

Muhammad Wolfgang G. A. Schmidt

# Comparative Religion: Islam and Christianity

A Textbook on Islam

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ:  
Thora - Gen. 1:1 - Judaism

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

John 1:1

New Testament - Christianity

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

Qur'an - Surah Al-Fatiha 1 - 7 - Islam

With Some Additional Supplements in German

and Its Theology and Comparative Issues  
Between Islam and Christianity

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Muhammad W. G. A. Schmidt

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and Comparative Issues  
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ISBN 978-3-937494-28-9

Berlin 2006

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Mobilfunk 0171 / 6 95 43 38

**Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme**

Schmidt, Muhammad W. G. A. :  
Comparative Religion: Islam and Christianity. A Textbook on Islam  
and Its Theology and Comparative Issues Between Islam and Christianity.  
With Some Additional Supplements in German

Muhammad W.G.A. Schmidt. Erstauflage viademica.verlag berlin 2006

ISBN 978-3-937494-28-9

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..... ISBN 978-3-937494-28-9

Bezug: Direkt über den Verlag oder über den Buchhandel

Verbindlicher Buchhandelsverkaufspreis: 37,00 € .....



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der viademica.verlag berlin empfiehlt Ihnen die aktuelle Neuerscheinung "Comparative Religion: Islam and Christianity. A Textbook on Islam and Its Theology and Comparative Issues Between Islam and Christianity".

Berlin, 11. September 2006

■ PRESSEMITTEILUNG viademica.verlag berlin

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### **Beitrag zum friedlichen Dialog zwischen Islam und Christentum**

**BERLIN.** Im viademica.verlag berlin erschien soeben ein hochaktuelles Werk zum Thema „Islam und Christentum“ – ein Beitrag zum friedlichen Dialog zwischen den Religionen. Der Religionswissenschaftler und Theologe Muhammad W.G.A. Schmidt legt hier ein neues religionsvergleichendes Werk zu Islam und Christentum vor, dessen Inhalt aus der universitären jahrelangen Arbeit in Forschung und Lehre sowie aus intimer Kenntnis des islamischen Milieus im In- und Ausland erwachsen sind. Neben einer fundierten und wissenschaftlich abgesicherten Einführung in Glaubenslehre, Geschichte, Soziokultur und Recht des Islam sowie die Exegese der islamischen Heiligen Schriften (Koran, Hadith) bietet es vor allem in einzigartiger Weise einen sehr genauen Vergleich der islamischen und christlichen Glaubenslehren und zeigt somit die wesentlichen Unterschiede, aber auch gemeinsamen Berührungspunkte, zwischen diesen beiden Weltreligionen auf. Ein fundiertes Werk für alle, die sich beruflich oder privat mit der Religion des Islam befassen. Da der Autor an US-amerikanischen Hochschulen lehrt und forscht, ist der größte Teil der Texte auf Englisch erschienen.

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<http://www.viademica.de> / MENÜPUNKT Buchkatalog | Einzeltitel

#### **Muhammad W.G.A. Schmidt:**

“Comparative Religion: Islam and Christianity. A Textbook on Islam and Its Theology and Comparative Issues Between Islam and Christianity“. Erschienen im viademica.verlag berlin am 11. September 2006. Berlin 2006. 201 S. ISBN 978-3-937494-28-9. Preis 37,00 EUR

Ebenfalls im viademica.verlag berlin erschienen: “Islam Studies Library“. Digital Books and Software for Education and Research. ISBN 3-932756-83-5. Preis: 32,00 EUR

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Steuer-Nr. 171/ 28101373

Handelsregister Berlin-Charlottenburg HRA

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## ■ PREFACE

The major parts of the texts brought together in this book are intended to address an English speaking and reading student audience at Graduate School level in the Focus Area of Comparative Religion. When it comes to comparative issues, you will also find a strong Christian theological component in it. This applies in particular to the two series of lectures on Introduction to Islam and Its Theology and Islam in Christianity contained in this book (pp. 9 – 134). Originally, these course materials were designed as two Graduate courses in succeeding order with the Introduction to Islam and Its Theology to be studied first and then to be followed by Islam and Christianity. They were written and designed for the Comparative Religions Graduate School Focus Area offered by Nations University (West Monroe, La., USA) in the Far Distance Extension Master of Religious Studies graduate program. Much of the material contained in Module 4 “Central Doctrines of Faith in Islam and Christianity” in the *Islam and Christianity* lecture series is based on research the author has done for a Doctoral Dissertation on the same topic for a Doctorate in Theology earned in 2400 (Institute For Christian Works, Bible School and Seminary, Burlington, WA, USA).

Some other German texts of the author’s works on the topic of Islam and Christianity have been added to complement the English texts in this book: First, a series of articles on “Christians in Dialog With Islam”, each of which deals with special related sub-topics such as the Concept of God in the Bible and the Qur’an, Jesus in the Bible and the Qur’an, and relations between the Western and the Muslim world. These texts have originally been intended to address a less scholarly audience of a more general interest, and thus the more commonly known forms of certain termini technici have been used, e.g. “Koran” for the Holy Book of Islam rather than Qur’an as would be used in more scholarly texts.

Secondly, another German text covering a detailed and systematic study of the concept of SOUL in Islam in an attempt to compare this with the Western-Christian understanding of the SOUL concept.

Finally, you will find an essay on “The Holy Warriors of Islam – Motifs and Background”, also in German. This essay endeavours to analyse some of the settings and mechanisms in the phenomena known as “fundamentalist Islamic terrorism” that are considered to play a major role and pertain to certain special patterns of action and setting in this “scenery”.

August 2006

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PART I:

**Introduction  
to Islam  
and Its Theology**

## I. | Two Approaches in the Study of Religion and in the Study of Islam

In German, there is a proverb running like this: “You have a glass of water only filled to the half. The optimist would claim it to be half filled (full); the pessimist might criticize that it is half empty“. This proverb illustrates a situation where you could view one and the same phenomenon from two entirely different perspectives. In commenting on the very same state of its being, your evaluations still might differ according to your own perspective. With the study of religion, it is very often much the same. You may approach the study of Islam, for example, from an entirely secular point of view and be interested in its doctrines, its historical development, and its underlying socio-culture without being a Muslim. You may be only interested in it from a merely academic or scholarly point of view. On the other hand, as a faithful Muslim, your approach to the study of Islam, even at a scholarly and academic level, may be much more different. In such case, you may take its basic doctrines and messages for granted, and most important of all, you may take the Holy Book of Muslims, the Qur’an, as God’s Holy Word of Revelation by way of His prophet Muhammad for granted. Thus, your approach as a Muslim in the field of Islamic studies may differ in respect to that adopted by a Western, secular scholar. The Western scholar may raise and answer questions that a faithful Muslim would never ask since this may be a point of mere blasphemy consisting in an unforgivable insult with respect to the Majesty and Holiness of God.

These two basic approaches constitute principal ways upon which studies of any religion may be undertaken. The first of these we may label an “empirical” approach to contrast it with the second that we may call an “ontological-dogmatic” approach. In the field of academic studies, the difference in these two approaches also constitutes the basic dividing line between what we call “theology” (in the sense that there is a Christian, Islamic, perhaps also Buddhist theology or theologies) and that what first in German came to be called “Religionswissenschaft” (“Science of Religion“). The latter stands for what in English generally has been termed “Comparative Religion” or “History of Religion”.

Basically, “theology” constitutes the study of (a certain) religion, say Christianity – its doctrines, history, literary sources, etc. – from a believer’s point of view. It is thus confessionally based in terms of its preconception and approach. This approach matches more or less largely the ontological-dogmatic approach. The alternative and opposite approach is the study of a certain religion, say again Christianity – its doctrine, history, literary sources, etc. – from a non-Christian or non-believer’s point of view. Here, you may occupy your-



self with the same topics, facts and questions as a Christian theologian does, but your approach is “neutral” and “free” of any preconceptions and faith-based creeds, and your personal interest may be entirely empirical and/or descriptive. Here, you would not ask if the Christian approach to salvation of mankind is “more correct” or “true” than any other taken, as for example by Buddhism or Islam. In fact, you may have no personal religious commitment yourself and you even may be an atheist or agnostic. One still can study religious phenomena with an entirely academic interest.

The basic difference in these two approaches to the study of religion in general, and to the study of Islam in particular, is important enough to be mentioned here. If our aim is to be able to enter into inter-religious dialogue with Muslims according to generally approved academic standards and discussion, we need to be aware of the difference in perspectives that the partners involved may bring into the dialogue. As a dialogue partner from a mainly Western based culture, and perhaps as a faithful Christian, you may understand Islam as a religion alien to you from a purely empirical point of view, while you may view your own faith in the light of a theological approach to Christianity. Your Muslim dialogue partner may be well versed in the doctrines of Christianity, but he may approach his criticism and doubts about Christianity from a perspective entirely theological-Islamic.

In this course, we will adopt an empirical descriptive approach. Here, we are concerned with the presentation of facts as they are known to us, and we will attempt to present them as befits general academic standards. That means we may be “critical” in various respects.

### **A. The Question of “Science”**

In science (including arts subjects), we are used to doubt. We only accept those things as facts that have been proven on the basis of evidence. With respect to Christianity, we even approach the literary sources of our faith in some way “empirically“. The Bible is viewed as a sacred Word of God in which God revealed Himself to us and to mankind in general. We ask various questions about the making of the text – date of composition, authorship, transmission from the moment it was written through thousands of years to us in our times. The time span between its composition and its reception by a present – day audience is an immense one. Although we commonly believe in the working of the Holy Spirit and the divine origin of what is contained in the texts as God’s Holy Word, we still are concerned with minor textual variants in the copies of copies of copies made from its original, with literary style, and with different sources that comprise a text. These are the kind of questions that biblical scholars typically are concerned with and also teach their students!

It is legitimate to ask “empirical questions” with respect to our own literary sources of religion, despite the divine origin and the human factors involved in the composition and transmission of the biblical text. If so, we adopt something like a double strategy that is neither entirely “empirical” nor “on-

tological-dogmatic.” Our strategy lies somewhere between these two extreme approaches. This is a common standard in Western based academic Christian theology, and such a “double strategy” employed is due to what we generally term the “Period of Enlightenment” in Western philosophy and culture. Historically, this Period of Enlightenment was a counter-reaction or “post-mortem” to the Period of the “Dark Middle Ages“. The strictly bound ideology of Scholasticism was mainly represented by the Medieval Catholic Church. Scholasticism served mainly to prevent asking new questions and developing arguments of doubt towards that which had been taught and was commonly acceptable in the Medieval church and universities. The Enlightenment, with its new approaches in philosophy and other realms, was revolutionary in just questioning and doubting official beliefs. The Enlightenment ended the monopoly of Scholasticism in the philosophical, theological, and cultural life in the 17th /18th centuries.

Such a period of Enlightenment has been, for all that is known so far, unique to Western culture. It allows for the development of such a double strategy as outlined above. Such has not been the case in Islamic culture. The most reputable authorities in Islamic theology and science itself would rather adopt a fundamentalist view with respect to making and transmitting Qur’anic texts. Again, we must be aware of such differences in the history of science within both cultures to make clear the perspectives from which a Muslim dialogue partner may “argue” and develop his arguments. He even may not fully accept our statements concerning the composition and transmission of the Holy Qur’an referred to in a later section of this introduction.

## **B. Implications with Respect to Approaches in the Field of Islamic Studies**

The field of Islamic studies as an academic discipline of higher learning and scholarly research is relatively young, having developed during the latter half of the 19th century. This was the period when Western European Colonialism in Africa and Asia was at its height. Naturally, the colonial ruling powers were in urgent need of specialists who could understand and “deal” with the respective native cultures and religions of the colonized areas. Christian missionary work was regarded as an integral part of either establishing or promoting colonial rule. Not only in Africa, but also in other colonized areas, Islam had been present since pre-colonial times. With the new religion of Christianity propagated, Islam became one of Christianity’s strongest “competitors” and perhaps also one of its strongest “opponents“. It is under this general impression that Western scholars of the late 19th century approached the study of Islam in presenting their own view of its history, doctrine, cult, etc. Their view was essentially an ethnocentric one. They tended to ask how Muslims looked at these issues themselves and tried to perceive their approaches from that perspective. The late 20th and early 21st century scholars in the field of Islamic studies, even when non-Muslims and Western-based, would nowadays adopt a much less radical ethnocentric view than had their colleagues in the latter half of the 19th century.

## II. | The Qur'an as a Literary Source of Islam

Here, we will present some essential factual preliminaries in a brief overview that may later, in the reading of textbook portions, come up again and be treated more in detail. However, the following preliminaries may be helpful to the newcomer in the study of Islam at this initial stage.

### A. The Structure of the Qur'anic Text

The Qur'an is a book of Islamic religious texts consisting altogether of 114 Surahs (more or less the equivalent to our Western "chapters") of different lengths. Each surah is divided into ayats (verses), most of which have the entry formula at the beginning: "*Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim* – in the Name of Allah the Most Gracious and Merciful". These entry formulas normally do not form part of the verse counting and numbering in each surah with respect to the Arabic original, although this may be the case in various Western translations. The term "surah" itself may perhaps best be translated as "the magnificence overwhelming Man" – with respect to its contents claimed to be of divine origin.

### B. The Sequential Order of Surahs in the Qur'an

Sometimes, the order of the sequence in which individual surahs appear in the Qur'an is equated with the order in which they were revealed to the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad. This concept is certainly a grave error, and even Muslim scholars commonly reject such a view.

**1. Surah 1.** Surah 1 is a very short surah and, according to Muslim belief, a summary of what Islam is all about. Surah 1 (Al-Fatiha) reads (in my own translation from the Arabic original):

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious and Merciful!

1. All Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.
2. The Beneficent and Merciful.
3. The Lord of the Day of Judgement.
4. It is You we serve, and it is You whom we approach for Help.
5. Keep us following the Right Path...
6. The Path of those upon You have bestowed favors and not the Path of those upon whom Your Wrath comes down nor those who go astray!

Vv. 1–4 refer to attributes of Allah. He is the Lord of the World, the Beneficent and Merciful, etc. Vv. 5–6 refer to the Path Allah has intended for the faithful believer, and most ideally for Mankind in general, to follow. It is the “Right” Path (of every faithful Muslim), to be contrasted with the path followed by those upon – *and now, pay attention, please!* – whom *His Wrath* has come down. Most commentators agree that the reference is to the Jews. Those *who go astray*, according to the commentators, refers to *Christians*.

The fact that this surah, commonly regarded as a summary of Islamic faith, comes first in the Holy Qur’an, does not mean that it had been revealed first to the Messenger and Prophet *of Islam*, Muhammad. Its arrangement at this place is due to later editorial work when the Qur’anic texts were laid down in written form some time after the death of Muhammad on June 8, 632. Until then, the Qur’anic texts had been only transmitted orally.

The way in which these surahs were originally transmitted is actually unknown. Even Muslim scholars do not seem to have a clear view on this question. Theodor N. Nöldeke, one of the German pioneers in Islamic studies of the 19th century, in 1860 presented the following probable sequence based on his research of the surah texts and hypothetical reconstructions of those sources. According to Nöldeke, four periods can be distinguished in which the following surahs were laid down orally in the following sequence.

- Period I:* from the first to fifth year of Muhammad’s appearance as a prophet: surahs 96, 74, 111, 106, 108, 104, 107, 102, 105, 92, 90, 94, 93, 97, 86, 91, 80, 68, 87, 95, 103, 85, 73, 101, 99, 82, 81, 53, 84, 100, 79, 77, 78, 88, 89, 75, 83, 69, 51, 52, 56, 70, 55, 112, 109, 113, 114, 1.
- Period II:* fifth and sixth years: surahs 54, 37, 71, 76, 44, 50, 20, 26, 15, 19, 38, 36, 43, 72, 67, 23, 21, 25, 17, 27, 18.
- Period III:* seventh year until the year of Hijra, the escape from Mecca to Medina, on June 16, 622: surahs 32, 41, 45, 16, 30, 11, 14, 12, 40, 28, 39, 29, 31, 42, 10, 34, 35, 7, 46, 6, 13.
- Period IV:* the Medina period (ca. 622–630): surahs 2, 98, 64, 62, 8, 47, 3, 61, 57, 4, 65, 59, 33, 63, 24, 58, 22, 48, 66, 60, 110, 49, 9, 5.

Thus, a difference has to be made with respect to the *editorial sequence* of order in which the surahs appear in the Qur’an after having been fixed in written form and the *order or sequence* in which they have been transmitted originally.

**2. Other observations on surahs of the Qur’an.** Surahs in the Qur’an are numbered according to the final editorial making when they were fixed in written form. In addition, these surahs are titled by certain headings such as “Al-Baqqarah” (*The Cow*, Surah 2). Such a title refers to some key concept or key word appearing in the actual surah text. The conventions and criteria of such “titulations” are by no means clear and common in all cases. The grouping of surahs by editorial making of the Qur’an seems to have been much more in terms of structuring of content and its relative lengths of the texts, with the longer ones preceding the shorter ones. But again, here are

4. According to Islamic tradition, Allah chose to reveal Himself in different stages. This accounts for obvious, superficial contradictions on surah statements dating from different times. For a Muslim, a later stage of revelation and its respective statement overrules the earlier one. Thus, the statements found in the surahs of the later period are thus finally binding and make those in the surahs of an earlier period “obsolete”.

5. Finally, even Muslim scholars would recognize that the Qur’an may not be clear on everything. Thus, a second source, the Ahadith (“Traditions”), or the sayings of the Prophet in certain situations, were recorded. These *Traditions* have become, once their genuine authenticity was verified, a second authoritative written source in addition to the Qur’an. However, Muslims believe that all these sources recognized so far give evidence of Allah’s Holy Word to which nothing else is to be added and from which nothing may be omitted.

### **C. Important Observations on Arabic, the Holy Language of the Qur’an**

The following observations concerning the Arabic language serve (a) to give the student some hints on the common rules of transcribing Arab terms and proper names in Latin in Western publications on Islam, and (b) to provide some insights into the basic structure of the Arabic language with important implications for translation of the Qur’anic text into Western languages.

**1. Arabic as the language of the Holy Qur’an.** All written documents of the early Islamic period from the first half of the 7th century to about 800 A.D. have been written in a form of literary Arabic common at that time. This was about 1400 years ago, and it is clear that present-day Arabic has changed tremendously in relation to the spoken vernacular of present day Standard Arabic. But the ancient form of Arabic has been strictly retained in the writings of the early Islamic period because it was the language in which, according to the Muslim view, Allah (God) has chosen to reveal Himself through His Messenger, the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad. Not a single letter had to be changed in order to preserve the originality and authenticity of its sacred text. This especially applies with respect to the Qur’anic texts and that of Ahadith. This form of ancient Arabic is still retained today in the publication of Qur’anic texts, its recitation, etc. In contrast to the modern vernacular of spoken Arabic, we call the ancient form of Arabic found in the sacred texts of Islam “*classical Arabic*”. Classical Arabic is linguistically based upon the vernacular spoken in the days of Muhammad, the Prophet, in Mecca. Muhammad himself originated from the Hashemi line of the Quraishite tribe living around Mecca. The Mecca dialect was the prevalent linguistic variety of Arabic spoken (and not yet commonly written) at that time.

**2. Transcription of Arabic key terms and proper names in Latin in Western literature.** Arabic has only three basic vowels that in Western literature on Islam are transcribed alternately either *as a, o, e or as a, u, i*. There is no common standard rule to transcribe these basic vowels in Latin

but please note that “a” is always “a” but that “o” may also at times be transcribed as “u”, and that “e” may at times also be transcribed as “i”. Those alternate transcriptions, however, stand for one and the same vowel mark in the native Arabic script. Thus, “Mohammed” may also read “Muhammad”, etc. Please note that the pronunciation of these vowels is as in Italian, Spanish, French, or German.

Furthermore, Arabic has a couple of consonants that do not exist in English or any other Indo-European language, which, on the other hand, it shares with other Semitic languages to which also Arabic belongs. There is for example a sound commonly transcribed as “q”, a very special “k” sound. At times, the “q” is also transcribed as “k”. You therefore may find such renderings as either “Qur’an” or “Koran” for the Holy Book of Muslims in Western literature. To indicate that there is a pause between the two syllables “Qur” and “an” of “Qur’an”, a “ ‘ ” sign is put between these two syllables in more exact transcriptions according to the Arabic original. Hence, “Qur’an” becomes “Qur’an”.

**3. The Arabic script.** The Arabic script is, like Hebrew script, a consonant based script. This means that normally the consonants of a word are written with the vowels omitted. Thus, the Arabic word for “book” (*kitab*), would be rendered as *k-t-b* with the respective vowels *i* and *a* omitted. The plural form “*kutub*” would also be rendered in the native Arabic script normally as *k-t-b*. Its plural reading can thus only be determined by the reader on the basis of context alone. That this can be done without any negative effect on efficient communication is due to a special trait in the structure of all Semitic languages. The consonants of a word provide the basic “frame” for the root and root meaning of a certain word stem. The vowels inserted between these consonants as the root of a word account for variations in either word or grammatical meaning. Thus, the insertion of “*u-u*” in “*k-u-t-u-b*” adds a grammatical meaning of plural, “*books*”, to the root “*k-t-b*”. Likewise, “*i-a*” in “*k-t-b*” stands for the singular form of this noun. In addition, Arabic makes use of prefixes and suffixes to indicate a large variety of grammatical and other meanings. The same applies to verbal stems and not only to nouns.

**4. Word order.** The basic word order of immediate sentence constituents is predicate (normally a verb)-subject-object. This basic word order may vary at times and give the sentence meaning a special emphasis or other meaning normally not conveyed in the basic word order of a simple sentence.

**5. Articles, nouns, and adjectives.** As normally in all Romance languages, the noun precedes an attributive adjective in Arabic with the adjective following the noun also being preceded by the definite article, e.g. *Al-Jumhuriyya Al-Arabiyya* for “Arab Republic”. This conforms to a common Semitic grammatical pattern of repeating the definite article before an attributive adjective following the noun (cf. Hebrew: *Habeyth hagadol* – the big house).

In Arabic, the form of the definite article is *Al*. It is the same form before masculine and feminine nouns in singular, dual, and plural forms. In certain cases, the consonant *-l* of *Al* may be assimilated to the initial consonantal va-

## **I. Basic Beliefs and Practices of Islam**

Although Lippman is not a scholarly text explicitly, the descriptive account and overview Lippman gives in this part of his book is assumed to be helpful in getting a first overview and impression of Islam with regard to its basics teachings and the practices (duties) required of a faithful Muslim. At the institutional level, note first of all that Islam originally was opposed to a laity-clergy division as had developed in Christianity with emphasis on the point that all Muslims, whether rich or poor, of higher or of lower social standing, were totally equal before God (Allah). Secondly, Islam rejected the doctrine of original sin inherited by man from the times of Adam and Eve. This unbiblical doctrine had developed in the post-Apostolic era under Church Fathers such as Augustine (4th / 5th centuries A.D.) (cf. Lippman, pp. 2 – 3).

## **II. Initial Stages in the Development of Islamic Faith – the Life of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam**

This chapter covers the period from the birth of Muhammad in 570 A.D. to his rise to the Prophet of Islam around 610 A.D. until his death on June 8, 632. The material covered in Chapter 2 of Lippman’s text is more than a mere biographical account of the life of this remarkable and holy man to Islam. It shows the struggles, the up and downs in the spread and forming of this new faith in that very early period.

## **III. Historical Background**

In each unit of this course, we will attempt to provide you with a frame of historical data relevant to the history of Islam, its background, spread, and development. We believe this is essential for adopting and developing an approach that is “empirical”, in addition to the comparative-theological approach. In this unit, we will first give a general historical perspective with respect to the state of Christianity and Judaism as the primary sources stimulating the doctrines of Islam and the geopolitical environment in which Islam first came to grow. Then, we will list some key data on the life of Muhammad, which also reflect the initial stages in development and spread of this new faith.

### **A. An Historical Outlook on the World of the Middle East and Adjacent Areas on the Eve of Islam**

Here, as already stated, three points seem to be of importance.

**1. Christianity.** Christianity of the 6th and 7th centuries found itself in a controversial state. In the preceding periods, it had seen the first controversial debates on Trinity and the divine and /or human nature of Jesus, including the question of whether Jesus was equal or “only similar” to the Father. Christianity at that time also had developed the laity-clergy division opposed

by Islam, and it also had developed the institution of monks and monasteries where Christian believers sought to lead a life especially close and devoted to God, refraining from all pleasures and desires of earthly life. It was this asceticism that basically was opposed by early Islam. Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, was neither a monk nor did he reject any of the normal pleasures that earthly life had to offer. On the contrary, his message in the Qur'an emphasizes at times that these are God-given and that man is to enjoy and regard them as a gift from Allah bestowed upon man in His grace.

Christianity also had developed the doctrine of original sin inherited by mankind from the times of Adam and Eve. This development came in the post-Apostolic period by the first Church Fathers, the latter of which seems to lack any real serious biblical foundation. (We cannot go into further detail here on how these debates developed in Christianity, their origins, conclusions, and effects. For a more thorough study of these aspects, you are strongly advised to study the relevant church history period from other sources available.)

Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, is believed to have drawn on various Christian sources initially in his becoming acquainted with the faith of Christianity in the early 7th century A.D. Legend has it that Muhammad was first introduced to the Christian Faith and its doctrines in his contacts with a hermit of Syrian Christianity. The hermit's name is said to have been Bahira. Early paintings show Muhammad sitting next to Bahira in discussion. From a standpoint of Muslim tradition, this would indicate the recognition by Christianity of Muhammad as a Messenger of God and God's Message as having been revealed to this prophet of Islam. However, from an "empirical" point of view, scholars generally believe that Muhammad largely drew on sources of Christian faith that were peculiar to Eastern Christianity at that time including Nestorianism and Monophysitism as well as other apocryphal sources with respect to Christianity. (For further details of these sources mentioned, consult any reliable church history text). Also cf. for this on p. 89 in this book.

**2. Judaism.** After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the Palestine-based Jewish community seems to have become more or less "extinct", and Jewish communities were scattered throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. But even before, in the Intertestamental Period and in the days of Jesus, many Jewish communities were already existent in the form of diaspora communities throughout the Mediterranean world and adjacent areas such as Persia, Mesopotamia, and the Arabian Peninsula.

Judaism in general was highly Hellenized during the first century, and certainly by the time of Muhammad. With reference to the immortality of the soul and/or the "body-soul division", Hellenized Judaism claimed that the body was of a timely nature and would cease and fall apart at physical death, while the soul was immaterial and eternal. Being more worthy than the body, the soul would live on forever. These concepts originally of Hellenistic origin crept into Judaism and are reflected in the differences between Pharisees and Sadducees in the days of Jesus and the first apostles. The Pharisees believed



- A.D. 630 – 631 Muslim conquering troops come as far as Tabuk, bordering with the Roman Byzantine Empire
- A.D. 632 Muhammad’s last but triumphant pilgrimage to Mecca, visiting the Ka’aba and preaching to thousands of listeners
- A.D. 632 June 8 Death of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, in presence of his wife, Aisha
- A.D. 632 Abu Bakr became the first Caliph (successor to the prophet)

Subsequently, two dynasties ruled the Muslim world after the institution of the Caliphate began to develop “dynastic” traits: the Omayyads (until 750), with all the main conquering of areas to be Islamized and Arabized successfully done. The Omayyads were succeeded by the Abbasides, the rule of whom lasted until 1240.

### Unit 3. | The Qur’an and Islamic Law

It is now time to take a closer look at the contents of the Qur’an, the Holy Book of Islam, and to examine the function of law in Islam. Below is an outline of the material covered.

#### I. The Qur’an and Its Contents

Be reminded of what was said in the Introduction about the structure and contents of the Holy Qur’an. Eventually, you would like to re-study this section.

In this text, Lippman discusses the status of the Qur’an as the Holy Book of Muslims (pp. 56–58), reflects on its translation into Western languages (pp. 58–59), and gives some information on the recitation of Qur’anic texts (pp. 59–61).

The compilation of the Qur’an was undertaken after the death of the prophet. Until then, all texts of the surahs known so far were only transmitted and delivered orally. The task of fixing the Qur’an into written form was begun in the period of the first caliph, Abu Bakr, and only completed by the time of the third caliph, Uthman (644–656). The work was done by a committee under the guidance of Zaid Ibn (son of) Thabit, who was responsible for gathering all the text fragments from the memory of various people. The text was fixed first in a written form on parchment and bone. From these, an official complete Qur’anic text was made by careful editorial work, which then was declared official and binding under the third caliph. Some text critics claim that amendments on certain surahs were made. To those of Meccan

(earlier) origin, pieces from the later Medinese period were added, and vice versa. More on the compilation of the Qur'anic text can be found in Lippman, pp. 61 – 68.

The need for commenting upon the Qur'anic texts by means of annotations was felt not much later. The tradition of commenting Qur'anic texts (known by the technical term *Tafseer*) dates back to 9th and 10th centuries, i.e. only three centuries after the earthly life of the prophet of Islam (cf. Lippman, pp. 68 – 69).

Now let us turn to the Qur'anic text directly and work on some selected reading. Hopefully, here you can begin to apply what you have learned and studied initially. For the following activities, you will need a copy of the Qur'an.

You may use any edition of the Holy Qur'an in either English or any other language, with or without parallel Arabic original text. However, we suggest strongly that you also make use of the Qur'anic text materials provided along with this course syllabus: a Freeware Program called "The Noble Qur'an" that gives the text of the Holy Qur'an in parallel English and Arabic original text.\* The English rendering of the text is found to be reliable with respect to the Arabic original (as much as it can be by way of "translation"). The English used here is easy to understand and free from linguistic archaisms such as "thou", "thee", "thy" for "you" and "your" commonly found in some English Bibles and Qur'an translations stemming from an earlier period of English. It also has a commentary providing important explanations on the individual surahs and its verses. It has a search function to look up key terms in the text, and textual portions can be printed out. In fact, this program provides you with all that you need for your study activities. In quality, it can easily match with any competing commercial programs.

**Study Activity 1:** Open Surah 1, Surah *Al-Fatiha*. It is a very short Surah that summarizes the essentials of Muslim faith. Read the surah in the English text (and compare with the Arabic text if you can). Then turn to the commentary. To do this, you need to follow a simple procedure:

For viewing the entire text in either window (surah or separate commentary window), scroll the window text. Now, read the text and then the commentary. Think about it. What does it say? What are the main topics treated in the surah? Obviously, the first part of the surah descri-

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\*) Available as a Freeware download from: <http://www.islamasoft.co.uk>.

bes certain qualities attributed to Allah, the God revealing Himself by His Messenger of Islam. These attributes center around the Oneness of God. Now, try to answer the following questions:

- a. What are the attributes of Allah referred to in this surah?
- b. How do they account for the Oneness of Allah?
- c. What is the topic in the latter part of the text?
- d. Who are the two groups referred to in verse 7 of this surah – those who “have earned” His anger and those who went astray? And who are those upon whom Allah has bestowed His Grace in leading them in the right path? You should be able to answer these questions easily after having read attentively this short surah text and the commentary on it.

**Study Activity 2:** Now study Surah 2, vv. 87, 136, 253; Surah 3, vv. 45, 48, 49, 52–3 and find out what these textual portions say about Jesus. *Which basic differences/similarities do you find with respect to the Biblical account in the Greek Scriptures?*

**Study Activity 3:** Now do the same with respect to references concerning Noah in Surahs 3:93; 4:163; 6:84; 7:61, 69; 9:70; 10:71; 11:25.

**Study Activity 4:** Use the Search Function in the Menu bar above and enter “Moses” (or “Musa”) in the search field. Find the first 6 references, read the relevant verses of the surahs indicated, and give a summary of the statements on Moses found there.

**Study Activity 5:** Do the same with respect to Abraham.

**Study Activity 6.:** Do the same with respect to Isaac.

**Study Activity 7:** Do the same with respect to Joseph (son of Jacob).

**Study Activity 8.** Now stop and think over for a moment what you have read and summed up. What basic difference you have found in the Qur’anic and the Biblical accounts of these patriarchs. What factors may have determined such differences?

**Uthman (sometimes transcribed “Osman” in Western literature), the third caliph (ca. 644 – 656).** One of the most outstanding acts in the period of rule under the third caliph was the “official” compilation of the Qur’anic texts in its final form as it has come down to us in contemporary time. Other unofficial versions or drafts may have existed before but may have varied in shape and content from place to place. Lippman says that Uthman “was a gentle man” and “that he lacked Umar’s ability to impose discipline on the garrisons. Where Umar was ascetic, Uthman amassed riches” (Lippman, p. 117). Uthman attempted to stabilize his power and that of the clan to the office of caliphate along his family ties. This in turn led “to ascension to power of his clan, the Ummayyads”, stirring resentments and opposition among the Hashemites who were related to the prophet and his family. Uthman’s regime and house in Medina were attacked by rebels from Egypt in 656 where he and his wife were killed. Now, we find ourselves in the midst of a dynastic conflict among various clans striving for the ascension of office to the caliphate, and what happened in result was a split in the hitherto unified caliphate.

**Ali, the Fourth caliph, from the Hashemite clan (656 – 661).** Ali is generally held to be the fourth of the four “just/righteous” caliphs, and his clan was that of Muhammad’s, the deceased prophet’s, own family. But his rule was not of duration and no longer stable as that under the previous caliphs. He had to defend his office and status against Muawiyah, a competitor of Ali to the office of caliphate.

### **B. Muawiyah, the Ummayyad and the Ummayyad Period of Caliphate (661 – 750).**

Originally a governor of the province of Syria under the third caliph, Muawiyah was related by family ties to the ruling third caliph, and he is known by the apposition “Ummayyad”. He showed ambitions to the office of caliphate after the assassination of Uthman, the third caliph. And when the leading elders at Medina bestowed the caliphate upon Ali, who was a son-in-law and cousin of Muhammad, the deceased prophet and founder of Islam, Muawiyah decided to send his troops against Ali. In 656, Ali’s forces defeated Muawiyah at the Battle of Camel. However, Ali and his sons were assassinated later, and finally the office of caliphate fell into the hands of the Ummayyads. The Ummayyads then transferred the seat of the caliphate’s office to Damascus in Syria and made it for the first time hereditary. This was the end of the period of the first four “just” caliphs as successors to the prophet and founder of Islam. The period of their office endured from 632 to 661. The fate of Ali and his family had enduring effect and caused one of the first “confessional” splits in Islam, that between *Sunna* and *Shi’a*.

The period of rule under the Ummayyads from 661 – 750 saw a further expansion of Islam, with this new faith being carried with the troops of Muslims “from Aquitaine to the Punjab (in the areas of India and Pakistan today, *my insertion, Muhammad W. G. A. Schmidt*), from India to the Indian Ocean” (cf. Lippman, p. 119). The Ummayyads also conquered large parts of North Af-

## Unit 2. | Islam and Society Past and Present

We hardly would do justice to the intricate and complex study of Islam if we failed to consider some of its sociocultural aspects and their evaluation in the context of its religious doctrine. As already indicated in our Introduction, theology and socioculture are associated with the culture and societies of adherents to a religious faith. They essentially go together to present a more holistic and overall picture of Islam. They help to explain the impact this faith had on Islamic societies and cultures in adjacent areas.

### OVERVIEW

#### I. Factionalism and Denominational Splits in Islam

- a. Sunni and Shia Islam
- b. Sufism
- c. Wahhabism
- d. The Druze
- e. The Alawites

#### II. The Muslim Brotherhood (Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun)

#### III. Islam in the Contemporary World of the 21st Century

#### I. Factionalism and Denominational Splits in Islam

##### A. Sunni and Shi'a Islam

The first and earliest split of early Islam into two divergent denominational fractions was that of *Sunna* and *Shi'a*. The division was less determined by divergent approaches to Islamic doctrine than by a power struggle for the caliphate. This occurred at the time of the fourth “just” caliph, the events of which have already been summarized in Unit 1. Note that one of the main differences is that the Sunnis far outnumber the Shi'ites. The Sunnis are more rigid and formalistic (cf. Lippman, p. 138). Shi'a, in contrast to Sunni Islam, has a devotion to martyrdom, belief in saints and worship at the tombs of holy men, and a mystical faith in the eventual return of the vanished Imam, a spiritual leader “designed by God to guide them” (Ibid.). Note also the remarks Lippman makes in this context. Shi'ites argue for a middle path between the conception of an impersonal God, which Shi'a claims for the

# MODULE 3.

## The Theology of Islam

Two units comprise Module 3: (1) Important Socio-cultural Considerations and (2) Central Issues in the Theology of Islam.

### Unit 1. | Important Socio-cultural Considerations

As already emphasized, religion (and so also Islam) is closely linked to its adherents and their societies. It will be understood in context of its socio-cultural implications. In this unit, we will introduce some issues crucial to an overall view and holistic understanding of Islam. Below is an outline of the material covered in this unit.

#### I. The Theological Concept of *Jihad*, “Holy War,” and Its Implementation in Islamic History

##### A. Historical Perspective

Instances of warfare and violent spread of Islam and Christianity

Instances of mutual religious tolerance in the past

##### B. Some Islamic Views on Warfare and Military Expansion Based on Qur’anic Texts

##### C. The Islamic Theological Concept of “Jihad”

Linguistic aspects: meaning of the term

A first definition from an Islamic point of view

Qur’anic perspectives on the concept of Jihad

Conclusions

##### D. The Methodical Procedure of This Elaboration on the Jihad Concept

Empirical

Theological

## **II. The Western “Rationalism of Ruling the World” according to Max Weber (1864 – 1920)**

### **III. Implications with Respect to Approaches of Sacred Scripture in Christianity and Islam**

#### **IV. The Claim of Universality to Islam**

- A. The Extension of Islam to the Arabian Peninsula
- B. Expanding Islam to Neighboring Regions
- C. To Remote Places

#### **I. The Theological Concept of Jihad, “Holy War”, and Its Implementation in Islamic History**

Lippman says in his book that “Islam went (spread, *my insertion, Muhammad W. G. A. Schmidt*) with the armies of the (Muslim) empire” and thus “the process by which Islam spread was almost opposite to that by which Christianity had been propagated” (p. 119). And, “Islam was not carried to hostile shores by dedicated individuals such as Paul or Mark who made converts by oratory and dedication”. Although there may be some factual truth in these statements, it is nevertheless problematic because it presents only one side of the picture: Islam was spread by force; Christianity was not. It may hold true for the initial stages in the spread of Christianity (and of Islam). But what about later periods of their expansion? The contact between the Christian and the Muslim ruled empires has always been intensive and very close due to their geographical neighborhoods. The history of their mutual contacts is a complicated and sensitive one with a history full of violence, war and religious intolerance. Such a history of mutual relationships between these two cultural areas certainly has also contributed to a false or one-sided understanding of the concept of *Jihad*, commonly “translated” as “Holy War” in the Western world. This translation is even false and incorrect in linguistic terms (cf. below).

#### **A. Historical Perspective**

Let us look at some instances in history that, although not claimed to be exhaustive and complete, may well illustrate the mutual relationships between the cultural and political areas of Islam and Christianity according to historical facts.

#### **Instances of warfare and violent spread of either Islam or Christianity**

##### *ISLAM*

- Early expansion of Islam on the Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East (7th – 8th centuries and later)
- Threat of the Christian world by Muslim troops from the 6th – 8th centuries (Byzantine Empire, Battle at Tours under Charles Martell with his troops gaining victory in 732)

- Threat of the Christian world by Muslim forces between 15th – 17th century in the times of the Turko-Osmanic Empire

#### *CHRISTIANITY*

- Crusades, 11th – 12 centuries
- Spanish Reconquista, conquest and extinction of the Muslim Cordoba Emirate in 1492
- 19th – 20th century colonialism and imperialism also in Asia and Africa including the Muslim World

### **Instances of mutual religious tolerance in the past**

#### *ISLAM*

- In the Cordoba Emirate, 14th – 15th centuries Christianity

#### *CHRISTIANITY*

- The Muslim communities under Christian rule in Sicily (12th century) for a certain time

As for the actual reasons of the military conquests in the cases cited above, the overwhelming cases were always more political than doctrinal. In fact, Muslim rulers and their armies were never more “violent” or “aggressive” than Christians and their rulers were, or vice versa. Thus, it is important to note that any warfare between Muslims and Christians was due to the political and strategic intentions and considerations of their respective rulers and the leading social elites linked with them. Their motifs were indeed of pure worldly desires. In this respect, no such war was “holy” even if it was fought under the banner of either Christianity or Islam as a pretext given. For further details on the complex and complicated history of mutual relationships between the Christian and the Muslim world, cf. Jeremy Johns on “Christianity and Islam,” in:

*The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, Oxford 1990 (German transl. used here for reference: Frankfurt am Main, 1993:175 – 210).

### **B. Some Islamic Views on Warfare and Military Expansion Based on Qur’anic Texts**

In the Qur’an, the Holy Books of Islam, we can find several statements with reference to situations of warfare and expansionism. Without claiming to present a complete listing, they are, for example:

- Islam justifies defensive acts against an aggressor from outside, but prohibits a mere war of aggression.
- You may not subjugate any other territory inhabited by Muslims by military force.
- Accepting and embracing Islam is a voluntary act and cannot be implemented by any force whatsoever; there shall be no compulsion in religious faith.
- You must stop warfare if your enemy asks for a cease-fire or for a pardon.



**Thought Questions To Answer.** Now, reflect on the following Thought Questions and write down your answers:

1. On the whole, is Islam an “aggressive religion” on the basis of its doctrine? If not, how would you make such an assumption?
2. Do such militant “underground” groups striving to re-establish theocratic rule in a nation by means of force or assassination represent the “whole of Islam”? Consider in your answer the concrete historical context of the individual instances to which you may be referring (several examples had been provided in the Lippman text). Try to state if such groups were marginal in their society at that time or at least to what extent they influenced the rest of society. How much influence did they seem to have?
3. Mainly from which social strata were such militants?
4. Looking around in the Islamic world today, what would you conclude in this regard with reference to the acts of the Muslim Brotherhood or similar militant groups such as “Hisbollah” in Lebanon or Palestine?
5. Do you know of similar instances in the Christian world? In your own country? Somewhere else?

### C. The Islamic Theological Concept of “Jihad”

We will now elaborate more deeply on the theological concept of Jihad as it is found in the Holy Book of Muslims, the Qur’an, and reflect also some approaches to the concept imposed on Jihad by later Islamic theology, mainly in the Sunni Islam tradition.

**Linguistic aspects: meaning of the term.** “Jihad”, used in such contexts where this term is commonly wrongly rendered or “translated” as “Holy War”, is an imperfective form derived from its verbal perfective dictionary root *jahada* and serves grammatically to function as a kind of gerund. While the basic meaning of this verbal perfective dictionary root is “to want to”, “to diligently strive for”, its English rendering would best be by “wanting to”, “striving for”. Again, a person striving for something then would be a *mujahid* (cf. our explanations in the Introduction of this course, section on Arabic as the language of the Holy Qur’an). Those fighting for the cause of Allah commonly are also known as *mujaheddin*. Thus, on purely linguistic grounds, the translation of Jihad as “Holy War” is not justified at all, and was only later given this meaning by either Western scholars ignorant of the Arabic language and not knowing the teachings of Islam or by certain Muslim scholars themselves favoring such an interpretation. But this is a subjective ideological view imposed on the original meaning of the term that lacks any linguistic justification. To the anti-Islamic oriented minds of the West, this false translation served as a pretext to condemn Islam on the whole as a violent, aggressive

“pagan“ religion. We need to be aware of the ideological reasons and interests behind such false interpretation or translation and the purposes of any interested party it may serve.

**A first definition from an Islamic point of view.** The following definition is quoted from *Dictionary of Islamic Terms*, in: *WinAlim 4.5 Software, ISL Software Corp., 1986 – 1996*: “Jihad. To strive:

1. This can be any kind of striving in the way of God which involves either spiritual or personal effort, material resources or arms.
2. Jihad is also used to refer to a war waged by Muslims for defense or advancement of Islam, its interest and ideals.” (*Note that the two sentences in the definition quoted above are not numbered in the original text whereas they were numbered here for reasons of reference convenience.*)

We need to be critical of this definition at least in the following respects:

1. To render Jihad with “to strive” is not linguistically and grammatically quite exact. As explained above, it would read more adequately as “striving” (gerund form of “to strive” in English).
2. The interpretation then given in sentence 1 of the definition renders more or less the exact original meaning of Jihad. At first and in the main, it describes a spiritual state of spiritual striving for and towards God in submission to Him. This can include development of mental capacities towards spirituality, “personal efforts” in not only following the religious duties of a Muslim but personal sacrifice in the peaceful spread of Islam (missionary activities), providing material sources for such activities are similar. In case of persecution of Muslims or in being attacked by an aggressor from outside, it is, according to the original teachings of the Qur’an, legitimate to take up arms and defend yourself. Note that this approach is *defensive* and not *offensive* in nature. It also matches with the original conception of Jihad in the original Qur’anic texts. The definition in sentence 1 therefore gives the basic and original meaning in accordance with the earliest sources of the Qur’anic texts.
3. Now look at the explanation in sentence 2. In terms of text structure, it does not stand in opposition to the explanation given in sentence 1, but rather serves to complement it. Thus, the information given in sentence 2 serves to complement the information given on the *basic and original meaning* of *Jihad* in sentence 1. It thus provides an explanation of the *extended meaning* of Jihad on the basis of the original basic meaning given in sentence 1, whereby such extended meaning is derived from its original meaning and is, historically, essentially of later date than the basic, original meaning. If so, it then would be only fair and reasonable to conclude that the extended meaning explained in sentence 2 is historically of later origin than the basic mea-

# OVERVIEW

## I. Structure and Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an

- A. Division and Arrangement of the Qur'an
- B. Interpretation of the Qur'anic Texts
- C. Theory of Abrogation
- D. Relation to Sunna
- E. Relation to Earlier Scriptures
- F. Miraculous Nature of the Qur'an
- G. Study Activities

## II. Essentials of Religion (Islam)

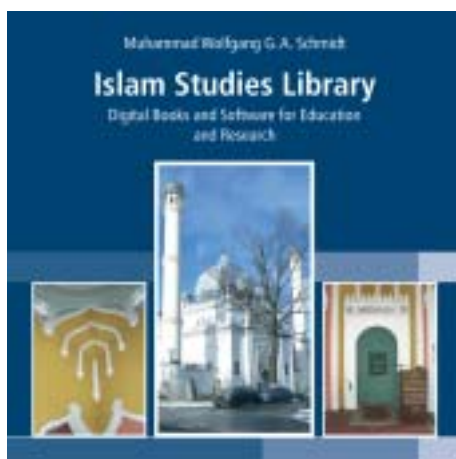
- A. The Unity of God
- B. Divine Attributes
- C. Life after Death
- D. Paradise and Hell
- E. Revelation
- F. Study Activities

## III. History of Prophets according to Islam

- A. The Office of Prophets from Ancient Times
- B. The Theological Concept of Prophethood in Islam
- C. Heretic Deviations in Islam
- D. Study Activities
  - Adam and Noah, etc.
  - Non-biblical prophets, etc.
  - Abraham and Moses as prophets, etc.
  - Jesus Christ, etc.
  - Other biblical prophets, etc.

## IV. Western Perceptions of Islam

- A. Inter-religious Tolerance with Respect to Islam, etc.
- B. The Position of Women in Islam, etc.



In what follows, you will need "The Religion of Islam" by Maulana Muhammad Ali as a textbook (Lahore 1985). The complete text of this book is also available in the CD-ROM edition "Islam Studies Library" by Muhammad Wolfgang G.A. Schmidt, Viademica-Verlag Berlin, 2004, ISBN 3-932756-83-5.

Read the Introduction, Chapters 1/2 of Part One and Chapters 2, 4, 5 and 6 of Part Two.

PART II:

# Islam and Christianity

person of some religious prominence in a most ideal and perfect character, thereby at times also running the risk to depart from pure and authentic historical facts with respect to such a person. The same applies also with respect to the biographical accounts on the lives of the first four caliphs, also commonly called the “four just caliphs”. However, the author has based his account on the most widely respected sources of Ahadith with reference to the biography of Muhammad, the prophet, and also other sources with respect to the first four caliphs, commonly also referred to by scholars of Islam within the Muslim world itself. Although this may not always meet the more critical standards of Western historiography, these sources display an authentic picture of what the Muslim world and the Sunna in particular commonly says and believes about the prophet and the first four caliphs. The key data, however, can safely be assumed to be fully correct in historical terms, and their knowledge is an absolute pre-requirement to understanding large parts of the Quranic texts and the Ahadith. You are encouraged to constantly refer to these historical key facts whenever reading textual portions from the Holy Quran or from the Ahadith sources.

## **(2) The Primary Written Source of Islam: Quran and Ahadith**

What the Bible is to the Christian is the Holy Quran to the Muslim. However, the Traditions about the sayings and deeds of the Holy Prophet of Islam (“Sunna”, recorded in the Ahadith) constitute an important complement in the written sources of Islam – especially in the Sunna, constituting the majority of the world’s 1.2 billions of Muslims.

Pay special attention to the six Ahadith sources and their writers. These six major Ahadith sources are named after their authors:

1. Bukhari (died 256 A.H. [year of Hijra, i.e. 622 A.D.])
2. Muslim (died 261 A.H.)
3. Abu Dawud (died 275 A.H.)
4. Tirmirdhi (died 279 A.H.)
5. Ibn Majah (died 283 A.H.)
6. Nasa’i (died 303 A.H.)

The first four, Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, and Tirmidhi are commonly regarded as the most reliable and authentic according to the criteria laid out in “Religion of Islam”, Chapter 2, Part 1, pp. 64 – 77. Among them, Bukhari appears as the most reliable, then followed by Muslim, Abu Dawud, and Tirmidhi.

[To convert the dates into common Western counting, you simply need to make an addition: If Bukhari, for example died in 256 A.H. according to Islamic dating, and if the year of Hijra were 622 A.D. according to Western counting, 256 A.H. would be 878 A.D:  $256 \text{ (A.H.)} + 622 \text{ (A.D.)} = 878 \text{ (A.D.)}$ . Likewise, for converting common Western datings into datings according to common Islamic counting, make a subtraction:  $2001 \text{ (A.D.)} - 622 \text{ (A.H.)} = 1378 \text{ (A.H.)}$ ]

## Unit 2. | Function and Written Sources of Islamic Law

Islamic Law is evidently closely linked with the religion of Islam. As we will attempt to point out in more detail later, it was from the very beginning and traditionally Theocratic Law, or at least aimed to function in a theocratic society that did not adhere to an explicit separation of spiritual-religious and secular-political leadership and an execution of its power.

### I. Some Essential Preliminary Remarks

**The written sources of Islamic Law** in general are quoted to be the following: 1. Its major written source is, of course, the Qur'an. However, provisions of Islamic Law, Shariyat, are scattered all over various passages of Qur'anic texts in various Surahs, and no systematic treatment can be found in these sources. Secondly, certain legal points important to a community are not addressed at all. Therefore, the need for other sources was felt.

1. A second important source, therefore, was the *Sunna*, in form of the oral traditions about the pronouncements and acts of the Prophet, Muhammad, transmitted later in writing by way of the Ahadith.
2. In case a certain legal problem was addressed for which there was no treatment either in the Quranic texts or the Ahadith of Sunna, reference was made to *ijma* as a third source of Islamic Law. *Ijma* is a technical term standing for a consensus of a generation of various Islamic scholars of Law on a certain legal issue. Some of today's Muslims would also take *Ijma* to include a consensus on legal issues reached by majority of Islamic world Congresses and /or (national) Parliaments. In Shi'a Islam, there is the additional requirement that upon reaching such a consensus, an Imam must be present to be fully valid in legal and formal terms.
3. The fourth source of Islamic Law would be *qiyas*, reaching a conclusion and/or decision on a legal issue by analogy. This is done by means of a certain, actual legal issue under consideration to be linked to a decision in a previous case similar to that under consideration. This also included legal interpretations and rulings on certain legal issues by famous judges and scholars of Islamic Law in the past. The inclusion of these different sources, in particular those mentioned under (3) and (4), attest for a gradual development of Islamic Law in successive order as outlined above. In particular, the addition of *Ijma* and *Qiyas* gave rise and paved the way for the development of a scholarly discipline, Islamic Jurisprudence (cf. below).

**Common areas of Islamic Law** in terms of its application are at least threefold: (1) Civic, (2) Penalty, and (3) Religious Law. Civic Law may include problems such as marriage, divorce, inheritance; the status of widows and orphans, Penal Law may include provisions for all kinds of criminal acts including theft, murder, adultery, etc. Religious Law sets forth the basics of Islamic

- c. *The Shafīite School of Islamic Law*. Founded by Ash-Shafi (767–820), normally regarded as the original founder of Islamic Jurisprudence. The School named after him, therefore, is also held to be the most important one among the different Schools of Islamic Law. Ash-Shafi's main contribution to the developments within the academic study of Islamic Law consists in a systematization of Islamic Law and limiting the (written) sources of Islamic Law to the four categories of the Quran, Ahadith of the Sunna, Ijma, and Qiyas (cf. above). Found in regions of Lower Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain, Lebanon, Indonesia, Malaysia, Central Asia, and only marginally in Saudi Arabia.
- d. *The Hanabilite School of Islamic Law*. Founded by Ahmad Bin Hanbal (780–855). In its essence, it may to some extent constitute a more conservative reaction to other, more rationalist tendencies within the other Schools of Islamic Law. It is commonly held to be rather conservative dogmatically and culturally (i.e., within the field of application of Shariah to the sociocultural environments of society); its positive legal asset seems to be its relatively progressive Contract Law. The Wahhabite movement on the Arabian Peninsula, making Islam a state religion in Saudi Arabia, sprang originally forth from this tradition. Mostly found in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, and parts of Egypt, India, Afghanistan, and Algeria.
- e. The only most prominent School of Islamic Law in Shia Islam is the *Jaafarite School of Islamic Law*. Mostly held to be the “fifth School of Islamic Law” (with the four other schools regarded to be more prominent within Sunni Islam). By tradition, its development and existence is related to the Sixth Imam of Shia Islam, Jafafar As-Sadiq. Found in Iran, parts of Pakistan, India, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria (among the minority Shiite fractions of Islam in these countries. Only in Iran, Shia Islam is the majority fraction in the Muslim communities there).

A remark of caution must be made here not to equate these Schools of Islamic Law with such of Islamic Theology. Although closely linked to religious doctrine and sources of Islam, as actually all of them are, they are *not* theological Schools of Islamic doctrine. Instead, they are to be taken as the “secular branch” of Islam, attempting to provide pragmatic and normative standards for the Rule of Law in worldly Islamic society. Standards for exegeting and interpreting Quranic and other (e.g. Ahadith) texts have been developed by the various approaches in those different schools of Islamic Law when the need was felt to apply textual portions from Quran or Ahadith relating to Shariyah issues.

Islamic Law in its very details is time and culture bound according to the socioculture and social orders prevalent in the society in the days of its making. These were the days of the Prophet, the Four Caliphs, and the centuries thereafter. The earliest provisions of Islamic Law addressed the state of a relative “lawlessness” of a largely clan and tribal based society on the Arabian Peninsula. Each clan or tribe may have had its very own traditions of legal rules developed by habit and tradition, and it did not apply to a nation as a whole. Moreover, it was not meant to meet the needs of Western-based, modern liberal societies and any such society formed in the Orient on such We-

own creed. The actual comparison of the five major critical points between Islam and Christianity will be undertaken in Module 4. Here, we will concentrate on such aspects of doctrines of Christianity that will pave the way for comparison of doctrine in Module 4.

The contents of this Module are as follows: (1) Unit 1 deals with the doctrine of Trinity and its development in Christianity, while (2) Unit 2 will deal with issues of Christological doctrine and its development in Christianity. Both areas of doctrine play a major role in a controversial discussion between Islam and Christianity. Finally, (3) in Unit 3 we will attempt to outline a helpful methodical procedure of how to address such issues and “prepare” them for comparison in interreligious dialogue.

## Unit 1 | The Doctrine of Trinity

Strictly historically speaking, the issue we name the “Trinitarian Controversy” here evolved in the beginning of the 4th century and was an issue at stake in the doctrine discussion of the Early Church between 313 and 381 A.D. Historically, the development of this discussion can also be divided into two stages or phases, with the first one focusing on the issue of relationship between the Son and the Father in the period between 313 up to 370 A.D. The second stage or phase relates to the period after the Council of Nicea and the decisions taken there when the questions of the relationship between the Father and the Son had theologically been decided upon and a new question arose: the status of the Holy Spirit and its relationship to the Son and the Father.

### 1. The Father – Son Relationship Issue

For the first phase, that relating to the discussion of the Father-Son relationship, we find two actors on the stage among whom this controversial issue of discussion arose: Arius, a Christian parish priest in Alexandria and Alexander, his bishop. Arius claimed that the Son was not exactly of the same nature as the Father and that the Son was subordinate to the Father. Alexander, his bishop, did not accept this theological approach and claimed that the Son, as the Logos (Word) of God, had existed from all eternity and was equal to the Father.

This very much reminds us of the discussion among Docetists, Monarchians and other theological fractions in the Early Church in the previous centuries, especially the third century. Superficially, the status of Jesus as the Son next to the Father appeared to be a logical contradiction to the monotheist God concept of Judaism and Christianity. On the other hand, if the status of Jesus remained unclear and was not well defined, everything that Christianity had to offer in terms of its message of salvation, could stand and fall with such a clearly and well-defined status of Jesus: The fact that he overcame death and brought the light of eternal life to the world by reconciling sinful mankind with God, the creator of the world and the universe, he could only



## Unit 2. | Christological Issues

### 1. Preliminary Considerations

While the Trinitarian controversy focused upon the Son – Father relationship first and finally on the status question of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Father – Son relationship, the Christological controversy developed around the question of the divine and human nature in the person of Jesus. The basic difference in both controversies is to be seen in the relational question aspect between the three entities of Father, Son and Spirit with respect to the issue of Trinity while the Christological issue was to concern the mere person of Jesus alone. Early Christianity was about to systemize and define its theological system of faith into a system of doctrine that attempted to be fully consistent and logical and thus also acceptable to the rational mind of Man and those emphasizing the rational approach within Christianity itself. This process of a final formulation of a systematic creed essentially concerned both issues, Trinitarian and Christological, in defining what was to become part of the orthodox faith in early and later Christianity in response to challenges from the outside world and controversial discussions on these issues within the church.

Another preliminary point to consider is the question whether in purely historical terms the Christological issue was raised parallel, prior or after in settling the Trinitarian issue in time. No clearcut answer seems possible here: Some historical data well indicate that the Christological issue reached its climax of controversial discussion after settling the Trinitarian issue at the Constantinople Council in 351 (with Apollinarius, then bishop of Laodicea in Syria, presenting his Christological position some time between 310 and 390 A.D.); on the other hand, one might well assume that the Trinitarian discussion presumes to some extent prior Christological discussions, which, if so, is more for systematic theological rather than purely historical reasons. Third, as Christological issues may have been at stake prior to the Constantinople council in 381 A.D. and the time span when Apollinarius held office as bishop of Laodicea in Syria (up to 390), it may well indicate that the issue of Christological controversial debate must have arisen and developed within the same period of time when finalizing the decisions taken with regard to the Trinitarian issue were at stake. It therefore seems that it is difficult and certainly improper to give an exact timing of developing, debating and finalizing the raise of both issues. We should rather view them as a process under gradual development in lack of more precise timing data, and as far as exact data are available, we may do well to comprehend them in view of these issues' debate having reached their respective climax.

### 2. The Debate

#### a. Apollinarius (310 – 390)

With respect to the christological basic question concerning the divine and human nature in the person of Jesus, *Apollinarius* thought to present the following answer: In accordance with the anthropological concepts of his

Certainly, such approach and effort is not only intellectually demanding, it would also require your very best effort and energy to prepare in such way as outlined for proper interreligious dialogue with Muslims. This is not only an absolute necessity; it would also serve the aim to view the relationships between Islam and Christianity critically and with Bible and Quran as the authoritative points of reference (“tertium comparationis”). In the deepest sense, only then you and anyone would be prepared for cross-cultural and interreligious dialogue with you fellow men, regardless of background of faith.

## **MODULE 4. Central Doctrines of Faith in Islam and Christianity**

This Module will deal with the central issues of differences in faith in Islam and Christianity and attempt to present and analyze the relevant arguments on the basis of various scriptures references in the Qur’an and in the Bible. The relevant comparative issues in faith between Islam and Christianity have been identified as follows: (a) Trinity vs. Unity of God, (b) Jesus Christ as the Son of God, (c) the divine nature of Jesus, (d) Sin and Atonement. Units 2–5 will deal with these issues in more depth, while in Unit 1 some basic introductory topics to be elaborated upon will be dealt with before we can proceed to discussing such comparative issues in more depth. This will provide insight into the basic settings from which all comparative statements from an Islamic point of view will have to be understood.

### **Unit 1. | Islam and other Religions: Principles of Continuity Towards the Final Stage of Divine Revelation**

#### **A. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam**

Let us begin with a question: What is “Islam” according to the teachings of the Qur’an, the Holy Book of Muslims?

#### **1. The Meaning of “Islam”**

The Arabic word “Islam” in the first instance means “dedication”, “rendering and submitting (oneself) fully (to God)”. The linguistic root of this word (which is *s-l-m*) has many different but related denotations, connotations and associations in its various actual morphological occurrences. For example, with *taslim* the actual act or process of submitting oneself to something is

some Muslims may perhaps deny, others might well agree. For, if there is only one True God, then only one such God can be worshipped. If so, Christians, Jews, and Muslims do in fact worship one and the same God, Who is only One and the Only One. However, each of them still may have his or her very own perception. Thus, the way in which Christians, Jews and Muslims perceive the very same God Who is Only One and worshipped by them is different in their perception. Factually, He is only One.

The Trinity concept is hard to explain in clear logical terms to anyone outside faithful and scripture-based Trinity. Christians hold that the Oneness of God consists of three persons in one substance, and that this is still Oneness of God. Others reject. We may conclude our considerations here in saying that, in the end, belief in Trinity and the Unity of God at the very same time is an essential asset to the Christian faith. But it really is a matter of faith and not such of proof or logical reasoning. For, in Trinity those components of doctrine are embodied that, at least to Christians, make Jesus the redeemer of mankind and the Savior of the world.

### **Unit 3. | Comparative Issues between Islam and Christianity II: Jesus as the Son of God**

From a systematic-theological point of view, the questions of Trinity (Unit 2), of Jesus as the son of God (this Unit 3), and the question of the divine nature in the person of Jesus (forthcoming Unit 4) belong together and determine and complement each other. The reason why we are treating them separately here under different headings is because the Qur'an approaches them in such a separate way. To be consistent in our methodical approach to comparing these issues of doctrine, we need to consider these topics under respective separate headings as well.

The Qur'an makes two assumptions with reference to Jesus in its criticism of Christian doctrine and the Christological approaches underlying them:

- a. God cannot have a son in a literal sense. He is the eternal absolute, He cannot beget and He cannot be begotten (cf. Surah 4: 171; 112:3).
- b. There is no other person (in one substance) equal or the same as God Himself (cf. Surah 5:72, 116 and others, cf. Unit 4).

In terms of Systematic Theology, both aspects (a) and (b) may belong together in their assumption, but as the Qur'anic view does not necessarily assume such a connection and does make in fact make contrary statements in quite different contexts, we will consider the aspect of (a) in this Unit and confine aspect (b) to consideration in the forthcoming Unit (Unit 4).

In fact, the Semitic cultural background of Biblical scripture (even when written in Koine Greek in case of NT scripture) suggests such metaphorical references at times. They are in agreement with common linguistic and stylistic features in the original languages of their time (Hebrew, Aramaic with Koine Greek texts building on the former). Likewise, we have expressions such as “children of Israel”. In the Hebrew original, this expression may be rendered as *b’ni ha-elohim* (“Sons of God”), cf. e.g. Gen6: 2–4, or similar. In such cases, the NT texts are more likely to refer to “children of God /in God” in such cases where the OT texts are using “Son of God” in a metaphorical sense. This metaphorical use is to indicate someone doing the will of God and therefore in a spiritual sense is a son or a child of God.

- B. Thus, to clearly understand the *criticism of the Qur’anic passages referring to this concept* in the light of Biblical scripture, we clearly need to differentiate between such references of “Son of God” in Biblical scripture that either suggest *literal* or *metaphorical* interpretation of this formula. Clearly, the Qur’an – and this for obvious reasons already indicated – refers in its criticism to the literal interpretation of this formula. According to its teachings, it is, like the doctrine of Trinity, *shirk* – an act of blasphemy towards the Only One and True God by violating the principle of His exclusive and absolute Oneness in referring to Him.

Let us now consider some relevant Qur’anic references in this respect. As the Qur’an does not only assert that Jesus, the son of Mary, is taken falsely as the son of God but also his mother Mary (with reference to the cult of Marianism that had developed in the Eastern church by that time), we are mentioning these references here as well. Likewise, we also present the statements the Qur’an makes with respect as to what Mary and Jesus “really” are, if not God’s son or mother next to Allah, as asserted by the Qur’an.

- Jesus is not the son of God in a literal sense: Surah 21:26 & commentary note 1623; 43:57, 58 & commentary note 2254
- Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Jesus taken as Gods by Christians: Surah 5:116
- Divinity of Mary denied: Surah 5:73 & commentary note 723.
- Jesus is a prophet and thus also Mary gives birth to a prophet: Surah 4:71; 66:12 & commentary note 2525.
- Metaphorical use of “son of God”: Surah 43:57,58; 21:26 and respective commentary notes.
- Mary is an example to other believers (but no saint and no God): Surah 66:12.
- Other references with respect to Mary, mother of Jesus: Surah 3:34, 36, 41, 44, 156 & commentary note 644.
- Jesus, on his part, according to the Qur’an is:
  - an apostle (messenger, prophet) of God: Surah 4:171

C H R I S T E N  
im Gespräch  
mit dem  
I S L A M

## Gott im Koran und in der Bibel

Beginnen wir mit einer Betrachtung, wie der Koran, das Heilige Buch der Muslime, diesen Gott Abrahams, Moses' und Jesus' versteht. Denn hier haben wir sicher die meisten Informationsdefizite.

Schauen wir uns dazu einmal Surah 112:1–4, deren kurzen Text ich hier aus dem Arabischen direkt übersetzt wiedergebe: „*Im Namen Allahs, des Barmherzigen und Gnädigen! Sage [damit ist der Prophet des Islam gemeint, Schm.]: ER, Allah, ist Einer. Allah ist Der, in dem alles gründet (seine Wurzeln hat). ER zeugt nicht und wird/wurde nicht gezeugt [ist von Ewigkeit her ohne Anfang und ohne Ende, Schm.]. Und niemand ist ihm gleich [so wie er, Schm.]*“. An dieser Stelle macht also der Koran schon drei wesentliche Aussagen: Es gibt nur den Einen und Wahren Gott, außer Ihm gibt es keinen anderen. Er hat alles geschaffen, und alles, was in Kosmos und Universum existiert, hat seinen Ursprung in Ihm. Er ist von Ewigkeit her, ohne Anfang und ohne Ende. Und schließlich: Niemand ist Ihm gleich, auch der Mensch nicht.

Mit letzterem beginnt aber schon der wesentliche Unterschied: In Genesis, dem 1. Buch der Bibel, lesen wir nämlich: „Da sprach Gott (*elohim*): Lasset uns den Menschen gemäß unserem Abbild (*damuthenu*) machen“ (Gen. 1,26 ff.). Der Mensch ein Abbild Gottes – undenkbar im Koran und in der Gottesvorstellung des Islam! Wenn Gott so ganz anders ist als der Mensch, wie der Koran sagt, kann der Mensch eben auch kein Abbild Gottes sein. Und damit gäbe es auch weder eine physische (tatsächliche) Nähe Gottes zum Menschen, noch könnte Gott menschliche Gestalt in Jesus Christus annehmen, wie im Neuen Testament berichtet wird. Der Koran versteht also den Einen und Wahren Gott so, dass dieser zwar den Menschen geschaffen hat, aber hoch über diesem Menschen steht und sich niemals auf die gleiche Ebene wie der Mensch begeben kann. Das würde eben die glanzvolle und über den Menschen so hoch erhabene Majestät des Einen und Wahren Gottes nicht zulassen. Folglich kann ein solcher Gott dann auch keinen Sohn haben, der in der Gestalt Christi Fleisch wird (Joh. 1:14 a) und sich den Menschen in Christus unmittelbar und direkt nähert, einer von ihnen wird, sie seine Brüder heißt und sogar am Kreuz die Schuld anderer auf sich nimmt. Letzteres ist für den Islam ebenso unvorstellbar wie ungerecht: Sühnen soll eben nur der, der auch tatsächlich schuldig wurde. Eine stellvertretende Sühne, wie Christus sie am Kreuz nach der Bibel für die gesamte Menschheit auf sich genommen hat, verstößt nach Auffassung des Korans und des allgemeinen islamischen Theologieverständnisses gegen das absolute Gerechtigkeitsprinzip Gottes.

Vom Glaubensansatz her ist nun dabei sicher wichtig, dass das Sündenverständnis im Koran und in der Theologie des Islam überhaupt im Gegensatz zum biblisch-christlichen Verständnis eine eher untergeordnete Rolle spielt. Darauf werden wir noch ausführlicher zurückkommen im nächsten Artikel, der die Aussagen zu Jesus im Koran und in der Bibel näher betrachtet. Wir müssen dies hier aber schon quasi im Vorgriff erwähnen, um deutlich zu machen, warum der Koran mit einem solchen Gottesverständnis, welches das Verhältnis Gottes zu den Menschen weitaus distanzierter betrachtet als dies die Bibel tut, auskommt.

arabischen Sprachgebrauch sind „Kinder/Söhne Israels“ oder anderer Stämme durchaus üblich und bekannt. Ausdrücke wie „Sohn Gottes“ für besonders fromme Menschen wie Abraham, David u. a. sind durchaus auch im Koran bekannt, aber natürlich immer in einem übertragenen Sinne zu verstehen.

## Jesus im Koran

Wie der Koran Jesus versteht, ist relativ schnell zusammengefasst. Wegen des nur beschränkt zur Verfügung stehenden Raumes für diesen Artikel konnten die entsprechenden Surah-Texte nicht voll zitiert werden, die Hinweise auf Surah und Vers zu den entsprechenden Aussagen des Korans müssen daher an dieser Stelle genügen.

Jesus war reiner Mensch und hatte eben keine göttliche Natur. Als solcher war er einer der bevorzugten Propheten Gottes (unter mehreren anderen Propheten vor und nach ihm), vgl. zum Beispiel Surah 5:72, 116; Surah 9:88–89; Surah 4: 171.

Die Jesus in der Bibel zugebilligte Bezeichnung „Sohn Gottes“ ist nur in übertragenem Sinne und damit nicht wortwörtlich zu verstehen, vgl. Surah 43:57–58.

Er hat nicht nur die *Thorah*, das jüdische Gesetz, im Namen Gottes bestätigt und untermauert; er hat es in gewissem Sinne auch modifiziert und spirituell mit neuem Leben erfüllt; vgl. Surah 3:49, usw.

Im Koran wird Jesus üblicherweise als *Isa Ben Maryam* („Isa, der Sohn Mariens“) bezeichnet (zum Beispiel Surah 2:87; 4:171,3:48). Überraschenderweise hat auch der Koran stellenweise Geschichten aus den Evangelien über Krankenheilungen u. ä. übernommen (vgl. zum Beispiel Surah 3:48; 5:110), es gibt aber auch aus der Bibel nicht bekannte Darstellungen, wonach Jesus zum Beispiel Vögel geschaffen haben soll (zum Beispiel Surah 3:48), er lässt die Toten auferstehen (Surah 3:49).

Überhaupt: Die meisten Anteile, die der Koran aus der Bibel entlehnt zu haben scheint, stammen größtenteils aus den neutestamentlichen Schriften, sind aber im Koran zum Teil verkürzt und auch nicht immer inhaltsgetreu in Anlehnung an die biblischen Texte wiedergegeben.

Diese Hinweise mögen genügen, um aufzuzeigen, dass Jesus im Koran nicht dieselbe hervorragende geistliche Bedeutung zukommt wie in der Bibel: Hier im Koran ist er nur einer unter vielen Propheten, wenn auch unter den prominenteren, wobei Muhammad ihn noch an Prominenz „übertrifft“. Vom Gottesverständnis des Koran und des Islam her kann Gott weder einen Sohn haben noch zeugt er einen solchen, zu den Menschen steht Gott ohnehin eher auf Distanz, und es bedarf daher auch keines Mittlers zwischen Mensch und Gott.

kürliche Faustrecht des wirtschaftlich und gesellschaftlich Stärkeren endgültig ablösen sollte – für die damaligen Verhältnisse ein ungeheurer Fortschritt; aus unserer heutigen westlichen Sicht ein veraltetes und überholtes Rechtssystem, weil dieses im Kern islamischerseits nicht konsequent weiterentwickelt und an veränderte gesellschaftliche Gegebenheiten angepasst wurde. Natürlich gibt es noch weitere kulturelle Fortschrittsleistungen in diesem Gebiet, die der Islam mit sich brachte, auf die wir hier aber nicht weiter eingehen können (zum Beispiel Entwicklung einer einheitlichen arabischen Schriftsprache u. a.).

## Die „verborgenen“ Unterschiede zwischen Islam und Christentum

Wir haben hier einige äußere Faktoren erwähnt, die die koranische Lehre im einzelnen beeinflusst haben: Die Lehren der Christen und Juden, mit denen Muhammad am Anfang seines religiösen Wirkens in Kontakt kam, haben auch den Koran in seinen Aussagen zu Jesus zum Beispiel entscheidend beeinflusst. Die Leugnung der göttlichen Natur Christi ist auf den Hintergrund auch der monophysitischen und nestorianischen Lehren zu sehen, die wir bereits erwähnt hatten. Die im Koran enthaltenen Grundsätze des islamischen Rechts (*Schariat*, wobei im Koran nur ein kleiner Bruchteil dessen niedergelegt ist, was heute dieses islamische Recht ausmacht) sind für damalige Maßstäbe sicher ein relativer Fortschritt, wurden aber im Laufe der späteren Jahrhunderte nicht ausreichend an die jeweiligen gesellschaftlich veränderten Verhältnisse angepasst. Von Anbeginn war der Islam *auch eine politische Religion*, die weder die Trennung von Staat und Religion kannte und wollte; Muhammad und alle späteren Führer der islamischen Geschichte verstanden sich als religiöse *und* politische Führer (heute ist dies nicht mehr in allen Teilen der islamischen Welt der Fall). Gewalt und Kriege sind und waren nach dem Koran aus reinen Gründen der Selbstverteidigung erlaubt, jedoch nicht zu Zwecken der Aggression und des Angriffs.

Jesus hat sich in seinem Wirken immer gegen die politisch geprägten Messiaserwartungen seiner Zeit gewandt und die messianische Erwartung des jüdischen Volkes auf das nahe herbeigekommene („himmlische“) Königreich Gottes bezogen. Sein Auftrag und Rollenverständnis war ein solches *als nicht von dieser Welt* und daher *rein spirituell* („geistlich“). Ganz anders Muhammad und seine Anhänger: Beides stellten sie von Anfang an gleichberechtigt nebeneinander. Das zeigt sich auch in dem im Westen eigentlich zu Unrecht so berüchtigten Begriff des „*Jihad*“, was fälschlicherweise mit „*Heiliger Krieg*“ übersetzt wird. „*Jihad*“ ist im Arabischen ein Hauptwort (Substantiv), das sich von einer verbalen Wortwurzel „*jaahada*“ herleitet, die eigentlich „unermüdlich und nach bestem Vermögen etwas anstreben“ bedeutet. Der Koran unterscheidet dabei zwischen einem „großen“ und einem „kleinen Jihad“. Der „große Jihad“ (*jihad kabir*; vgl. zum Beispiel Surah 25:52) ist demnach das höchste zu bewertende geistliche Streben des Gläubigen, sich innerlich selbst zu läutern und den Willen Gottes unablässig zu tun – mit Verstand, Herz und Hand. Das höchste Ziel ist dabei das *spirituelle* (geistliche) *Einssein*



Seelenzustand des *Ruh*, des Geistlich-Spirituellen, das über irdische Vernunft und irdisches Denken des menschlichen Nafs-Seelenanteils weit hinausreicht.

Dieser Zustand des Ruh ist nun auch der der befriedeten Seele (*nafs mutma'inna*). Vernunft- und gefühlsmäßig ist sie nun eins mit ihrem Schöpfer, sie ruht in Ihm und damit auch in sich selbst. Sie hat keinen Anteil mehr an dem schwächebeladenen Nafs der diesseitigen Welt, da sie ja zu ihrem Schöpfer „zurückgekehrt“ ist und in den Maßstäben Seines Friedens ruht (Surah 28:29). Mit den anderen Gläubigen reiht sie sich ein unter die Diener Allahs hier in dieser Welt innerhalb der islamischen Umma (Surah 89:30) und tritt in einer jenseitigen Welt damit auch in Seinen Garten ein (Surah 89:31). Dieser Garten steht symbolisch für das dem Gläubigen verheißene Paradies; hier auf dieser Erde tritt er innerhalb der Umma aber schon in den Vorhof jenes Seelenzustandes der Glückseligkeit ein, der die an sich sonst ruhelose Seele des Nafs dieser Welt nicht mehr so umtrieblich sein, sondern auch einen in sich ruhenden Angelpunkt finden lässt. Dies ist dann der Vorgeschmack der verheißenen und nur erahnbaren paradiesischen Glückseligkeit, die hier auf Erden noch nicht vollkommen ausgeprägt vorhanden ist, aber dereinst kommen wird (*Ruh*).

## 6. Zur Unsterblichkeit der Seele im Heiligen Qur'an

Das bisher skizzierte Bild von der islamischen Seelenlehre wäre ohne eine Anführung jener Textstellen des Heiligen Qur'an über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele unvollständig.

Beginnen wir mit einer Stelle aus Surah Al-Saradsch (32):10:

*Thumma sawwahu wanafakha fihi min ruhihi wa dscha'ala lakum al-sam'a wal abssara wal afidata qalilan maa taschkurun* [Dann formte Er ihn (i.e., den Menschen) und hauchte ihm von Seinem Geist (*ruhihi*) ein. Und Er hat euch Ohren und Augen und Herzen gegeben. Aber wenig Dank wisst ihr!]

Diese Stelle von der Erschaffung des Menschen, wo der Schöpfer zuletzt dem Menschen von Seinem Geist (*ruhihi*) einhaucht – der Lebenskraft Seines Atems, Seinem Bewusstsein und Denken – ist in der bereits zitierten Stelle von Surah 23:15 ausführlicher dargestellt. Die in Surah 23:15 erwähnte andere *khalq* (Schöpfung) ist die hier in diesem Vers erwähnte aus Seinem Geist, von dem Er dem Menschen bei dessen Erschaffung gab.

Was geschieht nun mit dieser von Gott geschaffenen Seele beim körperlichen Ableben des Menschen?

## Was ist JIHAD?

Die westliche Welt hat ein neues Feindbild – die Terrororganisationen islamischer Fundamentalisten, die durch gezielte Anschläge gegen Personen und Sachen weltweit von sich reden machen. Drei charakteristische Momente kommen dabei immer wieder zum Tragen: Erstens handelt es sich bei den Akteuren um Angehörige eher autonomer Gruppen, die aus dem Untergrund heraus agieren; zweitens bestehen ihre Motive eigentlich immer in einer untrennbaren Mischung von religiösen und politischen Motiven, und drittens: sie alle praktizieren eine bestimmte Form des *Jihad*, des sogenannten „Heiligen Krieges“.

Dabei ist die Wiedergabe von Jihad mit „Heiliger Krieg“ streng genommen eine Fehlübersetzung. Im Arabischen leitet sich „Jihad“ nämlich ab von einer verbalen Wortwurzel *jahaada*, die wörtlich „etwas fest anstreben“, „sich ständig um etwas ganz besonders stark bemühen“ bedeutet. *Jihad* in seiner Nominalform müsste daher genauer mit „ständiges besonderes Bemühen um etwas“, „zielgerichtetes Anstreben von etwas“ wiedergegeben werden. Nicht nur in den Texten des Koran, sondern in den an zweiter Stelle stehenden religiösen Schriften der Ahadith\* finden sich die grundsätzlichen Lehren dazu: Danach gibt es den Großen Jihad (*jihad kabir*), der ständig und unablässig praktiziert wird und sich eigentlich auf das rein spirituelle, individuelle und das gewaltlose Streben des Muslim in seiner Hinwendung zu Gott bezieht (vgl. Surah\* 9:73; 24:6, 25:52 des Koran). Daneben gibt es aber auch den Kleinen Jihad des Schwertes, der nicht ständig, sondern nur im Notfall eines Angriffs von außen, anzuwenden ist. Ein solches Recht auf Verteidigung mit Waffen im Falle eines solchen Angriffs von außen ist nicht nur ein billiges Recht, sondern sogar *heilige Pflicht* der Muslime. Ein Angriffskrieg der Muslime auf andere Dritte, zum Beispiel zur gewaltsamen Verbreitung des Islam, ist hingegen nicht gestattet (vgl. z. B. Surah 2:257 des Koran). Dass dabei eigentlich der Große Jihad des individuellen, spirituellen und gewaltlosen Strebens in der Hinwendung zu Gott danach Vorrang vor dem Kleinen Jihad des Schwertes hat, ist mit den jeweiligen Zusätzen „klein“ und „groß“ zu Jihad schon explizit angedeutet. Die Übersetzung von Jihad im Sinne des Kleinen Jihad mit „Heiliger Krieg“ ist demnach eine religiös motivierte Interpretation des *Kleinen Jihad*, der sich aus der Pflicht eines Muslim zur Selbstverteidigung ergibt. Es mag nur zur Debatte stehen, wann genau ein solcher Fall zur Verteidigungspflicht vorliegt.

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\* Das Sternchen (\*) hinter einem Fachwort verweist auf die Erklärung des betreffenden Begriffs in dem diesen Text beigefügten Glossar auf S. 192.

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## ABOUT THIS BOOK

The major part of this book has been designed as a textbook with materials of two Graduate courses on An Introduction to Islam and Its Theology and Islam and Christianity forming part of the Graduate course curriculum in the Focus Area of Comparative Religion and offered at International Faith Theological Seminary University College (IFTS) and at Nations University in the USA. Special emphasis is on qualifying students to communicate cross culturally and to conduct interreligious dialog in good manner from a Christian perspective. The student is not only introduced to the religious doctrine of Islam but also to its history, Islamic Law and to working with primary written sources of Islam (Qur'an and Hadith) for his own research purposes. In addition, he learns to address the central issues of differences in religious doctrine between Islam and Christianity. He is not only shown where such differences in doctrine are but will also be made aware why these differences exist. Some of the comparative contents in this major part of the book had originally are from the author's earlier Doctoral Dissertation in Theology (2004) on the same topic. ■ In addition, this book works also as a Reader; some other texts of the author have been added on the major topics dealt with in this book. These complementary texts are available in the German language only.



ISBN 978-3-937494-28-9 | [viademica.verlag.berlin](http://viademica.verlag.berlin) 2006