of the ambiguity of Persian poetry are of course always inclined to refer to the worldly level and to understand things literally, without perceiving their other meaning. This is the reason why later mystics, as for instance Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762) of Delhi in the 18th century and in our own time Muḥammad Iqbāl (d. 1938) warned so sternly against releasing this Persian poetry for general enjoyment. The initiated, who could (as Persians say) read the white between the letters, knew that it was a matter of metaphors – and those who did not know it, such as the 19th and 20th century Orientalists, often in their translations turned everyone who poured out the divine wine of love into a very common publican; in an American translation of Ḥāfiẓ (d. 1389), we even find that the person who pours out the divine wine is a bar maid! So there are very many possibilities of misunderstanding and therefore it is understandable that orthodoxy and normative Islam, as well as the modernists, have turned against this kind of mystical poetry, because it can be dangerous if one does not know about its ambiguity.

The first Turkish works in Central Asia and Anatolia are those of Ahmed Yesewi (d. 1166). Beginning with a few verses of Rūmī and his son, they reach in the poetry of Yūnus Emre (d. 1321) a high point which was decisive for the whole development of Turkish literature up to the present time.

In addition, Islam goes to India, and in the early evidence of the mystical experiences and utterances of the great Ṣūfī masters of North and South India, we repeatedly find that they used the vernacular and occasionally went into ecstasy when poetry in the vernacular was employed. Thus it is not surprising that everywhere in India mysticism plays an important role in the vernaculars. In his book Urdū kī nashw ū numā meñ ṣūfiyā-i kirām kā kām (Karachi, 1955) Maulvi Abdul Haqq shows very beautifully that in the 14th century, in South India, Urdu was used first by the mystics, and was then retained in later literature. The same can be said about Sindhi which was completely developed by the mystics and about Pandjābi, after Mādhō Lāl Ḥusayn (d. 1593) created the first classical Pandjābi poetry in 16th century Lahore. In Pashto it was no different: the first real book in Pashto is Khayru l-bayān of Bāyezīd Anṣārī, the Pīr-i rōshan, the 'shining master', who died in 1575.

The 16th century is the period in which this popular poetry really begins to blossom, and what is interesting for our discussion is the fact that these poets used images of the land. Perhaps the most beautiful picture is that of spinning: the _dhikr_, the thousandfold repetition of the divine names, is compared with spinning, for the more one spins, the finer the thread becomes, and the more one practises _dhikr_, the finer and the more purified the heart becomes. If the motif of spinning, which in areas where cotton is grown, such as Sind and Gudjarāt, was quite natural and could be understood by every housewife, is applied to life, it means: he who has not practised the _dhikr_, has not spun his heart fine, will, on the wedding day (and this is the day of reckoning and of resurrection) stand there like a shameful girl, naked and without a dowry and be punished accordingly. Thus an image emerging wholly from the language of the common people is turned into a mystical symbol. The symbol of the soul, _nafs_, which in Arabic is feminine, was particularly developed in these popular literatures, and in the purely Sunnī-Islamic context as well as in the _djinān_, the holy songs of the Ismāʿīlī sect, which were very strongly represented in Gudjarāt and Sind. Again and again the development of the soul is portrayed by relating old sagas of women in search of their beloved: all the pains they suffer are narrated dramatically, so that these women's experience of the soul are linked with their real experiences to become an incredibly powerful unity, into which of course also creeps the motif of the _virahiṇī_, the yearning bride of Indian popular poetry _(bhakti_ poetry). These cross-references between Hindu _bhakti_ poetry and Ṣūfī poetry in the border areas in western India and also in Bengal are extraordinarily interesting.

So, last but not least, through the development of the various languages to which it gave a specific colouring, Ṣūfism made a remarkably strong mark. In his excellent book _Exégèse coranique et langage mystique_ (Beirut, 1970), Père Nwyia says that, through the experiences of the Ṣūfīs, Arabic gained a new dimension, that of the experience of love. And in Persian above all it was the poets who formed this language to a great extent out of the treasure of mysticism; the poetry of even the most profane poets of Iran after the 11th century cannot be imagined without the influence of Ṣūfism, for it provided them with their whole range of metaphors.

poetry and orthodoxy   In poetry a certain magnanimity is also attained, which has led to orthodox believers always having a certain aversion to poetry because its thoughts have seemed to them to be too far-reaching and heretical. It is a very interesting development in modern Islam that al-Ḥallādj, the great martyr of Ṣūfism, was for some time, approximately between 1965 and 1980, a favourite figure with the modern left-wing intellectual poets of the Arab world because to them he appeared to have been a social reformer, a man who spoke freely, a man who was killed by the establishment. So for them he was a kind of role model they could use as a guide. And it is remarkable that during these fifteen years there was not only a drama about al-Ḥallādj written in Egypt, but also the Iraqi and the Arab-Lebanese poets, such as Adonis and Bayātī, either wrote poems about him or at least alluded to his fate. In the modern Indo-Muslim world we find the corresponding motif of the gallows and the pulpit, which found its most beautiful expression in a verse of Ghālib (d. 1869):

"The secret in the heart,
no sermon will it be.
On the gallows you can say it,
but on the pulpit – no!"

What until the 19th century marked the contrast between orthodoxy or normative Islam and the loving ecstatics, has become in the last 50 to 60 years in the sub-continent almost the opposition's war-cry. It is very interesting that the name of a mystic who probably wanted only to strive after God has become a motto for people who basically still feel they are Muslims, but who are not able to cope with orthodoxy and want to go their own way.

VANONI Encountering Islamic mysticism, one finds strikingly numerous parallels between it and Jewish Old Testament mysticism, particularly that the mystic need not despise the world when he becomes one with God. The verse of the Psalm comes to mind: "You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound." (Ps 4:7). This certainly does not mean that the man of the Old Testament despises corn and wine, but rather that it is indeed possible to enjoy the gifts of creation. In Ecclesiastes we even find the assertion that God reveals himself in joy (Eccl 5:19 f.), although it did not enter the German Bibles in this way. In any case, one has the impression that from the perspective of Islam's theology of creation it is impossible for a mystic in Islam to become a sombre ascetic.

Moreover, the great importance obviously attributed to the narrative-poetic element in the Islamic mystical tradition may remind Christians to be more careful in dealing with the holy Scriptures. After all, in the Christian tradition, too much of Scripture is often understood as history, in the sense of report and historical recounting, sometimes even in the case of parables. There

would be much to rediscover: the narrative elements in the Biblical tradition which simply tell stories taking delight in narrating them, whether in the Psalms or in the Song of Solomon or in many other parts. In the Islamic tradition this narrative element seems to have a central and leading function, above all in mysticism.

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WISSE   In classical Christian mysticism it is not man's endeavours towards mystical union with God that are in the foreground, but grace. The mystical union is a gift of God, for which man may have or create the prerequisites, but not more than that; this even applies in Bonaventura's *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*. It is God who encounters us; it is he who grants himself. How is this relation between the work of God and the work of man seen in Islamic mysticism?

mystical experience – endeavours of man characterized by the initiative of God

DUPRÉ   In mysticism a union is spoken of, and a non-mystic could think that a very special experience is meant here. The question arises of whether one becomes a mystic because one has a very special experience, or whether it is because one is a mystic that one begins to see one's own experiences in a new light. If the latter, what does it mean: 'to become a mystic'? Or, in other words again: is mysticism concerned with something that has to be granted, given or found, or with discovering existing conditions and relations? This would mean that for instance in al-Hallādj's assertion "I am the truth", which has already been mentioned, it is not so much a matter of someone here and now saying unintelligible things or giving the impression of being mad, but of a very fundamental insight being articulated, which became a certainty on the mystical path, so that what we call union is something which, when we touch it, is like touching and discovering our own origin – and I base this on the fact that we are created by God.

KHOURY   Also in Islam, the mystic knows that there is much he has to do in order to open himself up to the encounter with God, but that the initiative is always God's. Indeed, man can only reach God if he does not take the initiative. There are in Islamic mystical literature many examples of decisive statements that the agent in mysticism is not man. When speaking about mysticism, we speak about what humans do, but what God does evades our direct description, which may lead to misunderstandings. Nevertheless, the first and last initiative are always taken by God, and as long as man does not understand this, he does not attain God.

SCHIMMEL   The question of the initiative of God and the role of man in mysticism brings to mind a wonderful story which Rūmī tells in his poetry and prose: the story of the poor schoolmaster, who, on a cold winter morning, stood, dressed in lightweight cotton clothes on the bank of a raging torrent. The torrent brought along a great creature which everybody took for a dead bear. The schoolchildren said, "Master, jump into the water, look, there is a wonderful fur coat for you". The poor man jumped into the water, and the bear, who was not dead at all, dug his claws into him. The children cried, "Let the fur coat go". Whereupon the schoolmaster replied, "I would let it go, but the fur coat won't let me go." Rūmī says it is like this with the grace of God: once it has got hold of you it will never let you go again. I think this rather clearly answers the question of God's initiative in his relation to man.

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BSTEH A.   Is it not a sign of true mysticism that in every religious tradition two things go hand in hand: becoming ever more deeply rooted in the origins of the tradition and at the same time an eruption of everything man can grasp? So that within every true mysticism elements can be found of what Mrs. Schimmel referred to in her lecture in the metaphor that it is in death that the journey begins in God? May we not say that the believer only attains the mystical dimension when he has passed through this death, whatever form it takes, in which the infinite journey in God begins and with it all that is to be understood as the encounter with the simply Incomprehensible, Nameless and Inexpressible? And this, paradoxically, in each of the religious traditions, also always entails an extraordinarily fruitful – often visionary – deepening of the knowledge of its own faith: the deepening of what is that particular religious doctrine's unique articulation of its religious tradition, which at the same time transcends it into the inexpressible mystery of the One who always remains beyond all finite forms of expression. Can one also find something of this kind in the realm of Islamic tradition?

metaphors and symbols in mystical language

SCHIMMEL   This is very much the case. Taking up the subject of death, we may first remember a phrase frequently repeated by the mystics: "Die before you die!" They saw life as a series of minor deaths; with every step we take forwards, something base within us dies and we arrive at a higher level, so that our whole life is as it were a preparation for the final death. At every stage the divine is experienced a little differently, until one ultimately ex-

periences plenitude. This self-sacrifice and mystical death, taking place gradually, until at the end the complete extinction of the self is achieved, is indeed a subject broached repeatedly by the mystics. In the overall classification of the mystical journey (the seven steps, which we know so very well from Christian mysticism, or also the forty steps) there is an astonishingly strong parallelism not only with Christianity, but also with other traditions. Ibn 'Arabī, who in many respects unfortunately remains too theoretical, referred to the fact that – if we believe in the manifestation of the names of God – each of us is exposed to one or two names that have a special effect on him/her: this means that one can attain the experience of the divine, so to say, only through the channels of these names, so that in a certain way one is guided in one's own tradition by the respective manifestation of one (or several) specific name(s) of God and can attain the experience of the divine only within the symbols of the tradition that results from it, until one ultimately arrives at the final point where everything becomes one. On his/her way, however, the individual human being has to follow the line set out by his/her own religious tradition, which also reveals itself in his/her visions. If the Christian mystic has visions of Christ or similar visions, the only vision of which Ibn 'Arabī speaks and which is permitted is the vision of the letter *hā*'; this is the last and essential letter of the word *Allāh*, in which the soul then rests. As a consequence of the inlibration of the word of God, one cannot see God in a vision in human form – as happens in Christianity thanks to the incarnation – but only in the form of a letter. It seems important to state this here.

ELSAS In reflecting on the names of God as they occur in the individual Holy Scriptures, can we find anything that is distinctively Christian or Islamic? If, for example, in the Islamic tradition one thinks that one is able to see God in form of the letter?

SCHIMMEL Ibn 'Arabī's vision really does seem to be very informative. It is his only record of an actual vision of God. And the whole question of light manifestations on the mystical path, until one ultimately arrives at the final phase, the emerald green, which expresses the stage of the Prophet, is extremely fascinating. The vision of the Arabic letter *hā*' can rightly be called very typical of Islamic mysticism: when one takes the Arabic word *Allāh*, there is the first *lām* and then the second and at the end the *hā*'; this is indeed the famous *hā*' which Ibn 'Arabī saw in its individual form. In a later mystical text, which still belongs to the same tradition, there is a most beautiful description of man's journey towards God: it begins with the let-

ter *Alif,* the 'a' of Allāh (which numerically is the cipher one); thus one begins with the one and only God and in the course of the meditation, the heart travels on until, at the end of the path, it is enclosed by the shining *hā*' as if by a ring, and finds restfulness in it. Can we not see in this a very beautiful symbolism of the Islamic way? One rests in the essential letter of the word *Allāh*.

In this context we also have to bear in mind that we could not expect people – for instance in India, in the Pandjāb or in Turkey – to speak more Arabic than what they needed in order to recite the Qur'ānic Sūras necessary for prayer. So a motif repeatedly appears which is also linked with the inlibration of the word of God, namely that the mystics tell their simple, uneducated followers: "It is enough if you know the first letter of *Allāh,* the *Alif"* (which looks like a straight vertical line). And there are wonderful early poems from the South of the subcontinent in which the Islamic creed is explained to housewives by means of the metaphor of the millstone with which the corn for the bread is ground every day. It has of course a straight handle, which one holds tight; now the poets say the *Alif* of *Allāh* is exactly like the handle fixed to the stone, and exactly as you hold onto the handle and so get the nourishing flour and bread, you must hold onto the *Alif* of the word *Allāh* – then you are on the right path. The metaphors are certainly very simple and natural, and this probably contributed much more towards the spreading of Islam in its mystical form than all the learned works of Ibn 'Arabī and his successors.

the experience of the path: two types of mystics As for the experience of the path in general, it will have to be dealt with in greater detail within the scope of the second lecture: "Man's Path in the Presence of God" [see below pp. 283–293]. In any case, it is important to assert that the path is the absolutely basic element, or that the aim lies within the path. In this context, Islamic mysticism has two types of mystics: there is first the *sālik*, the wanderer, who progresses slowly on the mystical path, and finally, when God grants him this grace, attains the experience of union. Then there is the *madjdhūb* (the attracted one), the ecstatic who, in an ecstatic experience, without having passed through the various stages, attains the experience of union and then slowly descends again into the world, though often losing his spiritual and psychic balance through this experience in such a way that he is seen as one of those who are psychically no longer quite normal. The term *madjdhūb* is used today, as it was already in the Middle Ages, for people who are psychically no longer well; they often run about

in a terrible state and may become very dangerous. The *sālik* is capable of guiding people onto the path, but the *madjdhūb,* who has experienced the unique attraction to God, cannot appear in public as a mystical teacher, because he lacks the experience of the path.

Another very remarkable idea concerning the fool's role in Islamic mysticism may also be mentioned here. It belongs to the context of what can be called the 'rebellion against God'. This motif, which Helmut Ritter called "Muslim mystics' strife with God", is frequently to be found especially in the great epic poems of 'Attār (d. 1220): in this struggle of the Muslim mystic with God, God is accused of having created the world in a completely unreasonable way. There is a story in which a fool comes to Egypt, where there is a famine; he sees how people die and cry out "Bread!", whereupon he turns to God saying, "What is this? If you do not have enough food for all these people, why do you create so many?" Such things happen often, particularly in 'Attār, but interestingly such words are almost always put in the mouth of fools, of people who are a little mentally handicapped; for someone who is not completely healthy is not subjected to the compelling force of the law, he is not *mukallaf,* not obliged to fulfil the commands of the *sharī'a.* This is why, in 'Attār, the fools, who are as it were God's fools, may speak to him so freely and insolently; this is even a sign that God actually loves them; he has released them from slavery – now they can play with him.

mysticism and orthodoxy
IVANČIĆ Mysticism never seems to have really been accepted by Islamic orthodoxy. And there is also the lived religion of the believers, the piety of the people, which does not easily find a place in orthodoxy either. But is there not at the heart of Islam some kind of mysticism in the prayers that have to be said five times a day, in whose performance one gives oneself utterly up to God and renounces the world, in the whole ascesis – not only in the fasting of Ramaḍān – and finally during the pilgrimage to Mecca? There are, even in Islamic orthodoxy, various approaches which come close to mysticism, a meditative life which can make a life of deep faith replete.

Does one not have to see the importance of this, for it is often the reason why one can distinguish a Muslim very clearly from followers of other religious communities – by the imprint made on him by his praying, fasting and alms giving, through which he lives his faith?

Even though this is perhaps not a mystical experience, it is still a deep experience, which shows how unjustifiable it is to call Islam simply a religion of the law.

KHOURY There is no doubt that this kind of mystical dimension of normal religion in Islam deserves much attention.

OTT This seems quite obvious. But, how is it compatible with the view that mysticism never really gained acceptance in orthodoxy?

KHOURY It is not only in Islam that there are tensions between orthodoxy and mysticism because of the absolute transcendence of this God whom the mystics want to attain and with whom they want to become one. For orthodoxy this has always been a very delicate matter: how can a mystic want to attain God or even say that he has attained him in some way, when the Qur'ān definitely says that God is always beyond? Although he reveals himself, he always remains beyond the veil. How then can man desire and try to attain God, and how can man claim to have attained God? This has always been the decisive point for orthodoxy, and since al-Ḥallādj, and also Bisṭāmī, in their ecstasy made paradoxical assertions such as, "I am the truth", the reaction was that this was indeed blasphemous. And they were considered to be people who did not stand firm on the ground of orthodoxy. When later, in the 12th century, the mystics were given the right to stay within the Islamic religious community, they no longer wanted to expose themselves to this criticism and withdrew into esoterical circles.

Beyond all specific related questions, we must still always keep in mind that any religion that lacks the mystical dimension has become only a practical form, a method of organizing one's life. In order to understand the depth of a religion, one has to look at its mysticism. If it opens up a level of mystical experience, making mystical experiences possible or at least not preventing them, there is no doubt that a profound aspect of that religion is revealed. But the fact remains that mysticism in Islam, as in all other religions, is only one dimension, and not the most important one. Perhaps it is, in the perspective of religiosity, the richest and deepest, but for the Muslim it is not the decisive dimension. That position is reserved for orthodoxy.

OTT Can one take it from what Mr. Ivančić says that in Islam there is a mysticism even in normal everyday lived faith?

KHOURY It is possible to see a mystical dimension in it – not in the sense that man earnestly searches for union with God as in classical mysticism, but in the sense of a surrender to the will of God, particularly when the believer fulfils the religious duties in the right spirit of Islam.

OTT One may certainly also say that for Christians our normal religiosity is open to mysticism, again with the reservation that the mysticism of union is not the only form of mysticism.

PRENNER   How does the relationship between Ṣūfism and *sharī'a* unfold in history?

SCHIMMEL   For Ṣūfism both the Qur'ān and the *sharī'a* have absolute validity. This does not only apply to the early period, but also to the time of al-Ḥallādj, who was not in fact sentenced to death because of his eccentric mystical ideas, and his alleged heresy, but because of political difficulties caused by his ideas about more just taxation which met with opposition from the political authorities. al-Ḥallādj always underlined how important it was to fulfil the law down to its minute details, although in certain cases one can replace its literal obedience by the spirit of the law. This last-quoted assertion is the famous doctrine of *isqāṭ al-farā'iḍ*, the replacement of certain religious duties by others. For example, instead of performing the *ḥadjdj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca, it is as pleasing to God to take in thirty orphans during the days of the pilgrimage, to feed them, clothe them and perform certain rites with them. This view aroused much enmity against al-Ḥallādj. But this is the only thing one could reproach him for. He himself made the pilgrimage four times and performed infinitely many ritual prayers. This tradition continued over the centuries, up to Ibn 'Arabī, who has always been decried as the great pantheist and attacked as such by the orthodox, although he was very particular in fulfilling his ritual duties. So the *sharī'a* has always been designated as the great path, without which there is basically no *ṭarīqa*, no smaller path, namely Ṣūfism. Later on, however, there were groups which – as it is often the case also elsewhere – did not take the religious law seriously or even completely neglected it, because they dedicated themselves absolutely to the state of mystical drunkenness. It was these dervishes who first attracted the attention of European travellers in the East: the Qalandar and similar groups of dervishes did not really behave like good Muslims and some of them were even strongly addicted to drugs. The Ṣūfīs of the classical tradition were always very reserved, if not sceptical, towards these Qalandar or whatever they called themselves, because, for the major orders, the *sharī'a* has always remained the indispensable foundation of their life and actions.

The only great danger that actually exists, and has not of course remained unknown to the critics of Ṣūfism, comes from those Ṣūfī-masters who claim, as mystical leaders, to have attained the highest rank, that of a *quṭb*, an 'axis' or 'pole' – and as such have been placed, as it were, in a state beyond good and bad, because they are directly connected with the source of the *sharī'a*. It is understandable that this leads to excesses which have been rightly criticized. Classical Ṣūfism, however, strictly adheres to the *sharī'a*.

Another important aspect of the relation between Ṣūfism and *sharī'a* is the great variety of attitudes towards mysticism among today's Muslims. On the one hand, to a great many modern minds it is something old-fashioned or even dangerous which stalled at a primitive level and is not compatible with a modern view of life. Browsing through modern Islamic literature, one finds remarkably sharp criticism of any Islam that is tinged with mysticism, especially devotion to, or the nuisance of, saints, as it is called by normative Islam. Some of this can be found in a story of the Sindhi-writer Jamāl Abrrō which in my translation is published under the title: *Geschwärzten Gesichtes* [With a Blackened Face][5], in which all these problems are expressed with both bitterness and compassion.

Nevertheless, the inward values of faith, love and absolute dedication to God, have particularly in recent days been repeatedly referred to with great respect by educated people. A very interesting phenomenon that will probably occupy us for quite a number of years and perhaps decades is the appearance of ever stronger Ṣūfī-groups in the East, and to some extent also in the West, where Muslims who can no longer quite localize their spiritual home, find a new home in the Ṣūfī movements. Much of what one can observe today, especially in America, is evidence that the spiritual atmosphere found in Islamic mysticism, which initiates man as a whole into an experience of God that he misses otherwise in the secularized world, is a very important aspect of life particularly for Muslims living abroad. It seems that through it they can find a new home in Islam without actually observing in every detail all the ritual duties prescribed by the *sharī'a*. It is clear that many people, in this way, give their life a spiritual, mystical and profound dimension which enables them to survive in the West of the late 20th century while at the same time authentically preserving their values.

Islamic mysticism
– in opposition
to the 'prophetic
form of religion'?

Following on from the question of what mysticism as a whole is, and if one holds the view expressed several times that it is simply the psychic, the spiritual, the interiorized element of religion, the great movement of the spirit permeating all religions, then the further question arises of whether this 'mystical religion' has to be seen as opposed

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[5]   In: R. Italiaander (ed.), *In der Palmweinschenke. Pakistan in Erzählungen seiner besten zeitgenössischen Autoren.* Herrenalb, 1966.

posed to the 'prophetic form of religion'. Is the prophet the one who is seized by God and called to do something, whereas the mystic is the human being who tries to approach God and so needs much more guidance – a path which leads him in various stages towards God, although, the last step must still be taken by God? This is the classical formulation that one finds in Nathan Söderblom and Friedrich Heiler. Basically, however, one can find both forms in Islam, and if one says that, from the perspective of the history of religion, we encounter Islam as an example of prophetic religion, it is still a fact that the simplicity and clarity of such a categorization can be mitigated at least to some extent by referring to the existence of Islamic mysticism. When we read the classical work on mysticism by E. Underhill[6] we find that, although she gives very few examples from Islamic mysticism, the whole typology it puts forward can be applied to Şūfism absolutely and completely.

reservations concerning certain 'Şūfī' groups in Europe and in America At this point a final remark on a misapplication of the concept of Şūfism, which is currently widespread in the West: there are indeed numerous Şūfī groups in Europe and America, and in many of their books they assert again and again that in fact everybody is a Şūfī: Napoleon, Goethe and Francis of Assisi – everybody who is interesting is described as a Şūfī. This use of the term seems to me to be dangerous. For the term Şūfī can only be correctly used in the context of Islamic mysticism and must not be applied to every mystical experience. It may sound like a reconciliation between the religions, but it is simply a completely inadmissible confusion of terminology which must not be used in this way. Moreover, in America even the daily papers carry advertisements for things like: *Courses and Practice in Sufi dancing*. This seems even more suspect, because dancing, that is ritual dancing, is strictly rejected by many of the Şūfī-orders, and as far as it has been institutionalized by them, it is performed according to a precisely prescribed ritual. It is not remotely like a wild dance, and the permission to listen to music, and the dance resulting from it – the whirling dance – has been repeatedly discussed, from the 9th until the 20th century. There is a whole library of works which deal with this question and all its pros and cons. For this reason, especially if one does not know what the foundations of Şūfism

[6] Id., *Mysticism: A study in the nature and development of man's spiritual consciousness.* London, 1911.

are, 'sufi dancing' should be considered a very dangerous aberration. If one really lives within a tradition and has been initiated into a tradition where there is something of this kind, as among the Mevlevis, then it can be legitimate. But practising it like some kind of supergym is extremely problematic and not very clever either.

the importance of Şūfism in contemporary Islam **KAHLERT** How far is Islamic mysticism concerned not only with recalling something historical, but also with current tendencies in contemporary Islam? How strong are such tendencies even in our own civilization, i. e., among people living with us?

SCHIMMEL This question was already dealt with above, where the relation between Şūfism and *sharīʿa* was referred to. But I have a few further comments on the subject. Just thinking of the numerous Şūfī groups in Europe, for example, shows how great the attraction of Şūfism is, even and especially in our times. From my own experience in Turkey, where Atatürk banned the orders in 1925, it became clear that, although the outward forms no longer existed, modern Muslims still found there was an energy in Şūfism which they did not want to abandon.

This was not so much the Şūfism of the village dervishes, the saints, who at that time did after all interfere in politics. At first sight, for someone who had only read about Şūfism, it was actually not easy to understand why Atatürk banned the orders. But after one had been in the country for some time and been able to become personally acquainted with some village saints, it soon became clear that they were people who had very little to do with our world and, with their alleged energies, guided the population, if not astray, then at least not towards a very healthy path. So it was understandable why Atatürk had proscribed them, and at the same time these circumstances make one sensitive to the true problems of Şūfism and its real greatness.

After all, as an outsider, one at first perceives only the outward appearance; but when, later, one is in the company of a member of a pious family of mystics, one does indeed discern the true energies. Thus there are masters who worked as teachers and completely concentrated on education and on deepening understanding of history and art, who can be seen as ideal representatives of as perfect a form of classical Şūfism as may be found. It can be taken for granted that, especially in Turkey, there are numerous people living modern lives who covertly lead a deeply mystical life. This also applies in Pakistan. In Muslim India Şūfism is even stronger,

because there, as the religion of a minority, Islam cannot present itself in the outward form of a life lived according to the _sharī'a;_ this is not encouraged by the secular government. There people have followed much more strongly the mystical approach, and there are spiritual leaders, such as the spiritual master of the Shrine of Gēsūdarāz (d. 1422) in Gulbarga in the Deccan, who was not only a great mystic, but who also established a college in his compound offering a programme in engineering and a college for girls, so that this place which was otherwise of hardly any importance – it was simply a religious centre – has now become one of the most important cultural centres in South India.

The great and really good mystics, who carry on the classical tradition, do indeed have much to say. Sometimes, however, as in Pakistan, they go into politics, and there the outcome is sometimes very unpleasant, as in the case of the Hurr of Pīr Pagārō. There really are all the variations one can imagine, but it can still be said that, for modern man, the interest in or the turning towards the mystical values of Islam has recently become a little more obvious. Recently a young Egyptian who had worked on the Ṣūfī influence on medieval religious architecture in Cairo, stated during the oral examination for his doctorate that when he had arrived from Egypt he had been a complete secularist; then he had worked his way into the subject and found many things that were closer to him personally than the Islam with which he had been confronted in Cairo, where Ṣūfism was always rather ridiculed. Interestingly, this young man arrived at this point of view through his academic work.

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mysticism and the unfolding of practical life

DUPRÉ   On the relation between mystical understanding and daily life, what is the importance of mysticism for people's everyday life, in practice in one's behaviour towards other people, one's care for the community, one's solidarity with the world and in the world, one's responsibility for creation, the social dimension, etc.? How is responsibility for creation expressed in practice within and according to mystical traditions? This covers a whole array of questions, including the question of what precisely was the situation in these orders and brotherhoods.

ZIRKER   Perhaps mysticism has been a movement which not only de facto had a political relevance – the example of al-Ḥallādj has already been mentioned – but also included a political intention within its own self-definition so that, much more than just occasionally, it may seem that not only the 'I and God' dimension, but also the other dimension, 'I and my social environment', is active.

DUPRÉ   What also has to be reflected in the context of these questions is the silence of the mystics on their doctrine: what they really know, theologically and religiously, is only communicated to others who are able to understand it. This seems to have direct political relevance for the encounter with the religious powers in society – or is this again situated on another level?

mysticism and politics

ZIRKER   The fact that silence about the experience of a reality that cannot be expressed in words may play a significant role in politics is one thing; the question of how far this is related to a definite political intention is another. In any case, the connection between mysticism and politics may be considered from two directions: the intention of the mystics, and the effects of mysticism.

The mystics were generally not isolated individuals. Mysticism needed a master who, being an experienced man who knew the correct rules and paths, regulated the practice, so that mysticism was not simply stretched between the poles of love mysticism based on willpower on the one hand, and gnosis, _'irfān,_ based on knowledge, on the other. Rather, both were lived out through practice with the help of the master, the _pīr._ Linked with the danger that the one and only God may impose totalitarian rule with regard to social affairs, there is the danger that in mysticism, too, the one and only master in the order may exhibit some totalitarian traits.

RABERGER   It is well known that there have recently been very many discussions dealing with the polarity between mysticism and politics. _Mystik und Politik_ (ed. by E. Schillebeeckx. Mainz, 1988), a publication in honour of Johann Baptist Metz, broached the whole problem area concerning theopolitical theology and the social dimension, and also postmodern criticism of a social generalization of the processes of life; in this tension, polarity is again always seen as having mutually fertilizing effects. In the Middle Ages too, mysticism was a movement opposed to scholasticism, which claimed to be able to express everything by means of its conceptual language and demonstrate it through argument.

ZIRKER   There is the statement on the enigma of being, which one may speak of on the gallows but not in the pulpit. What is fascinating about it is that this statement does not simply argue for silence in the face of the absolute: it may be spoken of, but only by him who pledges his life to it.

SCHIMMEL When we speak about the question of mysticism and politics, the popular kind of Islam outside the great centres may also be referred to. This should and can just be mentioned here in brief. Theoretically, the mystics should of course be a-political: if one is oriented only towards God, then one should not after all join the political world. Nevertheless it is very interesting that among the mystics, who are to be found in all walks of life, there have been those who appeared in public as political rebels. Here I recall Qāḍī Badr ad-Dīn of Simawnā (d. 1416) during the Ottoman period, a man who lived very intensively within the Turkish mystical tradition and tried to dethrone Sultan Bāyezīd I (ruled 1389–1403). Qāḍī Badr ad-Dīn was then hanged in Serres, i. e., in the European part of Turkey. And in view of the fact that, in the years between 1965 till 1980, al-Ḥallāḏj became a model of left-wing orientation for many Arab poets, it is very interesting to see that the great communist Turkish poet Nāzim Ḥikmet (d. 1963) took Qāḍī Badr ad-Dīn as one of his models, and dedicated to him an uncredibly powerful and beautiful cycle of poems.

Another mystic of this kind is the Sindhi Ṣūfī Shāh ʿInāyat of Jhōk (d. 1718), who tried to carry through a just land reform (at least his modern interpreters say so), and it is understandable that this earned him the enmity of the landowners. There is quite a large number of such politically active leaders, often rebels against the establishment, but, especially in recent decades, also cooperating with the government. If one observes elections in Pakistan and sees how the majority of the famous Ṣūfī-leaders' successors are engaged in politics, then one sees the powerful influence that Ṣūfism, albeit in a very secularized form, has had on politics.

From the time of World War II, there is a quite interesting example: in Sind there was the Pīr Pagārō, who came from a Naqshbandiyya-family which had separated into two groups at the beginning of the 19th century. He was the more powerful and surrounded himself with a group of dervishes, devoted to him body and soul, i. e., in a kind of Fidāʾīs, as in Alamūt in medieval Islam. This hard core of followers also played a minor role in the Indian War of Independence against the Sikhs and the British in 1831, and survived up to the first decades of the 20th century, when, after the breakdown of the Califat movement in 1921, India's new struggle for freedom emerged. The Hurr, which Pīr Pagārō had trained as his faithful guard, were then very active and successful as underground fighters against the British during the 1930s and at the beginning of World War II. The story of the life of one of these men was described in an exremely thrilling report, the book *The Terrorist*, by the British officer Lambrick[7], who spoke Sindhi well and had all the records of the legal proceedings at his disposal. This is one of the most exciting books I know, a book which shows how complete dedication to the master, which is of course part of the mystical training, can really lead to political excesses of the worst kind. It illustrates in a very informative manner the issue of the possibilities and impossibilities of mysticism and its negative effects on politics.

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mysticism and interreligious dialogue; the relation between the heart and the mind

BARTH Considering the significance of mysticism for interreligious dialogue, from the inter-Christian perspective, it first comes to mind that mystics clearly have no role at all and that on the whole spirituality has not borne fruit ecumenically. With regard to interreligious dialogue, we have the impression that somehow the relation between the heart and the mind, if we may use these terms, is unclear. Then the questions are: Is the mind just the robe of the heart? Is what the mind provides only the outer garment of the language of the heart?

The opposite model would be that it is the mind that moves the heart – that the name, as has been said in this context, polishes the heart until it gives a pure reflection of the name.

A third model would lie in a kind of interdependence: could it not bear good fruit for interreligious dialogue, if we paid more attention to this mutual relation and explained it better – with reference to Islam as well as with reference to Christianity – and if one correlated the resulting models of interdependence with one another? An additional question in this context, from an anthropological perspective, would also be: What about the constitution of mystical experiences – including here psychological and sociological insights? It could after all be that the occurrence of mystical phenomena common to different religions simply has something to do with the psychic constitution of man and this fact would also somehow have to be introduced into interreligious dialogue.

mystical psychology

SCHIMMEL The field of mystical psychology is extensive and has many branches. If, for instance, one thinks of the classical Islamic doctrines about the various parts of man, as expressed, for example, in the doctrine of the formation of the

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[7] H. T. Lambrick, *The Terrorist*. London, 1972.

soul, *nafs:* on the lowest level there is the *nafs ammāra,* the soul that is "prone to evil" (Qur'ān 12,53), which we can sometimes also translate as 'flesh', and its training through the *nafs lawwāma,* conscience (the "self-reproaching spirit": Qur'ān 75,2) towards the *nafs muṭma'inna,* the "righteous soul" (Qur'ān 89,27). Then there is the spirit, *rūḥ,* the intellect, *'aql,* and the heart, *qalb,* the actual dwelling place of God, which is also called the throne of God or the organ that is the window towards God. Then there are even deeper strata: *sirr,* the secret, the inmost heart, where there is the very point of encounter with God. This is a complicated world and the mystics of the various orders, especially the Kubrāwiyya and the Naqshbandiyya, have developed a whole system of subtle substance centres within man, each of which can be awakened by certain kinds of meditation, until the whole human being is permeated by the names of God and his presence. This awakening of the *laṭā'if,* the subtle substance centres, if one may call them so, then often goes hand in hand with phenomena of light or other bodily appearances. Several books have been written on this subject, for instance Henry Corbin's *L'homme de lumière dans le soufisme iranien* (Paris, 1971), and in the work of Fritz Meier in Basle on Nadjmuddīn al-Kubrā (Wiesbaden, 1957) there is a beautiful exposition from a somewhat matter-of-fact point of view. Another work on all these issues concerning the *laṭā'if* will apparently be published soon.

mysticism and dialogue When the question is raised of what mysticism can contribute to dialogue, reference is always made to the fact that the aim of mysticism, deification, is after all the same everywhere, and that on the mystical level, if we set aside the more technical aspects, we can probably meet each other much more easily than on the dogmatic level. Yet here too, a reservation is to be made (and this seems to be completely relevant for our dialogue): Ibn 'Arabī referred to the fact that one can only attain the experience of ultimate union, or at least of the ultimate vision, legitimately within the framework in which one has grown up, the framework preconditioned by the divine name which is effective upon one. This is a clear restriction. Mysticism in itself, the aim, is general, but the paths are different and one can compare them. Before the stage of ultimate union they should possibly not be mixed; it would be unhealthy. This is what Ibn 'Arabī would advise.

the mind and the heart Then the issue of the mind and the heart was raised. One may say with Goethe in his *West-östlicher Divan* that the mind is 'das vorwaltende Leitende' [the foreshadowing and guiding principle] which leads man and establishes his relationship to the divine, but that it is the heart that is the place where God can really reveal himself. The concept of the three stages of the soul which has become typical of Islam, because it is based on Qur'ānic assertions which, however, are not connected with one another as such, has just been mentioned. Referring once again to poetry, it is very interesting that the word *nafs,* which is grammatically feminine, has often been described as a feminine energy, which is, of course, to say in contrast to the intellect, the *'aql,* which is masculine. The intellect is the leading energy, but, like the *rūḥ,* it can only guide man up to the door of the king. Once there, the intellect leaves man alone, for the intellect must not enter the bridal chamber of love, as the mystics call it. There, there is only love, and love is a matter of the heart, which, as was said before, is being polished more and more by remembrance of the beloved, until it becomes a completely flawless mirror – in the Middle Ages there were metal mirrors – in which the beauty of the beloved can be perceived. Hence the wonderful metaphor, which keeps appearing in Rūmī and in his successors: to Joseph, who manifests the divine beauty in itself, one can make only one gift, and that is the mirror, so that he can see his own beauty. And this has to be understood as referring to God: God, as the absolute transcendent beauty, can perceive himself in the mirror of the world. Here again we find the hidden treasure, wanting to be seen and admired. The heart always takes the central position, and opens up, and hears the word of God and takes it up, or else it mirrors God.

God remains the unattainable one **BSTEH A.** Since the encounter with Islam necessarily also entails an encounter with its mystical tradition, this reminds the Christian believer too very strongly of the indispensable element in his own faith: that for him God always remains the infinitely incomprehensible and unattainable one, that according to our faith we simply cannot grasp God, either in doctrinal teachings or in ethical ordinances. Should Christian theology not take this much more into account, so that in everything about this God one will always sense what is greater, the infinitely ever greater greatness of God, and that the language of the heart can always be heard in everything that the language of the mind conceptualizes theologically? If Karl Rahner was right when he said that theology is an inner aspect of faith, then, within it, faith always has to remain the infinitely greater – because it is God who is its subject. In other words, does not theology cease truly to speak about God if it does not include the 'via negationis'?

OTT   When we see how the multiple threads in the web of mysticism meet and that mysticism cannot be restricted to the mysticism of union, but is found within the wide scope of mystical experiences, then, to a Christian and theologian, this suggests defining mysticism as broadly as possible.

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common and distinct elements in the mysticism of the various religions

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KHOURY   The mystics encounter each other and are different from each other at the same time, but they do not encounter each other on the level on which they differ. One level is that of the experience of and encounter with the mystery, which cannot be defined more precisely. On this level the mystics of all religions meet and understand each other spontaneously, for they have similar experiences. What they experience has something to do with the psyche and the human consciousness, and since these states of awareness are similarly experienced by the mystics of all religions, they understand each other well.

The level on which the differences are clearly perceptible is the level of the interpretation of these experiences. This interpretation takes place through doctrine and dogma. It is the level of a particular religion's concepts about this God whom the mystic seeks or experiences. In the interpretation, differences soon emerge, as for instance when Meister Eckehart interprets his experiences against a trinitarian background, whereas Buddhists do not speak of God at all.

OTT   If it is said that the mystics meet on the human level, the level of their human experiences, but not on the level of dogmatic interpretation, one may then ask, "Where is the reality? Is it in the experience or in the interpretation?"

KHOURY   Neither nor. The true reality is the mystery of God. The mystic experiences this mystery in his own way, which cannot be reproduced, except in the sense that it may be interpreted and become communicable through this interpretation.

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fear in mysticism?

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SCHMATOVICH   How far does fear play a role in Islamic mysticism?

KHOURY   Fear can be seen as a motive for asceticism in the development of Islamic mysticism: in the early stages of Islamic mysticism, it was said that the Judgement of God was imminent, and so the hereafter was more important than the present world. In this context, the world is considered as a threat and a test, as something seductive from which we have to turn away in fear of Judgement and failing to attain bliss in the world to come. But wherever mysticism comes into play, with its inner power to overcome fear by complete dedication to God, there is no longer any room for fear.

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mysticism and gnosis

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HORN   How does the relation between mystical experience and gnosis manifest itself? Are they two movements which are always parallel with each other, in the sense that the gnostic movement is always there, touching the mystical experience wherever it appears?

ZIRKER   In Mrs. Schimmel's lecture, what was initially emphasized in the development of the mystic seemed to be the willed union with God, a love relationship, a letting-oneself-be-grasped by God, and then, in a second phase, it was rather gnosis or knowledge, even though the two can never be completely separated from one another.

MITTERHÖFER   Is the term 'gnosis' used in Islam itself, or is it borrowed from somewhere else to interpret certain phenomena in Islam?

ZIRKER   The term *'irfān*, which can be translated as gnosis or knowledge, is used here as a technical term from within the self-definition of Islamic mysticism. There is much in favour of the assumption that gnosis has never died out, but permeates various religious cultures. On the other hand, gnosis is certainly also linked with human cognition and reflection, independent of connections with individual historical traditions, so that it is certainly not easy to distinguish between what is simply to be expected wherever people reflect on their existence under the influence of mystical experiences, and what gnosis is beyond that in the historical context of the various traditions. It is nevertheless clear that mysticism is characterized by a movement that begins with something that happens and expresses itself as a love relationship which then arrives at something rather oriented towards knowledge and philosophical systematization. The question is only where to situate this distinction in the field of interpretation and its literary expression.

In certain traditions of Islamic mysticism there has been an extreme development, going as far as veneration of Satan, the evil one, and a very specific Satanic mysticism. In the Qur'ān all the angels were called by God at the creation of Adam and Eve to bow down before man. They were surprised and asked: Shall we bow down before one you have created from dry clay and who will do evil on earth? Iblīs (Greek διάβολος) is the angel who does not bow down before Adam. From the Islamic perspective, especially for

the mystics, he is therefore an extremely tragic figure, and for some also to be revered. He is tragic in the sense that, because of his paying respect to God, he does not submit to God's will that he should bow down before man, and to be revered because, of all the angels, he is the only consistent Muslim, because he is only ready to bow down before God alone. God's command entangles him in an unbearable conflict: he is no longer a Muslim and yet at the same time he is the only Muslim.

SCHIMMEL   The extent to which the influences of Gnosticism and Neoplatonism on Islamic mysticism can be historically established in detail is a real question. Neoplatonism was simply in the air in the Near East; one breathed it in, as it were, if one was mystically inclined. There have been scholars such as Nyberg, for instance, who said that Ibn 'Arabī actually represented Neoplatonism in Arabic terms – which seems to be a little exaggerated. After all, there are substantial differences. Nevertheless, his approach, his way of seeing the world and all the various divine levels, and the idea of emanation, all this is of course Neoplatonism, which is then permeated by Islam, changed and adapted.

There is also Shihāb ad-Dīn as-Suhrawardī (d. 1191), the 'master of inspiration', who developed a whole system which blended together neoplatonic, as well as ancient Iranian and ancient Egyptian ideas, to arrive at a very interesting, but difficult metaphysics of light, according to which Absolute Existence, meaning God, equals light. This can be deduced from the Qur'ān, according to which God is the light of the heavens and the earth; and then, through various hierarchies of the angels, this light is filtered down until it reaches the creaturely world of man, and man's degree of maturity depends on how much light he is able to absorb in the course of his life, when he returns from the Western exile, from darkness, to the place of sunrise – another beautiful parallel with Spanish mysticism. This is a special case of Islamic mysticism, but extraordinarily interesting because of the parallel development in other countries.

elite elements in Ṣūfism – as in Christian gnosticism?

VANONI   Typical of Christian gnosticism, which also always aims to bring liberation from this evil world, are elite groups. Is the Ṣūfī movement, whose energy has been strong enough to establish a tradition within Islam, also an elite movement or does it not extend into much wider circles and even break them up?

ZIRKER   Elite – yes and no. First, there is the striking phenomenon of the great figures of Islamic mysticism, which necessarily implies elite groups or individuals; in this sense Islamic mysticism as such cannot be described as being elite; but the mystics themselves are often elite because of their specific qualities and abilities. But this does not set up a barrier with everyday life, which cannot be easily penetrated. They do not walk behind walls, or live in an order where silence is imposed. In Islam there is not the kind of barrier which often exists in the Christian tradition – for example, between the order founded by Teresa of Avila and everyday life. There is no elite of that kind, or the esotericism which has often characterized 'Christian'-gnostic circles.

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Islamic mysticism open to other mystic traditions?

BARTH   Is Islamic mysticism to be seen as a phenomenon which opens the Muslim up to other mystical traditions? After all, mysticism could provide the common denominator; or does Islamic mysticism have a very specific profile that would have to be contrasted with, for instance, our Christian mysticism?

SCHIMMEL   There are of course specific traits, such as the role of Muḥammad according to Ibn 'Arabī, whose aim after all is to attain the ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya into which the mystic plunges, because he cannot reach the 'deus absconditus'; though the ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya still remains something created.

Otherwise the openness of Islamic mysticism towards other religious traditions is certainly very wide, and one has frequently tried to reach understanding on this level, especially in Islamic India, where the boundaries between Islam and Hinduism appear. Here again it is poetry that is very effective. When one reads, for instance, ecstatic 18th century poetry in Pandjābī or Sindhi, one is really surprised at the syncretism there between Islam and Hinduism. Or we may read the poems of Yūnus Emre who died in Anatolia in 1321: Yūnus' foundation is strictly Islamic, but then this feeling of loneliness develops, and the only thing that finally remains is the love of God that embraces everything: whether Mecca or Jerusalem, Christians or non-Christians, all is embraced in this great ecstasy of love. Something similar can also be said of Rūmī. Since he lived in Konya, in former Byzantine territory, he knew quite a lot about Christians and their customs. If we examine his work thoroughly from this point of view, we find very interesting details; his second wife even came from a Christian family. However, he was also critical: in the first book of the Mathnawī he tells the story of the traitor who, after the death of Jesus,

sowed discord among the Christians and thereby aggravated the tension between the various Christian groups to the extent that they killed one another. This is a very interesting allegory.

Nevertheless, especially in Rūmī, we also find in his prose works the idea of the birth of Christ in the soul: he expressed this very clearly. The body, or the human being, is like Mary; and the Qur'ān says of Mary that when she felt the pangs of childbirth, she went to a barren palmtree, and in her agony she grasped it and held it tight, and the barren palmtree dropped sweet dates in her lap (Qur'ān 19,23–25), as if in wondrous token of the prophet about to be born. Rūmī says: each of us is a Mary, and each of us bears Jesus in themselves, but if the birth pangs do not begin, then this Jesus cannot be born, but disappears again. Thus the throes which we suffer psychically are a precondition for our spiritual self, our Jesus, to be born within us. This was exactly fifty years before Meister Eckehart who spoke of Christ's birth in the soul, and so here we can see in Islamic mysticism a very interesting parallel with the Christian tradition.[8]

The connections between Islam, Judaism and Christianity which were particularly strong in Spain are certainly of special interest in this context. Very interesting investigations have been made recently, particularly concerning the numerous connections between early Islamic (Arabic) mysticism and Juan de la Cruz (d. in 1591).[9]

The Book of the Lover and the Beloved by Ramon Lul (d. 1315)[10], which contains a great many translations from Arab mysticism, should be mentioned here too. And there is also the remarkable reference to Jesuits saying that there are obvious similarities with Şūfī rules in the rules of Ignatius of Loyola. For example, in early Şūfism, in the 10th century at the latest, there is a statement that the Şūfī should be in the hands of his master like the corpse in the hands of the corpse-washer; so the metaphor of 'cadaver obedience' definitely already existed among the Şūfīs in the 9th and 10th centuries. For someone who really knows Şūfism and the Jesuit order well, it would be a fascinating task to investigate these parallels.

[8] Cf. also H. Rahner "Die Lehre der Kirchenväter von der Geburt Christi aus dem Herzen der Kirche und der Gläubigen", in: id., *Symbole der Kirche.* Salzburg, 1964, pp. 11–87.

[9] Cf. Luce López-Baralt, *San Juan de la Cruz y el Islam. Estudio sobre las filiaciones semíticas de su literatura mística* (Serie estudios de lingüística y literatura; 12). México, 1985.

[10] *The Book of the Lover and the Beloved.* Trans. by E. A. Peers (1923). Rev. ed. London, 1945.

The Qur'ān: the Ultimate Word of God Expressed in Human Language

Adel Theodor Khoury

Introduction: The Qur'ān is the core of Islam

For the Islamic faith Muḥammad is "the Seal of the Prophets" (Qur'ān 33,40)[1], but even so, he is not the core of Islam. The core of Islam is a book, the Qur'ān, the ultimate word of God, literally transmitted by God to the Prophet Muḥammad to lead human beings towards faith, to make known to them the commandments of God, and to guide and regulate their lives as individuals and as community.

In the experience of his call, Muḥammad is confronted with the message of God in the form of a book. According to Islamic tradition, Muḥammad himself relates:

Whilst I slept, he (Gabriel) came to me, holding in his hands a book wrapped in brocaded silk. He said: "Proclaim!" I said: "I cannot proclaim." Then he throttled me with the book, so that I thought I must die. – Then he let go and said again: "Proclaim!" I said again: "I cannot proclaim." And again he throttled me so that I thought I must die. – Then he let go and said again: "Proclaim!" I said again: "I cannot proclaim." And again he throttled me so that I thought I must die. – He let go and said again: "Proclaim!" Then I said: "What shall I proclaim?" I said this simply to avoid his doing unto me again what he had done unto me before. To the question: "What shall I proclaim?", Gabriel answered: "Proclaim! (or Read!) In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created – Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, – He Who taught (the use of) the Pen, – Taught man that which he knew not." (Qur'ān 96,1–5). And thus I recited these (words). Then Gabriel withdrew and left. I, however, awoke from my sleep and I felt as if a scripture had been engraved on my heart.[2]

[1] The statements made in this contribution set out the doctrine of Islam. For practical reasons this is done without emphasizing time and again that they represent Islamic positions.

[2] With the exception of the Qur'ānic verses, this is a translation into English of H. Stieglecker, *Die Glaubenslehren des Islam.* Paderborn, ²1983, p. 357.

A book is thus pressed onto Muḥammad's chest, a book coming from God, put down in a Scripture containing the eternal message of God, which is consequently, with regard to its fundamental content, elevated above historical events and beyond worldly fluxes and changes. From this book, the primordial norm of truth and the line of rightful guidance, the newly called Prophet must recite: first he must recite it once to himself, imbibe the message and internalize it in order to be able to recite, read out and proclaim the revelation of God.

Muḥammad had already found among the Jews (with their Torah) and the Christians (with their New Testament) a holy Scripture that functioned as the document of divine revelation and compendium of divine commandments and legal instructions. He must have been very impressed by the fact that these religious communities had holy books which they used during religious services and whose authority they acknowledged unconditionally. In many passages the Qurʾān mentions the Torah as the Book of God for the Jews (e. g., 2,44.53.78.85.87.101.113.144–146.159.174.176; 3,19f.23, etc.[3]) and considers it their duty to keep the Torah faithfully (5,44). The Qurʾān also urges Christians to comply faithfully with the Gospels (5,46 f.). It states unequivocally: "Say: 'O People of the Book! Ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation[4] that has come to you from your Lord.' [...]" (5,71).

Consequently, the Qurʾān calls the Jews and the Christians "the People of the Book" (2,105.109; 3,64f.69–72.75.98f.110.113.199; 4,123.153.159.171; 5,16.21.62.68.71.80; 29,46; 33,26; 57,29; 59,2.11; 98,1.6), a description that implies a religious superiority over the polytheists and the unlearned, who have no Scripture. The Torah of Moses is considered to be a model for the Scriptures and communities that came after (11,17; 25,74) and the Qurʾān expressly points out this advantage to people: "[...] if ye realise this not, ask of those who possess the Message[5]." (16,43; 21,7).

This shows clearly Muḥammad's conviction that a divine message only achieves the whole scope of its purpose and brings its full authority to bear when it is set down in a book and presented to people. This is precisely what was to happen with the new message of Islam[6]; and it becomes obvious in the various designations of the Qurʾān in the Qurʾānic text itself.

1. The Word of God as a book to be read aloud[7]

The Arabic word *qurʾān* is derived from the verb *qaraʾa:* read, read aloud, recite. This refers to a double function of the holy book: it is a lectionary and a reading-book.

1.1 The Qurʾān as lectionary

The Qurʾān is a lectionary, which one reads and which is read aloud. Reading aloud and recitation has special importance in an illiterate society such as the early Islamic community. Thus the Qurʾān is the collection of holy texts which are read aloud, proclaimed or recited over and over again. The word *qurʾān* is used in this sense in some verses:

75,17 f.: "It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it *[qurʾānahū]*: but when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated) *[qurʾānahū]*".

17,78: "Establish regular prayers – [...], and the morning prayer and reading *[qurʾāna l-fadjr]*: for the prayer and reading in the morning *[qurʾāna l-fadjr]* carry their testimony."

The recital of Qurʾānic verses is an obligation for the community: reciters of the Qurʾān fulfil this task in front of the Muslims assembled for prayer, but individual believers also read the Qurʾān and recite it.

Whether the Qurʾānic texts are recited solemnly or read silently, they are meant to bind the believers to God, have an effect upon them, and fortify within them their dedication to the will of God *(islām)*.

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[6] Muḥammad's intention to present the message proclaimed by him in the form of a book becomes very clear in later texts of the Qurʾān, e. g. where the Torah, the Gospels and the Qurʾān are given the same standing: "God hath purchased of the Believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the Garden (of Paradise): they fight in His Cause, and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him in Truth, through the Law, the Gospel, and the Qurʾān. [...]" (9,111). – On the efforts made by Muḥammad himself to provide a written version of the Qurʾānic revelation, see my book: A. Th. Khoury, *op. cit.* (fn. 3) pp. 67–70.

[7] Here I follow the explanations in my contribution: A. Th. Khoury, "Buch und göttliche Weisung. Der Koran, Buch Gottes", in: *Glauben durch Lesen?*, edited by A. Th. Khoury – L. Muth (Quaestiones Disputatae; 128). Freiburg etc., 1990, pp. 115–119; cf. A. Th. Khoury, *Der Koran. Übersetzung und wissenschaftlicher Kommentar,* vol. 1–12. Gütersloh, 1990–2001; A. Th. Khoury – L. Hagemann – P. Heine, *Islamlexikon.* 3 vols. (Herder/Spektrum; 4036). Freiburg etc., 1991; W. M. Watt – A. T. Welch, *Der Islam I* (Religionen der Menschheit; 25,1). Stuttgart, 1980; A. T. Welch, "al-Ḳurʾān", in *EI².* vol. V. Leiden, 1986, pp. 400–429.

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[3] See the complete list in my book: A. Th. Khoury, *Der Koran. Übersetzung und wissenschaftlicher Kommentar.* vol. 1, Gütersloh, 1990, p. 253.

[4] According to the Qurʾān, the Psalms of David (4,163; 17,55) and the Books of Abraham (87,19) are also counted among the revealed books.

[5] I. e., the former revelations and holy Scriptures.

1.2 The Qur'ān as reading-book

The Qur'ān is also a reading-book, the documentation of the divine message and Islam's reference book. In the Qur'ān the pious believer finds instruction, edification, admonition and practical guidance. The mystic too finds in the Qur'ān support for his meditation and for his search for an ever closer encounter with God. And finally, the Qur'ān is the absolute authority for the jurist in all questions of law establishment with regard to the definition of legal norms and laws which have to be observed in the life of the community. The commands of the Qur'ān are beyond question; on the basis of its assertions, legal norms, directives and concrete solutions are elaborated.[8]

1.3 The Qur'ān as norm for decision making

The Qur'ān is the divider between right and wrong (furqān: 2,185; 25,1; cf. 3,4) which carries absolute authority (the authority of God himself). As such the Qur'ān is the embodiment of divine guidance. Innumerable verses underline what is asserted at the beginning in Sūra 2: "This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear God" (2,2). Thus the Qur'ān requires of the believers: "So fear God as much as ye can; listen and obey [...]" (64,16). Faith and the endeavours they make to fear God in the living of their lives enable people better to realize the function of the Qur'ān as the guide for righteousness and for the right administration of God's law.

For this law is a light[9] which brings insight and enables people to make judgements. From the many relevant passages just one may be quoted here: "There hath come to you from God a (new) light and a perspicuous Book, – wherewith God guideth all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leadeth them out of darkness, by His Will, unto the light, – guideth them to a Path that is Straight." (5,17 f.; cf. 14,1; 65,11). This is not only a light from above illuminating the path of the believers so that they can walk straight along their path (cf. 57,28), but it also makes a light

[8] On the importance of the Qur'ān as the main source of the legal system see my brief exposition in A. Th. Khoury, Islamische Minderheiten in der Diaspora (Entwicklung und Frieden: Wissenschaftliche Reihe; 40). München etc., 1985, pp. 13–16; id., Der Islam. Sein Glaube – seine Lebensordnung – sein Anspruch (Herder/Spektrum; 4167). Freiburg etc., ²1993, pp. 49–56.

[9] On the following explanations see my contribution: "Das Gesetz Gottes. Eine koranische Theologie des Gesetzes", in: A. Th. Khoury, Der Islam kommt uns näher. Worauf müssen wir uns einstellen?. Freiburg etc., 1992, pp. 36–58 (here: pp. 54–58).

begin to shine within man, which makes him grow in understanding (e. g., 2,242) and provides an insight to help him in making judgements (6,104).

The law is the basis of right decisions, the guideline for carrying out in practice the decision taken, and the norm for action (cf. 5,51; concerning specific cases 4,11.25.176).

In order to be able fully to carry out its function as the norm for making decisions and judgements, Qur'ānic law endeavours to embrace all domains of life and contains detailed regulations (cf. 7,32.52; 6,126; 9,11). The Qur'ān itself confirms this: "[...]: and We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy, and Glad Tidings to Muslims." (16,89).

1.4 The Qur'ān as reminder and admonition (dhikr)

The Qur'ān is dhikr: a reminder and an admonition (3,58; 6,69.90; 11,114. 120; 12,104; 20,3; 56,73; etc.). The Qur'ān is a reminder of the fundamental message of all the prophets and of what is said about the primordial revelation: the profession of monotheism and the duty to obey the will of God. For the divine revelation, which, according to the Islamic doctrine, was officially and finally concluded with Muḥammad, has its origins in primeval times. The Qur'ānic concept is that God has revealed to every individual human being the essential content of the later prophetic message. He said to human beings: "[...] 'Am I not your Lord (Who cherishes and sustains you)?' – They said: 'Yea! We do testify!' [...] " (7,172). Added to this was the obligation to serve God alone (36,60 f.).

This concept of a primeval revelation and a primeval obligation for human beings means to say that knowledge about God, the recognition of his absolute sovereignty, and – related to it – human obedience and submission to the will of God are rooted in the heart of every human being, accessible to every human being, and also the duty of every human being.

Pointing out to people the signs of God in creation and reminding them of his action in the life of human beings and peoples, has, at all times, been the role of the prophets. They bring this to the forgetful minds of people whose belief in God has been buried and who, for whatever reasons, do not trust in him or obey his will, thus reminding people to mend their ways and be faithful.

The Qur'ān is also a reminder addressed to the Arabs, and beyond them to the many people in the world, of the fundamental message of God: "[...] there is no god but I; therefore worship and serve Me." (21,25; cf. 16,36).

2. The authority and importance of the Qur'ān

2.1 The grandeur of the Qur'ān

The Qur'ān is the Book of God: it is a direct revelation of God, word for word, and a collection of his communications, ordinances and laws.

As word of God, the Qur'ān has some kind of existence beyond this world. The Qur'ān refers to a "Mother of the Book" which is with God (cf. 13,39; 43,2–4) and of which the Qur'ān itself is a copy (cf. 56,77–80; 85, 21 f.; 43,4).

Orthodox Islam affirms (against the Mu'tazilīs who advocated the doctrine of the created nature of the Qur'ān) the eternity of the Qur'ān which (at least as far as its subject matter is concerned) is elevated into the transcendence of God. Thus its position is above time and history, unchanging and eternally valid. The task of human beings consists in constantly remembering its message and orienting their life in accordance with it.

As eternal word of God and, in its accessible form, the expression of its direct revelation, the Qur'ān is not under the authority of man – or even of the Prophet himself (cf. 75,16 f.; 15,9).

And because it comes from God, it is free of contradictions: "Do they not consider the Qur'ān (with care)? Had it been from other than God, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy." (4,82).

Here we should refer to the sensitive issue of abrogation *(naskh)*, i. e., the question of the abrogation of some Qur'ānic verses and regulations by other passages in the same Qur'ān. The specific application of abrogation is not unanimously resolved even among Muslims, for the Qur'ān itself states the possibility that God may abrogate and change his own ordinances (87,6 f.; 17,86). This makes unbelievers doubt the genuine character of its declarations and the Qur'ān itself witnesses to this: "When We substitute one revelation for another, – and God knows best what He reveals (in stages), – they say, 'Thou art but a forger': [...]." (16,101). The Qur'ān rejects this criticism by pointing to God's better knowledge of his own revelation (87,7; 16,101), to his discretionary power of disposition over it, and the expression of his sovereign will (17,86). The intention behind abrogating certain verses is to replace them with similar or even better ones (2,106).

The Prophet himself, however, had no authority to change what God told him to proclaim (10,15).

2.2 The inimitability of the Qur'ān

If the Qur'ān is beyond the authority of the Prophet himself, it is wholly inimitable and insurpassable for human beings. The Qur'ān itself challenges unbelievers to produce a similar book themselves (52,34; 17,88). They cannot produce ten Sūras (11,13 f.), or even a single Sūra (10,38; 2,23). Man's inability to produce a Scripture like the Qur'ān is a sign that it is the word of God. Its inimitability is the miracle that proves Muḥammad's prophetic mission.[10]

This uniqueness of the Qur'ān is related to its language. The Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic. This Qur'ānic language, when solemnly pronounced, holds a great fascination for the believers. But it is above all the subject matter of the Qur'ān which, being unsurpassable, witnesses its divine origin.

3. Advantages of the message being fixed in writing

Fixing the prophetic message in writing in a book helps to preserve precisely the subject matter of the revelation and the form of its proclamation. It means that it becomes possible repeatedly to ascertain its precise content, to subject scholars' statements to the authority of the authentic assertions of the Qur'ān, and to examine them for correctness. In addition, the danger of falsifying the message is avoided: by being fixed in writing, it is protected from the weaknesses of oral tradition, human fallibility, and deliberate additions and alterations *(taḥrīf)*. Thus the original word, transmitted by God and proclaimed by the Prophet, can, by a faithful recitation of its unaltered content, be repeatedly re-activated, re-actualized, and made present, thus affecting human beings anew.

4. The word of God expressed in human language: some problems

4.1 Accessibility of the language of revelation

The theological problem can be formulated briefly as follows: the Qur'ān is the word of God: the word of God is transcendent because it participates in the transcendence of God. However, transcendence means inaccessibility; thus the question arises of whether the language of the Qur'ān is directly accessible and understandable to human reason.

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[10] On these questions see H. Stieglecker, *op. cit.* (fn. 2) pp. 371–408; H. Grotzfeld, "Der Begriff der Unnachahmlichkeit des Korans in seiner Entstehung und Fortbildung", in: *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, vol. 13. Bonn, 1969, pp. 58–72.

The various theological schools of Islam have given different answers to this question.

The Ḥanbalīs are of the opinion that the believer can only repeat the words of the Qur'ān without being able to approach its content. The language of the Prophet Muḥammad and his first community provides human beings with the key to the understanding of the divine revelation. The Ḥadīth and Sunna provide appropriate access to the will of God expressed in the Qur'ān.

The Muʿtazilīs do not go this far, but nevertheless require that any speaking about God shall be appropriate to the divine transcendence. The transcendence of God, the fact that nothing in the world is equal or similar to God (cf. Qur'ān 42,11; 112,4), makes some theologians of this school hold a nominalistic view: any speaking about God is just a logical connection of human words and sentences which neither express the reality of God nor the reality of the world – according to al-Djubbā'ī (849–917).

al-Ashʿarī (d. 935, whose school represents Islamic orthodoxy) emphasizes the transcendence of God but at the same time underlines the fact that the revelation, expressed in human language, is both understandable and related to reality. The language of revelation is the basis and norm for speaking about God theologically. Moreover, the human language of revelation is related to the reality of God and even expresses it in understandable statements since there is a certain analogy between God and the world. Nevertheless this analogy does not imply that man is similar to God; it merely affirms that the language of revelation, which attributes a certain quality to God, can make man understand this vital issue. In the reality of the divine being, God has a quality that is essentially eternal and uncreated, utterly different from the being of man. For what is most important in this whole matter is not the human language that describes the divine attributes, but rather the divine reality itself which must find its expression in allusive ways. Thus speech about God is a language which is related to reality and gives expression to real qualities of God, which in turn, however, are hard to define. For, when God speaks to humans, he wants them to understand his words. The fact that God made use of a human language to announce the Qur'ānic message undeniably testifies to a certain correspondence between the divine and human language.[11]

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[11] F. Shehadi, *Ghazali's Unique Unknowable God*. Leiden, 1964.

4.2 Voluntarism in the Islamic concept of God

According to the school of the Ashʿarīs, God is an absolute will.[12] He does what he wills to do, and what he does not will does not happen. The consequences of this voluntaristic concept of God are far-reaching and led to the following conceptions in Islamic theology:

(1) God as unconditional will is the absolute free Lord of life in all its manifestations. In detail this means that God is the Lord of truth, the sovereign Lord, whose will determines the norms of what is true. The characteristics as well as the forms in which truth finds expression are basically just correlations established by God in his absolute freedom to dispose. What things are, how they are perceived, and how they affect each other, including the so-called natural laws, are ultimately nothing but customary divine operations which God ordains anew at every moment. So the metaphysical and logical principles of human reason lose their universal validity. They are valid only insofar as it can be ascertained that God once again, at this moment, of his own free will, acts as he did before.

(2) This atomism extends to all domains of being and existence, and comprises all levels of the world and of human actions. It is the consequence of affirming the exclusive activity of God and negating all causality outside divine actions. Later theologians, such as al-Ghazzālī (1058–1111) and Rāzī (1149–1209/10), introduce a modified form of this rigid voluntarism by discerning an ultimate, rationally necessary connection between perception, argumentation and knowledge, so that, probably thanks to what the divine will has determined, it becomes possible to perceive a constant structure of things. However, with reference to man and his will, strict voluntarism cannot be superseded. Everything that takes place in the world is directly caused by the will of God. And if man is somehow to be granted a certain freedom, it is not on the level of causality, but only on the level of moral responsibility, based on appropriating and making one's own the deeds worked by God within man.

(3) God is the absolute Lord of what is good and of ethical values. His sovereign will ordains, according to his free will, what is to be considered as good and what as evil. For the orthodox school of the Ashʿariyya, the

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[12] Here I follow my own expositions on the subject: "Gottesbegriff im Streit von Theologie und Philosophie. Bemerkungen zum islamischen Voluntarismus", in: D. Papenfuß – J. Söring (eds.); *Transzendenz und Immanenz. Philosophie und Theologie in der veränderten Welt.* Stuttgart, 1977, pp. 169–178 (here: pp. 174 f.).

positive ordinances of God are the only norms applicable to determine what is good and what is evil.

(4) God is the Lord of fate and salvation. His will determines man's fate, course of life, and final destiny. Yet God is no stern despot. He is pre-eminently the one who turns towards human beings and accompanies their life in mercy and benevolence. Certainly, the will of God is free and his sovereign decisions cannot be challenged, but, as his own revelation testifies, his ordinances are a grace and a mercy to man.

4.3 Hermeneutical problems

Fixing the will of God in a verbally inspired text involves the danger that religion may lose its capacity to react flexibly and to perceive and take into consideration the changing circumstances of life. The word may be taken too literally and severed from its deep intention and its fundamental aim of promoting life by binding it to God.[13]

In addition, there is the danger of ideologizing the word of God and leaning towards totalitarianism as a result of ignoring history: one loses sight of the fact that assertions that are taken literally and even absolutized, often arise from prevailing circumstances and can in many aspects not be transferred to other situations. This danger is clearly evident among the Islamists, the fundamentalists of Islam.

5. The Qur'ān, the ultimate word of God

The Qur'ān claims to be the ultimate word of God, as compared with earlier Scriptures to which are ascribed only a preparatory character. Muḥammad is "the Seal of the Prophets" (33,40); his message is the guide in the final phase of prophecy and the Qur'ān, which he proclaims, is the final and ultimate declaration of God's will.

As the ultimate word of God, the Qur'ān operates as a corrective to the deviations of the earlier religions (cf. the theory of falsification and corruption of scripture: tahrīf).[14] With the Qur'ān the re-establishment of the divine revelation's true content takes place as well as the definition of God's

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[13] This is only one variant of the more comprehensive problems concerning the tension between tradition and progress, faithful maintenance and development, wording and intention, concrete solution and underlying concern, etc.

[14] In the Qur'ān the Jews (cf. 2,41.75.79.146.159.174; 3,71.78.187; 4,46; 5,14.16.44; 7,162) and also the Christians (cf. 5,15.119 f.) are reproached for the falsification of their re-

final order for the human community. Thus, with the Qur'ān the correction, perfection, surpassing and abolition of former religions is achieved.

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spective holy Scriptures. tahrīf, the Arabic term used here, means corruption, change, permutation, or removal from the right place and meaning. Among the Qur'ān commentators and Muslim theologians, there are two approaches to the interpretation of this term. On the one hand, there are those like aṭ-Ṭabarī (d. 923) and Rāzī (d. 1209/10), who understand the falsification in the sense that the Jews, for example, although they did not falsify or change the text, interpreted it wrongly and attributed a false meaning to it. Other authors, including Ibn Ḥazm of Cordoba (994–1064), who applied his interpretation systematically in criticizing the Old and New Testaments, understand the term in the sense of falsifying the text and changing the words and sentences (cf. 2,79; 3,78). – Contemporary Muslim authors now try to prove that the books of the Christian New Testament are not authentic Scriptures expressing the original, true revelation announced by Jesus Christ, but the work of various authors which contain a doctrine composed by themselves, and especially by Paul. Moreover, the binding religious doctrines of contemporary Christianity are more the concoctions of human councils than the authentic message of God.

On tahrīf and its interpretation in Islam see I. di Matteo, "Il 'tahrīf' od alterazione della Bibbia secondo i Musulmani", in Bessarione 38 (1922) 64–111. 223–260; id., "Le pretese contradizioni della S. Scrittura secondo Ibn Ḥazm", in Bessarione 39 (1923) 77–127; E. Fritsch, Islam und Christentum im Mittelalter. Breslau, 1930, pp. 54–74; A. Th. Khoury, Einführung in die Grundlagen des Islams. Altenberge, ³1993, pp. 82–84; id., Wer war Muḥammad?. Lebensgeschichte und prophetischer Anspruch (Herder Taschenbuch; 1719). Freiburg etc., 1990, pp. 74–76; A. Th. Khoury – L. Hagemann, Christentum und Christen im Denken zeitgenössischer Muslime (Religionswissenschaftliche Studien; 7). Altenberge, ²1993, pp. 61–126; A. Th. Khoury, Polémique byzantine contre l'Islam. Leiden, 1972, pp. 210–216.

Questions and Interventions

changes in divine
ordinances and
the unchange-
ability of God

WISSE   Does correcting or abrogating a certain Qur'ānic statement not mean calling the unchangeability of God into question? Would it not imply that God was correcting himself?

KHOURY   In the Qur'ān it is underlined several times that the will of God is unchangeable. The problem arising from the fact that, in spite of this, God changes his commands in the Qur'ān, is traditionally referred to in Islam as the issue of abrogation and annulment. The Qur'ān's answer to this question is twofold: one response is that in these cases there is in fact no essential change, but within the frame of what remains constant, God acts in consideration of man.

The other response, which is in fact the answer to the question, implies reference to the transcendence of God. He is the Lord of his revelation and it is not for man to question him about it. As for the statement 'his will is unchangeable', the question should also be raised of what the will referred to here actually is: does it mean those details which God repeatedly wills in every unique *hic et nunc* of history or does it refer to the general plan of God for man? For the will of God revealed itself not only through Muḥammad, but also through the other prophets, especially those who brought the Scriptures. So, although in the succession of the prophets God always affirmed the fundamental message which is the ultimate issue, a progression was also entailed in the legislation which God of course always adapts anew, until, when God's revelations ended at the death of Muḥammad, it was established once and for all.

As for the so-called contradictions in the Qur'ān, to which people frequently refer, the general answer is that there is no contradiction (cf. Sūra 4,82). If there seem to be contradictions, they concern commands which contain an improvement or an alternative to, not a contradiction of, that which preceded.

Very radical theologians would say, of course, that there are no changes at all; any such reference in the Qur'ān, is only hypothetical.

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BARTH   On the problem of hermeneutics, the following problems arise among others: if the Qur'ān understands itself to be a correction of the preceding revelations, those preceding revelations that are accessible should be read alongside it so that the correction can be recognized as such. This means that anyone who wants to see where the Qur'ān corrects the Old or the New Testament should be familiar with the Old and New Testaments. So how far does the reading of the Biblical scriptures play a real part in the exegesis of the Qur'ān? The possibility that the Qur'ānic corrections might apply to various religions would raise a variant on this theme. For example, it is interesting that the criticism against the attribution of a possible wife to the supreme deity need not refer primarily to Christianity, but may also refer to polytheism. Such a change of focus would certainly also result in a shift in understanding. How are such matters taken into consideration?

A second question is implied in the idea that a text intended to be heard can never be heard independently of the addressee. The listener is always implied and is constitutive for the reception of the text, even though nothing may change in the actual wording. How far can these hermeneutical considerations be effectively included in the exegesis of the Qur'ān? If it is not possible, one would be hindered from a full understanding.

Finally a question that is even more strongly related to our subject: what about the spirit that is communicated in and with the recitation of a text? If, according to Christian understanding, when we listen to the word of God, God actually approaches, it is in fact not only information that is imparted when we listen, but also an encounter that takes place, an encounter with God. How is God's actual speech linked with the presence of the text of the Qur'ān, that is not only God's speech which became a written text and, as it were, took a material form, but also God's speech as it is encountered today in mystical experience? Is there some sense of the difference between 'spirit' and 'letter'? Of course in this context the letter does not kill but gives life, but the difference has still somehow to be made between 'letter' and 'spirit'. Or is this question raised from too Christian a perspective?

the Qur'ān,
the Torah and
the Gospel

KHOURY   To understand the Qur'ān it is not necessary to draw upon the texts it supersedes and corrects. If scholars do so, that is their business, but the Qur'ān by itself tells us which direction to take, and that is enough.

Moreover, the Qur'ān says in several places that the Jews distorted or misunderstood the Torah; it says, for example, "there are those who displace words from their (right) places" (Sūra 4,46; cf. 2,75; 5,14.44). What this means is a matter of controversy among Muslims. It may mean, you have misunderstood these texts and applied them wrongly. But with the passage of time, another interpretation came to the fore: you have falsified

this text, so that what is found in every edition and passage of the Torah today is not the authentic text, and modern authors claim that the original text of the Torah was lost anyway. In any case, no proof is offered of what was the authentic original text.

So it follows that if there are differences and contradictions between the text of the Torah available today and the Qur'ān, then the authentic text is always the Qur'ānic version and not what is in the Torah. With the passage of time something similar happened with the Gospel. For instance, Sūra 4,155–159 says that the Jews wanted to kill Jesus, but in fact did not kill him, because a figure resembling him appeared to replace him, and so Muslims say that Jesus was not crucified, that he did not die on the Cross and therefore did not rise from the dead either. The texts of any holy Scripture must accord with the Qur'ān. The New Testament is a collection of reports and testimonies about Jesus rather than a record of his own words. It is therefore comparable with Ḥadīth. And when the New Testament text diverges from that of the Qur'ān, as with the Torah, it is the text of the Qur'ān that is final.

When the Qur'ān says that it confirms the Torah (Sūra 2,41.89.91; 4,47), the extent of this confirmation is understood to be that there is agreement and therefore also confirmation in the fundamental message, but not in every detail of the legal regulations. So the basic message of the Torah is still valid, but why should one read it there, if it can be found in its ultimate, authentic form in the Qur'ān? And the Law has basically to be considered as abrogated by the Qur'ān.

On the question of references to a woman and the divinity, they certainly initially concerned only the polytheists, but by extension they also apply to the Christians, insofar as they say that God has a child. Thus the Qur'ān says, addressing the Christians, that God certainly does not depend on either a child or a son and subsequently directs against the Christians the whole argument against the claim that God somehow has a child, which was originally directed against the polytheists. So, the argument implies a parallel.

Islamic scholars of the Old or the New Testaments? **WOLBERT** Have the criticisms that the Old and New Testaments have been falsified ever been checked closely by Muslim scholars, and is there any statement of where, more precisely, one finds these falsifications in the Old and New Testaments? Is there a Muslim Old or New Testament scholar, just as there are certainly Jewish New Testament scholars?

SCHIMMEL Of course one might think so. Historically, especially in the Middle Ages, there were certainly many religious dialogues during which such questions were discussed; some statements from the New and Old Testaments were also dealt with in the books on the *milal wa-niḥal* (the nations and the sects), of which we have quite a number dating from the 9th to the 12th centuries. But no really comprehensive studies were ever made, except perhaps in very few cases; in general, knowledge was relatively vague and on the Muslim side no philological investigation of the Old and New Testaments was carried out. However, one may well imagine that there should be a Muslim Old Testament or New Testament scholar, who would delight in applying the philological-critical method.

interpretation of what is heard in the mind of the hearer? **KHOURY** With regard to listening to the Qur'ān and the co-constitutive importance of the subjective reception of what was heard for its understanding, one has to proceed from the fact that generally Muslims listen to rather than read the word of the Qur'ān. At this reading out or reciting of the Qur'ān, the listener is present, but not as someone who participates in formulating and actively applying the word, so that a hermeneutic could develop. The focus is rather on the listener's simply accepting the word of God and obeying it. As soon as he has realized what God says, then the next step is to put it into practice, without reflecting much on how it could be applied to today's situation, or the ways in which this word could be integrated anew into our modern understanding.

BARTH This then becomes largely a matter of development which might lead to a more conscious acceptance, because in fact everyone comes with his own experience and his own world of thought.

KHOURY Although this is rooted in the legal tradition of Islam, it is not altogether generally accepted. There are individual scholars who are trying to develop a hermeneutic based on this idea, for example Fazlur Rahman, to whom Mrs. Wielandt has already referred. If we, as Christians, are persuaded that the word of God cannot be understood statically, but rather that for us the development of its dynamic must be constantly renewed and that this is not possible without hermeneutics, then when we seek to live our faith we must orient ourselves accordingly and also introduce this into dialogue with Muslims, not only in theory, but also by means of concrete examples.

on the transferability of time-conditioned assertions There is no doubt that within Islam there are important initiatives taking place concerning this question of how one should proceed when applying a text that was composed in one period to a different historical context when it will in some way be affected by the prevailing cir-

cumstances. On this point, the Islamic tradition says first of all that the Qur'ān sets out absolute standards for people only in form of guidelines and principles which were definitely valid for a certain period in time, but which are also not conditioned by historical circumstance, since they are by nature principles and as such are transferable from one period to another.

the 'occasions of revelation' But the problem acquires a specific relevance, if in certain cases one has to find concrete solutions developed in response to the circumstances of life encountered at a particular period in time. This is the context of the attempts Muslims have made, with great astuteness and imagination, to identify the *asbāb an-nuzūl* (the occasions of the revelation) for every text; if there are contradictory propositions, it is an indication that it has not been possible in every case to outline the occasions of the revelation with the same degree of certainty. In general, however, it is maintained that it is not the occasion that is important, but the text, i. e., what God in principle fixed in the Qur'ān on a certain occasion and which is to be valid for future generations. This means that God used this or that occasion, in a historical context, to ordain certain rules which were nevertheless valid more generally.

the intentions of revelation However, there are experts on hermeneutics in Islam, who think that it is still possible to adapt the concrete solutions of former times to new situations; that the Qur'ānic texts do not only depend on the circumstances prevailing at the time of their composition but also on the subject matter, so that a hermeneutical exegesis has to be undertaken in order to find out, by examining the reasons why a certain decision was taken in the past, what was the intention and the original concern of the message of a particular Qur'ānic text so as to discover how to fulfil the intention of the Qur'ān today in the changed circumstances of our time.

freedom for new solutions If a statement made by Muḥammad is handed down, he should not be asked to apply it in matters about which he did not consider himself to be competent and about which his questioners were perhaps more competent.[1] Remarkably, the Qur'ān speaks similarly about God: "O ye who believe! Ask not questions about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble." (Sūra 5,104).

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[1] The relevant Ḥadīth is to be found in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, *bi-sharḥ an-Nawawī*. part 14. Cairo, s. a., pp.117 f., in the chapter on, "The duty to fulfil what he said concerning the religious law without what he mentioned about the affairs of this world"; also mentioned in: Manṣūr ʿAlī Nāṣif, *at-Tadj al-djāmiʿ li l-uṣūl fī-aḥādīth ar-rasūl*. vol. 3. Beirut, 1981, p. 276.

This certainly means that the Qur'ān exhorts people to use the liberty God grants them and not allow themselves to be driven by the desire for absolute certainty in the expectation that God will tell them what he wills in every specific detail. Perhaps one may see this as a Qur'ānic encouragement to humans to exercise the freedom God wants to grant them and not shirk the responsibility of giving new answers to new questions.

And a question to Christians is perhaps also implied of whether the scriptural canon in Christianity is complete in such a way that there is no room to consider the Qur'ān or other scriptures. According to Islam there is absolutely no possibility after the Qur'ān of further canonical texts being revealed. If one looks at the 'magisterium Ecclesiae', the teaching authority of the Church, and the history of dogma, the same attitude seems to exist in practice in Christianity.

the possibility of a 'magical' misunderstanding of the word of God The concept of a 'sacramentality' of the word of God could mean that man simply submits to the word of God expecting that this will automatically have some effect. But does God want man merely to submit passively to his word or does he not rather want man to listen and obey? Thus the Qur'ān speaks of a mandate given to man (cf. Sūra 2,285; 4,46). They shall listen, and when they have understood what God wants from them, they shall obey. And Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855), the founder of the Ḥanbalī school of law, does not hold the opinion that the Qur'ān should merely be recited; rather he looks for a key to understanding the Qur'ān and finds it in the Ḥadīth, i. e., in the additional explanation of Qur'ānic statements found in the tradition of the Prophet.

hermeneutics and the search for a 'new' identity In the present situation of Islam, the position of hermeneutics is rather difficult – not among intellectuals, but among religious leaders, whose political interest deters them from asking very deeply how Islam, while maintaining its religious identity, can show that it is genuinely capable of adapting to the changed conditions of modern times and how far a 'new Islam' in this sense is possible. Today Muslims tend to be primarily concerned with rediscovering their identity and declaring that they have clear knowledge of it in the Qur'ān, the tradition and the *sharīʿa*. And indeed people have the right to search for their identity wherever they find it best.

In the interest of finding a way forward together to a future when all religious communities will prosper side by side, we may hope too for new perspectives, which will then also be brought to bear in the domain of

political decisions. Is Islam really solely dependent for its identity on the traditional forms of the past or does it not also have the possibility, on the basis of the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth and its legal tradition, of building bridges towards others, which are not forced upon Islam from the outside, but arise from its own self-definition? Much in the Islamic tradition and literature speaks in favour of this, and this is good news; for there can only be acceptance of something new where people have the secure impression that 'what is new' is emerging from their own potentialities, often initiated and encouraged, of course, by exchange with other people.

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inlibration and incarnation of the word of God

WOLBERT There is obviously a certain analogy between the way in which the word of God, in the faith of Islam, became a book in the Qur'ān and, according to the faith of the Christians, a human being in Jesus. Is it possible that the Islamic teaching was in some way influenced by the Christian?

SCHIMMEL According to the opinion currently held by Orientalists, the assumption is that in the dispute which took place between 800 and 847 over whether the Qur'ān is eternal and uncreated or created, christological controversies were not without a certain influence. One may not be able to say more precisely where and how this influence operated, but the positions are comparable to such a degree that it has always been suggested that some of the same arguments as those used by the Byzantine Church were employed in the Islamic controversy. Perhaps the understanding of revelation in both traditions may also be a factor and, as has already often been said, the ideas of inlibration and incarnation of the word of God would naturally raise the same problems.

BSTEH A. Is this concept of 'inlibration' accepted by the Muslims?

SCHIMMEL The term itself was coined by Harry Wolfson, a Harvard philosopher, in the 1970s, and immediately found acceptance by a great many Orientalists. Since the Qur'ān is considered to be the visible word of God, this term seems to be absolutely acceptable for Muslims.

KAHLERT Is this historically suggestive parallelism between the problems in christology and in the understanding of the nature of the Qur'ān an approach readily accepted by the Muslims?

SCHIMMEL That depends on which Muslims you refer to. Modernists would certainly agree. For the traditional Muslim believer, the 'average' Muslim, the nature of the Qur'ān is so much taken for granted that it is hardly a

subject to be discussed. Nevertheless, over recent decades many attempts have been made by Muslims to speak of the nature of the Qur'ān and the Qur'ānic message in language that is understandable to modern man, although it is also quite characteristic that Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), who supported the idea of the living Sunna and the living interpretation of the Qur'ān and who may be thought of as one of the best theologians of Islam in recent times, wrote in his book *Islam* (London, 1964), that one must not in any way question that the words of the Qur'ān, as they are, were literally inspired by God. So he refuses to acknowledge that the revelation may convey the meaning of what God wants to say to humankind without being a text received word for word.

book of revelation and compendium of Islamic civilization

This is a very interesting and perhaps also a typical Muslim position: on the one hand he insists on literalness, but on the other hand he allows and even demands that these revealed words be interpreted according to our understanding and need; and this also brings us to what Mr. Khoury said: that finding out how individual revelational statements should be understood is a hermeneutical question. In fact, the many levels of Qur'ānic text have been a major preoccupation of Muslims over the course of the last thirteen centuries.

Here something deserves to be emphasized which Mr. Khoury has already referred to and about which Louis Massignon once very aptly said: for Muslims the Qur'ān is the "lexicon of weltanschauung". From it everything really can be deduced, not only through the literal interpretation of the text, but also indirectly through the central importance given to the Qur'ān in the life of the Muslim religious community. Thus, when Islam was spreading among non-Arabs, from the beginning it produced the science of grammar and lexicography, on the one hand to make clear to non-Arabic-speakers what all these Arabic words and expressions meant, which led to the whole development of Arabic grammar and lexicography, and, on the other, to explain the many historical data and allusions in the Qur'ān, which then brought about Islamic historiography.

Because many holy sites and places are mentioned in the Qur'ān, something similar applies to geography, with the additional fact that the direction of prayer from every new place had to be precisely defined. This in turn led to the development of new mathematical methods. And so piece by piece, the whole scheme of the sciences can be linked with the Qur'ān and can be considered as based on it, because every discipline in its way

contributed something towards the interpretation of certain data. This is why the Qur'ān is so very central, not only as the book of law, but also, to use the words of Massignon again, as the textbook and the key for the weltanschauung as a whole. It does not only have the function of a revealed book: it is the foundation of the whole Islamic civilization.

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sacramental aspects in the understanding of the Qur'ān

BSTEH P. In the endeavour to do justice to the revelational character of the holy Scripture in the Christian context, we shall repeatedly have to take into consideration the lasting importance of and tension between the two great schools of Antioch and Alexandria. The issue here is, on the one hand, the actual text of the Scripture, without which we have no access to the multiple meanings of the revelation, and, on the other, the sacramental dimension of the revealed word. In this respect, it is impossible to disregard the special context in human life given to the revealed word by its inclusion in the public worship of the community. This last function, that of forming the community and motivating them to dedicate themselves to God, will also be of essential importance for the right understanding of the Qur'ān, and the awareness of what happens if the Qur'ān is removed from this communal context into the sphere of the individual reader's insight and his subjective criteria.

SCHIMMEL This reference to the sacramental character of the Qur'ān and the sacramental possibilities inherent in it is very welcome. The only book on Islam in which I have come across this expression – it is one of the most beautiful and commendable books – is *Muslim Devotions* (London, 1960) by Constance E. Padwick, a practising Anglican theologian. This scholarly study, the first and so far the only such book on the Muslim life of prayer, draws attention in a competent and praiseworthy manner to the fact that recitation has a sacramental character because through it the person participates directly in the word of God. As for proclaiming the word in the community, the situation is different from that in Christianity: the short Friday sermons, which are of course based on the Qur'ān, are not the most important thing. What is much more important is that its Sūras, especially the short Sūras, have to be recited by every Muslim in the prayers of the community and in his/her personal prayer. This means that the individual Muslim, from his/her childhood onwards, is faced with reciting the words of the Qur'ān, mostly the short Sūras at the end of the Qur'ān, ideally five times a day, and in this way is, as it were, allowing him/herself be penetrated by their spirit

and content. So in the sermon the Qur'ānic proclamation actually plays a minor role compared with that of the Gospel in the Christian sermon. This is a difference, but it also helps the Qur'ān, especially the short Sūras, to form very much a part of the general knowledge of the believers.

the reputation of those who recite the Qur'ān

Those who are fortunate enough to learn the Qur'ān by heart enjoy a special reputation, so there is always an interest in having gifted boys and girls trained as *ḥuffāẓ*, memorizers of the whole Qur'ān. They begin with the last, short Sūras and progress, passage by passage, to the preceding ones. In this way, by the age of 12 to 14 years, many children from pious families know the Qur'ān by heart and can recite it on any ritual occasion, and they are honoured accordingly in the community. Even if the recitation of the Qur'ān is the only thing they ever learn, it confers on them a *baraka*, a charismatic quality, a blessing, and special respect will always be paid to the *ḥāfiẓ*. In southern India there is a custom that at the age of four years, four months, and four days a child becomes what in Urdu is called *basmala kā dūlham*, 'bridegroom of the formula *bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm'*. This brings us to something very important, which is the almost magical character of the Qur'ānic word. During this *bismillāh*-ceremony, the formula: "in the Name of God" is written on a wooden board, in saffron, if possible, not in ink, because it should be something that tastes good, and then the boy or girl has to lick the words "in the Name of God" in order to absorb the *baraka*, the blessing, of these words. From then on, the boy or girl begins to study the Qur'ān.

on the blessing emanating from the Qur'ānic verses

This is an aspect of the Qur'ān that is very important in the life of Muslims: the use of certain verses as talismans or amulets. Especially valued in this context are the Throne Verse (Sūra 2,255), the profession of Oneness (Sūra 112) and the Opening Sūra, al-Fātiḥa. This is found everywhere used as an amulet or blessing. Just as, in a Christian home, we have a picture of Christ or the Madonna or a cross, a Muslim will have Qur'ānic verses on the wall, simply to protect the house and to confer blessings to it. This capacity of the Qur'ān to confer blessings, which is recognized in both popular and more sophisticated devotional circles, should be taken very seriously. Clifford Geertz once called the Qur'ān a "*baraka*-radiating fetish" which may be an ugly expression, but it should be mentioned here, because it shows the importance for the religious life which many anthropologists attribute to the Qur'ān.

the 'iconic quality' of the Qur'ān

We encounter Qur'ānic texts in every life situation, even on the shirts of warriors, and – which is another important aspect – as the uncreated word of God, it has to be written as beautifully as possible. So one may say without exaggeration that Islamic calligraphy, the central art of Islam, developed from the necessity to write the word of God as beautifully and impressively as possible. Martin Lings once said of the great early Qur'āns that they have an "iconic quality": just as Christian icons allow the very face of Christ to shine through, so in a similar way, a great, beautiful copy of the Qur'ān, in wonderfully measured letters written on parchment, allows the one who looks on it to see the mystery of the divine word. When we speak about the parallelism between inlibration and incarnation, all these factors have to be taken into consideration.

For the Muslim, the Qur'ān really does have the quality of a divine revelation and a respectful attitude towards it is also expressed by people only being allowed to touch and recite it in a state of ritual purity. So the Qur'ān's importance is not only theoretical and theological. It plays a very important role beyond that in the life of all Muslims, from very simple people who do not know exactly what is written in it and for whom it is an amulet, to mystics for whom it is the most important source of all their mystical interpretations.

sacrament and magic

BSTEH A. A kind of magic in day-to-day life exists whenever man takes possession of what is holy, particularly the holy word, in order to use it for his own or another's benefit or harm. But apart from this kind of exploitation, in Islam someone can submit himself, his property, his whole life to the word of God – whether he writes a word of the Qur'ān on the walls of his house or on his shirt, when he goes to war to protect the *umma:* in this way he submits his very physical life to this word and to the blessing that emanates from it wherever it is accepted in good faith. Is not the word written, after all, not for its own sake, but for the sake of man so that it may become operative in his life?

So the sacramental operation of the word seems to be able to take place most intensely when the believer writes the word of God in his own heart, and in so doing becomes not only the bearer of that word, but somehow quite genuinely the word itself. Is it not in this way that the inward potential of the revealed word is fulfilled? Does it not achieve the goal for which it was sent wherever it lives in the human heart, through personal faith,

and makes its imprint there? Could this not be spoken of as a kind of calligraphy, indeed even its deepest and most beautiful form?

SCHIMMEL We could see in this a Ṣūfī dimension in the understanding of the Qur'ānic word, which expresses what Père Nwyia called *'coranisation de la mémoire'*, where man's whole memory, man as a whole, is permeated by the Qur'ānic words to the extent that he truly lives from them and in them, and his whole life is simply submitted to them.

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outward form and eternal content

ELSAS Another question addressed to our own Christian understanding of the holy Scripture is the relation we have already referred to between the outward Arabic text that exists in form of the Book, on the one hand, and what is to be communicated to man from the eternal content that transcends time, the "Mother of the Book", on the other.

SCHIMMEL The relation between *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin,* the outward and the inward meaning, raises the question of mystical interpretation, which also plays a very important role here. The Qur'ān says that God is "the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent" (Sūra 57,3). So it was very easy for the mystics not only to recognize the outward meaning of the words of the Qur'ān, but also to see them as a sign indicating and guiding towards a deeper dimension of the word. As Mr. Khoury said already in his exposition of the different positions of orthodox Islam concerning this question, the word, though it appeared in a human language, nevertheless contains much deeper dimensions which remain to be discovered, and there is a saying attributed to Muḥammad that the Qur'ān has seven levels of meaning. From the very beginning, the mystics tried in their meditation to penetrate the meaning of the word more and more deeply.

In Arabic there is even more potential for this than in other languages, because every Arabic root can have a host of meanings. Bearing in mind this characteristic of the Arabic language and knowing that the roots of words very often have not only very different, but sometimes even contradictory meanings, makes it relatively easy to find in even the simplest word meanings that lead in very different directions. So it is said of a 9th century mystic that he found seven thousand interpretations for every verse of the Qur'ān. Although this may be a little exaggerated, it does show what was considered possible.

lines of Qur'ānic interpretation

It is interesting that the mystics never abandoned the textual dimension of the Qur'ān. They always accepted that what we read, what is outward, is absolutely necessary, that it is, as it were, the protective wrapping, the bark of the tree. However, the inward meaning of the word has to be fathomed more and more deeply by constant meditation on the word. There are only a few sects, for example, the Ismāʿīlīs, who then went as far as attributing hardly any meaning to the outward text. Reading Goldziher's book *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*[2] or Gätje's book *The Qur'ān and its Exegesis*[3], one sees how each theological school understood certain passages of the Qur'ān differently. Thus the Shīʿīs have an interpretation quite their own, by which they find in the Qur'ān very many allusions to ʿAlī and the role of the Prophet's family. It is also interesting to read in one of the great autobiographical poems of the Ismāʿīlī Nāṣir-i Khusrau (died about 1080), written in approximately 1060, how he had gone astray and suddenly read in the Qur'ān that there was a pact in which "the hand of God was above their hands"; then it became clear to him that the line of descent from Muḥammad, as held by the Shīʿa, is to be deduced from the Qur'ān – and so he became an ardent Ismāʿīlī.

The Shīʿī interpretation of the Qur'ān includes some particularly strange ways of finding texts in support of ʿAlī. The mystics also had their interpretations, and one could say that the history of the Qur'ān's exegesis, if we look at the inner meanings which have been attributed to the outward words, in fact mirrors the whole theology and history of Islam. To this day one can find interpretations of the Qur'ān which, while acknowledging the literal meaning, still give every single word an additional meaning, and for the mystics the whole structure of the Qur'ān has a wonderful harmony. Thus Ibn ʿArabī says that the Qur'ān, though it looks incoherent and makes one think the topics jump from one to the other – yet for someone who really has an insight into the operation of the divine spirit, all this connects to become a wonderful, absolutely harmonious carpet, a complete and perfect entity of which one must not change a single word or a single vowel. This remark is all the more important precisely because it was made by Ibn ʿArabī, who, as a great mystic and theosophist, attaches great importance to the inward interpretation of the Qur'ān. But even he made no changes whatsoever to the verbal content of the text and the outward shape of the words. On the contrary, for him this was a sign that here what is outward encloses and reflects what is inward, and is absolutely necessary for it. This also represents a very remarkable difference between the recognized mystics and some Shīʿī sects, which simply interpret away the outward meaning.

an example of mystical interpretation

An example of a mystical interpretation comes from a late 16th century mystic from Sind, in southern Pakistan: Sūra 81,8 f., where the Judgement is described, says: "When the female (infant), buried alive, is questioned – for what crime she was killed" (it was after all a pre-Islamic custom that girls were buried alive when there were too many children, a custom Islam totally abolished). The interpretation of this mystic is that the "female (infant) buried alive" is the breath coming out of man without the name of God being uttered, without the memory of God being included in it. So every breath man takes without thinking of God and without binding himself to him is like an innocent infant being killed. This is a very beautiful, typically mystical interpretation, because it shows how the mystic can again and again discover a deeper meaning even in the most prosaic texts. If we look at Islamic poetry – for our purpose the topic should include not only theology, but also the enormous complex body of mystical poetry – we really could say that it is an interpretation of the Qur'ān rendered in a very unusual way.

'coranisation de la mémoire'

ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān Djāmī (d. 1492 in Herat, Afghanistan) calls Rūmī's great mystical textbook, the *Mathnawī*, the Qur'ān in the Persian language. This has frequently been taken as a kind exaggeration, but, strangely enough, even very worldly things in the *Mathnawī* can be traced back to the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth, and the longer one studies it, the more one sees that the mystics, and even profane poets too, felt bound to the Qur'ān to such an extent that, often inexplicably to us, they somehow connect everything they say with the Qur'ān – which again brings very vividly to mind the expression "coranisation de la mémoire". This powerful connection with the Qur'ān, which becomes clearer to one's mind the longer one works in the field of Islamic studies, also seems to be very important for the understanding of later literature.

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[2] Leiden, 1920; 2nd reprint. Leiden, 1970.
[3] Trans. and ed. by A. T. Welch. Oxford, 1997.

calligraphy and modern print technology

BSTEH P. In contrast to the sometimes wondrous beauty of early manuscripts of the Qur'ān, modern printed works can seem ugly. Is there a modern art of calligraphy and poetry?

printing of the Qur'ān?

SCHIMMEL First of all, since the introduction of the printing press (in Turkey this was at the beginning of the 18th century), there has been a great dilemma as to whether it is acceptable to print the Qur'ān at all. An extensive theological discussion developed about this, which is still on-going with regard to editions of the Qur'ān produced in printing houses run by 'unbelievers', where the possibility could not be excluded that mistakes may make their way into the text. In Turkey and some areas of Pakistan, the problem is often solved by photocopying the manuscript of a great calligrapher. In Turkey it is mostly Ḥāfiẓ Osman, who died in 1699. In this way the work also has an aesthetic appeal.

modern Islamic calligraphy

Many Muslim painters are experimenting in the field of modern art, and it is interesting to observe that even in countries where the Latin alphabet has been introduced in recent years, such as Turkey and Malaysia, calligraphy still continues to play a central role. Thus, for instance in Morocco, the Art School of Casablanca has developed very remarkable modern forms. One finds in practically every Islamic country some master-calligraphers who do not only maintain the tradition, but also develop it. An especially good example is Ahmad Moustafa in London, an Egyptian, whose manuscripts in Arabic cursive script are wonderful. He has also published a number of books, making use of modern techniques, such as silk-screen printing and computerized scripts, thereby creating new forms. It is fascinating to see what he achieves by linking classical calligraphy with modern techniques. In Paris there is Hassan Massoudy who has published a very beautiful book on *Calligraphie arabe vivante*[1], and last year also one of his own extremely courageous calligrams which are always based on the Qur'ān or on the tradition, and, as pictures, are uniquely beautiful. In Malaysia too, as well as in India and Pakistan, interesting attempts are being made. Calligraphy really is the art in which Muslims excel. The dilemma of modern artists is often that they want to be modern and so they often imitate rather bad

[1] Hassan Massoudy, *Calligraphie arabe vivante*. Avec la collaboration de Isabelle Nitzer. Paris, 1981.

19th or 20th century examples. But it is helpful that in calligraphy there is a tradition to refer to even if misshapen works appear.

Islamic literature and poetry

With literature, it is somewhat more difficult: novels have no place in classical Islamic writings; they are an invention of the 19th century. Before then there were long epics, fairytale-like narratives, stories about the campaigns of the Prophet, *maghāzī*, sagas, and legends. But the novel in the Western sense does not appear before the second half of the 19th century, at first based on translations, mostly from French, later also from British, and now from American works. There was very little inspiration from the German side, because there was no German colonial power that might influence literature, and because most Muslims either went to Paris or were from India and influenced by English culture. So the novel developed relatively late, as did the short story.

In poetry the traditional forms have mostly been abandoned. This started in Turkey and India at the end of the 19th century, where, instead of the *ghazal* or the long *qaṣīda*, poems in strophes appear and, at the beginning of the 20th century, especially in Turkey a literature develops which actually feels very European. The same is true in India. Then in the 1930s more modern movements emerged; there were abrupt changes, and one could say that, from approximately the end of World War II onwards, the rupture with the tradition has become extraordinarily distinct. In Arabic it is above all Nāzik al-Malā'ika, who first consciously moves away from the classical form and creates a new lyrical poetry, some of which is very powerful. In Turkey, the literary forms are being more or less dissolved and everyday language is fully present even in literature. The same applies in Egypt, India and Iran. Female poets are also making decisive contributions everywhere in the current development towards modernization. Practically everywhere the various contemporary literary genres are to be found and anything goes.

modern Arabic and the language of the Qur'ān

WOLBERT Do people who speak modern Arabic have difficulty in understanding the Qur'ān? And can there also be misunderstandings, since not only does language continue to develop as a whole, but also the meaning of individual words changes, and there are certainly also linguistic differences between the various regions of the Arabic-speaking world?

SCHIMMEL Every Arab today can understand the language of the Qur'ān if he makes an effort, but he cannot appreciate all its finer points; this may give rise to problems of interpretation, especially in the case of changes of mean-

ing (the word *qahwa* for instance, which does not occur in the Qur'ān and which in the classical period meant 'wine', today means coffee).

Nevertheless the problem is not major because very many people learn the Qur'ān by heart, or at least some Sūras from it that are used in prayer, and so they know what the contents are, without being able to understand their complete meaning word by word. For example, they may take Sūra 112 or 105 simply as signs with an inherent sacred energy. So for the 'average' Muslim and also for the modern Arab, there is hardly a need to think about the literal meaning of this or that word. The danger implied in learning the Qur'ān by heart without understanding its real meaning is of course not to be welcomed. This is why every meeting in Pakistan starts with a short recitation of the Qur'ān very beautifully read in Arabic and this is followed by a translation in Urdu so that people understand what they have heard.

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the Qur'ān – and the law of creation inscribed in the heart

BSTEH P. What is the relation between the word of the Qur'ān and the original writing of the divine law in the creation and in every human being? Is the Qur'ān to be found in the Muslim concept of eschatology, and will it exist for ever?

SCHIMMEL In answer to the first question: Islam indeed states that every human being is born with a natural disposition, *'alā fiṭratin*, which is initially Muslim, and only later, through the influence of the environment (as we would say today) and his parents is he oriented towards a certain way of faith and life. That is to say, the Qur'ān is in fact the law that was given to humanity in primeval times, especially in the assertions that God is the Lord and has power over creation. This is why the word *dhikr*, recollection, is suggested, which the Qur'ān also uses as a description of itself, probably referring to the fact that the Qur'ān reminds man of what was given to him from time immemorial.

Qur'ān and eschatology

As for the second question, which is very interesting, one could imagine that a Muslim theologian would have no difficulty in answering it positively. The Qur'ān, as the word of God, will, of course, remain: as it has existed from time immemorial, so it has also to be conceived of as infinitely eternal. Whether there is a literature dealing with this in greater detail is a question which perhaps Mr. Khoury can answer. There are ideas of a somewhat popular kind, namely that the Qur'ān, that is the copy of the Qur'ān that someone has read in his lifetime, will be personified, and appear on the Day of Judgement and bear witness that the person about to be judged did or did not read it. This is, of course, a beautiful mythological idea. But what will really happen to the Qur'ān in eternity? Will it be recited in paradise – where the believers greet each other saying, "Peace" and always bear God in mind?

KHOURY As in life, so also at the end of time the Qur'ān acts as the measure and standard for judging people. If the Qur'ān is God's right guidance, it is the standard for judging people's works of faith. But it is not the Qur'ān that is the judge on Judgement Day. God alone is the Judge. On Judgement Day, it is only what God himself wants to say to people about their faith and their works that will decide everything. So at the end of time the Qur'ān does not seem to play a direct role – unless something about this may perhaps be found in mystical circles, in the remote speculations of some mystics.

BSTEH P. Referring once again to the relation between the Qur'ān as the literal word of God and the Qur'ān as the word originally inscribed in the soul of the human creature: when the literal, written word of God resounds within man, in the individual and in the community, does the original word of God rooted in the creature take precedence over the former (written) one, and if so, is it possible to apply this primeval word as the source for a hermeneutical interpretation of the secondary word, the Qur'ān?

priority of the textually formulated word of God

KHOURY The possibility of taking the original, inward dimension of the word of God as a measure for the word formulated textually in the Qur'ān is a very beautiful Christian idea: can one subject the Qur'ānic word to the control of the word of God originally inscribed in the creature? In Islam, however, things seem to be seen quite differently. Priority is not given to what I have within my soul, this primeval readiness to open up towards the word of God. Rather, priority is given to the word spoken by God. Only in that word I can perceive what God really wants; the other 'word' is still unformed and may be seen only as a potential for receiving the word of God. What is rooted in the heart of man – which the Qur'ān calls natural religion, *dīn al-fiṭra* – are not the teachings of God on specific questions or the detailed interpretation of his message, but rather the innate ability and also the duty to acknowledge His uniqueness and profess monotheism, and secondly the human duty to worship God alone. This is rooted in man's life through creation. However, God did not plant in our hearts spe-

cific paths, values and laws, so that we could know them all on our own. For that we still have to rely on the particular revelation of God. A proof of this is the fact that God, at different times, changed the specific laws. In their intention, the specific laws are in complete accord with the innate nature of man. But that nature does not provide us with an explicit criterion by which we may test and alter the specific (positive) revelation.

In this view, it is in God's specific statements and his explicit revelation that we have to find the basis that enables us to undertake a particular development in our life, and we should not refer for this to the innate nature of man. At any rate, that is the idea of the Ash'arīs. Among the Mu'tazila, there is something like natural law, but among the Ash'arīs it is rather voluntarism that is underlined; that is to say, we can only understand the meaning of our innate intuitions if we search for detailed expressions of them in the explicit revelation of God. In other words: our human reason is not a second authority beside the explicit revelation of God; it is only a tool that can help us to discover, explore and assert what God has expressly said in his explicit revelation. However, if and when there are points of reference within the explicit revelation that grant us more freedom, to that extent we can and should seek to progress by means of our own reason.

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the Muslim and his Qur'ān

OTT   As Christians we appeal to people, when they encounter the Bible, to take into consideration its human context, what is typically human in its chronology and the historical specificity and limitation of its horizon. We perceive the human factors, the historical scenario, the context and the circumstances. We take account of the time in which Jesus lived, the personality of the prophets, the beauty of the wisdom literature, etc., and in those things we search for the word of God and the offer to receive his guidance. It seems to me that if we, as Christians, read the Qur'ān, we might experience something similar and take account of the historical, local and human context. But for the Muslim, it must all be quite different: although something is said and developed in a historical context, one basically knows that God himself, the Inaccessible, says this and that; there is no question that it is the utterly Transcendent who is speaking. So an element which we Christians see in the Qur'ān is non-existent for the Muslim and does that not make this point in the discussion somewhat theoretical? Compared with our experience of the Bible, how does the Muslim experience his Qur'ān?

different approaches towards the Qur'ān

KHOURY   It is very hard to say 'the Muslim'. There are various kinds of Muslim believers, who have different approaches towards the Qur'ān. The common man, who is not learned or a theologian, who may very often perhaps be illiterate, experiences the Qur'ān through its recitation. For him this is the sublime language of God which wants to communicate something and he somehow allows himself to be elevated into this world. Nevertheless, for him the Qur'ān is not the source of direct guidance for his life because the precepts of the Qur'ān which need no further interpretation have already entered into the so-called *sharī'a* and the rule of life which a Muslim of course knows and lives in his community.

So the common man searches in the Qur'ān less for guidelines or norms for his actions and more for spiritual nourishment to strengthen his piety or some consolation in the various situations of his life. This has brought about the interesting, wide-spread phenomenon which Louis Gardet is known to have called a culture of 'illiterate humanism'.

However, when it is a matter of theological reflection and the search for legal norms, things are different: there is analysis and not just a statement of how God can be experienced. This may not be a mystical endeavour exactly, but there is a different kind of search for the truth within the Qur'ān. It is rather a search for the background of this human dimension. The historical dimension is also noted, but no great importance is attributed to it, since the Qur'ān does not present it in great detail. This is also the reason for the arbitrariness of the data given by commentators and authorities on what is the actual human background of one statement or another.

the language of the Qur'ān

Even more importantly it is the language and the fascination of this language and the world of ideas of the Qur'ān, that impresses and holds the believer. The Muslim is persuaded that it is a sign of God's mercy that he clothes his word in this way – in a language that is somehow accessible to us, even though it is the sublime word of the sublime God. It is essential to share at least once with the community in experiencing and listening to a beautiful recitation of the Qur'ān – a rightly meditated recitation of the Qur'ān definitely does not consist of merely reading out of the text, but is like chewing and tasting the word of God, so that it may be rightly received – and seeing how the whole community reacts enthusiastically and spontaneously calls out the name of Allāh in the mosque and the profession of faith that God

is One. The word of God is then vividly and quite differently alive and communicating.

what matters is the content

It may be appropriate to refer here to Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905): in the Manār commentary on the Qur'ān he and his pupil Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), often express anger about the amount of information concerning the background of the Qur'ān that commentators give, and he asks why people should know all this? The information is diverse and often contradictory and he says that in the end the data are so arbitrary that they do not contribute towards a better understanding of the Qur'ān. It is in its own formulations that the Qur'ān tells us what we need as guidance for our life, and if no background information is given, we should not try to find a background for every word.

In this view, for Islam the content is inherent in the formulated text of the word of God and the question of historical background does not seem relevant. In these specific words God told us what he wants from us and that should suffice. If we indulge too much in hermeneutics, it might happen that the word is not present any more. This is the great concern of many Muslims.

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is God the interpreter of the Qur'ān?

ELSAS Does the Islamic tradition teach that in fact only God can interpret his word in the Qur'ān, just as we in Christianity conceive of the Holy Spirit as the one who guides us towards a right understanding? In Islam, is one guided by the Prophet's Sunna or the light of Muḥammad, or is it mystical paths that allow the divine meaning of the Qur'ānic revelation to be discovered?

interpretation even through personal inspiration

SCHIMMEL The question of guidance through the prophetic tradition is like the question of how far the Hadīth and Sunna really help in interpreting the Qur'ān. But it is indeed possible that interpretation comes about through the reader's or the student's personal inspiration, that the light of the Qur'ān slowly shines through the various veils, becoming brighter and brighter, so that it is in the light of God, as it were, that man is guided towards a right understanding, as most mystics would put it.

For the average Muslim, what God ordained becomes of course utterly clear by means of the Qur'ān, and since one is aware of the fact that He is *al-ḥaqq*, Reality, Justice and Mercy, with the help of the 99 most beautiful names of God the Muslim tries again and again to grasp other levels of the

Qur'ān. With the help of these names, which are revealed in the Qur'ān, it becomes easier for him to understand the Scripture, if he does not want to rely only on the authority of the Prophet's Sunna. There are numerous mystics who persevered in finding the right way through direct inspiration – as it says in Qur'ān 18,65: "[...] whom We had taught knowledge from Our own Presence", namely from God. The mystic always knows that he cannot attain the essence of God, but he also knows that he can eventually attain a certain level up to the 'deus revelatus', if he reads the Qur'ān and addresses God by the names he finds there. But the ultimate mystery always remains open, just like the mystery of the primeval and eternal revelation, the *logos*, the "Mother of the Book", or whatever we may call it.

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on the dignity of the Qur'ān

KHOURY One cannot adore the word of God. One gives honour to the word and one has to recite it with attention, but God alone can be adored. And the way people deal with the Qur'ān is evidence that they stand in awe of the word of God.

SCHIMMEL It is also a sign of appropriate reverence for the Qur'ānic text that in an edition of the original text no annotations or underlinings should be added, not even in a bilingual edition, as has been published by the Aḥmadiyya for example. However, this does not apply to translations of the Qur'ān; no special respect has to be paid to them, since they do not share the essential status of the original as a book revealed by God.

individual contents

KHOURY The Qur'ān contains not only the divine laws, but also statements about God and about how Islam determines the history of humanity and the prophets. There are quite a number of stories and didactic passages about the prophets, and also argumentation against polytheists, very lengthy argumentation, aimed at convincing them that polytheism is a misconception, and they should convert to monotheism whose defence is set out; there are also controversies with the polytheists concerning the resurrection of the dead, because they used to maintain that we live here and we die here, and there is nothing beyond that. In addition, there are debates with the Jews and Christians on various topics.

In the Qur'ān, which is ordered on the basis of several editorial principles, the contents are not arranged thematically. It should be taken as certain that Muḥammad wanted to have a complete text of the Qur'ān assembled during his lifetime. However, after his early death, others had to take over

the editorial work. At first they kept together the Sūras which already existed under Muḥammad and which belong together. All these collections start with mysterious letters. It is only the very short Sūras at the end of the Qur'ān, which each consist of only a few verses, that deal with a unified topic. The other Sūras frequently deal with a number of topics, which can be very discouraging to the reader. From the point of view of its editorial plan, however, it was not primarily intended as a reader, but as a collection of sermons, debates, stories about the prophets, and legal regulations. Since legal instructions are very important in everyday life, the Sūras which contain the most important legal instructions were placed at the beginning; they are much longer than the Sūras that follow.

The Qur'ān reflects the situation of the Islamic community and the fact that it is not only a religious community but also a political entity.

who oversees the purity of the text?

MARCOL   The text of the Qur'ān is considered to be a normative authority. Is there an institution in Islam that oversees and protects the purity of the text?

KHOURY   There is no supreme teaching authority which claims responsibility for maintaining the original version of the text, but the whole Islamic community is very much aware of this task and fulfils it primarily through its scholars. Today there is no edition of the Qur'ān that is not subjected to careful examination. So in every country there is some kind of Islamic council, commissioned to compare new editions word by word, sign by sign, with the official edition of the text. At the end of every edition there is a note of the commission by which it was examined. The Arabic language has developed, but the original text – as with the Bible – remains unchanged, and this gives rise to the need for numerous explanations of the text. Several versions of the Qur'ānic text are considered authentic, and of these particular importance is attributed to the Ottoman version.

the problem of the 'translations'

IVANČIĆ   If the word of the Qur'ān is eternal, there is something divine not only in every word, but even in every letter, and this is why the original text cannot be translated; all translations are then considered at best to be commentaries.

KHOURY   For Muslims there is no such thing as a translation of the Qur'ān in the precise sense of the word. The original Arabic text cannot be authentically rendered into other languages. No matter how faithful it may be to the original, a 'translation' of the Qur'ān can only be an interpretation of the text. The term 'translation' is therefore avoided as far as possible on principle, and German, for example, speaks of the 'meaning' of the Qur'ān.

'translations' allowed for religious reasons

Until around the year 1920, there was a sort of official prohibition of translation of the Qur'ān. Then, beginning at al-Azhar University in Cairo, an extensive discussion began. The argument was repeatedly raised that the word of God had actually been revealed as a text, specifically in the Arabic language, and that therefore human beings were obliged to hold onto it and should not risk allowing it to be corrupted through interpretation and translation. Although the supporters of 'translations' solemnly affirmed that they too held the Arabic original alone to be decisive in theological and legal issues, and the only basis for any binding argumentation, they nevertheless pointed out that the overwhelming majority of Muslims are not Arabs and therefore have no direct access to the Qur'ānic text. The argument of those who said Muslims should simply learn Arabic, could not really be expected to persuade people, especially in view of the high level of illiteracy in the respective regions. So it was finally agreed on a majority decision that, for religious reasons, the translation of the Qur'ān should in principle be permitted. Since then more and more Muslims have dedicated themselves to this task and in several countries official commissions have been established for this purpose.

However, the translation of the Qur'ān by non-Muslims continues to be discouraged lest alien ideas, from the Christian tradition, for example, may creep in, or more generally questions could be raised or additions made from too much of an orientalistic or islamological perspective. For these reasons the German translation of Paret, for example, is out of favour.

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on the understanding of transcendence

OTT   In Islam, do we encounter an understanding of transcendence in any way different from that found in Christianity? While for Islam transcendence primarily means inaccessibility, the absolute inaccessibility of God, for Christian faith, in which the concept of transcendence is also central, it is more associated with the moment of relatedness and communication, in the sense that here transcendence does describe the innermost mystery, but that mystery is at the same time always and already related and relational, because faith cannot conceive of it in itself, but only by taking man as its point of departure. In other words, in the Christian faith transcendence means the fundamental mystery – of being and of faith – which has always been communicating itself.

God as revealer

WISSE Can God, as the revealer, wholly enter a real relationship with man? From a Christan perspective, following Peter Knauer[5], the answer to this question might be that in Jesus Christ God is already unified with man and so, when revealing himself, does not need to enter into a relationship with man, but actually remains within himself in the process of his revelation. Similarly Gisbert Greshake[6] affirms that, as creatures of God, human beings already participate in the spiritual being of God, in the Holy Spirit, so that God in his revelation does not begin a relationship with something outside God, but is speaking to man as to someone who is already within Him.

KHOURY In the Christian understanding, God the transcendent is simultaneously the one who is present in Jesus Christ. The incarnation of God is the key for understanding transcendence and immanence; because he communicates himself in Jesus Christ, God himself becomes the one who supports and carries the world, and man, and his future.

In Islam, what transcendence means only applies to God himself and not to man. If God wants to build a bridge across the abyss between his transcendence and man, he creates tools for this purpose: he spoke through his prophets. In this way God did not remain inaudible in his otherworldliness, but made contact with us.

In any case, the opinion expressed by Mahmoud Ayoub, a Shī'ī (at the last Christian-Muslim encounter in St. Gabriel)[7], that God in his Spirit is already within us, has to be placed at the borderline of classical Islam. Classical and Sunnī Islam would not immediately accept such an idea; God in his transcendence speaks to us not so much in order to begin a relationship with us, but rather to inform us about certain matters and reveal to man what he should do.

In this context certain theological issues remain to be discussed in the encounter with Islam, most importantly the Christian concept of a certain connaturality of man with God, a natural openness of man to God, because God is said to have endowed man with this openness – a concept

[5] P. Knauer, *Der Glaube kommt vom Hören. Ökumenische Fundamentaltheologie,* Graz etc., 1978, pp. 76–102 (6th revised and enlarged edition Freiburg etc., 1991, pp. 113–154); cf. id., *Unseren Glauben verstehen.* Würzburg, 1986, pp. 45–55.

[6] G. Greshake, "Göttliches und vergöttlichendes Wort", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Hören auf sein Wort. Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 7). Mödling, 1992, pp. 89–118, here: pp. 108–110.

[7] Sixth Conference on Theology of Religions St. Gabriel, April 17 – 20, 1990, published in Volume 7 of Beiträge zur Religionstheologie: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Hören auf sein Wort,* op. cit. (fn. 6).

not in accord with the conceptual structure of Islam and its understanding of transcendence.

the eternal word and the word become Scripture

ELSAS Would it not be possible for Christian-Muslim dialogue to make good use of the topics concerned with the relationship between the different dimensions of the word of God – in the form of existing books and scriptures, in the earlier form of its oral tradition, and originally in the form of the primeval book of revelation? Specifically, would it be possible to start a dialogue with Muslims about the fact that in their view the eternal word of God already existed before the word of God that became Scripture within time, and that in a similar way (although not to be separated from one another) in Christianity Christ existed before the book of the Gospels?

SCHIMMEL This would be an area in which dialogue with Muslims could certainly be initiated and where one could get on very well with them. The issue here is *umm al-kitāb,* the "Mother of the Book", the uncreated form of the Qur'ān, and if one assumes this spiritual Qur'ān to be eternal, then this eternal reality already existed before the moment when it entered into the revelation and the oral and the written experience.

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eternity of the Qur'ān, 'primeval book' and verbal inspiration

IVANČIĆ If the word of the Qur'ān is eternal, then something divine is expressed not only in every word, but also in every letter and then every letter is important.

PROKSCH But if the word or the language of the Qur'ān is as eternal as God, then it existed before the creation, because it is co-eternal with God. But how can it be that God speaks a human language?

OTT Then, one could ask: if the word is eternal, its addressee is also eternally implied, so God had to create the world and human beings. Does this not limit the freedom of God?

LEUZE Against the background of the Islamic concept of the heavenly 'primeval Book', the question arises of whether and to what extent one can speak, with reference to the Qur'ān, about what, in the Christian tradition, is called 'verbal inspiration': for, in the Christian understanding, the concept of verbal inspiration assumes that the words, which are the issue here, were written down in this world. Even though they were inspired by God word for word, they still came into being and were written down here on earth. But in Islam, the underlying conception seems to proceed from the assumption that this primeval book itself already existed in the heavens, and then of course

through revelation was made accessible and handed over to Muḥammad. How should one conceive of verbal inspiration on the basis of that action?

revelation as expressing the riches of God

KHOURY According to the Islamic understanding, the primordial norm of the holy Scriptures is with God, insofar as he holds in his knowledge, from the beginning, everything he wants to reveal within himself, and in this primordial knowledge he also knows at which stages this revelation is to take place. In this sense there is a primeval Book, a primordial norm of the holy Scriptures, and it is with God – though this is rather a mythical way of putting it. What it actually expresses is the eternity of God's revelation. If this concept were taken literally, it would unavoidably lead to accepting that there is something primeval apart from God, which does not at all correspond to Islam's idea of God. What is in God can only be understood as the expression of the riches of his nature, just as the 99 names of God are the expression of the abundance of his nature in relation to his creation. How all this is eternally in God himself, in his nature, simply transcends our understanding and our ability to articulate. The Qur'ān does not speak about it and so theology is not competent to say anything about it either.

If, however, when we consider the Qur'ānic revelation, we relate the language of God to ourselves, we cannot think of these words as added to his nature. They are simply the expression of his bountiful nature in relation to our human existence, and everything is ultimately nothing but his nature itself. Looking at it in this way, we may naturally speak about the eternity of his word, which is nothing but the eternity of his being and his nature. For us it brings a relation that does not proceed from God, but is a development only on our side, as *our* relation to God.

✦

the concept of analogy applicable to the relation between God and man?

LEUZE May it be justifiable from a Catholic background, to introduce the concept of analogy into the orthodox theological system of the Ash'arīs? How far does al-Ash'arī and the school based on his ideas speak of a quasi-analogy? Is there in Arabic a term that corresponds to the concept of analogy? Or does this introduce Christian theologoumena into the thinking of Islam and use them as means of understanding the world of Islamic faith in a way that is inadmissible?[8]

[8] Cf. M. Allard, *Le problème des attributs divins dans la doctrine d'al-Aš'arī et de ses premiers disciples.* Beirut, 1965.

KHOURY This term may help towards a better understanding of the content of Islamic faith. Nevertheless, the concept of analogy is not much more than a tentative solution, since, according to Islamic understanding, there can be no analogy between God and the world. "God, the Eternal, Absolute; [...] and there is none like unto Him." (Qur'ān 112,2.4). This is even true if he reveals himself, or lets himself be heard. Even when he allows the Prophet Muḥammad to be guided up to his throne – a metaphor for immediate closeness to God – the Prophet has still not seen God; God remains behind the veil, though when God speaks to us, it is in his language and by his inspiration. But how can a language that is eternal, in a way 'analogous' to God himself, be understood by man? There must ultimately be a possibility of understanding the language of God apart from human language, but it is impossible for man to know exactly and define precisely what that language really expresses about God, even though we have indications such as 'God is merciful' or 'God avenges'.

However that may be, Allard concluded that it is not possible to find analogy in the teaching of al-Ash'arī and his pupils who rather wanted to respect the standpoint of orthodox Islam. Nevertheless, if by this we wish to state that we have no better way of making clear that we must not place God on the same level as man, and that it is not possible for us to define precisely what the language of God really means, then the concept of a quasi-analogy is helpful, though without really being to the point.

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does dealing with holy scriptures entail the danger of idolatry?

DUPRÉ When, as Christians, we see how Islam refers to the Qur'ān, we are drawn to reflect on our own approach to the holy Scripture as Christians. At the same time this observation of how sacred texts are regarded leads to a confrontation with our own awareness of truth when, for whatever reasons, questioning is no longer allowed. We may therefore ask how far the tension between authentic faith in God and the rejection of idolatry is a problem that arises when sacred texts are dealt with. This problem was touched upon when we compared the ideas of magic and sacrament. Beyond this, however, the basic issue here is that the concept of God submits all finite forms of its presentation to the judgement of the one and only eternal name of God. Can we also find within the framework of the Islamic tradition attempts to reflect on whether a particular approach to sacred texts can possibly be categorized as association or *shirk*? After all, in the Islamic tradition there is repeated reference

to the fact that man must refrain from idolatry and from associating anything with God. But if one approaches the word in the way laid down in Islamic teaching, is one then not practising exactly what idolatry means, that is with associating and adding something? What is more important now, maintaining God as a principle, or that there is something formulated in human language and therefore an arbitrary formulation?

KHOURY   The question of whether there are attempts in the Islamic tradition to reflect on whether a certain approach to sacred texts, especially the Qur'ān, can be categorized as *shirk*, can perhaps be answered as follows: according to the Islamic understanding, man commits this sin if he wants to impose his own categories upon the words of God, for then he tries to add or associate his own concepts to them.

reason and
revelation

On the other hand there is in Islamic theology, especially in the Mu'tazili tradition, something like an absolution of human reason from this danger by maintaining the principle of negative theology, that is that we can only speak negatively about God. At its extreme, on the basis of this position it would be best to assert that God is, and beyond this to make no further assertions, in order not to compromise monotheism. By taking this position, however, they give up both the opportunity and the responsibility, and perhaps even the necessity of bringing their reason into line with revelation. However, orthodoxy in Islam, represented primarily by the Ash'arī school, from the 10th century on, has followed another path. The role of reason is considered to be to discover the truth in the texts, but not, as it were, to seek the truth beyond the texts. From this perspective, the text would not be an occasion to ask questions that go beyond it. Rather it confronts the searching mind with the truth which God has formulated positively in the text. Thus the area in which reason operates is not left to its own choosing, but has boundaries positively set by God. More precisely, it is first of all the task of reason to search and find out exactly what God said, and secondly, by applying logical methods, to protect and defend the divine truth against the attacks of unbelievers. On this second level reason has as much freedom as it needs, as long as, in the course of defending truth, it does not run into the danger of deviating from what God specifically ordained in his revelation.

The philosophers of Islam were not at all content with this and it resulted in a tragic tension between them (especially al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd, who took up some elements of Greek philosophy) and orthodoxy. Although the metaphysics of Aristotle and Plato, apart from logic, were generally not used in Islamic theology (except perhaps in Islamic apologetics), they continued nevertheless to be cultivated among the philosophers.

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canonicity –
finality –
universality

CHMIEL   Does the exegesis of the Qur'ān include the concept of a canon, that is of certain texts of the Qur'ān being part of the scriptural canon?

KHOURY   There is only one Qur'ān and it was fixed very early, in the years before 656. Beside this canonically defined text of the Qur'ān, there are also variants to be found throughout Islamic literature, but they should be considered as largely unimportant and are therefore not even mentioned in any of the official editions. For scholarly readers they are listed in my Qur'ān commentary[9]: for every paragraph commented on, there is first the German translation of the section in question, then the Arabic original, and finally the variants known in Islamic literature which make a contribution to the editing history of the Qur'ānic text, but which are never edited together with the Qur'ān. Orientalists also work on the assumption that the canonical Qur'ānic text contains what Muḥammad actually said and presented as revelation, even though not in the sequence of the text at hand. To mention an example: there is a text which deals with the stoning of adulterers but which was not included in the edition of the text, and is therefore 'outside' the Qur'ān, although in fact it theoretically belongs to the Qur'ān and has the same authority as the Qur'ān.

DUPRÉ   In very diverse religious traditions, such as Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism, there is the phenomenon of the formation of a canon. If we look at this for a moment from the sole perspective of comparative religion, we could discuss how far the concept of ultimacy could be conceived of in the plural. To speak of 'ultimacies' is inherently contradictory, or is it thinkable? In this context, should we not also consider that perhaps each of us is to be considered as a manifestation of ultimacy?
This is a fundamental problem arising from the perspective of comparative religion and applying also to the complex of problems concerning the circular structure of its logical foundation. Why is the Qur'ān absolute and to be accepted unconditionally? – because that is what is said. It seems that this, mutatis mutandis, is repeated in the historical context of other scriptures and so the focus is finally on the concept of ultimacy. For, if it were merely

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[9] *Der Koran. Arabisch-Deutsch. Übersetzung und wissenschaftlicher Kommentar von* A. Th. Khoury. vol. 1–12. Gütersloh, 1990–2001.

a question of differentiating the use of a particularly emphasized word, then one could of course say that each scripture has its own particularity and, as it were, its own inimitable value. But what is also at issue here is finding a centre which leads to something denoted as universality – that is oriented towards this very centre and unfolding from it.

different authority of Qur'ān and Sunna

KHOURY   The question of the history of the canon, which is a very interesting and theoretically important question, was resolved by Islam in respect of its own tradition by concluding it with the composition of the Qur'ān, that is with the collection of what Muḥammad in his preaching spoke of as a revelation from God. By contrast, the Sunna is not a canonical work, because Muḥammad's own words, his sayings, his exemplary ways of life and decisions are not to be considered as a word of God, but rather as an additional interpretation of the contents of the Qur'ān and specific applications of it. No matter how much astuteness Muslims have certainly applied to differentiating between the genuine and dubious parts of the tradition (and no matter how beautiful and edifying some of them are), the fact remains that the Ḥadīth has a quite different authority from that accorded to the Qur'ān – simply because the Prophet is not to be compared with God. Although the Ḥadīth gives more instructions for solving concrete everyday problems than the Qur'ān because the Prophet was always in contact with his community and wanted to solve the various problem cases for them, behind the tradition of the Prophet there is only the authority of a human being.

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incarnation as well as inlibration of the Word in Christianity

BSTEH A.   In the encounter with Islam, perhaps Christian faith is challenged more than elsewhere to reflect on its own original and un-shortened relation to the Holy Scripture. For one thing, it could become apparent that the formula: Christian belief in the incarnation of the word of God corresponds to Muslim belief in the inlibration of the word of God, is a characterization of the Christian position that is not merely superficial, but on the whole absolutely inadmissible. Whatever we may say in favour of such a juxtaposition, for the Christian believer there is no Jesus who, as the glorified Kyrios in the texts of the New Testament (which in turn cannot be conceived of without including the texts of the Old Testament) does not continually turn anew towards and give life to the individual believer, the Christian community and humanity as a whole. There is therefore an original and, for Christian faith, inalienable relation between the Biblical testimony contained in the Old and New Testaments and the revelatory figure of Jesus, because the incarnation of the word of God, which happened once and for all in Jesus, whom Christian faith declares to be the Christ, was 'concluded' only in the inlibration of this word, in which it attained its true perfection.

ELSAS   This question has always been present here when we have spoken of the function the Qur'ān has when we consider a possible comparison between incarnation and inlibration. We may summarize it as follows: Christ is to be communicated and the Qur'ān is to be communicated, and then all the aspects which Mr. Khoury expounded and which were complemented by Father Bsteh arise again. What does this now mean as a question addressed to us: What is the relation between Christ and Scripture?, How is Christ to be communicated through Scripture, which we have as a testimony about him, and how is this to be seen as a parallel to communicating the Qur'ān in Islam and at the same time to the role of the Sunna of Muḥammad – where both exist, although perhaps differently assessed?

BSTEH A.   Would not the formulation of the Christian understanding of Scripture as 'testimony about Christ' have to be complemented by the formulation 'testimony of Christ', insofar as, in the original Christian understanding of faith in the holy Scriptures, the testimony of Christ is living, and they are ultimately holy for us because in them Christ declares himself to the world?

KAHLERT   This would also have to be introduced into the encounter with Muslims by drawing their attention to the fact that we also have recitations of our holy Scriptures, and that in this context there are also ways of showing a particular respect for them. For example, they are announced with various versicles of greeting and a high value is attached to people's standing up when the Gospel is read out during public worship.

✦

questions of hermeneutics

RABERGER   It is a word which, though it claims to be absolute, yet conceives of itself as constantly existing within certain conditions in time and space in which this absoluteness finds its expression, and has an identity that always has to be understood as existing in history and society. A self-understanding of this kind is closer to the relevance of the word as an authority providing direction. If Christianity or Islam claim social relevance, then, in specified circumstances, their identity should not be characterized by unchangeability, but by a conditional unconditionality, conditioned by the context of history and society.

HORN Assuming that the word of God always has to be interpreted anew, the question of testing the interpretation against the original testimony of faith would always have to be raised anew. How can this be done in Islam? How far does this presuppose a great clarity about the total meaning of a religious tradition and a certain differentiation between what is essential and what is not so important?

MEIER If we take into consideration, in the context of the hermeneutical problem we are discussing, the mystical tradition, which was so impressively presented in the preceding chapter, the question might be raised of whether the word of God as a whole should be understood conceptionally, or whether it might be understood as a sacrament? Just as in the Christian teaching on the Lord's Supper, the expression 'to chew the Body of Christ with one's teeth' was used, was it not similarly said, for instance in Ḥanbalī theology, that the eternal word of God, the transcendent word, immanent in human language, is moved between the prayer's teeth? Is the word of God not to be conceived of as an aesthetic miracle that does not really have to be understood? In this perspective, could it perhaps be an advantage that Turkish children learn the Qur'ān by heart in Arabic, so that they are completely exempt from all the problems concerning what is meant and for them the text itself of the Qur'ān is the target, in its wonderful language that finally cannot be understood, and this implies for them an experience of God? Is not this where the attraction of Islam lies?

VANONI The Islamic concept of the Qur'ān, against which scholars can test their deliberations and assertions, could certainly become a question addressed to Christianity concerning the way theology, ethics and morality refer to the Biblical testimony. If we have to proceed, especially against the background of the assertions of Vatican II, from the fact that, no matter what the hermeneutical difficulties, Scripture has to be the guideline, then relativizing this reference may happen in Christian circles as a result of the objections of certain high ranking authorities. This is something that does not seem to be immediately possible in Islam.

Another question is raised by the fact that in German the expression 'will of God' is often used, whereas in the Old and New Testaments it is in fact the concept of benevolence and the goodwill of God that is meant. Thus a Jew would feel understood by one who understands the Torah as the guidance of God speaking of this wide-ranging faith in a God who wants what is good and envisages and plans it for the world. The Torah, after all, is not simply a collection of laws; about half of it is a collection of writings, including many stories, which are guidance in the sense that they are stories that are told, and can be followed up, that repeat themselves, and can become the situation of our life. To what extent today do we rather focus on a divine voluntarism and continually try to discover the will of God in a Kantian sense, on the assumption that God simply wants something and also imposes it? In this connection, what are the terms in Arabic for 'will' and relevant expressions that specifically refer to the will of God: such phrases as: I do not want you to kill? Etymologically, is there as in modern Hebrew, a linguistic connection with what we call benevolence?

Reports on the situation in Islam may give the impression that a voluntarism of this kind is a danger there too and that the prevalent opinion is that everything, both good and bad, is ordained by God, and that what is needed is merely to recognize this and to act accordingly. In the Biblical tradition, however, one often encounters cases of sins being committed that do not consist in overstepping boundaries established beforehand (cf. Gn 11). This is very relevant to our modern problems and how we deal with our world where, in many cases, we have no idea of the future consequences of what we do or do not do today and where we do not therefore know what is good and what is bad.

ZIRKER In Islam there is the Qur'ān, the Sunna and finally the traditions of exegesis, but no obligation to refer all this to a teaching authority (at least not among the Sunnīs). On the other hand, traditional Catholic theology has an understanding of the Scriptures, which has its 'norma proxima' in the teaching authority of the Church compared with which Scripture only has the function of a 'norma remota'. So the question would have to be raised: what is the relation between the relationship of Scripture and teaching authority in Christianity, and the relationship of Scripture and Sunna in Islam?

RABERGER Faced with these questions, it seems important that we should go back again to the question of a spiritual identity that seeks to be reflected in history and society. This has been done by Christians, insofar as there is a history of dogma in which the issue has always been the tension between the Scriptures and the authority that claims to be the interpreter of the Scriptures. This is the dilemma, but at the same time also the opportunity in Christianity, because it implies an openness which makes it possible to think quite differently from the traditional approach about the conclusiveness of the revelation. This openness contains a greater potential than is usually believed.

ZIRKER Here the keyword 'history of dogma' is probably more important

than the aforementioned concept of the teaching authority of the Church because on the one hand (unlike this authority) there is nothing like a history of dogma in either Sunnī or Shīʿī Islam and on the other it does not so much involve the Catholic/Protestant divide.

RABERGER So here we may see the opportunity of Christianity, not only its dilemma. In any case, in this context we should bear in mind that a religious denomination which calls even its norms and unconditional claims once again before the forum of the respective plausibility of historical and social challenges, is not characterized by what the concept of inconclusiveness means. Unfortunately, in the wake of a false or even completely absent pneumatology, we have forgotten this, just as was the case in the system of neoscholastic theology.

DUPRÉ We should also see in this something of the human longing for certainty.

RABERGER In what was said above, normativity and unconditional claims were spoken of. But a conditional-unconditional claim is different from one that is concluded and needs no more consideration.

DUPRÉ In fact, historically the issue has repeatedly been the conditional-unconditional. But is this the way people really believe? Do we not repeatedly ask how this or that could be conceived of as absolute?

RABERGER In his essay "Zu Max Horkheimers Satz: 'Einen unbedingten Sinn zu retten ohne Gott, ist eitel!'" ["On Max Horkheimer's statement: 'Wanting to retain an unconditional meaning without God is vain!'"][10], J. Habermas underlines the difference between speaking of an unconditional meaning ('unbedingter Sinn') and speaking of an 'unconditionality of meaning' ('Unbedingtheit des Sinns'). This differentiation would have to be transferred from philosophical discussion into theological controversy.

VANONI The history of dogma is of course something positive: at a certain time one tries to find out what is most important and endeavours to gain a fresh understanding of it. But are we not then always in danger of stopping and saying: we need dogmas in order to bring the original message into the specific historical moment, but we no longer have enough energy to apply this principle consistently even to dogmas already formulated? So perhaps there are dogmas which, after two hundred or seven hundred years, must not be questioned any more – would this nevertheless be an authentic interpretation of the original intention?

[10] In: J. Habermas, *Texte und Kontexte* (Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft; 944). Frankfurt/M., 1991, pp. 110–126.

Islam as Religion, Society and Culture

Hans Zirker

Could the scope of a topic be more presumptuously expressed than this? It seems to encompass all there is to be said. However, the aim here will only be to consider how Islam connects and correlates these three areas – religion, society and culture – both in the claim it makes for itself, and also in the historical reality. For it differs in this from all other religions – and so to non-Muslims occasionally even seems to be frightening.

1. 'Islam' as a 'religion'

We read in the Qurʾān: "The Religion before God is Islam (submission to His Will) [...]." (3,19); but this categorical statement is not as definite as its German version – let alone the explanatory translation by Rudi Paret – suggests: "Als (einzige) Religion gilt bei Gott der Islam."[1] [The (only) religion before God is Islam.] The initial assumption here is that this sentence refers to the spectrum of the numerous religions, recognizing one of them and rejecting the others. 'Islam' would then be the proper name of a socially and historically limited denominational community in opposition to the rest. But this understanding too quickly restricts the meaning of the original text to the perspective of an interreligious competition.

Muslims often and justifiably like to underline the fact that, unlike the names of other religions, the term 'Islam' does not refer to an individual human being (as 'Christianity' refers to Christ, or 'Buddhism' to Buddha) or to a certain ethnic group (as 'Hinduism' refers to the Hindus, or 'Judaism' to the tribe of Judah)[2], but only expresses the relationship of human beings with God.

First *islām* is a verbal noun (or in the grammatical terminology familiar to us we could say: an infinitive) and denotes an activity: in the religious

[1] *Der Koran. Übersetzung von Rudi Paret.* Stuttgart, 1979 (revised pocket book edition), p. 44. – I refer below from time to time to my essay "Islam als Religion", in *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift* 140 (1992) 325–333.

[2] Cf. for instance Sayyid Abu-l-Aʿla Maudoodi, *Weltanschauung und Leben im Islam.* Leicester, 1978, p. 15.

context, the verb *aslama* means 'to entrust oneself (to God), to give one-self up (to him), to submit oneself (to him)'. So '*islām*' describes first of all an existential actualization and not an institutionally limited community.[3] This also becomes clear from the passage quoted from Sūra 3; for in the next verse (20), Muḥammad is the subject of the same verb: "So if they dispute with thee, say: 'I have submitted my whole self to God and so have those who follow me.'[...]"

However, this meaning of the word recedes, when, according to the translations, Jews, Christians and pagans see themselves confronted with the decision: "Do you become *Muslims?* If they *become Muslims*, they are given the right guidance." The idea that an individual may turn towards God and trust in him should not, as the Qur'ān sees it, so much be subject to their being members of a particular religion.

It is a feature of the Qur'ān that the term *islām* occurs far more rarely than the term *īmān*, which is close to it in meaning and grammatical form and means '(having) faith'.[4] Here too it becomes obvious that for the Qur'ān the primary issue is people's religiousness, i. e., their spiritual attitude and their conduct, and not a religion as a historically concrete community or an ideally prescribed system of orientation. It is only over the course of the centuries that usage changed the import of the word in this respect.[5]

It would of course be a mistake to change this difference of emphasis into an opposition. According to the Muslim understanding, religion, *dīn*, can never remain restricted to individual thinking and behaviour or even to the spiritual inner life, but has to be realized in the context of the person's whole life. The autonomy of particular spheres of life which could remain indifferent towards religion, is inadmissible from the Muslim perspective, in which *dīn* signifies an all-comprising order.[6] This does not only refer to the relationship the believer has towards his Creator, but also to all his inter-human relations and beyond that to his relations towards all the other creatures of God.

It is therefore understandable that in concrete historical and political situations, Islam may experience itself as competing with and in contradiction to other approaches to life and community structures. As the Qur'ān says: "Do they seek for other than the Religion of God? [...] If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to God), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)." (3,83.85) – "It is He Who hath sent His Apostle with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all religion [...]." (9,33). Nevertheless, such statements certainly do not derive from a claim to exclusivity in the history of religions, such that all other religions could simply be rejected and set aside. The specific, historically and socially defined religious community, developing on the basis of Muḥammad's proclamation and political action, understands its own existence as "the straight usage", "the standard Religion" (9,36; 30,30, etc.), related to and juxtaposed with the many other religions in much subtler ways.

In Sūra 7, Muḥammad and those who listen to him are reminded that God had already bound all human beings, before their worldly existence, to the only valid profession of faith: "When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam – from their loins – their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves (saying): 'Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?' – they said: 'Yea! We do testify!' (This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: 'Of this we were never mindful'." (v. 172).[7] From the Muslim perspective, then, humans have once and for all acknowledged their true relation to God, so that all later faith is ultimately nothing but a consistent out-working of this primeval and primordial scene.

Sometimes we read that, according to the Muslim understanding, "Abraham is the first Muslim."[8] However, this is not in agreement with the Qur'ān. To be a 'Muslim' means 'to have submitted oneself to God' and can be applied to mankind from the beginning of creation. It is true that the Qur'ān

[3] Cf. H. Ringgren, *Islam, 'aslama, and Muslim.* Uppsala, 1949.

[4] Cf. A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed. Its genesis and historical development.* Cambridge, 1932, p. 22: "In the Kuran the terms *islām* and *īmān* (faith) are synonymous"; similarly J. Bouman, *Gott und Mensch im Koran. Eine Strukturform religiöser Anthropologie anhand des Beispiels Allah und Muhammad* (Impulse der Forschung; 22). Darmstadt, 1977, pp. 201 f. incl. fn. 78.

[5] Cf. W. C. Smith, "The Historical Development in Islām of the Concept of Islām as an Historical Development", in: id., *On Understanding Islam.* Den Haag, 1981, pp. 41–77.

[6] Cf. T. Nagel, *Staat und Glaubensgemeinschaft im Islam. Geschichte der politischen Ordnungsvorstellungen der Muslime.* 2 vols. Zürich, 1981, register: *dīn.*

[7] According to Muslim traditions, this alludes to a scene after the fall of the first human beings (cf. R. Blachère, *Le Coran. Traduction selon un essai de reclassement des Sourates.* vol. 2. Paris, 1950, p. 649); in the Jewish traditions, there is a similar, perhaps related story in which the children of Israel are called to bear witness to the covenant on Sinai (cf. H. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran.* Hildesheim, [3]1988 [Reprint of the first edition of 1931], pp. 304 f.).

[8] Thus for instance J. Bouman, *Der Koran und die Juden. Die Geschichte einer Tragödie* (WB-Forum; 53). Darmstadt, 1990, p. 89; L. Massignon in his preface to Y. Moubarac, *Abraham dans le Coran.* Paris, 1958, p. 5; Sekretariat für die Nichtchristen – M. Borrmans, *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims* (Interreligious Documents; 1). New York, etc., 1990 (orig.: Paris, 1981).

quotes Moses, who professes before God on Sinai: "'[...] and I am the first to believe.'" (7,143), and Muḥammad is commanded to present himself to the human race as "the first of those who bow to God (in Islam)" (6,14); but this is obviously not meant in a historical-chronological sense. In the Qurʾān the disciples of Jesus also already understand themselves to be 'Muslims', i. e., as those who "bear witness that we are Muslims" (3,52); and in Sūra 26,52, even the Pharaoh's sorcerers call themselves the "foremost among the Believers", because they acknowledge the deeds that Moses does as greater than their own. Although individual people in their own situation may always again see themselves as protagonists of the faith, nevertheless Islam knows no other beginning for itself than the beginning of humanity as a whole.

Neither does Islam recognize itself as a path of experience and learning initiated by God within a special history of salvation. The guidance which God grants to human beings is offered at all times in the same way to all. Any individual may see himself and his contemporaries called like Muḥammad: "So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the Faith: (establish) God's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by God: that is the standard Religion: [...]" (Sūra 30,30). In accordance with this saying of the Qurʾān, Muslims understand their religion to be the order of the creation, or the natural religion: dīn al-fiṭra.

When God in addition sends prophets, in the Islamic view they do not in principle have to proclaim a new message, but only to bring a reminder, when human beings have transgressed or forgotten it, of the order already ordained long ago. Thus Muḥammad brings the Qurʾān as "a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe" (2,97), just as Jesus had also already been sent as "confirmation of the Law that had come before him" (5,49).

2. 'Islam' as 'social order'

According to the understanding of 'dīn' we have given, the human world in all its dimensions is subject to the obligations established by God and is thus the space where the individual as well as the community, the Umma which is to direct and support the believer, are put to the test.

Therefore one may rightly speak of a "comprehensive claim of the Is-

lamic order".[9] From this the programmatic formula 'dīn wa-dawla – religion and state' developed in the field of politics: all human action governing social structures should be guided as a whole by religious norms. Even though this claim was far from fully realized in the course of history, it is still always vigorous as a critical impulse.

When in the 11th century a concept of 'politics' – siyāsa – developed, which severed the sovereigns' realm of authority from the fundamental order of religion, dīn, this linguistic novelty was "at first experienced as something alien within the world of Islam; [...] as a relic from a past stage in the history of mankind."[10] Even though this term finally became an accepted and understood element in the Arabic language, it still did not push to the background the ideal aim: religion as a system of theocratic governance – related completely to God and completely to the shaping of worldly life.

If, when considering Islam, we speak of 'theocracy', we must nevertheless immediately acknowledge that the will of God is here communicated in the form of a book and not through any personal hierarchies. Thus the occasional attempts to understand the title of the 'Caliph' to mean not only 'successor of the envoy of God' (in leading the community: khalīfat rasūl Allāh), but 'vicegerent of God', khalīfat Allāh[11], were not generally sustained. God has represented himself through the direct presence of his word in the Qurʾān, before which any worldly authority in power has to justify itself. It is the task of the jurists to deduce the commands of God, the sharīʿa, from the Qurʾān, with the help of the Prophetic tradition and following certain rules of interpretation, but the scholars do not acquire their authority simply by virtue of a particular office; their teachings always remain subject to demonstration of their reliability and recognition by the people. The absolute authority of the sharīʿa does not imply with it the absolute authority of a magisterium. (This applies without restriction primarily to Sunnī theology; the particularities of the Shīʿa cannot be dealt with in detail here.)

Despite being closely connected with God's precepts already given in the context of the creation, the sharīʿa, based on the Qurʾān and announced

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[9] P. Antes, "Islamische Ethik", in: id. et al., Ethik in nichtchristlichen Kulturen. Stuttgart, 1984, pp. 48–81, here p. 49.

[10] T. Nagel, op. cit. (fn. 6) vol. 1, p. 16.

[11] Cf. B. Lewis, Die politische Sprache des Islam. Berlin, 1991, pp. 80–84; W. M. Watt, Early Islam. Collected Articles. Edinburgh, 1990, pp. 57–63: God's Caliph: Qurʾānic Interpretations and Umayyad Claims.

by Muḥammad, is not, of course, understood in Islam simply as something timelessly valid. It also contains regulations that have not always and already been decreed for all people. What the various prophets communicated to their respective communities as the will of God, took their specific living conditions into account. Thus, up to Muḥammad, there could in principle be a legitimate plurality of legal orders and thus also of religious communities. In another context, al-Ghazzālī has already been quoted: "But Jesus too is the Lord of a *sharīʿa*, and each *sharīʿa* is distinguished by special regulations."[12]

However, with Islam's claim to universality, aimed at unifying the whole of mankind in a way which corresponds to the original plan of God's creation, the plurality of different religious communities loses the validity it had enjoyed up till then.[13] The social order should now in principle be universally adjusted to the one *sharīʿa* – even though it continues to allow the 'People of the Book' to follow their own regulations to a certain extent. Thus, from Muḥammad onwards, but only then, there is a grounded and justified approach to a history of mankind.

3. 'Islam' as 'culture'

At first sight, there seems to be no theological topic specific to Islamic 'culture' beyond what has already been said. As an all-embracing order for life and society, religion has its foundation in the creation and revelation of God alone; in this fundamental respect, there is no room for merely human thought and action. Certainly, in obedience to God's ordinances, man takes over active responsibility for his world; he is *khalīfa* – 'Caliph', in the special way it is understood in Muslim anthropology: as vicegerent of God (or 'successor' of the angels[14]), he is faced with the task of carrying

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[12] Cf. my paper "He is God, the One – Join not Any Partners with Him!" (above pp. 35–43), ad fn. 13, p. 40.

[13] There are of course good reasons to assume that, originally, the Qurʾān did not perceive itself to be addressed to all mankind; it expressly states itself to be "a Book [...] in the Arabic tongue" (46,12), adapted to "an Arab" (41,44). Cf. on this problem F. Buhl, "Faßte Muḥammad seine Verkündigung als eine universelle, auch für Nichtaraber bestimmte Religion auf?", in *Islamica* 2 (1926) 135–149; R. Caspar, *Traité de théologie musulmane*. Tome I: Histoire de la pensée musulmane. Rome, 1987, pp. 65 f. – What is quoted from the Qurʾān as proof of the universality claim is primarily: "Say: 'O men! I am sent unto you all, as the Apostle of God [...]" (7,158) – "We have not sent thee but as a universal (Messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin) [...]" (34,28) – with "a Message for the nations" (6,90).

[14] On this alternative meaning of the term cf. J. Bouman, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) pp. 184–189; also R. Paret, *Der Koran. Kommentar und Konkordanz*. Stuttgart, ²1977, p. 16, on Sūra 2,30.

out the will of God. But the diversity of human attempts to shape human living conditions, which is what we mean when we use the term 'culture', is not yet envisaged here.

Nevertheless, the cultural roots and richness of Islam are obvious. First and foremost, it is a way of life and a system of action, and not simply either a dogmatic edifice or a sacral cult community. While being bound to a universal law, it is also characterized by a fundamentally pragmatic approach and considerable flexibility with regard to the individual particularities of life.

In the Islamic community, theologians have always played a subordinate and incidental role in comparison with the jurists whose task it is to extrapolate instructions for action from the Qurʾān and the Prophetic tradition. However, since Islam generally does not recognize a binding teaching authority, decisive importance is attributed to the factual reception of these directives. Even from early times, various schools of law developed which, until today, have marked Islam with different regional imprints. But also in addition to this, because of its capacity to assimilate, it has been able to enter into quite differently shaped social structures (as regards, for example, family relations and forms of government) and into autochthonous religious realities, even as far as syncretism.[15] In Morocco it has different features from Indonesia, in Saudi-Arabia different from Central Africa. In addition, mystical movements opposed the dominant role of the jurists and gained great influence on popular religiosity. Up to the present time, in large parts of the Muslim world, religious life has been shaped by such movements, groups and approaches.[16] The catchword "a Muslim is a Muslim", which is sometimes used in zealous religious self-assertion, is obviously not in keeping with reality.

Alongside the proclamation of the one God who once and for all revealed his will in the Qurʾān for the whole of mankind, and the leitmotif of the one Umma, there is thus a vast historical and cultural spectrum of specific forms and ways of life. This contrast is unimportant and can – if it is experienced at all – even be pragmatically neglected, as long as it does

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[15] Cf. O. Schumann, "Der Islam und lokale Traditionen – synkretistische Ideen und Praktiken", in: W. Ende – U. Steinbach (eds.), *Der Islam in der Gegenwart*. München, ²1989, pp. 560–581.

[16] Cf. A. Schimmel, "Sufismus und Volksfrömmigkeit", in: M. D. Ahmed et al., *Der Islam. III Islamische Kultur – Zeitgenössische Strömungen – Volksfrömmigkeit* (Religionen der Menschheit; 25,3). Stuttgart etc., 1990, pp. 157–242.

not antagonize relatively closed cultural domains by invading them. Yet it is precisely then that things become different – when Muslims of different regions and styles of religious life encounter one another outside their homelands, as currently in Western countries. Then plurality is placed under pressure by the need for unity, requiring uniformity. The consequences are hostile polarizations which develop, even within culturally Islamic territories, wherever strenuous efforts are made to resist outside infiltration. Here it is not uncommon for everyday, locally understood, as it were 'naturally' developed and valid traditions to be opposed by 'the true tradition', which in reality is an ideological construct. It is this that primarily characterizes the so-called 'fundamentalists' who prefer to be called 'Islamists'.[17]

Thus culture in Islam can be experienced in two ways – as the richness of its community, and as a plurality full of tensions that can even become dangerous; as a vital expression of faith, and as overloaded by human accretions; as a lived tradition and as alienated from its true source. In this respect, the encounter of the Islamic world with the secular civilization of the West adds further complications. When Muslims today occasionally say that they (still) understand themselves as belonging to the Islamic culture, but not (any longer) to the Islamic religion or the Islamic faith, it must be seen as a significant and rather explosive phenomenon.

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[17] Cf. as a small selection: B. Tibi, *Die Krise des modernen Islams. Eine vorindustrielle Kultur im wissenschaftlich-technischen Zeitalter. Erweiterte Ausgabe.* Including an essay: "Islamischer Fundamentalismus als Antwort auf die doppelte Krise" (Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft; 889). Frankfurt/M., 1991; J. Waardenburg, "Fundamentalismus und Aktivismus in der islamisch-arabischen Welt der Gegenwart", in *Orient* 30 (1989) 39–51; R. Wielandt, "Zeitgenössischer islamischer Fundamentalismus – Hintergründe und Perspektiven", in: K. Kienzler (ed.), *Der neue Fundamentalismus. Rettung oder Gefahr für Gesellschaft und Religion?.* Düsseldorf, 1990, pp. 46–66.

Questions and Interventions

universal religion and order of the community

OTT Dealing with the fundamental understanding of Islam as religion and social order implies to a certain extent its juxtaposition with the parallel concepts in our own Christian tradition of the inward and outward form of religion: universalism and pluralism, universal religion and order of the local community, with an accompanying cultural flexibility and pluriformity. Nor can we, as Christians, refrain from making a universal claim, although for us it might have a different basis and be understood differently. Christian faith is oriented towards universality, even if its name – unlike Islam – refers to a specific historical person, but it is perhaps not focused on the establishment of a universal order of life to the same extent as Islam. With regard to this Christian order of life, the same need for cultural flexibility is asserting itself in a new and very forceful manner. It might be appropriate to recall here the issue, currently much discussed, of the indigenization and inculturation of the Gospel of Christ and its proclamation, for everything it implies, not least the efforts made in the direction of interreligious encounter and hermeneutics, is presumably connected with the fundamental meaning of belief in the incarnation.

KHOURY Generally speaking, when these deliberations mean to deal with Islam questioning Christianity theologically and philosophically, it should be made clear, particularly in the context of what has already been said. The point here is in fact the fundamental concept of Islam in itself and, in response to this question – taking into consideration the different levels that have to be kept in mind – we should not keep jumping from one level to another. However that may be, the concept of Islam does not only refer to a constituted community in the sense of a sociologically defined system, but also, as has been rightly said, primarily to a universal religion professing monotheism and the duty of man to serve God. And there is a constant danger of shifting from this level of the universal religion to the level of the constituted community, and in so doing claiming somewhat apologetically and idealistically that this universal religion is realized in this constituted community.

Islam – the religion of creation and revelation

HORN Is Islam religion insofar as it reflects the order of creation? Is it not the case that, as in other prophetic religions, it is in fact only the existence of God and the need to worship the one God that Islam declares to be

the order of creation, whereas everything else is derived from prophetic inspiration and revelation? If so, are natural religion and revealed religion actually so congruent with one another?

ZIRKER We find the term 'natural religion', *dīn al-fiṭra*, in the Qur'ān (cf. Sūra 30,30). What does this mean with reference to the Islam of the Qur'ān and the Qur'ān of Muḥammad? On the one hand there is no doubt that Islam professes the religion of the created order which all the prophets proclaimed, which has already been instilled in Adam and all human beings by virtue of creation. Thus 'Islam' means: to recognize God as the one who created us, who alone holds us in his hands, and who will call us to account, and so religion is characterized by creation and judgement.

Concurrently, however, religion is at the time of every prophet always more than what is expressed in this short formula, because every prophet has his own *sharī'a;* al-<u>Gh</u>azzālī formulated this in a similar way.

The *sharī'a* also contains elements related to the specific community in which it is established and supported. Thus, although from the time of Muḥammad, from the perspective of the Qur'ān this concrete Islam understands itself as totally identical with the order established at creation, it still knows that at any particular time it has to be lived towards a particular future, within particular community structures, according to rules of life not always previously known.

In specific terms this means that in the Qur'ān much is written down concerning inheritance laws, pilgrimage regulations and the order of prayer. We can still see in the Qur'ān that initially prayer was made in the direction of Jerusalem and then later, for particular reasons, Mecca. Thus a new *sharī'a* changes law that had been valid up till then and generally regulates the life of the community differently from before. In this way, through the Qur'ānic revelation new regulations are definitely added which had not yet been defined in man's fundamental relation towards God, which does remain constant from the creation on. So Islam is both the ever valid religion established at creation called to mind anew, and at the same time, via the *sharī'a* which Muḥammad is understood to have received together with the Qur'ān and the new regulations for life contained in it, a positively revealed, new and final order of life for the whole of mankind.

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'Islam as an attitude'

ELSAS As *dīn*, that is religion towards God, Islam is, as the term itself indicates, firstly an existential perception and only secondly the specific community.

What is already implied in the Qur'ān is often also encountered in dialogue with Muslims and may well be expressed by the phrase 'Islam as an attitude': people who are trying hard, though they may be Christians or Jews, can, in a wider sense, also be seen as believers and as muslims. Hence, at first the sense is of an inward attitude of orientation towards God. Could this be a point of contact for dialogue? Approaching it from another direction, to what extent can Christianity understand itself as a religion in a wider sense, or an attitude of faith, such as may also be found in others?

SCHIMMEL I welcome Mr. Zirker's expression of criticism about Paret's translation of the Qur'ān because for the Muslim, for the orthodox Muslim, represented for instance in Pakistan by Mawdūdī (d. 1979), Islam is not a special religion, but an attitude. Mawdūdī writes in his book published in 1972 that everything in the world practises Islam: the plants by obeying the law of blossoming and withering, the stars by remaining in their orbits. In brief, what we see in nature, which may appear to us as following a natural law, is basically the fact that, as Islam sees it, nature tends towards complete submission.

It is interesting to observe that in Indian Islam (elsewhere it is not so obvious) one can call someone who belongs to this absolutely initial stage of religion given by God 'a muslim', but someone who expressly professes Islam is then generally called a Musulman: this expresses the difference between the primeval form of Islam, according to which everything is *muslim,* 'submitting itself' – as Goethe says in his *West-Östlicher Divan:* "Wenn Islam Ergebung in Gottes Willen heißt, in Islam leben und sterben wir alle" [If Islam means submission to the will of God, then in Islam we all live and die] – and the specific religion of someone, who as Musulman professes his religion and tries to live accordingly.

ELSAS This resonates with what the Biblical tradition, for example in Psalm 104, expresses as the general praise given by the whole creation, when the heavens and the earth praise God – which can also be said about Christians and Muslims as part of the creation. It would be important also to appreciate in this a general basis for approaches to a way of dialogue open to the more recent religious communities for they have developed within this context of creation seen as a whole.

BSTEH A. Is there not implicit in this a deep approach towards perceiving a commonality which simply exists wherever creation is affirmed, where the order of creation is lived, where someone gives water to a thirsty animal, or to a flower; where someone clothes a naked person or simply shares

the joy of someone who experiences joy, and wherever any creature joins in the creation's one polyphonic song of praise in this way? Would not this commonality, which extends to the ultimate roots of existence, be more important and true than the commonalities that might develop on the level of reflection on all kinds of (often even artificially constructed) agreements?

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| Islam and the history of salvation | **HORN** In what sense can one say that Islam does not base its claim on a concept based on the history of salvation, when it proceeds after all from the fact that the final form of God's will entered into history with the Prophet? |

Does this not assert an eschatological intervention and a new order into which the whole of mankind should be integrated? Should this apply not only to the outward order, but above all to purity of faith in God itself, so that in this claim to be purifying, surpassing and fulfilling, something has finally become visible which comes from God and could eventually become a new, and at the same time final, epoch of history ordained by God.

ZIRKER We must first note that, according to the Qur'ānic understanding, many prophets were sent to many peoples in all periods of history to recall repeatedly the original order of creation. We find a great many stories, but not a history of salvation in the sense of a developing course of learning or revelation. From Muḥammad and the Qur'ān onwards, a *sharī'a* was now to become the ultimate order of life for mankind as a whole. In the context of this universal perspective, which was not realized until the Qur'ānic revelation was proclaimed, the 'history of salvation' was spoken of in the lecture, even though the term is not Islamic and was only used in Christian theology relatively late. So even if the Qur'ān is the definitive revelation and Muḥammad is also the final Prophet, it is still not easy to say that Muḥammad is an eschatological figure and it may, in view of the ambiguity of the word, tend to give rise to misunderstandings. There are moments in Mecca when Muḥammad fills his proclamation so intensely and immediately with the idea of the last Judgement that one may understand it as an urgent reference to an imminent event (cf. Qur'ān 53,57 f.). The characteristic 'now and not yet' which we must perceive in the New Testament when considering Jesus does not, however, exist; so applying the term 'eschatological' to Muḥammad involves problems.

Misunderstandings also easily arise if one applies the three terms 'purifying', 'surpassing' and 'fulfilling' to the Qur'ān: 'purification' is certainly to the point if it is understood in the sense of reform and re-calling; 'surpassing'

can be correctly applied if it is understood only in the context of formally safeguarding the Book, so that mankind as a whole can receive it unfalsified; 'fulfilment' should preferably not be used in this context, since, from a Christian perspective, it misleadingly suggests even more strongly a progressive development in the content of revelation. Finality, however, seems to the point in view of the universality and future of the Qur'ānic message. So in this sense there has been a history of salvation since Muḥammad, if we want to call it so.

This universal perspective, embracing humanity as a whole, is seen in the Qur'ān as based in principle on the creation. Although humankind was created as a community, they still deviated in many respects from the right path, and what had then been happening in the individual peoples remains a priori only of a partial nature – until the announcement of the Qur'ān.

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| defeat and suffering in the existential implementation of faith in Islam | **BSTEH P.** Is it not a characteristic of modernity that it has brought teleological thinking into crisis and as a result has brought us back closer to an old tradition, which tends to perceive the order of creation from an eschatological perspective and in that way overcomes the crisis in faith? Here we may recall how, at the end |

of the Book Job, the song in praise of creation emerges from the crisis. So should we not make the dynamic of salvation history or soteriology the subject of our faith in a new way? In this context we may also ask to what extent tragedy, failure and defeat are of topical interest in the existential implementation of faith in Islam and its complex culture.

SCHIMMEL This is rather hard to answer. An Orientalist wrote a short time ago that Sunnī Islam has an unbroken trust in victory and has always taken the positive side, the side of optimistic hope, whereas in Shīʿī Islam the tragic element, the element of defeat and failure, perhaps plays a more important role, and this is why, in some respects, Shīʿī religiosity is closer to the Christian believer than Sunnī. The motif of the passion strikes similar chords.

ELSAS Could we also approach this topic, if we reflect on the tension between the Hidjra, on the one hand, where Muḥammad first had to emigrate from Mecca, and his revelatory experiences being interrupted, which was accompanied by profound temptations, and then, on the other, the experience of Badr, which could be interpreted as the affirmation of God?

SCHIMMEL ... and then the small set-back of Uḥud, which in the Qur'ān is put down to the fact that there were hypocrites among the Muslims who

did not participate wholeheartedly. Basically, however, all this follows the pattern of all the stories of the prophets in the Qur'ān: the prophet preaches, he and his message are rejected, and finally he and the message of God are the winners after all.

the mystics' theology of passion

We may also consider the whole theology of passion and of the mystics' 'die before you die': that the whole of their life consists of numerous self-sacrifices, and after each self-sacrifice one finds oneself on a new spiritual and psychological level. But they are deliberately chosen sacrifices. There is also, of course, suffering through no fault of one's own, but in mysticism the issue is primarily one of suffering that is consciously accepted.

We may also clearly think here of the juxtaposition of the two states of *qabḍ* and *basṭ*: *qabḍ*, compression, being pressed together closely, *basṭ*, unfolding oneself, or 'cosmic awareness', as we may often translate it. It is very interesting that the classical school of Djunayd (d. 910) in Baghdad held the view that the state of *qabḍ* was considered by the 'sober' mystics to be more perfect than the joyful unfolding in *basṭ*, a view which then spread among the Shādhiliyya-order in North Africa and from there throughout the Near East. For in the state of *qabḍ*, where one feels as if one's soul has to find room in the eye of a needle (as a beautiful Persian phrasing has it), if one is compressed so tightly that one sees no way out, nothing is left but to trust in God, and to hold out even under the toughest conditions in hope and utter submission, in *islām*, until, all of a sudden, the reversal comes which the mystics call 'the sun at midnight'. The parallel with John of the Cross and his teaching about the dark night which the soul first has to go through, is very striking here.

However, at this point we must remember that reading mystical literature, especially mystical poetry, gives the impression that the Ṣūfīs lived in constant ecstasy, felt at one with everything, and saw the world full of light and glory. The whole of Persian, Turkish and Urdu poetry is permeated by this idea. But for very many mystics this time of the dark night, in which they really no longer had anything to rely on and hold onto except their faith, remained theologically fruitful.

partial failure in history and a possible meaning attributed to it

WISSE   The recently published book by Gotthard Fuchs and Jürgen Werbick, *Scheitern und Glauben. Vom christlichen Umgang mit Niederlagen* (Freiburg etc., 1991) also points out that failure may become the grace of a new beginning. Now has Islam not experienced,

in the course of history, the problem of partial failure, recurring repeatedly and having to be overcome?

ZIRKER   Although Muslims may not introduce the term 'failure', there is in fact – apart from certain historical periods – a particularly aggravating manifestation of failure: Islam, the Qur'ān and Muḥammad emerged – in contrast especially with the scriptural religions which were at odds with one another – to form a unified community, a brotherly community, intended to be unlike the others. However, for many Muslims the experiences of history often give rise to almost depressive reactions; memories often include the extreme darkness in one's own history, not only darknesses inflicted by others, but darkness resulting from one's own inabilities. The claim that a peaceful and unifying word was now being brought to the world was not fulfilled, but in addition to that, the picture within the community was one of disruption, and of a community often disunited – a development that began straight after the death of Muḥammad. This is something that is certainly experienced as a failure and there is no sign of where a relevant response to it may be found. There certainly is the positive impulse: we can do it differently, we have to get out of it. But to the question: Was this failure meaningful? there is no pertinent answer.

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God the incomprehensible one

WOLBERT   How does Islam reflect on the theme – which is part of our everyday life – that something has happened that has had bad consequences, but it is not possible to reproach morally the person who is 'blamed' for it?

SCHIMMEL   If such a situation came about in Islamic literature, the solution would always be: this was God's scheme ('schemer' is one of God's attributes) and he led man into this situation, for a reason known to him, God, alone. For, as the Qur'ān says, God "cannot be questioned for His acts" (Sūra 21,24). For modern man, this is very hard to understand: that there is this absolute, divine will, which is not to be questioned, which has simply to be accepted, and that the solution emerges, if one accepts it in patience.

... and He knows it best

BSTEH A.   As Paul in his Letter to the Romans, considering the incomprehensibility of God's decisions and ways, breaks into praising the glory of God (11:33–36), so the believer would certainly always have to proceed on the basis that it is because of the divinity of God that he is confronted again and again in his life with the incomprehensibility of God's decisions, and that, whenever he accepts the decisions willed by God, he is not confronted with

some kind of blind fate, but can be sure of falling into the abyss of the infinite wisdom and mercy of God.

SCHIMMEL   The Muslim would think in exactly the same way, that this reality, which manifests itself in the most diverse forms, is basically much too great to be called into question; one would not be crushed by it, but one would know: it is *al-ḥaqq,* it is the absolute truth. If something happened which one absolutely does not understand, the common, traditional Muslim would always say in the end: God is the Wise One, he knows best. It is always easier to encounter one another in this faith than to discuss theological subtleties.

criteria necessary in order to prevent misuse

VIRT   In looking critically at our own history of ethics, the question arises of the factors that may cause this argument about the ultimate validity of faith to be misused and turned into an excuse for not accepting responsibility for the causes of preventable suffering. Are there criteria that can be applied to prevent this becoming an ideology that might hinder working at what are perhaps urgent and essential changes in structures and conditions?

SCHIMMEL   If we extend this whole idea of divine wisdom to predestination too, we find that great thinkers in medieval and even more in contemporary Islam have always said that faith in absolute predestination and in the fact that behind everything that happens there is an absolute will, can very easily tempt people to become lazy and flee from responsibility.

"deus semper maior" – "Allāhu akbar"

BSTEH P.   Is there in the Muslim tradition an expression analogous with the Christian "deus semper maior", describing the always greater greatness of God? Is there a similar comparative and dynamic way of expressing this "deus semper maior" which may, of course, initially be something like a formula, but, understood rightly, contains a very interesting programme?

SCHIMMEL   We only have to recall *"Allāhu akbar* – God is greater". Theology says that whatever we try to express, there is no perfection than which there is not an even greater perfection in God. And with the *"Allāhu akbar"* which is part of the five daily calls to prayer (and repeated over and over again in the ritual prayer) reference is already made to the fact that God is not only greater than everything created, but also, as the Qur'ān says: "[...] (for He is) above what they attribute to Him!" (Sūra 6,100); this means that no matter how close we may come to this greatness, there always remains a still higher perfection or a greater greatness beyond.

BSTEH P.   And this call repeated five times is not just a comparative? It does not just mean 'God is greater'?

SCHIMMEL   It is an elative, it means: God is greater than everything.

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religion, *dīn,* and religions

DUPRÉ   How can one somehow define the semantic field of *dīn?*

ZIRKER   Although this is not easy, we may perhaps mention the fact that in Islamic terminology we generally refrain from using the plural of *dīn, adyān.* For instance, if we want to say 'history of religions': *tārīkh al-adyān,* it is felt to be a suspect expression because there is only one fundamental *dīn,* of which all other 'religions' are considered as different expressions and developments. *dīn* is thus the order of God, the fundamental religious order, which is reflected in the order of this world, and is present even in the public domain, as a fundamental order that makes its imprint even on the state.

DUPRÉ   Is there a connection between this and the *dharma*-understanding in the Indian religions?

ZIRKER   Without being more familiar with the detailed implications of the *dharma*-concept, we may perhaps see a common feature in the fact that *dīn* means the structure that is rooted in the world, as well as what is to be realized in the consciousness of man.

VANONI   In Old Hebrew, one could perhaps see an analogy in 'fear of the LORD', *yir'at YHWH,* the Jewish expression for religion. This term does not occur in the plural. But the content is different, since the root meaning of *dīn* also has something to do with law – for example, *dayyān* is a judge. Perhaps the difficulty with using the plural of *dīn* may also be caused by the fact that one could make do with the singular in a pre-scientific age when there was no reflection about the others or comparison with them.

the problem of 'finalities'

DUPRÉ   We can also recognize our own position in the fundamental religious understanding of Islam, appealing from the Qur'ān for a life of dedication and fear of God, promising bliss and joy in God, but – because of our limitations – not excluding problems with God either. Despite all the differences between traditions, we are able not only to live side by side, but also to talk with one another on this basis. However, if it is then said that this is the final revelation, if a claim to universality is made and it is said that other religious expressions have lost their validity, if someone alleges that

my way of seeing and believing is no longer acceptable, there are two possible consequences: either I believe this claim and align myself with it, or I view it as unsustainable and reject it. With that the problem of finalities arises, so that one may of course also ask: if there can be no plural form of *dīn*, how can there be a plural of 'finality'?

Do Muslims too reflect on this problem, which is one that concerns the dignity of our fellow human beings? The possibility of dialogue seems to depend largely on how far we are able mutually to acknowledge each other in the specific character of our respective traditions and our understanding of truth, and so work towards a universality in which neither side dominates, but mutuality can unfold.

ZIRKER Even though Muslims may hesitate to use the plural form of *dīn*, from a linguistic perspective its use would certainly be possible. In fact, the respective claims to validity of Christianity and Islam (each springing from a different root, but both very similar structurally in that they claim ultimacy and universality) cannot be proclaimed together in such a way that each could say: I recognize what is mine and what is yours as mutually consistent. At the same time we can see that neither of the two religions could historically prove its claim to ultimacy and universality.

mutual claims of validity

It is the task of Christianity and of Islam to reflect about how, although their claims to validity cannot ultimately be reconciled, they could live peacefully side by side and play a part together in shaping this world. But this does not seem to be quite enough. For in such a situation two ultimate claims confront each other, and neither side can blame the other for being unable to be convincing, no matter how open-minded they are or how carefully the case is made. This inability to persuade the other that one's own claim is the better of the two and to motivate him to accept it, must at some point undermine one's self-confidence: there is the simple question: why are there reasonable, respectable human beings and highly developed cultures to which in the long run this claim obviously cannot be communicated? Simply continuing to say, "We are right" and at the same time realizing that we cannot make the others understand, will not do.

DUPRÉ We shall have to follow the path that has been suggested here, even though we cannot yet know what the outcome will be. Are Muslims also reflecting on a solution to this problem, which is an obstacle to an authentic togetherness, and hence to a sincere dialogue?

is there a search for solutions to problems?

ZIRKER On our own side, we can hardly see that this is being done either. On the Christian side, did we not avoid the challenge by shifting the whole problem from fundamental theology and the question: how can I credibly convey my convictions?, to soteriology and the question: how can others be saved? Facing the many people belonging to other religions and against the background of new theological insights, Vatican II – very differently from the assertions of the Council of Florence, which continued to fly the flag of the old axiom "extra Ecclesiam nulla salus" – opened up quite new perspectives which still, however, cannot be used to solve the problem we are considering here: what about my claim to validity and truth, which is in principle conceived universally, but is massively limited with regard to the possibility of being communicated and established among others?

insufficiency of approaches made so far in the Christian domain

This creates embarassments which invade both religions and theologies, at first as facts, but eventually as problems to be thought through. It cannot be assumed that theology is innately capable of achieving this. Theology does not produce awareness in the Church. It is, if it is doing sound work, dependent on a preceding awareness; it can formulate hypotheses and examine how far they are received. In theology we cannot anticipate what the Church's state of awareness will be in the next two hundred or five hundred years, though we may perhaps formulate dilemmas in an acceptable way.

RABERGER In dogmatic theology this question has become rather contentious, triggered primarily by various questions raised in Christian-Jewish dialogue, and attempts are now being made to confront the dilemma by means of a messianic rather than an incarnational christology.

HORN There is, of course, the fundamental question of whether it is in fact possible to move from incarnational Christology toward messianism, as has been attempted, for example, by the American theologian Paul Knitter. It is not easy to see how this can be done without calling into question the Council of Nicaea, and how could it then be compatible with the most fundamental historical consensus on faith which was reached at Nicaea and has endured up to the present time?

VANONI But at the same time the question arises of whether we have come to terms with the fact that basically we consider the hellenization of the Church as the norm in ecclesiastical history. Are we sufficiently aware of what happened before, that at the beginning, in Acts, the first

convert came from Africa, and that there are Syrian churches, etc.? Are we sufficiently aware of the fact that, when we speak of inculturation, we always speak of how we have to translate the structure and form of Christianity that established itself later in the Greek context? Does it have to be done only via the Greek route?

learning to deal with plurality

ZIRKER Christians as well as Muslims can already find many opportunities to learn how to deal with plurality within our own society, which is growing more and more pluralistic; coping with this plurality is one of the preconditions for being fully able to live with one another. In the changing situations in the course of every individual's life, this will vary widely in extent. Although we can learn a lot here, we are certainly also justified in being careful not to go to excess; for plurality may overstretch us and then it destroys the community. It is important that we restrict ourselves to a basis where, in living together with other people, we do not demand that our own convictions always have top priority, but where a common minimum which is necessary for all to live their life, is the goal: and that is not an arbitrary minimum such that people can change things at their own discretion, but a minimum of shared convictions which is an adequate basis for arriving at practical rules of engagement in the socio-political domain.

for the public domain minimal rules for playing the game

It is far more difficult for Islam than for Christianity to accept, in view of its own convictions, the adequacy and acceptability of this common basis of minimum rules for playing the game which is necessary to maintain life in the public domain of our pluralistic society. First, in the background, Islam may always tend to the ideal that everything would really be much better if only we had a total _sharī'a_, a divine law. In addition there is also the frequent experience of present-day Muslims of the West striving for power and of colonialism, and their concern that there is a potential or a desire for the destruction of Islam.

Muslims have also not often had good opportunities to learn, practise and experiment with pluralism in society. They see that much gets lost in our society; they feel threatened by our society and are often worried even by economic concerns, so the necessary composure is missing. But we may also feel here and there in the Church that fears are being revived, and sometimes we may become afraid of the other's fear more than of pluralism. To practise the latter day by day, to put up with frictions cropping up here and there, and yet encounter each other on the ground of religious freedom without being afraid, is something we gain, and which also has to be repeatedly thought through theologically. It simply will no longer do to make a certain religious creed the legal basis of a public policy.

internalization – secularization – open spaces to think

DUPRÉ Thinking through the history that has brought the various traditions to the attitudes towards pluralism that exist today in the social domain should be seen as an essential contribution towards making interreligious dialogue possible. Apart from adequately taking into consideration the question of which standards we apply in this respect to the analysis of our own history and that of the other traditions, the following stages will be important for the satisfactory accomplishment of this task. One stage will be the internalization into our own faith and thinking of the experience we encounter when we confront our own history and other cultures: here we have to apply certain consistent standards and preconditions if we want to approach matters from within, from the perspective of the theological questions we raise; this is, as it were, the tension between comparative religion (and perhaps also philosophy) and theology.

A second stage which in this context deserves special attention is the process of secularization: all that is possible today by way of living peacefully together in our pluralistic world, even a meeting like this one here, has mostly become possible only through an international legal system which has developed alongside what we call secularization, which in fact makes it possible, despite all our different points of view, not to fight against one another, and even commits us not to do so.

As a third stage we could see the need for an open space to think which is vital for reflecting on truth under finite conditions. In our tradition we have the universities which we may well call such 'open spaces to think', where theology is included as a branch of learning.

As far as the Islamic world is concerned, reference has already been made to the importance of the schools in which a detailed interpretation of the law developed. Has consideration also been given to what we call academic freedom?

ZIRKER There is no precise answer to this question, since in this sense 'the Islamic world' does not exist, but only parts or groupings often very different from each other within a world that bears the imprint of Islam. Concerning the question of secularization, we can only say that, thanks to the press, this is mainly a term of abuse. The most visible aspects of it are the corruption of morals, exploitation of women, all the questionable phe-

nomena attendant upon tourism, among which we may even count cable TV which is transmitted into hotels, and many other things, so that the experience of the West frequently becomes a very depressing experience for Muslims. In the face of such negative impressions, it is hard to make other people understand that despite all this, the secularized society means first and foremost something quite different to us – it means that thinking space free from fear which was mentioned above, although, even for us this is not granted everywhere and always.

With regard to freedom of thought, freedom within the various doctrinal traditions, and especially freedom concerning historical-critical questions, in general it exists only to a very limited extent. On all these issues there is a very informative book by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn: the story of his life, in Arabic published under the title *al-Ayyām*.[1] From a respectful distance, the author describes here, among other things, the difficulty of studying at al-Azhar for someone who asks modern, critical questions – despite all the efforts made to create a certain amount of free space.

sociology of religion and criticism of religion

RABERGER In the past – and the process still continues – we in the Christian community were often very radically challenged by research in the field of sociology of religion, by reflections and questions raised that were critical of religion, which often broke through our immunizing circular strategies of self-defence. What are the reactions to these questions of Muslims whose religion, society and culture meet similar challenges in the fields of sociology and criticism of religion, bearing in mind that they live in a society which is almost globally determined by the same reality, one characterized by a consistent rationalism, be it in its economic structures, in the digital technologies or in other domains?

ZIRKER We may find this particularly interesting, because in the Middle Ages there was a prolific historian and sociologist in the Islamic world, Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406), who confronted the Islamic world with perspectives, criteria and methods which are exciting from the perspective of the history of science. To what extent this could be done today is, frankly, another matter. There would certainly be some more anxious reactions here and there. On the other hand, sciences such as sociology are not simply

regulated by theologians; they also have their own space. Ibn Khaldūn proceeded from the idea that social conditions, of which religious culture is one, depend among other things on climatic zones, town-country relations and the creation of certain cultural forms. Thus, with reference to Islam, he held the opinion, for example, that the period when one Caliph alone could be expected to function as the head of an Islamic *umma* was over by the time a multiplicity of Caliphs existed. And this was not only to be understood as referring to a historical reality, but also as an assertion of theoretical conformity with a natural law, which was shattering and disturbing for the theologians of that time.

This reference back to Ibn Khaldūn is intended to point to the fact that in principle the Islamic world is open to such questions, which may certainly also include the problem of the plurality of Islamic world.

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religious freedom as an individual's right to choose

ZIRKER If we look at the different facets that have to be taken into consideration when dealing with the understanding of religious freedom, prominent today is the conception of freedom of religion as a personal right to choose. It is precisely this subjective right to determine for myself my own religious stance which does not exist within the framework of the *sharīʿa* and traditional Islamic society. When Muslims here and there refer to the fact that Islam has a great tradition of religious freedom, it is correct insofar as in Islam the People of the Book were guaranteed legal security, which was not granted in Christian societies before modern times. But this did not at all represent a personal right to choose: in an Islamic society, a Christian could not become a Jew, and a convert to Islam could not return to Christianity. It was rather a matter of being allowed, as one of the People of the Book, to live with a certain freedom, but not of being allowed to make a personal decision without reference to society. Being allowed to give up one's religion and declare in public that in fact one no longer wants to be a Christian or a Muslim, or being allowed to be an atheist, all this is for us a fundamental right, and it does not exist as such in the traditional type of Islamic society.

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on the Islamic understanding of 'theocracy'

BARTH On the question of the social implications of Islam, a relevant term is 'theocracy': in Mr. Zirker's lecture the word was already put between inverted commas and it was clear that there certainly are areas for

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[1] *The Days (al-Ayyām* in Arabic) is a three-part autobiography. Part one: *An Egyptian Childhood* (first published in a serialised form in 1926–1927). Part two: *The Stream of the Days* (1940). Part three: *A Passage to France* (1967).

individual responsibility: how much space, how much room for manœuvre is there really? And what about our efforts to open up towards a multi-cultural society where we encounter in Islam a culture which seemingly tends to exclude 'multiculturality' in principle? Against the background of the general problem concerning the relation between church and state, the question arises for a Protestant theologian of what positions are possible from the Islamic perspective: are there possibilities for me, as a human being and believer, to emancipate myself from the state, if it is defined in such strongly religious terms?

KHOURY The structure of the Islamic state is called a theocracy because the constitutional law and the supreme authority in the state does not derive from those who rule it, but from a law that, in its broad principles, is basically formulated in the Qur'ān and in its detail is expressed and handed down in the tradition of Muḥammad, the Ḥadīth. It is therefore to this constitutional law authorized by God that the actual authority is imputed, and not to those who rule, who have no scope at all for changing it. However, since not everything in this constitutional law is instituted as binding, the result is that there are certain margins for development within Islam.

how are individual laws passed?

So in an Islamic state laws are passed in detail in the following way:

(1) According to Islamic law, if in view of a certain problem a government has to pass a law, it has to consult the jurists about whether there is already a directive in the Qur'ān to deal with this problem. If this is the case, the government has no leeway – what is laid down in the Qur'ān is state law.

(2) If, with reference to this problem, there is no ordinance in the Qur'ān, as is usually the case, there is more hope of finding something in the Ḥadīth (reflecting the political conditions of a mini-state), although the traditions are graduated. First there are the traditions which have been accepted in general as genuine decisions of Muḥammad handed down without interruption. After the Qur'ān, they have the second highest authority. The majority of the Ḥadīths, however, belong to the second or third category: the second category contains those Ḥadīths which are generally acknowledged, but not handed down via an uninterrupted tradition; they arose in the second or third generation, and naturally they do not have the same authority as those of the first category. To the third category finally belong those Ḥadīths which go back to only one source, but are acknowledged

by the Islamic community as true dicta according to the criteria of Ḥadīth criticism.

Since most dicta belong to this third category, there are endless discussions among jurists as to whether or not they should now be applied. There is much freedom of interpretation for the jurists with regard to these dicta, particularly because in this third category many Ḥadīths contradict each other and many diverse opinions are held about one and the same problem. This leads to the differing resolutions in the various law schools – in accordance with the general system followed in each school.

(3) In cases, for which nothing relevant can be found in either the Qur'ān or the Ḥadīth, it is said that one has to see whether there was a consensus on the matter in the first community, and so whether deciding one way or another would be in line with the Qur'ān and Prophetic tradition. When there was absolute agreement on a certain issue, this has to be accepted as law – which, although not the word of God, is still authorized by God. Since this source helps very little in taking legal decisions either, a further possibility is having recourse to arguing from analogy, *al-qiyās:* thus concluding from one case in the Qur'ān or in the Ḥadīth that another parallel case can be decided analogously.

(4) Finally, in all other cases the jurists have the duty to find a reasonable, adequate solution in the spirit of Islam. In this very wide domain where the scholars have considerable scope, the following principles are to be applied:

• first is the principle that a legal decision has to serve the interests of the community;

• then there is the principle that, if there is an existing (non-Islamic) law that fulfils its function, it can be taken over insofar as it does not contradict the law of Islam. (Thus, in Indonesia, common law, alongside Islamic law, is a component of state law. A similar situation applied in Persian and Byzantine administrative law.);

• then there is also the principle of maintaining existing legal conditions: this means that, for example, when it is public knowledge that something is owned by a certain person and whoever contests this cannot present any proof to the contrary, then the legal status quo is acknowledged as valid even within the meaning of Islamic law;

• finally there is the principle of equity, of alleviation: a judgement should not only be made in the interest of the community, but also in order to make it easier for people to obey the laws of God.

There is a tendency among people in general to see freedom not quite as an opportunity but perhaps rather as a risk.

A Muslim can live in accordance with his tradition even in a non-Islamic country so long as he can fulfil his religious duties and is not subjected to any kind of oppression. If, however, the state is Islamic, it is obligatory for society itself to be governed according to Islamic law.

on the relation between state and religion

With regard to the Protestant tradition's doctrine of 'the two governments', what possibilities of emancipation are there in the context of the Islamic state?

Islam would have to be capable of withdrawing from state oppression or manipulation. In view of the close intertwining of state and religion, this is very difficult: there is always the danger that either the state is controlled by the jurists, or, vice versa, that the state controls the Islamic society. If everything is done in the right order, the Islamic state, when a law is to be promulgated, passes the bill to the office in charge of examining whether the law is worded in accordance with Islam or contradicts it. If a contradiction is discovered, the bill goes back to the government or parliament; if not, it is passed. The implicit danger is that the state gets everything it wants from the scholars, as long as this is not in direct contradiction to Islam.

Nevertheless, theoretically, Islam always has the possibility of starting emancipatory movements in the name of monotheism. The people can call the state to account if it does not accomplish the tasks entrusted to it in the interest of the community and does not act according to the law of God. When the community was still small and manageable, this happened repeatedly, as history testifies. Ever so often common people did protest against the Caliphs, even after the Umayyads had established a strong empire.

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can someone be a Muslim without knowing the Prophet?

VIRT Do we really need a historical revelation, given to a specific human being at a specific point in history – or is the path to the well, the *sharīʿa*, not simply accessible to all human beings who are really open and ready to respond without any prejudice to what is revealed by God?

SCHIMMEL This is turning to the question of natural revelation which, in a certain sense, is of course possible. A relevant example which the mystics liked to put forward, would be the figure of the Yemenite Uways al-

Qaranī who, according to the legend, was a shepherd in Yemen, had become a Muslim without knowing the Prophet, and had thus acknowledged the revelation. Muḥammad's words about him are said to be: "I feel the breath of the Compassionate, *nafas ar-raḥmān,* coming from Yemen", because he saw that there was a human being who had not heard the revelation at all and had nevertheless known this breath of the Merciful One. Perhaps the Islamists would not be happy about such a statement coming from a non-theologian. The mystics, however, always admitted the possibility for somebody like Uways al-Qaranī to have found the right religion without having heard about it – and therefore Uways was a favourite saint of very many mystic movements.

PRENNER And what about the figure of Abraham in the Qurʾān and the knowledge of God he acquired from watching the stars come and go?

SCHIMMEL This is an ideal example for the guidance man is given, and Islam, as the primeval religion, is really presupposed here when Abraham understands how the stars, the moon and the sun, after having risen, disappear again and then says, "I love not those that set", and turns towards their creator: "For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to God." (Sūra 6,76.79). Abraham was a *ḥanīf,* one who had the true faith in God before the individual *sharīʿas* came.

Essentially, even Adam too was a monotheist and knew the duties of a Muslim. The history of the prophets actually relates that Adam had already learned all the Islamic rites; when, after having been expelled from Paradise, he met Eve again in Mecca, the angel Gabriel came and instructed him about everything concerning the pilgrimage, prayer and the rest. Thus far, the Islamic law is already projected backwards into primeval times. Yet, the Qurʾān says nothing about it; it just states that Adam was shown the grace of God, and this presupposes that he also had the right faith. Nevertheless he fell – but without his fall bringing eternal corruption for mankind. He of course lived before the prophets who had brought a *sharīʿa,* and this is where the difficulty lies: as long as these *sharīʿas* did not exist, meditating on the works of God was a way to achieve the right faith. But what about our situation in which the various *sharīʿas* already exist? This is the question.

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the *sharīʿa* of Muḥammad and those of the other prophets

ELSAS If we place the social order of Islam in the narrower sense alongside the *sharīʿa* that Jesus as a prophet brought into this world, then, on the basis that every prophet and messenger of God in turn brought his *sharīʿa*, a certain socio-political plurality on an Islamic basis can be conceived; and whoever keeps to the *sharīʿa* valid for him, can – as a believer in that way – be included also under the aspect of the *Allāhu akbar*.

SCHIMMEL Without being myself a Muslim exegete, I would still say in view of the tradition that every prophet brought his *sharīʿa*, that this would certainly be possible. If one sees Muḥammad's *sharīʿa* as the great road, leading from primeval times up to the Last Judgement, then the other *sharīʿas* – not only that of Christianity and of Judaism, but also those of the other (legislator-)prophets, as for instance of Noah – can be seen as side-roads, along which, in the course of time, one may also arrive at the destination; even though, in some cases, it takes a little longer or is not quite as certain as on the great road of the Islamic *sharīʿa*. It seems possible to hold this view and in this respect many Muslims are rather open-minded. After all, in accordance with the *sharīʿa*, it proved possible in practical life for a non-Muslim from among the 'People of the Book' (Jews and Christians) to hold any office in the state, with the exception of the sovereign's: thus Boutros Boutros Ghali, a Copt, was Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs and held, as Secretary General of the United Nations, an eminent position in the international domain; in Pakistan, for a long time, a Christian was President of the Supreme Court of Law. The fact that, in the practice of everyday life, what is theoretically rooted in Islamic law is often not taken into consideration, does not alter the point that the People of the Book have their own rights. A non-Muslim is only prohibited from bearing witness before the Islamic court of law, but non-Muslims of course have their own courts of law and their own administration under their respective religious head, the bishop or the rabbi or whoever is responsible for them, and medieval history is still full of stories how, nevertheless, a Christian or a Jew, ill at ease with his rabbi or his bishop, came to the Islamic court of justice because he thought that there everything would be a little better for him.

absolute claim of Islam?

WOLBERT What does the absolute claim of Islam mean more precisely? Is there actually, as is often said, no separation between religion and politics, or does politics actually have a certain autonomy of its own? A representative of a secular state, a politician, for example, can certainly feel completely subjected to the claim of God too, but this does not entail any obligation for others to be so. And what about the conception that politics is primarily responsible for the worldly welfare of man, but not for his religious concerns, or for the spreading of religion?

SCHIMMEL The absolute claim of Islam, as Mr. Zirker elaborated most excellently in his lecture, can be understood as the rule of the word of God, as it is presented in the Qurʾān, but not in the sense of the sovereignty of any spiritual leader in Islam. The absolute claim of Islam means to the Muslim that in every situation of his life he has to conduct himself as someone who is in direct encounter with God. According to the *sharīʿa*, the legal Islam, there is thus no separation between what we call a profane or a religious act, as in Judaism, where everything, down to the smallest actions, is regulated. After the *islām*, the first stage, Islam sees as the second stage *īmān*, the faith that lives in the heart; and then, already at the time of the Prophet, a third stage was added, which is formed according to the same grammatical structure, namely *iḥsān*, which actually means 'being charitable' and is from the same root as the term *al-muḥsinūn*, "those who do good", which is often used in the Qurʾān (cf. among others Sūras 2,58.195; 7,56): those who practise *iḥsān* are those who adore God as if one could see him, who act at every moment in the certainty that we are in the presence of God and who, for this reason, do everything as beautifully and perfectly as possible, knowing that this is even a kind of worship.

dīn wa-dawla, religion and state

In fact, the absolute claim of Islam is really rooted in the knowledge that every human action, even the smallest, should be performed as in the sight of God. Here, politics can of course be strongly involved, especially since there is no magisterial authority. Here we perhaps confront a rather difficult question, and there are a number of modern Islamic theologians, who say that *dīn wa-dawla*, state and religion, of which it is usually said that they are two sides of the same coin, do not actually belong quite so closely together. They understand *dīn* more in the sense of religion, as we have used the term since the Enlightenment in Europe. But most Muslims would not make this division.

WOLBERT Robert Schumann, a French politician, was once said to have taken his seat in Parliament as a monk takes his seat in the stalls – to what extent would this differ from the attitude of a Muslim politician?

SCHIMMEL He would probably feel the same way: that he is subject to the law, if he is a pious politician, and that, as far as possible, he should try to orient himself according to the ideals.

PRENNER Does the expression *dīn wa-dawla* date from a more recent period?

SCHIMMEL The expression itself was already in use in medieval times. We know it primarily from the epithets of the sultans, who are called for instance 'Help of the religion and the state'. This was already in use at the time of the Būyids, i.e., in the late 10th and early 11th century. The two terms juxtaposed, *dīn wa-dawla,* then meant: 'in the spiritual world' (or 'in the world of religion') and 'in the world of *siyāsa,* of politics'. By the way, it is interesting that in some contexts the term *siyāsa* does not mean politics, but punishment. The power of *siyāsa* is the power of the state, or also an individual power, to punish. It derives from a root that also produces the word *sā'is,* an animal driver; this is somebody who, more or less gently, makes people choose the right path. The terms *dīn wa-dawla,* although they go back to the late 10th century, have been more strongly emphasized in modern times, against which even Muslim voices have protested.

work as worship

ELSAS In this context parallels with Luther come to mind: one, *siyāsa* as the power of the state to punish and another, the doctrine of 'the two governments', where the state has the power to establish a legal order and where in fact political responsibility stems from awareness that we are in the presence of God. But it also connects with Luther's concept of work: the street sweeper who does his work seriously, in a certain sense worships God.

SCHIMMEL It is a good thing that Luther's reference to the street sweeper and the scullery-maid is mentioned. There is a beautiful saying in Rūmī's *Fīhi mā fīhi:* this world is like the tent of a king, where each of us has a task: the one weaves the tent, the other one pushes in the nails, another one twists the ropes for the tent; and all of them have their task and make efforts to perform it as perfectly as possible in order to have their share in the tent of God and thus draw a little closer to God. So even the most simple work is done in praise of God. It is strange that Islam obviously never elaborated a work ethic, but approaches like Rūmī's are also to be found in Ghazzālī and other writers: if everything we do, whether as a blacksmith or as a farmer, we do in awareness of the absolute presence of God and wishing to glorify and praise him, we perform our worship, and all this joins in the praise of the whole creation. After all, the Qur'ān also suggests that God gave the world to man for him to work in and so do what is good – utterly in the sense of his position as *khalīfa,* as vicegerent and co-responsible. If we were to collect such testimonies from the classical sources, we might find an extremely interesting ethic of values and an altogether new interpretation of the concept of man in the Qur'ān and in Islam, and in this way make a very good contribution to an important aspect of Islamic teaching.

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a religious community without a hierarchy, teaching authority or sacraments?

KHOURY In (Sunnī) Islam, the constituted political community, the *umma,* does not know of any hierarchy or teaching authority. In the Shī'a, it is true, there is a role for a religious leader, the Imām, as a general guide of the community and a kind of teaching authority. To the Sunnīs, who are today the overwhelming majority of Muslims, the Imāms are not clerics: they are commissioned to represent the interests of the community. The Imām is also understood as a model; he directs the community prayer.

This system without a hierarchy and without a teaching authority works if the general public is Islamic; then every community knows what they have to do. For Muslim minorities in the diaspora, however, it is very hard to organize their life in these circumstances, because they have no points of reference and they find no structure for organizing their community properly. Neither is the Muslim community a religious-political community. Muslims certainly have their community prayer and the social dimensions of fasting and the pilgrimage to Mecca, and when they meet in the mosque for prayers on Fridays, they are aware of presenting themselves as a community, their shoulders touching, one row behind the other. But each person has to say his own prayers, which means that the community cannot lift from the individual believer's shoulders his responsibility before God. Each one has to fulfil his own duty before God, but in the community. Both aspects are important. Thus Muslims do not say the same prayer aloud together, as for instance Christians join in saying the Lord's Prayer, but the leader of the prayer announces the sections of the prayer in turn, and then everybody says the prayer on his own.

Thus they perform the various actions of the cult in the community, but not as a community. No sacramental character can be attributed either to the human community, or to anything else in this world. This seems to be con-

nected with Islam's concern for pure monotheism: the conviction that no aspect of this world is capable of mediating grace, of participating in whatever way in the power or mercifulness of God. The gift of grace is granted directly by God, not through the mediation of any creature, person or thing. Nor can the word of the Qur'ān be understood as a sacrament.

When we consider the Christian understanding of the sacramentality that characterizes the realm where God encounters the world, the general understanding of Islam as a religious community without hierarchy, teaching authority or sacraments raises a question that has to be taken seriously by Christian theology.

BARTH This idea that the absence of sacraments may be connected with the question of monotheism seems plausible, and particularly with respect to the rejection of the incarnation. Sacrament and incarnation do indeed belong together in a certain sense, and it is not possible that someone who categorically rejects the incarnation, should think sacramentally.

<div style="margin-left:2em">finding the truth without a teaching authority: advantages and disadvantages</div>

ZIRKER At first, without taking theology into account, it may seem appealing that defining obligations, and arriving at the truth, is the task of the community as a whole, in processes of group-dynamics with the competence of scholarly people who know more than others, but who have to stay in their place in this great process of group-dynamics. However, an everyday and political disadvantage is obvious. The actual consequence of having no institutional church office is that in certain countries Islam can very easily be taken over by the sovereign, for he is in power; he may then also feel it is legitimate for him to say what is Islamic and what is not; or he may get the relevant jurists on his side. The danger of surrendering to the sovereigns and their political machinations may therefore actually arise from the absence of an independent teaching authority.

<div style="margin-left:2em">questions concerning 'sacramentality' in Islam and Christianity</div>

The idea of the absence of sacramentality is also interesting. In view of the pillars of Islam, one could speak of sacramentality in a broader sense[2]; there is in them an outward sign – relevant to the personal and the communal – and a grace this sign works for the individual and the community.

In a further theological reflection, one would have to take into consideration to what extent Christianity has certain sacraments, because an attempt is made to make the event of Christ sacramentally present in the memorial is performed by the congregation, although the historical human being, Jesus of Nazareth, is no longer here. He is not there, but continues to be celebrated as the one who is present; this necessitates sacraments with the dimension of mystery and symbolic energy. Merely confronting Islam with the statement that it has no sacraments would be too negative. The reason would have to be given that it does not need them because the word of God is here as something present, as a book, to be read everywhere, among all peoples, whereas this human being, Jesus of Nazareth, who is no longer historically present, has to be made present in sacraments.[3]

<div style="margin-left:2em">'circumcision' – without a religious meaning in Islam</div>

WISSE In tribal cultures circumcision has a certain religious meaning. Since it is also performed in Islam, I am interested to know whether we can see here certain elements analogous to baptism, the Christian sacrament of initiation.

KHOURY In Islam circumcision has no religious status whatsoever. There is no mention of it in the Qur'ān. It is a semitic custom which is also known among Christians, who do not attribute any religious connotation to it; it is also customary among other peoples in the Orient who have nothing to do with Islam, but understand circumcision as a rite of initiation, whereas Islam, as far as its sources are concerned, never regarded it as a religious act. If a certain religious connotation is added here and there, it is a later development. In the course of time it so happened that Muslims had all their boys circumcised and this became a family celebration. For these reasons, we cannot compare these customs in Islam with circumcision in Judaism.

<div style="margin-left:2em">mediation between God and man?</div>

LEUZE From the Protestant perspective, one might certainly say that Islam is initially somewhat attractive because one might provocatively hold the opinion that in fact it achieves what in the Protestant Churches is understood as the priesthood of all believers, with no ordained priesthood and no clergy. Although Bassam Tibi asserts in his book on Islam that there are, in some sense, clergy in Islam, if we nevertheless take this not to be the case, we may ask, from a Protestant perspective, whether there are not

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[2] Cf. J. van Ess, "Islam", in: E. Brunner-Traut, *Die fünf großen Weltreligionen* (Herderbücherei; 488). Freiburg etc., ⁶1978, p. 73.

[3] On the question of the sacraments see also above, pp. 216–219.

certain elements in Islam which we, as Protestants, also aim at, but have not achieved exactly as they were originally envisaged?

BARTH If Islam is understood as a community whose fundamental concept rejects hierarchy, there is no doubt something in what you say. If, however, we proceed from the Reformed position that the priesthood of all believers is based on the individual's personal listening to the word of God, and becomes real by the one becoming Christ for the other, then it becomes clear that spiritual community does not essentially consist in there being *no* priest, but in *all* being priests, and that the one becomes a priest for the other, and a witness, and a prophet; this is very far from the case in Islam.

KHOURY This very satisfactory description of the concept of priesthood gives a good opportunity to point out that in Islam there is no priesthood at all in the sense that someone is a mediator between man and God. In comparative religion the general concept of priesthood implies that there is someone who can represent the concerns of human beings before God and so have some kind of mediating function between man and God. However, the concept of a general priesthood, in the sense that everyone is a priest, may still be attractive even to Islam: because in Islamic understanding all humans are equal before God, though without implying that there can be in Islam anything analogous to the basic Christian idea of a mediator between God and man, in whatever varying forms it may appear.

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conversion to Islam

CHMIEL According to the Islamic understanding, does one become a Muslim if one declares one's faith in the formula "*lā ilāha illā llāh* – there is no god besides God"?

KHOURY It is necessary to distinguish two terms: the term 'muslim' and the term 'believer'. Whoever declares the whole profession of faith – "There is no god but God, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God" – before two witnesses and does not make clear that he/she does not mean it seriously, becomes a Muslim, i. e., he/she becomes a member of the Islamic community, regardless of what his/her heart feels, because this is a legal act, a legally relevant act, and for the jurists what is valid is what is legally relevant, not someone's inward conviction. But this does not yet make him/her a believer. You only become a believer by inward conviction, not by declaring a formula. Muslims know this, and there has historically been a great controversy between the theologians who say that no one becomes a believing Muslim without inward conviction – and the jurists, who say: how can we determine people's inward conviction?, we have to proceed

from legally relevant acts; if, without any obvious signs that he/she does not mean it seriously, someone declares this formula before two witnesses, then we must assume that this is also his/her inward conviction and he/she becomes a member of our community.

In the conversion of non-Muslims there are in general two phases: professing one's faith before two witnesses and then, in a second phase, deepening one's faith. There is, however, also a reverse procedure which corresponds to the Christian custom, first to have the candidate undergo an extensive catechumenate and only afterwards to admit him to the community of believers.

OTT Does the validity of the formula depend on the intention?

KHOURY This is what the theologians maintain. The jurists, however, are of the opinion that this cannot be determined by them. If the person concerned does not express anything contradictory, it has to be assumed that his/her outward conduct corresponds to his/her inward intention.

In the case of Christians in Islamic countries, a conversion is sometimes not taken seriously by the Islamic community. This is the case when a husband wants to get rid of his wife, but cannot obtain a divorce in his church. When he then converts to Islam, dismisses his wife from his home, and sues for a divorce – but afterwards says that this settles the matter and wants to re-enter his church – this is usually not counted as apostasy from Islam.

synodal processes – and the legal schools in Islam

DUPRÉ If it is said that, unlike Christianity, the Islamic *umma* has no teaching authority, then after all, strictly speaking, it is also true that the Protestant Churches have no magisterial authority.

ZIRKER The various synods up to the level of Ecumenical Councils nevertheless all have their place in the life of the Protestant Churches in a long history of synodal meetings and decisions. From the start, there was nothing similar in the Islamic world – nothing like a synod, whose task it is to bring about certain doctrinal clarifications on the level of authoritative teaching. Another question is how such purposes are connected today with the establishment of the Islamic World Congress, the Islamic World League, etc. However, these supranational Islamic fora are primarily active in questions of a political nature – supporting Islam in the diaspora, responding to Western human rights movements, etc.

DUPRÉ So how is it possible after all to bundle up the Islamic tradition in the four great law schools, which cover very extensive areas and express unity more than diversity?

ZIRKER The traditions established in these law schools were formed by their

founders and their disciples. It was also possible for the four acknowledged traditions (the Ḥanafīs, the Mālikīs, the Shāfiʿīs and the Ḥanbalīs) to be taught and handed on alongside one another, for example at al-Azhar in Cairo. Belonging to one of these schools created a certain feeling of identity among those who counted themselves among their followers, but it never created anything that could be compared with the confessional differences in Christianity. The differences occur in things from the form of marriage to minor variants concerning the position of the body in prayer. But there are also serious differences concerning, for example, the question of how to apply the fundamental principles revealed in the Qurʾān.

the task of the law schools In any case, it is important to note that in general the task of law schools is not strictly speaking to find new laws. Laws are given by God, and the sovereign himself actually only has permission to pass regulations governing their application – administrative regulations, political instructions or whatever terms one may use here. The legislator in the strict sense is God alone. A legislative body with competence in worldly affairs in the strict sense no longer exists.

With the law schools, institutions were established which do not have the quality of a teaching authority or the official character of councils, but which are nevertheless institutionally tangible: there are legal traditions, references to masters and teachers within these law schools, patterns of argumentation, etc. Although such an institution may not be directly understood as an office or even as an administrative body, but as a socially permanent entity, the law schools, of course, must be understood as institutions administering what is legal and binding.

Islam as a form of life and the diversity of the law schools ELSAS Basically, Islam is a way of life but there is nevertheless a plurality of law schools. What about the ʿAlawids from Turkey, for example, who do not belong to any acknowledged school of law in Islam, but nevertheless want to follow some form of practice, although they are not attached to specific outward forms of Islam which are considered important?

SCHIMMEL Although the law schools are historically developed bodies, they are not so firmly closed towards one another. It may be that in one family there are four sons, each of them belonging to a different school of law, and the family can still be a happy one. One can also change from one school of law to another: if you are a Ḥanafī, you can, for instance, ask a Shāfiʿī jurist for a fatwā, if you are sure that it will serve your own purposes.

As for the ʿAlawids, they are of course Shīʿīs, i. e., ultra-Shīʿīs of the Ismāʿīlī group; they are outside the whole system of law schools. In modern times, there is noticeably an increasing tendency for people to choose one law school and take on the taqlīd, the obligation to follow all the decisions of a certain law school, whereas the Salafiyya, starting with Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905), and in the Middle Ages Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), in their efforts towards reform, have again and again insisted on returning, in their search for the law, to the sources, i. e., to the Qurʾān and Sunna no matter what, and rejected all the 'renewals' introduced in the early period of Islam.

There are many Muslims who say, we Turks are Ḥanafīs or we South-Indians are Shāfiʿīs, but in everyday life this only plays a role in family law or in minor formalities. All the differences between the law schools are not as deep as they perhaps seem to be when seen from the outside and someone who does not belong to any acknowledged law school is no different from someone who belongs to a Ḥanafī or Ḥanbalī part of the Islamic culture. And the Shīʿīs have their own law school, whereas the ʿAlawids again submit to other laws, because they belong to the ghulāt (= pl. of ghālī, one who exaggerates, goes beyond all bounds), those who exaggerate the veneration of ʿAlī and certain other people. The Ismāʿīlīs too, have a codex of their own. The Bohorās, a group of the Ismāʿīliyya, have a law that was elaborated in the 10th century, which they maintain even today, whereas for the Agha Khānīs the Agha Khān is the supreme legal authority.

An old Ḥadīth says: "Differences of opinion are a sign of God's grace", aptly characterizing the situation with regard to the plurality of law schools.

KAHLERT So why do we so often hear Turkish Muslims say that this or that which looks a little different is not Islam? "This is not Islam", they say.

SCHIMMEL This is a very modern and subjective development. Turks in particular, who are virtually all Ḥanafīs, should in fact agree on many things. But in the modern world there are many modern interpretations and personal attempts to approach an interpretation, so that it is very easy now to consider everything that is not compatible with one's own opinion as un-Islamic. It is often a question of minor matters, and the Prophet would probably shake his head if he heard something of the kind, because his heart was rather open, even to differences.

Islam and inculturation OTT Is there in Islam today something analogous to the present Christian trend towards inculturation, or does this happen rather unconsciously, unplanned and not thought through?

KHOURY This subject has not been dealt with in the literature, but as far as the practice is concerned, Islam has no great difficulty with it. In a first stage the culture of the country in question is not touched; in a second stage, the _sharīʿa_, as it is practised in the Islamic countries, is increasingly introduced in stages. Neither rites, which would be the subject of inculturation, nor hierarchy are relevant for Islam. Islam is content if it can put its imprint on cultures while each culture retains its own character. From that point of view, we may say that Islam is inculturated all over the world: in the Arab world Islam is Arab, in Turkey it is a Turkish Islam and in Iran an Iranian Islam. Thus it is a fact that Islam can live in different cultures without feeling it has lost some of its substance.

OTT Was there not something similar to what happened in Christianity, which, together with the Gospel, also passed on Christian culture?

KHOURY In the Christian tradition, there has been an inculturation of Christianity into other cultures, but the reverse happened even more. An inculturation of other cultures into European Christianity took place. In the second stage of introducing Islam into a new cultural area, Muslims now often commit the same sins: an attempt is made, with the introduction of the _sharīʿa_, to make everything Arabic. Thus in missions in Africa, an Arab Islam is predominant. In the process of intensifying Arabic, a way of life in accordance with the _sharīʿa_ is also introduced following the model of the Arab countries, because this happens primarily on the initiative of Saudi Arabia with the special promotion of its (Ḥanbalī) law school, whereas it was formerly the less strict Mālikī school that was predominant there.

Muslim minorities and the phenomenon of the 'cultural Muslim'
As for the situation of Islam in the countries in which Muslims are minorities, no successful model has yet been elaborated. The traditional model of tolerance refers to areas where Muslims are the majority and non-Muslims the minority.

In countries where Muslims form only a minority, a particular question is connected with the term 'cultural Muslim', referring to a Muslim who does not practise his faith, but feels bound to the culture in which he grew up. What links him with Islam is therefore this cultural background which he wants to unfold in the context of a possible communication with the Western hemisphere. And so he professes Islam to the extent that Islam has made its mark on culture, but not as a religious system. Here the question becomes pressing of whether we differentiate sufficiently in the encounter between expressions of identity that really have some-

thing to do with Islam and others that are in fact related to culture, but not to Islam as the religious ground of the order of life.

✦

ELSAS In some countries economic pressures motivate many Muslims to emigrate. In recent times this has also been understood as a chance, after escaping the rule of an Islamic country, to exercise one's religious freedom as a Muslim, a possibility offered by the secularized state. For many Muslims this means an opportunity to find an authentic personal way, as German Muslims, for example, and to gather in groups of their own, achieving a German, Austrian or Swiss form of Islam without external pressures. How can Christians support this religious freedom for Muslims, when we consider the different aspects to be encountered in Islam as religion, social order and culture? Can Christian communities provide rooms in which specifically Islamic religious acts are performed? How can the tensions between the claim to universal validity made by both religions, and the Christian obligation to promote a fruitful life together with all people, be resolved in a responsible way?

ZIRKER One may certainly expect with great confidence that the Muslims who live here will make a profound impact on the development of Islam as a whole; that there are chances for Muslims – and also for us – to learn things to which they are not similarly exposed in their countries of origin, and that this will perhaps also have its repercussions in those countries. However, this very much depends on how we grant religious freedom and how much open-mindedness and fearlessness Muslims experience in their immediate surroundings and in their personal contacts with us. Since most of them are here not only as Muslims but also as foreigners, they often have good enough reasons to regard us with anxiety. The question is whether we can remove this.

Here we should often be concerned not so much with the theological problems implied in the relation between Christianity and Islam, but initially quite simply with our constitutions, intending to make possible and guarantee the necessary space for people to live together peacefully with all their psychological and religious differences. Then we may feel challenged to show how far our religious freedom is really important to us in everyday life and worth having.

Man's Path in the Presence of God:
Worldly Happiness and Paradisiacal Perfection

Annemarie Schimmel

1. The path – a metaphor for Islam

A number of books dealing with Islam have the title: "Islam – The Straight Path", and indeed there is probably no better metaphor for the concern of Islam and Muslims than that of the path; for millions of pious Muslims pray daily not just once, but several times, in the five daily obligatory prayers as well as in supererogatory prayers: "*ihdinā ṣ-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm [...]! *Show us the straight way, the way of those on whom thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray" (Qur'ān 1,6 f.). Asking for right guidance is indeed central in Islam, and if we look at the vocabulary of the Qur'ān as well as of the later development, the word *sharī'a* immediately strikes us – a word that is mostly, and also rightly, translated by 'law'. Yet, fundamentally it is the wide, broad path, the safe path that leads in the desert to the spring of fresh water, to the fountain of life. The meaning is that one who follows the *sharī'a* is treading the right path and will find the water of life.

In the brotherhoods of mystics we then find, as a further development of this concept, the term *ṭarīqa*, the smaller 'path', which is a path that leads perhaps more quickly, but through greater difficulties, to this source of life; this is the word for the path of the individual mystic, the *sālik*, 'one who is making his way', and then it becomes the term used to describe the brotherhood itself.

Nor can we forget that the Qur'ān says again and again that man is to do something *fī sabīl Allāh*, literally "on the path of God", which means 'for the cause of God', 'for the sake of God'. This means that there are in the basic vocabulary of the Qur'ān and theology four different concepts linked with the 'path'. And even Islam's four schools of law are called *madhāhib* (sing. *madhhab*, 'a way upon which to go'). It is the path, *sharī'a*, which the Muslim is required to tread. It is a path on which the Prophet – the *uswa ḥasana*, "beautiful example (of conduct)", as the Qur'ān calls him (Sūra 33,21) – serves the Muslim as guide, for the Prophet is also, as the

same Sūra says, the shining lamp, *sirādj munīr* (Sūra 33,46). He is the lamp, the saving light, guiding man in the darkness, in the bewildering desert. The greatest danger is that man, not recognizing the lamp, may stray from the path to which the Qur'ānic prayer alludes, the path of "those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray" (Sūra 1,7), and get lost in the darkness of the seemingly endless desert.

One is never completely sure of one's fate. It may well be that through an unconscious aberration or even through a conscious crime one leaves the path of the *sharī'a*, and then God will perhaps, even probably, allow man to stray in the desert, for he is not only *al-hādī*, 'the one who shows us the straight way,' but also *al-muḍill*, 'the one who lets man go astray'. Therefore the path which man is treading is a path between fear and hope. "Fear and hope are the two wings that carry man towards God", says the tradition; and this is quite natural, for God, whose nature is incomprehensible, manifests himself in the creation in two aspects: *djalāl*, majesty, which inspires fear and awe, what Rudolf Otto would call the "mysterium tremendum", and *djamāl*, beauty, clemency, kindness, the "mysterium fascinans" – and everything that appears and exists in creation may be seen as having these two aspects: the sun is benevolent and beneficial, but the world would be consumed by its heat if it came closer; poison is useful for the snake but destructive to its victim; the wind brings the mild air of spring, but as a hurricane may destroy everything.

Only God is unity, beside whom there is no deity; but with the act of creation, duality came into being, and therefore, as tradition has it, man is "between two of the fingers of God", who moves the former as he wills.[1]

The path given by God, the *sharī'a*, is described and marked with precision. The Prophet not only goes before the believer as a shining lamp and a beautiful example, but he is also said to have declared, "I am the radiant sun and my companions are the stars; whoever among them you follow, you are shown the straight way."[2] We may deduce from this Ḥadīth that the community has a certain choice about which of the 'stars' it wants to follow.

[1] B. Furuzanfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī.* Tehran, 1955, no. 13.
[2] B. Furuzanfar, *op. cit.* (fn. 1) no. 44.

2. The five pillars of Islam

The duties a Muslim is required to fulfil and which are laid on him are in general called the 'five pillars of Islam', so one can compare Islam with a well-built house. But the concept of the 'five pillars' entails certain difficulties not only for the Orientalist, but also for many a pious Muslim. For the first pillar is the *shahāda*, the profession of faith, which means the acknowledgment that there is no god except God and that Muḥammad is the messenger of God.

The profession of faith, *shahāda*

Many years ago, at a bus station in Bursa, in Turkey, I met a bus driver with whom I entered into a conversation, and when he heard that I was teaching at the Ankara Faculty of Theology, he said, "Then surely you can answer my question: the profession of faith is always called the first pillar of Islam, but in fact it is its foundation and without it the other pillars would make no sense!" It seems to me that this is a powerful argument.

In this context we should never forget that anyone who professes a monotheistic religion could agree with the first part of the Muslim profession of faith, whereas the acknowledgement of Muḥammad as the (last and conclusive) messenger of God sets Islam apart as a religion on its own, a religion that appears to the Muslim to be the conclusion of a long development in the course of which, since the days of Adam, God never left the world without prophets to provide guidance. However, after Muḥammad no further prophet, sent by God and bringing a law, will appear.

To take up the argument of the Turkish bus driver, we may say that the house of Islam, *dār al-islām*, is built on the foundation of the *shahāda* and is supported by four pillars: the ritual prayer, the obligatory alms given for the poor, fasting during Ramaḍān and the pilgrimage to Mecca. These are all compulsory for Muslims, men and women. Women are exempt under certain conditions (menstruation, pregnancy and the like), but in the case of fasting they have to make up for the days missed or perform an act of atonement.

Prayer, *ṣalāt* – turning towards God

The aspect of Muslim life which seems to make the strongest impression on outsiders is the ritual prayer, which is performed five times between the time before sunrise and the time after sunset at definite hours of the day

and consists of bowing, prostrating, sitting, standing in a precisely prescribed posture, and reciting Qur'ānic formulas.

Altogether the five daily prayers consist of seventeen prayer-units, rak'a. They may, however, be supplemented by supererogatory units. For the Muslim, the prayers, which one can only offer in a state of ritual purity, really are the heart of the religion. Thus, in the literature one often comes across the Arabic expression lā ṣalāt lahū, or in Persian and Turkish bē-namāz, 'prayerless', to describe somebody who has as it were excluded himself from the community. For Muslims are not only, as is often said, the ahl as-sunna wa 'l-djamā'a, those who follow the Sunna (the tradition of the Prophet) and take their place in the community. They are also the ahl al-qibla, those who turn in prayer towards the same point of orientation, namely towards the Ka'ba in Mecca. The Ka'ba is the centre of the Islamic world, and defining the direction of the qibla, which is needed for the correct performance of the prayers, motivated medieval mathematicians and geographers in many different countries to achieve great results.

Metaphorically, the Ka'ba is the 'House of God': however, prayers offered in its direction are much more than those seventeen rak'a, defined as bodily movements and positions. Since a Muslim recites the Word of God, the Qur'ān, in his prayers it is as if he were personally conversing with God, addressing God with His own words – and so it is, as it were, a 'sacramental' act. Therefore it is always repeatedly emphasized that there is "no prayer without the presence of the heart". Prayers that are just a patter, while one's mind is roaming the world and the formulas are repeated mechanically, are unacceptable. For, if we believe the tradition, prayers were for Muḥammad a repetition, a repeated encounter with what he had experienced during his journey to heaven, the mi'rādj, into the direct presence of God, and again the descriptions which the pious give always show that a 'personal' encounter between God and man is involved here and it appears to man as if, entering into the presence of the greatest King, he is full of devoted awe, or feeling like a sacrificial lamb, he offers himself totally to the mighty Lord – his will, his wishes, his whole being.

The theology of Islamic prayer is one of the most fascinating aspects of the religion; in her beautiful book *Muslim Devotions*[3], C. E. Padwick, a Christian of the Church of England, is the first to refer to the spiritual, the pschological and the esoteric aspects of prayer and to establish parallels with Christian prayer.

[3] London, 1960.

The obligatory alms for the poor, zakāt – turning towards one's fellow human beings

In Qur'ānic usage, closely linked with prayer, ṣalāt, is the term zakāt, a religiously established obligatory payment. The terms are mostly to be found together: if prayer is turning oneself towards God, then zakāt (a term linked with the root zky 'being pure') is turning towards man by paying precisely defined taxes to the poor, travellers and other needy people, who are explicitly specified in Sūra 9,60. Thus, for instance, in Pakistan zakāt has in recent years been used to enlarge religious schools and colleges.

Fasting, ṣawm, during Ramaḍān

To the observer, fasting during Ramaḍān is probably the most difficult obligation, for the fasting begins at first light, when one can distinguish a black thread from a white one, and lasts until the sun has completely set. During this time one may neither eat nor drink nor smoke; one may receive no injections, one may not have sexual intercourse or do a variety of other things. It is particularly the total prohibition of drinking that makes fasting very difficult during the hot summer months. The twenty-nine or thirty days of the fast, which, because of the Islamic genuinely lunar year of 354 days, falls about ten to eleven days earlier every year in terms of the solar year and so moves across all the seasons, is often explained by modernists as a way of feeling solidarity with the poor and the hungry of the world. Unlike fasting in other religions, which often serves as a penance and means of purification, the Ramaḍān fast is a discipline of obedience to the word of God who ordained this fast in the Qur'ān.

The pilgrimage to Mecca, ḥadjdj

The last pillar of Islam is the pilgrimage to Mecca, again, like all the other obligations, prescribed for men and women, if – and here the practical mind of Islam is evident – they are healthy enough and have enough money to undertake the pilgrimage without incurring debts. This was important, because in former times the pilgrimage routes, whether on the long caravan trails from West Africa or Central Asia, or the voyage from India and Indonesia, were extremely dangerous because of the risk of attacks by Bedouin robbers in the desert, shipwreck or epidemics. All this made travelling an adventure to be undertaken only fully trusting in God. But anyone who dies on the way or in the holy city can hope for paradise.

From the beginning, the pilgrimage in the last lunar month of the Is-

lamic year which, like all other months of the lunar year, moves across all seasons, has been a central rite in Islam whose tradition, of course, goes back to pre-Islamic times. Emptied of all pre-Islamic meanings and prescribed in detail by the Prophet during his last pilgrimage shortly before his death, over the centuries the *ḥadjdj* has brought to Mecca thousands, today hundreds of thousands or even millions of people, who perform there precisely ordained rites: walking seven times round the Kaʿba, spending the night on ʿArafāt, "stoning satan", sacrificing the lamb, etc. The pilgrims wear a special garment, the *iḥrām* (derived from *ḥarām* – 'holy', 'forbidden'), which consists of two pieces of cloth not sown together. Women wear long, simple gowns with their face uncovered.

The path, which is so central in Islam, is as it were concretized in the pilgrimage and performed according to the Prophet's example.

In addition, one may also, outside the month *Dhū ʾl-ḥidjdja*, perform a small pilgrimage to Mecca, the *ʿumra*, which omits spending the night on the plain of ʿArafāt.

The pilgrimage was and is not only important for Muslims from all over the world as a time of encounter, but many, even almost all movements of reform have arisen from the pilgrimage: for the pious, coming from Nigeria or from Central Asia, from Bengal or from Turkey, saw here something they considered to be the true Arab Islam which was sometimes opposed to the forms of Islam in their home country, where local morals and customs had defiled the pure ideal. Thus one sees that over the centuries reform movements in the Islamic world were carried out by men who had performed the *ḥadjdj*, and who had in many cases stayed on for some time in Mecca or near the grave of the Prophet, in 'Medina the illuminated'. Important texts in Islamic theology and mysticism were also inspired by stays at the holy places.

3. Duties of the individual and of the community

The prescriptions of the five pillars are duties for the individual, but it is nevertheless better to carry them out in community – just as it is better to travel through the desert in a group than alone. Even though everyone performs the prayers individually – and nothing is more moving than seeing a Muslim pray alone in the desert – prayers in the community are far more valuable, for in the mosque the differences between rich and poor, high and low, are obliterated; people are simply united in the service of the one God.

The *zakāt* is clearly a duty towards fellow human beings, towards the community, but fasting too, strange as this may sound, is a community affair. This is particularly clear when Muslims in a non-Muslim environment try to keep the fast strictly, although they cannot share their fasting with a community. When one has experienced Ramaḍān in Turkey, Saudi-Arabia or Pakistan, one sees how every individual is carried along by the community, how in the evening people celebrate together and pray together, so that, as Muslim friends sometimes told me, fasting is not so much felt as a heavy duty there but as a time full of joy – for it is indeed the month in which the Qurʾān was first revealed, in which, as one may say, the light appeared that illumines the path.

With regard to the pilgrimage, it is clear that it is a matter of a duty for the community.

So we could say that the Muslim comes closest to what he is called to be when he is in community – for "the believers are brothers (and sisters)". When Iqbāl writes that prayer is a wonderful experience of God's majesty and of man's losing himself so that he finds God, he goes on (in the same chapter of his lectures on *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*[4]) to say that we should imagine what an enormous social change would take place if the proud Brahmin of South India had to stand five times a day shoulder to shoulder with the Untouchable. The whole caste-system of Hinduism would collapse upon itself. For the Muslim, prayers are a sign of the believers' solidarity.

It is the *umma*, the community in the faith, which helps the individual to find his/her path; and it is an *umma wasaṭ* (Qurʾān 2,143), a 'median' community, in which Muḥammad showed the 'middle way' between Moses' religion of law and the loving, ascetic religion of Jesus.

Exaggerating ascetic practices, as well as other excesses, has always been rejected, and some Muslim critics note with regret or displeasure that the Orientalists have not taken sufficient account of this normative attitude of the Umma on the path towards God and have instead concerned themselves with exceptional characters, such as the martyr-mystic al-Hallādj and similar individuals, who perhaps seem to the researcher more interesting and colourful than those who completely follow the normative path.

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[4] Lahore, 1930, several reprints.

4. The destination of the path – Judgement and the hereafter

When the Muslim, in hope and fear, has travelled the path through life (he never knows, of course, what God has ordained for him in the end), when he has tried faithfully to fulfil the duties laid upon him; when he has striven to purify himself, and when he has added *iḥsān* (doing good), which means "acting in full awareness that God sees every action", to *islām* (devotion) and *īmān* (faith), his heart purifies itself, and according to the word of the Prophet, "The believer is the mirror of the believer."[5] He will then begin to search for mistakes he himself has made when he is displeased in relation to a fellow human being. He – and they – know anyway that even if one does not precisely fulfil the commands of the Qur'ān, or if one does not completely observe the prohibitions, while always maintaining that they are absolutely valid, one will still belong to the community of believers. Only rejecting the validity of the Qur'ānic text makes a man an unbeliever. When a human being finally reaches the end of the path, relatives will whisper into his ear the profession of faith, so that he can answer correctly when he is asked at the grave by the two angels, Munkar and Nakīr, what his creed is. The first thing a newborn baby hears is precisely these whispered words of the profession of faith, and so life is lived from the first to the last breath under the protection of these words, which are, as it were, the food for the soul along the way.

With regard to what happens to man between death and resurrection, there are various opinions: some say the soul sleeps; some speak of the anticipation of heavenly bliss or hellish damnation, so that the grave becomes a wide garden or a narrow, vermin-ridden cave; often it is assumed that the deceased lives on in some inexplicable way and can tell those who are left behind through dreams what happened to him in the beyond and why. Here we seem to be confronted by a mixture of several conceptions, for the general resurrection only takes place at the end of the world – and it is this resurrection and the judgement of God, which are the central topic of the Qur'ānic revelations, especially in the early period.

Resurrection, *qiyāma*

The Qur'ān has dozens of words for this "hour"; "the beating one", when the earth shakes and shows what is inside it, when the sun darkens and

the heavens roll up, when the mountains become like combed wool, when smoke and darkness cover the world. In ever new, dramatic metaphors this terrible day of resurrection is described, though the Meccans did not want to believe these Qur'ānic descriptions – such ideas seemed too absurd to them. But the Qur'ān presents a comparison to make clear the possibility of a bodily resurrection of the dead: it is the comparison with spring, with the time after the rain, when the seemingly dead earth brings forth what had been lying in it and of which, for months, one could see nothing: green plants, blossoms, leaves – and for the poets of the later period, above all in the Persian-Turkish areas, every spring becomes an anticipation of the resurrection, so that the earth is turned into a fragrant paradise.

The day of the resurrection

The day of the resurrection is referred to in the Qur'ān in great detail: there are the books of human beings in which the writer-angels have written down their good and bad deeds and which are put in the right hands of the good and in the left hands of the sinners; the deeds are weighed on the scales even if they are only as big as a mustard-seed; there is a bridge over which human beings cross and from which the sinners are hurled into the fire – horrifying images for everybody. So, especially in popular Islam, the word 'resurrection', *qiyāma*, evokes terrible horror and absolute perturbation. The day of the resurrection is longer than forty years, the sun is burning, and human beings, clad in shrouds, run round in search of salvation. But from very early on, the Islamic tradition introduced a motif to mitigate this horror a little. On Resurrection Day, all the prophets, even the innocent Jesus, will cry out, "*nafsī, nafsī* – I myself, I myself (want to be saved)", Muḥammad, however, will cry out, "*ummatī, ummatī* – my community, my community (is to be saved)!", and God has compassion even upon those who have committed mortal sins (provided they have not associated anything with him) and admits them. This *shafāʿa*, this intercession of Muḥammad, plays an extraodinary role in the Muslims' hope for the last day, although it is not easily supported from the Qur'ān, where the throne-verse (Sūra 2,255) says: "Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth?".

Hell

Those who are damned – and the question is whether they have been destined to be damned from eternity, from their mother's womb, or only through

[5] B. Furuzanfar, *op. cit.* (fn. 1) no.104.

their disobedience and deviation from the right path – are subjected to horrible punishments in hell which are depicted dramatically in the Qur'ān and among which fire plays the central role. The question that troubles believers of all religions – whether the punishments of hell are eternal – has also of course arisen in Islam.

Thus the Mu'tazilīs hold that the punishments of hell are eternal because they are an emanation of God's justice. Other theologians point out that it is said in the Qur'ān that the sinners remain in hell for all time, "except as thy Lord willeth" (Sūra 11,107). This could give rise to a certain hope. Many thinkers later emphasized that according to the Qur'ān "everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face" (Sūra 28,88; cf. 55,26 f.), which means except the divine being, with the implication that hell as well as paradise, being created things, are transient.

Paradise

It is well known that Muslim conceptions of paradise were a shock to Christian theologians, especially in the Middle Ages: after all it was a sensual paradise with dark-eyed *ḥūrīs*, beds of silk, wine and fruits in gardens below which streams are flowing. And criticisms of Islamic conceptions of paradise, and, as their logical consequence, of the Prophet's 'sensuality', have continued till today. But we should bear in mind that the hereafter and purely spiritual experiences can only be presented in symbols (does the Bible not speak about the "marriage of the Lamb"?), and nobody can imagine what we hope the hereafter will be like. However, perhaps, if we look a little deeper, we may understand the Qur'ānic metaphors as feeble symbols in which the perfect beatitude, the soul's union with the beloved God, is alluded to from afar.

Can we see God in paradise? This was one of the controversial theological questions. In normative theology it is assumed that this may at least occasionally be possible – on Fridays, for example, as the Ḥadīth says. Yet it is not hard to see why the colourful portrayals of hell and paradise have always annoyed the mystics and the philosophers, even though they were moderated by the words of the Prophet.

In Islamic philosophy there are a great many thinkers – in fact all – who rejected the graphic images of paradise, and indeed even the idea of a personal immortality, and thus came into conflict with orthodoxy. The mystics, on the other hand, pointed out repeatedly that what they were hoping for was not a paradise of sensual or even meta-sensual pleasures, but

the vision of God or, in its extreme expression, union with God – many were hoping to be submerged into the primeval ocean 'God' and to be immersed in it like a drop returning home.

What was said about eternal life by Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877–1938), who seems to me to be the most ingenious representative of modern Muslim theology and philosophy, may be interesting in this context. Eternal life, he said, is participating in the life of God, continuous growth without diminution, whereas hell is the realization of one's own failure, of one's own shortcomings. (This interpretation is one of the reasons why Saudi authorities reject Iqbāl's ideas.) This is the very attitude we find at the same time in European philosophy in Heinrich Scholz, for example, and the Swedish bishop and scholar in the field of Islam, Tor Andrae. We cannot really say what the actual ultimate goal of the pious Muslim is: paradise in the traditional sense, vision of God, being immersed in God, or the infinite journey in God, which never ends, because God is infinite; we have to wait for the answer to the question which is the proper interpretation of the goal – "And God knows best."

Questions and Interventions

the 'smaller path'

WOLBERT What is the actual meaning of the 'smaller path' which on the one hand leads to the destination more quickly, but on the other is more difficult?

SCHIMMEL It is the path of the mystics. As they tread it, they deepen and extend the *sharī'a*-regulations by, for instance, striving for poverty, not so much in the material sense, but in the sense of becoming completely empty before God and of really trusting in God. With the help of someone who guides his soul, the Ṣūfī endeavours through various steps and stages referred to already in the preceding paper, to attain the divine reality, and this is not only at the resurrection; even during the time of his life on earth he may feel very close to the presence of God. This is perhaps the difference between the great *sharī'a* which prepares the human being for the hereafter, and the *tarīqa* which offers the hope of a foretaste of paradise or even an experience of union even here in this life.

Here we must say something about the Muslim's efforts towards knowledge, *'ilm,* which of course is not to be understood as we tend to use it in the sense of scientific information. It is rather a knowledge of his duties before God, which enables him, by following this path, to attain paradise. Knowledge in this sense refers to what prepares us for the hereafter. As a model of this we may take the work of Ghazzālī, *Ihyā' 'ulūm ad-dīn,* beginning with the *'ibādāt,* the acts of worship, and then moving on to the practical actions – the way a good Muslim behaves when he goes shopping, when he marries, etc. And finally, in the fourth part, the more deeply religious, more mystical concerns are mentioned, like trust in God, love and longing, so that the last of the forty chapters of this book are devoted to the conduct of man at his death. Thus the whole book ultimately is a guide towards dying – and this is *'ilm,* this is true knowledge.

In the last century, in South India for example, when some benefactors founded schools with modern interior fittings, the *'ulamā',* the religious scholars, protested and said this did not serve learning, but would distract people from searching for God. If one looks at the spiritual situation of many Muslims at the beginning of the 20th century and even nowadays, it is very important to take into account this difference in the concept of 'knowledge' which, for us, has something to do with our practice of life, whereas for the traditional Muslim its purpose is to help us find a good way to attain God.

importance and scope of mysticism in the Islamic countries

VIRT What about the actual impact of Ṣūfism in the Islamic countries, what does it mean to people there?

SCHIMMEL Very different assessments can be made of the status of Ṣūfism in modern Islam. Primarily modern Muslims would say that all this is superstition, especially insofar as mysticism is expressed in popular religion, and in the veneration of saints, which, as we all know, is one of the main points of controversy between normatively and mystically oriented Islam. In 1978, at al-Azhar, reading Ibn al-'Arabī was forbidden.

In some areas, for example in India, mystical Ṣūfism is actually an aspect of Islam to which many withdraw who in secularized India see this way as their only chance to really live and profess their Islam. In Central Asia, the mystical brotherhoods fought very vigorously against communism.[1] In Turkey it was interesting that some follower of Atatürk, whose views were quite modern, might suddenly mention that his uncle was a *shaykh,* a spiritual leader in this or that Ṣūfī order, and that his grandfather belonged to this or that Ṣūfī order. So there was a definite awareness that this element had made a deep mark on Turkish religiosity. In North Africa too, mystical brotherhoods play an important role, and in this context we may compare for instance Michael Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt. An Essay in the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford, 1973) and Fred de Jong, "The Sufi Orders in nineteenth and twentieth-century Palestine" (*Studia Islamica* 58, 1983), who present very interesting statistics on the spread of the orders in India, North Africa and the Balkans.

In Pakistan, the influence of the *pīr*s, the Ṣūfī masters, who are, however, often very secularized, is still very much alive. Just the name of the master and the sanctuary where he lives can still motivate hundreds of thousands of people to go from Sind and from Pandjāb by train, by car and on foot to the *'urs,* the anniversary of the founder, in order to participate in the three days of remembrance, to pray together with the others, to sing hymns and to receive the blessing of the master. This can be a very impressive experience. But these people are also ready to vote for the party that the *pīr* recommends and so the influence on politics can be very great, especially in Pakistan, and it can be terrifying because there no longer remains very much that is spiritual.

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[1] Cf. A. Bennigsen, *Le Yogi et le Commissaire.* Paris, 1988.

BSTEH A. Impressed by the extent of the mystical movements' influence in Islam, a theologian may feel motivated to reflect anew about the relation between mysticism and faith. For it may very well be that mysticism is misused to steal us away from faith. Then we would doubtless walk along the wrong way which disappears in the desert and does not lead to the water of life. But there is much to be said for seeing true mysticism as the original experience of faith, *pistis*; that mysticism is not only part of faith, but lives as the inner dimension of faith, so that true faith happens where it breaks through into this dimension. So reflecting on this relation is a very serious theological task, particularly in the encounter with other religious traditions, because otherwise we may set out on paths where we encounter neither Islam, nor Hinduism, nor Christianity.

And then it is frankly embarrassing to see things in Christianity or even in Islam to which the term mysticism is quite wrongly applied; we may think, for instance of those who claim here and there to be Ṣūfī masters and encourage people to confide in them. Might not an essential criterion for recognizing true mysticism be to discover whether the two wings of fear and hope, which were mentioned in the lecture, are the real supporting wings, and whether they grow bigger or smaller – or even become superfluous because some may claim to be able to anticipate the goal? For is it not true that those believers, who were granted in their lifetimes to experience these dimensions, were especially at those times most intensely shaken by fear, feeling themselves to be wicked and lost, so that they learned all the more to live by hope in God alone? Is it not specifically the mystic who has to live and endure the day of his encounter with God – as it is described in the Qur'ānic statements about the Day of Resurrection – even in all its awfulness, in a particularly intense way, the more he advances along this path and truly approaches his destination? As Mahmoud Ayoub, on the occasion of one of our dialogue meetings in St. Gabriel, emphasized[2] – is not the way of the *sharī'a* of lasting importance particularly for one who advances on the path of mysticism?

SCHIMMEL I am shocked by what is happening and can only emphasize the criticism of the so-called 'Ṣūfī masters', of whom so many swarm about in

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[2] M. Ayoub, "Das Wort und der Weg. Des Menschen Suche nach Gott in der islamischen Mystik", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Hören auf sein Wort. Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 7). Mödling, 1992, pp. 167–187, here: pp. 174–176.

Europe, and even more in the USA. And concerning the enduring importance of the *sharī'a* and the Qur'ān, Mr. Khoury has already referred to the fact that the Qur'ān will always remain the ultimate frame of reference. An early 9th-century mystic beautifully said: "Sometimes the truth knocks for forty days at my heart and I do not let it in before I have found a proof in the Qur'ān." This means that a mystic, who sees something and divines that it is the truth, knows the necessity of referring back to the Qur'ān. This is very important for our understanding of Ṣūfism, and for this reason one is always so annoyed when one sees these Ṣūfī masters here in Europe or in America, where it is even worse, who are quite unaware of the whole rigour of Ṣūfism. Basically, mysticism is in fact something very rigorous, a way that is very hard to walk; the *ṭarīqa* is much harder than the broad way, and if these people water everything down, serving sweet jam instead of soul-food, one may indeed be rather critical of them.

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OTT The five pillars, or the four pillars built on the one foundation of the Islamic creed, are at first sight very clearly established, well-ordered performances. As Christians, we understand our religious life as something which, if things are going well, permeates everything. One may certainly assume that this is also the case in Islam and it would therefore be good to know more about how these 'pillars of Islam' permeate Muslims' whole life.

KHOURY First of all, the 'pillars of Islam' are duties structuring the life of the community. Of course, fulfilling these duties also influences the personal life of the Muslim, when he fasts, prays or makes his pilgrimage, whether alone or in community. The pillars of Islam, these basic religious practices, are, however, firstly the expression of the community's religiousness: in them Muslim community life is performed and structured, and of course that is where every individual believer can also find nourishment for his spiritual life.

BARTH With regard to Islam, the lecture seemed to accentuate rather the formal conception of the Islamic path and how the way should be walked. For Christianity, 'path' tends rather to mean an inward process, an inward growth, an inward progress. This must also exist in Islam. What is the relation between these two conceptions of the path?

KHOURY   Indeed there is in Islam too the idea of an inward growth. In the context of how the path is understood, the lecture dealt first with the path as man's duty before God: what does the Muslim have to do, in order to testify to his being a Muslim, a member of the *umma?* In itself this is no direct statement concerning his inner life, whether the richness or the depth of it. Nevertheless, it is not only a formality that is the matter, a fulfilment of duty, because the duty should always be accompanied by an inward attitude.

outward duties and inward growth

SCHIMMEL   The path of outward duties and inward growth has very much to do with the relation between faith and work, which was discussed with great interest in early Islamic theology. Fulfilling the various religious duties, accompanied by the right intention, is a healthy way, one that guarantees salvation in the next life. Of course Muslims have also always been aware of the fact that the inward aspect is part of it, but ultimately this has been perceived mainly in mystical Islam, where, at the various stages, the soul is guided slowly from contrition towards dedication to God and to an ever higher perfection. Although the idea is not so distinct in normative Islam, there is still an awareness of the fact that the further one progresses and the more one really internalizes one's ritual actions, the more one may hope for a blissful ending. Of course there is never more than hoping for it; after all, until the last moment, the final questions remain open, for it is God who makes the definitive judgement.

declaring one's intention as part of the rite

The intention underlying the performance of an action, which we like to take as an ethical criterion – after all, works are judged according to the intention with which they are performed – has yet another ranking in connection with *niyya*, the intention required by Islam. Formulating this intention is the initial part of the ritual action; without it no ritual action is valid. Every ritual action, such as prayer, fasting and pilgrimage, in order to be valid, has to begin with the formulation of the intention; for instance, there should be a declaration: I have the intention to start fasting before the sun rises, or: I have the intention now to say prayers of three *rak'as*. In the first place, these are clear statements, and the ethical value, which is also of course very important, is here remembered too, but as a secondary consideration. I am not aware that there is also a *niyya* for non-ritual actions.

There is also a *baraka*, a power of blessing inherent in the *niyya*, which is needed to make the performance of the ritual fully valid. If, for instance, one does not quite succeed in the fast, in that one finds it too hard, one may hear pious Muslims say that the *niyya* was probably not formulated correctly.

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fear and hope

BARTH   Are the fundamental perspectives of 'fear and hope', the two wings which were mentioned in the lecture, to be understood rather, in the sense given by Rudolf Otto, as reflections of the *mysterium fascinosum et tremendum* within man, or can they be associated with the Christian or Reformation idea of 'Law and Gospel', and with that moment of awe which then becomes a deepened discovery of forgiveness and of the Gospel?

KHOURY   The two words fear and hope, are to be found in the Qur'ān in the context of prayer: you shall pray to God in fear – because God is not at our disposal – he withdraws when we grasp at him; and with hope – because he has told us that he gives us his attention (Sūra 7,56; 21,90). This would correspond less to the juxtaposition of law and gospel in Protestant theology, and rather arises from the fact that God is the transcendent one and at the same time the very close one. But this question should be followed up further.

VANONI   There are many passages in the holy Scriptures where fear and hope are mentioned together. In the Old Testament, this connection is to be found most in the Wisdom literature (where hope is sometimes replaced by trust), from which we may understand that this is rather an expression of popular religiosity than of official religion. So there is on the one hand awe and fear of God and on the other trust and hope (cf. e. g. Prv 14:26). In the New Testament, where the words 'law' and 'gospel' do not actually occur alongside one another, trust is rendered in Greek as πίστις and πιστεύειν, which is concealed by the German translation as 'glauben' [believe]. Both expressions are often mentioned in the context of the miracles narrated in the Gospels – awe towards the one who works the miracle and trust in him (cf. Mk 2:12; 5:36; Lk 7:16; 8:50) – and of the narratives about the resurrection, particularly in Luke in chapter 24, where it says that the disciples are repeatedly awe-struck when they encounter Christ Risen, and even up to the end do not find faith in him, but where there is then also the beautiful statement, "while in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering" (24:41). Perhaps what we should rediscover above all in popular religiosity is that there are no contradictions in these elements of tension, but that in the end people say for instance: the main thing is that

one does not lose one's trust in God. That trust in God is more important than listing dogmas is also Jesus' religion. And in Islam too this seems to be typical: that trust in God has priority over specifics.

inexorability of divine power and hope for his grace

SCHIMMEL It may be legitimate to compare the question of fear and hope with the relation between the law and the gospel. But for the Muslim it is simply on the one hand his own relation to the inexorability of God's power and his strength that surpasses every worldly power, and on the other hope for God's grace. These feelings of fear and hope which constantly encounter each other and belong together are most beautifully expressed in the prayers of the mystic Yahyā ibn Mu'ādh ar-Rāzī, who died in 871, prayers which, over the centuries, have been taken up in ever changing forms: "O God, I fear you, because I am a miserable sinner, but I hope in you because you are a merciful Lord." In these prayers the issue is always the tension between the miserable sinner and the merciful Lord, the sinner, who knows on the one hand that his sins will really take him down to condemnation, but who, on the other hand, trusts boundlessly in God's mercy which is much greater than human sins. The extent to which this is really connected with law and gospel would be an interesting idea to work with but it would have to be reasoned out and developed more.

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ritual and personal prayer

OTT Characteristic for Christian and supposedly also for Jewish piety is intense, personal prayer to God, talking to God about the events of daily life. Is prayer in Islam, as we sometimes read, primarily a ligurgical invocation of God without this element of a real dialogue with God as we understand it?

KHOURY Wherever faith is living, personal prayer, *du'ā'*, goes hand in hand with obligatory community prayers, *salāt*, and in addition there are personal endeavours to do what is good, personal efforts to deepen the relationship with God. As for prayer, there is a noticeable difference. Whereas the Christian believer tends to understand his personal prayers as a dialogue with God, the Muslim would express it differently: one does not speak *with* God; public and private prayers are rather addressed *to* God, are prayers *to* God, in which the believer takes his concerns, feelings, significant experiences to God, the transcendent one, who is for man the unattainable one, the unapproachable one. The Qur'ān says: when people pray to me, "When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close

(to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on Me [...]." (Sūra 2,186). This does not mean that God enters into dialogue with the suppliant, but that he listens to him.

ZIRKER Ritual prayer in Islam, the *salāt*, and the fixed times of prayer appointed for it, call to mind in some respects the hours of prayer known in Christian monasticism intended to sanctify time; there may even be historical connections between the two.

It is impressive to see how individual Muslims, when we visit them for instance, personally observe these times of prayer. But there are also many Muslims who no longer perform these prayers five times a day, which is often linked with the fact that personal prayer is also disappearing from their lives, and here and there from Islam as a whole. For converts, these five pillars of Islam are usually the quintessential element of their new faith from the very beginning; this is where they experience their new faith most strongly and where it can find expression.

ritual prayer and ritual purification

KAHLERT In the context of obligatory prayer in Islam, one question that arises concerns the ritual purification required for it, and whether this is understood simply as a help towards discipline, or whether there is a qualitative difference between prayer performed after ritual purification and prayer without it. And how does this importance attached to ritual purity fit in with the fact that elsewhere there seems to be no need for consecration, as with the mosque, for example, which is not considered to be a sacred place.

SCHIMMEL Ritual prayers are to be performed in a state of ritual purity because they contain words of the Qur'ān which may only be touched or recited after a ritual purification. This means that, after minor defilements, the hands, the feet, the face – everything that has in fact been defiled – has to be washed according to precise rules. This purification really is a ritual act, which means that it has to be performed even after one has washed or taken a bath, when one is already quite clean. Basically it no longer has anything to do with the dirt of the body, but more with the dirt of the soul and is therefore absolutely necessary.

But voluntary prayer, *du'ā'*, which can be said at any time, is possible without ritual purification unless one recites the Qur'ān. Beyond that, it is of course advisable always to be in a state of ritual purity, and this is in fact attempted by very many pious Muslims because one may by chance utter a Qur'ānic verse and then one would commit a sin. Since the rules are

very strict, it may sometimes be difficult for the idealistic Muslim constantly striving for ritual purity, to comply with them exactly. There are also certain prescribed prayers, which can be used according to individual piety. In his work *'Awārif al-ma'ārif*, Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar as-Suhrawardī (d. 1234) prescribes a number of such texts to be prayed when parts of the body are washed one after the other: for instance, when washing the right hand, one prays that on Judgement Day one may be given the book by God in one's right hand as a sign that one is saved. If there is no water, the purification can be performed with sand or dust. Thus one can really describe an Islam of purifications, of ablutions. The details and the many stories told concerning these ablutions are quite astonishing and are perhaps an aspect of Islam that is sometimes hard for us to understand.

the mosque as a space for prayer

It is correct that the mosque, on the other hand, is not a sacred space. The first mosque was in the house of the Prophet. The later mosques were schools. They either served the administration of law or as courts of law. In the course of time they became a little more distinct but they are not sacred spaces in the sense of being consecrated through a ritual action, as a Christian church, for example, is consecrated by means of prayers and blessings. Basically any building, any room, can serve as a mosque, if it is ritually pure. But through the believers praying in it, the mosque attains a certain sacred character, which it does not have in itself as a building, as we might say. The orientation towards Mecca is of course normal for the mosque and it is indicated by the niche for prayer, about whose function the art historians are still undecided. If nobody is in the mosque, it may in principle even be used for sleeping in; this does not disturb anybody. However, at the moment when the people come and begin to perform their prayers, it acquires a different character.

KAHLERT The basic thing is that ultimately it is the Qur'ān that is sacred in Islam.

SCHIMMEL This is a very beautiful way of expressing it.

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the Ka'ba – place of cult and destination of the pilgrimage

VIRT Did the black stone in Mecca, the meteorite, already have a religious meaning before Muḥammad and, if so, why was this tradition taken up by Islam?

SCHIMMEL A story in the Ḥadīth tells that the black stone had fallen out of the sanctuary after a natural dis-

aster and had also partly destroyed the Ka'ba, but that Muḥammad had put the black stone back in its place with his own hands.

The cult which had established its centre in Mecca and which focused on the veneration of stone deities (in the ancient Semitic tradition), was, as far as we know today, already very old and was performed during four months of the pre-Islamic year. As a result Mecca also became a trading centre for caravans, and every year great fairs took place there. The names of some of the gods who were introduced and venerated as idols within this certainly quite primitive pre-Islamic religion, are still known; however, we no longer know what these idols looked like.

When Muḥammad decided, or was told, that prayers should no longer be directed towards Jerusalem but towards Mecca, the reconquest of Mecca from Medina became the centre of his endeavours. Shortly before his death, on the occasion of his last pilgrimage, after he had cleared the Ka'ba of all idols (the legend tells that among them there was also a picture of Jesus and Mary which he did not destroy), he took over the major part of the rites from pre-Islamic times, but not without first stripping them totally of all the meaning they had held till then. Thus for instance, alongside the slaughter of the sheep, the central rite is maintained: that all believers, before the slaughter, should spend several hours in the plain of 'Arafāt (a place some miles away from Mecca), simply 'abiding' there and listening to a sermon, then hurry down again to Minā where the sacrifice is offered. These are rites which neither the history nor the phenomenology of religion can explain at all. It has already been said that Muḥammad performed as it were a Protestant-like purification of the cult, and, with the exception of the sheep slaughter, by emptying the rites of their previous meaning also cut off the connection with the pre-Islamic cult. It is in any case a pre-Islamic cult, which continues to live on without any further explanation and is accepted as it is. God willed it in this way, and we do not ask its meaning. It is one of the strangest developments, not only in Islam, but in the history of religions generally.

the slaughter of the sheep at the 'sacrificial feast'

PRENNER Would it be conceivable, as Smail Balić proposed, to replace the slaughter of animals at the 'sacrificial feast', which takes place in the course of the pilgrimage ceremonies with a donation of money?

SCHIMMEL One is frequently confronted with this question, even in the Islamic countries themselves: could one not substitute donations of money for the slaughter of millions of sheep, which itself involves (beside every-

thing else) the squandering of huge sums of money. Probably many Muslims would in fact readily agree. But the slaughter of the sheep is *sunna,* and the blood of the sheep must flow, because this ritual act reminds us of Abraham who was allowed to replace a human sacrifice with an animal sacrifice. By the sacrifice of the sheep Abraham was in fact set free from the command to sacrifice his son (cf. Sūra 37,101 ff.). Here the ancient experience of replacing human sacrifice with animal sacrifice is still partly alive. This is perhaps not known to the theologians, but there it is, referring back to Abraham and the Qur'ān. Nevertheless, one could refer to the fact that when we remember Abraham, the point is in fact that Abraham is freed from the command to sacrifice his son, and it is not the slaughter as such that was important.

Since in principle everyone who is in Mecca sacrifices a sheep, a goat, or even a camel, hundreds of thousands of animals are sacrificed: a piece of the meat is kept for oneself and the rest is given to neighbours and to the poor; the fur is given to a central institution which processes or sells it; the money earned is used for *zakāt,* the tax for almsgiving.

the proceeds from the almsgiving tax also for the benefit of non-Muslims? On this occasion we may make a very general reference to the question of whether the almsgiving levy, the *zakāt,* can also be used for non-Muslims: according to the Qur'ānic assertions in Sūra 9,58 ff. this is not allowed. The *ibn as-sabīl,* the son of the path, the poor, prisoners and a whole series of others, are listed, but there are no non-Muslims among them, unless they be those "whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to Truth)" (v. 60), a statement that could refer to non-Muslims, who, by means of a gift, by receiving a share of the *zakāt,* could perhaps be converted to Islam.

In modern times however, this hardly seems to be considered. Now, as for instance in Pakistan, the *zakāt* is mainly used to support religious schools and religious teaching; thus, under Zia ul-Haq's government, during the intensive Islamization of Pakistan, theological schools mushroomed, because the *zakāt*-money was used for this purpose – not always very pleasing to many believers.

Abraham and the Ka'ba **ELSAS** How is Abraham's role to be understood in the context of this ritual? Is the slaughter of the sheep taken over from the ancient Arab context and then connected with Abraham? Abraham is actually said to have been in the Ka'ba, too.

SCHIMMEL According to Qur'ānic assertions, Islam proceeds from the assumption that Abraham did in fact come to the Ka'ba; there Hagar had given birth to Ishmael, and when she was thirsty, the spring Zamzam sprang up from the sand from a depth of 45 metres to give water to her and the thirsty child; then Abraham rebuilt the Ka'ba, which had once been built by Adam, but later fallen into ruin. The scenario of Abraham's sacrifice is then connected with the Ka'ba and the pilgrimage.

the Ka'ba – centre of the earth and symbol of the heart The Ka'ba is a symbol of the centre of the universe and, in its theological interpretation, it plays the role of the 'omphalos', the central navel of the earth. According to the popular view, it is located in a precise parallel to the heavenly Ka'ba; their mutual relation is as if a vertical axis led from the worldly Ka'ba to the heavenly Ka'ba, so that man, when he turns towards the Ka'ba in Mecca, at the same time orients himself towards the heavenly Ka'ba above. The consequent orientation towards the Ka'ba is so important that, a few years ago, there was a rather lively discussion on how one could find the proper direction of prayer in a space-ship.

Yet, often the Ka'ba may also be seen as a symbol of the human heart. An interesting symbolism is attributed to it in the metaphorical idea of a bride veiled in black, for whom the pilgrim is longing: as the bridegroom is longing for his bride, so the pilgrim is longing to kiss the beauty-spot, the black stone of the Ka'ba, on her cheek. This symbolism of the Ka'ba, permeated much Arab and Persian poetry, and also prose literature.

For the mystic, the Ka'ba is just the milestone indicating the path that leads towards God, and in an internalized sense, the Ka'ba is the heart of the mystic where God dwells, and which can also be called the throne of God.

In an early Eranos-essay on the mystery of the Ka'ba[3], Fritz Meier summarized the interpretations of this mystery very beautifully, and in the work of Henry Corbin on Ka'ba and temple[4], the whole esoteric role of the Ka'ba is aptly portrayed. For the 'normal' Muslim this is of no great importance, but the mystics and esoterics, concern themselves with it very intensively.

priorities among religious duties? **PESCHKE** One might think that the five pillars of Islam are all assigned the same importance, although for us as outsiders it might appear that prayer is more important than, for instance, the pilgrimage to Mecca.

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[3] *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 11, 1946.
[4] In his Ismā'īlī studies *Temple and Contemplation.* London, 1986.

And what is the meaning of Friday in the life of Muslims? Is it a public holiday, dedicated to God, when the believers also meet in the mosque? After all this seems to be a very stable and important element for Islam. So why is it not mentioned among the five pillars of Islam?

ZIRKER It is hard to measure which of the five pillars has more or less weight. If the question is: what is it that one can dispense with most easily? then it is certainly the pilgrimage to Mecca. This is a fundamental duty, an enormous event in the life of the believer, but there are very many Muslims who can never afford to go to Mecca; this particularly applies to women, because they have to be protected and accompanied on the pilgrimage. It is also the custom that, in some cases, a Muslim sets out as the representative of his village community and therefore receives financial support from the others.

Friday is not a public holiday and cannot be compared with Sunday. For Muslims it is the day on which one of the five prayers should be performed in community. In many regions, women do not take part in the Friday prayer, because traditionally one thinks that their place is in the family home, but this is not the practice everywhere. Friday is mostly considered to be a day of normal business life and professional work, only apart from the time of prayer – insofar as people want to participate in it – at noon; but it may also be that during this time life goes on in front of the mosque with the usual traffic, business and other everyday activities, without anybody regarding this as a public nuisance. There is no formal obligation to take part in the Friday prayer, and so there is no religious sanction either. The prayers should be quite generally performed in common, so that in fact people also pray together on other days of the week. The expectation that the believers should join together to pray is certainly greater on Fridays than on other days, but this cannot be compared with the Christian obligation concerning Sundays.

KHOURY That Friday should not be a day off is connected with the fact that at the time of Muḥammad people were poor and therefore depended on whatever work there was in order to earn their daily bread. In any case, Muḥammad did not want to burden them with assembling on Fridays to pray together and as a result going hungry. But today, in Islamic countries where a certain living standard has been achieved, Friday is in fact a day off and is celebrated in a similar way to our Sunday.

In addition, in the course of the year there is a cycle of feast days for Muslims: there is first the Sacrificial Feast at the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca, in memory of Abraham's sacrifice (as discussed above). In this connection it is also worth mentioning that there is a discussion among Muslims about who the son was whom Abraham was to sacrifice. The Qur'ān only refers to his son, without stating a name (Sūra 2,124; 37,99–109). On the basis of the Biblical tradition, early Qur'ān commentators thought spontaneously of Isaac, but later ones always emphasize that it was Ishmael and not Isaac, because Ishmael, as the father of the Arabs, establishes a direct link between Islam and Abraham. The second feast is the Feast of the Breaking the Fast at the end of the month of Ramaḍān. They are the two greatest feasts of the year. Before the fast is broken, there is a night between the 27th and the 28th day of the month of Ramaḍān, which is considered to be "the Night of Power" (Sūra 97). This last night in Ramaḍān is the most beautiful and holiest night of the year. This is when the angels descend from God's throne or from God's heaven to the earth, bringing all kinds of good things, so that people, if they wish for something, may hope that their wish will be fulfilled. There are many Muslims who spend this night awake and in prayer.

Then there is the Feast of Muḥammad's Ascension, an event that is alluded to in Sūra 17,1: God is said to have taken Muḥammad "for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque", which is today identified with al-Aqṣā-Mosque in Jerusalem. From there – the story continues – riding on a hybrid creature like a horse, he was accompanied by Gabriel to heaven, where he was allowed to pass through various stages of heaven up to the throne of God. There he received the first revelation from God, and from then on, Gabriel was entrusted with transmitting God's revelation.

Later, further feasts were introduced, among others the Feast of the Prophet's Birth, which seems to parallel the Christian feast of Christmas.

SCHIMMEL Concerning the question of why Friday is not a day off in the sense of Sabbath or Sunday, the theological implication also plays a part: perhaps God does not need to rest. The idea that God created the world in six days, but then took a rest, is definitely alien to Islamic feeling. According to Sūra 55,29, he is in fact occupied every day with some new work. If one looks at it from a practical point of view,

Goitein in one of his essays has pointed out that Friday was chosen as the day of worship, because it was the day of the great markets in Mecca and Medina. The market lasted until noon, at noon there was the great Friday prayer including the sermon, and then the market people went home again to their respective villages. So the sermon was the culmination of the market and a means of calling together the people assembled there. But the specific character of the day has nothing to do with God's resting on the day after creation; that would contradict the dynamic Qur'ānic concept of the ever acting and creating God.

ZIRKER   A key to understanding Ramaḍān is to appreciate how much the character of this month is affected by the feast celebrated on the occasion of the Qur'ān's coming down in the night of the 27th Ramaḍān. The night of destiny, "is better than a thousand Months. Therein come down the angels [...]" (Qur'ān 97,3 f.). It is the night of inlibration – of the word of God coming to humankind.

... and Ramaḍān

In Cairo you can experience how this city, in daytime terribly congested, lives very differently on the nights of Ramaḍān. This even extends to shopping: the shoe-shops are crowded, the clothes-shops are crowded; then, after the night of destiny, the 27th night of Ramaḍān, children go out in their pink dresses, wearing sun-glasses, and with new buckles on their shoes; people dress up, and here and there in the streets you find something resembling parish fairs with booths, etc. All this is part of Ramaḍān. It may also be part of Ramaḍān that, three days before the fast, no more invitations are accepted, because one wants to 'meet' Ramaḍān, as one meets a guest at the airport. The fast is a moment for adjusting one's mind to solemnity and meaningfulness.

WOLBERT   It is said that the feasts in the evenings are rather beautiful for affluent people, but for the poor less pleasant, because their livelihood is hardly guaranteed. So how do these poor people experience the celebration of Ramaḍān?

SCHIMMEL   It is one of the duties connected with the celebration of the Ramaḍān that as many people as possible shall be invited for breaking the fast. So, basically even the poor should get something. Very many things should be covered by hospitality because it is simply a duty to invite people one knows and considers to be needy.

During the fast in European countries there is the added difficulty that the summer days are so long. To begin fasting in the morning at 3 a.m. and to maintain it until sunset at 10 p.m. can be a real problem. However, there are certain *fatwās* allowing the fast to be held from the moment the sun rises or sets in the nearest Islamic country. This would be Turkey for us and Morocco for Spain, etc.

There are also arguments here and there that in principle fasting could be counter-productive in an industrial society. Thus President Bourguiba in Tunisia tried to win over the religious authorities to the view that work for the welfare of the people, even industrial work, is a _djihād_ against poverty; fasting is not required in war and one should extend this exemption by calling useful daily work a war against poverty and hunger.

✦

SCHMATOVICH   How far do Muslims living in the West feel bound to keep the fixed times of prayer? How can they maintain them within the rhythm of life and work of modern times? And should this duty to pray several times a day not make us Christians rethink our current practice of prayer, when the bells of our churches no longer ring three times a day and four times on Fridays calling people to pray, and there is a danger that prayer no longer makes any mark on the rhythm of our life?

times of prayer

KHOURY   There is no doubt that it is very difficult for Muslims to keep the times of prayer when they do not live in an Islamic country. But on the other hand we must remember that they do not have to enter a mosque in order to meet their obligation to pray. They can say the prescribed prayers anywhere; they can make any place a place of prayer. The greatest difficulty is the time schedule. The fixed schedule of his/her professional work may make it impossible for a Muslim to keep the fixed times for prayers five times a day.

This is why, according to the general legal tradition it is possible, for example, to join two prayers together. If a Muslim says his noon prayers between noon and 3 p. m., his afternoon prayers between 3 and 6 p. m., his evening prayers between 6 and 9 p. m., his night prayers between 9 p. m. and midnight, and his morning prayers at daybreak, he can, if there are acceptable reasons, join together two times of prayer, for instance the noon and the afternoon prayers. As for places to pray, in Europe it is here and there already the custom for bigger organizations, to provide special prayer rooms for Muslims. It is obviously also necessary, to give adequate guidance to the Islamic community especially abroad, to advise Muslims on the practical ways for them to fulfil their religious obligations and help them to do so.

WISSE When one sees Muslims holding prayer beads, one often wonders whether and what they are really praying. They are often talking to each other and moving very quickly from one bead to the next.

prayer beads

KHOURY Originally prayer beads had a function similar to that of our rosary: they accompanied the prayerful recitation of "the Most Beautiful Names" of God (Sūra 59,24). This is sometimes still the case today; but in fact it is often no longer a tool or a help for prayer, but has become something like a pastime. The prayer beads have three times thirty-three beads, whose sum is equal to the ninety-nine most beautiful names of God. The one big bead recalls the One and Only God, who can be invoked by these names.

the Prophet's journey to heaven and prayer

ELSAS What is the significance of the Prophet Muḥammad's 'journey to heaven' for the Islamic way of life, particularly with regard to prayer?

SCHIMMEL According to the earliest versions, in the mi'rādj, the Prophet's ascension to heaven, prayer was an issue, and, according to the tradition most often received by the people, it is specifically linked with the obligatory daily prayers, ṣalāt. The Prophet is said to have been originally told that Muslims should pray this ṣalāt fifty times a day, but then, advised by Moses, he kept asking God for a reduction of this number, until God granted him the number five; then, however, Muḥammad – against the further advice of Moses – refused to ask for a further reduction. This is one of the traditions connected with the mi'rādj of the Prophet.

We very early find the assertion that Gabriel, the angel of revelation and Muḥammad's guide on his journey to heaven, accompanied the Prophet only up to the sidrat al-muntahā, the lotus-tree at the far border: had he gone on, the glory of God would have scorched his wings. This means that Gabriel cannot go further than the end of the created universe. Direct encounter with God is only permitted to the Prophet and also to the disciples of the Prophet who tread his path. The only difference, according to classical theology, is that Muḥammad performed the journey to heaven in his body, whereas the mystic or the Muslim can at best perform that journey to heaven in his soul.

The tradition also has it that whenever Muḥammad longed again to experience the immediate proximity of God, he asked his muezzin Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ: "O Bilāl, refresh us with the call to prayer." For, in the ritual prayer, Muḥammad felt the direct presence of God. Hence one also says: aṣ-ṣalāt mi'rādj, prayer is a journey to heaven, and this again explains the extraordinary importance of prayer for the pious Muslim, who should be present in his prayers with his whole heart.

For the mystics, the Prophet's journey to heaven became a paradigm for their own mystical experience. The journey through heaven and hell has also inspired a great number of literary works, so that, like Enrico Cerulli, one has to take into account the possibility that the stories about the ladder to heaven, on which Muḥammad approached God, were also known in the Mediterranean area and that it is therefore not out of the question that Dante's *Divina Commedia* is also influenced by it. And up to our own times the Prophet's journey has always been a central topic in literature because, coming back to our starting point, it can best idealize the path of the believer's soul. The most beautiful example of a modern elaboration of this topic is Iqbāl's Persian epic *Jāvīdnāma*, published in 1932.

✦

lived devotion – and the dialogue between religions

DUPRÉ Devotion is very strongly influenced by the practices of the religious tradition in which it is lived. But although we may be familiar with our own personal religious experience through the way it is expressed, we may also identify an independent dynamic, an independent identity, which is distinguishable from what our specific tradition contributes to our daily devotional practice. Then the question arises of whether there is perhaps something like an authentic logic of daily devotion, performed in the context of certain traditions, but which nevertheless suggests an identity of its own, not dependent on one or other tradition, but arising from devotion in itself (however we may define it). If this really is the case, we could then return to the various religions individually, in order to start something like a dialogue between them from this perspective of devotion.

ZIRKER There is no doubt that, from a Muslim perspective, a barrier would be felt against Christian prayers that address God as 'Father'.

DUPRÉ It is certainly also interesting to consider how far believers of one tradition can participate in the religious experience of another. However, the issue in the original question was man's very personal way to God in the sense of a longer and a shorter path, as mentioned in the lecture, a guiding light, emotions dynamically linked with one another in a way that

is full of tensions, fear and joy. We could also here think of something like love as it is spoken of in the Letter to the Corinthians: how the human being who practises devotion is a creature who accepts his fellow creature, who is friendly without envy, not proud or boasting, not arrogant, not insisting on his own way (cf. 1 Cor 13).

When Paul Schebesta on his journey to Malacca was accompanied by three Muslims (as he notes in his diary), one of them was a deeply pious man, the butt of the other two's jokes, although he bore them no grudge for this, a Muslim believer who simply performed his prayers without assuming from this practice that any privileges or special treatment were due to him, who was reliable, and whose company was a joy to Schebesta – this was an experience of something shown to him by a Muslim, which he, Schebesta, could consider a model for his own devotion.

On the other hand, we may also ask how far the practices of specific traditions, from the perspective of this practical experience of lived faith, can be looked at again in a new light, so that they are no longer just the practices of my own tradition or the other's tradition, but practices that can be evaluated in terms of lived devotion.

VANONI Does Mr. Dupré perhaps mean the domain of what is 'pre-religious'? But should we not try to live with and get together with the concrete religions as they in fact exist? What is common certainly exists, the question is only whether it is positioned 'before' them?

devotion in
and before the
diversity of
religions

DUPRÉ Faced with the diversity of religions, one frequent reaction is to say that ultimately all religions are alike. However, the more we get to know a religious tradition, the more its difference from the other traditions emerges. So, on the one hand, the problem of diversity in the domain of the religions cannot be overlooked, but does it therefore follow that the assertion that all religions are ultimately alike is really irrelevant?

In this context we may consider two areas of concern that display a distinct similarity. One similarity is the crimes committed in the name of religion. For example, the Malaysians were happy after they became Muslims for now they could persecute other communities in good conscience in the name of religion.[5] But Islam cannot be unhesitatingly criticized for this. In

all our religious traditions we have our own history of sinfulness. The other similarity is to be found precisely in this area of devotion which, as we have spoken of it here, is not to be looked for outside the individual religions, but 'before' them; devotion is something that has to be connected with 'fides qua' – before 'fides quae', but not independent of it.

This experience of devotion seems to be something that permeates the whole history of mankind. We find it in the Islamic tradition as well as in the narrations of Buddha and in the other religious traditions. The issue here is not an abstract devotion, but a concrete devotion, including fasting as well as prayer, but where it is above all the human being that matters – the human being who may, for example, follow all the rules of religion and still in fact be an offence, oppressing other people, unwilling to allow others to live freely alongside him, 'religious' but without the good will that is bound to find expression in authentic religion. So it is a question of how to live one's actual life in dedication, happiness, fellowship, etc. William James[6] tried to examine the practical state of religious life independent of the question of which tradition a person belonged to. One can certainly not ignore the cultural context, the specific religion in a particular person's life, but that does not negate the fact that the question he raised was itself legitimate and could also be answered in its own way. So there are two realities – man's personal devotion *and* the way it is prescribed by a certain religion. The question is how can the differentiation of these two elements be helpful for the dialogue between religions.

criticism of cult
and religiosity

VANONI Here one could perhaps also think of criticism of the cult in the Bible, where for instance in Third Isaiah we find God saying: "Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high." (Is 58:4 f.). This actually is not meant as a rejection of fasting, but in the actual situation that is at issue here man is told by God that fasting is not needed and that other things at that moment are more important. It would be interesting to know whether there is something like a criticism of cult and religiosity in Islam too which points out when religiosity has become degenerate.

SCHIMMEL In this context we might perhaps refer to Qur'ānic verses that indicate that religiosity does not consist in turning this way or that, but is a matter of the heart. There are also repeated declarations in the Qur'ān

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[5] P. Schebesta, *Tanah Malayu. Wanderungen und Forschungen in den Dschungeln Malayas.* Mödling, s. a., p. 62.

[6] W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature; being the Gifford lectures on natural religion delivered at Edinburgh 1901–1902.* London etc., 1902.

and the Ḥadīth that the true religious achievement of man consists in honouring his parents. This once again brings us back to women. It is related that a man came to the Prophet and said: "Prophet of God, what is my duty, whom should I honour, whom should I take care of?" Then the Prophet said: "Your mother." The man asked a second time, the Prophet answered again: "Your mother." This was repeated three times and the fourth answer was: "Your father." This honouring of the mother also seems to be a very important characteristic of Islamic piety which still makes its very deep impression on Muslim families, and one may deduce that some unbalanced judgements about the Islamic concept of man stem from the fact that most researchers have been men and as such had no access to families and did not see what an unbelievably important role the mother plays there. We find too in Indo-Muslim families that the mother is always the heart of the family. Even if the son were a minister, he would never do anything, go on a journey, etc. without beforehand asking his mother's permission. This should always be kept particularly in mind, when we consider the subject of lived piety.

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women's religious duties **SCHIMMEL** With regard to religious obligations, women have the same obligations, *mukallaf,* as men. This is not nullified by the fact that she is exempt from carrying out her religious obligations when she is ritually impure – when she is pregnant, after the birth of a child, when she menstruates. Although it is certainly true – as is sometimes said in theological discussion – that at times a woman cannot participate in religious observance, this does not mean that a woman's value is therefore ultimately less. We may regard this simply as a rather bad form of casuistry.

... and her position in paradise When women are pious enough they enter paradise just as men do. The story is told of a shrivelled, bleary-eyed old woman who came to the Prophet and said: "Messenger of God, you always speak of the joys of paradise and of the beautiful young ladies there; what is going to happen with us bleary-eyed old women, do we also get into paradise?" The Prophet said: "No". Then he looked at her, saw her sorrow, and said: "No, no bleary-eyed old women get into paradise, because they are all transformed into beautiful young women." This is the answer to the question of what women do in paradise.

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matters of worldly happiness **KOPECKY** What is worldly happiness to the Muslims? What are the joys that may bring a Muslim towards worldly happiness? Is it wealth, children, the family?
KHOURY It is part of Islam's conception of the world that this world is not only the place where faith is found and tested, but also the place of temporal, initial reward. To the righteous, those who trust in God, the Qur'ān says: "Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him will We give a new Life, a life that is good and pure [...]." (Sūra 16,97). This promise will be fulfilled already here on earth, not only in the hereafter. God sustains this world. The Qur'ān again and again speaks of the wholesome things of this world in which the Muslim should simply indulge gratefully because God has granted them to him: "O ye who believe! Make not unlawful the good things which God hath made lawful for you [...]" (Sūra 5,90). Since God grants us worldly goods such as wealth, reputation, family, wife, children, etc., we may and should be glad about them. To Muslim believers, those who do what is good, God promises their portion of wholesome things. In an interesting Ḥadīth Muḥammad, when asked what he likes best in this world, he answers that for him it is women and perfumes.[7] Another story is about three ascetics standing in front of Muḥammad's door who say: "We pray the whole night through, we do not sleep, we fast the whole month, we do not marry, etc." All this annoyed Muḥammad and he said: "Then you are not part of my community."[8]

worldly happiness and the hereafter **SCHIMMEL** The question of the relation between one's worldly happiness and preparing oneself for the hereafter is not a simple one in Islam. The Qur'ān certainly does not preach asceticism; it points to the fact that man should indulge in the good things God grants him and take care that the earth stays in good order: "Do not mischief on the earth [...]" (Sūra 7,56). Since the Qur'ān says that everything that is created, including, for example, the animals and the boats on the sea, is at the service of man, activity in this world is certainly required – provided man does not forget the hereafter. In the classical period (and this can be seen as a tension between ascetically oriented mystics and average Muslims) the average Muslim did not like seeing the mystics, especially the ascetics, donning patchwork gowns and woollen cassocks. Rather he would say: Since God has granted us some-

[7] With Nasā'ī.
[8] With al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Nasā'ī.

thing good, we can and should enjoy it, because in this way we prove our gratitude. Yet, our hope for the hereafter must not suffer from this. We must always bear in mind that the knowledge enjoined upon us, *'ilm,* is not the knowledge that is necessary for our practical life, but the knowledge that prepares man for the hereafter, i. e., the knowledge about the religious obligations which one should fulfil in one's life.

on the destination of the path

VIRT What happens when we die? There is a lively discussion about this question among Christians. Is it conceivable for a Muslim that resurrection takes place when we die, that is, the resurrection of the physical existence of man, meaning the resurrection of the body?

And does the paradise so beautifully portrayed in the Qur'ān in many images also have a theological meaning? How far is there a conception in Islam that paradisiacal perfection is promised not only to man or his soul, but also to the whole creation into which he is interwoven? And would this also imply a responsibility for this material world because this earth too, and not only man, has been given a promise?

resurrection of the body

SCHIMMEL The resurrection of the body is very clearly expressed and it is one of the points which most shocked the Meccans. The tradition and the Qur'ān repeatedly relate how strongly they reacted to it: "When we are (actually) dust, shall we indeed then be in a creation renewed?" (Sūra 13,5; cf. 23,35, etc.). In all descriptions of the resurrection, corporeality is very strongly emphasized, and the Qur'ān repeatedly says: "God created you out of dust and from the sperm of a man; for him it is easy to revive you again as the whole person you are." This bodily resurrection is in fact one of the great pivots of Islamic eschatology. The mystics set their mind against it and the philosophers even more. For them the resurrection is simply a matter of the spirit or the soul, in whatever way they expressed it. The idea that, after the resurrection, when everything that has frightened us is over, the blessed man who now enters paradise will find all his longings fulfilled there and even beautified and improved, and his corporeality utterly changed into a luminous and indescribable body is illustrated in the above story of the Prophet and the shrivelled old woman.

resurrection at death or on Judgement Day only?

VIRT Is resurrection at the time of death an idea acceptable to Muslims?

SCHIMMEL No. The deceased first has to pass through a sepulchral rest, or something that corresponds to it.

In R. Eklund's book *Life between Death and Resurrection according to Islam* (Uppsala, 1941), there is a discussion of practically all the possibilities suggested in orthodox Islam concerning what may happen to the soul after death. In general it is believed that the soul is told about its future fate in the grave. Those who will be damned live in a narrow, oppressive grave with scorpions and snakes, the blessed ones in a spacious garden. The fact that they know beforehand what is going to happen to them is shown when they appear to their fellow men in dreams, saying: "God forgave me for this or that reason." This is a common theme in hagiography, and also in very normal historical texts. Sleep is one possibility and somnolence another, as a way of characterizing the state of the person in the grave. Resurrection proper will follow only on Judgement Day. Then comes the great confusion, when all are called from the graves, all wrapped in their shrouds, and there are unbelievably dramatic descriptions of this. It is then that judgement is passed, not earlier at the time of death.

The Qur'ān says of the martyrs: "Think not of those who are slain in God's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the Presence of their Lord" (3,169). Where this is remains open. There are also all kinds of mythological conceptions: that they live for instance in the crop of green birds until they are finally called at the resurrection and take on their true shape.

As for the other question of whether the whole earth is included in the resurrection from the dead – although it is a fascinating idea, did the theologians pursue it? We may look at poetry, where the blossoms, the trees and everything living here on earth, including the animals, are seen as illustrating the resurrection: spring is basically resurrection. And then we may well be able to say: if the earth is seen as illustrating the resurrection, we may perhaps assume that the descriptions of paradise imply the spiritualization and sublimation of what is worldly. But it is questionable whether there have been fundamental theological treatises on this topic.

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on the time between the first and the final judgement

WISSE Today we often speak of an end-of-the-world eschatology, which for every individual begins in fact with their death; what happens in this interval, according to Muslim belief? In Christian theology today we no longer necessarily distinguish between a particular judgement which happens for every individual at their own death and a general judgement on Judgement Day. Are similar distinctions made in the Islamic tradition?

KHOURY   As we have already said, there are in the Qur'ānic tradition, within the framework of an end-of-the-world eschatology, the following general conceptions: immediately after death there follows a first intermediate judgement which, however, does not yet take man to hell or paradise (with the exception of the martyrs and outstanding persons such as Jesus, who may go immediately to paradise). When the human being dies and is buried, this first judgement takes place at his grave or in his grave, when the angels come to him/her, asking four questions: Who is your God? Who is your prophet? What is your religion?, and: In which direction do you face to pray? If he/she was a good Muslim, he/she will know the right answers: God is my God, Muḥammad my Prophet, my religion is Islam and the direction of my prayers is towards Mecca. If he/she knows this, then his/her soul is guided by the angels who perform this intermediate judgement some part of the way towards heaven, or to the door of heaven. Then the door of heaven opens a crack, and he/she sees the light of God, the light of paradise; then he/she knows, and becomes a calm soul, who is sure, who knows that he/she is destined for paradise. Then the soul returns and falls into a profound sleep, lasting until Judgement Day.

If the human being does not know any right answer, this is a sign that he/she was a very bad Muslim or an unbeliever; then, while still in the grave, he/she is tormented with heavy blows on the back, as a foretaste of what awaits him/her later in hell. As with the believers, his/her soul rests until Resurrection Day. This explains an act of piety in the Islamic world – the custom of whispering continuously into the ears of those who are dying the four answers: God, Muḥammad, Islam, Mecca; so that the person who is about to die does not forget them because of the shock of the horrors of death, because they are indeed decisive for his eternal salvation or ruin. There is also a pious custom of visiting the grave after the funeral and whispering to the deceased these four answers once again at his/her grave.

As for the time after death: how can this be measured? Does it make much sense here to develop theories which nobody understands? Does it really make any sense to speak in our language, which is part of our time, about something that lies beyond time?

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the expectation of an imminent Day of Judgement

KAHLERT   The Qur'ānic proclamation took place against the background of the expectation of an imminent final judgement. Was the delay of this early parousia not conducive to a crisis in Islam, as happened in Christianity?

SCHIMMEL   The expectation of an imminent Day of Judgement certainly existed, as is shown in the formula: 'It may be tomorrow.' In the language of literature, 'tomorrow' has also been coined as a term for the Last Judgement; and 'yesterday' stands for the day of the primordial covenant. Man lives in his ephemeral existence between yesterday and tomorrow. He bears the imprint of the divine word spoken to him 'yesterday', which obliges him to acknowledge God and 'tomorrow' he will render account for it. As for the absence of the parousia, it may be that the question of its delay was raised, but there were no great speculations about it. If we take the Qur'ān as the word of God and it says that it will happen soon, 'soon' may be in a thousand years, according to divine chronology, while according to human chronology, it may be tomorrow. Here we have to follow two different conceptions of time.

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is resurrection of the dead possible at all?

ZIRKER   Objections to the Qur'ānic declaration of a resurrection of the dead were not caused by any lack of linguistic clarity as to what it might mean, but by a rejection of its content: what is being said here? Can this really be? It would in fact assume that our bones rise again from the grave. Dead is dead. Muḥammad meets this critical attitude by using the language of metaphors: he uses for instance the picture of spring, life re-awakening from the earth; should not a God, who makes the grass grow in this way, be able to raise your bones from the grave? (cf. Sūra 41,39). So it was obviously not a semantic problem but rather the question: is this really true?

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transformation of man in paradise?

OTT   According to the Islamic faith, is man transformed after he ends his earthly journey, as it is expressed for instance in 1 Cor 15:35 ff. – a change to his body and also of his being?

KHOURY   Not in the sense that man in the hereafter will be radically different from what he was in this world. In some respects, however, his condition will change: primarily, people need have no fear any longer, as the Qur'ān frequently says (Sūra 2,38.62.112.262, etc.). Muslims are sure of God's benevolence and can enjoy it. Human existence is fulfilled, but no change will take place in the sense that the body will suddenly be of a different kind, with completely different qualities. In the Qur'ān, however, there are allusions that open up new horizons to theological reflexion, for the Qur'ān says

that in paradise God will give man a share of his bliss and of his grace and "more (than in measure)!" (Sūra 10,26), without going into detail as to what this 'more' will consist of. So even for the Islamic faith, heaven is not a mere reflection of what we have here on earth.

vision of God in paradise? Some theologians have said that the people who are saved do not see God in paradise – their eyes are turned towards God, but they cannot reach him. But for the Ashʿarīs this 'more' means that God will make the vision of his being possible, whenever he wills and to whom he wills. Nevertheless this will not be the very essence of paradise, as in Christian theology where 'heaven' means living near God, in friendship with him, and seeing him. Unlike the language of classical theology which does not speak of the vision of God, there is in the language of mysticism, as Mrs. Schimmel has explained, the expression the 'journey in God', for instance, which begins where man attains God.

Horn Generally, the Islamic conception of paradise is expressed in such a way that it makes no reference to a real vision of God. However, among the source texts for the work of Mircea Eliade on *Geschichte der religiösen Ideen*, there is a text where the vision of God is mentioned.[9] So the question arises of whether the vision of God was already spoken of by Muḥammad or is only a development of the later tradition and of Islamic mysticism.

Schimmel It is understandable that the issue of the vision of God has been much discussed. There are theological schools which completely reject this possibility; in others one can in fact find the idea that the appearance of God is possible from time to time and that then man may see him. In his book *Islam and the Destiny of Man*[10], Charles LeGai Eaton presents an astonishingly concrete description of paradise in which the idea of the vision of God also plays a role, and one has the feeling that for a short time – as if the TV were turned on for a moment – one may sometimes see God. In the traditional interpretation, this idea of the vision of God plays no special role, and certainly not a central one.

In Islamic mysticism it is different. For the mystics the vision of God, the divine beloved, is an indispensable necessity in paradise. Why should they busy themselves with all those superficial things like *ḥūrīs*, wine, etc.? The real point is the smile of the divine beloved and it is around this idea that the whole corpus of mystical poetry and literature emerged.

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[9] M. Eliade, *Geschichte der religiösen Ideen*. Vol. *Quellentexte*, transl. and ed. by G. Lanczkowski. Freiburg etc., 1981, p. 304.

[10] Ch. LeGai Eaton, *Islam and the Destiny of Man*. Albany N.Y., 1985.

So there are the various stages – from complete rejection by the Muʿtazila, to the possibility of seeing now and then, and up to the assumption that the full and real meaning of paradise is to be able to see the divine beloved in his whole, indescribable beauty.

Moreover, there is the idea that paradise cannot of course consist in a 'static' state of happiness, but is eternal life – a life that takes man more and more deeply into the infinite depths of God, which for man means a journey without an end. This is how Iqbāl has expressed it in our time. Of course this conception had already been expressed by the early Islamic thinkers in mysticism; Iqbāl just translated it into the language of philosophy – thus eternal life becomes a real life, including activity and also a little suffering. Tor Andrae formulated it quite similarly in his book *Die letzten Dinge* (German by H. H. Schaeder). Leipzig, 1940.

And since the Qurʾān also speaks of different sorts of paradise, different gardens, *djannāt* (pl.), and different degrees of bliss, people thought that one had to distinguish between different stages in paradise. Ibn ʿArabī, and following him other mystics, like Ibrāhīm Ḥaqqī Erzerumlu in the 18th century, actually drew diagrams of paradise, which state precisely at which stage this or that person is to be found on the basis of his individual dignity and worthiness. Such attempts can still be found in some popular books on Islamic mysticism even today.

union with God? **Horn** How far does one have to distinguish between vision of God and union with God?

Zirker In the Qurʾān and in normative theology, union with God is generally not mentioned; popular religiosity is also much more cautious. However, vision of God for the eschatological community in paradise means that God sometimes allows himself to be seen or sets aside his glory. It is relevant in this context that the righteous are occasionally, after their death, counted among those who are brought nearer, among those who are "Nearest (to God)" (Sūra 83,21).

Schimmel "The Nearest", the *muqarrabūn*, are first of all a certain category of angels. On the human level, the term may refer to pious people who, by a special grace granted by God, were brought closer and so became advanced in mysticism.

intercession of Muḥammad and the saints? **Dupré** Is the intercession of Muḥammad referred to in the Islamic tradition? And if so, how is it to be assessed?

Zirker In fact, not only the intercession of Muḥammad, but also that of the many saints, plays an impor-

tant role in the religious life of Muslims. However, this belief is also severely criticized by various schools. Thus, in the 1920s, there was almost a rebellion in the Islamic world because the strict Wahhābīs, who were in power in Saudi-Arabia and were thus also responsible for taking care of the holy places, said that it would not be in keeping with Islamic faith to have in the area around Mecca and Medina so many graves of saints which were visited by the believers. The graves were levelled – and other parts of the Islamic world were angry about this. Both approaches are Islamic. In North Africa, from Egypt to Morocco, visiting the graves of saints in order to ask for the saints' intercession plays a major role. And yet it has always to be taken into account that nobody may intercede with God, unless by his permission. Since this implies an attempt at approaching God, and since in the Qur'ān this is always linked with the suspicion of tending towards association, the whole matter remains very ambiguous.

intercession with the permission of God alone

SCHIMMEL Although according to Sūra 2,255, "Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth?" intercession seems almost impossible, the practice of asking for it and of relying on it has developed very strongly in the tradition of Islamic devotion. It is not only part of normal devotion to trust in Muḥammad's intercession, _shafāʿa_, and to ask for it again and again, and it is not only praised in innumerable poems and experienced by sinners as a source of hope. Beyond that, according to popular faith all the good deeds a man has done will as it were appear personified at the Judgement and bear witness for him – be it the Qur'ān, which will then say: this man or this woman has quoted me often, forgive him or her; or the mosque in which he or she has said the community prayers, which will appear as a ship of salvation or as a camel, in order to carry this or that individual across the bridge; or the alms levy – all this is personified according to popular faith and can then intercede for the Muslim. It is a very colourful portrayal, and it is anything but easy to derive this popular motif of intercession from the Qur'ān. Muḥammad's intercession, however, is a very central topic in a somewhat later Islamic theology, and once again the communitarian character of faith finds a very beautiful expression; for Muḥammad does not say: 'I' or 'the sinner', but the community of Islamic faith in toto will be saved. Moreover, the tradition of intercession is sometimes also found in the context of the Prophet's journey to heaven.

There is actually no mention of intercession by other prophets, and it is even hard to imagine it, if we recall that, according to the words of the tradition of the _shafāʿa_ already quoted, everyone, including the Prophet, and including, as it says literally, innocent Jesus, will say: "I myself, I myself want to be saved", and Muḥammad alone says: "_ummatī_, my community shall be saved". This seems rather to exclude the intercession of other prophets.

KHOURY Another aspect of this subject is that, with the permission of God, the angels may intercede too. Furthermore, following Sūra 3,45, where it says that Jesus will be one "of (the company of) those nearest to God", some theologians, especially the Qur'ān commentators, hold that, of all the prophets, Jesus will also receive permission to intercede, and is counted among the group of those who may do this.

Here the suggestion is that, having regard to all the elements within the general stream of the Islamic tradition, it seems to be important to distinguish very clearly between three levels: the level of popular devotion, the level of mystical ideas and speculations, and the level of classical theology. Every consideration of Islamic tradition must be clear about which of these it is concerned with.

SCHIMMEL The reference to Sūra 3 is very welcome indeed and enriches the perspectives that have to be kept in mind when we deal with these questions. Furthermore, we must underline the necessity to distinguish between the three levels mentioned. My own statements, as is well known, mainly refer to the two levels of popular devotion and the mystical tradition and not so much with the level of classical theology.

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are paradise and hell eternal or transitory?

SCHIMMEL On a question of existential importance to the believer – whether paradise and hell are eternal or transitory, the Qur'ān makes very different assertions. Orthodoxy and the Muʿtazila maintain the eternity of punishment in hell since they conceive of it as the expression of God's justice.

But this is opposed to what is said in the Qur'ān (Sūra 11,107 f.): "They will dwell therein for all the time [...] except as thy Lord willeth [...]". And some hold the opinion that this would contradict an eternity of punishment in hell. Thus, people like al-Qasṭallānī (d. 1517), but many mystical thinkers before him too, pointed to the assertion made twice in the Qur'ān that "everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face" (Sūra 28,88; cf. 55,26 f.). This would mean that paradise and hell, which are in fact created things, will

also pass away one day and God as the One, as he has been since eternity, will abide for ever, again without any trace of the creation. On the basis of the mystical tradition, this is indeed very easy to understand, if we say that the creation is something that has emerged from God by means of His names, whose existence is therefore only contingent; and which, in a certain sense, is therefore not real at all, but only indicates the power and might of God. Then we also understand that God may perhaps one day withdraw this breath through which the creative names are working – and then everything would again be as it was before time began. It is understandable that the mystics were of the opinion that such a point in time could in fact come, and in many later texts by pious people, especially in mystical poetry, one repeatedly finds the idea that the conceptions of heaven and hell are leitmotifs only, which will ultimately pass away so that God alone remains, although as leitmotifs they may perhaps be necessary.

✦

VANONI In the Christian tradition, hell has also frequently been a means to educate people and the question arises of whether it is this that really suggests the inherent reason why we as Christians have to speak about hell.

ZIRKER Hell as a means of educating whom – adults or children? There can be no doubt that to speak about hell is a severe and threatening admonishment. For adults it is of course also a dark and sombre, as well as a colourful and striking, means of educating people. There is, however, a great difference between adults being threatened with it and young people or even small children being warned by their parents 'to be good and obedient' for fear of hell.

SCHIMMEL On the question of the extent to which children were threatened with hell, we would have to read a few early Islamic books for children, and also a literary genre called *muqaddimat aṣ-ṣalāt*. This, at least in the eastern part of the Islamic world, consists of rhyming catechisms, in which all the religious questions are listed in a very simple manner. This literature is known from Afghanistan, Sind and Bengal, where it is a literary category of its own, about which there is unfortunately hardly any research. Hell is of course included because resurrection, fire and paradise are presented as realities. So probably children were told about them.

✦

VANONI In how far is the concept of hell really a burden to the Muslim? What is its status in the context of his faith?

ZIRKER First, it is striking to the reader of the Qur'ān that the strength and diversity of the metaphors are much more powerful in the Qur'ān than in the Bible. Just as the sensual plenitude of paradise is unfolded, so too hell is portrayed in awful pictures where the frightening and painful are presented just as dramatically as the revolting and nauseating. Possibly, but without absolute proof, Dante's *Divina Commedia* was influenced by this metaphorical language. In the tradition of Islam, however, internal theological criticism of these assertions is not absent. Thus al-Ghazzālī reflected on paradise, and how far these are just weak metaphors of the bliss and happiness that await us there – and similarly concerning hell – asking himself about the function of these metaphors: do the pains of hell simply consist in the punishments God ordains for the wicked deeds of people, or is it here a matter of the evil the sinner inflicts upon himself through his evil deeds.

✦

WISSE In the question concerning the destination of man's path, according to the Islamic understanding, especially concerning the concept of hell, to what extent does this also concern the devil?

KHOURY In Islam there is not only the devil. The Qur'ān speaks of three kinds of invisible creatures, and, at the end of Sūra 2, where Islamic beliefs are listed, even the angels are mentioned: "[...] Each one (of them) believeth in God, His angels, His books, and His apostles. [...]" (v. 285). God's angels include three groups:

Firstly, the angels who serve God, who have the same function as the angels in the Old and New Testaments; among these Gabriel is the most important.

Then there are those angels who refused to obey the command of God and prostrate themselves before Adam. Of these counter-angels, Iblīs, Satan, is the leader. He was expelled from paradise together with his followers and swore to God: "I will lie in wait for them [...]: Then will I assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left: [...]" (Sūra 7,16 f.). With that Iblīs became the enemy of God and of humans, and the Qur'ān warns again and again: "[...] do not follow the footsteps of the Evil One, for he is to you an avowed enemy." (2,168.208, etc.).

Finally, the third category of such creatures, the _djinn_ must be mentioned. They are complex creatures: they have a subtle corporeality and are invisible to our eyes. They are creatures who multiply like man; their offspring are in need of salvation and dependent on hearing the Qur'ān. Some of them have already heard the Qur'ān in primordial times and then handed it on.

Many popular devotional concepts taken from Jewish and Christian legends, which became mixed with concepts from ancient Arab legends have become integrated into the developed interpretation of these beings. There are also many speculations about the material from which these creatures are made: as man is made out of clay, the angels are made out of light, the devils out of fire and the _djinn_ as complex creatures out of fire and smoke.

✦

OTT In Islam the possibility of universal reconciliation seems to be considered. The fact that hell is not considered by all to be eternal seems to speak in favour of this. How is this question actually to be assessed?

universal reconciliation?

LEUZE Was the lecture not concerned rather to say that hell and paradise are transient, than with the idea of universal reconciliation? And would this mean that it is assumed by certain theologians and mystics that man does not attain an immortality of any kind, but, just as he began to exist, will vanish again – whether in paradise or in hell? This would be a very interesting idea, because then, in the nature of things, there would be a return towards nothingness, as we find in the early assertions of the Old Testament, where it also says that man does not live forever, but only God can claim eternity.

KHOURY In Islam there is no idea of a universal reconciliation in the comprehensive sense that in the end everything is reconciled with God. There is, however – not in the Qur'ān, but in the Islamic tradition – a reconciliation of all Muslims with God. If they have maintained their faith until they die, all Muslims attain paradise because of their faith and Muḥammad's intercession; for the Prophet will be given permission by God to intercede for all Muslim believers. This conception is based on the Ḥadīth. Thus there is the story that Muḥammad one day struggles against the angel Gabriel; they make a lot of noise, but finally the Prophet comes out with the message that nobody who believes in God will go to hell. One of the Companions of the Prophet then asks whether he should not run to bring people the good tidings. Muḥammad rejects this on the grounds that they would then rely on it.[11] The good tidings should not keep humans from being pious and fulfilling their obligations towards God. In this sense the idea has been accepted by Islamic theology.

The idea that in the end hell and paradise will completely disappear is rather a mystical speculation than a theological statement. It is a kind of inference on the basis of the Qur'ānic statement: that "everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face" (Sūra 28,88). However, does this also include the hereafter? In the Qur'ān obviously not. Maybe in modern times some Muslim theologians are trying to think in this direction.

✦

stage of purification (purgatory) also in Islam?

WISSE In the hereafter, Christianity knows of a stage of purification, in the language of school-catechism: purgatory. Is there a similar concept in Islam or is this what is meant by the 'non-eternal hell'?

KHOURY In the strict sense of the word, there is probably no purgatory in the Islamic faith, in the sense of a place of purification on man's path towards paradise. There is only hell, a place of painful punishment for people who did not keep the commandments of God. As such this hell would be eternal. But since God takes the Muslim believer into special consideration and, with God's permission, the believer is granted Muḥammad's intercession, for the Muslim it becomes a hell 'for the time being'. Perhaps this could in a certain way be seen as parallel to purgatory.

resurrection of man and the immortality of the soul

KAHLERT How far is a remnant of the idea of immortality in the Platonic sense contained in the Islamic discourse about the 'soul', or how does it conceive of the soul? What is the relation between the hope of being raised from the dead and the idea of immortality?

SCHIMMEL Insofar as the question is one of a purely philosophical nature, it would have to be dealt with on the level of philosophy. In any case, according to the general view, man as a whole is raised from the dead. The idea that only the soul survives, or philosophical conceptions that only the soul which is completely developed fully attains immortality, are to be found among the philosophers. Normal religion hardly knows of it. For the mystics, bodily resurrection is not of such a central importance. In

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[11] With al-Bukhārī, Muslim, at-Tirmidhī.

mysticism, the issue is rather an experience of the soul which is then given a share of the divine presence. We can see from Sūra 89,27 f., where the soul is addressed: "[...] 'O (thou) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back thou to thy Lord, – well pleased (thyself), and well-pleasing unto Him!" that the soul is actually always the main reality which is called back to God – although the body is also mentioned again and again. For most interpreters of mystic devotion this refers to the soul which, on its way towards God, starts out as *nafs ammāra,* the soul which prompts to doing evil, becomes *nafs lawwāma,* the reproaching soul, and finally, by remembering God in mind and heart, becomes *nafs mutma'inna,* the soul in peace, who is called back to God.

If one is a mystical interpreter, one may of course understand this as meaning that it is only the soul which is called back here and that the body is left behind like a garment. There is a very beautiful verse by Rūmī, whose words speak here for many others, which says:

"Death is a man, thus he may come –

I will draw him close to my chest!

He will receive from me a garment, one of many colours –

I will receive from him a soul without any colours."

This suggests that death does not lead towards a resurrection in the body, a resurrection of the flesh, but clears the way for casting off the familiar garment of the body, so that finally one has nothing to do with it any longer. This idea that it is the soul that goes on living and will live for ever is to be found frequently in similar passages. The soul is like Jesus, one can often hear Rūmī say, and the body is like the donkey on which Jesus rode, but which, when Jesus was elevated into heaven, remained down on earth. So it is with man – the donkey-body remains, and Jesus, the soul, ascends to heavenly glory. This metaphor which is to be found in Rūmī and other poets and mystics, expresses a widespread hope or a widespread faith, although it goes against, or at least does not conform with, the bodily resurrection as declared in the Qur'ān.

Polytheists, Jews and Christians

Adel Theodor Khoury

Faith is the core of Islam, the bond between the religious and political unity of the Islamic society and the foundation that makes Muslims "but a single Brotherhood" (Qur'ān 49,10; cf. 9,71).[1]

Moreover, in Islam faith is also the basis of Muslims' full social and cultural status. Islamic law decrees different attitudes towards non-Muslims depending on whether they are unbelievers or followers of a different faith (like Jews or Christians).

1. War or peace?[2]

1.1 The classical doctrine

The classical legal system of Islam, according to Shāfiʿī, divides the world into two territories: the territory of Islam, *dār al-islām,* and the territory of war, *dār al-ḥarb.* The territory of Islam is God's Kingdom, the realm of peace in which there is the rule of Islamic law and the social order and political structure ordained by Islam. The territory of the non-Muslims is in principle called the territory of war. In this territory there is the rule of the law of unbelievers and non-Muslims which contradicts the ordinances of the divine law on some, even many, points. Muslims have a duty to defend their own territory against attack by enemies and they have also actively to engage in gaining control for the law of God and causing the rights of God to be exercised.

When an Islamic territory has to defend itself against a massive attack

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[1] On the thoughts presented here cf. the following references: A. Th. Khoury, "Frieden, Toleranz und universale Solidarität in der Sicht des Islams", in: H. Althaus (ed.), *Christentum, Islam und Hinduismus vor den großen Weltproblemen.* Altenberge, 1988, pp. 50–79; id., *Christen unterm Halbmond. Religiöse Minderheiten unter der Herrschaft des Islams.* Freiburg etc., 1994; T. Nagel, *Staat und Glaubensgemeinschaft im Islam. Geschichte der politischen Ordnungsvorstellungen im Islam.* 2 vols. Zürich, 1981; W. M. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina.* Oxford, 1956.

[2] M. Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam.* Baltimore, ²1979; A. Th. Khoury, *Was sagt der Koran zum Heiligen Krieg?* (GTB; 789). Gütersloh, 1991; A. Noth, *Heiliger Krieg und heiliger Kampf in Islam und Christentum.* Bonn, 1966; R. Steinweg (ed.), *Der gerechte Krieg: Christentum, Islam, Marxismus.* Frankfurt/M., 1980; A. Waas, "Der Heilige Krieg im Islam und Christentum in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart", in *Die Welt als Geschichte* 19 (1959) 211–225.

by its enemies, all Muslims are called to fight to protect it and thus take up God's cause. In less dramatic situations it is assumed that the obligation to fight lies with the state and the community themselves and that this obligation is met when at least in some place, somewhere in the world, efforts are made to extend Islam's sphere of dominance.

This duty of the community is on-going. Essentially, being active in the cause of Islam comes to an end only when all people have accepted belief in God or have even become converts to Islam. The final target of the fight "in the cause of God", as the Qur'ān expresses it (for example Sūra 2,190), is only attained when the territory of the enemies is annexed to the territory of Islam, when unbelief is finally eradicated, and when non-Muslims have submitted to the sovereignty of Islam. As long as the sovereignty of Islam does not encompass the whole world, the engagement, *djihād*, continues; it has to be performed either by means of military action or by means of political activity or in some other way.

Peace, according to the intention of Islamic law, is the final stage to be attained in the conflict between the Islamic state and non-Muslim communities, for Holy War is waged so that all humans can live in peace and fear of God as Muslims, or at least in tolerated enclaves as protected citizens, *dhimmīs*, within the borders and under the supremacy of the Islamic state. Peace is only attained and considered to be established, when the borders of the Islamic state extend throughout the world so that there is only one state: the Islamic state. As long as this target is not reached, the Islamic state of God lives in a constant state of conflict with non-Islamic states; its relations with foreign countries remain those of a legal controversy. However, this state of affairs does not mean that Islam is constantly fighting against non-Muslims or has to wage a permanent war against foreign peoples. Nor does it mean that an Islamic state may not enter into relations of some kind with them. Treaties and pacts may be concluded, agreements made, and cultural and economic relations may be initiated and cultivated. But in the view of Islam's classical system of law, these contacts and relations in no way include an acknowledgment of the legitimacy of foreign states. Initiating such relations simply recognizes the fact that even in non-Islamic states, as long as they exist, a certain authority and a certain social and political order are necessary. So cognizance is taken of the existing authority, the accepted social order, and the institutions of the state and it is acceptable to establish contacts with the various governments in the interest of Muslims and to agree for the time being upon peaceful relations.

However, these peaceful relations do not rescind the fundamental division of the world into a 'territory of Islam' and a 'territory of war'. As long as the time of peace lasts, jurists call the territory of war 'territory of peace' or 'territory of treaty', but the emphasis is on the fact that the acceptability of treaties that may be concluded and periods of peace that may be agreed upon does not mean that the status of non-Islamic countries is the same as that of the Islamic state. Temporary and limited periods of peace are only a break along the way towards the islamization of the whole world. This target, however, is hard to reach and has to remain a pious hope in day-to-day practice, and one has to proceed from the fact that normally 'Holy War' in its active expression becomes a dormant duty, as it were not positively activated and fulfilled. But the theoretical aim remains and confronts actual practice again and again with the ideal state and target.

The conceptions of classical Islamic law with regard to 'Holy War' can be summarized as follows:

Peace is the situation of internal order in the state when it is ruled in accordance with the laws of God and grants no free space to unbelievers, apostates, rebels and similar groups that may endanger its existence, but eradicates or converts them. Externally, peace means the ultimate state which is reached after victory is won and non-Muslim communities are overthrown, so that only the Islamic state remains, except that followers of a revealed religion which is acknowledged by Islam or possesses holy scriptures, have the legal status of citizens protected by Islam. Thus the political community of the Muslims (called *umma*) fulfils its task of upholding and maintaining the rights of God and of safeguarding the rights of man ordained in accordance with the rights of God.

1.2 *djihād* today

The opinions held within Islam today concerning *djihād*, striving in the interest of Islam and Holy War, its targets and fundamental intention, differ on many points.

The strict traditionalists and fundamentalists of contemporary Islam, who are clearly gaining more and more influence, support the classical Islamic legal view as it was developed in the Middle Ages. They state that Islam calls all human beings to accept the Islamic faith, either by means of persuasion or, if they refuse, by means of the sword. This engagement attains its object when all non-Muslims become followers of Islam or submit to it as protected citizens. *djihād* is thus a commitment to promote Islam, and

extend its rule in the world. If the Islamic world is attacked by its enemies, it becomes the duty of every Muslim believer to fight for Islam. But _djihād_ is not by nature only a defensive war: it can and must also be waged preventively or offensively, for, in its true intention, this commitment is the instrument of worldwide revolution which will help Islam attain absolute rule in the world (cf. Sūras 2,193; 9,33; 61,9; 48,28). Intervals of rest for rearmament and to prepare the next attack, armistices in times of weakness, and limited peace treaties with non-Muslims are to be understood as intermezzos only.

The fundamentalists of Islam today cannot reconcile themselves to accept religious pluralism and make do with the diversity of political and social orders. The earth will be cleansed of unbelief, the word of God alone will be the victor – such have been the slogans since in the Middle Ages.

Apart from the fundamentalists, there are in Islam a considerable number of thinkers and jurists who emphasize that the Qur'ān holds a far more differentiated position on the question of Holy War and engagement for Islam. In the context of contemporary international relations and in view of current conditions in Islamic countries themselves, we must stress that Islam primarily engages in promoting peace. This was already understood by the authors of the classical period, when they emphasized the moral, spiritual, social and mission-oriented aspects of _djihād_. At that time they called war the 'small struggle'. The 'great struggle' was said to be of a spiritual nature and to consist of a threefold effort: the struggle of the heart, i. e., the daily striving for true faith and more faithful obedience; the struggle of the tongue, i. e., encouraging good people and reproaching evil doers; finally the struggle of the hand, i. e., in community service and in social charity. Ultimately peaceful proclamation and missionary activity will be an excellent means of spreading Islam in the world.

And above all it is expressly stated in the Qur'ān that peace is the actual goal of _djihād_ (cf. Sūras 4,90.94; 8,61).

There are circumstances, however, which make war inevitable or at least advisable. Legitimate, just war by Muslims may then only take place 'in the way of God'. That is, it must not be an expansionist enterprise or waged to take revenge or for the sake of spoils. Modern authors have mentioned various reasons which, in their view, would make a war into a just war for Muslims.

These reasons can be summed up in two. Firstly, Islam should retaliate against attacks and incursions by enemies, no matter whether these hostilities are expressed in a military campaign (cf. Sūra 2,190) or in the breaking of agreements and contracts (cf. Sūra 9,12) or in planning an attack against Muslims. Furthermore, Islam has to prevent, if necessary by force of arms, the oppression, persecution and temptation of Muslims in foreign countries (cf. Sūras 2,193; 4,75).

Secondly, Islam has the duty to engage in spreading the true faith and causing the rights of God to be acknowledged everywhere: this means that unbelief, polytheism and atheism have to be fought (cf. Sūras 2,193; 8,39).

2. Exclusion or tolerance?[3]

2.1 Freedom of religion

According to the regulations in classical Islamic law, there are two groups of people for whom there is no freedom of religion: Muslims and unbelievers.

As the expression of God's will, their faith and the Qur'ānic law is for Muslims the core of their life and they are binding for both the individual and the community. Faith grants stability and value to all human works.

Conversely, unbelief makes all deeds unstable and valueless (2,217), with regard to how they are judged both in this world and on the Day of Reckoning in the hereafter (2,161; 4,18; 47,1.34).

Hence the attitude to Muslim apostates (2,217): rejecting faith, _ridda_, is considered to be the greatest fault, the worst sin man can ever commit.[4] The Qur'ān expresses great indignation towards those who "reject faith after they accepted it" (3,86–91; 4,137; 5,6; 16,86–91).

Apart from punishment by God in the hereafter, the Qur'ān does not expressly specify a punishment for apostasy in this world. The tradition, however, decrees capital punishment for it and the tradition here also applies to apostates a passage of the Qur'ān which in context concerns hypocrites: "[...] But if they turn renegades, seize them and slay them wherever ye find them; and (in any case) take no friends or helpers from their ranks" (4,89).

[3] A. Th. Khoury, _Toleranz im Islam_. München etc., 1980, (Religionswissenschaftliche Studien; 8) Altenberge, ²1986; id., "Frieden, Toleranz und universale Solidarität in der Sicht des Islams", in: H. Althaus (ed.), _op. cit._ (fn. 1), pp. 50–79; A. Noth, "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen islamischer Toleranz im Islam", in _Saeculum_ 29 (1978) 190–204; R. Paret, "Toleranz und Intoleranz im Islam", in _Saeculum_ 21 (1970) 344–365.

[4] S. A. Rahman, _Punishment of Apostasy in Islam_. Lahore, ²1978; S. M. Zwemer, _Das Gesetz wider den Abfall vom Glauben_. Gütersloh, 1926.

Muḥammad is also said to have affirmed this: "Kill whoever changes his religion" (in al-Bukhārī). And: "The blood of a Muslim can be freely shed only in three cases: in the case of apostasy after the faith, of promiscuity after legitimate marriage and of murder that was not committed as vendetta" (in al-Bukhārī and Muslim). There are further reports testifying that Muḥammad decreed capital punishment for renouncing the faith. This rule was also applied after his death, specifically in connection with the war against the Arabian tribes who had turned away from Islam (the so-called Ridda-War), and later too under the Caliph 'Umar.

So the jurists of all law schools have agreed on the kind of penalty to be imposed for apostasy: capital punishment.

As for the unbelievers, there is no excuse for their lack of faith and their polytheism, on the basis that the primordial revelation was proclaimed to all humans and the prophets' message was announced to each and every people. Therefore the only choice unbelievers and polytheists have is to convert to Islam or to be fought against by the Islamic state.

In Islam, freedom of religion is therefore primarily enjoyed only by the People of the Book, i. e., by Jews and Christians and other communities of equal status and the Qur'ān formulates the principle of freedom of religion: "Let there be no compulsion in religion [...]." (2,256).

2.2 Tolerance?

The question concerning tolerance relates among other things to the structure of the particular state in question and the legal status granted to minorities in that state, and here tolerance is not granted to unbelievers and polytheists. Classical Islamic law is based on the assumption of a uniform society, a society of Muslims regulating their relations with minorities on the basis of contracts. Here the legal status of the minorities is based on a contract between the conquerors and the conquered, the victors and the losers, a contract that makes Muslims full citizens and the others only 'protected citizens', _dhimmī_s.

The protective contract expresses mainly the duty of non-Muslims to live subject to the Islamic authorities, to be loyal towards the Islamic state, and to pay the tributes and dues agreed upon in property and per capita taxes. It is the obligation of the Islamic state in turn to protect the life of the protected citizens and the rights granted to them.

We shall mention here the most important points that clarify the legal position of protected citizens, especially Christians and Jews.

(1) Freedom of religion and worship

Islam respects the protected citizens' freedom of conscience and guarantees them freedom of religion. "Let there be no compulsion in religion [...]", the Qur'ān proclaims (2,256). Thus the protected citizens may not be forced to leave their own religion and adopt Islam. Furthermore, the protected citizens' freedom of religion and worship implies the right to instruct their children and their fellow believers in their own religion and denomination respectively. The right to perform the acts of worship of their religion is also given to them. However, the state imposes the restriction upon them that they should perform their acts of worship only within their place of worship and in such a way that does not offend the Muslims' religious feelings or challenge their sense of superiority.

(2) Mixed marriages between protected citizens and Muslims

A protected citizen may not marry a Muslim woman, for, according to the understanding of the jurists, such a marriage entails an imminent danger to the faith of the Muslim woman. If such a marriage comes about by mistake, it has to be annulled. A protected citizen who marries a Muslim woman even though he knows the law and the prohibition that exists, must be punished.

A Muslim man may marry a woman from among the People of the Book, as Jews and Christians are called in the Qur'ān, and the Qur'ān itself states this (5,6). But such marriages are not recommended by the jurists. One advantage of such marriages is that the woman may perhaps feel motivated to adopt Islam.

(3) The judiciary

Concerning the judiciary, Islam states in general that each specific religious community should enjoy internal administrative autonomy and that the jurisdiction concerning its followers' affairs is its own responsibility. However, the general competence of Islamic judges remains.

(4) The political domain

The inequality of a country's citizens on the basis of their religious denomination is most obvious in the political domain because here the issue is the exercise of power in the state, which is, according to Islamic law, exclusively reserved to the Muslims. Thus Muslim jurists unanimously agree that access to major offices of state should be denied to the protected citizens. For, as they argue, the Qur'ān forbids friendship with non-Muslims

at least in the sensitive domains of public life, and concedes preference to the faithful in matters of public office (cf. 3,28.118; 4,115.144; 60,1; 5,54.60). It also emphasizes: "[...] And never will God grant to the Unbelievers a way (to triumph) over the Believers" (4,141). And according to the tradition of the Ḥadīth, Muḥammad is said to have underlined this: "Islam rules, it is not ruled." Access to high office would contradict the low position in the state accorded to the protected citizens.

The long and the short of it is that classical Islamic law provides for the formation of a two-class society. The Muslims are the real citizens; the others are tolerated. They are given a space to live in, but their only rights are those the Islamic state grants them, and these rights proceed from a fundamental inequality between Muslims and protected citizens. In fact Muslims and non-Muslims have no equality of rights in the state; they do not all hold the same fundamental rights and do not all have the same fundamental duties. Nor are they in principle equal before the law. Although, from the perspective of Islam, non-Muslims are not deprived of rights and are not simply handed over to Muslims as their prey, nevertheless they are treated as second-class citizens in their own country. This order certainly made the survival of Christian communities possible in the past, and promoted a bearable and sometimes even prosperous coexistence in the East and in Andalusia. On the other hand, this mixture of tolerance and intolerance, this relative integration of non-Muslims into the state and relegating them to the legal status of foreigners, in practice often and repeatedly made the life of the protected citizens, Jews and Christians a story of suffering under the pressure of the Islamic majority.

The question arises of whether re-establishing a state on this model today would be tolerable at all. Rather what is needed is a structure that allows the communities and all citizens to be loyal to the country that is theirs and to claim the undeniable right to be respected in this their country as citizens with equal rights, and to be granted the same fundamental rights and have the same fundamental duties imposed upon them. This would prevent some from making the state their own, while others are downgraded to the status of protected citizens, who are then at the mercy of the goodwill and generosity, arbitrariness and discretion of the majority. It would avoid the fear experienced by citizens who are 'only tolerated' of having to go through times of suffering that constantly threaten to befall them.

Perhaps it is not so presumptuous to hope that contemporary Islam will find a structure for society and state that will allow it to play its true role in the world without any loss of identity as "witnesses to fair dealing" (as the Qur'ān says in Sūra 5,9) and as a participant in the establishment of a social order in which all citizens are in principle equal before the law and enjoy the same rights in practical life, and in which, going beyond the limited tolerance granted as a gift, inalienable human rights for all are acknowledged without reservation.

3. Islam and universal solidarity

What we have considered so far makes it easy to understand Islam's position on the question of universal solidarity. If faith is the core of Islam, the bond of unity in society, the effective factor in the believers' solidarity and finally the basis of Muslims' full political participation in the state, then what we may call grades of solidarity with other people emerge: full solidarity with brothers and sisters in the faith, partial solidarity with the followers of various faiths, such as Jews and Christians, who among others may be called partial-believers/partial-unbelievers, and finally no solidarity at all with unbelievers.

3.1 The People of the Book

According to the Qur'ān, Jews and Christians are recipients of books of revelation and their divine message, even though they do not decide to adopt Islam. Therefore the Qur'ān ordains that Jews and Christians should not be utterly excluded, but neither are they totally integrated. Thus Muslims are allowed to share the food which Jews and Christians prepare, and it is declared permissible for them to participate in Muslims' meals. Permission is also given for Muslims to marry Jewish or Christian women (cf. 5,6).

But the interests of the Islamic community must nevertheless be protected by Muslims not directly befriending Jews and Christians. The Qur'ān specifically warns Muslims against friendship with Jews (58,14; 60,13). Christians are given preference over Jews. Despite all the criticism against some elements of Christian doctrine, the greater closeness of Christians to Muslims is emphasized: "Strongest among men in enmity to the Believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the Believers wilt thou find those who say, 'We are Christians' [...]" (5,85).

Based on this and on similar statements in the Qur'ān, some Muslims see the possibility of a solidarity embracing not only Muslims, but also Christians. Furthermore, they speak in favour of practical cooperation between Muslims and Christians.

3.2 Unbelievers

A primary protective measure is: there should be no community between Muslims and their enemies, the enemies of God and his Prophet. This concerns various domains of practical life.

(1) Food

Muslims are forbidden to eat what is expressly pagan, the meat of animals slaughtered when idols are invoked, i. e., primarily sacrificial animals, although anyone driven by necessity may eat it (2,173; 6,145; 16,115).

The polytheists became more clearly specified when the Qur'ān required that the name of God alone should be invoked and thus made the regulation considerably stricter (6,121).

(2) Marriage

In family affairs there should be no relationships between the Muslims and the polytheists either. Thus Muslims may not accept unbelievers into their families by marriage (2,221).

The Qur'ān (60,10) gives instructions for cases when women from the territory of the polytheists may seek refuge with the Islamic community and wish to join it by marriage. Their faith should be tested. If the result is positive and it is ascertained that they have become believing women, then the Muslims may marry them and treat them like the other believing women in their community. Thus their conversion brings new believers full integration into the community. Muslims whose wives do not after all wish to convert should not maintain their marriage with them (ibid). So the Qur'ān draws a clear line between the Islamic community and the society of unbelievers and polytheists.

(3) Social relations

The coherence of the Islamic community obliges Muslims not to enter into friendly relations with unbelievers for such relations undermine their unanimity and their readiness to fight against their opponents. The believers' shared identity and the solidarity of community members should be strengthened by their offering their friendship to believers rather than to unbelievers (3,28; 4,144). In this way the internal solidarity of the community as well as the division between believers and unbelievers is underlined (8,72.75).

4. New orientation of some scholars

4.1 Theory of peace

Challenging the traditional position of the classical system of law, some thinkers in the Islamic world today emphasize the priority of peace, not only as an ultimate state which may be attained by means of violence, but as the normal state of relations between people and communities. Mahmoud Zakzouk, Dean of the Theological Faculty of Azhar University, formulated it roughly as: Islam wants peace, and the path towards it is also peace.[5]

Those who hold this opinion mention in this context that even the theory that accepts armed warfare itself includes points that emphasize the priority of peace, for in the midst of fighting, Muslims should be prepared to make peace as soon as the enemy desist from their hostile activities (cf. Qur'ān 2,193; 8,39). The Qur'ān also makes clear that it considers peace to be the real target of the engagement for the cause of God: "But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace [...]" (8,61; cf. also 5,37). "[...] Therefore if they withdraw from you but fight you not, and (instead) send you (guarantees of) peace, then God hath opened no way for you (to war against them)" (4,90; cf. 4,94). Peace is the opportunity for non-Muslims as well as the opportunity for Islam. For the issue is making the message of God audible and always giving the enemy who is willing to learn an opportunity to hear this message, and perhaps be converted and be fully accepted into the Muslim community: "If one amongst the Pagans ask thee for asylum, grant it to him, so that he may hear the Word of God; and then escort him to where he can be secure. [...]" (9,6). "But (even so), if they repent, establish regular prayers, and practise regular charity, – they are your brethren in Faith [...]" (9,11; cf. 9,5).

Those who give priority to peace argue that Muslims today really should align themselves with the teaching of the Qur'ān which prevailed in the Meccan period.[6]

A remarkable position is taken by Inamullah Khan, the former Secretary General of the Islamic World Congress (Karachi/Pakistan), who no

[5] M. Zakzouk, "Peace from an Islamic Standpoint. World Peace as Concept and Necessity", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Peace for Humanity. Principles, Problems and Perspectives of the Future as Seen by Muslims and Christians* [International Christian-Islamic Conference "Peace for Humanity", Vienna, March 30 to April 2, 1993]. New Delhi, reprint 1998, pp. 65–86; similarly also at a conference in Zurich held in the same year, 1993, in which I also participated.

[6] Cf. some expositions about this period in my book: A. Th. Khoury, *Was ist los in der islamischen Welt? Die Konflikte verstehen.* Freiburg etc., ³1991, pp. 72–75.

longer wants to consider the followers of non-Islamic religions as enemies, but as partners:

The path towards peace runs via encounter of believers of all religions. Only through interreligious dialogue can humanity achieve a just, honest and lasting peace. Young people must also get to know the teachings and traditions of their neighbours. "In view of the threatening dangers, we must after all realize the fact that the world has long ago become a 'big village', in which we all are next-door neighbours. Neighbours, however, should respect each other and esteem and appreciate the various traditions of the others."

Islam means peace. This peace is a "lived peace", promised to "all people without any difference".[7]

4.2 Freedom of religion for all

Several authors consider some striking statements in the Qur'ān to be the basis of the assertion that there is freedom of religion for all, including unbelievers and polytheists. "Let there be no compulsion in religion [...]" (2,256); "If it had been thy Lord's Will, they would all have believed, – all who are on earth! Wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe! No soul can believe, except by the Will of God [...]." (10,99 f.).

The Qur'ān translator Yusuf Ali's annotation is: "If it had been God's Plan or Will not to grant the limited Free-will that He has granted to man, His omnipotence could have made all mankind alike: all would then have had Faith, but that Faith would have reflected no merit on them. [...] As a complementary proposition, men of Faith must not be impatient or angry if they have to contend against Unfaith, and most important of all, they must guard against the temptation of forcing Faith, i. e., imposing it on others by physical compulsion, or any other forms of compulsion such as social pressure, or inducements held out by wealth or position, or other adventitious advantages. Forced faith is no faith. They should strive spiritually and let God's Plan work as He wills."[8]

Even in cases of Muslim apostasy, some modern authors would like to have freedom of religion respected. Maḥmūd Shaltūt, for instance, former Rector of the Azhar-Mosque in Cairo and still today an authority ac-

knowledged in Islam, turns against the traditional teaching that advocates execution for apostasy: "Many jurists are of the opinion that such punishments cannot be confirmed by the traditions handed down by individual authorities and that un-faith all alone is no reason for allowing the blood (of a person who has become an unbeliever) to be shed, the reason for shedding blood is rather fighting against the believers, attacking against and attempting to dissuade them from their faith."[9]

4.3 Solidarity and cooperation

With reference to universal solidarity too, a new approach seems to be developing, as shown in a declaration of the Islamic World Congress made during the first months of the year 1983. In it, Inamullah Khan, at that time Secretary General of the Congress, underlines "the important role of education in the endeavours made to achieve world peace, which all mankind is so badly longing for. [...] Preconditions for the establishment of a lasting order of peace are above all readiness to open up for mutual understanding and tolerance as well as the capacity of people and nations to respect and acknowledge each other mutually. Seen from this perspective, education receives an international dimension as ambassador of a new and modern ethic, in whose centre there are free, worthy, and responsible people as citizens of nations understanding themselves as partners with equal rights and who are determined to shape the future of mankind together and in solidarity. According to the opinion held by the Islamic Congress, an education oriented towards attaining these targets can lead to a renewal of human values and to overcoming destructive thinking in terms of rivalry, distrust, and discrimination by a climate of trust, cooperation, and brotherliness."[10]

[7] In *Moslemische Revue* 9 [66] (1990) no.4, pp. 222–224.
[8] Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān. Text, Translation and Commentary.* vol. I. Jedda 1413 H., p. 510, fn. 1480, quoted in: N. Madjid, "Religious and Socio-Political Pluralism. Islamic Understanding in the Context of Indonesian Experience", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *op. cit.* (fn. 5), p. 212.

[9] Maḥmūd Shaltūt, *Al-Islām, 'aqīda wa sharī'a.* Beirut, 8th edition, s. a. (appr. 1978), p. 281.
[10] Quoted from M. S. Abdullah, Deutsche Welle, Kirchenfunk, Nr. 22/13, May 21, 1983.

Questions and Interventions

OTT There are Muslims in India and East Asia. What is their view, in Indonesia or India for example, of the position of Hindus and Buddhists? Do they have a status similar to that of people from the elevated Semitic religions, or are they considered as polytheists or unbelievers?

KHOURY Assessment of people from the religious communities mentioned has varied in the course of history and in different regions, and today there are attempts at greater discernment in these matters.

There is one view that simply relegates 'polytheists' to the status of 'pagans', and they then have no rights. But what can actually be said about religious communities – like Hindus and Buddhists – which are not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ān and who are not counted among the 'People of the Book' or the communities that have revealed scriptures?

The general view of Islamic theology is that the polytheists, *mushrikūn* (literally people who associate others with God), are not pagans, *kāfirūn*, which has too negative a connotation. Nevertheless, even from an Islamic standpoint, is justice really done to people from these religious communities, if they are considered to be unbelieving polytheists and treated accordingly?

Of course, today the majority of Muslims hold this second opinion and there are attempts to re-interpret the status and standing of these communities. The basis of this new interpretation is to be found in the Qur'ān, which in one place, addressing Muḥammad directly, says: "Of some apostles We have already told thee the story; of others we have not; [...]" (Sūra 4,164); and in another passage it confirms and emphasizes that a prophet came to every nation proclaiming the message of God in the language of his people (cf. Sūras 13,7; 14,4; 35,24).

Following these Qur'ānic assertions, one may work on the basis that these people, who in a specific situation may perhaps have been polytheists, in principle nevertheless had access to the revelation of God and to the proclamation of their particular prophet. Those who hold this view are also of the opinion that, in each case, we should examine more precisely how this prophetic message was in fact received by people and then specify and differentiate, instead of generalizing and saying that they are communities we do not know very well, who appear at first sight to have several deities and are therefore polytheists or unbelievers. This opinion is even held by some at al-Azhar University.

In this context it is right to refer to the above-mentioned passage in the Qur'ān (4,164) and emphasize that there are many things we do not really know and which the Qur'ān does not explicitly mention. It therefore has to be left to God to decide how to judge these people according to how far they have progressed in faithfulness to their particular prophet. This would bring about a certain change in the way of thinking followed till now, at least in that all these communities would not too easily and hastily be considered polytheistic. It would then be recognized that in these communities there are different levels of 'deities': not all of those called deities are actually considered to be divine, and behind these 'deities' the truly divine can be perceived. It is only this true deity that is called God in the strict sense of the word; the other 'deities' may, in Christian terms, be compared rather with angels and saints, but not with God. This is a matter that also faces us Christians, of course, calling us to search for a new interpretation of the various religions, rather than speaking carelessly of polytheists or unbelievers. The point of this essential re-evaluation is to make a realistic assessment of these religions and do justice to people who believe in them.

SCHIMMEL From a historical perspective, Muslim relations with Hindus and Buddhists in India is in fact a very special and interesting matter. After the conquest of Sind in modern Southern Pakistan in the early 8th century, an edict was issued according to which the same status as was granted to Christians, Jews and Sabians in the Near East was also granted to Buddhists and Hindus. The Muslims, who were only a small minority – they often called themselves a handful of salt in a huge kettle – would otherwise have had no possibility whatsoever of ruling the country peacefully. And then, over the centuries, the Hindus paid the *djizya,* the per capita tax, that was devised for *ahl al-kitāb,* the 'People of the Book'. In the 16th century, under the Emperor Akbar, there was once even a revolt by the Brahmins who did not want to pay this tax, whereupon it was indeed repealed for a while. Thus it was clearly a coordinated system in which the majority religion of a country in which the Muslims were a minority, although in many areas the dominant minority, was completely integrated. And what Professor Khoury has referred to belongs to this con-

text, namely the possibility of acknowledging other prophets, which is indeed acknowledged in the Qur'ān. For instance Professor Hamīdullāh, who is recognized as a pious Muslim, has tried repeatedly in his translation of the Qur'ān and in various articles – whether rightly or not – to set the Brahmins in India alongside Ibrāhīm, i. e., to see in them people who possessed the *ṣuḥuf Ibrāhīm,* the divinely revealed pages of Abraham and who can therefore be reckoned among the monotheists. This is certainly a very striking proposition.

strained relations with Christians For Muslims, relations with Christians have obviously been a great burden because of the political dimension, which was not initially an aspect of the relationship. It is a fact that in the colonial period the Christians were largely the very people who were the colonial rulers of the country. Only a few modernist Muslim theologians such as Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khan (d. 1897)[1], freed themselves of this aversion to the oppressors and held the opinion that it was certainly possible to have friendly dealings with the British. He not only emphasized that it was possible to sit around the table with the English – which most Muslims, despite Qur'ānic permission, rejected – but was probably the first person in Indian Islam to have concerned himself with a Muslim interpretation of the Bible. Many of the modern developments Mr. Khoury referred to at the end of his lecture, at least in India, go back to Sayyid Aḥmad Khan; he left an enormous literature and was also principally responsible for a reform of the Indo-Muslim education system, and particularly Aligarh University.

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tendency to align Christians close to the unbelievers? **HORN** Does the Qur'ān have a tendency to see Christians as people who associate something with God and so to align them close to unbelievers?

KHOURY In Sūra 5 the Qur'ān speaks rather strongly against the Christians in formulations such as: "They do blaspheme who say: 'God is Christ the son of Mary' [...]" (5,75). This does have to be taken seriously. But close to these texts there are also statements in which the Qur'ān asserts that the "strongest among men in enmity to the Believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the Believers wilt thou find those who say, 'We are Christians.'" (5,85).

Both these statements are in the Qur'ān, and it is hard to keep these two assessments of Christians separate from each other. This twofold assessment has a long history of influence on relations between Christians and Muslims. Here and there some benevolence towards Christians can be found and the promise that on the Day of Judgement God will make "those who follow thee [i. e. Jesus] superior to those who reject faith" (Sūra 3,55; cf. 61,14); but there is also the statement that "those who reject (Truth), among the People of the Book and among the Polytheists, [...] are the worst of creatures" (Sūra 98,6). In fact Christians are frequently counted among the polytheists because they say that Christ is the Son of God. "(In this) they but imitate what the Unbelievers of old used to say. God's curse be on them [...]" (Sūra 9,30). Taking into account that both views are to be found in the Qur'ān, we may sometimes be surprised that a great and wise man such as Rāzī says in his Qur'ān commentary that when the *mushrikūn* are mentioned, Jews and Christians are included.

Sometimes the Qur'ān considers Muslims themselves to be unbelievers and that they should be treated like them when they do something not in accordance with the law of God, but with regard to Christians it must be taken seriously when the Qur'ān says of them that they are unbelievers when they say: "God is Christ the son of Mary" (Sūra 5,75), and we should think about how to respond to it.

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Saudi Arabia: a special case **WOLBERT** Conditions in Saudi Arabia involve special problems and probably have to be dealt with separately.

KHOURY The special status of Islam in Saudi Arabia is in fact grounded on the Ḥadīth, but it also has practical and political causes. A Ḥadīth which, according to the Muslim view (different from that of many Orientalists) is genuine, says that in Arabia there shall be only one religion, not more.[2] On the basis of this theoretical argument, the Caliphs were even motivated to expel all non-Muslims from Arabia. After a long period exceptions were granted, so that today quite a number of Christian foreigners work in the country as well as representatives of other religious communities who are members of diplomatic missions and military advisers and fulfil other functions. However, these non-Muslims are not counted among the core of the

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[1] Cf. C. W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan. A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology.* New Delhi, 1978.

[2] See Mālik ibn Anas, *Muwaṭṭa',* chapt. Madina no. 17–19; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad,* vol. 6, 275.

population and it is held that it should remain that way. This is the reason why there have so far been no Christian churches in Saudi Arabia, and worship is only possible for Christians if it is not public and takes place, for instance, in foreign embassies. We find a totally different atmosphere across the border in Kuwait or Bahrain, where, in response to the presence of many non-Muslims working there, the building of Christian churches has semi-official support.

The practical arguments in support of the present situation in Saudi Arabia are based on the royal family's claim to be the guardians of the holy sites in Mecca and Medina and their surroundings, to which non-Muslims are not admitted. Their reputation as the guardians of the holy sites would be threatened unless they can honestly point to the fact that unbelievers neither approach these holy sites nor worship in public.

We should also take into account the fact that this situation is problematic even with respect to several statements in the Qur'ān and is not in keeping with what is practised elsewhere in the Islamic world: thus in Sūra 22,40 the Qur'ān speaks against those who "pull down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure [...]." If the name of God is not only praised in mosques by Muslims, but also in churches by Christians, and if in practical life the Qur'ān proceeds from a pragmatic pluralism of religions (cf. Sūra 5,47–51) and calls people from the various religious communities to strive "as in a race in all virtues" (Sūra 5,51), Muslims should not in fact consider it to be against the will of God that Christians, who are in most cases there in order to serve the country, should also invoke the name of God.

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different types of Muslim practice? **HORN** In view of the actual conditions in the various countries of the world in which Muslims live, is there today something like varieties of Muslim practice? It is well known that in Indonesia, for example, there is an open form of Islam and that Christians and Muslims there can encounter each other more freely; neither is the death penalty imposed in cases of the conversion of Muslims. On the other hand there is the shocking example of Sudan. How is this difference of practice to be understood and what can be done to achieve an improvement in the situation in places like Sudan, for example?

ZIRKER There is no doubt that in Sudan the central issue is not simply the relationship between Christianity and Islam. This country is economically

bankrupt and politicians are trying to assert themselves by such measures as introducing the _sharī'a,_ which is then mostly connected with certain specifics like the _ḥadd_-punishments (flogging, amputating hands, etc.) which are defined in the Qur'ān or the tradition, without taking into consideration that in the Islamic tradition this practice is surrounded with careful laws of procedure which protect the defendant as long as possible. So the situation in Sudan cannot be considered as indicative of an Islamic problem any more than the situation in the countries of former Yugoslavia is indicative of an Orthodox or Catholic problem case.

A different and more fundamental problem is that caused by the groups who pursue an aggressive policy in Muslim areas, draw up enemy profiles and want to follow a hostile path, for which they find, based on hermeneutics of their own, much supporting in rhetoric in the Qur'ān. This may of course be shocking even for Muslims themselves and make them object to this or that sentence being used out of the context in which it belongs in the Qur'ān. But because Medina was at that time threatened by Mecca, much is in fact said in the Qur'ān about belligerent self-assertion, so that every group that feels the need can find appropriate texts. Moreover, there is nothing in the Qur'ān like the Sermon on the Mount to act as a corrective to some other statements. Nor are there words like: "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Mt 26:52). There certainly are principles such as: whoever is patient does something greater than one who says: "Life for life, eye for eye [...]" (Sūra 5,48; cf. 16,126). This does not reject 'eye for eye', but positions it below being mutually patient. Although anyone who wants to be peaceful can find support in the Qur'ān, this is limited by the fact that others do not want to be peaceful.

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on the fate of converts **BSTEH P.** According to Jewish tradition someone who is baptized is like one dead. Is there in the Muslim tradition too a similar reaction which does not actually impose death, but assesses it and, instead of bringing it about, laments it as already having happened? In Jewish practice total exclusion from the community of life is also imposed, which could be almost the same as killing, as it is often experienced in Africa, where the community of the family simply excludes an individual member.

SCHIMMEL This problem is not restricted to specific religious communities. A relevant example is the fate of a Pakistani Orientalist who, together

with his family, wanted to be baptized in another country by a Methodist minister, and who could then of course not return to Pakistan for the next thirty years. The other dark side of the story was then the behaviour of Christians towards the convert family: when the family moved to England and America it was so negative that the family suffered intensely in the new religious situation brought about by their conversion and from the unfriendly attitude they faced from Christians. The new community was almost worse in its rejection of the convert family than their original religious community. Later the man went back to Pakistan and was treated very correctly there, but in the literature produced by orthodox and fundamentalist Muslims he is always referred to as a lesson of warning against apostasy.

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defence, prevention and aggression as reasons for war

DUPRÉ Does the Qur'ān not emphasize that no war should be started by Muslims unless they are compelled to do so?

ZIRKER In case of an actual attack by an enemy, war in pure defence is accepted as a matter of course and even as a duty from the point of view of the *umma* under attack. If it is clear that an enemy is preparing for war, a war of prevention which anticipates the other's actions and thus prevents him from using violence, is also in principle absolutely justified. With regard to Medina, this threatening situation was so clear that the topic of war runs all through the Qur'ān and terrible words are to be found in it. There is then the danger of taking up these words for oneself in a given situation, interpreting them using an aggressive hermeneutic, and then of identifying oneself with the group around Muḥammad, while describing the enemy, in the words of the Qur'ān, as *ḥizb ash-shayṭān,* "the Party of the Evil One" (Sūra 58,19).

the problem of theory and practice

VANONI It is a heavy burden to realize that through much of the history of the Church the peaceful principles of Christianity did not stand the test, and time and again even 'theologies of war' developed, quite apart from the fact that words might be taken in support of this from the Jesus tradition, even though they were misused: words such as: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Mt 10:34). It does not matter whether this should be seen as coming from original sin or from the wolf within man. Aware of all the hostility and aggression in their histories, should Christians and Muslims not admit to one another their shame and speak to each other about the theory and practice of peace in the various contexts of human co-existence and the preservation of creation?

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djihād even between Muslims?

KHOURY On the question of whether, in certain circumstances, war may even be waged between Muslims, we should refer to the fact well-known in the tradition of Islamic law that it is possible for the Caliph or the Sultan to take steps against insurgents if they endanger the unity of the state. The first historical example are the so-called wars of *ridda* or 'apostasy', when some tribes, immediately after Muḥammad's death, renounced Islam and thus were apostates and insurgents at the same time. Similarly, there were in the course of Islamic history many people who opposed their government and directly endangered the state, and the state felt justified in taking measures against them and fighting them.

The ways in which apostate groups are regarded may differ widely depending on the group concerned in the particular case. In the Gulf War between Iraq and Iran for instance, Iran considered its war as *djihād* against the atheistic regime of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, which, in the Iranian view, is not Islamic. Iraq, on the other hand, did not understand its war against Iran to be a holy war, since for the Iraqi regime the political and economic causes of this conflict were dominant.

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on the theological evaluation of certain historical processes

MEIER From a theological perspective, how should we assess the fact that, by means of its political activities and military actions, Islam brought about the disappearance of major early Christianity communities within an astonishingly short period? In other words: why did God allow half of Christianity, which had existed since antiquity to be extinguished by another dominant religion? How should we understand the historical fact that Islam, through its social dominance – however this may have arisen in diverse places – can be more forceful in 'the struggle between religions'?

ZIRKER Initially it seems remarkable that Jesus even found a people to address. From the very beginning, as a prophet, he was not called to form a political community. He was allowed, as it were, to leave out politics.

On the other hand, Muḥammad and the Qur'ān are from the beginning concerned with man in his totality and therefore also with the need to form a

political community. When the Christians were given an opportunity to take on political responsibility for the world, we find such developments as are known to have taken place at the time of Emperor Theodosius. What held good for Jesus somehow also applies to Muḥammad during his time in Mecca: he had his town, his community, he addressed them, he was rejected by them; of course he then did not allow them to kill him, but went away, formed his community, and in an astonishingly short period united Arab tribes who could hardly have been predicted to become a united community.

This is part of the background that has to be taken into consideration here from a theological point of view.

HORN Is there not more inward strength in being ready to live one's faith in difficult, perhaps even utterly adverse circumstances, going as far as martyrdom, than in feeling the obligation to advance oneself politically and socially in opposition to others in order to be able to really believe at all?

Does not differentiating between faith within a church community on the one hand and social life and the state, on the other, make a greater freedom possible – freedom of faith on the one hand and, on the other, freedom of society and the civil community? Is not this differentiation between Church and state, between faith and society, ultimately what is more appropriate for man and for the pluralism of mankind, and might not this model in the end have more stamina, although, superficially, it may not appear so?

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re-Islamization tendencies today

OTT When we draw a distinction between countries with a Muslim majority and Islamic states, the question arises of the probable future of the actual political situation in these areas. How should we assess the political practicability of Muslim ideals?

KHOURY These problems are very pressing, because the Islamists, who strive for the re-Islamization of state and society according to the model of the 'original' Islamic community in Medina, are gaining more and more ground among the population. The West, identified with the colonial powers and with Christianity, can no longer provide the basis upon which an identity can be formed in the Islamic world, which is therefore experiencing a crisis of identity. There is an enormous increase in the number of people who say that they find the basis of a new identity in the Islamic tradition. What this basis is actually meant to be cannot be easily identified by the average person; it is understandable that they should say: Islam is

our religion, our tradition and what stands for our culture; this is what we want to return to and, because God established it in this way, it is much better than anything people could ever make.

In addition, people in all the countries in the Islamic world are very disappointed about the existing economic and social conditions. They want the problems to be solved and those who are believers are turning to God for the solution in the ways he revealed. The laws and guidance of God should be taken up again: in view of the pressing crisis, people are becoming more and more attentive to the programme presented by the Islamists. Some years ago their followers constituted about ten percent of the population, but now this percentage has risen to more than 30 percent in many countries with an Islamic majority. This does not of course mean that this high proportion of the population are really convinced on the whole subject; rather they are disappointed by their governments because the latter have not established a reasonable economic programme, and so they become followers of the Islamist movements which today promise them a path to a better future.

There may well come a day when people will say that Islam, which is a religious system after all, does not have the key for solving the increasingly complex questions and problems in the technical, economic and socio-political arenas. But for the present the general trend towards re-Islamization still continues and we have to assume that a religious person can cope with many disappointments before he/she changes his/her attitude and opinion. So although there are only a few Islamic states, the governments in many countries of the Islamic world, such as Iraq, Syria or Jordan are exposed to heavy pressure from the Islamists, who are supported by an ever increasing number of followers.

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on the situation of Muslim minorities

KHOURY Concerning the situation of Muslims in diaspora conditions[3], there are in the tradition of Islamic law principles and examples clarifying that Muslims may live as a minority in a state that is not Islamic. In this context, reference has primarily to be made to the following principles:

1. According to the Ḥanafī school of law, a state which is not Islamic but grants freedom of religion and religious practice to Muslims and guarantees

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[3] Cf. A. Th. Khoury, *Islamische Minderheiten in der Diaspora* (Entwicklung und Frieden: Wissenschaftliche Reihe; 40). Mainz etc., 1985.

them protection of life and property, is not to be considered as a state hostile towards Islam, but as one that is friendly towards Islam. Dating from the time of the Reconquista in Spain, there is a Shāfi'ī legal opinion dealing with the situation of a small Muslim community which had survived in Andalusia. In reply to their request for a judgement, addressed to an Islamic jurist in the East, the question was asked: are you hindered, can you live in security, do you have freedom of religion? When the answer given was in the affirmative, the reply of the scholar was that they would not have to leave the country since they could fulfil their religious duties there and in addition had the opportunity, through their life and their faith, to bear witness to Islam.[4] This principle of course should also be applied to the present situation of Muslim minorities in European countries.

2. The theory on armed engagement on behalf of Islam includes instructions for Muslims living abroad. One of these instructions says that a Muslim should not consider himself to be waging Holy War everywhere. As long as the normal laws of the country are not opposed to the religious laws of Islam, a Muslim has the duty to obey these laws too. Muslims are therefore not obliged to reject the order of the state and the society or the constitutional law of a certain country or to act against these laws. Rather they should show a more open attitude, keep within the law of the country and live there as loyal citizens.

3. In the classical period when the Islamic legal system was elaborated, in view of possible cultural and economic interaction, rules were already established for the conduct of Muslims abroad and for the conduct of foreigners in an Islamic land. Muslims should not show too much zeal or act in a hostile way. Even if they enjoy the hospitality of a country only temporarily, they should behave as honest and loyal guests: they should not act against the interests of the country and its society and their interest should rather be that of the country.

However, in its classical theory Islam always presumed that Muslims would form the majority in a particular country and that others would be tolerated as a minority. The reverse situation was not explored to develop a desirable comprehensiveness. Nevertheless, the decisions already taken and the solutions implemented in various concrete cases can be helpful to Muslims in finding patterns of orientation for their life in countries where they form minorities, in matters such as mixed marriages, forbidden and permitted food, etc.

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[4] Cf. A. Th. Khoury, *Islamische Minderheiten in der Diaspora*, op. cit. (fn. 3) pp. 57–59.

4. With regard to the validity or importance of Islamic law regulations in a country that does not live under Islamic rule, in this case not all the commandments of the *sharī'a* are binding, but only those that can be fulfilled abroad. The Islamic penal law does indeed presuppose Islamic sovereignty, and where the state is not Islamic, it is not possible to assume that the state will act in conformity with Islamic penal law, but Muslims can still accept the binding laws of the country. This does not apply to the regulations that govern specifically the religious obligations which, according to the *sharī'a*, are binding on every Muslim in the world: in this respect, no country where freedom of religion is guaranteed will present the Muslim with an incompatibility between his obligation to fulfil his religious obligations and his obeying the laws of the country.

5. It would be relatively easy for Muslims to cope with the practical problems of their integration (for instance in European countries) if they could apply these principles more fully and in confidence that their faith is not endangered. This is mostly a practical issue – experience must assure Muslims that integration does not mean loss of their religious identity. They themselves and the society in question must be prepared for it, so much work needs to be done on both sides to disseminate the relevant information, provide mutual assistance in formulating appropriate arguments and understanding things, and finally to work out practical measures and rules, so that both sides understand better what things really mean for their own religious and cultural identity.

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common actions possible?

BARTH The feasibility of a pluralistic society implies problems, even among Christians. How can one's own sense of truth relate to such a religiously open model? If we envisage a new partnership, how can we face the sort of questions that are posed to Christians and Muslims together, and try to answer them positively? Perhaps a joint project, a shared goal which each tries to reach in his own way, could be the route, by which we could possibly approach a common goal along separate paths. For instance in the area of ethics related to justice, peace or the preservation of creation as the global goal of mankind, we can certainly only succeed if we split them up into partial aims; in area of religion and dogma we might think for instance of the shared project of confronting the problems arising from capitalism.

KHOURY The question is: how can we make a start on a shared project when we do not have a sufficient basis for shared action? Without this

shared basis shared action is not possible. There is no doubt that these are questions which interest all of us, and indeed they should interest us much more substantially than has been the case so far. Through Vatican II, an awareness was raised for Christians of this new way of raising questions. The Christian claim to absolute truth when dealing with other religions is becoming more open because it is acknowledged that there are true and holy elements in them, which we are to discover, recognize and encourage. It would be very beautiful if, vice versa, we Christians were not regarded as unbelievers by the great mass of Muslim believers.

BARTH   Is it possible to discern a common enemy?

KHOURY   We should not allow others to dictate the principle of our actions. The point is to make a positive contribution, which will be possible to the extent that the believers of both our religious communities have shared values as a basis for carrying out a joint project.

WISSE   Should there not be a joint Ministry of Religions, when Europe, in the Council of Europe, has a political umbrella organization, and all the questions concerning co-existence in a multi-religious society will then have to be settled anew? After all, in this new Europe, there will be twenty million Muslims among three-hundred million people.

KHOURY   It is obvious that fine formulas like 'multicultural society' will not suffice; the need is rather to define clearly, and in awareness of the implied problems, the meaning of integrating a huge new social grouping into an existing society and the appropriate ways of preparing for it. Although we are often interested and well-intentioned when contemplating such a project, and much welcome progress has been made, we are still not sufficiently appreciative of the problem. What we should do is start considering the important issues and, as we are searching for appropriate ways to deal with these problems and work towards a solution, also keep an eye open for new possibilities of cooperation between political and religious institutions. Our experiences so far in initiating developments that have seemed necessary have been very sobering, but not discouraging. Do we have enough knowledge of the problems hindering Muslim-Christian relations in terms of information and a historical perspective? Are we glad of any opportunity to approach each other, and are we also ready to put up with set-backs?

As for the rest, we should be very cautious about any predictions concerning population development in Europe, because more differentiations than usual have to be made in the assessment of many factors decisive in such predictions. If we are not careful, ungrounded fears may be aroused and unnecessary polarizations created.

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| about the status of Islam within God's plan of salvation | **KAHLERT**   We have occasionally said in our discussions that God must ultimately have had some purpose in allowing a third monotheistic religion to come into being. Consequently, when we reflect further on this idea, the question arises of Christian openness to Muslim prayer. |

When we enter a mosque and experience the utter seriousness of religious devotion we find there, we cannot turn away from this atmosphere. How could a pious Christian not sense that the favour of God rests on this kind of prayer and that he takes pleasure in it? And so if, as Christians, we can assume, to put it in human terms, that God must have had some idea that made him allow a third monotheistic religion to come into being, this would certainly have some consequence for our understanding of the prophetic office claimed by Muḥammad and for Christian respect for Muslim prayer.

SCHIMMEL   Clearly prayer and the theology of prayer are of central interest in Christian-Muslim communication. In this context we should consider again Constance E. Padwick's book, *Muslim Devotions* [cf. above p. 286]. The author, an Anglican believer, dedicated her life to the search for a deeper understanding of the secret of Muslim prayer.

BSTEH A.   In every case, a pious person can only regard with awe another human being who prays. Whoever prays stands on holy, untouchable ground. The one who prays is as it were a place of encounter with God.

However, the theological statement that God must have had some idea that made him allow a third monotheistic religion to come into being may be assessed by Christians more cautiously. Even Father Anawati repeatedly raised doubts in discussions as to whether it is really part of our theological tasks to 'integrate' Islam into some pattern of history that we set out and within which we find some place for it. Should it not be our primary concern to take seriously the fact that there is Islam as a religious community and to encounter it in the spirit of Christian faith? As beings capable of thinking and reflecting, of course we have to try to understand reality – but this capacity is a priori very limited, in particular when it comes to 'understanding' the ways and decisions of God.

Moreover, quite generally the question arises: how do we know that God made this or that 'come into being'? Or whether he only 'allowed' it (an expression which, by the way, often refers to utterly negative things). The

phrase that may seem to be most adequate in this context is perhaps: God granted room for this or that; within creation as a whole he allowed it to grow. This can, at any rate, be said when contemplating historical reality without claiming the competence to interpret the actual place of this reality within God's economy of salvation.

With regard to God's plan of salvation, is the Christian truth not simply what Paul said in the Letter to the Romans (11:33), "How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable are his ways!", and what was said to the disciples in Acts: that it is not for them "to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority" (1:7) and finally what the vision in the Revelation to John (chapter 5) says about the slaughtered lamb that alone is worthy to "open the scroll and its seven seals"?

KAHLERT An attempt to design a kind of plan of the history of salvation certainly involves many dangers; behind it there is often the temptation to categorize and claim to have sufficient information to do that. And yet, just like Gamaliel (cf. Ac 5:33 ff.), it is hard for us to deny an argument (based on a certain event's impact on history) that generally proceeds from the assumption that if something lasts and does not fail, God must have had it in mind. An assumption of this kind is helpful in coming to terms with our actual encounter with Islam, and being together with it in history, particularly because we do not know what to make of it.

BSTEH A. This seems to be the implication of the believer's conviction that the Father alone knows the hour, and the whole meaning of what happens in history, and that the lamb alone can open the scroll and break its seals. It is this conviction that particularly compels us to take seriously every historical reality and see in it something that confers upon us a responsibility before God.

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man put to the test and facing suffering **VANONI** In the Bible, in Judaism as well as in Christianity, inexplicable suffering and the suffering of the innocent is repeatedly linked with the idea that man is put to the test by God and may even mature through suffering. By emphasizing the transcendence of God, Islam also introduces into this context the motif of man being put to the test. What does this mean in the faith of Muslims? Can they integrate it into their spirituality?

KHOURY The moment of being put to the test plays an important role in the life of the Muslim believer. Under the pressure of a misfortune that happens to him and which he experiences as suffering, he initially asks

spontaneously: "What have I done that God puts me to the test?" For punishment for evil things he has done is something he should always expect. But when he examines himself and discovers nothing that he can be charged with, great weight is given to the conviction of being put to the test: God tests him in order to know how far he will remain faithful and true to him even in distress. If he passes this test, he may also expect some kind of reward for having been faithful. The mystics probably found an even deeper awareness of this problem.

... those who are tested most **SCHIMMEL** There is an alleged Ḥadīth to which very much attention is paid by the mystics and which starts with the words: "Those who are put to the most severe tests are the prophets, then the friends of God, then the others and the others".[5] This means, the more a human being is put to the test, the more the will of God to teach human beings is revealed in him/her; hence the prophets suffer most, in order to show that they really remain faithful to God. Thus Paul Gerhardt says in one of his poems:

"Wird's aber sich befinden,
Daß du Ihm treu verbleibst,
So wird Er dich entbinden,
Da du's am wen'gsten gläubst."[6]
[If you are found to be faithful to Him
He will set you free
when you least believe it to happen.]

The mystics liked to express their understanding of suffering by means of a picture taken from the field of alchemy and also generally known from mysticism: the image is of impure, metallic ore which is smelted in the alchemist's pan, suffers from the fire and is purified until the pure gold alone remains. The need for testing and suffering is also frequently expressed in the image of grapes which are crushed and pressed until they become juice and finally wine. In the *Mathnawī*, Rūmī set down a whole sequence of these experiences of suffering, one after the other: first the ground is torn and ploughed, so that it is able to receive and develop the seed; the seed-corn is crushed by the clods of earth so that it can sprout; the grown corn is cut and the ears are threshed so that flour can be made out of it, and so it goes on until finally the bread is crunched between a man's teeth.

[5] B. Furuzanfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*. Tehran, 1955, no 320.

[6] Paul Gerhardt, *Geistliche Lieder: Mit einem Nachwort von G. Rödding*. Stuttgart, 1991, p. 54.

So life consists of a whole series of tests and trials each of which leads up to a higher level of experience. As a final thought, we may refer here to something that leads us back to the beginning again: the Qur'ān speaks of the primordial covenant, when God says to pre-historical man: "*alastu bi-rabbikum* – 'Am I not your Lord [...]?'", then the souls reply: "*balā shahidnā* – 'Yea! We do testify!' [...]" (Sūra 7,172). The term *balā*, however, written differently, also means trial and test. From this the mystics inferred logically that at the moment when the souls replied *balā* – 'yes' to God addressing them, they, of their own free will, accepted not only all the joys, but also all suffering, and this gives them consolation until the day of resurrection.

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atheism and 'theologia negativa'

VIRT In dialogue with people who call themselves atheists, we may often perceive how much respect and discretion they have regarding the great mystery. Conversely, in this dialogue we may introduce them to the major importance that negative theology has for us; we can explain to them the legitimate place due to it in Christian theology and admit our own guilt for partly causing their reservation by a shameful arrogance about our knowledge of God. How do Muslims deal with such people, who do not now construct a counter-ideology, but who really want to refrain from any immediate statement, out of a greater respect towards the greater mystery?

SCHIMMEL A Muslim could react in the same way, since the preconditions are similar. But if we are speaking of a traditionally educated Muslim, he will probably rush to expound all the scholastic arguments for the existence of God, which were expressed so distinctly in the Middle Ages that they are no longer acceptable, even to a modern Muslim because they entail such a materialization and rationalization of the concept of God that the living God is utterly excluded. But if we are thinking of a Muslim with a certain mystical inclination, he will certainly admit that we may accept and appreciate this. Perhaps he would start with a beautiful Persian verse: "In the name of Him who has no name, but who appears in every name by which you call Him." (Dārā Shikōh, d. 1659). He may also recall the text: "Praise and glory be to Him! (for He is) above what they attribute to Him!" (Sūra 6,100). In a certain sense it may even be easier, because a Muslim is not burdened by conceptions of God as they have been illustrated in our pictures and paintings. Particularly the ways of imagining God with a beautiful long beard, and the

Holy Spirit as a dove, are apt to arouse repulsion rather than delight; we experience this again and again in dialogue with people who really take it seriously. In this respect a Muslim is in a better position than we, because he has no visual representation for what is holy.

is it possible to question the will of God?

WOLBERT It is said that it is not possible to question the will of God, but we have not mentioned the fact that we can only do the will of God if we have understood it to some extent. Otherwise this might become a comfortable escape for theologians confronted with uncomfortable questions and would also risk portraying God as an arbitrary despot. Are Muslims aware of this danger?

SCHIMMEL The concept of an arbitrary despot, which easily strikes the outsider, is repeatedly corrected for Muslims because God is called the Truth, the Wise and the Merciful. The sense that God's will reveals itself everywhere in his creation tends to guide the Muslim towards an emphasis on the absolute greatness of God and his omnipotence, and an acceptance of our lack of understanding as its necessary consequence. On the occasion of an illness or a catastrophe, when a Muslim initially asks spontaneously why this or that should happen to this person, it may be that as a believer he very quickly finds consolation in the thought that the will of God cannot be questioned and that He of course knows what is best. This recalls Rilke's poem in *Sonnetten an Orpheus*:

"[...]
Seidener Faden, kamst du hinein ins Gewebe.
Welchem der Bilder du auch im Innern geeint bist
(sei es selbst ein Moment aus dem Leben der Pein),
fühl, dass der ganze, der rühmliche Teppich gemeint ist.
[...]"
[Silken thread, you entered the fabric.
To which picture at heart you may belong
(be it even a moment from the life of pain),
feel that the whole, the glorious carpet is meant.]
[Second part, Sonett XXI]

as a thread in a carpet

– which certainly has its paradigms in Islam. There is always the feeling that although, as a thread in a carpet, one does not know what the final carpet will look like, there is still someone who knows why he gave me a certain colour or why

at this point in the fabric there is a strange break or a knot. I myself, as a small human being, do not know. I only see what is annoying about it.

God is the calligrapher
Here we may also refer to the image of God as calligrapher: a calligrapher writes letters, beautiful and ugly ones; the letter itself does not know what this is all about; but there is someone who knows what the whole text will look like. And this idea of God as the eminent Master, who intuits or foresees what the result will finally be and acts accordingly, is for the Muslim believer a profound consolation when facing the problem of whether or not one is allowed even to question the will of God.

Mūsā and al-Khaḍir
In the story of Moses, Mūsā and al-Khaḍir in Sūra 18, 60–82, the ancient theme occurs in which somebody commits three acts which cannot be explained logically and may even do some damage: al-Khaḍir, as a companion of Moses, first destroys a boat that belongs to poor people, then kills a young man, and finally rebuilds a wall for people who refused to receive them as their guests. Moses had promised not to ask questions, but cannot restrain himself and asks why his companion has done these three things. al-Khaḍir explains that there was a deeper meaning in each of his actions and then Moses and he have to part. This is an illustration like that of the carpet. There is simply a higher will which we cannot understand and in which we have to trust.

dangers of misuse
This story about Moses and al-Khaḍir may of course have very dangerous consequences, if for instance the mystic guide thinks he has the status of al-Khaḍir as the teacher of someone he is accompanying on the various stages of his journey. If the guide claims to be beyond good and evil and starts to order things which, according to normal human standards, are wrong or sometimes even develop into crimes, then of course the question arises of what to do when such a mystical authority does something that we cannot understand with our normal human reasoning. When should we say that this is al-Khaḍir acting once again and when should we fight against it so that evil does not continue? This is an extremely difficult question. We have already mentioned Pīr Pagārō, the mystical leader in Sind, who trained his dervishes as warriors to fight the British. Perhaps this was well-meant, but no matter what his intention he did irreparable damage! These really are points where it becomes difficult to see where wisdom lies and we can feel the tension between absolute acceptance on the one hand and asking: why a human being had to do something like that, on the other.

divine will and Qur'ānic order
But in general acceptance of the divine will is expressly directed towards acceptance of Qur'ānic ordinances. This is beautifully illustrated in a letter written by Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624), the great Ṣūfī-reformer of the early 17th century who wrote many letters to prominent people in the Mogul Empire in his endeavours to purify Islam of all the alien influences of Hinduism. Emperor Akbar's General Field Marshal, himself a great writer and poet, had (as we know from Sirhindī's answer) obviously asked him what was the actual meaning of this or that ritual obligation referred to in the Qur'ān, because he could not make anything of it. Then Aḥmad Sirhindī wrote: "It is not your task to ask why God ordained such and such ritual rules; you have to believe it, it is the will of God." This expresses the basic Muslim attitude, whereas the problem cases referred to belong to another level.

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new initiatives to deepen mutual understanding
WISSE   It is certainly important not to see the situation of one's own or the other religious community in isolation, but to try to understand it in the socio-cultural context in which it exists, in order to appreciate its historical background. Is this sufficiently taken into consideration in Christian-Muslim dialogue? For example, do we intensify our efforts to develop a more objective historiography, or make relevant corrections to the presentation of the other in textbooks and the general educational materials for young people?

KHOURY   In Germany, for instance, some years ago an extensive project was initiated aimed at formulating the best possible comprehensive presentation of both religious communities, Islam and Christianity, their eventful history and mutual relations, in the relevant schoolbooks. In particular Professor Falaturi, Director of the Islamic Academy in Köln, and Professor Lähnemann from the Faculty of Educational Science of the Erlangen University made a substantial contribution to this project and were supported in this initiative by a number of Catholic and Protestant theologians and historians. In addition, efforts are made in turn to ensure an appropriate presentation of Christianity in schoolbooks in Islamic countries. Here a considerable difficulty is caused by the historical upheavals taking place today. While Islamic intellectuals were often fascinated by the West in former times and saw it as the repository of a great culture, today in these circles a picture of a declining and largely already decadent West is widely perceived, a civilization which is about to lose its hold on ethical values

which have been binding till now, and especially on religious values. In contrast, Islam is seen as guaranteeing a binding order of values, understood in accordance with responsibility before God. In large sections of the population in all Arab countries, a sense of the absolute superiority of Islam is prevalent. A change in our approach towards Islam only became possible after an opening up of the Churches towards Islam had taken place in the World Council of Churches and in the Catholic Church. A revision of school textbooks, for instance, could only be started on the basis of this changed approach. A similar far-reaching change of climate in Islamic societies will also be capable of creating the necessary preconditions for sustainable changes in all social areas, even including what is taught about Christianity in the books on religion in Islamic countries.

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God is greater, and: God is always smaller

ELSAS   Taking into account the transcendence of God, wherever *Allāhu akbar*, God is greater (than everything), is said, there is, I think, something that would also correspond to a *Deus semper minor*. This is what came to mind with what Professor Khoury said about God who hears the suppliant, for whom we need no mediator, who directly heard the child Ishmael when Hagar fled and who intervened and brought salvation; and then this parallel with Mary and the child Jesus beneath the palm-tree: where in both cases water welled up, bringing salvation from the depths.

... but the heart embraces me

SCHIMMEL   Concerning the immanence and presence of God, Professor Khoury has already referred to the passage, "When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on Me: [...]" (Sūra 2,186), and, even more important, the exhortation in Sūra 40,60: "[...] 'Call on Me; I will answer your (Prayer): [...]'!" Devout people have always understood the well-known passage Sūra 50,16 as central to the theology of prayer: "It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein." In this context a very beautiful *ḥadīth qudsī*, a non-Qur'ānic word of God, may readily be quoted: "Heaven and earth do not embrace Me, but the heart of My faithful servant embraces Me."[7], or the parallel Ḥadīth: "If you are looking for Me, look for Me among those whose

hearts have broken for my sake."[8] This immanence of God in the human heart is then strongly emphasized in mysticism. We may for instance refer to ʿAṭṭār, who, in his *Muṣībat-nāma*, allows the searcher to ask all the creatures where God may be found. They tell him that they are also in search of Him. At the end of his forty-day retreat he finds God in the ocean of his soul. And the question: "Why do you go on a far journey in order to seek God?, Why do you go on a pilgrimage?" is a very frequent topic: God is not in Jerusalem, He is not in Mecca, but you will find Him in your heart. This has been a recurring theme from the Middle Ages to our own times for those who are open to mysticism – and yet we still know that this heart cannot embrace Him completely; it is a spark and a beam of light, but what is truly transcendent can still not be attained by the heart.

God's immanence and transcendence

BSTEH A.   If God makes the fourth with three who are in secret consultation, and if there are five of them, he makes the sixth (cf. Sūra 58,7). Does this not express an extremely great closeness, so great that God lets himself be counted alongside men?

SCHIMMEL   This simply expresses the feeling that God is always present at any moment within the development of faith, as we have already discussed above: from the adoption of faith, *islām*, towards its deepening in the heart, *īmān*, up to doing what is good as an action in the awareness of God's presence at any moment, *iḥsān*. This also shows how much one is aware of the fact that God dwells among human beings here and now, observes what every human being does, and perhaps – this is up to Him – guides him/her. It is then that we arrive at the pure immanence of God, at the birth of God in the heart, the birth of that part of the soul which Rūmī calls Jesus, from and within man. What is divine is then close to the heart. So, ultimately, the immanence of God seems to have a very strong impact on the life of devout people and active mystics and thus constitutes an adequate counterbalance to the scholastic definitions of God: that he has seven fundamental characteristics, such as existence, etc., and seven accidental characteristics as well as six others and twenty-one contradicting them; the forty-first is then that he can do everything that is possible and let be everything that is possible ... Opposing this scholastical restriction of the concept of God, this perfect mathematical circumscription of the living God, as well as the seemingly pantheistic mysticism of Ibn ʿArabī and his successors, Iqbāl, for example,

⁷ B. Furuzanfar, *op. cit.* (fn. 5), no. 63.

⁸ B. Furuzanfar, *op. cit.* (fn. 5), no. 466.

used to emphasize that God gave himself a name in the Qur'ān, the one great name Allāh and the ninety-nine other names. Although a name means a personality, one always has to bear in mind that in Islamic theology God can never be defined as _shakhṣ_, person; he transcends personality and nevertheless he is active within personal dialogue, within I and Thou, as Buber would say, between human beings.

It is this living dialogue between man and God which Iqbāl presented in his philosophy and in his poetry as something we cannot explain: God as the All-Embracing one, yet humans again as particles, as pearls in the ocean, and there is a continued living dialogue between these parts. Perhaps this can only be expressed in poetry, as Iqbāl did.

Speakers*

Ludwig Hagemann, born in 1947 in Niederlangen/Emsland; studied philosophy and theology as well as comparative religion, focus Islamic studies, in Frankfurt/Main, Tübingen, Münster, Beirut, Cairo and Tunis; Dr. theol. 1975; 1984–1988 Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Koblenz, 1988–1992 Professor of Missiology, University of Würzburg, since April 1992 Full Professor of Systematic Theology and History of Religions, University of Mannheim. Member of the Academic Advisory Board of the Cusanus-Society.

Publications (among others): _Der Ḳur'ān in Verständnis und Kritik bei Nikolaus von Kues_ (Frankfurter Theologische Studien; 2). Frankfurt/M., 1976; _Nicolai de Cusa Opera omnia iussu et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Heidelbergensis ad codicum fidem edita,_ vol. VII: Cribratio Alkorani. Hamburgi, 1986; German translation (Philosophische Bibliothek; 420 a – c) 3 vols. Hamburg, 1989–93; _Christentum. Für das Gespräch mit Muslimen._ Altenberge, ²1986; _Christentum und Islam zwischen Konfrontation und Begegnung_ (Religionswissenschaftliche Studien; 4). Würzburg etc., ³1994; _Propheten – Zeugen des Glaubens. Koranische und biblische Deutungen_ (Religionswissenschaftliche Studien; 26). Würzburg etc., ²1993; _Christentum und Christen im Denken zeitgenössischer Muslime_ (Religionswissenschaftliche Studien; 7). Würzburg etc., ²1993 (with A. Th. Khoury); _Thomas von Aquin, De rationibus fidei. Kommentierte lat.-dt. Textausgabe._ Altenberge, 1987 (with R. Glei); _"Ihr alle aber seid Brüder"._ Festschrift für A. Th. Khoury (Religionswissenschaftliche Studien; 14). Würzburg etc., ²1991 (with E. Pulsfort); _Was glauben Christen?. Die Grundaussagen einer Weltreligion_ (Herder Taschenbuch; 1729). Freiburg etc., 1991; _Maria, die Mutter Jesu, in Bibel und Koran_ (Religionswissenschaftliche Studien; 19). Würzburg etc., 1992 (with E. Pulsfort); _EN KAI ΠΛΗΘΟΣ. Einheit und Vielheit. Festschrift für K. Bormann_ (Religionswissenschaftliche Studien; 30). Würzburg etc., 1993 (mit R. Glei);
Contributions (among others) in: A. Th. Khoury (ed.), _Lexikon religiöser Grundbegriffe. Judentum – Christentum – Islam._ Graz etc., 1987; A. Th. Khoury – L. Hagemann – P. Heine (eds.), _Islam-Lexikon,_ 3 vols. (Herder/Spektrum; 4036). Freiburg etc., 1991; W. Beltz (ed.), _Lexikon der letzten Dinge._ Augsburg, 1993; _Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche._ Freiburg etc., ³1993 ff.

Adel Theodor Khoury, born in 1930 in Tebnine in Lebanon; Licencier en Philosophie, Université de Lyon (1959), en Orientalisme (1960) and Docteur ès Lettres in 1966; Lecturer in Comparative Religion (1966), Contractual Professor of Comparative Religion (1970), Wissenschaftlicher Rat and Professor (1970), since 1970 Full Professor and Director of the Seminar

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für Allgemeine Religionswissenschaften, Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Münster, Professor emeritus 1993; since 1988 Guest-Professor at Faculty of Theology St. Gabriel and since 1991 Member of Institute for Theology of Religions St. Gabriel.

Publications (among others): *Les Théologiens byzantins et l'Islam. Textes et Auteurs (VIIIe-XIIIe siècle)*. Louvain, 1969; *Polémique byzantine contre l'Islam*. Leiden, 1972; *Apologétique byzantine contre l'Islam*. Altenberge, 1982; *Der theologische Streit der Byzantiner mit dem Islam*. Paderborn, 1969; *Georges de Trébizonde et l'union islamo-chrétienne* (Corpus Islamo-Christianum, Series Graeca; 1). Altenberge, 1987; *Einführung in die Grundlagen des Islams* (Islam und westliche Welt; 3). Graz etc., 1978 (²1981; Altenberge, ³1993); *Begegnung mit dem Islam. Eine Einführung* (Herder-Bücherei; 815). Freiburg etc., 1980 (³1986); *Toleranz im Islam* (Entwicklung und Frieden, Wissenschaftliche Reihe; 22). München etc., 1980 (Altenberge, ²1986); *Islamische Minderheiten in der Diaspora*. München etc., 1985; (Translation:) *Der Koran* (Gütersloher Taschenbuch; 783). Gütersloh, 1987 (²1992); (ed.), *Lexikon religiöser Grundbegriffe. Judentum – Christentum – Islam*. Graz etc., 1987; *Der Islam. Sein Glaube – seine Lebensordnung – sein Anspruch* (Herder Taschenbuch; 1602). Freiburg etc., 1988 (Herder/Spektrum; 4167: Freiburg etc., 1992, ²1993); *So sprach der Prophet. Worte aus der islamischen Überlieferung* (Gütersloher Taschenbuch; 785). Gütersloh, 1988; *Wer war Muhammad?. Lebensgeschichte und prophetischer Anspruch* (Herder Taschenbuch; 1719). Freiburg etc., 1990; *Der Koran. Arabisch – Deutsch. Übersetzung und wissenschaftlicher Kommentar*. Gütersloh, 1990 ff.; (with L. Hagemann and P. Heine) *Islam-Lexikon. Geschichte – Ideen – Gestalten* (Herder/Spektrum; 4036). Freiburg etc., 1991; *Was sagt der Koran zum Heiligen Krieg?* (Gütersloher Taschenbuch; 789). Gütersloh, 1991; *Was ist los in der islamischen Welt?. Die Konflikte verstehen*. Freiburg etc., 1991 (³1991); *Der Islam kommt uns näher. Worauf müssen wir uns einstellen?*. Freiburg etc., 1992; *Christen unterm Halbmond. Religiöse Minderheiten unter der Herrschaft des Islam*. Freiburg etc., 1994.

Annemarie Schimmel born in 1922 in Erfurt; Dr. phil. 1941, Dr. phil. habil. 1946, Doctor of Comparative Religion 1951, Contractual Professor in Marburg 1953; Professor in Ankara 1954, Professor and Wissenschaftlicher Rat in Bonn 1961, Lecturer (1967) and Professor at Harvard (1970–1992); numerous awards, (among others) Goldene Hammer-Purgstall-Medaille (1974), D. Litt. University of Sind (1975), D. Litt. Quaid-i Azam University (1976), LL. D. University of Peshawar (1978), Ph. D. Selcuk University Konya (1989), DD. Uppsala (1986); Hilal-i Imtiaz (highest civil decoration of Pakistan) (1983), Foreign Member Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences (1987), Großes Bundesverdienstkreuz (1989), Dr. Leopold-Lucas-Preis (Tübingen 1992), Goldene Medaille der Humboldt-Gesellschaft (1994).

Recent publications (among others): (ed.), *M. Iqbāl, Botschaft des Ostens. Ausgew. Werke* (Literarisch-künstlerische Reihe des Instituts für Auslandsbeziehungen Stuttgart; 21). Tübingen etc., 1977; *Rumi. Ich bin Wind und du bist Feuer. Leben und Werk des großen Mystikers* (Diederichs Gelbe Reihe; 20: Islam). München, 1978 (⁷1991); *The Triumphal Sun. The Life and Work of Mowlana Jalaloddin Rūmi*. London, 1978 (Albany NY, 1993); *Und Muhammad ist Sein Prophet. Die Verehrung des Propheten in der islamischen Frömmigkeit* (Diederichs Gelbe Reihe; 32: Islam). München, 1981 (²1989) (Engl. ed.: *And Muhammad is His Messenger. The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*. Chapel Hill, 1985); *Der Islam im indischen Subkontinent* (Grundzüge; 48). Darmstadt, 1983 (²1992); *Stern und Blume. Die Bilderwelt der persischen Poesie* (Sammlung Harrassowitz). Wiesbaden, 1984; (with F. C. Endres) *Das Mysterium der Zahl. Zahlensymbolik im Kulturvergleich* (Diederichs Gelbe Reihe; 52: Weltkulturen). München, 1984 (⁶1992); *Mystische Dimensionen des Islam. Die Geschichte des Sufismus*. Köln, 1985 (München, ²1992); (ed.), *al-Halladsch, "O Leute, rettet mich vor Gott". Worte verzehrender Gottessehnsucht* (Herderbücherei; 1240: Texte zum Nachdenken; 47). Freiburg etc., 1985; (ed.), *Liebe zu dem Einen. Texte aus der mystischen Tradition des indischen Islam* (Reihe Klassiker der östlichen Tradition; 2). Zürich etc., 1986; (ed.), *Nimm eine Rose und nenne sie Lieder. Poesie der islamischen Völker*. München, 1987; *Muhammad Iqbal. Prophetischer Poet und Philosoph* (Diederichs Gelbe Reihe; 82: Islam). München, 1989; (ed.), *Die orientalische Katze. Geschichten, Gedichte, Sprüche, Lieder und Weisheiten*. (enlarged new edition), München, 1989; *Wanderungen mit Yunus Emre*. Köln, 1989; *Calligraphy and Islamic culture* (Hagop Kevorkian series on Near Eastern art and civilization). New York, 1982 (²1990); *Der Islam. Eine Einführung* (Universal-Bibliothek; 8639[2]: Reclam-Wissen). Stuttgart, 1990; (ed.), *Dein Wille geschehe. Die schönsten islamischen Gebete*. Bonndorf im Schwarzwald, 1992; *A two-colored Brocade. The imagery of Persian Poetry*. Chapel Hill NC, 1992; *Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Make a Shield from Wisdom*. London, 1993; *Aus dem goldenen Becher. Türkische Gedichte aus sieben Jahrhunderten*. Köln, 1993; *Gewänder Gottes* (S. Raeder [ed.]). Tübingen, 1993; *The Mystery of Numbers*. New York etc., 1993; *Von Ali bis Zahra. Namen und Namengebung in der islamischen Welt* (Diederichs Gelbe Reihe; 102: Islam). München, 1993; *Wüsten, Berge, Heiligtümer. Meine Reisen in Pakistan und Indien*. München, 1994.

Rotraud Wielandt, born in 1944 in Tübingen; studies in Istanbul, Munich and Tübingen; scholarship of Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft in Tübingen, for three years Scientific Assistant at the Orient-Institut der deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft in Beirut, for two years in Rome; since 1982 Heisenberg-scholarship; 1984 to 1985 Deputy Professor at University of Tübingen, since autumn 1985 Professor of Islamic and Arabic Studies, University of Bamberg.

Publications (among others): *Offenbarung und Geschichte im Denken moderner Muslime* (Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission; 25). Wiesbaden, 1971; *Das Bild der Europäer in der modernen arabischen Erzähl- und Theaterliteratur*. Beirut etc., 1980; *Das erzählerische Frühwerk Maḥmūd Taymūrs*. Beirut etc., 1983; "Zeitgenössischer islamischer Fundamentalismus – Hintergründe und Perspektiven", in: K. Kienzler (ed.), *Der neue Fundamentalismus – Rettung oder Gefahr für Gesellschaft und Religion?*. Düsseldorf, 1990, pp. 46–66; (ed. together with K. Kreiser:) *Lexikon der islamischen Welt*. Stuttgart etc., 1992; "Menschenwürde und Freiheit in der Reflexion zeitgenössischer muslimischer Denker", in: J. Schwartländer (ed.), *Freiheit der Religion – Christentum und Islam unter dem Anspruch der Menschenrechte* (Forum Weltkirche: Entwicklung und Frieden; 2). Mainz, 1993, pp. 179–209.

Hans Zirker, born in 1935 in Ludwigshafen a. Rh.; 1954–1962 studies in philosophy, Catholic theology and Semitics in Mainz and Munich, 1964 Doctor of Theology, 1962–1971 Secondary school teacher, 1971–1975 Assistant at Institut für Lehrerfort- und -weiterbildung Mainz, 1974–1980 Professor at Pädagogische Hochschule Rheinland, Abteilung Neuss, 1980–1993 Professor at Universität–GH–Duisburg for Systematic Theology, since 1993 at Universität–GH–Essen.

Publications (among others): *Die kultische Vergegenwärtigung der Vergangenheit in den Psalmen* (Bonner biblische Beiträge; 20). Bonn, 1964; *Sprachprobleme im Religionsunterricht.* Düsseldorf, 1972; *Lesarten von Gott und Welt. Kleine Theologie religiöser Verständigung.* Düsseldorf, 1979; *Religionskritik* (Leitfaden Theologie; 5). Düsseldorf, 1982 (²1988; 1985 Span.; 1989 Ital.); *Ekklesiologie* (Leitfaden Theologie; 12). Düsseldorf, 1984 (1987 Ital.); *Christentum und Islam. Theologische Verwandtschaft und Konkurrenz.* Düsseldorf, 1989 (²1992); *Islam. Theologische und gesellschaftliche Herausforderungen.* Düsseldorf, 1993; "Beschuldigungen Gottes in der Literatur", in: *Stimmen der Zeit* 110 (1985) 755–766; "Zwischen anthropomorphem Reden und Schweigen. Zur religiösen Sprachdidaktik Meister Eckharts", in: *Religionspädagogische Beiträge* 16 (1985) 90–110; "Erzählungen und Überzeugungen im gemeinsamen Geschick. Ein Beitrag zur Hermeneutik 'Narrativer Theologie'", in: A. H. J. Gunneweg – H. Schröer (eds.), *Standort und Bedeutung der Hermeneutik in der gegenwärtigen Theologie. Vorträge anläßlich des Bonner Hermeneutischen Symposiums 1985.* Bonn, 1986, pp. 77–100; "Caritas als Grundvollzug der Kirche", in: *Caritas* 90 (1989) 532–542; "Sicherheitsdenken in der Religion", in: *Katechetische Blätter* 115 (1990) 674–684; "Geschichtliche Offenbarung und Endgültigkeitsansprüche. Voraussetzungen des Fundamentalismus in Christentum und Islam", in: J. Werbick (ed.), *Offenbarungsanspruch und fundamentalistische Versuchung* (Quaestiones disputatae; 129). Freiburg etc., 1991, pp. 161–186; "Wegleitung Gottes oder Erlösung durch Christus?. Zum Heilsverständnis und Geltungsanspruch von Christentum und Islam", in: M. von Brück – J. Werbick (eds.), *Der einzige Weg zum Heil?. Die Herausforderung des christlichen Absolutheitsanspruchs durch pluralistische Religionstheologien* (Quaestiones disputatae; 143). Freiburg etc., 1993, pp. 107–143.

Participants*

Barth, Prof. Dr. Hans-Martin, Universität Marburg/L.
[Systematic theology]

Bsteh, Prof. Dr. Andreas, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Fundamental theology und Theology of religions]

Bsteh, Rektor lic. phil. et theol. Petrus, Wien
[Kontaktstelle für Weltreligionen]

Chalupa, Ass. Dr. Petr, Theologische Fakultät Olomuc [Exegetics OT]

Chmiel, Prof. Dr. Jerzy, Theologische Akademie Kraków [Exegetics]

Dogan, Prof. Dr. Nikola, Theologische Fakultät Djakovo
[Fundamental theology]

Dupré, Prof. Dr. Wihelm, Universität Nijmegen [Philosophy]

Elsas, Prof. Dr. Christoph, Universität Marburg/L.
[History of religions]

Gerigk, Eva-Maria, Doktorandin, Universität Münster
[Comparative religion]

Gładkowski, Ass. Krzysztof Gabriel, Universität Lublin
[Comparative religion]

Hintersteiner, Lektor, Mag. Norbert, Universität Salzburg

Horn, Prof. Dr. Stephan Otto, Universität Passau
[Fundamental theology]

Ikić, Ass. Dr. Niko, Universität Wien [Study of Eastern Churches]

Ivančić, Prof. Dr. Tomislav, Universität Zagreb
[Fundamental theology and History of religions]

Kahlert, Dr. Heinrich, Bremen
[Deputy for Islam in the Protestant Church of Bremen]

Klose, Prof. Dr. Dietmar, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Kerygmatics]

Kopecky, Prof. Dr. Frantisek, Hochschule Benediktbeuern
[Moral theology]

Kustusz, Dr. Gaudentius, Ordenshochschule OFM Poznań
[Dogmatics]

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* All data refer to the year 1992 in which the Academy, published in this book, took place.

Leuze, Prof. Dr. Reinhard, GH Neuendettelsau/Universität München
[Systematic theology]

Marcol, Prof. Dr. Alojzy, Theologische Akademie Warszawa
[Moral theology]

Meier, Andreas, M. A., Universitäten Hamburg und Münster
[Orientalism]

Mitterhöfer, Prof. Dr. Jakob, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Dogmatics]

Ott, Prof. Dr. Heinrich, Universität Basel
[Systematic theology]

Peschke, Prof. Dr. Karl-Heinz, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Moral theology]

Pitzer-Reyl, Renate, Doktorandin, Universität Marburg/L.
[History of religions]

Prenner, Doz. Dr. Karl, Universität Graz [Comparative religion]

Proksch, Mag. Brigitte, Wien

Raberger, Prof. DDr. Walter, Katholisch-Theologische Hochschule Linz
[Dogmatics]

Riedl, Doz. Dr. Johannes, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Exegetics NT]

Salmen, Prof. Dr. Josef, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Philosophy]

Schmatovich, Prof. Dr. János, Theologische Hochschule Györ
[Exegetics]

Schmücker, Mag. Marcus M., Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Indology and Orientalism]

Torisu, Prof. Dr. Michael Y., Universität Nagoya (Japan)
[Systematic theology]

Vanoni, Prof. Dr. Gottfried, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Exegetics OT und Biblical languages]

Virt, Prof. Dr. Günter, Universität Wien [Moral theology]

Welzel, Dr. Auguste U., Wien [ORF Wissenschaftsredaktion]

Wisse, Prof. Dr. Stephan, Phil.-Theol. Hochschule der Franziskaner
und Kapuziner Münster [Comparative religion]

Wolbert, Prof. Dr. Werner, Universität Salzburg [Moral theology]

NAME INDEX

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