

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ALLĀH IN THE KORAN

Allāh is the God<sup>1)</sup> of the Koran and the Islam, to which he owes his survival and his triumph over the pantheon of Arab paganism. To this day Allāh is of vital significance for millions of people by virtue of his position in the Koran. Nevertheless the Koran does not present us with a systematic doctrine of God nor with a theoretic speculation about his being. The Koran is not a philosophical or theological treatise. It serves the practical purpose of being God's message to mankind. In fact it is the ipsissima verba of God<sup>2)</sup>. In addition the Koran presupposes a certain knowledge of religious terminology and background with its hearers which is not explained. Keeping these facts in mind, our primary task is to reconstruct systematically the Koranic doctrine of Allāh.

#### A. Allāh as a name for the Koranic God.

A distinction between Meccan and Medinan sūras has long been recognized by Moslem tradition. One of the most fortunate achievements of modern Koran scholarship was the further division of its material, on a chronological basis, into three Meccan periods and one Medinan period. These periods coincide with the development of Mohammed's public career and although an absolute division is impossible the results of Th. Nöldeke in his Geschichte des Qorans (reprinted 1961) have gained wide acceptance<sup>3)</sup>.

An investigation into the names of God in the Koran<sup>4)</sup> revealed that the name Allâh is used not more than twenty-six times in sûras of the first Meccan period as against about 2,662 times in the rest of the Koran — following the arrangement of J.H. Kramers<sup>5)</sup>. According to the grouping of Nöldeke, who classified more sûras with the first Meccan period, the name Allâh is used about 40 times in the first period as against about 2648 times in the remaining 66 sûras. In 28 of the 48 sûras Nöldeke classified with the first Meccan sûras the name Allâh does not occur at all<sup>6)</sup>. The sûras of the first Meccan period are very short and consequently statistics may be misleading. But on the other hand it should be kept in mind that the later sûras are more concerned with communal discipline while they are less, what may be called, theologically orientated. Moreover Nöldeke himself declared the verses, which contain at least 22 (out of the 40) occurrences of the name Allâh in sûras of the first Meccan period, to be of a date later than the sûras in which they appear, viz. XCVI, 14; LXXXV, 8, 9; LXXIV, 33, 34, 55; LXXIII, 20 (seven times); LXX, 3; LIII, 23, 27, 32; LII, 43 (two times) and LI, 50, 51, 58. Furthermore he arranged Sûra I, 1 as the last in the first Meccan period — Kramers arranged it in the second Meccan period. In LXIX, 33 and LXXXV, 20 the rhyme is different from that of the context implying that these verses could well be foreign to their present context. Kramers also dated the latter reference in the second Meccan period. The majority of the remaining fifteen instances have also been subjected by some or other scholar to a later dating<sup>7)</sup>. Under these circumstances we

may well doubt whether it is legitimate to classify any âya containing the name Allâh as of the first Meccan period.

It is clear that Mohammed refrained from the use of the name Allâh at the beginning of his career. This state of affairs is confirmed by the fact that Moslem poets of the early Islam also rarely used the name Allâh<sup>8)</sup>.

Although pagan poets used the name Allâh soon after the Hidjra as a specific Islamic term it is encountered in the poetry of Medinan Moslems only, during the first four years of the Hidjra<sup>9)</sup>. This leads to the conclusion that the initial<sup>10)</sup> avoidance of the name Allâh by Mohammed made a deep impression on the early Moslems because it symbolised to them a separation from the current Allâh-worship in Mecca. Therefore they were reluctant to use the name and it is only the Medinans who had the most intimate contact with the prophet who dared to use the name after his example. Outside Medina Allâh was referred to as the "God of the heavens" to distinguish him from the Meccan Allâh<sup>11)</sup>. The avoidance of the name Allâh must however be seen against a wider background.

The absence of the name Allâh in the first Meccan period raises the question which name Mohammed then did use instead. The Koran mentions al-Rahmân<sup>12)</sup> as an alternative proper name of God<sup>13)</sup>. While the cult of Allâh was connected with the worship of secondary divinities by the pre-Islamic Meccans, the name al-Rahmân always signified the one unique God besides whom there is no other god. The

name al-Rahmân is encountered in inscriptions of Jewish, Christian and Sabaeen origin<sup>14)</sup>. It was not only used by rivals of Mohammed like Musailima of Yamâma, alias al-Rahmân<sup>15)</sup>, but also Zaid ibn <sup>c</sup>Amr ibn Nufail, one of the Hanîfs, employed the name al-Rahmân<sup>16)</sup>. The Meccans consistently rejected the reference to God as al-Rahmân and demanded that this name be deleted from the armistice agreement at Hudaibiya<sup>17)</sup>. They obviously saw in al-Rahmân a deity distinct from Allâh<sup>18)</sup>.

In the Koranic preaching of al-Rahmân there are no special religious ideas used in distinction from the preaching of Allâh<sup>19)</sup>. Everything said of al-Rahmân is elsewhere said of Allâh. Although the name al-Rahmân is explained and reinforced by al-Rahîm in the Basmala<sup>20)</sup>, it is significant that it is not necessarily used in a context where the mercy of God is emphasized. In fact a secret fear for al-Rahmân is referred to<sup>21)</sup>, while he is connected with the trumpet announcing the Last Judgement in XXXVI, 51-52. When al-Rahmân wishes to harm or punish, there is no protection against him<sup>22)</sup>.

A scrutiny of the references to al-Rahmân reveals the remarkable fact that this name was also not used by Mohammed at the beginning of his career. The name al-Rahmân appears almost exclusively in sûras of the second

Meccan period<sup>23)</sup> which was also the period when the prophet was closer to the Jews than at any other time.

This means that we are left with the name Rabb as the name Mohammed initially used for his God. It is used very frequently in the sūras of the first Meccan period but gradually lost ground to the name Allāh in subsequent periods<sup>24)</sup>. An investigation into the use of Rabb in the Koran shows however that it is never used as a proper name but always as an anonymous appellative<sup>25)</sup> meaning "Lord". This observation corresponds with Mohammed's predilection to introduce his God anonymously as "the Creator"<sup>26)</sup>. There can only be one conclusion namely that Mohammed was initially in doubt concerning the proper name of his God and avoided the issue until it was clear in his mind. Probably he had not yet settled in his mind his position in relation to the Meccans, Jews, Christians and Hanifs as far as religion was concerned. In the previous chapter we have pointed out that in the very oldest sūras Mohammed still identified himself with the religious practices of his tribe.

Nevertheless it is most important to note that a number of âyât from about the middle of the first Meccan period clearly implies that Mohammed did have a proper name for his God right from the beginning<sup>27)</sup>. In these verses the Moslems are invited to praise the name of God e.g.:

Praise the name of your Lord, the Most High, oh Mohammed, ... he prospers who purifies himself and mentions the name of his Lord when he performs the ritual prayer<sup>28)</sup>.

We are forced to conclude that Mohammed did have a name for his God but felt a certain hesitation at the beginning of his career to pronounce that name. It is a wellknown notion amongst Semitic peoples to avoid the name of a god for fear of abuse or profanation as we had the opportunity to point out in the second chapter.

Is it then possible to determine which name Mohammed had in mind? In the Hebrew literature some indication may be found where the Hebrew proper name of God, Yahwè, was supplied with the vowels of the Aramaic word which was pronounced instead of Yahwè for fear of abusing the name of God, viz. sh<sup>e</sup>mâ, "the name"<sup>29)</sup>. In the Ism-verses of the Koran we may then detect strong Jewish influence which subsequently led to the tentative application of the name al-Rahmân during the second Meccan period and which would mean Mohammed had in mind the Jewish God Yahwè/hā-êlōhîm of which Allâh is the Arabic equivalent.

On the other hand the phrase "the name of your Lord" in the Ism-verses may simply have been a stylistic variant for "your Lord"<sup>30)</sup>. Then these verses present no problem to the thesis that Mohammed had at first no particular name for God<sup>31)</sup>.

However this may be it is clear that the word Rabb was never used in the Koran with the intention of a proper name of God<sup>32)</sup>. Moreover the statistics show that Mohammed never intended to replace the name Allâh by al-Rahmân,

but that he merely wished to stress the unique oneness of his God with a name that was already exclusively in use to express this concept. The Meccans rejected this name as an unnecessary foreign novelty and when Mohammed realised that the Jews were not going to hail him as a continuer of their faith he had no objections to drop it. Being one of the first names of God used in the Koran the name Allâh finally became the only proper name of God<sup>33)</sup>. It had the additional benefit of serving the political implications of the prophet's career to facilitate the consolidation of the Arab tribes as a word of pure Arabic origin. We may at this stage remark that there is no original specific name created for God in the Koran. The Koran used known names although the contents of these names may have been renovated.

B. Characteristic aspects of the God of the Koran.

1. Allâh is the living God:

In the Koran revelation and faith are centred in Allâh. Its contents spell out the name of Allâh so that a presentation of the Koranic doctrine of Allâh amounts in a sense to a theology of the Koran. In agreement with our conclusions in the previous paragraph we shall not restrict ourselves to those passages containing the name Allâh. The mentioned considerations justify the use of the whole Koran as a source.

The existence of Allâh is never questioned in

the Koran. In the controversy with his people the prophet frequently pointed out that they themselves acknowledge Allâh. Those passages which have been invoked<sup>34)</sup> as cosmological or teleological proofs of the existence of Allâh were meant to stress certain aspects of the Koranic view of God which will be discussed later on. The reality of God imposed itself on Moslem and non-Moslem alike with an evidence beyond all demonstration.

The Koran most emphatically denies that Allâh ever had an origin or evolution. He is the eternal<sup>35)</sup>, he has always existed and will always exist. He was not begotten<sup>36)</sup>, he is the first and the last<sup>37)</sup>. Everything on earth will pass away but the countenance of God will remain<sup>38)</sup>.

The eternity of Allâh was not experienced as a quality of the philosophical Absolute. In the Koran the idea of God's eternity is coupled with the premise that he is the living God<sup>39)</sup>, he is eternal because he is living. His living is without any initial or terminal limit, therefore he knows all that happens before and after them who will appear before him on the Day of Judgement, while they cannot embrace him with a complete knowledge<sup>40)</sup>. As the living God Allâh is also the source of life. He gives and he takes life<sup>41)</sup>. This is also recognized by the pagan Arabs<sup>42)</sup> but they fail to draw the consequence that he will also return them to life on the Day of the Resurrection<sup>43)</sup>. For the believer the fact of the Living God, who does not die, constitutes a constant comfort, for it is to him the affirmation of victory over



death — including his own death<sup>44)</sup>.

Life is what differentiates Allâh from other gods<sup>45)</sup>. The feebleness of the idols is ridiculed in the story of Abraham who smashed the idols of his people to pieces<sup>46)</sup>. They admit that the idols can neither hear nor speak or profit man in any way. Thereupon Abraham admonishes them to worship Allâh, the creator who disposes over life and death. The divinities of the polytheists are dead, not living<sup>47)</sup>.

That Allâh is the living God implies his continuous presence in the world with the result that he has complete knowledge of world affairs, more particularly of the sins of his creatures<sup>48)</sup>. The presence of the living God in this world is concretely expressed by the use of anthropomorphic language: Allâh comes<sup>49)</sup>, speaks<sup>50)</sup>, hears<sup>51)</sup>, sees<sup>52)</sup>, while reference is also made to some of the organs suited to these functions: He has eyes<sup>53)</sup>, hands<sup>54)</sup>, feet and ears<sup>55)</sup>, and a face<sup>56)</sup>. God built the heaven with his own hands<sup>57)</sup>. Allâh is localized in the Ka<sup>c</sup>ba at Mecca<sup>58)</sup>. Elsewhere Allâh is located on his tremendous throne on which he sat down after the creation<sup>59)</sup>. At the final Judgement believers and unbelievers will meet face to face with Allâh<sup>60)</sup>.

A figure reminiscent of military language is Al-Qahhâr, "the Conquerer"<sup>61)</sup>. Other human activities which provided terms of comparison are that of a guide<sup>62)</sup>, witness<sup>63)</sup>, king<sup>64)</sup>, master<sup>65)</sup>, heir<sup>66)</sup>, judge<sup>67)</sup>, and a rich man<sup>68)</sup>.

The anthropomorphisms are accompanied by anthropopatisms: Allâh is described as helpful<sup>69)</sup>, merciful<sup>70)</sup>, mild-tempered<sup>71)</sup>, grateful<sup>72)</sup>, loving<sup>73)</sup>, revengeful<sup>74)</sup>, forgetful<sup>75)</sup>, repenting<sup>76)</sup>, and even as wily<sup>77)</sup>, scheming<sup>78)</sup>, angry<sup>79)</sup>, and haughty<sup>80)</sup>. In many Koranic verses the impression of a certain arbitrariness is created. Thus we read:

"You cannot wish to do anything, unless Allâh wills it. To him indeed belongs the knowledge and the wisdom. He makes whom he will enter his mercy, but for the iniquitous he prepared a painful punishment"<sup>81)</sup>.

Theriomorphism is avoided in the Koran, instigated by the widespread use of various animals as symbols of the pagan gods in the plastic arts of Arabia<sup>82)</sup>. There is only one trace of it in the Koran in a story describing the Israelites' lapse into idolatry when they made God in the image of a golden calf, while Moses was absent to receive his Scripture<sup>83)</sup>.

Though primitive believers doubtless visualized Allâh as a respectable old<sup>84)</sup> patriarch, it must be noted that the Koranic description of Allâh in terms of human qualities does not reflect a primitive concept or way of speaking of Allâh. It is harmonized with a highly spiritual understanding of the transcendent God in recognition of the fundamental difference between God and man<sup>85)</sup>. Although Allâh is presented as male<sup>86)</sup> his transcendence of sex is emphasized by the incessant affirmation of the Koran that Allâh has neither consort nor child<sup>87)</sup>. The reaction against idolatry in the Koran is so violent (it is even directed

against Judaism and Christianity) that the creation of any visual likeness of God is completely unthinkable<sup>88)</sup>. Allâh cannot be imprisoned in the confinement of an idolatrous image, for he is the living God. The absence of such images of Allâh abolishes a primitive anthropomorphic conception of Allâh. There is no other means to express God's qualities than by human analogies, consequently the use of anthropomorphic language is inevitable.

## 2. The attributes of Allâh:

The Koranic conception of God has often been described in terms of ninety-nine epithets. This number is in agreement with the ninety-nine beads of the subha — excluding the bead reserved for the mention of the name Allâh. These epithets are believed<sup>89)</sup> to constitute the most beautiful names referred to in the Koran<sup>90)</sup>, although the Koranic phrase specifies no definite number. Comparing lists of "the ninety-nine names of God" J.W. Redhouse found upwards of five hundred such names. Consequently the use of "the ninety-nine names" as a basis for the Koranic doctrine of Allâh is rather haphazard<sup>91)</sup>. On the other hand it stands without reason that the epitheta of Allâh form an integral part of Mohammed's understanding of his God and can as such not be left out of account. In fact Mohammed himself used these epithets when he wanted to promulgate his God<sup>92)</sup>.

It is a feature of the style of the Koran that assonance at the end of verses was intended and deliberately sought for. In sûras in which the verses are long, special

turns of phrase are employed in order to produce the assonance<sup>93)</sup>. In the long sūras with their long verses, statements regarding Allāh occur frequently at the end of the verses<sup>94)</sup>. These statements serve the purpose of supplying a rhyme-phrase, not necessarily undetachable from the context or indispensable for the argument.

In our present context we are first of all interested in the favourite twin epithets of Allāh, often occurring at the end of verses in later sūras. They are relatively frequent and are sometimes in the form of the active participle stressing the continuous intervention of the living God in the course of history. Occurring at the end of verses they serve at once to press home a truth by repetition and to clinch the authority of what is laid down<sup>95)</sup>.

These twin epithets can be contrasted pairs: The First and the Last<sup>96)</sup>, the Outward and the Inward<sup>97)</sup>, the first merism signifying in the Semitic idiom the eternity and the latter the ubiquity of God. This same desire to leave nothing and nobody outside the authority of Allāh can be detected in statements that he is the author of good fortune as well as of affliction<sup>98)</sup>, that he guides whom he wishes<sup>99)</sup> but also leads astray<sup>100)</sup>, that he is both the Creator<sup>101)</sup> and the Destroyer<sup>102)</sup>.

While contrasted pairs are rare, twin synonymous epithets are more often met with: Allāh is repenting, compassionate<sup>103)</sup>; knowing, cognizant<sup>104)</sup>;

tremendous, exalted<sup>105)</sup>; the lord of the throne, the glorious<sup>106)</sup>; the compassionate, the forgiving<sup>107)</sup>; compassionate, loving<sup>108)</sup>; merciful, compassionate<sup>109)</sup>; the great, the most high<sup>110)</sup>; mighty, powerful<sup>111)</sup>; exalted, great<sup>112)</sup>. In LIX, 24 three synonyms are used to describe God as the Creator.

The synonymous attributes amplify each other in contents. This function is frequently supplemented in the style, not only by means of vocal and consonantal assonance but also by means of alliteration of the twin epithets! Thus we find ʿafūw ghafūr denoting the forgivingness<sup>113)</sup>, hakīm ʿalīm<sup>114)</sup> or its reverse<sup>115)</sup> denoting the wisdom, hamīd madjīd denoting the praiseworthiness<sup>116)</sup>, al-rahmān al-rahīm denoting the mercy<sup>117)</sup> of God. Further examples are ʿalīm halīm<sup>118)</sup>, hakīm khabīr<sup>119)</sup> of which the latter signifies God's wisdom whereas the first pair combines his wisdom with his gentleness. In a few instances synonyms are linked in pronunciation due to the phenomenon that the second epithet begins with the same consonant that constitutes the final consonant of the first epithet e.g. ghafūr rahīm<sup>120)</sup>, al-barr al-rahīm<sup>121)</sup>. These stylistic devices, applied to combine synonymous epithets, illustrate the Semitic feature to express the contents also externally in the style<sup>122)</sup>.

Sometimes the connection between the twin epithets is logical. As creator of everything Allāh knows everything<sup>123)</sup>. He sees and hears everything<sup>124)</sup>. As the

one who hears all he knows all<sup>125)</sup>. If he hears all he must be near<sup>126)</sup>. Sometimes there are in themselves no apparent reason for the combination of two attributes. The choice of a particular attribute seems to be determined by the context or by the assonance between verses<sup>127)</sup> and between the two epithets themselves<sup>128)</sup>. The artificial application of twin epithets to stylistic effects is most apparent in Sûra XXVI, where the refrain "your lord is indeed the mighty, the compassionate", grouping off the different stories of the former prophets, is rather loosely connected with the contents<sup>129)</sup>.

Epithets are used in the genitive to express an inherent quality of God: He is swift at reckoning<sup>130)</sup>, swift in punishment<sup>131)</sup>, severe in punishment<sup>132)</sup>, severe in cunning<sup>133)</sup>, an excellent patron and an excellent helper<sup>134)</sup>, an excellent guardian<sup>135)</sup>. Stylistic considerations again contributed to the use of the superlative. Where the singular of the epithet would not fit the rhyme, the plural is conveniently applied by means of the superlative: Allâh is the best creator<sup>136)</sup>, the best judge<sup>137)</sup>, the best provider<sup>138)</sup>, the best forgiver<sup>139)</sup>, the best separator<sup>140)</sup>, the best schemer<sup>141)</sup>, the best pilot<sup>142)</sup>, the best helper<sup>143)</sup>, the best inheritor<sup>144)</sup>, the most compassionate<sup>145)</sup>. Since they are only employed as a stylistic device, Allâh is, notwithstanding these plurals, the only creator, forgiver, etc.

Most prominent amongst the attributes are those that have to do with God's strength, majesty and greatness though his mercy, his knowledge and his action as judge is also stressed<sup>145)</sup>.

### 3. Allâh and the other gods:

The shahâda contains the central theme of the Moslem profession of faith: "There is no god but Allâh". Though this phrase occurs repeatedly in the Koran its strict monotheistic interpretation is of a more recent date<sup>147)</sup>.

The Koran acknowledges the existence of other gods besides Allâh. They inspire the believers with awe<sup>148)</sup> and on the Day of Judgment they will quarrel with their followers<sup>149)</sup>. They will be the fuel of Hell<sup>150)</sup> after their condemnation<sup>151)</sup>. Prudence towards such gods is demanded but it is only in order to prevent blasphemy of Allâh in retaliation<sup>152)</sup>. The names of several idols are mentioned: Wadd, Suwâ<sup>c</sup>, Yaghûth, Ya<sup>c</sup>ûq, Nasr<sup>153)</sup>, al-Lât, al-<sup>c</sup>Uzzâ, Manât<sup>154)</sup>. Others invoked as gods besides Allâh are Jesus, Mary, Ezra, Pharaoh, angels and djinn<sup>155)</sup>.

The disbelievers, following the example of their ancestors<sup>156)</sup>, worship the gods<sup>157)</sup> which means that they provide them with a portion of the produce of the land and the cattle<sup>158)</sup> and battle for the cause of the idols<sup>159)</sup>. In obedience to their gods they kill their children<sup>160)</sup>. They refuse to abandon them<sup>161)</sup> so that they may gain prestige<sup>162)</sup> by their gods. Contrary to their expectations the false gods are leading them out of light into darkness<sup>163)</sup>. They expect their gods to act as mediators on their behalf on the Day of Judgement<sup>164)</sup> although the gods have no authority to do so<sup>165)</sup>. It is only to man's further disadvantage that he calls on

these gods<sup>166)</sup>.

As far as their relationship with Allâh is concerned there are indications that the gods were regarded as competing with Allâh<sup>167)</sup>. In reality, says the Koran, those invoked besides Allâh are themselves longing to become part of the inner circle of the servants of Allâh<sup>168)</sup>.

The problem of idolatry was from the beginning substantially connected with the worship of Allâh in as far as the history of the Islam is the history of Allâh's victory over the gods. As such the Koranic description of the false gods is the obverse of its conception of the true god, be it in a summarised form<sup>169)</sup>. Basic to the qualities of the gods is that they are stones<sup>170)</sup> taken from the earth<sup>171)</sup>, shaped by the very hands of those who worship them<sup>172)</sup>. They have no hands, feet, eyes or ears, consequently they can neither help nor see or hear<sup>173)</sup>. Their names are empty sounds and without any contents<sup>174)</sup>. In its criticism of the false gods the Koran stresses the female and thus inferior character of the so-called daughters of Allâh<sup>175)</sup>. The powerless idols have no rule, not even over a date-pellicle or an atom's weight<sup>176)</sup>. They are compared to a slave that is so remote from possessing anything that he himself is in the possession of somebody else<sup>177)</sup>. They do not dispose over life and death<sup>178)</sup>. They have no partnership in the heavens<sup>179)</sup>.

The idols are void of works. They cannot create anything<sup>180)</sup> not even a fly<sup>181)</sup>. In fact they are



themselves manmade creatures<sup>182)</sup>. They can provide no sustenance<sup>183)</sup>. They can neither benefit nor harm their followers<sup>184)</sup>. They cannot nullify calamity or mercy given by Allâh<sup>185)</sup>. The idol-worshippers can produce no revelation on which their worship is founded<sup>186)</sup>. The idols have no gratitude for the worship of the idolators, but will on the contrary betray them<sup>187)</sup>. In their turn the idolators will leave the false gods in the lurch<sup>188)</sup>. The idols cannot achieve the resurrection, in short they can do nothing of what Allâh can do<sup>189)</sup>. Was it not for the decree of the judgement, Allâh would already have obliterated the partners ascribed to him<sup>190)</sup>. The technical term employed in the Koran to name the false gods conveys the ideas of "overstepping the proper bounds, being tyrannical and a seducer"<sup>191)</sup>.

The claim to the exclusivism of Allâh is based on his all-embracing power and unlimited authority as creator<sup>192)</sup>. Since genuine atheism is foreign to the Koran, man does not choose between Allâh and atheism, but between Allâh and the gods as real authority over life and death. For this reason believers are defined as those who do not believe in the gods<sup>193)</sup> while disbelievers are those who believe in the gods<sup>194)</sup>. The decision between Allâh and the gods is not merely a matter of reason and as such the result of superstition or stupidity, it is an existential decision determining the whole life of man including his future life. Idolatry is a foolishness<sup>195)</sup> instigated by Satan<sup>196)</sup> in times of prosperity<sup>197)</sup>. Therefore the Koran not only forbids the worship of other gods<sup>198)</sup>, but refers to giving him partners

as the one deadly sin Allâh will never forgive<sup>199)</sup>. Indeed, idolatry is a most dangerous occupation: Allâh is the creator and sustainer of the universe. Consequently there is a direct relationship between his existence and that of the cosmos. Was it for one moment true that there were other gods besides Allâh, the whole universe would collapse<sup>200)</sup>.

Apart from the denial of the power of the gods several other means of their dethronement may be detected in the Koran; a) They are simply ignored by making no mention of their names<sup>201)</sup>; b) they are translated to the ancient past<sup>202)</sup>; c) their qualities, and in isolated cases probably also their names, became epithets of Allâh<sup>203)</sup>; d) they are relegated to the sphere of the angels and djinn<sup>204)</sup>.

The classical example of a professor of monotheism who ridiculed the false gods of his people is furnished by the stories of Abraham in the Koran<sup>205)</sup>. On the question of Joseph to his fellow-prisoners whether diverse lords are better, the Koran joins in his answer that Allâh is One<sup>206)</sup>, meaning that he is the one and only God. Since then the confession of the unity of God is the pride of Moslems and the term Tauhid even became the name for their theological science or Dogmatics<sup>207)</sup>.

#### 4. Angels and other powers divine or demonic.

As early as the days of the ancient Sumerians

people in the Near East believed in supernatural beings besides God, exercising a potent influence on both the life of the universe and the life of man. The distinction between these beings and Allâh was at times rather vague and confused so that they were mistakenly worshipped in his stead<sup>208)</sup>. This makes it necessary to define the Koranic view of them.

The angels form the celestial court of Allâh<sup>209)</sup> depicted as the heavenly king. It is with this court Allâh disputed over the creation of man<sup>210)</sup>. The Koran categorically denies any genealogical relationship between Allâh and the angels<sup>211)</sup>. The angels are creatures of Allâh<sup>212)</sup>. They were provided with two, three and four pairs of wings<sup>213)</sup>, but they appear in human form when they enter into contact with man<sup>214)</sup>. To be an angel is for man something to covet<sup>215)</sup>. In physical appearance they are beautiful in the extreme, and the references to their beauty specifically concerns their "sex appeal"<sup>216)</sup>. The Koran is not explicit over their sex. It seems, however, that they are generally considered as masculine<sup>217)</sup>. They are sinless although some of them may fall into sin<sup>218)</sup>. They do not need food, therefore it was only when they did not accept the food Abraham prepared for them that he recognized their supernatural character<sup>219)</sup>.

The Koran accentuates the absolute submission and obedience of the angels to Allâh: They praise him incessantly<sup>220)</sup>, they prostrate themselves before Allâh, void of any haughtiness<sup>221)</sup> and serve him as slaves<sup>222)</sup>,

standing in rows around his throne<sup>223</sup>). They do not anticipate him in speech<sup>224</sup>), they act only by his command; he knows them completely and they can intercede only for those he favours; in fear of him they are apprehensive<sup>225</sup>). These angels carry the throne of Allâh and while they praise God they also intercede for the believers<sup>226</sup>). Allâh uses the angels to guard the heavens against the djinn<sup>227</sup>).

The angels are the enactors of God's dealings with man<sup>228</sup>) and as such they form a bridge between the transcendent God and man. This function is already contained in the Arabic designation malak, messenger<sup>229</sup>). Allâh sends them down from heaven to carry a message which is always a revelation on his part and generally constitutes a warning and a promise<sup>230</sup>). The angel Gabriel served as medium of the revelation of the Koran to Mohammed<sup>231</sup>). Everybody has two guardian angels, the one to record his good and the other his evil deeds<sup>232</sup>). These angels also supervise the work of the prophets and report back to Allâh<sup>233</sup>). Together with Allâh they bless the believers and Mohammed<sup>234</sup>). The angels fight on the side of the believers when they go to war<sup>235</sup>); they call in the life of man at his death<sup>236</sup>) and have an important function in the process on the Day of Judgement<sup>237</sup>). Finally the angels welcome the believers in Paradise<sup>238</sup>), while nineteen of them guard the unbelievers in Hell<sup>239</sup>).

Whereas the proper place of the angels is heaven from where they descend and whither they return, the

djinn are invisible<sup>240)</sup> inhabitants of the earth. The nearest they come to heaven is when they try to eavesdrop on the proceedings of the heavenly council<sup>241)</sup>. They are not at all partners or relatives of Allâh<sup>242)</sup>, they are his creatures<sup>243)</sup>. The purpose of their creation was that they should serve Allâh<sup>244)</sup> to whom they are completely subjugated<sup>245)</sup>. They are also objects of the Revelation: They listen intently to it<sup>246)</sup> and those who reject it will be punished in Hell<sup>247)</sup>. The evil in their hearts are instigated by Satan as it is in the case of man<sup>248)</sup>. The believers amongst the djinn also refrain from giving Allâh partners<sup>249)</sup>. Only a fool of the djinn will infringe himself against Allâh<sup>250)</sup>. A remainder of the belief of the supernatural powers of the djinn is contained in the repeated accusation that Mohammed is a madjnûn<sup>251)</sup> i.e. having the demonic inspiration that assists men to special knowledge.

A certain dualism is represented in the person of the Satan or, as he is called in the context of the creation, Iblîs<sup>252)</sup>. Satan unites in his person all the powers in revolt against Allâh<sup>253)</sup> and the Koran stamps him as anti-God when it refers to him as an object of idol-worship<sup>254)</sup>. He causes men to commit sin<sup>255)</sup> and then presents everything they do in a favourable light to them<sup>256)</sup>. He adjures them to commit evil and abomination and speak irresponsibly of Allâh<sup>257)</sup>. He prompts them to disbelief<sup>258)</sup> and idolatry<sup>259)</sup>. It is Satan that causes man to sin against his neighbour<sup>260)</sup>. It is Satan who caused the ejection of man from Paradise and who is trying to prevent his re-entry

in the future<sup>261)</sup>. He is the enemy because he wants to separate man from Allâh<sup>262)</sup>. Satan even attempted to interfere with the Revelation Allâh gave to the prophets<sup>263)</sup> just as he ventured to make Mohammed forget<sup>264)</sup>. Thus Satan is the answer to the problem of the author of the evil.

Nevertheless there is no complete dualism. In accordance with Mohammed's strict monotheistic convictions Satan is totally subjected to Allâh<sup>265)</sup>. Allâh is not only the author of good but he is also the ultimate author of all ill. For this reason it can be said that Satan led astray many people while elsewhere the very same action is ascribed to Allâh<sup>266)</sup>. In fact Satan himself acknowledges the superiority of Allâh<sup>267)</sup>. Thus Satan is powerful, but his is a limited authority<sup>268)</sup>.

The relation of Satan/Iblîs to the angels on the one hand and to the djinn and the satans on the other hand, has always been a problem to students of the Koran. By nature Satan belonged, as one of the angels, to the celestial court of Allâh<sup>269)</sup>. When he was ejected from Paradise Satan lost all the qualities of an angel. Since the angels, djinn and Satan are described, named and known almost exclusively in terms of their functions it is obvious that Satan could no longer be classified as an angel i.e. messenger of Allâh. For this reason Mohammed could conveniently group Satan with the djinn<sup>270)</sup> who were guarded off from heaven, did not have an intimate relationship with Allâh, and were also liable to sin against Allâh. Eventually

the name of Satan was applied as a generic name to all adversaries of Allâh i.e. to the followers of Satan amongst the ranks of man, the djinn, and perhaps also the angels<sup>271)</sup>. In the Semitic idiom this does not imply a physical or genealogical relationship between Satan, the djinn and man<sup>272)</sup> but only a common purpose and aspiration<sup>273)</sup>.

##### 5. Manifestations of Allâh.

Allâh is invisible to the human eye<sup>274)</sup>. The privilege to perceive Allâh with the eyes is reserved for those who will meet their God with joy on the day of the resurrection<sup>275)</sup>. This presentation forms the natural conclusion to the concept of Allâh as heavenly king. There are nevertheless pericopes in the Koran to the effect that Allâh could deliver his revelation in person to his servants. Particularly interesting is the account of the meetings between Moses and Allâh contained in Sûra XX. First Allâh appeared to Moses in a fire, introducing himself as "Your Lord, Allâh"<sup>276)</sup>. On this occasion Moses received his calling as a prophet and the firm assurance of Allâh's assistance. When Moses visited Allâh on Sinai they conversed freely without any intermediaries<sup>277)</sup>. In a subsequent re-interpretation these verses were brought in line with the precept that man dare not see Allâh<sup>278)</sup>.

Strictly read Sûra LIII, 1-12 and 13-18 refer to two different occasions when Mohammed had a vision of Allâh<sup>279)</sup>, appearing to him in human form. In LXXXI, 15-29 the vision is however reinterpreted as a vision of the angel

used by Allâh to deliver the Revelation. Eventually both the visible appearance of Allâh and the immediate hearing of his voice were excluded<sup>280)</sup>.

Although man cannot see Allâh, everybody can experience his real presence in this world in the forces of nature. He is the light of the universe<sup>281)</sup>. Both the normal phenomena of nature and the catastrophic forces are revelatory of his character<sup>282)</sup>. Other less prominent manifestations of the presence of Allâh on the earth are:

a) The angels who are not always clearly distinguished from God of whom they are the representatives. On the contrary there is often a certain identification between Allâh and the angels as was already indicated. b) The face of God, an anthropomorphism with its origin in the worship of images, which reflects the most personal presence of Allâh, not only in the sanctuaries, but all over the earth<sup>283)</sup>. c) The name of God which ensures his presence when it is mentioned in prayer or otherwise<sup>284)</sup>. d) The sakîna of Sûra II, 248(249) which clearly represents the Hebrew Sh<sup>e</sup>kîna, the post-Biblical Jewish concept of the visual presence of God on the earth<sup>285)</sup>.

## 6. The Holiness of Allâh:

Holiness is a distinctive quality of the deity in the Semitic world<sup>286)</sup> that separates<sup>287)</sup> him from the profane. As an epithet of Allâh it occurs only twice in the Koran<sup>288)</sup>. The angels treat Allâh as holy, in their opinion



in contrast with man, who, they fear, will bring corruption and shed blood<sup>289)</sup>. Since all three references to a holy territory<sup>290)</sup> concern narratives of Moses firmly based in Old Testament tradition it is unwise to speculate on the communicative nature of the holiness of Allâh in the Koranic understanding. The sacred character of the Ka<sup>C</sup>ba and other cult affairs does not concern us in the present context.

## 7. The Righteousness of Allâh:

S.M. Zwemer stated that Allâh does not appear bound by any standard of justice<sup>291)</sup>. Daud Rahbar in his quest for the dominant note of the Koran's doctrine of Allâh discovered this dominant note to be the ethical doctrine of God's strict justice<sup>292)</sup>. Both scholars were however mainly concerned with the relation between the predestination of man's actions by Allâh and the free will of man. We postpone our treatment of this burning topic to a following paragraph to devote ourselves to the direct statements of the Koran on the justice of Allâh.

Justice is a juridical term. It implies that right be done. It carries the idea of reward of virtue and punishment of vice in conformity to a given norm. In consequence the judge has to be unimpeachable. Because of the irreproachable character of Allâh he will suffice as witness<sup>293)</sup> although normally at least two witnesses and in some cases at least four witnesses are required<sup>294)</sup>. The use of the name of Allâh in an oath is a guarantee of its truth<sup>295)</sup>.

The justice of Allâh is revealed in his action as judge<sup>296)</sup>. On the Day of the Final Judgment believers as well as unbelievers will be met with justice<sup>297)</sup>. Allâh will requite each according to his own deeds<sup>298)</sup> and no wrong will be done to anybody<sup>299)</sup>. Sometimes hyperbole is used: The believer will be rewarded only for his most beautiful deeds<sup>300)</sup>, effacing his bad deeds<sup>301)</sup>, in fact Allâh will double their reward<sup>302)</sup>. The disbeliever on the other hand will be punished according to his worst deeds<sup>303)</sup>, but even then no wrong will be done<sup>304)</sup>. The strict justice Allâh exercises in his judgement is pictured in the image of the just balance on which nobody will be wronged — even though it be the weight of a grain of mustard seed, Allâh will have it registered<sup>305)</sup>. In his judgement he is completely free<sup>306)</sup>. Allâh abhors injustice<sup>307)</sup>. In summarized form it may be said: Allâh is the best of judges<sup>308)</sup>.

In fact all judgement rests with Allâh<sup>309)</sup>. As such Allâh is also the source of the judgement of the affairs of this world. To ensure justice in these affairs he sent down his revelation which is perfectly reliable and just and contains his law<sup>310)</sup>. According to this law justice should be administered, even to disbelievers<sup>311)</sup>. If Allâh punished man according to his iniquity, not a living creature would be left on earth; but he is prepared to delay his judgement until the Day of the Resurrection in order to give man every possible opportunity<sup>312)</sup> to conform with the law of God i.e. to become a partaker of the Islâm<sup>313)</sup>. As final evidence of the justice of Allâh it should be pointed out

that he sent down his law not only to foreigners in the Torah and the Gospel, but also to the Arabs in the Koran, in a language they can understand<sup>314</sup>).

The evidence proves Allâh to be a just God<sup>315</sup>) who will reward the upright abundantly and who will go to great lengths to give the wicked every opportunity of absolution before he is finally doomed in agreement with his deeds.

#### 8. The Faithfulness of Allâh:

The Koran does not contain direct statements on the faithfulness of God. The idea is nonetheless not foreign. It is for example the presupposition of his continuous sustenance of creation and the guarantee of the future requital of man's conduct. The idea is also contained in two epithets of Allâh contiguous to one another in the catalogue of epithets in LIX, 23, viz. al-mu'min al-muhaimin<sup>316</sup>).

#### 9. The Love of Allâh:

The Koran speaks freely of the love of God. Love is an expression of affectionate devotion in an interpersonal relationship. In the Koran the attribute describing Allâh as the loving one implies, according to the context, his benevolent, merciful and especially forgiving attitude towards man<sup>317</sup>). In their turn the objects

of his love have an anxious desire to please Allâh<sup>318)</sup>; They love their neighbours<sup>319)</sup>, follow his prophet<sup>320)</sup>, do the good<sup>321)</sup>, do justice<sup>322)</sup>, purify themselves ritually<sup>323)</sup>; they are true to his covenant in fear of him<sup>324)</sup>, trust in him<sup>325)</sup>, are patient<sup>326)</sup>, go to battle on his behalf<sup>327)</sup>. Their love for Allâh surpasses all family ties<sup>328)</sup>, the fierce love of man for his possessions<sup>329)</sup>, and the love of idolators for their gods<sup>330)</sup>. Man experiences the love of God in this world when God comes to his rescue<sup>331)</sup>. Allâh does not love the unjust, the haughty sinner, him who exceeds the proper bounds, etc.<sup>332)</sup>.

Allâh is the source of interhuman love<sup>333)</sup>. Those who found their love on idols will discover that it is impermanent<sup>334)</sup>. On the other hand Allâh prepares love for those who believe and do good works<sup>335)</sup>.

#### 10. The Wrath of Allâh:

Less reference is made to the wrath of God than to his love in the Koran. As is the case with his love, the wrath of Allâh forms part of his action with man. The root ghab employed in the Koran to denote the wrath of Allâh, is metonymically borrowed from an observation of the physiological expression of anger viz. a red-flushed face<sup>336)</sup>.

The Koranic concept of the wrath of Allâh is sober. It contains nothing of the envious attitude towards

man encountered in the Babylonian pantheon<sup>337</sup>). It is the action of God against sin, against the transgressors of his precepts for proper conduct. As such the wrath of Allâh is related to his action as judge. Thus the wrath of Allâh inflames against those who exceed the proper bounds in connection with acceptable food<sup>338</sup>), against intentional and unrighteous killing<sup>339</sup>), against those who turn round in the Djihâd<sup>340</sup>), against those who commit perjury<sup>341</sup>). In particular the wrath of Allâh is directed against the ungrateful disbeliever who argues about him, refuses to accept his signs in nature and Scripture and ascribes partners to him or worships idols<sup>342</sup>). This reflects a holy concern for the exclusiveness of the divine person of Allâh. The wrath of Allâh amounts to nothing less than punishment by him; consequently the two concepts occur synonymous in the Koran<sup>343</sup>). Finally it is interesting to note that the Koran prescribes forgivingness in case of human wrath<sup>344</sup>).

#### 11. The Wisdom of Allâh:

For the Moslem all problems end in, or are lost in, a reference to the knowledge of God, as Kenneth Cragg rightly observed<sup>345</sup>). Already in the Koran unknown facts are rested in and referred to the unfailing knowledge of Allâh<sup>346</sup>). The numerous references in the Koran to Allâh's knowledge are not restricted to this usage. Mohammed proclaimed the perfect permeating knowledge<sup>347</sup>) of Allâh from whom nothing is concealed in the earth nor in the heaven. Everything which plunges man into mystery — the contents of

the mother's womb<sup>348)</sup>, the growth of living beings<sup>349)</sup>, knowledge of the future<sup>350)</sup> — is comprehended by his knowledge in the most complete manner.

There are diverse factors which give occasion to the knowledge of Allâh: a) He knows everything because he created everything<sup>351)</sup>. b) Allâh is graphically described as observing everything. He sits on his throne, hearing and seeing all that takes place in the universe<sup>352)</sup>. c) Allâh knows everything on the strength of the heavenly Book in which everything is written down<sup>353)</sup>. This Book is unchangeable and it can only be interpreted and explained by Allâh<sup>354)</sup>. It is called the "mother of Scripture", that is to say, it is the source of the Jewish, Christian and Moslem Scripture<sup>355)</sup>. This knowledge belongs only to Allâh but he did not keep it to himself, he communicated it to man by means of his Revelation which he sent down from heaven<sup>356)</sup>. By his revelation Allâh taught man the proper conduct in moral, religious and related issues<sup>357)</sup>. He even instructed him how to put his natural environment into practical use to the advantage of mankind<sup>358)</sup>. The Koran is the revealed wisdom of God<sup>359)</sup>. While the believers share in this wisdom<sup>360)</sup>, ignorance and stupidity is synonymous with unbelief<sup>361)</sup>.

The phrase ya<sup>c</sup>lamu Allâh (God knows) is used in Arabic as a form of asseveration. This parallels a Koranic application of the knowledge of God viz. to act as insurance for the fulfilment of an oath<sup>362)</sup>, to act as proof of the

genuineness of the message of the prophets<sup>363)</sup> and to act as guarantee for just forensic conduct<sup>364)</sup>. Man lives under the threat of the knowledge of Allâh: He will be brought on trial before God on the Day of Judgment to account for all his actions, including his innermost secrets; nothing can be hidden from God<sup>365)</sup>. On the other hand the knowledge of Allâh can be to man's advantage when it means his sympathetic, benevolent and forgiving understanding of human weaknesses<sup>366)</sup>.

Finally there are a number of texts which postulate that there are things which lay outside the knowledge of Allâh: He has to put man to the test to determine who fears him in the secret<sup>367)</sup>; he sends two guards to accompany his messengers so that he may know that they have indeed conveyed the messages of their Lord<sup>368)</sup>. Since it has never been the purpose of the Koran to supply a closed system of dogmatical doctrines it would be a gross mistake to find in the evidence of this paragraph an implacable contradiction to the Koran's categorical assertions concerning the all-comprising knowledge of Allâh.

## 12. The will of Allâh.

In line with Islamic theology a bilingual (Arabic - Afrikaans) catechism written towards the end of the 19th century for use in South Africa, describes Allâh as "the willing one"<sup>369)</sup>. Indeed the free and unlimited will of Allâh constituted an essential part of Mohammed's

preaching according to the Koran. Thus we read that Allâh creates whatever he wishes<sup>370)</sup> and that he can replace this creation at any time with a new one, should he care to do so<sup>371)</sup>. Even man's destiny in the hereafter, i.e. his reward in the Garden or his punishment in Gehenna, is held in suspense of the will of Allâh<sup>372)</sup>. His free will implies that no restrictions, not even moral restrictions, can be applied to God<sup>373)</sup>.

The free will of Allâh has as inevitable complement his all-embracing power<sup>374)</sup>. Consequently his will constitutes at the same time the reality, the existence of what he wills. When he wishes something he merely says: Be, and it is<sup>375)</sup>. Thus not only everything that exists, but also the contingent is object of the will of Allâh and exists only by virtue of his will. Even the changing length of the shadows and the movements of the winds are objects of his will<sup>376)</sup>. This inescapability of the will of God contains in itself the kernel of determinism. Accordingly the Koran states that man can bring about for himself neither benefit nor harm outside the will of Allâh<sup>377)</sup>; in fact also the will of man is dependant on the will of Allâh<sup>378)</sup>. The adversaries of Mohammed, quick to realise the implications of this doctrine, took advantage of it: If Allâh did not wish them to ascribe partners to him neither they nor their ancestors could do so, since the actions of man is dependant on the will of God. Considering that they are ascribing partners to Allâh it can not be against his will<sup>379)</sup>. Following the same line of reasoning the disbelievers also



refused to contribute to the support of poor Moslems: "Shall we feed those whom Allâh, if He willed, would feed?"<sup>380</sup>).

Mohammed quoted these fatalistic conclusions of the unbelievers to claim that they are invalid, erroneous and wild guesses. In spite of them he preserved the tension between the limitless authority of Allâh, determining man's every action, on the one hand, and the freedom of the human will on the other hand which makes man unescapably responsible for every deed<sup>381</sup>). Both these aspects are contained in Sûra XIII, 27: "Allâh sends astray whom he will, but he leads unto him whosoever turns repentantly unto him"<sup>382</sup>). Allâh permits the disbelievers for the time being to ascribe partners to him, but should he so wish, he would have guided them all right and they would not be able to give him partners<sup>383</sup>).

It is true that Allâh wishes no good in the Hereafter for those inclined to disbelief. Nevertheless the Koran maintains that the will of Allâh is motivated by an attitude of good-will towards man<sup>384</sup>). It is noteworthy in this context that the phrase Deo volente (in shâ'a Allâh) always implies in its Koranic employment that God will facilitate and make successful the intended actions of man<sup>385</sup>). Accordingly the present writer came across the use of the words in shâ'a Allâh on an amulet, apparently utilised to ease the way of the bearer through life.

13. Allâh as king:

The word mlk is a designation of divinity or the equivalent of a divine proper name throughout the ancient Semitic world<sup>386</sup>). The concept and name "king" naturally had its origin in a pure mundane context. Since the king occupied the position of highest authority in society on earth the concept of king was a most suitable metaphor to apply to God.

As we already had occasion to mention Allâh is described in the Koran as a mighty king sitting on a tremendous throne in the midst of his heavenly court. This court consists of angels standing in rows around the throne. Allâh takes counsel with them and uses them as messengers, while they in turn worship him reverently, serving him as earthly slaves would wait upon their king<sup>387</sup>). Here we wish to single out some additional aspects of the presentation of Allâh as king.

The absolute kingship of Allâh has as a result that earthly kings rule only by his grace<sup>388</sup>) and that nothing escapes his final authority<sup>389</sup>). Here we have the Koranic basis of the theocratic state in which the head of the state rules in the name of Allâh. Furthermore the kingship of Allâh implies in the Koran that everything belongs to Allâh, that he possesses the universe<sup>390</sup>). Finally Allâh exercises his kingly authority when he acts as judge on the Day of the Final Judgement<sup>391</sup>).

C. The Action of Allâh according to the Koran.

The Koran is interested less in the nature of Allâh than in his work. It is not interested in speculations about his existence. It is concerned with his living presence in this world, revealed in his creative action in nature and in his dealings with man.

1. The instruments of God's Action:

In several places the Koran pictures a most personal intervention of Allâh in his creation. In anthropomorphic language it is described how Allâh built the heaven with his own hands and how he formed man like a potter<sup>392</sup>). Such similes and metaphors do not detract from Allâh's transcendence which is maintained throughout the Koran. The gap between a transcendent God and his creation can be bridged in several ways. We already referred to the angels as intermediaries between Allâh and man. Now we have to consider the Spirit and the Word as representative of God's immanence in his work of creation.

a) The Spirit:

The Koranic data on the Spirit are little and of a divergent character. But also to the hearers of Mohammed the role of the Spirit was unintelligible. We read in Sûra XVII, 85(87):

They keep on asking you, Mohammed, about the Spirit.  
Tell them this: The Spirit belongs to the rule<sup>393</sup>) of my Lord and you are given only a little knowledge about it.

Allâh blew of his Spirit into Adam when he created the first man<sup>394</sup>). The virgin birth of Jesus was also effected when Allâh blew of his Spirit into Mary<sup>395</sup>). This personal intervention of Allâh at the birth of Jesus, for which after Adam only he was singled out, placed Jesus in the same category as the first Adam<sup>396</sup>). It also justified the application of the epithet "spirit of Allâh" to Jesus in a context where Mohammed had to grapple with the Christian doctrine of the trinity<sup>397</sup>).

Allâh used the holy Spirit<sup>398</sup>) to support Jesus just as he uses his Spirit to the support of every believer<sup>399</sup>). The Spirit is also the conveyer of the Revelation<sup>400</sup>). In this context the Spirit is associated with the angels and seemingly to be identified with Gabriel<sup>401</sup>). Thus the Spirit appeared to Mary in the likeness of a handsome man<sup>402</sup>) and on the Day of Judgement the Spirit will stand with the angels before Allâh<sup>403</sup>). Five times the Spirit is connected with the amr<sup>404</sup>) of Allâh.

b) The Word:

The whole process of God's action with the world and in the world is concentrated in the Koranic concept of his word. To begin with it is necessary to refer again to the fundamental idea of Semitic thought, of which the Koran is part, that a word, once spoken, already constitutes the reality of its contents. As such the word has a certain independant existence: The good word ascends<sup>405</sup>) to Allâh;

it is likened to a tree; if the Koran descends upon a mountain it will be rent asunder<sup>406</sup>). Also of the creative command of Allâh we read that it descends through the seven heavens and the seven earths, and that it returns to him<sup>407</sup>).

This dual character of the word viz. a verbal nature on the one hand and a material on the other hand comprises Allâh's dealing with the universe. First of all the word is the creative instrument of Allâh by which everything that exists came to be: Allâh merely says: Be! and it is<sup>408</sup>). Since this formula is explicitly used of Jesus, he may be called a (corporeal) word from Allâh<sup>409</sup>). Not only the material world, but also the events of history are the fulfilment of the word of Allâh<sup>410</sup>) just as his command determines the order of nature<sup>411</sup>). Though man's whole life is subjected to the word of Allâh, it is often mentioned in an eschatological context in the Koran: It is because of the word of Allâh that the division between believers and disbelievers is postponed to the Day of Judgement<sup>412</sup>); it is in agreement with this word that some will fill Djahannam<sup>413</sup>) whereas it is good news in both this and the coming world for the believer<sup>414</sup>). The Day of Judgement itself may simply be called the amr Allâh<sup>i</sup> 415).

The verbal aspect of God's word is above all contained in the directions he gave man by means of his apostles i.e. in his Revelation as it is written down in Scripture<sup>416</sup>). Since nature and Scripture are two aspects of the same word of God, the term âyat "signs" could be

applied to both<sup>417)</sup>. For man can read his demands in nature as well as in Scripture.

Allâh is then understood to have spoken<sup>418)</sup>. Mohammed believed in God and his word<sup>419)</sup>. The action of the word distinguishes Allâh from the idols<sup>420)</sup>. The golden calf of the Israelites could even low, but it could not speak<sup>421)</sup>. The human word is not comparable to the word of Allâh for his word carries the highest authority<sup>422)</sup>. Nobody can change or replace his word<sup>423)</sup>. He alone determines reality through his word which is without bound or limit, indeterminable in extent<sup>424)</sup>. Thus everything begins, exists and ends in dependence on the eternal word of Allâh.

## 2. Allâh, the creator of the world:

The action which is first and foremost assigned to Allâh in the Koran is his action as creator<sup>425)</sup>. Allâh is the only cause of everything<sup>426)</sup>, but his own existence is exalted above a creative or generative process of origination: He did not beget nor was he begotten<sup>427)</sup>. There is no theogony and the cosmogony is completely subjected to the free and transcendent will of Allâh. The only elements of conflict concerning the creation are contained in the narratives about the objection of the angels, under leadership of Iblîs, against the creation of man. But the context clearly states that this episode did not encroach upon the authority of Allâh<sup>428)</sup>. The existence of the universe is not centred in itself, but in Allâh who

determines time and space. In the Koran creation is not a matter pertaining to the natural sciences. It is an affair of the history of man, part of the action of God with him.

In the propnetic preaching of the Koran the creative deeds are a grandiose witness to the inescapable power and the incomparability of Allâh<sup>429</sup>). Awareness of the creation should lead man to realise humbly his creaturely status before Allâh who can easily replace him by somebody else<sup>430</sup>). The creation should convince him of the reality of the resurrection<sup>431</sup>). Allâh created the sun and the moon, the heavens and the earth, there is no limit to his power<sup>432</sup>). Mohammed rejected the Jewish blasphemy that God was in need of rest after the creation<sup>433</sup>). Allâh creates with ease<sup>434</sup>). The inability of the idols, and the partners ascribed to Allâh, to create the smallest creature, even in combined effort, illustrates their powerlessness and the incomparability of Allâh<sup>435</sup>). It is absurd to think of another creator next to Allâh<sup>436</sup>).

The creation was not the result of the passionate, arbitrary despotism of God or the product of an incalculable inane game. Allâh created man in esteem<sup>437</sup>), he gave him a most beautiful harmonious form<sup>438</sup>). He endowed man with the gifts of sight and hearing<sup>439</sup>) and he created the human couple<sup>440</sup>). Nature was arranged in accordance with the needs of man to secure his existence: It is Allâh who causes the green pasturage to sprout out and grow<sup>441</sup>), which

is a phenomenon of particular importance for people who essentially rely on the rearing of grazing livestock (sheep, camels, cattle, goats, donkeys and horses) for a living. Allâh created these animals and subjected them to man, and they supply him with transport, clothing, food and drink<sup>442</sup>). It is again Allâh who created fruit trees, such as date-palms, and corn<sup>443</sup>). Most important of all, God presented man with the gift of water<sup>444</sup>). The creation is a mirror by which the wise providence of the almighty God is reflected. All these kindnesses demonstrate that Allâh has disposed the earth for mankind. Even the sun and the moon are created on behalf of man, to be a light on his path and to enable him to calculate the number of years<sup>445</sup>).

The Koran is outspoken that Allâh carefully planned the universe and gave man a central place in it. It is the duty of man to observe the creation and to read God's intentions from it. He should realise that his creator has a claim on him to be obeyed and thanked<sup>446</sup>). It should prove to him the benefacting and irrefutable truth of the verbal âyât of God, revealed by his messenger Mohammed<sup>447</sup>). It should convince him of the unity and omnipotence of the only God, Allâh<sup>448</sup>). In breathless admiration of the miraculous creation man should join in the creaturely choir of praise and worship of Allâh<sup>449</sup>). Allâh placed man in this world to put him to the test<sup>450</sup>). Thus the creation is for man a matter of the utmost seriousness. Its existence is the prelude to and the proof of God's new and coming



creation when man will go on trial for all his deeds before the God of Judgement<sup>451</sup>).

### 3. Allâh and man:

In the Koran man is described in his relation to Allâh. There is hardly a more prominent theme in the Koran than the preaching of the coming judgement of the righteous God over obstinate mankind, coupled with a call to penitence and conversion. Consequently the Koranic portrayal of man is rather grim: He trespasses the commandments of God, he is disobedient, he forgot the covenant with Allâh, tells lies about Allâh, associates with the djinn against Allâh<sup>452</sup>). Men have hearts but they think not, eyes but they see not, ears but they hear not --- they are worse than straying cattle<sup>453</sup>). When they are in distress they invoke Allâh but in prosperity they forget about him<sup>454</sup>). Man is avaricious with what he received from Allâh, quarrelsome about the Revelation and hardened against Allâh<sup>455</sup>). Allâh gives man everything he asks for, his bounty cannot be calculated but man is a wrong-doer, an ingrate<sup>456</sup>). Man's misfortunes are the result of his own handiwork<sup>457</sup>). In his mercy Allâh nevertheless elected man, he turned again towards him and guides him by means of the Revelation<sup>458</sup>). Over those who remain ungrateful disbelievers the sentence of death is pronounced<sup>459</sup>).

Man may try to escape from the regions of heaven and earth in order to escape from Allâh but Allâh is

always close to him, closer than his jugular vein<sup>460</sup>). Man remains ever dependent on Allâh even for his weak creaturely existence<sup>461</sup>). The proper attitude and place of man before Allâh is that of a servant or slave, c<sub>abd</sub>, before his master, Rabb<sup>462</sup>). It is in fact for this purpose that man was created, viz. to be the obedient c<sub>abd</sub> of God<sup>463</sup>). This word c<sub>abd</sub> is therefore commonly used in the sense of "believer" in the Koran<sup>464</sup>), and its meaning of servile submission has the same contents as the word muslim. It is expressly denied that a human being can be called "child of Allâh"<sup>465</sup>), and the epithet ab, father, is carefully avoided in connection with Allâh. A genealogical relationship between Allâh and man is completely unthinkable. The relationship between Allâh and the believer can be described in terms of love, as was indicated above, while the unfaithful are objects of his wrath. It remains to be added here that the believer often experiences his attitude towards Allâh as one of fear or religious awe<sup>466</sup>).

Man is part of creation and at that not even the most impressive creative product of Allâh, for the creation of the heavens and the earth is more grandiose<sup>467</sup>). Nevertheless Allâh put man in a position of unrelated<sup>468</sup>) superiority over the whole of creation. Allâh subordinated it to his rule<sup>469</sup>). Even the angels had to kneel down before the first man<sup>470</sup>). Moreover, Allâh appointed man to be his viceroy, or deputy<sup>471</sup>) on this earth. Hence the central position of man in the plan of God and his responsibility<sup>472</sup>) towards God.

Allâh created man within the framework of a community or society formed with fellow men, interrelated by genealogical ties<sup>473</sup>). The institution of the family, even the larger family or tribe (consisting of members of the same blood and name) which existed in pre-Islamic Arabia was upheld by the "Book of Allâh"<sup>474</sup>). Nevertheless the believers find themselves to be members of a new family circle of which Mohammed is the father and his wives the mothers<sup>475</sup>). A member of this new family circle will neglect his former ties when they are not in accord with his love for Allâh and his prophet<sup>476</sup>). In this new community man gives freely of his possessions to the poor, he is even prepared to sacrifice his life in battle for the cause of Allâh<sup>477</sup>). Allâh is of more importance than life or possessions. The things of this world fade away in view of man's reward in the life to come when he will have his heart's desire. In the ritual prayer he humbles himself before Allâh and mentions the name of his God to praise him<sup>478</sup>).

#### 4. Allâh and History:

The cyclic course of nature, the sequence of night and day and the regular return of the seasons, is one of the first things of nature man observes. The polytheist believed that his life and history moved with the powers of nature in their never-ending cycle. The basic religious literature of the polytheist was therefore not primarily concerned with history or with the life of man on earth, but with the life of the gods, which is the life

of nature. The myths, the storics of the loves and wars of the gods, as told, for example, in the Babylonian creation epic, explained to a particular society the way of the universe to which it must adjust<sup>479)</sup>.

Just as in the Old Testament, Allâh is not part of the personified nature. As the creator Allâh has complete authority over his creation and nothing happens unless he wishes it. There is no place for dualism or

coincidence. He initiated the creation and to this day he brings about everything by his creative intervention<sup>480)</sup>.

Time began on the day of the creation and thus also history<sup>481)</sup>.

The Koran describes history as the action of Allâh with the different peoples, the Jews, the Christians, the Sabaeans, the peoples of <sup>Ā</sup>Ad, Thamûd and of Shu<sup>c</sup>aib. Now Allâh also sent Mohammed to his people with an Arabic message. The dealings of Allâh with these peoples are exemplary of his future action with the Arabs. In his narration of the stories of these peoples, Mohammed was not concerned with the virtues or vices of figures from the past, but with the deeds of God. Thus Allâh is not only the initiator of events, but he also binds himself to historical events to make them the manifestation of his purpose. In passing it is interesting to point out in this context that the holy place of pre-Islamic worship was brought within Islamic tradition by presenting the venerable Ka<sup>c</sup>ba as founded by the ancestor of the Moslems, father Abraham<sup>482)</sup>.

Allâh created man, but he is mortal. His life is terminated<sup>483)</sup>. At his death he returns to the earth until the new creation when Allâh will rouse him to go on trial. The moment of this Judgement is known only to Allâh<sup>484)</sup>. On this occasion the believers will be rewarded with the unthinkable pleasures of Paradise, while the disbeliever will be severely punished in Hell<sup>485)</sup>. The two main events of history are the act of creation at the beginning and the Judgement at the end. Between these two events every man lives and by these events his life is determined. In view of the coming Judgement Mohammed preaches conversion to Allâh, who as the creator has every claim on man. Mohammed substantiates his preaching with reference to Allâh's former dealings with the peoples mentioned above. In accordance with the purpose of Mohammed's preaching these references mostly have the character of punishment-stories.

History is not repristinated in an eternal cycle. It takes a linear course, following the plan of Allâh. History also proves the truth of the word of Allâh. It shows that he is faithful to act out his word, as it was conveyed by his servants, the prophets.

## 5. Allâh and the Religious Institutions<sup>486)</sup>.

### a) The ministry:

Allâh created man to represent him on earth.

To guarantee his rule on earth Allâh has made use of kings in the past<sup>487)</sup>. Amongst the Arabs<sup>488)</sup> this function of ruler was combined in the person of Mohammed with that of the prophet or apostle, who expressed by his message God's action in history<sup>489)</sup>. The important position of Mohammed is reflected in the Koran: Obedience to Allâh and his apostle is prescribed<sup>490)</sup>, he is to receive of the spoils of war<sup>491)</sup>. One should act in a becoming manner towards the Prophet and not cause annoyance to him<sup>492)</sup>; resistance against him will be severely punished<sup>493)</sup>. One should not speak loudly in the presence of Mohammed<sup>494)</sup>. Belief in Allâh is reflected in one's attitude towards his representative, Mohammed.

Some verses imply that Mohammed came to be regarded as superhuman or endowed with supernatural powers<sup>495)</sup>. Mohammed denied these assertions. He emphasized that he was only a mortal human<sup>496)</sup>. He was a prophet, a messenger of God, but his task and responsibility was merely that of a warner<sup>497)</sup>. He was not different from previous prophets or apostles. They were made liars, derided and killed by their enemies<sup>498)</sup>. To such humiliations and dangers Mohammed was also subjected<sup>499)</sup>. Mohammed maintained that his every action and whatever authority he might have, rested in Allâh<sup>500)</sup>. He was a mere instrument in the hand of God. Thus he judged between the people on the basis of what God had shown him<sup>501)</sup>. And thus even his most personal life up to small domestic matters was regulated by direct revelations from Allâh<sup>502)</sup>. This aspect is underlined in the saying of <sup>c</sup>Â'isha to the

Prophet: "Your Lord seems to be very quick in fulfilling your wishes"<sup>503</sup>). True to his office as a prophet Mohammed stood in unceasing relationship with Allâh, dependent on him not only in important matters, but also in numerous daily trivialities. He was seized in his totality by his God. His task was to confront man with Allâh and to bring man in the correct relationship with him.

#### b) The Cult:

Those who resigned themselves to the will of God serve him. The private as well as the official worship of Allâh consists, first of all, of the regular performance of the ritual prayer, the salâ<sup>504</sup>), also referred to as the mention, dhikr<sup>505</sup>), or the invocation, du'â<sup>506</sup>), of Allâh. The character and purpose of the salât is however better described by still another name for it, viz. the praise or glorification of Allâh<sup>507</sup>). In fact the word salâ has no Arabic etymology, but is an Aramaic loanword, used by Jews as well as Christians in the meaning of (ritual) prayer. The Aramaic root means 'to bend, to incline', thence 'to prostrate'. Indeed the prostration represents the most striking bodily posture of the salât in which the worshipper touches the floor with his forehead in humble adoration of Allâh, seeking his grace and approval<sup>508</sup>).

Since Allâh is holy, it is becoming that man approach him only in a state of ritual purity to ensure the

fulness of his grace<sup>509</sup>). Ritual purity is coupled with repentance<sup>510</sup>). Allâh will not purify the hearts of those who refuse to accept Mohammed's message<sup>511</sup>). In addition to the ritual ablutions the believer is to abstain from wine-drinking and the eating of certain animals<sup>512</sup>). In passing it is most interesting that Allâh himself purified the little Moslem army on its way to Badr with rain from heaven<sup>513</sup>).

The worship of Allâh must be pure<sup>514</sup>), which means that no partners should be ascribed to him<sup>515</sup>) and that his Prophet be obeyed<sup>516</sup>). In referring to the worship of Allâh the Koran often combines the giving of alms with the salât<sup>517</sup>). Thus the worship of Allâh attained an ethical standard of beneficence, exercised between man and fellow-man, of love towards the neighbour<sup>518</sup>).

The heathen Arabs carried out certain religious ceremonies with respect to their cattle and reserved the use of some animals and fruits of the earth for their gods<sup>519</sup>). These practices implied recognition of the gods and were abolished by the Koran. Allâh himself does not need any sustenance or food from man<sup>520</sup>). Allâh does demand the abstention of the eating of certain unclean things<sup>521</sup>) and blood<sup>522</sup>) but in cases of emergency this need not be observed<sup>523</sup>). Meat should also be rendered fit for eating by the pronouncement of the name Allâh at the slaughtering<sup>524</sup>).

Sacrifices were never part of the regular



public worship of Allâh and the Koran always mentions them in connection with the pilgrimage to the Ka<sup>c</sup>ba in Mecca, without an exposition of its purpose<sup>525</sup>). It is a modified continuation of pagan customs and references to it date from the Medic period<sup>526</sup>). The meat was eaten and divided between the poor<sup>527</sup>). This verse (XII, 36(37), in which an eucharistic element may be detected, calls on the gratitude of man. It is expressly mentioned that Allâh does not receive the flesh and blood; Allâh accepts the devotion of man<sup>528</sup>).

Fasting is imposed as a penance for ritual transgressions and sins<sup>529</sup>). The fast of Ramaḍân may be characterized as a thank-offering for Allâh's guidance and deliverance of the Arabs by means of the Koran<sup>530</sup>).

An important part of the pagan ritual was the istiqsâm, their oracular medium for which purpose divination-arrows or wooden sticks had been used. Since Allâh revealed his will in the Koran, such a practice is no longer necessary, and it is forbidden to use the Koran itself for such purposes<sup>531</sup>).

c) The sacred place:

In one of the oldest sûras, dating from the beginning of Mohammed's public preaching, he already associated his God with the Ka<sup>c</sup>ba<sup>532</sup>). After a long silence, following Mohammed's breach with the religion of his countrymen, the Prophet reverted to this ancient Arab sanctuary

when he changed the gibla of the salât to Mecca in the Medinan period<sup>533</sup>). The Ka<sup>c</sup>ba with its surrounding harâm area is a typical example of the Semitic sanctuary. Originally considered as the dwellingplace<sup>534</sup>) of God, the believers still regard the Ka<sup>c</sup>ba as a place where Allâh's presence is as real as if he were physically present, even though there is no fashioned image of him and even though the venerated Black Stone is not revered as his idol<sup>535</sup>). The Ka<sup>c</sup>ba was the first sanctuary founded on earth<sup>536</sup>). Allâh prescribed the pilgrimage to the Ka<sup>c</sup>ba<sup>537</sup>).

The Ka<sup>c</sup>ba is also called the Sacred Mosque<sup>538</sup>). The need for local places of worship led to the establishment of additional mosques already during the lifetime of the Prophet<sup>539</sup>). One of the first of these mosques was built by Mohammed himself<sup>540</sup>). The central position of the Ka<sup>c</sup>ba was nevertheless maintained since all mosques are constructed in such a way that the worshippers face the Ka<sup>c</sup>ba in prayer. By the mentioning of the name of Allâh in these mosques, his presence is secured<sup>541</sup>). Moslems always considered it more meritorious to do the salât in the mosque than to perform it at home and it is obligatory to go to the mosque for the Friday salât<sup>542</sup>).

#### 6. Some eschatological Aspects:

Mohammed was not unacquainted with the idea of sin as revolt against God<sup>543</sup>). Accordingly the Koran repeatedly announces the punishment of those who do evil by the

fires of Hell<sup>544</sup>). In his mercy, however, Allâh never punishes unless he first sent his messengers, the prophets, to warn their peoples<sup>545</sup>). The Final Judgement is already made partially real in each of the judgements which took place in the unfolding of history. Therefore Allâh's action with previous peoples has educational value<sup>546</sup>). This educational purpose is also served when the hand of a thief is cut off in the Moslem community as an exemplary punishment from Allâh<sup>547</sup>).

The principle of the lex talionis is accepted in interhuman relationships, particularly in case of murder<sup>548</sup>). Similarly the punishment by Allâh may be seen as an application of this principle<sup>549</sup>). As indicated above, Allâh does not accept sacrifices in expiation of sin. The allowance of substitutory offerings when the prescriptions concerning the pilgrimage and the fast could not be observed, has no significance in this context<sup>550</sup>). But there are certain meritorious deeds to the value of the expiation of sin<sup>551</sup>): Restraint from retaliation<sup>552</sup>); the giving of alms<sup>553</sup>); the salât<sup>554</sup>); to be killed in the Djihâd<sup>555</sup>). The pilgrimage is not mentioned by the Koran in this context<sup>556</sup>).

Above all the Koran stresses that man should turn in repentance to Allâh<sup>557</sup>). Allâh will return in repentance from his wrath (yatûbu) to those who repent their sins (yatûbûna)<sup>558</sup>); Allâh will change their sins into good deeds, he is forgiving and merciful<sup>559</sup>).

Sin<sup>560</sup>) is in the Koran more a token of man's

weakness<sup>561)</sup>, than it is of his revolt against Allâh. Allâh created man weak, therefore his intention is not to make things too difficult for man<sup>562)</sup>. Unintentional sins and sins due to circumstances of emergency will be forgiven by Allâh for he is merciful<sup>563)</sup>. For the believer it means that nothing can part him from the graceful mercy of God. Therefore the Day of Judgement can also be described in conjunction with Allâh's mercy<sup>564)</sup>. Only those who persist in serious sins, particularly the ascribing of partners to Allâh, will receive no mercy<sup>565)</sup>. Allâh saves in his free grace whomsoever he wishes but those who are doomed to Hell receive their rightful punishment for their disbelief and evil deeds according to the justice of God. For the believer his salvation on the Day of Judgement is the triumph of the grace of Allâh just as the creation of man resulted from his will and benevolence.

Only Allâh knows when the hour of the Judgement has come<sup>566)</sup>. Allâh postpones the Judgement so that the unbelievers can increase in sin, though it also means that there is still opportunity for conversion<sup>567)</sup>. Nevertheless the postponement is only for a fixed period<sup>568)</sup>. The Last Day is called the "Day of Resurrection" of the dead by Allâh; the "Day of the Gathering" of men to the presence of God; the "Day of the Meeting" of men with Allâh; the "Day of Distinction" when the believers are separated from the disbelievers<sup>569)</sup>. The sudden dawn of the Last Day is attended with a cosmic upheaval, described most picturesquely in order to underline the overwhelming omnipotence of Allâh and to inspire man

with a salutary awe for the hour of exposure. Everything will perish, save the face of Allâh<sup>570</sup>). The rule and the command will belong to Allâh alone<sup>571</sup>).

The Judgement itself is described as a lawsuit scene. Everybody will appear individually before Allâh, the Judge<sup>572</sup>). Then the books will be opened. The angels will hand the record of every man's deeds to him. The righteous will hold his account in his right hand and the bad man will hide his behind his back or keep it in his left hand<sup>573</sup>). Subsequently man's deeds will be weighed on the balance<sup>574</sup>) and no injustice will be done: Whosoever did an atom's weight of good will see it then, and whosoever did an atom's weight of evil will see it then<sup>575</sup>). Wealth or powerful kinsmen will not influence Allâh<sup>576</sup>). Even a man's tongue, hands and feet will witness against him<sup>577</sup>). Then the verdict is pronounced resulting in either everlasting bliss or everlasting torment.

The believer will praise and serve Allâh<sup>578</sup>) as it should be, together with the angels. No single power of opposition to Allâh will any longer be at work. In the fires of Hell Satan and the ungrateful, disobedient unbelievers will regret and repent eternally. In the end Allâh sits in exalted majesty on his throne, as it was in the beginning.

## CHAPTER SIX

ALLÂH IN THE EARLY MOSLEM THEOLOGY

In the previous chapter we had reason to suspect that Mohammed later reinterpreted certain Koranic passages to bring it in line with the precept that mortal, earthbound man dare not see Allâh. The visio dei would later become one of the focal points of dogmatic dispute when it was interpreted as implying anthropomorphism. The stimulation and need of a doctrinal formulation of faith were however due to external factors as is already suggested by its essentially apologetic character.

During the seventh century the Moslem Arabs conquered Persia and a large part of the Byzantine empire. The conquerors appropriated the mixed culture of Roman law, Greek wisdom and religious speculation they encountered in these countries. But more particularly the ‘ilm al-kalâm<sup>1)</sup> was influenced by discussions between Moslems and Christians like John of Damascus, the last great theologian of the Greek Orthodox Church (died about 748 A.D.), whose grandfather and father, and for a short period he himself, occupied the position of financial administrator of Damascus, the new capital of the Umayyad empire.

A. The first formal schism of Moslems.

The first formal doctrinal split was never-

theless sparked off by internal political schism. It coincided with the battle of Siffîn (657 A.D.) when the Umayyad dynasty began with Ma<sup>c</sup>âwiya while the followers of <sup>c</sup>Alî were divided into the loyal Shî<sup>c</sup>ites and the alienated, hostile Khâridjites. All these parties claimed to be Moslems. Most of them also claimed that they were the only true Moslems and that the others were unbelievers.

The issue was basically the political question of the legitimate succession to the leadership of the state. Since Mohammed instituted the idea of the theocratic state, religious involvement could not be avoided and the worldliness of the Umayyads made a religious verdict urgent: It became necessary to describe the terms "believer, sinner, unbeliever". Since <sup>c</sup>Alî was of the family of the Prophet, the Shî<sup>c</sup>ites believed that the Caliphate belonged to <sup>c</sup>Alî and his descendants by Divine right. In the course of time <sup>c</sup>Alî became deified, comparable to the incarnate Logos.

Like the Shî<sup>c</sup>ites, the Khâridjites considered the Umayyads to be godless heathen who professed Islam. According to their conception <sup>c</sup>Alî had committed a mortal sin by not defending to the end a sacred leadership which by the will of Allâh had been entrusted to him. They rejected the doctrine of justification by faith without works. According to them anyone who is guilty of a grave sin is no longer a Moslem. Their ideal was to establish the Kingdom of God upon earth.

B. The precursors of the kalâm.

Soon a dilemma which was much debated in the Eastern Christian Church gave occasion to much controversy in Islamic circles viz. the omnipotence of God and the free action of man. In other words the basic problem was the contradiction between man's consciousness of freedom and responsibility, on the one hand, and the absolute rule and predestination of Allâh, on the other. The Qadarites, one

of the most early purely religious sects, held that man possesses power (qadar) over his actions and thus continued the thought of a minority group of the Khâridjites, which would later be developed by the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites<sup>2)</sup>. In direct opposition to the Qadarites, the Djabarites denied the freedom of the will. On this point they made no distinction between man and inanimate nature for both are subordinate to the compulsion of Allâh so that in reality only Allâh acts.

Another sect of the early Islam, the Murdji'ites, were of the opinion that a Moslem does not cease to be a Moslem through sins so that works became rather irrelevant to faith. In direct contrast with the Khâridjites they held that a political leader who was guilty of mortal sins did not cease to be a Moslem. Consequently they could still support the Umayyads without homologating all their actions. They believed that faith alone saves man and that a believer in Allâh and his Prophet will not remain in Hell. They did not judge a Moslem who sinned but left it to Allâh on the Day of Judgement.



C. The Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites.

These debates inaugurated rationalism in the Islam. Human reason (ʿaql) was given a central place in Moslem theology by the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites. Nevertheless they remained in the first place theologians, motivated by what they regarded as a need for theodicy. They had political connections with the Shī<sup>c</sup>ites and later with the <sup>c</sup>Abbāsids, but their theological origin is ascribed to Wāsil ibn <sup>c</sup>ʿAtā' (died 748 A.D.). In opposition to orthodox fatalism they regarded it unthinkable that Allāh should punish man for actions not in his control. The freedom of the human will is an a priori certainty, man possesses qadar over his own actions. Allāh is the God of justice who will requite everybody only according to his deeds. It is also unthinkable that Allāh could do evil. Therefore evil and wickedness originates either from the devil or from the free will of man who are both responsible for their acts. In fact Allāh has to do the best (al-aslah) and he cannot act otherwise. He created the best of worlds and he acts continually to the advantage of his servants.

During the eighth and ninth centuries when Baghdād was the <sup>c</sup>Abbāsīd capital, Platonic thought and Aristotelian ideas in neoplatonic garb entered Islam. After the example of discussions in the Eastern Christian Church on the persons in the Christian Trinity which some explained as hypostatized qualities, the being of Allāh, his names and his qualities received the attention of speculative theology.

The Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites interpreted all anthropomorphisms away from the Koran. The existence of the attributes of God implies either a certain dualism in the person of Allâh or the existence of the attributes beside him both of which are unthinkable since they would destroy his unity<sup>3)</sup>. Therefore they reduced the attributes to knowledge and power and did not distinguish e.g. knowledge as a separate attribute to Allâh, but described it as identical with his being or essence: Allâh is knowledge. The result was that the attributes were hardly more than nominal distinctions in their system. They preferred to describe Allâh by the via negationis. In this way they sought to prevent any possible pluriformity in the being of Allâh. They rejected the idea of an eternal uncreated Koran. According to them it was possible to know Allâh and distinguish good from evil without any Revelation at all. Their doctrines regarding Allâh can be aptly summarized in the name they gave themselves: ahl al-tauhîd wa-al-<sup>c</sup>adl, the people who maintain the divine unity and the justice of Allâh in connection with the requital of human actions.

This rationalistic but puritanic movement never succeeded to stir the imagination of the people and its proclamation as religion of the state under the <sup>c</sup>Abbâsid Caliph al-Ma'mûn (813-833 A.D.) and his institution of inquisitorial measures only served to provoke the hostility of the masses. Nevertheless the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilites rendered Islam an invaluable service to make it acceptable to the educated non-Arabs, especially in the newly-conquered territories.

#### D. The Ash<sup>C</sup>arites.

In 848 A.D. Caliph al-Mutawakkil restored orthodoxy to the detriment of Mu<sup>C</sup>tazilism. The reasoning of the Mu<sup>C</sup>tazilites surpassed the comprehension of many ordinary believers while the orthodox rejected it as a depletion, a kenosis of the being of God. The orthodox reaction centred in al-Ash<sup>C</sup>arî (died 935 A.D.) who has been a Mu<sup>C</sup>tazilite himself, but deserted to the orthodox. He employed the tools of reason to combat the Mu<sup>C</sup>tazilites in their own terminology. As such he was the founder of orthodox scholasticism. In his school the system was formulated which to this day is the basis of the orthodox position.

In the bitter dispute whether the Koran was created by Allâh, or uncreated, he held that it was eternal in Allâh but that its expression in words was created in time. The Ash<sup>C</sup>arites rejected the Mu<sup>C</sup>tazilite doctrine of al-aşlah and held that Allâh is under no such constraint. He is free to do good or evil as he chooses. What Allâh does is the best, not because he is so obliged, but because he does it<sup>4</sup>). Al-Ash<sup>C</sup>arî contented himself with the position that the anthropomorphisms and the attributes were to be taken bi-lâ kaif wa-lâ tashbîh, i.e. without inquiring persistently into the nature and possibility of such things in God as the Mu<sup>C</sup>tazilites used to do and without comparing these things in Allâh to the corresponding things in men like the Karrâmites.

As to the vexed question of predestination and free-will he struck a middle path between the old orthodox fatalism and the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilite principle of justice: Allâh is the only creator; man cannot be a second creator, i.e. create his own actions. The action of man is created by Allâh as to initiative and as to production; but it is acquired by the creature. By acquisition (kasb) is meant that the action corresponds to the creature's power and choice, previously created in him, without his having had the slightest effect on the action. Man is only the subject of the action. With regard to the attributes of Allâh the verdict of the later Ash<sup>c</sup>arites was that the attributes subsist in the divine essence. They are not God and are nothing other than he.

After al-Ash<sup>c</sup>arî the scholastic attempts to reconcile religious doctrine with Greek thought became the supreme feature of Moslem intellectual life. We give an example<sup>5)</sup> of the scholastic reasoning from the ontology of the Ash<sup>c</sup>arite system, the final form of which was credited to al-Bâqillânî (died 1013 A.D.). He defined knowledge as cognition of a thing as it is in itself. To reach the "thing in itself" they examined the Aristotelian categories and determined that all the categories, quantity, place, time and the rest, were mere relationships existing subjectively in the mind of the knower, that they were subjective non-entities. The only two exceptions were the categories of substance and quality. Matter, then, could not have the possibility of suffering the impress of form. A possibility

is neither an entity nor a non-entity, but a subjectivity purely. Thus active form and all causes had to go since they were mere subjectivities. Qualities became mere accidents, in reality there was no such a thing as a quality. When, then, the qualities fall out of existence, the substances themselves must also cease to exist. Substance as well as quality is fleeting, has only a moment's duration.

The Ash<sup>c</sup>arites became atomists, the atoms consisting of space as well as of time. The basis of every manifestation in place and time in this world is a multitude of monads. These monads have position but no extension in space or time. They have no nature in themselves, no possibility of development along certain lines. These monads are, and again are not; all change and action in the world are produced by their entering into existence and dropping out again, not by any change in themselves. Leibnitz (died 1716), who held similar views, was compelled to fall back on a pre-established harmony to bring his monads into orderly relations with one another. The Moslem theologians fell back upon Allâh and found in his will the ground of the harmonious existence of all things. Thus their philosophy, the essence of which is scepticism, destroyed the possibility of a rational philosophical explanation in order to drive man back to Allâh and his revelation and compel man to see in him the one grand fact of the universe.

Thus their ontology became an argument for the necessity of God, the cause of the harmonious existence of

the universe. Secondary causes are excluded, a knife e.g. does not cut, Allâh produces the act as well as the ultimate appearance of effect. This scheme is of course not without its problems, particularly ethical difficulties. Mercifully these deeper mysteries were hidden from the multitude and its public discussion regarded as a breach of professional etiquette.

#### E. Final Remarks.

Apart from the most important contribution of al-Ghazzâlî (died 1111 A.D.), who regenerated the orthodox position by introducing elements of Sûfism<sup>6)</sup>, there was no significant or essential renewal of the Ash<sup>c</sup>arite formulation of faith up to the twentieth century to take its place. Where the initial theological thought had some contact with the Koranic teaching of Allâh — be it only with singular aspects like predestination and anthropomorphism — the connection in the course of time became purely formal under the influence of Greek philosophy.

We do not share the opinions of inter alia T.J. de Boer and D.B. Macdonald that Mohammed's concept of Allâh was naive, that he simply thought of God as an absolute despot, that inherent defects and inconsistencies of the Koranic portrayal of Allâh necessitated the subsequent reinterpretations and reformulations of the kalâm. On the contrary the Koranic concept of Allâh was impoverished into a meagre philosophical concept of the Absolute Being in the early Islam. This holds true of both the Ash<sup>c</sup>arite and the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilite systems.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### RÉSUMÉ

قال رسول الله صلعم : إنما الأعمال  
بالنيات ، وإنما لأمرى ما نوى .

In the preceding pages we endeavoured to spell out the name Allâh in order to understand something of the rich contents its mentioning calls to the mind of the pious Moslem. The frequent usage of this name is not thoughtless as it may appear, it is uttered in an awareness of man's complete dependence on his God.

An investigation into the origin of the name shows that it can grammatically be explained as either a combination of the definite article al and lâh or a combination of the article with the common noun ilâh, the word for "god" in Arabic. There are furthermore indications that the name Allâh originated amongst the Arabs of Sinai in the proximity of, or in association with, the Nabataeans. Since the name Allâh certainly occurs in the third century B.C. in Nabataea and most probably already in Lihyânite inscriptions of the fifth century B.C. it is historically unacceptable that the Arabs inherited the name Allâh from the Syriac-speaking tribes. On the contrary the deviation in the Syriac word for "god" from the common Aramaic spelling betrays Arabic influence. This is also the case with Mandaic. The evidence suggests that it was the Lihyânites who introduced the worship of Allâh

into Arabia and that modern al-Ulâ<sup>c</sup> was the first centre of Allâh-worship on Arabian soil.

The word Allâh is related to the common Semitic Il/El with 'lh as intermediary form. The form 'lh can best be explained as a secondary form of 'l after a phenomenon established by N. Rhodokanakis in ancient South Arabian viz. that long vowels tend to be dissolved into two short vowels with an intermediate h. The word 'l should not be derived from a triconsonantal root like 'lh, 'll or 'wl. The etymology of 'l will probably never be established indisputably, but it seems that the conceptions of distance and especially of power was associated with the root in primitive Semitic thought. Our information indicates that the proper name 'l was common to the Eastern, North-Western and South-Western Semitic groups. Originally the proper name of the most important deity, it ultimately became a generic name, while the god 'l lost ground to other gods. The god Il also disappeared from Arab religion, but revived amongst the Northern Arabs with a new form of the same name: Allâh.

Since Il belonged to the common religious wealth of the Semites and the relationship between Il and Allâh has been established, it is interesting to use the many religious texts from Ugarit as reference-material for a pre-Islamic concept of Allâh. In spite of difficulties of interpretation for example to determine in which instances 'l is used as a proper name, the South Arabian and North Arabian inscription material and nomenclature could not be



left out of account. Our most important source remains the Koran itself since pagan poetry is rather a-religious and subject to suspicions of unauthenticity, while Moslem writers were biased and often even ignorant about pre-Islamic religion.

The Ugaritic texts and the North and South Arabian material agree that Il was the most important god in their pantheons but that, because of his age, he came to be replaced by other gods. Other common characteristics are the knowledge of Il, his description as creator, that he is likened to a king. In the Arabian theoforic names attention is also given to the relationship between god and man: his tender care is expressed by the metaphor of the shepherd; he is addressed as father and many epitheta put him into a tribal relationship with his people; he gives children, fertility and prosperity; he leads his people in war and gives them victory over their enemies; he is the righteous judge who rewards good deeds; the people are his servants (slaves), he disposes over life and death. It is uncertain whether Thamûdic inscriptions describe Allâh as having no progeny since their interpretation is insecure.

The absence of religious contents in Arabic poetry mirrors the extreme decadence of the old heathenism of the time. The comparatively few references in pagan poetry connect Allâh with the Ka<sup>c</sup>ba in Mecca and picture him in the same lines as the Arabian inscriptions and nomenclature and to a lesser extent the Ugaritic texts. Moslem authors suggest

that the Nabataean Quraish introduced Allâh from the North into Mecca. Using the name Allâh, Jews, Christians and Hanifs gave it an exclusive monotheistic connotation to be continued in the preaching of Mohammed. According to the Koran the pagan Arabs experienced Allâh as some distant unapproachable supreme god. They needed their idols as intercessors through which they could communicate with Allâh. They denied Mohammed's claim that he was continuing the religion of the ancestors of the Arabs in its original pure form and accused him of inventing lies against Allâh. The relationship between Hubal and Allâh is indistinct. In spite of his outright rejection of idolworship Mohammed was prudent enough to have no confrontation with the statue of Hubal by name. Perhaps the deliberate avoidance of the name Hubal by Mohammed should be interpreted as a purposeful step to escape recognition of this idol<sup>1)</sup>.

It is remarkable that Mohammed at the beginning of his career was most hesitant to refer to God by means of a proper name. Instead he gave preference to appellatives like "creator" or "lord". That Mohammed did have a proper name for his God right from the beginning is implied by a number of verses from the first Meccan period referring to the use of God's name in public worship. His initial avoidance of this proper name can be explained as fear of abuse or profanation — towards the end of the Prophet's stay in Mecca it was necessary to warn expressly against the wrong use of the names of God<sup>2)</sup>. This attitude found an example in the Jewish sh<sup>c</sup>mâ, pronounced instead of the name Yahwê.

Allâh is the central theme of the Koran.

The Koran does not argue to prove the existence of Allâh. Allâh is the living God as against the lifeless idols, prepared by the hands of man. The presence of the living God in this world is concretely expressed in anthropomorphic language. This does not impair a highly spiritual understanding of the transcendent God and the Koran expressly forbids a visual presentation of Allâh<sup>3)</sup>. Although Allâh is presented as male, the Koran emphasizes that God is transcendent of sex, i.e. exalted above any genealogical ties. In this one respect Mohammed's preaching of Allâh differs from the pre-Islamic conception namely that he never applied the title ab, father, to Allâh. Manifold attributes of Allâh occur in the later sûras, where twin epithets or the superlative often appear at the end of âyât to facilitate the rhyme although they may be rather loosely connected with the contents. The Koranic description of the false gods is a summary of its conception of the true God in the obverse: They are lifeless, made by man, powerless, they do not dispose over life and death, they are void of works, they sent no revelation, they cannot achieve the resurrection. That Allâh is the only god has cosmic significance: Was it for one moment true that there are other gods, the whole universe would collapse. The angels are not to be worshipped; they are merely the enactors of God's dealings with man. Despite the fact that Satan represents all the powers in revolt against Allâh Mohammed's strict monotheistic convictions prevented a complete dualism. Satan is completely subjected to Allâh, who is not only the

author of good but who is also the ultimate author of all evil.

Man cannot see Allâh, but he can experience his presence in the forces of nature. This view does not turn Allâh into a storm or nature god. In his action with man Allâh reveals himself as the holy one, as the merciful but righteous judge. Allâh loves the believer but his wrath inflames against the ungrateful disbeliever in punishment. Since Allâh created everything, observes everything from his throne, and possesses the heavenly Book, his knowledge is perfect. He revealed his wisdom in the Koran and in this wisdom the believers share. He also instructed man how to put his natural environment into practical use. On the Day of Judgement man will have to answer before the knowledge of Allâh. The free will of Allâh determines everything: The movements of the winds and even the will of man. Nevertheless it would be erroneous to think that this precludes the freedom of the human will. Reference to the will of Allâh in the Koran always implies its application to the advantage of man. Although kingship was not usual amongst the Arabs, Mohammed frequently described Allâh in terms borrowed from the royal court. The kingship of Allâh is the basis of the theocratic state.

It is incorrect to think that God in Islam is absolutely transcendent. His immanence in this world is made manifest by his action as creator and his dealings with man. Allâh used the Spirit in the creation of Adam and Jesus and

to convey his Revelation. Allâh supports the believer by means of his Spirit. The real instrument of God's action is, however, his word: by his word Allâh creates the universe and its contents, determines the events of history and performs the Judgement. The verbal aspect of his word is contained in the Koran, supplemented by the âyât of nature.

The Koran most frequently refers to Allâh's creative action. It is witness to his knowledge, his inescapable power and his incomparability. Allâh arranged the creation in accordance with the needs of man and in order to secure his existence. Man should be grateful and join in the creaturely choir of praise and worship of Allâh. Creation should be proof to him of the resurrection and judgement. Allâh appointed man as his viceroy or deputy on this earth. Man should serve Allâh, but his disobedience often makes the fears expressed by the angels at the creation of Adam come true, resulting in punishment. Allâh does not abolish family ties, but to the believer Allâh is dearer than his family, his possessions and even his life. He expects his reward from Allâh in the Hereafter. Humbly he bows in prayer with the name Allâh on his lips, to bring all his praise to the only God. History is terminated by Allâh's creative action at the beginning and the recreation at the end. Allâh is the God of the Past, Present and Future. Man should learn the lessons of history for in them God's action with man is demonstrated.

Amongst men the prophet of Allâh occupied a

special position to provide the authoritative word of God. Since Allâh is holy, man should worship him in a ritually pure state. Man should worship Allâh by mentioning his name in the salât and by giving alms. Sacrifices are restricted to the pilgrimage and should be an expression of devotion and gratitude towards Allâh; it is expressly stated that Allâh does not receive the flesh and blood — he need not be fed. Also in the Islam the Ka<sup>C</sup>ba was considered to be the house of Allâh and, although practical needs led to local places of worship, its central position was maintained.

Certain meritorious deeds are accepted in expiation of sin but the Koran stresses that man should turn in repentance to Allâh.

On the Last Day everything will perish save the face of Allâh. After the resurrection all mankind will appear before Allâh, the just Judge. Allâh will again rule in unrivalled majesty.

Mohammed painted the picture of Allâh in more detail in the course of time, but we did not discover a marked evolution in his concept of Allâh in the later sûras of the Koran. Unfortunately the richness and depth of the Koranic concept of Allâh was lost in dogmatic disputes in the later Islam.

Allâh determines by his will what is right and what is wrong and it is true that he demands a high standard of ethical conduct from mankind<sup>4)</sup>. The virtuous conduct of man is motivated by the fear of God's justice on the Judgment Day. Nevertheless in the writer's opinion the

conclusion of Daud Rahbar that God's stern justice is the most essential side of the Koranic doctrine of Allâh<sup>5)</sup> does not answer to the total image. The total image is dominated by the inescapable and unlimited free power of the Creator, with the inseparable and logical complement that Allâh is the only God.

In general Mohammed complied with the pre-Islamic (as far as it can be determined) conception of Il/Allâh, though he added his own accents in conjunction with the Judaeo-Christian antecedents. The evidence indicates that Allâh was sliding back into oblivion. Because of Mohammed's preaching he regained his central position.

If we judge Mohammed's doctrine of Allâh according to his saying used as a superscript for this chapter, viz. that a man's deeds are to be judged only by his intentions and that one shall have only what he intended, both Jew and Christian are to accept the words of Mohammed in the Koran: Your God and our God is the same God<sup>6)</sup>. One can also admit the truth of the observation of Th. Nöldeke that Mohammed's idea of God is essentially that of the Old Testament. The Christian would regret the less than elementary knowledge about Christ reflected in the pages of the Koran, though he will appreciate the high regard and respect Mohammed had for the Messiah. Nevertheless he will remember that Arab Christians to this day use the name Allâh for God, in the Bible and in worship. He will find in his approach to the Islam much more justification of a common ground in Allâh than Paul could find

in the unknown God of the Greeks<sup>7)</sup>. He will strive to lead the Moslem from a legalistic worship of God, also represented in the early Christian church by the 'Judaists', to the fullness of the freedom and love of God in Christ Jesus, the Lord.