

Andreas Bsteh (Ed.)

*Christian Faith
in Dialogue with Islam*

Lectures – Questions – Interventions

Christian Faith in the Encounter with Islam
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Wilhelm Dupré
Notker Füglistner
Gisbert Greshake
Martin Karrer
Adel Th. Khoury
Heinrich Ott
Richard Schaeffler



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Editor: **Andreas Bsteh, SVD**

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Preface

It is the principal intention of these two volumes to help prepare the ground for a sincere and thoroughgoing dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Subsequent to the exposition and discussion of central aspects of Islamic faith in volume 1, Christian theologians and philosophers are now asked to explain central aspects of their Christian faith and discuss them in the presence of scholars of Islamic studies with all the other participants in the symposium. Basic commonalities and differences can be observed in the riches of both traditions. And it seems to be advisable neither to minimize nor to gloss over the differences by means of abstract formulas. Nor should we try to construct a new Islam or a new Christianity in an artificial attempt to reconcile the two traditions.

We should never tire of promoting the spirit of dialogue between Christian and Muslim believers, let personal friendship overcome all hostility and antagonism in former and present times, unmask and eliminate false differences through critical investigation and research, and deepen our belief in God.

Furthermore, we must develop, together with all peoples of good will, a new spirit of joint responsibility in the face of all the many problems that have to be solved on our way into the future – and, increasingly, they will be soluble only by a joint effort. This goal will be attainable if we search for a sound and stable dialogue ethos: an ethos that is built on the ethical values of the partners in dialogue and their readiness to set out for a unity in diversity and common goals and procedures based on the various arguments that can be derived from, while remaining faithful to, the different religious and cultural identities in which they are rooted.

Biblical reflections on the fullness of God and time, on the new creation, and on the vocation, mission and criteria of the prophets are presented in this second volume, together with dogmatic considerations on the ultimate finality of the Christ revelation and on the Trinity as the core of Christian faith. The reader will, moreover, find religious-philosophical approaches

to the relationship between dialogue and truth, the transcendence and immanence of the divine Word, as well as a paper that deals with the topic 'Islam as seen by Christian theologians'. All these papers are again followed by extensive discussion, which tries to evaluate the papers and, so to say, digest what was said in them.

Name and source indexes as well as indexes of terms and dicta from the Islamic tradition and a *general index of subjects for both volumes* help interrelate the various topics and motifs taken up in the different contexts.

The editor wishes to express once again sincere thanks to all who have co-operated in producing these two volumes on "Christian Faith in the Encounter with Islam", in particular to all speakers and participants in the symposia and to all who have contributed to the English edition.

Andreas Bsteh, SVD

St Gabriel, March 2007

The Prophets: Vocation – Mission – Criteria

Notker Füglistner

The three Abrahamic religions Judaism, Christendom and Islam, are also the three prophetic religions still existing today. The prophetic plays an important role in them, and they attribute their origin to a 'founding prophet': Moses, Jesus, or Muḥammad.¹ At the first Symposium on the encounter of Christianity with Islam, in the discussions subsequent to Ludwig Hagemann's lecture "Muḥammad – And the Claim that He Was the Last of the Prophets Sent by God"², there arose a three-fold question, which is generally relevant to the phenomenology of religion as well as to specifically Christian theology: a) to what extent is Muḥammad's claim to prophethood authentic?, b) can a Christian believer accept Muḥammad as a prophet – and even as "the Seal of the Prophets" (Qur'ān 33,40)³ – and the Qur'ān as a revelation?, c) what is the meaning of Muḥammad and the Qur'ān in the economy of salvation of the one and only God who is and works "above all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:6), who is common to Jews, Christians and Muslims? In order to approach at least a partial answer to this complex of questions (which, in my view, cannot be fully answered), we may consider the following ten aspects of the essential characteristics of the Biblical prophets (of which only the first and most important four will be elaborated in this lecture) as a basis and starting point for the subsequent discussion:

1. Prophecy as a phenomenon in the history of religions
 - 1.1 Definition of the prophet

¹ Zoroastrianism (Parsism) and Manichaeism, the (originally) monotheistic religions which originated in the region of present Iran and with whom Muḥammad very well might have come into contact, are also attributed to 'founding prophets' (Zarathushtra [Zoroaster] c. 630 BC and Mani 216–276/7 AD). They too have canonical scriptures whose author is their 'founding prophet', but they differ from the Abrahamic religions in their specifically dualistic worldview.

² The lecture is published together with the subsequent discussions in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Islam Questioning Christianity* (Christian Faith in the Encounter with Islam, vol. 1). Mödling, 2007, pp. 11–20 and 21–33; cf. L. Hagemann, *Propheten – Zeugen des Glaubens. Koranische und biblische Deutungen* (Islam und westliche Welt; 7). Graz etc., 1985.

³ In general we quote the Qur'ān from: Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān. Text, Translation and Commentary*. Beirut – Cairo, 1938. The relevant names and technical terms are, as a rule, rendered according to *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 11 vols. Leiden etc., 1960–2002 (= EF).

- 1.2 What does not belong to being a prophet
- 1.3 What characterizes a prophet
2. Prophetic self-understanding
 - 2.1 Positive; messenger – warner – bringer of joy – witness – prophet – servant of God – friend of God
 - 2.2 Not a soothsayer – not possessed – not a poet – not a sorcerer
3. Reception of the prophetic revelation
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 - 4.1 Doubtful Biblical criteria: miracles – prediction – success
 - 4.2 Functioning Biblical criteria: selflessness – perplexity – ‘*analogia fidei*’
 - 4.3 Additional Qur’ānic criteria: advance announcement of Muḥammad – originality of the Qur’ān – unsurpassability of the Qur’ān

In addition we should consider:

5. The prophetic message
 - 5.1 The one and only God
 - 5.2 Judgement and eschatology (individual – universal/cosmic)
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 - 9.3 The prophet “torn asunder” (Jer 15:10: “a man of strife”)
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 - 10.1 The prophet as a sign
 - 10.2 The prophet as a man who suffers and fails
 - 10.3 The prophet giving himself as a “ransom for many” (Is 53 – Mk 10:45; 14:24 par.)

We must keep in mind both Muḥammad and the Qur’an, and post-Biblical Judaism, the latter both for its own sake and because, in the light of history, Muḥammad only knew the Bible via Jewish and, to a minor degree, apparently Jewish-Christian traditions.⁴ From a religio-theological perspective, moving on from the double dialogue between Christians and Muslims and between Jews and Muslims, a ‘trialogue’ between Jews, Christians and Muslims, should develop, especially in view of the historical background to the situation of our present world.⁵

1. Prophecy as a phenomenon in the history of religions

The comparative history of religions shows that prophecy is a phenomenon which can be authenticated in pre- and post-Biblical periods and traditions. The prophet (prophetess) is a type of ‘*homo religiosus*’ to whom a very definite role is allocated within the structure of his society. Following Manfred Weippert, it may be defined as follows:

⁴ Cf. in this context J. D. Thyen, *Bibel und Koran. Eine Synopse gemeinsamer Überlieferungen* (Kölner Veröffentlichungen zur Religionsgeschichte; 19). Köln etc., 1989; H. Busse, *Die theologischen Beziehungen des Islams zu Judentum und Christentum. Grundlagen des Dialogs im Koran und die gegenwärtige Situation* (Grundzüge; 72). Darmstadt, 1988; J. Bouman, *Der Koran und die Juden. Die Geschichte einer Tragödie* (VVB-Forum; 53). Darmstadt, 1990; A. I. Katsch, *Judaism in Islam. Biblical and Talmudic Backgrounds of the Koran and Its Commentaries*. New York, 1980 (concerning Sūras 2 and 3); and, particularly related to our topic, W. M. Brinner, “Prophets and Prophecy in the Islamic and Jewish Traditions,” in: id. – St. D. Ricks (eds.), *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions II* (Brown Judaic Studies; 178). Atlanta, 1989, pp. 63–82.

⁵ Including Judaism will lead Christians to a twofold result: a) the main theological difficulties between Christians and Muslims and between Christians and Jews are largely the same; b) as to theologically classifying Islam as a world religion, Judaism suggests solutions which Christianity (and the New Testament) cannot provide.

"A prophet(ess) is a person [...] who,

1. in a cognitive experience, a vision, a voice, a dream, etc. receives the revelation of a deity and 2. conceives him/herself as being called by the deity to convey the revelation via language or meta-language to a third person, the actual addressee."⁸

1.1 On the basis of this religio-phenomenological definition of the prophetic, not everything that is denoted in the Bible as prophet, prophecy or prophesying (nb'/προφήτης κτλ.) is in fact prophetic in this sense.⁹

1.1.1 The prediction of the future is not specifically part of the prophetic, as the New Testament implies, partly following the Old Testament (cf. the deuteronomic concept of the prophet) and Judaism (cf. Qumran). And Muḥammad remarks that predictions are not part of his proclamation (Qur'ān 46,9).¹⁰

1.1.2 Nor is the prophet necessarily characterized by the ecstatic. The true prophet need not be an ecstatic, although in the Old Testament ecstasies, who resemble the Islamic dervishes, are called "prophets" or "sons of prophets" (i. e. members of Guilds of Prophets) even though they do not have to convey a message given to them by God. On the contrary: the so-called classical scriptural prophets, of whom, interestingly, Muḥammad does not seem to be aware at all,¹¹ are definitely sceptical about everything ecstatic, and in the community of Corinth Paul makes a clear distinction between, on the one hand, those who speak ecstatically in tongues and, on the other, the prophets who speak reasonably and are much more important to him (cf. 1 Cor 14:6–19). And Muḥammad does the same: he refuses to be considered as a mantic or 'possessed' in some other way.¹²

⁸ M. Weippert, "Aspekte israelitischer Prophetie im Lichte verwandter Erscheinungen des Alten Orients", in: G. Mauer – U. Magen (eds.), *Ad bene et fideliter seminandum. Festgabe für Karlheinz Deller zum 21. Februar 1987* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament; 220), Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1988, pp. 287–319 (here: pp. 289 f.).

⁹ Cf. M. Weippert, *op. cit.* (fn. 6) p. 307: "Die alttestamentliche Prophetie gibt es nicht. Es handelt sich weder um eine homogene noch um eine isomorphe Erscheinung. Sie wurde aus verschiedenen Quellen gespeist, sie hat Entwicklungen durchlaufen ..." | *The Old Testament prophecy does not exist. It is neither a homogeneous nor an isomorphous phenomenon. It drew from various sources and in its development passed through several stages ...*.

¹⁰ Occasional exceptions (perhaps Qur'ān 48,27) prove the rule. Muḥammad's proclamation of the Last Judgement, and the "Day of Resurrection" connected with it, cannot be classified as 'prophetic prediction' since they are part of generally valid religious truth.

¹¹ With the exception of Jonah – the Book of Jonah contains not collected words of prophets, but a single narration about a prophet – the Qur'ān mentions none of the three (or four) 'great' and the twelve 'small' prophets.

¹² Cf. what will be said below in chapter 2 about prophetic self-awareness and in chapter 3 about the reception of a revelation.

1.2 Positively, one must add:

1.2.1 When Muḥammad denotes as prophets figures who do not appear as prophets in the Bible, he does so rightly insofar as, according to him, they are people who preach because they are particularly called and inspired by God to do so. This also happens in the cases of Noah and Abraham, for example, in the Jewish Midrashim, by which Muḥammad is obviously influenced.

1.2.2 According to the above definition, Muḥammad, on the basis of his own self-understanding as it is expressed in the Qur'ān, is without doubt a prophet. From a sociological perspective, in Medina (i. e. in the second half of his prophetic activity of more than twenty years) his functions of course extended far beyond the role of a prophet. As an organizer he becomes a 'politician' and a 'statesman': at first the head of his 'community', then very soon arbitrator and legislator, first in the city state of Medina and then among the Arab tribes united by him, whose leader and commander he finally becomes. Of course, within that Muḥammad also remains a prophet insofar as all the proclamations contained in the Qur'ān are the word of Allāh, directly addressed to Muḥammad. In this respect Muḥammad possibly resembles the 'prophet' Moses who is very often mentioned in the Qur'ān¹³ and into whose portrayal some autobiographical features of Muḥammad have certainly been inserted. And Jesus too was, in his public ministry of two years at the most, on the one hand a true 'prophet',¹⁴ and on the other more than a prophet – but completely different from Muḥammad, although in the New Testament Jesus is expressly identified as a prophet, like Moses (Ac 3:22 f.; cf. 7:37), whom God wants to raise up from his own brothers (Dt 18:15.19).

2. Prophetic self-understanding

In the strict sense of the word, a prophet is anyone who receives charismatically (i. e. not by means of an already existing oral or written tradition), directly from God, a message which he has to communicate to the people around him (i. e. primarily to his contemporaries). This applies to Muḥammad whose self-understanding, as it is expressed in his 'titles' (self

¹³ Muḥammad is mentioned in about 40 Sūras.

¹⁴ In this context amongst others: F. Schneider, *Jesus, der Prophet* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis; 2), Freiburg etc., 1972, as well as H. Balz – G. Schneider (eds.), *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 3, Stuttgart, 1983, pp. 441–449 (lit.).

designations), is astonishingly identical with that of the 'classical' prophets in the Bible.

2.1 Positively, this emerges in the following terms:

2.1.1 Muḥammad is Allāh's 'messenger', his 'apostle' (*rasūl*). This is what he is called in the second half of the Islamic profession of faith: "[...] and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh". This is how he is addressed by God. "Probably the words [...] given to Muḥammad at the occasion of his first revelation were: 'You are the Messenger of God'.¹¹ The same also applies to the Biblical prophets: God 'sends' them or has 'sent' them (*šlh*) – starting with Moses (Ex 3:14 f.), then Isaiah (Is 6:8), Jeremiah (Jer 1:7) and Ezekiel (Ezek 2:3 f.) up to Jesus (for example Jn 17:3.8.18.21.23.25).¹²

2.1.2 Right from the start, Muḥammad knows himself to be called by God to be a 'warner' (*nadhīr*):¹³ "Arise and deliver thy warning!" (Qur'ān 74,2): like the prophets who precede him Muḥammad shares this vocation to warn his compatriots of God's judgement. It very much calls to mind Ezekiel to whom, on the occasion of his call, God says, "Mortal, I have made you as sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me [i. e. from my side] [...]" (Ezek 3:17–33; cf. 33:1–9).

2.1.3 But Muḥammad is not only a 'warner'; he is at the same time 'messenger of glad tidings' or 'evangelist' (*bashīr*) – these terms are coupled not only when used in connection with Muḥammad (e. g. Qur'ān 5,19) but also in principle with the other prophets (e. g. 2,213). For God utters threats as well as promises (*wa'id*, *wa'd*)¹⁴; as in Biblical prophecy, judgement as well as salvation are spoken of in threatening words and in oracles of salvation. The Qur'ānic term "bearer of glad tidings" also has its terminological parallel in the Bible; it corresponds to *hśr pi./εὐαγγελιζέσθαι* "the messenger of good news" (cf. Is 52:7; 61:1), which is also used to refer to the prophets.

¹¹ W. M. Watt – A. T. Welch, *Der Islam I* (Religionen der Menschheit; 25,1). Stuttgart etc., 1980, p. 56. Others place the appearance of the title 'messenger' in Muḥammad's second Meccan period.

¹² Of course in the Bible the noun 'messenger' (*šālīh/ἀποστολος*) is not used for the prophets or for Jesus. On the prophet as 'envoy': Is 44:26; Hag 1:13; Mal 3:1; 2 Chr 36:15.

¹³ In the Qur'ān Muḥammad is called "warner" more than 40 times; cf. W. M. Watt – A. T. Welch, *op. cit.* (fn. 13) p. 68.

¹⁴ Cf. M. Talbi, "Hören auf sein Wort. Der Koran in der Geschichte der islamischen Tradition", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Hören auf sein Wort. Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 7). Mödling, 1992, pp. 119–150 (here: p. 132).

2.1.4 As "[...] a Bearer of Glad Tidings, and a Warner" Muḥammad is the "witness" (*shahīd*: 33,45; cf. 48,8)¹⁷ sent by God. He has to bear witness to God's message, just as, in Deutero-Isaiah, Israel, as God's "servant", should be "witness" to the peoples (Is 43:10.12; 44:8; 55:4 f.).

2.1.5 Analogous with the Biblical prophets, whose awareness of being called and sent he shared, Muḥammad finally claimed the title of "prophet" (*nabī* = *nabī* in Hebrew).¹⁸ At first he sees himself as a prophet of his people (*an-nabī al-ummī*) – every people has (or had) its "prophets" and "messengers"¹⁹; then he takes his position within the succession of a long line of prophets, reaching from Noah (and Adam) up to Jesus; finally he considers himself to be the "Seal of the prophets": he not only confirms the message of his predecessors, but surpasses it and finally concludes it. The prophet of his people became the universal prophet of the peoples.

2.1.6 As prophet, Muḥammad is in a special way 'servant of God' (*abd* = *bd* in Hebrew) like the Biblical prophets quite generally, and Jesus in particular. Like them, he is seized by God and taken up in his service.

2.1.7 As in the Bible the prophet is the confidant of God,²⁰ so with Muḥammad too, being the 'servant' does not exclude, but include intimate closeness to God: "For my Protector is God, [...]" (7,196). Accord-

¹⁷ One has to differentiate between this kerygmatic bearing witness and the witness which, according to the Qur'ān, Muḥammad and the rest of the prophets will give at the Last Judgement against their individual peoples, insofar as they did not believe their message.

¹⁸ In the second Meccan period? But then cf. R. Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran, Geschichte und Verkündigung des arabischen Propheten* (Urban-Taschenbücher; 32). Stuttgart etc., 1991, p. 56: Muḥammad wusste "zu Beginn seines öffentlichen Auftretens noch nichts von Prophetie [...]. Mit den alttestamentlichen Propheten ist er erst spät und zudem äußerst mangelhaft bekannt geworden. Sie konnten ihm deshalb nicht schon bei seinem Berufungserlebnis als Leitbild dienen. Auch muss es eine gute Weile gedauert haben, bis er sich zu der Gewissheit durchgerungen hat, ein 'Gesandter' Gottes zu sein. Jedenfalls lag der Gedanke, dass irgendein Mensch mit einer göttlichen Botschaft an sein Volk betraut sein könnte, seinen arabischen Zeitgenossen fern [...]. [At the beginning of his public appearance Muḥammad did not yet know anything about prophecy [...]. The prophets of the Old Testament became known to him rather late and very inadequately. Therefore they could not serve as his ideals in the first experience of his being called. It must also have taken quite a while until he arrived at the persuasion to be a 'messenger' of God. Anyway, the idea that a human being could be entrusted with a divine message for his people was far from his Arab contemporaries].

¹⁹ To all appearances, in the Qur'ān the two terms are still mostly used synonymously; cf. W. M. Brinner, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) p. 66.

²⁰ Cf. among others Jer 23:22 and Am 3:7; the prophet participates in YHWH's council and his secrets are revealed to him, as well as Wis 7:27: wisdom "makes them friends of God, and prophets".

ingly, in Islam Muḥammad is called “friend of God” (*ḥabīb allāh*)²¹, as Abraham is the “friend of God” (Is 41:8; Jas 2:23), whom God “[...] did take [...] for a friend” (4,125).

2.2 This positive awareness of what a prophet is, if we look at it now from a negative point of view, is confirmed by what Muḥammad explicitly is not and by no means wants to be.²² Muḥammad’s closeness to the ‘classical’ prophets is shown in that he, like them, rejected anything mantic, magic or irrational-ecstatic.

2.2.1 To the Meccans, Muḥammad vehemently denies that he is what he was initially afraid of becoming: a *kāhin*, one of the soothsayers, professionally active in the old Arab tribes, who used mantic techniques to reveal secrets and tell the future. What Muḥammad did take from them is only their way of speaking: the rhymed prose which characterizes the whole Qur’ān and – at least in the first period of his preaching – the often elliptically reduced short sentences, delivered with passionate emotion.

2.2.2 Nor is Muḥammad ‘possessed’, mad or bewitched. He is not ‘meshugga’, as Hosea had been accused of being (Hos 9:7). He does not behave like an ecstatic but speaks clearly and rationally.

2.2.3 Muḥammad also denies being a ‘poet’. Not only were his Sūras directly reported and not invented, but he did not want to be a poet either because at that time poets were considered to be inspired by a ‘spirit’ (a *djinn*, a ‘genie’) and possessed.²³

2.2.4 Finally, Muḥammad categorically denies being a ‘sorcerer’: he considers himself unable to work ‘miracles’ or ‘signs’, as it were, at the bidding of his audience, as magicians or shamans do. According to his own words, Muḥammad is an ‘ordinary’ human being, called by God to be nothing but his ‘prophet’ and ‘messenger’.

²¹ In this context: A. Schimmel, *Und Muhammad ist Sein Prophet. Die Verehrung des Propheten in der islamischen Frömmigkeit* (Diederichs Gelbe Reihe; 32: Islam). München, 1989, p. 86 (engl. ed.: A. Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger*. Chapel Hill [University of North Carolina Press], 1985).

²² Cf. in this context the explanations and evidences in A. Th. Khoury, *Wer war Muḥammad? Lebensgeschichte und prophetischer Anspruch* (Herder Taschenbuch; 1719). Freiburg etc., 1990, p. 27; R. Paret, *op. cit.* (fn. 18) pp. 24 f. and pp. 56 f.; W. M. Watt – A. T. Welch, *op. cit.* (fn. 13) p. 87; W. M. Brinner, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) pp. 69 f.; L. Hagemann, *Propheten, op. cit.* (fn. 2) p. 165.

²³ In Greece the poets were called ‘prophets’, since they spoke in the name of a Muse, who had taken possession of them.

3. The prophet’s reception of the revelation

The prophet conveys a message given to him personally by God. This presupposes that, according to our definition, he “partakes in the revelation of a deity in a cognitive experience”. How does this happen?

3.1 Again, to look at it first negatively: it is not self-induced, and that in two senses:

3.1.1 It is not a case of induced divination, insofar as the prophet does not use technical means to receive his message. For instance, he does not cast lots and is not concerned with “interpreting signs, prodigies, omens, either natural ones like observing the stars, the flight of birds or accidental human utterances, or those brought about artificially like viscera and oil divination, etc.”²⁴ None of this occurs either with the Biblical prophets or with Muḥammad.

3.1.2 Above all, true prophecy is not induced because the revelation is not induced or artificially brought about by the prophet. He does not use drugs, whirling or ascetic practices (e. g. fasting) to reach a state of trance in order to attain an experience of revelation by means of his own initiative and energy, so to speak.²⁵ Instead, the revelation seizes him without warning, without his desire and often even against his will. This is also the case with Muḥammad.²⁶ He says of himself: “Your Companion is neither astray nor being misled. Nor does he say (ought) of (his own) Desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him” (Qur’ān 53,2–4).

3.2 Accordingly, the revelation is not induced but comes about intuitively – spontaneously and inadvertently. This is not a question of intuition which, like the intuition of a poet or scientist, for example, emerges from the subconscious of the prophet and suddenly enters his consciousness. It is the prophet’s firm conviction that he is overcome by the revelation as by an alien experience from outside himself. In it he experiences God who reveals himself to him ‘face to face’. His self-awareness is by no means extinguished; on the contrary, it is even intensified and sharpened. No ecstatic

²⁴ M. Weippert, *op. cit.* (fn. 6) p. 290.

²⁵ An exception is found in 2 Kgs 3:15 f.: “the power of YHWH” came on Elisha, the (non-classical) prophet, as he played the lyre.

²⁶ The fact that when he was called he was alone on Mount Ḥirā’, where, according to Islamic tradition, he had for years withdrawn for one month every year to offer prayers that cannot be defined more closely (*tahannuth*), must not be understood to mean that he induced a revelation; cf. in this context W. M. Watt – A. T. Welch, *op. cit.* (fn. 13) p. 56.

de-personalization and no mystical fusion with the divine takes place, but rather a personalization as a result of an intensely experienced interactive I-You relationship. There is no doubt that this was also the case with Muḥammad, whose self-awareness as a prophet was very distinct. But how does this intuitive reception of the revelation by the prophet actually happen? It is quite impossible to reconstruct a psychology of prophetic knowledge on the basis of the Biblical or Qur'ānic texts. It is especially futile to try to find out what is 'outward' and what is 'inward' in the prophetic experience, what happens objectively and what is 'merely' experienced subjectively. Usually one distinguishes between voices and visions, which is risky, since in the Semitic languages 'hearing' and especially 'seeing' can simply mean 'perceiving', 'realizing', 'experiencing'.

3.2.1 We are dealing with voices insofar as what the Biblical prophet experiences is above all a verbal event, as the well-known formula shows: "Now the word of the LORD came to me saying [...]" (e. g. Jer 1:2.4). The Biblical prophet is in the first place a man of the word (cf. Jer 18:18), which he receives again and again from God to pass on as he is commanded to the individual people to whom he is sent. God speaks to him (Hos 12:11), and this spoken word of God makes him a prophet (Am 3:8) and means that the word of God is in his mouth (cf. Ezek 2:8 ff.) so that he can say: "Thus says the Lord GOD [...]" And the prophet distinguishes clearly between the word of God and his own word – in contrast to the Qur'ān where, according to Islamic belief, the whole text is equally Allāh's word: God taught Muḥammad the Qur'ān (85,3). This happened by God revealing himself voluntarily to the prophet. For, "It is not fitting for a man that God should speak to him except [1] by inspiration [*wahy*], or [2] from behind a veil [i. e. in what is an actual audition one hears the voice of God without seeing him], or [3] by the sending of a Messenger [i. e. an angel] to reveal [to him], with God's permission, what God wills [...]" (Qur'ān 42,51)²⁷.

²⁷ Cf. in this context W. M. Watt – A. T. Welch, *op. cit.* (fn. 13) pp. 72 f., where reference is made to a tradition according to which Muḥammad is reported to have said, "Sometimes it (*wahy*) comes to me like the resonance of a bell, and this is what is worst for me; then it leaves me again and thereby (by the experience?) I have understood what He (God) said". According to Watt, the simple inspiration or revelation (i. e. the first of the three modes of prophetic knowledge mentioned in the Qur'ān) happens purely by intuition, so that "the recipient neither has a vision nor hears voices, yet nevertheless becomes conscious of the message" (p. 73).

3.2.2 A voice may be accompanied or even replaced by a vision. To return to Muḥammad: "His awareness of being sent was fortified by visionary experiences, but did not depend on them"²⁸. The Biblical prophet 'beholds' the 'word' (*dābār*) which, for the Hebrew, is not merely an abstract means of gaining knowledge, but also a concrete matter of fact or an event. The prophet (whether the early figures of seers or the classical type of prophets) is essentially a 'seer' (*rō'āh*) and 'beholder' (*hōzāh*). He sees things and connections that other people do not see: he sees visions (e. g. Am 7:1–9; 8:1–3; 9:1–4; Ezek 8–11; 40–48; Zech 1–6; cf. also Lk 10:18; Rev 1:1 f.; 4:1, etc.).²⁹ Apart from these actual visions, the prophet 'sees' something else: he perceives what is behind things. Commonplace things and events, whether a simple basket of summer fruit (Am 8:1 f.), a branch of an almond tree (Jer 1:11), the potter working at his wheel (Jer 18:1–12) or the painful experiences in his own married life (Hos 1 and 3) also become transparent and thus symbolic to him. In the prophetic vision anything may become a revelation, a sign and a reference to the action and being of God. This perspective is not found in the Qur'ān.

3.3 The first revelation the prophet experiences, which, as a vocational experience, establishes a lasting, unique, personal, immediately divine-human relationship, is decisive for him. Through it the prophet knows him-

²⁸ R. Paret, *op. cit.* (fn. 18) p. 51, states, "Wenn man alles in allem nimmt, gewinnt man den Eindruck, dass der Prophet wohl einige visionäre Erlebnisse gehabt hat, dass seine Prophetie aber nicht eigentlich von ihnen getragen worden ist. In seiner Verkündigung macht er auffällig wenig davon Gebrauch. Das lässt sich am einfachsten damit erklären, dass er ihnen keine grundlegende Bedeutung beigemessen hat." [All in all, one has the impression that the Prophet did have some visionary experiences, but they did not actually convey his prophecy. In his proclamation he makes strikingly little use of them. The easiest way to explain this is to assume that he attributed no fundamental importance to them.] Cf. R. Paret, *Der Koran. Kommentar und Konkordanz*. Stuttgart etc., 1989, p. 460: "Der Koran besteht im großen und ganzen aus Proben eines höheren Wissens, die Mohammed im Wortlaut als Offenbarungen empfangen zu haben glaubte, und die er in derselben Form an seine Landsleute und Glaubensgenossen weiterzugeben sich berufen fühlte. Man kann sie als prophetische Auditionen bezeichnen. Nur ganz vereinzelt äußert sich der Prophet über Visionen, d. h. über Erlebnisse, bei denen er etwas zu sehen bekam. Am ausführlichsten geschieht dies in den Versen 1–18 der vorliegenden Sure 53. Weitere Stellen: 81,23 f.; 17,1; (17,60); (48,27); (8,43)". [On the whole, the Qur'ān consists of items of a higher knowledge which Muḥammad is believed to have received *verbatim* and which he felt called to hand on to his compatriots and fellow believers. One may call them prophetic voices. But the Prophet speaks only rarely about visions, i. e. experiences during which he saw something. This is done in great detail in verses 1–18 of Sūra 53, which is referred to here. Further passages are: 81,23 f.; 17,1; (17,60); (48,27); (8,43).]

²⁹ In the Islamic tradition, Muḥammad's *ru'yā* – the "beholding" – is usually interpreted as dream experience. On the dream as a means of prophetic revelation cf. Nm 12:6–8 and Jl 3:1 f., on the one hand, and Jer 23:25–32, on the other.

self chosen and consecrated by God (Jer 1:5). The hand of the LORD is upon him (1 Kgs 18:46), has touched him (Jer 1:9) and is strong upon him (Is 8:11; Ezek 3:14). Thus he feels "taken" (Am 7:15), "overpowered" and "enticed" by God (Jer 20:7). This initial experience, unexpectedly breaking into the life the prophet has lived so far, may be described in a narration of vocation (supposedly in most cases composed retrospectively) which supports its legitimation (cf. Is 6; Jer 1; Ezek 1–3; cf. Ex 3 f.).

Muhammad's first revelation, which is not in doubt and which also seems to have included a visionary element (cf. Qur'ān 53,5–10.13–18), is hard to reconstruct from the fragmentary and enigmatic texts of the Qur'ān.⁴⁰ The narrations handed down in the *Sīra* (the biography of the Prophet) in which Muhammad's vocation through Gabriel is mentioned, including the former's subsequent reaction to it,⁴¹ are remarkable – last but not least – for their Biblical parallels.

4. The criteria for prophetic authenticity

In the Old Testament we already find that there are false prophets, people who are of the opinion (which may be subjectively honest) or who claim and pretend (without a subjective awareness of a vocation) to be prophets, without in fact having received from God that specific vocation or capability. The New Testament also mentions such "false prophets" (cf. amongst others Mt 7:15; 24:11 par.; 1 Jn 4:1). From this the important question arises, which also applies to Muhammad, of the criteria by means of which

⁴⁰ Cf. in this context W. M. Watt – A. T. Welch, *op. cit.* (fn. 13) pp. 53–60. Cf. R. Paret, *op. cit.* (fn. 18) p. 48 refers to 2, 185; 97,1; 44,3, where a "blessed night", "the Night of Power" in Ramaḍān (on 27 Ramaḍān according to the tradition) is mentioned in which the "Book", i. e. the Qur'ān, was "sent down" and he remarks in this respect, "daß die 'Herabsendung' des Korans sich der Sache nach nicht auf die koranische Offenbarung insgesamt, sondern auf den Beginn der Offenbarungen, d. h. auf das einmalige Berufungserlebnis bezieht. Das erste Offenbarungserlebnis wäre demnach für den Propheten nachträglich zum Symbol der ganzen Offenbarung geworden, so daß er sagen konnte, in jener gesegneten Nacht sei der Koran überhaupt, und nicht nur ein Stück daraus, auf ihn herabgesandt worden". [...] the 'sending down' of the Qur'ān does not in fact refer to the whole Qur'ānic revelation, but to the beginning of the revelations, i. e. to the once-and-for-all revelation experience. Accordingly, the first revelation experience would, for the Prophet, later become the symbol of the whole revelation, so that he could say that in that blessed night the Qur'ān altogether, and not only a passage from it, was sent down to him). If this is so we encounter here a remarkable analogy to the Biblical vocational narratives.

⁴¹ In W. M. Watt – A. T. Welch, *op. cit.* (fn. 13) pp. 53 f. and W. M. Brinner, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) pp. 69 f.

true and false prophets can be distinguished from each other. The first and foremost criterion of prophethood is the prophet's personal awareness of his mission as explained above, together with an irresistible urge to speak in the name of God (cf. Jer 20:9; Am 3:8). This criterion is necessarily subjective. But even the New Testament, which places the charisma of "the discernment of spirits" (1 Cor 12:10) alongside the charisma of prophecy, is of no further help here. For, ultimately only someone who himself has the spirit, can assess what really does and does not come from God (cf. 1 Cor 2:11), which again is an explicitly subjective criterion. Nevertheless both the Bible and the Qur'ān try to offer objective and thus measurable criteria for a prophet's authenticity.⁴²

4.1 First there are three criteria which, as the Bible already acknowledges, are rather precarious and fragile.

4.1.1 *Authenticating miracles.* The prophets Moses, Elijah and Jesus, as is also emphasized by the Qur'ān, worked miracles and signs, in order to make their mission credible. This applies above all to Moses.⁴³ However, the Old and New Testaments refer to the fact that false prophets too can announce and work miracles (Dt 13:2 f. as well as, for example, Mt 24:24 and Rev 13:13), and Paul expressly separates the charisma of prophecy from that of working miracles (1 Cor 12:10,29). Muhammad, who admits in public that he does not work miracles (17,90–93), also explicitly rejects the logical necessity and persuasiveness of the authenticating miracles he is asked in vain to work.⁴⁴

4.1.2 *Fulfilment of predictions.* The Old Testament does indeed acknowledge this criterion (Dt 18:22; cf. Jer 28:9.15 ff.). It led to prophecies of disaster being preserved because they proved right, and to their finally being included in the canon. But what about the salvation prophecy of a Deutero-Isaiah that remains as unfulfilled as ever? What about the universal kingdom of God, announced as imminent by Jesus, or the parousia of Christ? Apart from the fact that true prophets call upon people to make

⁴² On the topic 'true and false prophets in the Bible': F. L. Hossfeld – I. Meyer, *Prophet gegen Prophet. Eine Analyse der alttestamentlichen Texte zum Thema: Wahre und falsche Propheten* (Biblische Beiträge; 9). Fribourg, 1973; G. Münderlein, *Kriterien wahrer und falscher Prophetie. Entstehung und Bedeutung im Alten Testament* (Europäische Hochschulschriften. Series 23, Theology; 33). Bern etc., 1979.

⁴³ On the authenticating miracles of Moses and Jesus: I. Hagemann, *Propheten*, *op. cit.* (fn. 2) pp. 69 f. and pp. 102–105.

⁴⁴ Further details in I. Hagemann, *Propheten*, *op. cit.* (fn. 2) p. 166 and A. Th. Khoury, *op. cit.* (fn. 22) pp. 32 ff.

up their minds and decide here and now. As already stated (1.1.1), prediction does not belong to the core of what is prophetic and accordingly was rarely part of Muḥammad's proclamation, except that he was firmly convinced of the success of his religion.

4.1.3 *Success*. "Nothing is more persuasive than success" (Leopold von Ranke). Muḥammad did in fact have success. Beginning with the Hidjra (622) and up to his death (632), he steered a triumphant, irresistible course to success, apart from insignificant setbacks which he could dismiss as 'trials'. He himself would live to see how his Islam united the whole of Arabia and was about to gain a footing in the Persian and Byzantine dominions. And only a few decades later, Islam was a world religion. Does not the word of Jesus apply here: "You will know them by their fruits" (Mt 7:16.20), which of course he said referring above all to the false prophets? But the fate of the prophets up to and including Jesus, in fact shows that "success is not one of the (ninety nine) names of God" (Ernst Bloch).

4.2 This leads to a second, less problematical series of three Biblical criteria for authenticity.

4.2.1 *Selflessness*. There is first an ethical criterion: one whose life does not correspond to God's demands has not been sent by him (cf. Jer 23:14 f.; 29:23 the false prophets' preaching and way of life). According to Christian standards, a true prophet is one who himself lives what he preaches and claims (Did [Didache] 11:10), who has "the Lord's way of life" (Did 11:8). An essential part of this is unselfishness and selflessness. In contrast to the false prophets, the true prophet is not profit-oriented and so cannot be bribed (Mi 3:5.11; cf. Ezek 13:19 and Did 11:9.12). He is therefore no flatterer and no opportunist, complying with the wishes of the powerful and the rich, and pleasing them by constantly promising salvation where there is no salvation (e. g. Jer 23:17). Rather, he is ready to become selflessly committed to his God and his people (above all the poor, the deprived and the oppressed, with whom he takes sides) (cf. Ezek 13:5). And Muḥammad? In Mecca (i. e. in the first half of his prophetic ministry) he undoubtedly, to his own disadvantage, stood up against the powerful merchant-princes in support of those who were economically weaker. However, what about Medina? Here doubts could arise. Did he really never succumb here to the temptation of using the word of God to advance matters concerning his family and his property as well as his political plans and his (and Medina's) aggrandizement? This leads to a further criterion:

4.2.2 *Perplexity*. The prophet does not have God and his word at his disposal; God has the prophet at his disposal and reveals himself to him when and where and how he wills. While the 'professional prophet' at any time and for everything and everybody always has a ready answer, it is not unusual that the 'prophet by vocation' remains silent, because he cannot produce the word of God at his own behest, but is often, as it were, let down by his God, left without any help or counsel, and may have to wait for days, weeks, perhaps even for years for the hour of revelation (cf. Jer 28:11-17; 42:2 ff.7; 15:18).

To all appearances this does not apply to Muḥammad. Whereas "at first the revelations began unexpectedly, even explosively, later on they became rather a habit, so that, before all important decisions, the Prophet could practically reckon that a divine inspiration would be granted to him. This development also implied a danger. A revelation could, so to speak, be wished for, in such a way that the final result could be prejudged by some kind of factual decision taken in advance, which had already been taken in Muḥammad's consciousness or subconsciousness."⁵⁵

4.2.3 *'Analogia fidei'*. "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith [. . .]" (Rm 12:6). Setting aside the individuality and uniqueness of each of the prophets, which is conditioned by time and character, there is a continuity of message, and in Deuteronomy (cf. Dt 18:9-22 and the Deuteronomical historical work) as well as in Judaism generally, every prophet has his position within the Mosaic succession and so is in the service of the one Torah. Thus the prophecy of the true prophet is in agreement with that of his legitimate predecessors (cf. Jer 28:8 f.). To be credible, prophecy in the New Testament must also correspond to the fundamental assertions of Christian faith (Rm 12:6; cf. 1 Jn 4:1 ff. and 1 Cor 12:3 and Did 11:3). It is well known how great an importance Muḥammad attached to this continuity, which he considers to affirm the legitimacy and authenticity of his message.⁵⁶ His proclamation (i. e. the Qur'an) affirms and

⁵⁵ R. Paret, *op. cit.* (fn. 18) p. 66. However, Muḥammad is warned by Allāh: "Move not thy tongue concerning the (Qur'an) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it: but when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated): nay more, it is for us to explain it (and make it clear)." (75:16-19). Cf. also 28,86 as well as 10,16; 69,44 ff. and in this context W. Zimmerli, "Der Prophet im Alten Testament und im Islam" (1943), in: id., *Studien zur alttestamentlichen Theologie und Prophetie. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, vol. 2 (Theologische Bücherei; 51). München, 1974, pp. 284-310 (here: p. 295). On the so-called *fatra* (interruption of the revelation) in 93,3 cf. R. Paret, *op. cit.* (fn. 18) p. 58, as well as W. M. Watt - A. T. Welch, *op. cit.* (fn. 13) p. 59.

⁵⁶ Cf. among others L. Hagemann, *op. cit.* (fn. 2) pp. 26 f. and 168 f.

completes what all prophets before him – above all Abraham, Moses and Jesus – essentially proclaimed by command of one and the same God: Islam as the one and universal religion. Is this true? Seen in a historico-critical perspective, certainly not. The Hebrew prophets did indeed all plead for Jahvism, but not for absolute monotheism. Nor did they know and preach an eschatology which involved the hereafter (paradise and hell) or, connected with it, individual resurrection including a judgement passed on each individual. And as for the New Testament (which Muhammad hardly seems to have known), it has to be admitted purely and simply that, concerning Christology (which implies the Trinity) and soteriology, there is no agreement – unless Christianity could be reduced to the New Testament statement: “[...] whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Heb 11:6).

4.3 Finally, three further criteria based on the Qur’an should be mentioned at least briefly.

4.3.1 Muhammad sees himself in the legitimate line of prophetic succession insofar as he is the “apostle” (61,6), requested by Abraham (2,129), predicted “in the Law and the Gospel” (7,157) and announced by Jesus as his successor.³⁷ Muhammad thus locates himself in the ‘promise – fulfilment’ pattern of argument which the Christians use with reference to Jesus.

4.3.2 Although on the one hand Muhammad refers to the earlier prophets and their ‘Scripture’ in order to confirm his message, on the other hand, he strangely puts the greatest emphasis on the absolute originality of his Qur’an. He thus rejects the judgement of his compatriots that he is a plagiarist who only copies and repeats what has already been said before him and elsewhere (by the Jews and the Christians) and what already exists in writing.³⁸ What Muhammad absolutely does not want is that Jeremiah’s reproaches about the lying prophets of his time – that they “steal from one another” YHWH’s “words” (Jer 23:30) – should be applied to him.

³⁷ Cf. A. Th. Khoury, *op. cit.* (fn. 22) pp. 71 f., as well as on “Ahmad” W. M. Watt – A. T. Welch, *op. cit.* (fn. 13) p. 119, and J. van Ess, “Muhammad und der Koran: Prophetie und Offenbarung. Islamische Perspektiven”, in H. Küng et al., *Christentum und Weltreligionen. Hinführung zum Dialog mit Islam, Hinduismus und Buddhismus*. München, 1984, pp. 31–48; see also p. 160.

³⁸ Cf. L. Hagemann, *Propheten*, *op. cit.* (fn. 2) p. 168, as well as R. Paret, *op. cit.* (fn. 18) pp. 63 ff.: “Die Aneignung fremder Stoffe als psychologisches Problem” (!) [The appropriation of alien material as a psychological problem]. – In order to affirm Muhammad’s originality, the Islamic tradition interpreted the Qur’anic *nabī ummī* to mean not prophet of the people, but illiterate prophet, who could neither read nor write.

4.3.3 Thus, for Muhammad the Qur’an becomes the ultimate criterion of truth and authenticity because of the uniqueness and unsurpassability of its language as well as of its contents (cf. for example 17,88); it alone, and nothing else, is the miracle claimed by Muhammad.³⁹ On whether the linguistic quality of the Qur’an is indisputable, it is for the Arabists to give their opinion. As for the contents – there is a wide field of controversy for theologians to discuss.

³⁹ Cf. L. Hagemann, *Propheten*, *op. cit.* (fn. 2) pp. 167 f.; A. Th. Khoury, *op. cit.* (fn. 22) pp. 29 and 34; J. van Ess, *op. cit.* (fn. 37) pp. 45–47. On this basis the tradition inferred the “inimitability of the Qur’an”.

Questions and Interventions

Muhammad –
a prophet for
Christians?

LEUZE In the encounter with Islam, Christian faith will always face the question of Muhammad's claim to prophethood. Can the Christian believer acknowledge Muhammad as a prophet? And if this is not possible, how should he be regarded? Following on from the lecture, there is also the question of the criteria for the authenticity of his prophetic mission from a Christian perspective.

prophecy and
the reception of
revelation

KHOURY Is it possible in the theology of the New and Old Testaments to distinguish between prophecy in the sense of a prophetic mission on the one hand, and the receiving of a revelation on the other? Would it be possible to call somebody a prophet without it necessarily being connected with the reception of a revelation?

FÜGLISTER When Christian theologians speak of revelation, of course they do so having in mind revealed fundamental religious truth: what God reveals about himself, and what Jesus says about himself or about God. From the Christian point of view one speaks in this context above all about the revelation of the triune God, his selfcommunication and the belief that Jesus is Son of God and Kyrios.

On the other hand, revelation according to the understanding of the phenomenology of religion, in the sense of Manfred Weippert's definition quoted in the lecture, would be much wider and refer quite generally to 'what one is told', independent of whether it is a matter of a great and central religious truth or something marginal and incidental.

By the way, the definition used in the lecture stems from an article by the Old Testament exegete Manfred Weippert, in which he deals with prophecies in the Ancient East which are parallel with the Old Testament. So the definition does not emerge on the basis only of the Old Testament prophets, but generally of the phenomenon of what is prophetic in the Ancient East, that is in the period from the 18th century BC to the New-Babylonian period in the 6th century BC. It is generally accepted in the history and phenomenology of religion and seems an appropriate expression of what is essential: a cognitive experience which comes from the deity or, as Weippert says, from deities. Here revelation is defined in a wide sense, quite generally in the sense of a communication, which may even be of a very occasional, simple kind, as for instance the communication that this or

that should be done, or that something has been neglected in the cultic practice.

why is there al-
ways a need for
new prophets?

SCHAEFFLER There is no doubt that the figure of Muhammad comes under the general definition of a prophet in the phenomenology of religion as it was presented in the lecture – which therefore would not irritate Muslims. Subsequently criteria were referred to, which partly stem from the Christian tradition and so do not apply to Muhammad.

But a third element, something in between, seems to be necessary and this is exactly what makes Muhammad's prophetic claim provocative: why are prophets necessary at all, thinking here of Old Testament prophecy as well as Muhammad (whereas for the Christians this does not seem to be so essential)?

(1) First, because the world is full of idolatry, although God has spoken in many and various ways in every generation and to all peoples. The fact that most people have refused to listen to the voice of God is to be found in the Rabbinical writings as well as in the Qur'an.

(2) Yet, beyond this the prophet is still necessary because even in the community of those to whom the prophets – like Moses, the Old Testament prophets, Jesus – formerly spoke, this tradition has been falsified. Indeed, even the Mosaic tradition was used as a pretext for idolatry, as for instance in the case of the golden calf, which is in fact not a false god, but an attempt to portray and venerate the God who led Israel out of Egypt. Thus new prophecy is necessary, because "at the beginning it was different" and then something crept in that misguided people. The provocation lies in Muhammad's applying this pattern to Jews and Christians: the Torah, which had existed from the beginning, and which had been announced by Abraham, Moses and Jesus, was falsified in the community of Moses in Judaism, and in the community of Jesus in Christianity; and according to Muhammad it was used in Christianity to blur monotheism.

The Prophet is therefore necessary, since the world is full of idolaters and even the tradition of the prophets may be used as a pretext for new idolatry. So the Prophet understandably proclaims that through his message such a relapse into idolatry will be prevented for ever. This is why he is the last prophet.

Paul as *rasūl*

ZIRKER One may indeed distinguish correctly between the phenomenon of 'prophet' and the question of the validity of his claim. This is why the lecture referred to

much common ground between the figure of the prophet in the Old Testament and Muḥammad as a proclaimer who warns, promises, admonishes, etc. However, it would be very stimulating for the encounter between Islam and Christianity (and beyond that with Judaism too) to include in the dialogue as examples of the *rasūl* not only the figure of Jesus, but also that of Paul, especially since Paul is always called *rasūl* in the Arabic translations of the New Testament. As is well known, the comparison between Muḥammad and Jesus as prophets has already often been discussed. But what about Paul's *rasūl*-claim, his claim to be ἀπόστολος? This claim is particularly vehemently rejected by Muslims (and similarly also by Jews) on the basis that he, Paul is after all the main despoiler of the Jesus message. However that may be, it does not seem unimportant to put Paul forward as *rasūl* in the Jewish-Christian-Muslim triologue, in order to find out how much common ground can be discovered on the evidence of Paul's cognitive, emotional and perhaps also ecstatic awareness of his vocation.

on distinguishing between *rasūl* and *nabī*

By the way, it is interesting that the distinction between *nabī* (he who reminds of the word of God) and *rasūl* (he who brings the new Book) cannot be traced back to the Qur'ān, but is only to be found later in Islamic theology. Now the *rasūl*, who brings the new Book, does not found a new religion, but only reminds people of the original faith. In this respect Muḥammad places himself not only in the line of the Biblical prophets, but in that of the prophets of all peoples, and of mankind as a whole. To speak of the 'Abrahamic religions' therefore seems, not simply wrong, but very misleading in this context. Just as the prophets of all peoples announced the word of God, Muḥammad is again the proclaimer of the same word; here there is no 'Biblical line', no history of prophets in the sense of a connection between the individual prophets within history.

VANONI Paul begins his Letter to the Romans with an argumentation dealing specifically with idolatry. In this prophetic criticism of people who "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being" (Rm 1:23), there is a parallel with the figure of the *rasūl*.

according to the Qur'ān, is no idolatry possible any longer?

FÜGLISTER This can only be underlined. However, according to the Islamic understanding, we have only known since Muḥammad that we should no longer practise idolatry. Now everybody definitely knows this, and so no further prophet is needed.

SCHAEFFLER Whether a relapse into idolatry is in fact no longer possible

because the Qur'ān so clearly expresses the will of God and can no longer be used as a pretext for idolatry is a different question. However, this is what the claim suggests. The result would be that there is no need of a further revelation later in history, but only of a further interpretation of the Qur'ān – unlike Christianity which, in Muḥammad's view, could not prevent Christians from giving up monotheism again by professing the deity of Jesus.

NEUMANN Is it not problematic to apply the term *rasūl* to Paul, if we take into consideration that in Qur'ānic usage the term is in fact only used for Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad, who each brought a new book? And, concerning the concept of prophet, can one argue generally from the perspective of religion phenomenology that, since Muḥammad saw himself in the line of the Biblical prophets, we too are justified in so assessing him in the context in which he is placed?

Paul and Christian-Muslim dialogue

FÜGLISTER There is no doubt that Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ, ἀπόστολος (cf. 1 Cor 1:1, etc.), and thus in fact *rasūl*. For a Muslim, however, it seems to be difficult to approach Paul, because we find in his writing the whole doctrine of justification and reconciliation, of which nothing is to be found in the Qur'ān. Muḥammad probably did not know Paul at all. Certainly, what applies to the apostle also applies to the *rasūl*: that nobody can become a prophet unless he is sent by God. But it is interesting to note that the noun *ṣalīh*, messenger, although it occurs in the Hebrew of a later period, does not appear in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. On the other hand, in connection with the prophet the *mal'ak* (messenger, angel, envoy) also occurs in the Old Testament, though only in post-exilic texts. So we should expect discussion among Islamicists concerning the actual or alleged difference between apostle, *rasūl* and prophet, *nabī*.



what is it that makes someone a prophet?

DUPRÉ If we accept that the prophet is somebody who feels called to hand on a revelation which he receives in the context of a cognitive experience, the question arises of the prophet's special circumstances: to what extent is it a matter of psychological factors which make him capable of receiving a revelation, or is it a question of a personality with a very specific relation to the tradition who understands his own existence on the basis of the specificity of this relation? If we think of Zarathushtra who

is known as the founder of a prophetic religion, we have to ask ourselves (in accepting how little we know about him) whether he discovered the original truth within his own tradition as it existed, so to speak, and then proclaimed it with all the consequent ramifications.

the prophet and his community From the point of view of a form critical approach to the question of the emergence of a religion and then to the understanding of what is a prophet, we may ask how far such reflections can be applied to the situation of the Qur'ān. There is no doubt that referring to Paul could also be of decisive importance because the prophets are, in a certain respect, made by their communities. A prophet is after all not a prophet simply because he himself claims to be one. A prophet is rather somebody who is made a prophet in the mind of the community.

the prophets – 'revolutionary reactionaries' **VANONI** If, in defining a prophet, we are to go beyond the Christian revelation, it seems quite possible to start out with the definition of Manfred Weippert, as Notker Füglistler did in his presentation. In his essay "Prophet gegen Institution im alten Israel? Warnung vor vermeintlichen Gegensätzen", Walter Groß critically discusses much that has recently, in the years after Vatican II, been linked with the concept of prophecy: when people (within or outside Christianity) who were considered to be charismatics were also called 'prophets', or when 'prophetic deeds' were spoken of, referring to the activities of certain personalities such as Pope John XXIII. Groß' aforementioned article is probably also a source of the idea that prophets are reactionaries rather than revolutionaries – as Füglistler said in connection with some points made in his lecture and not developed further that the prophetic ethos is the ethos of "revolutionary reactionaries" [cf. above p. 10]. This would also be supportive of what Mr. Dupré said earlier, namely that what is prophetic does indeed have something to do with tradition, but that again and again what is absolutely new will break through when the prophet cannot but act in the way he does. As for the psychological element, in the Bible there is hardly any prophet about whose psyche anything can be said. So in our context we should not pay much attention to this question.



¹ In *Theologische Quartalschrift* 171 (1991) 15–30.

the definitional problem

DUPRÉ For us the hermeneutical or definitional problem which is certainly legitimate, i. e., in which context should the figure of the prophet be defined, is open to two possibilities: to define it in a Biblical context, or to start on the basis of Muḥammad, which at first sight may seem anachronistic, but which at the same time makes it possible to build up a number of other perspectives. In any case, the choice of definition will have to be made in accordance with the demands of the context.

how to deal with the title

KAHLERT Right up to the identification of the 'false prophet', the Old and New Testament tradition knows how to deal with the title of prophet with an open mind. However, when it comes to the question of whether it is possible for Christians to apply the title prophet to Muḥammad, we have always to ask whether this really achieves much. If we understand the title differently from the way it is understood in Islam, we may perhaps be 'polite' towards Muslims, but we would in fact make little, if any, contribution to solving the dilemma.

OTT Even though it may not be sufficiently detailed, perhaps a simple scheme in three parts may help to express possible Christian positions on whether or not Muḥammad is a prophet:

First, we might assert that Muḥammad is not a prophet and does not bring a message from God, because he preaches matters of faith and raises truth claims which contradict the Christian teachings.

Second, Muḥammad might be seen as a partial prophet: he stands for his people in an era outside our own and we assume that God makes himself known to all peoples, not only through nature or through their innermost conscience, but also through the testimony of human beings. In this sense Muḥammad may be called a prophet and we might consider that here, in a context of an open – not pluralistic – theology of religions, we could meet Muslims with a certain acceptance.

The third possibility would be to acknowledge Muḥammad as the "Seal of the Prophets" (Qur'ān 33,40) and as a universal prophet. Here, however, great theological difficulties would begin.

Because this scheme lacks detail, we could perhaps improve it. Should the second approach be preferred (and it would be possible to apply this not only to Muḥammad but also to other founders of religions as well as to other prophets), the question would arise of how God could make himself known to another people in another culture, through human

beings whose teaching is in conflict with what we may call Christian teaching.

how can God ultimately be spoken of?

♦

BSTEĀ A. Is it not an essential precondition for understanding a prophetic proclamation, as well as every attempt to speak of God, that we remain aware of the question of whether and to what extent human language is capable of communicating God at all? Does not this problem demonstrate part of the complexity mentioned in the lecture? If God really is God and neither a part (not even the most important and essential part) of the reality that is this world, nor the world as a whole, but the one who is beyond all beings and embraces the whole world – then how can the invisible and ineffable God ultimately be reflected by the means available to a creature? This develops into the crucial question of the extent to which human language can be held to speak of God at all.

If, and to the degree in which, it is possible not only to speak of God and about God, but to have words that communicate God himself, and if this distinguishes the prophet, then the question will arise of whether the term denoting someone as a 'proclaimer of God' can be considered as a comprehensive definition of the prophet. However, does this not risk the danger of constantly neglecting an at least equally important factor – that the prophet in everything he says should draw people towards the *mystery* of God, i. e., to man's speechlessness in the presence of God? Is not all prophetic speaking ultimately mystagogy, leading humankind deeper and deeper towards an encounter with the mystery of God? Is there not a beautiful statement in the Islamic tradition that on Muḥammad's journey to heaven the angel Gabriel had from a certain point to stay outside, away from the actual place of encounter.² This implies that it is the deepest calling of the prophet to guide man towards God, towards the encounter with God, in order to be told, like Gabriel, to stop before entering the actual place of encounter. Can the prophet really be understood as a 'proclaimer of God', a human being who says 'what God says'?

God is definite in his precepts

ZIRKER As for Muḥammad, in the self-understanding of the Qur'ān, he is a proclaimer of God, ordained by God and belonging to God, who announces the pre-

² Cf. T. Andrae, *Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde*, Stockholm, 1918, p. 68 (Engl. ed.: *Muhammad. The Man and His Faith*, London, 1936).

cepts of God by means of the Book, of which it is said that it is understandable for you – that it belongs to you, that it is your Book, in your language, not difficult to understand. Although there are ambiguities, the *mutashābihāt*, it is always only those "in whose hearts is perversity" who are "searching for its hidden meanings" (Qur'ān 3,7; 41,3 f.). Against this background, in Islam's self-understanding there is of course no question of whether such a prophet can or cannot exist. He does exist, along with a great many others.

God remains a mystery

BSTEĀ A. Is not the problem of whether there can or cannot be a prophet simply solved for Islam 'per viam facti', with the argument that he exists? Can a human being really 'quote' God, can he say: such and such is what God says – as we can sometimes hear almost unbearably in Jewish-Christian-Muslim tri-ologues, where every participant claims to know exactly what God says and, as it were, quotes God verbatim (often one against the other)? Without doubt it is one of God's characteristics to be neither ambiguous nor equivocal. But this is a question of the mystery of God, which is not on the same level as the matter of distinguishing between what is clear and what is unclear. In the Christian tradition, for instance, if we forget that even formally defined dogma speaks of the ineffable God, we spoil the dogma as a statement of faith. After all, dogmas, as truths that ultimately have their truth in God, can only be formulated when we accept the tension between what is expressible while at the same time remaining infinitely more inexpressible.³ If, and to the degree to which, this tension is forgotten in the understanding of Christianity and the revealed religions in general, the ordinances of God become ordinances of man.

Arabic – the language of God?

NEUMANN In Islam this problem seems to be even more acute since, in the Islamic conception, the word of God is given to man verbatim in Arabic, leading to the Arabic text of the Qur'ān being considered untranslatable. We therefore have the impression that Arabic is the language in which God himself speaks as it were. On the other hand, even in Islam the prophetic self-understanding implies that the prophet, as God's witness, points to the word of God and thus testifies to the way in which God can be worshipped and his paths followed.

³ Cf. on this topic the statement of Lateran IV (1215) concerning the dissimilarity, which remains infinitely great despite all similarity, between the Creator and his creature (Dz 807).

the prophet and what is ineffable

DUPRÉ If we ask *who* speaks of God and how we can understand what is meant by his speech, the figure of the prophet attains a completely new meaning based on the assumption that the prophet can be defined as a human being who, in an excellent, paradigmatic manner, speaks of God – whatever that may mean in detail. The question of what is ineffable seems to be immediately implied in what is actually meant and leads into a context which invites further reflection.

ELSAS The problem of the way in which we can speak of God, and in which a prophet too can speak of God, reminds us of the fact that even in Islam a distinction is made between the Qurʾān as a book (to which one may then refer – whether or not as a fundamentalist) and the spoken or recited word, which, in being spoken, is already gone again with the wind. At the moment when it is recited, it is a prophetic word, the word of God, but when it is fixed in its written form, it is in some sense made human. So in what sense can we say that the word of God is given in its originality wherever it is spoken ‘actu’, and that when man later speaks it again, it is in his very human way? This should be taken up for further reflection in future.

Here we must also ask more closely what language can in principle achieve (especially seen in the perspective of Greek, and of the word φήμη in connection with the term προφήτης), what language means as a word addressed to someone, a word that comes from somewhere, as the prophet is called to speak to the people around him.

WISSE At this point we should certainly remember what Gisbert Greshake said concerning this problem some years ago on the occasion of a Christian-Muslim dialogue meeting here in St. Gabriel. He was then dealing with the question of how to understand the Holy Spirit and his activity in creation and that it is this same Holy Spirit who makes man capable not only of apprehending revelation, but also of speaking about God.⁴

The question of how God can enter into a real relationship with man through speaking has always to be seen in connection with the fact that – from a Christian perspective – on the one hand every instance of God’s speaking and our understanding him culminates in Jesus’ divine-human

being, and that on the other hand our own speaking and understanding of God’s word is also comprised in him because he is the pre-existent logos, and as a human simultaneously not only speaks of God but also lives him so that he can say to Philip, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9).⁵

VANONI A Biblical approach to progress on this issue might also consider the so-called messenger formula used more than 400 times, “Thus says the LORD”. This formula is used by the true prophet (cf. Jer 28:13) as well as by Hananiah, who also comes and says, “Thus says the LORD” (Jer 28:2, 11). In connection with this discussion about true and false prophets, the specific question could be asked of whether there really is one who rightly says, “Thus says the LORD”. A comparison could then also be ventured with the claim which, according to Qurʾanic understanding, Muḥammad made in public.

differentiation between definition and criterion

SCHAEFFLER The differentiation made in the lecture between definition and criterion, between the question of what is a prophet and who is a prophet, was very apt. But whether the criteria in fact help us recognize the characteristics previously explained in the definition seemed to remain somewhat open.

‘perplexity’ as a criterion of authenticity

KHOURY In the lecture ‘perplexity’ was mentioned as a criterion for the genuineness of prophetic vocation: the sense that the prophet does not have God and his word at his disposal, but, on the contrary, places himself at God’s disposal. If Muḥammad is suspected by one or the other, in the Medinan period, of having had the word of God more and more at his disposal, there may be some evidence to support this impression. However, the Qurʾān should also be taken seriously in this matter, where, addressing Muḥammad, it says, “Move not thy tongue concerning the (Qurʾān) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it: but when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated)” (Qurʾān 75, 16–18), which means something like: do not deal with the revelation yourself, but leave it at the disposal of God alone. Accordingly, Muḥammad was conscious of being subject to the word of God, and not

⁴ Cf. G. Greshake, “Göttliches und vergöttlichendes Wort”, in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Hören auf sein Wort. Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 7), Mödling, 1992, pp. 89–118 (esp. pp. 110–112).

⁵ Cf. in this context also A. Bsteh (ed.), *Islam Questioning Christianity* (Christian Faith In the Encounter with Islam, vol. 1), Mödling, 2007, pp. 231 ff.

in a position to summon it. And it is often said with reference to the words of the Qur'ān that he had to wait again and again until the revelation came. So we should not be hasty in reproaching Muḥammad with tending in the Medinan period of having acted as if the revelation were at his disposal, for to the extent that we perceive this to be the case, we would be denying that he speaks as a prophet.

historico-critical method as a way towards understanding the holy Scriptures

FÜGLISTER But the intention here was not at all to bring up this old controversy. Rather it was a reference to the fact that in Medina Muḥammad is always immediately told what to do when he needs it and always to his own advantage [cf. above p. 23]. This is striking and somehow arouses scepticism.

Concerning the Old Testament prophets or Jesus, we no longer have difficulties as Christians in asking what they really said or what was only formulated later by the community of believers and put into their mouths. Even though, in applying this historico-critical method, we have probably often gone and still go too far, in principle the question arises of why we should not also apply it to the Qur'ān. After all, as we understand it, this is indeed a problem area with regard to the inspired book. When in the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation "Dei verbum"* Vatican II asserts that the Bible is the word of God, that it does not simply contain the word of God but that it is his word, this is not incompatible for us with the fact that the Bible is initially a genuinely human word, emerging historically and therefore situationally conditioned; and from a historico-critical perspective we must distinguish between the various strata, until we finally somehow hypothetically find the 'ipsissima vox' of Jeremiah or Jesus.

The whole problem of the 'ipsissima vox' when applied to Muḥammad, is a historico-critical problem. On the other hand, references can be found in the Qur'ān itself to differentiate between what Muḥammad says directly on behalf of God – where God therefore is the speaker, the direct subject of the words – and what Muḥammad says about God and to God. The prophets have always expressly distinguished between the direct word of God – "Thus says the LORD": then God speaks in the first person: I will come to judge you, etc. – and what the prophet says himself: words of supplication and complaint, for instance, in which the prophet himself is speaking. Moreover, in Paul there are also many parallels in this respect, for instance in 1 Cor 7, where he speaks about celibacy and distinguishes very precisely between his own opinion and that of Jesus.

It is well known that in the Old Testament and in the Gospels we rarely find the directly authentic words but rather words that were collected and edited later into a form that became canonical. This contrasts with the Qur'ān, in whose case the canon was formed very quickly. About ten years after Muḥammad's death, the first text was fixed and it was then finalized about ten years later, whereas the process of writing down and forming a book of the words of the Old Testament prophets often took several centuries and, in the case of the New Testament, at least half a century.

If we apply our methods, we arrive at certain conclusions, which should perhaps first be articulated in the form of questions. After all, it is simply surprising how well informed about everything Muḥammad is in Medina, even concerning things that are of special interest to him personally, for instance concerning his own family matters – with reference to 'Ā'isha, and certain financial circumstances, etc. – or how the armed robberies of his people in the holy month of Rāḍjāb can be justified. And he has a justification for everything. This is not meant to question the authenticity of these texts, but it does raise certain questions. It goes without saying that a Muslim should be respected when, from his perspective, he is persuaded that all this is the word of God. However, the question arises of whether there has to be a similar respect on the Christian side when, for instance, a Christian fundamentalist claims that every word in the Bible, beginning with the creation in six days in Gn 1, is historically authentic. The problem is: can a 20th century historico-critical perspective deal with the Qur'ān differently from the way it deals with the Bible?

objective criteria of prophecy?

The question of whether there are objective criteria for the phenomenon of prophecy is certainly of fundamental importance. Are not these criteria, whether applied to the Bible, the Qur'ān, Jewish tradition or the understanding of other religions, profoundly subjective and then conveyed in various ways? For 'outsiders' these criteria are not necessarily stringently applied as objective; one may accept them, but one may also reject them. So how should we approach the question? Can the Biblical and Qur'ānic prophetologies simply be compared with one another, or should we not restrict ourselves to religio-phenomenological data which bring out how the issue is presented in the perspectives of the Bible and the Qur'ān?

This also applies specifically to the area of ethics, which has historically always played a significant role in Christian-Muslim relations. To what extent can we criticize Muḥammad for a particular conduct performed com-

pletely within the frame of what was considered as given at his time, when he was behaving in this respect as his contemporaries did? The same applies to the Biblical domain. Here too, much is in keeping with what was the custom at the relevant time.

is the prophet necessarily somebody who suffers?

HAGEMANN Does the prophet necessarily have to be one who suffers or fails? This criterion would after all originate from a Christian pre-understanding and we could hardly use it to approach the Qur'ān.

FÜGLISTER This element was noted in connection with some other points too, which would have deserved being examined more closely within the frame of the lecture. But it actually goes beyond Weipert's definition given at the beginning. So, from a logical perspective, suffering and failure need not necessarily be included in the definition of a prophet.



uncertainty in the criteria of assessment

KAHLERT The point is to ensure the possibility of holding a dialogue on as broad a basis as possible. One obviously has to proceed from the fact that Christians are similarly uncertain about the central criteria of assessment: we may think for instance of the key issue in the preaching of Jesus about the close, even imminent coming, of the kingdom of God – but in fact the parousia is delayed.

As for the life of Muḥammad, since he lived considerably later, there exists of course much more authenticated historical material than about the life of the Old Testament prophets and Jesus. What, for example, is actually known about what Amos did when he was a landowner before the time of his prophetic preaching and then perhaps also afterwards? This material is much more fragmentary.

FÜGLISTER This is certainly true. The canonical texts at our disposal now, both Biblical and Qur'ānic, are the basis of an argumentation – with the great difference that perhaps two decades after Muḥammad's death the Qur'ān was already finally edited and the canon fixed, whereas, for example, with regard to the Biblical books of Jeremiah and Amos a very long process has to be taken into account. This applies to most texts, which somehow brings in the question of true or false prophets – as for instance the Jeremiah texts, which were edited in the time after Jeremiah and deuteronomically, and which are already on a higher level of reflection.

Historical criticism may have gone too far at some points, and the histori-

cal Jesus is given more credit today. However, what he actually said remains hypothetical. Whatever the case may be, in principle the historico-critical method has its validity. After all, the Bible and the Qur'ān are historical and historically conditioned and hence also relative. There is no getting away from it.

starting points of a historical dimension in the Qur'ān?

HAGEMANN The Qur'ān itself presents, not explicitly, but indirectly, a relative chronology of its Sūras, insofar as it says repeatedly: 'revealed in Mecca', or: 'revealed in Medina'. Even though this would not be said by Muslims in this way, it does imply a relative chronol-

ogy of the individual Sūras of the Qur'ān.

FÜGLISTER There is of course a certain problem. On the one hand the Qur'ān itself alludes to the fact that the revelation took place Sūra by Sūra and verse by verse through their recitation (cf. Sūra 25,32; 17,106). The tradition also says that under 'Uthmān (644–656), the second Caliph, the first canonical edition was completed and that Sūras which were written down on palm leaves or already known by heart were collected. On the other hand (probably from a retrospective viewpoint, as with the prophets), the Qur'ān also says that the Qur'ān as a whole had already been sent down or handed over (cf. Sūra 97,1), as is said in the Jewish tradition that the Torah had been written down eternally in heaven, before it was handed over to the Israelites through Moses on Mount Sinai.

'word of God' and the historical question

LEUZE Concerning the question of what the application of the historico-critical method implies for the problems discussed here, there is still another important aspect: to think that only the words which Jesus himself spoke have to be taken as the word of God (as was the case in the Protestant liberal theology approach, which is in fact hardly supported any longer) would be a fatal misunderstanding. If the application of the historico-critical method in a particular case leads to the assumption that this or that word in the form under discussion was not spoken by the historical Jesus, it can nevertheless, regardless of that, be considered as the word of God. The real difficulty lies in the fact that the doctrine of verbal inspiration on the one hand and historico-critical research on the other have mutually exclusive consequences.



dialogue
and criteria for
prophecy

LEUZE The other question concerning the criteria for prophetic authenticity and their importance for dialogue may be formulated as whether there are criteria which can be objectively applied beyond the understanding of one's own religion. That is, is it possible to find criteria, which Christians can not only agree on between themselves, but can also extend to monotheistic prophecy in general? If Christians regard these criteria as valid for the Old Testament, would they not also have to see Muḥammad as a prophet?

HAGEMANN It would be hard to imagine that this could happen beyond certain groups which agree on certain linguistic rules. One group would keep saying, for us this is a prophet, and another, for us this is not a prophet.

analogia fidei – the decisive criterion
KHOURY Asking theological questions is not an attempt to verify something beyond one's own faith, as if we were asking in the name of all people who believe in God and are searching for him. What we seek are not criteria that lie outside our own faith, on the basis of general comparative religion, or within a general monotheistic framework. In fact, the question about the genuineness of the criteria is essentially linked with the question about the truth of the message. There can ultimately be no other criterion for faith except the criterion of inner coherence, of *analogia fidei*. This already applies to the Old Testament, as well as later to the Christian tradition: whoever is against Jesus Christ, is outside Christianity. Does a consistent theological attitude not imply that it is not possible to accept Muḥammad's prophetic mission, because and insofar as his claim to be announcing the final valid religion is simply not compatible with the ultimately binding assertions of Christianity? So coherence in belief generally emerges as the real criterion when it comes to the genuineness of a prophetic mission.

SALMEN But then how far would it be possible to learn from another religion? Does not the encounter with another religion also entail the very possibility that questions may arise which open up new approaches towards understanding one's own truth and enriching its interpretation considerably?

KHOURY From the Christian point of view, one also certainly has to proceed from the fact that the search for truth is by no means concluded. The Gospel according to John says, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (Jn 16:13) and this remains valid. Christian

faith, therefore, is on its way towards this goal, and Christians can learn quite a lot from others, although this does not shake the fact that we have to proceed from the binding assertions of our faith if we want to find out what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Christians must never forget that in their present situation they do not yet possess the full truth.

on concretely
applying the
criteria of
analogia fidei

SALMEN How then should the criteria of *analogia fidei* be applied in practice?

KHOURY In the Catholic tradition there are the dogmas of the Church, the fundamental statements of faith summarized in the Creed. These truths are not at our disposal in such a way that we may say it does not matter whether Muḥammad says Jesus is the Son of God or not, or that he is the Saviour or not. If it is impossible to agree with him on these fundamental questions, there is a real difference which makes it impossible for the Christian believer to accept Muḥammad's claim to be called by God to announce the final truth – and this will be the case as long as there is no agreement between his message and these binding statements of faith.

At this point another minor reservation seems advisable. What has been said so far is valid as long as Muslims interpret the statements of the Qur'ān as we have assumed so far, in the sense of openly contradicting the binding statements of Christian doctrine. But there is also the possibility within Islamic theology (and this is in fact affirmed by some Muslim theologians) of understanding certain Qur'anic statements somewhat differently from the usual traditional interpretation. There are, just to mention a particularly relevant example, some Muslims who, in Christian-Muslim dialogue, hold the opinion that if two passages in the Qur'ān addressing Christians say, "Say not 'Trinity': [...] for God is One God" (Sūra 4, 171; cf. 5, 73), this reproach should not be addressed to the major Christian Churches who do indeed differentiate between the one God and the three persons, but who do not say "three gods", but it should rather be addressed to smaller groups and sects, who did not accept these differentiating assertions and did hold a tritheistic position. If the path of dialogue continues in this direction, it would in fact become possible to achieve in the future a more meaningful rapprochement. But as long as open contradiction continues, it is hard to see how the genuineness of Muḥammad's whole claim could be accepted if we apply the criterion of 'analogia fidei'.



the prophetic in
Christianity

FÜGLISTER Of course there is a continuous development in Christianity, a process led by the Spirit, who "will guide you into all the truth" (Jn 16:13). However, in Christian understanding, there is no longer anything essentially new to be expected. This is also true for the Islamic faith. The revelation as such is concluded. Anyone who publicly claims to be a prophet after that will be excluded in Islam. However, things are different in this respect in Christianity: with Jesus and the Jesus event, the prophetic charisma breaks out again. In Judaism, with the end of the first temple or immediately afterwards with Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, when prophecy died out, there was still the expectation that in the messianic period the spirit would break out again in different ways (and in Judaism the spirit is always the Holy Spirit, the spirit of prophecy). In the New Testament this same expectation is revived again. Jesus is the "prophet" (cf. for example Mk 6:4 par. and Ac 3:22), and those who surround him, announce him and refer to him are led by a prophetic vocation, like the Baptist who is the new Elijah (Mt 11:14; 17:11 f.). So, what is prophetic re-emerges and continues. With Pentecost, Joel's promise that now all become prophets is fulfilled (Ac 2); for the spirit of God, as it says in Joel 2:28 f., shall be poured out on all flesh, that is, independent of gender: on men and women, independent of age: on young and old, on masters and slaves: all shall prophesy.

And in the New Testament communities there actually were such prophets (cf. 1 Cor 12:28 f.; 14:29 ff.; Eph 2:19 f.) until prophecy was replaced by the 'office' and gradually 'extinguished'. It is of course a widespread phenomenon in the history of religions that the institutions try to stifle what is charismatic and prophetic, because to them it is always inconvenient. This happened as early as the second century, especially in the fight against Montanism, after a shift of emphasis from the charismatic towards the institutional had already become conspicuous in the post-Pauline "Pastoral Epistles". All the same it remains true that the congregation of Jesus only exists where the prophetic is alive, where all can and will partake of the spirit of prophecy. After all, according to Jer 31:31 ff., the nature of the new covenant implies that, "they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest", so there will be no further need for them to "teach one another" (cf. Jer 31:31-34).

In Protestant theology in particular, as everybody knows, in the context of the 'triplex munus Christi', of which all believers partake according to 1 Pt 2, the *munus propheticum* is also mentioned, but it is simply reduced

in an unacceptable way to preaching and the sermon. Jesus himself had already differentiated clearly between prophets and teachers, when he said, "I send you prophets, sages and scribes" (Mt 23:34 par.). And accordingly there are then in the Pauline communities first apostles, the direct witnesses, second prophets who, in direct contact with God, speak the right word, the *παρακλήσις*, and only then teachers, who preserve and explain the tradition (1 Cor 12:28).

an important
relationship with
Judaism

An important parallel with Judaism should be taken into consideration concerning the question of the 'prophet' Muḥammad's function in the history of salvation. After all, it is much easier for Judaism to deal with this subject than for traditional Christianity with its claim to absolute truth as expressed in the New Testament. Orthodox Jews can very well acknowledge Christianity as something positive within God's plan of salvation, insofar as Christianity spread the knowledge of YHWH, the message of the one God throughout the world, especially since from a Jewish point of view whether one is a Jew or not was and is not decisive as far as eternal salvation is concerned.

This positive Jewish assessment of Christianity could be transferred to the relationship with Islam: Islam announces the one God to all people. And, just as it is in principle no problem for Judaism that a Christian or a Muslim be saved, this also applies to Islam, since the Qur'ān says that those who believe in God and follow God's way "shall have their reward with their Lord" (Sūra 2,62; cf. 5,69; 4,123 f.). However, the claim that Muḥammad is the final, universal and absolute prophet cannot be accepted by a Jewish (nor by a Christian) believer. For an orthodox Jew, it is Moses who is the prophet, and all the others are prophets in his line, people who pass on the Torah; these prophets existed in fact only up to the Exile or until shortly afterwards; then the sages and scribes took over the task of handing on the tradition.

the prophetic in
Islam

Now what about this in Islam? Even though nobody after Muḥammad can say that he is a prophet, the charismatic of course also exists in Islam, above all in the form of its very important mystical tradition. It goes without saying that no Muslim Ṣūfī (any more than a Christian charismatic) can say anything that contradicts the nature of the message, the *analogia fidei*. On the other hand, he can in a charismatic, inspired and inspiring exegesis truly revive the word again, so that it strikes the individual personally, because the

charismatic himself has already been personally struck by it. 'Cum grano salis', one could call this 'prophetic' as well.

Ishmael as a prophet beside Isaac?

ELIAS In the Qur'ān individuals from the Biblical and Arab tradition, who are traced back to Abraham via Ishmael – the ancestor of the Arabs – are mentioned by name. The point here is the fundamental command of God not to worship idols, so that, according to the Qur'ān, Abraham and Ishmael are ordered to purify the Ka'ba of all traces of idolatry (cf. Sūra 2, 124 ff.). So alongside the lineage of Isaac via the Biblical prophets, a prophet has now arisen in the line of Ishmael too – Muḥammad, whom Jesus has already announced (cf. Sūra 61, 6) and whom Abraham has asked God to send (cf. 2, 129).

FÜGLISTER That's right. The relevant Qur'ānic passage can be understood as an etiological legend for Mecca, and specifically for the Ka'ba. But it is only the lineage of Isaac that continues via Moses and David up to John the Baptist and Jesus. Twenty-four prophets are named in the Qur'ān, about twenty of whom also are mentioned in the Bible (although not always as prophets). Only three or four are non-Biblical.

back to what was 'in the beginning'

We get the impression that the Qur'ān begins with the assumption that there are also prophets elsewhere and Islam is not only the religion of Abraham, but, as it were, the primeval religion as such. Thus, Muḥammad can rightly be called a 'revolutionary reactionary' [cf. above pp. 10 and 30], insofar as he goes back to the origins, ultimately to Adam, holding the view that every human being is born a Muslim and only human tradition turns him into an idolator.⁶

It is interesting that this thread is also found in the Biblical prophets and in Jesus: they repeatedly refer to the origins – "[...] from the beginning it was not so" (Mt 19:8) – to the Exodus from Egypt, to the originally egalitarian society, etc. And Paul can omit the whole period of legislation – referring to Abraham "our ancestor" (cf. Rm 4:12). This common trait also shows in Islam's self-understanding as the universal primeval religion, religion corresponding to the nature of man (cf. Qur'ān 30,30).



⁶ Hadīth in al-Bukhārī, Muslim et. al.: see A. Th. Khoury, *So sprach der Prophet. Worte aus der islamischen Überlieferung* (CTB; 785), Gütersloh, 1988, no. 104, p. 95.

certainty of faith – only subjective?

is the truth? Does this not give the impression that certainty of faith is always subjective?

KHOURY Subjective and intersubjective at the same time. From a Christian point of view, one can certainly not be searching for the truth independent of all other people who believe in Christ, but only within the community of Christian faith. And in this community, this one criterion of *analogia fidei* emerges as valid; everything else can be relativized.

LEUZE If every statement of faith were only subjective, talking to each other would become superfluous. Everyone would simply believe whatever he wanted. Conversely, however, the question remains open, of whether, within a monotheistic context there are ultimately more general criteria that go beyond what is Christian.

WESS If we refer to dogmas, we should question them once again, and examine how they came about. A statement in the Gospel according to John shows that Jesus did not demand blind faith and did not expect us to follow a closed circle (that he speaks in the name of God and that therefore everything he says is true and that therefore it is also true that he speaks in the name of God): "Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own" (Jn 7:17). In the spirit of the New Testament, Jesus expected people to recognize the truth of his teaching with a subjective objectivity, that is, with an inward certainty. We have to confront these questions of fundamental theology and the question of which practice testifies to the truth of this teaching – otherwise we shall make no progress in the dialogue with other religions either.



the question concerning the criteria and their assessment

ZIRKER Mr. Füglistner rightly stated that Muḥammad was different in some respects in his first period in Mecca from what he was in the second, in Medina. It would, however, be very problematic, if we were to evaluate this apologetically and play the one off against

the other.

Taking this dangerous route would make obvious how questionable it is to establish criteria such as 'selflessness'. In Medina there are perhaps circumstances where Muḥammad's selflessness appears quite differently from

the Meccan period, as the attitude of someone building up a community politically and finding success in doing so. For the Muslim at any rate, even Muḥammad the victor is a selfless person.

Further clarification is needed of the statement that a charismatic must always only be assessed by a charismatic, when it is a question of the objective validity of certain criteria for judging a person who claims to be a prophet. Who in fact is this charismatic? Who is it today? Who is it in the context of interreligious dialogue? How much did Vatican II actually say about Islam when it said nothing about Muḥammad? (In the meantime the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has now said more in this respect.) If we do not want to remain silent *vis à vis* non-Christian prophecies, we shall have to say something about Muḥammad and not be allowed to hide ultimately behind a statement that this is a matter that belongs to the range of questions about charismatics.

NEUMANN Does the concept of prophet not come from the Biblical tradition? And are not the necessary criteria for what should be considered a true or a false prophecy therefore to be found in the Biblical tradition?

GLADKOWSKI Here we have come to the decisive question in Christian-Muslim dialogue. Can we say that Muḥammad is the true prophet of God? In dialogue with Muslims we would then hold the same position as they do.

ZIRKER To what extent are the alternatives 'true' or 'false' prophet ultimately appropriate? True for whom, false for whom? Does the prophet constitute himself, or is he constituted by the reception of those who hear him? In the dialogue with Muslims we feel embarrassed about Muḥammad: if we try to say, for instance, that he was doubtless a prophet not only in the general sense of religious phenomenology, but also in the sense that we could acknowledge him in our Christian understanding as a 'prophetic figure', that he, in his personality, credibly embodies 'prophetic elements' – as is even suggested by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, what is our answer if the Muslims then ask why we say 'prophetic figure' and 'prophetic elements'? Why not simply 'prophet'? On the other hand, if we did use this term it would only lead to further misunderstandings; for the Muslim understands it differently from the Christian.

The question concerning the decision between false and true prophets should be passed to the Old Testament exegete. Who was for whom the true prophet? And how much reception had to happen before somebody was a true and inspired prophet for a particular religious community?

the actual
criterion is a
matter of content

FÜGLISTER Not all criteria mentioned in the lecture apply to the prophet's nature. The definition presented at the beginning of the paper, for instance, does not refer to the prophet's selflessness, or, more importantly, his failure and suffering. The way the general definition was given gives the impression that Muḥammad corresponds to what is considered to be essential for a prophet. The Biblical criteria mentioned in chapter 4 of my paper are to be understood, as was emphasized several times, in the sense of a gradual applicability: the first group (performing miracles – fulfilment of predictions – success) being extremely precarious and disputable, while the second group (selflessness – perplexity – 'analogia fidei') are criteria often encountered in the Biblical prophets, but which do not apply to the general definition of prophet. In any case, we could not use them as a line of argument; they provide at most circumstantial evidence.

However, Professor Khoury rightly drew attention to the fact that the real criterion – *analogia fidei* – is a matter of content. For Christians this certainly means above all the profession "Jesus Christ is Lord", ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ or ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ἸΗΣΟΥΣ (Phil 2:11), and it is clear that this did not originally mean that he was the second divine person, even though today the full doctrine of the Trinity as formulated by the first four great Councils is, for a Christian believer, implied in it – that is for Catholics and all Christians represented in the Ecumenical Council. This is also where the difference lies between us and the Jews. Just as the separation between Jews and Christians eventually became final at the Council of Nicaea, so it is from there too that the division between Christians and Muslims is pre-figured. We cannot go back to the time before these great formulations of religious belief. Similarly the three criteria deduced from the Qur'an (the preaching of Muḥammad as well as the originality and the inimitability of his message) refer to the content of the message, so it is only from that that the real criteria can be obtained.

Expressly and emphatically reference must be made here to a criterion or even *the* criterion that is essential as far as content is concerned, which the Bible (the Old and the New Testament) and the Qur'an share (apart from the specifically Christian "Jesus is Lord"): the one and only God who, though he is the Judge, yet is above all the Compassionate, the Merciful, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone", or: "The LORD is our God, the LORD is one" (Dt 6:4; cf. Mt 22:37 par.). ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΣ! "One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:6). He is at work

in all and through all, even in the 'false' prophets (cf. Ezek 14:9 and 1 Kgs 22:20–23) as well as in those whose hearts are hardened when they listen to the true prophets (cf. Is 6:9 f. and Mt 13:14 f. parr.; Jn 12:40; Ac 28:26 f.) and who do not believe them.

This also answers the questions addressed to the Bible exegete, "Who was for whom the true prophet?": to the believer, a prophet is one who is believable to him! And, "How much reception has to happen before somebody becomes a true and inspired prophet for a particular religious community?": the whole process that led to the canonization of the Bible (and of the Qur'ān?). For, to the Jew and to the Christian believer a prophet is one who is characterized as authentic in the Holy Scriptures. However, accepting the canon is again an act of faith! Thus it is faith (above all as *fides qua*), *'emunā*, πίστις, 'Islam' as absolute surrender, that – beside the One God – unifies and unites Jews, Christians and Muslims. Already now!

Dialogue and Truth

Wilhelm Dupré

It is a historical fact that the one earth is not only the ground on which the life of human beings has unfolded in various directions, but also that it has become a space within which various traditions and cultures exist alongside one another. As a result of specific circumstances, people and traditions are compelled or challenged to communicate with one another and, beyond the obvious differences, to become members and partners of one worldwide community. Since the living space for mankind is limited, the necessity of territorial divisions entails that a meaningful coexistence of people and cultures is only possible when it is preserved by a general order of rights which embraces the whole world, which is nobody's property and everybody's obligation, and which consists in the cooperation of all people with all people. In contrast to the actual division of mankind into many different cultures and traditions, which are linked more or less accidentally (if at all) with one another, we are confronted with the idea of a necessary coexistence, in which the principle of territorial division loses its provisional validity and the meaning of a shared humaneness has become, in different traditions, the decisive criterion for being human.

It is self-evident that the coexistence of human cultures and traditions refers to a situation in which contacts and relations of different kinds are conceivable. At the same time it must be emphasized that, in and beyond the possibilities of the actual coexistence of cultures and traditions, we face a necessity which, though it might be superficially repressed for a time, has to be ultimately acknowledged and accepted as a characteristic trait of human existence as a whole. Ever since the world became the object of political planning, we have had to stop thinking as if mankind's living space were unlimited and the territorial dependence of human existence were no problem for the shaping and the meaning of cultural space.

I mention these points, first, because I think that the problem of interreligious contacts and relations is already a given through the very existence of different religious traditions, and secondly, because I want to draw attention to the fact that the solution to this problem is characterized by the same necessity which applies to mankind as a whole and calls for a general

order of rights as a requirement for humanity. With regard to the first proposition we could also say that it is important to familiarize ourselves with the historical facts, that it is necessary to become knowledgeable about the various contacts and relations which have (or have not) come to exist between religious traditions, and which, in one way or another, have become part of the various religious traditions themselves. With regard to the second proposition, however, we are concerned with the question of whether and how far religious traditions, in their contacts and relations, meet the requirement of humanity; whether and to what extent it is possible (or impossible) to fuse the meaning of religious existence with the requirements of being human in different traditions; and then, what the consequences of our answers will be. – Do we have to assume that the solution to the problem lies in the cultural and spiritual uniformity of all humans? Or does the idea of a general order of rights rather imply that diversity and difference are brought into concordance, and that the unity of mankind has to be found in different forms of compatible traditions and ways of being human?

In what follows I shall not deal with all the questions which arise here, but restrict myself to the problem of dialogical relations between religions. Since I am convinced that one of the main obstacles to peace between religions derives from certain forms of religious truth consciousness, I would like to start with a discussion of this problem. Next, I shall try to show that the issue of truth cannot be developed or adequately treated without giving priority to the practical dimension of truth. Against this background, I would like to defend the thesis that dialogue is in itself an event in which truth manifests itself, and that this form of truth precedes the forms of propositional truth. Moreover, since dialogical truth is essential to the integrity of being human, I would like to point out that dialogue and the pursuit of dialogical relations are, in fact, a requirement of religious truth consciousness. Finally, I want to deal with the consequences of this approach inasmuch as they concern the prefiguration of the relationship between religions in the form of dialogical relations, and enable us to come closer to the meaning of truth in the mode of religious self-understanding.

1. Demands and forms of truth consciousness

Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) drew attention to the fact “that for the sake of religion many use weapons against each other, force people to renounce

beliefs they have observed for a long time, or kill them”¹. He saw the reason for this attitude in the observation that “it is part of the earthly human condition to defend as truth a long-practised habit which is considered to belong to man’s nature”². Similarly, though differing in emphasis and interest, David Hume (1711–1776) remarks: “The intolerance of almost all religions, which have maintained the unity of god, is as remarkable as the contrary principle in polytheists”³. The explanation which David Hume gives us consists in the observation that “the corruption of the best things gives rise to the worst”⁴.

There are certainly good reasons in favour of the argumentation of both Nicholas of Cusa and Hume. But to me it seems more important to reflect on the central argument which in both cases concerns the persuasion that lies and falsehood are in principle unacceptable, and that there can be neither peace and justice, nor piety and freedom if they are not grounded and expressed in truth and honesty. From what Nicholas of Cusa maintains, we could say that truth makes us fight because it requires us to accept the consequences of our awareness of truth and act accordingly. With regard to Hume’s observation we could add: it does so all the more the better we understand that the truth of the One God is indivisible and is not under our control in any circumstances whatsoever.

Since language and communication are not possible without the idea of truth and the compelling force of truths once we have recognized them, I do not see how we could contradict the principle of the unacceptability of lies and falsehood without undermining the meaning of human existence and destroying the foundation upon which human culture rests and develops. There is no ‘beautiful lie’, even though the opposite impression may sometimes be given. If one assumes that religion and truth are essentially linked (i.e., that the idea and awareness of truth are not only preconditions for thinking and acting in general, but features of explicit concerns in what we call religion) then it becomes perfectly clear that the ‘struggle

¹ “[...] ob religionem plerosque in invicem arma movere et sua potentia homines aut ad renegationem diu observatae sectae cogere aut mortem inferre”: in *De pace fidei* (Philosophisch-Theologische Schriften), ed. by L. Gabriel, vol. 3. Wien, 1989, p. 706.

² “Habet autem hoc humana terrena condicio, quod longa consuetudo, quae in naturam transisse accipitur, pro veritate defenditur.” *Op. cit.* (fn. 1) p. 710.

³ A. W. Colver (ed.), *The Natural History of Religion*. Oxford, 1976, p. 60.

⁴ “From the comparison of theism and idolatry, we may form some other observations, which will also confirm the vulgar observation, that the corruption of the best things gives rise to the worst” (*op. cit.* [fn. 3] p. 62).

with truth' does indeed belong to the very nature of religious existence. For this very reason the contest for truth is nowhere as uncompromising as here, because it has to be undertaken per definitionem without any 'ifs and buts'. Truthfulness demands that we call a spade a spade. What is "true and holy" cannot be rejected. Nor is it acceptable to support what is not true and holy and defend the opposite⁶.

In the development of religious traditions there are certainly many reasons and motives that have been, and still are, decisive for the shaping of their inner life and their relations to other traditions, and which need not all be interpreted in terms of truth contests. On the other hand it is at least strange that the same reasons and motives should be linked with the claim to truth and draw their strength from it because and to the extent that they are understood as religious reasons and motives.

Individual cases may be open to discussion. We might wonder whether the claim to truth can be justified, whether and to what extent forms of intended or unintended self-deception are identifiable, whether and to what extent one has to speak of a conscious or unconscious obfuscation of motivations. All this is possible. But I do not think that it impinges upon the principle of the unacceptability of lies and falsehood, or that the meaning and claims of religious truth consciousness would be disproved by the history of religions. However, I certainly think that the recurring phenomenon of disguising true motivations clearly indicates that the question of truth is far

⁶ The idea refers to a basic possibility of human existence. If, as I assume, this supposition is correct, one could say that religion defines itself as religion to the extent that it is the explicit representation of what is implicitly given as the reality of truth. Cf. also Hegel: "Religion ist der Ort, wo sich ein Volk die Definition dessen gibt, was es für das Wahre hält." (Religion is the place where a people gives to itself the definition of what it considers to be true.) (*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* [Reclams Universal-Bibliothek; 4881]. Stuttgart, 1961, p. 100); as well as H. M. Vroom, *Religions and the Truth. Philosophical Reflections and Perspectives*. Amsterdam, 1989, where he examines the relation between the concept of God and the awareness of truth in particular. In addition, I would like to stress the difference between the 'beautiful lie' and all those statements in which propositional truth has to be rejected because of the demands of existing truth, as for instance, when saving human life is at stake. To say that I am hiding someone when I am asked by some authority and know that this person will be murdered, is not an expression of truthfulness, but a lie because it joins and supports the unlawful and mendacious behavior of the murderer.

⁷ Cf. *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions "Nostra aetate"*, art. 2, where the relation towards the other religions is briefly formulated as follows: "[...] The Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. [...]".

simpler and at the same time more complex than we are generally willing to perceive'. This is connected with the fact that truth does not primarily consist in the theoretical correspondence of thinking and being, but in the compliance and conformity of being human with the principles of human development. The actual configuration of being human is in itself a form of truth which differs from lies and rejects them because mendacious behaviour defaces the meaning of integrity and is an insult to humanity.

What is essential to realize when we juxtapose the 'simpler' and the 'more complex' relates to our experience that, on the one hand, in the context of personal relationships we know very well what is important for the fulfilment of human life while, on the other, we come to appreciate that the truth which we recognize in perceptions and judgments is only conditionally the whole truth. Since the truth we recognize includes by no means all that can be known about truth, it is obvious that truth is inconceivable without the thought of an ever greater truth – 'veritas semper maior'. In the first instance, we could think of the possibility, and necessity, of questioning the truth of what we are doing when we persecute fellow human beings for the sake of truth which we believe we have recognized. Is the one truth truly compatible with the other? and if not, what does the latter say about the former? I am convinced that what the Declaration on Non-Christian Religions says is very much to the point: "We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God".⁸ Nor do I see how it could possibly occur to somebody who really loves his neighbour as himself (Mk 12: 31) to torture this neighbour for the sake of God⁹. In the second point, I am thinking of the joint effort of various people in all traditions to attain the one truth, and of the fact that the truth which we come to know cannot be conceived apart from the signs through which it presents itself. Truth has its history, not because truth should

⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* 993a 30.

⁹ "Nostra aetate", art. 5.

¹⁰ Quoting Nicholas of Cusa, we could also say in this context: "Divina mandata brevissima et omnibus notissima sunt, et communia quibuscumque nationibus. Immo lumen nobis illa ostendens est concreatum rationali animae. Nam in nobis loquitur Deus, ut ipsum diligamus; a quo recipimus esse, et quod non faciamus alteri nisi id quod vellemus nobis fieri. Dilectio igitur est complementum legis Dei, et omnes leges ad hanc reducuntur." [The divine commandments are most concise and very well known to all; they are shared by all peoples. Verily, the light that shows them to us is co-created with our rational soul. For, within ourselves, God says that we should love him from whom we receive our being, and not to do unto others except that which we want done unto us. Therefore, love is the fulfilment of the divine law, and all other laws refer back to it.] In: *De pace fidei* (fn. 1) p. 784.

not be definitive and timeless, but because it creates time and history. Even though truth, when it is recognized, is binding, this does not mean that it may not be questioned again and again; that there is nothing more to be learned; that it should not be possible to achieve new and perhaps deeper insights; that it could not be understood differently and better. In particular, I think of the fact that the connection of theoretical insights with forms of truth as they present themselves in terms of personal, communal and traditional reality, not only requires that we examine this connection in the light of the ever greater truth, but also enables us to find perspectives which allow us to understand, and learn to assess, the truth-claims of our own and other traditions in the light of living faith and the insights which are gained through the practice of that faith¹⁰.

2. Priority of the practice of truth

Formally, the juxtaposition of a 'simpler' and 'more complex' truth means firstly that the truth in personal encounters is more immediate and reaches farther than the truths we believe we know, and secondly that the truths we seek in terms of knowledge and understanding can only be addressed as binding and obliging truth if they agree with the truth of personal encounters and are part of them, that is to say, if and to the extent that they are expressions of truth in terms of being human. In both cases it is obvious that practice as well as theory are determined by the truth that "lives and exists" in them¹¹, and become effective in modes of distinctions where necessary, and of connection where possible and desirable. The question of truth is 'simpler' than we assume because, and to the extent that, practice comes first, and the actual acknowledgment of fellow human beings provides the decisive principle for the development of humanity.¹² Yet, at

¹⁰ Cf. R. Schaeffler, "Wahrheit, Dialog und Entscheidung", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Dialog aus der Mitte christlicher Theologie* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 5), Mödling, 1987, pp. 34 ff. and K. Klostermaier, "A Hindu-Christian Dialogue on Truth", in: W. Foy (ed.), *The Religious Quest. A Reader*, London, 1988, pp. 682-698.

¹¹ E. Heintel, *Die Stellung der Philosophie in der "Universitas Litterarum"* (Sitzungsberichte/Osterreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse; 557), Wien, 1990, p. 166.

¹² Truth, one could also say, has to be done in order to be and become real as truth. On the other hand, truth can (!) also be done because the reality of being human always and already emerges because of the demands made by truth. Within and on the grounds of the actuality of being, we know, therefore, in one way or another the 'guidelines' which are decisive for its development.

the same time it is also 'more complex', because the conceptual unfolding of truth has to follow its own rules while remaining bound to the truth of being and acting by which it became possible. Thus, a theoretical statement of the problem of truth is seriously lacking as long as its practical relevance and reality are not taken into account¹³. Against the background of the tension between the practical and theoretical aspects of the problem of truth, the unfolding of what it means to be human presents itself overwhelmingly as a task which speaks for itself and needs no other parameters than those which appear in the unfolding. The first question we must ask about the relationship between religious traditions does not concern the exclusivity of revelation (or whatever the obstacles may be that bar the development of theoretical consciousness), but is about whether the relations that already exist, or are being sought, agree with the principles on which the development of human existence is grounded¹⁴. However, humans do not exist without consciousness and neither must human conscience be separated from the insights in the light of which it decides against what is bad and in favour of what is good. It would therefore not only be unrealistic, but would also amount to a perversion of being human, if we did not immediately add to the first question a second, which concerns the truths we know and the truths we may find, as well as the limits of human potential. For in order to respond to the demands of ever better and more comprehensive insights into the truth of all things, the knowledge of limits is no less important than the exploration of possibilities.

If only for the sake of our own dignity, we can and should expect neither ourselves nor others to overrule their insights, even though our actions may quite often speak another language. Moreover, since truth itself is always greater and more comprehensive than the way it is presented in modes of behaviour and understanding, and because the tension between practical and theoretical truth is such that it will not disappear, we must expect ourselves and others to strive continuously for better insights. But for the sake of truth we should also ask how truth can be binding at all if the

¹³ What is decisive is not only the idea that there is always more to know than we actually understand, but also the insight that the truth of being human comprises the truth of understanding and therefore requires that this understanding be integrated as a concrete aspect of truth.

¹⁴ In line with "*Pacem in terris*", we could also say that what it all depends on is a change of relations as they exist, which is necessary "until world events follow a course in keeping with man's destiny and dignity". (Pope John XXIII in his Encyclical "*Pacem in terris*" [April 11, 1963], art. 117).

greater truth necessarily relativizes the truths we have understood. This question is part of the answer, which consists in the effort to acquire better insights. At the same time, it points to a special task, which is that, in and among recognized truths, we search for the way where beginning and end become present, and the meaning of human existence makes itself known in the affirmation and reconciliation of opposites. Important as it is that we follow the principles of being human and orient ourselves in relation to recognized truths, we must not forget that appealing to truth requires searching for truth and that searching for truth cannot avoid ending in futility unless it succeeds in maintaining the reality and meaning of its effort by connecting theoretical and practical truth¹⁵.

Whoever really adheres to truth knows that truth is true to its promise. The principle that lies and falsehood are unacceptable is valid. But to maintain this validity, it is not sufficient that we should stay with recognized truths. There is no theoretical truth that should be binding at the expense of practical truth. The relation between theory and practice is not determined by providing a theoretical blueprint for the solution of practical problems, as various kinds of rationalism would like us to believe when they assume that forms of human existence and cultural reality are no more than a problem of technocratic engineering. The important thing is rather to acknowledge the truth that emerges when priority is given to practice, and subsequently to take care that theoretical truths, whose value and validity lie in the service they perform for human existence, be understood and developed in ways that make sense of practical truth.

3. Dialogical relation and the truth of being

We have to consider two basic questions when we turn towards dialogue with the intention of understanding and shaping relations between religions through dialogical encounter. The first concerns the meaning of *dialogesthai* in the fulfilment and unfolding of human existence. The second refers to the place of dialogue on the path towards the recognition of truth and the assessment of recognized truths with the aim of deepening, enlarging

¹⁵ Unlike S. J. Samartha (cf. id., "Christen im Verhältnis zu Gläubigen anderer Religionen. Entwicklungen und Perspektiven", in *Dialog der Religionen* 1 [1991] 46), I would like to emphasize that searching for truth cannot be defined in opposition to 'having found the truth', but that searching and 'having found' express moments inherent in the relation with truth, which can be separated only at the expense of truth and sincerity.

and critiquing them by including and giving priority to practice. With regard to the first question, we must ask whether and to what extent dialogue between people makes a decisive contribution to the understanding of the truth of human existence and the formation of religious attitudes. The second question concerns the role of dialogue in the struggle for truth and the achieving of a humane world. It focuses on the consequences of dialogical experiences for relations between religious traditions and the shared truth of all being and thinking. I shall begin with the first question.

If we proceed from the fact that the word 'dialogue' means no more or less than that people speak with one another, it is clear that the experience of dialogue is an event without which it would be impossible to be and become a human being. The language we know and with which we identify ourselves has been spoken to us by others before we learned to speak it as our own language. Nobody can say 'I' without reference to the 'You' that has addressed him/her, without 'I' and 'You' having found each other and distinguished themselves from each other in the commonness of 'we', without there being a 'tertium quid' to which all who say 'I' could refer¹⁶. Language can certainly be used in different ways. Wherever people meet, many relations are possible. We can think of various forms of speaking and conceive of many ways of giving an answer. We may reflect seriously together, we may dispute with each other, we may converse about God and the world, or even crack jokes. But whatever possibilities there are, sooner or later we come back to the experience that our human nature bears the imprint of mutuality, that our own thinking and speaking is in need of the other person who thinks and replies in his own way, that the community of those who speak in their personally distinct manner is a necessary requirement for the emergence of culture and the validity of ethical relations.

The reality of dialogue suggested above may be reduced to the almost trivial fact that people talk to each other, and do it in such a way that there

¹⁶ With Martin Buber we could say that what corresponds to the tertium quid is the "Es-Welt", the "it-world", to which 'I' and 'you' are related in the same way. However, this is a matter not only of the factual givenness of things but also, and primarily, of the fact that the 'other' is a shared form of meaning which is shaped in personal encounters, and is not identical with the world, or with thinking, but represents its own (i. e. cultural) reality resulting from both. Cf. also the idea of a "third presence that must accompany the dialogue, so that the partners of interreligious dialogue can in fact turn towards each other", N. Solomon, "The Third Presence: Reflections on the Dialogue", in: T. Bayfield et al. (eds.), *Dialogue with a Difference*. London, 1992, pp. 147-162.

are no limits to this talking. But it should be noticed that this takes place with the fundamental assumption that partners are acknowledged in the spontaneity of their individual being. Anyone who engages in dialogue must not only speak but must also be ready to let others speak and listen to them, for the intended dialogue becomes a reality, if, and only if, the partners in dialogue are ready to let each other speak and to listen to one another. In contrast to the unlimited extent to which speaking is possible, we are confronted with limits which are imposed by dialogue itself. But they are limits which presuppose as well as constitute freedom by their very necessity. However we think of dialogue, one thing is sure; namely, that dialogue, to be dialogue, cannot be enforced.

In the configuration of acknowledgement and spontaneity, we have to leave it to the power of the word and to whether and how the word integrates the dialogue partners into its meaning; whether it confirms and expands the dialogical community in its initial integrity and integrality, or denies and destroys it. This is the one aspect of dialogue that results from the fact that the preconditions for speaking with each other are basically fulfilled but not necessarily guaranteed. However, if we respect the preconditions, the other aspect of dialogue emerges: this is the acknowledgement of the partners – whether we cultivate or neglect it, whether we deepen it or allow it to become shallow. In the movement which sustains the unfolding of dialogical encounters, we discern an opposite movement which is manifest in the constitution and preservation of dialogical relations, and is concerned with the conditions under which it is possible to have and maintain dialogues. The one movement presupposes the establishment of dialogical relations. The other relates to the formation of these relations, both as it has already taken place, and in its potential and possibilities for development both during and separately from their actualization.

We need not emphasize that the meaning, possibilities and truth of dialogue on the one hand depend on the formation of dialogical relations, and on the other are determined by the manner in which the development of dialogical encounters relates to the inherent demands and standards of the conditions required for their feasibility. Actual dialogues do continue and put (more or less) into practice what is possible in the specific conditions of human existence. They take account of what the partners in dialogue have to offer. But the problem has a deeper dimension: if we look at dialogues as they take place, we have also to consider the formation of dialogical relations and all the relevant factors. The formation of these re-

lations necessarily precedes words in dialogue, but it does not have the same meaning as the words, nor is its truth identical with the truths expressed in the words. Nevertheless, in spite of this difference, we cannot disregard the fact that the formation of relations draws these words and their truths into itself, at least in the sense that it carries them and makes them possible, and inevitably continues after the word has been spoken. Indeed, because the formation of dialogical relations has to be maintained, it is not only a necessary requirement for words, but is also shaped by them. In the unfolding of propositional truth through the words of dialogue we discover the truth of being which makes itself known in, and as a result of, the formation of dialogical relations. As organisms who have been born and are trying to stay alive, the partners in dialogue do not create their own being. But inasmuch as they acknowledge each other as persons, they predicate and enact themselves as beings who change and become different in the process of this predication. In the mode of mutual recognition they confirm the structure of propositional truth by becoming 'subjects' and 'predicates' of, and in, an event which defines them as persons and as parts of the order which gives substance to this event, and for which they are responsible as they establish themselves in its relations. It is an order which comes into being as they acknowledge it in their mutual recognition, but which also in turn carries and sustains them because it enables them to be themselves as representatives of this order. What is decisive is not only the experience that language allows us to portray reality and present it as a nexus of meanings which (depending on whether and how the presentation succeeds) is relevant and true, but also and primarily the fact that the truth, presented as image and portrayal, regains its being and re-emerges by becoming one with the relations in which it is concretized, and through which we are what we can be as persons and communities. The truth of these relations implies that we accept the claims of humanity: it manifests itself as we comply with these claims, and fades as we miss and lose the meaning of humanity¹⁷.

¹⁷ Of the various forms of truth, that of visual correspondence is probably the most convincing, especially when, as in sensual seeing, model and image directly fuse with one another. However, if we pay attention to our capacity to imagine things, which enables us to separate the two images again, we are not only reminded of a general experience, namely, that with the help of what we imagine, we are more or less successful in orienting ourselves in this world, but we are also confronted with the idea that impressions of difference and unity initiate the game of assigning and attributing meaning to reality, and are thus essential to what we call language. The form of truth that we come to know is that of the correspondence between

People talking with each other is certainly not the only thing that matters in life. But because the continuity of dialogical relations is essential to the meaning of being human and an indication of its truth as well as a guarantee of its fulfilment, dialogue is of decisive importance. In the conjunction of necessity and freedom, dialogue occupies the place where it is possible to turn towards the existential truth of human life and to cultivate the formation of dialogical relations in order to let their simple and substantial truth be the principle and goal of, and in, the unfolding of being human. Whether we think of dialogue as achievement or as challenge, it is evident that truth claims cannot be raised apart from experiences of dialogical encounter which, directly or indirectly, are part of these claims. First and foremost, however, it is clear that wherever the truth of human existence is under discussion, we have to deal with the formation of dialogical relations. Moreover, since religion is intimately interwoven with the meaning of being human, we have to add that it is not possible to conceive of a religious tradition which would abstain from the formation of dialogical relations, that is, if and to the extent that religion is rooted in, and striving for, the truth of being human as it is willed by God. On the contrary: whether we understand the formation of dialogical relations as the criterion for existential truth or as a task which takes shape within the actualization of our being, inasmuch as we believe in the truth of religious traditions, we have to say that dialogue has become indispensable and the dialogical principle has to be considered as an integral part of the formation of religious traditions. Whenever religion is truly religious, it must also be dialogical. If it is not, it is either

idea and thing (*adaequatio intellectus et rei*), as it is presupposed by the assessment of reality and developed and performed in processes of assessing. – This is not the place to go into further details concerning the problem of truth. Nevertheless, I would like to point out that the figure of dialogue, in its own way, can certainly be compared with the figure of judgments, which means that, when dialogue takes place, it is a living predication as far as the affirmation and development of its structures is concerned. This comparison fails if we only keep in mind the idea of presentation. Since the beginning of dialogue is always also its ending, its meaning is necessarily fulfilled in the affirmation of mutuality which, in dialogue, comprises the discourse itself as well as the partners who speak. Conversely, the comparison gains more depth and content, if we keep in mind that the point of the exercise is precisely this mutuality, the dignity and integrity of the participants within the integrality of what is happening. In fact, what characterizes dialogue is not the correspondence of thoughts vis-à-vis what (and how it) is the case, but the commonality of being human in the togetherness of human beings who adhere to the principles of humanity in the realization of their possibilities; who in the commonness of their being are consistent with themselves and their humanity – in a similar way as the formation of judgments should be consistent in its specific ways; who not only know truths but who, in truth, are what they can reasonably be in the circumstances of their respective existences.

no religion at all or else is not in keeping with the principles that are at the root of religious life. This brings me to the second question; namely, the question of the place and the importance of dialogue in the struggle for truth and the achievement of a humane world.

4. The validity and limits of the dialogical principle

Even if we are persuaded that the dialogical principle is a constituent of religious traditions, it could still be argued that the development and unfolding of dialogue is primarily a task of the spiritual life within the tradition into which one has been born, or to which one has converted, and to which one feels bound by a sense of a shared form of life. This is true insofar as it does not make sense to search for dialogue with others if life at home has become speechless, if the acknowledgement of one's fellow human beings is counted unimportant, or if they are excluded for the sake and on basis of the pattern of life of one's own community. However, if we bear in mind that the limits of human existence are not primarily drawn by human beings but are defined by the truth that is given with being human and the possibilities of human potential, it becomes clear that this argument is one-sided and untenable as expressed above. We could, of course, assume that being human is not identical, or is only conditionally identical, with the culture in which the human has grown up and that it is therefore necessary to distinguish between the two, that is to say, to abstain from identifying the encounter of human beings with an encounter between traditions. I think this distinction must be made. But at the same time I would argue that the interrelation between being and truth from which culture originates is such that man and culture, religious tradition and human existence, can be distinguished to the point where they fall apart or, at best, that in one or the other tradition they tend to form some sort of a unity. It is hard to say where and how the lines must be drawn. But whatever the answer to these questions, since human existence cannot be conceived of without culture and tradition, and because religious traditions need human beings and their cultures in order to come into existence, the opposition between human existence and culture cannot be pursued to the extent that their essential interdependence is lost.

In fact, as these distinct elements resist separation, I would like to argue that the validity of the dialogical principle cannot be suspended, whether for personal or religious or cultural reasons, nor could we think of a configu-

ration of religious traditions in which it would be acceptable to give up the formation and development of dialogical relations for the sake of truth. At first sight, there might be good reasons to think of models of confrontation, of inclusion and exclusion, of demarcation and neutralization, in order to cope with the relation between religious traditions. But there is no alternative to dialogue as long as we accept truth and humaneness as standards of human existence worth pursuing. Since truth is in itself, and essentially, indivisible, the development of dialogue within one's own tradition can only be true and truthful if the dialogical principle is also valid for being human outside that tradition, even though such an extension might be difficult and problematic.

But we should not forget that being oneself is only possible through being with others, and that the self-recognition, which our conscience needs in order to be conscientious, always includes the recognition of other human beings and cannot be called true if that recognition is missing. This applies when one human being encounters another. But it also applies to cultures and traditions, which are present in the encounter of human beings and which, in the encounter, set free meanings which have till then been bound in various ways to particular paradigms of meaning.

The idea of a model in which dialogue is essential to the formation and arrangement of relations between religious traditions is initially and basically grounded in the truth of being human, which consists in the formation of dialogical relations and is distinguished by these dialogical relations as a reality of truth. The development of this model is essential for the perception of existential truth which on the one hand precedes the unfolding of being human (*gratuite et per necessitatem*), and on the other is implemented and shaped (*impliciter et per intentionem*) by the attainment of humanity.

These findings are relevant in that they point to the responsibility for existential truth and confirm it as both a general and a specific task in the dialogical encounter; but they are also significant because and inasmuch as they attribute special importance to the connection between the truth of being human and propositional truths. With regard to the first, we may say that the meaning of a dialogical model is found in the challenge to comply with the conditions under which human beings communicate with each other in such a way that they are free to become themselves; this means that, being responsible for themselves, they have the right to express themselves freely without any fear that they may be risking death or punishment. With regard to propositional truths, the issue is whether and

in what sense experiences of dialogical encounter themselves are a starting point where the truth of being human can be recovered, and through which new aspects of that truth can be discovered and developed within, and together with, already acknowledged truth.

5. Dialogue and the general order of rights

When I speak of the cultural conditions in which it is possible to meet each other freely, I do not think immediately of religious dialogues between partners of different traditions, but of all kinds of contacts which occur for various reasons and, to the extent that they are not an expression of power, aim at a generally applicable order of rights. Within this order, dialogue has its own proper place. But dialogue is not necessarily the first and is certainly not the only purpose of its realization. Accordingly, the responsibility for this order is not only inherent in the nature of dialogical relations, but extends to all aspects of human existence.

Nevertheless, if we bear in mind that it is precisely the reality of dialogical relations which depends on the general order of rights under which dialogue becomes possible (because it is not restricted by decrees or other considerations), it follows that such an order has always been and already is required by dialogue, and that the truth in (and of) dialogical relations is not only sustained by the reality of the order of rights, but also needs to be seen and developed in connection with that reality. Inasmuch as the formation of dialogical relations is an indispensable trait of the truth of being human, it is in itself part of the general task of achieving a comprehensive order of rights. Conversely: to the extent that a general order of rights is an indispensable prerequisite for dialogical relations, the development and form of that order is necessarily implied by the truth of dialogical relations. In whatever form we have to conceive of religious truths, from the viewpoint of formal considerations we must declare that religious traditions are challenged and obliged to co-operate in the development and the acceptance of a general order of rights. This is a challenge which originates in the truth of being human, and an obligation which is part of human responsibility. But co-operation and development are also a task which belongs to the essential meaning of dialogue, for dialogues do not only take place with certain intentions and goals in view, but are also an event expressive of being human which shows there is a truth already, before intentions and goals can set out to recover that truth.

Apart from this basic correlation between dialogue and the general order of rights, there is also a more specific reason to connect them which lies in the fact that the idea and reality of religious freedom are found in various religious traditions and persuasions, but cannot be fulfilled unless there is a general order of rights that supports them. The development of such an order and the form it should take is a complex problem. We may think of the solution to it in terms of principles, but we cannot anticipate what it may mean precisely in concrete terms, for development and form depend on the specific circumstances of human existence and whether they are more or less in agreement with this order, or need it more than ever, because times have changed considerably. Therefore, we cannot expect religious traditions always to cooperate openly and fully; nor is it justifiable to expect that they will structure and establish the general order of rights alone. On the other hand, I am convinced that the idea of religious freedom is a topic of decisive importance not only because of the self-understanding of religious traditions, but because it is an issue that underlines more than any other their responsibility for the general order of rights.

It is essential to the inner life of religious traditions that it should develop freely. The idea of freedom in religion therefore refers to an ideal which every tradition likes to claim for itself. But matters become problematic when divergent developments take place within a particular tradition, or when claims of one tradition come into conflict with those of the other. The situation of religious traditions is comparable with that of human beings and cultures. Both situations interblend, since it is ultimately one and the same human nature which, according to varying circumstances and interests, is getting in people's own way. We all face the same possibility of destruction, oppression and loss of freedom on the one hand, and commonality, co-operation and freedom on the other. But separately and together these situations reveal the need for a general order of rights to deter negative developments and support whatever is positive and in line with the needs of humanity.

Since the freedom of dependent beings, who owe their existence to the gift of others, cannot be reasonably realized without the imperative of mutuality, the ideal of religious freedom becomes necessarily a question of how the claims of various traditions can be integrated into a general order of rights which presents itself as the basis of religious freedom, and grants and requires that freedom where it is denied. Whether we think of the establishment of a general order of rights, or of the right to religious freedom, it should be clear that religious traditions are also called to make

their contribution. First and foremost, however, religious freedom presents itself not merely as an issue which brings religious traditions directly into confrontation with the order of rights, but as a test case where their meaning within the realm of humanity is at stake. In coping with religious freedom, the various traditions have to decide for themselves whether their time is over, or whether they represent real forces capable of dealing with self-inflicted suffering, and strong enough to guide afflicted people into a life of truth and dignity.

To the extent that it is possible to speak of a general order of rights in the present world, we have to concede that it has been established largely apart from, and outside the sphere of, religious traditions. In many instances, its development has been inspired by motives of religious origin, but the motives themselves have not been provided directly by religious traditions. These facts raise critical questions concerning the formation and development of the order of rights within frameworks of cultural actuality, and the role of religious traditions in the implementation and acceptance of this order. The most important question in this context, however, is whether dialogue between religious traditions (which has become possible because the existing order of rights grants religious freedom) is not only clear evidence for the right of religious freedom, but also an essential feature of its meaning and reality; that is to say, whether dialogue is a necessary element in the formation and development of the general order of rights, and of decisive importance as far as the relationship between religious traditions and the order of rights is concerned¹⁸.

With this question, I return to the observation that the meaning of truth in dialogical relations expands into the reality of the general order of rights, and that encounters in the form of dialogue can be identified as a possibility prefigured in the essence of this order. In the movement which links the general order of rights with the advent of dialogical encounter, and in turn connects the unfolding of the latter with the development of the former, dialogue proves itself to be a confirmation of what it means to be a human being. It presents itself as a medium in which we recognize possibilities which pertain to the meaning of being human in the diversity of its modes and appearances. The occurrence of free dialogues is not only a gift for which we are indebted to particular traditions, but it also points to the general order

¹⁸ It is no coincidence that Vatican II, as well as the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions "Nostra aetate"* also formulated a *Declaration on Religious*

of rights as a gift of and to humanity¹⁹. In whatever form they take place, by virtue of the truth which is expressed in the event, dialogues benefit from, and participate in, the unfolding of the general order of rights, which in principle is given with the act of being human. At the same time they constitute a place where human beings are obliged to care for the general order of rights, in accordance with the potential of their tradition and beyond the limitations of particular situations. To care for this order of rights is a task which is not only important to the development of humanity, but which becomes even more important with increasing possibilities of being and becoming human in different forms of dialogue. Dialogue is a duty which every religious tradition must accept if it does not want to lose its credibility. But it is also a right to which each tradition is entitled as long as it is oriented towards truth and human dignity.

The successful realization of a general order of rights requires the interaction and co-operation of many forces, including those which mark and determine the life of religious traditions. It should be evident that the objective of these efforts is not the construction and enforcement of a general order within which the different cultures, traditions, and religions would have to cease, or where the history they express should be eradicated²⁰. Rather, it is of first importance that the standards of the general order of rights, which have always and already been operative in various situations, are enacted and that what has become reality within the various expressions of human existence be connected again with its preconditions and principles, so that this reality may find its rightful place within the essential truth of being human, that is a reality which confirms it in the mutuality of intrinsic relations. In the constellation of these relations, dialogue proves itself to be a token and sign of the validity and presence of the general order of rights. It stands for the fact that the one truth which, in and with the formation of dialogical relations, manifests itself in the idea and reality of a general order of rights, can be scrutinized and examined in dialogue.

Freedom "Dignitatis humanae". Even though the two declarations have motives of their own and as it were, speak for themselves, one should not forget that they share the same implicit logic. As far as their purpose is concerned, the one declaration cannot be isolated from the other.

¹⁹ I think of verse 35 of Sūra 5, which points out that he who murders a human being (and thus, who definitively ends all dialogues) acts "as if he slew the whole people".

²⁰ To set up such a construction could indeed be understood as a 'solution' to all the problems which result from the fact that people are different from one another. But since neither

6. Dialogue as an experiment in mutuality

The conjunction of dialogue and a general order of rights on the one hand, and of the order of rights and religious freedom on the other, affirms nothing more or less than that the possibility and reality of dialogical encounters are an indispensable feature of being human. In view of the form and circumstances in which human existence presents itself, various forms of dialogue are to be expected. We can distinguish dialogues between people of different communities from dialogues within a specific community. In distinction from dialogues within the same religion and culture we become aware of the possibility of encounters which can be described as examples of intercultural and interreligious dialogues. In all these instances people necessarily talk with each other, which means that the meaning of being human is recognized as truth and manifests itself in dialogical relations; that wherever dialogical relations already exist, they are to be maintained, deepened and not severed; that wherever they do not yet exist, they are to be established and developed. But dialogical engagements are also an involvement with a general order of rights, which means that dialogues are not only a confirmation of the actuality of this order, but also a means to understand and improve that order; that the truth which emerges in them is a criterion as well as a guide in the pursuit of the meaning of this order and its reality. In the specifications and guidelines which dialogue provides for work on a general order of rights, both that work and its subject are referred back to the actuality of the dialogue itself. In order to achieve these goals in the spirit of dialogue, compatibility between people, cultures and traditions is both necessary and critical. What is effective is not uniformity and the levelling of difference, but the togetherness of people who are both the same as and different from each other which proves its truth in peaceful plurality on the basis of the same general order of rights that encourages and sustains that plurality.

The relations which mark this characterization of dialogue unite in the idea that the practice of dialogue is not only a touchstone of mutual acknowledgment, but also the place and the medium where, and with the

conceiving nor implementing plans is possible outside a particular language and culture; any design of this kind remains bound to the particularity of its origin. Even if the opposite seems to be true, the result does not do away with the concrete diversity of what has come about, but rather confirms it in the sense that the power of those who are stronger determines the 'law' to which the weaker have to submit.

help of which, it is possible to test the peace-keeping capacities which can somehow be found in all human beings as well as in their cultures and traditions. The ability to relate to each other in dialogical contexts allows us to focus on dialogue as an experiment in comprehensive mutuality, and to discover in truth and truthfulness what remains to be learned in order to improve the general order of rights and to attain the ideal of religious freedom. Since the annihilation of the partners' identity cannot constitute dialogue, the real question to be raised and answered in dialogue is, first and last, not whether one or the other is the better human being, whether one or the other culture, or one or the other religion, is the only true culture or religion which deserves to be fulfilled. It is rather a question of whether and how all can find and recover the truth of their being in the primeval meaning of dialogue in such a way that the truth that is recovered agrees fully with the order of rights that makes it possible to exist and develop one's potential. In the light of this, the purpose of inter-religious dialogue is not the removal of difference, but its purification in the knowledge that difference originates in the truth of being human. As an experiment, the practice of dialogue can teach us how to find the way back to the essentials where the right to one's own religious freedom provides the basis for the religious freedom of others, and where the experiences of this possibility and its initial realization in dialogue enable the pursuit of the road to the fulfilment of their full potential.

The goals and tasks that emerge from these deliberations are first and foremost of a practical kind. They concern real life, as it actually presents and defines itself in expressions of a mutuality which determines and reveals the meaning of being human. And although dialogue and the formation of dialogical relations call for the realization of these goals and tasks, they are not restricted to dialogue. By being its own purpose and beginning, dialogue is in fact different from other ways of being human. When it takes place, dialogue draws the whole of human existence, as it has developed and come to exist, into the moment of particular encounter and binds it to this moment in an act of original spontaneity. When word and being are linked with one another, world and reality begin to reveal themselves in dialogue and become a subject of shared inquiries about common goals. The importance of dialogue is beyond question. But no less important are the various conditions and features which form the background to the dialogical encounter event, and which must not be disregarded, for it is they that make it possible for dialogues speak for themselves.

On the other hand, for the same reason that it is possible to trace the movements which place dialogue at the centre of human reality and allow us to look at it in the light of dialogical relations, we can also come to an understanding of reality as a whole in the spirit of dialogue, and merge it with insights that have been gained and may be developed through dialogical experiences and experiments.

7. The concept of truth in the spirit of dialogue

The question that arises at this point concerns the concept of truth as truth manifests itself in the formation of dialogical relations, and as it reveals itself in the spirit of dialogue. The appeal to the spirit of dialogue implies that the truth we seek has to be approached under conditions which accord with the practice of dialogue, and can be confirmed and verified in the actuality of the dialogical event. We have to ask ourselves particularly what the principle of acknowledging what is true and holy really means when we approach it in the spirit of dialogue, that is to say, when we follow the rules of theoretical reasoning, and accept the practical unconditionality of the truth of being human as it presents itself in contexts of dialogical encounter. We cannot and must not put truth aside. But before we stop short at the inexorability of truth expressed in the form of judgments, we should ask ourselves whether we have understood what we call truth, or whether the relentlessness with which we block off other conceptions may not after all represent an expression of self-complacent dogmatism rather than obedience in freedom¹¹.

Since the understanding of truth depends on the insights which have been achieved, it does not matter how truth has been arrived at in terms of theoretical reasoning. In this regard, we could argue that dialogue may be important in a didactic sense or as a source of information, but that this does not change the fact that the battle for truth has to be fought with means accessible to understanding. Nor do dialogical experiences change the obligation to acknowledge what is true and holy and to reject what is untrue and unholy. On the other hand, dialogue retains its meaning, even if recognized truths are contradictory. Even if claims to holiness seem to have turned into

¹¹ It would not surprise me if what keeps us away from a meaningful and God-willed order of existence, on a small and a large scale, were not only lack of benevolence and necessary virtues, but also opinions about truth which we adopt in assessing our own tradition and especially the tradition and symbol systems of others.

its opposite, they should be maintained at least as long as we can speak with each other. The validity of this requirement rests at least partly on the grounds of the search for the greater truth. But the requirement derives, strictly speaking, not directly from the specific truth itself, and certainly not from an indifference to spiritual values and other religious truths; it results rather from the truth of being human which presents itself originally and unconditionally in contexts of dialogical relations²².

The core of dialogue which manifests itself in possible contradictions between the demands of recognized truths and the continuity of dialogical encounters, consists primarily in the reality of the simpler truth which is taken as given in the formation of dialogical relations, and which cannot be undone by recognized truths because they themselves are rooted in it. Indeed, whereas truth in the context of dialogical relations is at once simpler and more complex than we tend to assume, the event itself relates to the unfathomable presence of truth both as a necessary condition of its possibility and as the implicit objective of its occurrence. The connection between simpler and more complex truth turns out to be a principle which emerges in dialogical experiences, and to which we can appeal when we follow the inspirations of these experiences and let ourselves be guided in our efforts to deal with both known truths and those still to be recognized.

Of primary importance is not what is said in dialogue, nor that dialogical encounters reveal the truth of being human, but that dialogue itself is an event which presents itself as a means of understanding and orientation because, in principle, it is the actual connection between the simpler truth and the more complex. As a medium of truth, dialogue is, in essence, also an instrument by which to find truth. In emphasizing the event in dialogical encounters, I do not imply that dialogue has no didactic qualities or that it could not be a source of information (which it certainly is), but that dialogue offers the chance to improve the understanding of one's own tradition and of other traditions; that it enables us to study them in the spirit of dialogue, and connect them in practice and in theory with the simpler as well as the more complex truth that are essential to the event. The question about what is true and holy cannot be answered directly, and the answer becomes even more difficult if it concerns other cultures, tradi-

²² Cf. also M. Wiles, *Christian Theology and Inter-religious Dialogue*. London, 1992, p. 80: "The only requirements that one participant can make of his or her partner in dialogue are requirements imposed by the nature of dialogue as such."

tions and religions. For this reason and because it is a question where truthfulness is as important as it is difficult to achieve, I am convinced that this question can only be answered in the spirit of dialogue and in no other way. The attempt to answer in the spirit of dialogue means that the connection between simpler and more complex truths serves as a principle of orientation in the light of which we begin to realize that we could think and act as representatives of how other cultures, traditions and religions truly think and act. The emphasis is on truth in the thoughts, acts and attitudes of others. It is complemented by the insight that we comply with the demands of truth when we follow our own way and not the ways of others, if and to the extent that this way is compatible with the idea and reality of a general order of rights²³.

The realization of possibilities which originate in dialogical encounters presupposes the actual occurrence of these encounters. As this realization takes place, it seeks good and better encounters with everyone willing and capable of joining the process. But to think and act in the spirit of dialogue is not identical either with dialogical encounters or with the experiences that accompany them. The task is rather to reflect anew on ourselves and everything we know and understand, what we believe and hope, what we do and are, in the light of truth proper to dialogue and let the result of our reflection make itself felt in unity with this truth.

The meaning of dialogue, which aims at the understanding and realization of truth, concurs with the spirit of dialogue inasmuch as the latter reveals itself primarily in the anticipation of the fulfilment of human destiny, spontaneously and in various signs, but also as impetus towards order and unity. In the light of this revelation the endeavor to establish a general order of rights is a task which concerns all and excludes none. It is an order which turns religious freedom into a human right, and in which talking with each other is a self-evident feature of being human.

²³ Cf. also M. Wiles: "There is a minimal sense in which the word 'dialogue' indicates no more than the basic courtesy of allowing the other person to speak, even though one is convinced that he or she is wholly mistaken and that one has nothing to learn from what he or she has to say. But in speaking of inter-religious dialogue or interfaith dialogue, something more than that is implied. Dialogue in that context is not just the name of a more civilized or socially acceptable way of achieving the same ends that were previously intended by the one-sided preaching to the unconverted. It involves a genuinely reciprocal process, in which the two parties stand on an equal footing of readiness to receive as well as to give. And if that is implied by 'dialogue', it necessarily involves seeing the other religion as in some sense a revelation of God from which we need to learn." *Op. cit.* (fn. 22) p. 4.

However, by accepting the invitation to enter dialogue, we also understand that true togetherness can only be achieved if it remains bound to solitude, in which a "quiet conversation", das "stille Gespräch"²⁴, with truth takes place. In the certainty that truth is one, the spirit of dialogue invites and compels us to study the history of religions in accordance with the ideals of 'objective scholarship'; that is to say, that we suspend all judgments in order to receive anew and from changing perspectives what we know already and whatever else may be understood. But the same spirit also reminds us that truth is personal; that there is no truth which, in essence, is not mediated in human nature and tradition, which is not shaped by culture and language and does not obtain a living meaning in the practice of being human, which does not need insights into the relations between being and growing in order to be understood as truth. How one is connected to the other cannot be expressed in a few words. But it is obvious that the efforts required by dialogue do not cease when we are alone or among people of similar convictions. On the contrary, they have to be continued in the light of insights which are gained in dialogue, and aim at the transformation of our own existence as well as an understanding of truth that is in tune with the basic needs entailed in being human.

²⁴ F. W. J. Schelling, *Die Weltalter. Fragmente. In der Urfassung von 1811 und 1813* (ed. by M. Schröter). München, 1946, p. 114.

[Study Group 1]

what does 'truth of being' mean?

OTT What we call 'convergence of truth' and 'ad-aequatio intellectus ad rem' may in fact not suffice for the understanding of truth. If, complementarily, we want to use the term 'truth of being', we must clarify more clearly what this expression means. From the history of philosophy we may assume that, while the meaning of the former concept is generally known, that is not so for the concept of 'truth of being'. It may well be that a new approach is intended through the use of this concept but what is meant by it should be explained more clearly.

KHOURY Could we not find an approach to the concept 'truth of being' in human nature, which reaches out towards others? Man is a social being. If he/she is generally dependent upon the other in order to become a human being, this must be true also in the religious context: i. e. only in an attitude of dialogue, opening ourselves up to others, can we fully realize our religious identity.

on the concept of a 'general order of rights'

And the other central concept, a 'general order of rights', obviously has to be understood as a necessary precondition for religious dialogue to take place at all, although in this context the concept of religious freedom seems more concrete than that of a general order of rights. Or does this general order of rights have only a protective function: that people can open up in dialogue without any threat from outside, so that religious freedom is thereby protected? How would a general order of rights have to be defined in greater detail with regard to the dialogue situation which we are supposed to enter in order to realize our identity as religious persons?

BIRK Perhaps we could understand such an order of rights as an order of life-enabling people to live together? Are people, including groups, supposed to arrange their life in such a way that they can all live and lead a good life? If so, agreements are certainly required, and certain ways of behaving have to be inculcated. It would not be possible to deduce such an order of life from the Charter of Human Rights; it would have to be able to grow as a process right up from below. We might also associate such an understanding with the concept of 'truth of being': that we mutually allow each other to live and say; I want to live, and I also want you to live.

'truth of being'
as precondition
for dialogue

SALMEN If we start with the assumption that the event of dialogue may already be understood as a mode of truth, then the truth of being would be its necessary precondition, in the sense of Kant's regulative idea, as something that has always to be presupposed if dialogue as a process of truth is to take place at all. In such an event, truth would not be 'made' in the dialogue, but revealed; and, as a prerequisite, it would at the same time have in itself a space for freedom, a legal space. Or, in the sense of Habermas' thesis, freedom of speech simply has to be possible.¹

truth and
dialogue

LEUZE Truth, as defined by Habermas, also forms a contrast with 'dialogue'. Or should the process of dialogue, according to Dupré, be itself regarded as truth? After all, truth must be sought only behind the dialogue, whether in the sense of the old correspondence theory, or in Habermas' consensus theory. To look more closely, can interreligious dialogue be truth if, in spite of dialogue, everyone ultimately maintains his position? Or is it truth only if a consensus emerges through this compulsion-free discourse? It certainly cannot be that we say: although we are not of the same opinion, we have at least talked with each other, and this is already truth. In the dispute between religions, is it not primarily truth claims that compete with one another? And in view of that could we be content with having heard this or that about each other? Could one simply leave it at that or is there something more?

nexus between
an order of rights
and discourse
ethics?

WOLBERT If we enter into dialogue with another person, we must already have acknowledged certain ethical principles. Following the line of Mr. Khoury's question and Habermas, would this not make us think of a nexus between an order of rights and discourse ethics?

multifarious
levels of dialogue

KHOURY Since we cannot realize our identity in isolation but only in communication, the human truth of being is expressed in dialogue. Just as the various levels of communication at which human existence is actualized may be different, so, in consequence, the levels of dialogue in discourse with others on the truths of faith are equally multifarious. Before anything is 'achieved' in this discourse, dialogue itself is already indicated as an essential ex-

¹ Cf. J. Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*. 2 vols. Frankfurt/M., 1981; *Moralbewußtsein und kommunikatives Handeln* (Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft; 422). Frankfurt/M., 1983.

pression of human existence and is characterized by what we may mean by the concept of 'truth of being'. Thus the area in which people agree or disagree on certain truths would hold considerable scope for dialogue. So the line of Mr. Dupré's ideas would be convincing.

*ens et verum
convertuntur*

WESS An early scholastic axiom, *ens et verum convertuntur*, refers to an ontological truth, a general lucidity or cognizability of being. And this being is (if I understand Dupré's ideas) a priori to be understood not as static or monistic, but as a dialogical being. In actual dialogue the truth already given and preformed in the dialogical being would then unfold, moving within the context of this dialogically designed being and borne by it.

become what
you are and
what you are not

SALMEN The fact that the being of the person has to be understood not as something static, but as unfolding, can perhaps also be expressed as: become what you are and what you are not, and also what you can never become on your own, where a mutual relation is needed. In this sense, dialogue, no matter what its outcome actually is, would in itself already be a way of realizing one's own personal being. This growing self-awareness then becomes part of the person's growth. Seen from this perspective, the fundamental question arises of whether and to what extent it is possible or necessary (even in the context of religious dialogue) to hold onto one's own viewpoint, or whether being a person always presupposes that one's own standpoint has to be considered as open and exposed to dialogue.

to what extent
are we supposed
to be ready to
hold a dialogue?

KHOURY Mr. Dupré's paper called for an understanding of the tenets of faith in the spirit of dialogue. Did this imply only an ever deeper cognition of these truths, or also an openness towards understanding them in radically new and different ways? This question of the extent of one's openness and readiness to communicate in the context of dialogue should be taken very seriously.

OTT Karl Rahner has expressed in an interesting short essay his ideas about a collective mode of finding truth²: where the issue is not so much specific facts, but rather being human, so religious truths are primary. If dialogue is concerned with this kind of truth, we could conceive that it may occasionally become a place where elements of truth shine out.

² K. Rahner, "A Small Fragment 'On the Collective Finding of Truth'" in: id., *Concerning Vatican Council II* (Theological Investigations; 6). London etc., 1974, pp. 82-88.

is there truth only in dialogue?

Another question is, of course, whether truth can emerge only in dialogue. It is one thing to say that truth is not only seen in the form of Aristotelean truths of 'adequation' (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*), but can also take various other forms, and in certain cases may only emerge in dialogue. But it is quite another to claim that truth (at least for us) could *only* become clear in dialogue. Then the whole adequation understanding of truth would lose its validity. Extending the concept 'truth of being' in this way might lead to a misunderstanding of Mr. Dupré's deliberations on the subject. In any case, the concept needs further clarification.

dialogue with whom ...

KHOURY The question that arises next is how we should differentiate in this context between dialogue within a certain religious community and dialogue between different religious communities. In other words, can the truth of a particular religious community only become visible within that same community or can it – for instance the truth of Christianity – only be discovered if dialogue is held with all the other religions of the world?

... and of what kind?

WOLBERT And the question must also be raised of whether any kind of conversation is to be understood as dialogue – for example, an exchange with people who would refuse a blood transfusion even if it were necessary to save the life of their child. Would not the goal of such a discourse be, at most, to understand better how these people have arrived at such a view and not really to find the truth in it? What kind of conversation would ultimately be considered 'dialogue' in the sense discussed here?

dictum and contradiction

FÜGLISTER Does not dialogue in fact presuppose dictum and contradiction, a certain idea and a response to it or even a contradiction of it? Can there be a dialogue between people of the same opinion? Does it not assume different opinions and in some way a confrontational situation?

... and prophetic intuition in dialogue

We may add another question too: if truth can become obvious and plausible – may we not also see this as an intuition that may possibly be granted on quite a small scale, particularly in dialogue, through the contradiction? For example, the ancient Greeks did not speak about God in an abstract manner, but said, "θεός ἐστίν" when they had some sort of experience of something divine or numinous, which may also have been love or meetings between people – "θεός ἐστίν". Likewise we could also speak

of ἀληθὴν ἐστίν, if something suddenly dawns upon us intuitively – for example during the discourse, in dictum and contradiction. If we apply the axiom of an *adaequatio rei et intellectus* to religion – is God and the divine then the 'res'? If so, we are talking about something that cannot be defined, but must somehow dawn upon us. So here I would like to refer to the importance of prophetic intuition which may, even with prophets, happen in dictum and contradiction, in the dialogical process between God and man.

'truth of being' and 'truth of revelation'

KRÜGER Concerning the concepts we are discussing here, we should perhaps regard 'truth of being' as a philosophical concept, whereas as theologians we would in this context prefer to speak of revelation. Then the discussion would take on another aspect.

LEUZE 'Truth of being' seems to be a concept that goes beyond 'revealed truth', since truth of being expresses a general *proprium* of human existence, which is then realized in dialogue but which, in its nature, is not directly dependent on revelation.

To go on to another point, what is meant by the proposition that the process of dialogue itself is already a form of truth? In any case if we say that we realize our being by speaking with each other, this means something different from Platonic dialogue. Furthermore, the relation in dialogue between being in general and the truths of religions needs to be clarified in greater detail.

SALMEN If we raise the question as one of classical metaphysics, the axiom "*ens et verum convertuntur*" would refer to factual or objective truths, which nevertheless in themselves exist by referring back to being itself – since initially we think of "*ens et verum convertuntur*" (not: *esse et verum*) and *ens* is after all derived from *esse*.

Again, something like this flash of the divine as Plato expressed it, can also be found in Aquinas and the same is ultimately at the heart of all dialogical efforts. In classical metaphysics, when *esse* is interpreted as symbolic of God, all attempts to attain truth (including every dialogue characterized by such efforts) are oriented towards making us more conscious of this divine reality. When religions then publicly put forward a revelational claim, the implication is certainly that God is revealing himself in it. Dialogue would then provide the possibility of tracing these differences back to the point where the original experience is referred to or recalled or even expressed in the prophetic message.

anthropological observations on these discussions

BIRK Following on from what Mr. Khoury has said in this context, what we are discussing here can be much better understood in the light of anthropology. If something happens, such as an experience of an intuitive opening up or breaking in (which, as Mr. Füglistner mentioned, the Greeks called *ἀληθὸν ἔστιν, θεὸς ἔστιν*, a reality which overwhelmed humans and which was suddenly present within them), nobody can suppress it; we have to share it with others.

It may be that what is experienced and communicated in this way is accepted, and that those to whom it is granted try to acknowledge and even affirm it, for something of a truth has come into being that is compelling for them.

But others might protest, referring to diverse experiences which are perhaps already integrated into a tradition, and from which quite different points of reference for the perception of reality understandably develop. As is well known, Peter Berger posits Jerusalem as the spiritual topos of a religion that arises from outside, in contrast to Benares as centre of those religions that, so to speak, emerge from within. Here the classical opportunity for dialogue emerges, dialogue based on aspects of existential background and experience, where we may find various approaches to the actualization and understanding of religious reality and where we would have to live together and communicate with each other for quite a while in order to grasp the context in which certain religious experiences are encountered by somebody else and what they mean to her/him. So a considerable period of life, forming a process of concretely experienced interaction, has to be involved. In any case, what is important here first is mutual communication, from which a well-founded dialogue can develop.

a reference to C. G. Jung

GLADKOWSKI Carl Gustav Jung was of the opinion that it is impossible for a human being to identify him/herself completely with another culture, and similarly, just as we are not able completely to understand another culture, so it is with another religion.

FÜGLISTER Affirming this, Jung also speaks about archetypes that are generally valid and exist in the collective subconsciousness, and are therefore common to all human beings. This theory did not go uncontested, but Jung acknowledges both elements – that each human being has his/her religion, and that, on the other hand, everyone who really lives his/her religion and participates in it thoroughly, discovers what is essential and common to

all. According to him, there is a universal commonness even in the religious, and this conception then finds concrete expression in his doctrine of the archetypes.

truths of faith only to be recognized in the dialogue of religions?

KHOURY Religion refers to a word of God, but that word is quite sparingly given. What takes up far more space within the various religions are people's responses to the word of God. There are so many different people and religious communities, each of them expressing their own reply to the (supposed or real) word of God, so that the full truth of religions only unfolds in dialogue between them. In this sense we can only recognize the full extent of this truth of religions in dialogue, but we would then no longer be speaking of 'the truth of faith', but of 'the truth of religions in general'. Is this what the lecture meant by saying that the truths of faith are to be understood in the spirit of dialogue and that the truths of faith of a particular religion can only be grasped in dialogue between religions?

truth of being – propositional truth – truth as person

OTT Despite the diversity of the questions we are raising, much of this discussion seems to be moving in the same direction. First, with regard to the last idea referred to, we have to wonder whether and to what extent there can be dialogue of all with all, whether we can be in dialogue with all. Do not generalized intentions of this kind contradict the historical reality in which there have always been only quite concrete and specific dialogue situations?

Moreover, the term 'truth of being' seems to have been introduced by Mr. Dupré because he wanted to differentiate between this kind of truth and 'propositional truth' which an individual is in a position to articulate by making his/her own statement without reference to another truth. This propositional truth may or may not correspond to reality. In contrast, the 'truth of being' would suggest that a number of people – a group, a culture or a religious orientation – discover together what becomes evident to them together. Neither the 'truth of adequation' nor the 'truth of consensus' can provide an exhaustive understanding of truth. In the Bible, for example, another truth is expressed, in Heidegger's interpretation of the Greek word *ἀ-λήθεια*: something manifests itself, becomes bright and clarifies; or in the sense of the Hebrew word *'aemaet*: this truth is now valid, and one can rely on it and build upon it. And then there is the significant passage in Jn 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" – truth being a person; or,

to put it less religiously: truth is like an organism, not a system of facts or a system of possible statements of those facts, but an organism, developing in the history of one in one way and of another differently.

As for the person of the Lord who himself *is* the truth: obviously there is also a type of truth, which, in the form of a human being, can encounter various people in the intersubjective personal context very differently. Everyone who knows this human being perceives him somewhat differently, and there is no need to say that only one is right and the other is wrong, as if only one perspective corresponds to reality. The truth of this person reveals itself in different ways, and all can participate in this truth in their own individual way. This could perhaps be a model for reflecting further on the concept of truth of being.

BIRK Perhaps this is the place to refer to a statement found in the joint document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples on "*Dialogue and Proclamation*" (May 19, 1991), which says among other things that although Christians believe "that in Jesus Christ [...] the fullness of revelation has been given to them", they also know that "in the last analysis truth is not a thing we possess, but a person by whom we must allow ourselves to be possessed" (nnr. 48 f.).

truth as person – differently perceived **KHOURY** When truth is a person, as is expressed in Christian faith in Jesus Christ, that person can of course be differently perceived. And in dialogue, in exchanging the different modes of experiencing and recognizing that person, it becomes possible to attain an ever deeper understanding of his truth. On the other hand, how can we discern which of the different ways of experiencing are in fact related to that person and in keeping with him, and which are not? It cannot suffice simply to say that another person or another community have this or that experience of truth which can be accepted, just as it is, as one more small stone in the mosaic of the entire image of truth. It must be somehow possible to examine critically the truthfulness of assertions which refer specifically to Jesus Christ, and confirm whether or not a particular small stone does in fact accord with the image of his person as a whole.

exclusivist or open to all? **LEUZE** Identifying truth with a particular person does of course carry the danger and the problem of becoming a position with a pronounced exclusivist character.

KHOURY If it is true that Jesus Christ is the way to the Father, it could ul-

timately mean that people who have had an experience of God must always also have something to do with Christ. If Jesus Christ is the truth that is to guide all human beings on their way to God, then the possibility of attaining God also implies the possibility that they should be in line with the truth of Jesus Christ. Seen in this way, the identification of truth with the person of Jesus Christ would in principle not be exclusive, but would propose thinking in terms of the relationship of Jesus Christ towards all human beings who seek the truth.

personal and propositional truth

FÜGLISTER Saying simply that Muslims have the truth of their faith in the Qur'an, Jews in the Torah and Christians in the person of Jesus Christ is not without problems. As for the person of Jesus Christ, we must not forget that access to him is essentially provided by the Scriptures, that is by propositional truths. The truth of faith certainly wants to take possession of us, but it is expressed in propositional truths which we can investigate further. At any rate, this is implied in our reflections on the juxtaposition of personal and propositional truths.

KUSTUSZ Christians certainly have the content of their faith expressed in the form of statements, but at the same time they also have Christ in his person, in the Church and in the sacraments; and Christ in his person takes possession of those who believe in him before, and more than, they relate to any statement.

FÜGLISTER We can find experience of God, and people being deeply moved, as well as sacraments and similar realities, in other religions too. As humans we can only have experiences in a personal way; but, as soon as we want to communicate them, we have to clothe them in sentences. Christians have to do this with regard to the various ways in which they experience Christ. Here it seems remarkable that the mystics in all religious traditions speak a similar language, obviously because, despite all the differences, they ultimately have quite similar experiences.

LEUZE There is no doubt that every religious person must make statements to express what he/she wants to convey about his/her faith. It is from the meaning of these statements that differences arise. In the Christian faith they refer to a person and this is central in a very special way, because for Christians the encounter with Christ is also in the nature of an encounter with God. Compared with the Islamic faith, there is a difference in what is behind the propositional truths, what is meant by them and what is expressed in them.

social equality
and the question
of truth

MITTERHÖFER In the lecture a general order of rights was proposed which would guarantee freedom of religious practice and religious speech, so that every follower of the various religions could make their indi-

vidual contribution to the dialogue of religions. Does this not grant every religion fundamental equality and equal status? And if so, does it mean the final rejection of any claim to absoluteness?

KHOURY Concerning equality and the equal status of people within the frame of a general order of rights, what is meant is the right to one's own experience of God and the right to express it. No theological assessment of any kind about whether and to what extent these experiences of God are equal and of the same status is intended. The ultimate aim of such an order of rights would be that no one would be excluded by law from dialogue between partners enjoying equal rights. This is quite distinct from equality and equal status on the question of truth.

LEUZE But if the event of dialogue itself is defined as truth, the impression could arise that there are in fact no longer any gradations. The meaning of truth, as referred to in the lecture, still needs further explanation.

MITTERHÖFER If Christian revelation understands itself as a conclusive revelation and if we assume that this truth can be better understood only in dialogue within one's own religious community, with other Christian communities and also with other religions, do we not also have to allow Muslims or any other believers to make the same assumptions? Are they not entitled to consider their religion to be just as absolute? From this perspective, do we not gain a picture of a city where all the houses are equal in size and the house I live in is more or less a matter of coincidence?

LEUZE This would represent a pluralistic theology of religions.

the word
in the context
of personal
encounter

OIT As Mr. Füglistner has said, it is right that Christian faith should not present itself as being superior by saying: we have a person, you only have books? It is also true that Christians have the testimony of Christ in the form of words. However, words and sentences are not

necessarily propositional truths. Similarly, not every grammatical sentence is an affirmative sentence; whether it is or not depends on its grammatical structure. In the context of personal encounter, a verbal assertion may be made, but is not essential.

I would like to agree with Mr. Khoury's proposition that not every subjective, individual experience can be simply accepted just as it is presented.

We must be ready to examine critically, argue and counter-argue, by justifying rationally or by appealing to the other to rethink his/her positions or deepen his/her experiences. Among the possible consequences of this process are complementarity (if we initially have the impression that certain things contradict each other, but later discover they contain *particulae veri*, which may complement each other) and contradiction (if we are convinced that certain things are simply wrong).

Of course a similar situation may also apply in secular matters, with regard to the interpretation of a work of art for example: there are certainly interpretations that can be said to be made with a touch of genius, and others where we gain the impression that the critic has thoroughly misunderstood the work of art completely. We can hardly prove this opinion to others who do not share it; we can only argue over it without those who believe they understand and can spell out exactly the reasons why they understand. Even in this critical examination we can never leave the dialogue; we have to present the differences of opinion and by doing so either reach a conclusion or not. In any case, remaining subjectively or intersubjectively in dialogue does not contradict the rationality of the matter, but we have no criteria to use outside this frame of dialogue. Perhaps here again something of the close interweaving of dialogue and truth appears.

revelation
in the experience
of history

WESS In dialogue between religions based on revelation, each partner in dialogue appeals to a revelation that can no longer be called into question, so here the dialogue must become very difficult. Should we

not distinguish more clearly between revelation in creation and revelation in history? Revelation ultimately takes place mainly through experiences in history since, according to the Book Exodus, God is the One who will prove himself in the history of his people. So can dialogue between the religions of revelation only take place to the extent that the partners in dialogue can refer to experiences which make possible a mutual approach to the shared experience of God?

Christ said, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Mt 18:20), so could we not infer (on the basis of the event of a really successful dialogue, if we persevere with it till to the end) the necessary common ground that mutually relates us which must already include a relationship? Is it not only on this ground that revelation can become true and credible?

dialogue –
a form of truth

ELSAS We should have a detailed discussion, especially in view of what is happening in our world today, about the idea that the event of dialogue is a form of

truth and that refusing dialogue fundamentally affects human existence.

PESCHKE On the one hand we say that dialogue itself is already a form of truth, by which we probably mean a source of knowledge. On the other we say that in dialogue we agree with the truth of being. Is this based on the fact that in dialogue each acknowledges the other as a person, as one who has equal rights, and who must be taken seriously?

DUPRÉ That is one part of it, but we should still take a further step. If it is truth we are talking about, we cannot hold rigidly to the formula that truth is *adaequatio intellectus ad rem*. We must always also consider the question about the “identity of identity and non-identity”, as Hegel puts it, the fact that all difference is preceded by unity, and about the *ante omne diversum*, which in its difference is after all one. Then it is by the way we address each other and thus allow ourselves to come into being, that relations of identity and difference are formed in this process. This is why truth is living and operative in a very original way in this process and finds expression in it.

stated truth or
truth accessible
by means of
reason?

NEUMANN In the case of interreligious dialogue we are dealing with a very specific form of truth, a stated truth, in which it is therefore not the *res* as such, but its statement or expression which becomes visible. This expressed truth is essentially different from what can

otherwise be directly perceived and compared. However, it is also different from a conviction developed from an idea, which then, as an ideology (as in the case of Marxism), may become a truth which excludes everything else because it simply considers it to be wrong. Such an attitude may go as far as negating the religious freedom of others, because what is different contradicts the truth people believe they have found.

When we speak of dialogue here, it must therefore be clear which kind of truth we mean – and whether the partner in dialogue is operating on approximately the same level and wants to hold the discourse there. This also applies to dialogue with Islam; it has to be clear which understanding of truth we are dealing with: to what extent are we speaking of a mystery expressed as a testified truth, or are we speaking of something evident which

is perhaps even considered to be ‘the most reasonable religion’; are we referring to testimony or to reason? Is it essentially a question of the revelation of a mystery, or the restatement what has always been from the beginning, and has always been accessible to reason?

intra-religious and
inter-religious
dialogue

DUPRÉ What connects the various forms of truth with one another is the idea and the reality of consonance and conformity which are variously inherent in them, such as the consonance of sounds (in the sense of the

Latin ‘consonare’) or the conformity (‘conformitas’) of conceptions. They are elaborations of the semantic field of correspondence and compatibility.

The problem of truth in inter-religious dialogues seems to arise from the fact that speaking results primarily from various processes towards conformity which take place *within* a certain religious tradition and then enter into dialogue with other religions. If we intend to understand each other, we must learn constantly to understand anew the truth of other traditions, as well as the truth of our own, in the light of the processes towards conformity which have preceded them and led to these different traditions. If we are, at least to some extent, always participating in such processes of translation within our own tradition, we must not, in the encounter with another tradition, shirk the effort of trying consciously to follow the process towards conformity which has led in that tradition to the truth of its religious persuasions; for instance, we should try to understand what is really written down in the Qur’ān when we contemplate encounter with Islam.

‘performatives’ –
a language
creating reality

In religious language particularly, it is often not an issue of mere statements, but of ‘performatives’, creative speech, where it lies primarily within the dynamics of words to create reality and develop life. In this sense,

language does not speak of a reality that exists independent of it, nor does it summarize what is already known. In the religious context, language rather creates the reality about which it speaks. The question remains of how we can express this in the form of a judgment about things, that is, in forms of propositional truth.

WISSE In the case of such performatives which create what they are speaking of, does this not also occur on the level of personal attraction, what we also like to call love? After all, is it not especially love that mobilizes energies that would otherwise lie fallow? Is it not love that gives rise to what we call communication and community? Through the process of mutual attention the word creates new reality; should the occasion arise it

even creates the reality it speaks about; it makes accessible what is new. Actually this should have something to do with what we mean by the 'truth of being'.

DUPRÉ If we are referring to what God has granted to man, this would in fact be the case.

'performatives'
and predicative
sentences

SCHAEFFLER It is clear that language in general and religious language in particular are not limited to 'statements', which describe what already exists before the speaker begins to talk. It also contains expressions that

create something that would not come about without these expressions – what we well describe as 'performatives'. And these performatives have a truth of their own, for there are, within the dynamic of the word, possibilities of successful, and also unsuccessful, creations of reality.

However, this should not lead to a downgrading of the importance of predicative sentences. Luther is known to have said "*Tolle assertiones, et Christianismum tulisti* – Remove the assertions and you have taken away the whole of Christianity."³ It is not a question of constructing or allowing the development of an either-or mentality.⁴

Even though performatives must allow themselves to be measured against the fact that they do not make statements unimportant, but rather underline their importance, the question remains of whether there are not special requirements in the context of religious dialogue, whether intra-religious or inter-religious. After all it is proper to many religions that their adherents say something they could not have said by themselves, but which they are aware was put into their mouth, or on their lips or written in their heart. What they have to say they therefore consider ultimately not to be their own speech.

In this case the dialogical capacity of the speaker seems restricted to the extent that it is impossible for him/her to permit the decisive tenets of his/her religious persuasion to be discussed (except with those who share his/her faith) because s/he does not know *more* than s/he has been told. This makes inter-religious dialogue considerably more difficult and we may ask whether the truth of being, in this context, is only the truth of being of the listeners, who do not speak their own word.

³ Martin Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, WA XVIII, p. 603.

⁴ Cf. R. Schaeffler, *Religionsphilosophie* (Handbuch Philosophie). Freiburg etc., 1983, pp. 155 ff.

dialogue in general
and actual dia-
logue with Islam

ZIRKER Discussion within the general scope of the question of what dialogue means in general is one thing; but something quite different is brought into play if we raise the specific question of the meaning of dialogue with a particular religion, such as Islam, for example. Here a very concrete spectrum emerges ranging from Muslims who say, "There is no longer any place for dialogue given what we have declared, which is known to you" – and others who, considering the plural situation of the world in which we live, say, "In order to be able to live side by side, we have to talk with one another." So the question of the variety of presuppositions about dialogue in the various religions in the light of their foundational documents seems important here. Otherwise it might happen that in Islam, from a faith perspective – in which "conjecture avails nothing against truth" (Qur'an 53,28; cf. 10,36; etc.) – the unconditional obligation to the word of God might be imposed, whereas dialogue, on the other hand, is left to the realm of human conjecture and experiment, which is irrelevant to the faith.

purpose of
dialogue

NEUMANN In this context we cannot ignore the question of the actual meaning and purpose of dialogue. Is it to reach a consensus that seems desirable, or is it a

certain form of testifying to one's own faith before the other in the sense that dialogue is an interpersonal event in which we try to remove misunderstandings and acquaint each other more closely with our own personal faith and make it understandable? Is eventual agreement considered to be the purpose of dialogue and thence a future ecumene, especially between the monotheistic religions, or is it a matter of deepening mutual understanding and achieving a new togetherness notwithstanding lasting differences?

remaining open
to dialogue in
the experience of
pluralism

VANONI We must agree that we cannot argue about the 'performatives' mentioned above, but when people have become open to dialogue, we could still be in conformity if we agree that the other says things he is bound to say because the statements are not his own.

Conformity can be found in the fact that such statements belong to the realm of religious truth.

On the other hand, is it not a fact that reactions to pluralism in the history of mankind have mostly been belligerent? We may think, for instance, of Israel at the time of the Babylonian exile, when (in a state of insecurity caused by pressures from worlds built on other meanings which were apparently also viable) it developed a very militant monotheism and began

to deride other religions, claiming that its God could do as much as theirs; for we think that we should not allow insecurity to be created by a healthy pluralism, but should fight against it. In a most inspiring essay on the topic of culture and conflict, Aleida and Jan Assmann work out the relevant context: that man's potential for conflict must not simply be traced back to the animal in man, but rather that culture itself creates conflict and the climax of culture has arrived when we are no longer in a position to speak with each other.⁵ It should be considered an important agreement that, given the conflicts which will always recur in the pluralism of religions, we will not fight each other for the sake of truth and faith, but keep speaking with each other in spite of everything.

horizons of understanding have to overlap each other

HAGEMANN In building up dialogical relations, the search for possibilities of understanding with people who come from a completely different cultural tradition is of great importance. Unless horizons of understanding in human relations 'overlap' each other, as it were, dialogue and encounter between people from different cultural traditions are impossible.

the necessity of finding civilized ways of discussing problems

SCHAEFFLER Not to negate is equivalent to saying nothing. Every *assertio* needs a *negatio*, otherwise the former ceases to have meaning. If we ignore the objection of another, it means we have not listened to him.

In inter-religious dialogue too, the way we contradict each other is as important as the way we affirm each other. When Muslims, or others, accuse Christians of having abandoned true monotheism, it is not enough to say, this is simply the way Christians understand monotheism and we have no need to deal with what Muslims call tritheism. This is as if we said to each other: I am content to leave your problems to you and you should be content with my having no problems. It amounts to a refusal of dialogue. When the Christians' conscience does not react and give a reply that shows how serious they really are about their monotheistic profession taking into account their theology of Trinity (the indispensability of this doctrine will be the topic of Mr. Greshake's lecture later in this symposium), and if they do not take the objection seriously, it means they have not listened to what the other has said. A culture of controversy, which

⁵ A. & J. Assmann, "Kultur und Konflikt. Aspekte einer Theorie des unkommunikativen Handelns", in: J. Assmann – D. Harth (eds.), *Kultur und Konflikt* (Edition Suhrkamp N. F.: 612). Frankfurt/M., 1990, pp. 11–48.

is necessary for dialogue, is only achieved when we each allow ourselves to make the other feel uneasy in his/her conscience. Uneasiness felt as a result of the other's otherness has to extend to an awareness of our own otherness too, otherwise, although we may have an argument with one another, the matter basically culminates with the statement: pluralism is a fact after all; so, let many flowers bloom – and it is better if there are many flowers that do not annoy each other. Considerations of such issues seems to be decisive for the dialogue's truth of being.

communication between the different worlds of understanding

HAGEMANN If a dialogue or triologue between the Abrahamic religions is taken seriously in this way, it will in practice be difficult to find a typical Christian, Jew or Muslim, capable of contributing to the discourse an expression of the general concern of his faith in a representative way. However well a delegate from al-Azhar may be able to speak for the Islamic faith, this will possibly be of little help to the dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Germany, where it is difficult to find a 'typical Muslim', who is at the same time able to empathize with the general approach his partners in dialogue have to understanding and conceiving things. For, without a shared foundation of understanding it may happen that one's own theology – as Peter Antes once said – becomes the stumbling block in the way of dialogue.

EISAS There are certainly various quite different horizons of understanding and this need for them to 'overlap' so that dialogue can get started, is significant. But it is not unusual for this difference in the horizon of understanding to exist – often even within shared traditions of faith – when different generations want to start a dialogue with one another. Conversely, many Muslims are already growing up in our society and this is the source of many new commonalities which result from various shared social experiences. However it comes about, dialogue is essential and must be sought after. And we can be grateful if it begins to develop profitably at least now and then. We should be able to assume that today, all in all, a basis of understanding between the partners in dialogue is developing which makes many things easier, and some occasionally more difficult.

dialogue between religions in a secular society

ZIRKER What seems to be very important too is that dialogue between Islam and Christianity is not between two religions in isolation, but in a secular society; that there has been the Enlightenment; there is criticism of religion.

What would also be relevant, besides taking contradictions seriously, is the desirability mentioned already by Mr. Schaeffler, of a form of dialogue which is currently hard to achieve in Germany. That is dialogue where there is not only the Christian theologian speaking about Christianity or the Muslim about Islam, but the Christian speaking about Islam and the Muslim about Christianity; and the Muslims are then asked to say whether it was their Islam which they heard being spoken about, and the Christians, whether they found their Christianity expressed in the presentation of the Muslims.



mutually preparing a dwelling place for each other

BSTEH A. The special problem in dialogue between religions which understand themselves as religions of revelation is obviously implied in the fact that the believer who speaks with others knows himself obligated by God and must ask himself how he should expose

to discussion with another what God committed to him. In this context it seems worth reflecting on the extent to which such people, in their individual otherness, can mutually prepare a home for each other, and to what extent it is inherent in intersubjectivity that a human being, within his own mind, can grant to another the right to exist despite the latter's radical otherness, and can then accept him in his otherness without giving up his own identity; to what extent can one realize an essential aspect of one's own identity precisely by granting the other, no matter how different he may be, the right to remain in his own spiritual identity – in other words, in a radical sense not wanting to be who he is without the other, even before God.

God in the dialogue of believers

When human beings are concerned with God, is God then not always the third party, we might ask, wherever two such people encounter each other – all the more so if their existence is characterized by a lived

piety and faith that is taken seriously? So it is then our very awe of God, present and hidden in our own existence as well as in that of the other, that must characterize our relationship in dialogue.

so is not dialogue ultimately already a form of truth?

DUPRÉ Following on from the question concerning the other's right to a home in the realm of my own identity, is the following reflection: is it acceptable for the sake of an easy peace to leave out questions of

truth and solve all problems only on a practical level? Is it not of decisive

importance at this point to take into account that dialogue is a possible (if not the primary) form of truth? The truth of statements must not be set aside; rather, they are supported by a background of which performatives are an integral element.

a general order of rights as space for dialogue

Religious freedom is important. The idea of a general order of rights, however, goes beyond that, since it concerns not only interreligious dialogue, but also the elaboration of conditions needed for a world in which people

can exist and live with one another in a great variety of cultures. This is approximately what Hegel meant by the term 'urbanity'⁶; the attitude of a human being who is ready to acknowledge whatever she/he comes across, and to deal with it courteously.

A general order of rights conceived in this way expresses the idea of a global task which is not restricted to religion, though it hardly seems attainable without the efforts of religious traditions to support it. If these efforts are absent, the general order of rights is likely to turn into a worldwide technocratic network, which might be useful in some respects, but ultimately destroys the earth: for the economic order and the technology in this network do not care for local traditions, questions of exploitation, human dignity, etc. To a religious person this could be an argument in favour of thinking that it is better to be in dialogue than to live in confrontation with those one does not yet understand.

SCHAEFFLER What has been said invites the question of whether the concept of a divine reality which is involved everywhere, of a God who is the fourth party where three are in conversation, is not open to question. Have we not arrived at a concept which avoids the relation between God and world in the specific understanding of the individual religions and comes close to a philosophical concept of God?

God who accepts the sinner

BSTEH A. It was certainly not in this context, if ever, that I had in mind a god of the philosophers. I mean rather the God of whom the Letter to the Romans (11:32)

says he "has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all", the God who makes Jesus say that one day "many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom

⁶ Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Werke, vol. 19, Frankfurt/M., 1971, p. 25.

of heaven while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into outer darkness" to make room for "the tax collectors and the prostitutes" (Mt 8:11 f. and 21:31). He is the God who, speaking in human terms, was the first to set an example of what it means to welcome another in his otherness to be at home in his own divine being. He is the God who is infinitely holy and yet grants the sinner a right of abode within his own divine being, the God in whom the problem of the *simul iustus et peccator* finds its solution, not because he calls black white, but because he, the infinitely just one, loves the sinner and embraces him with his mercy.

SCHAEFFLER Only a Christian can speak in this way. A Muslim would not acknowledge this as a shared point of reference in dialogue.

faith and its place
in the dialogue
process

NEUMANN We can see very well from the Easter narratives in the Gospels how one person can feel at home with another. In these narratives the Risen Christ is not depicted directly; rather there are different people who

encounter him and then, in a personal way, narrate their experiences, each of them as he has accepted the Risen Christ in faith and prepared a home for him within himself. With this in mind, can we not also define dialogue as giving room to the other, in order to learn to know him better in his otherness and respect him? In this context some subjects will sometimes arise which are supported by a consensus, notwithstanding the variety of concepts that exist. We may assess differently the extent to which this consensus may also apply to Muslims' understanding of Jesus in particular cases. Here there will always be a wide range of tensions.

religious freedom
as a topic of
Christian-Muslim
dialogue

HAGEMANN As the specific image of God, as Prof. Schaeffler already noted [see above p.88 f.], belongs to the most problematic areas of interreligious dialogue, we must still expressly broach here the question of religious freedom. Is religious freedom as it is

understood by Christians the same as the religious freedom of which the Muslims speak with their specific way of understanding? While Christians think that the Western cultural tradition cannot be conceived of without religious freedom, Muslims for their part hold the view that they find religious freedom already codified in the Qur'ān. Given these two concepts, how can we find a way to dialogue? In any case, one's own presumed understanding of this issue cannot be laid down as the norm for communication with others. In this context we may also ask whether the recent paper on the understanding of human rights in Islam published by the

Conference of the German Bishops⁷ is not too optimistic, if we really take sufficiently into account the various kinds of understanding which are part of the discussion on this question.

ZIRKER This again raises the question of the actual purpose of dialogue: is the aim to work for a consensus, or is it enough to accept each other respectfully despite the individual otherness of the other? Perhaps no generally valid answer can be given to this question. In the case of certain dogmatic issues we may be quite content to assess whether some more or less substantial rapprochement was achieved in the dialogue. However, when it is a matter of the understanding of religious freedom with all its social consequences, or the understanding of human rights in general, then we are immeasurably more concerned with the position of the partner in dialogue and whether or not dialogue can bring about a narrowing of differences.

ELSAS At a time in history when people are and will be more and more dependent on living together peacefully, it seems important to build on the special arguments Christianity has contributed to the shaping of human rights in the Western secular tradition, and the special arguments Islam claims in this connection and how they can be related to the secular understanding of human rights. There is no doubt that as social conditions change, quite new insights into these fundamental questions of human coexistence also develop – for example, in a society which grows from a more or less closed, monocultural space into a rationally polymorphous situation. Such developments need time. Each person has to allow the other the necessary space for searching, for recalling his own individual sources and for self-critical confrontation with current developments.

dialogue
and truth

VANONI A particular problem for dialogue arises whenever people are persuaded that they 'have the truth'. For example, the reaction of some Christians to the Assisi event was that they took it for some kind of apostasy when the Pope went to Assisi some years ago in order to pray for peace with representatives of other religions. Or, to quote a completely different example: some Old Testament exegetes consider a chapter like Isaiah 19 to be a text that is actually not part of the Old Testament. For them, it falls outside the

⁷ Cf. J. Schwartländer – H. Bielefeldt, *Christen und Muslime vor der Herausforderung der Menschenrechte* (ed. by Wissenschaftliche Arbeitsgruppe für weltkirchliche Aufgaben der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz), Bonn, 1992.

Old Testament, because it says: "On that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the LORD of hosts has blessed saying, 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage.'" (Is 19:24 f.). Does this not contradict Old Testament principles? But there can be no doubt that these assertions are in fact to be found in the Old Testament and are thus part of the Biblical truth. This demonstrates the on-going need to account for how the Bible understands truth and the fact that, when referring to this truth we must neither break each other's heads nor refuse dialogue. Moreover, we would probably be more open to communication with other religious communities, if we already cultivated dialogue within our own religious community, without always being afraid that this might lead to abandoning the truth.

readiness to engage and to learn

DUPRÉ As in situations of tolerance, we are confronted with 'polemics' in dialogue. We engage in dialogue; we are even ready to have arguments in its interests. But the argument is for the sake of peace, so that those

engaged in this struggle will be able to continue to live.

At the same time dialogue is a matter of learning. What happened in former times – even in the age of the Enlightenment – was largely restricted to dialogue on paper. Today people do in fact meet in order to talk with one another. Here, something new has begun to take place: we must ask ourselves the direction in which things should be developed further. The concept of the 'truth of being' is meant to justify the axiom that it is better to be in dialogue than to remain in confrontation, and that this is in line with something that belongs essentially to being human, although the forms of its development have still to be found. Only our being ready to learn can justify the hope that the task we are facing will be carried out.

HAGEMANN A willingness to hold talks and encounter other religions has of course existed in the past – for example, at the time of the Islamic rule over Spain when, for four centuries, Jews, Muslims and Christians mostly lived together in peace and also disputed with each other.

general order of rights – a fundamental right

NEUMANN The general order of rights which was discussed in the lecture is obviously not a right to be granted, but a fundamental right in itself. Therefore it should not be important whether the right to build places

of worship for various religious communities is expressly granted in the legislation of a certain country or not. It rather belongs to the more basic human right to have one's own religious convictions and practise them.

ZIRKER We can legitimately assume that for Muhammad the main struggle was not primarily in support of monotheism against idolatry, but rather to deal with an order of rights which was disturbed in many respects. Where people who deal with power in respect of widows, orphans and the poor no longer think of being judged one day, the need arises for a prophet to come and re-establish the order willed by God. Since this concern to re-establish an order of rights had such a high priority in the original prophetic message, should dialogue between the prophetic religions not have to deal from the beginning with issues of a general order of rights and questions of an order of rights which is disturbed in many respects, or no longer (because of changed social conditions) responds to the legal requirements of today?

DUPRÉ Logically, the concept of a 'general order of rights' has a 'transcendental' character because no specific law will ever be able to express such an order fully, and also in the sense that it includes the conditions for the possibility of peaceful coexistence ...

SCHAEFFLER ... and for moral developments in general, since important moral experiences are impossible in the face of a corrupted legal system, where everyone distrusts everyone.

[Plenary Discussion]

dialogue as an expression of religious existence

DUPRÉ It is the pattern of dialogue which clearly indicates that human faith is not primarily a matter of theoretical interpretations of specific phenomena in the world, but of how the human person matures in her being. *Fides facit personam*. Only when there is faith (*fides qua*) can we discuss tenets of faith (*fides quae*). If, in one and the same community, dialogue is needed to establish religious community and to develop a religious spirituality, then the first issue is not dialogue as it grows out of truths, but real and productive dialogues out of which truths will grow. This understanding of dialogue and truth is a defining aspect of what is meant by the 'truth of being'.

in dialogue truth is set free

In connection with the understanding of truth, the concept of conformity seems to be of great importance. Conformity can be understood to apply to imaginative thinking, but it also means to live and act in accordance with principles. Wherever the rights and obligations of humane behaviour are recognized,

where there is conformity with the rules of humanity and the meaning of faith, there will be space for the dynamism of truth. Truth is after all not something that has to be well guarded and kept in a safe place like jewellery to be used from time to time. On the contrary: it is the quality that marks the way we are; that is, how we live and allow this life to unfold, how we take care to let ourselves become true and beautiful. In this sense truth means to be creative, and to allow things and humans to comply with the demands of their integrity. This is where the concept 'truth of being' comes in. The question that must be asked concerns the meaning of truth in actions, ideas and attitudes: how does truth become manifest in dialogue? Is the event of dialogue not in itself already a form of truth? In the light of these questions it makes sense to base further deliberations on intra-religious dialogue and the dialogue within our own religious community, including even trivial experiences, in which we acknowledge each other and take care of one and the same humanity in communities of independent individuals. This is the point at which we are exposed to what we mean by the concept 'truth of being', and at which it becomes possible to develop this concept into conceptual forms of truth. It is not a matter of asserting the truth of being at the cost of conceptual truths. What is crucial is the overall concept of the various features and kinds of truth.

shared
responsibility for
everyone to be
who she/he is

As for the formation of consensus, the history of philosophy (and presumably also of theology) certainly knows of something like the need for clear doctrines with which everyone can agree. Since this idea has become relatively well established in the field of mathematics, it is highly valued. But what does this really have to do with what happens in daily life where ultimately everyone has a different face – namely, her/his own – and where we are glad that everyone can be a human being in her/his own individual way, and be able to develop her/his own ideas. Of course there are also developments of uniform concepts. But prior to this idea of a universal abstraction which we are quite often inclined to equate with truth, there is responsibility for each other, by which we must see that each of us may be who she/he is – namely, different from one another and yet still the same. In the light of this responsibility we address the meaning of being human in terms of my, our and everybody else's humanity. These are features of unity and diversity which pass into actual consciousness and concrete actions, and so form a unity of their own. And, if we focus on dialogical relations, is it not the acknowledgement and elaboration of these relations that

is the precise meaning of dialogue? The main question is not whether and to what extent it is possible to be of one mind with one another or to understand a religion in such a way that even the followers of that religion can say, 'you have understood me', but that we are able to be authentically ourselves within the context of inseparable coexistence.

In a way, we ourselves are therefore the meaning of religious dialogue: the other who is different, and I, who am (from this perspective) also different – for the purpose of both searching and discovering together how we can establish within our manifold otherness a network of relations within which it becomes possible to be truly pious. How piety defines itself in the pre-conditions of individual faiths, God alone knows. It is up to us to make efforts to work at it and certainly also to try to speak about these issues with each other. It is not out of indifference that we accept that not all questions have to be answered straightaway – such questions as, for instance, the understanding of God's uniqueness in the light of the Christian doctrine of Trinity, or the doctrine of the Holy Book, the Qur'ān. The consensus that matters within this context consists in the integrity and interdependence of human beings, that is of beings who live in this world and who have to reach out for consensus because they have no other choice.

struggling
for the truth

In this concept of dialogue the question of truth has an authentic right to be included, for the occurrence of dialogue represents the fact that truth has already begun to be present. Both the freedom of dialogue and the risks of that freedom can be reduced to this awareness of truth and the idea of the priority of practical life, just in the sense of Anselm of Canterbury's simple and yet profound axiom: "melius est esse quam non esse". Whether and to what extent this dialogue will be successful is hard to predict when dialogical encounters are taken seriously. The important thing is to prepare ourselves for these encounters and – like Jacob who wrestled with God (cf. Gn 32:23–33) – struggle with truth in order to work for a common world order. There will hardly be a more relevant contribution towards a peaceful world than that which a theologian, or anybody else for that matter, can make when we try to be really pious human beings – when we learn to think in the spirit of dialogue and start to revise the philosophical terms by means of which we both order reality and, at the same time, quite often do violence to the world and things in it. When we are willing to let our thinking change in accordance with these fundamental experiences, the story begins. How it will continue, is dependent on our shared endeavours.

dialogue and mission

MITTERHÖFER If dialogue, as it were, belongs to the order of the indispensable for the understanding of religion, how is mission to be understood?

DUPRÉ It must be understood by observing the specific historical conditions with which we are confronted when we consider the question. Three aspects appear to be important: the first is pragmatic in the sense that we have to ask ourselves: if there were no mission, what would be the alternative? Are the conditions of the present world not of such a nature that mission is the only hope left for people who are being uprooted, even if mission itself is a contributory factor in this uprooting?

The second concerns the testimony of traditions. If it makes sense that human beings are concerned with first and last questions, then bearing witness to the answers is part of the life of all people. And is it then not of compelling urgency that every religion convinced that it contains glad tidings should share its answers with everyone? From this perspective the idea of a mutual presence of religions in various cultures and traditions seems to be not only justified but also necessary.

The third lies in our attitude towards cultures without scriptures. The wealth of so-called primitive cultures is such a wonderful gift that we have to ask ourselves over and over again what are the fundamental insights provided by these cultures in the variety of their existence. It is particularly the tradition of St. Gabriel, which is associated with the names of Wilhelm Schmidt, Paul Schebesta, Martin Gusinde and others, that should be a sound basis for fundamental reflection on this question: how far does the manner in which 'polytheistic' religions are assessed and condemned by the 'high religions' agree with the spirit of the Gospel and the Bible, on the one hand, and with that of the Qur'ān, on the other, even though condemning them seems to be in the line of Biblical and Qur'ānic traditions? Do not certain developments occur in their own special time, and is not what really matters that we permit whatever is primal in our human existence to re-assert its primality? Reference to the primal features of being human underlines once more the truth of being as it emerges in the mutuality of becoming persons, as it reveals itself when we do what is right and try to do justice to one another – not because it is up to us to be just, but because justice is a divine gift whenever it can be achieved.

questions about sincere dialogue

KHOURY At this point a number of questions suggest themselves: what is the function of a 'general order of rights' with regard to the situation of dialogue?, what is

meant by affirming that the truths of faith should be understood in the spirit of dialogue?, and: although we wish that Muslims should be able to live according to their faith and equally concede to Christians to live their life authentically, the two do not really seem to be compatible, because the authenticity of Islamic life does not, according to the understanding of some, allow Christians to live an authentic Christian life, so how should we proceed here? And a last question: how does one in fact arrive at dialogue, if there are too many preconditions on the way to it?

aim of dialogue: to bring to bear a common order of rights

DUPRÉ It is precisely in this context that an attempt could be made to help us understand more deeply what is actually meant by a 'general order of rights'. When today, here and there, despite many seemingly irreconcilable objections, peaceful discourse between Jews,

Muslims, Christians and other believers is possible, we have to ask ourselves: is this due to the good spirit of their religious traditions, or is it one of the phenomena of a secularized world, for which the idea of a general order of rights is in fact more important than theological quarreling? On the other hand, theological controversies are important to us if they are pursued honestly. From the point of view of this presentation of the problem, it is obviously not the first purpose of dialogue to develop a theory, but to allow the emergence of this common order of rights, which ultimately allows us to be human beings of different traditions and persuasions.

It is in the nature of tolerance, which is part of such an order, and religious freedom, which is a human right, that they are debatable and the result of the debate will allow us to recognize whether something has been achieved: whether there are fewer wars, whether Christians are allowed to build churches in an Islamic country and Muslims their mosques in traditionally Christian countries. These are signs of the history of salvation. A major role will always be played here by what we may call 'authentic piety', for instance, as Paul refers to it when he speaks of love that bears all things and endures all things (cf. 1 Cor 13). Something similar can also be found in the Islamic context. These aspects are no less important than questions about the interpretation of dogmas.

When we are concerned with learning to think in the spirit of dialogue, a first requirement is to try to think with others, especially in connection with the question: who is the God in whom I believe and how does this belief shape my relationship with my neighbour? To think in the spirit of dialogue means that we learn to think more radically in many respects

than is suggested by traditional understandings of propositional truth.

truth as granting authentic existence **OTT** If we approximate the concept 'truth of being' to that of dialogue, we may initially understand it to mean that dialogue itself *is* the truth, or that dialogue *is the place* where truth becomes obvious (for instance in the sense of the famous excursus of Plato's Letter 7).

If we follow the latter concept rather than the former, the question arises of whether we may perhaps paraphrase the former as follows: truth is to be understood as an event in which the human being becomes authentic and this happens in dialogue and under the conditions of openness that make dialogue possible. In this sense, can we understand truth to be that which grants authentic existence, as for example, implied in Jesus' saying in the Gospel of John: "and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (Jn 8:32)?

truth and freedom call for each other **DUPRÉ** Freedom must be understood from the perspective of truth, but this should not be misunderstood to imply that truth might be understood without freedom. The important thing is not only the event that leads the individual towards authentic humanity, but also always the event in which we are authentic human beings. Truth of being means that dialogue is truth, that dialogue is the setting where truth happens. Dialogue, especially where it succeeds (as in the *Platonic Dialogues*), can even be the place where truth is revealed. In dialogue the truth, which is the dialogue, and the place, where truth is revealed, are becoming one. In this sense dialogue as dialogue is already a form of truth, although it is not necessarily comprehensive; it is a form that opens up to other forms of truth and, in its way, brings them into being, as in the silent discourse with truth that we hold with each other and have to be for each other, but which ultimately each has to hold with him/herself and with his/her God.

a shared theory – presupposition of a shared order of rights? **LEUZE** If the meaning of dialogue is not only a shared theory but also a shared order of rights, we must ask whether the two can ultimately be separated from one another. Is it possible to establish a shared order of rights before a shared theory has been found? Different theoretical foundations also lead to different orders of rights. Discussing a shared order of rights necessarily implies working towards a shared theory too. So is it adequate to speak of truth as dialogue, as Mr. Dupré has, and does it mean we have found a sound basis for dialogue? Is not con-

flict, or the awareness of the controversial character of truth, unrealistically absent here? We would in fact ultimately deny dialogue to Muslims if we simply told them, "Go on considering Muḥammad as the last and final prophet, although we, on our part, do not see him that way". After all, we set out to do dialogue only if we are searching for a shared theoretical basis upon which it will become possible for us to communicate with each other about a certain question and to argue for it.

a general order of rights begins with practising it **DUPRÉ** The concern for a general order of rights does not mean that we should not attempt to form a theory of that order, or that such a theory could not help us to achieve a better understanding of the reality of that order. However, the conditions under which the order of rights becomes possible only come about if we learn, individually and socially, not to tread on each other's toes. When this and other things are practised, the order of rights begins to emerge. The question of whether Muḥammad was or is a prophet of God for Christians could hardly be conceived without the idea of a general order of rights according to which it is no longer acceptable simply to disregard another human being's sense of what is sacred. There is obviously an inner connection.

For the rest, I would like to emphasize that I understand the concept of a general order of rights in terms of a principle (that is, as a claim that exists in its own right), and that I do not identify it with any specific legal structure, no matter how ideal.



revelational faith has to prove itself as true in history **WESS** Dialogue does not only mean speaking about something; ultimately it is encounter, and in dialogue truth happens. Whenever a blind revelational faith is presupposed, however, dialogue becomes impossible.

Revelational faith rather has to prove itself in history. Its truth is demonstrated in creation and in history.

And dialogue has a pre-eminent place in human history. "I AM WHO I AM, and I shall prove myself in your history" (cf. Ex 3:14); here we may also recall Jn 13:34 f.: "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." The truth of Jesus' message and its authenticity appear in a more deeply understood dialogue, a dialogue that leads to the experience of faith and the love of God. In encounter with others we dis-

cover the common ground on which we find ourselves related to one another and this is exactly the point where the horizontal becomes the vertical. If, however, it is common ground that makes dialogue possible, that common ground must already exist in a relationship. So this interpretation of dialogue as a truth event can only be actualized when the experience is possible.

dialogue as cooperation for the benefit of humankind

NEUMANN In its initiative to promote and deepen dialogue with other religious traditions, the Church certainly had in mind the exchange of ideas on an academic and theological level but perhaps intended even more the making of common cause with them for the benefit of humankind. Numerous as the obstacles may be on a theoretical level, by doing what is true we will experience truth (cf. Jn 3:21) and become capable of approaching it together.

about doing what is true

DUPRÉ Referring to the statement: "We have to do what is true", I wanted to point first of all to the fact that the concept of truth has to be developed essentially in the light of this fundamental assertion. This doing what is true happens in a special sense whenever we enter dialogue. This *is* a form of truth. In dialogue itself, not only within its framework, parts of the structure of truth become visible, truth as it permeates our whole life. In this sense it can be rightly affirmed that intense dialogue is an excellent measure of the intra-religious life, and the life between people(s), cultures and religions generally: it is a sign that we are doing what is true. It seems that the principle of mission, shaped by the idea of testimony and conveyed in the right to religious freedom has its proper place in this context, too.

no dialogue without confidence-building measures

BIRK There can be no dialogue without confidence-building measures which – sometimes in a roundabout way – strengthen human relations and sometimes even establish them for the first time. Dialogue, after all, often means asking a lot, since truth can be challenging and relentless and often calls for uncomfortable decisions to be made, as in the above mentioned example of 'dialogue' with people who believe for reasons of personal conviction that they must refuse their child a life-saving blood transfusion. Is this really the living God who is worshiped here or is it some Moloch? How many requirements would have to be met, so that a question of this kind could lead to a dialogue on the subject?

but no dialogue either without spontaneity from within

DUPRÉ It is clear that life does not only consist of dialogue, although dialogue touches all aspects of human existence. There are for instance also conditions that have to be considered from the standpoint of socio-political responsibility within a certain society. Moreover, even allowing for all the preconditions required for dialogue, it remains to a decisive degree something that has to grow from within, and is dependent on spontaneity on our own part and our partner's. In this sense dialogue is as little under our control as truth and its demands.

The Fullness of God and Time: On New Testament Christology

Martin Karrer

In Basel, in 1542, Theodor Bibliander produced the first edition of the Qurʾān in Latin, at that time the language of European science. The opposition in Basel City Council was intense. When the type setting had already been completed, printing was prohibited and the printer (Oporin) arrested. After determined intercession from outside the city, these measures were lifted, but the printer was prohibited from making any reference to Basel, the place of publication, and was not allowed to sell the edition in the city.¹ The preface to the publication alludes to these anxieties: "Some are afraid that weak minds, as it were, might be infected by reading this book and could be torn away from Christ."² The concern was that people's attitude towards Christ would be affected.

However, the author of the preface (no less than Martin Luther, together with people from Strasbourg³, who decisively advocated the edition of the Qurʾān) was not at all arguing in favour of Christianity opening up more receptively towards the Qurʾān. His conviction is rather that reading the book could strengthen rejection of it, for he perceives Muslims as "idolatrous" like Jews and Papists. His reasons for reading the Qurʾān are "that the Church of God has to defeat the errors of all enemies"⁴.

Certainly under the influence of the political situation of that time, Islam is here identified as the enemy of the Church and Luther is encouraged by statements contradicting (Latin: *antitheses*) the Qurʾān; christologically, an example is, "by the message of the Gospel, according to the will of the eternal Father, the Son of God should become the sacrifice for our sins"⁵.

¹ K.-H. Kandler, "Luther und der Koran", in: *Luther* 64 (1993) 3–9; here: p. 3.

² "Quod autem aliqui metuunt, hac lectione imbecilles animos quasi contagio laedi et a Christo avelli [...]": Martin Luther, "Vorrede zu Theodor Biblianders Koranausgabe", lat. WA (= Luther, *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [Weimarer Ausgabe]) vol. 53, pp. 569–572, quotation p. 570, lines 34 f.

³ Martin Bucer and his cooperators; cf. Kandler, *op. cit.* (fn. 1) p. 3.

⁴ "[...] Ecclesia Dei errores omnium hostium Euangelij contutare debet [...]": WA vol. 53, p. 570, lines 14 f.

⁵ "[...] vox Euangelij, quod filium Dei victimam fieri pro peccatis aeternus Pater voluerit": WA vol. 53, pp. 571 f. (quotation p. 572, lines 2 f.).

With regard to Luther, our approach has changed.⁶ Reproaching the "Papists" with "idolatry" has been superseded in recent decades by internal Christian, ecumenical dialogues. The reproach addressed to Judaism has proved to be based on an inadequate perception of Israel's concept of God and therefore ultimately one of the roots of modern European anti-Semitism. The crucial issue for Christians and Muslims is to bring to an end the perpetuation of hostility and, for the sake of their common responsibility for the world at a time when peace is hard to find, to promote peace together.⁷ Therefore, what is needed today is christological reflection that is *against* hostility, fear and theological ideas that justify enmity.

The question is: what does scripture have to say to this current concern? The subject in my title seems to avoid it. To say that in Christ the "fullness of God and time" is revealed does not encourage the rash building of interreligious bridges. It evokes the christological characteristic of Christianity, which claims that in Christ, and nowhere else, does the fullness of God appear. Can progress nevertheless emerge from this towards a Christian theology of religions that opposes hostile exclusions? I think it can, but it is not an easy path to walk. The title, if I do not want to evade it, makes me depart from a 'high' christology. To make the contours as sharp as possible, I shall concentrate on the motif of fullness and shall not spare you a comprehensive reflection on the Biblical findings. Only after making this long excursion shall I finally return to the initial question.

I. Presuppositions

1. The excursion begins at the beginning and that means, according to the holy scriptures of the early Christians, with the story of creation. When God created the earth, the early Christians read there, it was "*tohuwabohu* – a formless void" (Gn 1:2).⁸ But God's creative action did not leave it in this state. God created living creatures and humankind, so that they "filled"

⁶ On further statements of Luther see especially L. Hagemann, *Martin Luther und der Islam* (Christlich-Islamisches Institut. Abhandlungen; 2). Altenberge, 1983.

⁷ In this context, a recent example is the "Vienna Declaration" passed by the International Christian-Islamic Conference "Peace for Humanity", Vienna, March 30 to April 2, 1993 (since published in: A. Bsteh [ed.], *Peace for Humanity. Principles, Problems and Perspectives of the Future as Seen by Muslims and Christians*. New Delhi, 1998, pp. 278 f.).

⁸ Luther translated "wüst und leer" (WA. DB [Deutsche Bibel] 8,37). For an interpretation see e. g. C. Westermann, *Genesis I* (Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament; 1, 1). Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976, pp. 141 ff.

the waters and the earth (1:22.28; the LXX reads πληρώω). A void is an incomplete state; fullness, in contrast to it, is the goal.

And the early Christians continue reading that God pursues this goal beyond *the guilt* of humankind.⁹ Until the turn of the times, Israel¹⁰ reflects the hoped-for fullness over and against human guilt.¹¹ On their own, humankind can neither bring about nor find fullness. It is to God and his spirit that the fullness of heaven and earth belong, as a Qumran hymn celebrates shortly before the New Testament (1 QH [hymns] 16:2 f.).¹²

2. Fullness – filling something, making it brim-full – is in itself a concept that refers to space. It can, however, be transferred to time. Then time becomes a space of time (ein "Zeitraum"); and like the space of creation described above, it is also only complete when it is filled.¹³

Thus, in the late Old Testament period, eschatological components are emerging. For example, the concluding admonitions in the book Tobit look to the continued existence of the temple, rebuilt after the Exile, until "the times (*kairoi*) of fulfillment", determined by the present aeon, shall come (14:5).¹⁴ Even in the so-called apocalyptic literature¹⁵, there is no 'pure' conception of time to be opposed to space.¹⁶

⁹ Gn 9:1.7 repeats Gn 1:28 after the flood (between comes the declaration of guilt and the motif of fullness in 6:13). Since in New Testament times the Pentateuch had been completed, in the present context questions on sources have to be set aside.

¹⁰ In tension with the motif of fullness, Israel hears from Am 6:8 on (probably already formulated before Gn 1) that God could also withdraw the fullness as a judgement.

¹¹ Old Testament records having the leading stem *ml'*, see L. A. Snijders, art. "ml'", in G. J. Botterweck – H. Ringgren (eds.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, vol. 4. Stuttgart, 1984, pp. 876–886, especially pp. 885 f. Following the Old Testament period, CD [Damascus Document] 2 reflects the promise of God to "fill" the earth (2:11), in contrast to the destructive action of God (2:5 ff.), in order to explain the special position of the CD-community in or opposed to Israel.

¹² Here the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumrān) reflect especially sharp contrasts: when God grants plenitude, it is his blessing in action in contrast to the expected destruction of the enemies (IQM [scroll of war] 12:12; 19:4).

¹³ Thus, for instance, the days of a pregnancy or of a vow have to 'be fulfilled'. Finally, the days of one's life 'are fulfilled', not only positively, but even painfully experienced: see L. A. Snijders, *op. cit.* (fn. 11) p. 878 (concerning the examples mentioned see Gn 25:24; Nm 6:5 as well as the field of tensions between 2 Sm 7:12; Jer 6:11 and Lam 4:18).

¹⁴ S [manuscript] varies to 'until the chronos of the *kairoi* will be fulfilled'.

¹⁵ Cf. there our terminology starting with Dn 9:2 (LXX ἀναπλήρωσις, Theodotion: συμπληρωσις).

¹⁶ 4 Esr 4:35 ff., at the time of the late New Testament literature, hears an angel reply to the question by the just of how long they had to go on waiting, that the Most High "mit dem Maß die Zeiten gemessen" (measured the times with the gauge) and "setze nicht in Bewegung [...], bis das festgesetzte Maß erfüllt ist" (does not set anything in motion [...], until the fixed measure is fulfilled) (German translation by J. Schreiner, *Das 4. Buch Esra*. [Jüdische Schriften aus

3. Further transfers follow.¹⁷ Fullness, being fulfilled, the Lord's *word* and *order* (I am selecting these terms) are pushed forward. The former is implied in the Old Testament phrasing "the word of the Lord shall be fulfilled", namely by being done.¹⁸ In German the paraphrase 'das Wort erfülle sich'¹⁹ (the word shall be fulfilled), which is not quite identical with the Hebrew and the Greek, passed into current use.

Just as operative as his announcing word, is God's ordaining word. This, too, becomes real when it is performed, when it is made concrete by man's obeying it and putting it into practice. Israel articulates this, particularly in New Testament times in the semantic vocabulary of 'filling'.²⁰ Again, the German expression 'Gesetzeserfüllung' (fulfillment of the law) is only partly

hellenistisch-römischer Zeit; V 4). Gütersloh, 1981, p. 321): The times have their measurement. Where it is a question of fullness, components of space and time permeate each other. – Literature on the much discussed passage in Schreiner, *ibid.*, and especially in R. Stuhlmann, *Das eschatologische Maß im Neuen Testament* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments; 132). Göttingen, 1983, pp. 109–112, 124–129; the latter also referring to Dn 9:2 (28 ff.). In addition, cf. around the New Testament period CD (Damascus Document) 4:10; 1QM [scroll of war] 1:8; AssMos [Assumptio Mosis] 10:13; LAB [Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum] 3:10; syrBar [Syrian Baruch-Apocalypse] 40:3 and 4 Esr 11:44.

¹⁷ Thus the "filled" hand belongs to the service of the Lord; in Israel, a rite of filling the hand characterizes initiation into the priestly office (starting at Jg 17:5, 12); on this topic M. Delcor, art. "ml"; in: E. Jenni – C. Westermann (eds.), *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, vol. 1, München, 1971, pp. 897–900, more closely pp. 898 f. and L. A. Snijders, *op. cit.* (fn. 11) pp. 881–884; in both, further areas of transfer.

¹⁸ LXX 3 Reg (for 1 Kgs) 2:27 and 2 Chr 36:22 πληρωθηνα (το) ρημα κυριου, 2 Chr 36:21 with the variant λογος for "word", in LXX 1 Esr 1:54 with the noun αναπληρωσις, intensifying the significance of 'filling' to 'filling up'.

¹⁹ The paraphrase shifts somewhat the basic Hebrew-Greek structure, according to which the word of God does not remain void and meaningless, but produces event and action. Israel's understanding of the term, which, according to modern linguistic categorization, is of a pragmatic nature, is narrowed down to a specific concretization in Christian tradition, turning the word of God, which is fundamentally operative and therefore creating reality, into the systematic pattern of promise and fulfillment. – Cf. the explanations of J. Roloff at a former conference in Mödling: J. Roloff, "Hören auf sein Wort. Das nahe Wort als lebensschaffende Macht nach dem Neuen Testament", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Hören auf sein Wort. Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung* (Beiträge zur Religions-theologie; 7). Mödling, 1992, pp. 71–88; here: pp. 71 ff. (on Is 55:10 f., etc.). In the New Testament context the subject would have to be discussed in consideration of the 'quotations on fulfillment'.

²⁰ Hence, according to Philo, God's admonitions must not remain void, "spoken to the wind"; their "words" ("logoi") have to be "filled" with praiseworthy deeds (De Praemiis et Poenis 83; πληρω stands for "filling"). An example is given by Sib [Sibyllines] 3:244 ff.: when the wealthy man gives his share to the needy, he "fills" the word (φορτις) of the great God, his hymn of praise that is alive in the commandment (εὐνομος ὕμνος). Further examples are to be found in 1 Mc 2:55; TestNaph [Testament Naphtalis] 8:7. Related examples are to be found in U. Luz, "Die Erfüllung des Gesetzes bei Matthäus (Mt 5,17–20)", in: *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 75 (1978) 398–435; here: p. 415, fn. 84.

adequate; for neither the Hebrew nor Greek formulation takes its point of departure from man who is confronted with the commandment and has therefore to fulfill it, but from the word of God, which is especially alive in his ordaining word. Thus when the word is performed, its effectiveness is manifested and fills the otherwise formless living-space of man. God's command is not a law alien to man, but supportively orients his/her life towards fullness.²¹

4. The hoped-for fullness on earth and fullness of time, word and order urging fulfilment – for all this, Israel can look to their God. He himself, it must be added, fills with his glory the place where he makes himself present. From Ex 40:34 f. onwards, it is said that he fills his tabernacle, the temple, with his glory.²²

Since his glory lays claim to the earth, Is 6:3 further formulates, "fullness of the whole earth" be his glory.²³ In the Hellenistic period, the LXX reads: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Sabaoth. The whole earth²⁴ is full of his glory." All over the earth – far beyond the temple – there is no space that has become bereft of God's glory.

God's filling the earth is a two-edged event, for where his glory is present or is hoped for²⁵, there is no room for misdeeds.²⁶ At the time of the New Testament, the wisdom literature summarizes it thus: "Because the spirit of the Lord has filled the world, [...] therefore those who utter unrighteous things will not escape notice, and justice, when it punishes, will not pass them by" (Wis 1:7 f.).²⁷ The curve we have extended, now finally

²¹ Since E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism. A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*. Minneapolis, MN, 1977) this progression has been discussed in a somewhat changed form, especially under the catchword of "covenant nomism". The connection with the covenant concept is not binding.

²² See further (up to the opposite in Ez 10) L. A. Snijders, *op. cit.* (fn. 11) pp. 878 f.

²³ According to the translation of L. A. Snijders, *op. cit.* (fn. 11) p. 879.

²⁴ πλήρης πάσα ἡ γῆ.

²⁵ Cf. Ps 72:19; Nm 14:21.

²⁶ The LXX-translators of Jeremiah find there in 23:24 the formulation that no evil-doer could hide from the Lord so that he would not see him, for "Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD." They translate the last words of the verse literally (as πληρω), but intensify the introduction in v. 23. There the Hebrew text called into question the idea that God is a God of proximity; for the evil-doers he rather is a God at a distance. Conversely, the LXX reads, "I am an approaching God and not a God who is far away"; the God who is theologically far away becomes in space terms the near God and thereby especially frightening to evil-doers.

²⁷ In Greek, in v. 7a we find the perfect περιήρκεν, which intensifies "the spirit of the Lord has filled the earth so that it is full of him". Verse 7a, which is not translated, is hard to interpret; in each case we are in the process of transition towards the philosophy of that time (cf. for example A. Lindemann, *Die Aufhebung der Zeit. Geschichtsverständnis und Eschatologie im Epheserbrief* [Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments; 12]. Gütersloh, 1975, p. 60).

leads back, at a deeper level, to the first section. Even Philo's theologico-philosophical speculation that God fills the world²⁸ maintains its reference to ethics.²⁹

5. I cannot conclude the section on the New Testament premises without going beyond Israel, for the specificities mentioned above concerning the semantic field of "to fill" are largely not only rooted in Hebrew and the Greek translations of Hellenistic Judaism, but are also related to general Greek, so there too we encounter the transfer of space into time.³⁰ The Greeks likewise know of an announcing or ordaining word (including commandments) that urges "fulfillment" through events.³¹

One step still further on, we may follow the structure of these thoughts in the environment. In Antiquity, the period that interests us, the idea is widespread that the void is ephemeral, if not negative. Of course outside Israel, there is not only one God present in space; there are rather a plurality of gods who fill the universe (i. e. everything).³² Around the beginning of the Christian era, the Stoics even thought that a void should not

²⁸ Cf. De Confusione Linguarum 136; De Somniis II 221, etc., continued towards a statement on the spirit De Gigantibus 27 (the pneuma is said to be τὸ πᾶντι δι' ὅλων ἐκπεπληρωμένον).

²⁹ The story of creation in Genesis, with which our section I.1 began, moves on in chapter 3 to the fall of humankind. Humans perceive that they are naked – and hide (3:8). Philo interprets this to mean that evil-doers hide from God, but at the same time could not be hidden from him; for God "fills" and permeates everything, and does not leave anything void and "unfilled" with his nature (Legum Allegoriae III 1.4; cf. as continued in III 6 f.). See further De Gigantibus 47.

³⁰ Even in an apprenticeship contract OxyPap [Oxyrhynchus Papyri] 275, dated 66 AD, the formula "time" (here the time of apprenticeship agreed upon) has to be "filled" (χρόνον πληρωθῆναι I. 24; in German we have to paraphrase with "erfüllen", "abschließen", etc., cf. the translation in C. K. Barrett – C.-J. Thornton [eds.], *Texte zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments* [Uni-Taschenbücher für Wissenschaft; 1591]. Tübingen, 1991, p. 44). Further examples in H. G. Liddell – R. Scott – H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. New ed. with a Supplement 1968. Oxford, 1983 s. v. (1420) III 3.

³¹ To fulfill what is ordained, a law (νόμος): OxyPap 1252 r.9 (πληρῶν), Herodotus I:199; 4:117 (ἐπιπληρῆμι); to "fulfill" promises or oracles: Herodian II 7:6; Polyæn, strat. I 18; cf. also Epictetus, diss II 9:1.3.22. Therefore, we must not restrict to Israel the pragmatic understanding of word and order. Fulfillment through events or deeds, urged on by the word, is in harmony with widespread Mediterranean thinking.

³² Since Aristotle, De anima I 5. 411 a 7, Thales has been quoted in this context (he is said to have believed πάντα πληρῆ θεῶν εἶναι; on this discussion see J. Ernst, *Pleroma und Pleroma Christi. Geschichte und Deutung eines Begriffs der paulinischen Antilegomena* [Biblische Untersuchungen; 5]. Regensburg, 1970, pp. 7 and 11, fn. 2); cf. also in G. Dellings, art. "πλήρης κτλ." in G. Kittel – G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*. vol. 6. Stuttgart, 1959, pp. 283–309, especially p. 286.

exist at all and affirmed, as Hippolytus summarizes briefly (in post-New Testament times), that everything is "filled" and nothing void.³³

6. The above references may suffice. A diverse conceptual structure which existed in Antiquity clearly emerges and was particularly developed in Israel, but not restricted to Israel; fullness overcomes a formless void. Fullness orients the passage of time towards a goal. Fullness provides action with orientation. *Fullness, not emptiness, is appropriate to the deity.*

Of course up to the 1st century, the verb plays a far greater role in all this than the noun. In Antiquity, formulations begin with action.³⁴ The abstract noun ("fullness"³⁵) is derived from action and therefore follows the latter in its predicative weight. So, for instance, before the New Testament, πληρωμα (fullness) is not yet attested in Israel as a name for God³⁶; and in philosophy, according to the extant sources, Stoicism had not yet summarized its conception of the universe's fullness by using the noun.³⁷ So with regard to the theological weight given to the noun, therefore, the New Testament is of extraordinary significance.

I may – or must – conclude my first approach to the topic by referring to a problem: in late Antiquity, the conceptual movement towards fullness was to continue broadly, alongside philosophy, especially in hermetism and Gnosticism.³⁸ By the Middle Ages it is already more restricted to Judaism. In modern times, apart from some specific thinkers, it has become

³³ Hippolytus, *refutatio omnium haeresium* I 21,5: πληρωσθαι πάντα καὶ μηδὲν εἶναι κενόν. Cf. J. Ernst, *op. cit.* (fn. 32) pp. 10 f.

³⁴ Just logically following the pragmatic linguistic approach as described.

³⁵ Before the New Testament, the derivatives πληρωσις and πληρωμα are to be distinguished: the former is in form a *nomen actionis* and therefore denotes the bringing about of fullness (up to the LXX; see J. Ernst, *op. cit.* (fn. 32) p. 24). The latter is a *nomen actae rei*, thus referring to the fullness brought about by such actions. In the New Testament only πληρωμα is to be found, which suggests that it also integrated the nuance of πληρωσις. Since the time of the early Church, the resulting possibility of distinguishing between two nuances of πληρωμα has played an important role in New Testament interpretation (see J. Ernst, *op. cit.* (fn. 32) p. 198 and passim).

³⁶ Which H. E. Lona, *Die Eschatologie im Kolosser- und Epheserbrief* (Forschungen zur Bibel; 48). Würzburg, 1984, pp. 126 f., tries imprecisely to bridge with the help of Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* I 272.

³⁷ Cf. J. Ernst, *op. cit.* (fn. 32) p. 11; examining the *Thesaurus linguae Graecae*, in the present state of the edition, supports his observation.

³⁸ Focusing now on the noun. Most important records in the hermetic literature are: Corp. Herm VI 4 (now the cosmos as "fullness of what is evil" opposed to God as "fullness of what is good"), XII 15 and XVI 3. Through the Nag Hammadi discoveries, the gnostic records (Valentinianic Gnosticism according to Hippolytus, *refutatio omnium haeresium* VI 29,1 ff., etc.) are now much more numerous; see C. A. Evans, *The meaning of πληρωμα in Nag Hammadi*, in: *Biblica* 65 (1984) 259–265.

less important.³⁹ Today, if I am not mistaken, in general usage "fullness" implies some ambivalent connotations. It is not a word that is frequently used and sometimes comes close to the sigh that is breathed because something is replete. And so our topic at first takes us on a longer journey than was perhaps expected at the end of the introduction.

However, what are the points emphasized by early Christianity? Are these emphases more relevant to us and to our present task? We move on to the second section:

II. The fullness of God encountering us in Christ

1. Early Christianity slowly and cautiously approached the assertion that Christ is the πλήρωμα, that in Christ the "fullness" (cf. Jn 1:16), even "the whole fullness of deity" (Col 2:9 after 1:19) encounters us; he is the measure of what is called "the fullness of time" (Eph 1:10).

But Paul did not yet use such a formulation. Where he spoke of fullness, he picked up an Old Testament saying, "the earth and its fullness are the Lord's" (1 Cor 10:26 in keeping with Ps 24:1); or else he was thinking of the end that was to come, as in the final passage of Rm 9–11 which has become famous in the course of recent decades: by meandering paths God's saving acts, which we have encountered in Christ, lead to Israel's fullness and the fullness of the Gentiles (11:12.25).

Therefore, the passage which is closest to our topic, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son" (Gal 4:4) has to be read with a certain restraint. For let us remember that for Jews and Greeks, time is fulfilled when it is running short. It is fulfilled if what is going on comes to an end. However, Gal 4:3 says of such events: "we were enslaved". This now comes to an end; slavery's space in time has reached its "fullness", its end. This demonstrates the mission of the Son; it liberates us from being under the law and calls us to receive adoption as children (4:5).⁴⁰

³⁹ Cf. W. Ullmann, *art. "Fülle"*, in: J. Ritter (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 2, Darmstadt, 1972, 1132 f. On Bernard of Clairvaux cf. M. Diers, *Bernhard von Clairvaux* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters; 34), Münster, 1991, p. 115, etc.

⁴⁰ This careful interpretation is supported by Paul's use of χρόνος for "time" rather than the theologically denser term καιρός. On the other hand, since the umbrella term he chooses is the noun πλήρωμα and not the verb πληρώω (as in the contemporary Papyrus cited in fn. 30), there is a step towards abstraction allowing us to speak of an intensified understanding of time in the light of salvation history and eschatology. The passage is discussed because of the 'Son'-formula integrated into it; cf. apart from the commentaries: J. M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God. An exegetical investigation into the background of hyiothesia in the Pauline corpus* (Wissenschaftliche

For this reason, Paul is our most important witness that early Christianity, in the first generation, eagerly accepts the framework explained above, that space, time and God's actions press on towards fullness.⁴¹ However, this motif will be condensed into a christology of fullness, not by him, it is true, but by his churches. As a main passage that sets this out, I shall discuss the assertions in Col (under point 2). The other texts in Eph and (from another central collection of early Christian scriptures) in Jn 1 will be briefly touched on (under point 3) to supplement.

2. In the Letter to the Colossians two verses, namely Col 1:19 and 2:9 belong to this context. Our attention must focus on the former, in the context of the so-called Colossians hymn⁴²:

2:1 As to its form: Col 1:15 changes to a poetic metre, which continues till v. 20. The poetic metre is not consistently maintained thereafter, so scholars⁴³ assume various interpolations. The early post-Pauline author of

Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. Reihe 2: 48). Tübingen, 1992, especially pp. 121–186 (without necessarily having to accept Scott's typological interpretation as a whole).

⁴¹ In this context the expressions "the fullness of the blessing" Rm 15:29 (used christologically by Paul) and "the fulfilling of the law" Rm 13:10 must also be included; cf. Gal 5:14. If we interpret these passages according to the senses elaborated in section I, the result is a remarkable sequence of argumentations in Paul: the law presses for "fulfillment", according to 13 through acts. But it also refers decisively within itself to love and Paul emphasizes this in both passages. The order to love is written in the law (Lev 19:18), and at the same time love performs the law. With this the perspective shifts to love so much that it finally leads to a commutation; the commandment to love becomes the decisive commandment against which – even critically – the whole law is to be measured (this is an attempt briefly to take a position in a thoroughly controversial field; cf. apart from the commentaries, see H. Hübner, *Das Gesetz bei Paulus. Ein Beitrag zum Werden der paulinischen Theologie* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments; 119), Göttingen, 1982; K. Kertelge, "Freiheitsbotschaft und Liebesgebot im Galaterbrief", in: id., *Grundthemen paulinischer Theologie*, Freiburg etc., 1991, pp. 197–208, especially pp. 203 ff., and Th. Söding, *Das Liebesgebot bei Paulus. Die Mahnung zur Agape im Rahmen der paulinischen Ethik* (Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen. Neue Folge; 26), Münster, 1995, pp. 191 ff.).

⁴² According to more recent hymn research, "hymn" is an imprecise term (see M. Lattke, *Hymnus. Materialien zu einer Geschichte der antiken Hymnologie* [Novum testamentum et orbis antiquus; 19], Göttingen, 1991, especially pp. 227–235, etc.), but since it has become widely accepted, we shall continue to use it carefully in what follows for simplicity's sake.

⁴³ We cannot discuss them here individually. Relevant general characteristics, apart from the commentaries (or supplementing them) are presented by N. Kehl (*Der Christushymnus im Kolosserbrief. Eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Kol 1,12–20* [Stuttgarter biblische Monographien; 1], Stuttgart, 1967), E. Schweizer (among others "Kol 1:15–20", in: id., *Beiträge zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Neutestamentliche Aufsätze [1955 bis 1970]*, Zürich, 1970, pp. 113–145), N. Walter ("Geschichte und Mythos in der urchristlichen Präexistenzchristologie", in: H. H. Schmid [ed.], *Mythos und Rationalität* [Veröffentlichungen der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft für Theologie], Gütersloh, 1988, pp. 224–234, here: pp. 230 ff.), H. Gese ("Gottes Bild und Gottes Wort", in: E. Lühbahn – O. Rodenberg (eds.), *Von Gott erkannt. Gotteserkenntnis im hebräischen und griechischen Denken* [Theologische Studien-

Col seems to have taken up a somewhat older hymn to weave into the text of his Letter. This means that the christology we shall discuss in what follows, even though the only firm evidence for its origin is in the late New Testament, has roots that must go back to the first Christian generation. Bold, far-reaching christological assertions begin soon in early Christianity.

Characteristic of the song-like form of expression is the direct beginning: "he" (Col 1:15; cf. in Pauline churches Phil 2:5 and 1 Tm 3:16), to which we spontaneously add: "namely Jesus Christ" ("is the image of the invisible God", etc.). It seems that the connection with Jesus Christ would ultimately have to be made explicit,⁴⁴ although the early Christian churches could make do without such explicitness.⁴⁵ That the subject of their songs is Christ goes without saying, even though it is not mentioned in the song⁴⁶ or at least only at the end⁴⁷. The christological focus in the early Christian divine services (where our songs certainly belong) could not be more obvious.

2.2 A specificity of form therefore already signals an essential trait of content which we need not discuss in detail. The "pleroma" ("fullness") statement is to be found towards the end of the song in its last strophe (v. 19).⁴⁸ Initially this may seem to be a negative observation: the statement is not at the beginning, where we have: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him all things were created [...]" (1:15 f.).⁴⁹ This means that the christological fullness is not formulated in our song on the basis of Christ's role as creation's mediator.

beiträge; 3]. Stuttgart, 1990, pp. 42–67, here: pp. 62–67, J. Habermann (*Präexistenzaussagen im Neuen Testament* [Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe 23, Theologie; 362]. Frankfurt/M., etc., 1990, pp. 225–266) and R. Hoppe (*Der Triumph des Kreuzes. Studien zum Verhältnis des Kolosserbriefes zur paulinischen Theologie* [Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge; 28]. Stuttgart, 1994, pp. 146–225).

⁴⁴ This is why in the literature a preceding introductory sentence starting with "Jesus Christ" or the like is often assumed (cf. concerning our hymn J. Habermann, *op. cit.* [fn. 43] p. 227).

⁴⁵ So it seems to me that in this case negative deductions from the text do not apply; cf. the approach in R. Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit. Untersuchungen zu Form, Sprache und Stil der frühchristlichen Hymnen* (Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments; 5). Göttingen, 1967, p. 146.

⁴⁶ Sic in Col 1:15–20 and 1 Tm 3:16.

⁴⁷ Sic in Phil 2:10 f.

⁴⁸ In this formulation we leave it open whether the song as a whole should be structured in three strophes (as, for example, by E. Schweizer, *op. cit.* [fn. 43] and N. Walter, *op. cit.* [fn. 43] p. 230), or in two major parts (as for example by J. Habermann, *op. cit.* [fn. 43] p. 238 and R. Hoppe, *op. cit.* [fn. 43] p. 167) or in two groups of two strophes (as for example by H. Gese, *op. cit.* [fn. 43] pp. 62 f.).

⁴⁹ Translation according to *New Revised Standard Version: Catholic edition*.

It does, however, presuppose the latter. Therefore we have to try initially to reflect on how it is to be understood in the Colossian hymn. Let us call to mind that this is hardly one generation after the activities of the earthly Jesus, but even so that is not the song's starting point. In the course of the song, the earthly Jesus is only touched upon in what follows.⁵⁰ How is this possible? To pose the question more concretely: how did the transition come about from what we like to call a christology "from below" (starting from the earthly Jesus and his being human) towards a christology that transcends our human existence and even the existence of creation in general? We can never be ultimately certain, but our hymn reveals the starting points:

The key event is the experience of Jesus being raised from the dead which, not only to us, but also in the 1st century, appeared as a total break with conformity to the laws of creation.⁵¹ The previously held theories of the order of creation (we would say the laws of nature) fail here. A new 'first event', so to speak, appears. However, it is only an inadequate conception, and again not only to our modern way of thinking, as long as we think here simply of a sundering of natural laws. God may indeed disrupt his own order. From God's side, it is indeed more appropriate to the importance of the event of Jesus' being raised from the dead, if we connect it with the event of creation at the very beginning (in Greek ἀρχή), formulated as it is in the verse in our passage which leads to the statement of Christ's being raised (v. 18b): "He (Christ) is ἀρχή", foundational origin. "He is the firstborn from the dead", the text continues, "so that he might become what he himself is, in everything having the first place".⁵²

As a result, the structure of our thinking about creation in general is affected by christology. A pure exaltation-christology is to be supplemented by a creation-christology. The most obvious premise allowing this devel-

⁵⁰ That he is "the firstborn from the dead" indirectly includes his dying; the reference to the cross at the end of the song v. 20bβ, on the other hand, rather sounds as if the author of Colossians inserted it into his letter to create a transition (generally it is taken as an addition; for discussion see J. Habermann, *op. cit.* [fn. 43] pp. 237 f.).

⁵¹ Just as the expectation of an individual resurrection, beyond created space, was at that time restricted to a limited circle, as more recent critical reviews of the sources show (cf. G. Barth, "Zur Frage nach der in 1 Korinther 15 bekämpften Auferstehungsleugnung", in: *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 83 [1992] 187–201, especially pp. 195–200).

⁵² By translating it in this way, I am trying to render most precisely the combination of the verb 'to become' γίνομαι and 'to be' πρῶτον. On a more detailed interpretation, see the commentaries and the literature mentioned in fn. 43 up to J. Habermann, pp. 251 ff., and R. Hoppe, pp. 176 ff. In the sequence of the proposed interpretations, ἀρχή need not yet be directly referred back to Gn 1:1.

opment was in Israel's wisdom literature shortly before and at the beginning of the Christian era, specifically the conviction that "the order perceptible in the world, the order of creation and of being is pre-existent to the universe" (already existing in God before its concretization in its creation – briefly summarized in Gese). The order does not develop with and after the actual act of creation, but is the "structure and means of creation" (Prv 8:22 ff.; Jb 28:21 ff., etc.).⁵³

Now if the structure of creation in general is affected by the Christ event, that structure must be reflected on anew in view of that event and in the light of it. The Christ event does not simply enter at a later stage into an order already given, but determines its structure right from the beginning. As extracts from Col 1:16 and 17 say: "In him (sc. in Christ as the paradigmatic structure of creation, in the above mentioned sense) all things in heaven and on earth were created [...]. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together."⁵⁴ According to what the beginning of the hymn says (v. 15), "he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn", not only "from the dead" (v. 18), but for the destiny "of all creation".⁵⁵

⁵³ H. Gese, *op. cit.* (fn. 43) p. 63.

⁵⁴ For a more detailed interpretation see, apart from Gese, the above-mentioned literature up to J. Habermann, *op. cit.* (fn. 43) pp. 248 ff. From here a cross-reference must be made to 1 Cor 8:6.

⁵⁵ Various impulses originating from the ambience of this 'wisdom' we refer to enter into the image-assertion. I refer to the two most prominent: 1. In the texts mentioned, God shapes the world according to Prv 8:22 ff.; Jb 28:21 ff. in "wisdom", in which he also makes his people participate. He, the completely 'other', thus in wisdom grants a "similarity" to which human knowledge is given access. Wis 7:26 concretizes this as a reflection of the eternal light and image of God's goodness. Philo thereupon describes wisdom – overlapping with the logos – as the beginning, and as image and manifestation of God (*Legum Allegoriae* I 43). 2. We shall find a somewhat different and supplementary line of thought, if we begin with Gn 1:26. At the beginning of the Christian era this passage was not necessarily seen as referring to humankind in their present historical nature. If we read Gn 1 f., as it was read at that time, as referring to an on-going process and not as it is read today as presenting separate stories, this suggests the creation of a "heavenly" human being preceding the creation from the dust of the ground according to Gn 2:7 (Philo, *Legum Allegoriae* I 31, etc.). Man's being created in the image of God is then seen as prior to his being given physical shape; it is an incorporeal creation, beyond gender and immortal (Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* 134). Philo connects this being created in the image of God with the "logos", the "word" of God as the concept developed later (*De Confusione Linguarum* 146 f.).

Both aspects can be read as indirect or direct premises behind the Colossians hymn: what was previously reflected in Israel as wisdom, logos and the heavenly man, antecedent to creation, is fulfilled and fuses into a new unity in Christology. An earlier attempt at interpretation, referring to early gnostic texts, can be regarded as secondary by comparison. For a deeper view of this in the light of history of religions, apart from the literature already mentioned, see J. Fossum, "Colossians 1:15–18a in the light of Jewish mysticism and Gnosticism", in *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989) 183–201.

An Excursus

I am inserting an excursus here with Christian-Muslim dialogue particularly in mind. In the line of thought we have described, *mediatorship in creation* has to be conceived of as a process that lays the foundation of the cosmos. I do not intend to extend this to the creative acts of the earthly Jesus or his earthly activities. Indeed, the subject is remote from them.

It is true that, later on, a story about the childhood of Jesus that dates from the time of the early Church makes this connection. When Jesus "had become five years old", the story goes, "he was playing by a ford across a brook [...]. He made some soft clay and from it he formed twelve sparrows. It was Sabbath, when he did this", that is, the day on which God's people remember that God rested on the seventh day from all the work he had done (Ex 20:11; cf. Gn 2:1–3). Jesus offends against the day of rest from the work of creation. Joseph was summoned and asked him gruffly, "Why do you what one is not allowed to do do on Sabbath?" But Jesus clapped his hands and shouted to the sparrows: "Go away!" The sparrows opened their wings and, shouting, they flew away.⁵⁶ Jesus stops playing, but in a way that brings it to a climax: he brings the sparrows to life. From clay that is suddenly no longer simply material taken from the bed of the brook to play with, but a variant of the dust of the ground from which the LORD God formed man (cf. Gn 2:7), they become creatures – through the clapping of his hands, in keeping with a child's game (not through breathing the breath of life into them, as in Gn 2:7). A distance from the stories of creation in Gn 1–2 is retained, but at the same time Joseph's criticism is answered: this child participates in God's creative acts, so much so that he can continue creating even on the day when God rested from all the work he had done in creation at the beginning.

I mention this legend in detail because it became known to Muhammad⁵⁷ and entered the Qur'an in a version that was developed a step further. For in both places where the Qur'an quotes the legend, the childlike, playful motif of clapping the hands is replaced by "breathing" (into the clay); the Qur'an places Jesus' action closer to breathing the breath of life in Gn 2:7 than the legend of the early Church (Qur'an 3,49; 5,113)! "[...]

⁵⁶ Story of the Infancy of Thomas 2 in extracts (from 1.2.4), according to the edition of O. Cullmann, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*. I Evangelien. Tübingen, 1987, p. 353.

⁵⁷ According to G. Risse, "Gott ist Christus, der Sohn der Maria". *Eine Studie zum Christusbild im Koran* (Begegnung, Kontextuell-dialogische Studien zur Theologie der Kulturen und Religionen; 2). Bonn, 1989, pp. 184 f. probably through Mariya, a Copt, who was also his wife.

God "createth what He willeth", Sūra 3 prepares the incorporation of our legend (3,47), and confirms: Jesus did this not as an associate, but as an "apostle" of God, "by God's leave" (3,49).⁵⁸

It is clear that, for the Qur'ān, the creative acts of Jesus must not lead to the claim that he is divine; as an apostle Jesus simply carries out what God wills. Nevertheless, the Qur'ān preserves one of the most suggestive statements about Jesus' participation in creation that has been handed down to us in the history of religions – and, may I say, in the history of theology?⁵⁹

The Christian theologian faces the challenge of giving reasons for the basis on which the claim about the divinity of Jesus is made, in contrast to the Qur'ān. We can return to this challenge by discussing the concluding assertions in the Colossians hymn and their reception in the Letter.

2.3 So let us turn to the conclusion of the Colossians hymn. It is so densely formulated that a translation is extremely difficult. Luther tried to retain the density of the text more precisely than the modern translations, which are therefore satisfactory for our purposes only to a limited extent.⁶⁰ He translated: "Denn es ist das Wohlgefallen gewesen, dass in ihm alle Fülle wohnen sollte⁶¹ und alles durch ihn versöhnt würde zu ihm selbst, damit dass er Friede machet [For it was pleasing that in him (Christ is still adequately indicated by the pronoun) all fullness should dwell and by having made peace by him to reconcile all things unto himself]."⁶² I will concentrate on three components taken from the complex sentence structure:

2.3.1 "For it was pleasing that in him ..." (εὐδόκησεν κτλ.): the opening verbal phrase no longer speaks of the creation of everything that exists.⁶³ It rather presupposes that all things had been created, as the first part of the hymn indicates. Against the background of all things having been created, there is now a special "pleasure" – in Greek "good" (εὖ) pleasure.⁶⁴ Together with all that is good, which is included in the prefix εὖ, the

⁵⁸ Translation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an. Text, Translation and Commentary*, Beirut – Cairo, 1938.

⁵⁹ The prohibition of images having been enforced by the Hadīth, the existence of these passages in Islamic literature is even more striking.

⁶⁰ Including the German 'Einheitsübersetzung' which, in v. 19, introduces God as the subject and, in v. 20, inserts the additional verb "(zu Christus) führen" [to guide towards Christ].

⁶¹ Luther, WA.DB 7,229. It is questionable whether the text after v. 20 is part of the hymn; cf. above fn. 50.

⁶² In Gn 1 I. the verb is missing.

⁶³ Ps 44 (LXX 43):4 constructs εὐδοκέω ἐν with the dative like Col 1:19; cf. also 2 Sm (LXX 2 Kgs) 22:20. In this context see also G. Münderlein, "Die Erwählung durch das Pleroma. Bemerkungen zu Kol 1,19", in: *New Testament Studies* 8 (1962) 264–276, here 267 ff.

hymn conceives of creation as concluded in Christ, the first-born from the dead of v. 18.⁶⁴

2.3.2 Who decided that this should be so? We instinctively answer: God. The Greek sentence rather suggests the translation "the fullness decided", a definite and chosen good way of "living in him (Christ)". Our theme word 'fullness' is the subject⁶⁵, which, for the first time in the literature handed down to us, has replaced a direct reference to God. We are still able to perceive the starting point of it, if we go on reading: the fullness decided "to dwell". Here the background⁶⁶ is what we referred to in 1.4, the dwelling of God in fullness in the Temple. This means that the community that sings our song or says it as a profession of faith, experiences the fullness in which God makes his imprint on his dwelling with humans and from where he supportively chooses to shape history, oriented towards Christ.

In the latter formulation, I am aware of being rather tentative: fullness represents God, but at the same time makes it possible to avoid the direct assertion "God dwells in Christ".⁶⁷ We are confronted here with a christological formulation that is transitional. There is no doubt, however, which way christological thinking must continue, as is reflected by the author of Colossians. In our passage the author simply quotes. In chapter 2 he goes back to the quotation, changing it at a central point: "in him (Christ)", he writes, "dwells divinity in all its fullness" (2:9). The word θεός (God) is still avoided, but it is now represented by the closest possible derivative θεότης (divinity). This is the first use of the term in early Christianity; the history of languages shows that it is an expression for "being God" that was already

⁶⁴ "Beschießen" [to be the pleasure] is the most familiar meaning of εὐδοκέω ἐν. Reference of ἐν αὐτῷ following v. 18 in J. Habermann, *op. cit.* (fn. 43) p. 253 (lit.).

⁶⁵ As a rule, this is the view taken in the relevant literature: cf. discussions in J. Ernst, *op. cit.* (fn. 32) pp. 83 ff. (references to the earlier preference of "God" as the subject, which the syntax of the hymn neither excludes in principle nor directly implies: according to v. 16a, a *passivum divinum* should rather be expected here) and in H. E. Lona, *op. cit.* (fn. 36) pp. 124 f.

⁶⁶ Cf. especially Ex 40:34 f.; further references (from Ps 68 [LXX 67]:17 up to 2 Mc 14:35) for instance in H. E. Lona, *op. cit.* (fn. 36) pp. 127 f.

⁶⁷ At least as long as we take the background from Israel, as explained in section I, as a standard. For some time, research gave more weight to the sources that regard "fullness" as a direct predicate of God (see I. 6, fn. 38; in addition cf. OdSol [Odes of Solomon] 7:11, God is said to be "unvergänglich; Fülle der Äonen und Ihr Vater" [everlasting, fullness of aeons and their father] [German translation according to E. Lohse, *Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon* (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament; 9/2), Göttingen, 1968, p. 99; there also lit.]). Then the assertion grows even stronger. On the other hand, the relevant sources, as mentioned above, have to be considered as later than early Christianity.

in use before the New Testament, and this meaning for it was widely authenticated in the early Church.⁶⁸ Even if it is not in the hymn itself, the author of Colossians here plainly sees the fullness of being God dwelling in Christ.⁶⁹

I pause here in order to address the above-mentioned question concerning the justification for asserting the divinity of Jesus which sets Christian theology apart from the Qurʾān. One basic assumption must also be called to mind. It is fundamental for the early Christians because of their origin in Israel (Dt 6:4), and it unites Christians and Muslims: God is One. His being-one is inviolable. Early Christianity takes this as expressly affirmed by Jesus (Mk 12:29.32).⁷⁰

This is therefore clear to the early Christians no less than to the Muslims later on, and Christology must be consistent with this premise.⁷¹ One solution could be: to subordinate Christ to God on principle, although as one who is eminently distinguished.⁷² The alternative of not subordinating christology to theology, but making God's expression of his deity the basis of one's thinking is more theologically focussed.⁷³ The Colossians hymn shows the inner logic and rigour that point to the assertion that if Christ determines the structure of creation, he, as we have noted before, has to

be conceived of as preceding it. If in him, against the background of the already existent creation, all the "fullness" was pleased to dwell (as the concluding part of the hymn says), he transcends creation at present and until the end. Creation needs him in its perspective on God and on the divinity of God. It needs him, as the conclusion of the hymn explicates, for

2.3.3 reconciliation (v. 20). This assertion will be explained in more detail later. "Fullness" for God's people, as we saw in part 1, means primarily presence within the bounds of God's tabernacle, however otherwise, for them and the surrounding ancient world, goal. The Colossians hymn makes this bear fruit for its conclusion: the fullness that dwells in Christ realizes a goal, even the goal of which the whole cosmos – "all things", as v. 20 says – is in need. It grants reconciliation to the cosmos disregarding its noticeable imperfection.⁷⁴

In Antiquity, reconciliation meant doing away with overt hostility so that there may be peace.⁷⁵ Col 1:20 actualizes this in a clear-cut way: reconciliation does not only happen in Christ, but also towards him (εἰς αὐτόν). Since Christ is conceived of, from a theological perspective, as the one in whom God's acts and expresses himself, the beginning as well as the end are bound up in him.⁷⁶ As v. 20 continues, this is grounded in the fact that it is the fullness that is in Christ that made peace.⁷⁷ In Greek, the aoristic participle is used: the fundamental act has already been performed, although it is not yet completely and perfectly perceptible.⁷⁸ It was oriented towards all things, whether in heaven or on earth, through the blood of his cross, the author of Colossians concludes the hymn (v. 20bβ–c).⁷⁹ Reconciliation has a cosmic effect.⁸⁰

⁶⁸ Cf. the commentaries on this passage (for example E. Schweizer, *Der Brief an die Kolosser* [Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament], Zürich etc., 1976, pp. 107 f.) and G. Schneider s. v., in: H. Balz – G. Schneider (eds.), *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 2, Stuttgart, 1981, p. 353.

⁶⁹ We find this already expressed in essence in 1:19, then τῆς πλεότητος ultimately becomes a *genitivus expegeticus*: see P. Pokorný, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Kolosser* (Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament; 10,1), Berlin, 1987, p. 102 (lit.).

Problems in the churches may have motivated the author of Colossians to make the statement more focussed. For implicitly one may read: the whole fullness dwells in Christ, and not parts or even the whole fullness elsewhere. Then our passage is part of the controversy with opponents who, for example, attributed more importance to the 'world-elements' (see 2:8; accentuated especially in J. Lähnemann, *Der Kolosserbrief, Komposition, Situation und Argumentation* [Studien zum Neuen Testament; 3], Gütersloh, 1971, pp. 78 f.).

⁷⁰ Cf. enlarging H. Merklein, "Die Einzigkeit Gottes als die sachliche Grundlage der Botschaft Jesu", in *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 2 (1987) 13–32 (there via "Gottesherrschaft" [kingdom of God]).

⁷¹ In a wide context, this premise is evoked in the early Christian scriptures: see 1 Cor 8:6 for the stereotypes taken up by Paul; concerning Paul himself Rm 3:30, etc., in the Deuteropaulines Eph 4:6 and 1 Tim 2:5, and apart from them Jas 2:19.

⁷² The best known statement of this solution is in 1 Cor 15:23–28.

⁷³ Choosing this alternative begins very early, as is shown in the New Testament formulas which combine "God is one" with a christological statement at the beginning of which they repeat "and one is" (1 Cor 8:6; 1 Tim 2:5); lit. in J. Habermann, *op. cit.* (fn. 43) pp. 159–188 and J. Roloff, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus* (Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament; 15), Zürich etc., 1988, pp. 110 ff.

⁷⁴ For "reconcile" v. 20 uses the composite form with the prefix ἀπό, "away from".

⁷⁵ Cf. the investigation of the term in: C. Breytenbach, *Versöhnung. Eine Studie zur paulinischen Soteriologie* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament; 60), Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1989, especially pp. 40–83.

⁷⁶ This is already intimated at the end of v. 16; cf. H. E. Lona, *op. cit.* (fn. 36) p. 130.

⁷⁷ εἰρηνοποίησας contains the verb ποιεῖν which, according to Gr 1:1, etc., has connotations of creation. Since it shifts towards masculine, a direct reference to the neuter πληρωμα is impossible. There must be a *constructio ad sensum*. Research has found that, as a rule, God becomes accepted as the subject presented in πληρωμα (Lona, *op. cit.* [fn. 36] p. 131, etc.; in R. Hoppe, *op. cit.* [fn. 43] p. 163 as an editorial note). More obvious is the influence on the construction by the immediately preceding αὐτός which has to be seen as referring to Christ. Luther adjusted his aforementioned translation in the light of this (and of course simultaneously lessened the tense construction of the verb).

⁷⁸ To be expressed by means of the Greek perfect.

⁷⁹ On the relevant literary criticism cf. above fn. 50.

⁸⁰ This is seen in Israel's conceptions of God as peace-maker in the universe (cf. especially

Let us not forget, of course, that the cosmic effect can be professed even though it is not directly experienced. Therefore the concretization leads the author of Colossians to the Church where he sees reconciliation manifested (1:22), and sees the whole fullness of deity dwelling bodily in Christ (2:9).⁸¹ The cosmic christology of Colossians has its centre in the Church.⁸²

3. Before we come to conclusions, we shall, as I said, have a quick look at Ephesians and John 1:

3.1 The Letter to the Ephesians touches our topic in the great hymn of praise in its first chapter. As in the Letter to the Colossians, the language of praise allows the most concentrated christological utterances. I here draw your attention to the three most important points:

3.1.1 Read more attentively, Eph 1:3–14 is not, like Col 1:14–20, a song to Christ, but a song in praise of God. The christological reflection not only as a matter of assumption, but also formally, begins with the understanding of God: God's people have known God already, before the New Testament, as working through his Spirit.⁸³ Ephesians takes this up. So we find 1:3, the formula relating God, Christ and the Spirit to one another: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every blessing of his Spirit [...]."⁸⁴ Many generations before the period of the early Church in which the dogmas were formulated, the progression from Colossians to Ephesians shows that christological reflection, which begins with the divinity of God, presses on to "triadic" structures (the Father – in Christ – in the Spirit).⁸⁵

Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus II 192*). There is a presupposed understanding of the cosmos as fragile, even as contradictory in itself, which is, from the perspective of history of religions, not completely unproblematic (as to the discussion see for example E. Schweizer, "Versöhnung des Alls. Kol 1,20" [1975], in: id., *Neues Testament und Christologie im Werden. Aufsätze*. Göttingen, 1982, pp. 164–178 and N. Walter, *op. cit.* [fn. 43] pp. 231 f.).

⁸¹ Beyond the corporality of Jesus (cf. 1:22), *σωματικῶς*; 2:9 points to the Church as body (cf. 1:18); see especially P. Pokorný, *op. cit.* [fn. 69] pp. 102 f.

⁸² Correspondingly, 2:10 further develops the motif of fullness: in the Church it is possible to say by using the perfect tense, describing something unrestrictedly and lastingly founded, "you have come to fullness in him (Christ)"; the Church participates in the fullness of Christ; cf. especially J. Ernst, *op. cit.* [fn. 32] pp. 103 f. and P. Pokorný, *op. cit.* [fn. 69] p. 103.

⁸³ For examples from our semantic field of 'filling', see 1.

⁸⁴ The translation taken from the German Einheitsübersetzung again slightly simplifies the basic text: "Gepriesen sei Gott, der Vater unseres Herrn Jesus Christus: er hat uns mit allem Segen seines Geistes gesegnet [...]."

⁸⁵ According to the opening, via a broad unfolding of God's blessings "in Christ", the eulogy again leads towards an utterance about the Spirit (vv. 13 f.). If we go on reflecting on this systematically, we will first discover the components of God's acts / blessings in the Spirit in Christ; a path emerges towards the doctrine of Trinity via its 'economic' aspects. However, v. 3 also already contains the impulse towards the inner, 'immanent' reflection; for it starts "in

3.1.2 For the purpose of our topic, the centre of the hymn is v. 10. The 'Einheitsübersetzung' renders "(Gepriesen sei Gott ...) in Christus wollte er die Fülle der Zeiten heraufführen, in Christus alles vereinen, alles, was im Himmel und auf der Erde ist [(Blessed be the God ...) as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth]." We hear the echo of Col 1:20. But now the hope for the fullness of time, mentioned in 1.2, becomes vibrant: God communicates himself in Christ, the Ephesians hymn summarizes, in such a way that time wholly and conclusively (eschatologically) attains fullness. As time-space it is complete. As with a space offering pleasant accommodation, rules are given for residents ("Hausordnung", in Greek *οικονομία*⁸⁶, which is not clear in the German Einheitsübersetzung).⁸⁷ The next partial sentence is also extremely concise. The 'Einheitsübersetzung' gives only a reduced meaning of the verb. In Greek, however, two components are included: all things experience being gathered up and also recognize their culmination.⁸⁸ Nothing in the cosmos therefore remains outside the process of salvation. Christ is its absolute culmination.

3.1.3 Sovereign-christology encompasses the cosmos. At the same time its proper place is in the Church, as Colossians showed. Ephesians focuses on this last component after the eulogy: as head of the Church, Christ is the head over all things.⁸⁹ In the Church as his body, his fullness comes upon us (1:22 f.).⁹⁰

the heavenly places" with God as the Father of Jesus Christ. The precise place attributed to the Spirit remains undecided (further details in J. Adai, *Der Heilige Geist als Gegenwart Gottes in den einzelnen Christen, in der Kirche und in der Welt. Studien zur Pneumatologie des Epheserbriefes* [Regensburger Studien zur Theologie; 31]. Frankfurt/M. etc., 1985, pp. 61 ff., 273 ff.); here the history of dogma will meet its most difficult problem.

⁸⁶ "Haus-Ordnung" [house-rules] renders both components of the term; for further discussion see H. E. Lona, *op. cit.* [fn. 35] pp. 272 f.

⁸⁷ So is time still conceived of temporally after all? In a slightly different rendering of 1:10 A. Lindemann, *op. cit.* [fn. 27] p. 202, proposes to see it as a clear "renouncement of temporality". According to section 1.2 (where we have already found "filling" in combination with "kairoi") this does not seem to me to be absolutely required. In Ephesians the progression towards 3:19 becomes more plastic, if time-space in its fundamentally ordered fullness still contains aspects of the future.

⁸⁸ *ἀνακεφαλαίω* 'dissolved' according to its general meaning and the noun *κεφάλαιον*, contained in it. Further details on this much-discussed term can be found in the commentaries and in H. E. Lona, *op. cit.* [fn. 36] pp. 272 ff. As to its historical effectiveness cf. the term "recapitulatio" in Irenaeus.

⁸⁹ In Greek a progression of *κεφάλαιον* towards *κεφαλή* can be perceived.

⁹⁰ On the discussion of this central ecclesiological passage in the New Testament see, beside the commentaries, for instance A. Lindemann, *op. cit.* [fn. 27] pp. 62 f. and H. E. Lona, *op. cit.* [fn. 36] pp. 312–335; Eph 3:19; 4:10.13 follow (cf. also 5:18).

3.2 In 'fullness' Colossians implies the reconciliation of all things, Ephesians the destination of time and space in Christ. Compared with this, Jn 1, the passage we mentioned last here, is restrictive. Only assertions in the first person plural acknowledge the root: "The Word became flesh [...], and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. [...] From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace." (Jn 1:14.16).⁹³ In grace and truth⁹⁴ everything that God grants attains fullness; the law given through Moses (cf. above 1.3) does not seem to be exempted from this.⁹⁵ However, the experience of the saving fullness of God in Christ is entirely concentrated in the witnesses of Christ, the Church.⁹⁶ How the grace and truth of God in Christ spread beyond this remains open, and is not even looked at critically by the Johannine community. Turning away from the world seems to be a stronger impulse than turning towards it.⁹⁶

⁹³ Its being different from Colossians and Ephesians speaks against a "deuteropauline insertion" (versus P. Hofrichter, *Im Anfang war der "Johannesprolog". Das urchristliche Logosbekenntnis – die Basis neutestamentlicher und gnostischer Theologie* [Biblische Untersuchungen; 17]. Regensburg, 1986, pp. 63 ff.

⁹⁴ The German 'Einheitsübersetzung' has, "Und das Wort ist Fleisch geworden [...], und wir haben seine Herrlichkeit gesehen, die Herrlichkeit des einzigen Sohnes vom Vater, voll Gnade und Wahrheit. [...] Aus seiner Fülle haben wir alle empfangen, Gnade über Gnade."

⁹⁵ Behind the Greek, we can sense the Hebrew expression *h̄s̄d w'ṯm̄t* (see H. Gese, "Der Johannesprolog", in id., *Alttestamentliche Vorträge zur Biblischen Theologie*, München, 1977, pp. 152–201, here: p. 186 and the other literature mentioned in M. Theobald, *op. cit.* [fn. 95] p. 58) referring to God's free, unconditional and untiring attention (as, for the Old Testament, E. Kellenberger showed in: *h̄s̄d w'ṯm̄t als Ausdruck einer Gotteserfahrung. Gottes Offenwerden und Bleiben als Voraussetzung des Lebens* [Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments; 69]. Zürich, 1982, p. 81 and passim).

⁹⁶ Since its two lines follow one another without any adversative particles, v. 17, which follows our verses, can rather be understood as a synthetic than as an antithetic parallelism. In this case, the grace and truth through Christ are not to be understood as an antithesis to the law given through Moses. Gained from the scripture, they are rather to be interpreted as a circumscription of the salvational happening, in which the law is ultimately fulfilled (one should not forget that "grace and truth" is a formula previously coined by the law itself; as far as that goes, the process can be compared *mutatis mutandis* with the fulfilling of the law, described in fn. 41, via the commandment of love in Paul, taken from the law). Moses is only relativized insofar as the fullness surpasses all that there was before, which only guides towards the goal. The fact that, in the course of the Gospel of John, Moses is understood as writing about Jesus (1:45; cf. 5:45 f.) fits in well with this interpretative approach. – For a further discussion of Jn 1:17 see e. g. M. Theobald, *op. cit.* (fn. 95) pp. 60 ff.; J. Schoneveld, "Die Thora in Person", in: *Kirche und Israel* 6 (1991) 40–52 extends the relation of Logos and Torah beyond the text as far as an identification (on v. 17 pp. 44 ff.).

⁹⁷ On the interpretation of the 'We', cf. M. Theobald, *Im Anfang war das Wort. Textlinguistische Studie zum Johannesprolog* (Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge; 106). Stuttgart, 1983, pp. 56 f. (extension from the witnesses in v. 14 to the 'pluralis ecclesiasticus' in v. 16).

⁹⁸ Cf. the much-discussed negative assessment of the cosmos in Jn (1:10, etc.).

III. Consequences

In conclusion, let us return to the initial question: does a christology of fullness open up approaches for a theology of religions that resists hostile divisions? It does indeed in a striking way, if we agree to approach faith in a way that follows the urgings of the Letter to the Colossians:

In Christ the fullness of divinity encounters us. Fullness, however, overcomes a formless void. It does so especially where it happens to encounter a world disintegrated through hostility. God's fullness, as the Colossians hymn expresses it in Christ, leaves nothing on earth or in heaven in a state of alienation from God. Fullness is incomplete where it excludes anything or anybody (the speculation of the hymn comes to a head here, going beyond what was said in 1.1 and 1.4). It is complete where it reconciles or, more precisely, where it has already essentially brought about reconciliation. God's fullness in Christ is like this. Even before the present we are experiencing, it has granted to creation the structure of peace (Col 1:19 f. before 2:9).

If we do not play down the Letter to the Colossians' line of thinking, we perceive all our fellow human beings, fellow creatures and even creation as a whole, as reconciled. Our perspective receives its orientation from a fundamental structure of peace not only hoped for in Christ, but already granted. 'High' christology permits, even demands, a theology of peace against hostility, extending it to everything there is on earth and in heaven.

Our actual reality is not in keeping with this. It falls short of the peace that, in the fullness of the Christ event, precedes everything that is to be formed. We notice this, and the early Christians noticed it. On the other hand, a structure of creation that does not apply to experienced reality is hollow. If Christ gathers and structures the fullness of time, then his fullness must gain ground in the time we experience. To be this ground is the gift of the Church (Eph 1:22 f. after 1:10) – as Colossians sketches out and Ephesians unfolds in its most focussed form.

If we hold onto this idea, then, before the world, the Church must declare that the world has been reconciled. The reconciling and peace-making fullness of God in Christ calls for embodiment in the Church. How is this to be expressed? Negative experiences with the actual reality of the world can easily bring about new restrictions. The New Testament is not free of this tendency, as I had to mention specifically with regard to Jn 1. But an extensive unfolding corresponds better to God's grace and truth in

Christ. To leave hostility as it is, when people believe that reconciliation has been brought about, is wrong. Therefore, to return to the very beginning, we are right to correct Luther's reasons for reading the Qur'an. Beyond all unavoidable restrictions, a christology of fullness gives rise to a theology of religions in the spirit of reconciliation and peace.

A final remark on the strangeness of the term 'fullness' noted in part I. It forbids us, from a hermeneutic perspective, to regard the lecture as simply finished. On the other hand, the term 'fullness' is not easy to replace. Its special good fortune is that, etymologically, it is very remote from the terms superiority, absoluteness, etc., which happen to be very problematic in the theology of religions. These terms are Latin, post-Biblical foreign words. 'Fullness' belongs to a Biblical image context of 'high' christology.⁹⁷ Perhaps the development of an image, although it has to be perceived anew, is helpful, despite its limits, in the presently difficult state of discussions.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ An intellectually consistent line runs up to the formation of the early Church's creed, even though a synopsis with the Nicene Creed is not to be so directly made as in H. Gese, *op. cit.* (fn. 43) p. 65.

⁹⁸ It hardly needs to be stated after what has been said before that this goes against a 'pluralist theology of religions' (cf. in this context of our terminology for example J. Hick, *God and the Universe of Faith. Essays in the Philosophy of Religions*. London, 1973).

[Study Group 1]

what happened to Jesus' message – reason for Christian discord?

ZIRKER The lecture has addressed what hinders Muslims from sharing the Christian understanding of faith. This is exactly where their reservations about Christianity come from – whether and to what extent is Christian preaching still faithful to the original message of Jesus, the apostle and prophet of God, or have Christians changed the message, beginning at the time of Paul and from Paul through to the Council of Nicaea?

Maybe, from the Muslim perspective the difficulty does not primarily come from their suspicion that in Christian dogma somebody is associated with God, but rather that (primarily due to Paul) a theology developed which subsequently divided the community of Jews and Christians, and then divided the Christians themselves. If God is one and if a theology of unity and fullness is pursued, this should work itself out in the unity of the believers. History, however, which led to division between Nestorians, Monophysites and others, has also disqualified the theological idea itself.

tension between theologies of creation and election?

BSTEH P. Is Muhammad's interest in bringing about unity not in the first place related to the universality implied in the order of creation and mankind? Does he not perceive the basic trait of exclusivity which is part of the Jewish and Christian theologies of election, as contradicting this universality insofar as they consider the uniqueness of their election as the point of culmination in the revelation of God's uniqueness? However, the Christian understanding of faith would in fact be contrary to that, since Christians understand the uniqueness of Jesus precisely in terms of his witness to the unique love of God that includes all people and which grants universal validity to his own mediatorship. This tension should be worked out.

pleroma-christology and transcendence of God.

KAHLERT Could Islam follow something like an 'incarnatory progression', as mentioned in the lecture with reference to wisdom speculation in the Jewish tradition? Would a conception of God's name in the temple, for example, that God's name is present there,

be possible in Islamic thinking?

WESS Do we not risk denying the transcendence of God if we assert that

the fullness of the Godhead encounters us in Christ? When the Old Testament says that God dwells in his temple, it was certainly clear to every Jew that God is still much greater than what can be experienced of him in the temple. Is it not possible that the Fathers of the Council of Nicaea, in the understanding of Apollinarios of Laodicea, replaced the human rational soul with the divinity of the Logos (which was actually the issue at this Council), thus defining the divinity of this Logos in such a way that they in fact affirmed the divinity of Jesus Christ? And is there not much to support the view that the misleading (in that it sounded monophysite) statement of Nicaea, which was then possibly corrected, though only half-heartedly, by the Council of Chalcedon, is actually where the history of this Christian disagreement has its roots? Does not the hymn in the Letter to the Philippians (2:5 ff.) say that Jesus Christ did not regard equality with God – the sin in its very essence – as something to be exploited, but, on the contrary, humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross? The Latin Fathers still translated: he did not want to seize being-like-God like a stolen good, whereas the Greek Fathers translated: he did not see it as a prey which one has anxiously to hold fast.

ZIRKER Islam makes us realize that in fact the consequence of this theology of pleroma and non-delimitation has been a story of restriction and discord in a quite massive way. Of course Muḥammad did not need to be informed about Nicaea and Chalcedon in order to be very clearly aware of the story of discord between Jews and the Christians as well as between Christians themselves.

He could easily see it without having to know how it all came about in the history of dogma. The Qurʾān repeatedly affirms that it was particularly this christology that drove the Christians into discord: they speak about Christ, but they have no certain knowledge – and sects from among them fell into disagreement (cf. Qurʾān 4,157; 21,92 f.; 23,53; 43,63–65, etc.). The Christians are the example that illustrates the opposite of a united Umma – not withstanding the tragedy that Islam, contrary to its original intention, did not achieve the unity of mankind either.

OTT It would be helpful if two statements made in the lecture could be explained in more detail:

pleroma-christology a Christian motif? first, the statement that pleroma-christology was the christology of the first generation, earlier than one that concentrates on the earthly and historical Jesus; this of course makes it quite clear that the idea of the

cosmic Christ is not of modern origin, but is well-grounded in the Bible.

does pleroma-christology lead towards discord?

The second statement which should be clarified more closely refers to the transition from pleroma-christology to the concept of peace and non-exclusivity: that where there is the *πλήρωμα* nothing is excluded, but everything is included – as also in the sense of the Non-aliud concept of Nicholas of Cusa: how does this interlocking of the two motifs ‘pleroma’ and ‘peace’ work out, if we look at it in a critical, systematic and historical way, and specifically vis à vis the idea already mentioned here several times, that the departure from pleroma-christology during the history of Christianity has in fact been a strong cause of discord?

historicity of Jesus in view of the unchangeability of God

KRÜGER Should we not understand the problems connected with the Council of Nicaea in the light of a certain historical situation: at that time they had learned to reflect on theological issues from the perspective of Greek philosophy? That, given the problem we are discussing here, Christians were looking for a possibility to link the concept of God, which is characterized by eternity and unchangeability, with this concrete human being Jesus of Nazareth? In other words, is it not the difficulty of combining history, dynamism and change in the context of the historical Jesus with the concept of God that really made them discuss all these controversial matters? This was then further defined at the Council of Chalcedon with regard to the second Person of the Trinity, but without finding a way of expressing it other than the *via negativa*.

does chaos continue to threaten ‘fullness’?

SCHREINER Following on from the lecture, the question also arises about the relation between ‘fullness’ and ‘fulfillment’ and what is called “tohuwabohu” in Gn 1. Does ‘chaos’ simply vanish when ‘fullness’ takes its place or is a power that threatens fullness still inherent in ‘tohuwabohu’?

pleroma and the earthly Jesus

KARRER Of the various problem areas which were addressed here, I will try to take up three. First the inter-Christian key issue: pleroma and the earthly Jesus. Pleroma christology makes up only a small part of early Christian thinking; it is only one among several different approaches between which one had to choose. There is much in favour of the view that the kyrios-christology expressed in the profession “Jesus Christ is Lord”, is a related approach. ‘Lord’ is after all the circumscription of God in the Septuagint. The

choice of the title implies that being the Lord must be thought of in the context of God being the Lord.

But, how is this tendency towards the proclamation of high-ness to be reconciled with the perception of the earthly Jesus? It is striking that the proclamations of high-ness in the New Testament documents are older than the stories about the earthly Jesus. The letters of Paul with their hymns – including the Colossians hymn – are probably somewhat older than all gospels. This fact reflects the fundamental problem already addressed by Mr. Wess: what happens with regard to the earthly Jesus, if we get involved in a 'high christology'?

Here we ultimately face a demarcation line. For a New Testament exegete it is quite obvious that the gospels choose another approach. If we look at the Colossians hymn, we notice that the earthly Jesus is only touched on in passing. Although it says that he died, at the moment when the earthly Jesus should be included more extensively the subject is changed. On the other hand, the gospels as they unfold are following not a hymnic, but a narrative line.

Early Christianity does not therefore succeed in attaining a systematic and full integration of the assertions about the earthly Jesus in relation to God by narrating how he lived as the earthly Jesus. We may regret this, but we may also recognize in it the considerable inner strength of the New Testament from which both impulses come. There are on the one hand the words that arise from the experience of resurrection and give the most plausible explanation for it, in which Jesus is seen shining with God's divinity. With this vital impulse that originates from the first Christian generation, the narrative impulse has to be simultaneously maintained. This gains importance to the extent to which there was a danger of losing the insight that the one whom we see shining with God's divinity was earthly, so that his earthly existence had to be spoken of through a narrative about his activities. Thus both ways of understanding result, which are reflected in the words of the New Testament: to conceive of Jesus in the context of God's divinity and, simultaneously, to tell of him as the one who acts and speaks among his people.

It remains the task of systematic theology to constantly make new attempts to synthesize both lines of teaching about the one Jesus and so keep open a way towards understanding christological dogmas. In the interest of forging links between both sides, we have to explain how this has developed and improve people's understanding that it was a plausible outcome of the efforts made by the early Church to think through these issues.

pleroma and peace

As to the second group of questions: pleroma and peace on the one hand and pleroma and restriction or pleroma versus chaos on the other. To start with the latter: ever since creation as we have it related, fullness has been the goal, but nevertheless chaos retains its threatening power. The saying in the Wisdom of Solomon, "The spirit of the Lord has filled the world [...]" (Wis 1:7), excludes the source of chaos which is injustice (cf. point 1.4 above pp. 109 f.). In the context of pleroma, statements are always directed against injustice, which is opposed to the wide-ranging peace of fullness.

pleroma and Christian unity or disunity

Finally the third group of questions, which emerges, as it were, automatically from the second: pleroma and Christian concord or discord. If we proceed from fullness, we have to reject everything that does not contain fullness. We find in the Letter to the Colossians relevant assertions of great (primarily ethical) importance. In the Letter to the Ephesians the ethics of fullness are taken forward towards a struggle against the dark powers in which the forces of chaos are again at work.

Fullness that is known and believed in does indeed meet with opposition. And this opposition has to be dealt with, which leads from the start to a difficult decision being taken: to oppose the opposition. Thus, what is characteristic of early Christianity is not an attempt to overcome opposition through love (which in early Christianity is certainly considered to be the highest commandment), but to confront it with resistance. This is not only true with reference to the fullness statements in the Letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians, but also to those in the Gospel of John.

As soon as this approach is adopted, it can also be applied to the inter-Christian realm – when one comes across Christian groupings who do not seem to attain or exemplify this fullness. The fact that failing to live a life of fullness has something to do with discord is not only relevant in the history of dogmas, but also already evident in the New Testament. Since pleroma-christology is only one part of early Christian christology, something similar might also be said in the context of other conceptions, for example with reference to the *kyrios* title already mentioned. Where there is belief in Christ, the Lord, shining with God's divinity, a barrier is immediately set up against any context where this profession becomes somehow problematic, so that, from the beginning of Christianity, there were fierce controversies.

Although it is unimaginable that one could persuade a Muslim of the christological elements of our faith, we must still face the even more pressing

question about the divisions within the Christian tradition itself which have resulted in relation to the christological contents of the Christian creed. On the one hand there is no doubt that the disputes in the course of Christian history have exhibited a falling short of what should in fact have been the task of the Church according to the Letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians. There is after all, especially in the context of the 'fullness' statements in the New Testament, the most highly developed ecclesiology and it is considered to be the task of the Church to embody this *πλήρωμα*, a task with which any kind of schism or division is incompatible.

On the other hand, if a high christology would result in thinking of unity in a way that objects to any diversity, we would probably be confronted with the greatest difficulties in thinking adequately of God the Father and the Son as being interrelated. By affirming 'fullness', the New Testament preserves an open space, open to an understanding of God's oneness that can be developed and renewed, that simultaneously says fullness and difference. As a result, in Christianity a concept of God's oneness has developed which is different from that in Islam: in the light of christology the understanding of God's oneness progresses with a certain dynamism, so that the counter to the disunity of Christians no longer has to be unity at all costs, but unity within a dynamism which allows for variety and differences.

LEUZE In this case, Islam would be justified in its criticism of Christianity insofar as the christological *pleroma*-statements are not 'exaggerations' that were only made later, but belong to what is originally Christian, and that there is no way round this as liberal theology, for instance, has proposed.

unity and the oneness of God in Islam

Conversely, with regard to christology, the question must also be raised of whether God can in fact be thought of as one, in the strict way in which it is formulated in Islamic theology. Here reference must be

made among other things to Islam's own controversy concerning the question of whether the Qur'an is created or uncreated, which, in some sense, is in parallel with the christological discussion. Is Islamic theology not too quick to say: "God is one", without taking into consideration that unity can only be conceived of through difference?

HAGEMANN In forming their own faith in God, the Qur'an and Muhammad were not initially opposing the christological disputes. The determining factor was rather the dispute with old Arab paganism, whose cult addressed many gods and goddesses (such as Hubal the city-god of Mecca).

In this early period, while he did not yet have to break with them decisively, Muhammad conceded that his Meccan compatriots could continue to venerate their gods, although he persisted in confessing that there was only one God. However, in the course of the confrontation with the Meccans, this kind of henotheism was replaced by the clear assertion that their gods and goddesses were nothing but non-beings, because it was obviously not in their power to do anything comparable to what God had the power to do (cf. Qur'an 27, 59–64). It was only in the third Meccan period (from 618/619), if not in the Medina period (from 622) of his proclamation that Muhammad gradually distanced himself at first from the Jews and later also from the Christians (and then everything took its course as Mr. Zirker has said: see above pp. 127 f.).

high christology – a hermeneutical question

In this context the critical problem seems to be not so much whether to think in terms of the *pleroma* or the earthly Jesus. It is rather a hermeneutical question: if we consent to the thought patterns underlying the Biblical assertions in the Letter to the Colossians, then this approach is rigorous and coherent. If we do not consent, the approach becomes incomprehensible, and a Muslim will not be able to go along with thinking of Jesus alongside God's divinity. There is then no need to refer to Chalcedon, because the decision has already been made, in Biblical christology.

where does this strict form of Islamic monotheism come from?

KAHLERT In the history of ideas, what is the origin of this strict monotheism, which one always suspects cannot be thought through rigorously? And where does this unquestioned decision come from, according to which we tend to think of God as transcendent in such an absolute way? Are there any connections with Greek philosophy, like the linkages by which Christianity got involved with this thinking?

ZIRKER The determination to hold to this absolute monotheism has its roots in the fact that worldly contradictions and worldly chaos can be explained by a heavenly diversity: if there are several parties in heaven they will start quarrelling with one another – as happens in this world. If we want to be of one mind on earth, we have to conceive of a very strict unity existing at the top. Otherwise worldly forces flee first to one side, and then to the other – and their quarrel is transferred to heaven; or, conversely, the heavenly powers could divide and destroy their own work, creation.

So the Prophet's main protest does not at first seem to be directed so much

against idolatry as against a disturbed social, legal and moral order, and of course as we have just said, these are closely linked with one another.

unity of God and
unity of society

HAGEMANN The idea of *tawhīd*, God's unity, cannot be valued too highly, but it must not be restricted to the image of God. Islamic ethics, after all, are no autonomous, but theonomous. There is also, for instance, a very distinct concept of unity in the area of social doctrine and policy – as it is represented in the 'unity parties' in some countries: in this way the unity of God is, albeit imperfectly, transferred to certain realms of worldly actuality.

does Islam fulfil
its own claim
about unity?

LEUZE How do Islamic theologians deal with the fact that Islam has obviously not been able to fulfil the claim about unity which it initially set out to bring about? Is this lack of unity disputed or are there any supplementary theories, which can help explain the dilemma?

ZIRKER The problem of actual disunity, which is considered to be a great evil, confronts the Islamic world very forcefully. It was referred to from the beginning in the *Ḥadīth* of Muḥammad himself, when, shortly before his death, he was walking in a graveyard and extolling the dead because they could not see the looming shadows that were plain to him.

HAGEMANN Efforts have recently been made to find a way back to the trans-denominational unity of the *umma al-islāmiyya*, especially by resolving disputes between Sunnis and *Shī'īs*, and to re-establish a unified Islam with one religious-political character, not ignoring the possibility of using *djihād* to bring this about.

ZIRKER Here the fundamental question arises of how to deal with the fact that a religious doctrine or theory is not borne out in reality. The usual apologetic scheme, in Islam as elsewhere, simply puts the blame on reality: it is people's fault, because they have not put the ideal into practice. Ultimately, this is the easy way out. A more far-reaching option would be to establish this unity by means of violence, by simply 'excluding' the others. Then of course the result is the *una Ecclesia catholica*: unity is guaranteed – at the expense of those who no longer belong there.

On the other hand, this sense of unease should certainly be taken more seriously and the problem behind it admitted to the field of theological investigation. Does the theory not tend too much towards the utopian? When confronting reality, it may easily tend towards coercion, often only intellectually, but sometimes, in the political arena, with more dangerous implications.

similarity
between Muslim
and Christian
basic concerns?

WESS Beside these specific concerns to ground the unity of society in the unity and oneness of God, did not a strictly theological issue also play a decisive role for Muḥammad, which is the desire to safeguard the transcendence of God? Is this not a fundamental concern in Islam which was also initially operative in the context of Christian christology, though perhaps not so clearly articulated? As for christology, following on from the hymn in the Letter to the Philippians, I would like to refer back to kyrios christology. When, at the end of this hymn, it says, "[...] and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:11), does it not mean that he has re-established the glory of God the Father, or will re-establish it? Or we may think of 1 Cor 15:28, where it says, "When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection to him [...]." This means that the rule of Jesus Christ consists in establishing the rule of God and as far as that goes a rightly understood kyrios christology would not necessarily result in placing Christ on the same level as God. We could here also refer to 1 Tm 2:5, "For there is one God, and there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human."

Should we not also take account of the literary genre of the hymn in the Letter to the Colossians? If it proclaims enthusiastically what we can experience in the encounter with Jesus, we should not directly translate this into theological language.

WOLBERT Perhaps this is a quite general weakness of religious people that when they disagree, they quickly suspect underlying dubious motives, or a lack of faith, or something similar. There may of course be a grain of truth in this, in that worldly or political interests do play an important role in such matters; this is clear from the historical background to the christological controversies. However, these political or worldly interests need not necessarily be immoral or suspect; there may also be underlying legitimate concerns.

In this context, should we not consider more seriously the possibility that different formulas may be used to mean the same thing, as for example when Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Shenouda III declared to each other that they meant the same thing, even though one side used the dyophysite formula and the other the monophysite? If we underestimate the difficulties of communication inherent in the use of language, we may also take

insufficiently into consideration the various possible causes of disagreement.

theocentric orientation of the New Testament FÜGLISTER The subject addressed by Mr. Wess is of great importance. In fact the orientation of the New Testament is not so much christocentric as theocentric, so that the whole Bible forms a unity based on a general Biblical theology. The synoptic Jesus does not announce himself, but the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, the kingdom of God and, according to the Gospel of John, Jesus expresses his task as: "I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (Jn 17:26). Furthermore, it is Paul who, as we have already quoted, says in 1 Cor 15:26–28 that Jesus, when the last enemy is subjected to him, will hand over the kingdom to God the Father, "so that God may be all in all" (v. 28). It is interesting that in the Letter to the Philippians there is a text from Deutero-Isaiah, which originally refers to Yahweh, that is here interpreted as referring to Jesus: "so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend", but of course "to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:10 f.). The whole New Testament finally ends in the Revelation to John with the Old Testament King, Yahweh-Psalms, "ἐβασίλευσεν κύριος ὁ θεός – For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns" (Rev 19:6).

Whatever the case, the profession of Κύριος Ἰησοῦς should not be understood in the sense of Jesus being Yahweh, but – at least primarily – as a formula of enthronement: as, for example, Peter says in the 'sermon of Pentecost' that, by raising him up to life, "God has made him both Κύριος and Χριστός, Lord and Messiah" (Ac 2:32–36). In this way it also says at the beginning of the Letter to the Romans, "and was declared to be Son of God with power" (Rm 1:4), which means enthroned as Messiah. Similarly also in the creed, "He is seated at the right hand of the Father" – following Psalm 110, "The LORD (Yahweh) says to my lord (to the king): 'Sit at my right hand [...]'" (v. 1).

As for the oneness of God, and the oneness in God, it seems worth noting that the Bible is concerned with God as Yahweh, the God who is, who shall be and who is Emmanuel, God with us, and whose being-Yahweh found its highest manifestation in Jesus. It is interesting here that, although Moses is referred to extensively in the Qur'ān, in forty Sūras, the revelation of the name in Ex 3:14 is, probably deliberately, never mentioned – just as the Jews too have avoided pronouncing the name Yahweh. Probably in

a similar way the being-Yahweh, which actually comprises not only transcendence but also immanence, is somehow remote from Muḥammad.

clarification from the perspective of the history of religions

KARRER First the question of the relation between the history of religions and theology. In the light of the history of religions a fundamental clarification takes place which indirectly also concerns Islam as a scripture-based religion: we have become too accustomed to proceed

on the basis that high christology rests on a Hellenistic rather than a Jewish foundation. The exact opposite is probably the case: it was precisely the heritage of Israel that led towards Christ being conceived of in the light of God's divinity. The decisive presuppositions underlying this strict assertion are first: God is one; and second: the Wisdom speculation before and at the beginning of the Christian era, already mentioned in the lecture [s. above pp. 114–116], that the structure of the world is prior to the world. Christianity has taken up both of these from Israel. We can regard the fact that the very emergence of Christianity out of Israel separated Christianity and Israel as a great tragedy in the history of religions. Nevertheless, this separation does not seem to be due to a shifting of Christianity towards a Hellenism alien to Israel. Rather it was the heritage of God's people, Israel, that had to be conceived anew, on the basis of the fundamental experience of the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ.

categorization of theocentric and christological structures

Connected with this religio-historical clarification is the second, theological, question which arises from the interventions of Mr. Wess and Mr. Füglistner: in inter-religious dialogue, which is the best way of dealing with a certain ambivalence found in the New Testa-

ment, namely that christological ideas include some subordinationist components? Should these be more strongly emphasized today or should we not rather begin on the basis of God's divinity?

If we read them closely, the subordinationist components do fit into the overall structure of christological propositions. Two examples mentioned by Mr. Wess may be cited. One passage is 1 Tm 2:5: "For there is one God; there is also one mediator [...], Christ Jesus, himself human." Here one can very clearly recognize the progression: it begins with the assertion, there is one God, εἷς θεός – which corresponds exactly to the assertion in Dt 6:4 of the oneness of God. Then it goes on: εἷς καὶ μεσίτης θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπων: Christ is conceived of from the perspective of God's oneness. Then thirdly there is the assertion, "there is also one mediator between

God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human". So 1 Tm 2:5 is not a passage that may be used against conceiving of Christ in the light of God. We cannot say that the thinking here is theocentric and not christocentric. On the contrary, theocentric and christocentric thinking seem to intertwine very closely. And anyone who conceives of Christ in the light of God must freely add *ἀνθρώπος* with due emphasis. The humanity of Jesus cannot be ignored here.

The most subordinationist passage in the New Testament is 1 Cor 15:23 ff., which says that at the end the Son "hands over the kingdom to God the Father" (v. 24). Here again we find the βασιλεία-motif which has been referred to. It demonstrates that an enlarging religio-historical impulse has to be received: it is Jesus' kerygma that drives the idea that where God is all in all and fullness, God has also to be linked with the βασιλεία-concept. The result is a linking of different ideas that complement each other: Christ before all, and Christ at the end, and the emphasis of a special father-ship of God in relation to Christ, must not hide the fact that the βασιλεία is that of God's kingdom and that God shall be all in all. Here too Christ is conceived of from the perspective of and facing towards God. There is no doubt, however, that the passage allows a certain withdrawal of the idea of oneness, because in 1 Cor 15:28 it ends subordinationally.

But within the subordinationist thread there is a passage in Paul, which is opposed to others. The most striking one contains the unresolved syntactic problem of Rm 9:5, the famous passage where Paul affirms in the controversy over the vocation of the Israelites, "to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah", in order to pass directly (in the old manuscripts there is no punctuation) into praise, "who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." The final sentence may be read as an independent eulogy. The christological statement leads to it: God should be praised. But it follows on so closely, even without Paul using any punctuation, that the theocentric statement necessarily has a christological effect: the divine praise also (and according to the syntax of the verse, even directly) applies to Christ. This mutuality of theocentric and christocentric structures inherent in the New Testament must not be lost.

[Study Group 2]

creation as a whole is where God brings about his salvation

BSTEH A. The lecture made clear that faith in God leads into the breadth of creation as a whole. If we look for a generally valid criterion by which to judge whether one thing or another may be attributed to God, or to his initiative, we may find it here: is it something that happens for the benefit of creation as a whole or is it restricted to serving only particular interests. As far as Biblical faith in God is concerned, it is certainly true that the world in itself and as a whole is his creation and "without him not one thing came into being" (Jn 1:3). And if even human beings do not in reason do anything without being mindful of the goal of their actions, how infinitely more should we assume this is true of God. Especially when God visits the world in order to bring about salvation in it, it is that world which (before and within all its unfolding into diversity and detail) is and remains the one creature of his wisdom and omnipotence. In whatever context we reflect about the relation of God towards the world – and particularly when we focus on the relationship of God towards a specific community or individual (however elected or chosen) – we are always initially dealing with creation as a whole, as the one *πλάσμα* of his hands (cf. Rm 9:20).

NEUMANN This addresses the comprehensive horizon which also applies to christology. But how does this actually affect our understanding of Christ? or, in the encounter with Islam, is it not rather the understanding of God within the context of creation as a whole, on which we should focus?

BSTEH A. In the encounter with Islam we should also focus on the basic understanding of the world as creation, which is shared by Christians and Muslims. For both of us there is a question of creation as a whole, in its origin and therefore in its destiny too, as a whole that cannot be divided. And the matter of what God intends to do with the work of his hands, which is one in all its diversity, should therefore be a consistent way of approaching dialogue between Christians and Muslims, encompassing the different responses they may give to it.

VANONI In the dialogue with Islam it is without doubt good and necessary for Christian thinking to concentrate on central issues. The topic we are discussing here has a special place in this: to what extent is God always concerned with creation as a whole in his redeeming work. For, even in the New Testament, there are texts that give a rather different view on

this central matter. We may, for example, think of the Gospel according to John, where in Jn 3:16 there is the wonderful statement: "For God so loved the world [...]", but then we find in 1 Jn 4:10 f. a parallel statement, where it no longer says that God loves "the world", but (only) "us", and that we do not have to love everybody but (only) the "brothers". So it seems to be important, particularly in encounter with 'others', to recall such statements in which the horizon of faith is open without restriction, and to develop a hermeneutical approach that allows us, for the sake of our faith in the one Creator of all things, constantly to refer to central assertions like Col 1 and to interpret all other assertions in that broad perspective.

the fullness of God only in the Church?

PESCHKE Since the Letter to the Colossians says that in Christ "the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things" (1:19 f.), and in view of the fact that this

has not been made good in the reality we experience, the Church has begun not to see this fullness, this reconciliation, in the whole world, but to believe that (for the time being only) it has become real within her, and that consequently the world should be integrated into her. This will ultimately be an obstacle for Muslims in their relation to the Church, and in any case this fullness is not exactly put into practice in the Church either.

NEUMANN The lecture did not say that the structure of peace exists only in the Church. It is present in the whole world, but in the Church it can be experienced, probably because the Church is open to it. If Christ shapes the structure of creation, the lecture said, he must also precede creation.

KHOURY In fact this was not only intended as an observation, but also as a vocation, a vocation for the Church: she is expected to be the place where all this can be experienced – if she is not, then she has to change.

mediatorship of Jesus in creation – no bridge towards Islamic faith

Muslims would agree with us on the statement that this creation is one that is reconciled – but directly, for the sake of God, not in Christ. In Islam it is hardly possible to accept the mediatorship of Jesus Christ in creation, as was suggested in the lecture after the passage about

Thomas' story about the infancy with reference to certain statements in the Qur'ān [cf. above pp. 117 f.]. Although the word *khalaqa* is used in the Qur'ānic texts (cf. 3,49; 5,113), the commentators point to the different use of the word in the context of God's creation and the passages quoted. It is the same verb: when God is the subject it means 'to create', but in the context of what Jesus does (in order to protect monotheism from any per-

version) it means 'to make'. The idea of the mediatorship of Christ in creation cannot build a bridge towards Islam because it immediately reinforces the suspicion that Christ would in this way become an associate Creator and subsequently a god.

Muslims can see a possibility of salvation being granted to all human beings (as some of them have even stated), because God wants to guide all humans towards salvation. However, they do not acknowledge a humanity that is reconciled with God in Jesus Christ, and they would never be able to say that they are redeemed in Jesus Christ. The idea of the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, whether in redemption or in creation, cannot therefore be seen as a bridge towards the faith of Muslims. For them, this idea raises very serious problems.

As for the fact that the same legend is to be found in the Gospel of Thomas and in the Qur'ān, we cannot conclude from this that the Qur'ān took the narration from the Gospel of Thomas or that Muḥammad knew about it. Parallelism does not prove origin. For the Muslim, the Qur'ān from the very beginning, has no human source: as long as no connection has been proved in the tradition, we can initially only state the fact that there are parallels between the Qur'ān and the Gospel of Thomas, but no one can claim that Muḥammad took it from this source.

VANONI The lecture did not say that Muḥammad knew about the Gospel of Thomas, but only that this legend was of course known. There was no reference to how the legend found its way into the Qur'ān. On the other hand, we have to be honest: in the case of parallels, which are obvious in connection with the story of the birds, there must be some relation between them. If we reject this a priori, we could no longer speak about connections in general. Are we really able to take in the position of a Muslim in this matter when he says that everything in the Qur'ān was introduced only by higher authority?

There is no question of the difficulty already experienced in Old Testament criticism of developing elaborate methods of comparison and establishing criteria which make it possible to determine when authors actually copy each other, when they have come to know each other through other sources and when they did not know each other and only by chance say the same things. It is regrettable that the necessary tools of philological research are not yet available.

KHOURY The main difficulty concerns contents: to proceed from the literary parallels between the passages quoted in the Gospel of Thomas and the

Qur'an, to link them with the text of the Letter to the Colossians and to speak of a possible mediatorship of Jesus Christ in creation even in the Qur'an. Whereby, of course, in the lecture attention was also drawn to the very essential reservation that, what Jesus then did, was done "by God's leave".

ELSAS In any case, Mr. Karrer said quite cautiously: "it became known to Muhammad"; whether it was made known to him by human beings who handed it on to him, or by God (as Muslims see it) was left open. Concerning mediatorship in creation, on the other hand, he said that it was granted to Jesus, as already mentioned, "by God's leave". And God is almighty: if he can do this with Jesus, he can also do it with anybody else.



Christian and Muslim belief in creation

SCHAEFFLER When the lecture referred to the theological standing of the passage in the Letter to the Colossians where something like the cosmic meaning of Christ seems to be expressed, the difference between

the Christian and the Muslim understanding of creation becomes particularly clear: on the Christian side there is no independent doctrine of creation; rather it develops in the light of the proclamation of the resurrection from the dead; we could even say that it is a commentary on this proclamation. If Jesus has been raised from the dead, a new creation has come about, but then he has also to be seen in connection with the first creation. This is a claim based on the interpretation of revelation and it makes the issue with Muslims more difficult rather than easier.

If Christians could develop a doctrine of creation that is separate from christology, it would make things easier. Neither the hymn nor the editor who integrated it into the Letter to the Colossians, does this. Rather it says that he as the *πρωτότοκος*, the firstborn from the dead, is also the *πρωτότοκος* of all creation. This doctrine of creation is therefore part of christology. This makes the whole matter more difficult and we must not, for whatever reason, make it easier ourselves. There is much to indicate that something similar is the case elsewhere too: the Old Testament truths on creation and the stories of creation, for example, are not autonomous and cannot be separated from other subjects of the kerygma.

belief in creation and resurrection

ELSAS The encounter with God that took place in his people's march through the Red Sea was extended in Judaism to become the profession that God is the Lord of the whole world and created the world. Connected with this is the ex-

perience of Christianity, in that when Christians arise from baptism they continue along the path of Israel, and experience in it the power of God that forms the new creation and is related to resurrection. But in the Qur'an there are also verses that speak of a connection between resurrection and the belief in creation: why should it be difficult for God to raise the dead on the day of resurrection, when, at the beginning, he made them from dust and gave them life (cf. Qur'an 17,98 f.; 30,27; 36,79.81-83)? So resurrection is possible because God "is the Creator Supreme", who called all things into being. In all three religions there is therefore a relation between creation and resurrection, although differently assessed, and this should constitute an interesting basis of dialogue between them.

DUPRÉ When the Gospel according to John says, "the Word was with God", and: "the Word became flesh", could it not be differently translated as "the Torah was with God", and "the Torah became flesh"? And, taking that as a starting point, could we not go on to ask: what is the heavenly Qur'an which is now given to the Arabs? In the understanding of Islam, does the Qur'anic revelation not follow the line of something similar, continuing what is expressed in the fundamental idea that in the beginning the Torah was with God and has now (as this Qur'an) appeared visibly?

VANONI The assumption that the Torah is behind Jn 1:1 should rather be contested. There are those texts in the Old Testament tradition, such as Sir 24:23, where the Torah is mentioned, but already Sirach goes still further back to creation in the beginning. And as for Genesis, in the Aramaic translation (Targum) it does not say: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth", but: "In the beginning when the word of God created the heavens and the earth". So it seems to be rather certain that Jn 1:1 with "In the beginning was the Word" goes back then to the Aramaic translation of the Bible. This word of God that in the beginning created the earth was not the Torah, but his word, and the Torah is not pre-existent, but given only later, in the period after the Exodus.

KHOURY In the Qur'an there are no references whatsoever to a parallelism between Logos, Torah and Qur'an. "And the Logos was God" – there is nothing comparable in the Qur'an to this saying in John's prologue. It does say that the Qur'an in its earthly form is a copy of a heavenly "Mother of the book" (cf. Qur'an 43,4; 56,77-80; 85,21 f.), but beyond this statement no possible parallelism can be found. In any case, Islam would never accept a statement such as "And the Qur'an was God". The question of the eternity of the Qur'an and whether it is created or is uncreated, is on another level.

reconciled
creation – basis
of a common
ethic of peace

The shared call for a theology of peace, despite all the different bases for it, can be perceived as a sound bridge of common understanding which could possibly result from the high christology of the Letter to the Colossians. The call for such a theology, as far as Christian faith is concerned, has its roots in the conviction that we are all reconciled with God in Jesus Christ and therefore also reconciled with one another, and for Muslims, this same call could be seen as directly resulting from their belief in the all-merciful and almighty God. Then there is, for Christians as well as Muslims, for the sake of God, a reconciled creation, which obliges them to practise together an ethic and policy of peace. If we are all reconciled, it involves the obligation to live with one another in peace and to ask ourselves which ways may lead towards that peace. This shows how important it is, at least for Christian-Muslim dialogue, to prove that our christology, as it affects our self-understanding, does not necessarily and in every respect separate us from others but, on the contrary, could also lead us towards others.



how can fullness
be recognized
and professed?

PESCHKE What are the factors which make it possible to profess the 'fullness' that was mentioned in the lecture? And furthermore, how should we conceive of the 'possibility of recognizing' and the 'possibility of professing'?

professing?

DUPRÉ Apart from the question of the factors that make it possible to profess something, the question arises of how these possibilities of professing something look in other traditions and whether there are different ways in which it is possible to profess something and include their specific intrinsic consequences. Mr. Karrer seemed to contrast the concept of 'what can be professed' with the 'possibility of experiencing' fullness within the context of the Church. Do we not here touch again on the problem of 'performatives', creative speech, which has been discussed before [s. above pp. 85 ff.]: that something may also be presented in the form of a hymn – and to what extent we may make use of it to build up something as a creation in which we live and are at home?

Do we also find in other traditions this potential of arriving at the possibility of professing something? What are its premises and does this represent a kind of logic of establishing religion?

SCHAEFFLER The reconciliation achieved by the death of Christ can, for

example, be professed in the context of a church service in which the *memoria passionis* is celebrated, and where we can also at the same time celebrate the *memoria passionis* as reconciliation between believers. If we ask, apart from this general context, whether we can experience ourselves to be reconciled Christians, we would have to be honest and say: this is perhaps what we are, more or less, but the experience does not live up to what we celebrate in our church service. Nevertheless, the reconciliation achieved by the death of Christ can be professed on the basis of a promise which is also part of the church service: in the case of the Colossians hymn it is not a matter of a doctrinal letter, but of a hymn that also has its performative context. If we were to deprive it of this context, its meaning would change. It is a profession living on the promise that, because Jesus died for us and was raised from the dead, we are capable of granting forgiveness and receiving it from each other.

For Muslims there is certainly another performative context in which they find themselves able to profess the universal state of reconciliation of creation, although for them too this is not lived up to by experience, because the world is full of quarrels. To this extent Muslims too, have to be asked about the actual context in which they can profess the general reconciliation of creation when it conflicts with their everyday experiences.

GLADE When the Church prays in the prayer for peace during the celebration of the Eucharist, "Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church", she professes her faith that reconciliation is possible and remains possible despite our sinfulness. So the profession of this faith in the gift of reconciliation becomes the profession of an ever-widening faith.

[Plenary Discussion]

questions
concerning the
lecture

KARRER In the study groups, the question raised by the lecture is initially a christological one: to what extent was the lecture oriented too far towards a Nicene reading of the New Testament? Another question concerns how Christians cope with the fact that the fullness presented in the Letter to the Colossians is not evident in the present reality. A statement concerning this twofold problem was formulated by Mr. Zirker as follows: Christians have to realize that, until eschatological perfection is attained, they will fall short of what is written in the New Testament. And they have to exercise restraint when putting forward their theories so that the impulse

that is given does not result in more and more fixed ideas, which would very quickly set limits.

Another question raised in the study groups referred to the issue of whether fullness can be professed in other traditions too. Is Christ the only way? Concerning this question, a quite open answer: if fullness is professed and experienced elsewhere, we must take note of it. Nevertheless, on the basis of early Christian teaching, we would only be able to interpret these perceptions and professions within the context of that fullness that comes from Christ. The meaning of the Colossians hymn culminates in the assertion that reconciliation has been perfected. As explained in the lecture, this decisive assertion shifts into the aorist, the preterite: something has happened – it is not only something that is expected in the ultimate future. Where fullness is perceived in the world, we therefore perceive it from the perspective of the Christ event. On the basis of the formulations in the Letter to the Colossians it is not possible, from the divine perspective, to conceive of fullness in the world ‘apart from Christ’.

A final question: does the assertion that Christ is the firstborn help us along in the dialogue with Islam? In fact it does not seem to make the discourse easier. Rather, a point has been reached where it is becoming clear that awareness of differences is also part of the dialogue. However, attention has to be paid to the fact that the consequences could help us along where the profession in itself does not get us any further. Accordingly, I tried at the end to frame the lecture with these consequences. This would mean: even where a high christology is felt by Islam as a strict separating line and has to be resolutely rejected as such, attention must be paid to possibilities of approaching each other which might be inherent in the consequences.

intra-Christian plurality helpful for dialogue with the religions?

ZIRKER Might granting more space to an intra-Christian plurality be helpful to Christians in dealing with other religions? This also leads us to ask how early Christianity dealt with plural christologies. Norbert Brox referred to the deplorable history which started

in the Syrian region with the attempt to come to terms with christologies that tried, in their own way, to adhere consistently to the New Testament. Eventually they stopped asking many questions out of fear of division, valuing harmony in the community of faith more highly than continuing in speculation with the aim of attaining a uniform theory and language. The problem in the history of dogmas does not lie so much in their following

this one intellectual path, but in the desire (1) to make this the only language that should be used, (2) to sacralize it by incorporating it into public worship, and (3) to introduce with it rules and regulations that became canon law. Is not Christianity the only religion in the religious spectrum in which dogma has been formed speculatively to such an extent and which has developed its theological language with such artistry to make a coherent whole? And does this not also have dangerous implications?

formation of the canon concluded prior to formulating dogmas

KARRER The great strength of the New Testament seems to lie in the fact that the formation of the canon had been basically concluded before the formulation of dogmas took place. In the New Testament, therefore, the diversity of early Christian approaches is found to be incorporated: side by side there are for example the Colossians hymn and the narration about the humanity of Jesus in the Gospel according to Mark. However, the history of dogma also has its answer: we cannot deny that in the New Testament there are clear lines which, in ancient thinking, were rightly continued by the Council of Nicaea. It would be of little avail to play off the one against the other, but we may maintain that, as far as this question is concerned, the New Testament makes things easier for us than the subsequent history of dogma.



all the fullness was pleased to dwell in him

SCHAEFFLER First a purely textual question concerning Col 1: in the lecture the translation referring to πλήρωμα in v. 19 was: “In him all the fullness was pleased to dwell”. But in the text it says, ἐν αὐτῷ εὐδόκησεν πᾶν το πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι, with an ACI-construction at the end, so that the translation should be: “It pleased God that all the fullness should dwell in him.” But perhaps this is just a philological remark of marginal significance.

KARRER The traditional or older interpretation should be translated: “It pleased God that all the fullness should dwell in him.” But if we make God the subject, we have to go back through the whole sequence to the beginning of the hymn. This not only makes the subject more remote, but also raises difficulties with regard to the structure of the sentence, since there are several syntactic sections. Present-day exegetes therefore prefer to read πλήρωμα as the subject of the sentence, which is very plausible.

SCHAEFFLER First, εὐδόκησεν would have to govern a dative: ‘to whom’

did it please?, not a nominative. For it pleased God, θεῷ εὐδόκησεν – or all the fullness, τῷ πληρώματι, which, however, is not written here. Second, there is no need here to look for the word ‘God’; we can proceed from the fact that (under the influence of the Jewish way of speaking) there is no subject at all. And especially where there is no grammatically defined subject, we have to assume that God is the implied subject. The more important argument, however, lies in the first point.

KARRER In the Greek of that time εὐδοκεῖν does not necessarily govern a dative. Beyond that, in my interpretation I cautiously referred to the transition from ‘fullness’ as predicate of God to God conveying fullness. That is why I emphasized the fact that the point is not that God dwelled in Christ, but that we have here a transitional formulation. The question can then be held open philologically between the various possible interpretations, even though the arguments in favour of πληρωμα being the subject make that the more probable alternative.

“the firstborn from the dead – the firstborn of all creation”

SCHAEFFLER In christology we are used to speaking of μονογενής, but the term πρωτότοκος is less current. Concerning the firstborn from the dead, implying that there are, so to speak, more who have been raised from the dead or will be raised at the end of time, is not so difficult. If, however, Christ is the firstborn of all creation, then there is also a secondborn and a thirdborn. The fact that he is the firstborn of all things in heaven and on earth, things visible and invisible, would imply a brotherhood of all creatures. So how should the term ‘firstborn’ be interpreted, if it is used in the theology of creation?

KARRER The interpretation of ὁ πρωτότοκος, the firstborn, in the context of mediatorship in creation leads to an analogous open-ended formulation. “The firstborn” is mentioned twice in the hymn. The first text is probably “the firstborn from the dead”. “The firstborn” does not make Christ the first with others to follow, but rather means that he is the first to rise from the dead. At the same time the matter is left open as to whether others follow after. Probably the same tension is to be found in the creation proposition: “the firstborn of all creation” need only be interpreted to mean the firstborn in the sense that he belongs to all creation, but even more that he is the firstborn before all creation, although in the hymn the problem is not explicitly resolved.

The open-ended formulation is only resolved by the later history of dogma. On the basis of the preceding assertion with which the hymn begins: “He is

the image of the invisible God”, which does not say, he is the image of us who have been created, but “the image of the invisible God”, the history of dogma was to infer that he is therefore the firstborn *before* all creation. Our hymn does not exclude this assertion, but it does not state it. This is consistent if one calls to mind that the creation proposition derives from the resurrection proposition. Its roots have to be understood in the context of the fact that God does not disrupt his own creation. Therefore it is important that the firstborn from the dead should be the firstborn of all creation, the one who determines the structure of creation. It is only then that the next question arises of whether Christ is such that he precedes all creation in the divinity of God. Only with this assertion do we arrive at the christological speculation that brought so many problems to the early church.

how do Christ hymns come about in general?

◆
SCHAEFFLER In the lecture, the hymn quoted here in the Letter to the Colossians was dated rather early. What is most astonishing and hard to understand is how it eventually came about in the early Christian communities that in church services hymns were sung about Christ and addressing Christ. For all the questions dealt with at Nicaea and in certain developments in christology are preceded by the fact that in church services hymns were sung that were not of a theological but of a christological character. In any case, we have good reason to be sure that through the language used in the act of singing hymns, all later christology had already been initiated. The mere fact that Christ Resurrected became the topic of hymnological language (and this can also be seen in the context of invoking the name of Jesus in church services) constitutes a turning point in the history of religions which seems rather hard to explain in the context of the community of the disciples and the Jerusalem community, until it then entered the two missionary communities which are the subject here. This turning-point may be considered more radical than any later dogmatization.

KARRER In its structure and the way it begins, the Christ hymn is without doubt one of the most remarkable christological phenomena in early Christianity. Its “He” beginning is usually interpreted differently in the literature from the way it was presented in the lecture. The literature says that this insertion is so vital that one would in fact have to clarify it by adding, “We are now singing a song about Christ, who ...”. However, according to what was said in the lecture, this does not seem to be absolutely necessary.

pneumatological
formulation
and intellectual
rigour

As for the exact dating, the first Christ hymns – as is also shown by the Letter to the Philippians – could go back to the first Christian generation. There is a problem in interpreting New Testament hymns and it has not yet been decided whether they are better understood as a 'pneumatological profession', expressing in a pneumatological manner what moves the congregation when celebrating the church service, or should rather be seen as a result of early Christian reflections, a liturgical condensation of what had been experienced and then intensively thought through and reflected. If the hymnic propositions receive their validity from an inward, pneumatological experience of Christianity, it would make things easier in interreligious dialogue, for then a particular hymnic liturgical language could be distinguished from the language of general theological reflection. However, the consequence would be that the liturgy of the Church and theological reflection would suddenly pursue two different paths.

Even though the view put forward in the lecture which, in all pneumatological worship, assumes a reflective hymnal text, cannot be philologically-historically proved, it is supported by the fact that the hymn has such a sharp impact. All in all we may consider this analysis more probable insofar as, at the beginning, there was no pre-reflective pneumatological formulation which was only later examined intellectually, but rather hymn and reflecting formulation blended from the beginning, so that the New Testament hymns, of course, are far from the last word in dogmatics.



dogmatic
christology
grounded in the
New Testament

KHOURY If we are right to see the later development of Christian christology as grounded in the New Testament, as was shown in the lecture, we may infer, on the one hand, that authentic christology cannot be reduced to a certain scripture or a certain group of New Testament scriptures, but that an attempt has constantly to be made to reach a christology that reflects the New Testament testimony as a whole. On the other hand, when we consider it more carefully, an inner convergence is recognizable between the assertions made in the various New Testament scriptures and those of the later Councils, which makes it difficult to differentiate between the faith of the Church, as it developed towards the Councils in the later history of dogmas, and a so-called authentic christology in the testimonies of the New Testament.

Neither is there any need to feel that the fixed formulation of faith by means

of the early Christian dogmas is fatal if we bear in mind the theological chaos which this brought to an end. What would have happened if the chaos had continued? What is more disastrous, chaos or a certain kind of firm formulation in the context of christology, which is after all grounded in the New Testament? In addition, despite that formulation, christology ultimately remained open to be deepened further, for example, by faith in a general reconciliation in Jesus Christ which makes a theory of peace binding on Christians. So it is a formulation that has remained open to further developments.

subsequently,
exclusion of
whole Christian
traditions

ZIRKER Obviously, in early Christianity and at the Councils the main concerns were not only forms of language and the search for a creed of faith, but also the exclusion of whole Christian traditions that existed and have even continued to exist, and forming lines of demarcations from them. The result was a speculative culmination, a sacral consolidation, a juridical delimitation and a violent policy. The complex manner of this development is even reflected in the Qur'ān. And this is, as historians tell us, also obviously the reason why Christian communities in North Africa and other areas frequently welcomed Islam as liberator.

FÜGLISTER From a merely historical perspective, we may also doubt whether the four Councils did in fact create a cosmos out of the chaos. The Arians remained, and so did the Nestorians; Christianity in the East and the Monophysites were separated off. Did not these Councils rather create chaos and was it not, to a considerable extent, also a matter of politics and imperial interests?

whom do the
Christ hymns
actually address?

The so-called Christ hymns in the Letters to the Colossians and Ephesians are ultimately only Christ hymns in the sense, as Pliny the Younger says, that Christians are people who address hymns to Christ. But in fact, both hymns have God the Father as their addressee: "Blessed be the God and Father [...]" (Eph 1:3), "[...] giving thanks to the Father [...]" (Col 1:12). Does the Colossians hymn (Col 1:12–20) in fact start only with the "He" (v. 15)? After all, it says: "[...] while joyfully giving thanks to the Father [...]. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his blessed Son [...]. And at the end: "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things [...]. And perhaps even more insistently in the eulogy of the Letter to the Ephesians (Eph 1:3–10; cf. v. 14): "Blessed be the God and Father" – and in its refrain: "[...] to the praise of his glory".

Except for some acclamations addressed to the lamb in the Revelation to John, none of these are hymns addressed to Christ. In the New Testament in most instances, especially in prayer and liturgy, the old formula: "through Christ to God – διὰ Χριστοῦ εἰς Θεόν, is applied.

not hymns
addressed to
Christ, but hymns
about Christ

KARRER These important observations have to be noted because they prevent misunderstanding. At the same time they may be seen to support the substance of the lecture: hymns in the New Testament are not hymns addressed to Christ, but hymns about Christ. They would not be hymns that attempt to reflect the Christ event arising from God's divinity – or, to put it more precisely, from the one God and his divinity – if they were hymns addressed to Christ without keeping in mind God's sole divinity. Drawing to its logical conclusion, the hymn about Christ in the Letter to the Philippians culminates in the assertion: "[...] to the glory of God the Father" (2:11). These are thoughts that begin with God's divinity and are oriented towards the divinity of the one God.

As for the pronoun "He", from a formal point of view, distinctions must be made: the Philippians hymn and the Colossians hymn, as well as that in 1 Tm 3:16, all begin with "He – ὁς". We do not allow the Colossians hymn to begin with the thanksgiving statement since v. 12, which was quoted above with its "joyfully giving thanks to the Father", takes us back to v. 3 at the beginning of the Letter: "We always thank God, the Father". Paul normally started his letters by writing "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, to ... " and then continued, "We give thanks to God". This structure shows how much Paul is oriented towards this one God. Following his form of thanksgiving, the Letter to the Colossians integrates the hymn it takes up. Therefore the philological probability is all in favour of the words, "[...] joyfully giving thanks to the Father" being part of the tradition of the Pauline letters and the hymn in v. 15 beginning with "He – ὁς".

God's praise in
Eph 1

The so-called hymn in the Letter to the Ephesians is a completely different matter: it is not a Christ hymn, but a hymn of praise to God which the author either integrates into his letter at this point, having found it in Christian tradition, or formulates himself. What is relevant for us is the structure of the ideas: the author of the letter continues to proceed from the conviction that everything that can be said christologically has to be thought of in the light of the one God. For him, it is the one God in the Old Testament or in Israel who – as the scriptures say – works through his Spirit. When he praises

this God at the beginning of his letter, he therefore praises him as the one who works through his Spirit. At the same time he praises him in the light of his Christ experience. Thus in Eph 1 the result is a eulogy in three parts, not a hymn: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing [...]" . Further reflection on the eulogy in the light of the one God leads to triadic structures (which of course are much earlier than the trinitarian reflections of the 4th century).

In the immediately ensuing history, christology was formulated first, i. e. the relation between Father and Son, in order for speculation to continue on what this meant with regard to their being together with the Spirit. *Mutatis mutandis* an analogous further development appears between the Colossians hymn, which the author of the Letter to the Ephesians probably knew, and the progression towards the triadic structure of the Letter to the Ephesians. Even though this is not the triadic structure of the 4th century, it still initiates, we may assume, the impulses which were then carried forward by the early Church.

At this point the necessity becomes obvious of reading New Testament christology in the perspective of theology and integrating it into the latter. This would also avoid giving the impression that the Christians' christological confession implies someone who is associated with God. This is important for the dialogue with Islam. It is never a matter of association, but rather of thinking in the light of God.

from theology
towards
christology

VANONI At the beginning of the Letter to the Romans there is first the author's statement that he is called to announce the εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ, and then, in the very next verse, reference is made to the fact that it is the Gospel concerning his Son. This is another example of the fact that this step from theology towards christology was actually taken in the first generation, but we must not see it as a leap into something quite separate.

hymn about
Christ and the
category of
professing faith

DUPRÉ If the Colossians hymn is not a hymn addressed to Christ but is rather about him, does it not mean that we have changed the category of what may be professed into the category of what may be known?

KARRER How are we to understand the connection between the statement that we have here a hymn about Christ and the category of confession of faith? In this context I would like to remind you of a term which is not commonly used in the context of hymns, but is taken from elsewhere: when the New Testament speaks of confessing it uses the

term ὁμολογεῖν. In confessing, therefore one speaks (see the part λογεῖν of the term) in such a way that something is expressed that is adequate to the object and through the confession makes the speaker equal or similar to it (ὅμο- is an abbreviation of ὅμοιος or ὁμός). The term ὁμολογεῖν thus expresses the structure of confessing, of uttering something in a way that expresses the object as adequately as possible, and is in agreement and harmony with it. This is precisely what seems to be the case when the hymns are pronounced.

God's activity
ad extra and its
categorization
ad intra

WESS The Letter to the Ephesians brought up 'triadic structures'. Is it not fatal that in theology and in the popular understanding of the confession of faith, the triad of God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are much too easily interpreted as a triad internal to the divine? Ultimately, the Son is rather the one mediator, Christ Jesus, himself human, and the Spirit is the activity of God in his creation, who cannot so easily be equated with a 'third inner-divine person'. This is where many misunderstandings actually arise, even in Islam.

KARRER The problem touched upon here is of substantial interest for Christianity too. My exegetical explanations tried to convey that the christological approaches in the New Testament have their linkage with the early Church. It would not be consistent to ignore the fact that in these approaches foundations can also be discerned for continuing our reflections towards the immanent Trinity. Here however, particularly with respect to the Ephesians eulogy, a certain progression can be observed. The eulogy is formulated on the basis of what we would like to call the activity, the working of the Trinity 'ad extra', outwards. It actually says at its opening: "Blessed be the God [...], who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing [...]". The triadic structure takes God's activity as its starting point.

However, there is already implied in it the component which would later initiate the formulation about the immanent Trinity, namely: "Blessed be the God and *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus the attempt is made here, in discerning the outward acts of God, to find too a special inward categorization, by following up with the question: when we experience the acts of God 'ad extra' through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit – how are we to think of this in connection with the relation of Jesus and the Spirit to God?

Usually references to the Son precede references to the Spirit. As we all know, the title 'Son' in the New Testament is a much simpler title than what

it came to be in the history of dogma, for the children of God are of course all the Israelites. But from this title of Son the impulse to think of the relation between the one God and Christ as a particular sonship quickly develops. On the other hand, the more detailed categorization of the Spirit in the Ephesians eulogy remains unsolved. Logically, this implies that there are the most enormous trinitarian difficulties.

Once we allow ourselves to look in the New Testament for the christological foundations of the later development of dogma, we must at the same time be sure that these foundations are not mistakenly identified with the formulations that systematically fixed them in a language which disengages itself substantially from the language of the New Testament in favour of a philosophical idiom. This should be discussed and dealt with separately.

The Ultimate Finality of the Christ Revelation

Heinrich Ott

'Theology of Religions', as a field of theological study, is becoming increasingly important in Christian thinking. It has to be classed alongside systematic theology, and probably with fundamental theology. But, unlike other systematic fields of study, there is no way of presenting it as a system. It is rather a continuous process, a journey – and nothing but a journey. At least, that is the case if theology of religions is not conceived of as a theology *about* religions or even a theology of religion, that is a kind of philosophy of religion, a 'systematic stocktaking of religious truths'. It should rather be seen as a constant process of encounters, of dialogical events, point for point, so to speak, but in such a way that these events are 'heuristically' linked with one another so that, within the event of dialogue, a ray of truth may shine out.

Because of this process-like, dialogical approach characteristic of theology of religions, it is always essential to include a specific methodological stage, even in the most diverse contexts, which is that the sense of each individual step one is about to take must always be checked. Where does it lead? What fruits may it bear? And what is the general purpose of this whole process of theology of religions?

1. The assessment of our question in the context of Christian-Muslim encounter. The 'popular' concept of the ultimate finality of the Christ revelation that makes communication impossible from the beginning.

If we venture onto the path of dialogue between Christianity and Islam, it will quite soon arrive at the checkpoint of questions about 'finality'. Here in our symposium, right at the start we raised the question: is Muḥammad a prophet who must be acknowledged as such by us too? In the context of the terminology of comparative religion, an affirmative answer is quite possible. But this would be irrelevant for our religio-theological project, because for us this is a theological question. In order to illustrate the state of affairs with which we are confronted here, I would like to begin by suggesting a perhaps somewhat simplistic three-stage scheme:

Stage 1 From the viewpoint of traditional Christian dogmatics, the answer is simple: compared with the substance of Christian revelation, the followers of the Prophet and he himself make truth claims that are in many ways different, and even contradictory. Therefore, Muḥammad can only be a 'false' prophet. His word of revelation does not come from God.

Stage 2 However, it seems possible to make a concession: among supporters of a liberal (not pluralistic) theology of religion, it could be accepted that Muḥammad was a prophet chosen by God, an 'inspired' and commissioned (and as far as that goes, a 'true') prophet for a certain people, a certain culture and a certain time. So, for example, Hans Küng, in his book on *Christianity and the World Religions* (London 1993), referring to Wilfred Cantwell Smith, holds the view that Muḥammad, through a "special relationship to God" (i. e., ultimately as someone commissioned and 'inspired' by God), radically proclaimed the one and only God at a time of particular religious and social crisis. When the people of his time and culture heard him rightly, a deep and vibrant religious culture came into being. Muslims would perhaps take this concession as a friendly gesture in doctrinal dialogue, but they would certainly not be satisfied with it. For – and here we reach

stage 3 – according to Islamic faith, Muḥammad is the final and conclusive witness to the divine truth, whereas Moses and Jesus were only precursors. Therefore at this third stage anything like a 'compromise' is certainly no longer theologically possible. One ultimate finality, one unsurpassable claim, here confronts another.

At this stage, I will still nevertheless be looking for possible understanding, even though not for agreement, and I would like to insert an intermediary consideration. The deliberations at stage 2, as we saw, remain unsatisfactory for a real encounter with Muslims and have to be accepted basically as not a subject for discussion. The problem as such, however, remains interesting for us Christians. After all, we reserve the right to interpret the prophets of another religion from the perspective of our own convictions, just as we must grant the same right to others. This mutual interpretation 'iuxta modum' is legitimate as long as it does not include false, hostile and discriminating elements, but is performed in a spirit of friendship and respect. This is a kind of 'dialogue-rule' for interreligious dialogue that also corresponds to the methodological approach to this whole enterprise that I outlined at the beginning of my paper. Perhaps one could speak here of an

'interreligious circle'. Indeed, we have to ask ourselves in religio-theological thinking, a thinking that arises from commitment to our own religious tradition: if it is true that, from the beginning, God did not leave mankind without a testimony to himself (and we must make this assumption), and if we continue to assume (which is most plausible!) that God has not given this testimony only through the wonderful works of creation or through our individual conscience, but also through human beings, then the serious theological question must be raised of how such a testimony of divine truth can actually work in another religion. What are the extent, the content and the specifics of this testimony that God entrusts to human beings in another religion? Is it possible that 'truth' is there, mixed with 'error', and if so, how? What enabled the people of the time to accept their testimony? In the light of the formulations of *"Nostra aetate"*, continuing to ask such questions makes the utmost sense. If there is such a thing as 'anonymous Christians', they have probably come to be what they are not outside of all non-Christian religions, but emerging from among them, because it is, after all, religions whose theme is what is holy and transcendent.

After this intervening comment, I return to stage 3, where two different, mutually exclusive 'ultimate revelations' confront each other and the situation seems to be one of complete incompatibility. But this incompatibility has perhaps to be traced back to the fact that a conventional, however insufficient, understanding of 'ultimate finality' has been assumed, according to which finality must be conceived of as that revelatory statement that came last, which surpassed everything that had come before and after which not only nothing greater, but also nothing essentially new can be expected. Perhaps we should modify the concept of finality as well as the concept of revelation in order to continue to be able to proceed. Here modifying does not of course mean manipulating, but rethinking, and doing so in the light of approaches in one's own religious tradition that already exist from long ago.

2. Questioning the intention of encounter and the level at which an approach seems to be possible at all

I have no illusions: even if, as I suggest, we modify the concepts of finality and revelation with reference to our own Christian tradition and with theological integrity, we will not arrive at a consensus with our Muslim partners in dialogue on the level of doctrine. Nevertheless, for the sake of our own religious heritage and understanding, it could be good and fruitful, if,

precisely at this point, we take a step forward in our thinking, not only for our own sake, but also for the sake of our relations with followers of another faith. Therefore, as suggested in my introductory methodological remarks, we must raise the question: what do we actually expect from interreligious dialogue? What sort of dialogue is this ultimately? Do we want to achieve a consensus-declaration, comparable for example to the "Leuenberger Konkordie" between the Lutherans and the Reformed or the so-called Lima-paper in the context of the Ecumenical Council of Churches on the topics of office and sacraments, or whatever such intra-Christian, interdenominational 'convergence-papers' may be called? Would this be the right understanding of interreligious dialogue or is it rather a thorough misunderstanding? I am quite definitely of the opinion that the latter is the case.

For, what would such convergence-papers or similar results achieve? Here we have to make a *qualitative* distinction between an intra-Christian ecumene and an 'ecumene' of the religions. We must not even want to find doctrinal consensus between the different religions! We must not blur or water down the differences, the individual specific character, the different fundamental feelings. What would be the good of being able, by shaking hands and contracting, to affirm "we agree ..., we agree at least in the essential points"? Is it not more than enough if one day we shake hands and are able to say, "We are friends..."? I shall never forget the remark once made by my dear Catholic colleague Professor Johannes Feiner, one of the two editors of the post-conciliar Catholic work "*Mysterium Salutis*", who was for me something like an ecumenical teacher: "If God had wanted Christianity to finally triumph in history, he could have ordained this already a long time ago. Obviously he does not want it. He wants to maintain the fruitful tension between the religions..."

Nevertheless (and this sounds paradoxical only initially) we can and should strive for certain 'agreements' with other religions, even and particularly with Islam. For if we make friends, the dynamism of this friendship has also to be maintained and strengthened. For – to put it in trivial terms – what would be the good for me of having him for a friend, or the good for him of having me for a friend, if we just meet once a week in the evening to have a beer without anything to argue about, nothing to get excited about, to disagree about and agree again, expressing in this way our thoughts and feelings and entrusting ourselves to one another? In Augustine's "*Confessiones*" there is a wonderful description of the dynamism and richness of tensions in a good friendship showing that true friendship cannot be main-

tained without such tensions. In order to retain an integral tension and there-with also the ultimately distinct identity of all participating, new exchanges are always needed, a lively pursuit of the controversy and the consequent partial agreement. What I have in mind here can perhaps be illustrated better by the experience of the first interreligious conference which the World Council of Churches held in Ajaltoun (Lebanon) between representatives of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism: Professor Hans Jochen Margull, the moderator, reported that in the evening of the first day which was spent in intensive talks, the Muslims came up to him declaring: "Now we have been talking about God for such a long time, why don't we also pray to him together?" In response to this proposal, various degrees of reluctance appeared among the participants, the strongest, typically, among the Christians. But finally every evening there was a short time of prayer or meditation according to the ritual of one of the religions.

Meanwhile there are not only interdenominational, but also interreligious occasions of prayer. They have become a widespread phenomenon. Such shared spirituality and liturgy only makes sense if it does not remain purely ritual, but is also accompanied by reflection and dialogue between the participants and in this way triggers the experience of "neighbourliness" (Martin Heidegger), that is, simultaneous closeness and distance. But perhaps on this level we may already be seeing a new practice of the old rule, "*Lex Orandi Lex Credendi*". Therefore, in the reflections and discussions which accompany the shared practice of spirituality, 'doctrinal' topics should not simply be left aside completely. We can and should discuss even theologically, but not under the obsessive expectation of reaching a consensus. Nevertheless, according to the principle "*Lex Orandi Lex Credendi*", of course we must know and want to know what we are doing! If no consensus seems possible or perhaps even desirable, certain points of contact can still be brought out between the spiritual conceptions of religions that encounter each other. Ultimately, even a joint "praying and doing what is just among people" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer) is already dialogue. But it is the theoretical, theologically-oriented dialogue that strengthens the dynamic framework for future praying and acting. And through it, agreements about interreligious language can occasionally emerge in shared theological reflections, and perhaps here and there even a partial "merging of horizons" (Hans-Georg Gadamer) and, stimulated by that, new learning processes on both sides. One religion can be enriched by the other's spiritual language and the experiences behind it. And where something like that happens it is not only a liturgical, but indeed also a theological event.

It is at this level of theological discourse and theological-existential experience of neighbourliness that we must place what will have to be thought and said – beyond widespread popular understanding of revelation and finality – about the “ultimate finality of the Christ revelation”. And this is where areas of contact may also appear that allow us to develop amicable discourse further and for the time being simply leave aside the irremovable contrast of doctrines and ideas.

3. The ecumenical-interdenominational potential in Christian thinking as a possibility of solving these new kinds of theological problem

Here again a short intervention must be made, appropriate for the consideration of the special situation of religio-theological thinking. In *Widerstand und Ergebung* (in the text “Gedanken zum Taufstag von D. W. R.”): Dietrich Bonhoeffer once formulated this expressive sentence: “But also we ourselves (like the child to be baptized, who does not understand yet what is happening to him/her when he/she is baptized) are thrown back again to the beginnings of understanding.” Bonhoeffer wants to say that, in the new ‘non-religious’ age, we no longer understand the great old Biblical concepts such as reconciliation and salvation, rebirth and Holy Spirit, cross and resurrection. We must try a new language, and perhaps one day a new “liberating and redeeming” language really will be given to us. We probably can and should say something similar today, although we live in a wholly different context from Bonhoeffer, namely the context of the ‘globalization’ and the recent eruption of intercultural and interreligious encounter. But here we also are thrown back to the beginnings of understanding and have to express old, familiar terms such as ‘revelation’ or ‘finality of revelation’ in an entirely new way, beginning, as it were, from their roots. We can only be ready for this task because we have already been equipped for it by decades of experience in intensive and amicable interdenominational dialogue. I believe that here there is a real historical link and a new basis for understanding. As a Protestant theologian I have to confess today that in the face of these new questions, what would we do today without, for example,

¹ “Aber auch wir selbst [so wie der Täufling, der noch nicht versteht, was in der Taufe mit ihm geschieht] sind wieder ganz auf die Anfänge des Verstehens zurückgeworfen.” In: id., *Widerstand und Ergebung. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen aus der Haft*, ed. by E. Bethge [Siebenstern-Taschenbuch; 1], München etc., 1968, p. 152 (Engl. edition: D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. by E. Bethge. New York, NY, 1997).

the document “*Nostra aetate*” or Karl Rahner’s transcendental theology which distinguishes between transcendental and categorical levels, or without the biographical and intellectual experience of a scholar in theology of religions such as Raimundo Panikkar – all landmarks reliant on the theology of another denomination, which we have adopted in encounters of friendship! Engaged in questions such as we are dealing with here and now, I feel compelled to include the thinking of Catholic theologians, not in the sense of ‘foreign aid’ which we regrettably depend on, but in the sense of a property we have acquired together, that is dear to us.

Perhaps in this context something similar will have to be said on the side of Catholic theology. Through ecumenical development in its tense diversity in the environment of Vatican II, a new spiritual potential has emerged that alone enables us to confront the problems of our times.

4. Revelation seen as happening on the level of ‘fides qua creditur’²

In theology it is still commonly accepted that revelation has to be placed on the level of ‘fides quae creditur’, as far as doctrine is concerned. God reveals ‘something’, which has new content, and this gives rise to the complete incompatibility of the contents of the Christ revelation with any other revelation. On the other hand, I would like to maintain that the concept of revelation should be radically (‘in its roots’) placed on the level of ‘fides qua creditur’, i. e. on the level of the act of faith. This is of course not a recent conclusion, but is very closely linked with an understanding of revelation which already has gradually achieved a far-reaching consensus, even beyond denominational borders: revelation is essentially *self-revelation* of God. God does not reveal ‘something’, but himself. This means, he encounters us personally and establishes a personal communion with us. Thus the Catholic document of the Vatican II Council “*Dei verbum*”, the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation* says that God “speaks to men as friends and lives among them.”³ On the Protestant side this has also already been the prevailing view for a long time. Then, of course, we may ask ourselves, from this perspective what is to become of the propositions contained in the Christian revelation, as they still exist and are articulated, for example, in Biblical formulations or the statements of the Creed? This

² *Fides qua creditur*, i. e., the act or practice of faith through which we believe; whereas *fides quae creditur* refers to the content and propositions of faith.

³ Art. 2.

is indeed a problem for many theologians who have been thinking in this direction. Ultimately there seem to be propositions of faith which can be formulated in statements. In my view, simply applying an 'additive' procedure in this context achieves nothing of theological relevance. It simply makes no sense to say, "Revelation of God is self-revelation, and so is essentially personal encounter, but then there are, of course, in addition Christian propositions about faith that can be formulated."

There is no way out: revelation, if it is pondered, has to be thought of radically and consistently as personal encounter. It is "revelation for the sake of faith" ('fides qua creditur'). It is the act of love, fidelity and friendship of a personal God that awakens faith and is then mirrored in the act of loving fidelity of human faith. In this sense Karl Rahner in a late essay entitled "Glaubensakt und Glaubensinhalt"⁴ tried to integrate, so to speak, the 'fides quae creditur' into the 'fides qua creditur': it is true that faith in God in Christ does indeed have its specific propositions, but these propositions are characteristics of the act of faith itself. Rahner formulated his fundamental thesis as follows: "There is a *fides qua* which exists as something that is a possibility for every human being [...] and yet at the same time this *fides qua* possesses a reality of content in its own right, the free acceptance of which can be acknowledged as the acceptance of revelation in faith."⁵ This is exactly the basis from which we try to develop our thinking: the propositions, the specificity of true faith in God (which means the specificity of faith in God's revelation in the history of salvation) is inherent in the kind, the structure and the characteristics of the personal act of faith, or of the encounter of faith itself. In this way it is (for instance) insufficient and theologically inadequate, to say: we believe in the fact of Christ's suffering as a redeeming event, or: we believe in the fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead as a redeeming event. We should rather say: for the believer, the personal encounter with God is formed by Christ through the spirit of suffering and self-sacrifice, and through the spirit of overcoming death, of *καὶνὴ κτίσις*, of new creation. Faith is in itself and most deeply Passion-faith, Easter-faith, Incarnation-faith.

Since my time is limited, I can only briefly set out the consequences of this approach to the idea of the ultimate finality of the Christ revelation. A

⁴ "The Act of Faith and the Content of Faith", in: id., *Theological Investigations*, vol. XXI, *Science and Christian Faith*. New York, 1988, pp. 151-161.

⁵ In: id., *op. cit.* (fn. 4) p. 153 f.

saying of Martin Luther, often quoted by Paul Schütz as proof of his opposing "parousial time" to "historical time", is: "God does not see time according to length but crosswise."⁶ In other words: for him, the Eternal, all time is simultaneous. He, so to speak, sees all points in time at a glance. This also corresponds to Augustine's famous idea about time in Book XI of the *Confessiones*, that God did not make creation within time, but time together with creation and that subsequently there is no one-after-the-other for the Creator. Accordingly, 'what is final' need not necessarily be what is chronologically last. It could just as well be what is unimaginably early, what has been and is intended for and offered to all human beings since the early stages of human history. Perhaps it is this that is irrevocably final, namely that God is with them and for them in his love and fidelity. This "God with us", Emmanuel is indeed also an Old Testament name for Jesus Christ and it expresses the quintessential meaning of the Christ event. Karl Barth begins his whole christology with a chapter under this title.⁷ His Japanese student, Katsumi Takizawa, concluded from it that the "Emmanuel event" is the primordial event, intended from the beginning for all human beings. Here is indeed the point of all christology: God's unshakable being-for-us, happening and being testified in Jesus Christ. In it is included and recapitulated the fullness, the breadth, depth and width of christology. So the 'cosmic' Christ, who works worldwide, is at the same time the eschatological, final Christ.

From this perspective it becomes easier for us to speak with Muslims, to encounter them, respect the wealth of their tradition and spirituality and learn from it. For at the level of this perspective it is possible, even necessary, to leave aside the question of the finality of revelation, because the understanding of finality in both religions is in fact placed on quite different levels. It has to be left to Muslims to discover whether, by means of such deliberations (if not in the doctrine, then) in deeply felt religious experience and dedication, they also can move closer to us.

In any case, since in that way God has eschatologically, finally and unsurpassably established his presence in our midst, with us and for us, dialogue can go on with promise, despite all the differences. Speaking of finality then takes on a different aspect: for, if God through his self-giving act is definitely present, so too the proofs of his presence will continue in the spirit.

⁶ "Gott sieht nicht die Zeit nach der Länge, sondern nach der Quer." Cf. P. Schütz, *Das Mysterium der Geschichte. Eine Meditation der Christusapokalypse*. Kassel, 1950, pp. 7 f. referring to Luther's works, Erlanger Ausgabe 52, 268/269.

⁷ *Die Lehre von der Versöhnung* (Die Kirchliche Dogmatik; IV/1). Zollikon etc., 1953, p. 1.

Question and Interventions

[Study Group 1]

'superabundance'
in the self-
revelation of God

LEUZE When God reveals himself, is there not a quality to it that must be differentiated from what the listener or believer is able to grasp and handle?

OTT Insofar as it is accepted in faith by the human being, the Christian understanding of God's self-revelation implies two things. One is the idea of participation: a sharing which, especially in Orthodox theology, is understood as 'deification'. From this perspective, on the basis purely of terminology and doctrine, we may not get on with Islam, because there we meet with a different fundamental attitude which is expressed in turn in its own terms. To make an attempt to understand revelation as self-revelation would, however, be a good thing for the Christian believers themselves with the dialogue encounter in view and could free them towards a greater openness.

The second issue implied in the understanding of revelation as God's self-revelation is the question of the extent to which what God reveals may be reduced to what man, in his weak *fides qua*, can actually grasp. It is true that God offers so much – and man, in his weak faith, can grasp so little. However, in every personal encounter there is a 'superabundance', and there remains some kind of a surplus. This is true of the very nature of personal encounter.

the universal
realm of grace
and the fact of
unrighteousness

KRÜGER Is the concept of Emmanuel, a notion towards which christology was summarized in the lecture, really so obvious? According to the New Testament, is there not in fact apart from the 'fullness' which is revealed in Christ, also injustice, as was demonstrated in

the lecture of Mr. Karrer [see above pp. 105–126]? Here we sense something referred to in the New Testament as ἀμαρτία, trespasses and sin, and which should be included more fully in these deliberations.

OTT Of course the revelation of Immanuel is not self-understood and not to be seen as a fact of nature. Grace remains grace, because it is undeserved, although granted to all – a statement that one could learn and take over from Karl Rahner! Calvin declared: grace is grace, because it is granted to a small number only as an absolutely improbable salvation. Yet, as Karl Barth once explained, grace remains grace even if hell should remain

empty. Similarly revelation is never a matter of course either. It is, like existence, an act of grace. And the fact that there is evil in the world, and that there are rebellious forces, does not contradict the universality of God's grace as an offer – what Catholic theology calls God's general will for salvation.

dialogue—
encounter and
doctrinal
exchange

SCHREINER In dialogue we can rightly see a determinant form of encounter with Islam. But the question, "How do I encounter Muslims?" aims beyond that. Speaking of 'arguing friends', makes it obvious that doctrinal dialogue alone is no longer the decisive issue,

but in addition other important components of shared human life and experience must be included. First of all, when friends argue it is in the context of continuity, whereas in general dialogue is rather understood as a brief event, a conference of a week or only a few days. So there are two points that need more detailed information. One is the question of how we approach a Muslim personally and make friends with him, and the role played in this by doctrinal dialogue. Then there is the question of which other decisive factors may determine the conduct of the individual when life is shared. Hence, how can we move from the 'subject of Islam' to the 'human being in Islam'?

OTT The basis of our thinking here should be a wide concept of dialogue. This goes back to the beginning of my own involvement in hermeneutical discussions. Dialogue is actually any form of encounter, not only what is happening here and now and during certain conferences, not only what is expressed in words and debates. All these are modifications of what is essentially happening in dialogue, which is encounter, opening up to each other, communication, participation and also contradiction. There are concepts that are watered down if they are defined too widely and other concepts which only gather their full force when they are defined as widely as possible. For Gadamer and Martin Buber dialogue is indeed an event with essential meaning, and this should also apply to the understanding of interreligious dialogue in such a way that shared activity, shared prayer, the shared life of Muslims and Christians in a village – of people, who day by day participate in the same life and share the same concrete world – is already seen as a dialogue. In this context the more doctrinal and theological element is only one specific form of dialogue. This kind of extension of the concept seems to be the only way that makes sense, particularly for interreligious dialogue.

Originally my participation in a very early conference of the World Council of Churches in Chiang Mai (1977), an intra-Christian conference in the Buddhist world of Thailand, led me onto this way of approaching interreligious hermeneutics. The fundamental insight of the final document "Dialogue in Community" referred to the need to consider every form of community as being already a beginning, a virtual dialogue – in a word, widening the understanding of dialogue. Thus even what is non-verbal, non-verbal communication, can be a form of dialogue. The I-You-relationship in its most comprehensive sense, is dialogue.



'middle of time' and 'axial time' **SALMEN** Karl Jaspers drew attention to the fact that in Christian tradition Christ is conceived of as the middle of time, whereas from the point of view of the whole history of civilization the axial time would have to be dated at 500 years earlier. If time is seen in the perspective of Christ and interpreted in the perspective of the Christ event how would this be regarded from the perspective of a different understanding of time? Would it give a different horizon of understanding, and how might we conceive of a merging of horizons or a mutual approach?

OTT We may indeed ask whether the linearity of time, according to which something is gradually fulfilled, and which is an almost dogmatically fixed linear understanding of time, is necessarily Christian. For instance, does a so-called cyclical understanding of time or life make it impossible for an Indian Christian to believe in the uniqueness of Christ's redeeming mission? Can we not assume that it is possible to translate what is Christian into different conceptions of time?



faith as devotion and the specific propositions of faith **FÜGLISTER** *Fides qua* is certainly the most essential part (a *fides qua* which of course, as soon as we try to give an account of it, does contain specific propositions). But then the Christian *fides qua* is in fact and in practice identical with Islam as devotion, and surrender. Is not the most essential thing to give oneself completely up to God and to believe him to be all-powerful? "I shall be your advocate and you will leave everything to me." Indeed, as Martin Buber says, this is even the faith of Jesus. All mystics, all denominations and religions agree with this. And this also sets people free to involve themselves in the interests of their fellow beings and the world. Can we therefore consider the *fides qua* as

the point where all people can meet – aside from the fact that, and the way in which, the *fides quae* is and will remain different?

OTT If *fides qua* is considered to be the essential part in faith, this does not mean, of course, that faith propositions can be arbitrarily inserted or exchanged, as if it were simply a matter of our socialization or a personal fancy whether we prefer or adhere to this or that proposition. This is why the essay by Karl Rahner that we have mentioned [see p. 164] seems so interesting – because in it he makes an extremely original attempt to integrate the approach to the thought and propositions of faith with its realization. This faith, although anonymous, may still be true faith in God as revealed in Christ, because it is not only of an instrumental character. Faith rather implies in itself the fundamental character of a propositional reference to a specific knowledge of being responsible, called and upheld.

also different forms of *fides qua*?

WESS If we are right to see the *fides quae* contained in the *fides qua*, it raises the question of whether there are not ultimately different forms of *fides qua*. In other words, are there not, because of the different propositions,

different forms of practice too? Who expounds more correctly the contents inherent in every *fides*, and who has the better way of discovering them? Is there not much to be said for the assumption that there are in fact different forms of the *fides qua*, different expressions of religious practice, which may certainly have the same name, but are not identical? So that there is difference arising not only from another example of a more or less good and complete expression of one and the same *fides qua*, but also from the practice of faith that is in itself different?

Should we not see here a different kind of *fides qua*, whereby one experiences God as a God who loves the sinner, including the ultimate consequence, made possible by Jesus through his action, and the other in his faith responds to a God whom he experiences as the Lord who loves only believers?

OTT Undoubtedly there are different *fides qua*, because there are also (infinitely many) different religious destinies and religious paths. Nevertheless, perhaps they all share a common fundamental structure which in Christian understanding bears a christological stamp. One could for instance find this reflected in the *Hadith*, which Mr. Khoury related at our last year's symposium. It was the story of a man about whom nothing good was to be reported on Judgment Day and who therefore had to go to hell, but on his way there he turned one last time towards God and said, "Till

now I thought you were merciful", and then, because of his faith, was allowed to enter paradise after all.¹ Does this not evoke the idea of the infinite grace of God, a God who loves even the sinner? So perhaps, within all the shifting and overlapping, we can recognize something like common fundamental structures. The difference, however, within the realm of *fides qua* can be found not only between people of different religious communities, but also within one and the same community – simply because of the individual people's different religious life stories.

FÜGLISTER The figures of speech in the New Testament writings and in the Qur'ān must always be analyzed in their context. Can we really say that there is a contradiction between Islam and Christianity such as that, according to the New Testament, God loves sinners whereas according to the Qur'ān he does not? If God loves sinners, why is there hell in the New Testament? The Qur'ān says that God does not love sinners insofar as they are damned. Could we not take the view that Muḥammad actually took over from the Christians and Jews his teaching of a personal eschatology and a personal Judgment, including paradise and the fire of hell, and the general resurrection? In any case, even in Islam God is the Merciful, the Compassionate, who is ready to forgive sinners, specifically without their making amends.

WESS In the context of the question of how far God loves sinners and to what extent there is a difference between Christianity and Islam in the answer they give, we do not intend to refer to the satisfaction theory of Anselm of Canterbury, but rather to the Christian understanding of God as one who, with a different kind of consistency, follows the sinner and meets him at the point where he has gone astray. Such differences would be reflected in the *fides qua*, thus affecting the practice of faith. To put it more concretely, should the Muslim feel equally obliged to help all humans, even 'unbelievers', or does Muslim solidarity remain directly focused only on the Islamic community?

FÜGLISTER The commandment to do good to all people is also to be found in the Qur'ān. Conversely, especially in the Johannine writings, the commandment of love is repeatedly given with reference to the circle of one's own religious community only and is thus not immediately universal. So, in this respect too, we have to be very careful about making general statements.

¹ Cf. A. Th. Khoury, *Gottes ist der Orient – Gottes ist der Okzident. Lebensweisheit des Islams*. Freiburg etc., 1983, p. 26.

Islamic originality
and simplicity

ZIRKER A Muslim would probably have found the whole lecture difficult and would feel confirmed in his conviction that the relationship between Christianity and Islam is very complicated, because Christians make it complicated. For Islam everything is ultimately much simpler: there everything is consolidated in the belief that God created us, that in his mercy he accompanies us and that at the end he calls us to account. From Adam and Eve, down to the last human being, this basic formula of Islamic faith does not change, there is nothing new to be learned, because the prophets do not develop history, but always remind us of the original law given by God to which history has been subjected.

From this perspective, there is no linear progression in historical thinking, but rather a faith to which we have always to refer back. This is the *fides qua*, which is filled with a *fides quae* of a very simple kind. There are of course different commandments to different communities and the *shari'a*, that comes from Muḥammad, for instance, is not simply the *shari'a* that Jesus brought for his community. But this is of secondary importance compared with the basic faith. Nor is there within this faith the problem that arises when God's self-revelation implies a participation of man in the God who draws near to him. God gives commandments and makes promises; he also gives man a language through which he can turn towards God and pass on the promises of God. He tells man how he should see his relationship with God. But man is not to think about God himself, or about how to find access to and communion with him. From early on in the Islamic tradition, this has been considered an evil. (Here lies the great problem of mysticism by which quite different currents entered Islam, in strong tension with what has just been said, under the constant suspicion on the part of the orthodox that this or that element is no longer Islamic, may possibly even be Christian, and in any case is outside the right faith.)

what is new in
the message of
the Qur'ān

What is new in the message of the Qur'ān must therefore not be understood as a fulfillment, or a final supreme enhancement of what there was before, because the basic elements of the human relation towards

God is at all times completely identical with the faith already professed by Adam and his wife and the following generations and to which we all, according to Muslim conviction, have always already testified in a 'pre-existent' existence, "You are the Lord!" (Qur'ān 7,172). What is new in

Muhammad and the Qur'an is only the fact that this fundamental message is for the first time universally and finally set down in the book in a guaranteed form. In this sense it can be said that the history of mankind only begins with Muhammad; what went before was a particular history of individual communities and individual peoples.

This is why there is nothing like a "middle of time", when God encounters man in a supreme way, nor anything that could be compared with Christian symbols, like the Eucharist, etc., in which we have to re-enact the presence of God, because his most intimate symbolic presence, Jesus of Nazareth, is no longer with us. For Islam, the word, the book, can be seen at any time. Islam knows that the nature of God transcends everything we can imagine. Faith, in its self-understanding, should always remain quite simple and unpretentious, basically identical at all times. In the course of time, God does not draw closer to man than he has always been before. Faced with such a simplicity, the Christian believer will of course ask himself what part of the wealth of his own faith is ignored by it.

ultimate finality of the Christ revelation to be sought in the eschaton?

KARRER Finding a way to understand the ultimate finality of the Christ revelation by means of the faith in or through which we believe, may appear more and more difficult against the background of such deliberations. The problems multiply even more when we consider that theology of religions is expected to try to

develop positions that in principle can be held beyond Christianity and Islam.

On the other hand, the topic of faith seems to be particularly characteristic of Christianity and Islam. Not even in Israel has faith assumed such a prominent position. If we want to make faith a comprehensive topic, after all that has been said here, we must begin on the basis that everyone has his/her own *fides qua* and that nevertheless there are at the same time shared fundamental structures.

If we continue asking which fundamental structure is due to the *fides qua*, i. e., the faith through which I believe, then we inevitably end up again with christology. The expression "faith of Jesus Christ" in the New Testament was until recently normally rendered as "faith in Jesus Christ". This would indicate that in Christian faith we cannot manage without a faith in Jesus Christ, and the very faith through which we believe can in fact only be defined as a faith in Jesus Christ.

Going a step further, "faith of Jesus Christ" can also be construed as fol-

lows: from the point of view of grammar, there is much to support the idea that Paul often used the genitive as subject-genitive, i. e., Jesus Christ is not seen as the object of the belief, but as the subject of the believing. Then, in believing, we encounter the fidelity of God towards us in Jesus Christ for the Greek term πιστις originally means fidelity. The *fides qua creditur* thus includes an involvement with God's fidelity in Jesus Christ. However, this leads to the inclusion of all partners in dialogue in whom we find a similar involvement in God, in some sort of anonymous christology and anonymous Christianity. It is doubtful whether this is very helpful in interreligious dialogue. Would a simpler approach not be to deal with the issue of the finality of the Christ revelation via eschatology instead of via the faith through which we believe? This means leaving the finality of things to the one who in the end brings it about. In this frame of reference, the finality of the Christ revelation would only be verified in the perspective of the end, and it would be in the hands of God.

OTT We can certainly agree with this view of the christological structure of faith without as a consequence having to share unconditionally these reservations about the conception of an anonymous Christian-ness, for we definitely experience the fact that people from another religious community may not feel in the least incorporated against their will by this idea. On the contrary, they may well be glad to be seen as anonymous Christians, since they may understand it as a sign of special respect and appreciation. Of course Christians would also have to learn to welcome it gladly when Muslims, in the spirit of appreciation, take them for 'anonymous Muslims'. Understood wrongly, however, this concept could look like quite a bit of Christian imperialism ...

As for the proposal to shift the answer to the question about the fundamental structure of faith into the eschaton, as it were, this could initially be seen as some kind of theological 'extrinsicism'. That is to say, it would be as if the event of faith did not happen between God and man, but somehow remained extrinsic to man, as for instance in a merely forensic judicial situation nothing necessarily changes in the person concerned, but he/she is judged in a completely extrinsic sense from the outside only, without being touched by it as a person. Karl Rahner's strength was that he did not say that God would redeem these people somehow, without their contributing anything to it, but that, in what happens between God and them, there is something going on in them (even though perhaps without words and names), which one may call salvific faith.

faith as personal realization and the concept of participation

WESS God is the permanent greater one, and man will always be the creature living on his grace. Therefore, even in the state of perfection, man will only be able to participate in the life of God; there will be no deification of man, because the creature can never become God, for a created god is a contradiction in itself.

OTT It was not my intention to develop in this context a theology or philosophy of participation, but rather a phenomenology of personal being. When faith is affirmed as a personal relation, what personality means has to be clarified phenomenologically, and in this context reference should be made to the issue of whether the ancient philosophical concept of *participatio* could perhaps help us along. If on a theological level there is a sense of personal encounter, it may be that this can only be expressed as participation. A relation consisting merely of action and reaction, an interaction as it were between robots, is not yet dialogue. Encounter only happens when the partners in dialogue share an overall meaning in that they communicate spiritually with one another. That is what is meant here and the possibility of attaining a certain rapprochement in the fundamental understanding of what faith 'through which' one believes means for Muslims and Christians. For after all we have to proceed from the fact that for Muslims as well as for Christians the relationship to God is one of a personal encounter.

applying the concept of person to God

ZIRKER In this context we should be aware of the fact that applying the concept of person to God is by no means unproblematic for Islam. This is also mirrored in the history of the origin of the Islam-Declaration of

Vatican II, which originally spoke of a personal God, but after the intervention of experts on Islam referred instead in the final version to a "God, living and enduring [...] – Deum adorant, viventem et subsistentem [...]".²

SCHMÜCKER On the other hand, Professor Schabestari did once speak very well of God as infinite and of man as finite person.³

OTT For Martin Buber the eternal You is also not a You like any other. Nevertheless he speaks of a personal relation between God and man. If we try to expound the reality of faith, we certainly have to do it in the best possible

² Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions "Nostra aetate", art. 3; cf. Qur'ān 2,255).

³ See M. M. Schabestari, "The Theological and Legal Foundations of the Freedom, Autonomy and Sovereignty of Man in Islam as the Basis for an Earnestly Desired World Peace", in A. Bsteh (ed.), *Peace for Humanity. Principles, Problems and Perspectives of the Future as Seen by Muslims and Christians*. New Delhi, 1998, pp. 179–184.

earthbound way; it has to be related to the phenomena of our life. To make a phenomenon such as responsibility before God accessible, for instance, one can only do it by taking what we know as responsibility between people and examining the similarities and differences. In this sense a phenomenology of personal reality remains an indispensable tool for theological work. At the same time we must pay sufficient attention to the reservations put forward by Mr. Zirker: the typical Muslim reaction he describes is certainly plausible. On the other hand, when they enter this encounter, Christians are both gifted and burdened by their own tradition. And much of the theological discussion held at our symposium here is mainly in our own Christian interest, in the sense that it is making us Christians freer and more open to encounter rather than defensive. It could also bear fruit in dialogue with a Muslim theologian, if the latter were as openminded as Professor Schabestari in the dialogue conference referred to.

are competing spheres of salvation time necessary?

Concerning the 'middle of time' and the lack of such a concept in the Islamic tradition: the question was whether and to what extent we can free ourselves from the concept of competing spheres of salvation time without thereby sacrificing some of the essential fea-

tures of the Christian understanding of salvation. Perhaps there are other things we have to say to each other (even theologically), and we may even consider discussing whether and in what sense the idea of Muhammad as the last and final prophet is a question of great importance, without having to be reckoned as *the* question behind all other questions.

As for simplicity or complexity of faith, they may be very close to each other, and even included in each other. Faith is the most simple thing if it is lived. At the same time it is infinitely complex if we try to explain what happens deep down inside the believer. Thus in the course of their studies, students have to be provided with a variety of arguments – so that they will afterwards be able to preach simple sermons and not spring a complicated theological wordgame on their communities.

imminent Day of Judgment and the present time

FÜGLISTER When we Christians speak of a 'middle of time', should we not simultaneously also consider the fact that, according to the New Testament, for Jesus the *end* of time has come? There is even the expectation

of an imminent Day of Judgment. Can the Islam experts tell us whether there was a comparable situation in the life of Muhammad: was he also living in the expectation of an imminent Day of Judgment?

ZIRKER There is, especially in the early preaching of the Qur'an, very intensive reference to the Day of Judgment, so dangerously intensive that it implies the expectation of an imminent Judgment. An immediate expectation that would be comparable to that in the early Christian communities did not exist, of course, such that, in the expectation of an imminent end, some people thought they could fold their arms, and that they should not marry, etc. In the Qur'anic tradition we might describe this element more as a concept of a 'here and now-expectation': that for now we have to prepare ourselves for the Judgment.

It is true that in the Qur'an individual eschatology corresponds in some respects to the Biblical message; the difference, however, is that the Qur'an, by its use of intensively threatening proclamation, is even more insistent than the New Testament. Nevertheless, the basic fact that, according to the Qur'an, the hereafter is not seen in the light of a community with God, but is rather characterized by the success of the human *umma*, remains a profound difference in eschatology.

And then, for Muslims the question of where the eschatological statements in the Qur'an originate cannot be posed in this way for dogmatic reasons, no matter how on the Christian side we tend to think from a tradition-historical perspective.

FÜGLISTER In the ancient Arab religion these eschatological aspects did not exist.

ZIRKER They are common to the Jewish-Christian tradition.

[Study Group 2]

seeing different religious doctrines as a challenge

KHOURY Following on from the lecture and in view of the difficulties we have in approaching each other about the teaching of our two religions, i. e., the *fides quae*, we may ask whether we should try all the more to establish dialogue on the basis of the commonalities which

characterize our faith as it is practised, the *fides qua*. The last religio-theological symposium held in St. Gabriel under the topic "Listening to the Word of God",⁴ focused on the personal attitude of the believer as a unifying element between Christians and Muslims (as it is generally between believers of all

religions). Should we in fact accept that the differences between Islam and Christianity in the field of religious teachings and dogmatic formulations cannot be bridged, and therefore try instead at least to bring about an atmosphere of personal friendship, so that Muslims and Christians (despite all their differences, and even antagonisms) can come to terms with each other? Should not our common search for the full truth actually encourage us to do more together than merely stating that we all believe in God and, as believers, submit to his word? If God is really with us, the Immanu-El, as we heard at the end of the lecture, that should certainly encourage us to do more.

variety among religions also a valuable asset?

BSTEH A. In our further discussions two ideas mentioned in the lecture should be taken up: one refers to the differences between the religions, and suggests that they may constitute a great asset and will probably

continue in the future. From the Islamic position we may see this in the Qur'anic saying, that "if it were God's will, He could gather them together" so that all people would be Muslims; but obviously it is not his will (cf. Sūra 6,35.107). The other idea refers to Karl Rahner's thesis that theology is from the very beginning something internal to faith, because faith as a human act is only possible if it is also a faith that tries to understand itself, a "*fides quaerens intellectum*". From this perspective the *fides quae* is seen to be part of the original *fides qua*.

PESCHKE In view of the variety of religions that currently exist, can we conclude that the will of God is revealed in that and we therefore have to accept it? Would God not otherwise have allowed Christianity to overcome Islam, or Islam Christianity?

And with regard to inter-Christian differences too, surely we cannot ultimately simply state that it is all fine the way it is, or even that we should strive to preserve these differences.

VANONI The lecture did not suggest that everything should stay as it is simply because that is how it is. In fact Johannes Feiner was mentioned, who is supposed to have said: if God really wanted unity the way we imagine the future and unity, he would certainly have brought it about a long time ago. Would inter-Christian unity really be ideal in the way some imagine it?

dissent within the framework of substantial common ground

DUPRÉ The opinion that no agreement between Christians and Muslims about their teachings is in prospect or even possible and that doctrinal consensus cannot therefore be seen as the direct aim of dialogue, could end in resignation. But we can also take it as a chal-

⁴ Published in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Hören auf sein Wort. Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 7). Mödling, 1992.

lenge. In that case the concept of common ground mentioned by Mr. Khoury could be important: we could think here of shared ideas with respect to the general order of rights or religious freedom [see above p. 63 ff.]. Depending on how we assess the need for convergences, certain important conclusions will lead from there to particular views on the idea that a consensus on the doctrinal level does not seem possible. Here we could certainly learn from the inter-Christian experience of dealing with dissent on the doctrinal level.

Two questions here still deserve attention: on the one hand, might not each of us, depending on the circumstances of our life stories, have belonged to the other's religious community? And: might we not also *want* to belong to the other religious community? In any case, the discussion about a doctrinal disagreement underlines the challenge that results from dissent of this kind within the framework of a certain amount of convergence.

dissent not to be regarded too quickly as unbridgeable

KHOURY Nevertheless, we should avoid being too quick to say that there is, or can be, no agreement. Whether and how far this is the case can only be stated after a long process of clarification. We have first of all to consider how much theological effort is needed

on both sides in order to uncover possible convergences. It will certainly not be easy to arrive at a point where we can definitely say that here or there there really is an unbridgeable disagreement, a line beyond which we cannot go in the search for common ground.

individual doctrinal tenets and the basic content of faith

With reference to Karl Rahner it has been said that there is no act of faith that does not of necessity inherently contain faith propositions. For dialogue with other religious communities, it could be relevant to ask how far, in the practice of faith, we are always dealing

with a certain basic proposition which is simply never identical with the particular propositions of either Christian or Islamic doctrines, but in principle goes beyond them. Here we should specifically think of faith in God, the Lord of life and death, the Creator. In this fundamental dimension of our faith, is there not already immanent a consensus with all other believers who make the same act of faith? So, before we come to the specific propositions of a particular religion, there really is a fundamental proposition of faith on which we must focus, which is the affirmation of God, his omnipotence and his sovereignty over humankind.

So, we need to look more carefully at which propositions are really at the

heart of the matter when we deal with the issue of doctrinal agreement or disagreement between religions, between Christianity and Islam for example, because it may be that a particular proposition may act as a connecting bridge between believers.

mutual challenge instead of temptation to resignation

KLOSE It might be counted an act of resignation if we exclude a priori from interreligious dialogue the issue of faith propositions simply because we do not see any chance of agreement in this area. Can we really imagine a sincere dialogue between friends where these

questions of propositions are completely excluded?

WISSE If we remember the extent to which healthy competition may have stimulating effects in different contexts of our life, should we not see even the diversity of religions more positively? After all, it is known that situations of controversy and conflict, and even of political oppression, can provide a particular challenge and invigorate faith. So it is that Thomas Mooren³ speaks of a "Kokonstitutivität der Religionen", of a 'co-constitutivity' of the religions, insofar as they can permanently learn from one another in situations of mutual challenge. And should we not assume correctly that this attempt to come to terms with other religions will be more fruitful than an attempt to engage with secularism? May God's providence not ultimately be involved? In addition, are there not many things in this context that would appear differently, if we did not compare the different religious teachings of, for instance, Islam and Christianity directly, but instead linked them more strongly with the relationship to God of the person who believes in them and look at it from the perspective of the human being who is on his/her way to God, who, in all his/her troubles and with all his/her burdens, is persuaded that God is his/her goal?

neighbourliness of the religions

BSTEH A. In the reflections of Mr. Ott, Heidegger's concept of 'neighbourliness' seems to be important with regard to the relationship between the religions.

It is true that this concept assumes differences that will be lasting, but they may become fruitful in their very interrelatedness. Neighbourliness after all does not mean a resigned juxtaposition, or silent confrontation: rather it makes discourse possible and fills it with all the colours of life, including civilized ways of discussing controversial issues or arguing out different views on the same subject.

³ In his book *Auf der Grenze – Die Andersheit Gottes und die Vielfalt der Religionen*. Frankfurt/M., 1991.

convergence in the propositions of faith

As for the convergence in faith propositions between Christians and Muslims, there is first of all their faith in God the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and that everything there is lives because God wills it by name and calls it into existence. Beyond this fundamental commonality, however, there is also faith in the ever-present care of God for his creatures, which permanently supports and accompanies them. Does not this trust in God's salvific care for all his creatures unite Christians and Muslims in a deep commonality upon which we can build a resilient friendship and neighbourly relations? For Christians this is underlined again by their faith in the God who, in his divine being, opens himself up to *all*, beginning with Adam, and reveals his self-communication finally in Jesus Christ, "a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45 par.), as it is expressed in the Christian doctrine of grace.

Looked at this way, there is ultimately nothing for Christians or Muslims (no matter how differently it may be articulated in the context of their particular faiths) that does not relate to God, existentially, down to the deepest roots and fibres of their existence. This also sheds light on the diversity that is characteristic for our world and allows us to conceive of it as fundamentally willed by God – despite all the things in it that are not willed by God, but have their roots in human sin. So the fact that there is in our world 'diversity' that is a consequence of sin and manifests itself as division, schism and mutual alienation, must not blind us to the fact that diversity still has an initially positive meaning, quite in line with the inscrutable, inexhaustible richness of creation and the Creator's history with his creatures.

to accept tensions

VANONI We should not try to deny or eliminate doctrinal disagreements, but should rather take them into account, not in the sense of resignation, but with a

healthy realism that is ready to live with what exists. Those who are mistakenly optimistic eventually always end in resignation, because they over-exert themselves and are wrong from the start. But neither would it be realistic to expect that in every case we should reach agreement; this could make the beginning of dialogue even more difficult.

As for the question of *fides qua* and *fides quae*: if we begin with the assertion "I believe in God", we find in this statement both the *fides qua*: I believe, and the object (in the grammatical, not in a theological sense): God as proposition, as *fides quae* creditur. There is no "I believe" standing alone, but only: "I believe in God". From a purely linguistic perspective we can

therefore only gladly agree with Karl Rahner's assessment that to every *fides qua* there belongs a *fides quae*.

feeling of uncertainty makes *fides quae* more important

From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, 'faith' is something like standing in an established world of meaning and finding one's way in it by a link with an inward certainty, *certitudo*. This sense of being spiritually at home becomes problematic to the extent that

different worlds of meaning – as in our plural world of today – collide. This brings about a state of uncertainty in which the *fides quae* becomes more and more important. We can trace this in the history of Old Testament faith as well as in Christian history. If one world of meaning looks at another, as for instance the young Christianity did on its way into the Greek world, they suddenly have to explain who this God is whom they proclaim. In the early stages – as in the preaching of Jesus himself – it had been enough simply to say "God". All Jews could associate a good deal with this. Encountering the world of Greek religion with its polytheistic character, we get into a linguistic context where it becomes necessary to articulate propositions about this God without which it would be impossible to build up a new world of meaning in this new environment. So, if the *fides qua* is in keeping with the revelation that I can rely on God because he is backing me all the way and guides me, we have to start linking propositions with this and expounding them as soon as things become difficult in our faith.

Does this apply to all religions? Can we find this concept of faith in all religions and define a *fides qua* as a common denominator for their relations with one another? In the encounter with the Muslims I assume this is the case, because they come from the same tradition; and even if we do not find agreement, it will perhaps be possible to state that their faith and ours are to be understood as similar.

propositions of faith in Islam not mysteries

NEUMANN A significant difference in the basic understanding of what faith means for Christians and Muslims probably also lies in the fact that, in Muslim understanding, Islam knows of no mysteries which need a new revelation. The Qur'an wants to remind of what has already been known since the beginning of creation, what everybody should actually know already, and what is accessible to reason. Therefore in Islam one cannot speak of revelational propositions that have now been announced for the first time, as for instance Paul speaks of the mystery that was "hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the Church the wisdom of God [...]"

might now be made known" (Eph 3:8–11). When Christians link with the concept 'propositions of faith' mysteries that are otherwise inaccessible, it is obvious that they are taking a different approach.

does dialogue presuppose the acceptance of religious diversity?

DUPRÉ Coming back to the problem of whether and in what sense doctrinal agreement can be found: it was important in this context to mention the fact that there is both diversity subsequent to sin, in the sense of conflict, and diversity in the sense of richness. And we should also be dealing in this context with the crucial issue that

has also already been stated, of whether, if our life circumstances were different, we might just as well be Muslims and even *want* to be so.

So does advocating interreligious dialogue as an expression of human truthfulness in fact also necessarily entail the attitude of actually approving religious diversity as it is assumed by dialogue, and the way it has developed in history? Part of the answer to this crucial question is given in our intellectual efforts to reflect about what exactly are the conditions needed for people no (longer) to be at loggerheads because their religions are different, but to be capable of being on friendly terms and speak calmly with one another about the doctrinal side of their faith without implying therewith a stance of identification.

fides qua always a material a priori too

Another question follows Mr. Ott's assessment that it is necessary through reflection to trace all fundamental concepts back to their roots. As for the act of faith, the *fides qua*, a hermeneutical problem arises since

this *fides qua* is no theoretical a priori but always also a material a priori, as it is expressed in the specific religious traditions. How is this expression to be understood? Can it be understood without at the same time also developing a theory about the meaning of being human and of human culture? Are we here not also confronted with the need to differentiate between revelation as it took place and developed in history in very different forms, and history itself as revelation in which the fact of otherness really does have to be understood as a coded message, which we have to decode. This theme of history as revelation and the hermeneutical problem resulting from it should be examined in more detail.

something 'new' even in the Qur'anic revelation?

KHOURY It is not possible simply to transfer to Islam the concept of revelation as it is understood in Christian tradition as the self-communication of God and an event in which man is granted something new by God. Islam rejects an understanding of revelation that

is based on the articulation of new propositions. According to Islamic understanding, the revelation is rather characterized by the fact that God himself, on his own authority, guarantees that what is written in the Qur'an actually corresponds to His purposes. However, as for the question of whether the Qur'an contains something new, we would perhaps have to differentiate: the recollection of the primeval testimony which is transmitted in the Qur'an, takes the form of repeating the testimony that reflects the reaction of humankind to the primeval revelation (cf. Qur'an 7,172).

So, faith is only possible here and now because the primeval testimony at the beginning of the world was already reinforced by the intervention of God, and faith is still, or again, characterized by that new element, which was 'added' to the creation in God's intervention at the beginning.

creative dimension in time for the sake of the Spirit

Christians should be open to the future in a decisive way, because, from a Christian perspective, a creative dimension has entered time through God's being with us and through the working of the Spirit on whom we can depend. This eschatological presence of the Spirit

cannot be taken too seriously by them; it introduces into time a creative dimension, as Mr. Ott expressed it, which Christian faith can only meet with boundless openness. This is why we have to say of the God in whom we believe that he is a 'God of surprises': who sends his Spirit so that God can share our ways, so that his ways may become our ways and his thoughts our thoughts. And why should the encounter with other religions and with Islam not also be part of these surprises that God has ready for us along the path by which his Spirit will guide us into all truth and declare to us the things that are to come by taking what belongs to Jesus (cf. Jn 16:13–15)?

cosmic Christ and historical Jesus

On the idea of the 'cosmic Christ' being the eschatological Christ, following on from the lecture the question arises of how the concept of the cosmic Christ can

be harmonized with that of the historical Jesus. A transcendental theology is certainly very illuminating, but in the encounter with Muslims all these statements have to be linked with historical reality. First, however, this question concerning the relation of the cosmic Christ and the historical Jesus should be further clarified in inter-Christian reflection, and then we would have to examine whether such a conception could be at all helpful in Christian-Muslim dialogue.

should questions from the history of religions be part of the preconditions for dialogue?

DUPRÉ Similarly, we should also examine the term 'Χριστός – Messiah': bringing in questions from the history of religions, such as asking in what way Christ, the Messiah, is a category we encounter in various religions, as for instance in figures like 'ancestor', 'hero' or even 'trickster'. Is this not ultimately also part of interreligious dialogue? Do we not encounter around the

Christ-conception (to stay with this example) a broad spectrum of interpretations of this symbol? So here the question arises of how far Christian faith can recognize itself in the mirror of such diverse expressions in order to articulate its own identity again in this new situation of religious diversity as we find it in our present world, and in the area of tensions between the various religions. In this context we should follow up the term 'Christos' too, investigating what it means in the history of religions. On the Christian side we quite rashly tend to assume that this is a specifically Christian term such that the concepts of other religions could not be compared with it. And yet: when Peter answers, "You are the Messiah", ὁ Χριστός (Mt 16:16), he certainly refers to this as a more general category and the specificity that this figure adopts here only comes about by virtue of the connection: it is *he*. But, before this connection is established, an extension takes place into dimensions in which various traditions are represented.



faith in the promise of God shared by Christians and Muslims?

BSTEH A. If we take up 'ultimate finality', the central theme of the lecture, looking for the quintessence of Christian belief in asserting this finality, we could probably say: for the Christian believer finality means that God has irrevocably promised to man that he himself wants to be the destiny of humankind – and that this

self-promise of God became true in the mystery of Christ.

Is there not an irrevocable promise of God made to his creatures at the core of Islamic faith too, even though in a very different way and above all not as a 'self-promise'? In the Islamic tradition could not all the callings of the prophets, including Muḥammad, ultimately be conceived of in the light of this primeval covenant which God concluded with all humans before the beginning of time (cf. Qur'ān 7,172)? Are not all the prophets meant to be a reminder of the original revelation and to show the straight path – up to Muḥammad and the Qur'ān which God sent down upon him

(cf. Qur'ān 2,213)? Even though the Christian and Islamic conceptions are on quite different levels, is not the ultimate issue in both religions faith in a final promise of God, which God makes good in the course of history and maintains in the face of all human aberration and infidelity?

NEUMANN On the one hand, Islam assumes that revelation was also granted to other prophets and these acts of God are in fact evidenced in Judaism, Christianity and Islam from the very beginning. In this respect Islam goes right back to creation and 'primeval time' (cf. Qur'ān 7,172). But in spite of all the commonalities this may imply, there remains on the other hand for the Christians the uneasiness of being confronted in the Qur'ān with a quite different kind of finality – that its purpose is to correct what came before, particularly what is in written form, namely the Gospels.

PESCHKE It was said in the lecture that what is final was already there at the beginning; that it is in fact the original. How may this be understood more deeply? Should it not be only the development of creation that brings forth what is final?

NEUMANN What may perhaps help us along in this context, is the concept of the fullness of time, the general theme of Mr. Karrer's paper, according to which God does not see only the sequence of time, but the whole of time lies open before him, so that it may happen that what is chronologically before or after is oriented towards what, in His eyes, is the centre since it is the ultimate reality; since it is that which ultimately matters.

VANONI Time is a category of creation, God is above time or beyond time. The Bible tries to express this in words, when it says for instance, "with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like one day" (2 Pt 3:8; cf. Ps 90:4). Eternity certainly must not be understood as a prolonged time; it is non-time. So we have a struggle to equate finality with the last word.

the callings of God are irrevocable

What is true of God's self-revelation in Christ, that it is irrevocable, is also true of the revelation long before Christ, "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rm 11:29). In the first century the mistake was already being made of thinking that the irrevocability of God's self-revelation in Christ leads to God's condemning the Jews. This is mirrored in the discussion in Rm 9–11, which ends, however, with: "No, the callings of God are irrevocable!" The problem for Christian faith is how to apply this to the Islamic understanding of revelation too. The odds are in favour of Islam, insofar as, compared with Jews and Christians, Islam can say that

chronologically it is the last. To respond that, although it is last chronologically, it is pre-Christian as far as its propositions are concerned, does not help. Can we attempt a solution to this problem by trying the perspective proposed by Mr. Ott: that time cannot ultimately be applied to God? Deutero-Isaiah repeatedly states, "I am about to do a new thing" (Is 43:19; cf. 48:6); and, "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, [...]" (Is 40:28 f.; cf. 41:4; 46:10). He announces what is to come and asserts that this has been already from the beginning. How can this be conceptualized philosophically?

revelation in different traditions?

DUPRÉ Luckily there are many incentives to dialogue, and Allāh knows more than humans. So we can speak with one another even without having come to terms with the problem of finality beforehand. Nevertheless,

there is a need to reflect critically about this question in particular, and to ask how far certain conceptions intrude in this context that hinder or even block dialogue in a way that is actually not justified by the subject matter. Cannot the promise, "I am about to do a new thing" also refer to revelation, which is in fact given to different traditions that may be quarrelling and yet at the same time are also coming into harmony with each other? This means being open, knowing that God is always new.

[Plenary Discussion]

dialogue characterized by a culture of friendship

OTT It was the declared aim of the lecture to serve the cause of a culture of friendship. Even if it seems impossible to achieve a formal agreement in Christian-Muslim dialogue – and this statement may be taken to imply an attitude of resignation – this should by no means indicate that we should in future eliminate questions of faith propositions from dialogue. To renounce attempts at doctrinal unification or conversion does not mean renouncing theological reflection. On the contrary, reflection may perhaps become even more differentiated if it is part of this culture of friendship. So the theological discussion which takes place in the context of these symposia is not only desirable, but also in some sense necessary, notwithstanding the fact that this is an inter-Christian theological dialogue and not a direct dialogue with Muslims. These inter-theological reflections are ultimately intended to further clarify and deepen the preconditions for encounter and so improve our own attitude towards other religions.

Now it will be possible to introduce into the encounter with other religions an important element from the inter-Christian ecumenical experience – the element of analogy. Within inter-Christian relations, so many commonalities have been established that we no longer stop short at controversial topics, but have learned to apply ourselves together to many problems; for example, the problem of encounter with other religions. By doing so we also grow together in other areas, into a kind of spiritual unity. Who knows whether Christians may have to speak about completely new subjects when meeting Muslims or Buddhists, subjects that go beyond the traditional controversies, such as their own and the others' concept of God or of revelation, which may certainly then become very fruitful for inter-Christian relations in turn. In this situation we should not feel at all resigned, as if we were entrusted with an unrewarding task that has no future. On the contrary, we should be motivated to follow gladly a path that is full of new challenges.

on the concept of a 'cosmic Christ'

MITTERHÖFER Among the matters mentioned in Mr. Ott's lecture, there was the concept of the 'cosmic Christ'. It would be good to have this concept discussed

here in greater detail.

OTT We find today in many cases a common general understanding of this concept. Within the framework of this symposium, however, much has already been said in detail and most carefully by Mr. Karrer [see p. 105]. The concept aims to extend the historical figure of Jesus Christ into a cosmic and universal dimension, as it is expressed, for example, in the Prologue to the Gospel according to John, in the Colossian hymn, perhaps at the beginning of the Letter to the Hebrews and similarly by theologians of a past generation such as Bonhoeffer or Teilhard de Chardin. This motif of the cosmic Christ is an integral part of the Christian heritage. We may question whether it makes sense to introduce this theme into the dialogue with Muslims. But nevertheless it reminds Christians that the Christ event must not only be understood in the sense of a new, final proclamation of supernatural knowledge, and does not only represent a claim to a religious truth alongside others, but it means that God's deepest turning towards humanity, as it happened in Christ, is a universal – and hence 'cosmic' – event. It is intended to express something that, according to Christian faith, concerns all human beings of all times: that the world as a whole is addressed in the Christ event.

In this context I would also like to mention Panikkar's book on *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man* (New York, 1973) in which he speaks of the fact that the truth of the incarnation of the Logos, the second per-

son of the divinity, is ultimately a reality that calls to every human being and is in some way also present in every authentic religion.

BSTEH A. 'The cosmic Christ as the eschatological Christ' – is not this idea true insofar as it remains embedded in the other idea that the 'historical Jesus' is the 'cosmic Jesus'? This would mean that in the understanding of Christian faith Christ's cosmic dimension depends on its inseparable integration in the dimension of the historical Jesus.

OTT Mr. Karrer's lecture and the subsequent discussions dealt very intensively and appealingly with the historical primacy of Christ Risen, in whom "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell". Accentuating the cosmic Christ, which is indeed very characteristic of our present theological situation, leads – even though perhaps in different ways – to losing the concreteness of the figure of Jesus, since the cosmic Christ of course embraces the whole world; it is a salvational phenomenon as wide as the whole of reality. What does the concreteness consist in? In view of the discussion about the concept of the 'historical Jesus', it would perhaps be better to speak in this context of the earthly Jesus, of that Jesus who speaks to me. What is decisive concerning this personal-concrete Jesus is that fact – that he addresses me – in the Sermon on the Mount, in the Beatitudes, wherever. This is part of this picture of Christ who is facing me, who is always present. So we can both be conscious of the imperative to speak of the cosmic Christ, and at the same time be aware of the danger that may be inherent in it when it stops being concrete.

Nevertheless, the Christian believer does have an uncommon relation with Christ: he is not accessible to him as a human personality, as a character, but only in adoration and praise. All we know of him is the testimony of faith of those who have called upon him. He is clear but we are unable to objectify or partly objectify him psychologically, as we can any other human being whose plans and intentions we can recognize or at least speculate on. In the case of Jesus we are utterly and only *addressed*, we are only facing this 'icon' of God that is looking at us. If we think of the Pantocrator-Icon of Russian iconography, we know that there is no way to go behind it. In Rudolf Bultmann and in studying the theology of Martin Kähler, who speaks of the image of Christ,⁶

⁶ Cf. the famous lecture held in 1892 and today still up to date "Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus" [The so-called historical Jesus and the historical, Biblical Christ], Theologische Bücherei, Neudrucke und Berichte aus dem 20. Jahrhundert, vol. 2, new edition by E. Wolf, München, 1961.

we could learn that we must not keep asking about the historical Jesus, because then only our own preferences are at work; rather we have to confront the whole Biblical, concrete Jesus. Living with Jesus as a person, as the Lord, as a friend, a brother, however, is still something never to be abandoned.

BSTEH A. Of course referring to the historical Jesus has nothing to do with the call for a psychological reconstruction of his person. What was intended was Jesus, the Galilean, to whom Mary gave birth, who walks the path up to Jerusalem. This "today" (cf. Lk 4:21), this event of his earthly life at a certain time and in a certain place in history was in my mind when I pointed to the historical dimension of Christ, part of which must remain what, in Biblical tradition, is rightly called the cosmic Christ.



intrinsic asymmetry in the event of faith.

SCHAEFFLER It was a good thing not to conceptualize the relation between *fides qua* and *quae* on principle as additive. Nevertheless, it seems problematic to describe revelation as an event on the level of *fides qua creditur*, as was done before. For in this relation of personal attention, which is much more than a mere communication of information, there is an intrinsic asymmetry, because God's turning towards man is always infinitely more important than the believer's turning towards God. As a result, the *fides qua*, since it is an act of faith, will never match up to God's attention that is promised to us. What we are permitted to believe in is greater than our belief. Understood in this way, the *fides quae* has a special kind of preponderance. This plus of divine attention in comparison with the believer's faith, is directed to him in the *verbum externum*, through which the *fides quae*, which is communicated to the believer only in the preached word, has a justification and meaning of its own.

The issue of the divine simultaneity is tied up with this question. "Koste die Zeit nicht nach ihrer Länge sondern nach ihrer Breite [taste time not according to its length, but according to its breadth]" is a saying of Luther on divine simultaneity and human temporality. A deeper understanding of God's attention and man's response to it does not seem to be served if the temporal axis, upon which human actions are situated, is faded out too much.

Mr. Karrer explained very clearly in his paper the meaning of a christology that speaks of the first-born of the whole creation. We must not forget in this context that this is an interpretation of Jesus' death on the Cross and his being

raised from the dead. He of whom it is said that he is "the first-born of all creation", is only known to us as the one who died and was raised from the dead. And this happened on the axis of time, as far as we are concerned, with the raising of Jesus crucified. We may well say, "Before the creation of the world there was the Logos"; we may well say with the Letter to the Hebrews, "Before coming into the world, the Son had offered his obedience to the Father". We may well say all this. But we cannot say, "Before the whole world was created, he died and shed his blood".

The issue of sufficiency does not so much refer to the sufficiency of information, beyond which no further information is needed; it refers rather to the sufficiency of this blood that was shed. This is a question of the sufficiency of Jesus' death on the Cross, and we may say that beyond that there is no possible or necessary satisfaction. This is something that did not happen before all time. There is God's attention, certainly; but what happened in time is the blood that was shed and the death on the Cross.

OTT On the asymmetry, I gladly agree. Human faith can never grasp the mystery. There will always be a surplus on the side of what God reveals. That is why I consciously moved on from the concept of *fides qua* to that of the encounter of faith, in order to include both sides, to include what transcends our subjectivity. There is a surplus – we can certainly not underline that enough – but the surplus does not consist in the way additional religious dogmas can be formulated on the level of *fides quae*.

on the word
proclaimed

SCHAEFFLER In this context I was not so much thinking of articles of faith, but rather of the word we preach, which promises something that goes beyond the act of hearing and making it our own: here is the point of departure for everything that can be called *fides qua*. This is not primarily what theologians write in their books and which may then, after lengthy theological discussions, perhaps be made into an official statement by the Church. It is rather first and foremost the 'viva vox' of the sermon, which of course is also rooted in the *fides qua*, but which is more than a testimony to the preacher's faith. For what he preaches goes immeasurably beyond his own faith. In this respect the element of what has to be said to the believer should not be seen as what enters the (succeeding) encounter, which is, after all, always also a failing encounter.

OTT In basic agreement with this too, another idea that may perhaps be helpful in clarifying my view on this subject is this: in the Reformed profession of faith, the *Confessio helvetica posterior*, there is a dangerous sentence,

which is often quoted, "praedicatio verbi Dei est verbum Dei – the preaching of the word of God is the word of God". In a way this is true, but not in the sense that everything the pastor says in the pulpit (let alone all sermons of all times) is simply congruent with the word of God. It is rather that the process of proclamation and promise is on-going and that the Holy Spirit himself is working within it. The matter of faith is thus not merely an existential reality contained within the human being, but it transcends him/her, even though it is received together with existence. So, the concept of *fides qua* must be extended and not restricted to the subjective human act of faith.

axis of time
and divine
simultaneity

As for the question of time: here we may think of such interesting texts as the one that speaks of the lamb that was slaughtered before the foundation of the world (cf. Rev 13:8) which, in the Reformed tradition, is a reference to people who lived long before Christ being redeemed by Christ's salvific act – "intuitu Christi, Redemptoris" or, as is sometimes also said, redeemed by the *logos incarnandus*, by the logos who was still to be incarnated. These teachings in the Catholic tradition⁷ as well as in the Reformed Churches, suggest that the importance of the event of the Cross must be extended – not only in its efficacy, but also in the pressing urgency of its reality. This theological debate about the Cross need not invalidate what should be said about the relativity of the time axis or about linear time.

In judging other religions, Christian theologians sometimes seem to make a strange assumption, when they say that these religions have a 'cyclical' concept of time and do not have a sense of history. We can easily denigrate another religion by making a theological generalization of this kind. Of course time is manifested as a line, but the fundamental nature of time cannot be defined as linear, either philosophically or theologically. The uniqueness, the ἐφ' ἑαυτῆς of the Cross does not seem to conflict with this self-criticism which is essential for Christians to apply with regard to their traditional understanding of time and history.

WESS What has been said about facing up to the diversity of faith propositions in the encounter with other religions and what has been described as 'resignation', seems to tend towards a complete equivalence between the religions. Would it not also be good and appropriate to put forward my own point of view, even and especially concerning my faith, in a way that is accessible to other people? If we are not in favour of conversion by

⁷ Cf. Vatican II, "Lumen gentium", art. 2.

fire and sword, we could still feel obliged to share with other people things we are sincerely convinced, not through any merit of our own, are closer to the truth. In doing so we must, however, be aware that this or that is an invitation to conversion. If we are not at all concerned about conversion, it could ultimately look very much like indifference.

The consequence of this would also be that Christians who are oppressed and persecuted for their faith, as is currently the case in some countries, would not really see why they should bear this burden. Why should they not adopt another religion instead of becoming martyrs for the sake of their Christian faith?

sharing with others the wealth of Christian faith

OTT The issue of interreligious encounter also raises a question about the mission imperative. Could we understand the task of mission as a task of dialogue? Declaring the great acts of God, which means making what we have become aware of through the original testimony of our faith shine out – that is the glory of God, the love of God and our human responsibility for our neighbours and the world, and allowing others to share it – would this not adequately express what is meant by ‘Christ’s mission imperative’?

Is the message of Christian faith not all-embracing so that it invites Christians to recognize the hidden reality of faith in all human beings, so others really are to us ‘anonymous Christians’ – or so that we recognize, as Panikkar puts it, the ‘unknown Christ’ in the others’ religion?⁸ We might think, for example, of the ‘Sat-cit-ānanda-Āshram-Movement’ in India, of Raimondo Panikkar, of Bede Griffiths and above all of Henri LeSaux with his Benedictine Āshram among the Hindus. For LeSaux, it was the immediacy of religious experience that inspired him to recognize the presence of Christ in India, whereas Panikkar’s perceiving ‘Christ in all things’ was more strongly the result of theological interpretation.

But when they step out of the world of their own interpretations, Christians must be fair and accept it when others also interpret them in the light of their Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, etc. religious traditions: an example is that Jews from the perspective of their understanding of faith, as suggested in the work of Leo Baeck, interpret Christianity and Islam as the originally Jewish monotheistic faith spread throughout the world.

As for martyrdom, this has today perhaps taken a new form: is it ‘for the

⁸ Cf. R. Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, London, 1964.

name of Christ’ or ‘for the cause of Christ’? Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a martyr not so much for the name of Christ, but rather for the cause of Christ. **BSTEH, A.** Is not the expression ‘dying for the cause of Christ’ in keeping with Christian faith only insofar as it is also understood as ‘dying for the name of Christ’? That is to say, the more we separate the cause of Christ from the name of Christ, the more it loses its Christian substance. “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10) – what is expressed in these words, happens in the “today” of the historical Jesus “up to his death on the Cross”, and becomes true on the path the historical Jesus walked to Jerusalem, even though Peter rebuked him and said, “God forbid it, Lord!” (Mt 16:21–23). It is the historicity of this Jesus, which appears as the everlasting foundation for a right understanding of the whole cosmic dimension of Christ. If this were not so, it would mean not only that Paul presented an awful misunderstanding of Jesus, but also that Jesus himself would ultimately be the greatest misunderstanding of Christianity. The whole vitality of Christian faith, and with it also the stumbling block of Christian faith, depends on its being embedded into the event of the historical Jesus, and we have to take this on board – even theologically.

the possibility of Christian esteem for other religions

DUPRÉ The fact that a doctrinal consensus is not the direct goal of dialogue is an idea that is to be thoroughly welcomed. On the other hand, it is clear that behind dialogue there is the concrete heart-to-heart encounter where competing disagreements must have a part – a reasonably arguing and at the same time concordant disagreement. In view of the many religions that exist, we may ask how far it is possible for Christians to learn to appreciate these religions in their authentic life and truth, i. e. without the perversions which unfortunately exist everywhere, in order to be able to say: it is good that you exist: something of God’s greater honour and the meaning of human and historical existence is revealed in you. This should not be seen so much as a task of dialogue but as a task of preparation for dialogue. It may be summarized in the simple and yet complex question: to what extent and under which conditions it is theologically, philosophically and culturally possible for Christians to see something good in another religious tradition and wish that it stays alive and continues to develop? This will not be achieved without quarrels, because in order to attain this goal, there are things that must change in both the Christian and other faiths.

understanding the scope of dialogue as widely as possible:

OTT Assuming that this is only to be seen as a task preparatory to dialogue, we may certainly also add a different opinion: should not the scope of dialogue itself be conceived of as widely as possible? This would be in line with Martin Buber and Hans-Georg Gadamer, who

both conceive of dialogue as an absolutely universal anthropological reality. **DUPRÉ** The dialogue within the framework of this symposium is an example of a dialogical process oriented towards dialogue with Islam. This reference to its preparatory character raises the fundamental question of how far it is possible for Christians to go in appreciating another religion positively. A reasonable principle expressed in Vatican II, is that rays of truth can be perceived in the other religions and "the Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions"⁹. At the same time, however, these statements are rather painful because they are made, it seems, with great difficulty. Is it not a certain joyfulness that we are missing in this statement? Should it not be a particular part of Christian preparation for dialogue to discover really positive approaches?

OTT At the time when the Declaration of Vatican II on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions "*Nostra aetate*" was made it was an initial breakthrough, and perhaps rather restrained formulations were appropriate in order for it to gain adequate acceptance.

As far as preparation for dialogue with other religions is concerned, especially with Islam, I find myself strongly supported in my own personal appreciation of these religions by other Christians and also, vice versa, by non-Christians contributing in many respects to my appreciation of my own religion.

VANONI We may very well be persuaded that our own faith is best, or at least the best for ourselves, but we need not, as a result, denigrate others, particularly when we see that a Muslim may live his faith with greater conviction.

KHOURY As for the expression 'anonymous Christians' we might mention that as early as the twelfth century al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) developed an alternative argumentation, in which good Christians are perceived as anonymous Muslims¹⁰. This idea is also expressed in various ways in the present

⁹ Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions "*Nostra aetate*", art. 2.

¹⁰ Cf. A. Th. Khoury, *Der Koran. Übersetzung und wissenschaftlicher Kommentar*, vol. 1. Gütersloh, 1990, p. 289.

Muslim world. Hence we need not be too anxious when the phrase 'anonymous Christians' is used and discussed on the Christian side.

dialogue of life and dialogue of ideas

It is certainly correct that, compared with the dialogue of ideas, the dialogue of life is more important. However, if the dialogue of life is not sufficiently accompanied by and reflected in the dialogue of ideas, terrible confrontations can very quickly come about. The Qur'ān says that friendship with Jews and Christians is possible as long as the interests of the community are not threatened (cf. Sūra 5,85 and 5,60). However, if the situation is one of conflict, the command is to fight them "until they pay the *jizya* with willing submission" (Qur'ān 9,29). So it may well be that somebody sits at the table with other believers for a long time, even as a friend of the family, but then if the situation changes, they suddenly turn against one another. This applies to Christians as well as Muslims. But if we succeed in interiorizing the idea of peace and dialogue, the consequence should be that friendship would hold good in every situation. People really have to digest this idea mentally, so that, even when a crisis blows up, they can see that this must not lead to renouncing their friendship and peace with others. So both are important, the dialogue of life as well as the dialogue of ideas in which different orientations and value systems can be examined to assess their compatibility.



many cultures in a steadily narrowing space:

VANONI If we look at the world from the perspective of sociology and cultural-sociology, we must deal very seriously with the question of what the world is currently developing towards. In this context we must certainly assume that the trend towards globalization could be irreversible. Many religions and cultures live in a steadily narrowing space. Will humankind in the long run be able to bear several worlds of meaning existing side by side? Earlier solutions to the problem consisted in either trying to strengthen one's own world of meaning when other worlds called it into question, or simply trying to resist them or incorporate them. On the level of the family, or society at large, it was hardly imaginable in the past that there were several worlds of meaning existing alongside each other. Thus, during the Reformation, whole villages changed their denomination – and after some years changed back again, because living together interdenominationally seemed impossible. On the level of the family, so-called mixed marriages have, until today, always been a critical issue. If the patterns of

history are constant, we should actually expect that this tension will continue and that we only imagine today that the world has become global and that from now on it will be possible for people to live peacefully side by side in many houses with different meanings. These are, of course, only incidental questions that sound rather pessimistic, but they should be taken into consideration. Mr. Ott's suggestion that we should not strive a priori for a consensus in the various problem areas, but to try to establish good relations of neighbourliness really should be noted. If this were to succeed, the world would have changed.

OTT An imposed religious uniformity of a fundamentalist kind would indeed represent a frightening idea. So how will mankind be able to cope with religious plurality, which is becoming more and more an intrinsic characteristic of the global world today? Perhaps medieval Andalusia is one historical example among others which can give rise to hope, for there the religions, without denying their identity, simply lived peacefully side by side with a certain amount of interaction.

If someone adopts another religion, the Abrahamic religions assume that, by doing so, he or she abjures the faith he or she had previously practised. In Japan, however, this is evidently not the case: one can adopt a new religion and maintain the religion one held before. Obviously this is not out of indifference, but because there is a different attitude towards professing faith. Without suggesting that we should see this as a model, it might still help us to consider whether it might be possible to somewhat limit the tendency to negate other worlds of meaning which is inherent in the pressure to abjure, and so bring about a more peaceful kind of pluralism, which would be both rich in tensions and mutually enriching.

VANONI But history has mostly taken another course, notably even in Spain: they were then ultimately not able to bear that peaceful togetherness. Something similar is currently happening in Bosnia. History shows that we cannot simply go ahead hoping that the coexistence of Muslim Turks and Christians in Europe is bound to turn out all right. Mr. Ott's proposal to practise dialogue as the only hope in this situation points towards what sociology and cultural anthropology also generally teach us. Why should people now suddenly be different from people in former times and manage suddenly to achieve what they could not achieve in the past, namely to live in complementarity with each other in dialogue?

Adel Theodor Khoury

Ever since Christian theologians have been working on evaluating non-Christian religions, there have been in this field different approaches adopting various tones (from a strict claim to the absoluteness of Christianity to the relativization of a pluralistic theology of religions), different assessments (from the wholesale condemnation of non-Christian religions to the equal acceptance of all religions on the basis of tolerance), different models of integrating religions into a general plan of God's economy of salvation (from excluding non-Christians to assuming that all religions have an equal salvific relevance), and finally different types of argumentation (from unequivocal reiterations of dogma to levelling statements that endanger identity).¹

¹ On these questions see among other publications J. Daniélou, *The Salvation of the Nations*. New York, 1962; id., "Christianisme et religions non chrétiennes", in: *Théologie d'aujourd'hui et de demain*. Paris, 1967, pp. 65-79; Y. Congar, *Außer der Kirche kein Heil*. Essen, 1961; Karl Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions", in: *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5. London, 1966, pp. 115-134; id., "Anonymous Christians", in: *Theological Investigations*, vol. 6. Baltimore, 1969, pp. 390-398; J. Doumes, *Dieu aime les païens. Une mission de l'Église sur les plateaux du Viet-nam* (Théologie; 54). Paris, 1963; H.-R. Schlette, *Towards a Theology of Religions* (Quaestiones Disputatae; 14). New York, 1966; H. Maurier, *Essai d'une théologie du paganisme*. Paris, 1965; G. Thijs, *Propos et problèmes des religions non chrétiennes*. Tournai etc., 1966; J. Heislbeitz, *Theologische Gründe der nichtchristlichen Religionen* (Quaestiones Disputatae; 33). Freiburg etc., 1967; P. Rossano, *Il Problema teologico delle religioni*. Rome, 1975. — On protestant side see H. Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*. London, 1938; id., *Religion and the Christian Faith*. London, 1956; id., *World Cultures and World Religions. The coming dialogue*. London, 1960; id., *Why Christianity among All Religions? Foundations of the Christian mission*. London, 1962; W. Pannenberg, "Erwägungen zu einer Theologie der Religionsgeschichte", in: id., *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie. Gesammelte Aufsätze*. Göttingen, 1967, pp. 252-295; G. Vallée, *Mouvement œcuménique et religions non chrétiennes. Un débat œcuménique sur la rencontre interreligieuse; de Tambaram à Uppsala (1938-1968)* (Recherches Théologie; 14). Tournai etc., 1975; J. Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths. Essay in the Philosophy of Religions*. London, 1977. — See also the whole series *Beiträge zur Religionstheologie*, ed. by A. Bsteh, vol. 1: *Universales Christentum angesichts einer pluralen Welt*. Mödling, 1976; vol. 2: *Der Gott des Christentums und des Islams*. Mödling, 1978, reprint 1992; vol. 5: *Dialog aus der Mitte christlicher Theologie*. Mödling, 1987; vol. 7: *Hören auf sein Wort. Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung*. Mödling, 1992; vol. 8: *Peace for Humanity. Principles, Problems and Perspectives of the Future as Seen by Muslims and Christians*. New Delhi, 1998.

In this lecture it will not be possible to deal with our topic in a comprehensive way, but only to refer to the main threads of the most important conceptions held today. Nor shall I try – since much is still in a state of flux – to offer an exhaustive theological appreciation of Islam, consistent in every respect.² I would prefer to address the following points: which New Testament guidelines must not escape the notice of theologians when they open up to a theological encounter with Islam? which perspectives are relevant for them when they try to evaluate and classify Islam? what initial assessments can be made? which questions remain unresolved and challenge Christian theology to find solutions that are appropriate and humane?

I would like to discuss these points in the following stages:

1. Theological point of departure and theological guidelines.
2. Apologetic and polemic attitudes in the past.
3. Modern developments.
4. Attempts to integrate Islam into the economy of salvation.
5. Further approaches to theological reflection.

² Some titles may be helpful in this area: my research-work: A. Th. Khoury, *Les théologiens byzantins et l'Islam. Textes et auteurs (VIIe–VIIIe s.)*, Louvain, 1969; *Polémique byzantine contre l'Islam (VIIIe–XIIIe s.)*, Leiden, 1972; *Apologétique byzantine contre l'Islam (VIIIe–XIIIe s.)* (Studien; 1). Altenberge, 1982; N. Daniel, *Islam and the West. The making of an image*, Edinburgh, 1966; R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, 1978; L. Hagemann, *Der Kur'an in Verständnis und Kritik bei Nikolaus von Kues. Ein Beitrag zur Erhellung islamisch-christlicher Geschichte* (Frankfurter theologische Studien; 21), Frankfurt/M., 1976; id., *Christentum und Islām zwischen Konfrontation und Begegnung* (Religionswissenschaftliche Studien; 4), Würzburg etc., 1994; C. Geffré, "La portée théologique du dialogue islamo-chrétien", in *Islamochristiana* 18 (Rome, 1992) 1–23; H. Zirker, *Christentum und Islam. Theologische Verwandtschaft und Konkurrenz*, Düsseldorf, 1989 (1992); id., *Islam. Theologische und gesellschaftliche Herausforderungen*, Düsseldorf, 1993. – L. Hagemann (ed.), *Nicolai de Cusa Opera omnia iussu et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Heidelbergensis ad codicum fidem edita*, vol. 8: *Cibratio Alkorani*, Hamburg, 1986; the already published volumes of the *Corpus Islamo-christianum*, Würzburg–Altenberge: *Series Latina*: "Petrus Venerabilis, Schriften zum Islam", (ed. R. Gleij), 1985; Thomas Aquinas, "De rationibus fidei", (ed. L. Hagemann – R. Gleij), 1987; "Raimundi Martini, Capristum Iudaeorum", (ed. A. Robles Sierra), 1, 1990; II, 1993; "Wilhelm von Tripolis, Notitia de Machometo / De statu Saracenorum", (ed. P. Engels), 1992; – *Series Graeca*: "Georges de Trébizonde, De la vérité de la foi chrétienne", (ed. A. Th. Khoury), 1987; "Bartholomaios of Edessa, Confutatio Agareni", (ed. K.-P. Todt), 1988; "Johannes Damaskenos – Theodor Abū Qurra, Schriften zum Islam", (ed. R. Gleij – A. Th. Khoury), 1994; "Manuel II. Palaiologos, Dialoge mit einem Muslim", (ed. K. Förstel), vol. I–III, 1993–1996; *Series Arabica-Christiana*: "Paul d'Antioche, Traités théologiques", (ed. P. Khoury), 1994.

1. Theological guidelines

Without giving detailed commentaries, here I quote some New Testament texts which are of basic relevance for the Christian attitude and serve as guidelines for further theological reflections.

1.1 Salvation and truth are linked with one another.

"[...] of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tm 2:3 f.).

"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free" (Jn 8:31 f.).³

"And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn 17:3).

"But those who do what is true come to the light [...]" (Jn 3:21).⁴

1.2 Salvation and truth are closely linked with God and with Jesus Christ. Without Jesus Christ there is no salvation.

"[...] grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn 1:17).

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6).

"For there is one God, there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human [...]" (1 Tm 2:5).

"[...] and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:20).

"There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Ac 4:12).⁵

1.3 Salvation and truth have been entrusted to the Christian community (the Church) in a special way, as a trust and as a task.

³ In several New Testament texts, one of the ways salvation is defined by use of the term 'freedom': "[...] and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rm 8:21); "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:17); "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Gal 5:1); "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (Jn 8:36).

⁴ This verse makes clear that the issue here is not an abstract, purely intellectual truth, but a salvific truth, one that also determines our actions and which will become a salvific path, a path of the good life.

⁵ In addition we could also quote the following passages: "[...] and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son [...]" (Mt 11:27); "Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father [...]" (Jn 5:23); "No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6).

"[...] and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 Jn 1:3).

"I have given them your word [...]" (Jn 17:14).

"He [Christ] is the head of the body, the Church" (Col 1:18).

"[...] whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son [...]" (2 Jn 9).⁶

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (Jn 16:13).

"Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned" (Mk 16:15 f.).

2. Apologetic and polemic attitudes in the past

The question which earlier Christian theologians in the Arabic-speaking countries, in Byzantium and in the Latin West asked themselves, was: how can Islam be unmasked as a false religion? For it was a priori obvious that Islam was not a true religion and was of no relevance for salvation. In this polemic venture use was made of the apologetic system which the theologians had already developed in order to refute the objections of those who opposed Christianity and to prove the truth of Christian teachings. If Islam did not meet the criteria set down by this apologetic system (and a simple comparison seems to make this easy to prove), Islam as a whole has to be taken as a false religion, i. e., with reference to its proclaimer, its original record and holy scripture, and to its teaching and way of life. The Byzantine theologians, for instance, make clear that, compared with Christianity, Islam is so different in its teachings, ethics and piety, that it must be considered a false religion. Muḥammad can bear no comparison with Jesus Christ, so he must be taken as a false prophet. Finally, the Qur'ān contradicts the true scripture, which God revealed to Moses, the prophets, the Apostles and the Evangelists, to such an extent that it must be declared a false scripture.

Very briefly, the most important arguments of the Byzantines (and the arguments of the theologians in the West parallel them) may be presented as follows.⁷

⁶ Cf. also: "No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father also" (1 Jn 2:23).

⁷ See very comprehensive data in my research paper: *Polémique byzantine contre l'Islam*

2.1 Muḥammad and his prophetic mission

Although Muḥammad succeeded in persuading the Arabs of his divine mission, he could not justify the genuineness of his mission: not a single one of the various criteria for credibility can be found in him.

Muḥammad has no witnesses

Muḥammad cannot present any witness who – like the people on Mount Sinai in the case of Moses – was present when he received the revelation. On the contrary, the circumstances which, according to Islamic tradition, accompanied the event of his vocation and receiving revelation (deep sleep, dreams, paroxysms) do not accord with a genuine action of God.

Muḥammad was not predicted by any prophets

Although the Qur'ān asserts that Abraham prayed for the sending of an Arab prophet (2,129), that Muḥammad is "mentioned [...] in the Law and the Gospel" (7,157), that even Jesus has predicted his coming (61,6), the Byzantines do not accept this claim on the grounds that there is no passage in the Bible in which Jesus announces the sending of Muḥammad. The other Bible texts quoted by Muslims are not at all convincing to the Byzantines.

Muḥammad himself did not utter any prophecies

Muḥammad has no prophetic gift. His message contains no evidence of knowledge of hidden and future things which would indicate the divine origin of his mission.

Muḥammad worked no miracles

According to the general view of the Qur'ān, prophets present signs of their divine mission, especially in form of miracles. This was the case with Moses and Jesus. Muḥammad received no miracles, nor was his divine mission confirmed by other proofs.⁸ The miracles, which the Islamic tradition later ascribed to Muḥammad are brushed aside by the Byzantines as false legends.

(VIII–XIII s.). Leiden, 1972; a summary is to be found in my book: *Der theologische Streit der Byzantiner mit dem Islam*. Paderborn, 1969; L. Hagemann, *Propheten – Zeugen des Glaubens. Koranische und biblische Deutungen* (Religionswissenschaftliche Studien; 26). Altenberge, 1993, pp. 182–193. Cf. further literature in fn. 2.

⁸ Cf. brief data concerning this subject area in my book: *Einführung in die Grundlagen des Islams* (Religionswissenschaftliche Studien; 27). Altenberge, 1995, pp. 68–72.

Muhammad's conduct is not exemplary

The Byzantines reject the genuineness of Muhammad's mission since he does not demonstrate the exemplary conduct which characterizes the high moral ideal manifested in Jesus Christ. Neither do they find in Muhammad that truthfulness and charisma which distinguish the true prophets. His alleged mission is only the adventure of an epileptic, who was confirmed in his erroneous belief by the utterances of a heretic Christian monk. Finally his conduct shows serious negative sides: theological ignorance, excessive sensuality, brutal aggression.

2.2 The Qur'an

In order to expose the Qur'an as a false scripture without genuine divine origin, the Byzantines deal with three of the Qur'an's own assertions: 1. Is the content of the Qur'an really compatible with that of the Bible? 2. Is the Qur'an the word of God? 3. Is the Qur'an the final form of revelation?

The Qur'an too often contradicts the Bible

The Qur'an contains numerous reports on various Biblical figures, from Adam through Noah up to the prophets of the Old Testament and certain events in the life of Jesus Christ. However, what the Qur'an relates is, to varying degrees, mixed up with details taken from the Apocrypha and the Arab traditions. An exact comparison with the Biblical data shows that the Qur'an is in many ways not faithful to the Biblical texts, and frequently even contradicts them. So when its correspondence with the Bible is mentioned (cf. Qur'an 26,196 f.; 20,133; 35,31; 46,12, etc.),⁹ in order to prove the authenticity of its prophetic mission, we must infer from the contradiction between its content and the Bible's that it is not a true revealed scripture.

The Qur'an is not 'word of God'

Here the Byzantines deal with the Islamic doctrine concerning the eternity of the Qur'an. They see this as conflicting with the negative attitude of Muslims to the Christian doctrine about the divinity of Jesus Christ, the eternal Logos. Moreover, according to Islamic teachings, the word of God should be incarnated in a book, which is to say in a lifeless matter.

⁹ See the comments in my book *Einführung in die Grundlagen des Islams* (fn. 8) p. 74, pp. 78 f.

The Qur'an and progress in revelation

The Qur'an is based on the assumption that the revelation of God has a certain continuity and progress, i. e., from Moses' Torah via Jesus Christ's Gospel up to the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an is then said to be the final valid and perfect form of revelation, establishing the last stage of the religion willed by God. Nicetas of Byzantium¹⁰ also works on the assumption of a law of religious progress. He deals with the Qur'anic claim that it brings in the last stage of religious development and writes:

"Muhammad says that his message brings a real advantage to mankind (Qur'an 10,2). However, let us reflect a little. It is easy to follow up the manifestations of religious progress from Abraham to Jesus. Abraham rejected idolatry and adopted the monotheistic faith. Through Moses mankind received better knowledge about God and a more demanding law: Moses indeed brought them 'the good order of the law'. With Christ the knowledge of God became more precise still and the law more perfect. Moses said for instance: You shall not kill! Jesus says: You shall not get angry! Religious progress is not only a fact; it forms a law of the development of religions. Let us see now whether at the time of Muhammad this progress was continued [...]. Muhammad does not need to measure himself against Abraham and the Law, but he absolutely has to surpass the Gospel which represents the last stage of the revelation that precedes the Qur'an. However, since Muhammad has nothing to show that is superior to or on the same level as the commandments of Christ, we must draw the conclusion that his message is not of divine origin."¹¹

2.3 The religion of Islam

Islam and salvation

For the Byzantines it is a foregone conclusion that the religion of Islam has no salvific relevance. Redemption is founded on Jesus Christ's act of salvation – his life, his death on the cross and his resurrection; the vehicles for obtaining salvation are the sacraments of the Church. Since Islam does not believe in Christ's act of salvation or in the sacraments, the forms of

¹⁰ On this author (9th/beginning of the 10th cent.) who determines the Byzantine attitude towards Islam and influenced it substantially in the following centuries, see my book: *Les théologiens byzantins et l'Islam* (fn. 2) pp. 110–162.

¹¹ From his work *Widerlegung des Korans* II, IX, pp. 64–65, in: *Patrologia Graeca* 105, 752 B–753 C; see further sections in my book *Polémique byzantine contre l'Islam* (fn. 2) pp. 285–288.

Islamic religiosity have no salvific relevance; they are ineffective acts, despite their outward similarity with some Jewish or Christian rites.

The law of Islam

The moral standards of Islam are so easily satisfied that they are not capable of bringing mankind closer to God. This is true with regard to sexual ethics, the order of the family, fasting, etc. The Islamic ethos not only promotes the sensual and sexual desires of human beings but even goes so far as to arouse their aggressiveness and their belligerent inclinations.

The teachings of Islam

In their controversy with Islamic teachings about God, the Byzantines adopt two different attitudes: some theologians acknowledge the monotheism of Islam as true and they never express any doubt about the identity of the one God worshipped by Islam; they are to be found primarily among the Greek-speaking theologians in Syria. Their reproach against Muslims is that they reach a dead end when they try to find an explanation for the existence of evil in the world and when they speak about the relation between God's omnipotence and man's free will.

Other Byzantines, however, following Nicetas of Byzantium, do attack the God of Islam and tend to consider the monotheistic statements of the Qur'an simply as a ruse to deceive the Arabs and make them worship idols, and even the devil. They say the alleged monotheism of the Qur'an is not to be compared with the monotheism of the Bible, nor can the God of Muḥammad be identified with the God of Abraham, and Muslims have no share in the covenant God made with Abraham. Neither can the God of Muḥammad be equated with God the Father, since the knowledge of the Father is revealed to mankind through Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and humankind, and any knowledge of the Father leads to acknowledging his Son Jesus Christ. If Islam knew about the Father, it would not fight against Christian faith and deny the divinity of Jesus Christ.¹²

The result of this controversy with Islam inevitably leads the Byzantines to a condemnation of Islam. The general assessment is: Muḥammad is a false prophet; the Qur'an is a false scripture; Islam is a false religion.

¹² On this central topic see the comments in my book *Polémique byzantine contre l'Islam* (fn. 2) pp. 315–352.

3. A new development in our time

In the 20th century, Catholic theology underwent a new development in the theological appreciation of non-Christian religions, and this happened under the influence of the new understandings of comparative religion and increasing interaction between people, which led to a new perception of the religious traditions of other peoples. In its documents, particularly "*Nostra aetate*", the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, Vatican II clearly articulated this development and therewith sanctioned the work already carried out by many theologians.¹³

3.1 The impact of religions on the life of peoples

Vividness of religions

The Christian Churches are becoming more and more aware of the recognition that should be accorded to the religions in our world and the role they have in the life of the various peoples. Most of them support or at least help to support the life of their communities, and hence also of the world community. Even though secularists and Enlightenment-romantics say that there is no future for religions and repeatedly proclaim their death, the religions prove to be very much alive. The religions' current renaissance in most countries of the non-Western world testifies to this. It is a renaissance whose vitality surprises some of the sceptics and makes futurologists quite confused. The re-awakening of spirituality – even though it may not be tied to a particular religion – the emerging search for meaning and transcendence, also clearly confirms that humankind is oriented towards God, in need of salvation and searching for ways to find it.

Value system and message of salvation

In this human context the religions have an indisputable function, for they offer a system of salvific truths and interpretations about God and the relationship of humans to God, about the world, life and death, and the universal history of mankind. In their interpretation models for world and life, for genesis and history, they offer an orientation that is helpful for mastering the present, integrating the past and planning the future.

¹³ On the assertions of the Council cf. my summary and further comments in my paper: "Auf dem Weg zu einer Ökumene der Religionen – die Etappe des II. Vatikanum", in: K. Richter (ed.), *Das Konzil war erst der Anfang. Die Bedeutung des II. Vatikanums für Theologie und Kirche*. Mainz, 1991, pp. 106–118. I take some of the following explanations from this article.

Above all the religions offer an answer to the question of how to behave and find a value system, and finally, and most importantly, an answer to the question of salvation and redemption. They guide people along paths that lead to reconciliation with themselves and others, with creation and the environment, and with God.

Culture and identity

Even though the various religions have the same human concerns, their specific answers and solutions are linked with the cultural context in which they find themselves. Thus human communities try to safeguard their identity; they resist alienation and conceptions and models forced upon them by the stronger industrialized societies, for they do not want to copy the aberrations and disturbances of the societies dominated by technology and themselves become their victims. Through their traditions they are searching for their own cultural pattern under the formative influence of religion, with which they can identify and live a reconciled and peaceful life. At the same time, beyond the borders of a stable identity, they are in search of a common basis, a system of shared fundamental values for structuring the one world and shaping the universal culture of mankind.

3.2 Readiness for dialogue

Taking into account that the world is drawing closer together and distant peoples are getting closer and closer to us, the Christian Churches are trying in our time to emphasize those things in non-Christian religions that are beyond divisive factors and held in common by all human beings and all the religions. In Vatican II the Catholic Church formulated this as follows: "In her task of fostering unity and love among men, and even among nations, she gives primary consideration in this document to what human beings have in common and to what promotes fellowship among them"¹⁴.

Taking non-Christian religions seriously, learning to know them and looking upon them with esteem

In the encounter with other people, the fundamental attitude of Christians is inspired by the attempt to take them and their religion seriously, for the non-Christian religions are a source where people search for answers to

the rightful and important questions of life. Vatican II formulated these questions as follows: "What is a man? What is the meaning and the purpose of our life? What is goodness and what is sin? What causes us sorrow and why? Where lies the path to true happiness? What is the truth about death, judgment, and retribution beyond the grave? What, finally, is that ultimate and unutterable mystery which engulfs our being, and whence we take our rise, and whither our journey leads us?"¹⁵

To these relevant questions the other religions also try to give right answers and to offer adequate means of salvation in the context of all serious human concerns.

Yet whoever makes an effort to encounter the other must take the trouble to gain a more thorough knowledge of their heritage, language and customs, and above all of their system of moral values, religious regulations and innermost ideas, which inspire them and shape their life.¹⁶

To acknowledge, preserve and promote what is true and good in the religions

Christians should reject nothing they discover to be true and good in the non-Christian religions. Vatican II sees in these elements "a ray of that Truth" which is the truth of God and his incarnate Son¹⁷ and an effect of God's Providence.¹⁸ So, we must adopt a positive attitude to these religions and acknowledge, preserve and promote what is true and good in them.

3.3 What has changed?

Salvific relevance of non-Christian religions

The non-Christian religions are no longer indiscriminately condemned as paganism, sinful aberrations and false religions; their doctrines, norms and behavioural patterns are no longer comprehensively rejected.

The possibility of non-Christians attaining everlasting salvation is acknowledged. "Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who, with-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity "Ad gentes"*, art. 26.

¹⁷ *"Nostra aetate"* (fn. 14), art. 2.

¹⁸ *Decree on Priestly Formation "Optatum totius"*, art. 16.

¹⁴ *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to the Non-Christian Religions "Nostra aetate"*, art. 1.

out blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life, by His grace."¹⁹

Thus the possibility of attaining salvation is linked for non-Christians with what they recognize as true and with their fundamental faith in God (cf. Heb 11:6), which is mediated to them through their religions and through the good they do (cf. Ac 10:35; Rm 2:10; 1 Jn 2:29). And it is precisely this which unites them with the grace of God and relates them in some way to Christ's salvific act, who died for all human beings – "through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things" (Col 1:19 f.).

In the context of the salvific relevance of non-Christian religions, theological controversies have taken place which were focused on the appreciation of these religions²⁰, and on describing the Christian path of salvation and the non-Christian religions as ordinary and extraordinary or as general and special paths of salvation.²¹

More detailed interpretation of Christianity's claim to absoluteness

This statement helps us to understand better and formulate more precisely Christianity's claim to absoluteness. For it is not the Christian religion as the institutionalized form of the Christian profession of faith with its mixture of good and less good things, as a form legally established in a certain period of time, which can make the claim to absoluteness. What is absolute is Christ, grace, faith, which means ultimately God. Christ alone is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). Christianity, and the legally established Church, have also to follow more and more Christ's example; they must constantly purify themselves, so that the face of Christ can come to shine more and more purely within them. This implies that Christianity as it exists in actuality remains a sinful pilgrim Church until at the end of time it will attain the "measure of the full stature" of Christ (Eph 4:13; cf. Col 2:2; also 1 Cor 13:9). Nevertheless Christianity has a definite advantage which is its direct relation with Christ, and with the unsurpassable salvation which God has granted to mankind in Christ. In this respect the

¹⁹ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "Lumen gentium", art. 16.

²⁰ At the centre of these controversies there were the term "anonymous Christians", coined by Karl Rahner, and the existence of error and evil in the specific non-Christian religions underlined by those who criticized him; cf. amongst others K. Rahner, "Das Christentum und die nichtchristlichen Religionen" (fn. 1) pp. 157–158; id., "Die anonymen Christen" (fn. 1) pp. 545–554; J. Ratzinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre. Bausteine zur Fundamentaltheologie*. München, 1982.

²¹ See amongst others H. R. Schlette, *Die Religionen als Thema der Theologie* (fn. 1).

actual Church, despite all her imperfect traits, understands herself as the place where what is true and good in the religions is fulfilled.

3.4 The relationship of Christianity towards non-Christian religions

Various theories have been presented about defining the relationship of Christianity towards non-Christian religions, including Islam.

Christianity – crisis of the religions

Crisis may mean condemnation. This is the fundamental thesis of the dialectical theology of Karl Barth, who understands religions as human attempts to take hold of God and therefore as sinful ways. Non-Christian religions do not proceed to Christianity through a form of continuity but only by radical conversion.²²

However, crisis may also mean assessing and weighing up. This is connected with differentiating between truth and error, what is good and what is evil, and continuously searching for the seeds of the Logos and the traces of Christ's truth. This is confirmed in the documents of Vatican II as a task of the Church.

Christianity – fulfilment of the religions

The search for "elements of goodness and truth" in non-Christian religions is justified by the fact that they possess them "by God's Providence"²³ and "reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men"²⁴; this means they are nothing strange to the Church and to Christianity. On the contrary, Christianity is the reference point of religions and the place of their fulfilment since, according to Vatican II, non-Christians "are related in various ways to the People of God", and "whatever goodness or truth is found among them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the gospel. She regards such qualities as given by Him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life". All this lays the foundations for the claim and the task that "whatever good is in the minds and hearts of men, whatever good lies latent in the religious practices and cultures of diverse peoples, [...] is also healed, ennobled, and perfected."²⁵

²² Cf. the analysis of Hendrik Kraemer's position, who at least at the beginning acknowledges dialectical theology, in: G. Vallée, *Mouvement œcuménique et religions non chrétiennes* (fn. 1) pp. 43–52.

²³ "Optatam totius" (fn. 18) art. 16.

²⁴ "Nostra aetate" (fn. 14) art. 2.

²⁵ "Lumen gentium" (fn. 19) art. 16 f.

This task to be the fulfilment of religions also implies the acknowledgement that Christianity itself is on its own way towards the full knowledge of truth. The measure of the full stature of Christ will only be attained at the end of time (cf. Eph 4:13; Col 2:3; also 1 Cor 13:9). Until then the Church must be open for the Spirit of God to guide her "into all the truth" (Jn 16:13). One of his ways of doing so can certainly be seen in the encounter with other religious traditions and simultaneously in the readiness of the Church to present herself as open to these traditions and to rely on the freedom of the Spirit to blow where he chooses.²⁶

3.5 How to continue?

From what has been said, some conclusions may be drawn which support new orientations and suggest stages on the way towards an "ecumene of religions".

Towards a theology of religions

Acknowledging true and good values, and also religious values, in non-Christian religions, allows further questions:

In which way are these values true and good, and efficacious for salvation? Here it is a question of a more detailed definition of the salvific relevance of non-Christian religions and their relationship towards Christ and Christianity within the scope of a theology of religions. Are non-Christian religions proper paths of salvation for their followers? Are they paths of salvation positively willed by God? How are their ways of bringing about salvation related to the act of salvation of Christ, the one mediator between God and humankind (cf. 1 Tim 2:5) in which alone salvation is to be found, as Peter testified before the high-priestly council? (see Ac 4:12: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.") What part do these religions play in God's economy of salvation?

In this context we also have to deal adequately with the question of how

²⁶ That the Spirit acts freely and cannot be tied down within the narrow frame of institutionalized forms is shown in the story of Cornelius' conversion (Ac 10:23b-48). Already before Cornelius and his family were baptized, "the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcized believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, 'Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Ac 10:44-48).

and by whom these true and good values, upon which the salvific efficacy of non-Christian religions is based, have been introduced? How did they emerge in the religious traditions of various human societies? Here it must be noted that the non-Christian religions – seen from a historical perspective – mostly developed in their own ways, and that their true and good values originated from within their own tradition. This means that these religions demonstrate a certain self-sufficiency vis-à-vis Christianity. They do not owe their holy and religious values, which are relevant for salvation, to historical Christianity.

This means that the relationship between Christians and non-Christians, and between Christianity and the non-Christian religions must be one of partners in dialogue, and that this dialogue must not be a one-way street, but an exchange between partners who are both listeners and speakers, recipients and givers.

It also means that those who are engaged in dialogue have quite generally to be ready to learn from one another, to take up the values recognized and acknowledged in the partner's religion, and to integrate them into their own traditions, for those values which are acknowledged as true and good are God's signs and a result of his Spirit's impact on the life of human beings. So the partners together start searching for God, the God common to all, and for the essential, living truth.

All this leads towards the affirmation of the complementarity of all powerful manifestations of God's Spirit in humankind and history, so that believers of all religions can recognize more deeply and clearly – even in the traits of their fellow human beings – the perfect form to which they all are called. Thus they learn to know and accept more fully and in more detail the working of God in history and, linked with that, to recognize and put into practice the true dimensions of universality, which is intrinsic to the religion of God.

4. Islam within the economy of salvation

Among other approaches, the concepts and theories referred to above are currently applied to Islam in the following forms:²⁷

²⁷ Cf. a very informative presentation of the different theological attempts to class Islam into salvation economy in R. Caspar, *Traité de théologie musulmane*, vol. 1 (Collection "Studi arabo-islamica"; 1), Rome, 1987, pp. 76-116.

4.1 Islam is on the way towards the true Christ

Islam, as well as the other religions, is at a stage of preparation for Christianity, not within the framework of a chronological succession but within the scope of the economy of salvation. From the perspective of salvation history it is therefore on a level with the pre-Christian religions, which are on their way towards acknowledging the fullness of the truth of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

Ludwig Hagemann sees, for instance, the following indications of Islam's connection with the truth in Jesus Christ: "Even though in the Islamic faith this christological element is not fully spelled out, but presented in a shortened form, Islam may still be seen as a step in the right direction, as a stage on the way towards the perfect knowledge of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13) in a three-fold transition a) from a mere blood relationship towards a community in faith, b) from the age of human ignorance (*djähiliyya*; cf. Ac 17:30) into the age of knowledge (*'ilm*) and 'revelation', and c) from magic polytheism to the strict profession of faith in the one and only God."²⁸

Hans Küng tries to place Islam at the stage of Judeo-Christian belief²⁹, which did not fully acknowledge Christian christology as it was ultimately developed in the Councils. In the landscape of a fulfilment-theory, this affirms that a further development towards Christianity is conceivable, even though such a further development is definitely rejected by Islam.

Of course, Islam in some of its critical statements concerning Christian dogmas can be understood as a reminder of the necessity to protect faith against excesses and an admonition to faithfully preserve monotheism.³⁰

Vatican II underlined some points, connecting lines, even commonalities between Christian and Islamic teachings: it speaks of Muslims, "who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind."³¹ In "*Nostra aetate*", art. 3, besides faith in God and expectation of judgment, a moral life and worship of God (prayer, almsgiving and fasting) are also emphasized.³²

²⁸ L. Hagemann, *Propheten – Zeugen des Glaubens* (fn. 7) p. 199.

²⁹ Cf. H. Küng – J. van Ess, *Christentum und Weltreligionen: 1. Islam* (Gütersloher Taschenbücher Siebenstern; 779). Gütersloh, 1987, pp. 179–185.

³⁰ In this way once formulated by C. Geffré, cf. his words in: R. Caspar, *op. cit.* (fn. 27) p. 104.

³¹ "*Lumen gentium*" (fn. 19) art. 16.

³² Cf. Hans Zirker's comments on the special case of the relationship between Christianity and Islam and the importance and limits of the statements of Vatican II concerning the non-Christian religions, in his book: *Christentum und Islam. Theologische Verwandtschaft und Konkurrenz* (fn. 2) pp. 18–37; pp. 38–54.

4.2 Islam belongs to a salvation economy parallel to Christianity

Based on the complementarity of truth and moral standards, which has been mentioned above, some think of a salvation economy that runs in parallel with and independently of historical Christianity. Just as the non-Christian religions cannot be deduced from Christianity, and their salvific relevance is not directly based on the impact of the institutions of Christianity³³, one could draw three parallel lines within the Biblical tradition: Judaism is in the line of Isaac and Jacob up to Moses, Christianity in Jesus Christ's line of salvation, Islam in Ismael's line of salvation down to Muḥammad.

4.3 Christianity makes it possible to define the relation towards the Christ mystery

Christianity relates the other religions to Christ and can therefore appreciate them in this perspective. Christianity is neither the crisis of the religions nor primarily their fulfilment; it is the place where a relation towards Christ is mediated.³⁴

4.4 Specific clues

In all these attempts to integrate Islam into God's salvation economy, what must be done is to examine how specific matters of Christian faith are seen and appreciated in Islam: the trinitarian God, and Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God and redeemer of humanity. Another issue is to elucidate the prophetic claim of Muḥammad more closely from the perspec-

³³ So-called pluralistic theology infers from this that Christianity can make no claim to central importance; Jesus Christ is basically just the foundation of a particular salvation history, whose validity can only be ascertained within Christianity and cannot be transferred to the other religions; cf. L. Swidler, *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion* (Faith meets faith series). Maryknoll NY, 1987; J. Hick, "The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity", in: J. Hick – P. E. Knitter (eds.), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness – Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*. New York, 1987; P. E. Knitter, *Ein Gott – viele Religionen. Gegen den Absolutheitsanspruch des Christentums*. München, 1988. – This approach gives up positions essential for Christian faith. The identity of Christianity cannot be extended infinitely, for at a certain point every identity gets lost. Beyond this, the criterion of truth and salvation here seems to be no longer Christian faith but the salvation doctrines of the different religions. This is a reversal of the criteria for the religious truth of salvation which raises the question: where can we ultimately stop? Are the many salvation doctrines, no matter how they express themselves, their own internal criterion of truth and of the impact of salvation? Are they in fact all equivalent?

³⁴ Cf. P. Knauer, *Der Glaube kommt vom Hören. Ökumenische Fundamentaltheologie*. Graz etc., 1978.

tive of Christian religious teaching.⁵⁵ Finally, dialogue between Christianity and Islam has to be defined more closely as to its scope, its dimensions and its content, and to be vigorously developed.⁵⁶

5. Finally: further reflections

In the context of a Christian theology of religions in general and of Islam in particular, many questions remain open and much further reflection is needed. At the end of my lecture, I would like to formulate three questions which in my view express a rewarding subject for theological reflection:

1. How can we interpret and make intelligible the Christ of Christianity – who is of course also a concrete person in the concrete history of salvation – as a universal sign of salvation in all religions, as the “cosmic Christ”? Here what is particular in fact attains a universal dimension. The Gospel according to John already has Jesus saying, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). Accepting a cosmic Christ alone, without referring him back to the historical figure of Jesus Christ, would favour the formation of a myth and make the connection with Christianity appear dispensable.

2. How can we appreciate the other religions’ otherness and make this assessment compatible with the need of having them – by means of Christianity – positively related to Christ? For the fact that they are pregnant with truth, and their relevance for salvation, are not based on their irreducible otherness but on their capacity to entertain a positive relation with Christ.

3. Could it be helpful to consider a theory of different levels of salvific truth and their relation to Christ?

Much time will inevitably pass and much effort will be needed before the most important theological issues concerning the relationship of Christianity to Islam and the non-Christian religions will be clarified. Perhaps here the words of the Gospel can help: the truth has to be done (“But those who do what is true come to the light”: Jn 3:21). With this in mind Vatican II recommended that Christians and Muslims forget the centuries of quarrels and hostilities: “On behalf of all mankind, let them make common cause of safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace, and freedom.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Cf. R. Caspar, *Traité de théologie musulmane*, vol. 1 (fn. 27) pp. 182–199; A. Th. Khoury, *Wer war Muhammad?: Lebensgeschichte und prophetischer Anspruch* (Herder Taschenbuch; 1719), Freiburg etc., 1990.

⁵⁶ See C. Geffré, “La portée théologique du dialogue islamo-chrétien”, *op. cit.* (fn. 2).

⁵⁷ “*Nostra aetate*” (fn. 14) art. 3.

Questions and Interventions

[Study Group 1]

new approaches
following
Vatican II

LEUZE Today it seems to be widely accepted that medieval theological arguments, as referred to in the lecture, are no longer appropriate for the encounter with Islam, if they ever were. For they only proved what had to be proved then: that Islam is a false religion.

Current development in the argumentation, particularly in Catholic theology, bears the strong imprint of the statements of Vatican II which proceed from the conviction that salvation is given in Christ and then raise the question of whether and to what extent non-Christian religions should be understood as legitimate religions. The thesis of the anonymous Christian has developed in the context of this new approach, while a ‘pluralist theology of religions’, which is an approach supported primarily in the English-speaking world, takes a decisive step beyond that. We may ask whether this thesis of the ‘anonymous Christian’ goes too far in including the other. Although non-Christians sometimes accept this term quite positively, does it sufficiently recognize the otherness of non-Christian religions?

mutual inter-
pretation and its
problems

OTT Today we may very easily find ourselves in a dilemma. There is on the one hand the perception that we should interpret other believers in some way because it is no longer adequate to say we simply leave all these questions to be resolved by God, trusting that he will find ways to save those he wants to save. It is no longer possible to ignore these questions or avoid them. By interpreting others from the point of view of our own faith positions we show that we are taking them seriously. Conversely, Christians must then accept being interpreted by other religions from the point of view of their own systems. The necessary dialogical tension is thus preserved.

But what is the source of the patterns of Christian interpretation – is it the event of dialogue or, as it were, ‘from above’? Consider, for example, an interpretation based on the conviction that all the issues raised by other religions (even though they may have their own justification and their own elements of truth) find their true and definitive answer in Christ and in Christian truth. Does this interpretation not unavoidably give the impres-

sion that it comes 'from above' and therefore prevents dialogue? It is hard to harmonize these two requirements fully: to interpret the other on the basis of one's faith without simply anticipating the dialogue encounter, and to remain open to dialogue.

LEUZE With regard to Islam we must not forget that it has always had its own way of resisting such attempts at interpretation by Christians because it came after Christianity. As everybody knows, it was easier to say that all the religious and moral truths of the Greek world were fulfilled in Christ and that everything points to him. Christians have therefore tried to classify Islam within Judaism and to describe it as an offshoot of Judaism.

difficulties are already inherent in the New Testament **FÜGLISTER** This difficulty is already present in the New Testament. Particularly in Paul one cannot avoid the fact that he believes everything is corrupt and redemption is only possible for those who believe in Jesus and are baptized. Moreover, in the Letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians there is no doubt that God has chosen his children in order to glorify them: that is, those who, together with Christ, are born from the dead in baptism.

We must admit the existence of these difficulties in such texts as Mk 16:16, "The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned." Up to Vatican II the teaching was "extra Ecclesiam nulla salus". The movement which then took place did not happen accidentally; it had already been prepared. And it seems to be very important not only to interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament but also, vice versa, to interpret the New Testament in the light of the Old Testament.

Israel is chosen to be a blessing for the peoples Israel is the chosen people. However, this choice is functional – oriented towards the nations. Israel is God's servant and also the priestly people to mediate salvation to the nations. It is like a sacrament of God's presence among the nations. Its existence is to be found in the context of Abraham's vocation to become a blessing for all the families of the earth (cf. Gn 12:2 f.). The tabernacle is pitched in the midst of the people: when God becomes present in the tabernacle, all the people are under the sign of his presence. "You shall be for me a priestly kingdom" (cf. Ex 19:6; 1 Pt 2:9; Rev 5:10, as well as Is 61:6); Israel is for the whole world what priests are for a body of people.

Something similar is true of the 'missionary mandate' in the New Testament.

The Jews do not expect all peoples to accept the Torah. Their real utopia is that all peoples should profess one God as the highest guarantor of peace and the universally acknowledged arbitrator. Then there can be peace. Thus the New Testament must constantly be seen in the light of the Old Testament, and be understood on the basis of the First Testament.

responsibility and the search for dialogue **BIRK** Of course everyone who holds his faith responsibly is bound to declare (both within the framework of his community and in the sense of personal integrity): "this or that is binding for me, and this is what supports me." But it is a very different thing to state right from the beginning, "There is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Ac 4:12). Should we not consider it appropriate to take the historical context of such statements more seriously into consideration in order to maintain an acceptable openness? In the context of a sincere dialogue, does the form of our own faith not need to be shaped by our persuasion that the partner in dialogue has the same integrity? Then it would be quite possible for the God of surprises to allow something to emerge in the faith of humankind which they had never imagined.

living in anticipation of the future **KAHLERT** The way we perceive truth in this earthly life implies a trustful attitude, and it always has something to do with an anticipation of the future. We can see that this is a structural principle of New Testament eschatology and it could even help us along in the issue of truth in dialogue.

in the milieu of an enlightened secularism Moreover, we must pay attention to the specific spiritual environment of our dialogue initiative, which is one where many people outside probably prefer sitting in the audience with an enlightened secular attitude, looking at Nathan the Wise and saying: all three paths are equally justified in their claim to lead towards salvation; and even God does not know which is the right path, for the father himself can no longer distinguish between the rings.

the New Testament, dependent on how it is received? **ZIRKER** It may be necessary to anticipate a theory and we need not refrain from this as long as we remain aware that it is a hypothesis. Before entering into dialogue with others *verbis expressis*, we do, of course, have the discussion first with the other in our own minds. For usually we do not meet people who are completely unknown to us and with whom we have not already had exchanges in internal discourses before.

We may ask here to what extent the reception the New Testament receives depends on changing contexts – in those days, today and in future generations and milieux. The New Testament was written on the basis of the experience that an expanding dynamic is inherent in its message and of course there was also the experience that here and there one met with limits, although of course, this could be perceived quite differently by people who had the experience of being swept along by this expanding dynamic of the Spirit, and seeing that new communities were constantly being founded, etc.

a new experience with cultures that seemingly do not need the Gospel

There is, however, a kind of experience not known in the New Testament, because it came along centuries later: there are cultures and religions which apparently do not need the Christian message at all. Today we try to cope with this experience, which certainly challenges the Christians of our time, and the theory of the 'anonymous Christians' seems to be only a rather makeshift attempt to come to terms with it. It cannot be expected that the problem of the plurality of religions will be solved on the level of theological reflection alone. It must be negotiated much more via other processes of communication.

New Testament approaches to an answer to these questions

KARRER With statements such as "there are religions that do not need Christianity", we actually get close to the pluralist theology of religions. Is the New Testament perhaps the greatest obstacle in this context? Where can we find in it an approach that is useful to answer

these questions?

The radical passage "but the one who does not believe will be condemned [literally: condemned to the ground, κατακριθήσεται]" (Mk 16:16) was only included later by the Church; it is missing in the oldest manuscripts. In Acts the formulation closest to the passage quoted is only in the positive: believe on the Lord Jesus and, being baptized, you will be saved (cf. Ac 16:31.33); in Acts there are also other stories that do not yet include the negative counterstatement (esp. 2:38). However, in Johannine theology this development is brought to the fore with the negative restriction (Jn 3:18) and decisive importance was to be attributed to it in the early Church.

A passage in the New Testament – in Paul, interestingly – opens up another approach: it is the famous passage in 1 Cor 8 when Paul takes up the early Christian formula of faith and introduces it rather strangely: "Even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth," followed by

an insertion: "ὡςπερ εἰσιν ... as in fact there are many gods and many lords". He then continues, "yet for us there is one God, the Father, [...] and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things [...]" (vv. 5 f.).

So there is a passage in Paul which is open to the perception that there are many gods. Today we are trained to take the implication of this comparison seriously, so if such a comparison is made on the basis of experience, then in Paul at least one thing is clear (and seems to be indispensable in the light of the New Testament), and that is that, as with everything else, this comparison must be seen as having its point of departure in Christ.

With this, our deliberations have arrived at a point where we quite rightly find an area of tensions which is hard to overcome: on the one hand there is an approach open to the concerns of a pluralist theology of religions and on the other great difficulties arise for Christian faith if it completely renounces that 'perspective from above'. If that were to happen, could we still explain why such great importance is attributed to the incarnation?

Perhaps it would be better to ask: does this perspective of faith necessarily have to be called a 'perspective from above', or could it also be formulated as a 'perspective from below'? After all, the passage quoted above from 1 Cor 8:6 says of Christ: "δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ... through whom are all things", just as in the assertion about creation in the Colossian hymn (Col 1:16). It simply must appreciate that in some way even the multitude of the gods belong to a creation that was made accessible through Christ. How we can come to terms with this remains an open question. But how could we deny it?

LEUZE There is no doubt that these deliberations point to an important issue, but they are hardly relevant in this form to the encounter with Islam, for the main issue there is the one God and not other gods, which is a dividing line that plays a part in making the distinction between Jews and Gentiles.

KAHLERT When Paul speaks of "gods and lords", is this in fact as definitely positive as the impression being given now, or is there not some equivocality?

KARRER It is indeed equivocal, which is why the even more crucial question was raised by Mr. Leuze. In fact, for clarification, I must add that in my explanations of 1 Cor 8 I was not referring to Islam, and it has been rightly said that this passage cannot be applied to Islam, but I was pointing to fundamental reflections on a theology of religions in general, for this is an area where it is still necessary to further develop relevant hermeneutics.

a linguistic note
on Mk 16:16:

VANONI Let us make a linguistically based observation on Mk 16:16: "the one who believes and is baptized will be saved – but the one who does not believe will be condemned." If we put this difficult formulation alongside similar statements, we should take into account from the linguistics perspective not only semantics but also pragmatics; we would then infer that the statement is not so much centered on a propositional truth, a definition of those who are saved or those who are condemned, as on a command-to-act: "Engage yourself unconditionally for the salvation of the others!" Sentences like this where an opposite is juxtaposed, are normally pleonastic statements and usually have a supportive function. When Pilate says: "What I have written I have written" (Jn 19:22), he is not using tautology simply for the sake of it. He wants to say quite bluntly: don't bother me any longer, this is the way it is and there it stands.

And when Jesus says: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:23), he does not intend to define propositional truths and say: if you do not forgive, then you do not leave God a chance to forgive. Rather, he wants to emphasize how important it is that we forgive each other. Similarly, if a mother proposes an alternative to her child and the child then rejects it, she may say, if she loses her patience: Well, so be it then! And by this she defines the opposite of what she actually wants and expects the child to do.

That being so, we should understand that contexts formulating a counter-statement mean to underline how important the first basic statement is and to say: this is the way it is and there it stands. In the case of Mk 16 this would mean: it is most important that you declare your convictions and what has been entrusted to you for yourselves and also for others; it cannot be left unsaid. However, to go on to deduce from this that God would have no other possibility would be unacceptable.

the one path of
salvation for all
and the salvation
relevance of
other religions

SALMEN In statements both about Christ as the path of salvation and about the salvation relevance of non-Christian religions, is the point at issue a problem of mediation or fundamental exclusiveness? Could we not approach this question using an analogy with the christological controversies in the early Church? At that time assertions about the divinity and humanity of Jesus were finally placed for the first time directly side by side. So, with our own question too, could we not initially maintain both the general salvation relevance of Christ and

the salvation possibilities of non-Christian religions, even though the two assertions are not yet theologically compatible?

claims must
always be
challenged

WESS If every revealed religion took it for granted that it was based on the word of God without allowing that fact to be questioned, dialogue between them would certainly not make sense. So then our own statement stands against the other's. Is there not the danger that there is an underlying vicious circle which presupposes what has to be proved: a certain religion asserts that it possesses the truth because it is based on the word of God, which must be true. Therefore its statement that it is based on the word of God must also be true. So, for the sake of sincere dialogue, should not every religion's claim to truth be questioned? Islam probably does this less than Christianity, which today is rather in danger of going to the opposite extreme.

moral sinfulness
and the doctrine
of the Church

One aspect of the problem seems to be that, because of our own sinfulness, we are once again critically confronting our own faith and our own understanding of faith, and finding ourselves motivated to do so from outside, since an outsider often sees the problems better than we do ourselves. The Church is sinful as well and has to measure itself against Christ. If we admit that the Church is morally sinful, can we not now admit that this also has an effect on its knowledge of the truth and on the doctrine it holds true? If we say that the *fides quae* is contained in the *fides qua*, then of course an inadequacy in the *fides qua*, in the realization of faith, would also have its effects on the *fides quae*, the content of faith.

WOLBERT Perhaps the actual problem is not so much moral failure and confession that we are all sinners. Admitting that we have made a mistake when we were intending to do good is much more difficult.

KAHLERT As for the term 'claim to absoluteness', it would be helpful to know more about the history of this term. Since when and in which context has this been discussed? In his book *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions* (1902; London, 1972), Ernst Troeltsch indicates a great awareness of the problem. The debate over relativeness and absoluteness is the focal point here, and the texts do not say much about claims. So if we want critically to distance ourselves from this term, we should clarify once again very precisely who it is that speaks of absoluteness in this context and what approach to the problem is in the background when he does so.

LEUZE It seems that the expression 'claim to absoluteness' is only used where one is no longer sure that absoluteness can be proved. Even though the fundamentalists do not like to hear it, the term goes back to a philosopher: Hegel, however, does not speak directly of the claim to absoluteness, but tries to show that Christianity is the absolute religion; the other religions are not called false religions, but each of them has a different importance. Probably it is only later that we started to speak of a 'claim' with regard to something we can only claim without being able to prove it.



anticipating interpretation of the other and dialogue

OTT Vigilance in the anticipation of a general interpretation of a religion by others is primarily a methodological factor. Mutual interpretation itself is an essential part of sincere dialogical discourse, all the more so if it is one in which we confront another religion or its followers. The point is really that we should react to the other – within the I-You encounter as well as in encounter between groups: to perceive the other and then also interpret him/her. Caution is an aspect of methodology and is meant to be exercised in respect of umbrella-interpretations and general interpretations which arise even before we have held the dialogue. If we put forward a general interpretation beforehand, it means: I already know who you are. There is nothing left to be learned. This cannot contribute anything to dialogue.

truth coming from the other

In dialogue we should start out from expectation rather than from an umbrella-interpretation. If something comes to us in the encounter that shines with truth and is plausible, then it is Christ who is approaching us; not in the sense of a pluralist theology of religions, but in Christ's truth, bringing a new perception, a ray of light emanating from that truth "which enlightens all men", as it says in *"Nostra aetate"*. What comes to us as alien, from the side of the other, may be a correction of possible corruptions in our own doctrine of faith, but it may also be an inspiration which in that case also comes from Christ.

Of course, a conception like this may more easily be linked with the idea of a cosmic Christ than with that of the earthly-historical Christ or with Jesus; it implies the issue of integrating the cosmic Christ with the earthly-historical Jesus, which Father Bsteh has already raised in the last plenary discussion. This issue has yet to be considered more seriously.

dialogue – between the other's otherness and necessary anticipation

SCHMÜCKER In this context the ideas of Emmanuel Levinas deserve attention.¹ They may help to avoid 'umbrella-interpretations'. Levinas contrasts two figures to exemplify the problem that exists in understanding another religion, namely, the problem of respecting the other in his otherness and at the same

time maintaining a necessary anticipation. One is the mythical figure of Odysseus, who sets off but finally arrives home again within himself. This circle is an allusion to what may be implied in a general understanding that never really grasps the object in itself and leaves us always in danger of remaining within ourselves, on the assumption that we are in some sense already with the object. The other is the figure of Abraham, who sets off towards uncertainty, not knowing where or when he will arrive or whether he will ever return.

This comparison strongly emphasizes the danger that threatens dialogue if we try to put ourselves in the place of the object to be examined or of the other. In that case we ultimately make ourselves the subject of discussion. Our understanding of the other religion in its otherness must not come down to the religion's becoming for us an object of our consciousness. Despite all necessary reservations, it must remain clear that there is always something more which is proper to the subject, something more in the subject matter to be examined or in the other himself. This 'something more' makes it impossible simply to subsume the other into one's own view and of course also entails a feeling of uncertainty about the final outcome of the dialogue.

This knowledge of the limits of our own understanding may also help us to stay open to an awareness of new developments. Indeed, the subject can only perceive changes when it understands itself capable of only finite and limited interpretation and always takes into account that the whole that confronts it is never completely under its control or completely fathomable. The task is to search for this structure in other religions too, an endeavour that is not necessarily restricted to interreligious dialogue. After all, other religions also put forward conceptions and interpretations of the world. Similarly, when we perceive the other, it should become clear that he also has a certain understanding of his own finitude, so that we may conclude that

¹ Cf. E. Levinas, *Die Spur des Anderen. Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und Sozialphilosophie* [Alber-Broschur Philosophie], München, 1987, pp. 211, 215 f.

the other also understands himself as finite in his religion which, although it is different from mine, does not try to subsume me.

LEUZE In fact here we are encountering a fundamental problem: on the one hand we continue to assess other religions from our own Christian point of view and on the other, at the same time, for example in a pluralist theology of religions, a relativization is taking place which no longer seems acceptable, for it becomes doubtful whether and to what extent theological statements remain possible at all, and it seems that God himself might evaporate and become some 'thing in itself'. Maybe we then become unable to say anything any longer, because everything is already merely an interpretation?

When interpreting the other, and there is no avoiding this, we should still try to leave enough room to perceive the other in his/her unmistakable otherness. Both these aspects should be connected with one another.

dialogue
grounded on
faith and not on
ideology

GLADKOVSKY In the interest of this whole discussion, a clear distinction between faith and ideology is essential. Only faith can be the basis of any interreligious dialogue. But we so easily leave the basis of faith and become entangled in our own theories and concep-

tions – both when we consider our own faith, and also when we attempt to understand and interpret other religions. The road from faith to ideology is always open and quite often it is hard to discern where one ends and the other begins. If, however, we remain grounded on faith, we make more space for truth. This also applies to dialogue. When Christians are seeking an encounter with Muslims, it should be an encounter with Muslim believers in which there is an open space for God. When people listen to God, their encounter will become fruitful.

anthropological
question raised
in dialogue

KRÜGER If, in dialogue with Islam, it is difficult to arrive at mutual understanding when we start on a very high theological level with the doctrine of God, a fruitful alternative might perhaps be to speak with each

other about anthropology. Asking about human beings, how they act and perceive themselves, would probably allow us to get closer to the problems we are facing today, if we think of the global village which is about to develop and in which the religions are also becoming ever closer to one another. In this context the idea we may have read recently should make us think: that in our time the point will be reached when as many people will be living simultaneously on our earth as have lived here altogether since the beginning of history.

on the apologetic
attitude in the
past

Another remark is about the negative apologetic attitude to Islam adopted by Christianity in the past. If, for example, Luther comments negatively on Islam in one way or another, the question arises of the extent to which the Reformers really knew Islam. On the other hand, in the constitution of the Franciscan Order (no matter what in fact took place when Francis of Assisi visited the Sultan) there is a section dealing with how to associate with the Saracens where it says: one should go to the Saracens and live with them; and if the friars are then asked about their way of life, they should respond to those who ask them.² We might also mention here a humanist such as Erasmus of Rotterdam who, on the occasion of the siege of Vienna in 1529, published a text under the title "*Utilissima consultatio de bello Turcis inferendo*".³ Herein he answers the question of how to wage war against the Turks, by replying: Not at all. The Christian world should rather take stock of themselves and follow Christ. That would be the right way to tackle the Turks.

LEUZE In Luther too, we find the statement that, as Christians, we actually need not be unhappy if the Turks are the victors for then the Christians would suffer and thus imitate Christ⁴. There are also many other statements that point in this direction. On the other hand, as Christians we may ask ourselves critically how often Muslims today suffer under Christians, and whether this constitutes an 'imitation' on the part of Muslims although certainly without their seeing it as such.

[Study Group 2]

necessity and
limits of
apologetic
argumentation

NEUMANN Has Christianity's apologetic attitude to Islam in the past been overcome or does it still play a role today?

KHOURY In our time there are still forms of argumentation that depend for their content on the apologetic system of the past. These arguments cannot be rejected a priori and

² H. U. v. Balthasar, *Die großen Ordensregeln* (Lectio Spiritualis; 12). Einsiedeln, 1974, pp. 301 f., cf. p. 321.

³ Des. Erasmii Rot., *Opera omnia, Lugduni Batavorum 1703–1706* (=Hildesheim 1961/62), vol. V, pp. 345–368.

⁴ Cf. R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge (Mass.) etc., 1980, p. 106.

in general, they should be examined as to whether they are sound or not. As was mentioned before, there is only one definitely negative criterion: whoever preaches against God cannot be God's prophet. So it says in Deuteronomy (cf. Dt 13:2f.6; 18:20–22), in the New Testament (cf. Mt 24:24; Mk 13:22; 2 Pt 2:1) and in the tradition of the Church.³ The value of all other arguments is only relative. After the many centuries during which, as everybody knows, numerous disagreements and hostilities between Christians and Muslims arose in which it was almost always only what divides them from one another that was emphasized, Vatican II in "*Nostra aetate*", art. 3, underlines that today the first and foremost task is "to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding".

Basically, an apologetic system worked out from the structure of a particular religion is not universally applicable, i. e., not applicable to all other religions. Incidentally, Muslims make the same mistake when they say: the Qur'ān is the word of God and if the Gospel deviates from it, then it is not the original Gospel, but a falsified one. In this view, the Gospel would be only a Christian tradition and not the word of God. Moreover, it would not even be a genuine tradition, because in the form in which it exists today it cannot be traced back to the actual words of Jesus in the same way as the Islamic understanding of tradition claims with reference to the words and acts of Muḥammad. On the basis of the structure of our own religion, we build up arguments in order to reject the structures of other religions. Given the fact that every specific religion has specific structures of its own, this cannot be admissible. The only argument seems to be the agreement in faith, *analogia fidei*, which determines the binding quality of a certain religion's tenets of faith. Anything that overtly contradicts these binding truths cannot be considered as true within the religion in question.

DUPRÉ Although everyone has to know who he/she is and apply his/her own standards in some way to others, nevertheless, our daily existence is primarily a matter of give and take, communicating ourselves and listening to the other. So what sort of relationship with other religions are we expected to develop against the background of our own apologetic tradition, where the objective has always been to establish contrasts in order to assert our own identity through them? The relevance of the question of the legitimacy of apologetic argumentation in general must by no means

³ See A. Bsteh (ed.), *Islam Questioning Christianity* (Christian Faith in the Encounter with Islam; vol. 1), Mödling, 2007, pp. 21–33, esp. pp. 29 f.

be underestimated. One point among others is in fact to do justice to the apologists of the past who worked before Vatican II: they were generally by no means malicious people and they tried to give of their best. Since dealing with truth formed them in this way, should we not ask ourselves whether we may be about to overlook something very essential at this point – that the one truth emerges as truth in a variety of centres but nevertheless has to be understood as manifold in the religious context too?

Furthermore, in this context the question about the 'Christ of Christianity' must be aired: here the issue is not so much the Jesus of the Bible whom we believe to be the Christ, but the Christ of Christianity from the perspective of the history of religions, who, as a symbol, belongs to this very definite history which we call Christianity. And this is not immediately identical with what is present in the form of faith. To what extent then is the 'Christ of Christianity' the expression of human longing, reflection, hope, and also of human failings, etc.? And to what extent is there also, like the 'God of Christianity', a 'God of Islam' – a God of human making, who must not immediately be identified with the God in whom we believe, to whom we testify, whom we worship, and who wants to be alive and exist beyond this symbolism.

signa externa
because faith
wants to be
responsible

SCHAEFFLER The apologists of former times are also concerned with the question of *signa externa* which, before faith is accepted, contribute to the recognition of the legitimacy of someone who appears in public as God's spokesperson, for behind the question about the *signa externa* there is a concern to understand obedience in the faith as a *rationabile obsequium*. After all, it cannot be a matter of acknowledging someone and obeying him in the faith simply because he claims to be God's spokesperson. This obedience requires a sense of responsibility. Even though we may assume that some criteria were incorrectly formulated, this does not detract from the genuine concern to act responsibly especially in matters of faith and in this context to look for well-founded criteria. Does it make dialogue with Islam more difficult if we want to know the circumstances in which responsibility can be accepted for acknowledging a prophet as a prophet and a messenger as a messenger? According to the Islamic faith, may we raise this question in the encounter with Islam, or would this not be permitted out of respect for their obedience to the word of God conveyed in the Qur'ān? Leibniz once referred to the fact

that, although the order of the king must always be obeyed, everybody has the right to examine the king's signature when someone brings him a royal decree. This concern for an obedience with accountability seems to be behind the apologetic arguments and the *signa externa*. Could someone simply say: the fact that I come from this (Christian or Islamic) tradition, is in itself sufficient reason to acknowledge the binding force of the Biblical scriptures or the Qur'an?

Christianity
also Christianity's
crisis?

The distinction made in the lecture between the absoluteness of Christ and of Christian preaching, may be felt as very liberating. The question is whether we may then assess Christianity to be the crisis of religions, and conclude that the word of Christ also judges our attempts to be Christians and similarly too our Christian traditions. If this were the case, other religions could not only uncover Christianity's deformities, so to speak, that is, its undeniable mistakes, but also motivate us to reflect once more on the infinite difference between truth on the one hand and our knowledge of it and our professing it on the other. Although these religions do not understand themselves to be helping us in self-reflection, if we are ready to learn, we may listen to them in this way.

criteria for the
Qur'an being a
revelation

KHOURY A supplementary remark on the criteria for judging the Qur'an. The Qur'an does not only say that it is the word of God which must be believed in and obeyed. There are also criteria which are applied in the discussion about the Qur'an between Muhammad on the one hand and Jews, Christians and polytheists on the other.

Thus the Qur'an says that it is a true revelation because it is in agreement with the holy scriptures of the early revealed religions, namely Judaism and Christianity, and confirms them (cf. Qur'an 2,41; 4,47). Thus it goes further back to what is acknowledged in its environment as revealed religion.

According to the Qur'an, another criterion is the judgment of religious scholars among Jews and Christians: if you do not know what this is supposed to mean, go and ask those who possessed the message before, Jews and Christians – they have knowledge concerning religious questions (cf. Qur'an 16,43; 21,7; 10,94). The tradition simply took this over. When Muhammad had his vocation experience, he had doubts as to whether he was encountering God or the devil. Then they turned to a scholar – this may have been a Jew, a Christian or a Judaeo-Christian – and he confirmed the authenticity of Muhammad's vocation. Furthermore, a legend says that

Muhammad, when he still was a small child, once travelled home to Syria, and there he met a Christian monk, who recognized in him the signs of the prophetic mission.

When the Muslims were involved in discussions with Jews, Christians and polytheists, the miraculous character of the Qur'an itself was the ultimate criterion: the Qur'an in itself is a sign of its own truth (cf. for example Sura 11,13 f.).

criteria are indis-
pensable, but not
necessarily
unequivocal

VANONI The miracles – as *signa externa* – are never unequivocal, if one looks at them from a Biblical point of view. We may even pointedly say: the miracle is a matter of faith; it may sometimes produce an adverse effect, as can be seen in the New Testament passage where some scribes are mentioned who said that Jesus "has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons" (Mk 3:22 parr.). This shows that if we start comparing things within a certain community or religion, the *signa externa* may remain equivocal. Then it will be difficult to raise the question of the *signa externa* in comparing two different religions and say that one can boast of them, but the other cannot. However, in logic there is not only an exclusive, but also an inclusive 'or'. Therefore in a comparison we should not assume *a priori* that what exists on the one side does not exist on the other side simply because it is the other.

Since Christians believe that Christ achieved reconciliation through his death, some Christians deduce from this that there is no reconciliation elsewhere. There are some New Testament exegetes who maintain that there is no true reconciliation in the Old Testament, even though it belongs to the fundamental truths of God's Old Testament revelation. It is even right at the centre of the Torah, if we count the chapters: exactly in the middle between Genesis and Deuteronomy, namely in Lv 16, there is the ritual for the Day of Atonement, the *yom kippur*, which remains to this day one of the Jewish High Holidays. So it may be necessary to accept an inclusive 'or' and to admit that a certain truth does have a central position in one's own faith – and this remains true even if it also has a central position elsewhere. This may be life-threatening to religious communities, if they are not able to distinguish in this way between inclusive and exclusive.

Criteria are indispensable in the realm of faith, just as they are for discerning whether a signature is authentic or not. Considering the problems that exist in the world of today, should the true purpose of apologetics not rather be to account for one's own faith? In any case, we could then more

easily accept Christ as a universal symbol instead of saying that he cannot be a universal symbol for us as long as others do not accept it.

no other sign than that of Jonah

BSTEH A. With regard to the criteria of faith: In trying to prove our love of others, can anyone go further than Jesus did, when he laid down his life for his friends (cf.

Jn 15:13)? "The sign of Jonah" is the sign given to humans (cf. Mt 12:38-40). At the same time the question arises of whether there is a proof that is more difficult to appreciate than this proof given by Jesus.

Thus Corinthians I rightly speaks of the *μωρία τοῦ κηρύγματος*, the "foolishness of our proclamation", through which God decided "to save those who believe" (1:21), and of the *σκάνδαλον*, the "stumbling block" that is caused by this way of arguing (1:23). Concerning the question of the criteria of Christian faith, there is therefore on the one hand the insurpassable striving of Jesus to prove the truth of his coming by the action of his life, and at the same time there is no other proof that leads so much into darkness, although it does become bright and persuasive to the extent that it can and must be interpreted as a light on God's incomprehensibility. "The *λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ* – the message about the cross" is at the same time "foolishness" and "the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18).

Christ – the crisis of Christianity

And as for the question of whether and how the word of Christ judges our own attempts to be Christians and hence also our Christian traditions – it cannot be suf-

ficiently underlined. Jesus is still also and even primarily a crisis of all that emerges from his truth, that is of whatever kind of system, establishment, development and socialization of religion; Christ remains *the crisis* of Christianity. This also applies similarly to all great religions: that the heart of a religion always remains infinitely greater than any particular tradition developing from it, and that all religions are called to hold on to this difference which they will never be able to overcome; they should not play it down, but remain aware of it. In a similar way Buddha will always remain *the crisis* of Buddhism; and his original experience of transcendence will judge the history of its impact on all forms of experience in the diversity of Buddhist traditions.⁶

⁶ Cf. Y. Takeuchi, *The Heart of Buddhism. In Search of the Timeless Spirit of Primitive Buddhism* (Nanzan Studies in Religion and Culture). New York, 1983.

signa externa – indispensable and signs which are being contradicted

SCHAEFFLER The *signa externa* are indeed indispensable for taking a responsible decision about faith; but this does not mean that these exterior signs are unequivocal. The supreme sign of God's love is the sign of the cross. This sign in particular is one that will also be opposed (cf. Lk 2:34). It is by no means a matter of

course that there are those who fall because of it and others who rise, but it could also well be that those who fall for the sake of this *σημεῖον ἀντιλεγόμενον* are at the same time those who rise again because of it. Furthermore, there are probably not those who reject it and others who assent to it; it is rather a matter of "the inner thoughts of many being revealed", the inner *διαλογισμοί* for the sake of this sign (v. 35). Perhaps we should say that the sword which pierces the soul, divides even one's own soul (like that of Mary): in the face of this sign we are inwardly split and in each of us this gives rise to conflicting speech. The sign of Jesus is so contradictory that it provokes in the heart of everyone agreement and opposition – an experience that even the mother of Jesus is not spared – so that our soul at first threatens to be ripped apart and the *ἀνάστασις*, the rising from this fall, remains a promising hope.

how can the sign of salvation be made understandable to other believers?

What has been said about the necessity for the *signa externa* was also meant to express the conviction that self-criticism of Christian faith in its relation to the truth which must be proclaimed by Christians, could hardly have been articulated more radically than in the passage of the Gospel according to Luke quoted above:

knowing about this sign of salvation that provokes opposition can make us open to self-criticism and it can also, however, make us open to taking seriously opposition from outside. The pressing question, therefore, remains one of how the sign of salvation which we already know to be crucial for our own soul, can be made understandable in interreligious dialogue. This is not meant to give the impression that Christians themselves would not know whether they should say yes or no or that they are only capable of saying 'on the one hand' and 'on the other hand', without arriving at clear decisions. But the question remains of whether this inner crisis of the believer facing the divine sign of salvation, can be outwardly 'professed' at all, if we take up this term again here [cf. above p.144 f.], and introduced into interreligious dialogue, or whether it only has a place in the inner-dialogue of the Christian soul.

HAGEMANN So how is it actually possible to make what has just been said – and previously too by Father Bsteh – relevant to discussion in the context of interreligious dialogue? Or is there for the Muslim necessarily such an opposition between “the message of the cross” and the message of the Qur’ān that he *a priori* refuses dialogue?

Lk 2:34 also applicable to Jesus himself?

VANONI Particularly in the context of an attempt to introduce into interreligious dialogue what has been said by Mr. Schaeffler in connection with Lk 2:34, it seems important to apply these reflections even to Jesus him-

self. In the Gethsemane scene (Mk 14:32–42), does this divided heart not become visible, a heart which is not sure of itself or of its God and which does not know how things can go on? To the extent that Christians, in a mono-physitic way, do not want to believe that Jesus is truly man because he is truly God, they block their own way to an understanding of what happened on the Mount of Olives. Jesus *did not* know what would come next, and so it was an act of faith when he said, “But you know it, I believe that your guidance is right and that you know what is right; I entrust myself to you”. If we are able to convey this to Muslims, it will help them to see more clearly that Christians do not mean to associate anyone to God. Would it then be acceptable to apply the passage in Lk 2 to Jesus, in the Gethsemane scene?

SCHAEFFLER This application seems acceptable, even though it was probably not intended by Luke.

VANONI Not intended by Luke, but it is in the statement in Mk 14.

SCHAEFFLER This could be accepted.

GLADE This is also mentioned in Eucharistic Prayer IV where the Church expressly refers to the Letter to the Hebrews saying, “[...] a man like us in all things but sin”. Jesus took the plunge into empty space, hoping that the Father’s hand would cushion his fall.

the ever greater – and the ever smaller God

ELSAS Two Christian hymns have already been mentioned: the Colossian hymn, in which the focus is on God’s absolute dignity revealed in Christ, the *πλήρωμα* of the divinity, the ever greater God; and the Philippian

hymn, where the focus is on the ever smaller God. In Islam God’s ever greater greatness, the *Allāhu akbar* is strongly emphasized. Are there also assertions about the opposite pole of the Christian concept of God, concerning the ever smaller God, the one who descends to human beings?

KHOURY In the Qur’ān there are various references to the fact that God, although he is the sublime God, still occupies himself with the specific

history of the community. As a matter of fact, he is always present as the sublime one on the horizon of the community’s life.

At the same time there are assertions about the relation of God to human-kind, in which not only his mercy, but frequently also his thoughtfulness is referred to. A sign of his proximity is primarily his readiness to forgive and to forget about the sins people have committed against him. He is not only the distant God, but also the close one. His divinity is characterized by transcendence and immanence, even in Islam. But any kind of incarnation, in the sense that God in his fullness could be present in a human person, simply goes beyond the foundations of a classical Islamic theology. Here again, the word of God that became a book is something totally different.

ELSAS If recitation is the core, can we then not speak of a word of God put in the mouth of man?

KHOURY It is not the process of recitation but what is recited that is the word of God.



amid discontinuities also continuity

DUPRÉ The Qur’ān understands what Muhammad does in the tradition of the prophets. The idea of continuity seems to be of fundamental importance. But in Islamic self-perception, the tradition of the prophets also features distortions on the part of the Christians, characterized primarily by the falsification of Jesus’ original message, a falsification which was already becoming apparent in the New Testament.

Nevertheless, amid all these discontinuities and dissents on the doctrinal level, there is obviously a persistent continuity and agreement in the field of personal religious commitment and attitude in the realm of piety. When the important point is what we are, we discover signs of a common authenticity and togetherness. In what way should this reality find expression in our terminology too, in order for us to take up the question of unity as one of inclusiveness?

NEUMANN As Christians, we should however also be careful about the tensions between ‘salvation and truth’ and fulfil our task to testify to the truth of faith and proclaim it. Although we have to resist the temptation to feel better than others or to show a know-it-all attitude, Christian faith is bound to this task – which, as is well known, once made Paul say, “[...] and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel” (1 Cor 9:16). It is not others who have to come to us, we have to go to them. How is this task to be understood and

lived in the context of the sense of solidarity among all who are pious in the various ways characteristic of their religious worlds?

continuity and
sequence of time

KHOURY First I would like to refer to the problem of continuity. In the context of Muslim self-understanding, as it was stressed by Mr. Dupré, a clear distinction has to be made between continuity and chronology. Islam argues on the level of chronological sequence: Judaism, Christianity, Islam – and in this context Islam is understood as the ultimate and conclusive expression of God's will to show us the straight path. Unlike this pre-set sequence on the level of chronology, what is in fact the decisive issue in the controversy with Islam is the question of continuity: is Christian faith really to be understood in terms of continuity, or is it not rather, as far as the essential points are concerned, a matter of discontinuity and contradiction? Something similar applies, although the other way round, in the case of Islam.

DUPRÉ But you have to be aware of the problem of whether and to what extent it is the richness originally given in the Qur'an and in the Bible that characterizes the historical development of the Islamic or Christian *understanding* of faith, or whether in the course of later developments (as also in all other religions) narrowing definitions and blockages have taken place. In other words, does the Qur'an not say substantially more than what was perceived later in Islamic tradition? Do we not here – as in Christianity too, and elsewhere – too easily fall victim to our own fixed ideas on the assumption that they are blessed by God?

on a 'pluralist
theology
of religions'

KHOURY It is the purpose of this symposium to pursue theology taking account of the terms of reference of the other religions. In this light, how should we regard the other approach to the diversity of mankind's religious heritage, which sees itself as a 'pluralist theology of religions'? Several factors suggest that this approach does not really help us make progress in resolving the questions to be answered.

First there is the danger of overlooking too easily the figure of Jesus Christ by assuming that we do not need him in order to attain salvation since salvation comes from God alone. But according to the New Testament, it is not possible to do without Jesus Christ in this way. Is not the guidance of the New Testament and faith being abandoned too quickly, and for what reasons? It probably happens because others do not accept that salvation for mankind takes place in Jesus Christ. However, does this not imply a reversal of criteria: is the criterion here no longer Christian faith but the sal-

vation doctrine of other religions? In order to integrate the salvation doctrines of other religions into Christianity, we start to hold the opinion that it is possible to renounce the salvific relevance of Jesus Christ and say that God in his transcendence is simply enough; this would then become a shared basis for Christian faith and at least some other religions.

This concept was initially developed in the context of the encounter with Hinduism, and then extended towards Buddhism. How far is this to go now? Can Christian identity in fact be expanded to such an extent that the salvation doctrines of all other religions, and possibly also of the various religious sects, find acceptance in it? I would suggest that Christian identity does not seem to be infinitely extendable. Can we as Christians in our theological thinking really renounce the Christian faith's original and foundational relation to Christ and do without it? We must note the attempts made in this direction by John Hick or Paul Knitter, but are these attempts, in their present form, sufficiently mature to meet the essential requirements of a Christian theology? It is good to open up to others but not at the price of one's own identity which ultimately cannot be extended ad infinitum.

[Plenary Discussion]

what is essential
in Christianity

PESCHKE There is a danger of casting doubt on Christianity till nothing is left. What is it that really (and therefore also in encounter with other religions) cannot be dispensed with about the Christ in whom and through whom we believe?

KHOURY What is indispensable is what was formulated in the Creed of the Church, the Christian community: what Jesus is in his relationship to the Father, Jesus' work, his act of salvation, and that this Jesus is not only the Jesus of history, but also the eschatological Jesus. Of course, we must constantly review the more detailed interpretation of these statements, but they are binding and form the essential basis of all further explanations.

I would like to make one more remark concerning a general theology of religions following on from the image of the pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem (cf. Is 2; 60). It would certainly be problematic to say: the nations come to Jerusalem and when doing so remain the nations they were before. Although by coming to Jerusalem, they have not become Jews with

respect to their nationality, they have nevertheless recognized Yahweh and praised him, and in doing so have acquired a different quality. We must distinguish between the development of faith on the one hand, and belonging to a particular people or nation on the other. Christianity, therefore, should not so much be seen as the mediator of a certain culture, but first of all as the mediator of the good tidings of the reconciliation of all mankind with God in Jesus Christ. When Christians today demonstrate a much less certain culture than in former times, this need not mean that Christianity has lost its vigour and impetus. Christianity rather has to be measured by its endeavours to live and hand on reconciliation for all with God in Jesus Christ. When the nations make their pilgrimage to Jerusalem and there believe in Yahweh and praise him, then they have become a different people, they have become open to a greater faith.

transcendence of God to be taken more seriously

Is there in Islam any sense of inadequacy that would make it possible to open up to what is different? This question can only be answered in a very differentiated way: for Islam as a formal religion, subject to the law under which it was established, this is not the case. But insofar as Islam conceives of its current situation as the living community of Muslim believers, there may very well be an awareness of this kind. There are many books by Muslim authors who speak of a sick Islamic society – aware of the fact that the present Islamic society does not attain what Islam is meant to attain, either in theory or as a social order.

We must also admit the inadequacy of our language, which means that, even in Qur'ānic usage (cf. Sūra 18,109), the transcendent God cannot fully express himself in words: for God, in revealing himself, remains ultimately beyond this revelation, and is not completely attainable and available through it. In fact, it is his revelation itself that refers most to his supreme transcendence. If Christians and Muslims took this transcendence of God a little more seriously than they have so far, it would perhaps be easier to find ways towards a mutual understanding not directly in the area of dogma but most probably in general religious terms. This would not yet amount to an understanding in detail, but it would be an overture for a religious understanding that is aware of the transcendence of God in our respective traditions and religions.

Islamic theology of Christianity

Finally with regard to an Islamic theology of Christianity, two levels can be discerned: one about truth and the other about the question of salvation.

truth in Christianity?

As for the truth of Christianity:

(1) With regard to its origin there is initially a fundamental assertion that is thoroughly positive: since Islam's first emergence, it understands Christianity as a revealed religion. Jesus is not only prophet (*nabī*), as the proclaimer of a message conveyed to him by God, but he is also messenger, *rasūl*, since he came with a scripture on the basis of which he proclaimed a religion and founded it in God's name. With regard to its origin, Islam therefore understands Christianity as revelation and law; Christians have something like a document providing a complete doctrine of faith and social order, as it had previously been given to the Jews in the form of the Torah.

(2) In the course of time, however, this document of faith and order was somehow lost, or was falsified, and it is the Christians who are to be blamed for this. There are several theories about what kind of falsification this is. For example, it was thought from quite early on that the Christians distorted, changed and thus falsified the words of the revelation. This applies to doctrinal statements that are points of conflict between Islam and Christianity: the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus Christ, his task as redeemer and his act of salvation on the cross. From the Islamic perspective, nothing in the Gospel (or more precisely: the four Gospels) that affirms these doctrines could possibly be part of Jesus' original revelation. Another theory held by important theologians in the early period holds that we are not dealing here with a distortion and falsification of the texts, but only with a false interpretation of them. Finally there is today a (rather small) group of Muslim theologians who agree that there has been neither textual manipulation nor thoroughly false interpretation. Christians and Muslims only differ in having ways of interpreting the person of Jesus Christ which are mutually unacceptable. Thus, if Christians interpret the statements of the New Testament about Jesus Christ as they were interpreted by the early Christian Councils and if it is clear that this interpretation contradicts the Qur'ānic statements, then their christology is unacceptable to Islam.

(3) A third approach to the truth of Christianity is the Islamic rejection of the so-called exaggerations or distortions within Christianity, as it says in the Qur'ān, "O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: nor say of God aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of God, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in God and His apostles. Say not 'Trinity': desist: it will be better for you: for God is One God: Glory be

to him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is God as a Disposer of affairs" (Sūra 4,171; cf. 5,75).

salvation in
Christianity?

As for the concept of salvation, we find in Islamic theology a main line of thought and some variant positions:

(1) From the beginning till today the vast majority of Muslim theologians assume that the original unfalsified Christianity, even though it is a path towards salvation because it is based on a revelation of God and is in agreement with the Qur'ān, represents nothing but, as it were, a first or second version of Islam which was afterwards completed by the Qur'ān.

Today Muslims no longer consider this unfalsified Christianity, and Christians have simply become people who deviate from the right path (which sometimes equates them with unbelievers) and who, since they do not acknowledge Muḥammad as a prophet, stand outside the faith that brings salvation. Therefore, until the present day, the vast majority of Muslims think of Christians (as well as Jews and above all polytheists) as people who do not attain salvation. Those who do not believe in God in a perfect way and refuse to submit to him by following the straight path shown by the Qur'ānic message, must be tolerated politically, but religiously they are seen as on the wrong track and on the way to hell. It is no consolation for Jews and Christians that there is an idea of something like levels of hell to which people are assigned depending on their proximity to or distance from Islam: a very severe hell is threatened for unbelievers and polytheists because of their absolute incompatibility with Islam, whereas others who have a certain proximity to Islam may expect a less severe degree of pain and torment. But although these pains are less severe it is nevertheless hell, eternal hell, which awaits them.

(2) However, in Islamic theology there are also voices of great weight who hold a different opinion: among them are al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111), Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905) and Maḥmūd Shaltūt, renowned Rector of al-Azhar in the 20th century.

al-Ghazzālī distinguishes between three groups of non-Muslims. First there are those who have never heard anything about Islam. It is not their fault that they did not attain Islamic faith, so it would be unjust if God sent them to hell. If these people maintain the faith proclaimed to them by their respective prophets – for God sends a prophet to every people (cf. Qur'ān 13,7; 35,24) – and try to do good, they will go to paradise.

Another group are those who know about Islam but have been given a false understanding of it; they have been told that the Qur'ān is a false scripture, Muḥammad is a false prophet and Islam is a false religion. How should these people, who include Christians, be persuaded that Islam is the true religion if access to it is blocked? If these people live according to their faith, which is at least partly based on Christ, and if they maintain this faith and try to do good, they too will go to paradise. The third group, those who go to hell, are those whose hearts are impenitent, who know that Islam is the true religion and nevertheless do not adopt the Islamic faith.

The first and the second group, according to al-Ghazzālī, are to be considered like Muslims: "They believe in God and try to do good" – this was the fundamental definition of Muslims before Islam became an established community and an additional more specific meaning was attributed to the word Islam.

Maḥmūd Shaltūt, the former Rector of al-Azhar and a great authority, adopts this argumentation almost word for word. His book *al-Islām, 'aqīda wa sharī'a* (8th edition, Beirut s. a. [ca. 1978], pp. 19 f.) has been published in numerous editions.

Muḥammad 'Abduh in turn makes reference to Sūra 2,62 which says, "Those who believe (in the Qur'ān), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Šābians, – and who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve." In this text no difference is made between the groups mentioned and those who, as believers, may hope for their reward with God. 'Abduh is irritated with the theologians who say that Jews and Christians do not go to paradise. What are the reasons, he asks, for excluding those of whom the Qur'ān speaks in this way?"

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the whole
testimony about
the whole Christ

SCHAEFFLER From the Christian point of view, what is unnegotiable in dialogue with other religions? When we consider this important issue, the process of subtraction probably does not help: should we always ask what more can be subtracted from the total content of the Christian creed, or how can we arrive at a 'hard core' of what is not negotiable? We must

M. 'Abduh, *Koran-Kommentar Manār I.* Kairo, 1948, pp. 336–337. See in this context also A. Th. Khoury, *Der Koran. Arabisch-Deutsch, Übersetzung und wissenschaftlicher Kommentar*, vol. 1. Gütersloh, 1990, pp. 285–290.

always hold to the whole testimony of the whole Christ and the economy of his salvation. But the question *how* this testimony is understood, *how* to bear witness to this whole Christ, opens up a wide scope for discussion of tradition within the Christian community and there is nothing wrong with our learning in this inter-Christian discussion from our mutual exchanges with the followers of other religions. This is with regard to the *contents of dialogue*.

content and basis of dialogue The *basis of dialogue* is another issue. The shared conviction that we may entrust our lives into the hands of God, and we ask together questions about the will of God and trust in God, would, for instance, be a basis for dialogue with Islam. But the actual contents of our dialogue are not limited to that. The contents become possible because we start with a certain basis, but the basis, as also in human relations in general, does not set the limits for what we speak about. Every scientific discourse is based on an agreement that all the partners in dialogue abide by certain rules of interpretation, but that does not mean that they speak only about those rules.

The history of Christian theology, especially in the medieval period, shows that, through the encounter with Islam, Christianity learned a lot about how to bear witness to the Christian message. Just to mention one name, there would be no Thomas Aquinas if there had not previously been a dialogue with Muslim Aristotelians. Learning from the other how, through a better understanding, the unabridged message of one's own religious tradition can be declared, is different from distinguishing between what we can and cannot discuss.

WESS When Mr. Khoury said in his lecture that the Creed represents the essential in Christian faith, does he refer to the Apostles' Creed or to the so-called Nicene Creed?

KHOURY To the Nicene.

WESS The lecture asked for a critical examination of our own religion. With reference to the historicity of faith and the sinfulness of the Church, which may also have an impact on the contents of faith, should we not accept that there may have been certain erroneous developments which might now and then lead to an obligation to correct the language used? For instance, did the Council of Chalcedon not correct the doctrine of the preceding Council of Nicaea concerning the rational soul of Jesus with regard to the subject matter, not only the manner of speaking? – this question is relevant for the dialogue with Islam too.

KHOURY Even if such a correction had been made, it would still not be a reason to call into question the fundamental message of the Council of Nicaea. Reading these texts in the light of history cannot relativize them to the point where they become irrelevant. If a certain clarification was made by a later Council, that becomes part of the contents of faith first established. The Holy Spirit cannot be excluded from the journey of the Church towards an ever deeper understanding of Christ's truth (cf. Jn 16:12–15). Historical awareness makes us read things in a 'relative' context but not that we can read them in any way at all.

WESS I did not mean to imply that the Council of Chalcedon made the Council of Nicaea irrelevant. The point was rather that what the Council of Nicaea really intended to speak of was the divinity of the Logos, and to say that in Jesus Christ it was not some created being, neither one nor the other, that spoke to us, but God himself. And this propositional intention which must be reflected on and expounded anew, is also binding on our own way of seeing things, because a dogma cannot become irrelevant.

Trinity as the Core of Christian Faith

Gisbert Greshake

If a peaceful dialogue or a polemic dispute between religions, philosophies and weltanschauungen is to make sense, it is not enough simply to discuss a number of controversial points. The purpose is actually to discover and treat the ultimate and crucial idea. In the case of Christian-Muslim religious dialogue this means that it is not enough to debate whether, for instance, it is Christ or Muḥammad who is the last prophet, etc. What must be considered is rather the various formal horizons, or one could also say interests, within which this and other problems are situated. What must be focused on is the hidden centre that underlies all the dissimilarities. With this in mind, I would like to put forward the following thesis: the quintessence of Christian faith is faith in the trinitarian God which at the same time is also the heart of Christianity's difference from Islam. The Christian belief in the Trinity implies (1) that the relationship between God and man must be understood as one of dialogical love, and this already in the perspective of creation; it is indeed the prerequisite for a conception of creation that is free of contradiction; it explains (2) that God really communicates himself most radically, redeems humankind and leads them towards perfection; it explains (3) that time and history have a productive meaning: the 'communalization' of reality. In brief: faith in the Trinity is the integration of Christian faith insofar as it meaningfully interprets the assertion "God is love". Therefore the fundamental questions addressed to Islam are: (1) Is it possible to develop a plausible theology of creation, revelation and history free from contradictions without the background of a trinitarian theology?¹ (2) Is Islam in a position, and does it wish, to understand love as the ultimate meaning of all reality?

¹ In order to prevent misunderstandings which have already arisen in the discussion about the paper in hand, the following has to be kept in mind: in this lecture the issue is not to prove Trinity, or to assert that every reasonable thinker would in fact have to arrive at faith in Trinity, or that within trinitarian faith each of the problems dealt with in what follows has been 'resolved'. The only concern is to lay foundations for a rational discourse, in which – this is at least what Christian faith hopes for – it can also stand the test as the 'greater' and all-incorporating truth.

In what follows we shall try to unfold this in a Christian-theological, dogmatic perspective, although in such a way that, in the background, there is always the Muslim partner in dialogue.

1. The perspective of creation theology

1.1 The divinity of God and the subsistence of creation

Although Jews, Christians and Muslims agree with each other that man is God's creature, there are very different emphases in their understanding of this fundamental assertion. According to Biblical-Christian faith, the quality of being creature implies the fundamental dialectic of man – he radically depends on God and yet is extremely free; he owes himself totally to God and is, at the same time, willed by him as an independent free being, even in his relation to God. This dialectic inherent to faith in creation necessarily presupposes a trinitarian God.² For if God were an undifferentiated absolute power of being, a creaturely being could have no place 'beside' him, for an undifferentiated-one absoluteness without differences excludes any independent self-governing 'beside' or 'vis-à-vis' and any formulations such as 'God and creation', 'God and man' would become self-contradictory. To the absolute one and whole, no 'and' may be attributed. If, nonetheless, there is creation, it must be either a *particula divina*, an abridged emanation of the divine, or a moment in the divine life process without any real self-governing potential in its merely apparent being alongside God, or else – another possibility – the absoluteness of God must be limited, or even dismissed. Since, in the form of an autonomous creation to which at least a relative independence is proper, 'something' is positioned vis-à-vis the self-determining divine-unitarian omnipotence, that 'something', be it ever so subtle, is opposed to the divine self-determination – at least a passive quality to which God's power extends. Therewith, however, the concept of God as a power determining everything becomes aporetic.

This aporia, this always thinking of God as dependent on creation, despite and in his being different from it, can only be resolved by conceiving of God's nature in such a way that the concept of God's self-determination includes that of self-surrender (namely that of the passive 'allow-

ing itself to be determined by the other'). This is exactly what the trinitarian concept of God means: as one who realizes his inner divine life in an exchange of love, God is no absolute that subsists in itself, but a communal unity, each of the divine persons receiving their divinity from the others and giving it to them. The individual persons in God (pure relations of a 'wherefrom' and 'whereto') are such that, according to their deepest nature, they grant to the others space 'beside' themselves, by being receptive each of the other person. With reference to creation this means: God, as it were, need not grant to creation a space 'beside himself'; this space already exists in God, within the inner-trinitarian mutual giving and receiving, that is, in the realization of trinitarian life. Through his grace, creation receives its subsistence by being integrated into God's mutual giving and receiving. As the persons in God "live towards each other, as it were, mutually setting each other free towards their own being, so God is able to grant room to the finite being through creation"³. As the Father recognizes the fullness of his own divinity 'facing' the Son and receives it again from the Son as a gift of love, so (extending, as it were, and developing the Son's being) he calls into being and bestows creation: in it he recognizes and realizes in a finite way the fullness of his divinity and accepts it, so to speak, anew in the creation's free recognition, without the creation thereby being something that is 'beside' God. It rather has its place in the 'Son' to whom the Father has given everything he possesses. Thus the creation holds its 'space' and 'subsistence' in the life of the triune God. Its infinite distance from God is grounded on the "prototypical distance between God and God"⁴. In this way the trinitarian life of God also demonstrates that the reality of difference within being does not happen only through creation (i. e., through a diminution of being), but the supreme being, God himself, establishes and is difference, alterity between the one and the other. In this, however, the self-differentiation in God realizes also the most intense form of unity, namely, unity in difference. This is called *communio*: unity in and originating from diversity. This trinitarian basic law also applies to creation: difference from God as such implies neither diminution of the creation's subsistence nor diminution of the divine being,

³ Wie die Personen in Gott "zueinander leben und sich gleichsam gegenseitig in ihrem Sein freigeben, so vermag Gott durch die Schöpfung endlichem Seienden Raum geben", in: A. Brunner, *Dreifaltigkeit. Personale Zugänge zum Mysterium* (Kriterien; 39). Einsiedeln, 1976, pp. 25 f.

⁴ H. U. v. Balthasar, *Theodramatik*, vol. 2/1. Einsiedeln, 1976, p. 242.

² Incidentally, Thomas Aquinas remarks briefly: "The knowledge of the divine persons is necessary in order to think creation correctly": *Summa theol.* I q.32 a.1 ad 3.

but precisely that in the difference lies the highest form of unity. So the togetherness of God and man, of the Creator and his creature, can, according to Christian understanding, be 'understood' in a non-contradictory way only against the background of a trinitarian concept of God.

1.2 Freedom in creating

Let us assume for a moment that God is not to be conceived of as *communio*, but as strictly unitarian, as in Islam. Does this not immediately give rise to the objection: isn't God in need of man? In order to be love, does God not have to create a partner? Does God not need creation, first and foremost, in order to constitute himself as love by creating man? But would God then still be God, the one who is perfect in himself, self-sufficient, embracing everything and sublime? God's freedom and sovereignty, and with it man's true creatureliness, are guaranteed only if God is love *in himself*, which means if he in himself is personal exchange, mutual giving and taking in love. If this is not what he is, there is the danger of functionalizing creation for the purpose of God's self-constitution as love, by which the creature would become a means to an end, and the absoluteness of God be destroyed.

This shows, from a Christian perspective, the fundamental aporia of Islam: *either* it is God's sovereignty that overwhelms man, so that the creature's "Woe is me!" remains the last word faced with God's all-defeating majesty and finally reduces the creature to nothingness, *or* man has to perceive himself to be a 'part' or 'particle' of the divine Self. In both cases religion ends up demanding too much of man: the religious relation becomes a totalitarian power submerging the freedom of man. Ultimately only faith in a God who is love in himself can make man comprehensible as a creature created for love and predestined to love. For only then does it become evident that God is not a God 'above us' who overpowers man in his almightiness, nor is he a God 'below us' who needs us, but rather the God 'with us' and 'within us', who invites us into the freedom and love that he is himself.

1.3 The trinitarian structure of creation

The creation's participation in the trinitarian life of God does not only apply to the transcendental condition of possibility of its existence, but also to the inner categorial structure of its essence. Participating in God's 'communal' being, creation mirrors in its perceptible form the very nature of

the trinitarian God. The Holy Scripture speaks of this in various ways. It says, for instance, about the creation of man, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them" (Gn 1:27). Some exegetes interpret this passage as follows: man is the image of God precisely in that the individual is created towards the 'other' who is different from him. In their being different from one another and mutually oriented towards one another, forming the primordial *communio* of mankind, humankind as male and female is the image of God. But not humankind only. All the rest of creation also has communal features, as an image and reflection of the communal God, and is designed to attain communal perfection. This becomes clear when we see that the communal structure of creation is continued in the history of salvation. From the beginning, God's action in creation is not aimed at individuals as such, but at *communio*: at the gathering of a people, of the Church, of mankind, of the whole creation. And when it happens that single individuals are called, they are always assigned to serving the formation of community.

Thus, according to the Holy Scripture, the structure of creation is utterly communal, not only insofar as it originates in the way it is created, from the *communio* with God, but also insofar as creation lives out its own being in history. In particular, it is human nature that is structured in such a way that it can only realize itself authentically in community with others. This however means that the human person is placed in a twofold *communio*: with God and with his/her human brothers and sisters (and of course with all the rest of creation too). But they are not two different '*communiones*', for they are inseparably linked and interrelated with one another. With the God who himself is *communio*, and who freely destined himself to enter a *communio* with human beings, we can have a living relationship only if we place ourselves in *his communio*, if, as it were, we live the principle: the friends of my friend are my friends too. This is why the 'vertical' *communio* between God and every individual is *eo ipso* a 'horizontal' *communio*, in which the individual participates by performing God's all-embracing communal movement.

Small wonder that, because of the communal character of all created things, ontology also encounters the *communio*-structure of being. The basic metaphysical problem of unity and diversity can only be ultimately solved if the fundamental assertion is valid: "Being is not only what establishes commonality, unity or even identity [...] but also what differenti-

ates."⁵ This is exactly what corresponds to our understanding of *communio*: the mediation of unity and difference, which structures not only creation but also the infinite being. Thus *communio* turns out to be the innermost structure of being. This of course applies especially to interpersonal relations: "The greater the unity the greater difference. This means: the more the individual persons open up to and enter into relations with each other, the more they realize themselves. The diversity of persons therefore shows the quality of an inner connection, a communal unity, which means identity and difference."⁶ These findings and thoughts, which are also accessible to philosophical reflection, may be confirmed in many respects, for instance, even by empirical anthropology and scientific evolutionism, so that if our point of departure is trinitarian faith, as it were, a key is provided to understanding reality.

2. The perspective of salvation history

Belief in creation, since it refers to the enduring primordial relationship between God and humankind, also leads from another perspective to conceiving of creation as the beginning of a process, called history, which is aimed at the radical self-giving and self-communication of God to man as it became apparent in the Christ event. God's unconditional love and self-giving! Here again we are dealing with a basic difference. It is true that the Qur'ān also speaks of God not only as the powerful legislator, but beyond that as the one who wants "a people whom He will love as they will love Him" (Qur'ān 5,57). It also says, "God is the Protector of those who have faith" (Qur'ān 3,68) and "He is nearer to man than (his) jugular vein" (Qur'ān 50,16). Such assertions, however, which seem to speak of a mutual, loving relation between God and man, are actually not speaking of humankind's participation in the life of God. God's concern about man "refers in the Qur'ān to the good deeds of man [...], to a successful community of humans among themselves, in which 'the Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another' (9,71). So what the Qur'ān is concerned about is that humans should come close to each other by the help

⁵ B. Weissmahr, *Ontologie* (Grundkurs Philosophie; 3) (Urban Taschenbücher; 347), Stuttgart etc., 1985, p. 93. – This book shows especially great 'sensitivity' concerning the communal character of being.

⁶ B. Weissmahr, *op. cit.* (fn. 5) pp. 95 ff., p. 117.

of God, their place being in their mutual union and not 'with God'.⁷ The trinitarian concept of God stands for another structure of faith according to which God, through his own divine initiative, radically invites humankind into the loving reality that he is himself. In his word, in his Son Jesus Christ, God gives *himself* to man. This means that when God's ultimate word encounters him, man does not encounter some thing, and God does not communicate to him some part of himself; in God's word man is not given only a partial and transitive medium of communication, but rather in it God gives himself to man completely. In Jesus Christ, the divine Logos in which God expresses himself completely, is made man. Therefore in him expression and reality expressing itself, human nature and divine self-assertion and self-communication become one.

This is the background to the Christian conviction that in Jesus Christ the word of God reached its culmination and hence, when understood correctly, its conclusion too. God's speaking reached its conclusion not because God decided to stop speaking and has remained silent ever since, but because in him, completely and without reservation, radical love opened up "*quae maior cogitari nequit*", such that nothing greater can be conceived of, and for this reason, essentially, it cannot be surpassed.

Let us take one step further: according to Islamic and Christian understanding, the word of God actually reaches man and this confronts both religions with a fundamental problem.

If the word of God cannot be perceived independent of its creaturely mediation – for the word of God that is superior to the world has to manifest itself in what is creaturely-finite, and has to be mediated in and through human words – does not the word of the infinite, transcendent God consequently become finite through its creaturely mediations? Is it not then modelled, as it were, on the finite creature and its possibilities and, at the most extreme, even made available by being immanent in the world? Sunnī theologians also teach that although the Qur'ān has existed eternally with God, it was created in time.⁸ However, if created, how can it then pronounce and be in itself the word of God? How can it be that the difference between God himself and his created, finite verbal expression does not fall victim to the idolization of something finite? In brief: how can the word

⁷ H. Zirker, "Die Hinwendung Gottes zu den Menschen in Bibel und Koran" in *Una sancta* 43 (1988) 234.

⁸ H. Zirker, *Christentum und Islam. Theologische Verwandtschaft und Konkurrenz*. Düsseldorf, 1989, p. 84.

of God remain the word of God if, in order to reach man, it embarks upon creaturely mediation?

This problem is answered by Christian faith as follows: if the word of God is really expected to reach man as it is in itself without losing its potency by creaturely mediation, then God must avail himself of a creaturely medium in such a way that it becomes transparent and revealing of what he enunciates. And into this creaturely medium God has to convey such a malleable, pliable figure that it is capable of referring to his divine word without falsifying it. Such a medium is man, with his mental capacities that enable him to open up to God in such a way that God can accept him to mediate his divine speech. Wherever, through God's operation a human being becomes thoroughly sincere, transparent and available, the divine word itself can appear through him or rather *in him*. It is against this background, that we must see the task of the prophets who in certain situations and historical contexts are taken over by God in such a way that their words become transparent vehicles of the divine message. According to Christian faith, this transparency of human nature attained its supreme culmination in Jesus Christ. In him a human nature is adopted and, as it were, 'occupied' by the divine word in such a way that it makes the word of God present not only with reference to a certain historical context or situation, but in the whole breadth of a man's living and dying, with nothing excluded. It is he "who has made him known" (Jn 1:18), and this not only by an audibly spoken word, but also in his non-verbal reality. He is the word that is life and that is, passed on as the living one, in the Church by means of Biblical word and sacrament. Whereas in Islam the decisive pointer in faith is represented in the form of a book, for Christianity it is in a person⁹, who lives on and works on, mediated by the Holy Spirit.

However, these deliberations do not yet provide a complete answer to our initial question. Even if God may mediate himself through what is creaturely – concretely in man and his infinite capacity to be transparent, how can man then, while being finite, perceive the infinite God? Is the word of God not after all made finite in man's receptive capacity? Metaphorically speaking: if the word of God is infinite fullness, how can this enter into the circumscribed vessel of human understanding? Is God's infinite fullness not then reduced to the modest limit of the finite human being? Or – and this is the other possibility – is man's creatureliness not annihilated by his

⁹ Cf. H. Zirker, *op. cit.* (fn. 7) p. 229.

experiencing the infinite majesty of divine proximity? If these are the only two possibilities – either making the divine word finite, or annihilating the creature – then there would be no relationship at all between God and man in which both could remain what they are, that is, infinite God and finite man. Or is there another possibility?

In Christian understanding, the person of Jesus Christ is evidence of the fact of a real community between God and man. If the word of God is to enter man without loss, it must be a precondition that it is possible that God himself brings about this *capacitas* within man, the potential for perceiving and accepting him. God must himself become the possibility of his entering into man. At the time of the Church Fathers, this was already the great theologians' way of interpreting the Psalm: "[...] in your light we see light" (Ps 36:9). This means: the light that is God, when it approaches man, can only be seen by man in the light within him that is God himself.

In Biblical and theological tradition, this light of God within ourselves, by which the word of God can be heard *in itself*, is called the Holy Spirit. This Spirit of God brings about in us the possibility that the word of God as it is in itself can enter into us and that we can understand it as God's word. As it says in 1 Cor 2:10 [": "[...] for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God."]

So there are three aspects to the Christian understanding of God's self-communication to man:

First: he is really the infinite God, the Father, who in his word communicates himself completely to man in order to enter into a community of love with man.

Second: in its highest and supreme form, this word of love is no longer a word that occurs partially and with reference only to a particular historical context or situation, but is God himself as word, as the Logos, in which God has expressed himself since eternity and who, in Jesus Christ, adopted human nature and human life to make them transparent for God.

Third: the reception of this word of God which he himself is, happens in man in a divine manner, i. e., the subjective reception of God's word is once again through God: the Holy Spirit.

So it becomes obvious that, if we want to conceive of God's self-communication, namely the reality of his radical love of man, without contradicting ourselves, it presupposes a trinitarian understanding of God: not

only does God live his life by way of three different actualizations of his divine being, but in receiving God's self-communication man too is included in this trinitarian God's actualization of his own life. Only by virtue of the Spirit dwelling in him is man able to receive the Word that is God himself, Jesus Christ, and through this Word, understood in the Spirit, to enter into a relationship with God the Father.

Only such a trinitarian concept of God and the event of his divine self-communication is, according to Christian understanding, consistently monotheistic, because in this way "God is not conceived of simplistically only in his transcendence and thus, as a matter of fact, as a concept correlative to the world; he is conceived of as transcendent and simultaneously immanent and therefore all-embracing."¹⁰ The divine Word brings the listener into the transcendent and immanent reality of the one and only trinitarian God and thus grants him participation in the divine life, in which alone all the longing of the human heart finds its fulfilment.

This analysis of the event of divine self-communication as a trinitarian process could also be radicalized in a trinitarian analysis of the specific event of *salvation*. Redemption, in the Christian concept of it, does not ultimately mean simply divine forgiveness, but that God himself enters into the depths and abysses of human guilt and forlornness, so that even what is negative and evil does not remain outside of God, but is integrated – through the Son of God, whom "for our sake he made to be sin" (2 Cor 5:21) and who experienced hell, and through the operation of the Spirit – into the life of God in a transformed and converted way. Only in this way is evil overcome from within and does not remain as a negative 'remainder of reality' for ever 'beside' God. These few suggestions must suffice here for lack of time.

3. The eschatological perspective

If we consider the understanding of time and history in Islam, it may look rather static from a Christian point of view. In the Islamic view of creation, man is the listener to God's word, and this in the sense that God grants him by his word the gift of 'right guidance', i. e., the foundation and norm

¹⁰ W. Pannenberg, "Religion und Religionen. Theologische Erwägungen zu den Prinzipien eines Dialoges mit den Weltreligionen", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Dialog aus der Mitte christlicher Theologie* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 5). Mödling, 1987, p. 192.

of right human acting, those eternally valid, lasting directives which God, according to his unfathomable will, but in wisdom and mercy has decreed should be so and only so, and has revealed them to man. God, so to speak, gives a helping hand to man and guides him on the right and straight path through life.¹¹ In this way God, the 'Wholly-Other', the one who transcends the world and is elevated above all creatures, through the power of his word introduces to his creature the attitude of surrender and the right relation of obedience to him.¹² In this sense Muḥammad is the last and conclusive mediator of God's will, which has remained the same since the world was created. "Through him God gave his guidance in such a way that humans would have to conceive of themselves as being finally rightly guided; they would be given no further chance, if they did not make use of the one given. In this sense Muḥammad's proclamation overrode all the preceding ones [...] not, in fact, because he was believed to have brought some decisive new thing."¹³ For what Muḥammad says only passes on a final explanation of what, from the beginning, guided every righteous human being. Therefore, time and history, including Muḥammad, serve as an explanation of the norm-giving word, and time and history are ultimately destined to be characterized by righteous, but strictly unified ethical behaviour.

In keeping with its trinitarian core, the Christian understanding of time and history unfolds very differently. It may be summarized as follows: by his nature as a creature, man is designed and called to participate in the communion that is the communal-trinitarian God. However – as we have already explained – this communion has a twofold orientation: it is communion with God and communion with one's fellow men and women. Only where man has become communal, can he participate in the life of the communal God. Otherwise he would be, as it were, an alien element in the life promised to him. This twofold communion, or more precisely: this twofold-one passive communalization of humankind, is the subject-matter of time and history. Although, in the flow of creation, being called

¹¹ In this context see also A. Th. Khoury, *Zur Theologie des Gesetzes im Koran*, in: M. Fitzgerald et al. (eds.), *Mensch, Welt, Staat im Islam* (Islam und westliche Welt; 2). Graz etc., 1977, pp. 73.76.

¹² Cf. Th. Mooren, "Muslimische und christliche Spiritualität: Zwei Weisen des Handelns und In-der-Welt-Seins" in *Wissenschaft und Weisheit. Zeitschrift für augustinisch-iranziskanische Theologie und Philosophie* 52 (1989) 70: "The issue about power is, as it were, the key for understanding Islamic monotheism".

¹³ H. Zirker, *op. cit.* (fn. 7) p. 229.

to communion represents the primordial need of man, since it is directed to freedom, it must also be attained in freedom. The attainment of finite freedom, however, essentially means attainment within time. In other words, time is essentially 'time in between': between God's call and man's answer, between divine expectation and human fulfilment of it, but also a time in between so that encounters between human beings in all the dimensions of their shared 'We' and of their communion with each other, may develop within time. That is why the communalization of mankind needs the historical dimension: in passing through the world, in being challenged by concrete situations and encounters, in the analysis of society and zeitgeist, man is set the task of freely catching up with what was given to him in creation. The gift of time and the task, throughout our life, 'of putting time to good use' in freedom, are direct, essential consequences of the communion-idea that is grounded on trinitarian faith: real communion comes about only where everyone, by giving and receiving, participates in bringing it about. So it is not only God who gives; he also sets us the task of *acting*, so that he himself may receive something from his creature. His gift, therefore, always immediately becomes a task, equipping and challenging humankind to joint action, so that the creature, endowed with the spirit, is free to cooperate in the attainment of the goal of creation – that is, perfect trinitarization, perfect communion. Thus time is given so that the divine being's actualization of life, namely communion, which God operates by virtue of the fullness of his own divine nature, may also be imitated by the creature, not only passively, i. e., because God sovereignly ordains it, but actively, in the strength of his/her own freedom. Although the creature has nothing that it did not receive from God, it is (once the end of the time given has come and it participates forever in the life of the trinitarian God) not just a passive beggar into whose lap the gift simply has fallen, but a person similar even to God in that he/she participates in attaining for him/herself in freedom the form of their eternal being, analogous to God himself, which is communion with God and the many brothers and sisters.

From this perspective it is also possible to understand the inherent communal logic of the Old and New Testament history of salvation and its promises. Here we may have to point primarily to the reality of the 'covenant' as the constant key to salvation history. Jesus Christ is ultimately the one who gathers the dispersed children of God to become one, who, as the 'head' joins and knits together the many members to become one body, who has broken down the dividing wall between human beings so that they may all be one in him.

After Easter this universal-communalizing 'extension' is realized in the Church, in the gathering of Jesus' disciples, whose purpose is then to bring the whole world to unity. "That they may all be one" – this is Jesus' prayer for his disciples – "as you, Father, are in me and I am in you" (Jn 17:21). The communion in which the trinitarian God exists will characterize the body of disciples, who are sent out in order to lead the whole world from its sinful fragmentation into their own communion with God and with one another. Therefore – as Vatican II says – the Church "is a kind of sacrament of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind, that is, she is a sign and an instrument of such union and unity".¹⁴ In and through the Church this communion into which all humankind are called is to be realized. "Wherefore this People, while remaining one and unique, is to be spread throughout the whole world and must exist in all ages, so that the purpose of God's will may be fulfilled."¹⁵ The Church, who "shines forth as 'a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'"¹⁶, who is thus shaped in keeping with the image of the trinitarian God, will extend so that the whole world may, as it were, be 'trinitarized'.

A communion of this kind does not come about without the freedom of man and his own endeavours, and yet, ultimately it is not man-made. It is above all the 'mystery of unity', worked by God primarily in the Eucharist and – in particular ways – in all the other sacraments. It is important to observe that the idea of the Church as the body of Christ, which is so central for Paul, emerges first in connection with the Eucharist (1 Cor 10:14–17): by every individual's participating in the eucharistic meal and receiving the body of Christ, "those who are many" become "one body", the body of Christ. It is Augustine who expanded this idea in a special way. In answer to the question: "What is it actually that we receive in the Eucharist?", he gives the daring answer: "We receive our own mystery."¹⁷ For, since in the Eucharistic meal we receive the body of Christ which, however, consists of head *and* members, we do not receive the Lord in an isolated way (*Christus solus*), but also the many brothers and sisters, who indeed are members of his body (*Christus totus*). In this context the Bishop of Hippo formulates the well-known statement: "Become what you see, and

¹⁴ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "Lumen gentium", art. 1.

¹⁵ "Lumen gentium", art. 13.

¹⁶ "Lumen gentium", art. 4.

¹⁷ Cf. Augustinus, *Sermo* 272: "If then you yourselves are the body of Christ and his members, then your own mystery lies on the Eucharistic table".

receive what you are: body of Christ".¹⁸ The individual people's Eucharistic communion with Christ leads to communion between them, that is, to the Church, which is the one body with the many different members, drawn and joined together, insofar as the body does not exist without the members and the members cannot be members without being integrated into the body. But the unity of the Church does not subsist in itself; it is as the *sacramentum unitatis* directed to the communion of the world. Indeed, striving to promote unity against a background of permanent antagonism between divisive evil doers and those who cooperate in doing good, constitutes the whole drama of human history, on the small and the large scale. As has been said before, the aim is that the world and man (who is at the head of the world as its member equipped for action) become more and more in the image of God, and this means more communal and more 'trinitarian'. Only in this way can creation eternally 'play its part' in the communion which is God himself. In traditional usage, this goal of ultimate and perfect communion with God and between one another is called 'heaven', which is not a private tête-à-tête between the individual and God, but a 'social entity'. It is the communion of communal humankind with the 'communal', trinitarian God. The world, and even Christ himself with the world, are still on their way towards this goal; it will be attained only when, together with him, the whole creation has entered into communion with the triune God, when God will be "all in all" (1 Cor 15:28).

If we put together the three aspects under which I have tried to demonstrate faith in the Trinity as the core of Christian belief, what I stated at the beginning now becomes obvious: trinitarian faith means the concrete and also intellectually plausible demonstration of the assertion that God is love, that his deeds are love and that creation and history can have no other meaning but to extend love towards a common life in love. To me this actually seems to be the crucial point of difference between Christian and Islamic religion. This does not mean to say, of course, that in the Christian world love is practised more than in the Muslim world, but that in Christianity love as the core of all reality is more obviously, even supremely obviously, the point of reference in speaking, experiencing and calling for decisions. This is what we should discuss with one another and with Muslim theologians.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

[Study Group 1]

a differentiated concept of God in Judaism

VANONI Did the lecture do justice to the teachings about creation in Jewish tradition? Did it not give the impression that only the Christian concept of God, more precisely the Christian doctrine of Trinity, allows a logical unfolding of the concept of creation? Seen in the light of Jewish faith – and something similar probably also applies to Islamic tradition – God is by no means a monolithic entity which, as it were, overwhelms the creature and inevitably expects too much of it: God's wisdom and word are central elements of Jewish faith, even to the extent that the question is raised of whether they should be understood as hypostases in God. Should we not take more seriously the fact that these elements of Jewish faith in God were pushed into the background to such an extent that it was the Christian concept of God that became the subject matter of Jewish-Christian polemics, since Jewish faith wanted nothing to do with its trinitarian thinking? If we look at it in this way, it might well be that the strict monotheism of post-Christian Judaism is somehow connected with a reaction to a trinitarian concept that remained completely misunderstood or was wrongly explained. Then the idea of the so-called *Zimzum*, for instance, the idea that God himself gets into difficulties because of evil in creation (which of course has been interpreted in many varying ways), would not be thought of as necessarily representative of Judaism.¹

do the Christians 'exaggerate'?

ZIRKER With regard to the subject matter, the lecture addressed both Judaism and Islam, although Islam was in the foreground. With reference to the power of logic, two things were addressed: a speculative development of Christian self-understanding *and* an interpretation of the others. Stating that it is only in Christian doctrine that a non-contradictory relation between God and man is developed (including all dimensions, encompassing creation, redemption and eschatology), gives rise to the pressing question: do the others, in their system, simply not employ logical rigour, or are they not aware of this problem? How would Jews and Muslims perceive such statements,

¹ Cf. on the understanding of the *Zimzum*, the 'self-restriction of God', C. Thoma, *Das Messiasprojekt. Theologie jüdisch-christlicher Begegnung*. Augsburg, 1994, pp. 372–374.

and the questions and perhaps also the reproaches, presented to them here?

When human beings go too far in their theological thinking and exaggerate their ability to approach God, Islamic theology speaks of 'excess - *ghulūw*' and subsequently notes religious discord (as, for instance, in the quarrel between Christians and Jews and in the dogmatic controversies among the Christians themselves). With this in mind, might not a Muslim react to the lecture with the reproach that it is speculative imperialism?

what role does philosophy play in Islam? **NEUMANN** Is this not also a question of the role philosophy plays in Islam? Does Islam not sometimes give the impression that philosophical thinking is neglected, as compared with the weight of theological argumentation? Although Islamic scholars brought us Aristotelian philosophy, does it have the position it deserves in Islamic thinking, or do they not perhaps too quickly revert to Qur'anic assertions? Do they really reason out particular questions, for example, those concerning the laws of nature, or are they too quick to think that by doing so they would probably compromise their relation to God? One frequently gets the impression that Islam resists defining conceptually the relation between God and world, because God himself, the Creator, should not be defined more closely in any case. For example, does not the atomistic conception, that at every moment God must create the world anew, refer to the fact that, although one takes cognizance of the problem, as also in other domains, one does not reason it out for fear of 'exaggerating' things?

striving for harmonization between Qur'an and philosophy? **ELSAS** On the other hand, Islam conceives of itself as a 'reasonable religion' especially in the encounter with Christianity, and reproaches Christianity for not having admitted philosophy at all in the beginning, having adopted it only through the mediation of Islam. Thus the Greek philosophers were first translated into Syriac and Arabic and only later into Latin. Then there were of course the familiar arguments about al-Ghazzālī, who tried to find a synthesis between orthodoxy and mysticism. In the course of these controversies, some oversophisticated philosophical formulations were rejected if they seemed to be too Aristotelian, as for instance, certain teachings about the prime mover. Later, however, a harmonization between the Qur'an and philosophy was finally arrived at which largely accommodated Muslim self-perception.

varying assessments of philosophy in Islam

SCHAEFFLER In Islam similar developments have apparently taken place as was the case in Judaism. Obviously, in the Middle Ages philosophy, as inspired by Islam, was more open than we may observe it to be in modern times. This seems even to apply to various speculative philosophical elements in the interpretation of Islam. This may be partly due to historical circumstances, primarily the decline of Arab high culture during the Ottoman period; after all, in that period quite a large amount of Arab theology and philosophy was shattered, because it was deprived of its social basis. It may also be partly due to the fact that their philosophical insights were appropriated by Christian theology, which made the representatives of Islam even more cautious. This is comparable with certain developments in Judaism.

parallels with Hermann Schell's arguments against Brentano

With regard to the general orientation of the lecture from the perspective of the history of theology, we may certainly think of a parallel line of argument in Hermann Schell, since it was Schell who undertook a confrontational defence of the doctrine of Trinity against his teacher Franz Brentano. In the late period of his life (after he had left the Catholic Church), Brentano advocated the idea that anyone who conceives of God as trinitarian no longer conceives of God at all because making assumptions about the inner processes of the divinity would amount to relativizing God's oneness; Schell, his pupil, tried to respond with a counter-thesis: that it is precisely in conceiving of God as trinitarian, that he is conceived of as God.

Schell's line of argument is as follows: I accept your, Brentano's, intentions and want to show you that it is precisely when I conceive of them as trinitarian that they are fulfilled more perfectly. With regard to its content, Schell tries to apply this line of argument, even vis-à-vis Judaism and Islam, by saying: because we conceive of Christianity in a trinitarian manner, you think we have abandoned monotheism, and I want to show how your concern for monotheism is better safeguarded by a trinitarian concept of God.

Schell's thesis – a critical inquiry

In presenting his thesis, Schell did not accuse the others of making a mistake, but offered his thesis as a critical inquiry: how can the aporias of creation, redemption and eschatology be resolved, if one does not conceive of monotheism by way of Trinity? Schell has indeed emphasized that this inquiry is based on reflections on God's oneness. Thus his argument does not result in an immediate condemnation of the other opinion, by calling it foolish.

or wicked. Rather, he wants to say: I have made your concern my own and I am trying to introduce a Christian-trinitarian faith specifically in fulfilment of your concern. It does not then seem to be such an imperialistic line of argument as appeared at first sight.

doctrine of the Trinity and event of the cross There is a twofold question to be raised here: first, whether it is possible to separate the Christian doctrine of Trinity as far as the lecture did from its original emergence as a hermeneutic of the event of the cross. The focus of the lecture was certainly the doctrine of Trinity, the hermeneutic foundation on which the relevant contents of faith become understandable, but it did not make sufficiently clear why and how this doctrine was originally developed.

are the concepts 'trinitarization' and 'communalization' synonymous? And second, we may ask whether the concepts of humankind's 'communalization' or 'trinitarization' can in fact be used synonymously, as was done in the lecture. The Son certainly does not need to be forgiven by the Father, whereas each of us knows that we need to be forgiven by the Father. In this respect (particularly from the perspective of soteriology, which is still considered to be a point of access to the Christian message) transferring inner trinitarian relations to the *creator – creatura* relationship is problematic.

logical necessities and the incomprehensible God **DUPRÉ** Even if we respond positively to such attempts to think about faith, we may still ask what Jesus would probably say if he heard all this about the inner life of God. But when we have tried to do that, it is important to remain aware of how problematic it is to refer to implied necessities. Perhaps it would be rewarding in this context to listen to Nicholas of Cusa, especially with regard to trinitarian issues. He has taken up these problems, also with Islam in mind, and has tried to look at them particularly in connection with the concept of creation; but at the same time he never tired of referring to the fact that nobody knows who God really is and so nobody can really tell.

no deductive thinking, but reductive questioning **SCHAEFFLER** When the lecture spoke of logical necessities, Mr. Greshake was not deducing what 'must be' from a presupposed knowledge of God's being, whether creation, redemption or eschatological perfection. He approached it from exactly the other direction: if God revealed himself as love in Jesus, how then – as rightly or wrongly as humans

are capable of it – is God to be conceived of? The need to think that has been mentioned, refers to the need to find an interpretation of the statement, "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16) that makes sense. It does not consist in deducing creation, redemption or salvation from God's being, but is based on a reductive enquiry: in what way – speaking in Johannine terms – has the Logos-made-flesh revealed the God whom no one has ever seen (cf. Jn 1:14–18)? And in this context logic, in the form of further enquiry about what kind of exegesis to practise here, is by all means justified.

This does not challenge God's incomprehensibility either. It would be challenged, if an initial assessment were made of exhaustive knowledge of God's being and the acts of God were deduced from it. But this did not happen in the lecture.

no gap, but a difference in God Furthermore, Mr. Greshake did not look for a gap alongside or in God (as is the case, with all the many questions it raises, in Hermann Schell), but for a difference. He was looking for a difference in God that is required for us to conceive of creaturely participation: that all knowledge of God is knowledge through the light of God, and man's love of God is love worked by God. This does not only invite agreement but is almost to be taken for granted. And in his presentation he tried to think in logical terms about the unlimited transparency to the divine Logos of a particular human being – Jesus, and the unlimited self-giving of God in Jesus. Then the *λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ* is not completely set aside either, for when Greshake says that God gave himself up for us in Jesus, this self-giving can only be spoken of in terms of the Cross – even though the word itself was not used. It is an attempt to think about the theology of the Cross as a theology of God's self-giving. And, notwithstanding some possible criticism of the detail, this seems to be not only admissible, but an on-going central task of Christian theology.

faith and reason in Islam **ZIRKER** To refer again to Islam's appeal to reason: this is made on the basis of Qur'anic statements that Islam can be understood by "those who give thought", by "men who are wise" (cf. Sūra 16,11–13.69, etc.), although nowadays this frequently takes on a merely apologetic character. And of course, those who appeal to reason, need not themselves be reasonable or be speaking reasonably. Nevertheless, the attempt to harmonize faith and reason plays a major role in Islam. This was particularly clear in the theological tradition of the Mu'tazila (which reached its peak in the 9th century). Although it was soon ousted and disappeared, not least for political reasons, this does

not mean that no more efforts were made in theology, *kalām*, to reflect reasonably upon what is confessed in faith.³

if logical –
why not
communicable?

And then concerning the expression 'speculative-imperialism' [see above p. 258]: I did not mean to use this to characterize the whole lecture. I rather distinguished between the way Christianity presents itself and the way it assesses others. With regard to the latter, I asked how what was said in the lecture would be received emotionally by a Muslim or a Jew, the central problem being where a logical consistency can be reached and where in matters of faith we continue to be met with inconsistencies. The purport of the lecture throughout seemed to be that, in contrast to Christianity, Judaism and Islam as monotheistic religions get caught in logical inconsistencies, when the believer comes to think about creation, salvation or eschatology. But should these other religions not become aware of this deficiency (if there is one) themselves? Can Christians really be satisfied with simply shifting the burden onto others, or should they not ultimately accept the deficiency of their own theological theory if, despite its assumed logical superiority, it is not communicable to others? The polemical expression 'speculatively imperialistic' was meant as a protest against this questionable theological self-confidence.

further develop-
ment in matters
of faith?

NEUMANN Are we not also faced here with the issue of historical development in matters of faith and whether in one case or another we stick with certain assertions instead of continuing to reflect on them and bringing about a new, deepened understanding of them.

SCHAEFFLER Here perhaps it is useful to draw a distinction: development can take place in the sense of an ever deeper intellectual penetration and an ever more detailed exposition of tenets of faith that are given once and for all, and in that sense cannot be developed historically any further. Distinct from that, there can also be an intellectual development in response to new developments in history.

In the Islamic understanding Moses, Jesus and Muhammad basically said the same thing. There is not, as in the Christian understanding of faith, a *Concordantia Veteris et Novi Testamenti* to take account of the differences between them. The word of God is basically the reiteration of what has always been the same.

³ Cf. T. Nagel, *Geschichte der islamischen Theologie. Von Mohammed bis zur Gegenwart*. München, 1994.

In contrast, the relation between the covenant of the Old Testament and that established by the blood of Jesus is, in the Christian understanding, not the reiteration of what was before, but a stage in a progressing history. When Mr. Greshake emphasizes this difference in his lecture, it does not seem to be polemical. He is only trying to use this as a point from where to continue his enquiry into how this attachment to a history in which really new things are coming up and new covenants are established that are not simply repetitions of previous ones, is compatible with the traditional concept of a God who is eternal and unchanging. And again his view is that anyone who does not accept that the divinity has an inner life will find it more difficult to engage intellectually with the difference between the acts and contents of a divine communication that addresses humankind.

In the preceding sentence a comparative was consciously used: "he will find it more difficult", and it was not simply stated that one will be unable, whereas the other would be able. Obviously, Mr. Greshake was neither of the opinion that others are foolish or wicked or that such contradictions escape their notice. We can certainly find that Islamic scholars (just like Christians, by the way) have their difficulties in conceiving of God's omnipotence and human freedom as being compatible. Whether and to what extent the attempt succeeded, the lecture did try to show that a trinitarian understanding of God is offered in response to a shared problem that Jews, Christians and Muslims raise alike and of which they all are well aware. So we should not accuse the lecturer of claiming that 'We have the answer and the others do not'.

where is the
actual point of
departure of faith
in Trinity?

However, what seems to be much more important is the question of whether the Christian faith in Trinity is something 'beside' the problem of monotheism, or whether Christian faith in Trinity is a way of understanding the oneness of God in the context of the creature's and history's self-sufficiency and sinfulness. The lecture could be understood as an answer offered in response to this question, and whoever rejects it of course faces the question: so what is your answer? For the problem remains.

analogous con-
tents in Islamic
understanding
of faith

ELIAS From the perspective of the history of religion, we might imagine that a Muslim would point to subject areas in the Islamic faith tradition that are analogous to the areas dealt with in the lecture: first with reference to the creation-word "Be! – *kun*" (cf. Qur'ān 2,117) at the beginning of creation, which is also recalled when Jesus is

created in and from the Virgin Mary (cf. Qurʾān 3,47). Creation-word and revelation-word are deeply related to one another. Both are eternally intrinsic to God and this is an aspect of Islamic tradition which became especially prominent in the controversy with the Muʿtazila.

As for the element of 'salvation history', which for the Christians is linked with the transparency towards God that is characteristic of Jesus' humanity, a Muslim would probably like to point to the Qurʾānic word's similarly transparent quality towards God. This also finds expression in the Islamic tradition of calligraphy – in significant analogy with the Christian art of icon painting.

We might recognize another meaningful analogy in the character of the Muslim *umma* which is founded on the Qurʾānic word as the Church is founded on the humanity of Jesus.¹

can religion
expect too much
of man?

DUPRÉ The opinion was expressed in the lecture that, without a trinitarian understanding of belief in God, too much is inevitably required of man. This may remind us of a major concern in Islamic thinking: that the aim of religion is not to make life difficult for man, but that God rather wants to make it easier for us (Qurʾān 2,185; cf. 2,178; 5,4, etc.).

So then we have first to ask the Christians, what were the relevant results in practice? As far as their religious existence and spirituality is concerned, to what extent has the doctrine of Trinity made life easier for Christians to cope with or has it not ultimately resulted in expecting too much of them?

SCHAEFFLER There are different types of demanding situations, and I shall mention two here. One is when new commandments are continuously introduced with the claim that they are the will of God, so that finally no one is able to fulfil them. The other, however, could be regarded inherent even in the smallest commandment God has given to man or in the simplest obligation – to call upon God in prayer, and it comes into play whenever we think that we have to do what pleases God in our own strength. The mere fact, for instance, that the words of prayers we can repeat have been handed down to us, be it in the Bible or in the Qurʾān, does not of

¹ Cf. the lecture of Mohamed Talbi at the 6th Religio-Theological Symposium St. Gabriel, where he pointed to "the importance of the word for the structuring of the *Umma* which by listening to His word maintains its inward coherence and experiences itself as moved forward on the straight path – *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*" in M. Talbi, "Hören auf sein Wort. Der Koran in der Geschichte der islamischen Tradition", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Hören auf sein Wort. Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung* (Beiträge zur Religions-theologie; 7). Mödling, 1992, pp. 119–150, here: p. 120.

itself mean that we can then really pray or that we know how to pray properly (cf. Rm 8:26). So religion can be expecting too much from us not only because too much is demanded, but essentially, if religious actions are understood as an autonomous human act by which human beings must respond to the divine challenge.

From a Christian perspective, in the light of the doctrine of Trinity we can see that it is from the beginning the Spirit who intercedes for us and gives us the ability in everything we do, even in praying. This is God becoming active within the believer, about which Paul for instance says, "Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God" (2 Cor 3:5). This is a way of God's becoming active, which is interpreted by Christians in the line of a theology of the Spirit who is both the Spirit in God and the Spirit granted to us.

VANONI Whether we think of Islam or Judaism, there arises in fact a fundamental uneasiness as to whether we do justice to them if we assert that they on principle expect too much of man. Did the pious Jew not know already before the time of Jesus that he can only love God because God grants it to him? As it says in Dt 30:6: "Moreover, the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live." Already before it is stated in Dt 10:16 (and here the demand made of man is specified): "Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart [...]" But they learn in Deuteronomy that it is in fact not possible for man to circumcise his own heart, and so God himself does it – "your heart and that of your descendants".

ZIRKER When Muslims say in the light of the Qurʾān that God is the one who shows us the straight way, then we may understand this as corresponding with the Biblical faith about redemption, for showing us the straight way means that God guides on the path to salvation even those who are sinners.

on the
importance of
love in the
Christian and
Islamic context.

ELSAS If Christians think that they can develop everything logically and without contradictions from the perspective of love, may we find parallels in Islam or are there differences that deserve discussion in greater detail?

ZIRKER There are substantial differences between the importance given to the concept of love in the Christian understanding of faith and that given to it in Islam. When the Qurʾān states that God sees those

“whom He will love as they will love Him” (Sūra 5,57), it is certainly referring to a mutual, deeply felt relationship between the Creator and his creature. However, this statement in the Qur’ān and in Islamic theology does not occupy the central position held by comparable ideas in the Biblical scriptures. When the relationship between God and man is fundamentally defined in terms of ‘love’, we mainly think of a Jewish-Christian perspective.

ELSAS If this is true, do we not have to ask ourselves whether a system centrally based on love can be so exclusive of others?

love in the light of God’s self-giving in Jesus

SCHAEFFLER In the context of Christian faith, the discourse about love is not only given a more central place, but it has also an unmistakably new meaning as far as its content is concerned, since it refers to God’s self-giving in Jesus. It is in him that what love is can be seen, and in a very definite way this even goes beyond the central assertion of God’s love in Judaism, even though there is no doubt that declaring the love of God – who loves us and who therefore also makes us capable of loving him – is of central significance in Judaism. The commandment to love, as it is handed down, for instance, in the Gospel according to Mark (12:28–34), was most certainly already known to the scribe in his own religious tradition (cf. Dt 6:4–9). But there it does not have the meaning of God’s self-giving for the world and humankind. So when Mr. Greshake presents Christianity’s self-interpretation in his lecture, he is right to recognize that as the core of the Christian message, and he must also state that he can do this only in a trinitarian way, because otherwise the death of Jesus cannot be understood as the self-giving of the Father. It is because of this that Trinity is the core of Christian faith. The question that then remains to be addressed to Judaism and Islam is how they conceive of God’s love for humankind. In fact there are in post-Biblical Judaism attempts at reflecting on the self-giving of God, whose *Shekhinah* is sent into exile with his people and who participates in the suffering of his people. It is absolutely legitimate to be interested in such attempts at reflecting on this and to consider their coherence.

community of people with each other – and with God

NEUMANN The *umma* is understood in Islam in the sense of a brotherly union of people joined with one another in accordance with God’s providence, while the Christian understanding focuses on the friendship with himself that God grants to humankind and which calls humankind into communion with God. It may be that the differently accentuated concept of God’s love and mercy in both religious traditions

corresponds with these different perspectives. Love that grants community and mercy as in the Islamic faith is characterized more by careful attention and giving guidance than by self-communication.

ZIRKER The Qur’ān does use the word *khalīl*, which means ‘friend’ or ‘confidant’ to refer to Abraham: “Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to God, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in faith? For God did take Abraham for a friend” (Sūra 4,125). And in the Qur’ān God is frequently called *walī*, a term quite often rendered as ‘friend’: “God is the friend of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light” (Sūra 2,257); it is also translated as ‘protector’ or ‘patron’. So there is a wide spectrum of meanings linked with this term, extending to its usage in mysticism, where it indicates the most intimate communion with God. Finally, there is also the term *muqarrabūn*, those who have been brought close to God, such as Jesus: “O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself [...]” (Sūra 3,55). From an eschatological perspective, the *umma* is the flourishing community of people at peace among themselves, where there are no more tears or sufferings; it is the joyful feast into which the glory of God shines.⁴

NEUMANN In this context I am reminded of a dialogue meeting at St. Gabriel where this mystical path in the Islamic religious tradition and others was considered.⁵

overlappings in basic human experiences

DUPRÉ In everything that can and should rightly be said about comparing different conceptions in Islam and Christianity, there ultimately remains a great uneasiness. When we use such terms as love, mercy and sympathy, we are touching upon such fundamental matters of religious life that it is probably difficult to say that this or that is to be found in one tradition but not in the other. There are experiences which simply belong to the self-awareness of pious people and which find expression in statements such as “*ubi amor, ibi Deus est*”, or the saying, well-known from Antiquity, that God is wherever one person helps another – “*Deus est mortali iuvare*

⁴ Cf. in this context also A. Schimmel, “Man’s Path in the Presence of God. Worldly Happiness and Paradisiacal Perfection”, in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Islam Questioning Christianity* (Christian Faith in the Encounter with Islam, vol. 1). Mödling, 2007, pp. 283–293, and the subsequent discussions pp. 294–328.

⁵ Cf. M. Ayoub, “Das Wort und der Weg. Des Menschen Suche nach Gott in der islamischen Mystik”, in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Hören auf sein Wort. Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 7). Mödling, 1992, pp. 167–187, here: pp. 182 f.

mortalem" (Pliny the Elder, in *Nat. hist.* 2.18). Here, profound perceptions open up that are common to all mankind in spite of all the differences, perceptions that should consequently have an impact on the interpretation of religious statements because we can see that they are fundamentally valid for both traditions.

Is it the mystic who really understands his faith?

BSTEHA. If we cannot ignore what Mr. Dupré has just said, especially in the utterances of the mystical movements, it seems urgent to raise the question of whether the path of mysticism leads to peripheral areas of faith or towards the core of faith – whether, in other words,

it is the mystic who understands his faith better (or perhaps even 'really'), or the 'orthodox' believer. If we do not raise this question, would we not be in danger of depriving ourselves of a depth dimension in faith which is indispensable and which is in any case present in all religions?

[Study Group 2

questions subsequent to the lecture

LEUZE If we take the argument of the lecture quite formally that the doctrine of Trinity is a prerequisite for a consistent monotheism, a dialogue with Islam should be easy, since it is precisely a consistent monotheism

that Islam ultimately aims at. So should it not be possible to make the doctrine of Trinity more credible to Muslim theologians than has been the case in the past?

Another question results from the thesis presented in the lecture, which is that the doctrine of Trinity is the exposition of the statement "God is love." Does Islamic theology not have a major problem with defining God as love at least as far as the majority of its practitioners are concerned?

MITTERHÖFER Do Christians want to know too much about God in their attempt to find a way into him, as it were, whereas Muslims, in awe of God, refuse to step across this holy threshold? If so it would then also be easy to grasp why God's revelation in the Qur'an is oriented towards giving humankind correct ethical guidance, rather than being concerned with how God communicates himself. And similarly, are the 99 names of God not to be understood doxologically, as expressing awe vis-à-vis the 'Unapproachable-Other', rather than as statements about God's 'inner life', or attempts to find a way into him?

KAHLERT And then perhaps we should consider whether dialogue with Islam might break off the moment Christians try to explain to their Muslim partners how to think about monotheism consistently? This obsession with consistency, they would say, is your problem – and you have suffered from it for centuries.

similar questions asked also in Islam

GRESHAKE But there are quite similar problems and discussions in Islam too, for instance, concerning the matter of the nature of the Qur'an – whether it is eternal or not, whether it is created or not. So they cannot

say: you Christians speculate, and we do not.

And with regard to what has been said about attempts to penetrate into the inner life of God, as it were, and to know too much about God – we can only share this apprehension; after all the lecture was not trying to deal with that issue, and if it did, then certainly not more than the way Muslim theologians speak about the relation between God and the Qur'an.

creation vis-à-vis the oneness of God

KARRER Right at the beginning of the lecture, a central question was raised: what approach is it possible to take in order to think about creation? And it seems in fact plausible that it is easier to include both God and creation by taking a trinitarian approach. How is this problem resolved in Islam since it insists on the strict oneness and non-differentiation of God and the creation's nature as completely other than him?

differences also on the existential level?

OTT On the basis of what was said in the lecture we might think that Christians and Muslims are actually concerned with the same issue; that basically they have the same intention and that the difference between them is only on the theoretical level, insofar as Christians, for their part, very consistently and without contradiction reflect theoretically on what both actually mean. However, it has also been suggested that an existential difference is implied too. It would be good to hear more about this.

between modalism and tritheism

A second question concerns the communion concept. Thinking about Trinity as communion in God is not new. Karl Barth, for instance, frequently emphasized that God is not in need of a communion with anybody else, because he already has the fullness of communion in himself.

Is the whole doctrine of the Trinity not always a tightrope between tritheism and modalism? If we are more inclined towards modalism (as personally I am), then speaking about a communion in God may rather give the im-

pression of a tritheistic imbalance. What is actually behind the concept of communion? How can we give it concrete content? In his treatise on the doctrine of the Trinity as explained in *Mysterium Salutis*⁶, Karl Rahner proceeds from the assumption that the Trinity first reveals itself *ad extra*, towards the outside, by God's communicating himself in this threefold structure and then, on the basis of the axiom that the 'economic Trinity' is the 'immanent Trinity', arrives at the proposition that God (as the One) must be structured within himself. This would be another angle, which is also to be found elsewhere in the history of theology. Whereas, in the lecture the element of communion was brought in more strongly, and we may note that this is something firmly emphasized in the Eastern Church.

characteristics of the Islamic teachings about God

KHOURY Islam certainly is more cautious when it comes to matters related to the knowledge of God. When asked once about the nature of God, Muḥammad is said to have replied, "Do not so much concentrate on the nature of God but rather on his will;

you are not capable of knowing his nature."⁷ In fact, practice has priority over theological reflection in Islam. But this does not at all mean that Muslims have made no effort to develop a doctrine about God, and they do not lag behind the Christian scholastics of the Middle Ages in this respect; they also had their disputes with Christian theologians and tried to compare their own theology with that of the Christians.

As for the 99 "most beautiful names" of God, as the Qur'ān calls them (cf. Sūra 59,24; 7,180), they are certainly assertions about God; some are about his nature, but most of them are about his actions – his relationship to his creation, to nature, the world and humankind.⁸

In al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111), the great theologian, we find the idea that, given God's transcendence which does not allow us access to his nature, the Qur'ānic assertions about God are rather a help in the practical develop-

ment of piety. Thus, the Qur'ān wants to teach humankind how to speak to God, how they can and should address him – without there necessarily being implied any access to an understanding of his nature. Nevertheless, orthodox theology also recognizes in these Qur'ānic assertions something like the mediation of a cognition of God himself, a knowledge about God, although the theologians avoid using analogy in this context, because the Qur'ān says, "[...] there is nothing whatever like unto Him". (Sūra 42,11; cf. 2,255; etc.). Nonetheless, Islamic theology finds it helpful to consider that what is conveyed by human language could be something like intimations of what is in God.

God's absolute freedom in his omnipotence

How then is the passage from God's oneness to creation conceived of in Islamic theology? In this context Muslims prefer to begin with the infiniteness of God's omnipotence and his absolute freedom in his omnipotence and his actions. What for us looks like a contradiction, need not be the same for God.

possible if factual

Given the fact that creation exists, it is ultimately considered rather futile to reflect on the possibility of its existence. If Christian theology tries to recognize the conditions in God that make creation possible, Muslim theologians refer to man's inability to define the conditions that would make the transcendent God's relation towards his creation possible. Mankind and all other creatures are denied the possibility of conceiving of God in his divine nature and understanding him. Although Muslim theologians may debate about God for hours, at the end they will always say, "God is All-knowing, All-Wise"; we are trying to articulate our thinking, but as for the way it really is – God knows better.

trinitarian access to creation

Many other questions arise with regard to what was said in the lecture about the trinitarian concept of God giving access to thinking about creation. It is first of all the question of how, in the context of this trinitarian conception, the relationship comes about between the Son of God and the Spirit of God (who is present in creation and makes us capable of encountering God in his self-communication in Jesus Christ), and then the relationship to other human beings who of course are not Jesus Christ. If creation, as it was stated, has its place 'in the Son', which creation is meant here? Does this idea imply the whole creation, with all its elements and all human beings? Is the Spirit of God granted to every human being? And, does every human being there-

⁶ In: J. Feiner – M. Löhrer (eds.), *Mysterium Salutis*, vol. 2, *Die Heilsgeschichte vor Christus*. Einsiedeln, 1967, pp. 369 ff.; cf. also K. Rahner, "Einzigkeit und Dreifaltigkeit Gottes," in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Der Gott des Christentums und des Islams* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 2). Mödling, 1978 (reprint 1992), pp. 119–136.

⁷ Cf. Khālid Muḥammad Khālid, *Kamā tahaddatha al-Rasūl*, vol. 2. Beirut etc., 1973, p. 15; A. Th. Khoury, "Gottesbegriff im Streit von Theologie und Philosophie. Bemerkungen zum islamischen Voluntarismus", in: D. Papenfuß et al. (eds.), *Transzendenz und Immanenz. Philosophie und Theologie in der veränderten Welt* (Internationale Fachgespräche/Alexander-von-Humboldt-Stiftung Bonn-Bad Godesberg). Stuttgart, 1977, p. 172.

⁸ Cf. A. Th. Khoury, *Der Islam. Sein Glaube, seine Lebensordnung, sein Anspruch* (Herder/Spektrum; 4167). Freiburg etc., 1995, pp. 110–112.

fore participate in God? What happens if somebody falls victim to sin and distances him/herself from God?

Whether conceived of as trinitarian or unitarian, the transition from God to individual creatures and individual human beings does not seem to occur logically, in either conception. And even though the thesis presented in the lecture may be persuasive and helpful from a Christian perspective, can it also become useful beyond that to overcome the aporias of other systems?

WESS There is no doubt that it is necessary and makes sense to reflect on the implications of the relation between God and creation and the history of salvation, and hence also to reflect about God himself. As for the specific way in which this was done in the lecture, two questions arise:

fundamental forms of love in God instead of 'communion'? The term communion refers to persons who are related to one another. In the doctrine of Trinity, however, there is the fundamental axiom "*in Deo omnia unum sunt, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio*". This may also be understood as follows: God, as *relatio subsistens*, is

giving love, receiving love and sharing love. Seen in this way, would it not be better to speak of 'three fundamental forms of love' which are actualized in God, who is love, instead of 'communion', because this entails the possible misunderstanding just mentioned?

can a human being be transparent for God? The other question refers to the issue of whether man's horizon is really as infinite as Christian theology maintains (under the influence of Greek philosophy or of idealistic concepts, etc.), and whether the human mind

has an infinite capacity that is capable of relating to God and therefore also capable of being completely transparent for him. If we begin with the fundamental principle *agere sequitur esse*, a limited creature can only have limited capacities. In his self-communication God then remains the infinitely greater, whose glory nobody can perceive without being burned, "whom no one has ever seen or can see" (1 Tm 6:16). Thus man could be integrated into the divine, but only in such a way that God once again remains the all-embracing one.

God is love – the basic existential option **GRESHAKE** The difference between the Christian and the Islamic points of view is certainly not only on the level of theoretical explanation, but can first of all be characterized as a basic existential option. For if God is primarily love, then, from the perspective of this central proposition, Chris-

tian faith is enabled to understand reality in general in a new way. For in the statement, "God is love" a fundamental existential option is expressed, which then also has consequences for the theoretical explanation.

neither tritheism nor modalism – God is communion As for the question tritheism or modalism, we may begin by asking when, in the course of Christian history, have tritheistic positions ever been seriously advocated? When Rahner, referring to tritheism and modalism, liked to speak about a tightrope walk and

then said he would rather be a modalist than a tritheist, who would not have agreed with him? But who, in Christian history has ever spoken in favour of tritheism in such a way that it had to be taken seriously? Modalism on the other hand had, and still has, many followers.

With regard to the concept of person, several serious investigations have since shown that, instead of 'person', Rahner was actually introducing in this context the modern concept of 'subject'. Of course in God there are not three subjects in the modern sense, of autonomous beings, etc. But that was never intended in trinitarian theology. The problem may also be formulated as follows: even if one tries to think of God as the "Wholly-Other", it is not possible to refrain from imagining him at all since it is generally impossible for man to live without imagination. For instance, to consider Christian prayer: what do I imagine when I am praying? Do I imagine a simple 'one' or a communion of three? In the early Church it was considered to be heretical to address God as a simple 'one'. From the beginning, early liturgy always prayed in a differentiated manner vis-à-vis the three persons: to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. In God personal communion is of course utterly different from anything we may imagine, and the principle and permanent key to the inner mystery of the Trinity remains, as Rahner frequently emphasized, the revelation of the Trinity in the history of salvation. There the Christian believer experiences three persons; he experiences the one God as communion, as it is expressed in the high-priestly prayer of Jesus: "[...] that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one" (Jn 17:21 f.). Note that it does not say, "that they may be one" as if referring to something inexpressible, but "as we are one". In my opinion the real danger seems to lie in modalism which is characterized by a rationalization of faith and is essentially a philosophical position.

difference not only through creation, but already in the nature of God

As for the passage from God, the absolute one, towards the reality of the world in the act of creation: the actual, inexplicable 'leap' consists in the absolutely transcendent, self-sufficient God creating a creation *because he wills it*. This freedom can be seen as the 'leap' that cannot be explained beyond just that. And it is this leap that ultimately implies the infinite freedom of God and in which the unity between Islam and Christianity consists – which is their shared awareness that God had no counselor when he made his decisions (cf. Rm 11:31–36).

What makes the Christian perspective different from that of Islam is not this, but something else. Any non-trinitarian position inevitably conceives of the relation between God and his creation in such a way that it is only through creation that something comes into being vis-à-vis God, introducing for the first time 'difference' and 'negation'. But then we very quickly move on to the Neoplatonic pattern, which conceives of creation as being always decline and deficiency – like a ray of light proceeding from the source of light and becoming weaker and weaker the further it moves from its source. Seen in this way, creation is characterized by difference and negation. When God creates, a 'non' (non-God) comes into being, whereas up to that point there had only been pure affirmation. Now Trinity theology maintains that difference and negation do not come into being only by creation, but are already intrinsic to the nature of God: the Father is not the Son. A vis-à-vis is not only emerging when creation is established, but has always been a reality in God. Moreover this means that being different, being non-identical, is not something negative (in the bad sense), but something extremely positive. From this perspective creation is also set free from the ultimately Neoplatonic conception of its deficient and emanative condition and eventually its falling into decay.

Thus the trinitarian concept of God can explain what remains ultimately unclear in Islam: not how there can be creation at all (on this Islam and Christianity do indeed agree on the basis of the mystery of God's freedom) but how God's absolute transcendence can be seen as compatible with it. Concerning Mr. Wess's explanations about person and relation, the principle quoted by him, which refers back to Anselm of Canterbury, according to which everything is one in God *ubi non obviat relationis oppositio*, precisely describes what is person in God: *relatio*. And why do we call it 'person'? Probably because, in the reality known to us, being person is the

highest thing we know, and if we speak of God, we must at least attribute to him what is highest in our human understanding – that he is person. And it is then a completely different issue to state that person in God is actualized in a *totaliter aliter* way.

Jesus – the self-expression of God

Whether man is *capax infiniti* or not has already been frequently discussed with Mr. Wess. We are here facing fundamental options. Be that as it may, being capable of the infinite applies to Jesus when he says: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). In Christ we cannot distinguish between what is and what is not divine. Of course we are not here to discuss the fact that God is the always greater one, as shown when Jesus himself speaks of the Father as being greater than he (cf. Jn 14:28), and that even in the state of eschatological perfection he will remain the ever greater one in the sense, as tradition has it, that in the *visio beatifica* we shall see God *totum, sed non totaliter*. All this is undisputed. But the question here is whether Jesus is the self-expression of God.

is difference in God necessary in order to conceive of creation?

KHOURY Muslims do not want to accept the trinitarian model because they think that if God alone is there and a creation vis-à-vis, then there is only *one* difference and negation.

Why should it be better to see difference and negation in God first and then transfer it from there to creation? If difference and negation do not exist only between God and creation, but already exist eternally in God himself, this would in fact mean that they are no disadvantage. What is good within God can also be good between the one God and his creation. From this perspective the trinitarian model would ultimately not really be helpful or necessary for grasping the difference between God and his creation.

Furthermore, in the trinitarian model as it was presented in the lecture, are there not in fact still points characterized by logical dislocation, so the aporias are not resolved? For even if the trinitarian model is assumed and in all this communication and communion there still remains something that is not divine, i. e. that is not God, the aporia returns.

GRESHAKE In principle we *could* perhaps say that even in a 'unitarian model' the relation between God and creation can be conceived of positively. Nevertheless, the category of creatureliness has always had a rather negative connotation. The questions this gives rise to are in fact better answered by the trinitarian model.

KHOURY The real problem is how it is possible for the finite to occur at all. In both models the problem seems to be equally unresolved – whether God is thought of as substantial or as relational. The existence of the finite alongside this God is what constitutes the aporia.

“God is love”
in Islamic
understanding

With regard to the concept of love in Islam, a discussion is on-going between mystics – who want to understand God as love – and orthodoxy. Whatever the case, orthodoxy rejects the idea that “God is love” if love is defined as communicative friendship, for this would mean placing God and man on the same level, which in the eyes of Muslims would not be compatible with the concept of God’s transcendence. If, however, love is understood in the sense of the repeated Qur’ānic assertion that God loves human beings who live according to his right guidance, then this seems acceptable, for it means that he grants man grace and merciful care: the love of God is then his attention in grace and mercy, and the human beings’ love for God is their surrender to his will.

communion with
the whole variety
within the world?

KARRER The problem is repeated, as Mr. Khoury already said, if communion is extended: at first it is absolutely fascinating from a rational point of view to imagine how the trinitarian community extends to the world. This communion must then also extend to the other religions, and in a certain form naturally to Islam too. The problem of its extension to the evil in the world, however, is essentially different. Is it still possible to pursue this idea, and if so, how?

GRESHAKE As for the effectiveness of the inner-divine communion in creation as a whole, in the world and therefore also among the world religions, there is much to support the argument that this communion will only reach its goal in God’s eschatological action when the dead will be raised, so that the effective action of the trinitarian communion in the whole world and thus also in all religions, is related to the eschatological promise – and for that very reason signs of it should already now be in evidence.

once again the
concept of
person in the
doctrine of Trinity

LEUZE Do we really do justice to Rahner if we assess his reservations about certain tritheistic tendencies in the doctrine of Trinity as Mr. Greshake has done? Was Rahner not correct in pointing out the difference between the modern concept of person and that of the early Church – although even then there was a certain reservation about applying the concept of the person to the doctrine of Trinity, as we see if

we only look at Augustine? And did not Moltmann, for instance – and to a limited extent perhaps even Pannenberg – come precisely to the point at which the Islamic criticism really seems justified? Is ‘person’ not conceived of in such a way that, although the divine persons form a wonderfully united ideal community, they are ultimately in fact three gods?

KAHLERT But if we look at our own religious socialization, we must note that we quite often tend towards a naive theistic conception, and that not only are average Christians relatively quick to manage without a differentiated trinitarian doctrine, but not uncommonly pastors too. From this, which is easy to prove empirically, we should in fact discern that there is a significant task for Christian preaching and for catechetical teaching: to explain to believers in a responsible way approaches to trinitarian theology that are relevant for their actual Christian living and prayer.

GRESHAKE In the past century Christians may have been inclined to rather tritheistic ideas; however, today Christians are often undifferentiated theists, addressing their prayers to a vague and blurred God – unlike Christian liturgy, which, in its prayers, differentiates clearly when invoking God the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Tritheist tendencies appear in Jürgen Moltmann, when occasionally at least it looks in his writings as if the communion, which is God, manifests itself as the conduct of three persons.

faith in Christ
that opens up for
others

KHOURY Since the trinitarian way of understanding Christian faith must absolutely not be mistaken for tritheistic conceptions, we must make this clear in Christian theology and practice. It would indeed be of supreme importance for the positive future development of relations between the Christian and Muslim religious communities, if we could only succeed in convincing Muslims that their accusing us of tritheism is unjustified. If this obstacle could really be overcome, Christian theology would also be in a better position to convey to Muslims some idea about Christ’s image as it appeared in Mr. Karrer’s presentation: Christ as God’s gift of reconciliation for all. Was Christ not in the past often linked with delimitation and exclusion and sometimes even used as a weapon ‘against others’, or at least felt by others to be used in this way? Whereas the opposite should clearly be emphasized, namely, that faith in Christ entails that Christians should *open themselves up to others*, particularly to Muslims. Similarly, it should be made clearer in the practice of Christians that no opposition should be set up between faith in the Trinity and the Oneness of God, but rather that the former represents a ‘differentiated view of the Oneness of

God'. These would represent decisive steps towards a true rapprochement between Christians and Muslims.

the need for a phenomenology of love and person

OTT One may learn from Mr. Greshake's presentation that in the fundamental Christian and Islamic understanding of reality, and above all in the relation between God and world, there is not only the *theoretical* difference to be defined by reasoning out this

relation without contradictions, but also the difference as it is known *existentially* which is based on how reality is experienced, and above all on the experience and understanding of love. Furthermore, he referred to the fact that the concept of person is actually not part of the discussion in Karl Rahner and, in his theological reflections about the Trinity, Rahner ultimately rejects not three persons, but what would be defined today as three 'subjects'. In the end it may still be difficult in the encounter with Islam to accept the idea that the self-giving of God is not possible or permissible since nobody is like God or participates in him; or that we may perhaps speak of a relation of friendship with God, but the concept of love and, even more, of man being a child of God goes too far.

In the whole controversy with Islam as a brother religion the three points mentioned here aim at the questions about a phenomenology of love and person, and about the connotations of the two concepts in the context of both their theoretical and their existential self-definition.

ideal-typical expressions

GRESHAKE In the encounter with the various contexts of life (not only among Muslims, but also among Buddhists in Asia and others), we may (for instance, in the

practice of married life) observe various ways of expressing fundamental human values like those of love and friendship. But, with respect to the questions just raised, I am rather dealing with ideal-typical expressions, and then we may well ask whether a similar ideal with regard to our marriage partners is held by other cultures and comparably valued: that is the ideal that love means above all self-communication, not only giving something to the other, but giving ourselves. Love in its ideal-typical form means that the other opens up his/her existence to me completely out of his/her inexplicable freedom and that I respond to this by opening up my own existence completely to him/her. Although, in its ideal form, this is rarely found, the ideal is still alive in most people, particularly in young people, and we may rightly ask whether this is not a fruit of Christian faith, for it is a love that, in its self-giving radicality, we can learn from the initiatives of God in the history of salvation.

From this the desideratum of a phenomenology of love and person is clear.⁹ But here the question remains of whether and to what extent the subject we are ultimately dealing with here can in fact be handed down by means of a theoretical 'treatise about love', or whether it must happen the other way round, by love being lived in its radicality to the extent of self-giving, so that on the basis of this existential experience a wider and deeper prospect may open for the understanding of a love that causes the lover to give him/herself.

the shape of love and prayer

OTT This topic may be linked with the experience of prayer. Here the inner shaping of the relationship to God is bound to present itself in a particularly intense way, the essence of prayer being most closely connected with the phenomenology of love.

The special relationship with God as it appears in Jewish prayer should also be considered in this context. For the Jewish believer, who is also a radical monotheist and disapproves of the Christian understanding of the Trinity and the Son of God in a similar way to Muslims, has this intimate way of praying, in which he may even struggle with God and in his contest with God may sometimes even be right in the end.

LEUZE This direct way of speaking with God, which is so characteristic of Jewish prayer, somehow in fact receded in the New Testament. The Old Testament does give examples of a direct relation with God, lived and realized in prayer, the like of which can no longer be found in the New Testament.

KAHLERT It is hard to ignore the intimate relation implied in the surrender and performance of Muslim prayer if we are invited to witness communal and personal prayers in the Mosque. We cannot easily turn our backs on the intensity of this atmosphere and, in order to understand better that here we are encountering very personal matters, we should be much more interested in the practice of Muslim prayer, which is performed on different levels.¹⁰ And then, even from the perspective of fundamental theology we should

⁹ Cf. also G. Greshake, "Göttliches und vergöttlichendes Wort," in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Hören auf sein Wort. Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 7). Mödling, 1992, pp. 89–118, esp. pp. 89–102.

¹⁰ Cf. in this context the explanations of A. Schimmel in her contribution "Man's Path in the Presence of God. Worldly Happiness and Paradisiacal Perfection", *op. cit.* (fn. 4) and the subsequent contributions to the discussion, esp. pp. 297–311; on the Muslim life of prayer cf. also Constance E. Padwick, *Muslim Devotions*. London, 1960 – according to A. Schimmel "one of the most beautiful and most commendable books" (*op. cit.*, p. 216) and: *Gebete des Islam. Erläutert und ausgewählt von A. Th. Houry* (Gütersloher Taschenbücher; 710: Weisheit der Religionen). Gütersloh, 1995.

follow up much more explicitly than has been the case so far, whether and how Christians and Muslims can pray together.

relationship
to God
characterized by
Islamic mysticism

GRESHAKE How does the average Muslim discover that the mystical traditions of his own religious community speak of ways to understand, think and live the relationship with God very differently? These traditions which are characterized by a great intimacy with God,

where God almost becomes one with man, are ultimately much closer to Christians. How does an average Muslim get to know these completely different expressions of his own faith?

MITTERHÖFER And then – in the context of the above mentioned desideratum of a phenomenology of love and person – there is the question of the extent to which Muslims, out of regard for God's transcendence, shrink from using the concept of person.

KHOURY The question of the possibility of applying the concept of person to God has been a matter of permanent dispute between Christian and Muslim theologians since the Middle Ages. In fact Muslim theologians avoid applying this term to God. Even though God is there face to face with man, so to speak, addressing him by His word, the One in whom man can believe and to whom he can pray, if we refer to God as a person (as if he were a human being), it could be an offence against God's transcendence. This is also the reason why the Church avoided using the concept of person in the Declaration on Islam in "*Nostra aetate*".

As for the question of the immediacy and intimacy of prayer in Islam, as we know, there is obligatory prayer performed according to fixed rites, *ṣalāt*, and there is also personal prayer, *du'ā'*, and in the tradition of the latter we find all the forms of prayer that we find elsewhere in other religions, to the extent even of complaining to God, and this variety of forms testifies to the fact that there is an intimate relation between God and man. However, in most Muslims' minds there remains a certain reticence about going too far in the intimacy of prayer, because God always remains the transcendent One. His will must not be questioned and his absolute freedom must not be called into doubt.

As for the matter of love, the Qur'ān states clearly (cf. Sūra 30,21) that love between husband and wife is the foundation of married life. Even when this is here and there not so obvious, partly because of the social conditions in various Muslim cultures, and also because we do not see this intimate love of husband and wife in forms recognizable to the outsider, this does not by

any means imply that it may not be found in the intimate circles of family life. In the Islamic world there is a very intimate love between husband and wife which we cannot but admire and in the light of this it is clear that Muslims certainly have access to an understanding of a kind of love that is more than just mercy or careful attention on God's part. It is this that helped the mystics to long for more than just to surrender to God and expect his mindful attention. They really were striving for mystical love.

The attempt to define the relation between mystics and orthodox believers must start with the fact that the overwhelming majority of Muslims live their piety by way of the *sharī'a* or the law. For centuries the mystics were suspected of taking God's transcendence less seriously than is required and of undermining the orthodox faith. When, from the beginning of the 12th century, mysticism obtained the right of abode as it were in the world of Islam, it could nevertheless only develop for the most part in esoterical circles, and the mystics' contact with the common people remained slight. Thus the mystics exercise no great influence on the life of others, except when they appear in public in such a way that they cannot be ignored, as is the case, for instance, in some regions when they form brotherhoods. These mystical movements even exercised a certain political influence especially in North-Africa, and black African Islam is still under their influence. However, the mystics did not succeed (unlike, for instance, the religious orders in the Church) in having a decisive impact on the spirituality of Islam in the Islamic religious community as a whole. They remained and continue to remain a group apart.

[Plenary Discussion]

differentiated
understanding of
God in Judaism
too

GRESHAKE Some spontaneous reactions to some of the issues discussed in the study groups.

First we should not immediately equate the problems that arise in the Jewish faith in the context of thinking about creation with the parallel positions held in Islam although some developments may be similar. Hegel after all ranked Judaism with the "Religion der Erhabenheit" [religion of the sublime]: God remains the transcendent one, exalted above everything he created. Yet, particularly in Judaism, great efforts are also made to master intellectually the problems inherent in the relation of God to creation. We may think here of various sayings in the Jewish mystical tradition or of certain of

Martin Buber's statements affirming that the problem becomes insoluble unless we speak of relationship in the sense of relationship to the 'attributes' in God. That is to say, we cannot understand God, unless we take for granted a certain polarization of the attributes in God. In this context, a Christian believer could and might speak here of 'persons' rather than attributes. In other words: there is a certain affinity with the theology of the Trinity. Thus, the Jewish idea of the *Shekinah* includes the idea that God must be conceived of as both transcendent and immanent.

important things to be learned from the Islamic faith in God

The impression may have been received that the incomprehensibility of God was not given sufficient attention in my lecture, but one simply cannot say everything at once and in a short time. At an earlier conference in which Muslims were also participating, I raised the

question of what we could learn from Muslims and referred in this context to the stories of some conversions of this century, which were without doubt decisively motivated by an encounter with Muslim piety as, for instance, in the case of Charles de Foucauld and Louis Massignon. In their encounter with the religious world of Islam, they experienced to some extent the deep transcendence-related attitude of adoration and devotion which indeed does not dream of being able to tap the *bon Dieu*, the good Lord, on the shoulder, as it were.¹¹

responsibility in face of truth

It is not absolutely necessary to be afraid of the expression 'speculative imperialism', although the term does not seem to me to be at all well-chosen. In the

first Christian centuries, through God's revelation, people were still deeply convinced they had been given the truth and were able and obliged to confront others with the claim of truth. In my view it would be good for contemporary Christians to regain just a little of this attitude. People are more convinced today by Lessing's attitude of being constantly on the way towards the truth, instead of even once being allowed to say: we have been granted a truth which we must with good reason hand on. And we should not rush to call this 'speculative imperialism'.

about the danger of the negative possibility

As for their actual behaviour, is it easier for Christians to begin their thinking from the love of God? Not at all. When love emerges as the ultimate and highest value in the light of which decisions must be made,

the opposite (of love) certainly also becomes greater. When in Christ the word of God manifests himself, the tempter, the evil one, is also given greater power. The fact that Christians are exposed to committing even the most horrible crimes, is from this perspective not contradictory to the law of love to which they are subject in Christ. When the highest goal is to be decided on, according to a certain inner logic the opposite may also happen and often does. As it was emphasized, Christians do not necessarily have more love, but the issue in question is for them more clearly defined.

the problem of hell

Are all problems resolved if the basis of all differences is found within God himself? From this perspective, is hell found within God too? Hans Urs von Balthasar once said: when hell – even if only one single person enters it – remains outside of God, it would primarily be a tragedy for God himself, for then God would not achieve the reconciliation he enacted in Christ. Then, apart from all the human concerns, hell would be a problem for God himself – a problem that seems insoluble.

aporia of the 'coexistence' of God and creation

As for whether, against the background of the thoughts developed in the lecture, the aporia of the coexistence of the finite and the infinite is resolved, the answer is: certainly not. The most fundamental aspect of this question is the fact that creation originates in the unfathomable freedom of God. Therefore, *a priori*, the essential issue cannot be rationalized. On the other hand, we are concerned here with a very unique relationship, for which there are no analogies in the sphere of creation. And for this reason the problem cannot be resolved. Nevertheless, in a non-trinitarian understanding of the matter, these problems would remain not aporias but contradictions. It is in this sense that the explanations proposed in my lecture should be understood. How can we think radically of the transcendence of God, as Islam tries to do, and at the same time deal with the phenomenon of creation?

theoretical questions only or existential questions first?

Of course the most important problem seems to be whether what ultimately separates Christianity and Islam is neither a theory nor a Bible nor a Qur'an, but fundamental options concerning the understanding of one's own life and of reality. On the Christian part, the understanding of reality is characterized by love and nothing else. So, do we finally discover here lived fundamental options that exist alongside one another? If so, the dialogue should not so much be about theories and the-

¹¹ Cf. G. Greshake, *op. cit.* (fn. 9) here: pp. 116–118.

ologies; it should rather be a matter of starting to speak or exchange opinions about the fundamental options in life. Then theology, like any theory, would always come too late. We should start much earlier.

the doctrine of the Trinity in its historical effectiveness

VANONI The statement in the Letter to the Ephesians about the dividing wall that Christ has broken down (2:14), is contradicted by so many dividing walls that came into the world through Christianity, and unfortunately also through the doctrine of the Trinity. If this

doctrine is so plausible, should the opposite not have happened? In Judaism there have indeed been several approaches in the direction mentioned above by Mr. Greshake such as, for instance, the concept of *shekinah*. They are much less emphasized today, and this may not be so because they were simply lost by the Jews, but because in the course of their history Jews began avoiding them in face of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Conversely, today scholars of Judaism increasingly support the thesis that it is not unlikely that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity could originally have been based on precisely these Jewish expressions of the experience of God as it was articulated in the conception of the *shekinah* and such like.

However, Christians have also fallen out with one another about faith in the Trinity. Is Islam in some way not also a reaction to the Christians' having become divided amongst themselves (cf. Qur'ān 3,105; 42,14)? If we do not only look at what is now left in the Orthodox Churches, but at the whole history of heresies with all the excommunications, we can sense that it is an extremely urgent matter to address how that communalization in fact emerges in history, as was mentioned in the lecture.

trinitarization from a historical and eschatological perspective

GRESHAKE To deal first with the relation between Jews and Christians as a 'model', so to speak, of a fundamental fissure: it forms the background of the statement in the Letter to the Ephesians which was mentioned by Mr. Vanoni. In this context we should perhaps also refer to Rm 11:25 f., where it says expressly: in the "mystery"

of God Israel will be saved, and it will be then as in the resurrection from the dead (Rm 11:15). This means that here the code "life from the dead" is used for God's eschatological action. In the meantime, the trinitarization of reality is not at all a continuous process. Rather the principle also proves true here, that where the holy appears in its intensest form, the powers of darkness also emerge at their strongest. Compare in this context also

1 Cor 15:24 f., which states that Christ is about to destroy "every ruler and every authority and power".

This polarity can also be found in Teilhard de Chardin when, on the one hand, he deals extensively with the unification of humanity in history emerging as a continuous process, while on the other, we also find very different statements: namely that the transition towards the point omega is characterized by a final struggle between good and evil, because then the ruling powers of evil will be strongest.

The concept of trinitarization has both an individual and an ecclesial aspect. "[...] so that all may be one"; it is for this that we are sent out. Each group in the Church, in whatever situation, must strive for this ideal. The fact that the opposite frequently happens does not contradict what is stated here. The trinitarization of reality is rather the content of God's eschatological promise and has something to do with what "life from the dead" means. This is a matter of the whole dialectic of present-day and future eschatology.

The idea of the unity of mankind, however, and the ethical challenge to strive for and bring about the lost unity of mankind, is also an essential Muslim idea. This is well known and was also mentioned in Mr. Khoury's contribution to the discussion. On this question, there is no fundamental dissent between Muslims and Christians. The difference only emerges in what the Christian faith says as a further, deepening addition: this is not only an ethical postulate addressed to man, but has something to do with the vocation of creation in the image of the triune God.

I am frequently asked whether it is possible to make the Trinity as the quintessence of faith plausible to others. This question will in the end remain open here. What seems to be important is that a theory rarely becomes plausible because of the strength of its arguments alone. Insofar as various theories are finally grounded on lived fundamental options, a theory can only become plausible to the degree that such a fundamental option is convincingly lived and testified to 'as life'.

can polytheism also be conceived of as consistent with monotheism?

DUPRÉ The subject of our discussion here is the doctrine of the Trinity, its contents and how it can be conveyed to others. At the same time, however, this discussion has also centred round monotheism, which on the part of Islam (and possibly on the part of Christianity too) is also characterized by the rejection of

polytheism. Should we not go for once into greater detail here and address the question of where this rejection actually comes from?

Judaism had its reasons, so had the Prophet – but what did they really know about the peoples that live on this earth? Here we should have not only Hindus in mind, but also, for instance, Pygmies and Bushmen. As little as was known about these people, so just as little was also known about their idea of God and their contribution to the religious history of mankind. So the question should be raised of whether not only the doctrine of the Trinity but also a rightly understood polytheism could be a true consequence of monotheism. This seems paradoxically formulated, but it is not necessarily therefore incorrect.

GRESHAKE This may certainly be regarded as a problem. But as far as the early theological speculation about the Trinity is concerned, it was characterized absolutely by the oneness of God. The oneness of God has always been beyond discussion, so no connection whatsoever can be established between the theology of the Trinity and a modified polytheism.

The controversy with polytheism, wherever it is not simply based on a polemical reaction, is carried out in the early Church partly in the context of angelology. The legitimate concerns of polytheism are taken up in a differentiated manner in that context, but not in the theology of the Trinity.

Created by the Word – Created for the Word: On the Transcendence and Immanence of the Divine Word

Richard Schaeffler

Preliminary remarks

In contrast to Mr. Greshake's lecture, in which he tried to describe the entirety of Christian faith from one single integral departure point, the investigations that follow will deal with quite specific problem-perspectives from which we shall look at the relation between transcendence and immanence. Moreover, a focal point will be used whose justification may be contentious. In keeping with my special area of knowledge, this point will be the question of the meaning the problem of the transcendence and immanence of God, and more specifically of the word of God, may have within philosophical-theological dialogue.

1. Posing the question at three levels

In the attempt to define the relation between transcendence and immanence, three problem-levels must be distinguished, which are distinct although they relate to each other: the question on the relation between the transcendence and immanence of *God*, then the question on the relation between the transcendence and immanence of his *Word*, and finally the question, which particularly interests the philosopher, concerning the relation between the transcendence and immanence of *truth*.

1.1 Transcendence and immanence of God

Belief in the transcendence of God is clearly the common heritage of the so-called 'monotheistic religions', whereas speaking about the immanence of God in the world or in the soul of man is a point of possible conflict between them. If one asks what is the religious intention behind belief in God's transcendence – as distinct from the philosophical-metaphysical intention of explaining the totality of reality on the basis of a single principle – then it seems to be clear: the specifically religious intention is focused on the freedom of God vis-à-vis his creature – in the act of creation as well as in all his

salvific acts – a freedom which is not apparent if God is seen as an inner constituent of the creature and its life, or if the creature is seen as an inner constituent of the divine life. It seems to me equally important, however, that it is the religious aspect that retains a place for the human capacity for experiencing guilt, which is misunderstood if human life and history is declared to be an inner constituent of the divine life, as easily happens, for instance, in the various schools of idealistic philosophy.

Speaking of God's immanence, of his dwelling in the world or in the human soul, is a point of possible conflict between the 'monotheistic religions', and this is particularly apparent in the protest made by Muslim partners in dialogue, when they hear something like God's immanence being referred to. Nevertheless, speaking in these terms does occur in monotheistic religions. At this point I am only referring to one single motif in this theme which has become important for the religions of the Old and New Testaments and which has already been mentioned here before: the term 'immanence' is a philosophical term, while the term 'dwelling', in Hebrew *shechinah*, is a religious term.

As far as I know, this term does not appear in the Old Testament, but it is used by the rabbis, initially to denote the presence of God – or, more precisely, of his name – in the temple. It is here that the name of God, i. e. God himself, dwells insofar as he allows himself to be invoked by man. After the destruction of the first, and even more, of the second temple, the term '*shechinah* – dwelling' is used to denote God's sharing the journey with his people in the diaspora. The Shekinah joins the Galut, the exile and the diaspora.

Both constituent meanings of the term Shekinah, God's dwelling in the temple and his sharing the journey with his people, return in the New Testament which speaks of the *tabernaculum Dei cum hominibus* (Rev 21:3), God does not only live 'among' humans, but 'with' them in that tent which is the new Jerusalem. Then God's dwelling with and in humans comes to be understood in a new way: as his dwelling in the believers. "[...] and we will come to them and make our home with them" (Jn 14:20–23; cf. Jn 17:21 ff.).

Here too, there is a philosophical, or more precisely a transcendental-philosophical, intention in speaking of God's making his home with man. The divine truth in particular, the philosophers have stated repeatedly, must be interior to man if it is to be understandable that it becomes the 'light' that enables him to attain knowledge of all things. "*In interiore homine habitat veritas*", Augustine explains. But here the point is the specific religious in-

tenion behind speaking about this 'inhabitation', notwithstanding the undiminished belief in God's transcendence. And to me this intention seems to be based on the fact that it is in this that direct access to the source of life is granted. I am referring here to Jn 4:14, where Jesus states, "[...] The water that I will give [to the believers] will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." According to this text, humans will not only receive gifts that are always new, but within themselves the new life granted to them will become the well, constantly bringing forth new life.

From this and similar texts the question arises: how can it be conceived theologically – and also philosophically – that God makes his home with his creatures notwithstanding his freedom vis-à-vis the creature: in all things he is the source of their vitality, in the human mind he is the source of its cognitive faculties, and especially in the believer he enables him to perform religious actions, which of course cannot be seen as man's action independent of God, but must always be received anew as a gift in every act of faith, every act of adoration, and every act of obedience? For this to take place the operation of God has to become interior to man, so that his action does not only happen *to* man, but enables him to live his own intellectual and, especially, his own religious life and freedom.

1.2 The transcendence and immanence of the divine Word

The general issue of the transcendence and immanence of God becomes particularly focused when it is linked with a specific question relating to the transcendence and immanence of the divine *Word*.

Belief in the 'exteriority' of the divine Word – that it can never become a mere constituent in human monologue – is part of the heritage of the so-called 'monotheistic religions'. This exteriority expresses the freedom of God that is also expressed by belief in his transcendence. Here too, in the belief in the exteriority of the Word, the implied religious intention is to maintain the freedom of God who reveals himself to whom he wills, conceals himself from whom he wills, and also makes stubborn whom he wills: in his Word God remains free vis-à-vis the hearer. And, incidentally, he retains this freedom after the Word of revelation is spoken.

And as with belief in God's transcendence, so too in the matter of the exteriority of his Word, belief in divine freedom is linked with the experience of the human capacity for experiencing guilt: the hearer recognizes himself as a "man of impure lips" who is judged by the Word that is put on those lips.

All this would be impossible if the event of the Word were considered to be a process taking place only in God himself, as a Word remaining immanent in God, or conversely, if it could be understood as a mere 'externalization' of inner-soul processes, as a Word immanent in man.

Despite this shared belief in the Word's exteriority, religious texts do speak of the Word's making a home with man. And here again is a point of possible conflict between the 'monotheistic' religions. In Judaism and in Christianity, there is the leading idea that the divine command is not so far away that one would have to cross to the other side of the sea or go up to heaven, but it is "in your mouth and in your heart" (Dt 30:11 ff.). When perfection is attained – and this has also been mentioned before in the course of this symposium – the law will be written on man's heart so that "they no longer teach one another" (Jer 31:31 ff.). On the Christian side, these assertions are expressly taken up in the Letter to the Romans (Rm 10:8 ff.) and Johannine texts (Jn 14:26 and 1 Jn 2:27) also speak of man's capacity for putting into practice what he has heard (Ex 24:7), or professing it himself, as a sign of the inward operation of God and his Spirit in man. The Word does not only resound in the ear as a Word coming from outside, but can also be spoken and practised by man with the power granted by God, which is now present in man and becoming operative in him.

Moreover, a question arises from the Biblical records: how can it be conceptualized theologically that the Word of God should become the inner source of man's capacity to believe, obey and profess faith, without that Word thereby becoming a mere constituent of the pious monologue of the soul? There is no doubt that this danger exists, but the Bible clearly declares that man does not necessarily succumb to this danger.

If we throw in here a justifiable question: how does this concern the philosopher?, my initial reply is that, regarding the problem area referred to here, there is an answer offered by faith to a philosophical question and at the same time an answer offered by philosophy to a question raised by faith.

The philosophical question concerns the relation of human subjectivity to truth. On the one hand, truth is different from the way we conceive it; it is not a mere constituent of our subjectivity. The *veritas semper maior* frequently mentioned by philosophers, which is always greater than the way in which we become conscious of it, remains *exterior* to us insofar as we are permanently only on our way towards it; and the appearance of such a truth is always characterized by its being a contingent event that

cannot be calculated in advance by any law intrinsic to reason. On the other hand, this truth should not silence reason as a mere *stupendum*, with which it is confronted bewildered and perplexed. If this is to be avoided, then truth has to become internal to reason and operative within it as a new principle of its activity.

This is a topic that may occupy philosophers and theologians alike, and also believers in general. For it applies to *revelation* too and we must ask: how can the manifestation of God's truth retain the character of a contingent event resulting from no intrinsic necessity and being moreover freely granted, without its thereby becoming a mere *stupendum*, confronted with which man either falls silent or has no choice but to merely repeat it, reciting the outwardly heard word without understanding it?

1.3 The transcendence and immanence of truth

The theological question of the relation between the transcendence and immanence of God and his Word is thus related to the philosophical question of the relation between the transcendence and immanence of truth. The relation between these questions therefore sets up a certain area of philosophical-theological discourse. If we look at it from this angle, surprising impulses in both directions result: from theology towards a questioning philosophy and from philosophy towards a questioning theology that strives for an understanding of the word-event.

What unites religion and philosophy is the conviction that truth transcends human knowledge about it, the fact of the *veritas semper maior*. But it is the thesis of the immanence of this truth in human knowledge that denotes not only the point of possible conflict between them, but also the subject of their dialogue. The philosophical, and more precisely transcendental-philosophical, question is: how is it philosophically conceivable that both the subject's capacity for cognition (*veritas qua cognoscitur*) and the binding force of the objects (*veritas quae cognoscitur*) proceed from the subject's own activity without cognition thereby becoming a mere constituent of self-mirroring? If the latter were the case, the alleged cognition would rather become a means of the self-isolation of the subject, which in all alleged encounters with objects would be led to nowhere else but 'itself'. And the theological question is: how can both the capacity to believe and the content of faith be attributed to man as constituents of his new being, thinking and acting, without both the act and the content of faith becoming a mere explication of what man has always been and has unconsciously al-

ways known? If this were the case, man's alleged listening to the Word of God would become a means of the self-isolation of man who, in all alleged encounters with God, is only led towards ever new forms of self-affirmation. The correspondence of these two questions is what makes an intensive dialogue between theology and philosophy possible.

2. The teaching on creation as a 'protology of the Word' – the offer of a theological answer to a philosophical question

The philosopher who gets involved in dialogue with theology encounters a surprising experience: the theology of creation as 'protology of the Word' implies an answer to the philosophical question concerning the relationship between the exteriority (transcendence) and immanence of truth.

2.1 The transcendence and immanence of the creative Word

According to some Biblical statements, the Word is constitutive for everything there is. I am here of course alluding to the sequence of divine actions in the creation of light: "He said, there was, he separated, he called" (Gn 1:1). Even though in the further acts of creation, narrated in the first chapter of the Book Genesis, this sequence of verbs does not recur in the same form and the connection between God's Word and acts is described in very different ways, it still seems to be permissible to understand the first verse, which contains these four verbs, as a fundamental model of the whole story of creation.

Here the word as a creating Word is first and foremost a command; it does not presuppose its addressee, but brings him about. And this is already why it is different from anything the creature could be and say of itself. At the same time the divine Word as a Word of specifying and naming is admitted into what is created and inheres in it in a lasting manner. Obviously, this specifying and naming is not the outward establishment of a nomenclature, but has a 'word-character' that is intrinsic to the creature; it is what it has been intended by God in his specifying and naming.

In this context man's task is obviously, if not to speak the word of command, then ultimately to speak on his own authority the word of specifying and naming the creatures – incidentally, in dissociation from his previous commission to name the creatures, Adam is aiming at the goal of being enabled to say, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gn 2:23). Thus giving his own word of specifying and naming, man

specifically expresses the word-relatedness of what has been created. And the extent to which this is made man's own responsibility is made clear by the intense expectancy, as it were, with which God himself waits "to see what he [Adam] would call them [the creatures]" (Gn 2:19).

In answer to the question of how man must have been created with the capacity to fulfil such a task, we usually say: man's capacity to express the truth of things through his word presupposes that he is a rational being. However, when the Holy Scriptures mention the spirit, be it the spirit of man or the Spirit of God, it always means at the same time the breath of life and the bearer of the word, for man's capacity to breathe is linked with his capacity to speak. This already applies to the anatomy and physiology of the human body: we speak with the breath of life. But this anatomical-physiological aspect seems to be an important presupposition for the Biblical way of speaking about man: thinking and speaking is not something added to life that might also be absent; and, conversely, being alive is not a secondary addition to man's rationality. Rather, the rational word is breathed out with the breath of life, which for its part, emerges from the self-communication of God, who "breathed into his [Adam's] nostrils the breath of life" (Gn 2:7). Understood in this way, man's participation in the divine life is the condition for the possibility for man's participation in the divine power of the Word.

2.2 Consequences for the relation between truth and subjectivity

The philosopher who hears the Biblical assertions about the divine Word of creation and the divine gift of the breath of life and the capacity to speak granted to man, may learn that it is the foremost task of man to speak this word that is inborn in things; the second task is also thus simultaneously introduced, which is for the divine Word that specifies and names to provide an image in the human *verbum mentis et oris*, the inward word of thought and the outward enunciated word of speech.

In this Biblically inspired assertion about the task of man's word another topic is included which may be discussed philosophically: it is not by chance that it was between Muslim and Christian Aristotelians that the whole medieval discussion concerning the *verbum mentis* and the *intellectus agens* took place, i. e., concerning the creative and formative activity of human reason, which forms the subjects of rational cognition from the material of sensual conceptions and only thus brings them about. This philosophical discussion cannot be adequately understood on the basis of

Aristotle's rare statements on the subject. Looking back from the medieval texts to the Aristotelian sources, one is extremely disappointed that the statements one finds there on the active reason are so peripheral and poor. It was theologically engaged philosophers who, because as theologians they were concerned with the Word, came to see the Aristotelian texts in a changed light and above all understood the urgency of the question about the meaning of the human specifying and naming of things.

Thus the 'protology of the Word', those statements about what 'happened in the beginning' in order to make human thinking and speaking possible, became an attempt to answer the philosophical question: how can the truth be living in the mind of man and become a principle of his autonomous activity without dissolving into a mere function of human subjectivity? Understood on a Biblical basis, the flash of truth retains the character of a contingent event; for it is important for the whole context discussed here to see that the breath of life must be received anew with every breath taken. Breath of life, breath of spirit, that enables man to exist and gain knowledge, thus far remains 'exterior', something to be received always anew, never dissolving in human subjectivity; and therefore the flash of truth remains a contingent event, but one by which reason is not silenced, but is specifically granted the capacity to enunciate the autonomously spoken word.

The answer to the philosophical problem of the transcendence and immanence of truth offered by Islamic and Christian philosophers can be summarized as follows: the truth of things, instituted in them by the divine Word of creation, and the cognitive capacity of man, instituted in him by the divine breath of life, are images of the same divine Word which calls things into being and man to gain knowledge. As such images, things and the human mind bear the truth within themselves; however, since the prototype remains exterior to the image, truth is not limited to being an inward constituent of creaturely being or human subjectivity.

3. A philosophical contribution to a theological discussion

So it has become clear that a theology of the Word, inspired by Islamic or Christian philosophy, has developed an approach of its own towards resolving the problem of the transcendence and immanence of word and truth. From this perspective, this theology of the Word has time and again been in a position to contribute to the theological discussion about the ex-

tent to which it is the same Word of which we may say that it is in God and with God, and, on the other hand, that it is the Word spoken into the world, dwelling in it as the innermost principle of its life. The philosophical teaching of the *verbum mentis* could thus become helpful for interpreting a theology of the *Verbum Dei*.

For in the controversies between Islamic and Christian philosophers, and particularly between Islamic and Christian Aristotelians, a philosophical epistemology was developed which could in its own way bear fruit for a theological understanding of the creative and redemptive divine Word. If the activity of man which is seen only to bring about the subjects of cognition as such can be understood as the image of the divine Word of creation, and every cognitive activity of man should therefore be understood through its being the image of the divine Word of creation, then it is also possible to explain how the divine Word of revelation too calls man into a new mode of existence: through the Word's making a home with him, the hearer of the Word becomes a self-sufficient and autonomous subject of the *actus essendi* as well as of the *actus credendi*, without the divine Word thereby ceasing to be the transcendent *Aeternum Verbum Patris*. The self-sufficient and autonomous act of human subjectivity becomes possible particularly because and insofar as man, as a hearer of the Word, is addressed by the God whose nature is different from him and from all creatures.

What can such reflections mean for a possible Christian-Muslim dialogue?

1. To start with a historical reminder: there was a time when Christians were learners in their relationship to a philosophy inspired by Islam, even though it may have been a learning in confrontation "*Contra Gentiles*". Was this the result of a unique, unrepeatable set of conditions? Or is there a possibility that it may recur on the basis of the specific character of Islam and of Christianity?

2. This learning of Christian theologians from philosophers who had been inspired by Islam was mediated by a fruitful mutual relationship between a theologically inspired philosophy and a theology taking up philosophical methods. A theological treatment of the *Verbum Divinum* and a philosophical treatment of the *verbum mentis* fertilized each other in an extraordinary way. Now, we point out that these Islamic Aristotelians have far fewer successors within Islam than within Christian theology. Now, at a time when even Christian theologians seem to have got somewhat weary

of philosophy, I finally dare to stress that the great turning point in Christian-Muslim dialogue became possible exactly because the mutual relation between philosophy and theology was held in high esteem, at least by some representatives of both religious communities. Christian as well as Islamic contempt for philosophy would thus obstruct an important opportunity for Christian-Muslim dialogue: Therefore once more the question: was the encounter between Christians and Muslims in the field of a theologically inspired philosophy, a philosophy that fertilized theology, only possible in unique and unrepeatable historical conditions? Or is there a possibility that is important in principle and grounded in the specific nature of Islam and of Christianity, so that it cannot be ignored without detriment to both religious communities?

3. The theology of the *Verbum Divinum* and the philosophy of human subjectivity expressed in the *verbum mentis* seem to show in an exemplary way that, and how, a mutual relation between philosophical and theological questions open up specific possibilities for both philosophy and theology which cannot be neglected without disadvantage to both. And in this context it seems helpful to remember that the fact that there are good Biblical – and presumably also good Qur’ānic – reasons for maintaining that one cannot adequately speak about the creative power of the human cognitive capacity without at the same time speaking of the Word of God, and also, conversely, that one cannot adequately speak of the divine Word’s creative power if one does not accept that the assertion of the rationality (reasonableness) and rationability (accountability) of faith, which is so strongly emphasized by Muslims and Christians, also requires an appropriate theory of human cognition. Without such a theory of human cognition, the thesis that faith is reasonable and accountable would remain a mere assertion that does not live up to its promise.

Questions and Interventions

[Study Group 1]

Adam and
naming in the
Bible and the
Qur’ān

ZIRKER As was mentioned in the lecture, the Bible says that in paradise God called on Adam to give names to the animals – “to see what he would call them” (Gn 2:19).

There is an interesting parallel to this scene in the Qur’ān (Sūra 2,31–33) which at the same time significantly contradicts the Biblical story, for in the Qur’ān all this takes place in the context of competition and controversy with the angels who do not want to recognize the sovereignty of man or Adam. God calls on the angels to tell him the nature of all things, whereupon the angels withdraw, saying that God alone is perfect in knowledge and they have none. Then God calls on Adam to tell them the nature of all things – and Adam knows the names which God has taught him.

This naming of the animals, which Adam is asked to do in the Bible, may of course refer back to God’s preceding act of creation – but it is nonetheless Adam who autonomously gives the names. According to the Qur’ān, however, Adam knows the names (and is thereby superior to the angels), although not by virtue of his own ability, but in the sense of repeating God’s naming of things.

LEUZE Accordingly, the important aspect of the human power of speech would be reduced in the Qur’ān to a knowledge of the names that already existed.

KAHLERT And then the focal point of the Qur’ānic story would be man’s position of dignity ...

ZIRKER ... especially as compared with the angels. This introduces the crucial Qur’ānic concept of *khalīfa*, meaning ‘vicegerent’ or ‘successor’, referring to the position due to man. The concept is used in the Qur’ān in this twofold meaning, not in a political sense: man is characterized as ‘vicegerent’, meaning a representative of God, and as ‘successor’, probably meaning successor to the angels.

the discussion
concerning the
‘intellectus agens’

GRESHAKE With regard to the history of theology, we are in this context reminded of the dispute between the Christian West and the Arab Aristotelians, a dispute that was also significant for the Lateran Council V (1512–1517): there the issue was whether the *intellectus agens* is given to

every human being individually or whether there is just one that is active in all humans. Although the latter position, held by the so-called 'Neo-Aristotelians', was rejected by the Church as pantheistic, underlying this problem (whether it is God's intellect that, being universal, brings about understanding in every human being) was ultimately the creature's implied self-sufficiency vis-à-vis God.

ZIRKER Which is why we must bear in mind that in the Islamic tradition it was particularly these philosophers, such as Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), who had much less standing than they had with us and were considered by orthodox Islam to be heretics.

a theological dialogue about the Word of God should be held

KARRER What developed in the course of history in the field of philosophical dialogue between Islam and Christianity is extremely impressive, and we may well consider how much today we lag behind the Middle Ages in this respect. On the other hand, it was ultimately not a specifically theological dialogue, but a dialogue whose subject was actually a third party, Aristotle.

If we look today for a dialogue about the Word of God, should we not try to pick it up from where the Qur'ān actually speaks about the Word and obviously in some passages even links Jesus with the Word? We should examine this anew and follow up the question of how Islam, in its conception of God's transcendence, actually proceeds from the assumption that the Word of God remains forever external to and distant from mankind. Would it not be possible to bridge the gap in another way than via Aristotelian philosophy, which is on the whole suspected of heterodoxy in Islam?

ZIRKER A relevant theme in the Islamic tradition, which plays an important role in mystical thinking, says that God summoned all people in their pre-existence and asked them, "Am I not your Lord?" and they said, "Yea! We do testify!" (Sūra 7, 172). The point here is God's call and question addressed to mankind – and mankind's profession in reply. What is striking is that the externality of God's question addressed to man and of man's answer continues; however, this is not the externality of a historical event, but of a pre-historical event that precedes all individual histories. This may initially appear to be a response to a very different question from the one that was raised, but perhaps it is ultimately relevant.

FÜGLISTER Complementing this conception of pre-existence in Islam, in the Jewish tradition we find a seemingly very similar conception of a 'chamber of souls', in which all souls are already pre-existent. More specifically,

a certain analogy may be found in the Jewish Midrash, where a gathering of all the (seventy) peoples is mentioned; the Torah is offered to all of them, but Israel alone accepts it.

finite man facing the infinite God

WESS In all this there is an unanswered question: how does the createdness of man's cognitive capacity affect his knowledge of God and his Word. In Thomas Aquinas

there are two assertions concerning this question: one suggests that the human intellect is simply limited, *simpliciter finitus*. When it comes to the transcendence of God, Thomas thus advocates the view that God is not only incomprehensible in the sense that He cannot be understood within the human horizon, but that he also simply transcends this horizon. The other speaks of an *intellectus finitus capax infiniti*, a finite intellect capable of the infinite. These two assertions do not seem to be compatible.

GRESHAKE Mr. Schaeffler said in his lecture that the exteriority of the transcendent Word – by virtue of this very Word itself – creates an immanent *capacitas* that makes man capable of accepting this Word. The question concerning the infinite character of man is therefore answered by stating that it is the Word which, as a transcendent one, addresses man and simultaneously brings about within man his capacity to accept that same Word. In this sense, man on his own is not capable of receiving the Word, but the capacity is granted to him.

WESS Then there still remains the question of whether it is intrinsically – and therefore even for God – possible to create a finite being with an infinite capacity, or whether God's true nature remains hidden and inaccessible.

MITTERHÖFER Did not the First Vatican Council also deal with the question of the extent to which the truth of faith, God's infinity, is accessible to man? Insofar as it is so, it is not in the sense that man, as it were, may be seen as a vessel containing God's infinity, but in the sense that he has the capacity to strive for it, which enables man to approach this infinity and to conceive of part of it.

WESS If God in his true nature transcends the horizon of man, he cannot be striven for in himself, but only in what he grants to us. This would mean that man does not seek to become God, but that he is striving for an eternally full human life which he can share with his brothers and sisters.

man infinitely transcends man

GRESHAKE Man's striving to be God must not be contrasted with his wanting to be a human being. If man transcends man infinitely, as Pascal says, it means that

being human itself reaches out towards being God.

As Mr. Mitterhöfer has already said, Thomas Aquinas speaks of an infinite horizon and of a striving open to infinity. In Aquinas finitude and infinity are not on the same level such that they could exclude each other. In keeping with the transcendental nature of being to be true – *ens et verum convertuntur* – man is granted a horizon open to infinity, which nevertheless does not imply that man could actually perceive all being. The fact that man can be addressed by God himself does not prejudice God's freedom to communicate to man what he wants him to communicate.

ZIRKER From a Muslim perspective, it would of course not be possible to link a human being's increasing in knowledge, or entering more deeply into striving, with the concept of 'becoming God'. Being God is forever separated from being human. In Islamic mysticism there are statements that speak of a human longing to become God, but for theological orthodoxy, this is something utterly presumptuous and reprehensible.

GRESHAKE Is it conceivable that a Muslim could accept a phenomenology of man against the background of Pascal's statement referred to before: that man transcends himself infinitely? Do Muslims also sense an insatiable longing and desire that can be fulfilled by God alone?

Islamic orthodoxy and mysticism **ZIRKER** It is harder to speak about Muslims in general here than in relation to any other topic. In mysticism we may, as has already been said, find this longing for God as something that may even be fulfilled. But from the perspective of the Qur'an and orthodox theology, paradise is not a matter of being with God, but rather of a prosperous shared human life granted by God. Particularly in this context, the open question which Father Bsteh mentioned this morning and to which we should probably pay much more attention, remains the question of the status of mysticism in Islam. Meaningful as mysticism is, the critical question certainly always remains of whether it entails that 'exaggeration – *ghulūw*' which is definitely rejected in Islamic theology.

critical tendencies in Protestant theology **LEUZE** In Protestant theology there have also been tendencies to reject or at least treat critically the anthropological approach presented by Mr. Greshake to man's infinitely striving and reaching out for knowledge. So

this is not only a difference between religions, but between denominations. **WESS** The theological question should also be raised of what the difference would be between this longing for deification and sin, which according to Genesis means wanting to be like God (cf. Gn 3:5). Would the

difference only be that the sinner wants to seize something for himself which he can and will receive anyway?

tentative usage in the Bible **FÜGLISTER** To address once more the issue of the *visio beatifica*. It seems important not to compare apples with pears – in this case not to compare the Christian conception of a beatific vision, as it was developed only in later patristics and scholasticism, with Qur'anic statements – but to draw a parallel between statements on the same level, i. e. Qur'anic texts and Biblical texts. If we look at the Bible, even at the New Testament: what in fact is bliss? In the Revelation to John, we find mainly Old Testament metaphors: God will wipe every tear from their eyes (21:4), they will not thirst again (21:6); and, interestingly, these phrases which in the Old Testament apply to Israel; he will dwell with them, and; they will be my people and I will be their God (21:3), or: I will be their God and they will be my children (21:7), as well as the promise – quite in line with Deutero-Isaiah: there will be no temple any longer (21:22). And then, right at the end, it says once more: "They will see his face" (22:4).

As has already been suggested in Mr. Greshake's lecture, there are some arguments in favour of speaking of an 'experience of God' rather than '*visio Dei*', just as Moses experiences God very personally in his vision. In Hebrew, however, seeing corresponds to experiencing. Here too, the rest of the New Testament is very cautious, with the single exception of one passage in 1 Cor 13:12 which states that then "we will see face to face". And when it says at the end of this Song of Love, "then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known", it does not say in more detail what we will know. So we should be careful when saying with reference to the Qur'an that for Muslims life in paradise is just a blessed life with God only now and then looking in, as it were, whereas our Christian faith tells us there will be a *visio beatifica*. Obviously, in traditional Christian theology perfection has been understood too much in terms of the *visio beatifica*, whereas actually in the New Testament it is only referred to very sparingly.

GRESHAKE On the basis of today's usage, terms like 'vision of God' and 'blessed vision of God' are indeed not very appropriate in the context of the subject we are discussing here, but this is because of a fundamental change of meaning of the word 'see'. In Greek Antiquity 'seeing' implies the most intense contact with reality; Greek culture is, as it were, a 'culture of seeing'. In fact 'seeing' and 'being seen' stand for what we understand today as 'exchange' of life. In looking at each other, the deep import is a

mutual self-giving, a communication. With regard to the New Testament, is this not exactly what should be emphasized much more explicitly? After all, at the time of Jesus, there were a great number of eschatological images – it is said that once several hundred were counted; it is therefore all the more significant that Jesus has ultimately selected only *one* of them, the image of the meal. This is the metaphor which, against the Jewish background, expresses the most intense community. Then heaven is seen essentially as a ‘social event’. And are not all the metaphors quoted from the Revelation to John also meant to emphasize precisely this social, communal character of perfection – the perfection in the completed community of created beings in company with each other and with God?

FÜGLISTER It is all the more regrettable that the conception of the beatific vision has been so individualized in the course of history.

GRESHAKE Last but not least by Thomas Aquinas, who expressly asks if man needs his brother to attain everlasting bliss and gives the answer: no, although there is then a very exciting sequence of interpretations of this.

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KARRER Is there in Islam a theology of the word, as we may ultimately find underlying Mr. Schaeffler’s lecture? Protestantism after all links some essential concepts with a theology of the word. If, as Christian theologians, we speak about the word and look for commonalities with Islam on this topic, it is now looking rather necessary to disregard a theology of the word in favour of medieval philosophy. But are there not a number of statements in the Qur’ān referring to the word, and is there not an inner connection between these passages or a theological reflection on these Qur’ānic statements?

ZIRKER According to Islamic understanding, the Qur’ān is the word of God as such and there is intensive theological debate about what this tenet of faith really means. Analogously to the Christological controversies, there have been controversies in Islam over whether the Qur’ān is created or uncreated. The solution that the Qur’ān is both created and uncreated is strongly reminiscent of the dogmatic decision of Chalcedon: the Qur’ān is uncreated insofar as it is the eternal word of God, and created insofar as it was declared historically, and here and now liturgically proclaimed.¹

¹ Cf. in this context also M. Talbi, “Hören auf sein Wort. Der Koran in der Geschichte der islamischen Tradition”, in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Hören auf sein Wort. Der Mensch als Hörer des Wortes Gottes in christlicher und islamischer Überlieferung* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 7). Mödling, 1992, pp. 119–150, here: p. 119.

So there is a very decisive word-of-God-theology in Islam. Jesus is called “His word” as well (Qur’ān 4,171), which of course must not make us connect the Christian Logos-theology with the Islamic assertions about Jesus. However, links with the *ḥimḥ*-understanding in Syrian theology are obvious.

KAHLERT Was it not at the heart of Muḥammad’s early preaching that man shows excessive wickedness if he is proud of his own achievements and arrogantly intends to be dependent on nobody? Does the Qur’ān not suggest openness towards God by speaking about his dependence on God? This is ultimately known because man can recognize the signs of God in creation which he has set everywhere.²

ZIRKER Man’s dependence on God has to be distinguished from his openness towards God. The sense of dependence results from belief in God as Creator. Daily food, wool for making clothes, animal furs for tents, ships on the ocean, etc. – according to the Qur’ān all this has been created by God for mankind (cf. e. g. 2,164; 14,32; 16,80 f.; 17,66). The Qur’ān (even more strongly than the Bible) declares God’s thoughtfulness for man with a naivety that may lead one to ask how a Muslim theologian would cope today with the objections raised by criticism of religion, even if he accepted the challenge. Incidentally, in a dialogue between Christianity and Islam criticism of religion could also have a part.

WOLBERT There are Islamic philosophers who are intensely occupied with European philosophy – as for instance with Descartes. Do they see European philosophy – at the time of the Enlightenment or at present – as a totally alien world, or do they recognize in it problems they also share?

ZIRKER In the Islamic world there are, on the one hand, representatives of an extreme criticism of religion (partly of a Marxist provenance), who may still call themselves Muslims, but who mean by this only that they want to be seen as belonging to a certain cultural context. On the other hand, there are Islamic theologians and scholars – mostly holding professorial chairs in Western countries – who take up the modern history of ideas and its methods very intensely, including historical-critical questions about Muḥammad and the Qur’ān. However, if we went to al-Azhar, for instance, it would be hard to find modern thinking in theology.

² Cf. M. Zakzouk, “Der Mensch im Koran als Hörer des göttlichen Wortes. Gnade, Freiheit und Verpflichtung”, in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Hören auf sein Wort*. op. cit. (fn. 1) pp. 35–70, esp. pp. 41–44.60 f.

SCHMÜCKER Perhaps we should not focus so much on the contrast between theology and philosophy in Islam, but on the philosophical controversies that arise in the field of theology, as when the Mu'tazila tried to understand the tenets of faith by means of reason, but then later, for the Ash'arīs, only the wording of the revelation is decisive. So perhaps Arab philosophy only emerges when the philosophical problems have already been formulated in theology?

ZIRKER It is interesting to know that the Mu'tazila had already receded into the background when the great philosophers, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Sīnā, came on the scene. The problems had also changed. Another reason why the philosophers had fallen into such disrepute was, for example, their teaching about the eternity of the world and the subsequent controversies with orthodoxy which did not consider these teachings compatible with the Qur'ānic concept of creation. For the Mu'tazila the issue was above all the competence of reason and free will in their relation with God's causation of everything. To resolve these questions, the Mu'tazila proposed models which found little acceptance, not least because of their political implications.

MITTERHÖFER Thinking of Mr. Greshake's lecture and the trinitarian theological approach developed there, it would be interesting to know the approach he would have chosen to develop the subject Mr. Schaeffler dealt with in his contribution.

GRESHAKE At first we should probably note a certain convergence between the approaches of both lectures. I would probably have referred the problem of transcendence and immanence, the question of identity and difference between the created being and the divine being, back to the inner-trinitarian process of one person's receiving the divine being from the other.

Fundamentally characterizing being as gift, which Mr. Schaeffler emphasized very much and which he himself sees in a similar way to me, has its prototype in the quality of giving that distinguishes inner-trinitarian relations.

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criticism of religion – but only concerning the position of others?

LEUZE Could one find in Islam something similar to Barth's theology, in which although he accepts criticism of religion, he does not see that Christian revelation is affected by it?

KAHLERT Perhaps we might see something comparable in the thinking of modern Islamic authors who, on the one hand, are

enthusiastic about the application of historical criticism and the results of historico-critical research to the Christian Scriptures only in order then to state that the Qur'ān, on the other hand, is the revealed word of God.

LEUZE Perhaps this has also something to do with the fact that statements are made about Jesus in the Qur'ān, which can be more easily harmonized with historical criticism than with New Testament statements when they are read without that criticism.

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old and new things in the Qur'ānic message

ZIRKER Two different dimensions must be distinguished in the message of the Qur'ān. There is, on the one hand, the simple primordial faith of Islam which man bears within himself from creation and can probably be summarized as: "God is my Lord; he guides me and helps me in mercy; but, on Judgment Day he will also call me to account." In Islamic understanding, this awareness which is immanent in man's nature, may also be found in the teachings of Jesus and Moses and the rest of the prophets – up to the preaching of Muḥammad.

On the other hand, the Qur'ān also presents a special social order for the *umma* that is only established with the activity of Muḥammad. This *shari'a* need not be identical with the *shari'a* of Jesus and all the other earlier messengers of God. Thus Islam has a particular understanding of the historicity and diversity of revelation. But since the Qur'ān was proclaimed, according to its own universally authoritative claim, there can no longer be a legitimate plurality in the history of religions.

ultimate finality of an originally particular order?

FÜGLISTER This is quite similar to the position of Orthodox Jews, for whom the Torah is definitive, and it is where the practical problems arise: according to his original intention Muḥammad wanted to establish an order initially for his small *umma*, and then for the Arabs. Eventually this was declared to be de facto universal. This is where the problem lies.

ZIRKER It could be very fruitful to follow this up, particularly since in the short revelation-period between 610 and 632 it was possible to annul commands of the *shari'a*, as is expressed in the doctrine of abrogation, whereas later this can no longer happen. So the question arises: why should it have been possible at that time, when they were learning to deal with problems, to withdraw certain regulations (or, according to Islamic understanding, for God to abrogate them), but not later?

What is felt to be very frustrating and irritating in Christian-Muslim dia-

logue is that, according to Islamic understanding, all the other prophets, including Jesus, are considered to have had a specific mission and only Islam is the universal religion. Muslims feel supported in this view if they can say, by referring even to Christian exegetes, that the historical Jesus believed himself to be sent to his own people alone, and that it was only the post-Easter Jesus who sent his disciples to all parts of the world.

the messenger's relationship to his message **LEUZE** The fact that, in Islam, Jesus (like Muhammad) is seen as separate from his message can indeed be felt as a serious problem for Christian-Muslim dialogue. If Jesus declares his message, but not in such a way that his person and his message are one, it may even lead to Jesus appearing to support the Qur'ān.

ZIRKER In this context there is an interesting parallel which Muslims sometimes draw between Muhammad and Mary: just as Mary gave birth to Jesus, the "Word" of God (Sūra 4,171) in a way beyond human capacity, without the cooperation of a father, entirely through the creative power of God, similarly Muhammad proclaimed the word of God without being himself remotely capable of doing so. He is "unlettered" (*ummī*; Sūra 7,157), even illiterate. If we class the Prophet as low according to the level of his education, the miracle of his message is all the greater, as though it were the virginal conception of God's word.³

word-of-God-theology in Islam? **KARRER** Is the Qur'ān seen as the word of God, and how is this word-of-God-theology developed further? Is it an effective word? Does it have a redeeming power? How is it conveyed to man?

ZIRKER From a Muslim perspective, one could not say that the world was created through the Qur'ān, through this word of God. This implies an important difference from the word-of-God-theology in Christian understanding.

the Qur'ānic word is not a creative word ... **KARRER** Is there any mention of a 'creative word' when the Qur'ān speaks of creation?

ZIRKER Sūra 2,117 says of the Creator of the heavens and the earth: "When He decreeth a matter, He saith to it: 'Be', and it is." Yet, this spoken word of God is not identified with the word of God in the Qur'ān. Another context is of considerable importance for understanding the Qur'ān.

³ Cf. also A. Schimmel's reference in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Islam Questioning Christianity* (Christian Faith in the Encounter with Islam; vol. 1). Mödling, 2007, p. 31.

... but an unfathomable word

Two passages (varying the metaphors) say: "And if all the trees on earth were pens and the Ocean (were ink) [...], yet would not the Words of God be exhausted" (Qur'ān 31,27; cf. 18,109). Here the question has to remain open of whether Islamic theology has ever digested the difference between this unfathomable, inexhaustible word of God, and the word of God in the Qur'ān defined in Sūras and verses.

historically selective, but sufficient

Finally, there is a further important aspect to the Islamic word-of-God-theology: the historical selectiveness/specificity of the revelation. How can the event of the Qur'ān, which emerged in the 7th century, between 610 and 632, during this particular period of Muhammad's life, be thought of, in its historical limitedness and contingency, as an eternal word? And why was this word given precisely then? Why not before? And why was this universality not already found in the proclamation of Jesus or Moses? The revelation of the Qur'ān is initially only ascertained as a fact. The question of the basis for this is not raised – as little as the question is raised in Christian theology of why God supremely and ultimately revealed himself in Jesus of Nazareth and not somewhere else in the history of mankind.

WESS Should we not also probably ask not only why the word of God should have been given only here and now, but also why there cannot and will not be a further revelation to follow?

ZIRKER In Islamic understanding it is simply a given that this word of God in the Qur'ān is sufficient. The issue is therefore not, as in the Christian word-of-God-theology, the word of God as such, which we comprehend more and more in its unfathomable fullness – sharing and approaching it, but the transmission of a word which is sufficient for mankind and which has no need to be excelled by later prophets or later books. The Book is sure, everybody can open it, it is universally present. There is therefore no need either to 're-enact' the word of God in any sacramental signs.

can God alone explain the Qur'ān?

FÜGLISTER But the Qur'ān also says that God alone can explain the Qur'ān.

ZIRKER This is stated in Sūra 3,7: "But no one knows its [the Qur'ān's] hidden meanings except God." God's statement in Sūra 75,19 is similar: "It is for us to explain it (and make it clear)." – Moreover, the Qur'ān refers to the fact that it contains "allegorical" passages, followed by those "in whose hearts is perversity [...] seek-

ing discord, and searching for its hidden meanings" (3,7). But it does not say why there is this obscurity and ambiguity.

WOLBERT Is there agreement among Muslims about which passages are clear and which are obscure?

ZIRKER The answer would probably be: look at what you start fighting over because the one reads it like this and the other like that. However, there shall be no discord among you, so search for those passages that are clear. And it is basically God who also provides the commentary.

FÜGLISTER However, it is also frequently said – particularly in connection with controversies between Christians and Jews or Jews and Muslims: God will show it and that only at the end of time (cf. Qur'an 5,51). So the Qur'an does not claim that everything is clear: there are points that remain open and God will show what the truth is.

KRÜGER It is known that only the Arabic text of the Qur'an is binding. How do Muslims deal with the necessity for the Qur'an to be translated?

ZIRKER Translation is permitted, but it is essentially impossible. All translations are only intensive endeavours to interpret the meaning of the Qur'an in Turkish, German, etc. In fact, a translated edition of the Qur'an is only acceptable as such if the Arabic text is alongside the 'translation'. From this perspective it was quite surprising that the Secretary General of the Islamic World Congress wrote the preface to Adel Th. Khoury's translation of the Qur'an, although there is no parallel Arabic text in this edition.⁴

KRÜGER So does this mean that somebody who does not have a good command of Arabic cannot really be a Muslim?

ZIRKER We should not perhaps put it in those words, but it is certainly true that as a Muslim one should in fact learn Arabic.

But this raises a certain discord within Islam that is based on the Qur'an, which says expressly (cf. Sūra 41,44) that it is written in Arabic so that the Arabs cannot avoid it, objecting: What is this supposed to mean for us who are people speaking Arabic, a book written in a foreign language (for instance, in Hebrew or in Greek)? Then, however, this book went to Persia, and Turkey, etc. How should we respond to this obvious contradiction between the new situation and the old argumentation, between the universally oriented proclamation and the linguistic-cultural limitation?

⁴ Cf. in this context also *op. cit.* (fn. 3) pp. 230 f.

GRESHAKE Would this not also possibly imply, for an Islamic theology of the word, that simply reciting the Qur'an in Arabic has its effect – even when it is not understood? On the other hand, there would be a great tension between this and the idea that the Qur'an is a right guidance of God, a word telling man how to live his life. How can this be true, if the word is not understood?

ZIRKER At this point the Muslim would probably say that simply reciting the Qur'an would be inadequate; preaching and teaching would have to be added.

KAHLERT But in the Arab mosque we may come across a massive sense of superiority over the Turkish mosque.

[Study Group 2]

Shekinah – a conception also found in Islamic tradition?

ELIAS In the lecture the Jewish concept of Shekinah was mentioned. For the purpose of Christian-Muslim dialogue it would be important to know whether a similar concept is to be found in the Islamic tradition and, if so, how Christian theology might approach it?

KHOURY A certain correspondence could be seen in the Qur'anic affirmation of God's presence among humankind, which brings them tranquillity. The point, however, is not so much God's making a home with man, but rather "pouring his calm on the believers" (following the term *sakina* – a Hebrew loanword), which God sends down on the Apostle and on the believers (cf. Qur'an 9,26 and 46,18,26). "It is He Who sent down Tranquillity into the hearts of the Believers" (48,4).

does God remain free in relation to his word of revelation, even after it is spoken?

A question to Mr. Schaeffler arises from his statement that God is not only free before the word of revelation, but remains so after it was pronounced. How is God's liberty to be understood after his word of revelation was spoken? If he reveals himself, God in a certain sense commits himself. If this were not the case, man would

also remain free to accept or reject that revelation and this would then also directly affect the human obligation to obey in faith. God at least commits himself in the sense that he no longer allows what he reveals to be contradicted, even taking into account his own freedom. The Ash'arīs, for instance, used to think that everything is but a positively decreed revelation, absolutely everything, including what is good and what is evil. If God for-

bids killing in the Bible or in the Qur'ān, he could in theory order exactly the opposite tomorrow, and then we would be expected to kill.

SCHAEFFLER If we consider initially the effects of the divine word, we may say that God remains free to determine the effects of his word even after he has spoken. A word that was sent to sanctify humans and make them a new creation, can also, if God so wills, make them stubborn and push them into darkness. The hearer of the word, even when the word is given, remains constantly dependent on the freely granted grace of God if the redeeming word is not to judge and condemn him.

If we raise a further question about the subject matters of God's word, we may think time and again of the passage at the beginning of the First Book of Samuel. Seeing what the sons of Eli have done, God says: Although I have said that the priesthood will stay with your family until the end of the world, I now declare: far be it from me, your house and your father's house. If you refer to my promises and assume that nothing can go wrong any more, then I say: Away with you! (cf. 1 Sm 2:30). These words show that God is free, even from his own promise. And incidentally, we may rightly sense that it is not accidental that these words are found at the beginning of this Book of Samuel, if we remember Saul's fate, his vocation and his rejection.

We find a similar striking example of the fact that God remains free vis-à-vis the word that he has spoken in the Book of Jonah, where it says that Jonah comes to Nineveh and cries out: "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" You would think that the person of faith is the one who says in reply to the word spoken by God: We have to obey, all this will happen just as the prophet announced it. The king of Nineveh, however, gives a completely different answer which we would normally interpret as a reply of unbelief, when he says: "Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish." (Jon 3:9), which made Jonah very irritated and he became angry (Jon 4:2 f.). In the first case (1 Sm 2:30) a promise of salvation is revoked, although it was expressly given "for ever". In the second case (Jon 3:10) the announcement of a disaster is revoked, although it was definitely decreed ("Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"). Thus, in both good and evil, God is the master even of what he himself has declared through his word. The tension between the freedom of God and the reliability of his word cannot be removed by emphasizing one or the other.

KHOURY In the Islamic tradition, the idea that God remains free even with regard to his own word has its classical parallel in the Qur'ānic doctrine of

abrogation or withdrawal, *an-nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh*, which says that God remains free with regard to his revelation so that he can later revoke what he has once stated and replace it with something else, not, of course, simply something opposed to it, but something similar or better. This would be the case with Jonah: it is better to save the people than to let them perish.

SCHAEFFLER In the story of Jonah, emphasis is obviously placed on the dialogical character of the narrative: after all, there is a certain correspondence between God's turning from his anger and the humans' giving up their sin, which then conveys the impression to the prophet – whom God had finally brought very painfully to the point of speaking in his name – that his prophetic mission eventually put him to great shame.

VANONI Concerning the whole story about Jonah, we must notice a certain trick the narrator plays. On the one hand, there is no doubt that Jonah's vocation has something to do with wickedness and evil (cf. Jon 1:1 f. and 3:1–3) and that Jonah, by setting out and walking, does what he is told. However, it remains uncertain whether the content of his proclamation in fact corresponds to his mission: in Jonah, the *dabar YHWH*, the word of Yahweh, is a guiding word, which gets very close to the concept of Shekinah insofar as the word of God, through the power by which it works, already makes itself somewhat independent by achieving inexorably what God wills. Even before the king responds to it, the whole city had turned from their evil ways: "And the people of Nineveh believed God [...]" (Jon 3:5). Finally the king orders the people to do what they had already done long ago. Jonah's problem is an important question facing the theology of God's word. Although the word of God is preached by humans inadequately and clumsily, the theory underlying the Book of Jonah is that, despite all this, it is always a matter of the whole word of God which achieves in and of itself what God wills.

SCHAEFFLER Whatever the case, it seems remarkable that in the story of Jonah, the king listens to a prediction of disaster – whether Jonah delivered it correctly or not – and replies with the strange idea that God may change his mind. This reflects an idea that God is free in respect of what he has said. At first, it seems scandalous after all to speak about God as we would about a man who we hope will change his mind. But it implies a distinct reference to God's sovereignty which remains in the face of everything – even with regard to an elected priesthood guaranteed till the end of the world, as was clear in the chapter of the First Book of Samuel already quoted above.

NEUMANN Is it part of the intention of the Book of Jonah to say that the call to repent is also addressed to the pagans?

VANONI As in the parable of the two sons (cf. Lk 15:11–32), where it is the elder son who stays at home who is the real problem, it is Jonah's problem that he must learn that God works beyond the limits of theological conceptions and that the so-called pagans (basically not a Biblical term) are considered to be more pious and religious than the Israelites themselves. Apart from the Israelites at the Red Sea (Ex 14:31), in the whole Old Testament it is only the people of Nineveh who are said to believe in God (Jon 3:5). This is initially a new self-criticism of Israel calling them to become aware that they should actually open up: being chosen is ultimately always characterized by being chosen for others.



on man's
capacity to name
the creatures

KHOURY Adam's being told to name the creatures, which was mentioned in the lecture, may also be found in the Qur'ān in the context of Adam's creation (cf. Sūra 2,30 ff.): as in the Jewish tradition, there is

a dialogue between the angels and God in which the angels ask God what he actually wants mankind for – after all they are celebrating his praises and glorifying his holy name, whereas mankind will make mischief on earth and shed blood. Whereupon God says that he knows what they do not – and teaches Adam the nature of all things. Finally God calls on the angels to tell him the nature of things, which they cannot do, while Adam can. Through being given the names by God ("And He taught Adam the nature of all things", v. 31), Adam, according to the Qur'ān, also has a key to understanding.

can man under-
stand the word
of God?

Furthermore, it was also said in the lecture that the word of God is perhaps not understood by man, and as a result the texts are merely recited. In fact, the Mu'tazilīs were of the opinion that humans cannot understand the word of God because they cannot approach his transcendence. If the Qur'ān is God's eternal word, it is not possible for man to understand it (even when expressed in human language); although it contains a series of juxtaposed logical statements, their reference to God still remains inaccessible to humankind. In contrast, the Hanbalīs tried to hold a more moderate view, saying that, through the interpretation of the Prophet, access to understanding the word of God, which is impossible to man on

his own, i. e. directly, does become possible. Mankind therefore owes his understanding of the Qur'ān to the Prophet's interpretation.

al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) developed another model of access to understanding the language of God when he says that God remains inaccessible to us in his transcendence, but that his word in the human language of the Qur'ān is meant to help us shape our piety. If a human being wants to turn to God in prayer, he can use the language of the Qur'ān and finds in it a secure vehicle for his prayers.

limited meaning
of the doctrine of
the *intellectus*
agens for
dialogue

As for the *intellectus agens*, this concept was introduced into Islamic philosophy by al-Fārābī (d. 950) and Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) and later Ibn Rushd (d. 1198). In earlier periods it had been fitted into an emanation-theory of the world's origin.

However, the view that this theory goes back to Aristotle was due to a misunderstanding in Islamic theology. Rather the doctrine of the *intellectus agens* was probably taken over from Plotinic theology, more precisely from the doctrine of Porphyrios. On the assumption that it stemmed from Aristotle, there was extensive speculation about how this emanation-theory could be compatible with Aristotle and with faith in general. It was only in the 12th century that Ibn Rushd proved the error and that two different traditions had been confused by mistake: in fact Aristotle had said something different. So we may ask whether and to what extent it would be helpful in dialogue with Islam, to refer back to the doctrine of the *intellectus agens*, since this would immediately create the suspicion that we were supporting the doctrine of emanation.

SCHAEFFLER The discussion about the *intellectus agens*, as it took place in the 13th century between Christians and Muslims (cf. Thomas *Summa theol.* 1 q.79 a. 3–5) was sparked off by a passage in the writings of Aristotle about the soul (*Peri Psyches* Γ 430a 10 f.). There Aristotle distinguishes two powers of the soul, both of which he calls *Nous*: "The one is *Nous* by becoming everything, the other one is *Nous* by working everything". It is this *Nous* that works everything by turning all possible objects of cognition into real objects of cognition – just as the light turns all possible colours into real colours. The dispute between the interpreters was concerned with the question of whether this "light" of the mind is a power of the individual soul (the passage from *Peri Psyches* suggests this interpretation), or whether one identical light shines "from outside" into individual souls, thus making the subjects of cognition communicable.

This interpretation was supported by a passage from the Aristotelian treatise "On the origin of living beings", where it says: "Thus the only assumption remaining is that the Nous alone enters from outside and that it alone is divine" (*Peri Zoon Geneseos* 736 b27 f.). This gave rise to the question of whether the *intellectus agens* is "*aliquid animae*" or "*unus in omnibus*" (*Summa theol.* I q. 79 a. 4–5). The subject of the dispute was therefore one between exegetes of Aristotle. The thesis that the *intellectus agens* as "one in all human beings" could then combine with a neo-Platonic doctrine of emanation, was refuted by Averroës and Aquinas, and Mr. Houry has rightly referred to this. The question which was to be answered by the doctrine of the *intellectus agens* could only originate within an Aristotelian, not a Platonic, epistemology. It was the question of how we who, according to the Aristotelian conception, are not capable of attaining the vision of ideas, can obtain from sensory appearances those *species intelligibiles* which constitute the object of intellectual cognition. This is what Aristotle and the Aristotelians saw as the specific achievement of the active intellect.

I would then observe that the passages in which Aristotle speaks about the *intellectus agens* are rare and rather peripheral to his work. Nevertheless, in discussions between Muslim as well as Christian Aristotelians, this idea gained astonishing importance. And my thesis is that this interest was theologically motivated, for, in the question concerning the "light" by means of which only sensory appearances become objects of intellectual cognition, the matter of the relation between transcendence and immanence is open to discussion.

This philosophical problem is closely linked with the theological question about the relationship between the transcendence and immanence of the divine word. Thus, discussing the *intellectus agens* to me seems to be an example of how a theological interest of Muslims and Christians made them sensitive to the impact of a philosophical problem. And I would like to have my thesis understood to mean that it was a felicitous moment in the history of philosophy and theology, when Muslim and Christian thinkers in mutual dialogue discovered the connection between two questions: the general epistemological question of how the human intellect should be conceived of when the relation between transcendence and immanence is correctly described, and the theological question about the relationship between the divine word and the human capacity to accept it in faith.

the transcendence
and immanence
of the word of God

NEUMANN This pair of terms – transcendence and immanence – also raises the problem of how the word of God can come to man's mind at all so that he can then transmit it to others. This question may also have a scientific aspect, in the form of a hypothesis based on the assumption that in the human brain there are cells which react to impulses of a non-cosmic origin. In other words, how does the immanence of transcendence come about in man?

SCHAEFFLER First, I completely agree that speaking of 'the transcendence and immanence of the word' is related to the question of how the word of God can come to man's mind so that we can hear it and even pass it on in our own language. But I think this question is not primarily about either the psychic or the physical mechanism of information-reception, but is rather a semantic problem: how does the word of God, as a word heard and passed on by man, remain distinct from any word that man could say of himself, i. e. from any soliloquy of the human soul?

freedom of God
and of man

This question has recently become remarkably topical in the context of attempts at an exegesis of depth psychology. It comes down to an attempt to direct the hearer towards recognizing in the word declared to him some processes which take place in the depths of his soul, so that through the word something that has already been waiting hidden within him is simply and explicitly brought to man's mind. Alongside this, it seems necessary to me to emphasize a twofold freedom: the freedom of God vis-à-vis the hearer, to whom God may say something the former does not already have within himself in any hidden form, and the freedom of the hearer, who may accept the word or refuse it because of the very fact that it is a new word, different from anything he could say himself. Theological interest in the transcendence of the word and of truth is at heart an interest in this twofold freedom of God and of man. And theological interest in the immanence of the word and of truth has essentially to do with an interest in the idea that the word of God, spoken in freedom, may be freely acquired by man and thus may become his own word.

I would here like to comment on the use of terms: in my lecture I used the philosophical terms 'transcendence' and 'immanence' because they are current. But I tried to underline that these terms become meaningful for the understanding of the Biblical message only to the extent that 'transcendence' expresses the freedom of God vis-à-vis his creature, while 'immanence' in-

dicates that indwelling of which Jesus speaks when he says: "[...] and we will come to them and make our home with them" (Jn 14:23).

the word heard
in faith and the
response given in
the word
proclaimed

DUPRÉ As for the question of the logical position of transcendence, Anselm of Canterbury begins by conceiving of God as "*id quo maius cogitari nequit*". From this perspective, can transcendence be understood as an impetus for moving towards what is greatest, beyond which nothing greater can be conceived? At the

same time this impetus would be corrected by the idea that true transcendence can only be conceived of when true immanence has been conceived of too. Otherwise transcendence would remain unfulfilled. Conversely, true immanence can only be conceived of if complete transcendence is also conceived of – and then such thinking always remains characterized by that 'beyond', so that transcendence and immanence would be, as it were, the impetus towards articulating the idea of God.

It was mentioned above [p. 297 and p. 312] that God was curious to see which names Adam would give things and in this context the anthropomorphic character of this story was pointed out. Now I ask myself: is our speaking about transcendence and immanence really less anthropomorphic than this Biblical reference to God being curious to see what Adam would do?

SCHAEFFLER First, I completely agree that St. Anselm's concept of God "*id quo maius cogitari nequit*" is not so much meant to describe the nature of God, but should rather be seen as an indication of how the idea of God can be articulated. This becomes even more obvious if we remember that Anselm also re-formulated his concept of God as: "*malus quam cogitari possit*" (*Proslogion* cap. 15). There can be no doubt that here the transcendence of God is most pointedly emphasized without denying that he is simultaneously inherent in the human intellect, being, as it were, the stimulus of the transcending movement.

Nevertheless, in my lecture it was not without good reason that I avoided the terms 'Gottesgedanken' (thoughts of God) or 'Gottesidee' (idea of God). I was not concerned with approaching the reality of God from the perspective of a certain concept of God – for instance the concept of "*quo maius cogitari nequit*", but with describing the word-process, which has two aspects: the word spoken to man is such that he could never have said it of himself (the aspect of the word's transcendence), but he can only hear it by responding to it from his innate knowledge, and by his response making

it his own word (the aspect of the word's immanence). It seems to me that in this context the *concept* of God is secondary, though indispensable. It then enters into the word-process by which man seeks to discern whose word he is receiving. My reference to the doctrine of the *intellectus agens* was also an attempt to interpret the meaning of the concept that the *verbum externum* is put on man's lips in such a way that by speaking he is capable of responding to it and passing it on.

anthropomorphic
language about
God

As for the anthropomorphisms used in speaking about God, the point is that we need to distinguish between two things: all terms at our disposal are human terms, but not all terms at our disposal describe humankind.

Anthropomorphic terms, such as 'change one's mind', which are also applied to God, originate in man's self-recognition. From this general statement that all the terms we use (even if they are the most philosophically abstract) are human terms which, of course, if one analyses them, reflect the specific character of humankind, we must then specify that anthropomorphisms, in the strict sense of the term, use descriptions of humans to speak of God.

how can this
kairos in the
encounter be
revived?

BSTEH A. How can we revive this historical opportunity for fruitful dialogue between Christians and Muslims, which we have referred to here, and which began and made considerable progress in the past?

SCHAEFFLER In this context it would be interesting to ask the Muslim believer what rationality and rationability mean to him, for what he says about it would of course imply some anthropology and general epistemology. So if he explains how he understands the rationality of faith, he expresses something about the human *ratio*, and we could tell him how the Christian believer tries to understand the gift of the word. This could clarify some interesting points quite apart from the theological realm of Christian-Muslim dialogue.

original
approaches
relevant for
searching for new
ways of dialogue

KHOURY The problems lie first in the structure of Islamic theology itself and secondly in the state of that theology today. Concerning the structure of Islamic theology, there are two main elements which seem to hinder the fruitful development of dialogue: on the one hand, the tendency to voluntarism, that is to prioritize God's will over the inner intelligibility of his message and, on the other hand, an ethical positivism that sees in what God wills a positive assessment of God which cannot always be explained in a rational discussion.

The result is the difficult situation in which Islamic theology has found itself ever since the 13th century, inviting the question of whether it has really undergone any development since then. In the 20th century there has been some kind of renaissance of the Mu'tazila tradition, the most rationalistic school of Islam. This is at present being rediscovered and has produced a number of publications. An important contribution on this question was made by Josef van Ess.¹ We may expect new approaches from this revival of Islamic theology, if it does not remain limited to the current still relatively small circle of intellectuals and if it begins to deal with really theological and not only juridical issues. On the level of dialogue, a new lively exchange of ideas would have to develop in the field of the essentially theological approaches of Christian and Islamic faith. There is no doubt that here, in the theological efforts to understand faith, great importance would be given to a renewed philosophical reflection. The way of thinking demonstrated by our philosophers within the framework of these symposia, and also especially in the area of a topical and lively philosophy of religions, Biblical studies and the wider context of the Christian tradition, would greatly encourage such a concern.

How then should the mutual relationship between human reason and the word of God be seen and, more closely, how should the word of God be seen to inspire and fructify the use of human reason from within?

SCHAEFFLER An adequate understanding of the nature of reason requires more than this dialectic of the exteriority and interiority of truth – the truth which I do not have and which I can only recognize because it grants itself to me, and whose knowledge is nevertheless creatively brought forth by myself as *verbum mentis*.

There can be no resolution to the philosophical problem of this dialectic unless the philosopher listens to what the theologian says about the word and listening to the word. This was what I meant to say here. And conversely, there cannot be an adequate theological theory about the word and hearing the word, about the word and responding to the word, if the theologian does not at the same time take note of what must be said about the relation between the exteriority and interiority of truth. They do each other an injustice, if they avoid dialogue with one another.

¹ Id., *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*. Berlin etc., 1991 ff.

... is of decisive importance for every revealed religion

KHOURY This dialectic, formal as it may appear, will obviously be of decisive importance for every revealed religion. For, if all that finally counts is what can be read, that is, what is positively written in the revelation, so that autonomy and responsible thinking is dismissed, the resulting positivistic voluntarism inevitably becomes a fatal danger to the life of every revealed religion, particularly Christianity, Judaism and Islam. A differentiated view of this problem is therefore of vital importance for their self-understanding and their capacity for dialogue.



God himself magnifies himself within man

SCHAEFFLER It would be interesting to know whether there has even been reflection in Islamic theology on the inner prerequisites of praising and honouring God. When we read in the Bible the *Magnificat* of Jesus' mother, the words are usually watered down by the translation "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord", although what she actually says is, "it magnifies him – μεγαλύνει [...] τὸν κύριον" (Lk 1:46). If we isolate this from its context, we might consider it a blasphemy. But the key to seeing it as non-blasphemous lies in connecting Mary's hymn with a passage in Ezekiel, where it says: "so I will display my greatness and my holiness" (Ezek 38:23, etc.). Between this statement that God alone can display his greatness and holiness and the passage from the Gospel according to Luke, there are several intermediate stages – but the point in all of them is that man can contribute to the greatness of God, because God himself displays his greatness in man. This has a decisive relevance to transcendence and immanence. Is there something like a theory of hymnology in Islam, or are there any approaches to it: for example, the idea that Allāh does not profit from my praising him because there is nothing I could give him which he would not have already, but that it is still my task to praise him?

KHOURY Without being able to point to a specific work, I would assume that there is something of the kind and I would naturally think of al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), and of his work "*Ihya' 'ulūm ad-dīn*" (meaning something like: the revival of religious knowledge) for instance. He was a theologian who had formerly been a mystic and he tried to combine both traditions in his theological doctrine.

DUPRÉ Does the statement in the *Magnificat* "My soul magnifies the Lord" refer to God or does it refer, as one may assume, to the name of God?

SCHAEFFLER A link between the above mentioned statement in Ezekiel, "So I will display my greatness and my holiness" (38:23, etc.), on the one hand, and the *Magnificat*, on the other, can probably be found in the Jewish evening-prayer, which was already prayed at the time of Jesus and which is both the evening-prayer in a Jew's lifetime and the funeral prayer at his open grave. It says, "The exalted name proclaims its greatness and holiness" [in Hebrew: *yitgaddal weyitqaddash shmeh rabbā*]. Thus, it is possible for man to proclaim the greatness of God in his speaking about him – because in this God magnifies himself.

NEUMANN Do we not also have here an exhortation: magnify my name among the nations, among people? So that, by the uttering of his praise, the name of God is made known among human beings?

SCHAEFFLER The reason for remembering here first the Jewish prayers for the dead is that in Judaism this has an extraordinarily lasting meaning: it is the first thing a Jewish boy is taught when he learns Hebrew, so that he can later say it at his father's grave. In this context it is not the Gentiles who are thought of as those who are expected to listen to it, but it is like drawing up a balance of Jewish life: that one may say at the grave of the deceased that God showed his greatness in the former's life, and so he will have a share in the world to come, adding the beautiful sentence: "And you will live to witness it and all Israel will live to witness it, and about it we say, Amen."

This idea that it is God who magnifies himself as the precondition for our being able to magnify God's greatness in our words, represents a thought often to be met in Jewish theology of the language of prayer, and one which we can certainly include in Christian reflection about speaking of God. Since there are also doxologies and praises to God in Islam, it would be interesting to know how Muslims understand the fact that human beings can do this.

KHOURY In Arabic (as in other Semitic languages) the translations of the *Magnificat* also say: "My soul magnifies the Lord – *tu'azzimu ar-rabba nafsī*", but this does not mean that man makes God greater, but that he proclaims his greatness.

concerning
intentionality in
speaking of God

DUPRÉ Do we not have here two things that merge: on the one hand, the intention which we link with the term 'God' and which underlies all our speaking, and, on the other hand, what has been called 'performative speech', which seems to be present in our awareness that the name of God is power-

ful on earth? By exalting this name – after all it is not God but his name that we say is powerful on earth – it positions itself, as it were, in front of God's ineffability. What is decisive here, however, is perhaps not even this metaphor, which we may find adequate or perhaps not quite adequate, but that something happens to our intentionality. If we put it as a question: when we think of immanence and transcendence, interiority and exteriority, are we dealing with the same intentionality or does it change?

SCHAEFFLER This differentiation makes sense if we say, for example: God is enthroned in heaven and his name dwells in the temple. But otherwise, the name of God means God himself, insofar as he allows himself to be invoked. It must not be made into a hypostasis. Therefore it seems questionable whether we should distinguish so strictly between the name of God and God himself.

DUPRÉ My intention was not to establish a distinction, but possibly to offer a symbol of the transcendence which makes us think that we cannot speak of God as we do of all other things.

SCHAEFFLER It is undeniable that there is transcendence and that we therefore cannot speak of God as we do of other persons or things and this should not be connected with the term 'name'. The central question is rather whether something changes with regard to our intentionality – unless, like Levinas, we want to abandon the term intentionality on principle. In the tension area between immanence and transcendence, not only is there something about intentionality that changes, but the reason for its possibility emerges. That we can generally refer *intendendo* to God is the result of this contrasting combination of transcendence and immanence. If God only remained outside us, we could not refer to him. If he were only inside us, it would amount to an *incurvatio in seipsum* and then intentionality would be unnecessary. The possibility of our being freed from our self-addiction and that this kind of intention is made possible, is based on this dialectic.

a soliloquy
open for hearing
the word

The question of the sense or nonsense of the soliloquy can then be taken up once more. In fact, there is a soliloquy that is open to hearing the word: it is a kind of asking oneself, a self-questioning, etc. What must be rejected here is something that exists in human relations and also in the religious domain: that one only hears what one has always been saying to oneself. I refer here to those stubborn people to whom we can say whatever we like but who will always reply: 'I quite agree with you, this is what I myself have always been saying.' But this is all they can say, because they

(who never disagree or find any contradictions) only hear what they themselves have always been saying.

This danger also threatens pious people who always find only their own piety affirmed in what the alleged *verbum externum* tells them. This is a danger to human relations and inter-religious relations, and to be freed from it is a very important experience. A percussion of the self-contentedness of the individual religious and/or profane subjectivity can have only liberating consequences for the person concerned.

the experience of transcendence – an important topic for inter-cultural dialogue

VANONI For people living in different systems of reference, the subject of transcendence-immanence, as it was presented in Mr. Schaeffler's lecture, is an important point of contact, because it touches upon an anthropological constant. There is no doubt that it is in the nature of human language that humans can also have a meta-language, which means that we can reflect upon our speech and speak about it. Here the link with theology is that on the human level I already have the experience that there are insights that, when I reflect on them, make me realize that this or that is not of my own making, where in German we like to speak of 'Eingebung' (inspiration). In this case, it is not a matter of a mere soliloquy of the soul, but what the lecture refers to in connection with Gn 1 and 2. When we think about God, we must also realize that no matter how hard we try to articulate it in human language, we have to admit that all our words cannot comprehend God and express him. As long as people in other religions accept the existence of a divine being, we should try to enter into dialogue with them about these fundamental religious experiences, on the basis of open-minded anthropology and linguistics.

exteriority becoming interiority in personal encounter

OTT Concerning the subject of 'exteriority and interiority', and 'transcendence and immanence', we could also raise the question of the extent to which this is mirrored in the experience of personal encounter. What exactly does it mean that man "is told something that he cannot tell himself" – a basic formulation that frequently recurs in Karl Barth's thinking? It would be easy to understand this as a figure of thought in which transcendence is the point at issue: a 'You' arrives, an other, who tells me something new, which is not of my own making – but which then becomes mine, living inside me as something of the other, whose very transcendence or exteriority then becomes for me an interiority, an inner (perhaps the innermost) constituent of myself. This only seems to be contra-

dictory, and is in fact mutual permeation in the deepest sense, and it happens in the world of our experience – in the everyday occurrence of personal encounter, dialogue and sharing, or whatever we may call it.

At this point we may add a remark about the concept of the soliloquy: we may of course take it to be a term denoting the state of being closed up within oneself. But in the soliloquy a decisive opening-up may happen, a certain transparency, since there are in fact soliloquies in which there is a sudden inspiration, a fundamental permeability towards the other, as is shown, for instance, in Augustine's *Soliloquia* which, through his dialogue with his own reason, become 'transparent' soliloquies.

SCHAEFFLER It is plausible initially to see in this an anthropological constant, and we may here also be reminded of a saying, which is said (rightly or wrongly) to be an Ethiopian proverb: "You cannot say to yourself the word that you need." Nobody can ever speak to himself in the same sense as, for instance, his wife does when she says: "I love you", or: "I forgive you". Perhaps the words that man needs most are those which he cannot say to himself. On the other hand, they are only given to him as his own if they have the potential for him to answer them himself. There is no doubt that this can be adequately described by linguistic psychology and phenomenology and forms an analogon of what is discussed here.

Concerning the exteriority and interiority of the divine word, what must be added of course is that there is no equality between the speaker and the listener. My fellow human who says something to me is of the same nature as I, and so the echo within me is triggered more easily than when an infinite difference between speaker and hearer is involved. This probably needs another interpretation, which one may then perhaps associate in Greshake's sense with the inspiration of the Spirit: I can only pray because the Spirit intercedes for me. However, by introducing this very strong metaphor for the unity between breath of life and word, we may imply that my life is so exterior to myself that I literally have to receive it anew with every breath I take – and it nevertheless becomes my own life. The same is true of the word that I must receive, but which must become my own word, if I am to answer it.

prayer as access to faith in the relevant other tradition

We may think of two ways of continuing Christian-Muslim dialogue: first, that we try to find statements about hearing the word in the tradition inspired by Islam, and second, that we aim at a mutual exchange of thoughts about our own prayer and try to stimulate each other to

say what we are doing when we pray. We may certainly hold the opinion that theology is the meta-language of religious speech and that therefore, what theology speaks about is first already alive in the language of belief, hymnology and other ways of praying. Theology does not in fact invent its own subject, but finds it in the subject already addressed in the language of faith and becomes the meta-language of this discourse. Thus, in dialogue, prayer would give ready access to the subjects of faith and theology in the other religious tradition involved. I wonder whether there is in Islam a theory of spirituality, like that which exists in Judaism and Christianity – a reflection on what we do when we pray, as, for instance, Hermann Cohen did in his analysis of the liturgy of the Day of Atonement.⁶

infinite difference, infinitely deepening the relationship

BSTEH A. Where there is no equality between the one who speaks and the one who hears, but there is rather the infinite difference that characterizes the relationship between God and his creature, this difference should in fact infinitely deepen the relationship and

not, as it were, raise it above the clouds. Where the one who speaks not only addresses the one who hears, but also constitutes him as the hearer, is not a lasting inner relationship established of an intensity that could not be dreamt of elsewhere? This was also the question at issue on the occasion of our Christian-Muslim encounter in St. Gabriel in 1990, when the topic was "Hören auf sein Wort" [Hearing His Word]. It dealt with man who is called to listen to the word of God, but who has already received himself in hearing the word of God.⁷

SCHAEFFLER There is no doubt that the infinite difference between God and man does not make their relationship impossible, but on the contrary is what makes it possible as a relationship different from all the relations that exist between creatures. When every hearing between human beings is already giving an answer provoked by the word of the other, then hearing the word of God is an answering of a kind where, in all that it is, the answering subject is called into being by this divine word only. The word constitutes the human hearer and speaker, for instance the one who prays, not only because it is answered in the prayer, but because, only through this answer stimulated by the divine word, does man become the one he is meant to

⁶ Cf. H. Cohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*. Wiesbaden, 1988 (reprint), chap. XII: "Der Versöhnungstag".

⁷ Cf. A. Bsteh (ed.), *op. cit.* (fn. 1).

become through the word of God. But what this says about the word which summons man into his being still remains to be elaborated. This raises a question about a theology of language. This is an indispensable element of any theology of spirituality, which may also offer quite fertile approaches to philosophy beyond the theological context.

We leave it open as to whether we must develop something utterly new in this context, or whether it suffices to modify existing philosophical approaches in linguistics. Thus the term "Sprachhandlung" [performative speech], which is so much in favour today, was first coined by Hermann Cohen to describe the language of prayer. He starts from the fact that, when he prays, man does not have to inform God, since God knows everything already; nor does man have to motivate God, since God always does what is good. Man in his prayer rather performs a "Sprachhandlung", "den Eintritt in die Korrelation" [an entering into correlation], as Cohen called it. This example shows very beautifully how fruitful a theological approach may become for philosophy, and the same is also of course the case vice versa.

[Plenary Discussion]

approaches for Christian-Muslim dialogue

theological reflection on 'word' and on 'hearing the word'

SCHAEFFLER As is evidenced by the reception and critical evaluation of Arab Aristotelianism by Christian theologians, two themes may be indicated, which could become fruitful in future Christian-Muslim dialogue:

(1) On the one hand, we can see here that a theologically conducted reflection about 'word' and 'hearing the word' may give a decisive stimulus, even concerning the philosophical question about the relation between truth and inward knowledge. The theories of *verbum mentis* and *intellectus agens* are examples of

this. An appreciation of the Aristotelian tradition from the perspective of a theology of the word (no matter how it should be assessed philosophically), was able to recognize here more than would have been possible with eyes that were not theologically sharpened. On the other hand, a certain philosophy did have repercussions here for a theology of the word and its being heard.

This example may perhaps show that for both Christians and Muslims there are shared problems concerning the divine word, on the one hand, and human hearing and speaking of that word, on the other. From this we can

see how, under certain conditions, shared problems may give rise to philosophical impulses even beyond theology, and how philosophy may vice versa provide valuable impulses to a theology of the word. It goes without saying that under present-day conditions this dialogue between philosophy and theology should take the form of raising questions of a different kind and dealing with other types of problem.

It has been correctly said that attempts to develop a philosophy on the basis of Islam (for example to develop Aristotelianism further) as well as Islamic mysticism (which, like any mysticism, is of central importance regarding the matter of truth and efforts to grasp it) were suspected of heresy, similar to the medieval controversy between dialecticians and anti-dialecticians which was conducted very vehemently within Christianity – simply because theologians naturally saw the danger that a theology of the word spoken to man and entrusted to him, could suddenly become a general theory of the human intellect.

Another question arising for Christians and Muslims alike is how to concretize the claim raised by both, that their faith is rational and reasonable, reasonable and capable of a reasonable explication. It cannot of course be enough simply to say: it is written in the Qurʾān that the Qurʾān itself is rational. It is rather a matter of explaining what this means for someone who wants to understand the word given in the Qurʾān and what this says about man as a being capable of rationality. The question remains, even though today we no longer wish or are able to discuss it in the context of Aristotelian epistemology.

reflections about man's calling to praise God (2) The second theme I would like to mention here which could become fruitful in future dialogue between Christians and Muslims, may be broached with the question of what it means to man to be ordained by God to name him, God, and glorify him: what does this say about man and God? It would be a matter of reflecting on man's capacity to praise God (with reference to God's instruction to do so), which was granted to man, regardless of whether and how we want to discuss this using completely different philosophical tools and within completely different philosophical contexts, or whether we want to introduce it into Christian-Muslim dialogue via partly re-discovered and re-edited sources from past centuries.

In this context of course the relation between finitude and infinity also plays a role, and whether we can simply say *finitum capax infiniti*. In other

words, how can we do justice to the infinite difference between the *aeternum verbum Dei* and the way we can hear and answer it, without establishing an unrelatedness which leaves man with no option but to admit that he does not understand what God tells him? In the Middle Ages the idea formulated as *participatio*, which today must certainly be modified, was always of a decisive importance, the idea that active hearing, the interplay between *intellectus agens* and *possibilis*, the active formulating and at the same time passive perceiving of the intellect, in their reciprocity, is only understandable as a *participatio* in the creative power of the divine word. This participation implies finitude and a relatedness to what the human intellect participates in. Even though we probably need new terms to articulate this, the fact still remains that there is no hearing which is not already a response. The medieval epistemologists stated, *nihil cognoscimus nisi verbo mentis* – there is no cognition which is not already there in the hearer's speech. This insight has been even more emphasized in modern philosophy where what is said concerning the constitution of the object and transcendental reflection is certainly nothing but an interpretation of the insight that it is only in responding that we can hear, and of course also that it is only in hearing that we can respond.

When this question continues to be asked and, through the encounter with modern thinking (which he cannot deny, even if he rejects the modern theory of subjectivity), the Muslim's attention is drawn to the problem of subjectivity, he will also face the question of how there can be a human response which simultaneously expresses the word of God: for the word of God is always expressed only in the human response, be it the response of the Prophet. Here a common problem must be perceived and the question must be raised of the terminology that should be chosen under the present conditions in order to do justice to this problem. This seems to be a promising task, and one that can probably be most directly approached if we concentrate on reflecting about the central words of faith: praising God, professing his glory, etc. For here it becomes clear once again that all our speaking about God and all our speaking to God is a response to being addressed by God, so that the question of transcendence and immanence must find its concrete point of departure in a theology of the divine and the human word, a theology which, as the example of the Middle Ages shows, could also become extraordinarily fruitful for answering the philosophical question of what man's rationality and rationally actually mean.

who is the subject that, affected by truth, turns towards the truth?

DUPRÉ In this context, I would like to bring up another point. It is the matter of the *veritas qua*, the cognitive faculties of the subject, that, affected by truth, turns towards truth. From a historical perspective, these problems concerned with the relation between *veritas qua* and *veritas quae* within a certain tradition often seem to be linked with an internal controversy and a defensive attitude towards the outside. Even Thomas Aquinas writes his comprehensive work *Contra Gentiles* by opposing what comes from outside in order to gain a greater inward transparency.

Who is therefore the subject that, affected by truth, turns to truth? On the one hand, it is the individual believer who does not of course say, "There is something in me that believes", but, "I believe." However, in a decisive sense, it is also the community that says, "We believe." Is there not today a challenge to philosophy, and possibly also a philosophical challenge to theology, to go beyond the individual subject and ask, who in fact is the *communitas* that thinks and acts, and who is the *communitas* that also thinks and acts in the other form of a tradition? Does the *veritas qua* not have to be interpreted in this twofold way? How can the individual understand another tradition and, vice versa, how can the other tradition understand him? And how is the wider context included in this thought process, and what consequences does this also have for our concepts? Emile Durkheim rightly referred to the fact that our thinking is much more strongly tied to society than we previously thought.

a history not only of delimitation but also of dialogue and reception

SCHAEFFLER For many reasons we have become aware of the fact that our capacity for thinking, speaking and even praying is embedded in communities and their history, with their particularities and variabilities. This has already been mentioned here several times – often in the context of *analogia fidei* [cf. above pp. 23 f. 40 f.

47 f., etc.]. Since this must always be taken into consideration, it seems advisable in this context to proceed from the word, both the word that we hear and the word that we speak, which is ultimately always related to the community of those who hear and those who speak and their history. The more clearly we perceive that our thinking is tied to the language we speak, the more we become aware of its relatedness to society. This can be verified with regard to the Biblical word and similarly the Qur'an and the convocation of the religious community, the *umma*, which emerges from it.

Christian-Muslim encounter, unlike some other interreligious encounters,

has always taken place in a context of mutual reference. As is well known, this goes back to the origins of Islam: the Prophet cannot speak without referring to Judaism and Christianity. He expressly refers to it as the history that precedes his own prophetic mission. Yet, the new community of believers, the *umma*, while claiming that it supercedes those who went before it, soon has to acknowledge that the communities of the Jews and the Christians continue to exist, so that subsequently there is a history of Christian-Muslim encounter which is full of grief, although in many phases also very fruitful. So when Christians and Muslims speak with one another, they do not completely abandon their individual history, unlike the greater difficulty in relations with religions from completely alien cultures for reasons of language as well as subject.

It should be possible to come to terms with this history of mutual relatedness, which is well attested in many different phases and particular aspects of our religious traditions, much better than has so far been the case. The fact that both sides have generally perceived the relationship between Christianity and Islam as a history of barrier building, whereas in fact it has been characterized much more by a positive history of dialogue and acceptance, is a different matter. The remembrance and acknowledgment of commonalities in our histories – without our necessarily being able to speak of a common history – might constitute an opportunity in the Christian-Muslim context, in addition to the common ground in various subject matters that has already been mentioned here many times.

the word of God in the response when man hears the word

Another question arises from the concern on the part of the Muslim religious community that the word of God would lose its claim to absoluteness if it were historically-critically made into a part of human history. The reaction against a historical-critical evaluation of the

Qur'an has parallels in Christian thinking about the Bible, but it is hard to imagine that a Muslim thinker who in other literary genres, such as profane lyrics, historiography, etc., is used to reading texts historically, would remain totally unaffected by this approach when he turns to his Qur'an. There are obviously internal tensions within the self-understanding of Islam which we should never play off triumphalistically against each other, but which we can include in the dialogue as a mirror image of our own difficulties.

A related question is whether the transformation of our cognitive capacity through the word which we cannot speak to ourselves, can be conceptualized in such a way that it cannot be accused of pantheism. In mysticism

above all, there is in Christianity as in Islam the temptation to think of the immanence of God in the believer's soul as if it were not man who performs the act of faith, but God who affirms himself within man. A possible answer to the question of how we may arrive at a concept of God that overcomes this temptation might be: God is the one who addresses me in such a way that it is precisely through his word that I am called to give my very own personal response, which nobody else can give. In order to achieve this, however, this word must make me a new creature, who is able to hear this word in responding to it and respond to it in hearing it.

The mutual questions: "What do you mean when you speak of the rationality of your faith?", and: "What do you mean when you say you are only able to speak to God and about God through and under the word of God?" seem to be topics that touch Muslims and Christians alike and disturb them in the same way, and may therefore be chosen as subject matter for dialogue.

the word of God
and other
religions

DUPRÉ Can we go as far as to say that the Muslim tradition, like the traditions of Jews and Christians and all those in whom piety is alive, is word of God?

SCHAEFFLER I would not say that the tradition is word of God, but that it is woven of responses in which this word appears. The tradition is always subjected to the word of God, and even to its judgment; that is what the Reformation reminded us of. For, even though the word of God can only be perceived in the response, the response always follows after the claim of the word and leads to self-adoration if it identifies itself with the word.

Neither do I think it is possible to place the traditions of Jews, Christians and Muslims on the same level as the tradition of "all those in whom piety is alive". First it is clear that the self-understanding of Judaism, Christianity and Islam contains a sort of mutuality or a fabric of relations that does not exist in the same way in the self-understanding of the Buddhist or a follower of a nature religion. So there is a mutual relatedness and also, with regard to speaking of God, the awareness that Jesus recognized the God of the Old Testament and did not introduce a new God, and similarly in Muslim self-understanding, Muhammad did not introduce a new God either.

learning how to
speak, even from
other religions

This often seems to be forgotten, so that Christians sometimes doubt whether Muhammad's Allāh is identical with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whereas Muhammad for his part never had any doubt

about this. Over all, the identity of the God who is worshipped seems to

imply a relation between Judaism, Christianity and Islam which cannot be seen immediately to apply to religions in general. This is not to deny that the Jewish, Christian and Islamic faiths would deprive themselves of their own language if they tried to eliminate everything that is not specifically Abrahamic. All the Psalms and the sayings of the prophets are composed in a language that was also used in the religions of the neighbouring peoples. Similarly today, we would deprive ourselves of our religious language and so become incapable of hearing the word of God in responding to it if we were to reject 'religion' in its generally human forms, as opposed to an exclusively Biblical phenomenon. We may – perhaps I should even say we must always learn religious language anew, even from followers of other religions. This of course does not exclude the possibility that, in the language we have so learned, we may contradict decisively what the followers of other religions say. We can say the most unmistakably individual things while using a common language, for the decisive rejection of alien gods also belongs to the commonalities of the three Abrahamic religions. "The general gathering at Shechem" and its call, "You must choose whom you will serve" (cf. Jos 24:15), could not have taken place in all religions. So the three Abrahamic religions are strangely in agreement with each other in denying alien idols and even at times suspecting each other of idolatry.⁶

piety does not
protect against
idolatry

What does it mean that there are religions whose message includes the idea that piety does not prevent idolatry? One may be very pious and an idolator in another religion, and sometimes even become one in one's own religion. We must not leave aside this problem. But what does it actually mean that, according to the testimony of Jews, Christians and Muslims, making one's own gods is a particular temptation for religious people? Here we encounter something specific which prevents us from dealing in the same way with the commonalities of all religions *and* the joint endeavours of Jews, Christians and Muslims. This is not to denigrate the others, but it shows that something special is at work here. Sensitivity to the possible perversion of religion is not equally developed in all religions.

⁶ Cf. R. Schaeffler, "Wahrheit, Dialog und Entscheidung", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Dialog aus der Mitte christlicher Theologie* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie 5). Mödling 1987, pp. 13–42, here: pp. 22 ff.

New Creation: The Eschaton in History?

Martin Karrer

"What do you want to do to the world? God has already made it, / The Lord of creation thought of everything" – is how Goethe begins one of the aphorisms of his *West-östlicher Divan*.¹ Creation wisdom is a segment in the great cycle of poems which he designed under the influence of the Persian Muslim poet Ḥāfīz ("the preserver" who learned the Qurʾān by heart; he died in 1389/90). For West and East, Islamic² and Christian cultures are linked by their conviction that God has created the world and man, and has pre-conceived what happens in it.

But it does not link both religions in the same way.³ If I am not mistaken, the Qurʾān does not use the term "new creation", which is the subject of my paper and points to a specific theme in early Christianity. Indeed, in our symposium it seems to have been chosen expressly for this reason: theology of religions is not supposed to conceal difference, but rather to awaken people towards perceiving what is also specifically their very own.

However, what is special, what is proper, to early Christian talk about new creation? In order to trace it, we have to start with Paul and the New Testament Letters composed under his influence, for it is Paul who introduces this term into Christian theology.

I. New creation in Paul and in Ephesians

I must begin with a brief but important religio-theological preface: until recently the concept of "new creation" was considered to have been shaped in Israel long before Paul, but the more accurately the sources were read,

¹ "Was machst du an der Welt? sie ist schon gemacht, / Der Herr der Schöpfung hat alles bedacht": quoted from *Goethes Werke* (Sophienausgabe), vol. 6, Weimar, 1888, p. 120 (Buch der Sprüche).

² From the Qurʾān, Sūras 22,5 and 23,12 ff. may be mentioned as the most important passages.

³ So even Goethe's persistence mentions only one possible meeting point between the religions, namely his – Goethe's – conclusion (in continuing the aphorism *op. cit.* [fn. 1]): "Dein Loos ist gefallen, verfolge die Weise, / der Weg ist begonnen, vollende die Reise [...]." [It fell to your lot, continue the manner, / the path has been started, complete the journey.]

the more the evidence shrank, especially evidence of this specific phrase.⁴ It is true that the idea that God creates something basically new refers back to Deutero-Isaiah (Is 43:16–21)⁵ and this new beginning is to be inferred from the metaphor of a new heaven and a new earth that goes back to Trito-Isaiah (Is 65:17–18a).⁶ But the phrase “new creation” is only to be found in an inter-Testamental text (Jub 4:26; cf. 1:29).⁷ It did not then spread widely in the pre-New Testament period either,⁸ most likely in so-called apocalyptic literature.⁹ The main writings of Qumran come close to the exact phrase only twice, and that following the two different verbs possible in Hebrew to denote “to create” (1QS [community rule] 4:25 with *šh*, 1QH [hymns], 13:11 f. with *br*).¹⁰ The term “new creature” (*bryh hdshh*), applied

⁴ Just to mention the research progression from W. Foerster, art. “κτίσω κτλ.,” in: G. Kittel et al. (eds.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 3, Stuttgart, 1938, pp. 999–1034 (p. 1020 fn. 144) and P. Stuhlmacher, “Erwägungen zum ontologischen Charakter der κοινή κτίσις bei Paulus,” in *Evangelische Theologie* 27 (1967) 1–35 (especially 10–20) via J. Baumgarten, *Paulus und die Apokalypik. Die Auslegung apokalyptischer Überlieferungen in echten Paulusbrieffen* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, 44), Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1975, pp. 164 ff., down to U. Mell, *Neue Schöpfung. Eine traditions-geschichtliche und exegetische Studie zu einem soteriologischen Grundsatz paulinischer Theologie* (Beihette zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche; 56), Berlin, 1989, pp. 9–257.

⁵ For “create” v. 19 in Hebrew *šh*, in LXX ποίω.

⁶ In this *Trito-Isaiah* goes significantly beyond Is 51:6 (cf. also Ps 102:27). More details in U. Mell, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) pp. 48–67.

⁷ Here, in Jub [Book of Jubilees], “new creation” is not necessarily to be understood eschatologically; renewing creation in history may also be inferred: see references in K. Berger, *Das Buch der Jubiläen* (Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit; II 3), Gütersloh, 1981, p. 320 (fn. 1 ad 1,29). – The phrase does not occur in the Greek fragments of the Book of Jubilees. After all, the phrase does not appear so far in the Greek literature of pre-New Testament Judaism (concerning the pseudepigrapha to be verified in the *Concordance grecque des pseudépigraphes d’Ancien Testament* [Publications de l’Institut Orientaliste de Louvain] par M. Denis, Louvain, 1987, p. 491; JosAs [Joseph and Aseneth] 8:9 – as already elaborated by J. Baumgarten, *op. cit.* [fn. 4] p. 166 – is to be approached more carefully than in older literature).

⁸ U. Mell, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) pp. 104 ff., p. 254 refers to 11 QTemp [Temple Scroll] 29:9 as the second central text. However, the reading is controversial and even decyphering it as *ywm hbryh* (coming “day of creation”), does no more than imply the concept of “new” creation (Ph. Callaway, “Exegetische Erwägung zur Tempelrolle XXIX,7–10,” in *Revue de Qumran* 45 [12] (1985) 95–104, here 97–99 refers to a glorifying creation of the temple).

⁹ In pre-New Testament times it is in particular äthien [Ethiopian Book of Henoch] 72:1, which refers back (intensifying Is 65:17, 66:22). The scope of apocalyptic conceptions widens in the late 1st century (most recent evidence in Mell, *op. cit.* [fn. 4] p. 255).

¹⁰ Both are verbal phrases, the first referring to Is 45:19 and the second to Is 65:17; cf. U. Mell, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) pp. 97 ff., pp. 100 ff., p. 254. The thesis, operative up to J. Roloff, “Neuschöpfung in der Offenbarung des Johannes,” in *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 5 (1990) pp. 119–138, here p. 120, that the sectarian community paraphrases “a human being’s turning away from his old ways and his reception” in the community as a ‘new creation’, proves to be untenable in a strict sense given our concept of ‘new creation’ (cf. Mell, *op. cit.* [fn. 4] p. 110, etc.).

to someone who has experienced that his sins are forgiven, finally develops only in the post-New Testament Rabbinic period.¹¹

What remains clear even after this critical examination of the sources is that, by the time of Paul, Israel had been reflecting for centuries about what is fundamentally new in creation and about new things that supercede the existing creation. However, only at the beginning of the Christian era do these conceptions concentrate into the expression “new creation”. Paul participates in this process of concentration and has an opportunity for manoeuvre that should not be underestimated. A new term which, if it was used at all, was part of Greek usage¹² makes it possible for him to give specific accentuations.

This of course simultaneously also raises a problem for exegesis: a widely and long-used phrase must be interpreted more precisely than a recent one, especially one that occurs only twice in Paul’s Letters (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). The exegetical angles I am now going to present must be heard with this reservation. I will place each of them under a theme and after 2 Corinthians and Galatians, I shall add a third theme arising from Ephesians.

1. New creation – a deep-rooted change in knowledge (2 Cor 5)

“von nu an / kennen wir niemand nach dem Fleisch. Und ob wir auch Christum gekand haben nach dem fleisch / so kennen wir in doch jtzet nicht mehr. Darumb ist jemand in Christo / so ist er eine neue Creatur / Das alte ist vergangen / sihe / es ist alles new worden.” This is Martin Luther’s translation of the first passage that is central for our topic, 2 Cor 5:16 f.¹³ In the

¹¹ Mell, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) pp. 182, 256 situates all the evidence only in the post-Tannaitic period (4th century). Even if we trace some preliminaries back to the Tannaitic period, it is no longer possible to use it directly in interpreting 2 Cor 5:17 (here more discretion is needed than we find in Ch. Wolff, *Der zweite Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* [Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament; 8], Berlin, 1989, pp. 127 f.).

¹² According to current lexicographical evidence, our phrase is not found in profane Greek before Paul. There κτίσις denotes creation mainly in the sense of foundation (of a city, etc.; see H. G. Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, new ed. with a Supplement 1968, Oxford, 1983, s. v. 1003). κοινή κτίσις would therefore at first be “new foundation”, and the phrase (in the plural) seems to occur in exactly this sense a generation after Paul in Josephus (*Antiquitates Judaicae* 18,373; in this context see Mell, *op. cit.* [fn. 4] pp. 221 ff.). Neither does Josephus use κοινή κτίσις in the theological sense (singular). The special importance attached by Paul to the intensification of the Greek term is confirmed.

¹³ D. Martin Luther, *Biblia. Das ist die gantze Heilige Schrift. Deutsch auffis new zugericht. Wittenberg 1545* (ed. by H. Volz), vol. 3, (Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag; 6033; Textbibliothek), München, 1974, pp. 2332 f. [“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (King James Translation)].

1545 edition of the Bible a marginal note turns our attention to the beginning: no longer knowing Christ from a human point, das "ist nichts fleischlich an jm suchen / oder gewarten / wie die Jünger theten für dem leiden / Sondern an seinem wort begnügen".¹⁴ Being a new creature means being placed within a new sphere of knowledge, no longer knowing Christ after the flesh – today we would say: as the earthly Jesus – but as the living word. We must leave aside the earthly appearance of Christ as the signpost; a great Protestant exegetical tradition continues this idea.¹⁵

Recently a somewhat deviant reading of v. 16 philologically speaking has gained ground: "nach dem Fleisch" [after the flesh] follows v. 16a "wir kennen" [we know].¹⁶ According to this, we must first read that *our* knowledge after the flesh is over. Even then, we no longer know Christ after the flesh (so that the difference from Luther must not be exaggerated into a contradiction). The orientation point, however, shifts from the question concerning our relation to the earthly Jesus, to the definition of our knowledge in general: this knowledge is new, fundamentally and in every respect.¹⁷ The New Revised Standard Version already follows this understanding of the text: "From now on, therefore, we regard no one *from a human point of view* only; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"¹⁸

What does this mean for our access to the concept of 'new creation'? The development in v. 17 is significant: so if *anyone* is in Christ, he is a new creation (καὶνὴ κτίσις). The assertion starts with the person who is in Christ.¹⁹ But since this person is new – following the text more precisely,

¹⁴ ["is not searching for something in him after the flesh / nor expecting it from him / as the apostles did before he suffered / But be content with his word".] *Op. cit.* (fn. 13) p. 2332.

¹⁵ Cf. in the 20th century for instance R. Bultmann, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther* (ed. by E. Dinkler). (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament. Sonderband). Göttingen, 1976, pp. 156 ff. In a considerable part of German exegesis till now, "according to human standards"; philologically linked with "Christ" (resulting in the formula "Christos kata sarka"), has been predominant (for instance Mell, *op. cit.* [fn. 4] p. 380 etc.).

¹⁶ The position of v. 16b is between "wir haben gekannt" (we were familiar with) and "Christos"; since no article, etc. attributes it more closely to "Christos", an adverbial position is to be assumed.

¹⁷ Sharply contrasted with Mell by J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Pauline Studies", in: *Revue biblique* 98 (1991), pp. 145–151, here p. 149 (lit.) ("the creation is not objective or ontological [...], but subjective and epistemological").

¹⁸ As emphasized by Karrer. In the first edition of the 1972 Einheitsübersetzung the translation is still undecided.

¹⁹ Cf. J. Baumgarten, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) p. 166. Luther captured this by personalizing "new creation" as "new creature" [see above].

through reconciliation in Christ²⁰ – he perceives everything in an eschatological-definitive new way. The renewal of knowledge gains a cosmic dimension. For whoever "sees"²¹ in Christ, "the past will not be remembered", "new things have been created".²²

2. New creation – a deep-rooted change in being (Gal)

In the Pauline congregations a concise way of speaking developed to describe the specificity of God's children vis-à-vis their environment; among them there is no longer Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free.²³ If we read this in the perspective of the development of a radical change in knowledge we have referred to, then the issue is to set Christian knowledge free from all criteria that could degrade anyone. In the Christian understanding, nobody held in low estimation socially can be rightly discriminated against as a slave, a new-comer to the religion²⁴ or a foreigner from among the Gentiles.²⁵

New creation then means a new way of life based on new knowledge.

²⁰ The understanding of which is currently controversial: cf. particularly on the one hand C. Breytenbach, *Versöhnung. Eine Studie zur paulinischen Anthropologie* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament; 60). Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1989 (especially pp. 107 ff.), and on the other P. Stuhlmacher, "Cilliers Breytenbachs Sicht von Sühne und Versöhnung", in *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 6 (1991) 339–354 (especially 345 ff.). We cannot go into further detail here.

²¹ Continuing the focus on knowledge, Paul inserts in v. 17b ἴδω "see" (which, problematically, the Einheitsübersetzung leaves out).

²² Cf. Is 43:18 f.; 65:17. The textual tradition intensified the cosmological nuance: many manuscripts complemented "alles / das All (τὰ πάντα) ist neu geworden" [everything / the universe (τὰ πάντα) has become new]. P. Stuhlmacher, "Ervägungen...", *op. cit.* (fn. 4) p. 22, sees this complementation (which Luther followed, see above) as factually grounded; J. Baumgarten, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) pp. 166 f. tries to set it aside in favour of an existential line of interpretation.

²³ This way of speaking is supported with slight variations 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:28; Col 3:1; cf. also 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15; Col 3:11 f. The variations mean we cannot refer to an established formula strictly speaking. However, in the numerous examples the context is in every case one of motifs already widely known before being written down. More details on the reconstruction are in H. Paulsen, "Einheit und Freiheit der Söhne Gottes Gal 3, 16–29", in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 71 (1980) 74–95, here 77–85 and G. Dautzenberg, "Zur Stellung der Frauen in den paulinischen Gemeinden", in: id. et al. (eds.), *Die Frau im Urchristentum* (Quaestiones Disputatae; 95). Freiburg etc., 1988, pp. 182–224, here pp. 215 f. (according to id., "Da ist nicht männlich und weiblich". Zur Interpretation von Gal 3,28", in *Kairos. Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft und Theologie* 24 [1982] 181–206).

²⁴ This could be suggested by the development of "Greek" contrasted with "Jew" (as a member of God's people).

²⁵ Cf. the extension of the phrase by adding "barbarian" in Col 3:111.

In Pauline congregations this perspective is to be expected.²⁶ Today it is very powerful as a socially communicable incentive against all discriminations.

In his most famous use of the phrase, in Gal 3:28, Paul takes a step further. To the sentence: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free", he adds "there is no longer masculine and feminine".²⁷ Involuntarily, we read "no longer male and female". In Greek there is in this passage a broader formula which is so important for Paul that he is not willing to modify it for the sake of fluency:²⁸ the formula of Gn 1:27 Septuagint "So God created man [...], masculine and feminine (ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ) he created them." Gn 6:19 and 7:3 applied this formula to all creatures: of all living creatures, clean and unclean, there shall be a pair aboard the ark, so that they may be saved from the great flood, "they shall be masculine and feminine (ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ)".²⁹ It is only in this context that we come across this formula in the Bible.

This is not enough; we also have to translate more precisely the introduction of the three phrases in Gal 3:28. In Greek it is οὐκ ἔνι, the sharpest possible negation, so we should render it "there is not"; the usual translation, "there is no longer", modifies the sentence at the cost of its forcefulness. But what is the point, beyond the modification? It is this: the way in which God created man, namely as masculine and feminine, is not valid; the pairs, in which God saved the living creatures from the flood, "are not" among those who are children of God³⁰ through faith in Christ Jesus. They are "one" in Jesus Christ.³¹

²⁶ Most clearly in Col 3:10 f.: according to v. 10, Christians have put on a new Self, specifically "which is being renewed in knowledge"; therefore "there is no longer Greek ..." (v. 11).

²⁷ Quoted from *The New Revised Standard Version*, however, cf. also already Luther's translation in "Biblia", *op. cit.* (fn. 13) p. 2350.

²⁸ In Greek this is even more distinct than in German: in order to leave the formula unchanged, Paul also puts up with changing the conjunction; between the first two parts there it is οὐδέ ("and not"), now it is καὶ ("and").

²⁹ Here the Septuagint translation approaches the Greek formulations on the structure of society; cf. particularly Plato, *leges* 665C; further examples in G. Dautzenberg, "Stellung der Frauen", *op. cit.* (fn. 23) p. 217.

³⁰ Cf. v. 26. V. 27 concretizes this argument by mentioning baptism with the bold metaphor that Christians have clothed themselves with Christ.

³¹ The use of the masculine gender εἰς is striking (in some manuscripts so striking that they correct it to ἓν). If this was done in order to lead the reader in a straight line towards 3:20 ("God is one"), the radical change in creation thus presented would lead to a perception of Christians from the perspective of God's oneness. The most far-reaching reflections in this direction (including the christological εἰς suggested in 3:16) are those of N. Baumert, *Antifeminismus bei Paulus? Einzelstudien* (Forschung zur Bibel) 68. Würzburg, 1992, pp. 13–22 (cf. id., *Frau und Mann bei Paulus. Überwindung eines Mißverständnisses*. Würzburg, 1992, pp. 264–276).

So here Galatians goes beyond 2 Cor 5:16 f. The new creation does not only mean breaking with the way knowledge had been in use till then. The new creation also means a radical change of being as it had so far been conceived. The cosmos, as it existed before Christ, is literally crossed out, if we further read in Gal 6:14 f., where it says that the radical change of creation is grounded in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is because of the cross that (abbreviating our formula): "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!" (6:15).³²

Paul leaves no doubt that he does not want this to be understood simply as an abstract theologoumenon. No, this principle has to be put into practice, or in the language of Gal 6:16, "has to be followed." Thus updating the idea to apply to the present is justified, even required. It is right to use our Pauline text against discrimination against women,³³ foreigners and our fellow men and women who do the work of slaves in our present-day society. Nevertheless, this still lags one step behind Paul's words in Gal 3:28; 6:15. According to these passages, in Christ society should be fundamentally designed anew.

But how is such radical action to be conceived? I shall leave Paul and present the most far-reaching scheme found among his successors:

3. Creation in Christ – creation for good works (Eph 2:10)

If you listen attentively to this title, you will realize that I have omitted the expression "new creation". I have a good reason for doing so, for Ephesians does not contain it; the phrase κοινή κτίσις in the New Testament remains proper to Paul. Nevertheless Ephesians belongs here, for it does not avoid our phrase because it wants to hold back, but because it develops Paul's approach a step further.

The step is obvious: according to Paul, Christian women and men are a new creation in Christ, destined for new knowledge and a new exist-

³² As explained by W. Klaiber, *Rechtfertigung und Gemeinde. Eine Untersuchung zum paulinischen Kirchenverständnis* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments) 127. Göttingen, 1982, p. 98, "New creation is to be understood cosmologically, insofar as the congregation is not set alongside Judaism and paganism as a third progeny, but is characterized as the eschatological foundation of the new mankind." – Further remarks on the passage in the commentaries and in U. Mell, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) pp. 261–325 (with some rather controversial positions).

³³ Some very important reflection has taken place in this area; cf. for instance E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her. A feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins*. New York etc., 1983, pp. 205–241.

tence. In Christ they have been newly created. Do we need to retain the word "new" in this assertion? Whoever is thus newly created in Christ is certainly wholly created in Christ. To her and to him the new creation in principle becomes the decisive creation. All creation must be thought of as in Christ³⁴; the events of creation and salvation (protology and soteriology) must be linked. This step takes us to Ephesians where the verses which are crucial for this discussion also begin with an assertion about salvation. They deepen this into creation and lead it towards ethics. I am quoting from 2:8–10: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God [...]. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life."³⁵

"Grace", "gift of God", "salvation" are the headings of creation. God's prerogative is that of the gracious God. Full of strength it is like – no, it is creative action. Everything is because of God, not because of man's deeds.³⁶ Therefore the Christian man/woman, is not simply created,³⁷ but created to do good deeds.³⁸ To leave no doubt that they are part of God's gift, these good deeds are said to have been prepared beforehand by God.³⁹ From the perspective of history of religions, conceptions here have been radicalized in that man of himself can do no good, and just acts in the full sense are the work of God.⁴⁰ The ethical consequence is that the Christian man/woman does not have to acquire good deeds, but finds himself/herself already

³⁴ In all probability Eph presupposes Col whose concept of Christ's creation-mediatorship was presented above in the lecture "The Fullness of God and Time. On New Testament Christology". Cf. Eph particularly 1:4.

³⁵ According to *The New Revised Standard Version*.

³⁶ Expressly inserted in the part of our passage (v. 9) that was not quoted. Ephesians thus no longer puts forward the Pauline concept of justification; by pushing its critical potential to the background, it rather intensifies and develops soteriology (cf. particularly R. Schnackenburg, *Der Brief an die Epheser* [Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament; 10], Zürich etc., 1982, pp. 97 f. 100 about the passage in question).

³⁷ Eph expresses this by means of the two stems ποιημα and ποιζω and thus mirrors the two Hebrew guiding verbs 'sh and br', to which reference has been made above.

³⁸ The plural "good deeds" is not supported in Paul, but at least the singular occurs in 2 Cor 9:8. Again, in its own way, Eph continues a Pauline approach.

³⁹ Even more intensively, we find the active in Greek: the point is God's active working for and in the good deeds. Concerning this discussion see particularly A. Lindemann, *Die Auhebung der Zeit. Geschichtsverständnis und Eschatologie im Epheserbrief* (Studien zum Neuen Testament; 12), Gütersloh, 1975, pp. 138 f. (Lit.).

⁴⁰ Cf. particularly I QH [hymns] 1:26 ff.; 4:31; 16:5 (cf. R. Schnackenburg, *op. cit.* [fn. 36] pp. 99 f. in. 242). We may add the idea that fundamental things have already been prepared in God before they are put into practice (evidence in A. Lindemann, *op. cit.* [fn. 39] p. 139).

within them. Consequently Eph 2:10 ends by ushering them not into an ethical "should", but towards "walking" (περιπατεῖν) in the good deeds, like men/women walking in a protected domain. Eph 4:24 articulates this once again with a somewhat different ensemble of images concerning our (new-)creation subject: the decisive expression is "clothing yourselves" (ἐνδύσασθαι) with the new self created by God, as a man/woman puts on a good gown in which he/she is well wrapped around. Then he/she finds himself/herself surrounded in true righteousness and holiness.⁴¹

For whoever conceives of the indicative – God's creating and saving work in Christ – as radically as Ephesians, will ultimately find every action of his life emerging from this indicative. Ethics is nothing apart from it; to Christian women and men it is the space granted for living out their being created in Christ. This ethical approach can only be conceived of clearly within a Christian context. The ethical bridge towards Islam becomes complicated.

II. The eschaton in history?

If we limit ourselves to the development of the three passages described, taken from 2 Corinthians, Galatians and Ephesians, it is beyond question that the Christ-event is a definitive manifestation of God's working in history. The end, the eschaton, becomes or rather is present for the one who allows himself/herself to be clothed in Christ and walks in the new creation. Christian life and ongoing history can in fact just enter into what actually exists already.⁴²

This is a striking way of approaching creation and history, entailing the ethical consequences of living as a new creation. But how strictly can it be carried through? Is it not too bold, living in history, to leave history and enter the eschaton? The Christian man and woman must ultimately realize that history has not all been transformed. On the contrary, history tends towards restriction rather than freedom and manifests need and hostility that are increasing rather than coming to an end. If free fulfilment is not to remain only hypothetical, ethics have to contrast it with action limits down to insoluble conflicts. Creation-theology must ask itself whether it

⁴¹ For an interpretation, besides the commentaries see A. Lindemann, *op. cit.* (fn. 39) pp. 72 f. The topic is already introduced in 1:4.

⁴² Expounded in the strictest way (and so perhaps too strictly) for Eph by A. Lindemann, *op. cit.* (fn. 39) passim: for him "new creation", according to Eph 2:6 f. is ultimately "identical" with heavenly existence, "ascension" (137); instead of ongoing time, one would have to speak in Eph of an "annulment of time" (see title of his book!).

is feasible to consider beginning and end as being as close to one another as Ephesians does, or whether it is more appropriate with regard to the world and God to discern a wide band of tensions between the creation of the beginning and the creation of the end, which has not yet been completely covered.⁴³

These questions have not arisen only in the present time. A theology of new creation that is as consistent as the one I have presented is also to be found in the New Testament, but only as a part of the reflection on the existence of Christians in the world and history. It therefore needs broadening. Of course it is impossible to treat the subject exhaustively, so I am going to choose two significant points:

1. On the problem area of ethics: 'conscience' in the present creation

It is not by chance that I begin with a short section on the meaning of conscience. For in the New Testament 'conscience' is of considerable significance in the context of human existence in creation. I think there is no exact linguistic equivalent of 'conscience' in the Qur'an. Accordingly, for the task that faces me, I choose a term especially significant for Christian thinking, in order to use it to discuss the problem of Christian ethics in the present creation.

On the other hand, the special character of the concept of conscience must not be given too much weight, for the Qur'an, with its lack of a precise equivalent, stands in the Semitic linguistic tradition; we already have similar difficulties in finding an equivalent in the Hebrew Old Testament.⁴⁴ The word belongs to the context of the Indo-Germanic languages, where it is not a Christian neologism, but a considerable impulse towards the philosophical-juridical generalization of the idea in Western cultures, even when they distanced themselves from close ties with the Church.⁴⁵

In ancient Greek word formation, the term connects the prefix *συν* ('con')

⁴³ A major question in creation-theological themes till today: cf. C. Link, *Schöpfung*, vol. 2 (Schöpfungstheologie angesichts der Herausforderungen des 20. Jahrhunderts) (Handbuch Systematischer Theologie; 7,2). Gütersloh, 1991, pp. 494–599 according to pp. 351 ff.

⁴⁴ In the LXX, *συνείδησις* is only once written down in parallel with a Hebrew term of the MT (Masoretic text), in Eccl 10:20; however, the interpretation of the Hebrew term (*md'*) is not unequivocal there (cf. the commentary of A. Lauha, *Kohélet* [Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament; 19], Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1978, p. 196); when choosing their terms, the translators slant the text in their own way.

⁴⁵ For a general survey of this more recent development see H. Reiner, art. "Gewissen", in: J. Ritter (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 3, Darmstadt, 1974, pp. 574–592, here: pp. 584–592.

to *οἶδα* ('know'); analogously, the more recent Latin term 'conscientia' (only in general use since the 1st century CE) places the prefix 'cum' ('con') before 'scientia' ('knowledge'). In Antiquity, con-science has to be read precisely as co-knowledge.⁴⁶ Before the Christian era, a philosophical focusing took place only in part and we cannot assume that it was accepted by early Christianity to the extent that has been previously supposed.⁴⁷ After the Septuagint, texts in Hellenistic Judaism show the possibility of approaching the term in the context of the people of God without its crystallizing in ethics to become a comprehensive Israelite guiding principle.⁴⁸ We find that it is a phenomenon already known to us: a term already known offers space for developing further meanings and Christian theology enters this open space.

1.1 Paul

An essential passage for our discussion here is one in which Paul combines his consideration of divine creation and human conscience. He does

⁴⁶ The German term "Gewissen" (conscience) is a neologism created by Notker of St. Gallen (about 1000 CE; see H. Reiner, *op. cit.* [fn. 45] here p. 574). The formation of the word (as an abstract noun derived from a verb) derives directly from the stem of the verb "wissen" [to know]; a comparable example is the German phrase "ich habe gewusst" [I have known]. Hence, according to the German derivation, he who has conscience is one who has acquired knowledge. Compared with Latin and Greek, there is an unequivocal process of abstraction. Notker did not develop this, but in the Middle Ages it gained more and more weight: conscience came to be seen as having two focal points. Before the co-knowledge accompanying the deed, was the ethical knowledge which God had given to man with creation before man did anything, a conscience in the sense of a *habitus* ("having") of the highest moral principles. The Biblical term *syneidesis* (in the Vulgate *conscientia*) was no longer adequate to express it. As a result of a misreading of a passage in Hieronymus, a medieval neologism for the fundamental meaning emerged: *synderesis*. In the main, *conscientia* can maintain the sense of the conscience (co-knowledge) which accompanies and follows the deed (for examples and necessary differentiations see H. Reiner, *op. cit.* [fn. 45] pp. 582 f.).

⁴⁷ For examples see particularly H.-J. Eckstein, *Der Begriff Syneidesis bei Paulus. Eine neutestamentlich-exegetische Untersuchung zum "Gewissensbegriff"* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament; Reihe 2; 10). Tübingen, 1983, pp. 35–104. For instance, Seneca's famous phrase in ep. 41:2 that "conscientia" was "sacer intra nos spiritus malorum bonorumque nostrorum observator et custos" ("a holy spirit within us, observer and guardian of our wicked and good [deeds]") – even in this concentration, in the motif of observing, the origin of co-knowledge can be felt) has to be seen as an independent philosophical concentration at the time of Paul. In the history of philosophy it is only after late Antiquity that the traditions of the terms merged.

⁴⁸ References in the Septuagint, beside Eccl 10:20 previously mentioned, with clearly different nuances: Wis 17:11; Sir 42:18 S. – Beside this, special weight must be given to Philo: three times *συνείδησις* of injustice or sins (*De Specialibus Legibus* II 49; *Quod Deterius Potiori insidiosi soleat* 146; *De Virtutibus* 124); however, for his own reflections Philo prefers *συνείδησις*, which is not taken up in the New Testament (for more details see H.-J. Eckstein, *op. cit.* [fn. 47] pp. 121 ff.).

this when he reflects that man is without excuse before God, in Rm 1:18–3:20. For the Creator, as stated in 1:20.25, may be understood through the things he made; everything that takes place in creation happens before the face of the Creator. This is concretized in conscience: it knows what a human being does and thinks. It is an uncomfortable 'co-knower' of our affairs, co-knower until Judgment Day, for then the co-knower becomes the witness. Conscience testifies juridically⁴⁹ that man in his deeds consciously or unconsciously refers to an ethical norm, the 'law'. Man is concerned with this until God's Judgment: "Man, you have knowledge of the Law", including the people among the nations who do not turn towards the one God (the 'pagans').

In this line of thought conscience accompanies and follows man's activities in creation.⁵⁰ Ultimately conscience becomes relevant at God's Judgment to which the whole creation, not only the new creation, is subjected.⁵¹ According to Pauline theology, conscience therefore belongs rather to the field of tension within a 'not yet' that is moving speedily towards the end, than to a realized eschatology of the new creation.⁵² It actualizes itself as co-knowledge with the other, not avoiding the tension between the present world and the strength of faith, but reflecting it.⁵³ It even allows adaptation to the order of the state and its legislation, a particularly conflict-ridden institutional area of the present creation (Rm 13:5).⁵⁴

⁴⁹ In Greek in 2:15 the juridical verb "συμμορτυρεῖν" is chosen (again with the prefix "co").

⁵⁰ A *conscientia antecedens* in the strict sense is not yet to be found in the Pauline references. Behind all the examples, the starting point of co-knowledge is noticeable (especially clearly in 2 Cor 1:12; 4:2).

⁵¹ For a more detailed interpretation of this difficult passage see the commentaries and H.-J. Eckstein, *op. cit.* (fn. 47) pp. 137–179 (lit.).

⁵² Therefore it is perhaps no coincidence that *συνουδία/συνειδησις* does not occur in Galatians which contains Paul's most far-reaching reflection concerning the new creation. Even less by chance, the gap between verb and noun is found in Ephesians.

⁵³ As in the passages where Paul most frequently suggests our concept of conscience, in 1 Cor 8 and 10 (most important in 10:28–29a). A more precise interpretation is controversial; references in H.-J. Eckstein, *op. cit.* (fn. 47) pp. 232–276 and (for a position that raises, without concluding the discussion, the idea that in this passage conscience should be taken to mean 'bad feeling') P. W. Gooch, "Conscience" in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10", in *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987) 244–254.

⁵⁴ In this passage the position of *συνειδησις* = conscience, or more precisely co-knowledge – is crucial and such that three interpretations are possible: first, it is simply a matter of co-knowledge about actual good and evil; this means, a general ethical knowledge about right and wrong (cf. Rm 2:15) which supports the legal authority of the state (if, in keeping with the preceding *ὄργη*, we discern a penal context, it takes shape especially in reflections about the

1.2 Pastoral Letters and 1 Peter

By no means all New Testament writings expound the concept of a new creation. This must have been mentioned already. But how then does the term 'conscience' develop, which, in the perspective of creation-theology, is more open to debate than in Islam?

If we begin with Paul, we shall first turn towards the Pastoral Letters. There we encounter a completely different line of argumentation from that in Ephesians (which avoids the term conscience). For the Pastorals do not simply refer to creation in general. They assert more precisely that what God has created is beautiful and good (*καλός*; 1 Tm 4:3 f.). But this does not mean they give up the eschatological tension.⁵⁵ Rather they give space to an existence that has co-knowledge of the surrounding environment and knows the norms of God. The concept of conscience emerges: the "good conscience" or "pure heart" appears (1 Tm 1:5.19; 2 Tm 1:3), the like of which Paul has not mentioned before. It is "good" because it knows that the Christian believer, in the concrete situation of his life, is capable of acting according to God's norms; an ethics of love, based on a good conscience, gives the Christian believer an orientation with which to face all threats.⁵⁶

1 Peter takes a remarkable further step. It demonstrates the certainty that God is the Creator to people whose experience of the world is different from that of the Pastorals: the society in which the Christians, God's own

consequences of our own deeds; cf. M. Wolter, art. "Gewissen II", in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* vol. 13. Berlin etc., 1984, pp. 213–218; here p. 216). Second, especially vv. 1–4 suggest the Christian's co-knowledge vis-à-vis the responsibility of the state as a servant of God even where there is not a Christian government (on both these interpretations cf. U. Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, vol. 3 [Rm 12–16]. [Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament; 6,3]. Zürich etc., 1982, pp. 36 f.). Third, in contrast with the aforementioned wrath (hardly mentioned in any studies probably because of the linguistic analogy between *διὰ τὴν συνειδησὶν* and 1 Cor 10:25.27, which is not strictly required by the context) one could also think of the co-knowledge of God; the gen. subj. of *ὄργη* as well as of *συνειδησις* which is left open in the text would thus implicitly refer to God. A particular correspondence with verses 3 and 4 would then occur because there wrath is linked with the evil deed (v. 4b–d). Understood in this way, God's co-knowledge is seen to have an orientation towards the good in whose interest the state is intended to serve the individual person (v. 3c–4a). The state would have to be particularly aware, besides taking the culprit to law, that it is God who, in his co-knowledge, accompanies the service of the state for the sake of the good.

⁵⁵ See in the immediate context of the passage mentioned 1 Tm 4:1; cf. 1 Tm 6:14 f., etc.

⁵⁶ Above all against wrong ethical teachers; 1 Tm 1:5 ff. – On this topic see particularly J. Koloit, *Der erste Brief an Timotheus* (Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament; 15). Zürich etc., 1988, pp. 64 ff., pp. 68 ff. Conscience conceived in this way is of course also vulnerable in a new way, as M. Wolter, *op. cit.* (fn. 54) p. 217 emphasizes (cf. especially 1 Tm 1:19c).

people, live is alien to them (2:9). The legal status given to them is that of people who are aliens and exiles (2:11).⁵⁷ What is important is therefore not that everything God has created is good, but that God is faithful.⁵⁸ Uniquely in the New Testament, creation here is balanced between the divinely and the humanly created institution (2:13).⁵⁹ In an alien environment which confronts the Christian in an evil rather than in a good way, the "good conscience" has to assert itself (3:16; cf. 3:21).

Speaking of the "good conscience" reminds us of the Pastorals. However, an additional element which we hardly expect to be implied in the concept of conscience, is brought to bear in the extremely tense relation to the environment described in 1 Peter, which includes more intensive confrontation and suffering. Here my comments must be a little far-ranging and take you back once again to co-knowledge as an approach to the term 'conscience' in Antiquity: man knows together with his fellow man. But God the Most High knows still more. Pre-New Testament Jewish wisdom states that he knows all that may be known (Sir 42:18 Hebr text). From this idea it is but a small step to the thought that God has all 'co-knowledge'. So we cannot exclude the possibility that one of the three references for συνειδησις in the Septuagint should be translated as God's 'co-knowledge' rather than as (human) 'conscience'.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ A great topic of 1 Pt elaborated recently by R. Feldmeier, *Die Christen als Fremde. Die Metapher der Fremde in der antiken Welt, im Urchristentum und im 1. Petrusbrief* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 64). Tübingen, 1992 (passim, especially pp. 153 ff.).

⁵⁸ The latter is only stated about the Creator in 1 Pt 4:19.

⁵⁹ In Greek, κτισις is a *nomen actionis* (creation seen from point of view of creating); read from this perspective, ἀνθρωπίνη κτισις 1 Pt 2:13 would have to be rendered as "human" in the sense of "man-made creation". Earlier research has hesitated to make this step. However, the philological argument carries weight. If one ponders the possible combination of a general Greek conception of creation (as a [human] institution) with the specifically theological creation concept (God as Creator), i. e., that man the creature would himself become creatively active, a substantial step forward is made: the development of human institutions (dealt with in 2:13 f.) is (clearly beyond Rm 13) initially to be traced back to human creation and but indirectly to God. (Further details in M. Gielen, *Tradition und Theologie neutestamentlicher Haustafelethik. Ein Beitrag zur Frage einer christlichen Auseinandersetzung mit gesellschaftlichen Normen* [Athenäums Monographien; Theologie; Bonner Biblische Beiträge, 75]. Frankfurt/M., 1990, pp. 396–400). To me this does not seem to be unimportant in the context of the discussion of social and political ethics in 1 Pt which is partly very critical (for instance D. L. Balch, "Hellenization / Acculturation in 1 Peter", in *Perspectives on First Peter. National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion. Special Studies*, Macon, GA 1986, pp. 79–101).

⁶⁰ This concerns the Greek tradition of Sir 42:18. It is divided into two lines. According to the first (manuscript A,B) God generally "knows" in the sense of "possesses" (cf. the Hebrew *yad d'ti*). According to the second (manuscript S), God has "all co-knowledge" (πάσων

if we follow this line of thought, 'conscience' at the beginning of the Christian era has a place not only in anthropology, but also in the context of understanding God. There is much to support the idea that 1 Peter intends to deepen this conception. In the central passage, 2:19, it speaks of "God's συνειδησις" (conscience / co-knowledge"). Since Luther, translations have understood this as a genitive in the object position: "Denn das ist grade / so jemand *umb des Gewissens willen zu Gott* / das ubel vertregt / und leidet das unrecht." [For this is worthy of thanks, if a man *for conscience toward God* endures evil and suffers unjustly.]⁶¹ If we follow this line, then, in 1 Pt 2:19, suffering for the sake of conscience is not only rewarded because it is an inescapable distress; it also becomes a place of grace, of God's turning towards man, where the sufferer may feel joy about God (according to the stem χαίρειν "to feel joy" in χάρις).

This nuance of the genitive in the object position is, I think, not to be rejected, but it must be complemented. For in Greek it is far more likely that the person referred to in the genitive rather becomes a *nomen actionis* (as with συνειδησις) as a genitive in subject position.⁶² As a further stratum of the text, the translation must be: "das ist Gnade / so jemand um des Mitwissens Gottes willen und begleitet durch dieses⁶³ Schmerzen in ungerechtem Leiden erträgt" [this is grace / when somebody for the sake of God's co-knowledge and accompanied by it bears the pains of unjust suffering]. The idea deepens: grace in suffering grows from the conviction that God knows about this suffering and accompanies it. That God shares in it

συνειδησις). In the Sir-context, both variants can be combined with one another: God is the knowing one, and as such he has co-knowledge of everything; nothing, not even a single word, escapes him. – In Hebrew the alternative understanding that God knows every (human) co- = conscience (maintained in the field of research up to H.-J. Eckstein, *op. cit.* [fn.47] pp. 114 f.) is less probable philologically, although not impossible as a further development in Greek.

⁶¹ Quotation according to Luther, *op. cit.* [fn.13] p. 2412; emphases by Karrer. The translation shows how strong and linear was the orientation of conscience towards man, and this held in the history of philosophy / theology till Luther (cf. the references with H. Reiner, *op. cit.* [fn. 45] pp. 580–583).

⁶² The object position of the genitive in Philo (*op. cit.* [fn. 48]) and in the New Testament (certain only in Heb 10:2) is always constructed with the impersonal object (as Ge-/Mitwissen der "Sünden" [as conscience / co-knowledge of the "sins"]; etc.). The only proof in pre-New Testament Jewish literature with a personal pronoun in the genitive position concerning συνειδησις, Test XII Rub [Testament Rubens] 4:3, is clearly to be rendered as genitive in subject position ("my conscience"); there the description of the object follows with περὶ. – Interestingly, many later manuscripts of 1 Pt 2:19 (manuscript C, but also substantial minuscules and early-Church-translations) clarify it as συνειδησις παρὰ τῷ θεῷ, "with (I) God".

⁶³ διὰ in the accusative case rendered causally and temporally.

– according to 1 Pt 4:12 ff. because of Christ's sufferings – makes Christian joy possible even in suffering.⁶⁴

1.3 Consequences

Let us leave these deliberations behind and return to our main question – the eschaton in history. From the perspective of the early Christians, this can absolutely not be thought of only in the way found in Ephesians, namely as the life of a new creation, which the Christians experienced as a radical change that had already taken place. If we follow the development of the concept of conscience in Paul, it can also be seen as an introduction to an extremely tense position between the 'already' and the 'not yet'. Finally, according to 1 Peter, it can be thought of as an existence that, although it is in the alien territory of this world, is nevertheless guided by God who, after Christ's suffering, co-knows all sufferings away from home and thus lays the foundations for action in alien lands.⁶⁵

This area of tension seems to me important for interreligious dialogue about ethical questions. When facing the critically aggravated problems of the present in partnership⁶⁶, it is easier to begin with the awareness that history is not yet perfected, even though the line of ethical argumentation in the religions will certainly be different. (I note here that in the Qur'an a linguistic equivalent for the term conscience is lacking, so an equivalence will have to be developed by a different approach.) At the same time the radical nature of the formulations concerning 'new creation' up to Eph remains a great challenge: far-reaching as specific Christian efforts may be towards peace, justice and preservation of the creation we are given, they must never abandon the perspective of thinking of and living in creation as principally based on Christ – indeed even in Christ.

⁶⁴ As a rule, the discussion in the field of research is restricted to the renderings with the genitive in the object position, but this leads to substantial problems of interpretation: cf., besides the commentaries, especially H.-J. Eckstein, *op. cit.* (fn. 47) pp. 308 ff. (who, concerning this passage, finally feels obliged to give a problematic 'improper' interpretation of συνειδησις as 'awareness').

⁶⁵ This does not bring the New Testament concept of conscience to an end. Hebrews in particular should also be consulted; first references and lit. in this context in M. Wolter, *op. cit.* (fn. 54) p. 218.

⁶⁶ This concern is by no means new: as regards the particularly important question of peace, may I recall here, at a Catholic Faculty of Theology, for instance R. Schneider, *Gesammelte Werke* (hrsg. von E. M. Landau im Auftrag der Reinhold-Schneider-Gesellschaft), vol. 8, (*Der Friede der Welt* [1956]), Frankfurt/M., 1977, pp. 379–406, here: p. 399.

2. On the problem area of soteriology: congregation and the extra-Christian world

I do not want to evade a second question that is difficult for interreligious dialogue, although I can only touch upon it marginally: where does non-Christian mankind fit in with the 'already' and the 'not yet' of the Christian experience of salvation? What does early Christianity expect or hope for them as God's creation?

From the early Christian insights I choose Rm 8:18–22 and Rev 21 f., because they contain the concept of creation or the concept of the new creation:

2.1 Rm 8:18–22

"In the midst of the renewed creation, the community of salvation both Jews and Christians will be allowed to praise the Creator", is how Peter Stuhlmacher characterizes the Pauline idea in the context of Rm 8:19–22.⁶⁷ Although the passage (like Rm in general) only mentions creation in general and does not speak of the "new creation" in particular, it is thus directly part of our topic.⁶⁸

I however, what does "in the midst of the renewed creation" mean? The question central for us is difficult in the interpretation of Scripture.⁶⁹ So I go to verses 21 f. (following the *Einheitsübersetzung*): "Creation too shall be set free from slavery and forlornness to obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now." Here a distinction is made between creation and the children of God.⁷⁰ Creation must therefore mean what is created other than the Christian community. The majority of exegetes think this refers to creation as a whole.⁷¹ A minority think it means "mankind that is

⁶⁷ P. Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1 (Grundlegung: von Jesus zu Paulus), Göttingen, 1992, p. 271.

⁶⁸ Cf. id., *Erwägungen* (s. fn. 4) p. 9.

⁶⁹ It has been so since the early Church, according to: Ernst, *Schöpfung...* *op. cit.* (fn. 72) p. 196 since Augustine, *De octog. trib. quaest.* 67,1: "Hoc capitulum obscurum est, quia non satis apparet, quam nunc Apostolus vocat creaturam."

⁷⁰ The rendering of Rm 8:21 f. here according to *Einheitsübersetzung*. Even more distinctly vv. 19 f.

⁷¹ Supporting texts in N. Walter, "Gottes Zorn und das 'Harren der Kreatur'. Zur Korrespondenz zwischen Römer 1,18–32 und 8,19–22", in: *Christus bezeugen. Festschrift für Wolfgang Trilling zum 65. Geburtstag* (hrsg. von K. Kertelge u. a.) (Erfurter Theologische Schriften; 59), Leipzig, 1989, pp. 218–226, here: p. 220 n. 9 and in the commentaries.

not reached by the Gospel and does not believe in Christ".⁷² Even if we take the view that the latter is too specific⁷³, in this text non-Christian mankind cannot be excluded from what is meant by 'creation'.⁷⁴ If we take a moderate position, we might read it as, "Creation too (nature and creatures including non-Christian mankind) shall be freed from slavery and forlornness to obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God [...]".

According to the final words of v. 21, Paul presents a free and glorious existence as children of God, like that of the congregation, as the goal of the renewed creation.⁷⁵ Verse 22 follows. The *Einheitsübersetzung* unnecessarily omits the Greek prefixes of the verbs. Taking them into account, we should translate more precisely: "Wir wissen, dass die gesamte Schöpfung bis zum heutigen Tag mitseufzt und mit in Geburtswehen liegt."⁷⁶ [We know that the whole creation is co-groaning and co-suffers in labour pains until now.] This means that v. 22 also contains a relational component, a motif of "togetherness" (in Greek συν). If the verb is intransitive, the creatures are groaning together in labour pains, indicating – according to the apocalyptic metaphor of labour pains, that it is referring to the birth of eschatological perfection⁷⁷ – the birth of something new.⁷⁸ A reference to the children of God in v. 21 is also possible, so that creation is groaning in labour pains with them.⁷⁹ In the background, lies the (untranslated) v. 18: facing the congregation, Paul cannot and does not want to pass over

in silence "the sufferings of this present⁸⁰ time", yet he sees them in the light of the glory to come.

The following perspective suggests itself for interreligious dialogue (I am here going beyond our passage): just as certainly as Christian men and women experience the new creation in themselves (see above what was said with regard to '2 Corinthians' and 'Galatians'), they continue to encounter the sufferings of the present time. They therefore wait "with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" – and they may believe that all creation is involved in their turning towards God's future. It is not primarily a rupture between Christian and non-Christian creatures that must be constructed, but a relation, a relationship in suffering and a relationship in hope.⁸¹ Life as children of God, towards which all creation presses, thus begins from the Christian congregation which in this respect does remain special. However, all creation participates in the birth. Life as children of God must be conceived of not as excluding but with instances of opening out towards creation as a whole. This gives access to a possible inclusive approach in the theology of religions.

2.2 Rev 21 f.

Access to this from Revelation is much more difficult, for, although it presents in its final chapters the most comprehensive vision of a new heaven and a new earth to be found in early Christianity (21:1–22:5)⁸², this is strictly focused on the Church.⁸³

With regard to the non-Christian earth, an unresolved tension emerges. On the one hand, the seer has a vision of the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem – in whose image the new creation is crystallized – that will never be shut

⁷² For the most substantial arguments (among others, reference to Pirge Abot 1,12 as comparable usage), see N. Walter, *op. cit.* (fn. 71) pp. 220 ff. (citation 220). Further representatives are mentioned by J. Ernst, *Das Heil der Schöpfung* (Catholica. Münster; 46), 1992, pp. 189–206, here p. 196.

⁷³ Criticism of Walter particularly in P. Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie*, *op. cit.* (n. 67) p. 271 (in my view not conclusive).

⁷⁴ Since in these verses there is no definitive evidence for an interpretation in this direction. However, in more recent exegesis, this position is very widespread (up to J. Ernst, *op. cit.* [n. 72] pp. 196 ff.; older examples also in N. Walter, *op. cit.* [fn. 71] p. 220 n. 10).

⁷⁵ Cf. among others J. Baumgarten, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) p. 175.

⁷⁶ In Greek the συν-element is vital in both verbs: examples to be found via H. G. Liddell et al. (s. fn. 12) s. v. (1730, 1735) and W. Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, hrsg. von K. u. B. Aland, Berlin, 1988, s. v. (1583, 1586).

⁷⁷ Cf. J. Baumgarten, *op. cit.* (fn. 4) pp. 175 f. (referring to 6 Esr 2 = 4 Esr 16:38–40). Further material in W. Harnisch, *Eschatologische Existenz. Ein exegetischer Beitrag zum Sachanliegen von 1. Thessalonicher 4,13–5,11* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments; 110). Göttingen, 1973, pp. 62–72.

⁷⁸ This is the main line of research till J. Ernst, *op. cit.* (n. 71) p. 197 (Lit.).

⁷⁹ Luther emphasized this aspect in his translation ("alle Creatur sehnet sich mit uns" [all creatures are longing together with us]); *Biblia* (s. fn. 13) 2282.

⁸⁰ Νῦν like v. 22.

⁸¹ Cf. ἐλπίς v. 20.

⁸² Rev 21:1 refers particularly to Trito-Isaiah (Is 65:17; 66:22). On all this see especially W. W. Reader, *Die Stadt Gottes in der Iohannesapokalypse*. Diss. Göttingen, 1971, and (trying to interpret the new heaven and new earth as denying the annihilation of the world) A. Vögtle, "Dann sah ich einen neuen Himmel und eine neue Erde..." (Apk 21,1). Zur kosmischen Dimension neutestamentlicher Eschatologie", in *Gläube und Eschatologie. Festschrift für W. G. Kümmel zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. by E. Grässer – O. Merk, Tübingen, 1985, pp. 303–333.

⁸³ See the development to 22:3 ff. and numerous individual motifs; on this topic particularly see J. Roloff, *op. cit.* (fn. 10) pp. 122–138. The line culminates in 22:17: the motif of the bride develops from 21:2, so it must be understood to refer to the heavenly bride. But this heavenly bride does not remain beyond, at the level of a new creation. Rather, the earthly congregation can hear her (probably during the service) together with the Spirit of God and the Lamb calling: "come". The perfection of the new heaven and the new earth extends to the earthly community, when the word is spoken and Christ is encountered (cf. v. 20).

by day. According to 21:25, the gates will never be shut by day or by night; "and there will be no night there". "The nations" will walk by its light without restrictions (21:24, already anticipating the picture of the open gates).⁶⁴ On the other hand, the holy also remains exclusive in its perfection; the imperfect and unclean have no place in it (21:27a). Therefore all those who, when they face perfection, cannot make a claim to holiness, are excluded. They are named in the damning catalogue in 21:8, and in other lists found in the polemics against other religions of the time. Excluded from renewal by God, those who, according to the seer, deny God's truth, are afflicted by suffering the second and final death.⁶⁵ From the perspective of the theology of religions, the new creation has the most stringent conditions attributed to it.

From the perspective of a theology of history or of creation, Revelation does not know a balance of tensions.⁶⁶ This makes it difficult to follow. Nevertheless, its conclusion does also suggest that the seer does not want to stop at an eschaton in history, where there is an unbridged separation from the non-Christian environment. In contrast with all the excluding negations, he chooses as the last sentence of Revelation the encouraging words: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen." (Rev 22:21).⁶⁷ These encouraging words continue the tone of the early Christian letters where Paul wishes grace to his addressees; however, at a decisive point it goes beyond the letters, for while the letters usually conclude by wishing the Lord's grace to the addressees of the letters ("to you", etc.), the seer John wishes it to "be with all".⁶⁸ The Greek makes another point which can only be paraphrased in English, because, in the wish for grace, as in almost all the wishes for grace in the early Church, the verb is missing in Greek. The

optative "be" may therefore be inserted, which is familiar to us, or else "is" in the indicative of affirmation. The optative suggests the certainty that God is full of grace. Rev 22:21 bases it on the Christ-event. And so we may read it: "The action of grace, which our Lord Jesus brings to bear, be – since it is – with all!"

Compared with the line of thought in Rm 8:19–22, we are here, in Rev 21–22, on another level of reflection according to which we cannot by human reason resolve the religio-theological problem. But in Christ we can trust God even where man can find no solution. Even the most critical position possible in the New Testament arising from the context of the new creation motifs, is opposed to a strictly exclusive understanding of Christianity.

⁶⁴ Even the kings of the earth, so far mostly seen as being extremely negative (see esp. 17:18; 19:19) will bring their glory into the city (in this context see W. W. Reader, *op. cit.* [fn. 82] pp. 129 f.).

⁶⁵ They appear in the catalogue of vices as idolatry and as theological falsehood; the polemic does not differentiate. On interpreting 21:8.27a, apart from the commentaries, see W. W. Reader, *op. cit.* (fn. 82) pp. 188–194, pp. 134 f.

⁶⁶ Especially tough criticism based on depth psychology in H. Raguse, *Psychoanalyse und biblische Interpretation. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Eugen Drewermanns Auslegung der Johannes-Apokalypse*. Stuttgart etc., 1993, pp. 182–209, etc.

⁶⁷ Here 'Einheitsübersetzung' and the revised translation of Luther are in agreement.

⁶⁸ In the early Church this was already so striking that some manuscripts revised it to: grace be with "the saints" or something similar (see the apparatus in the critical text editions). Luther, who had a very bad Greek translation at his disposition, read "with you all" (Biblia [see fn. 13] p. 2513). The more recent translations rightly correct this.

Questions and Interventions

[Study Group 1]

the meaning of difference in gender

LEUZE With reference to Gal 3:28 – “there is no longer male and female” – it was said in the lecture that among those who, through their faith in Christ Jesus, are children of God, difference of gender no longer exists; in

Christian tradition this continues with regard to the expectation of paradise (cf. Mt 22:23 ff.). In comparison, we may ask to what extent the difference of gender is maintained in the Qur’ān.

good works – already created?

Another question arises from Eph 2:10, which states that we are God’s creation, in Christ Jesus created “for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be

our way of life”. In the Christian faith, do we not generally say that the works must be done by us ourselves and have not been created beforehand? Is it not rather in the Islamic tradition that we may expect statements about works which have already been created?

Islamic ethics of obedience – Christian ethics of being?

HAGEMANN If we assume that Islamic ethics are ethics of obedience, oriented towards God who guides man along the right path through his commandments, how would we make a comparable characterization of Christian ethics? If through Christ, as was stated in the

lecture, a new dimension of knowledge is attained, should Christian ethics then rather be called ethics of being?

creation and salvation

GRESHAKE It was both surprising and fascinating to have the passage Rm 8:18–22 interpreted as it was in the lecture. Is this interpretation – that creation belongs to the non-Christian realm rather than to that of God’s children –

generally accepted among exegetes?

FÜGLISTER Does this passage really mean that all things are groaning and waiting for the revealing of the children of God, and that ultimately universal salvation will only come through the children of God, through the Church? In that case, the whole creation would be what will be restored at the end, including non-Christians. Does this not contradict the sharp division between destruction and salvation that may also be found in Paul, according to which the believers, the baptized, gain salvation, whereas the others are subject to destruction (σωτηρία – ἀπώλεια; Phil 1:28; cf.

among others Rm 9:22 f.)? However, Paul does not go into detail about this destruction; he never speaks about hell. But it is clear that the others will not participate in the new creation. Does the Revelation to John (chapt. 20 and 21) not state that everything that is non-Christian will be thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur?

‘ethics of being’ and conscience

GRESHAKE The lecture correctly refers to two approaches – ‘new creation’ and ‘conscience’, if we can put it like that. How can these two approaches be reconciled with one another, not only intellectually, but also practically, in the performance of life? On the one hand, following the idea of ethics of being, we only have to live out the salvation that already exists, or in other words, once we are saved, we cannot but do good works; on the other hand, there really is still the difference between being and action. How can these two approaches be reconciled with one another?

WOLBERT These two understandings of morals must be differentiated: the consecutive one, according to which one already has to be a good person in order to do good, and the teleological one, according to which one has to do good in order to become a good person. It is interesting that these problems were already dealt with in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, although normally philosophical ethics are very strongly oriented towards a teleological understanding. If, however, a consecutive understanding of morals already exists in the classic metaphor of the good tree and its fruits, it is deepened in Christian understanding by the assertion that one becomes a good tree through the work of God, not by virtue of one’s own strength; finally here the problem of the doctrine of grace and justification emerges. The two levels of understanding morality must not be confused.

on the issue of moral positivism

One also has to make differentiations when dealing with the question of moral positivism, in awareness of the problem of what religious language is in this context and what are the literal meanings implied. When Ockham states, for instance, that we should obey God even if he orders us to hate him, this naturally would result in a contradiction, insofar as it would make hating God a form of loving him. After all, it is said: the one who loves God will obey his commandments. If we are probably right to assume that Ockham as a philosopher supports a different theory from that of a theologian, we may similarly ask ourselves whether a Muslim would not also articulate quite differently the problem that Plato articulates in this way in the *Euthyphron*.

HAGEMANN Even though the concept of moral positivism arises from a

society that does not belong to the Islamic cultural tradition, it has still been transferred there. In medieval Islam there is a school that maintains that tomorrow God may turn what is truth today into a lie. The different schools have focused intensively on this problem, however, and even today discussions of it have not been concluded. In our terms, notwithstanding all reservations concerning this concept, the best possible way of stating this problem is in terms of moral positivism.

ZIRKER And yet God forever remains the one who as the Creator establishes his order positively and who is trustworthy, so that man may depend on his faithfulness in all things.

how are ethics to be reconsidered on a New Testament basis

KARRER The one focus of our discussions here seems to be whether, from the perspective of early Christianity, there is simply a system of ethics that is inconsistent and follows various lines, or whether the 'ethics of being' are predominant. It is tempting to follow two

different approaches. One focuses on God's trustworthy acts from time immemorial so that the incentives of the Torah are of great importance, and the other is strictly christological in conception.

Even if we have the impression that the two approaches have not been harmonized in the New Testament, there is still perhaps a possibility of synthesizing the two different approaches in our thinking. For this purpose, the christological approach could be further developed: if we assume, as Ephesians does, that in the Christ-event the baptized person is granted a new being and enters into the approach of the 'ethics of being', the baptized then stays in a space that is granted to him, in which he may move, but which may simultaneously be more closely characterized on the basis of God's action that has been already effected. In a 'hearing' space, the Christian believer may not only hear what is utterly new and strange and situational, but he may also hear how God has granted his guidance and effective word from time immemorial. So, depending on the individual situation in dialogue, we may discover many different aspects.

... and included in dialogue with Islam?

If we try to introduce this into the dialogue with Islam, we will not be able to manage without interfering a little in the interpretation of Paul which favours thinking in terms of distinct contradictions. In the field of ethics

this would mean, for instance, not thinking of 'new being' in such a way that with Christ came the end of all that preceded him. The new being in Christ in fact proceeds from a God who has always been one and the same,

so that ultimately what is new is the goal of all that has been so far. This also explains why considerable elements of the Torah may be found in Paul supporting ethical teaching.

on the meanings of κτίσις

The other question is concerned with the interpretation of Rm 8:18–22. I chose this passage because in this context it seems to me to be the most appropriate.

My attention was drawn to its importance by Nikolaus Walter, a theologian who comes, not incidentally, from the former German Democratic Republic, once again seeming to confirm that the specific social situation co-determines the interpretation of Scripture. In a Christian society, creation was of course generally the κτίσις, the creature, which is mentioned in Rm 8:18 ff. However, in a society where Christianity had become a minority view (as was the case in the Federal Provinces of Eastern Germany), the question arose as to whether the text was not rather concerned with the Christians' non-Christian compatriots. Walter takes this exegetical option with regard to non-Christian mankind, and to prove his view refers to the fact that the Greek always thought from the perspective of humanity towards all the other creatures and not vice versa. We may perhaps not want to go as far as Nikolaus Walter, but if we take into account the Greek environment in which Paul lived, it seems inescapable that the Greeks would not have thought of κτίσις as creation without including man.

FÜGLISTER We would indeed wish very much that all this were the case. Of course a κτίσις includes mankind. However, how can this be reconciled with other very precise statements which are equally to be found in Rm 8: "And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified." (v. 30)? This formulation is so pointedly formulated with Christians in mind that it is impossible to say apodictically that all human beings are included in the new creation which is groaning in labor pains and that they will all be saved. Even though Rev 21 is another *genus litterarium*, the new heavens and the new earth are mentioned there too – as well as the burning lake of fire and sulphur into which are thrown those who are cowardly and unbelieving, and who are tainted with the horror (of ungodliness), etc.

faithful understanding in face of the mystery of God

KARRER There is one point that has not yet been expressed clearly enough: we would certainly be interpreting Rm 8 wrongly if we understood it to mean that non-Christian mankind is also drawn into the new creation. The point is rather that Christians are the children of

God, and the non-Christian creation/mankind is groaning, which means it must be understood as a creation that is also approaching reconciliation or that must be seen in the perspective of reconciliation. But, there is a difference between saying that it is approaching reconciliation and must be seen in this perspective, and saying that it is already reconciled. This would be a theology of religions that could somehow be grounded on the New Testament.

Ultimately, the salvation of creation remains a mystery for Paul, like the mystery of Israel's salvation. In Rm 8 and 11, Paul approaches this mystery, recognizing that the acts of God cannot be anticipated. If Paul were asked what his personal hopes were, he would probably reply: it is the mystery of God, who in Christ acted radically in reconciliation, and the way in which this gift of reconciliation becomes effective for all through Christ. What must certainly not be entertained is that there is a reconciliation apart from Christ. Nevertheless, reconciliation in Christ is to be hoped and contemplated for all, although without presuming to control God's acting in Christ.

FÜGLISTER Here of course a crucial problem remains in the scheme which is taken up and eschatologized in the New Testament: mankind is created at the beginning in the image of God, but is nevertheless destroyed and only a remnant remains with Noah, and this remnant is then the seed of a new creation.

'newly create' in the Qur'ān **ZIRKER** As for the phrase 'new creation': this term is certainly not found in its New Testament sense in the Qur'ān. 'Newly create' there means 'create a second time' (cf. Qur'ān 17,51; 30,27, etc.). In opposition to those who deny resurrection, apologists refer to this 'repeating creation' which the senses perceive in nature's re-awakening: if God can create new things after the winter, and the grass can grow again and again in the following spring, then he can also as a matter of course "give life to (men) who are dead" (cf. Qur'ān 41,39). But this is not what is meant by the Biblical term 'new creation'.

'conscience' as recognition of the will of God Concerning the term 'conscience', Mr. Karrer has drawn attention to the fact that we must be careful about the way the Islamic tradition refers to it. It is a matter of recognizing the will of God, not only through physical hearing which became possible in later times through the Prophet's message, but also in the inner knowledge passed on in creation, which has always been intrinsic to man. It is hard to differentiate between this and Biblical perspectives. This kind of knowledge is a knowledge that carries responsibility towards the community and towards God.

creation is thoroughly good

The idea that creation is groaning would also be completely at variance with the Qur'ān. Creation is not groaning, it is thoroughly good: "[...] So turn thy vision again: seest thou any flaw? Again turn thy vision a second time: (thy) vision will come back to thee dull and discomfited, in a state worn out." (Qur'ān 67,3 f.). Nor is there any reason for groaning for mankind as a whole, but only for the individual and for individual groups, who are doing harm to themselves. There is no such evil in the world so fundamental that creation should join together groaning. Rather, there is joint praise and veneration: "Whatever beings there are in the heavens and the earth do prostrate themselves to God (acknowledging subjection); with good-will or in spite of themselves: so do their shadows in the mornings and evenings." (13,15) – "[...] their (very) shadows turn round, from the right and the left, prostrating themselves to God, and that in the humblest manner." (16,48). Nature assumes the attitude of those who pray.

man and woman in paradise

Mankind's being newly created on Judgment Day, according to the Qur'ān, means being newly created as male and female; it is not permitted, however, to project matters of legal status, superior and inferior rank and family arrangements, onto these paradisiacal relations.

it is the whole creation which is rejoicing and groaning

KRÜGER Joachim Jeremias had his difficulties with κτῖσις in Rm 8, with the idea that 'the cabbage-heads' are said to be groaning, i. e. with the groaning of inanimate and animate creation.

KARRER This passage in the Letter to the Romans where the 'groaning of the creation' is mentioned, is often quoted as an argument that here 'creation' is rather intended to mean man. Incidentally, it is most probable that Paul is here speaking metaphorically in every case, because it is not possible to say that mankind as a whole, which is around us, is groaning.

FÜGLISTER In the language of the Psalms, it is also the whole creation which rejoices – all creatures, beasts and plants: Genesis 3 should also be drawn upon as a parallel, where the whole creation – illustrated by man and woman, but then also by man and animal, animals and plants – is involved in man's sin. The meaning here is that everything is concerned with sin and is groaning, including all creatures, and nature. And so too, on the other hand, everything will be saved by Christ. There is no doubt that the whole is included here, human beings as well as animals and plants.

"there is no longer male and female"

individual human characteristic? Should it be somehow understood eschatologically, in the sense that ultimately all these distinctions are no longer needed? Must we consequently believe that through Christ they are all brought to an end?

GRESHAKE It says, "For all of you are one in Christ Jesus", εἰς ἓστε – and not ἓν. ἓν would mean it results in a 'levelling'. But, εἰς means that reality has attained its oneness, and so does not mean negating difference: being human has attained its personal oneness in Christ. Beyond this, there is the image of Christ's body with its many members. It is one body, it is εἰς. So when Gal 3:28 says that "there is no longer male and female", it does not mean at all that male is the same as female.

KARRER In fact, it may be assumed that Paul thinks theologically in this way. Now there is one, namely Christ, in whom the many have attained their oneness. Since here εἰς is emphasized so very much, we may even consider whether it is the one God who is meant, who reveals himself in Christ, so that we are included in this God-event and Christ-event. There is an investigation which courageously elaborates on these lines'. However, as far as Paul is concerned, a more careful approach may be followed. For him, it is ultimately clear that Christian existence should be seen from the perspective of Christ. But the question which Mr. Krüger raised, of how this is realized in greater detail, still remains unresolved.

With respect to "no longer male and female", much is in favour of Paul having drawn the conclusion: as a person I am defined by Christ – to me it does not matter that I am male. However, his ethics show that in reality this generates conflicts. From the perspective of sexual ethics, this would mean that living without physical sexual activity would demonstrate that the former order of creation no longer exists. At the same time, however, it appears that the area of behaviour can and must be defined theologically in a different way, namely through a sexuality practised with God, the Creator, in view.

protologically grounded

FÜGLISTER The meaning of "no longer male and female" – because both are "one", εἰς ἐν Χριστῷ – seems to be based on the fact that they are both Christian in

¹ Cf. fn. 31 of my lecture, p. 338.

the full sense of the term. This assertion is ultimately grounded not eschatologically, but protologically. In the beginning God created humankind in his image, male and female he created them – regardless of gender or position, race or religion. They are all his image. Unfortunately Paul does not quite sustain this when he says in 1 Cor 11:7, "For a man [...] is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man." However, through the christological focus – Christ is the image of God – the general statement, which must be understood protologically, really exists from the beginning and is of fundamental importance: that in principle all humans are equal before God.

In this context it is interesting that in Islam man is not described as 'image of God', but *khaliifa*, successor and vicegerent.²



'conscience' in the New Testament

WOLBERT In the genuine letters of Paul 'conscience – συνειδησις' seems to have a meaning which is different from that in the Pastoral Letters, the Letters of Peter and the Letter to the Hebrews. What is meant by this term can of course be expressed by means of synonymous terms, for instance, 'heart', as previously mentioned. Conversely, one may of course also use the term 'conscience' very differently, as can be observed in the New Testament, when there someone is referred to who inwardly 'accuses', 'judges' or 'consoles', primarily in good conscience, which finds classic and beautiful expression in one of the variants of the story of the adulteress, where it says: "and they, convicted of their own conscience, went away, one by one" (Jn 8:9).

In the Pastoral Letters, on the other hand, the Letters of Peter and the Letter to the Hebrews, συνειδησις actually no longer denotes the one who is the inner prosecutor and judge, but the addressee of the phrase, so to speak, is the moral subject, and here the term could also be rendered as 'heart' or 'attitude'. So Heb 9:9 states that "gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper". In a particular instance the meanings of 'heart' and 'judge' may even coincide as, for instance, in 1 Jn 3:19–22, "[...] whenever our hearts condemn us; for God

² Cf. on this topic R. Wielandt, "Man and His Ranking in the Creation, On the Fundamental Understanding of Islamic Anthropology", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Islam Questioning Christianity* (Christian Faith in the Encounter with Islam, vol. 1). Mödling, 2007, pp. 75–82, esp. 78–80, as well as the subsequent discussion esp. pp. 84–90.

is greater than our hearts". In the encounter with Islam especially, we should be aware that the New Testament uses the word 'conscience' in varying meanings.³



'new creation' – real or only believed? **HAGEMANN** When, as Christians, we speak of the 'new creation' – a concept that does not occur with the same meaning in the Islamic tradition (unless we think of the 'new creation' at the resurrection from the dead on Judgment Day) – an urgent question may arise as to where this new creation that is believed to exist can be found in reality. Johann B. Metz once raised the question, "What do we mean if we speak of repentance?, do we repent or do we 'believe' in repentance?, and he also illustrated these questions with various examples. In a similar way, here too, the question must be raised of whether the 'new creation' in the New Testament is only a new creation that is believed in but to which nothing corresponds in reality.

When we rightly refer to the Christian community as the germ cell of ethical relations, this in Islam corresponds to the *umma al-islāmiyya*, which is, according to the Qur'ān, "the best of Peoples, evolved for mankind" (Qur'ān 3, 110) and which is now to "strive as in a race in all virtues" with other communities (Qur'ān 5, 51).

KARRER The question is addressed to all theologians, and there is a long-standing dispute about it running through the history of the Church. No matter how often we may have seen new creation only as something believed in, ultimately a 'believed new creation' which does not become a reality does not really seem to be a new creation at all. Paul can hardly have thought of it in this way.

As already indicated, this gives rise to the problem of Pauline ethics: after all, Paul's sexual ethics, for instance, are based the first place on the fact that these ethical conceptions correspond to reality. But when Paul tries to move on from sexuality, conflicts develop. His aims cannot be realized in the communities. These conflicts can only be explained if we move on from the conception of a new creation that is only believed in to a new creation that is real.

³ Cf. on this topic Annemarie Schimmel, in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Islam Questioning Christianity*, (fn. 2), p. 90.

on striving: "as in a race in all virtues" – as a motif of dialogue

Great importance is to be attached to the other motif mentioned by Mr. Hagemann, that of the striving as in a race between the communities that do and communicate the will of God. It is a fascinating challenge to the interaction of religions.

KAHLERT In Rm 11:14, does not Paul's hope that God will make the Jews jealous also contain this element of striving as in a race that can become extremely fruitful, and not only for Christian-Muslim dialogue?

FÜGLISTER More precisely, in Rm 11 it is the Christians who are expected to make the Jews jealous.

ZIRKER Apologetically oriented Muslims frequently interpret this passage in Sūra 5 on the striving of the divergent groups as if the tolerance of Lessing's Ring Parable had already been defended in the Qur'ān. This would certainly be a misinterpretation, for Lessing proceeds on the assumption that we cannot judge at all – that our positions are equal when we are striving and only later will it emerge who has the full and fruitful truth.

By contrast, the striving referred to in the Qur'ān is meant to show that the community of the Muslims will actually turn out to be the best. According to the Qur'ān, therefore, it is not a striving in which the ranking and the truth of a religion still remains to be ascertained. It is rather a striving in which the other religious communities will ultimately realize that they are not as good as the Muslims.

Even though, in the light of this, the parallel with Lessing is not correct, there still remains the positive fact that in the Qur'ān people are called to start walking on a path that puts them to the test and not simply assume that everything has already been achieved.

LEUZE Another positive aspect of this Qur'ānic statement can be seen in the fact that other religions are noted and as such are also acknowledged. On the basis of this text in Sūra 5, there seem to be possibilities of regarding other religions in ways that appear to go further than the New Testament.

HAGEMANN As we all know, the starting point for Islam is easier since, in revelational and theological terms, it defines itself over and against Jews and Christians, whereas for Christianity Islam is a post-Biblical religion. Vatican II made great endeavours to integrate this post-Biblical religion into Christian theology and, referring back to the tradition of the Church Fathers, did this in the form of an argumentation that emerges from the perspective of salvation history (whereas Islam argues from the perspective of contemporary history).

“world ethos”
or/and ethics
conditioned by
culture?

Another question relates to the “Project World Ethos” presented by Hans Küng. Is not ethos conditioned by culture, and therefore a “world ethos”, at least as proposed by Küng, is difficult to conceive of? How does such a scheme appear in the light of the New Testament – is the concept of a “world ethos” possible at all in the light of the New Testament, or is it a syncretistic concept?

“creation-ethics”

KARRER If one tries to conceive of a “world ethos” from the perspective of the new creation, an approach towards it from the Christ-event, which comprises the whole world, would certainly be possible. However, a christologically designed world ethics would hardly provide an appropriate possibility for increasing understanding in interreligious dialogue.

If we are aiming for understanding between the religions, we should perhaps proceed more simply from some kind of ‘creation-ethics’. Israel saw in ancient times that God had given good instructions in the Torah. It is actually a good ordinance for the whole world, something that extends to all peoples and is already present in a hidden way everywhere and it is the basis for the structure of Jewish apologetics: Moses is older than the Greek legislators, so that what is good in Greek law is nourished by the law of God.

a good living
space for the
whole world

It is a matter of the living space in which humans act; the new creation, even in the understanding of Paul, is not a rupture from the present world, but the space in which it takes place already exists. In this sense several passages in Paul assume that whatever is pleasing and commendable in the environment, is pleasing and commendable before God (cf. Phil 4:8). Something could be developed from this, though it does not seem to be Küng’s approach.

The term ‘Weltgesetz’, universal law, is frequently used, but it is a difficult term. Antiquity here has a system of coordinates to structure the human living space: the laws, for instance, as in the Greek πόλις, were in fact designed to shape a human living space where the citizen was free, if and insofar as he had the law – for with it he had an area of activity which granted him the possibility of living free. On the other hand, those who had no law were in fact not free. This is a completely different concept of law from the one we hold today.

This area of thinking could be shared with Islam. On the whole, however, a rather complicated religious dialogue would result, for we would have

to search every religion for appropriate points of contact. In addition, we would have to take into consideration the point that they would only be relevant for us Christians when seen from a christological perspective, since it would be impossible for us to forget, for the sake of interreligious harmony, that Christian ethics have to be conceived christologically.

the core of the
Christian mes-
sage not to be
communicated?

ZIRKER Here again the question arises of the extent to which our focusing on this Jesus of Nazareth, this one historical person, does not also lead to a kind of embarrassment, if we are aware that this is both the very core of the Christian message and also, at the same time, something that, to a large extent, cannot be communicated to the non-Christian world.

GRESHAKE A God who is, as it were, suspended like a ‘big brother’ over everything, would not be a God who made himself incarnate. Incarnation by definition involves the irritating here and now and nowhere else. This has been explained by Karl Rahner in his attempt at a ‘transcendental deduction’ of the absolute saviour: if we begin with God’s radical engagement in his creation, an engagement that goes as far as his becoming part of the world and of history, then this event must indeed happen at a certain time and place in history. That it is Jesus on whom this particular attention of God is focused and not, for example, Muhammad must remain an open question in this transcendental deduction, but it is no embarrassment to me that this is part of the inconvenient incarnation of the logos and is a consequence of radical love.

ZIRKER A Hindu would reply that the incarnation does not cause problems for him, but the ‘once for all’ in the vast history of mankind is very much a problem. In the context of our own self-understanding and our being in agreement with those who share our convictions, a way of thinking such as that presented by Mr. Greshake may be very beautiful and consistent. However, if we consider the great expanse of human culture, and see that reasonable people cannot comply with our convictions, and either shake their heads or say clearly that it rouses objections in them, then this must make us feel embarrassed. We could of course say that the others will understand one day; that the eschaton will enlighten them. But then we would always be those who want to have their relationship with others settled now and in such a way that the others agree to our terms. This is the embarrassment.

FÜGLISTER The same problem exists in Islam too. The incarnation is necessarily contingent, in space and time. But this also applies to God’s becoming word.

HAGEMANN Islam also has the concept of the pre-existence of the Qur'ān.
FÜGLISTER The concept of the pre-existence of the Torah also exists among the Jews. In Islam, analogously speaking, this word is incarnated in the Qur'ān. For this reason the Qur'ān is, like Muḥammad, historical. The Islamic tradition has tried to cover this up, but in the long run will it be really possible for Muslims to get round this historical conditionality of Muḥammad and the Qur'ān?

Christianity – most close to 'thinking about God'?
KARRER The problem of 'embarrassment' in encounter with 'others' does not only concern Christianity, but exists similarly in many other religions. Of course this does not make decisions easier. A classic solution would be to say that Christianity is rationally the 'most logical' religion.

Impressive as Mr. Greshake's deliberations have been, the question arises as to whether there are not equally rational magnificent deliberations in other religions. In principle, the lecture seemed to confirm that there is such a competition in the field of religion, and yet at the same time to arrive at the conclusion that Christianity is the religion that is most appropriate for 'thinking about God'. There is no doubt that this is a fascinating perspective. The ultimate decision, however, seems to lie in every case on the existential level of a personally expressed affirmation of the Christ-event.

Among New Testament exegetes there is a trend in interreligious dialogue not necessarily to place the Christ-event in the centre of the New Testament, but to emphasize other aspects of the New Testament. Hermeneutically, this seems to me to be too influenced by the contemporary situation. If we hold the view that christology remains central, the existential reply depends on whether I experience something essential for myself in the Christ-event – especially in its ultimate culmination in Jesus' death on the Cross and Resurrection. Luther sees living this faith as a gift of God. If, on the other hand, we leave this existential answer to the individual person, this would ultimately result in a decisionism.

This certainly does not provide a satisfying solution to these problems. Ultimately, however, one can only give a theological answer, unless one wants to argue from the perspective of philosophy of religion with Christianity's claim to absoluteness.

universality grounded on the 'once for all'
OTT The discussion about 'embarrassment' is probably the most crucial that arose in this study group. Just as a comment on it: the incarnation is intrinsic to the radical nature of redemption. If we examine the de-

velopment of the Christian dogma of the incarnation, we cannot fail to see that universality is expressly implied in the once-for-all of incarnation. Rahner liked to formulate this as follows: God at the incarnation of his Word, did not only somehow 'dress up' like a human being, but in truth assumed human nature – *naturam humanam assumpsit*; and *natura humana* is the nature of every human being. Perhaps today we would no longer use the term *natura*, but would translate it differently, but it still remains that in the Christ-event, including the incarnation, mankind as a whole is affected.

KAHLERT In this discussion, however, the fundamental question also arises of what is the aim of the speculative consideration of faith: is it in order to be right or is it to attain an inner calm in encounter with the other? If it is the former, seen from a human point of view, we would reduce ourselves and our subject matter to absurdity. For indeed nothing can be more deystating in human relations than if one party is adamantly right and nobody has a chance to contradict. The result would be the opposite of building relations. Instead of guiding the other towards agreeing with what has been said, it would arouse the other's anger and defiance. If, however, speculative consideration enables me to face the other more calmly, a greater openness for talking would be achieved.

GRESHAKE The point is certainly not to be right *vis-à-vis* the other; it should rather become evident that we want to discuss not 'my truth', but the truth of God. As Mr. Karrer's lecture has shown, there is a new creation in the context of knowledge too. There is a truth that liberates and I must present it to the other as liberating. Today, we sometimes have the feeling that it is almost indecent to have the truth (having in the sense of 'having received', not in the sense of 'having it in the bag'). In the tradition of modern times, of Lessing and others, it is easier to say: I do not have it, and neither do you; we are all in search of it.

turning towards Christ without giving up anything, but gaining everything
Much could be said about man being concerned with his incapacity to communicate what he has to others. In any case, should it not be our goal to formulate Christian truth in such a way that others can become Christians and gain everything without giving up anything of their own? As long as Christianity is still something alien, where one has to give up part of the truth that has been valid so far in order to be able to become another, the universality based in the Christ-event has not yet become communicable. It is clear that ultimately

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faith is a grace. Nonetheless, if the other does not attain faith, I should ask myself whether I have succeeded in really presenting Christ as universal truth.

[Study Group 2]

creation and resurrection of the dead

KHOURY In Christ a new creation has come about, but this concept of a 'new creation' does not occur in the Qur'ān. There is, however, the concept of a 'second creation', an act of creation that is repeated. Thus, in order to make the resurrection of the dead on Judgment Day plausible, it says: "Say, 'He will give them life Who created them for the first time!'" (Qur'ān 36,79).

old and 'new' Adam

ELIAS How can it be made clearer in conversation with a Muslim that the word of creation at the beginning: "kun – be!" (Qur'ān 36,82; 2,117; 3,47, etc.) is the very word by which Jesus Christ was created from the Virgin Mary (cf. Qur'an 19,35). Does this not imply at least a formal parallel – a new and an old Adam?

KHOURY The term 'new Adam' which means so much to Christians, is not acceptable to the Muslim. Jesus is like Adam, like any other man: God called him into being through his creative word. The word of God brings forth creation, it is a creation that extends from the beginning to the end, a creative activity that continues permanently. It is not possible to speak of a 'new' creation.

'conscience' and 'creation' in Semitic languages

VANONI In dialogue with Islam it may be important to begin with the Hebrew language, since of course the language of the Qur'ān is also Semitic. A great deal of what Mr. Khoury has spelled out also applies to Biblical Hebrew. The most important word we should refer to is 'heart – *lebab*'. With regard to conscience we should not rashly argue that the word does not exist, but the substance of its meaning does. I think that in Semitic languages the word does exist, but it is a different one. There are many passages in the Bible where 'heart' and 'knowledge' are linked and this would be a possible bridge.

The matter of the 'new creation' is more difficult. Without knowing how it is expressed in Arabic, I can still say that in Biblical Hebrew there is no abstract noun for 'creation' (*brī'ā*, the verbal noun that occurs only in Nm 16:30 means an 'unusual interference' by God; it only occurs in post-Biblical times

in the sense of 'creation'). In concrete terms, the Bible refers to "the heavens and the earth" (Gn 1:1) or "all things – *hakkol*" (cf. in German "das All"). In Greek, by contrast, there is a word for 'creation' (κτίσις) which certainly makes it easier to speak of a 'new creation'. Would it be easier to build a bridge towards Islam from here? Moreover, we should note that the Hebrew term 'new – *hadash*' may also mean 'renewed'. "Creating something new" means that it is possible for God to assist where humans are at the end of their resources. But there are concrete contexts: in Deutero-Isaiah it is the end of the Exile (Is 43:19), in Ps 51:12 the forgiveness of sins.

NEUMANN In Is 43, is the term 'to make' or 'to create' used, when, for instance, in v. 19 it says, I am about to do a new thing?

VANONI In this passage it is 'to make – *'asā*'. However, Deutero-Isaiah elsewhere uses 'to create – *barā*('?)'; sometimes both verbs are used side by side; he even uses *barā*('?) with 'evil' as the object – which annoys the pious.

KHOURY In Arabic there is the word 'creation': to make, to create on the part of God is *khalaqa*, and the creation is the *khaliqa*, a term used in the Qur'ān as well as elsewhere in Arabic.

does the 'new creation' mean being a citizen of the world to come?

SCHAEFFLER It is exegetically significant to ask whether there are comparable terms and statements in the Semitic languages, especially in Biblical Hebrew or in the Arabic of the Qur'ān. Ultimately, it is also a matter of reading what is said in Greek in the New Testament against the background of a Hebrew-Aramaic linguistic tradition. Here we may ask whether what is meant by 'old' or 'first creation' and 'new creation' has something to do with '*ha'ōlam hazzā* – this (world)time' and '*ha'ōlam habbā*('?) – the time to come'. This is a distinction made in Judaism, which must also be seen as a shared conception underlying many New Testament writings: the *ōlam*, as it occurs even in the Bible, is understood at the time of the Second Temple as the sequence of two world-times: 'this eon', whose end is imminent, and the 'coming eon' to which this will give way.

The question would then be: does the 'new creation' mean being already now 'citizens of the world to come'? And, would the statement 'You are a new creation' then have to be seen in the context that whoever is 'in Christ' is already now a citizen of 'the world to come – *ha'ōlam habbā*('?)'? We would have here an area of connotations, where the New Testament's specific reference to the one who has become a new κτίσις could be positioned. And the context of speaking of the 'new creation' would then be

determined by the dialectic of the obvious 'not-yet' and the hidden 'already' of the new world-time. Then we could continue asking whether, in inter-Testamental Judaism, citizenship in the world to come is only understood futuristically, or whether there is already a present tense element in this concept and whether in Islam it is also possible to say that we may already now participate in what we hope for in the world to come – for this certainly seems to be a connotation of the statement 'You are now a new creation'.

KHOURY In the Qur'an the question cannot be seen to be raised in this explicit form. We might, however, consider in this context that the Qur'an, when it speaks of being put to the test in one's life, for instance, means to say: whoever passes the test, i. e., whoever obeys the will of God despite all the troubles of life, will be rewarded by God in the hereafter and in the life on earth (cf. Qur'an 16,97; 10,64; 30,44 f., etc.), so that the blessing of God is bestowed on the person and guarantees that he will receive not only the reward of paradise, but also a reward in this life. If we draw a parallel between the grace received in the earthly life and in the hereafter, may we speak of man participating already now in what he hopes for? Even if for the Muslim paradise is not necessarily a 'new' life, and it is not a new heaven and a new earth that he hopes for, it is still a fulfilled life that is no longer threatened and, compared with the present life, it contains a new quality which can also be experienced already in this world.

SCHAEFFLER The passage from 1 Peter which was cited in the lecture [cf. above pp. 345–348], draws the conclusion that, since we are now God's people, we are aliens and exiles in this world. Linked with the quality of 'new creation' that is promised to us, is also the dialectic that we have to live in this world although having no right of abode in it, since we are now already citizens with Christ of the world to come.

**the Christ-event
"in the heart of
the earth"** **BSTEH A.** Following up on the story of Jonah, the Gospel according to Matthew refers metaphorically to the fact that the Jesus-event – his death and his resurrection – takes place "in the heart of the earth: ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ τῆς γῆς" (12:40). In his life, which is perfected in death and resurrection, the Son of Man does not remain limited to a particular event of any kind, but essentially has a relationship with reality as a whole; his life has its 'Sitz im Leben' in the life of the whole earth, ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ τῆς γῆς. If we look at it in this way, the whole creation has become another and a new creation through the Christ-event.

**the goal of
creation as its
original concern**

Another idea follows on from the Christian reference to something 'new' that has come about through the Christ-event. In the Christian understanding of creation, in view of the figure of Jesus and what originates in him, this something 'new' is on the one hand something that has not always been – we do not simply arrive again at where creation was at the beginning or at some other moment in the course of its history. In creation Christian faith recognizes a historical dimension and acknowledges the theo-drama of history in which creation is on its way towards a point omega. But on the other hand this goal of the whole creation is at the same time the most original thing, the *primum in intentione*. As we say of the parables of Jesus, in them is proclaimed "what has been hidden from the foundation of the world – ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου" (cf. Mt 13:34 f.; 25:34), and as the Letter to the Ephesians says: proclaiming Christ's message of salvation means "to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things [...], in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord." (cf. Eph 3:8–11). So what is new in the Christ-event is simultaneously the oldest, the most original thing. It is God's original intention in creation. Rightly understood, what is new in Christ is not something that emerges all of a sudden as something that happens 'afterwards' in creation, but wherever this new thing turns up, it is in Christian understanding, the outworking of the most original thing; it is what God originally intended when he created the world. In the dialogue with Islam, this subject should always be borne in mind, and the unresolvable tension between 'old' and 'new' should be taken into account.

**does the new
creation exclude
others?**

KHOURY If Christian men and women are the new creation, where are the others? Following on from the lecture, an answer to this question may be found in the statement of the Letter to the Romans, that the whole creation waits with eager longing for the fulfilment of the promises of God and for the revealing of the children of God. If the all-embracing sacrament of reconciliation in Christ is the crucial issue, as Mr. Karrer explained in his first lecture, and if the whole creation is pregnant with its eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, then we should, in anticipation of the fulfilment of this longing, regard and treat all human beings as reconciled children of God, i. e., offer them community and try to build up a relationship in suffering and in hope. In this way the knowl-

edge of being a new creation in Christ would not only avoid excluding others, but on the contrary, would lead to a new opportunity for more openness towards others.

starting from
the core, to find
comparisons

DUPRÉ The efforts to balance against and compare with each other the matters of substance in Christian and Muslim faith, as we are doing here in the context of the question of creation and new creation, generally raises the question of how we should go about making such comparisons. We should first begin with the question of what happens to the believer, to the one who surrenders himself utterly to the divine – be it in the Christian, or the Islamic context. The next question would then be what terms are at such a believer's disposal to convey adequately what is happening to him in this act of faith: is this possible, for instance, without introducing the category of newness, and without referring to issues of conscience and ethics, of meaning, beginning and end, here and now? The comparison would probably have to be made in this way, and then particular questions of whether incidentally a certain expression occurs in one of the basic texts of a religious tradition or not would become less important.

ELSAS On this basis, beginning with the question of what happens to the believer in Islam, we could consider a parallel with the first three points that were dealt with in the lecture from the point of view of Christian tradition: With regard to the new dimensions of knowledge that are opened up for the Christian believer in Christ, one could ask whether similarly and to what extent new possibilities of acquiring knowledge are opened up for the Muslim believer by the Qur'ān: how, for example, man has always been able to recognize the Creator, but how what was originally intended in creation or what was intended to be communicated by the preceding prophets becomes recognizable only from the perspective of the Qur'ān.

Second, the way the Christian believer experiences himself to be a new creation in Christ; does the Muslim experience himself to be guided in a new way into a life before God?

Finally, from the perspective of the meaning of ethics for Christians as part of their being created in Christ, the question would arise: to what extent are ethics for Muslims too not limited to mere guidance that comes from outside and remains outside, but are perhaps also considered by them to be part of their createdness, and of their being newly consolidated as members of the *umma*.

In these comparative discussions from the perspective of the history of re-

ligions, Muslims should first be asked whether they do in fact consider these matters to be interrelated in this way and whether they could then also try, on that basis, to coordinate their concepts accordingly. In any case, initially the fundamental anthropological element would have to be proposed as a point of comparison.

new creation –
because one
died for all

SCHAEFFLER If we want to stay with the considerations presented by Mr. Karrer, we should, for the sake of the context, not forget the first lecture when listening to the second.

The citation from the Second Letter to the Corinthians, where it says: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17), is an interpretation of the preceding sentence: "[...] one has died for all; therefore all have died" (v. 14). We are all a new creation, because everything old has passed away with the death of Jesus. That being so, the question of what happens to the believer is essentially connected with the question of how the end of the old world and the emergence of the new world have arrived with the death of Jesus.

In sermons we often hear that if someone is in Christ he is a new creature, because he walks in this new situation – and this is then immediately understood morally and in relation to new attitudes and actions, although in the Pauline context and generally in the New Testament all this is seen in the context of having died with Jesus. And it is indeed not only an individual who has died, but all have died. The concept of an old eon and a new eon may already have existed before Christianity, but now it is concretized not so much as *ante* and *post Christum natum*, but rather to *ante Christum passum* and *post Christum passum*. The necessity of using such categories in New Testament texts, and also the new meaning they acquire in this context, can be made understandable from the context of the subject matter as well as on the basis of the literary context.

being human in
the encounter
with God as the
basis of a mutual
approach

DUPRÉ There is no doubt that in Paul certain categories belong to a special context and combine in the mystery of Easter, but we intend here to refer to the question of what happens when people really believe in God the One, the Merciful and Compassionate. Could it not be that the encounter with God – man's encounter with God or the encounter of God with man – is such that the fundamental categories which have perhaps been revealed in the Jesus-event in a very special way, are present and, in the attempt to arrive at an

adequate description of this event, a rapprochement could happen, not on the basis of our concepts, not doctrinally, but based on *pietas formata*, performed piety.

KHOURY This recalls a suggestion already made at this symposium to reflect on prayer or on spirituality and hence on an implied shared concern ...

SCHAEFFLER ... at least as a precondition for Christian self-understanding and the understanding of other religions. We should speak here of a precondition, because we must remain aware that sharing a specific common form does not mean that the difference in professed faith no longer matters. Thus, for instance, a Baal-hymn and a Psalm may not only be similar in their literary form, but some Psalms show that they are strongly influenced by Baal-hymns and reveal a comparable spirituality – without thereby weakening the Psalmist's protest against the veneration of Baal. Logically, however, this only follows as a second step when we perceive what praying means.

the new creation characterized by 'already' and 'not yet'

VANONI The points the lecturer has chosen to present raise something indispensable for Christianity. What he said refers to what others have to confront in dialogue with us, if they want to understand us. And in the encounter it will emerge whether or not there is agreement on this or that point.

The subtitle – the eschaton in history? – refers to an essential subject in New Testament writings: the present eschatology, the change which made a new time and heaven begin with the death of Jesus and his rising from the dead. But what about the time 'before'? Speaking of a new creation and generally of something new appears in the Old Testament only in the context of the Exile. The total rupture which the Exile entails for Israel raises the question of what was actually brought about by it, and whether this was the end of Israel. In this situation the word 'new' appears at various points: "new heavens" and a "new earth" are mentioned (Is 65:17; 66:22). The Psalm says, "put a new and right spirit within me" (Ps 51:10), and a "new song" is referred to (Is 42:10; Ps 40:4). Originally all this was seen almost as a realized eschatology: Yahweh will put an end to the Exile, Kyros is on the way. All this is spoken of as if it were expected tomorrow (cf. Is 43:19).

After the Exile the problem of the *parousia*-delay begins. In fact they had expected something utterly new, but it has not yet arrived. Various models are suggested in order to work out this problem of 'already' and 'not yet': some say, since it is not yet known all over the world that God is king, we should at least celebrate it in singing the Psalms and make him present as king (cf.

Ps 96). Others have said that the only thing to be done is to sing a song saying that at the end of time everything will turn out well (cf. Ps 149). We all know that this tension may also be found in the New Testament.

linked to newness; serving reconciliation

For Christians the present eschatology remains indispensable – the faith that in Christ a new creation has begun. In this context one question remains: why do Mr. Karrer's comments on 2 Cor 5 refer only to a change of knowledge and not also to that other change, which is the gift of reconciliation? The gift of reconciliation seems to include an important constant relating to all the Old Testament texts which promise change and mention the forgiveness of sins (cf. Ps 51) and the new covenant that is written on their hearts (Jer 31:31–34; cf. Ezek 36:25–27). This is also a distinct call to the ministry of reconciliation linked to the beginning of something new (cf. 2 Cor 5:17–21). If, as we seem to be called to do, we begin with the assumption that together with the new creation the ministry of reconciliation is also entrusted to Christians, we may have great doubts in view of the current situation as to whether it is not particularly in this that Christians are most unbelieving. To have a gift for reconciliation should become for Christians a fundamental motif in their encounter with people from other religious communities.



conscience – word and substance

KHOURY Although in Arabic, as in Semitic languages generally, the term 'conscience' does not exist, we do find something of similar meaning in Islamic tradition. There is in the *Ḥadīth*, for example, a text where Muḥammad tries to define good and evil: evil is what makes your soul or your heart worried; what gives you peace of mind, is good.⁴ Here the word 'soul' can be seen as parallel with the word 'conscience'. However, as Mr. Karrer said, conscience also has something to do with 'co-knowledge'. Thus the Qur'ān speaks, for instance, of attaining the 'age of discernment – *ḥulum'* (24,58 f.; 52,32), when one learns to discern between good and evil; or of a 'capacity for understanding – *lubb*, pl.: *albab'* (2,179.197.269; 3,7.190; etc.) that provides man with wisdom. These words mean something comparable to conscience, and this also applies to the word 'heart', which tells us what is good, although in the Qur'an even the

⁴ In Muslim, *Tirmidhī*) and Ibn Ḥanbal: see A. Th. Khoury, *So sprach der Prophet. Worte aus der islamischen Überlieferung* [GTB; 785]. Gütersloh, 1988, pp. 321 f. [Nr. 629 f.]

word 'knowledge – *'ilm*' has this connotation of co-knowledge. So, even if the word 'conscience' does not exist in various languages, the substance of its meaning may very well be there.

conscience and the will of God

DUPRÉ And what about that reference to conscience in Islam which always plays a certain background role in the whole discussion about conscience, and which can provide man with a certain justification for a way of his own?

KHOURY Islam does not permit a reference to conscience as something which might lead to man no longer obeying the commandments. Conscience can never be played off against the will of God. Its task is rather to prompt us to act according to the law of God. Only when man is absolutely unable to find out what is the known will of God can conscience alone be relied on, because then of course the precondition is missing for man to freely choose the will of God.

VANONI Since the language of the Qur'ān is also a Semitic language, what has just been said applies for the most part also to Biblical Hebrew. Thus we would, for instance, have to advance the word 'heart – *lebab*' as probably the most important word in this context. So we could say, especially if we have in mind the combination of heart and knowledge, that the concept of conscience does exist in the Semitic languages, but the word used is a different one.

common 'spirituality of the way' for Christians and Muslims?

BSTEH A. Could what is meant by conscience unite Christians and Muslims in a comprehensive spirituality of the way? The motif of acting with the co-knowledge of God could then play a special role. The motif so often mentioned in the Qur'ān – God knows everything and he is merciful – makes man sure of being allowed to

live in the light of the co-knowledge of God. Being aware that this is a knowledge accompanied by mercy, shows very distinctly that it is not a knowledge that continues to calculate, as it were, how one's life is striking a balance – but a knowledge that is always creating balance anew.

So do not Christians and Muslims share a common spirituality of the way, since for both of us it is ultimately infinitely beautiful to know that God knows about everything and that we – because he is the All-merciful – may both be full of hope that we will reach the destination of our paths? For the Muslim this is concretized in his faith in the right guidance of God, which means everything to him: he does not believe in a God who is somewhere unknown, but has a faith that speaks of Him being present in every-

thing, taking the believer's hand and ensuring that he will truly arrive at the goal of his journey.

Muslims – newly created for God-pleasing deeds?

NEUMANN In scholastic theology we are accustomed to reproach Muslims, as well as others, for thinking extrinsically and not believing in the inward renewal of man. Considering what has been said above, does a

change of consciousness not take place in the Muslim believer too? Do they not feel like new human beings because and insofar as they are addressed by the All-Merciful, and are rightly guided and act accordingly? Does not this deep-rooted change of knowledge lead to a change of being for them as well? In this sense, when we consider the concept of a 'new creation in Christ', could we not, in the interpretation of Islam, think of a 'creation towards new action' instead of a creation 'in Christ'? As a matter of fact, there are certainly many parallels in reflecting about what happens in believers, so that we can in fact speak in a deeper way of a 'spirituality of the way' in which Muslims and Christians can share a lot with each other – also in the awareness that God is with us in our knowing, our actions and also our suffering. Perhaps all this cannot be seen very much in the Qur'ān itself, but rather in the faith lived by the Muslims. There could be fruitful approaches here for Christian-Muslim dialogue.

new propositions for the relationship with others

KHOURY Whatever the case may be, on the basis of these deliberations, it seems important in the dialogue with Islam to perceive more clearly what we could offer Muslims from the perspective of our Christian self-

understanding. How could the deep-rooted change we have discussed here, the newness of our knowledge, affect Christian attitudes vis-à-vis others? If it means, for instance, that for Christians there is no longer Greek and Jew, or male and female, and that they are free from all categorizations that degrade others, this would certainly imply a proposition for their relationship with others. If, in this sense, Christians can understand their life anew in the light of Christ, it means, as far as their relationship with other people is concerned, that we are all reconciled in Jesus Christ. So reflecting about our own faith in the encounter with others should create new possibilities for relations with them.

conflict between ideal and reality

DUPRÉ The clearer the ideal becomes of the removal of the various walls separating Jews and Christians, male and female, the clearer the possibility becomes of a comprehensive reconciliation entrusted to Christians for others, and

the tougher is the reality one experiences where Christians within their own religious community and in dialogue with other believers fall short of these aims.

readiness
for continuous
repentance

WISSE In the midst of this on-going tension there is yet another sign, which is the readiness for repentance found in lived Christian faith, the repeated readiness for reconciliation after conflicts. In this endeavour we

can see the knowledge of Christian faith that we are on the way towards the ideal reality, and that the ideals are becoming reality at least by way of signs and testimony.

DUPRÉ This may be the case in the personal life of Christians and they may also experience it, but the structural problem remains.

reality to be
oriented towards
the ideals

VANONI Perhaps it is particularly dialogue with people who profess another faith that can motivate us to become peaceful – if together we find a way of not measuring the ideals against the reality, but the reality

against the ideals, and if we manage to encourage each other to keep the ideals alive. This was the path we walked at the Christian-Muslim Conference "Peace for Humanity" held in Vienna in 1993⁸, where an effort was made to measure neither oneself nor the other constantly against the practice of one's own life and the other's and subsequently to condemn the other or tear oneself to pieces, but in pondering one's ideals to find oneself encouraged again and again to present them with the reality. Christians are always in danger of losing awareness of the radical change in knowledge which initially made such an impact on their life, and they are called to listen to those whom the Spirit has given them as teachers to direct them always anew towards the original ideals.

suffering as a
path to lived
hope

BSTEH A. Suffering from our own history and from the history of mankind as a whole can help Christians to understand what their faith really means, and where it teaches that the whole creation has not yet attained its

ultimate, perfected form, but is "groaning in labor pains" – hoping to be set free from "its bondage to decay". It is certainly a special grace for us Christians that we may have this vision of creation as a whole actually groaning in labor pains, which gives even suffering an intrinsic meaning, so that we will even

⁸ Cf. A. Bsteh (ed.), *Peace for Humanity. Principles, Problems and Perspectives of the Future as Seen by Muslims and Christians*. New Delhi, 1998.

be able to rejoice if we have accepted and gone through it (cf. Jn 16:21 f.). And quite spontaneously and frequently we may ask whether and how this value may also be found in the mainstream of Islamic tradition.

aspects of
Islamic inter-
pretation of
suffering

KHOURY Suffering within the horizon of New Testament expectation, as expressed in the Letter to the Romans with respect to "the whole creation", is most probably to be understood quite generally in the perspective of the salvation that has not taken place yet,

which the Christian believer hopes for and in the expectation of which he is allowed to live. If it is a matter of suffering in the more specific sense, of pain, illness, etc., there are mainly three approaches which are brought to bear in the Islamic tradition, which are, however, utterly different from the problem area discussed here; there is first the idea that human suffering goes back to the snares of the devil who was driven out of paradise because he did not obey God's command and did not want to bow down before Adam. This caused enmity between man and the devil, and led to the snares of the devil.

Second, suffering may also be the consequence of man's own sinfulness. A passage in the Qur'ān says that "mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men have earned" (Sūra 30,41). Finally, suffering may also be a test to which man is put by God because he wants to find out who is really faithful and believing so that he can then reward them (21,35; 27,40, etc.).

futility also
as "bondage
to decay"

SCHAEFFLER The passage from the Letter to the Romans mentioned here uses two specific expressions: the whole creation is subject to "futility" and "decay". Obviously "ματαιότης – futility" here does not only mean distance

from salvation in a closer spiritual sense, because we then find a "bondage to decay", a δουλεία της φθοράς. So the meaning is not only that creation is mortal and subject to decay, but that it is forced into a bondage that compels it to work its own decay. Today we can illustrate this statement with very much actual experience, and probably at the time of Paul it also expressed a great many painful experiences. Probably each generation makes its own experiences of everything we do turning into a bondage to decay, often particularly when we intend to do our best and so in this radical sense it proves to be futile effort. This applies to creation outside the congregation, the non-Christian earth, as was shown in the lecture. But beyond this it also applies to Christians who also do much ματαιότης, futility, and pro-

duce very much φθора, decay – and they suffer from it together with the whole world. The question here is of a futility that is not only a lack of salvation in the strict sense, but what we do ourselves, and what is a bondage to decay. This can be seen inside and outside the Church.

[Plenary Discussion]

new creation in Christ opened up to others

KARRER When Christian men and women are a “new creation”, this can only be understood from Paul’s perspective in the sense of a new creation “in Christ”. However, the new creation of the Christians exists in the world with its suffering, and produces a being linked with the world and with mankind in the shared groaning of birth pains. This could be a way of finding an answer to the question: what about “the others”, if we say that Christians have become a new creation?

In today’s religio-theological discussion, could we extend this towards an ‘inclusive’ approach? I would rather speak from the perspective of the New Testament and call it a ‘Self opening’ approach, because the term ‘inclusive’ could give the impression that the whole creation is included when the new creation comes about. In Paul the structure is different:

Christians have become the new creation. Before – and here Paul has the gentile Christians in mind – they were what the rest of creation still is. They were not yet a new creation; they were still in need of it. This can of course only be experienced and recognized through the Christ-event. When Islam sees the world as a good world, we must therefore keep in mind that Paul in fact sees it as a groaning creation only from the perspective of his Christian existence. In any case, we cannot of course interpret 2 Cor 5:14 f. without saying that we are new creation because we are reconciled in Christ.

conscience and co-knowledge of God

As for the question of conscience, the idea of a ‘co-knowledge’ of God seems to be important. At the same time we would like to hesitate to see Islam as simply characterized by an ethics of obedience. Would it not

be possible in New Testament thinking to go further and say: ultimately the space granted to us from the beginning is, since God remains the same, not *another* space; rather, within this space there are walls and chairs, tables and other objects as well as options granted by God. Since God co-knows about us and we co-know about these objects and options, we could find approaches to joint actions.

For a further clarification of the questions raised here, it would probably be good if we could also work first with the issue of a “world ethos”, as proposed by Hans Küng, with regard to Islam and Christianity.

further questions about speaking of the ‘new creation’

DUPRÉ In sacred texts we may come across statements which, on the one hand, belong to a certain historical context, but which are at the same time also valid here and now. How then can experiences of our here and now be conveyed in such a way that the statements of the Holy Scripture do not simply appear to be claims about which nobody can say whether they are true or false? When Scripture says that we are a new creation living within the same space, we would actually also like to know what this means exactly and whether it is a basis for dialogue to be continued and deepened.

learning to live with the difference

It is indeed hard to understand that faith in Christ could be understood as an offence in dialogue with Islam and generally with other religions – unless every religion is considered to be an offence. Why should Christ be an offence if we are Christians – or is our existence *per definitionem* already an offence? Then of course the existence of the Muslim would also be an offence, because as far as Christians are concerned, there is no need for him to exist at all. In the context of faith in Christ, it is ultimately a matter of the identity of the Christian and the question of how to live with the differences that exist.

‘new creation’ and ‘old eon’

SCHAEFFLER Confidence in being the new creation or living in it – they are of course both variants of the same thing – is rooted in the belief that with the death of Jesus the old eon is brought to an end. If “one has died for all, therefore all have died” (2 Cor 5:14), it is, of course, even for Christians, a frustrating claim, since the old eon hangs on so tenaciously. But it is an even greater offence in the understanding of the Muslim or the follower of another religion that there are people who assert that the whole world in its bondage to decay has been brought to an end.

If it is true that Paul only declares in the light of his Christ-experience what the state of this world is, we may ask: are there points of contact with these two experiences that constitute in Romans 8 the precondition for everything that follows: the experience of futility, that everything is subjected to ματαιότης, and the experience that, in addition, we are even condemned to serve this futility as slaves?

In this respect Paul probably has very specific experiences in mind. How-

ever, perhaps there is an anthropological way of expressing this experience that the whole world is not only subjected to futility, but also to the bondage to decay, and therefore needs a particular kind of renewal:

This is not to suggest that everybody should profess that this renewal happened through the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is rather meant as a question which everybody will have to answer in his own way: what do you do about your experience of futility and about your experience that you are condemned to drag along this cart of decay?

what is behind the term 'new creation'? **KARRER** The last question is addressed to all of us and needs no further comment, but now the other question is to be taken up: how can we speak comprehensibly about the new creation?

One possible approach would be to begin with the term ortho-'doxy', which after all expresses 'glory – δόξα'. We could see in this an indication that the 'new creation' does not initially refer to a right doctrine, but to opening one's eyes and realizing that there is the glory of God. What becomes essential is the strange tension between the knowledge that on the one hand creation – and we with it – is groaning in labor pains, and that on the other, the manifold experiences of God and of happiness make doxology at the same time an essential part of Christianity.

ethics of reconciliation The greatest difficulty is of course to accomplish in our way of life what the new creation is. New Testament ethics indicate this strongly, which was perhaps the reason for the relatively limited spread of the term 'new creation' in Christian tradition. What is required is at least a deep-rooted change in knowledge.

This may be concretized in one point: even though the Christian believer is not capable of acting in the newly created space as he should, he must still realize that reconciliation has been achieved for all and is to be handed on in the message of reconciliation. So the Christian believer must face the world knowing that the event of reconciliation in Christ has arrived. The fact that, on the basis of the ethics of the new creation, no reasons may therefore be advanced for any kind of hostility in interreligious dialogue, is of inestimable importance.

a path towards encounter **OTI** Can this specifically Christian motif, as a theological or perhaps as a general religious category, be a means of access to an interpretation of the phenomena of faith, or perhaps religious matters in general, in other religions? If this were actually the case, it would also be helpful for encounter and

dialogue between religions. In order to illustrate this, I would like to refer to 1 Cor 15, where Paul answers the question of how dead people are raised, as follows: "Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies," (vv. 35 f.). There is no simple identity any longer, but eschatological *transformation* – conceptually expressed, *καινή κτίσις*, new creation.

forgiveness of sins and 'new creation' Does not something of this kind also happen when sins are forgiven, which can be best interpreted by means of the motif of 'new creation'? Incidentally, problems of identity are implied here: with the coming into being of the newly created, eschatological, true Self, the Self is at the same time identical and non-identical: *καινή κτίσις*. For Western logic and substance ontology this is of course hard to grasp or cannot be grasped at all. In order to understand the substance of Christian faith better here, perhaps some help can be looked for in Buddhist logic. Is it possible to think that something specifically Christian might be conceptually widened in this way?

KARRER Such a conceptual widening is – in the transition to Christian systematics – hermeneutically legitimate. Then the question still remains of what things will be like at the point that is then reached: to what extent is it helpful in the transition to specific interreligious dialogue? Here the lead must be handed on to the experts in Islamic studies.

When we come to the matter of the forgiveness of sins, things become very difficult. For the Muslim sins are forgiven through God's mercy; there is no need for the concept of a 'new creation'. So in this context a logic would have to be developed which unfolds and specifies 'yes' and 'no' even at the risk of systematic incompatibility. I prefer to ask here the preliminary question: is there for the Muslim something like a co-knowledge on the part of God that accompanies human action and could moderate a pure ethics of obedience?

the foolishness of the cross to save humankind Concerning the question of the stumbling block of Christ crucified and the dilemma in which Christian faith finds itself in the encounter with non-Christian religions: acknowledging this stumbling block of the cross is not new; as is well known, it can already be found in Paul. On the one hand, it unmasks to us Christians our own foolishness and, dialectically, the foolishness of the others, which is doubtless a very difficult situation in interreligious dialogue. But Paul does not stop there. For, although for him the foolishness of the cross has a polemical objective, the actual goal is that *salvation is effected* particularly through the foolishness of the

cross. When for Christians human foolishness is unmasked through the cross, the thought should be followed up with the idea that God made use of this foolishness in order to save and reconcile mankind.

are sins forgiven, but not forgotten? **OTT** Here a certain parallel seems to appear: if God has forgiven man's sins, he has wiped away his sinful past. On the other hand, the past remains and then it is as if God 'forgives' the sin, but does not 'forget' it. This 'yes' and 'no' indicates a tension that becomes clearest in these strange thoughts in the context of κοινή κτίσις.

God is the one who truly reconciles **VANONI** The Old Testament knows of a concept of sin which might look archaic and atavistic: it knows of a context of sin, a field of malignant influence. Ps 130 states: if you should mark the interweaving of our sins, Lord who could stand? There is a new logic, a logic that transcends that of man. We keep measuring our fellowmen by what they do and pin others down by what they do and what they say, but not with what they actually want to and should believe according to their own tradition; so we do not measure their practice against their own orthodoxy and ideals. God acts very differently. He does not pin us down, and this is certainly in 2 Cor 5 indicated by the new creation, because he reconciles in truth and he puts an end to this recording and perpetuating and continuing to weave this web of sinfulness.

reconciliation 'before' and 'beside' Christ **ELSAS** If we assume that Christian faith can only recognize the new creation in Christ, and then try to suggest what can be read in 1 Cor 10 – the way Paul sees the rock in the desert which gives the water of life to the people, as already prefigured in Christ – we may ask whether this somewhat remote typology might be a basis for opening out the Christ-event towards other facts and relating this through a motif portrayed in a certain Trinity-icon. Here the "I am the One who is here for you" is revealed on the occasion of the prophecy of the birth of a son to Abraham and this announcement obviously includes a promise concerning Abraham and Sarah taking the law into their own hands. So God enters in for mankind, although they are acting on their own. He also enters in for Hagar, although she flees without permission. Seen from our Christian perspective and also from that of Paul, is a work of reconciliation on the part of the trinitarian God conceivable in the context of other pre-Christian and extra-Christian developments?

communio – an event that reaches out to the whole world

KARRER From Paul's perspective hardly, at least beyond Israel. But if we continue to reflect in Christian systematics and arrive at a trinitarian approach such as that presented by Mr. Greshake, a transition could be possible by understanding Trinity as an event that, in the *communio*, reaches out to the world. According to Paul, this thought could be further developed in such a way that this trinitarian God's emptying himself into creation also becomes manifest outside, even in the world outside Christianity. However, this would be a systematic suggestion, not one suggested by Paul himself.

incarnation – inlibration and the pouring-out of the Spirit

BSTEH A. Everything that is suggested by Christians with regard to the concept of 'new creation' is founded in Christ and in his Spirit. Obviously it is also the Pentecost-event, the pouring-out of the Spirit, that links the Word of God in its becoming *man* and becoming *scripture* inseparably together – the Pentecost-event seen as both the birth of the Church and the birth of the Scripture, in which the Church's faith in her birth finds its binding written expression.

... so that in the end God may be all in all

It is equally true that, in the understanding of Christian faith, with the incarnation worked by the Spirit, ultimately the whole of history, the history of the whole creation, is set free towards the future of God. Therefore, the ultimate finality of the Christian faith does not in principle close or exclude anything; it rather gives expression to the definitive openness of the whole creation towards God. And the Church, begotten of the Spirit, is in Christ the sacrament of this will of God that nothing but he himself is the goal of mankind's and creation's history.

Final Reflections on the Result of the Symposium

[Introductory Statements]

applying history of religions **DUPRÉ** Exercising the art of dialogue with people from other religious traditions, which brings joy but is sometimes also a burden, motivates us to consider lines that may guide us into a new situation. In a context where peoples rights, claims and expectations are at issue, it is important to acknowledge that it is only possible to have confidence in the universal aspect of our own Christian identity as it exists in specific circumstances, if we simultaneously look at the history of religions. Ultimately, the real problem is that there may be different universes of meaning of religious faith, each of them striving to encompass the whole – and yet they always remain entangled in their own particularity and are expected to be happy in it. How can the tensions that arise here be reconciled with one another?

key position of non-literary traditions Besides referring to the history of religions, we must also face the problem of the extent to which we humans share a common origin that is present in every situation and whose resources are not completely exhausted by any of them. In all dialogues we should therefore constantly refer back to this origin, and thus remember the possibility that a key position should be granted to the non-literary traditions. This seems important because, on the one hand, the literary traditions permanently distance themselves from these non-literary traditions. The latter are often still classified as unbelieving, although the former ultimately originate from them. On the other hand, the meaning of the shared beginning and of the concrete actuality of a pious or less pious existence is particularly accessible in this context, for here the constraints exerted by the scripture and the invention of writing in general, and which have found expression in the context of literary traditions in Holy Scriptures, do not exist. In such circumstances, there is a special opportunity for the examination of the common origin.

initiation into a lasting pluralism **ZIRKER** I would like to mention four points, which are not simply desiderata, because they have often been seriously taken up at this Symposium, but they deserve being explored further:

First it seems important to understand interreligious dialogue as an initiation into a pluralism which is perhaps to a large extent unsurmountable.

The goal then becomes to know about each other more intensively and to allow people be affected by each other in an open experiment where processes of mutual persuasion can also take place. Initially, however, it should suffice to perceive and face up to the mutual embarrassments and a consensus should not be urged.

where is there no need for community? Second, we have to perceive and consider theologically which are the points of Christian faith in which the other religions do not need commonality with us – even though they are open to understand Christian faith as far as possible.

the importance of mysticism A third element is to take note of mysticism, even though rather an obscure function is attributed to it in comparison with the fundamental language of faith in Islam and the more varied language of reflection in Islamic theology. The consideration of mysticism can, however, be motivating, disquieting and enriching.

the secular society Finally, it seems to be of substantial interest to give attention to a point which was not expressly referred to as much as it deserved; when Christians and Muslims speak with each other in today's world, and specifically in the West, there is always a third party at the table, even if only in our heads: the secular, plural society, which is shaped by the justifiable perception that no religion is in a position, on the basis of its tradition, to promise, let alone guarantee, a peaceful community, a world ethos. Our states already live on the basis of a constitutional law that is a modern fruit of religion.

theology as an obstacle to dialogue? **HAGEMANN** Some years ago, Peter Antes wrote an article about "Theologie als Dialoghindernis?" [Theology as an Obstacle to Dialogue?].¹ What he wanted to avert is the *a priori* separation of Christian theology from the theologies of non-Christian religions. With reference to our symposium here on "Christian Faith in Dialogue with Islam", this begs the question: how distinctly may and should Christian faith be articulated so that it may be understood and accepted, or at least accurately represented by others? What Muslims want is to be able to recognize themselves in what the other says about Islam, in the same way as Christians may expect to recognize themselves in what Muslims say about Christianity.

¹ In: L. Hagemann, et al. (eds.), "Ihr alle aber seid Brüder". Festschrift für A. Th. Khoury zum 60. Geburtstag (Würzburger Forschungen zur Missions- und Religionswissenschaft; 14). Altenberge etc., 1990, pp. 29–39.

In fact, Christian theology can become an obstacle to dialogue when subjects such as the message of the Cross or, for instance, the understanding of Jesus as the Son of God are introduced too early. As has been said several times during this symposium, the issue in dialogue is 'a merging of horizons' between Christians and Muslims. It is therefore necessary somehow to understand ourselves before we can understand each other. So Christians must ask themselves beforehand, what is meant by 'Son of God' in the New Testament. As we all know, there are great varieties of theologies about this. For somebody who grew up in the Greek world, enquiry about the 'Son of God' was very reasonable, whereas for a Jew the term 'Messiah' was more likely to make Jesus Christ accessible to him. Today all this should be made clear in the dialogue with Muslims, in order to show that even in the New Testament there are very varied approaches to understanding Jesus Christ and helping others to understand him. On the other hand, when considering the Qur'an, this would mean there should be a way to ask historico-critical questions, in order to find out what there is new in the Qur'an.

In a so-called dialogue, or on the way to it, the point is to develop a theology of religions by taking into consideration the possible objections of the partners in dialogue, which *a priori* should be included. It is not enough to elaborate a Christian theory or theology which is precise and coherent for Christians, but for Muslims is not accessible.

In his *Cribratio Alkorani*, Nicholas of Cusa as early as 1460/61 expressed the opinion that one should, as it were, take Muslims by the hand in order to guide them towards an understanding of Christian faith; in this context he literally speaks of a "manuductio ad Trinitatem". This is a possibility that could be taken into consideration at a meeting like this, which tries to develop Christian theology in the encounter with Islam.

open questions Two questions have been left open: from a Christian perspective, if we refrain from using a purely comparative religion approach, is Muhammad a prophet or not – or are we neither able nor willing to decide this? And: can Islam bring about salvation, and can it bring about salvation for Muslims only or also in a universal sense?

analogia fidei as a criterion **FÜGLISTER** First, referring to this question about the prophetic character of Muhammad's mission: this question was the topic of my own lecture. We are allowed to begin with the assumption that Muhammad was a legitimate prophet, primarily for his *umma*; but there is also something he has to say to us, not

least because God, who is above everything, works through everything and within everything. I also showed that the so-called *analogia fidei* ultimately serves as the only criterion for true prophecy, and that it is therefore impossible for a Christian to accept Muhammad as the one he thought himself to be – the last, decisive and unsurpassable Prophet. For a Christian, the christological statement “Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, Jesus is Lord” is certainly unshakable. So here the uncrossable line is found in christology and hence in the doctrine of Trinity.

Concerning what Mr. Greshake said about the Trinity, it is ultimately only plausible to someone who is already a believer. However, even the strict logic of his explanations is not easily accessible, either concerning creation – the question of how there can be a finite being alongside the infinite – or the history of salvation or eschatology.

the greatest
however is love

In practice and in living together, the ever-greater love seems to have a function that is more important than the *analogia fidei*. This becomes clear if we go back to the message of the prophets, including Jesus, where we find commonalities. For instance, we may consider the word of Micah: “He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you.” This means very concretely: to work for the rights of the poor, the oppressed and disadvantaged; it means to love kindness, to strive for loyalty, solidarity, practical love of one’s neighbour, “and to walk humbly with your God” (Mi 6:8). In fact this means the same as Islam: treading one’s path, surrendered to God.

In view of this actual standard – the ever-greater love – we may rightly feel ashamed and hesitant in affirming that we belong to this new creation, that we are ‘a new man’, that we are those of whom Ezekiel says God will remove from their body the heart of stone, the rigid heart incapable of loving, and give them a heart of flesh instead – the new heart and the new spirit (Ezek 36:26 f.). There is no doubt the point here is not so much orthodoxy as orthopraxy, a practice to which we all, Jews, Christians and also Muslims, must return.

widening
Christian-Muslim
dialogue to
Judaism

Finally, in the discussions we have had in these days something obvious has emerged once more as a perspective of fundamental importance: that the New Testament, the Second Testament, must necessarily be interpreted in the light of the First, and so it follows that the dialogue between Christians and Muslims should become a triologue in which Jews should be included. This is not only because the problem areas

are similar, but because the Old Testament and Judaism, because of their special experiences, are able to make a particular contribution to the whole controversy about a proper understanding of plurality in the world and in history, and above all of what it means to be chosen – that chosenness must be understood instrumentally and functionally. The individual in the community is always chosen to serve the community and thus all Israel, the whole people of God, is chosen to exert a kind of sacramental function in respect of mankind as a whole. With regard to the understanding of the Torah, this means that it is valid for this particular community, so that it may become a blessing for all human beings and peoples.

approaches
towards a
philosophical-
theological
cooperation

KHOURY My first idea concerns the question of possible cooperation between Christianity and Islam on the philosophical-theological level. It is important here to be aware that today Islam is mainly concerned with political and social problems, so there is relatively little time left for philosophical or theological speculation. Nevertheless there are approaches that could bear fruit if we take them up in the West or here within the work of the Institute for Theology of Religions in St. Gabriel and try to develop from them points of contact with the Islamic world.

A second suggestion: it is not always necessary to strive to discover in Islam all the subjects and angles that have been developed in Christianity. Every religion has its own system with its own internal logical coherence. Concerning the situation of dialogue with Islam, we are called, on the one hand, to realize and develop what Christian self-understanding may offer to Muslims. This reflection, which aims at self-confidence in faith, both in its content and as an attitude, is the task of theology and has also been the goal of these symposia. Alongside this, however, there is also reflection in encounter with others, in which others are included – and there is finally reflection as part of the dialogue itself.

offers from the
self-understanding
of Christianity

However we look at it, the most important issue within the framework of a symposium of this kind seems to be the question: what can Christianity’s self-understanding offer to non-Christians, here more precisely to Muslims, and which of its elements can be introduced into our dialogue with them? Specifically, we might here, for instance, refer to two motifs which have been mentioned in this gathering: first, there is the idea of a general reconciliation in Christ and of an inclusion of the whole creation into the hope

for redemption. Could not and should not this awareness of a universal act of reconciliation with God be introduced in a very new way into the dialogue with Muslims, because in this Christian view of creation and history their position is not 'outside', but inside it?

Secondly, in anticipation of the fulfilment of the creation's longing for a comprehensive reconciliation, all human beings may, in Christian faith, already now be considered as reconciled children of God and Christians may relate to them accordingly: they are no longer distant – they are close; they are no longer aliens – they are members of God's family, so that through a relationship in suffering and hope, as Mr. Karrer expressed it, we can share life with them. Christians may know that they are open to others in the love of the Trinity and show others that they do not regard them as those who are left aside, but as participants.

OTT Alienness and friendship – two keywords under which these summarizing thoughts can be presented. Already at the first of these symposia and now even more strongly, a feeling of sympathy has arisen, a feeling of closeness, of the riches of the religion of Islam and of a broad offer made to us, who, as Christians, of course are and remain 'searchers' for God too. In this way, the religious world may be experienced as a space for encounter, where treasures are kept for us, which has a depth and which promises that the spiritual adventure of the encounter is worthwhile. The promise is that we may hope to get closer to God, that even here, in this tradition, inspirations are waiting for us, and that we could go more profoundly into the depth of being, the depth of the all-embracing mystery.

However, in this hopeful atmosphere of the initial encounter, an element of alienness also arises. There is no self-communication of God, which for us Christians is ultimately the central idea of faith expressed in the fundamental dogmas of incarnation and Trinity. That is why there is no *participation* in the community, *no being the children* of God. God is much too distant, too transcendent, only his will, his law, is our portion, and we are expected and called to be obedient, to surrender, to be devout – to practise Islam. But is this surrender ultimately simultaneously the deepest communion with God himself, with God as a person (insofar as this term may be used at all)? Is God the absolute mystery which embraces, surrounds and penetrates me as described in Psalm 139? Is he sufficiently immanent to be really radically transcendent, *interior intimo meo*? Is there that safety and security in himself which is the final fulfilment and perfection?

All these are not rhetorical, but open questions. The feeling of closeness, which was conveyed last year and particularly this year by Mr. Khoury, is so great that one would wish everything to be different and that the view held so far might be modified. It may currently still be the case that Hinduism and Buddhism, and of course the God-fervour of Judaism, seem to be closer than Islam to the world of Christian faith – despite the monotheistic kinship which ultimately unites Islam and Christianity. Perhaps we should not make such sharp distinctions between monotheistic-prophetic and Eastern-mystical religions as Hans Küng and Horst Bürkle do. These two types of religion are probably closer to each other than we might think, because radical transcendence must at the same time be immanence or, to put it differently: because word is necessarily intertwined with silence. In this context Islamic mysticism is a special source of hope in the encounter.

tensions to be endured – common questions to be followed up At present it seems that these tensions must generally simply be endured and the encounter must be continued with a basic attitude that should be characterized by the second keyword, friendship. In my own contribution to this symposium, following Martin Heidegger, friendship and neighbourliness were mentioned. The alienness that has been described does not, of course, eliminate closeness. There are common questions and quite a number of things to be discovered together. For this reason, there should be no quarrels about traditional and persistent divergencies – just as there are practically no more quarrels between Catholics and Protestants about whether or not marriage is a sacrament. Instead they are asking together what a sacrament is in general. But shared questions should be followed up: not only questions concerning practical world problems, but also spiritual-theological questions, where both sides could learn from each other and with each other and should also try to practise what they discover and acknowledge inwardly, so that each party could be spiritually enriched by the other.

the missionary mandate of the Church **KARRER** A question that extends a little beyond what has been discussed so far, but which has always been in the background, is the question of the missionary mandate of the Church. The most difficult passage concerning this mission is the end of the Gospel according to Matthew, a passage that has no parallel in the New Testament. From all that has been suggested during these days of discussion, there seem to be two main exegetical points that are relevant:

One is the fact that the disciples have doubts. When the disciples came to the mountain, it says "they worshiped him; but some doubted" (Mt 28:16 f.). We may interpret this to mean: some of the disciples doubted, or even: they all doubted. The Gospel according to Matthew includes the doubts of the disciples. It has already referred to Peter walking on the water and mentions his doubts that make him sink (14:30 f.). It is especially exciting in this context that the disciples' rising insecurity is not removed by the missionary mandate. The Gospel makes no further remarks about the disciples; it does not say that having doubted they obeyed; it simply maintains: they however doubted. In this situation, Jesus' missionary mandate stands.

The other point is the image of Jesus in Mt 28:16–20: authority wholly withdrawn in favor of companionship. Usually the scene is interpreted as indicating enthronement: "All authority has been given to me" is a difficult background for any mission, since it sounds initially as if mission were close to exerting imperial authority. But something more striking is to be noted in the context: "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" in Mt is not explained as ascension. Instead, there is a complete withdrawal of authority by Jesus, who says, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (v. 20). A small, striking element in the text supports this approach: the passage is not introduced with a predicate of sovereignty for Jesus. It does not say that "the Lord", "the Lord Jesus" or "Christ Jesus" spoke; only Jesus is mentioned. For Matthew this is extremely important: the one who will continue on the path with the disciples is the Jesus who appeared earlier in an earthly form, and his path is one of renunciation of the exercise of rule.

If we combine both elements, what emerges is the following: according to Mt 28, the disciples' mission is the mission of those who worship Jesus and doubt; their doubts are intrinsically included. And it is a mission that renounces rule; he who has the authority defines authority as being with others. Coming to a conclusion concerning hermeneutics necessarily implies risks, because in every situation of the Church, both coordinates should be concretized according to the respective situation: Islam exposes us to the specific situation of a post-Biblical religion which knows of the Biblical message and may also address Christians or direct their attention to matters of substance. So it may be that we would never confront the issues of Christology or Trinity in this way were it not in response to the message of the Qur'an. It seems to emerge here very specifically that we have to face and live a situation of uncertainty for Christianity and, unsure as we feel, we

can confront it, because he who brought about the reconciliation of the world is always with us.

new challenges to the understanding of the Christian message

SCHAEFFLER First: the intention to enter into dialogue with Islam, or to prepare ourselves for it by means of a theology of religion, might have raised new challenges to the self-understanding of the Christian message. No one who interpreted the Christian message at this symposium would have spoken exactly as he did, had he not spoken with Islam in mind. So it seems that, in listening to Islam, something can be learned even on the Christian part and even if it is learning in terms of contradiction.

comparable intentions of the dialogue?

On this basis a second question arises: do Christians and Muslims enter dialogue with comparable intentions? Do Christians want to listen to the testimony of Muslims because the latter have something to tell them that they cannot tell themselves? If Christians are convinced that God has left nowhere without a testimony to himself, it is worthwhile for Christians to listen to the testimony of those whom he did not leave without such a testimony. But what are the reasons for Muslims to listen to the testimony of Christians? Is there not the deterrent for Muslims that they believe they have already been informed about what there is in Christianity worth noting, because it is already written in the Qur'an, whereas what is not written there is not worth heeding and only leads into temptation? Then the situation would be like that described in the certainly malicious legend about the burning of the library of Alexandria: if what is written in the books is what is written in the Qur'an, then we do not need them, and if what is written in them is not written in the Qur'an, they are ruinous. So what sort of interest may Muslims have in listening to the testimony of Christians?

Third: selecting subjects for dialogue, as Mr. Khoury has rightly said, should take the form of suggestions. However, not only the concern of the *pars ponens*, the proposing party, should be taken into consideration, but also that of the *pars tollens*, the tolerating party, i. e., of what the others reject. We should understand them even when they misunderstand us – where, for instance, they condemn us for associating partners with God. It is relevant to ask questions related to the tolerating party and to allow these questions to be answered, taking this as an opportunity for critical self-examination. The same of course also applies to what Christians mean when they say that "there is no other name", or similar assertions that imply

contradiction or even condemnation. How is it possible for the ears of non-Christians to hear something that opposes their teaching without it being understood as simply destructive?

interrelationship
between life in
practice and
religious doctrine

GRESHAKE I think there would be a particular interest in the further examination of problems in two areas: There is, on the one hand, the interrelationship between Muslim life in practice and Muslim religious doctrine. It has frequently been clear during these discussions that we need to consider further an anthropology that refers to the need for salvation and how the average Muslim experiences it. For example, what role does the longing for love play in his life in practice? The extent to which we learn to understand the basis on which life is worked out in reality, determines how far we can make Christian faith plausible to others. If the longing for unlimited love is not a lived reality in one's life, and if the desire for what is beyond that, for closeness to God, does not exist, then of course every Christian statement about a 'deifying grace', 'love as the core of reality', and 'radical salvation' remains quite inaccessible and ideological in its nature. So what does this mean quite specifically in the life of a Muslim? How could a phenomenology of Muslim life be elaborated?

Christ the
pleroma

On the other hand, what is essential is Christ as the centre of faith. When Christ is the *pleroma*, *medium tenens in omnibus*, it must also be possible to establish connections between him and all the religious concerns that move and inspire Islamic faith. This means demonstrating that nothing that is valuable in the faith, as much as what is valuable in the life of a person in general, has to be given up in the encounter with Christ; and that it may all be upraised in the *pleroma* of Christ. This statement of Christian faith should not remain a mere claim, but should be filled with substance and, as it were, examined. In practice this must take place in dialogue, in talks which make it possible to ask Muslims what they find disturbing about Christianity, what they feel to be a dividing line and what is, on the other hand, perhaps really experienced as an invitation towards a greater life. To follow up the questions that arise in this context could be important and rewarding for the future.

'conscience' and
co-knowledge of
God

KHOURY The question of the extent to which something may be found in Islamic tradition concerning the co-knowledge of God [cf. above p. 375-377] should be spelled out in more detail in the context of the general subject of 'conscience'. That God has co-knowledge of all things is a concept shared by all religions that assume the omniscience of God. So what specific issue beyond that was intended by this question?

KARRER The point here is a co-knowledge of what man does, but also a co-knowledge in which God completely enters into what man experiences and what he suffers, so it is a co-knowledge in the sense of sharing life and suffering. From a Christian perspective the culminating point would be that decisive expression of God's co-knowledge in which he entered into the suffering of man in Christ on the Cross. Although we could not expect to find a full equivalent to this, we may still ask whether there are in Islam some indications of a comparable co-knowledge of God of the deeds and sufferings of man, and whether we might find here something like a mutual horizon.

the problem of
terminology

FÜGLISTER In reply to Mr. Ott's question concerning man's being the child of God, the Qur'an and the Islamic tradition certainly consciously avoid such terms as 'child' or 'son' of God, because in polytheism they imply very definite conceptions which were completely unacceptable to Muhammad because they would have contradicted the absolute transcendence of God. However, we must bear in mind that something may exist without being named in the expected way. There is in the Qur'an, and then particularly in the *Ḥadīth*, a deep-felt love of God that is truly amazing. We must presumably keep the same principle in mind concerning the word 'conscience', and above all when considering what the word 'love' actually means.

GRESHAKE This is exactly why the word 'love' was not mentioned, but whether there is love, and what it means, can be found in the actual life of the Muslim.

FÜGLISTER In any case, only things of the same kind must be compared: the practice of an average Christian with the practice of an average Muslim, the practice of a Christian mystic with the practice of a Muslim mystic or the comments of an above-average Christian theologian with those of an above-average Muslim theologian.

questions to be formulated on the level of mutuality

DUPRÉ Going back to what has been said about the pleroma of Christ, could it not become important particularly here to keep on pursuing dialogue about the basis of dialogue? The question of the extent to which

the Muslim could find his place within Christian fullness becomes legitimate when it is echoed by the other question of the extent to which the Christian might find his place in the pleroma of the Muslim. Does dialogue not make particular sense when it builds up a new world, based on the event of dialogue with its own realities, insights and rules, a world in which our religious traditions have their place, aiming at a peaceful, but quite possibly combative friendship?

on the co-knowledge of God

KHOURY A few remarks concerning some of the questions raised. As for God's co-knowledge in sharing man's life and sufferings, there is certainly little to be found in the Qur'an itself, but perhaps we may say, although also with reservations, that it may be found in the mystics.

Islamic interest in dialogue?

What might be the reasons and interests that could motivate a Muslim to concern himself with Christianity and Christian theology? For the time being, to a large extent,

it will continue to be a polemical, apologetical and missionary interest aimed at making obvious the errors and deviations of Christianity and guiding Christians towards accepting the Qur'an. In many ways a healthy curiosity or a scholarly interest is blocked because many non-theologians and even theologians in Islam think that they already know enough about Christianity from what the Qur'an says. It does, of course, contain some statements of theological appreciation or condemnation, and this seems to be sufficient for many; and so it is difficult to find efforts to deal more intensively with Christian theological reflection.

concerning man's need of salvation

As for man's need of salvation, Islam would speak of man's need of salvation and of a salvation granted directly by God, rather than a redemption which is mediated.

Concerning man's being in need of God, there are several statements: "God is free of all wants, and it is ye that are needy" (Qur'an 47,38); "it is ye that have need of God: but God is the One Free of all wants" (35,15). On this basis we can develop a theology of man's need of salvation before God and build a bridge between Christianity and Islam, leaving aside what is specifically Christian, which is that this took place in Christ. In Islam, however, it is true that there is evidence to be found of

the anthropological component, of man's being in need of salvation, and this is developed with reference to God himself.

elements of an interest in dialogue are developing

SCHAEFFLER What about the interest in dialogue that goes beyond the interest in presenting oneself and is open to listen to the testimony of the other? It is not long ago that Jewish partners in dialogue said to Christians: although you Christians must learn about Judaism

because it is your roots, we Jews need not learn about Christianity, because Judaism had existed for centuries before there were Christians, and afterwards none of the Christian writings became part of the Jewish canon, whereas the Hebrew Bible has canonical status for Christians. By this logic, the conviction arose that, although one could be a good Jew without knowing anything about Christianity, one could not be a good Christian without knowing something about Judaism. So initially Jews had only an 'educational interest' in Christianity on the basis that one should know the environment in which one lives.

In Judaism it is only recently that the question has arisen of what happened to the Torah when it was taken to the gentiles. This is a question that may concern a Jew and which he can only answer if he listens to the testimony of Christians. Much later other questions have arisen too, referring to experiences Christians have had, but not Jews because of their own history – experiences which they do have to confront today. An example is when they had to confront in Israel, in practical and concrete terms, the existence of several "judaisms", which of course they knew about before, but which they now had to cope with in practice. Then Christians were asked to tell them about their practical experiences with the various "christianities". Even though these are not particularly exemplary experiences, they have nevertheless been a painful part of Christian history, and listening to this is rewarding for the Jew. Similarly we are told today by Jews: we have experienced how to be powerless with dignity. Now we have never had the experience of how to be powerful with dignity, and we now need that quite urgently.

This cannot, of course, simply be transferred to Muslim-Christian dialogue, but there are nevertheless two aspects which deserve to be noted: first, what happens to a shared Abrahamic tradition in the hands of other peoples and cultures? – for this is what happened with Muhammad. And second, when Muslims ask us Christians: you have had cultural experiences which we expect to have in the future, and above all specifically the experience with the secularized world. What are you doing with it?

exchange about common theological aporias and questions that arise

LEUZE On the one hand certainly none of the participants in this symposium would want a theology that is an obstacle to dialogue and in the dialogue with Islam much can certainly be done to avoid this danger. Umbrella questions can be found which concern both religions and make a dialogue possible. On the

other hand, there are also problems which exist in both religions and cannot be resolved, for instance, questions related to the doctrine of predestination. Could it not be a shared objective to identify these common aporias that arise in monotheistic faith as such?

Then there are positive shared intentions, for instance, to conceive of God truly monotheistically. If the objective is the same, it is easier to start speaking with one another. Without intending to go as far as Mr. Greshake did on this question, we could still think, with regard to the doctrine of Trinity, that Islamic theology shows that God, when he reveals himself, must be conceived of as an existence in difference. In this context we may have the impression that the pathos of unity in Islamic theology is too dominant to do it justice. This is a point that we could imagine would get a dialogue going.

Concerning the doctrine of Trinity, we could try to find Christian traditions in which this doctrine does not play such an important part so that Christian theology need not necessarily be presented as identical with a theology of Trinity. If we think of prominent theologians, including Protestants, this is of course difficult in the 20th century because there is a general consensus among them. However, if we think of 19th century Protestant theology and of a theologian such as Schleiermacher, we find that he made the Trinity only an appendix to his religious doctrine and, in contrast to what Mr. Greshake tried to show, was of the opinion that the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be made intelligible.

Finally, are Hinduism and Buddhism closer to Christianity than Islam? In this respect, we may certainly hold a different opinion from Mr. Ott. Despite all the differences, we can find points of contact with the common tradition shared by Christianity and Islam in many subjects of dialogue and problem areas that may be discovered and developed. At least as far as the original form of Buddhism is concerned, do we not have to walk much further before we may find points of contact useful for dialogue?

the importance of common aporias

FÜGLISTER The aporias shared by the monotheistic religions that were mentioned by Mr. Leuze are significant; the created within the uncreated, the self-communication of God, the problem of theodicy, the question of the origin and meaning of *malum physicum* and *malum morale* – these are aporias that cannot be resolved, particularly on the basis of the thought patterns of strict monotheism, even if we appeal to a trinitarian understanding of God, or incarnation or Jesus' suffering. We may well keep pointing to the Cross, but that does not resolve the problem of Auschwitz, the problem of suffering that ends in absolute despair – even though the suffering of Jesus may be an example for us and motivate us to be patient in suffering. Suffering may lead to maturity, but also to despair. It goes without saying that Muhammad did not resolve this problem either by simply saying that difficulties are tests we are given, thereby alluding to God's omnipotence and incomprehensibility. But strictly speaking, the Christian does not get any further on this point either.

KHOURY First, just a brief remark on the question of whether Hinduism and Buddhism are closer to Christianity than Islam. Insofar as it is claimed that the transcendence-immanence problem is resolved by these religions, is it not at the cost of negating or, at least relativizing, the reality of the world and what Christian faith calls creation? Does this theory, as it is conceived of here, not suffer from the very aporias which also result from the understanding of the monotheistic religions?

steps towards a 'theology in the encounter'

When theology is undertaken within the horizon of the presence and questions of other religions, whether it leads to the thwarting of dialogue depends on whether we want to exclude the others by presenting the specifically Christian view as the only possibility. This however remains outside the scope of this symposium. On the other hand, the intent at such meetings cannot be to start by elaborating a theology that is ready to be conveyed to Muslims, Hindus or Buddhists. This symposium rather intends to discover steps towards expressing the Christian understanding of faith not in opposition to others, but in an endeavour to develop an explanation of the world and of man's relation to God which is in keeping with God's all-embracing love and reconciliation. Such a theology does not want to exclude, but to show a great openness.

If I may say so, I actually have the impression that what was offered in the keynote lectures and discussions could present new and revealing per-

spectives and offer valuable help for the agenda of direct dialogue. It is not possible to achieve everything at the first attempt. After all, much is still in process and we are, as was already said last year, largely still in the run-up to dialogue; major advances have yet to happen and valid principles, methods and strategies of dialogue remain to be elaborated.

the lack of
theology as an
obstacle to
dialogue

SCHAEFFLER The following is meant to be a brief defence of theology. Reproaching theology has become so usual today that we may feel provoked to present such a defence. The thesis "theology as an obstacle in dialogue" will therefore be opposed here by the anti-thesis that the lack of theology is the most obvious obstacle to dialogue. The less theological the reflection, the more the supposed dialogue tends to be exhausted by reciting the usual formulas, be they Biblical, Qur'anic or of any other origin.

critical self-
reflection makes
dialogue possible

Furthermore, how does theology originate? Some people think that it exists because the Bible itself is imperfect and that theologians have the task of turning it into a comprehensive system of theories. But theology does not owe its origin and present form to the fact that we want to know things better than the Holy Spirit who inspired the Books. Rather, theology emerges from the experience that faith is not immune to aberration, so that there is not only the alternative of other beliefs or unbelief, but also that of a corrupted faith. A magical understanding of the sacraments and a corresponding practice may serve as examples of cases when theology attempts to protect faith from going astray or to develop criteria for judgment. In this way theology is a sign of possible – though unfortunately not always real – critical self-reflection by the religious community, and this makes dialogue possible, because without self-criticism no dialogue is possible.

re-translation of
theological state-
ments into criti-
cally considered
religious life

Thirdly, this needs what Mr. Greshake spoke about: the corresponding re-translation of theological sentences or constructs into a considered religious life. If they remain isolated, merely remaining shut up in themselves, they could indeed become obstructive to dialogue, but they would then probably also lose their context and meaning. Unless they are the expression of a critically considered religious life, they no longer speak of anything or say anything. For this we need simple Christians and simple Muslims who, compared with theologians, may be lacking in reflection, but they are not lacking in experience

of faith and can therefore sometimes remind the theologian of what he is talking about when he talks about God. If we understand theology as critically considered religious life, it is indeed necessary to speak with each other "ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν – through faith for faith" (Rm 1:17).

concept of truth
and cultural con-
text relevant for
the dialogue

DUPRÉ Theology may appear as an obstacle in dialogue when it works with a concept of truth that only corresponds to the meaning of truth very inadequately, or because the culture in which it appears is not ready for a theological development of religious life. Efforts must be maintained in the interest of dialogue both in a theoretical direction – with which truth do we live and think?, and in a practical direction – which culture do we need in order to guarantee religion free development, not only in the context of one's own Church, but in the wider West European secularized context and finally even in a worldwide context?

anthropological
approach turns
theology into
an obstacle to
dialogue

ZIRKER The phrase "theology as an obstacle to dialogue" was used by Peter Antes in relation to a particular theological approach. He was not warning against theology as a whole, but against an anthropological approach to theology which structures a certain way of thinking about God on the basis of human conditions. He assumes that this would inevitably cause irritation to Muslims, because thinking about God is already an extremely problematic matter for them; in addition there is the anthropological approach that designs theology on the basis of human need and striving. In this respect, there is no reason to suspect Antes of suggesting that theology as a whole would be something dangerous.

conflicting
conditions also
make dialogue
necessary

DUPRÉ The question of whether and to what extent the objectives of dialogue are accepted is certainly also a practical problem that shows in situations of conflict of interests. Ultimately, people in different parts of the world realize that the crucial problems of the present day can only be solved together and that it is therefore better to speak with each other than not to speak with each other. We may certainly hope that there is something like rational cunning, which manifests itself in given circumstances when people, whether Christians, Muslims or others, are constrained to speak with each other.

Sometimes we get the impression that the Muslim world is ready to speak about very practical questions, such as education, family problems, famine,

etc. rather than about theological issues. Nevertheless, if we succeed in working towards a cultural situation that is shaped by the spirit of dialogue, then we do indeed perform God's work.

religious interest
in dialogue in
view of lasting
differences

KAHLERT Recently, a very different, strange experience has occurred in a district of Bremen: following talks with Muslim theologians about eternal life, a culture of friendship and trust had developed in this part of the city, which even stood the test in the challenges after houses were burned. The mosque leaders, for their part, insisted on not speaking about social issues, but they wanted to speak with a man of God about such theological topics and even wanted to be surprised. And the differences remain.

situation of dia-
logue in schools
and in other
areas of life

KRÜGER The reality of dialogue with Islam has attracted special interest in relation to the training of teachers of religion and in classroom work. After all, in school Christian teachers of religion have increasingly to face the situation of having Christians and Muslims together in their classrooms. So the question arises quite urgently of how teachers of religion can be trained and prepared to meet this challenge.

KHOURY In their current experience people face this situation of encounter in various areas of life. Christians are asked about their faith, and Christians also ask Muslims what they believe in. In this dialogue of life on all levels the need is to help people to cope with this situation, which is after all largely new to them.

As for the situation in our schools, especially in the German Federal Republic, much has already been done. As an example, there is a special study group which critically examines how Islam is presented in Christian schoolbooks. In Erlangen, Professor Lähnemann is now attempting the reverse: a study group is to examine how Christianity is presented in Islamic schoolbooks. We shall then become aware of how much knowledge is still lacking.

OTT The experience of which Mr. Kahlert spoke is very interesting: that a culture of friendship and dialogue can develop, even though all the differences remain, and no opinions change, but perhaps only the ways things are experienced becomes different. An important step in this direction is obviously that dialogue also serves a criti-

critical evaluation
of one's own
faith also impor-
tant for dialogue

cal evaluation of our own faith. If this really is the case – quite apart from the others' reactions – then the present symposium has achieved its purpose very well. This of course requires that when the time comes the partners in dialogue from the other religious communities will participate again in future events.

St. Gabriel
tradition tried
and tested in
the practice of
dialogue

KAHLERT From the perspective of my own practice of dialogue, theology as it has been presented in the various academic meetings in St. Gabriel since 1977, has made me able to begin actual dialogue calmly and without any preconceived goals. At the first of these meetings in 1977 no one had foreseen what would come along. Quite unexpectedly, from the perspective of what was known at that time, Islam has become a challenge in our society. Today, as Mr. Zirker rightly emphasized, secularized society is now present as the third partner in dialogue, when we are asked, for example, by Muslims about human rights or historico-critical research.

secularism
as partner in
dialogue

In this context it may well be that Muslims, when confronting the challenges that emerge from contemporary secularism, such as the question of the theory of evolution, expect us to be on their side and are bewildered if we cannot easily be so. Christians then need to come to terms more carefully between themselves about how to proceed in such situations. In any case, it is the goal of our endeavours to testify that religion is in fact a power for peace, and in these endeavours also to find partners in dialogue. The important thing here is to free ourselves from the fear of siding with the wrong allies.

ZIRKER The previous remark about how important it is to find the right partners in dialogue, is of course in many cases limited to conferences where certain participants may be invited, in contrast with situations in local communities and in schools, etc., which already exist and where it is hardly possible to choose whom we talk to and whom we do not. In any case, Muslims in European countries also profit from those things that do not simply originate from our Christian tradition, but are largely the product of secularization. In this context it would also be meaningful, in our theological endeavours towards the dialogue, not to ignore non-theological and non-religious literature such as the literary work of Nobel Prize winner Nagib Mahfuz, in which he presents a wide spectrum of contemporary Islamic life in relation to the Western world.

what are human beings that you are mindful of them?

BSTEH P. Just a few fragmentary remarks with reference to previous contributions; they are also based on continuous reflections on dialogues with Muslims.

First: in the context of belief about creation, the horizon of 'everything' should be eclipsed by 'the whole'.

And this '*totum*' is only achieved through a qualitative leap: the '*totaliter aliter*' must be pondered in our deliberations – "what are human beings that you are mindful of them" (Ps 8:4), God thus creating the possibility of considering history with him. It is only because the heart of man "is restless until it rests in God", that it starts exploring everything to find and shape human partnership on different levels and in wide circles.

a name given to us as a gift

Second: in this same context the truth is revealed to us that a name is given to us, the name of the one whom God calls "my Son, the Beloved", with whom "I am well pleased" (cf. Lk 3:22).

So once again the '*totum*' is integrated into the dialogue of his life story, which can then in fact only be unfolded through the personal *pneuma*. Here the institution of the legacy of this name emerges, here is clarified the meaning of *anamnesis*, *koinonia* and *parousia* of the *Christos Pantokrator*; here may also be found the hermeneutical key to the understanding of what is otherwise in danger of remaining a tough and hard word of theological speculation.

the question about the *mysterium iniquitatis* and the *Pascha Christi*

Third, the agonizing question about the *mysterium iniquitatis* must be admitted: that in fact salvation history begins only where God's covenant promises go so far beyond failing human efforts that everything comes to a head in this final mutual offer, which has its unsurpassable point of culmination and conclusion in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

This *Pascha* remains definitively the core of salvation history, where God and man exchange the final word with each other.

the eschaton characterized by an inextricably interwoven mutuality

From this perspective, we shall once again have to consider whether the eschaton should not be seen in the way repeatedly suggested by Augustine, which is of a personal nature. It is then no one-dimensional infinite process. It is rather God's mercy towards man – as one who is "chosen from" and "put in charge of" in the

sense of ἐκ καὶ ὑπὲρ (cf. Heb 5:1) – which leads towards an inextricable mutuality, which is the actual theme of the eschaton. All this is connected with the mysterious name of Jesus, where God and man are open to one

another – ultimately in a wondrous silence, to which all that is verbal leads. His mercy is present there to release tears and wipe them away, and only there does our name become so pure and whole that everything in it becomes new.

Christian faith too can be simple

SCHMATOVICH When it is said that Islam is a religion that is easy to understand, we should certainly point to the fact that Christian faith too can be very simple.

This is especially clear if we go back to the beginning and ask, for instance, what stands out in the Acts of the Apostles as the specific early Christian kerygma. This kerygma is based on the promises made to the prophets, showing the great sensitivity of the early Church concerning the past, the Old Testament and the monotheism alive in it. Then it speaks of these promises being fulfilled in Jesus' work and death on the Cross, showing a sensitivity concerning historicity and immanence. In its declaration of the enthronement of Christ and the authority he exerts on behalf of God, the early Church shows its openness to transcendence and its belief in the Spirit of God, who carries forward the cause of Jesus, and it shows the element of a present eschatology. And finally in the apostolic proclamation, the faith of the Church in the second coming of Christ becomes clear, when he returns his rule to God, in the profession therefore of a future eschatology – and also in the mission of the disciples to call mankind to repentance and to belief in the good news. In this way, considering the beginnings of Christian faith draws attention to the fact that not only Islam, but also Christianity, is by nature a simple religion.

simplicity of faith, because everything converges in Christ

FÜGLISTER It is particularly the relationship between promise and fulfilment that points to the fact that the matter is perhaps not quite so simple after all.

First we are reminded that much has been promised that still remains to be fulfilled such as the kingdom of

God and the *parousia* of Christ, his coming as *Kyrios* and *Christos*. Christians are still awaiting this *parousia* of the Messiah, just as the Jews are also still awaiting him. Of course the Christian believes that Jesus is the absolute mediator of salvation (as we may put it, although the term remains dangerous). But this faith is not so much rooted in the fulfilment of individual promises handed down in the so-called promise-texts. What is wonderful and persuasive in the New Testament rather is that in Jesus – the one who came in history and is still to come – *everything* is fulfilled and all expectations of a mediator of salvation, divergent as they may be in themselves,

converge in Christ Jesus: he is the prophet in the full sense of the servant of God's existential engagement, who also gives up his life as a victim in order to testify that he is the royal mediator of salvation (the "Messiah"), the Son of man, the Word, the Sophia, the Yahweh angel. The convergence of all this so magnificently in Christ, is not, of course, to be found in Islam.

an elementarization of faith to be introduced into the dialogue **GRESHAKE** Seen from the perspective of religious psychology, Islam's plausibility and efficacy certainly has something to do with its didactic simplicity, compared with which simple Christians may frequently have the feeling that faith is something extremely complicated, something for experts, for theologians. Here perhaps a great deficit really may be observed in Christian tradition. And the important thing would be to present the Christian faith in its basic elements analogous to the Islamic faith. Then it would be very interesting to introduce such a break-down into Christian-Muslim dialogue. Otherwise it may well be that we speak about all sorts of things, but lose sight of what is essential.

theology and practice in Islam not at all simple **KHOURY** The simplicity of Islam is not the simplicity of theological reflection, but derives from the formalization of the tenets of faith. When we ask theologians what this simple, formalized substance of faith – faith in God and in the Prophet – really means, it leads to complicated reflections that are thoroughly comparable with Christian reflections. To mention just one example: there are detailed and extensive treatises on the attributes of God in Islam, which is a subject that also interested classical Christian theology. If we look particularly at the practice of faith in Islam, here too it is really not as simple as we might think at first sight. For every question, there are in Islam varying opinions or practical references on how to answer it. It is simpler only because the Muslim can choose this or that solution, according to which fits better with the specific circumstance of his life.

theology to be included in the dialogue on both sides For the future we might consider that at this symposium complex theological reflections were presented from the Christian side, and when the question was raised as to what could be found in Islam about these issues, generally only texts from the Qur'an and Hadiths were offered. This meant that Islamic theology was neglected, although it would certainly be fair to take into consideration the theological elaboration of the various problems and questions that has taken place in Islam.

other processes of tradition in Islam **ZIRKER** The fact that simple formalization succeeds more easily in Islam is certainly also related to the fact that in Islam theologians do not hold the same position as in Christianity. The processes of tradition are different. There is, at least in Sunni Islam, no teaching authority and there are no binding synods; their catechisms have a very different character from ours with regard to their subject matter and validity. From this point of view Islam has a very different social system to keep faith present and binding.

different simplicity of Christian faith **SCHAEFFLER** There is another relevant difference which is not accidental and which concerns Christian faith with regard to the simplicity and complexity of its subject matter. It consists in the fact that Christians have the one testimony of Christ but in a great variety of testimonies. This makes any kind of brief formula of faith difficult. It is not the theologians' fault, but a blessing of Christian tradition that there is not only one Gospel text, but four Gospels and in addition a number of other canonical texts, particularly a highly diverse collection of epistles, whose theology is on many points quite divergent. Moreover, there is the fact which has also been discussed during these days, that Christians have a prophet who did not leave a book himself, but who inspired the variety of testimonies which then became books.

WILHELM DUPRÉ, born in 1936 in Hermeskeil/Trier, 1955–1963 studies in Philosophy and Anthropology at the Faculty of Theology St. Gabriel and the University of Vienna; 1963–1965 Assistant at the Institute of Philosophy, University of Vienna, 1965–1974 Professor of Philosophy at DePaul University, Chicago, since 1974 Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Comparative Religion at the University of Nijmegen. 1995 Guest-Professor at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg (Canada).

Publications include: (transl. with *D. Dupré*.) Nikolaus von Kues, *Philosophisch-theologische Schriften. Lateinisch-Deutsch*. 3 vols. (L. Gabriel [ed.]). Vienna, 1964–1967; *Religion in Primitive Cultures. A Study in Ethnophilosophy* (Religion and Reason; 9). The Hague etc., 1975; "Kultur und Ethos. Zum Problem der Sittlichkeit in Primitivkulturen", in: C. H. Ratschow (ed.), *Ethik der Religionen. Ein Handbuch. Primitive, Hinduismus, Buddhismus, Islam*. Stuttgart etc., 1980, pp. 79–176; *Einführung in die Religionsphilosophie*. Stuttgart etc., 1985; *Patterns in Meaning. Reflections on meaning and truth in cultural reality, religious traditions, and dialogical encounters* (Studies in Philosophical Theology; 10). Kampen, 1994.

NOTKER JOSEF FÜGLISTER OSB, born in 1931 in Rüti/Zürich, since 1950 Benedictine of the Abbey Disentis; philosophical-theological studies in Einsiedeln, Disentis and at the Faculty S. Anselmo in Rome; 1961 Doctor of Theology; after special studies at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, Licencié in Exegetics; 1961 University Reader, 1963 Professor of Old Testament Exegesis at the Theological Faculty S. Anselmo, Rome; since 1970 Full Professor of Old Testament Exegesis at the University of Salzburg.

Publications include: *Die Heilsbedeutung des Pascha* (Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament; 8). München, 1963; *Das Psalmengebet*. München, 1965; "Alttestamentliche Grundlagen der neutestamentlichen Christologie", in: J. Feiner–M. Löhrer (eds.), *Mysterium Salutis*. vol. 3/1. Einsiedeln, 1970, pp. 105–225; "Strukturen der alttestamentlichen Ekklesiologie", in: J. Feiner – M. Löhrer (eds.), *Mysterium Salutis*. vol. 4/1. Einsiedeln, 1972, pp. 23–99; "Grundweisen biblischer Heilserfahrung", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Erlösung in Christentum und Buddhismus* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 3). Mödling, 1982, pp. 147–174; "Das biblische Verständnis von Offenbarung und Geschichte", in: A. Bsteh (ed.), *Sein als Offenbarung in Christentum und Hinduismus* (Beiträge zur Religionstheologie; 4). Mödling, 1984, pp. 83–111; cooperation in: H. Fries (ed.), *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe*. vol. 2. München, 1963; H. Haag (ed.), *Bibellexikon*. Einsiedeln, 1968; J. Schreiner (ed.), *Wort und Botschaft des Alten Testaments*. Würzburg, 1969; J. Schreiner (ed.), *Die alttestamentlichen Lesungen der Sonn- und Festtage*. Würzburg, 1969/72.

* All bio- and bibliographical data were correct in the year 1996, when the original German edition of the book was published.

GISBERT GRESHAKE, born in 1933 in Recklinghausen, studies in Rome, graduation as Licencié in Philosophy and Theology, Doctoral Degree at the Catholic-Theological Faculty, University of Münster, 1972 Habilitation in Tübingen, 1974–1985 Full Professor and Head of the Institute of Dogmatics and History of Dogma at the University of Vienna and since 1985 Professor of Dogmatics and Ecumenical Theology at the Faculty of Theology, University of Freiburg.

Publications include: *Historie wird Geschichte. Bedeutung und Sinn der Unterscheidung von Historie und Geschichte in der Theologie* R. Bultmanns. Essen, 1963; *Auferstehung der Toten. Ein Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen theologischen Diskussion über die Zukunft der Geschichte*. Essen, 1969; *Gnade als konkrete Freiheit. Eine Untersuchung zur Gnadenlehre des Pelagius*. Mainz, 1972; (with G. Lohfink) *Naherwartung – Auferstehung – Unsterblichkeit*. Freiburg etc., 1975 (1986); *Stärker als der Tod. Zukunft, Tod, Auferstehung, Himmel, Hölle, Fegfeuer*. Mainz, 1976 (1991); *Geschenke Freiheit. Einführung in die Gnadenlehre*. Wien, 1977 (new edition: 1992); *Der Preis der Liebe. Besinnung über das Leid*. Freiburg etc., 1978 (1980); *Die Wüste bestehen*. Freiburg etc., 1979 (new edition: 1990); (with W. Geerlings – J. Weismayer) *Quellen geistlichen Lebens*. 4 vols. Mainz, 1980–1993; *Priestersein*. Freiburg etc., 1982 (new edition 1991); *Gottes Heil – Glück des Menschen. Theologische Perspektiven*. Freiburg etc., 1983; (mit J. Kremer) *Resurrectio mortuorum. Zum theologischen Verständnis der leiblichen Auferstehung*. Darmstadt, 1986 (1992); *Tod und dann? Streit der Hoffnungen*. Freiburg etc., 1988 (1990); *Wenn Leid mein Leben lähmt*. Freiburg, 1992; (ed.) *Zur Frage der Bischofsernennungen in der römisch-katholischen Kirche* (Schriftenreihe der Katholischen Akademie der Erzdiözese Freiburg). München etc., 1991; *Epistulae Cartusianae. Lateinisch, deutsch = Frühe Kartäuserbriefe. Bruno – Guigo – Antelm* (Fontes Christiani: 10). Freiburg etc., 1992.

MARTIN KARRER, born in 1954 in Weißenburg, studies in Protestant theology and German philology at the Universities of Erlangen, Tübingen, Zürich and München, 1978 State examination, 1980 Magister examination, 1983 Dr. theol., Vicariate, 1984 Ordination, 1988 habilitation in New Testament Exegesis, since 1990 Full Professor of New Testament Exegesis at the Protestant Faculty Wuppertal, 1993/1994 Rector.

Publications include: *Die evangelische Landjugend in Bayern. Ein Paradigma kirchlicher Jugendarbeit im ländlichen Raum*. Erlangen, 1980; *Die Johannesoffenbarung als Brief. Studien zu ihrem literarischen, historischen und theologischen Ort* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments; 140). Göttingen, 1986 (Dissertation); *Der Gesalbte. Die Grundlagen des Christustitels* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments; 151). Göttingen, 1991 (Habilitation); *Aufsätze zur neutestamentlichen Theologie, Ethik und Hermeneutik*; in preparation: *Jesus Christus im Neuen Testament* (Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament). Göttingen.

ADEL THEODOR KHOURY, born in 1930 in Tebnine in Lebanon, Licencié in Philosophy, University of Lyon (1959), in Oriental Studies (1960) and Docteur ès Lettres (habilitation) in the year 1966; subsequently contractual

Academic Reader in Comparative Religion (1966), contractual Professor of Comparative Religion (1970), Wissenschaftlicher Rat and Professor (1970), since 1970 Full Professor and Director of the Seminar für Allgemeine Religionswissenschaften, Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Münster, Professor emeritus since October 1993; since 1988 Guest-Professor at the Faculty of Theology St. Gabriel and since 1991 Member of the Institute for Theology of Religions St. Gabriel.

Publications include: *Les Théologiens byzantins et l'islam. Textes et Auteurs (VIIe–XIIIe siècle)*. Louvain, 1969; *Polémique byzantine contre l'islam*. Leiden, 1972; *Apologétique byzantine contre l'islam*. Altenberge, 1982; *Der theologische Streit der Byzantiner mit dem Islam*. Paderborn, 1969; *Georges de Trébizonde et l'union islamo-chrétienne* (Corpus Islamo-Christianum, Series Graeca; 1). Altenberge, 1987; *Einführung in die Grundlagen des Islams* (Islam und westliche Welt; 3). Graz etc., 1978 (1981, Altenberge, 1995); *Begegnung mit dem Islam. Eine Einführung* (Herder-Bücherei; 815). Freiburg etc., 1980 (1986); *Toleranz im Islam* (Entwicklung und Frieden, Wissenschaftliche Reihe; 22). München etc., 1980 (Altenberge, 1986); *Islamische Minderheiten in der Diaspora*. München etc., 1985; (Translation:) *Der Koran* (Gütersloher Taschenbuch; 783). Gütersloh, 1987 (1992); (ed.) *Lexikon religiöser Grundbegriffe. Judentum – Christentum – Islam*. Graz etc., 1987; *Der Islam. Sein Glaube – seine Lebensordnung – sein Anspruch*. (Herder Taschenbuch; 1602). Freiburg etc., 1988 (Herder/Spektrum; 4167; Freiburg etc., 1992, 1993); *So sprach der Prophet. Worte aus der islamischen Überlieferung* (Gütersloher Taschenbuch; 785). Gütersloh, 1988; *Wer war Muhammad? Lebensgeschichte und prophetischer Anspruch* (Herder Taschenbuch; 1719). Freiburg etc., 1990; *Der Koran. Arabisch – Deutsch, Übersetzung und wissenschaftlicher Kommentar*. Gütersloh, 1990 ff.; (with L. Hagemann and P. Heine) *Islam-Lexikon. Geschichte – Ideen – Gestalten* (Herder/Spektrum; 4036). Freiburg etc., 1991; *Was sagt der Koran zum Heiligen Krieg?* (Gütersloher Taschenbuch; 789). Gütersloh, 1991; *Was ist los in der islamischen Welt? Die Konflikte verstehen*. Freiburg etc., 1991 (1991); *Der Islam kommt uns näher. Worauf müssen wir uns einstellen?* Freiburg etc., 1992; *Christen unterm Halbmond. Religiöse Minderheiten unter der Herrschaft des Islam*. Freiburg etc., 1994.

HEINRICH OTT, born in 1929 in Basel, 1948–1952 studies in Theology and Philosophy in Basel and Marburg, 1952–1962 Vicar in rural communities in the Cantons Graubünden and later Basel-Landschaft, 1954 Dr. theol., 1956–1962 contractual Academic Reader in Systematic Theology in the University of Basel, since 1962 Full Professor *ibid.* Guest-professorships in Bonn, München, Madison (N. J., USA), guest lectures in Asia: Japan, Thailand, Korea, China, etc. 1979–1991 Member of the Swiss Federal Parliament.

Publications include: *Geschichte und Heilsgeschichte in der Theologie Rudolf Bultmanns* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie; 19). Tübingen, 1955; *Denken und Sein. Der Weg Martin Heideggers und der Weg der Theologie*. Zollikon, 1959; *Wirklichkeit und Glaube I: Zum theologischen Erbe Dietrich Bonhoeffers*. Göttingen etc., 1966; *Wirklichkeit und Glaube II: Der persönliche Gott*. Göttingen etc., 1969; *Die Antwort des Glaubens. Systematische Theologie in 50 Artikeln*. Stuttgart etc., 1983; *Das Reden vom Unsagbaren. Die Frage nach Gott*

in unserer Zeit. Stuttgart, 1978; *Apologetik des Glaubens. Grundprobleme einer dialogischen Fundamentaltheologie*. Darmstadt, 1994.

RICHARD SCHAEFFLER, born in 1926 in München, 1946–1953 studies in Philosophy, Catholic Theology and Psychology in München and Tübingen; 1952 Dr. phil., 1953 Faculty examination for Catholic theologians: after assistantships in Erlangen, Mainz and Tübingen, 1961 habilitation in Philosophy in Tübingen, 1968–1989 Full Professor of Borderline Questions of Theology and Philosophy at the University of Bochum, Member of the Faculties of Catholic Theology and Philosophy.

Publications include: *Die Struktur der Geschichtszeit* (Philosophische Abhandlungen; 21). Frankfurt, 1963; *Weg zu einer Ersten Philosophie. Vom rechten Ansatz des philosophischen Fragens*. Frankfurt, 1964; *Religion und kritisches Bewußtsein*. Freiburg etc., 1973; *Einführung in die Geschichtsphilosophie*. Darmstadt, 1973 (1990); *Die Religionskritik sucht ihren Partner. Thesen zu einer erneuerten Apologetik* (Theologisches Seminar). Freiburg etc., 1974; *Frömmigkeit des Denkens?. Martin Heidegger und die katholische Theologie*. Darmstadt, 1978; *Was dürfen wir hoffen?. Die katholische Theologie der Hoffnung zwischen Blochs utopischem Denken und der reformatorischen Rechtfertigungslehre*. Darmstadt, 1979; *Dre Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Philosophie und katholischer Theologie* (Die philosophischen Bemühungen des 20. Jahrhunderts). Darmstadt, 1980; *Glaubensreflexion und Wissenschaftslehre. Thesen zur Wissenschaftstheorie und Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Theologie* (Quaestiones Disputatae; 82). Freiburg etc., 1980; *Fähigkeit zur Erfahrung. Zur transzendentalen Hermeneutik des Sprechens von Gott* (Quaestiones Disputatae; 94). Freiburg, 1982; *Religionsphilosophie* (Handbuch Philosophie). Freiburg etc., 1983; *Das Gebet und das Argument. 2 Weisen des Sprechens von Gott. Eine Einführung in die Theorie der religiösen Sprache* (Beiträge zur Theologie und Religionswissenschaft). Düsseldorf, 1989; *Erfahrung als Dialog mit der Wirklichkeit. Eine Untersuchung zur Logik der Erfahrung*. Freiburg etc., 1995. "Wandlungen des Gottesbegriffs", in: K. Hemmerle (ed.), *Die Botschaft von Gott*. Freiburg, 1974, pp. 63–93; "Der Kultus als Weltauslegung", in: B. Fischer et al., *Kult in der säkularisierten Welt*. Regensburg, 1975, pp. 9–62; "Rechtfertigung und Glaube als Thema des jüdisch-christlichen Dialogs", in: M. Stöhr (ed.), *Jüdische Existenz und die Erneuerung der christlichen Theologie. Versuch der Bilanz des christlich-jüdischen Dialogs für die Systematische Theologie* (Abhandlungen zum christlich-jüdischen Dialog; 11). München, 1981, pp. 220–241.

Participants*

- Birk, Prof. Dr. Gerd, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Pedagogy of Religion]
- Bsteh, Prof. Dr. Andreas, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Fundamental Theology and Theology of Religions]
- Bsteh, Rektor lic. phil et lic. theol. Petrus, Wien [Missiology]
- Dupré, Prof. Dr. Wilhelm, University of Nijmegen
[Philosophy of Religion and Comparative Religion]
- Elsas, Prof. Dr. Christoph, Universität Marburg/L. [History of Religions]
- Füglister, Prof. Dr. Notker, Universität Salzburg [Old Testament Exegesis]
- Glade, Prof. Dr. Winfried, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Liturgical and Sacramental Theology]
- Gladkowski, Ass. Dr. Krzysztof Gabriel, Katholische Universität Lublin
[History of Religions and Comparative Religion]
- Greshake, Prof. Dr. Gisbert, Universität Freiburg
[Dogmatics and Ecumenical Theology]
- Hagemann, Prof. Dr. Ludwig, Universität Mannheim
[Systematic Theology and History of Religions]
- Hauser, Prof. Dr. Ludwig, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Dogmatics]
- Kahlert, Dr. Heinrich, Bremen
[Consultant on Islam in the Protestant Church of Bremen]
- Kahlert, Ortrud, M. A., Bremen [Philology and Protestant Theology]
- Karrer, Prof. Dr. Martin, Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal
[New Testament Exegesis]
- Khoury, Prof. Dr. Adel Theodor, Universität Münster
[Comparative Religion]
- Klose, Prof. Dr. Dietmar, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Catechetics and Pastoral Theology]
- Kopecký, Prof. Dr. František, Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule
Benediktbeuern [Moral Theology and Moral Pedagogy]

* All biographical data were correct in 1993, when the Symposium, published in this book, took place.

Krüger, Prof. Dr. Friedhelm, Universität Osnabrück-Vechta
[Historical Theology]

Kustusz, Prof. Dr. Gaudentius, Ordenshochschule OFM Poznan
[Dogmatics]

Leuze, Prof. Dr. Reinhard, Universität München [Systematic Theology]

Mitterhöfer, Prof. Dr. Jakob, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Dogmatics and Missiology]

Neumann, Prof. Dr. Bernhard, Theologische Hochschule Vallendar
[History of Religions]

Ott, Prof. Dr. Heinrich, Universität Basel [Systematic Theology]

Peschke, Prof. Dr. Karl-Heinz, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Moral Theology]

Proksch, Mag. Brigitte, Vienna

Salmen, Prof. Dr. Josef, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Philosophy and History of Philosophy]

Schaeffler, Prof. Dr. Richard, Ruhr-Universität Bochum
[Borderline Questions of Theology and Philosophy]

Schmatovich, Prof. Dr. János, Theologische Hochschule Győr
[Exegesis]

Schmücker, Mag. Marcus M., Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Islamic Studies and Indology]

Schreiner, Prof. Dr. Lothar, Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal
[Missiology and History of Religions]

Torisu, Prof. Dr. Yoshifumi M., University of Nagoya (Japan)
[Systematic Theology]

Vanoni, Prof. Dr. Gottfried, Theologische Hochschule St. Gabriel
[Old Testament Exegesis and Biblical Languages]

Welzel, Dr. Auguste Ulrike, Wien

Weß, Dozent DDr. Paul, Universität Innsbruck [Pastoral Theology]

Wisse, Prof. Dr. Stephan, Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule der
Franziskaner und Kapuziner Münster
[Comparative Religion and Fundamental Theology]

Wolbert, Prof. Dr. Werner, Universität Salzburg [Moral Theology]

Zirker, Prof. Dr. Hans, Universität Duisburg
[Fundamental Theology]

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The 'Index of Subjects' relates to both volumes *Islam Questioning Christianity* and *Christian Faith in Dialogue with Islam*. It aims to link the manifold aspects broached in the various contexts of both volumes. Completeness proved to be unrealistic, even undesirable. The superscript 1 or 2 refers to the pages in volume 1 or 2.

The 'Index of the Terms and Dicta from the Islamic Tradition' and the 'Name Index' should also be consulted. Although the technical terms are frequently included in the 'Index of Subjects', it should be kept in mind that the reader is dealing here with very complex contents that are often specifically linked with the terms and can only be understood correctly in the relevant textual context of the two volumes.

(i.) refers to statements that relate to the Islamic tradition and (c.) to statements that relate to the Christian tradition; the superior figures before the page quoted refer to the volume.

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Logos → the word of God

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mystery → God

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territory of war (*dār al-ḥarb*) (→ territory of treaty)

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(i.) ṡ Muḥammad's lifetime is the best of all possible times – this explains Islam's sense of history as a whole '24, comparable to the Christian idea of "the fullness of time" '24f., from Muḥammad and the Qur'ān onwards, a *sharī'a* was now to become the ultimate order of life for mankind as a whole '254f. '350f., faith, in its self-understanding, always remains basically identical at all times – this is why there is nothing like a "middle of t." '171f. '175f., imminent ṡ Day of Judgment and the present t. '175f.

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tolerance (→ general order of rights, → religious freedom)

the relationship of Islam to non-Muslims – exclusion or t. '333–337.

Torah

as guidance of a God who wants what is good and plans it for the world '240, a good ordinance for the whole world, something that extends to all people '364.

(i.) the T. seen in the light of the Qur'ān '209f., in the Qur'ān there are no references to a parallelism between Logos, Torah and Qur'ān '143.

tradition(s) (→ Christianity, → Islam, → religions)

Muḥammad saw the Qur'ānic message as being in continuity with the Biblical t. '18f. '25f., a meaningful coexistence of various t. and cultures only possible when it is preserved by a ṡ general order of rights, a shared humaneness has become, in different t., the decisive criterion for being human '49–72, ṡ revelation in different t.? '186, '330f., key position of non-literary t. '387.

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Trinity (→ communion)

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Dialogue and T. (Dupré) '49–72, subsequent discussions '73–103, especially '82–84, '93–95, '102f.; is there t. only in → dialogue? '76, demands and forms of t. consciousness '50–54, → religion and t. are essentially linked '51f., t. is inconceivable without the thought of the ever greater t. '53f, '290f., priority of the practice of t. '54–56, t.s we seek can only be addressed as binding t. if they agree with the t. of personal encounters and are part of them '54f., dialogical relation and the → t. of being '56–61, '85f, '100, unacceptable to give up the formation and development of dialogical relations for the sake of t. '61f., the t. in dialogical relations needs to be developed in connection with the reality of a → general order of rights '63, the concept of t. in the spirit of dialogue '69–72, stated t. or t. accessible by means of → reason '84f, '93f, '233f, '282, '289–291, '318, t. and subjectivity '290f, '293f., t. as → person '79–81, '222, about doing the t. '101f., → transcendence and → immanence of t. '291f, '318, concept of t. and cultural context '403, we should hold a dialogue of t. '31f, '40f., finding t. without a teaching authority: advantages and disadvantages '274.

(i.:) t. in Christianity? '237f., "I am the t. – *anā 'l-ḥaqq*" '155f, '166f, '176, '181.

truth of being (→ dialogue)

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ultimate finality (→ christology, → Qur'ān, → Muhammad, → claim to absoluteness)

(i.:) *The Qur'ān: The Ultimate Word of God in Human Language* (Khoury) '197–207, subsequent discussions '208–242, Muhammad – "the Seal of the Prophets" '19f., u. of an originally particular order? '305f.

(c.:) *The Fullness of God and Time: On New Testament Christology* (Karrer) '105–126, subsequent discussions '127–155; *The Ultimate Finality of the Christ Revelation* (Ott) '157–165, subsequent discussions '166–196; u. can only be verified in the perspective of the end? '172f., faith in the ultimate promise shared by Christians and Muslims? '184–186, u. does not principally close or exclude, but rather gives expression to the definitive openness of the whole creation towards God '385.

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