



Islam in a Biblical Perspective

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THE MANY FACES OF ISLAM

The religion that originated with Muhammad has developed during the last 1,350 years into a world-wide cultural power, appearing in various and sometimes contrary manifestations.

Gamal Abdul-Nasser wanted to annihilate the new-born state of Israel to erase the Arab's disgrace at the defeat of their war with Israel (1948/49). He also wanted to repel the infiltration of atheistic communism and transform it into an Islamic socialist state. He hoped to shake the Arabic people, wake them from their lethargy, and unite them in war against Israel. Until today, Algeria, Libya, South Yemen, Syria and Iran are influenced by the ideas of Nasser.

Khomeini had a similar concept. He wanted not only to take revenge on the multimillionaire Shah (whose father was partly responsible for the death of Khomeini's father), but also to reverse the influence of materialistic Western capitalist and the penetration of Soviet Bolshevism in Persia. Khomeini was deeply obsessed with the idea of "the kingdom of Allah" in Iran. Consequently, the Sharia, the religious law of Islam, was imposed upon the new state in detail. However, in the few years of Khomeini's rule in Iran, more Muslims and non-Muslims have been tortured and killed in Allah's name than there ever were in the long reign of the Shah beforehand.

In 1900 Abd al-Aziz al-Sa'ud tried to restore the former Wahabite kingdom with its strong puritanistic ideas on the Arabian peninsula. In his reign even Turkish coffee was forbidden in the area he ruled. His son, King Fahd, was unable to cope with the responsibility and temptations of enormous wealth and the stress that was involved in leading an oil empire in the modern world. He became an alcoholic and had to undergo several rehabilitation programs.

Who then does represent true Islam? The Sunnites, who constitute 90 percent of the Islamic population in the world, or the Shiites with their extraordinary political and religious outbursts? Did the Muatazilites come nearer to the Islamic ideal as they adopted thoughts from the Greek-Byzantine philosophy, spiritualising their religion? Or have later generations of Qur'anic lawyers fulfilled the basic ideas of Muhammad by forcing Islam into a rigid religion of law? In a counter-movement the Sufis and Dervishes tried to gain devotion to Allah through mysticism and collective trances, while the Aisawijin extolled Jesus and his miracles in the Qur'an.

When the Mongols and the Turks stormed out of the arid lands of Asia destroying the Arabic and Persian empires, they developed an Islam interwoven with the Mongolian and Turkish cultures. In the West the Turks reached Vienna, while in India an Islamic-Hinduistic piety developed under the great and wealthy Moguls.

In Indonesia, the most populated Islamic country, the mixture of Islam and animism advanced so much in certain areas, that although the government alleges 90 percent of the 160 million inhabitants are Muslims, the last election shows that only 35 percent of the people favour an Islamic state. The mixture of tribal customs, occult practices and Islamic ideas can hardly be labelled as Islam.

Anyone who reads excerpts of lectures from leading Muslims in the USSR will be amazed to find that Bolshevism is praised as a development of Islam. Such statements arise as a result of

the pressure on their religion. Every sixth Soviet citizen is a Muslim. The birth-rate among Muslims is higher than among those of other religions.

What is Islam?

One thousand three hundred fifty years of Islam have influenced more people and cultures than the old Christian Occident ever enveloped. We should recognise that Islam in itself is not a "religion" in a Western sense, that fills and stimulates its followers only spiritually and intellectually: Islam is much more a way of life that encompasses all sections of personal and civil life. Many of its followers find rest and peace only where the Sharia is impressed upon the entire social structure of the country. We should understand that, for a Muslim, there is no separation between religion and politics. The **Islamic State** remains the unwavering goal of this religious society.

Today, 900 million Muslims live in 90 countries of the world. Half of them are not even 20 years old. The Islamic peoples are young and aspiring - a challenge for satiated and pessimistic Europeans and Americans. Every sixth inhabitant of the earth is a Muslim. Twenty-five million Muslims are born each year. Biologically, Islam is advancing while the Christian population in some countries is decreasing.

What, then, is Islam? What is the common denominator that has kept all these nations together in their theocentric culture? What is the invisible backbone of Islam? Billions of dollars from oil price increases have awakened the hidden strength of the Muslims and incited them to a third great historic offensive to unite mankind under the banner of Muhammad.

The faith, hope and life of all Muslims is based on four fundamental principles. Here they find the strength that drives them to holy wars and even to self-sacrifice for Islam. With four questions we shall unfold the meaning of these concepts:

- Who is **Allah**?
- Who was **Muhammad**?
- How does a Muslim relate to his **Qur'an**?
- What is the meaning of **Al-Sharia**?

Let us think about these four fundamentals of Islam according to the self-understanding of Muslims and compare them with the New Testament. Then we will come closer to a better comprehension of the religious culture of Islam. In so doing we should avoid any hasty judgement: Islam is not a primitive religion. During the illustrious time of its history Islam covered all realms of science, law and society. It produced a vast amount of literature in which Islam was interwoven and impressed upon all areas of this world and the next. While Charlemagne was preparing to unite and Christianise Europe, Harun al-Rashid was ruler in Baghdad over a glorious empire compared to which the newly formed European state appeared very backward. As the Crusaders marched off to free the Holy Land from the Muslim occupation, they came against a loftier culture than they had in their homelands. They returned beaten and with a shaken view of life. Therefore, we should not easily despise Islam, the second largest religion on Earth. We want to reach for a deeper understanding of Islam, that we might comprehend this great power which opposes the church of Jesus Christ.

I. ALLAH IN ISLAM AND THE INCARNATION OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST

Islam is a theocentric culture. All facets of its existence revolve around one central point - Allah.

In the confession of faith every Muslim testifies, "There is no God except Allah." **The oneness of Allah** in Islam is the eye of the needle through which all other opinions and attitudes of God must pass. This unity should not be confused with the union of equivalent deities. Allah is only a single person. All other gods are nothing and, in the eyes of a Muslim, whoever acknowledges the existence of other gods besides Allah is a blasphemer.

Whoever inquires about the attributes of Allah finds a list of his 99 most beautiful names, 72 of which are used in the Qur'an 1,286 times. Sometimes they contradict and even cancel each other out. As a result, the Islamic theologian Al-Ghazali wrote that Allah is everything and nothing. He cannot be grasped by the human mind and is greater than we can comprehend; He rules and governs all and is the sole controller of the universe.

This is the exact meaning of the Islamic call to faith and battle, "**Allahu akbar**", uttered on innumerable occasions on the lips of Muslims. This call resounds 40 times a day over the rooftops of the cities and villages from loudspeakers attached to minarets. It sums up the Islamic faith: Allah is greater, stronger, wiser, more beautiful and cleverer than we can imagine; he is more cunning than all the cunning and the best of all judges in the day of judgement; he is totally different and incomprehensible; he is beyond all, a distant, great and unknowable God. Every thought about him is insufficient and false. He cannot be fathomed, only worshipped.

Islam is a **religion of worship**. During the five daily prayer times a Muslim prostrates himself before Allah up to 34 times: each time his forehead touches the ground. The bowed back of any Muslim worshipping is the visible interpretation of the Arabic word "**Islam**", which means "**deliverance**", "**surrender**" and "**submission**".

This unreserved devotion to Allah does not guarantee entrance to free grace. It is part of their righteousness by works based mainly on their commitment to the testimony of their creed, daily prayers, official fasting during Ramadan, set offerings and a pilgrimage to Mecca. In the Qur'an, performing religious duties is seen as paying a debt, as if it were a business transaction with Allah (Sura al-Fatir 35:29-30). The Almighty counts quickly and precisely the good and bad deeds of every person; he weighs all words and thoughts against each other, and presents an error-free account on that great day of judgement.

Anxiety over the Day of Judgement, the climax of the Islamic religion, increases the Muslim's fear of Allah. He stands respectfully before the unknown ruler of creation, and fears the everlasting judge. No Muslim knows exactly what awaits him on the "day of religion". A dark future lies ahead of him.

According to Islamic faith, Allah is the unquestioned ruler and despot who reigns arbitrarily. No one knows why he leads some to paradise, or why hell is the destiny of others. A Muslim prostrates himself on the ground before Allah like a slave before his master, who does not know whether he will be apportioned life or death, grace or damnation. He longs for mercy and his honest **intent** to worship the only true God earnestly brings no assurance of everlasting life.

Allah - No Triune God

Every Muslim knows from childhood that Christians believe in three Gods. He is constantly warned about committing this "sin of sins". The fact that there is a Father, Son and Holy Spirit sounds like blasphemy to a Muslim and is synonymous with breaking the first commandment: "You shall not have any other gods before me." Anyone who confesses that there are one or two god-like persons beside Allah commits an unforgivable sin. This coincides with the sin against the Holy Spirit (Sura al-Nisa 4:48 and 116).

A Muslim does not know the reality of the triune God, nor does he want to know it. He rejects it decidedly. A Muslim feels repelled when Christians try to explain the Trinity to him. "Three cannot be one, and one is not three," is their stereotyped answer. Allah in Islam does not need a helper, mediator or partner. He alone is great. No one is like Him.

A divine triumvirate could, in the eyes of a Muslim, bring the possibility of an insurrection of one God against the other. Jealousy, ambition, hate and criticism would be unavoidable. At the head of a Muslim country there is usually just one ruler. Rivals are executed. In the same way Allah can only be one.

The mystery that our God is love remains hidden to Muslims. The Father loved the Son before all time. He is not an egoist who only loves Himself. Through Him, the "Word," He created the universe. After Jesus' substitutionary death of reconciliation, the Father bestowed all power in heaven and on earth into the hands of the risen conqueror. The Holy Spirit today is completing the work of the Son in His church. Muslims see none of this. They also do not understand that the Holy Spirit never glorifies Himself, but the Son, and the Son continually honours the Father, who has set the Victor over sin, death and hell at His right hand. Such spiritual relationships in the Holy Trinity are completely foreign to a Muslim. He does not want to understand the words of Jesus: "I and the Father are one", or "the Father is in Me and I in Him." Love, humility and self-denial, in Islam, do not emerge as roots of every spiritual authority. Allah is different. He is the only one exalted from beginning to end, solitary and unreachable.

With the rejection of the triune God Islam has judged itself. Christians recognise that since the time of Christ's appearance, the former meaning of "God" has changed. Who really exists is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in spiritual unity. Jesus stated in His final prayer, "**We are one**" (John 17:22). Here, the plural attested to the singular in order to reveal the secret of our God.

Islam refuses to have anything to do with the reality of our Trinity. Muhammad stressed, "Believe in Allah and His Ambassador, and say not, `three', refrain; it is better for you. They are infidels who say, Allah is the third of three" (Sura al-Nisa 4:171 and al-Ma'ida 5:73).

Muhammad received a distorted picture of the Divine Trinity when sectarians told him that Jesus had said, "Take me and my mother as gods, apart from Allah" (Sura al-Ma'ida 5:116). This idea was rejected from the beginning by every Christian church on the basis of the commonly held Nicene Creed (325 BC).

In spite of this refusal, Islam cannot tolerate the divine reality. Allah alone is great, sovereign and glorious. There can be no other god beside him. He does not need a helper. No one is like him. The entire existence of Islam rejects the triune God.

Allah - No Father

The confession that God is a father arouses in Muslims the repulsive idea that God would have slept with Mary and would have begotten a son. The name "father" will not be understood in Islam in a spiritual sense, but only literally. Allah remains the exalted one, the holy and distant God who has no personal contact with man. The idea of Allah being a father evokes rejection and aversion in a Muslim.

This is the precise point where the gospel confirms us. God became flesh in Jesus Christ. He did not remain a distant, foreign and unknown creator, but revealed Himself to be an **intimate and loving father**. God has bound Himself as a father to each person who accepts Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord.

The Old Testament understanding of God was deepened by Jesus' emphasis on the name, "Father". This was **the theological revolution** Jesus introduced into the rigid monotheistic faith of the Jews. But the Jews rejected the fatherhood of God as absolute blasphemy (Matthew 26:65; John 10:33-36), just as Islam is indignant about the reality of God the Father.

Has it occurred to you that Jesus did not guide us to pray to Elohim, to Yahweh, to the Almighty God, nor to himself, but revealed His own personal prayer to us? As children we can pray: **"Our Father in heaven...The Father's name be hallowed!...Our Father's kingdom come...The Father's will be done."** To deny or to empty the very name of the Father would be to tear the heart out of the gospel. "Father" was the first word of Jesus on the cross and it was to the "Father" that He cried out in His last sentence. Jesus revealed the innermost secret of the essence of God to His disciples as the basis and goal of the new covenant.

God did not remain an unfamiliar Lord whom we must address as "master". We have the privilege of addressing our Heavenly Father in the familiar term, "you". The Spirit of God testifies with our spirit that we are **children** of God. Every sincere Christian has direct contact with God. We are not **slaves**, but children of the new covenant through the grace of Jesus Christ. Muslims pray, often more than Christians, but their official prayer consists of a prescribed liturgy and not a direct conversation with God. In Islam all men are categorised as slaves that were created to worship Allah. But through Jesus we are not slaves: we are children. The door to our Father stands wide open. Our prayer is a conversation with God straight from the heart full of requests, intercession, thanks and worship. We have a direct line to a Father who hears us at all times. Muslims can also cry out in their own words to Allah, besides the five times of prescribed prayers, but these attempts at making contact are like a call into an empty sky. A Muslim does not know whether anyone will listen and whether his prayer will be answered. Allah is too great to bind himself to his worshippers. A Muslim has no personal contact with God. This remains the privilege of Christians.

Since Islam rejects the fatherhood of God, it sets itself on the road that leads to destruction. Muslims must accomplish everything alone when preparing themselves to give account before Allah on the Day of Judgement. Their god is an incorruptible witness and judge, before whom there is no regard of kinship or person. All sin will be mercilessly uncovered. It is terrible to fall into the hands of Allah. He hardens whom he will, and saves whom he will. No one knows exactly what Allah will decide to do with every individual. But the gospel reveals the will of our Father to us, and we know that He desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. So we can approach the Day of Judgement with great comfort, for the judge is our Saviour.

God sent His only Son into this evil world that He might reconcile all men to Himself. Christ bore the sin of everyone and suffered the punishment in our place. The Father did not break the holy law when He justified sinners, but fulfilled it through the substitution of Christ's death. Only through the crucified One did we receive the privilege to call God our Father. He has given all judgement to his Son, who will judge in complete unity with His Father. Everyone who believes in the Father through the Son has already been rescued from judgement (John 3:16-19; 5:22-23).

Allah - No Son

In contrast to the other world religions, **Islam rose after Christ** lived on earth. Muhammad had often inquired about Jesus and collected information about the New Testament from Arabic Christians, as well as from foreign Christian slaves. Waraqa Ibn Nawfal, a cousin of Muhammad's first wife Khadija (also a distant relative of Muhammad), probably was the leader of a house church in Mecca. Muhammad analysed the life of Jesus and accepted certain assertions that harmonised with his system of belief. Everything he did not understand, or that did not suit him, was renounced as erroneous or false. In this way the Christology of Islam became limited to 93 verses in fifteen suras of the Qur'an.

Muhammad testified in several verses in the Qur'an that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary. His marvellous birth is not only a Christian belief, but also an Islamic dogma. Muhammad called Jesus the "Word of God" incarnate and a "spirit from **Him**" (Sura Al Imran 3:45 and al-Nisa 4:171). The difference between Islam and Christianity in the understanding of Christ's birth is reflected in Muhammad's teaching: Christ is not "born" from Allah, but has been "created" in Mary, out of nothing, through the Word of the Almighty. Allah can never be understood to be the Father of Jesus, but only as His Creator. Christ is not the Son of Allah in Islam, but only a marvellous person, a special prophet, and an authorised ambassador of Allah. This contradicts the faith of all churches who agree with the Nicene Creed that Christ is "God of God, light of light, very God of very God, **begotten, not created**, being of one essence with the Father."

The Qur'anic Christology shows that ideas from a doctrinal dispute over the nature of Christ, that arose between the third and sixth century in the churches of the Mediterranean region, had advanced as far as Mecca. Resident Jews may also have influenced Muhammad with their rejection of Jesus' divine Sonship. Thus Muhammad denied the heavenly nature of Christ with a cutting sharpness. In Sura al-Ikhlās 112 we find the core of Islam in the command for the Muslim confession, "Allah begets not and was not begotten." This phrase is impressed upon every Muslim from childhood - God is not a father and never had a son. In Sura al-Tawba 9:29,30 Muhammad gave a more radical argument to this theme. He ascertained: "The

Christians say, 'the Messiah is the Son of Allah.' That is the utterance of their mouths, conforming with the unbelievers before them. Allah kill them! How they are perverted!" With this curse Muhammad asserts that anyone who believes that God is a father and Christ is His Son, must be annihilated by Allah. Who can deny that this is a manifestation of an anti-Christian spirit? In Islam a real incarnation of God in Christ is unthinkable. In 1 John 2:22-23 and 4:2-3 the signs of the Antichrist are made obvious: **"This is the Antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.** Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either... Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God, and this is the spirit of the Antichrist."

At the beginning of 1984 Qaddafi published an open letter to the leaders of the Christian world, in which he summarised the thoughts of Islam in a daily Indian newspaper. We have reprinted this letter in English in the appendix. It is a typical example of the entire Islamic Christology.

Muhammad analysed the person of Jesus. He believed in his wonderful miracles. The Qur'an says that Jesus opened the eyes of the blind, healed lepers and raised the dead. Muhammad reported that Jesus moulded birds out of clay, breathed into them and they flew away. Besides that, He freed His disciples from the observance of some difficult laws and instituted new commands. Muhammad saw in these acts and words of Christ no sign of His divine authority and power, but rather proof of His weakness. He said several times that Allah strengthened Christ through the spirit of holiness, so that He could do such miracles (Sura al-Baqara 2:87, 253; al-Ma'ida 5:110). In the eyes of Muhammad, Jesus was an instrument in the hands of Allah, through which He revealed His greatness. Muhammad did not understand Christ's meekness when He said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do: for whatever He does the Son also does." Jesus revealed Himself as gentle and humble of heart. Such a spirit is foreign to Islam. One of the "99 most beautiful names of Allah" is "the proud one". Therefore, Muhammad saw in the humility of Jesus a sign of weakness and incapability, not recognising the source of His power and authority.

The revolt of the Islamic spirit against God and Christ reveals itself, finally, in the denial of the crucifixion of Jesus. In Sura al-Nisa 4:157 it says, "We (the Jews) slew the Messiah, Jesus, Son of Mary, the messenger of God - yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them."

Muhammad lived in Mecca in great distress, persecuted by the merchants of his city. It was difficult for him to hear their biting ridicule about his mission. Their threats made it clear to him: "just as the Jews killed Christ, the son of Mary, the Ambassador of Allah, so it is possible that they can kill you too, the troublemaker and deceiver, if you will not stop propagating Islam. Allah did not save Jesus from the hands of the Jews and he will not deliver you from us either." But Muhammad trusted in the omnipotence of Allah. It was unimaginable for him that the sublime God would allow his persecuted servant to perish. Therefore Muhammad rejected and denied the vexation of the cross and said, "Impossible! Allah is faithful. He must have saved His faithful Christ, even if it appeared to the confused masses that he was crucified. It is not so that he really died on the cross, but was raised up alive to God."

Fear and despair may have caused Muhammad to reject the crucifixion of Jesus. He wanted to obscure the cross and let it vanish from the face of the earth. He did not directly deny the substitutionary work of Christ, nor the justification by grace or the new birth through the Holy Spirit, but he nullified for his followers the basic requirement of the second and third articles

of our faith. In Islam there is no room for the cross of Christ and its spiritual fruits. Muhammad's anti-Christian spirit denied the very core of the gospel. Perplexingly, he testified in the Qur'an of many miracles, acts of power and names of Christ. He also confirmed the ascension of Jesus and his existence today at the right hand of God. But he rejected Jesus' divine incarnation, the indispensable condition for the atoning death of Christ on the cross, and tried to erase the hour of reconciliation of the world with God from the history of mankind.

The rejection of the death of Christ for all men is a logical consequence in Islam. Allah does not need a mediator or substitute for men. The possibility of the blood offering in the Old Testament that shadowed the expiatory death of Christ has not been received in Islam. Allah is sovereign. He forgives when he will, whom he will and where he will. He does not need an atoning "lamb". The existence of a mediator and redeemer would diminish the majesty of Allah in the eyes of a Muslim. He alone is great.

Thus, in Islam, there is no place for the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The consequence is that Muslims are not certain about the forgiveness of their sins. They can read 111 times in the Qur'an that Allah is a forgiver who generously pardons and turns himself towards the repentant, but the impersonal Allah gave no clear sign for a Muslim to recognise whether the forgiveness is in fact valid for him or not. When a Muslim is asked if he really has forgiveness of sins, he can only answer, "If Allah wills!" Whether Allah wills only becomes visible at the Day of Judgement.

This understanding shows anew that no Muslim carries in his heart the certainty of forgiveness of sins. He lives unredeemed and stands under the burden of an accusing conscience. "Allah does not love sinners" is written 24 times in the Qur'an: he only loves those who fear him. Who is so devout that he can no longer be considered a sinner? On the contrary, our gospel declares, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost. The Good Shepherd prefers to leave the 99 righteous who think they do not need to repent and seek the single lost sinner, who is searching for righteousness, until he finds him (Luke 15:2-7). The forgiveness of God in the Gospel is valid for every sinner; the forgiveness of Allah in Islam is possible only for his true worshipers - even for them it is uncertain. Muslims do not know the comforting certainty that their sins are forgiven, because they reject the crucified one, who is the only way for us to receive God's grace and peace.

Allah - No Holy Spirit

Twice in the Qur'an Allah is referred to as the "holy one". The meaning of this name in Islam is unclear. It has probably been taken out of Judaism and signifies the majesty and loftiness of Allah.

The Arabic word for "spirit" is closely bound to the meaning of "wind". Just as the wind comes and goes where it wants and cannot be seen, so also the spirit is incomprehensible. In Islam the "Holy Spirit" is understood as a created spirit that stands at the level of angels and demons, who were all created by Allah out of nothing. The Qur'an does not know a revelation that "God is Spirit" or that "the Spirit is God". No one can comprehend who and what Allah really is. In Islam **the Holy Spirit** is understood as the angel Gabriel who was sent by Allah to

Zechariah, Mary and Muhammad in order to convey special messages to them(Sura Maryam 19:17).

The New Testament reveals to us that the deep piety in Islam, which manifests itself in prayers, fasting and pilgrimage, is far from signifying the new birth or sanctification. Jesus' word is like a sword which separates false piety from the reality of salvation. Only "He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36).

Muslims get a slight glimpse of the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with the miracles of Christ, but His power and gifts remain unknown to them. In the culture of Islam no fruits of the Holy Spirit are found. The fruit of the flesh reigns there (Galatians 5:19-26). We admit that Arab hospitality shames Westerners. Their politeness, sensitivity and refined manners are appealing to every guest. Whoever lives in the Middle East for a long period of time knows that these virtues often serve unconsciously to build up the honour of their own clan or are influenced by an unconscious striving for righteousness by works.

Islam is a religion that can arouse in its followers an entire life controlled and modelled by religiosity. But the individual is not renewed in his essence and character. After his submission to Allah a Muslim can generally remain the same as he was before. If he had previously married several women, his conversion to Islam is not a problem, for in Islam polygamy has been legalised by Allah. Islam is a comfortable religion for men.

Also, if theft is not commonly practised in some Islamic countries and fewer crimes are committed than in Western countries, it is not due to a better Muslim character, but to a deep fear of severe punishment.

The expiatory offering of Christ for the unworthy is not very appealing to people in an Islamic culture. Instead, the majesty and sovereignty of Allah has become the guiding principle. The generous dictator rewards his worshipers if he so desires. The thought of reward for good works, not devotion out of gratitude, characterises the Islamic everyday life. Regal power, princely splendour and legendary wealth are the principles that resulted from Allah's example. Christ, however, has encouraged His followers to be humble, meek, poor, self-denying and to bear the cross. Islam produces exalted and proud masters; Christ forms humble and diligent servants.

Muhammad personally met real Christians, for he wrote, "You will surely find the nearest of them who love the believers (the Muslims) are those who say 'we are Christians'; that is because some of them are priests and monks, and they wax not proud" (Sura al-Ma'ida 5:82). This is a testimony by Muhammad about Christ living in Arab believers at that time. Muhammad had seen the spiritual "body of Christ" and testified to its existence, but had not understood the spirit of Jesus. Christians confessed to him clearly that they were sons of God and His beloved ones, but Muhammad sharply rejected this statement and questioned their spiritual existence and privilege when he stated in return, "Why then does he chastise you for your sins? No, you are mortals out of his creating; He forgives whom he will, and he chastises whom he will. You are nothing except created slaves for his adoration" (Sura al-Ma'ida 5:18).

The spirit of Islam is opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ in life and teaching. Muslims do not consider themselves to be children of God and have not received the gifts of grace, which the triune God granted to the members of His New Covenant church. Islam rejects, through the Qur'an, Christian dogmas and service ordinances, factors that are all essential contents of the

Christian message. Whoever is acquainted with Islam either through the practical ministry or through a knowledge of Islamic law and theology, is forced to recognise this religion as an antibiblical and anti-Christian power. Muslims are immunised against the salvation of Christ. The already quoted Sura 112 is a compilation of their revolt against God and His anointed One:

Allah begets not = Allah is no Father

and was not begotten = and is no Son,

and no one is like him = and is no Holy Spirit.

Every true Muslim knows this Sura by heart and prays it repeatedly in silence during his five daily times of prayer. He carries these words tenaciously like a shackle in his unconsciousness, and excludes himself from salvation in Christ by this confession.

It is hard for us to comprehend that, in spite of its piety, Islam is not the way to salvation, but a straight road that leads to hell. The daily hardening of 900 million Muslims should stir Christians and drive them to prayer. Especially when we recognise that under the cloak of Islamic devoutness there hides a spiritual bondage and a collective obsession which, for more than 1,300 years, has defied nearly all Christian attempts at missions. In the world of Islam the rejection of the holy Trinity is propagated a thousand times daily from the minarets creating a continuous echo from the Muslims' repetition,

"There is no God besides Allah; Muhammad is the Ambassador of Allah."

II. Muhammad and Christ - A Comparison

After Christ, **Muhammad** is the second most influential man in history. For 1,350 years he has had an essential impact on a sixth of humanity. The apostle Paul did not aim to put forth his own ideas or a new religion, but was totally subordinate to Christ. Marx and Lenin exercised an influence on the nations only for a few decades, and thus can hardly be considered. Buddha and Confucius, Plato and Aristotle, reached relatively few people when measured by the founder of Islam. Everyone should become acquainted with the life of Muhammad in the light of the Bible, because Muhammad became one of the most influential men in history.

In studying the life of Muhammad one can recognise the important stations of his life: the **orphan** who became a **merchant**, a persecuted **prophet** in Mecca, and finally a **statesman** in Medina. There he died, presumably poisoned by one of his Jewish female slaves. Muhammad thought he was the last of all prophets in line with the Old and New Testament men of God. According to his interpretation, each prophet received some pages of the original book of Heaven from Allah. Muhammad suffered persecution in Mecca for about 12 years. Then, in 622 AD, he rose to reign in Medina as the "Ambassador of Allah" with craftiness and power.

Three turning points in Muhammad's life may be compared with corresponding incidents in the life of Jesus.

Muhammad - A Normal Man

Neither the Qur'an, nor any Muslim, nor even Muhammad himself, ever claimed that Muhammad was of a divine nature or of transcendental origin. His father's name was Abdallah and his mother's name was Amina. They were descended from the Hashemite clan (at that time an impoverished family) and belonged to the tribe of the Koreish. Muhammad's father died before the birth of his first son. His mother died a few years later, while Muhammad was still a child. His grandfather, Abd al-Mutallib and later his uncle, Abu Talib, raised him in accordance to the Arabic laws of kinship.

The Qur'an mentions, in Sura al-Sharh 94:1-3, an extraordinary story from the childhood of Muhammad. Two angels appeared and took the boy aside. Cutting open his chest, they took out his heart and removed an impure clot (wizr) from it, then put his heart back and closed his chest again. This event is interpreted by Muslims as the purification of Muhammad and his predestination as prophet from childhood. It appears to them as though all inherited unrighteousness had been removed from the child. Islam denies that there is an inherited sin nature!

In regard to his later life the Qur'an states that Muhammad asked Allah several times for forgiveness of his sins, for example, when he married the wife of his adopted son Zaid (Sura al-Ahzab 33:38; Ghafir 40:56; Muhammad 47:21). **Muhammad understood himself to be a sinner who lived by God's mercy.**

This fact is clearly attested in the Qur'an, yet denied by most Muslims. They claim that all Ambassadors of Allah and his prophets lived irreproachably, without sin. They were accounted as "good ones," just as Allah is good. The assertion that Muhammad, like David or Moses, was an adulterer and murderer, sets Muslims into a blind rage. They idealise

Muhammad and fear that an acknowledgement of his imperfection could make his message questionable.

Christ - Son of Man and Son of God

In contrast to Muhammad, Jesus remained without sin throughout his entire life. He was begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. The Holy Spirit in Jesus overcame all inherited sinful tendencies from His forefathers, so that He could say to His enemies, "Which of you convicts me of one sin?" If they had been able to point out even the slightest unrighteousness in His life, they would have done so with joy. Even in His youth Jesus remained free of sin. Pilate, the Roman governor, officially confirmed three times that he had found no guilt in this man. Jesus was holy and without sin, but Muhammad was impure, a sinner.

A former Muslim, now a Christian, marvelled: "How can you compare Jesus and Muhammad to each other? Christ is God, Muhammad is man. They do not stand at the same level." This interpretation is only partly correct, for **Jesus the Son of God is also the Son of Man**. He is a real man and true God. Muhammad was only man, while Christ has always been God and only became man in order to save us.

The Qur'an literally confirms Christ (Sura al-Nisa 4:171) as the "Logos incarnated" and as a "Spirit of Allah". It testifies that Christ not only taught God's word, but He was it. He lived out what he taught. There was no difference between his words and his deeds. When Muhammad died he did not ascend into heaven, according to Islamic teaching, but his soul remained in an intermediate state (barzakh) where it is still waiting for the day of judgement.

So, all Muslims in the world, each time they mention Muhammad's name, must also intercede, "May Allah pray for him and grant him peace!" That means, according to Islam, that Muhammad is not yet saved; he is not living with God. But if the founder of Islam is not yet redeemed, how much more do other Muslims, his followers, live with uncertainty and fear in their heart, waiting for the judgement!

Christ, however, is risen from the dead. His grave was and is empty. The grave of Muhammad in Medina still contains the bones of the prophet. The resurrection of Jesus was an essential sign of His sinlessness and holiness. He would have remained caught in death's snare had He committed a single sin and not always lived in complete conformity with His Father. Now Christ is risen from the dead, but Muhammad, a sinful man, remains in his grave.

After His resurrection Christ ascended to heaven and was seated at the right hand of His Father. He returned to His place of origin. So the promise of Psalm 110:1 was fulfilled: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.' "

The one who recognises these spiritual facts in the life of Christ understands that it is almost impossible to compare Muhammad with Jesus. The founder of Islam was only man: limited, impure, guilty, mortal, and he remains in the grave. But Christ the Son of God became man and remains continually holy, omnipotent, innocent and humble. After He died for us, He ascended to His Father into eternal glory. **Christ lives. Muhammad is dead.**

The Revelations of Muhammad

After Muhammad started working for a lady-merchant, Khadija, he married her, even though she was considerably older, and so moved up into the higher level of Meccan society. He belonged to the prestigious class of the city and lived in the prominent quarter of Mecca. His wife gave birth to four daughters and three sons. Unfortunately all three sons died. The Arabic understanding attributes this to black magic or Allah's wrath. Muhammad was rich and respected, but He lived under continuous pressure.

At that time spiritual unrest arose among the people of the Arabian peninsula. Jewish refugees, Christian slaves and followers of Zoroastrianism brought foreign ideas into the land with their caravans. A religious breakthrough began in the Bedouin culture. Animism, with its primitive idol cult around the Kaaba in Mecca, became more and more questionable.

Some orientalist write that, in those days, Christian evangelists from South Yemen came to Mecca in the month of the pilgrimage and held discourses in the inner court of the Kaaba. Muhammad could have listened to such a sermon and snatched up the fearful message: "**Allah is coming soon for judgement!**" These words shot like lightning through his soul and became the commanding theme of his life. This last judgement is described in Islam as "**the day of the religion,**" the aim of all history and the conclusion of all existence.

Shocked, Muhammad did not wait to listen to the continuation of the messages in which the grace of God in Christ would probably have been presented as a second step. He ran panic-stricken into the desert, hid himself in a cave, and meditated over the question: "What can I do, I, the merchant from Mecca, when Allah comes and demands an exact account of my life?" His total guilt suddenly rose before him like a mountain.

In his deep turmoil -- while he was still in the cave searching for answers over right and wrong -- he suddenly heard a voice saying to him, "Read (recite) in the name of your Lord!" (Sura al-`Alaq 96:1-6). He leaped up and cried to himself, "How shall I recite? I can neither read nor write. Now I am receiving a revelation from God, the key to the solution of all problems -- but I am illiterate!" Deep despair overcame him, yet the voice was heard again and became irrevocably impressed upon his soul and memory.

Here is the decisive question: **who** inspired Muhammad, and from **where** did his messages originate? Was Muhammad a real prophet of God or was he a medium of Satan? Was he a charlatan, a deceiver, or was he led astray by Jews and sectarians? To these questions several answers are possible:

- In the Qur'an we read in 12 verses the thoughts and words of the residents of Mecca about Muhammad and his revelations. They called him demon-possessed and a magician. He gave the impression of a bewitched poet or a fortune-teller in a trance. He did not give the impression of a normal man to the Meccans, but that of a mentally disturbed person (Suras al-Hijr 15:6, al-Saffat 37:35, al-Dukhan 44:13, al-Tur 52:29-30, al-Qalam 68:2, al-Takwir 81:11, Yunis 10:2, Sad 38:3, al-Isra' 17:50, al-Furqan 25:9, al-Haqqa 69:41-42, and Fussilat 41:5). Naturally all of these verses in the Qur'an try to prove that Muhammad was not possessed, but that he only seemed to be so while receiving his revelations. The strange conduct of Muhammad is not denied but is given a spiritual explanation in the Qur'an.
- Some orientalist are of the opinion that Muhammad was an epileptic who felt and heard voices during his attacks, which he interpreted as revelations.

- Two-thirds of the texts of the Qur'an are distorted stories and laws from the Old Testament. Muhammad had heard them previously from the Jews. During his attacks the memorised texts came to mind in the form of poetry. He adapted them to his system of faith and law and considered them to be pure revelation.
- Muhammad himself described the actual reception of his inspirations thus, "When the angel Gabriel comes, I first hear a sound like a singing bell. Then I climb quickly from my horse or camel and cover my head. The arriving messenger of Allah then speaks to me, and I feel as if I almost die of pain. I hear, understand, and retain everything that he says to me and later recite it exactly." In later years Muhammad himself could create these conditions when circumstances demanded a necessary revelation.
- From the Gospel's viewpoint, we are certain, that God did not send the angel Gabriel to Muhammad in the Meccan desert 610 years after the birth of His Son, to inform him that He, God, had no son.

Likewise, the Father of Jesus Christ never revealed to Muhammad that Jesus had not been crucified, when the sole purpose of His Son's birth was to reconcile the world with God on the cross. We must, therefore, recognise that:

- If Muhammad actually received revelations, they did not come from God.
- If he heard real voices, they were voices of spirits.
- If Muhammad was instructed falsely by his contemporaries, he became the victim of Christian sects or anti-Christian Jews.

This means: **the spirit that speaks until today in the Qur'an is not a divine holy spirit**, but rather an ungodly power that holds 900 million Muslims captive.

6. In a peculiar fashion, we find two Suras in the Qur'an in which Muhammad confirmed that he had direct contact with spirits. After the death of his wife Khadija and the death of his uncle Abu Talib, he was lost, without protection, and fled from Mecca to Taif, where he was violently rejected. He wandered about in the rocky desert, where **djinns**, considered to be good or bad spirits, supposedly appeared to him. He preached the Qur'an to them until they were impressed and ready to prepare the people in their domain for Islam (Sura al-Ahqaf 46:28-31 and al-Jinn 72:1-15).

Both Suras confirm that Muhammad did not communicate with real angels of God, but with other spirits.

Jesus and His Revelations

Whoever reads the Gospel recognises that Jesus also heard voices in the wilderness. This contact did not shock him or create negative or disturbing vibrations in him. He also did not search for unknown answers to the question of guilt or for other key problems of mankind. He was led by the Holy Spirit to meet Satan right after His intercessory baptism for all sinners. As soon as the Spirit rested on Him, He was sent into the wilderness to overcome Satan during his temptations (Matthew 4:1-11).

Jesus clearly heard the voices of the anti-deities, but He had the **gift of spiritual discernment** and judged the voice of the Tempter with the correctly interpreted word of God. Jesus was not deceived by Satan, for He is Truth personified and speaks continually in the spirit of truth. The devil "piously" suggested that Jesus use his power to change stones into bread and also

told Jesus to prove His Sonship by throwing Himself down from the temple, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully." But Jesus did not intend to become great, spectacular or rich, but chose instead the way of the cross. Muhammad, on the other hand, grasped at power, fed his followers in Medina by violence, rejected suffering and was always seeking security and fame.

Several times Jesus encountered demons. They were afraid of Him. Jesus' overwhelming person made them cry out, "What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who You are - the Holy One of God!" (Mark 1:21-27).

When Satan used Peter, the disciple's spokesman, to try and dissuade Jesus from going the way of the cross, Jesus commanded him, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offence to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:23).

It is obvious that the revelations of Christ were never demonically influenced, neither in form nor content. Jesus was not arrogant and did not fall into Satan's trap. The Son of God did not act tyrannically, but described Himself as the Word of His Father, "The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works" (John 14:10 and 12:49). Jesus became even more self-denying and spoke, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner" (John 5:19-20).

Through all His revelations, speech and testimony, Jesus did not behave unnaturally, as if possessed, or as a sorcerer. He was the incarnation of love, joy, peace and patience. He did not speak as if in a trance or in strange tongues, but continually remained kind and gentle, full of grace and truth so that He was able to say, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Jesus was even suspected by His own family of being out of His mind, yet did not act insane. His brothers spread this rumour to save Him and themselves from persecution by the teachers of the Torah. They blamed Jesus for standing in league with the highest of the demons, because in no other way could they account for his supernatural miracles. Jesus warned them of the sin against the Holy Spirit, because they hardened themselves against His testimony and blasphemed the Spirit of God in Hit (Matthew 12:22-32, Mark 3:22-30).

Jesus was begotten by the Spirit of God and also anointed with the Holy Spirit. The fullness of the deity was incarnate in Him (Colossians 2:9). Jesus did not only speak the words of God as other prophets had done: He Himself was the Word of God incarnate. He not only preached the gospel, but He was the gospel in person. He not only brought a new revelation, but was Himself the inspirer of the revelation.

Jesus had given Satan a last chance to repent when He told him, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only" (Matthew 4:10). Satan refused this last call to an unconditional submission to the Father and the Son and did not worship Christ, God in the flesh, although, ironically, he had twice called Him "the Son of God".

With Muhammad it was the opposite. Satan met Muhammad, disguised himself using the old Arabic name for God, "**Allah**", and demanded from him total submission and worship. Muhammad delivered himself wilfully to this anti-divine spirit. Since then, one-sixth of humanity bows before the wrong **Allah** and denies the deity of the Father, the Son and the

Holy Spirit. It is not difficult to recognise that the spirit of Islam is opposed to the spirit of Christ.

The Holy War of Muslims

Muhammad and his small community in Mecca suffered under the increasing pressure of boycott and persecution. Their position became more and more untenable until the spirits, which had promised their support to Muhammad, smoothed the way for him to proceed toward Medina. Seventy-three people who had become Muslims before Muhammad's resettlement already lived in this town. Muhammad struck an agreement with them as a legal basis for the emigration and naturalisation of his community in Medina. Every Medinan Muslim should adopt a Muslim family from Mecca and guarantee housing, food and tribal protection for them. Muhammad and his followers did not flee with blind trust in Allah and his care, but only after contractual assurance and an extensive guarantee for the life of each member in his community were made. This unity of Muslims, later understood as blood-brotherhood, lasted only for a time. It is difficult to shelter refugees over a long period. Soon serious problems developed regarding living space, work, property and the distribution of inheritance. The refugees from Mecca remained poor; their funds dwindled. The Medinan Muslims, on the other hand, possessed everything necessary for life and were becoming richer and richer. Muhammad became aware that he was obliged to do something to help the Muslims who had fled with him from Mecca to establish a source of income. Otherwise, the community stood in danger of falling to pieces. But where should he go for money and goods, if not to the inhabitants of Mecca, who had taken the possessions of the refugees?

Muhammad began to summon his followers to a holy war, and to attack the Meccan caravans. He incited the Muslims to take part in these ventures, although his fellow-believers did not want to participate in a holy war. In the end, the ones they were to fight were their own relatives. They were still unbelievers, but among Arabs blood-bonds count as much as spiritual alliances, if not more so.

As long as the Muslims lived in Mecca they had understood the "**holy war**" to be a verbal defence of their faith as a minority, but they were secure under the protection of their relatives. Tribeless slaves were brutally persecuted. These were the first Muslim martyrs.

In Medina the concept of holy war changed. Out of this passive suffering a planned ambush rose. It escalated to active defence, to methodical attack and aggressive attack in every possible direction under heaven.

Decisive in this dramatic development was the indoctrination that had taken place in the Muslim community. From a contemplative, passive, prayerful group that was fasting and waiting for the last judgement, there arose in a short time an aggressive band, resolute even in the face of death. In the first military campaign the Muslims opposed fighting and abandoned Muhammad. They did not want to fight, but to pray; they shunned the spilling of blood, and preferred to prepare themselves for paradise. They often said, "Allah has not predestined us for war" (Sura al-Nisa 4:73-80).

But Muhammad continued with his systematic brainwashing. At first he tried to arouse his followers with direct commands from Allah. He enticed and threatened, made promises and

hurled curses. He did everything to motivate the community to attack in the name of Allah. But the Muslims preferred a civil, modest life over battle.

At that point Muhammad confined himself primarily to some wild companions from among his acquaintances, sending them out to attack the small caravans from Mecca. These ventures were not successful until the month of pilgrimage, when all fighting among the Arabs was forbidden under treaty. It was then that Muhammad pushed his followers to attack an unarmed caravan.

When the robbers returned to Medina with their booty, there was an uprising. Muslims and Jews alike condemned the attack and wanted nothing to do with the booty. Muhammad, knowing his countrymen, commanded the camels to remain loaded. The rich booty then spoke for itself. After some days the mood changed, so that, with the help of divine revelation, the booty could be publicly distributed. For the next attack 83 emigrants and 231 Medinan Muslims set out for battle. The brain-washing had finally had an effect. Muhammad had revealed an absolute Sura for all fighters in the holy war, "They will question thee concerning the holy month, and fighting in it. Say: `Fighting in it is a great transgression, but to hinder men from the way of Allah and not to believe in him and the sacred mosque and to turn out its people from it is worse with Allah. Sedition is worse than killing'" (Sura al-Baqara 2:216-218). Sedition (al-Fitna) usually means tempting a Muslim to fall away from Islam and to fight against it.

The expected caravan of the Meccans did not come. Their leader had spied out the intentions of Muhammad in Medina, turned his caravan in another direction, and lured him into an ambush.

In this decisive "**Battle of Badr**" the fate of Islam stood at a knife-edge. Muhammad, in despair, implored the retreating Muslims with frantic eloquence, full of poetic flights of imagination to fight on, whatever the cost. At last an amazing thing happened.

The Muslims were victorious against a force three times their size. Thus, Muhammad triumphed and declared, "You did not kill them, but Allah killed them. You did not shoot, when you shot, but Allah shot (Sura al-Anfal 8:17).

With it the principle of the holy war was born. Allah himself fought through the hands of his Muslims. The bloody victory of the holy war was evidence of the truth of Islam and the presence of Allah. Where Allah is, there is victory!

Attack after attack followed the Battle of Badr, counterstrikes by the Meccans, and changing fortunes of war. Yet the unceasing victory of Allah had impressed itself on the minds of the Muslims. After ten years they had subjugated the entire Arabian peninsula. The spread of Islam into Asia and Africa was mostly based on the sword. **The holy war** was the motivating factor that drove Muslims out into all the world.

Jesus and His Holy War

Jesus also placed His disciples into a **spiritual battle**, but without spear and arrow. He said to Peter, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). Christ never called his followers to an armed crusade. He strictly forbade

the spreading of the kingdom of God with weapons. None of His apostles went armed on any missionary journey.

Christ Himself spoke to Peter, "Do you think that I cannot pray to my Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53). Had He done so, both His visible and invisible enemies would have been annihilated before the battle had begun. But that was not the case, and is not the way of Jesus Christ. He chose the cross, the sign of devotion and weakness for His divine victory over sin, Satan, and death. Paul recognised the secret of Christ and said a few years later, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

In the beginning, the disciples of Jesus did not understand the principle of spiritual authority clothed in human weakness. They wanted to fight, and hoped to build a strong government. The Lord continually led them back to powerlessness, meekness and humility, so that the prophetic word might be fulfilled, "'Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit' says the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6).

For the followers of Christ it is unthinkable to fight and kill to spread the gospel. For Christians, only humble devotion to their Lord is allowed and love for their neighbour, even to the point of self-sacrifice. We have no rights and have received no command for retaliatory vengeance or blood-vengeance in the gospel. More than that, Jesus has commanded us to unconditional forgiveness, just as He has forgiven us all our sins. The cross of Christ unmask the spirit of Muhammad.

Christ did not inflict harm on anyone, not even on His enemies. He taught: "It is better to suffer wrong than to commit wrong" (Matthew 5:38-48 and 1 Corinthians 6:7). Khomeini reserved the right to proclaim in the spirit of Muhammad: "It is better to commit wrong than to suffer wrong." Christ erected the kingdom of God based on love and righteousness, while Muhammad resorted to carrying out unrighteousness by force. Until today, hate and revenge are strong motivating forces in the lives of Muslims. Christ commanded His disciples to love everyone in the power of the Holy Spirit. This includes even the love of enemies, forgiveness toward those who are guilty, and patience with the weak. Spreading the gospel occurs through the Spirit of God with prayer, love, forgiveness and confession. Religious wars that are carried out in the name of Christ find no justification in the Gospel.

On the cross, Jesus forgave His enemies and did not curse any of the men that nailed Him to the cross. He even tried to save Judas in the last minute, after He received the traitor's kiss. Jesus took the penitent criminal on the cross with him into paradise and filled the disciples, who had deserted him, with the Holy Spirit. The holy war of Christians demands **the denial of self and the entire sacrifice of the messenger**. The holy war of Muslims plunges countless families and peoples into bloodshed and sorrow.

Jesus was an example of frugality and modesty. He possessed neither home nor donkey. Jesus chose to reject social power. Muhammad, on the other hand, spurred his followers on to loot and plunder. Paul wrote, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Diligence and manual work, not attacks on the heathen, were Jesus' ethics.

Muhammad personally took part in military campaigns. In so doing he participated in the murder of his enemies. He called upon the believers in the Qur'an several times to, "Slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at

every place of ambush" (Sura al-Nisa 4:89; al-Tawba 9:5). Thus, corresponding actions of Muslims thus do not signify individual offences, but rather occur at the command of Allah.

When Muhammad had strengthened his power in Medina, he had several of his personal enemies, especially the poets who scoffed at him, killed at the hands of commissioned men. He demanded assassination and revenge. While Medina was encircled and besieged, some Jews of the city conspired with the enemies. Following his victory Muhammad agreed that a mass grave be dug and had several hundred men of this tribe killed by the sword. Muhammad was a mass murderer, and his hands drip with the blood of countless people.

Jesus, however, did not sacrifice others - only Himself. He died on the cross for His friends and enemies - also for Muhammad. But Muhammad resisted Jesus and rejected Him as the crucified Son of God. His spirit was opposed to the spirit of Jesus.

III. The Qur'an and The New Testament

The Qur'an: A Collection of the Revelations of Allah to Muhammad

The Arabs, particularly Muhammad, were at a disadvantage before the rise of Islam because they possessed no written document to serve as a foundation for their animistic belief. The Jews who had been expelled from Palestine and then settled in the Hedjaz, with some Christian slaves, possessed a holy book that guided them, gave them the law, revelation, power, wisdom, promise and understanding. The Torah and New Testament had not yet been translated into Arabic at that time. They were available only in the original draft of Hebrew and Greek. A part of these texts probably also existed in the Syriac language. These **holy books** were considered a sign of higher culture and a source of wisdom. This could not be said for the animists on the Arabian peninsula. Jews and Christians could say, "It is written!" The Bedouins, however, possessed no written proof related to their set of beliefs. Muhammad longed for a holy book in the Arabic language, for a valid revelation of faith and life, and a written law to serve as the sum of all ordinances. Such a book, with its revolutionary knowledge, should be faultless.

Muhammad was illiterate (Sura al-A`raf 7:156). As a merchant he could probably count and make out letters, but he could not read or write fluently. He did not have full command of the Arabic script, let alone Hebrew, Greek or Syrian. He never had direct access to any Biblical source or to the translation of an inspired source, and thus totally relied on hearsay and oral traditions. Even today, texts in the Qur'an show that the Biblical accounts in the Qur'an have been distorted. Muhammad could only pass on what he had heard from the Jews and Christians in his area. Certain Christian groups in Mecca during that time advocated essential deviations from the New Testament texts. In addition, Muhammad had to reckon with either intentional concealment or with distorted stories of the Torah from the Jews.

Muhammad had no access to the clear sources of the word of God, either during his upbringing or from his informants. There are allusions to the fact that Waraqa Ibn Nawfal, the cousin of his wife Khadija, attempted to translate portions of the Torah from Hebrew into Arabic. What actually happened is not known. Beyond that, it is questionable whether Muhammad got along well with his relative, who did not recognise Muhammad as a spiritual leader, but believed in Jesus the Lord.

Despite his deficient education, Muhammad was a gifted poet and a master of popular Arabian poetry. His Suras are written with a dynamic, enthusiastic rhythm and flights of imagination. Despite minor grammatical errors, the Qur'an is considered to this day to be the most beautiful and best creation in the Arabic language. It remains the standard and the source of all later publications in the Arabic world. The holy book of Muslims does not present its content in plain prose, but in a memorable poetic form.

Islam claims that Muhammad did not compose the Qur'an, but rather that Allah himself, through the angel Gabriel, dictated all Suras word by word to Muhammad and unforgettably impressed them upon his mind. Muhammad was counted only as an involuntary instrument in the hand of Allah. Therefore, the Qur'an is for many Muslims the place where Allah approaches mankind. His book is highly esteemed; it is kissed, never laid on the ground, and fitted with gold frames and arabesques.

It is obvious to readers of the Qur'an that the Suras from the Meccan period are shorter and more dramatic than the long texts of law composed later in Medina. It relates to the fact that during the time of persecution the Muslims only retained by heart the texts which impressed them most. In Medina, there were several secretaries who always stood near Muhammad in order to write every word of his revelations. The texts from the Meccan period are more prophetic, written with warnings or threats, while the texts composed in Medina are concentrated on regulations and laws for the community, family life and a political system. They contain the foundation for all later Islamic legislation. It is significant that the last words of Muhammad related to the observance and refinement of his directives, and did not contain a vision for the future, nor words of consolation. In Mecca, it was as though a volcano of ideas had erupted; in Medina the lava hardened into solid blocks.

After Muhammad's death, different transmissions of his revelations circulated among his followers. Many a partisan word was subsequently attributed to him or spread as if having originated from him. The third caliph, Othman, saw no other way but to assemble all the existing versions of the Qur'an and put a final draft of the Qur'an together. This final draft is now considered the faultless, holy book of the Muslims.

Jews and Christians would not trouble themselves with the Qur'an so much had not Muhammad seen himself as the absolute culmination in the line of all God's prophets. In the Qur'an he confirmed Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, John the Baptist and Jesus as prophets or ambassadors of Allah, with the limitation that each would have received only a part of the heavenly book. However, he, Muhammad, would have been the one to receive the most important pages as the final revelation in the Arabic language.

Even these assertions would not stir up a non-Muslim had not Muhammad proclaimed the content of his revelations in the Qur'an as the measure of all prior truth. What had been prophesied through many prophets and what Jesus said, did and suffered, was now no longer considered valid revelation or a real historic event. Only the texts from the Bible which passed through the filter of the Qur'an remained standing as "truth" for Muslims. Muhammad asserted that the Jews had distorted, falsified and suppressed the texts in the Old Testament, and that Christians had invented the crucifixion of Jesus as well as his resurrection from the dead. The designation "Son of God" and the belief in God as Father were later inserted into the Gospel.

Muhammad did not make clear by whom, or how, the concerned texts had been falsified. He also did not trouble himself over the fact that the Torah and the New Testament, centuries before Muhammad, had already been translated into several languages. Muhammad recognised none of this. He contented himself with the belief that his revelations alone were to be the measure of truth. Everything in which the Jews and Christians are not in agreement with the Qur'an is considered by Muslims to this day to be a falsification of the truth.

Islam condemns itself with such a claim. Calling the truth a lie reveals this religion to be a false one. Jesus called Satan the "father of lies" and Paul warned us about the cunning attacks of the enemy, whose words turn out to be ingenious perversions (John 8:44; Ephesians 6:11). It would be false to classify the whole Qur'an as a lie. It contains a lot of truth from both the Old and New Testament. But the entire aim of these statements is twisted and leads people astray. The more truth is interwoven in a lie, the more intelligible and effective it is. The Qur'an is a masterwork of Satan, an ingenious mixture of truth and lies that binds all its beliefs in an imitation of truth.

The Revelation of God in Christ

One of the most important differences between Islam and Christianity is the fact that with Muhammad, the revelations of Allah became a **book**, whereas in the new covenant, God's word appeared as **a person**. The New Testament consists not merely of written or printed text, for Jesus Himself is the gospel in person. The central confession of Christians reads: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory" (John 1:14).

Even Muhammad claimed to have passively received his revelations from Allah. Jesus, however, is Himself the Revealer of God. The Qur'an declares the laws of Allah. Christ is Himself the lawgiver, for He said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you" (John 13:34; 15:12). Muhammad spoke about the forgiveness of Allah. Jesus fulfilled all prerequisites for forgiveness, and was Himself the forgiver. The difference between the Gospel and the Qur'an, formally seen, is as great as the difference between the text of a revelation and the one from whom the revelation originates. **Christ is our Gospel.**

The other fundamental difference is the fact that Jews and Christians do not believe in the truth of the revelations in the Qur'an. Nevertheless, Muslims cling to their holy book just as Christians hold fast to the Resurrected Christ. The book of the Muslims has become an idol to them, created and erected by Muhammad.

Finally, one cannot compare the Gospel with the Qur'an. While the Qur'an represents the sum of the messages of Muhammad, the Gospel is an eyewitness account of a person, the living Christ. Admittedly, the New Testament is the basis of our understanding and faith and the Bible remains the source of our strength and comfort. Behind the commands and promises of the Gospel there is no concealed, unknown and distant God like Allah, but a God who became man and lived life like us. He is our standard and our strength. Our God did not only speak and command, but became visible and tangible. The centre of our faith is the person of Jesus Christ, not theoretical beliefs or philosophical dogmas. Neither law nor grace, justification nor sanctification are the actual themes of the Bible; the Saviour and Lawgiver, the Crucified and the Resurrected, the Living and the Coming One, is its theme. He is the object of our faith. From Him, through Him, and to Him are all things. The end of our knowledge is not His book filled with letters, but Christ Himself - the one who loves us.

Moreover, Jesus did not write any book with His own hand. He was the Word of God in person, who left it to the care of His Father and to the power of the Holy Spirit, that His words and deeds would be genuinely lived out by His disciples. The resurrected Jesus saves us, not the Gospel as a book. Through the word of the New Testament, we can come to know the surpassing character, indeed, the very person of Jesus.

How Should the Qur'an and the New Testament Be Read?

The contents of the Qur'an are considered to be a faultless dictation of Allah - up to the last letter. This inspiration is regarded as being universally understandable. The necessity of an explanation would be a sign of the defectiveness of the Qur'an. Therefore, the Suras demand no critical thinking, only a passive acceptance and obedience.

The Qur'an should be memorised by every Muslim in the Arabic language, even if the reader is not an Arab. This act of memorisation is considered a justifying work, and so is often practised. Even small children sometimes have the suras drummed into their minds. It is not important whether they understand the text or not, it is only important that they keep the revelation faultlessly in their memory. Active and analytical thinking are not essential in Islam, only acceptance, submission and a passive assimilation. The rhythmical character of the suras makes them easier to recite, and impresses them upon the mind. The listener does not need to consider the text too much, because he will be carried along by the poetry and rhythmical beat.

In the beginning stages of Islam an interpretation of the suras was forbidden for some reason. A neutral exegesis would have been interpreted as being a presumptuous devaluation of the revelations of Allah through human reasoning. Open criticism of the revealed text would have been condemned as insolent pride and revolt against Allah and his prophets, as if the understanding of man could be placed over the word of God and it could be proudly judged. Free thinking is not welcomed in Islam. Only unconditional submission of reason to the Qur'an is demanded.

In contrast, Christians (unfortunately) are not encouraged to memorise the Bible, but to participate in active Bible study, to do research, meditation, prayer and to compare critically. Active faith with responsible thinking is the foundation of our culture, and not passive assimilation of the Gospel. Jesus has freed His followers to a humble sense of responsibility, to love in action. He does not allow them to linger with static knowledge that displays itself in emotional outbursts.

Christians are not required to keep the words of their Lord according to the lifestyle of the Middle Ages, but are challenged to live the Gospel of Christ's Lordship in their life each day. With such an emphasis on the present, the Christian mind is not elevated above the word that is revealed, but prayerfully seeks to listen to the voice of our living Lord each new day. The Bible is not an idol, but the place where Christ meets His church through His Spirit; He speaks to her, guides her, frees her from limited thinking and leads her to active trust in His comforting care.

In this regard a great difference becomes evident in the faith, thinking and awareness between the two religions. While many Muslims recite large portions of the Qur'an, there are few Christians who have memorised even one Gospel, or the Sermon on the Mount. Through the practice of memorisation in many generations, the average Muslim is more capable of remembering than the average Christian. In schools it has been obvious that Muslims are better able to remember than students from the West. In return, Christians are more gifted in thinking and adept in research than the majority of Muslims. The love of Christ frees its followers to an active thinking that operates in many areas of life. Recently a Muslim said, "The Protestants were the first on the moon." He wanted to express that in evangelical countries creative thinking has become more developed than in Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist or Catholic countries. It is significant that this statement did not come from a Christian, but from a perceptive Muslim.

The Solution of Religious and Judicial Problems

After the Death of Muhammad

As the Islamic armies rushed forward in victorious waves, reaching as far west as the Pyrenees, and as far east as the Indus River, tremendous problems emerged from the cultures of the subjugated lands, which had not existed on the Arabian peninsula. There were no answers or solutions in the Qur'an regarding these questions.

It was out of the question for Muslims to exercise independent and investigative thinking in matters pertaining to theological principles and divine laws. Since Allah had spoken finally through Muhammad, who became the "seal" and end of all prophecy, it became necessary for the Islamic teachers of the law to laboriously inquire whether or not Allah might have revealed additional words through Muhammad that were not written in the Qur'an. As a result the book of the traditions, **al-Hadith**, came into being, which goes through the companions of Muhammad back to Muhammad himself. Their only hope to finding a divine answer for the respective problems relating to modern life was through Muhammad. In Islam, no one except Muhammad can be the spokesman for Allah. He was and remains the eye of the needle through which all Islamic thought must pass. His Qur'an and the al-Hadith, the collection of traditions, have been the standard and source for the entire Islamic culture and science until today. When seen in the light of Islam, no other human is able to receive revelations from Allah. Muhammad was the absolute end point.

The al-Hadith encompasses approximately 20,000 sayings of Muhammad that were passed on by word of mouth. Many Muslims strove to attain the high honour of being bearers of such revelations and pretended to have come into honourable possession of a special revelation of Allah to Muhammad. The truth of most "traditions" is in doubt and is questioned by many scholars of Islamic theology. But their existence shows a basic principle of Islam. After Muhammad, Allah made no direct contact to other Muslims in order to impart revelations. The gap between Allah and Muslims is irreconcilably great. Besides that, Muslims originally had no right to do their own research to find explanations to problems in various areas of life, human rights and religion. They all had to subject themselves to the Qur'an. But with issues where the Qur'an contained no answer, everything came to a standstill until some artificially constructed tradition was brought forth for a verdict or until an instruction could be found.

Later allowances were made for analogical conclusions. By virtue of earlier decisions of Muhammad, based on similar case facts, new laws could be enacted and justice rendered. Islam practices free thinking indirectly. Therefore, the collision with Greco-Byzantine philosophy shocked Muslims to the core. The germs of free thinking in science and public life were eliminated only after a decade-long battle. Islam was paralysed amid innumerable laws that are embraced in the Sharia. Islamic law has become the climax of its culture.

Who Are the Bearers of Revelation in the New Testament?

The New Testament contains not only acts and words of Jesus Christ, but also many Christ-centred testimonies of the apostles. In view of Islam a considerable difference emerges. Jesus

made His disciples to be eyewitnesses and bearers of His self-revelation. He said to them, **"Receive the Holy Spirit."** Thereby, the Father and the Son took up residence in the followers of Christ, and spoke through them. They became a source of truth. Without the Spirit-inspired testimony of the apostles we would know little of the grace and righteousness that unfolds itself in the church. John, Peter and above all Paul, wrote and explained much about what Jesus accomplished and taught. The Spirit of their Lord led them into all truth. Through Him they received their instructions by direct inspiration.

The resurrected Lord has authorised the testimony of His followers, and speaks through them until today. They have become His living letter to the world. As Muhammad was once the voice of Allah, so every Christian today should be a witness of Jesus. Thus, we should not compare Muhammad with Jesus, but only with His followers.

Only a few present-day Christians have the gift of prophecy. Many people have recognised that they are sinners in the all-revealing light of Christ, and have personally experienced the justifying grace of the Saviour. The love of God and the forgiveness they have experienced in Christ has so overwhelmed them, that they willingly devote themselves to Jesus and become His slaves and followers. They relinquish their false freedom and bondage to sin, living from the word of the Lord day and night. Jesus Christ said of Himself, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me" (John 4:33). The disciples of Jesus are strengthened in their spiritual life through daily Bible reading, prayer and practical obedience. As a result, they are guided in their daily life and receive direct inspirational contact with their Saviour (John 10:27-28).

The apostle Paul testified to this fact in the following way: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:14-16). "God Himself admonishes through us: be reconciled to God!" (2 Corinthians 5:20). Paul revealed the secret of the church as the body of Christ in which the head and members represent unity in action. Jesus' followers are also called the "temple of God," which shows the closeness of God to each believer. Christians stand on another level from the old covenant believers or followers of other religions. In regard to John the Baptist, the greatest of all prophets, Jesus said, "The least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." This reference that justified Christians have a greater privilege than earlier prophets does not make them proud and presumptuous, because the spirit of truth holds them in brokenness and humility. They never forget who they were and what it cost their Lord to save them from the wrath of God. They also know that His care, intercession and love alone preserves them in being children of God. In their daily Bible reading and prayer they stand in direct conversational contact with the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit.

Whoever compares this fact of the new covenant with the rigid limitations of revelation in Islam will see the imprisoned thinking of Muslims and recognise that the followers of Muhammad were led by a deceiving spirit. Furthermore, the Christian will be thankful for the privilege he has. On the other hand, we understand that our call through Christ, our contact with the Father, and power to faith, love and hope, also compels us to mission work among Muslims.

IV. Islamic Law and the Grace of Jesus Christ

Islam - A Religion of Law

One of the 99 most beautiful names of Allah in the Qur'an is "the truth and **the right**". Whoever reads the eight suras in which this name for Allah is written, finds that Allah is to be understood as the originator of all cosmic order and the source of Islamic law. Sun and moon move their course according to his will. The fate of the individual is firmly held by him in advance. Islam is considered to be the correct, revealed religion, which represents the foundation of every right for time and eternity. At the last judgement the law of Allah will be ultimately revealed on the "day of religion". He himself is truth and reality, the right (al-Haqq) and the judge.

One who lives within the scope of this cosmic-religious culture of Allah, lives right and will have **success**. Whoever places himself outside of these all-encompassing ordinances of Allah will have no good fortune in this life and in the end will be punished and damned. Thereby, the **thought of reward** is a basic principle of Islam. Whoever proves himself to be faithfully religious will be rewarded. At the break of dawn the cry is heard from the minaret over all the houses "rise to prayer, rise to prosperity!" Whoever builds a mosque is rewarded with a palace in paradise. One who dies in holy war will be transferred immediately to paradise. Such promises are reality for many Muslims. Children and old men run into the mine fields for Khomeini, and sacrifice themselves, hoping to escape the misery of this life. Some Muslims see the oil wealth of the Arabic lands as a reward from Allah for remaining true to Islam for over 50 generations. In the eyes of a Muslim it pays to be a Muslim. This thought is in agreement with the theocentric world view of Islam. The psychological feeling of a Muslim, therefore, is the thought of achievement and reward.

Muhammad said in Sura al-Fatir 35:21 and 30, "Surely those who recite the book of God and perform the prayer, and expend of that we have provided them, secretly and in public, look for a **commerce** (business) that comes not to naught, that he pay them in full their **wages** and enrich them of his bounty." Allah is compared with an Arabic trader, who counterbalances good deeds and bad deeds. "Surely the good deeds will drive away the evil deeds" (Sura Hud 11:114).

The good deeds are not primarily ethical in nature, but more of ritual performance of religious duties. Whoever speaks his confession of faith openly, memorises the Qur'an, prays five times a day, fasts during the month of Ramadan as long as the sun shines, pays his religious taxes from his net profit, and when he is able, participates in the pilgrimage to Mecca, may have a rich credit of good works. Conversion to Islam and belief in Allah, as well as circumcision and hospitality, are also counted as meritorious works.

Despite the double predestination taught by the Qur'an, in which everything is predetermined by Allah, **righteousness of works** dominates in Islam. A Muslim has no option whether or not to pray, fast, believe and testify to Allah. He **must** do so. It is his holy duty. He stands **under** the law. He cannot run away from it.

At the end, a Muslim's life will be weighed and measured. All of his sins will come to light; all of his prayers and good works will be counted. A Muslim does not know in advance

whether his good works will be sufficient or whether his sins will predominate. Therefore, he is uncertain whether he will be promoted to the eternal garden or whether he will be thrown into the roaring fire. There is **no certainty** in Islam regarding the forgiveness of sins. Only the "day of religion" will bring a clear settlement of accounts to Muslims. This will be the climax and summary of the entire history of creation. Therefore, he must strive through his life to fulfil exactly all the laws of Islam so that his hope for Paradise will not fade and that he may overcome the fear of damnation by Allah.

Such a world view, which rests on right and law, manifests itself in the day-to-day life of a Muslim in various ways. One hears fixed expressions arising constantly from legalistic thinking. "The right is **with** you!" "The right is **on** you!" "The right is **against** you!" Compromises cannot be made. That is one of the reasons for the long wars in the Islamic world. To forgive an enemy would be wrong, because his sin was not expiated and the demand for justice was not met. The blood of a murder or of an accident victim cries out to heaven. Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Therefore blood revenge is necessary for a Muslim. In Islam, law goes before grace. In the Qur'an there are similar passages to those found in the Torah: "A life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth" (Sura al-Ma'ida 5:45). Admittedly, forgiveness is also possible without avenging a murder, but only if a high ransom of blood money is paid.

Law is the foundation of Islam, and the law must be satisfied. When we understand the Muslim's law, we can better understand what appears strange to us in Islamic thinking. Muslims live in a **realm** different from the Christians. They live **under** the law. It encompasses their entire life in this world and the next.

The Grace of Jesus Christ

Jesus taught an entirely different way of life. He set us free from accusing demands and oppressive burdens of the law. Christians no longer live **under** the law, but **in** grace.

It cannot be questioned that the law of the Old Testament is in itself good and holy. God Himself is the law, because He said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." He made Himself the standard when He spoke to Abraham: "I am the Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless (complete)!"

In this way, the law of God not only gives us wisdom to adjust our lives according to the blessing of God, but in addition the Holy Spirit enlightens us to **recognise** our sin and leads us to humility, brokenness and complete awareness of total spiritual bankruptcy before God. Our pride must be shattered. All of our good deeds appear as filthy garments in the light of God. We lack the glory and perfection of God. That is our entire sin. Without Jesus we are all irretrievably lost.

Christ, however, is the end of **the law**. Whoever believes in Him is justified. Pious achievements, long prayers and ascetic exercises do not save anyone. Christ Himself has reconciled us once and forever to the Father. We are freed from the continual demand of the law that says we must bring good works for the One who justifies us. Christ is our truth, righteousness and justification. He is the love of God in person. Allah in Islam is not love, but law.

Paul, an expert on the Torah, wrote about the meaning and effect of Christ's death, in view of the law, in a more detailed manner than did the other apostles. We have been justified without silver or gold by the blood of Christ. **All demands of the law were met and fulfilled with the death of Christ.** Our sins have been atoned for. We have been removed and freed from the final judgement. Jesus has justified us from all accusations of Satan. Christians are no longer under the law, but live in grace. They are free from the compulsion of trying to save themselves. They have a Saviour. Neither the word salvation nor the idea of salvation through grace occurs in the Qur'an.

Such facts effect the entire religious and ethical **life** of a culture. Christians are free to be thankful. They serve God with gladness in every area of life, not with the hidden thought that their own works might possibly justify them. They willingly surrender their money, time and life for Jesus as an offering of thanks *because* they have already been justified. They do not work for reward, for their Lord Himself is their reward, their salvation and their righteousness. This motivating force in their lives leads to devotion, thanksgiving and praise for God's free and marvellous grace. Therein lies the secret of a joyful and blessed Christian life.

The pride of a Christian believer is broken by confessing his sins. He no longer needs to appear as a pious hypocrite. He has found his identity: a sinner justified by grace! He has received a new life from God as a gift and recognises the voice of the Comforter in his heart.

Christians live continuously from the benefits of forgiveness won by their Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, they are **programmed for forgiveness.** Jesus has forgiven them and their enemies all sins, so they have the ability and desire to forgive anyone at any time. Christians must not take revenge. Jesus has satisfied all demands of the law universally. It is not wrong, but right, when you forgive your debtor, just as you have been forgiven. The cross of Christ is the open door that leads us out of the compulsion of retaliatory thinking and hate into the freedom of mercy and forgiveness. When we know Jesus, then grace goes before law. In Islam it is the opposite.

Christians know their verdict on the day of judgement in advance. Officially it will be said: failed, guilty, condemned! But the voice of Jesus says: justified, cleansed, saved! This sinner has accepted My grace through faith. Because of Christ Christians no longer live in uncertainty and tremble before death and eternity. The cross of Jesus is their righteousness. **Jesus' resurrection has become their life.** It is not the fear of judgement that drives them to live a God-fearing life. Rather, having been condemned and crucified with Christ they die to themselves and no longer live their own lives, but Christ lives in them.

Justified Christians, being liberated from the law, have not become lawless. **Christ, the lawgiver, became flesh and lives in them.** His Holy Spirit is the divine law and the godly power in them for fulfilling all demands of the law (Jeremiah 31:33-34). He is their comforter and their advocate at the judgement. Christians no longer live **under** the law, but through Jesus the law resides in them. Christians are not only liberated from the negative, the guilt and the accusations of the law, but they have also received power and the fruits of righteousness.

Most Christians are not aware that they have been freed to think, to serve and to thank. They do not realise that they need not frantically seek to fulfil the will of God. They themselves want to do it. They are not plagued by a bad conscience because of their past, but their cleansed conscience is sharpened by the gospel and leads them to humble deeds of love. A new feeling of life inspires them. Thankfulness, the love of God, and the joy of the Holy

Spirit lives in them. A Muslim, with his deep respect for Allah, experiences life differently. In the Qur'an we read: "Allah loves not those that exult" (Sura al-Qasas 28:76). But Christ said, **"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."** No slave-like grimness holds the Christians prisoner. Joy in the Lord is their strength. They are no longer alone, forsaken and fearful, awaiting the last judgement. The Lord Himself is with them, has taken away their sins, and lives in them through His Spirit.

The Sharia- The Law of Islam

Muhammad preached Islam in the name of Allah, and when he died in 632 AD he had given the basis for a new Islamic law. The new regimen of culture was by no means classified according to an orderly arrangement, nor systematically established. But the Qur'an, the al-Hadith (according to tradition, additional words spoken by Muhammad), and the Sunna (Muhammad's private decisions), were considered to be binding ordinances for all Muslims.

In the first century after Muhammad the Suras of the Qur'an and many other sayings of Muhammad were, in accordance with their literal meaning, still alive in the minds of many Muslims. But as the Islamic armies pushed forward to Gibraltar and into the steppes of Russia, problems arose and no solutions were found in the law of the Bedouin culture of Mecca and Medina. As far as local existing customs and laws (Adat) appeared to be in agreement with Islam, they were largely accepted. When doubts arose, conclusions were drawn through analogy. In so doing, judgements were made in similar fashion, just as in earlier cases Islamic judgement had been passed. Thus, **the four sources of Islamic law are the Qur'an, the Sunna** (traditions from Muhammad's life), **the analogical conclusions** relating to earlier decisions in Islam (Qiyas), and **the statements agreed upon by all Muslims** (al-Idjma'a).

With the setting of Islamic laws and customs, Muhammad had borrowed heavily from the **Bedouin** law in Mecca and Medina, as well as from **Jewish** law. Later, principles from Rome, Persia and India appeared in the Islamic law. As a result, fierce discussions arose among the Islamic teachers of the law regarding the origin of divine Islamic law, what it was and what it was not. One was more generous than the other. A third allowed only the Qur'an and the words of Muhammad to be valid. In this manner **four schools of law** (and ways of life in Islam) developed, besides the Shiites, during the course of a hundred years. They are all taught today as "orthodox" at the al-Azhar University in Cairo.

Since each school defends its own set of laws as being the only divine and legitimate one, there exists, until today, **no unifying Islamic law**. None of the existing laws could be implemented for all Muslims. Therefore, four different basic laws exist today in Islam, indeed agreeing on all fundamental principles, but strongly differing in detail. The principles that came into practice in various Islamic areas have to do with the special developments in the respective lands.

The study of law (Sharia) is considered to be the most important subject of Islamic theology. In importance, it surpasses the interpretation of the Qur'an, dogma, the history of Islam or other disciplines of theology. This importance is understandable, because the Sharia, with the help of the legal science (fikh), represents the attempt to regulate **all areas of life in mankind**. This was done by commands and prohibitions, judging all actions and punishing all offences. This means that the Sharia is not only a spiritual or moral law that may sharpen the conscience of the believers, but is primarily a **penal law**, which places all areas of life under the control of the Islamic state.

The Sharia contains above all the **spiritual duties** (al-Ibalat) of all Muslims (the five pillars of Islam). They consist of the confession of faith (dogma), the five daily times of prayer, the fast during the month of Ramadan, the religious tax and the pilgrimage to Mecca. Then, practical detail ordinances follow for everyday life (al-Muamalat), such as agreement in trade and social life, the inheritance, marriage and family laws, as well as all crucial penal laws. Furthermore, they contain the law that concerns the holy war, the treatment of unbelievers, directives for battle, dietary laws, oaths and vows, legal proceedings and treatment of slaves.

To this encompassing catalogue of commands and prohibitions, laws and duties comes a further religious scale of worth. It determines how important a command or offence is:

1. A law can be an **indispensable duty**. Doing it will be rewarded, its omission will be punished.
2. Certain ordinances are **recommendable** and appreciated. Doing them will not be rewarded and their omission will not be punished.
3. Uncountable actions are possible and **left to a person's option** and are not followed by any legal prosecution: for example, blood revenge in the case of murder or an accident.
4. Further actions are **religiously abominable**, but not punishable.
5. Then there are acts that **Allah has definitely forbidden**, and that should be punished by the state.

The cataloguing and evaluation of all individual deeds has brought about innumerable variations between the four schools of law. It is understandable that no final unification of the law could be attained.

In order to clarify the spirit that is manifested in the Sharia, we will briefly describe some specific ordinances:

1. **The five daily prayers** require 34 prostrations before Allah amid a word-for-word prescribed liturgy, in which the worshiper says up to 102 times daily "my exalted Lord be praised," 68 times "Allah is greater," 51 times "may my mighty Lord be praised." In this liturgy there is no room for one's own thoughts, formulations or petitions. These should be expressed outside the official prayer times in private invocations.

In Saudi Arabia there is a prayer police, which herds passers-by into the mosque at the times of prayer, in case they do not enter by their own free will. In some Islamic countries the mosques are full at the time of prayer, in many lands almost empty. An exception is the Friday prayer. Because of its political significance it is heavily attended in many countries.

2. **Marriage and family** laws place women under the dominion of men, despite the protest of some Muslims. According to the Sharia a man can marry up to four wives. The man has the right to discipline, guide and educate his wife and, if necessary, to strike her. In most Islamic countries the man can divorce his wife at any time. The children always belong to the father only. In court, the testimony of a man counts as much as the testimony of two women. In the case of inheritance the wife is always underprivileged.

3. Regarding **criminal law**, severe punishments executed in staunch Islamic states since Muhammad allowed for the left hand of a thief to be cut off for the first substantial theft; the right foot is sawed off for the second theft. For adultery 60 to 100 bloody whiplashes are administered to the bare back. In some of the stricter countries the stoning of the adulterer is demanded. Converts who have abandoned Islam are to be killed. The consumption of alcohol, trading of narcotics, homosexuality and other crimes are punished by death at the hand of

Khomeini's hangmen. (An extract from the draft of the new Persian penal law is in the appendix. The design of this law was put before the leading mullahs in parliament for passage. It shows in detail what the Sharia demands.)

Whoever recognises the great abundance of judicial problems in all areas of life that are hidden in the Sharia, realises that in Islamic theology, public worship and everyday life leave only little room for thoughts and acts of love, faith and hope. Political and legal questions of the clans stand at the forefront. In Islam politics and religion are not separated. On the contrary, **Islam is a political religion**, in which attempts will always be made to establish a theocentric order demanding submission in all areas of life under the law.

The decisive question in the face of this legal dilemma remains: **How has the system of the Sharia withstood the practical test over the last 1,350 years?**

In the life of Muhammad, the ruler of Medina, a personal union between spiritual and political authority existed. He was the spiritual spokesman and the political governor of Allah in one person.

His followers, the four judicial caliphs, were also able to rule arbitrarily within the defined paths of the new Islamic theocracy, but with an important restriction: They themselves were not sources of revelation, and Allah no longer directly intervened in history through them, giving commands and prohibitions.

With the Umayyids and Abbasids, a strong split from spiritual ordinances and worldly dominion already took place, and two different laws, each with its civil and religious jurisdiction, had to be implemented. International law, war, taxes and criminal law were placed under secular jurisdiction, while the five pillars of Islam, inheritance laws, marriage and family questions, as well as religious duties continued to remain under religious jurisdiction. **Since that time, the Sharia has become limited to the spheres of religious service and family government.**

Between the two extremes, the submission of all areas of life to religious law, and a jurisdiction limited to spiritual and family problems, the Islamic countries fluctuated between the struggle of religious and worldly power. Powerful rulers, who themselves were Muslims, decided the distribution of jurisdiction to their own favour. In such cases the lawyers of the Sharia were banished to the **opposition**, since they demanded persistently that all areas of life must be ordered according to the revelation of Allah. In their **fight against worldly power** they increasingly **idealised** the Sharia and even produced judicial decrees for areas that had been taken away from them. These were implemented more than ever. Even more extreme is the claim that every Muslim **must** believe in the entire Sharia, "the divine law," if he did not want to be designated as an unbeliever (kafir).

The centuries of hard work by the religious lawyers was, nevertheless, not in vain. Their endlessly ramified religious law became an **ideal character** in Islam and was the model for assessing secular law, even when it was not literally applied. Secular law, in the majority of Islamic states, assimilated with the Sharia in the course of time, but did not come under the supreme control of the sheikhs and mullahs. The reigning caliphs, sultans, and moguls were the absolute rulers and sovereign over all believers. Religion and politics, belief and all governmental decisions combined, remained in their hands.

The unruliness of people, according to the Islamic religious law alone, is made evident by the fact that the penal laws of the Sharia were not able to be carried out practically. Masses of people in cities and villages would have been largely incapable of work had their left hand been cut off for every first theft. Countless men and women would live with shredded backs and disrupted nervous systems for life if all adulterers had been whipped as the law demands.

Turkey went the farthest in the abolishment of Islamic law in 1926 when it introduced the Swiss civil law and the Italian penal law. In 1928 the concept of "Sharia" was eliminated from the constitution. Nevertheless, or precisely because of this secularisation, Islam has been strengthened in Turkey in large parts of the rural population. **Tunisia** too has restricted Islamic marriage considerably and promoted monogamy to law. A man can no longer unconditionally divorce his wife otherwise he must secure her life insurance.

In a number of Islamic countries, a continual tendency toward liberalisation in everyday life and in all areas of legal affairs can be observed. This occurs despite the fact that a fanatic opposition has grown stronger everywhere in the age of a renewed Islam. In **Egypt**, representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood have repeatedly tried to introduce the Sharia either in part or fully into the Egyptian law, but until now they have been frustrated through the resistance of the liberal Muslims in parliament. In **Syria and Iraq** attempts were made to separate state and religion. In **Syria** this resulted in powerful and bloody conflicts between the Baath Party and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Sharia and its defenders **claim** until today that the entire life of the Islamic nations is to be subjected to the law of Allah, for Islam means "submission". Where this submission in practice is not possible customs and languages remain impressed with **legalistic thinking**. Islamic culture is based on law, the "Sharia". All Muslims live under its bondage. It is a factor influencing culture, that is mightier and more far-reaching than we can imagine.

Jesus Christ and the Law

Wise Christians live in the realm of the grace of Jesus and do not groan under the religious law. The real meaning and burden of the Old Testament law has largely disappeared from consciousness. The law of Moses does not limit itself to the Ten Commandments, serving as guidelines to everyday life, but also contains strict punishments. Blasphemers, adulterers and everyone who broke the Sabbath rest were to be stoned. The lives of the Pharisees and the Essenes were regulated to the last detail through volumes of detailed rules. The more a person held to the religious laws and decrees, the more pious and honoured he was in his society. The Jewish law stood by as a godfather to the rise of Islamic law. Arabs and Jews are cousins, also in regard to their legal understanding and judicial cultures.

Jesus emphasised that He did not come to abolish **the law**, but to fulfil it. He acknowledged the demands of the Mosaic law in the Sermon of the Mount, and filled them with the original principle that **every person should be perfect, as God our Father in heaven is perfect**. Every falling short of this level means sin. The blameless love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have become the measure of our life, guiding us to a continual repentance. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you." His self-sacrifice for all sinners is the basis for the new law, and the likeness of God in His followers the goal of the new covenant.

The seriousness of God's holiness and His summons to mankind reach us in the commands of Jesus. But His **new law** does not drive us to fear and despair in opposition to a state that is a heartless enactor of justice. He places us before God Himself. Jesus also did not desire to lead us to sanctimonious actions and to hypocritical piousness, but to self-denial and self-judgement. **He, the one who bore all our guilt and suffered our punishment**, spoke these commands that we might remain in continuous repentance.

No person can, of himself, fulfil the will of God in its entire depth and breadth. The followers of Christ would have to mutilate themselves, tear out their eyes and cut off their hands as soon as they led them astray into sin. None of the apostles ever tore out an eye or chopped off a hand -- nor did Martin Luther. He once confessed to his wife he had let his eyes fall enticingly upon a girl while in a hostel. With this confession his pride was broken and he asked for forgiveness. Jesus wants not only to govern and impress our heart and mind, but above all to **cleanse and sanctify our heart and mind**.

The Sermon on the Mount is a clear mirror of the righteousness of God and at the same time an indictment against our human imperfection. The demand of Christ that we should be perfect, as well as the threat of hell as punishment for every sin, remains permanent. But Jesus has borne away our personal guilt and our eternal punishment. The cross alone enables us to lead an unhindered life in the law of the new covenant.

Jesus demonstrated the law of **self-judgement** to the Jews when they dragged a woman, caught in the act of adultery, before Jesus. Jesus did not call upon the Jews to pardon this woman; He also did not say that her sin did not deserve death. Instead He called upon all of them to stone the woman on the spot, as commanded by the holy law, but on the condition that the one who was without sin should begin the stoning. Every Jew knew that whoever had committed even a single sin had become guilty of the entire law. With His piercing question, Jesus had judged the judges, as well as the accused, in their innermost being. He Himself did not stone the guilty woman, but commanded her to go and sin no more. This pardon through Jesus would not have been possible had he not vicariously taken her whole guilt and punishment upon Himself. The substitution of Christ in the judgement of God is the only solution that justifies sinners as well as preserves God's righteousness.

In the life of Muhammad a similar case arose. A woman who was expecting a child from another man, not from her lawful husband, was brought to Muhammad. He turned his face from her in disgust and after a short reflection said, "Bring her to me again when she has born the child." After the birth they brought mother and child to Muhammad and he commanded them to take the child from her and to stone her. They obeyed him immediately and stoned the woman on the spot.

The two accounts show the irreconcilable gulf between Islam and Christianity. The divine law must be fulfilled. A superficial forgiveness would be a cause for new wrong. But since Jesus carried the judgement of God on our behalf, He had the right and authority to let the adulteress go in peace. Muhammad rejected the cross of Christ. He acknowledged no substitution. Only justice and the law remained for him. He stands with his entire community under the law. All Christians remain free, under grace.

When we ask ourselves how Christ's law took effect practically in church history, we see that out of the persecuted congregations at the beginning of the 4th century the **state church** of the Eastern Roman Empire developed. With it began the attempt to establish an all-encompassing political administration of justice on a Christian basis. But the many attempts to bring Roman

justice into harmony with the Sermon on the Mount were useless. No state believed that it would be able to exist when it literally followed the word of Christ "Do not resist evil."

Muhammad, however, commanded the holy war in the name of Allah and pressed the sword into the hands of his followers. Christ, on the other hand, elevated non-violence, love of one's enemies, and forgiveness as the absolute norm for His followers.

In the nations ruled by Islam, the clergy lawyers of the Sharia attempted in vain to seize political power for themselves and bring the life of the people under the Sharia.

In the history of the Christian church we see in this regard differing lines. In the **Eastern Roman Empire** most of the Orthodox churches subjugated themselves to the respective rulers. Today in the East block the Greek Orthodox church has been relegated to low rank in deference to the current politics. In the **Western Roman Empire** the Catholic popes tried again and again to rule the emperor. The battle lasted for centuries and finally ended with a separation of church and state.

In his city-state of Geneva, **Calvin** tried to realise the Sermon on the Mount as the strict rule of life, but even there he could not establish the kingdom of God. Only when our Lord returns will He set up His kingdom and fill the earth with His righteousness. With this, the law of Christ remains a "shall" and a "must"; however the cross of Christ is our "possession" and our comfort. The Holy Spirit urges us to keep the law of Christ completely, helps us to overcome our weak natures, and enables us to bring forth words and deeds of love. He is also the comforter, who points us to the crucified One amidst our frequent failures. Apart from the cross we have no righteousness.

The Idea of the Kingdom of Allah in Islam

From the beginning Muhammad pursued more than just a religious goal of influencing the animists in Mecca and Medina so that they might subject themselves to Allah, the only God. Muhammad wanted to subdue all aspects of the existing society for Allah and his messengers. **The idea of realising the kingdom of Allah on this earth** is the principle duty of every Muslim and the actual goal of Islam. For this reason the **Islamic calendar** does not begin with the birth of Muhammad, nor with the first revelation of Allah to him, but with the date of his emigration from Mecca to Medina (September 24, 622). Previous to that more than 100 Muslims had stood the test for years under persecution in Mecca. Some had abandoned their homes and goods and fled to Ethiopia and later returned. But their faith and suffering are not interpreted as entirely Islamic. Only as Muhammad became ruler in Medina and founded a **religious city-state** was Islam born. This event teaches us that Islam is not only a religion in the Western sense of the word, which finds its spiritual self-understanding in dogmatic articles of faith, practical acts of kindness and a certain hope of eternity. No, Islam has realised itself only where it has become a **state**. Only then, when Islam is recognised as the state religion in a land and when the Sharia is introduced as the primary source of all legislation, does this desert religion come to rest.

In the first years of the expansion of Islam, the world was divided by Muslims into a "**house of Islam**" and a "**house of war**." Where Islam reigned and shaped all areas of life, Islamic peace ruled; where Islam did not govern or where it represented only a minority, war reigned.

The goal of Muslim missions is not the conversion of individuals, but the subjugation, penetration and domination of an **entire** people.

Islam is a political religion. War, taxes, might, glory and the sword belong just as much to a form of self-expression as the new mosques, the dominance of men, multiplication of children and the public whipping of thieves, adulterers and hashish smugglers. These outward manifestations of Islam are not mistakes of individual Muslims or of fanatic Islamic groups, but are deeply anchored in the Qur'an and in Islamic law.

In an age of renewed Islamic strength, related to the oil billions, there appears to be an increasing stagnation in the liberalisation and the secularisation in individual Islamic countries in the last 200 years. The **revolution of Khomeini** was a rebuke to the Islamic socialism of Nasser and brought it back within bounds. The aged leader in Persia systematically hastened the elimination of all Christian, Communist, Western and Eastern influences out of Shiite Islam. He wanted to **erect the kingdom of Allah** in a pure culture, as the laboratory and source of strength for the revival of world Islam.

From the Khomeini revolution shock waves went forth into many Islamic countries. The **Sunni Muslim Brotherhood** received strong stimulus through him. In some **Syrian** cities it provoked bloody battles between the Syrian army and these fundamentalists of Islam. All members of the Muslim Brotherhood are on the black list of Syria, because their goal is not only a religious renewal of Islam, but is at the same time for the overthrow of the liberal Alawite government. In **Jordan** the king aligned himself with the Muslim Brotherhood for a time. They were growing in numbers and trained militarily in the cellars of the mosques. Finally the king had to imprison their leaders and to limit their activities. In **Egypt** the battle is still undecided. Sadat was shot to death by Islamic fanatics. Mubarak tries to balance the country between extreme Islam and socialism. In **Sudan**, Numeiri, upon pressure from Saudi Arabia, had introduced the Sharia as the law of legislation in his land. With the introduction of Islamic law in Sudan, Numeiri released the prisoners from the jails, because they had been judged under the wrong law. He gave the discharged prisoners some pocket money, so that they could make a new beginning and warned them: "Now begins the merciless time of law. Watch out that you don't commit a crime again. In the new age there is no more grace, only law." As a result a civil war flared up in the south, since the majority of animists and Christians are not ready to bow under the Islamic yoke. Numeiri had to flee from his own country and the Sharia was set aside by a military government. Other states who view the Sharia as the legal basis for their nation are **Saudi Arabia, Libya, the Gulf States, Iran and Pakistan.**

The immediate goal of the Islamic fundamentalists is the reformation of all Islamic countries, with force if necessary, so that the kingdom of Allah will become a reality. Hands are chopped off for thefts, men and women are whipped or stoned when they have violated the laws of the Sharia. Revolutionary guards shoot anyone to death who is suspected of being an enemy of Khomeini, since the full adaptation of the Sharia to Iranian law and modern life is not yet concluded. Until then free will has its reign.

Besides the self-realisation of Islam in the different countries, Islam pushes for a **co-operation of all the Islamic countries** and their union in an Islamic world empire. The spirit of this religion, however, is pride. Muslims do not want to subject themselves to other men. As long as there is no dominating Islamic ruler who subjugates the other Muslim countries with an iron hand, there will be no united Islamic kingdom of God. The Gulf War is an indication of this. The unrest in the Islamic countries is great. In the meantime, Qaddafi

finances overthrows, revolutions and terrorists in many countries of the world and tries to incite alienated Christian groups against each other. He writes political-religious treatises and makes it clear to Christian theologians ready for dialogue, that in the future, the Qur'anic Christ can be the only basis for discussions between Muslims and Christians.

The world mission of Islam has received strong impetus in all parts of the world. The high birth rate of the Islamic countries, which exceeds 25 million a year, is the most significant reason for the spread of Islam, while the Christian countries stagnate because of birth control. It was originally the oil weapon, later the finance weapon and finally political strategies that provided the impetus that drove the third Islamic thrust into all continents. Islamic universities are built at pivotal points in important centres of the world. Businesses and research firms are bought up and Islamic workers in the lands of the West are motivated to become active Muslims. The Protestant countries of Europe and the USA must reckon that by the year 2050 approximately 100 million Muslims could be living in Europe. Who can grasp the consequences of such a development?

The Muslims in Europe and America can evangelise without hindrance person to person on the street and in the media, but every Islamic country (except Pakistan) **forbids** the activities of Christian missionaries in their lands. Missionaries are expelled. Skilled Christian workers must sign an agreement stating that during their stay in the guest land they will not be active as missionaries. Charitable works which still exist from the colonial times are put under pressure to work only socially and not evangelistically.

In several Islamic countries **Christian churches** still exist dating from the time of early Christendom. These minorities, who have survived severe storms for 52 generations like islands in an Islamic ocean, have once again come under increasing pressure in the last decade. In 1979 200 evangelical Christians were thrown into prisons in **Iraq**, because they had arranged house meetings without permission. In 1980 the Bishop of the Anglican Church in Iran had to flee because he was shot at. His son, pastors and laymen of his church died as martyrs. In **Egypt** in 1981 eight bishops, 50 clergymen and many laymen from the Coptic and evangelical church were locked up and detained for a long time. They had been suspected of promoting the separation of Christian groups and of evangelising Muslims. In 1984 in **Morocco** more than 100 converts from Islam were interrogated and their literature confiscated, while several active Christians were locked up and put under pressure. A church elder in Morocco said, "We must prepare our congregation for suffering, so that in the time of persecution they will not flee." In 1987 about 80 churches in northern Nigeria were burned and about 60 Christians killed. The churches in various Islamic countries are coming under increasing pressure. The prominent example is **Lebanon**, where increasing signs indicate that for more than 10 years already the bridgehead of Christianity in the world of Islam is being decimated and shattered.

Anyone who travels as a tourist in Islamic countries sometimes finds outstanding hospitality and much friendliness. If the tourists only knew what the native Muslims think and say about the half-naked girls on the beaches they would be ashamed. Probably the only one who understands Islam and its collective power is the one who has lived for a longer time among Muslims, has tactfully represented Jesus Christ before their eyes, and as a consequence has felt their increasing rejection. Those who evangelise Muslims with prayer and love will understand and endure the fact that Islam is an expression of an anti-Christian spirit. This spirit not only guides individual Muslims; it guides his attitude which is manifested in most of the Islamic countries and in their laws, which reject open preaching about the crucified Son of God.

Christ and the Kingdom of God

The message of Jesus Christ had the **kingdom of God** as its goal from the very beginning. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel." The Lord has always claimed all creation as His own. His final command for world mission encompasses all cultures and peoples.

Christ's goal, however, does not mean a mere political kingdom. He said to the Roman governor Pilate, "**My kingdom is not of this world...** I am a King. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice" (John 18:36-37). Jesus wanted to establish an **everlasting kingdom** according to His own nature by way of a new creation. He was the kernel of wheat, His kingdom the multiplied fruit. He was a real man and the true God. His followers should be like Him, existing in the world, but at the same time born of God's Spirit and living eternally. To the extent that Muhammad and Christ differ from each other, so the kingdom of Christ differs from the Islamic state. Muhammad did not know nor experience the Holy Spirit, and rejected the cross of Christ. The Islamic state is an imitation of Muhammad; the church of Christ should be an imitation of Jesus.

The history of the apostles shows us that the Holy Spirit never guided the apostles to train terrorists, or make attacks for political revolts. Christ renounced violence and pointed to a **spiritual kingdom** from the beginning. His love, nurturing and care was consolidated in the building of His church. She is the apple of His eye and at the same time His body. He said to His disciples, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Thereby God is acting through men with His authority. Christ's church can never be a political kingdom, like that of Muhammad's, for Muslims are only natural people. But Christians are born from the Spirit of God. Jesus prayed to His Father for them: "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, just as I am **not** of the world... As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (John 17:14,18).

All who are called out of spiritual death into life, out of the anonymity of the masses into the family of God, and who serve God and mankind, represent the kingdom of God in this age. To their ranks also belong the uncountable number of believers who have already died, yet who live in Christ. In them the word of Jesus has proved true: "Many are called, but few are chosen." The call of Christ always encompasses the entire world, but only those who open themselves to the power of the Holy Spirit, to his love and self-discipline, will live eternally. To them the Lord spoke, "**The kingdom of God is within you.**"

Whoever wants to make the church a political, sociological or an economic instrument of power, as Muhammad did with Islam, will not find any promise from Christ. Whoever thinks that changing age-long living conditions may create better people, has not yet understood the ABC's of the kingdom of God, which state that only changing one's mind through faith in Jesus Christ will bring real life into the heart. In the midst of a world far from God and dying in unrighteousness, He grants love and hope. We do not need political revolts and bloody revolutions, but **new men and women!** Christ awakens those who are dead in sin to a new life in the power of His Spirit. The church of Christ is totally different from the Islamic state. **The existence of the Holy Spirit in the church is the decisive factor in the difference**

between Islam and Christianity. In a Muslim there dwells no Holy Spirit, nor is he really known in Islam.

Where Muslims hope to become a great political and economic power to spread the kingdom of Allah over the world, even by force if necessary, the mission of Christ has as its **preliminary goal the spiritual renewal of the individual.** Only when individuals reform inwardly and change their thinking, when they become His followers through a personal encounter with the resurrected One, then the kingdom of God will be realised in our time. Every Christian should be a witness for Jesus in his family, in school, at work, in the club or in the church and, when possible, even abroad. The kingdom of God comes today where Jesus Christ, through His messengers, restores those who are spiritually dead to life through the gospel.

When Islam employs "great power and much cunning" in order to build its kingdom, we should begin **to love Muslims**, to understand them, to pray for individuals and speak to them personally about the true Jesus, who died for them on the cross too. Some Muslim guest workers or students will return to their homeland. Our Lord will ask us one time, who in the Christian Occident has depicted the Saviour of the world before the eyes of these strangers, or who has at least paid them some attention, and prayed for them, so that they felt the nearness of Christ and His love.

The kingdom of Christ will only be manifested in its splendour with the return of Jesus Christ. Presently we see strong vestiges of His love and power. But when He comes, His followers will be transformed in the resurrection to live in His spiritual body. Then it will become clear that in the end the kingdom of God means eternal life with Jesus Christ. Our hope is not sumptuous pleasure in gardens and oases, like the Qur'an promises Muslims, but in returning home as lost sons and daughters to our Father. Then it will be plain that Jesus, the crucified Son of God is Lord of all Lords and King of all Kings. Every knee will bow before the Father and the Son. Even Muhammad will be forced to give Jesus the honour, when the Islamic lie of Satan will be revealed, and the demonic power of this spirit will be totally shattered. In Sura al-Zukhruf 43:81 Muhammad cynically said, "If the All-merciful would have a son, then I would be the first to serve him!" The glory of the Son of God at the end will humble even Muhammad to bow in worship.

Christ is victor. He is liberating individual Muslims from their collective bonds. When they fully entrust themselves to Him He sanctifies them completely as examples of His love and truth. **The kingdom of Jesus Christ will come inevitably** -- even in the world of Islam today.

V. Appendix

Qaddafi's New Year Message to the Statesmen of the Christian Nations

Tripoli, Rabi Awal 28, January 1

Jamahiriya News Agency

The Revolution's Leader today sent a letter to the heads of Christian countries to mark the beginning of the New Year. the letter reads:

"I congratulate you on the occasion of the New Year and the passage of 1984 years on the birth of Jesus, 'may the Lord's peace be upon him', of whom we would have known nothing were this not revealed to Muhammad. 'peace be upon him'. It was Muhammad who recited the complete story of Jesus and his mother Mary, daughter of Umran. We Muslims have believed, through the Qur'an which was revealed to Muhammad and which you have unfortunately not recognised, in the miracle of Jesus' birth and prophecy. This story has not reached us clearly either through the Torah or the Bible, because the current copies of the Old and New testaments have been forged and distorted and the name of the prophet Muhammad and many other things have been intentionally dropped from them. For Jesus says in the true Bible, addressing the Israelites who deserted him and tried to kill him: 'O ye sons of Israel, I am the prophet of god sent to you to attest the Torah and Bible and to bring glad tidings of a prophet called Ahmad who will come after me.'

"On this holy occasion, I call upon the new generation in the Christian world to read the Qur'an to discover the truth about Jesus Christ, 'may peace be upon him', his mother Mary and brother Aaron, I call upon them to read the Qur'an to see how the virgin Mary was approached by Gabriel who brought glad tidings Of Jesus and how Jesus was born in a distant place. They will also learn how God provided her with food from heaven and a palm tree and how her people attacked her... How the child Jesus spoke and convinced people that he is a blessed prophet and that Muhammad will come as a prophet after him... How he was forsaken by the Israelites who tried to kill him, putting his look-alike to the cross, while God lifted Jesus to the heavens... How Jesus, through God brought life back to the dead and healed the lepers and the dumb.

"All these details have made us, we the Muslims, believe in the miracle of the birth of Jesus, his prophecy, his beginning and end, the Israelites war against him and the Hiwaris support for him... We have learned all this only from the Qur'an which you have not read and do not believe in because of the blind nationalistic fanaticism against the Arab nation, misleading Israeli propaganda and the ignorant which has prevented you from seeking the truth of the Qur'an and the prophet Muhammad who recited in detail the story of Jesus and the stories of other prophets in the Qur'an.

"Therefore, I call upon the new generation in the Christian world to carry out a cultural revolution to transform the beliefs of the Christian world which is now in the process of disintegration and decline and is now in need of men like Savonarola, Martin Luther and Calvin.

"May peace befall all the righteous..."

Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi

(The Times of India)

Extracts from the Law of Retaliation

The Law of Retaliation was passed by the cabinet of the government of Radjai (Iran) during the first days of February in the year 1981.

Through this law, which contains 80 articles, the criminal law is shortened. One differentiates between two main parts. The first part relates to crimes of homicide, the second to bodily injury.

Article 1

For premeditated murder the law of retaliation is valid. On the approval of the Imam of the Muslims or his representatives, the relatives of the slain person on the side of the father may punish the accused in accord with the fulfilment of the conditions in the following articles.

Article 2

In the case of premeditated murder the following conditions are valid:

- a) When the guilty person intentionally acted to kill someone. It is not important whether he succeeded in killing the person as long as the intention was death.
- b) When the guilty person consciously undertook an attempted murder, even when the murder was not premeditated.
- c) When the guilty person did not have the intention to kill, but the attempt itself resulted in the death of the victim by reason of the victims age, sickness, weakness... and when the accused was conscious and aware of these conditions.

Article 3

There are three cases of homicide to be distinguished: cognisant homicide, nearly cognisant homicide and negligent homicide. The regulations for both of the last two cases ensue in the column regarding the blood price (compensation).

Article 4

The fact that one acted under coercion cannot be used to justify a homicide. Therefore the offender is condemned under the law of retaliation.

Whoever instigates a homicide is condemned to life-long imprisonment. However:

- if the offender is an under-aged child who doesn't know what he is doing, or a mentally retarded person, then the instigator alone is condemned by the law of retaliation.
- if the offender is an under-aged child, who is conscious and aware of the act, he will be judged according to the law of retaliation. In such a case his guardian is obligated to pay the blood price (compensation). The instigator is condemned to life-long imprisonment.

Article 5

If a Muslim man kills a Muslim woman he is condemned according to the law of retaliation. But before the execution the relatives of the woman on her father's side must pay the murderer half of the blood price (compensation), which is customary in a case involving the death of a man.

Article 6

If a Muslim woman consciously kills a Muslim man, she alone is condemned by the law of retaliation, and does not have to pay the relatives of the victim.

Article 7

If a non-Muslim kills a non-Muslim, the offender is condemned by the law of retaliation, even if the murderer and the victim do not belong to the same religion. If the victim is a non-Muslim woman, her relatives on the side of her father must pay the blood price to the murderer (compensation), which is customary in a case involving the death of a man.

Part two: Conditions under which the law of retaliation is applied.

Article 15

The retaliation can only be exercised if the relatives of the victim are in agreement. Otherwise the one carrying out the execution is himself condemned under the law of retaliation.

Article 16

If a father or grandfather kills one of his offspring, the law of retaliation does not apply. He must merely pay the heirs of the victim the blood price (compensation). In addition, the religious judge must reprimand the man.

Article 23

For homicide, the law of retaliation is valid if the victim did not deserve to be killed in a religious sense. Causes for retaliation exist with the death penalty, however, if the victim insults the Prophet, the Imams, or Zahra, the daughter of the Prophet;

- the victim attempted to force his way into a private residence and the owner could only defend himself by killing the intruder.
- a married man kills his wife, whom he surprises committing flagrant adultery. He may also kill the lover.

The execution of these articles relate to the law of Allah, and if someone in all of these cases is against the one who has murdered, then he must make a statement under oath, otherwise the law of retaliation is valid.

Part Five: Modalities for the Application of Retaliation

Article 45

Retaliation is made use of in the cases of cognisant homicide, but can, however, with the approval of the relatives of the victim on the father's side and the agreement of the murderer,

be commuted into the payment of a corresponding blood price (compensation), that is, in the paying of more or less large sum. Yet neither the relatives nor the murderer can propose this exchange alone.

Article 49

Among the heirs, those of the victim on the father's side alone have the right to demand the use of retaliation. Neither the married man nor the wife have the right to pardon or the right to have retaliation implemented.

Article 50

A pregnant woman, who is condemned under the law of retaliation, may only be executed after the birth of the child. If the implementation of retaliation after the birth may bring fatal harm to the child, the execution must be postponed, until the danger is no longer present.

Article 51

It is not allowed to carry out the retaliation with an instrument that is not sharp enough, and which could be used to torture the delinquent. One must behead him with a good sharpened sword or shoot him with a gun or a suitable weapon so that he will die without difficulties. It is forbidden to mutilate the one condemned to die.

Article 52

If there are many relatives of the victim on the father's side, then every one of them must be asked his opinion. If they are all united over the implementation of retaliation, then the murderer must be executed. Also, when only a part of them favour retaliation and the other favour blood price (compensation), retaliation can still be carried out. In this case those who demanded retaliation must pay the blood price (compensation) to those who gave in to the retaliation. If some of the relatives give a pardon without blood price (compensation), the others can exercise retaliation, as long as they have previously paid the blood price (compensation) to those who had granted pardon.

Article 53

The relatives of the victim on the father's side can carry out the retaliation with their own hands or, if they have the permission of the imam, commission an authorised agent, without being prevented in doing so or being prosecuted for corruption.

Stipulations for the Employment of Retaliation Involving Mutilation and Injuries

Article 59

The stipulations for the employment of retaliation involving mutilation or injuries are the same as those in the case of a homicide. For situations involving limbs of the body, however, one must employ the principle of reciprocity, and take into consideration whether the limbs are healthy and essential for life. This reciprocity obligates one, moreover, to consider which part of the body is involved. One cannot overreact, and the death of the guilty one must be prevented, or that a greater injury not be inflicted upon him than that which he caused.

Modalities for the Implementation of Retaliation Involving Mutilation or Injuries

Article 66

So that the retaliation for the mutilation exactly corresponds, one has to evaluate the injury, so that the retaliation can be equivalent. Everything that could prevent retaliation, or bring danger with it, or could precipitate exaggeration, must be avoided. If, for example, hair would interrupt the carrying out of the correct retaliation, it must be cut off. If the guilty person has open wounds on arms or legs, they must first be healed, so that the use of retaliation will not be disproportionate.

Article 67

If, through the carrying out of the retaliation, the guilty person moves and thus causes a worse mutilation, the executioner is not responsible. If the retaliation exceeds mutilation, however, and the condemned one did not move, the executioner is to be condemned to retaliation in like measure, in case he acted intentionally. In case it was not intentional, the executioner must pay compensation in an amount proportional to the excess.

Article 68

If the danger of necrosis exists because of heat or cold, the retaliation must be carried out in moderate temperatures.

Article 69

The instruments for carrying out the retaliation must be sharp and sterile, in accordance with the manner of retaliation, and be suited for such purpose. It is not allowed to inflict greater injuries on the wrongdoer than he caused.

Article 70

If someone gauges out the eye of another, he can be condemned in accordance with the law of retaliation, even if he himself has only one eye and will be blind as a consequence. No reason exists for him not to pay compensation.

This excerpt is from the translated texts of the law of retaliation (in Iran) and originates from the magazine "Conscience and Freedom" 19/1982 (Bern, Switzerland).

Ways to Understanding Muslims

Not many Christians are shaken by the spirit and the practices of Islam. Others grow furious over the apologetic explanations put forth by Islam. But those desirous to evangelise ask: "How can we bring Muslims nearer to Jesus?"

In observing Islam and in conversation with Muslims we realise there are different methods that should not be confused with each other. Otherwise endless misunderstandings can arise.

1. **The self-understanding of Muslims** is frequently different than that which we can easily grasp or sympathise with. Nevertheless, we should endeavour to grasp their teaching, laws, prayers and conceptions, especially if we want to declare the gospel to them.
2. **An evangelical diagnosis of Islam** is substantially different from a scientific description of this religious culture and their self-understanding. In such a diagnosis the teaching and life of Islam must be measured by the New Testament. Christ is also the standard for Islam. His spirit uncovers the false spirit of Islam and shows the spiritual bondage of Muslims.
3. **A New Testament therapy** for a Muslim places as a prerequisite the comprehension of his self-understanding and sets forth the fact that an evangelical diagnosis exists. But like a doctor who frequently cannot explain to his patients the substance and details of their sickness, but leads them, nevertheless, on the road to recovery, even so it would be unkind and unwise to explain to Muslims about their bondage and the shortcomings of Muhammad. We want much more to take Jesus clear to them and to portray His love, holiness, words and deeds before their eyes. Only in the recognition of Jesus does a Muslim gain a new measure for his life, recognise his own guilt, discover the justification prepared for him, and receive strength and hope for his salvation.
4. **An open question.** Christ did not come to judge mankind, but to save it. He sacrificed Himself in our stead, because we all have fallen under the judgement of God. Scarcely anyone had understood His sacrifice or recognised that it was necessary. But He completed His salvation for everyone - for Muslims too.

So, therefore the question is posed: Who will tell them more about this gospel and hold His power before them, that they might recognise Jesus, and through faith in Him receive eternal life? We love Muslims and guest workers only as far as we pray for them. Whoever prays receives guidance, open doors and contacts, along with necessary words for discussion with them. Jesus desires to meet the 800 million Muslims living today. Who will be His messenger?

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. John 3:36