

Who is God, Yahweh or Allah?

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The Purpose of this Book

Many people are of the opinion that Yahweh, the God of the Christian Bible, and Allah, the God of Islam and the Quran, are the same being and, therefore, deemed by many as the one and only true God. Is this the truth? Are they the same being, known only by different names? If this is the case then both can be worshipped as such. However, if this is not the case, then at least one of them is not the true God and should not be worshipped. There are off course many false gods being worshipped all over the world.

One way to find out whether Yahweh and Allah are in fact the same being is to use their holy books to determine and compare their main attributes. If these attributes are identical, especially their most important attributes, then and then only, can they be acknowledged as one and the same being. That is the purpose of this book. A study of the most important attributes of Yahweh and Allah will be determined from the Bible of the Christians and the Quran and Hadith (sayings of the prophet Mohammed (Muhammad) which are very important in the life of the Muslim), of the Muslims. These attributes will be compared to discover if they are, indeed, the same being, or the same God. From the study it will also be possible to conclude whether they are, as the same being, the true God, or alternatively, if they are not the same being, which one is the true God.

In this process, in excess of 85 citations from the Quran, 95 from the Hadith, and 75 from the Bible, are used in this book; sufficient citations to determine the character and attributes of the God of the Bible and of Allah, the God of Islam.

The purpose of this book is also to assist the diligent seeker of truth to compare the characteristics and attributes of Yahweh of the Bible and Allah of the Quran, in order for him/her to make an informed decision about the question: Are they the same being, and if not, who is the true God?

Author

1. Who is God?

The two largest religions in the world are Christianity and Islam. For the purpose of this book, Roman Catholicism is seen as a part (the major part) of Christianity. Yahweh is the God of the Christians, and the one who revealed himself to them through, and in the Bible. True Christians acknowledge and worship Him as God. Islam worships Allah and acknowledges him as the only true God. Muslims do not acknowledge the God of the Christians as Yahweh. They claim that Allah, their God, is in fact the same God who is worshipped by Christians. There are also many Christians, perhaps the majority of Christians, who think that Christians and Muslims worship the same God, only by different names. According to both of these religions, there is only one true God. It is, therefore, extremely important to determine whether they are, indeed, the same person or God. If they are not the same God, it means that at least one of them is not the true God and, therefore, must be an idol.

These two beings, Yahweh of the Bible and Allah of the Quran, are revealed through their respective revelations (holy books). In the case of Yahweh, it is through the Bible, and in the case of Allah, through the Quran as well as through the Hadith. The Hadith will be discussed later in more detail. The two books, the Bible and the Quran, provide clarity and illuminate the characteristics and attributes of these two beings. The moral attributes of these two beings will be the focus of this study. If they are the same God, then at the very least, they will share the same moral attributes, demonstrated by similar characteristics, which will be clear from their books. The reader will realise, from the many citations from the holy books which are used, that there is no doubt as to the nature of the character and moral attributes of these two beings.

The premise or presupposition held in this book is that **love** is the core moral attribute of the true God. This love is a love that really cares; not a sentimental or emotional love. In life, every creative person typically cherishes the things he/she has created, be it art or any form of creativity, the creator is usually proud of it, and protective over it. It can be expected, therefore, of a Creator-God to care about and feel benevolent towards his creation, especially about humankind that He created. The assumption exists that the love of the true Creator-God would be a benevolent kind of love, and probably an unselfish kind of benevolence. This love that can be defined as compassionate and caring love, a kind of love possessing a disposition to do good deeds, and be kind only for the sake of kindness, not because of personal interest or gain. On a human level, this kind of love would mean that a person always acts in a benign manner towards all people, including people

he/she does not like. This means always doing to others what you would want them to do to you in similar circumstances, and never doing to them what you would not want done to yourself in similar circumstances. These actions should be done without the slightest motive for personal gain. Although self-serving is never the motive in this kind of love, it is inherent in it, because this love is never a threat to anyone, but is constructive, while lack of this kind of love is always a threat and it is destructive. If all people had always acted in this kind of love, no one would ever have been wronged and it would have been heaven on earth. This then, is the kind of love that can be described as real love, and the kind of love that can be expected from the true Creator-God. There are numerous examples of love and kindness in the Bible that concur with this description of love. One of them is found in 1 John 4:18:

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love."

A person can expect that the law of a true God (commandments to his followers), who is undoubtedly a loving God, will be based on this kind of benevolent love. It will surely be a law that insists on compassionate actions towards fellow humans, as well as towards Him. This law will be resolute on a disposition that is never a threat to another person, but rather a consideration for fellow humans.

The true God's benevolent love is obvious in the wonder of His creation. The true Creator-God must be a God of love, it is impossible for the God who created the universe - the earth with everything in it - not to be a God of love. The proof of the Creator's love cannot only be seen in the harmony of the earth in relation to the universe, the beauty, the artistry, and delicacy of that which was created, (the universe, the earth, plants, animals and man), but also in the fact that man was given the ability to choose (free-will). Imagine man functioning mechanically and instinctively, like a robot. Would there be any love involved in creating machines without the ability to enter into any meaningful relationships? It would not have been possible for man to do good deeds or to be obedient, and although man would not be able to do wrong or be disobedient, it would be insignificant because there would be no freewill involved.

Friendships and relationships are voluntary, and it is impossible to force anybody into a friendship or a relationship. There are points of agreement to some aspects about the creation narrative of the Bible and the Quran. Man (Adam and his wife) was created by the true God with the ability to choose. He (God) also intended for man to live with Him in a loving relationship, as was initially the case in the Garden. The true God knows that man will have

peace and freedom only as long as he serves God in a relationship of love. This relationship must, however, be voluntary and without any compulsion, or it would be meaningless, and prove a lack of love and righteousness by God. It is for this reason that God gave man a choice, according to the Bible, either to put God first and be obedient by not taking the forbidden fruit (eating from the tree), or to be disobedient to God's command and thereby putting themselves (love of self) first. A God of love will choose to be in a voluntary loving relationship with his created humanity. It would not have been necessary for God to forbid wrongdoing by man if man did not have the ability to make choices. It would not be possible for man to do anything against God's will. By taking the forbidden fruit, in an attempt to become like God, man proved that his own interests (self-gratification) became more important to him than the interest of God. Man made the decision to serve himself rather than God. Off course, according to the Bible, this happened under the instigation and deception of Satan, through the serpent, but man is still guilty because he had the ability to remain obedient to God. Man could have resisted the allure of self-serving behaviour presented to him by the serpent.

A God of love can only be just because righteousness is a benevolent disposition and, therefore, the kind of love that He has. God could do nothing but to enforce his promised punishment, because He is a just God. Selfishness and lack of love cannot exist in any way in the presence of a perfect God of love. For this reason, He sent man out of His presence and out of His responsibility, into a world that is under the power of the evil one. Man disobeyed God, in spite of the fact that he was duly warned and was aware of the consequences of disobedience. This is, in essence, the biblical reason for man's alienation from God and consequently, man's spiritual death, but it goes further than that, according to the Bible.

Because the true God is love He longs for the restoration of the relationship, but it must take place in a righteous manner. The only righteous manner is to get man to return to Him voluntarily. It is, however, impossible for man to do so, except if someone else who qualifies, could take the punishment for the sin of man. Therefore, because of God's love and man's inability, God involved Himself with humanity, and more specifically with individuals (living in a world under the power of the evil one) who had a love for Him or a desire to know Him. God worked through these people and prepared a nation through which the Person would be born, who would bear the punishment for all and reconcile to God those who sought salvation. In what other just way could a God of love reconcile his alienated (spiritually dead) creature with Himself?

If the true God was not a God of love He would have created man without the ability to choose, in which case it would have been unnecessary to make

commandments or laws, because no one would have had the ability to transgress. Alternatively, He could act more unloving by creating them with the ability to choose (freewill), but then force them to serve Him by using violence. Would it not have been better then to rather create them without this ability to choose at all? How just is a God who creates man with freewill but then forces man, by using violence, to serve him?

The Bible will provide proof that Yahweh, the God of the Bible, is indeed a God of love. Therefore, if it can be established from Islam's holy books (Quran and Hadith), that Allah is also a God of love and that he shares moral attributes with Yahweh, God of the Bible, it can then be concluded that they are, indeed, the same God (as is generally believed). If, however, it becomes clear that they do not share the same characteristics and attributes, it will be reasonable to conclude that they are not the same being.

This means that it needs to be determined what the holy books of these two religions, Islam and Christianity, teaches and what behaviour and life each of these religions portray. This study is certainly not about the opinions of people regarding these religions, **but only about what their holy books teach concerning love, and the type of lifestyles these books promote.**

If, during this process, there are statements made which readers find offensive, please be assured that this was not the intention. **The intention is neither to offend anybody, nor is it to create feelings of resentment or hatred between religions, but only to search for truth.** When a true representation of anything offends, the blame would lie in the nature of the fact and not the person who brought it to light. Every effort is made to represent the contents and teachings of the different holy books in an unbiased way. If the reader perseveres and finishes this book, he/she will realise that the motive for writing it is love, and a serious effort to convey the truth and nothing else.

The reader is invited, therefore, to finish reading this book and, if necessary, check all the citations in the sources mentioned to confirm their accurate quotation. Only then can a decision be made regarding the credibility. It is, unfortunately, a fact that not all Christians are always fully informed about all biblical doctrines, and likewise, there are Muslims who are not always aware of all the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith. There is a possibility that some of the citations might surprise some readers, Christians as well as Muslims.

2. How Non-Muslims perceive Muslims

In the aftermath of the brutal destruction of the World Trade Centre, New York, America, on 11 September 2001, by so-called Muslim extremists, one hears contradictory media reports about the peace-loving nature and character of Islam.

Western and even Christian 'experts' on Islam, claim that it is a peaceful religion and that the average Muslim is a peace-loving person. During discussions with the media, Muslim leaders assure the public that Islam is by nature a peaceful religion. They condemn terrorist acts and sympathise with the victims and their families. On hearing these declarations, the non-Muslim feels much more positive about Islam in general.

One would like to believe that Islam is a peace-loving religion. If they were not peace-loving, this would spell problems for non-Muslims. There are a large number of Muslims in the world today, and the so-called extremists do not appear to hesitate when it comes to offering up their lives in the name of their religion. They willingly give up their life in an attempt to destroy the 'enemy'. How these Muslims could consider thousands of unsuspecting, unarmed civilians going about their daily tasks, including women and children, the 'enemy', is a mystery.

On seeing the joyous reactions on TV by thousands of Muslims over these terrorist acts, and the fierce reaction by so-called peaceful Muslims all over the world against America for its action against these terrorists, and the former terrorist state of Afghanistan, can only bring about questions on the meaning of the term 'peace-loving'. Their demonstrations and placards are nothing less than threatening and these threats include a so-called holy war, or *Jihad* against America.

Comments by 'peace-loving' Muslims to the effect that, if non-Muslims, for any reason whatsoever, attack Muslims, then all Muslims are obliged to defend themselves, are heard on a regular basis in the media. The South African Muslim Judicial Council publicly condemned America as the aggressor against Afghanistan. The majority of Muslims half-heartedly condemned the attacks on America, but they deny America the right of action against the attackers. The question then arises, how peace loving is Islam, and who are its enemies?

For the average non-Muslim, Islam is an enigma. These days, there is serious uncertainty in the minds of the majority of people about these matters. Even 'nominal' Muslims, whose faith is built on what they hear in Mosques (Muslim

places of worship), from their spiritual leaders, and in their communities, are unsure about these matters. If there is so much uncertainty among them, these contradictory opinions cannot be explained.

The non-Muslim generally consider the average Muslim a peace-loving person. Overall, they are seen as friendly and helpful people. In Western countries, contact between non-Muslims and Muslims is, however, mainly limited to a business situation where the non-Muslim is the customer and the Muslim is the businessman or –woman. Muslims are generally viewed as an exclusive group, where friendships and real, meaningful social interaction with non-Muslims is rare. For this reason, the Muslim and his religion, Islam, are enigmatic to the average non-Muslim.

It often happens that Muslims are involved or implicated when acts of violence (actions that are seen as terrorism by non-Muslims) are perpetrated. Extreme examples of such actions are the violent destruction of the World Trade Centre, in New York, America on 11 September 2001, and the car bomb explosion on the island of Bali, Indonesia on 12 October 2002, where non-Muslims were the targets. Reactions by Muslims to these deeds of ‘terrorism’ are not only contradictory, but also very confusing. On the one hand, there is sometimes condemnation of these deeds, although never unequivocally, and on the other hand, these deeds are often condoned. Their reactions create a distinct impression that Muslim leaders do not always see these violent actions as terrorism, but rather as justifiable deeds of war. Public announcements from both leaders and the average Muslim give a sense that their sympathy is with the perpetrators of these deeds.

The abovementioned perception of a Muslim as a peace-loving and friendly person does not correspond with the senseless acts of terrorism and violence, which take the lives of thousands of innocent people in the name of fighting the ‘enemy’ or being justifiable as an act of war. This is also something that even the Muslims themselves do not understand, and often find difficult to explain.

Muslims, on the other hand, also have difficulty in understanding non-Muslims, in particular westerners who are mainly perceived as Christians. Many Muslims were killed during the *Crusades*, in the name of Christianity. Furthermore, Muslims see people in Western countries, who claim to be Christians, living in sin, including committing acts of immorality, drunkenness, and violence. They justifiably do not understand how people can continue living in sin while they claim that Jesus saved them by paying the price for their sins through His substitutive death on the cross.

As a Christian, the author is aware that the majority of people who claim to be Christians, and who are viewed as Christians by people of other religions, do not know what a real Christian is, nor do they know the Biblical meaning of the word 'Christian'. These 'Christians' do not know the God of the Bible, nor do they live in complete surrender to Him as it behoves a real Christian. These are not merely excuses; they are facts. If Muslims realise this, they will also have a better understanding of Christianity. Appendix B contains a definition of a true Christian. Suffice it to say, the closer a person lives to the God of the Bible, and the more he/she surrenders his/her life to Him, the more loving he/she will become, because the God of the Bible is love, and this will be shown from the Bible. Not anybody then, who encourages or instigates hate, violence, immorality, or any other sin, can be a real Christian, regardless of any claims to the contrary.

The author is sensitive to the fact that, according to Islam, the Bible is corrupt and unreliable. He is also aware, however, that even Muslim scholars acknowledge that there is no valid proof of such corruption. He is in no doubt that such proof does not exist and will never be found.

Because of his own ignorance and uncertainty about the peace-loving nature of Islam, the author has obtained different translations of the Quran (in English and Afrikaans), as well as English translations of more than one compilation of the Hadith. He has conducted a relentless search of these sacred books of Islam for answers to questions about love, violence, sin, forgiveness, and punishment. In this book, pronouncements made about these things by the God of the Bible will be compared with pronouncements made by Allah, God of the Quran. These comparisons will provide clarity on whether Yahweh, God of the Bible, and Allah, God of Islam, are the same being, and if not, which one is the true God.

Unfortunately, the author does not understand Arabic, and therefore, was compelled to rely on English and Afrikaans translations of the sacred books of Islam (Quran and Hadith). As previously stated, every attempt is made to provide correct quotations within the correct context from these books. References are provided to enable the reader to check the accuracy and appropriateness of the citations.

3. What is Islam?

Islam

Islam is a religion that originated in the Arabic Peninsula (now Saudi Arabia) at the beginning of the seventh century AD.

According to Al-Haj Maulana Fazlul Karim (1998:(Vol.1):128), a retired Judge, in his compilation of the Hadith (later more about Hadith), *"Islam literally means peace or complete resignation (to Allah)"* and *"Islam is (i) Peace, and (ii) worship of only one, Allah."* If it is true that peace and complete resignation to Allah are synonymous in meaning, as is stated by Karim above, the question can be asked: Is this peace then only destined for Muslims?

There are, however, different opinions about the original meaning of the word Islam. Dr. M Bravmann (as quoted by Morey 1992:36-37), a Middle East scholar, has this explanation: *"[Islam was originally] a secular concept, denoting a sublime virtue in the eyes of the primitive Arab; defiance of death, heroism; to die in battle."* The conclusion is that the word Islam only later developed into the meaning of 'submission' or 'resignation'.

Muslim

An adherent of the Islamic faith is called a Muslim. This is someone who has subjected himself to the Islamic religion.

Koran – Quran

The main holy book (Bible) of Islam is the *Quran*, also spelled as *Qur'an*, *Qur-an*, *Qurân* or *Koran*. It consists of 114 chapters. The Quran was originally written in Arabic and some Muslims do not accept any other translations of the Quran. For this reason, translations of the Quran are not referred to as the Quran but as 'the meanings of the Quran' (see the Bibliography). The chapters of the Quran are known as '*Sura*' or '*Surah*', which mean 'degree' or 'step'.

According to Islam, the Quran is the final and complete revelation of God, whom they call Allah. Muslims take the Quran very seriously, and consider all commands therein as direct instructions from Allah through his prophet Mohammed, which must be obeyed. When Muslims handle a copy of the Quran, they do it with the greatest respect, using only the right hand, because of the Arabic and Muslim traditions of using different hands for different tasks. (See also Mohammed and the Quran below.)

Allah

Allah is the God of Islam and according to them, the only true God and worshipped as such. The word *Allah* does not mean God but it is the name of the God of Islam. The name *Allah* originates from the pre-Islamic period. Morey (1992:217) claims that, according to archaeological evidence, Allah was the name of the moon god who was worshipped at the *Ka'aba* in Mecca in pre-Islamic times. Mecca is the holy city of Islam, which all Muslims must visit at least once in their lifetime. This compulsory pilgrimage to Mecca is called the *Hajj*. (See also chapter 4: iv below for more information regarding this). For Morey, the fact that the name Allah was known in pre-Islamic times, answers questions such as: Why is Allah never defined in the Quran? And why did Mohammed assume that the pagan Arabs already knew who Allah was?

Mohammed (Muhammad)

Mohammed is the founder of Islam, revered in Islam as the last true prophet sent by God (Allah) to the world, and the greatest of all prophets. They also claim that the Quran is the final and complete revelation of God, whom they call Allah. Mohammed himself made these claims in the Quran. Mohammed refers to himself as “*honoured apostle*” in *Surah* 69:40 of the Quran. (When portions from the Quran are quoted, they will be referred to as ‘*Surah*’, followed by the chapter and verse numbers for example *Surah* 7:157 or 51:52).

Mohammed and the Quran

Islam claims that the Quran is a word-for-word revelation by the angel Gabriel to Mohammed [571(570)-632 AD sources vary on the year of his birth].

Mohammed received his first revelation in 610 AD by way of a vision while in a trance. He originally feared for his life and “greatly over-awed” did not know the origin of the experience. His wife, Khadija, consoled him and treated him for shock. She then took him to her cousin, Waraqa-b-Naufal, and they assured him that it was in fact the archangel Gabriel, who also previously appeared to Moses. According to tradition, Mohammed then considered suicide by jumping off a cliff, but that the angel Gabriel prevented it by appearing to him and assuring him that he was the Apostle of Allah. Over the next 22 years, up to his death in 632 AD, he received revelations on a regular basis in different ways (Karim, 1998:(Vol.4):354-359).

The Quran consists of these visions of Mohammed. He was illiterate so he dictated them for other people to transcribe. Only after Mohammed's death were the different parts of the Quran, that were written on various objects, from parchment to leaves and bones, collected and compiled to form what is now known as the Quran. Even in Muslim circles, there is disagreement about the composition, completeness, and contents of the Quran.

There are several denials in the Quran about whether Mohammed was insane or possessed.

Surah 52:29 reads: "By the grace of Allah thou art neither soothsayer nor madman." (Pickthall, 1997:381) "... nor are you one possessed" (Ali 2000:484) (See also Surah 37:35-36; 44:14; 51:52; 68:2 & 51; 81:22).

These denials must at least mean that Mohammed was perceived as, or accused of, being one possessed or insane, by some of his contemporaries. This was probably because he was often, when receiving his revelations, in a trance. According to Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:22:79(Vol.4):360), Aisha (also spelled Ayesha, Mohammed's favourite wife) said:

"I saw him while the revelation descended upon him on an intensely cold day; then it left him while his brow steamed with sweat."

In (Karim, 1998:22:80(Vol.4):360) the same page, Obadah-b-Swamet said:

"... when a revelation came unto the Prophet, he used to become greatly perturbed and his face became changed. ... He nodded his head and his companions also nodded their heads. When revelation came to an end, he raised up his head."

The Hadith

The 'Hadith' (also known as *Hadis*) contains, next to the Quran, the most important writings upon which Islam as a religion, was founded. Recorded by people who lived close to him, it is a collection of the sayings, actions, and customs of Mohammed.

An established fact is that the Quran is the most important book in Islam, but the Hadith however, cannot be ignored. There is a difference of opinion among Muslims on the authority and value of the Hadith in the life of a Muslim. It is, however, very important, because its authority was determined by Allah himself in the Quran. In the Quran, Allah commands that Mohammed is always obeyed. In *Surahs* 3:32; 4:59; 8:20 & 46; 24:52; 47:33; 64:12 Muslims

are instructed: “... *obey Allah and His Apostle, (Mohammed)*”. This is evidently the reason why Mohammed’s traditions and the things he said (recorded in the Hadith) are also compulsory (*Sunnah*: that is to be followed) for the Muslim. The command is directly from Allah. He also puts it clearly in *Surah* 4:80:

“He, who obeys the Apostle (Mohammed), obeys Allah,” (Ali, 2000:71).

The *Al-Hadis* is an English Translation and Commentary of *MISHKAT – UL – MASABIH* published by *Islamic Book Service*, New Delhi 1998, compiled by Al-Haj Maulana Fazlul Karim. The compiler says in his introduction (Karim, 1998(Vol.1):3):

“Indeed the Quran minus Hadis remains unintelligible in many cases in the work-a-day life of a man” and further on: *“Therefore, if the Quran is believed, there is no other alternative but to believe in the Hadis of the Prophet (Mohammad).”*

He also says (Karim, 1998(Vol.1):154):

“The ... Quran and the Hadis of the Holy Prophet shall be the foremost books in guiding the life of a true Muslim.”

The importance of the Hadith for the Muslim is also illustrated in Karim’s (1998(Vol.3):122) words:

“Hence the observation of the rules of the Quran and Hadis is compulsory for preservation of the soul from fire and for its continued progress.”

Except for the above compilation of the Hadith, hereinafter referred to as *Al-Hadis*, the English translation by Dr. Muhammad Mushin Khan of *Sahih Al-Bukhari*’s compilation of the Hadith is also used. It is entitled, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari*, published by *Khitab Bhavan*, New Delhi, 1987. This compilation is hereinafter referred to as *Al-Bukhari*, and cited as (Khan, 1987: followed by the number, volume number: and page number).

From the Hadith the ‘*Sunnah*’ or ‘*Sunna*’ is determined. *Sunnah* means something that must be followed, and can, therefore, be understood to mean ‘law’. The literal meaning of *Sunna* is ‘path’, as opposed to *Shariah* or *Shariat*, which is the religious law of Islam. *Sunna* was developed from the teachings, sayings, and traditions of Mohammed that are found in the Hadith. It is defined by Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987(Vol.1):Lxxxi) as:

“All the traditions and practices of the Prophet that have become as models to be followed by the Muslims.”

It is, therefore, the guideline for every Muslim to live by. All instructions from the Hadith quoted here can, therefore, be understood as a 'law' for every Muslim, which he is supposed to obey, the path he must walk on, or the road he must travel.

According to the important writings in Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:1:59(Vol.1):135), the prophet Mohammed said: *“A Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands other Muslims are safe.”* It is obvious that this is not true, because there is more than enough evidence of war and fighting between Muslims. There was, for example, the war in the 1980s between Iran and Iraq. Recently, Muslims were at war against each other in Afghanistan (North against South) where they were killing one another. Another example of Muslims killing each other is the so-called Arabic spring, which started in Egypt and followed in Libya and Syria. Even if it is true that Muslims are safe from the tongue and hands of other Muslims, what can be derived from what Mohammed said? Are non-Muslims not safe from the tongue and hands of a Muslim? If a Muslim is, contrary to what Mohammed said, not safe from the tongue and hands of another Muslim, how safe is a non-Muslim? This question can also be posed in view of the following quotation from the Hadith (Karim, 1998:1:73(Vol.1)144), according to which the Prophet said:

“A party of my people shall not cease to fight for truth (Islam) overcoming those who will oppose them”

Pronouncements like these, which are in agreement with the message of the Quran, give reason for uneasiness among non-Muslims.

The Five Principles (Pillars) of Islam

The Islamic faith rests on five principles, which are also known as the five pillars of Islam. According to Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987(Vol.1):17), these principles are:

- To testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that Mohammed is Allah's messenger.
- To offer the (compulsory congregational) prayers dutifully and perfectly.
- To pay *Zakat* (i.e. obligatory charity).
- To perform *Hajj* (i.e. Pilgrimage to Mecca).
- To observe the fast during the month of Ramadan.

There are specific prescriptions for the fulfilment and meaning of each of these principles (pillars). These will not, however, be discussed in this book; suffice to mention that every Muslim is expected to faithfully obey all these prescriptions.

The questions to be answered are: Is Allah a God of love; and if so, Is Allah of the Quran, and Yahweh of the Bible one and the same God? Islam's holy books, the Quran and the Hadith, will subsequently be perused in search of Allah's pronouncements concerning **love**. This will determine whether he is a God of love. When compared with what Yahweh, God of the Bible says about love, this should assist in bringing about clarity on the question of whether Allah of the Quran and God of the Bible are the same God.

4. The Love of Allah, the God of Islam

The question that must be answered is: Is Allah a God of love? In other words, does He love all people regardless of whom they are? Are all His deeds motivated, or initiated by love? Here one must bear in mind that it is possible for a God of love to command that certain people are killed, not because of hate or lack of love, but because He knows everything. This can happen when the true God, is omniscient, and knows that people are totally depraved, that they will never repent, and will only work against His plan for the salvation of humankind. His command, in such cases, is not in order to subject people to Him or to force them to worship Him, but to prevent them from ruining His specific plan for the redemption of man.

According to the Quran

When reading the Quran, it appears that Allah's love is not for all people, but exclusively given only to those who deserve it. It is evident from the following quotations from the Quran who qualifies for Allah's love:

Surah 2:190: "for Allah loves not transgressors." (Ali, 2000:24)

If a god does not love transgressors, what reason is there for him to care for them at all? Are all people not transgressing at least at some point in their lives; that is if they do not do it on a more regular basis? Who will then qualify for the love of Allah?

Surah 2:195: "For Allah loves those who do good." (Ali, 2000:25)

It seems that, if you do good you can reckon on Allah's love for you, but if you transgress there is no more love for you. This means one of two things: either Allah's love is very uncertain and changeable or Muslims have the ability not to transgress at all.

Surah 2:222: "Truly, Allah loveth those who turn to Him, and loveth those who have a care for cleanness." (Pickthall, 1997:25)

Surah 5:13: "for Allah loves those who are kind."

Here, the word 'kind' must have a limited meaning. As illustrated under the explanation of *Zakat* above, charity towards Muslims, including Muslim interests like *Jihad* seems to be the real meaning of kindness in Islam.

Surah 6:141: "for Allah loves not the wasters." (Ali, 2000:115)

It appear, from the context of this quotation, that the reference to 'wasters' concerns those who have an abundance of food and fruit, and then waste them in some way. This is most certainly a wrong attitude, but is that sufficient reason to forfeit God's love?

Surah 7:55: "Lo! He (Allah) loveth not the transgressors." (Pickthall, 1997:106)

The nature of the transgressions in this case is not clear.

Surah 3:31: "If you do love Allah, follow me (Mohammed): Allah will (then) love you and forgive you your sins." (Ali, 2000:42)

Allah requires no propitiation. If you love him and follow Mohammed, you are pardoned and forgiven.

Surah 4:107: "And plead not on behalf of (people) who deceive themselves. Lo! Allah loveth not one who is treacherous and sinful." (Pickthall, 1997:65)

According to the context of this quotation, 'treacherous' means apostasy, but sin is never defined in the Quran, which means that nobody knows what sinful means. What is clear from this quotation, as with the others cited, is that Allah loves only certain people who deserve his love, and that he does not love all people. There is no clear indication in the Quran that Allah loves all people.

According to the Hadith

In the tables of content of the four volumes of the Al-Hadis, as well as in the nine volumes of the Hadith compiled by Al-Bukhari, a multitude of subjects are discussed, but no mention is made of the love of Allah. In Al-Hadis, more than 250 pages are dedicated to the virtues of the Prophet Mohammed under headings like: *"The greatest legislator; The greatest hero and military commander; The greatest charitable man; A great teacher of health and hygiene,"* etc. There are also headings such as: *"Sneezing and Yawning; Combing and Hair dressing; Eye-Paint; Jihad (Holy War); Sexual Intercourse; Polygamy."* The heading closest to the love of Allah in the Al-Hadis is: *"Love and hatred for (on behalf of) Allah."*

Under this heading, one reads in Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:4:273(Vol.1):506) the following:

“The Holy Prophet said: The action dearest to the Almighty Allah is love for Allah’s sake and hate for Allah’s sake.”

It is not clear what the prophet meant, although it gives one a sense of the nature of Allah’s love. The compiler (Karim, 1998:4:273(Vol.1):501) explains what this means under the sub-heading, *Hate for cause of Allah*:

“If a Muslim loves the teachings of Islam and its great teacher, he cannot but love those who follow those teachings and also love Allah and His Apostle. On the other hand, it is natural with him to hate those who reject the teachings of Islam and do not obey the commandments of Allah and His Apostle.”

Karim leaves no doubt that Allah expects all Muslims to hate those who reject Islam as a religion, and that includes all non-Muslims. Karim also claims that Muslims cannot but love each other. It has already been shown that Muslims frequently fight and kill each other, which means that they do not always love each other as they should, according to Karim. He further writes about the people who reject Islam and thus should, be hated by Muslims: *“They are the worst people in the eye of Islam.”* He then translates Surah 8:55 in the Quran as follows: *“Surely the vilest of animals in Allah’s sight are those who disbelieve,”* (Ali 2000:146) renders it like this: *“For the worst of all living creatures in the sight of Allah are those who reject him”*. While Pickthall (1997:124) renders it: *“Lo! The worst of beasts in Allah’s sight are the ungrateful who will not believe.”* Therefore, in the view of Islam, it is no wonder that such 'vile people' should be hated. Always keep in mind that all these people who are to be hated, are those who reject Islam as a religion. This might include you who read this, if you are not a Muslim.

He continues about this ‘justified’ hatred on behalf of Allah, (Karim, 1998:4:273(Vol.1):501):

“Intensity of hate is greatest in case of a polytheist, greater in case of people of the Book (Christians and Jews), and great in the case of Muslim innovators and great sinners.”

In the case of ordinary sinners, the minimum requirement for the extent of this hatred is great, but it is greater in the case of Christians and Jews. Muslims often accuse Christians of polytheism, because they believe in the Tri-Unity of God. This carries the greatest degree of hatred.

There is another indication in the Hadith that Allah’s love is partial, in Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:4:265(Vol.1):503):

"the Messenger of Allah (Mohammed) said: When Allah loves a man, He calls Gabriel and says: I love so and so, so love him. Then he announces in heaven and says: Allah loves so and so, so love him. Then the inmates of heaven love him."

According to this, Allah's love is an achievement and in agreement with all the above citations from the Quran and Hadith. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that Allah only loves those who love and obey him, especially those who fight for him. This will become even more obvious in the more detailed discussion of *Jihad* (Islam's holy war), later in this book.

What is the God of the Bible's attitude towards humankind in general?

5. The Love of Yahweh, God of the Bible

Christians know, or should know, that the God of the Bible is a God of love. The Christian who does not accept or believe this fact does not know the Bible. How can one be a real Christian if you have no knowledge about the heart and nature of real Christianity?

In fact, no one with a basic knowledge of the Bible can deny that Yahweh, the God of the Bible, is a God of love. It can be read in John 3:16:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (NIV) (Emphasis added).

The word 'world' includes all humanity and does not exclude sinners. That is why Jesus said in Mark 2:17:

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." (NKJ). (See also Matthew 9:12 and Luke 5:31 in this regard.)

God sent Jesus because of His love for people:

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:3, 4 (NKJ)

This love of God and His patience with sinful humankind are further illustrated in 2 Peter 3:9:

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (NKJ).

God's love for man is further confirmed in Ezekiel 18:23. He asks:

"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" (KJV)

God loves His creation - humankind - who fell into the power of sin through disobedience. With endless patience, through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the nation of Israel, He worked his plan of salvation for every person through

Jesus Christ. **No man on earth deserves to be saved**, because all have sinned. He (God) first loved us, as we read in 1 John 4:19:

"We love him, because he first loved us." (KJV).

Is there any proof that He first loved us? We discover this in 1 John 4:10:

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (KJV).

Proof of His love is also found in Romans 5:8:

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (NKJ) (Emphasis added).

According to the Bible in 1 John 4:8, God is love: *"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."* and 1 John 4:16: *"God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him."* (Emphasis added). One can therefore say, with respect to Him, that God is unable to do anything that is unkind or unloving. All His acts and everything He does, originate in love, are benevolent and to the ultimate good of man. Benevolence is a disposition to do good for the sake of doing good and not for any selfish gain whatsoever. Any deed or action that is not benevolent, or to the ultimate good of man, is not of God, but of Satan or man. Even God's judgments are benevolent and for the ultimate good of man. Sometimes His actions against people are to their advantage in that they prevent them from bringing a greater judgment upon themselves. Pain and suffering on earth are not necessarily God's judgments. Most of this is the result of man's sin (his own and others').

The essence of God's law is love because He is love. You must love God above all, and love your neighbour as yourself. God's law is found in Jesus' words in Matthew 22:37-39:

"'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 'This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (NKJ).

Obedience to the God of the Bible means to love and not harm people; Leviticus 19:18:

"but you shall love your neighbor as yourself." (See also Deuteronomy 6:5, Mark 12:30-31 and Luke 10:27.)

Our behaviour (all our actions) must, therefore, always be benevolent and to the honour of God and the benefit of His creation, including our neighbour. Benevolent behaviour towards your neighbour means that you do everything possible (in the circumstances) to his/her benefit, and nothing to his/her detriment. It is obvious that if all people always did that, no one would ever be harmed, and God would always be honoured. **How can the motive for such a law be anything but love?**

This love of God is not a feeling or an emotion; it is a choice to act with benevolence in all circumstances, including in interaction with people you do not like, and your enemies. This is God's command in his Word. In Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:27 God says:

"Love your enemies" (NKJ)

And in Proverbs 25:21:

"If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;" (NKJ).

In Romans 12:14 the command is:

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse." (NKJ).

1 Peter 3:9 concurs:

"Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing;" (KJV).

Everyone knows, however, that not all 'Christians' behave in a benevolent manner. To the contrary, very few Christians behave in this way. The reader must realise that there are different definitions of Christianity. A biblical definition for a Christian is someone who, because of the salvation in Christ, is completely dedicated to God, denies himself, follows Christ and is willing to deny himself every day (Luke 9:23). It is someone who is dead to the world and sin, but lives for Christ (Romans 6:2-14) who, as a child of God, is led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14); and in whose heart the love of God has been poured out (Romans 5:5). (See also Appendix B).

It is important to realise that in this process of salvation, God gets all the honour because it is His work. Even the ability to believe and to choose is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8). God Himself enables people to dedicate themselves completely to Him (John 15:5). **No good works can save a person,**

but if your dedication (salvation) does not lead to good works, your dedication cannot be real.

In some texts in the Bible, it seems as if God hates people. An example is found in Malachi 1:2-3, where God says: *"I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau,"* The word *hated* is, however, used in the sense of 'I have a lower regard for the one' or 'I love the one less than the other'. It is understandable that God loved Jacob more because He is omniscient, and He always knew that Esau would be His enemy. *Enemy* is also a word that can be derived from the original word that is here rendered as 'hated'. According to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, the word was also used in Old Testament times *"In the case of two wives in a family, in which one was preferred over the other, it may be said that one was loved and the other 'hated'."*

Another example is where Jesus, in Luke 14:26, says: *"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."* It is obvious that the word rendered as 'hate' in this instance cannot mean lack of love, because it is the same Jesus who repeatedly taught people to love their neighbour, even their enemy, as they love themselves. You must love God more than you love yourself. According to *The New Strong's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words*, the meaning of the word rendered 'hate' is also to 'love less'.

It is clear that God loves all people, and that is not because it is deserved, but because **He is love**. It is His nature. God's wrath can, however, be provoked when his love is persistently rejected.

6. Relations with other People

The love of Yahweh and Allah's love for people have already been discussed. It has also been shown that Allah expects Muslims to hate non-Muslims, but there are clearer instructions in the respective holy books, of what dispositions are expected by Yahweh and Allah towards other people.

The Bible

Yahweh, the God of the Bible, is love and it is important to Him that people live in peace with all people, and love their neighbours, including strangers.

Romans 12:18: *"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."* (NKJ)

Hebrews 12:14: *"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:"* (NKJ)

1 Corinthians 13 contains an inspired lesson about the excellence of love. It is an unequivocal instruction to love. It is in agreement with Yahweh's law of love that has already been discussed, and it ends with the following words:

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (NIV)

Yes, the God of the Bible is serious about love, and that includes love for strangers, people from other cultures who act and think in different ways to what you are familiar with. This is more proof that when Yahweh commanded the destruction of whole nations, it was not because of His lack of love for them but because there was no other option. He loved them and would not have them killed if there was any possibility that anyone would repent. In Ezekiel 18:32, the God of the Bible says:

"For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!" (NIV).

It must be understood that God did not destroy people because they did not serve Him but because they were a threat to His plan of redemption for humankind through the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason, Yahweh expects man to love his neighbour as himself, including strangers, as can also be seen in the following three verses:

Leviticus 19:18: *"but you shall love your neighbor as yourself:"* (NKJ)

Leviticus 19:34: *"The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself;"* (NKJ)

Deuteronomy 10:19: *"Therefore love the stranger,"* (NKJ)

How is a true Christian recognisable? The Lord Jesus Christ Himself answers this question in John 13:35:

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

This means that should you see people, known as Christians who hate, fight and kill one another, know that they are not true Christians.

Quran

If Allah hates people who do not worship him and expects his followers to do the same, it is difficult to believe that *Islam* means peace, and that Allah and the God of the Bible are the same being.

Allah's instructions concerning the attitudes of his followers towards non-Muslims (unbelievers) are clearly evident in the Quran.

Surah 3:28: "Let not the believers (Muslims) take disbelievers (non-Muslims) for their friends ..." (Pickthall, 1997:38).

Surah 5:51: "O ye who believe! Take not Jews and Christians for friends. They are friends to one another. He among you who taketh them for friends is (one) of them. Lo! Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk." (Pickthall, 1997:79).

In their book, *The Facts on Islam*, Ankerberg and Weldon (1991:8) quote the above verse (*Surah 5:51*) from another English translation of the Quran as follows:

"O, true believers, take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends. They cannot be trusted. They are defiled-filth."

How does this equate with peaceful, and what does Allah mean, in the following citations, when he instructs Muslims to be 'hard' against unbelievers (non-Muslims)?

Surah 48:29: "Muhammad is the Apostle of God (Allah); and those who are with him are strong against unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other." (Ali, 2000:471)

Pickthall (1997:372) renders it as follows: *"Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. And those with him are hard against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves."*

Allah is serious about enmity against non-Muslims. The following is not a recommendation but a command that is punishable if disobeyed:

Surah 4:138-139: "Bear unto the hypocrites the tidings that for them there is a painful doom. Those who choose disbelievers (non-Muslims) for their friends" (Pickthall, 1997:68).

Allah clearly describes a Muslim who befriends a non-Muslim as a hypocrite, and warns that a painful doom awaits him.

Surah 18:102: "Do the disbelievers reckon that they can choose my bondsmen as protecting friends ...? We have prepared hell as a welcome for the disbelievers." (Pickthall, 1997:208)

If a painful doom awaits Muslims with non-Muslim friends and Allah calls them 'hypocrites', it explains why there is no real social interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims. **A Muslim cannot have any non-Muslim friends without disobeying Allah.**

Peace-loving?

7. Sin, forgiveness and Punishment

According to the Bible

The Bible is clear about what sin is. God spelled it out in the Ten Commandments. Jesus came and summarised God's law in the command of love, to which reference has been made. The command of love is to love God above all, and to love your neighbour as yourself. This means that a person has to love if he/she wants to fulfil the law of God. Lawlessness or not keeping the law of God is sin.

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness."
(1 John 3:4) (NKJ).

Transgression of the command to love God and man is lawlessness, which is sin. In other words, sin is a lack of love or unloving behaviour. Everything that one does that is not to the honour of God, and any behaviour that is to the detriment of one's neighbour is viewed as unloving behaviour, and therefore, sin according to the Bible, and that means death. Romans 6:23 says:

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."(NKJ). This death means eternal separation from God.

By now, the reader should know that God loves man. He wanted to redeem him (man) from this eternal death. That is why He sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins, to redeem those who believe and so enable them to be with Him for eternity. Jesus not only saves man from the penalty of sin but also from the power of sin, according to Matthew 1:21:

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." (NKJ).

John confirms this when he writes in 1 John 3:5:

"And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin". (NKJ).

When one is saved from sin, you belong to the One who saved you from sin and then He pours His love into your heart according to Romans 5:5:

"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us". (NKJ).

If His love is in people's hearts, then His law is also in their hearts. He enables them to fulfil His law and to act with benevolence in all circumstances through His Spirit and His law in their hearts.

God is just, and therefore, He must punish sin. It is a well-known fact that punishment for transgressions of the law is required to maintain law and order. Numbers 14:18 says:

"The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished;" (NIV).

Sin must be punished. God's love for humankind compelled him to provide the Offer in Jesus Christ to bear the punishment for our sins. Jesus, as the perfect offering, bore the punishment for the sins of all who believe and accept it. Being a just God, He does not punish sin more than once. The (true) Christian is forgiven on the basis that Jesus was punished for his sins. This person has turned in repentance from a life of sin, to a life fully dedicated to God. Pain and suffering on earth are usually not God's punishment for sin, but merely the result of sin.

According to the books of Islam

A clear indication of what sin is cannot be found anywhere in the Quran or the Hadith. There is no definition of sin. In Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998(Vol.3):121,124). A description of various sins and virtues is found under the heading *Sins and Virtues*. It states that good deeds can cancel bad deeds (sins):

"In many places in the Quran and Hadis, it has been stated that sins are forgiven if particular acts of virtue are done in a particular manner."

One of these 'places' is in *Surah 23:102-103* where it says:

"Then those whose balance (of good deeds) is heavy, they will attain salvation. But those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls; in Hell will they abide."

This is, of course, not even possible in a worldly legal system, due to its unfairness. Imagine the following scenario: a murderer tries to convince the judge that after committing a murder, he found himself in a similar situation but this time he did not commit another murder. What if, in another situation, he saved the life of a person who was in similar circumstances as his victim when he murdered him? Would that be sufficient to acquit him, or to waive his punishment? No court of law will ever do that, and any person with any

sense of justice knows that justice is not done in such a way. How much more will a just God see that justice prevails?

In Islam, however, one can be forgiven without punishment. A mere ritual prayer like the *Salat* referred to in chapter 3 above can earn the forgiveness of sins. According to Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:34:466w (Vol.3):168) the Prophet Mohammed, on enquiry, answered as follows:

"A Muslim servant says prayer hoping thereby the pleasure of Allah and then his sins drop down from him just as these leaves drop down from this tree (sic)."

Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987:504(Vol.1):300) confirms that sins are forgiven by saying prayers. When somebody enquired about his sins, the Prophet, as part of his council to him, recited *Surah 11:114*:

"Allah revealed: 'And offer prayers perfectly at the two ends of the day and in some hours of the night. Verily! Good deeds remove (annul) the evil deeds.'"

It is understandable that a Muslim is in doubt concerning his relationship with Allah. How must he know if his prayers, fasts and other good deeds are sufficient for the remittal of his sins? The cause for and even more serious concern is the fact that it is virtually impossible to know what sin is and what constitutes serious sin, because it is never clearly defined in the Quran.

Karim, in his Al-Hadis (1998(Vol.3):128) lists 53 sins under the sub-title: *"The following have been enumerated by the jurists to be the great sins:"* Some examples are: no. 1: *"To set up a partner with Allah."* no. 12: *"Rebellion without just cause"*, no. 20: *"To have friendship with the unbelievers to the detriment of Islam."* no. 49: *"to address a Muslim as 'Kafir'"* (*Kafir* means unbeliever in Arabic), no. 52: *"to cohabit with a menstruating woman"*. Lack of love or unloving behaviour is not mentioned as a sin.

Some of these sins are apparently unforgivable, while it is never sure what, or how many, good deeds are required for the forgiveness of different sins.

In some places, mention is made that Allah does forgive sins when asked, but there is more in the Quran to the effect that Allah does not easily forgive. It is uncertain when one can expect pardon for sins.

The exclusive nature of Allah's love is also proven by the fact that, according to the Quran, one can earn eternal life by being a Muslim and doing good

deeds. This is never a surety, because the Quran makes it clear that Allah forgives whom he wants to forgive:

Surah 2:82: "And those who believe (Muslims) and do good works, such are rightful owners of the Garden. They will abide therein." (Pickthall, 1997:11)

Surah 4:48: "Allah forgiveth not that a partner should be ascribed unto Him. He forgiveth (all) save that to whom He will" (Pickthall, 1997:59). Yusuf Ali's translation says: "He forgives anything else, to whom He pleases".

The phrase 'partner ascribed to Allah' means to worship another God, and according to the above verse, this is an unforgivable sin. Evidently, this means that, should a Christian convert to Islam or someone else convert from any other religion to Islam, Allah cannot forgive that person. What sense will such a conversion to Islam have if your new God cannot forgive you?

There is only one certain way to get into the Muslim-heaven, called 'Paradise', and that is to fight for Allah (to take part in *Jihad* or Holy War). Allah's promise is read in:

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:39(Vol.2):356): "Fight in the way of Allah. Whoso fights in the way of Allah even for an interval between two milkings of a she-camel, Paradise is sure for him."

There is, however, the exception of debt. Not even *Jihad* will get you into paradise if you are in debt:

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:20(Vol.2):350): "the Holy Prophet said: Fighting in the way of Allah atones for everything except debt."

However, other sins are not a problem. No matter how sinful your life, if you partake in *Jihad*, you will enter into paradise. According to Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:324w (Vol.2):369) Mohammed was present at a funeral prayer of a man when the following conversation took place:

"O Messenger of Allah, don't pray for him, as he was a transgressing person. Then the Holy Prophet looked towards the people and asked: Has anybody among you seen him in any action of Islam? 'Yes' reported one man, 'O Messenger of Allah, he was a guard for one night in the way of Allah.' Then the Messenger of Allah led prayer over him and scattered dust

over him. He said: Your companions have thought that you are in Hell. I bear witness that you are one of the inmates of Paradise.”

In this passage, nothing is said about this man’s possible debt, or that Mohammed enquired about it before he gave his verdict about the man’s salvation. In Islam, the only certainty is that qualification for paradise is uncertain. The following quotations from the Quran do not really bring more clarity:

Surah 4:17: “Forgiveness is only incumbent on Allah towards those who do evil in ignorance (and) then turn quickly (in repentance) to Allah.” (Pickthall, 1997:56)

Surah 57:21: “Race one with another for forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whereof the breadth is as the breadth of the heavens and the earth, which is in store for those who believe in Allah and His Messengers. Such is the bounty of Allah, which He bestoweth upon whom He will,” (Pickthall, 1997:396) (Emphasis added).

Repentance sounds like an acceptable reason for forgiveness, but is it sufficient without punishment? Will anyone guilty of theft, assault, murder or any crime be pardoned; and his punishment be waived purely on account of his repentance? Certainly not! It will be unjust. How just is a God who forgives only based on his will without any valid reason? One can argue that God can do whatever He wants to do, and that is true. If what he does is unjust, then there is no love because love includes justice. A god who works on this premise cannot be Yahweh, the God of the Bible.

Allah, however, punishes all those he does not forgive; and they are severely punished here on earth as well as in the hereafter. Allah's warning to non-Muslims in this regard in the Quran in *Surah 3:56* is:

“As to those who reject Faith (Islam), I will punish them with terrible agony in this world and in the Hereafter, nor will they have anyone to help.” (Ali, 2000:137) (Emphasis added).

This study will mainly focus on punishment meted out by Islam here on earth. The nature of punishment in Islam will contribute to the question whether Islam is the peace-loving religion it claims to be. The next quotation from Al-Bukhari’s Hadith (Khan, 1987:173(Vol.2):100) is not only an indication of the prescribed punishment for disrespect for Allah, but also of the fate of unbelievers (non-Muslims):

“The Prophet recited Surat-an-Najm (specific prayer where the forehead must get dirty as proof of prostration before Allah) at Mecca and prostrated while reciting it and those who were with him did the same except an old man who took a handful of small stones or earth and lifted it to his forehead and said, ‘this is sufficient for me.’ Later on, I saw him killed as a non-believer.”

Apostasy from Islam is a very serious sin for a Muslim, and punishment on earth, as well as in the life hereafter, is severe. It appears that punishment of apostates is not only entrusted to Allah. The death penalty is applied to apostates here on earth and sometimes in very cruel ways. This is understandable in view of the above quoted *Surah* 3:56:

“As to those who reject Faith (Islam), I will punish them with terrible agony in this world and in the Hereafter, nor will they have anyone to help.”

This presents serious problems for non-Muslims, and not only for Muslim apostates. Karim (1998(Vol.2):523) says:

“It appears, ..., that the jurists prescribed death sentence for the apostates in accordance with the verse – 5:33 Q.”

The verse referred to, *Surah* 5:33, and it reads as follows in Pickthall’s translation of the Quran:

“The only reward of those who make war upon Allah and His Messenger and strife after corruption in the land will be that they will be killed or crucified, or have their hands and feet on alternate sides cut off, or will be expelled out of the land. Such will be their degradation in the world, and in the Hereafter theirs will be an awful doom.”

From the Hadith’s handling of this verse it can be deduced that apostasy from Islam, and even non-acceptance of Islam as a religion, are seen as equal to war against Allah against which Islam is forced to defend itself. This is probably the reason why the Hadith leaves no doubt as to what should happen to apostates. Its clear instructions are: Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:25:74(Vol.2):524):

“Akramah reported that some heretics were brought before Ali. He burnt them. This reached Ibn Abbas who said: Had I been (there), I would not have burnt them owing to the prohibition of the Messenger of Allah: Don’t inflict Allah’s punishment on anyone. I would have certainly killed them owing to the saying of the Prophet: Kill one who changes his religion.”

The problem was not the killing of the apostates but rather the way in which it was carried out. According to the Prophet, burning is Allah's way of killing, and man was not supposed to use the same method.

Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987:57(Vol.9):45) also leaves no doubt as to what the punishment for apostasy should be:

"Allah's Messenger said, 'Whoever changed his Islamic religion, then kill him'."

According to Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:25:75(Vol.2):524), to kill an apostate is a good deed that Allah rewards:

"the Messenger of Allah said: ". They will flee away from the religion as an arrow runs from a quiver (sic). Wherever you meet them, kill them, because there will be reward for their murder on Resurrection Day for those who kill them." (Emphasis added).

Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987:64(Vol.9):50) confirms this:

"So, where-ever you find them, kill them, for who-ever kills them shall have reward on the Day of Resurrection."

A group of the 'Ukl' tribe accepted Islam and went to Mohammed in connection with a health problem they had. The following then happened, according to Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:25:77(Vol.2):524):

"He (Mohammed) ordered them to bring the camels of Zakat (Islam's obligatory charity offer) and drink their urine and milk. They did so and became cured. Afterwards they turned retrogrades (sic), killed their herdsmen and drove away the camels (they probably felt that the contribution - Zakat - was too high) he sent to trace their steps and so they were brought. He had their hands and feet cut off and eyes plucked out... Then they did not medically treat them till they died."

One must admit that the punishment was probably not only for apostasy, but also for the killing of the herdsmen and the stealing of the camels. It is, however, treated under the heading *Murder of rebels and apostates*.

Sahih Al-Bukhari's Hadith (Khan, 1987:796(Vol.8):521) also gives some examples of the way in which the Prophet Mohammed punished apostates. The reader should bear in mind that the Prophet's traditions are seen as the

standard that should be followed by all Muslims. Al-Bukhari ends his rendering of the above story with the following caption:

“the Prophet ordered for some iron pieces to be made red hot, and their eyes were branded with them and their hands and feet were cut off and were not cauterized. Then they were put at a place called Al-Harra, and when they asked for water to drink they were not given till they died.”

Before he gave the above and other examples of Mohammed’s way of killing people, Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987(Vol.8):520) wrote:

“The Prophet did not cauterize (the amputated limbs of) those who fought (against Allah and His Messenger) and of those who were renegades (reverted from Islam) (therefore they bled) till they died.”

The refusal of medical treatment is an indication that the Prophet’s intention was to kill them. The question is: Was such a cruel method of killing necessary? Would the punishment for their crimes in the Hereafter not have been sufficient? This is, of course, in accordance with Allah’s warning in *Surah 3:56*:

“As to those who reject Faith (Islam), I will punish them with terrible agony in this world and in the Hereafter, nor will they have anyone to help.” (Ali, 2000:137)

Islam’s sacred books describe these events in detail, without any indication that there is anything wrong with them. There is, on the contrary, an admiration of Mohammed despite all these cruel deeds.

Theft is another sin or offence that is severely punished in Islam. The prescription in the Quran is:

Surah 5: 38, 39: “As to the thief. Male or female, cut off his or her hands, a punishment by way of example, from Allah, for their crime: and Allah is exalted in power. But if the thief repents after his crime, and amends his conduct, Allah turns to him in forgiveness;” (Ali, 2000:88). Note that in the same author’s earlier translation, (Ali, 1946:254) these two verses are numbers 41 and 42.

This is a clear command from Allah, according to Islamic teaching, which all Muslims are obliged to obey. However, it is somewhat differently applied in the Hadith (Karim, 1998:25:351w (Vol. 2):560):

"the Messenger of Allah said about a thief: If he steals, cut off his hand. If he steals again, cut off his foot. If he steals again, cut off his (other) hand. If he steals again, cut off his (other) foot."

It was already shown that the Bible is clear about what sin is, the penalty for sin, and how to get pardon from God for your sins. It is true that many 'Christians' are ignorant about these truths, but this is because they are not serious enough about the Bible and their relationship with God in Christ. The true Christian knows that he/she has eternal life; 1 John 5:11-13:

"And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."

In Islam, it is an uncertain matter, as the Muslim will only know in the hereafter if his good deeds were sufficient to qualify for paradise.

8. Islam's Paradise

An eternity filled with fun and enjoyment awaits those who qualify for Islam's paradise. Paradise, also called 'Gardens' (the place where some Muslims will be in the hereafter), is the item that, together with *Jihad* (holy war), receives the most attention in the Quran. It is discussed here because it is the reward or price that Allah pays for those who fight for his cause, *Surah* 9:111:

"Lo! Allah hath bought from the believers their lives and their wealth because the Garden will be theirs: they shall fight in the way of Allah and shall slay and be slain." (Pickthall, 1997:137).

See also Dawood's (1999) rendering:

"God (Allah) has purchased from the faithful their lives and worldly goods, and in return has promised them the garden. They will fight for the cause of God (Allah); they will slay and be slain." (See also Chapter 11: iii *Jihad*, p.24).

It is a place where sensual pleasures such as eating, drinking and sex are the main ingredients. As already mentioned, *Jihad* is the only certain way to be admitted to paradise. This may explain the fact that men are the most privileged in Islam's paradise. It must be borne in mind that for every man in paradise there will be at least 72 virgins. It is not clear whether these virgins are the women who qualified for paradise while on earth. If a man, regardless of his age on earth, can be changed into a man of thirty to thirty-two years of age in paradise, why can't a married woman on earth be changed into a virgin in paradise? There is, however, this poor consolation for women that, although they will be in groups of at least 72 (virgins), the men will each have the sexual ability of one hundred men. An additional 'advantage' is that:

"In spite of prolonged intercourse, no child will be born" (Karim, 1998(Vol.4):161).

Women are not only the majority in Islam's paradise, but also in Islam's hell. According to Sahih-Al-Bukhari's compilation of the Hadith (Khan, 1987:28,301(Vol.1) & 2:161) Mohammed said the following:

"I was shown the hell-fire and that the majority of its dwellers were women"

In the Quran, there are at least 82 references to this paradise or gardens, where Muslims who qualified for it will be forever. Only some are quoted:

Surah 2:25: "And give glad tidings (O Mohammed) onto those who believe and do good works; that theirs are Gardens underneath which rivers flow; ...Therefore them are pure companions; there for ever they abide." (Pickthall, 1997:6)

Surah 37:42-45, 48 mentions that for the pure there will be: "Fruits (delights); and they (shall enjoy) honour and dignity, in Gardens of Felicity (bliss, happiness), facing each other on raised couches (of dignity); ... And besides them will be chaste women, restraining their glances, with big eyes (of wonder and beauty)." (Ali, 2000:398)

Surah 38:50-52: For the faithful there will be: "Gardens of eternity, whose doors will (ever) be open to them; therein they will recline (at ease): therein can they call (at pleasure) for fruit in abundance, and (delicious) drink; And beside them will be chaste women restraining their glances, (companions) of equal age." (Ali, 2000:409)

Surah 44:52, 54: Those who did their duty shall be: "Among gardens and springs; So; and We (Allah) shall join them to Companions with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes." (Ali 2000:451)

Surah 47:15: "A description of the Garden which the righteous are promised: in it are rivers of water unstaling (Sic.); rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink; and rivers of honey pure and clear. And there are for them all kinds of fruits;" (Ali, 2000:462).

Muslims are not allowed to drink wine here on earth (no. 9 on the list of 53 serious sins, mentioned before), but in paradise it is permissible. More promises by Allah:

Surah 52:17, 19, 20: "As to the righteous, they will be in Gardens, and in happiness, .. (To them will be said:) 'Eat and drink with good pleasure because of your (good) deeds.' They will recline (with ease) on couches (of dignity) arranged in ranks; and We (Allah) shall wed them to maidens, with beautiful, big and lustrous eyes." (Ali, 2000:484)

Surah 55:70, 72, 74, 76: "Wherein (are found) the good and beautiful - ... Fair ones, close-guarded in pavilions - ... Whom neither man nor jinni (spirit) will have touched before them - .. Reclining on green cushions and fair carpets" (Pickthall, 1997:390).

According to Ali (2000:496) the maidens are *"restrained in pavilions."* One wonders why these beautiful maidens are 'restrained' and 'close-guarded in

pavilions'. Are they held against their will? Is it not 'paradise' for them also? Are they only objects for men's pleasure? If this is true, then it certainly cannot be the reward of women who lived a good life on earth.

Surah 56 gives the following explanation of what awaits those whose good deeds were sufficient to get them into paradise:

"There wait on them immortal youths" (v.17) "And (there are) fair ones with wide, lovely eyes, Like unto hidden pearls" (v. 22,23), "We (Allah) have created them a (new) creation and made them virgins, lovers, equal in age." (V.35-37) (Pickthall, 1997:391)

There are too many examples to quote, but let us have a look at what the Hadith says about this matter. In *Al-Hadis* (Karim, 1998:23:44(Vol.2):358) the Prophet Mohammed said of those who take part in *Jihad*:

"... the Messenger of Allah said: There are six virtues of a martyr near Allah. At the first shedding of blood he is shown his place in Paradise, he is protected from the punishment of grave, he is kept safe from the great catastrophe, a crown of glory will be put upon his head, one jewel of which is better than the world and what is therein, he will be married to seventy two wives of large dark eyed virgins,"

In *Al-Hadis* (Karim, 1998:42:36(Vol.4):175) the Prophet said:

"The lowest of the inmates of Paradise (in rank) will have eighty thousand serveat (sic.? Probably 'servants') and seventy two wives, and a tent of pearls, emeralds and jewels will be pitched up for him"

How will a man be able to cope with so many wives? The Prophet's answer to this question is (Karim, 1998:42:24(Vol.4):169):

"the Holy Prophet said: The believer will be given such and such strength in Paradise for sexual intercourse. It was questioned: O Prophet of Allah can he do that, He said: He will be given strength of one hundred persons."

There is no balance here, because each man will have the sexual ability of 100 men, but only 72 wives. Surely, a man would wish at times that he had 28 more wives.

The reader should bear in mind that these pleasures will last forever. What man, who really believes this, will not be prepared to give his life in *Jihad* for this?

9. Violence within Christianity

Yahweh, the God of the Bible, hates violence so much that He made a decision to destroy humankind because of the violence. In Genesis 6:13 God said to Noah just before the deluge:

“The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” (KJV)

God declared His dissatisfaction with man's violence again in:

Isaiah 59:6b:“... their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.” (KJV)

In the book of Amos, Yahweh also spoke out against the violence and oppression perpetrated by his nation:

Amos 3:10: “For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.” (KJV)

However, no one can deny that in the history of man, ‘Christians’ and organisations committed heinous deeds of violence in the name of Christianity. Think of the Inquisition where thousands of so-called heretics [people who disagreed with (false) teaching] were tortured and killed by the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). It was mainly the true Christians, who did not agree with the false teachings of the RCC, who were persecuted. During the Crusades, which were also led by the RCC, thousands of people were killed because they were not ‘Christians’. These people were mainly Jews and Arabs.

Even Reformers were sometimes violent. Martin Luther encouraged violence against Jews; (something he learned from the RCC) an attitude that was never ‘reformed’. John Calvin was involved with the execution of at least one ‘opponent’, one Michael Servetus. The Swiss Reformer Zwingli died on the battlefield, defending himself against an attack by Roman Catholic groups.

So-called Christians, calling themselves Protestants and Catholics, have been fighting each other for decades already in Northern Ireland. These ‘Christian’ groups are nothing but political parties that developed from Christian groups that were far-removed from true Biblical Christianity, even in their development phase. More examples could be mentioned.

In none of these instances can these ‘Christians’ find justification for their violent behaviour in the Bible. Referral has already been made to the fact that God’s order for man is to love his neighbour, including the stranger.

God loves peace and He wants all people to live in peace; Romans 12:18:

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. (NKJ) (Emphasis added).

Hebrews 12:14: *"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:"* (NKJ) (Emphasis added).

Peace will only be achieved when people love each other; Leviticus 19:18:

"but you shall love your neighbor as yourself:" (NKJ).

This includes the stranger; Leviticus 19:34:

"The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself;" (NKJ).

Deuteronomy 10:19:

"Therefore love the stranger," (NKJ).

God is serious about this. Deuteronomy 27:19:

"Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger" (KJV).

God is not to be blamed for violence within Christianity. Some Christians, who were subjected to false teaching, may have been involved with some of the violence that was perpetrated in the name of Christianity. Real Christians know that the love of God compels them to love all people. The Christians who make themselves guilty of violence are 'wolves in sheep's clothing', and only Christians by name. They never really knew and served Yahweh. They were people who did not know the biblical definition of true Christianity. (See the definition in Appendix B).

It has already been demonstrated that a just and loving God has the obligation, because of these attributes, to punish and to protect. God inevitably had to discipline His nation because of their sin. Sometimes He had to punish surrounding heathen nations severely through His nation Israel. This was, however, the result of His love for man, because His plan for the redemption of man was in jeopardy. His action against those nations was necessary to keep His plan on track.

Satan always tried to impede God's plan to redeem man from the power of darkness. For that reason he not only tried to destroy the nation through

which God wanted to bless the world, but he also tried to deceive them into idol worship, with some success. It was essential that God sometimes disciplined His nation by using other nations. At other times, when Israel was in danger, He instructed them to punish hostile heathen nations. The violence was always the result of man's disobedience, and used for the purification and preparation of His nation for the advent of His Blessing to the world, the Saviour Jesus Christ. It was never meant as a general rule against non-Jewish nations, or for the purpose of Israel's domination over other nations.

Jesus is God's Saviour for everyone who believes. When He came to the world, He made it clear that love for God above all else, and love for your neighbour, equal to your love for self, are in effect what the law of God is about, as stated in Matthew 22:37-39:

Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸"This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹"And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (NKJ).

Only those *"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not"* (2 Corinthians 4:4 KJV) are unable to see the great love of God herein.

How can anybody say that he loves God if he is guilty of violence and bloodshed against His command? How can he say that he loves his neighbour, while committing acts of violence against him?

If one should ask God: "If You are a God of love and omnipotent as the Bible teaches, why is there so much violence and senseless suffering on the earth?" His answer, based on the teachings of the Bible, in humility and respect could be as follows: *"In My supreme wisdom I created man to live with Me in love and harmony. They were in My presence and under My control. They were intelligent beings with the ability to make decisions. They chose, against My warning, to put their own interests above Mine by being disobedient. I am a God of justice and dispelled them from My presence, immediate control and responsibility, into a world that is cast in wickedness. Their separation from Me meant death for them and that is still the case for everyone who is not reconciled to Me. I had to act in accordance with what I said, otherwise My warning would have been false and that would mean that I could never again expect anyone, including the angels, to believe Me. I am Truth, which means that if I say one thing I cannot do something else. It was their choice against My warning. It is still my desire for them to return to Me voluntarily for My love is never ending towards them. Knowing that people would not be able to*

*return to Me without facing punishment for their disobedience, I reached out to them. I reached out to those who had enquiring hearts about Me, and through them I prepared a nation by making covenants with them into which they entered voluntarily. Through this nation, I made provision for man's reconciliation with Me, (a blessing unto the nations) by sending My Son, Jesus as ransom and propitiation for their sins. Anyone who voluntarily accepts this offer, and now lives through My power in this love of Mine, is reconciled to Me. It will be unjust to force people – in different possible ways – to return to Me. They can only return voluntarily, and in no other way but through Jesus Christ, My Son. Through the ages I have intervened in people's lives (through salvation as well as punishment) only when they willingly subjected themselves to covenants with Me. It is only those people's prayers that I hear and answer. I do not even listen to the prayers of people who call themselves believers but who live in sin (lack of love). There are lots of people who claim to be Christian-believers, but who want to be Christians for selfish reasons, in order to gain some benefit from it. These people have not yet denied themselves and are not prepared to trust Me with their lives. Although I love these people and want them to return to Me in true dedication so that I can hear and answer their prayers, I cannot do it because of My righteousness. These people are already so unbelieving, depraved and self-centered that if I should protect them without them asking for it in prayerful trust in Me, it will only encourage them in their wrongdoing. Others demand My protection and assistance in times of trouble because they claim to be Christians. They are not doing My will and therefore I do not know them. (See Matthew 7:21 where Jesus said: **"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."**). True believers are foreigners and strangers in this world (see 1 Peter 2:11) which is presently still in the power of wickedness, and are often still subjected to pain and suffering as a result of other people's sin (sometimes their own), but I am with them every moment and in My omnipotence I will see to it that everything works out for their good. (Romans 8:28)*

From this explanation, the reasons for violence, pain and suffering in Christianity should be clear. The God of the Bible is against violence, it is man's sin (unloving behaviour) that necessitates violence from His side, which He would rather avoid. Violence initiated by Yahweh is exclusively to protect His plan for the redemption of humankind, and His motive is love. All other violence is against God's will and is sin against Him. What would the reason for violence in Islam be?

10. Violence in Islam

It is obvious that Islam is involved in much violence worldwide. No effort will be made to prove this fact as everybody who follows the news in the media knows it. This, however, does not mean that all Muslims are violent by nature. The problem is not in the character or nature of the people but in the nature of the religion. Muslims are adherents to the Islamic faith, which is based on their holy books, the Quran and the compilations of the Hadith (traditions of Mohammed). Muslims live in servile obedience to the teachings of these books because of their high regard for them. The more faithful Muslims become to Allah, the more faithfully they obey his teachings of the Quran and Hadith. The teachings of these books concerning violence, including *Jihad* (Islamic holy war) will now be discussed in some detail, because that is what determines the peacefulness of a faithful Muslim, and not his character.

i. In the Quran

Contrary to the God of the Bible who hates violence, the Muslim sees violence often as a virtue by which he can earn wonderful benefits in paradise.

There are countless places in the Quran where Allah encourages his followers to violence against 'unbelievers' (non-Muslims). Only some of these will be quoted.

Surah 8:38, 39: "Say to the Unbelievers, if (now) they desist (from unbelief), their past would be forgiven them; But if they persist, the punishment of those before them is already a matter of warning for them. And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and religion becomes Allah's in its entirety." (Ali, 2000:144) (Emphasis added).

This is a clear warning to non-Muslims that they will be punished in the same way as other non-Muslims before them.

Furthermore, it is clear in view of the example given, that this section of the Quran was only written after there was already violent actions undertaken in the name of Allah against non-Muslims.

There is a reward of 'great value' (Pickthall, 1997:62) for those who obey Allah's command to fight and spread Islam as a religion:

Surah 4:74: "Let those fight in the way of Allah who sell the life of this world for the other. Whoso fighteth in the way of Allah, be he slain or be he victorious. On him We (Allah) shall bestow a vast reward."

Surah 4:76: *"Those who believe do battle for the cause of Allah; and those who disbelieve do battle for the cause of idols. So fight the minions of the devil."*

Ali (2000:70) renders this verse:

"Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who reject Faith (Islam) fight in the cause of Evil: So fight you against the friends of Satan:"

Non-Muslims are here described as 'friends of Satan' and Muslims as 'those who believe' who have no choice but to obey Allah's instructions to fight.

Surah 4:84: *"So fight in the way of Allah - ... - and urge on the believers (Muslims). Peradventure, Allah will restrain the might of those who disbelieve."* (Pickthall, 1997:63)

Surah 4:89: *"They long that ye should disbelieve even as they disbelieve, that ye may be upon a level (with them). So choose not friends from them till they forsake (flee from) their homes in the way of Allah; if they turn back (to enmity), then take them and kill them wherever ye find them,"* (Pickthall, 1997:63)

Muslims claim that they only fight and kill in self-defence. It is, however, clear from this section in the Quran that these people have already fled their homes because of Allah's persecution. They were then sought out and killed. Can this be self-defence?

Surah 4:104 confirms the attitude expected of a Muslim towards his enemies:

"Relent not in pursuit of the (hostile) people." (Pickthall, 1997:65), and:
"And slacken not in following up the enemy." (Ali, 2000:74)

To pursue (the enemy) means to harass, persecute, and persist in opposing or seeking to injure (Chambers English Dictionary, 1988). Clearly, Allah does not want his enemies (non-Muslims) to escape. They must be punished in this world as well as in the next, and this is confirmed by the next quotation:

Surah 5:33: *"The only reward of those who make war upon Allah and His messenger and strive after corruption in the land will be that they will be killed or crucified, or have their hands and feet on alternate sides cut off, or will be expelled out of the land."* (Pickthall, 1997:76)

This text does not only apply to war situations, as was demonstrated earlier, but is also used to justify the killing of apostates. In the Afrikaans translation, under the heading *'Vrede moet deur krag beveilig word'*, which means, "Peace must be protected by power" Pickthall (1997:124) translates *Surah* 8:59-60 as follows:

"And let not those who disbelieve suppose that they can outstrip (Allah's purpose). Lo! They cannot escape. Make ready for them all thou canst of (armed) force and of horses tethered, that thereby ye may dismay the enemy of Allah and your enemy, and others beside them whom ye know not. Allah knoweth them. Whatsoever ye spend in the way of Allah will be repaid to you in full, and ye will not be wronged."

These 'unbelievers' are in serious trouble. Even if they should try to escape Allah's wrath, he gives them the assurance that they will not be successful, together with instructions and encouragements for Muslims, not to 'relent' or 'slacken' in their pursuit of unbelievers as mentioned in *Surah* 4:104, cited above. In *Surah* 8:65, Allah instructs Mohammed:

"O Prophet! Exhort the believers to fight. If there be of you twenty steadfast they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a hundred steadfast they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, because they (the disbelievers) are a folk without intelligence." (Pickthall, 1997:125). Ali (2000:147) renders this verse as: *"O Prophet, rouse the Believers to the fight. If there are twenty among you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred; if a hundred, they will vanquish a thousand of the Unbelievers, for these are people without understanding."*

Note that the 'believers' (Muslims) are instructed to fight, not to avert an attack by the 'unbelievers', but because the 'unbelievers' (non-Muslims) are without 'understanding' or 'intelligence'. This is clearly an instruction from Allah to his prophet Mohammed, to incite Muslims to war. It is also true as far as the next six citations are concerned.

Surah 9:41: *"Go forth, light-armed and heavy-armed, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the way of Allah! That is best for you if ye but knew."* (Pickthall, 1997:131).

Surah 9:111: *"They (Muslims) fight in His cause, and slay and are slain"* (Ali 2000:163) According to Pickthall (1997; 1370): *"they (Muslim-believers) shall fight in the way of Allah and shall slay and be slain."* (See

also at the end of this chapter, under the heading: iii *Jihad*, in what sense this verse is used by Ayatollah Khomeini.)

Surah 9:123: "O ye who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are near you, and let them find harshness in you, and know that Allah is with those who keep their duty (unto Him)" (Pickthall, 1997:138).

Surah 61:4: "Lo! Allah loveth those who battle for His cause in ranks, as if they were a solid structure" (Pickthall, 1997:405).

Surah 61:11: "Ye should believe in Allah and His Messenger (Mohammed), and should strive for the cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives" (Pickthall, 1997:406).

Surah 66:9: "O Prophet! Strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be stern with them" (Pickthall, 1997:415).

Violence in Islam is, however, not limited to action against unbelievers and sinners. Allah also gives clear instructions as to how a Muslim man should treat his wives. It is clear from this verse that he regards them as inferior:

Surah 4:34: "Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of woman). So good women are the obedient, ... As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them." (Pickthall, 1997:58)

Another translation renders it:

"Men have authority over woman because God (Allah) made the one superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. ... As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them, forsake them in beds apart, and beat them." (Dawood, 1999).

Does a true Muslim have a choice but to be violent in obedience to these commands of Allah?

ii. Violence in the Hadith

The Hadith supports the Quran and leaves no doubt as to what Allah and his prophet, Mohammed, expect of a Muslim. A follower of Islam is obliged to fight for peace with his life and his wealth. The following quotations are not mere encouragements to violence, but are also clear warnings to Muslims

who do not want to be involved in violence 'in the way', or in other words, for the furtherance of Islam.

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:1:73(Vol.1):144): *"A party of my people shall not cease to fight for truth (Islam) overcoming those who will oppose them"*

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:15(Vol.2):347): *"the Messenger of Allah said: This religion will never cease to prosper. A party of Muslims will always fight for it"*

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:20(Vol.2):350): *"the Holy Prophet said: Fighting in the way of Allah atones for everything except debt."*

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:27(Vol.2):352): *"the Messenger of Allah said: Whoso dies without fighting (Holy War) and without feeling it his duty, dies on a kind of hypocrisy."*

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:31(Vol.2):353): *"the Messenger of Allah said: A party of my companions will not cease to fight for the right gaining victory over those who oppose them,"*

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:32(Vol.2):354): *"the Holy Prophet said: He who does not fight, nor equip a warrior, nor looks after a warrior's family with fairness, Allah will afflict him with a calamity before the Resurrection day."*

In view of these threats, does a Muslim have any choice but to fight for Allah, or at least take part in *Jihad* in some or other way?

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:33(Vol.2):354): *"the Holy Prophet said: Fight against the polytheists with your properties, your lives and your tongues."*

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:43(Vol.2):357): Mohammed *"was questioned: Which Jihad is best? He said: That of one who fights with the polytheists with his property and his life."*

Violence against women is also a part of it. The rape of the women of the enemy, for the sake of the 'relaxation' of the Muslim fighters at the front line, was considered acceptable. The compiler of Al-Hadis, Karim, (1998, (Vol.2):440): writes the following under the heading, *"Captives of War"* and the sub-heading, *"Captive women and girls"* in connection with the treatment of such women and girls, with the approval of Mohammed:

"In the actual war-field in the midst of hostilities, according to some jurists, some concessions were sometimes given to soldiers for recreation. Captive virgin girls in war were once made lawful for the soldiers for copulation."

Mohammed's orders are *Sunnah* for the Muslim, which means they must be followed and obeyed. The Muslim has no choice but to act violently, irrespective of his natural characteristics. What Mohammed says is what a Muslim must do.

iii. *Jihad*

From the discussion thus far, it is clear that Allah's followers are called to war against their enemy or 'unbelievers' (non-Muslims). All the quotations and examples in the previous sections are calls to participate in *Jihad*, for the furtherance of Islam.

There are different explanations by Muslims of what *Jihad* really is, but it is nothing less than to fight or to strive on behalf of Allah, for the superiority of Islam over other religions. It is that simple, and that is why it is called "holy war."

Al Bukhari, in his glossary, (Khan, 1987(Vol.4): viii) describes *Jihad* as follows:

"Holy fighting in the cause of Allah or any other kind of effort to make Allah's Word (Islam) superior, which is regarded as one of the principles of Islam."

Islam often claims that *Jihad* is essentially self-defence. It does however, appear that the fact that somebody rejects Islam is sufficient aggression against Islam to necessitate self-defence. Al-Bukhari, in his Hadith, (Khan, 1987(Vol.6):106) says:

"to wage war against Allah means to reject faith in Him."

The Quran's instruction is clear:

Surah 2:216: "Fighting (Jihad) is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you," (Ali, 2000:270). (Pickthall, 1997:25) renders it as: "Warfare is ordained for you, though it is hateful unto you: but it may happen that ye hate a thing which is good for you,"

Regardless of the Muslim's natural inclination, which may be (and in most instances are) very mild and peace-loving, they must take part in *Jihad*, because according to Allah it is 'good' for them. The importance of participation in *Jihad* is also stressed in the Hadith, Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:42(Vol.2):356):

"Abu Huraira reported: Whoso meets Allah without any wound of Jihad, meets Allah with defect in him."

Muslims belong to Allah. According to the Quran, he bought them for the purpose: To kill and to be killed on his behalf. In return, they will receive paradise as their reward. This is confirmed in the Quran:

Surah 9:111: "Lo! Allah hath bought from the believers their lives and their wealth because the Garden will be theirs: they shall fight in the way of Allah and shall slay and be slain." (Pickthall, 1997:137). See also Dawood's (1999) rendering: "God (Allah) has purchased from the faithful their lives and worldly goods, and in return has promised them the garden. They will fight for the cause of God (Allah); they will slay and be slain."

From these quotations, it is clear that Allah expects his followers to strive, for the furtherance of Islam, with their lives as well as their material possessions.

Not all Muslims can be physically involved in battle, so these Muslims must provide the money and other resources necessary to wage war. There is, apart from the *Jizya* (special tax payable to Muslim governments by non-Muslims) as a means of income, an abundance of successful and flourishing Muslim business people, also in non-Muslim countries, from where the money is sent to the frontlines for the purpose of *Jihad* against non-Muslims. The Quran as well as the Hadith are clear about this, and every Muslim is under the obligation to obey these orders, because it is Allah speaking.

Surah 9:34: "And there are those who hoard gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah: announce for them a most grievous chastisement" (Ali, 2000:154) "a painful doom" awaits them according to Pickthall (1997:130).

Surah 9:41: "Go forth, light-armed and heavy-armed, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the way of Allah! That is best for you if ye but knew" (Pickthall, 1997:131).

Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987:95(Vol.4):68) confirms this: *"This worldly property is sweet vegetation. If it is ... spent in Allah's cause."*

Every Christian and other non-Muslim should know that with every cent or penny spent in Muslim-owned businesses, the money is used to support Islam's *Jihad* or holy war against the 'unbeliever'. To finance *Jihad* is to "strive with your wealth in the way of Allah" and that in itself, is *Jihad*.

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998(Vol.2):358) mentions the price a Muslim will receive for taking part in *Jihad*:

"the Messenger of Allah said: There are six virtues of a martyr near Allah. At the first shedding of blood he is shown his place in Paradise, he is protected from the punishment of grave, he is kept safe from the great catastrophe, a crown of glory will be put upon his head, one jewel of which is better than the world and what is therein, he will be married to seventy two wives of large dark eyed virgins, and he will be given permission to make intercession for seventy of his relations."

When reference is made to a 'martyr' in Islam terminology, as in the following quotations, it refers to somebody who offered his life in *Jihad*. This includes suicide bombers in the Middle East (a frequent occurrence), Bali and elsewhere. It includes all Muslim attackers, who kill themselves in order to kill their 'enemy', like the 'terrorists' who steered the aircraft into the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001. The following promises serve to help Muslims overcome their fear of dying (killing themselves for the purpose of killing the enemy) while participating in *Jihad*.

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:45(Vol.2):358): *"the Messenger of Allah said: A martyr will not feel the pangs of murder except as one of you feel pangs of a sting."*

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:61(Vol.2):364): *"the Messenger of Allah said to his companions: When your brethren were killed in the battle of Uhud, Allah put their souls in the belly of a green bird which frequents the rivers of Paradise, eating its fruits and taking shelter of gold lamps and hanging under the shade of the Throne. When they found the sweetness of their foods, their drinks and their sleeping beds, they exclaimed: Who will convey message for us to our brethren that we are alive in Paradise, so that none will cease to desire Paradise and to participate in Jihad? Then the Almighty Allah would say: I shall convey to them on your behalf. So the Almighty Allah revealed: 'And you must not consider those who are martyred in Allah's way as dead, but they are alive'," (Emphasis added).*

When the souls of these martyrs came out of the belly of the green bird and experienced the wonder, comfort and pleasure of paradise, they immediately wanted to encourage their brethren on earth to desire paradise and to know that, to participate in *Jihad*, is the way to get there. The difficulty in getting their message across to their earthly brethren was soon solved when none other than Allah himself offered to be their message bearer.

In the midst of all the violence of *Jihad* there is even more violence, because in this holy war every one under suspicion pays dearly, mostly with his life. Proof is not necessary. The discretion of the leader, in the following cases Mohammed himself, is apparently sufficient to take a life. It also serves as a clear warning not to oppose Islam:

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:202(Vol.2):441): *“Salamah-b-al-Akwa’a reported: A spy of the polytheists came to the Messenger of Allah while he was on a journey. He sat down to talk with his companions and then he went away. The Holy Prophet said: Search him out and kill him. Then I killed him. He (the Prophet) gave me his goods.”*

The spy mentioned in this passage was in Mohammed's presence. The suspicion that he was a spy was probably raised later, and in his absence without opportunity to prove his innocence. Mohammed decided that he was guilty, passed the death sentence, and sent somebody to kill him - and for all his trouble, the executioner was entitled to keep all the spy's possessions. In the next example, there was at least some criterion. However, it is left to the readers' own judgment to decide how just it was:

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:214(Vol.2):451): *“Atiyyah ai-Qurazi reported: I was among the captives of Quraizah. We were presented before the Holy Prophet and they were examining. Whoever had his hair grown was killed, and whoever had not, was not killed. Then they uncovered my private part and found it without growth (of hair). They then made me among the captives”.*

His shaved pubic hair saved his life. What sort of justice is this?

Ahmed Deedat, someone who for many years was disabled and unable to talk as the result of a stroke, was a South African Muslim apologist and propagandist. It was his passion in life to discredit and even mock Christianity and Jesus Christ's deity. In his pamphlet, *What is his Name*, published by the Islamic Propagation Centre, Durban (quoted by Hunt, 1986/1995:275) said:

"Our armour, sword and shield in this battle of Faiths are in the Koran, we have been chanting it for centuries ... now we must bring them forth into the battlefield."

After having numerous non-Muslims, including Christians killed, Ayatollah Khomeini, a former religious and political leader of Iran, said the following:

"In Persia (Iran) no people have been killed so far – only beasts!" and on another occasion: *"The purist joy in Islam is to kill and be killed for Allah."* (Quoted by Moshay, 1994:31-32). This citation is based on *Surah 9:111* in the Quran, to which reference has already been made above.

It does not matter whether the Muslim leader who calls people for *Jihad* in a specific situation is a good or a bad person, according to Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987:44(Vol.4):71):

"Jihad is carried on whether the Muslim ruler who calls for it is a good or a bad person."

This explain clearly why Muslims are so united in their support of people like Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, whom some Muslims sometimes acknowledge as bad people, but nevertheless still support.

Are these people cruel extremists or merely obedient followers of their God, Allah and his prophet Mohammed?

11. Why War and Violence?

“Fight those who believe not in Allah, nor in the Last Day, nor forbid which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger and those who acknowledge not the Religion of Truth (i.e. Islam) among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.”

Above is Al-Bukhari's quotation of *Surah* 9:29 from the Quran and it answers the question: “Why all the war and violence in Islam?” Yusuf Ali's rendering of this verse amounts to basically the same. Pickthall (1997:129) renders it as follows:

“Fight against such of those who have been given the Scripture as believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, and forbid not that which Allah hath forbidden by His messenger, and follow not the Religion of Truth, until they pay the tribute readily, being brought low.” According to Dawood's (1999) rendering, unbelievers must be fought *“until they pay tribute out of hand and are utterly subdued.”*

According to Islam, these are the words of Allah himself and it is clear that he commands Muslims to fight all non-Muslims until they are subjected to Islam's rule. This seems contrary to what is written in *Surah* 2:256 of the Quran:

“There is no compulsion in religion.”

The meaning of this verse is unclear. If it serves to deny that violence used in Islam is for the purpose of spreading itself, then it is contrary to the abovementioned verse (*Surah* 9:29) and also to the rest of the Quran, the Hadis and the history of Islam. It is perhaps an acknowledgement that no one will accept a religion in his heart, even if he is forcefully subjected to it.

It is, however, certain that there is a purpose behind it, and that it is not just for the sake of violence. Contrary to what Jesus said: *“My kingdom is not of this world”* (John 18:36), Allah wants Islam to triumph as the only religion on earth. Allah wants to be honoured and worshipped throughout the world. **The purpose is that Islam must dominate and prevail on earth, at all costs.**

The Quran assures its readers that Islam will prevail:

Surah 48:28: *“It is He (Allah) who has sent His Apostle with Guidance and the Religion of Truth, to make it prevail over all religions;”*

The Hadith agrees; Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:1:14w (Vol.1):152) the messenger of Allah said:

"There will be left no house of clay or tent of camel-hair on the surface of the earth but wherein Allah will not admit the word of Islam with the honour of an honourable man and disgrace of a dishonourable man. Either Allah will give them honour and make them dwellers thereof or He will put them to disgrace and they will be subject to it."

If there is still uncertainty, the following excerpts from the Quran and Hadith should suffice to remove it:

Surah 2:193: "And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allah." (Pickthall, 1997:22)

Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987(Vol.9):167) renders this verse in his Hadith as:

"And fight them until there are no more afflictions (i.e. no more worshipping of others beside Allah)."

This is virtually the same as:

Surah 8:39: "And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is all for Allah." (Pickthall, 1997:123).

In this regard, Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987:355(Vol.4):228) reports:

"A Bedouin asked the Prophet: 'A man may fight for the sake of booty, and another may fight so that he may be mentioned by the people, and a third may fight to show his position (i.e. bravery); which of these is regarded as fighting in Allah's cause?' The Prophet said, 'He who fights so that Allah's Word (i.e. Islam) should be superior, fights for Allah's cause.'"

All the longer chapters (*Surahs*) in the Quran are divided into sections. In one of the English translations used, they are numbered. In the Afrikaans translation however, every section is not only numbered but also has a heading, as an indication of the meaning or intent of the section. The English meaning of some of these headings are: *"Muslims shall triumph"; "Islam shall triumph in the world"; "A warning to Christians"; "The establishment of the Kingdom of Islam"; "The disappearance of all resistance"; "A victory for the Muslims"; "The defeat of the enemy"; "The end of all opposition"; "The eventual triumph of Islam".*

There is more confirmation of Islam's wish to be superior in Al-Bukhari's Hadith:

Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987:65,355(Vol.4) &550(Vol.9): *"The Prophet said: 'The one who fights that Allah's Word (Islam) should be superior, fights in Allah's cause.'"*

Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987:196(Vol.4):124): *"Allah's Messenger (Mohammed) said, 'I have been ordered to fight with the people till they say, 'none has the right to be worshipped but Allah.' and whoever says, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah,' his life and property will be saved by me.'"*

It is understandable when violence is used to discipline or protect a nation so that the world can be blessed through it (as it happened in the Bible). The God of the Bible does not expect his followers to use violence to force the world into submission to Him. He created people not as robots, but with the ability to choose, which is necessary for a meaningful relationship with Him. For the same reason, He will never use violence to force anybody to worship Him. He will, however, punish all sin, except the sins of those forgiven through Jesus (Jesus took the punishment upon Himself), but He does not mete out punishment through violent acts on people. All those who reject His redemption through Jesus, even though He gave them the ability to accept it, will be punished accordingly. No human being is expected to torture and kill anybody on His behalf. 'Christians' guilty of this are not acting on the commandment or expectation of God. The writer of the book of Hebrews writes about this in Chapter 10:30:

"For we know Him who said, 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' and again, 'The Lord will judge his people.'"

Muslims have the duty to see to it that all people are subjected to and worship Allah. They do this by means of *Jihad* (holy war) and every Muslim is under command of Allah himself to take part in *Jihad* against 'unbelievers' (non-Muslims). Some do it through suicide bombs and suicide attacks, others through fighting in conventional wars, others through terrorist attacks including kidnappings, and still others (the majority) by earning money and donating money and resources as *Zakat* for the purpose of, among others, *Jihad*. This is confirmed by Karim, (1998:8:90(Vol.2):39) in his discussion of *Zakat*).

As long as there are non-Muslims on earth, Muslims will fight dutifully. They have no choice, as their God (Allah) expects this of them.

12. The Importance of Treaties, Oaths and Vows in Islam

Not honouring an agreement (covenant) treaty, promise, oath or vow is always unloving behaviour, because it is always to the detriment of the other party in some or other way. It has to be sin, according to the Biblical definition of sin.

Everyone knows that most people, including Christians, sometimes break their agreements, vows and promises. For the Christian it is, without exception, a sin because it is unloving behaviour. Muslims however, have Allah's permission to break their agreements, oaths, vows and promises under certain circumstances. There is such an exception in the Quran:

Surah 9:1-5:- 1): "A (declaration) of complete absolution on the part of Allah and His Apostle, from all agreements made with idolators." (Ali, 2000:150) See also Pickthall (1997:127): "Freedom from obligation (is proclaimed) from Allah and his messenger toward those of the idolators with whom ye made a treaty."

2): "Move about for four months, (as you will), throughout the land, but know that you cannot frustrate Allah (by your falsehood) but that Allah will cover with shame those who reject Him." (Ali, 2000:150) and "Travel freely in the land four months, and know that ye cannot escape Allah and that Allah will confound the disbelievers (in his guidance)" (Pickthall, 1997:127).

3): "And an announcement from Allah and His Apostle, to the people (assembled) on the day of the Great Pilgrimage that Allah and His Apostle dissolve (treaty) obligations with the Pagans. If then, you repent, it were best for you; but if you turn away, know that you cannot frustrate Allah. And proclaim a grievous Chastisement to those who reject Faith (Islam)" (Ali, 2000:150). (Emphasis added). Pickthall (1997:127): "And proclaim from Allah and His messenger to all men on the day of the greater Pilgrimage that Allah is free from obligation to the idolators, and so is His messenger. So, if ye repent, it will be better for you; but if ye are averse, then know that ye cannot escape Allah. Give tidings (O Muhammad) of a painful doom to those who disbelieve." (Emphasis added).

4): "(But the treaties are) not dissolved with those Pagans with whom you have entered into alliance and who have not subsequently failed you in any matter, nor aided any one against you. So fulfil your agreements with them to the end of their term, for Allah loves the righteous."

5): *"But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem; But if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity (become Muslims and pay Zakat), then open the way for them,"*

Note that in verse 3, Allah and his apostle (Mohammed) have no problem to "dissolve treaty obligations with Pagans." Pickthall (1997:127) renders it "... *all men ... (are) free from obligation to the idolaters, and so is his messenger (Mohammed)*". For Islam, all non-Muslims are pagans and idolaters. So, with Allah's permission, they can break (dissolve) treaties whenever it suits them. In some instances, they must wait for four months (verse 2 and 5). Their adversaries, however, may not do that:

Surah 8:55-56: "For the worst of all living creatures in the sight of Allah are those who reject Him – they will not believe. They are those with whom you did make a covenant, but they break their covenant every time, and they have not the fear (of Allah)"

The Hadith supports the Quran in this. In AL-Hadis (Karim, 1998: 23:133(Vol.2):397), under the heading *Treaties and Peace* the compiler explains in his footnote:

"Treaties and contracts which are consistent with the Quran and Hadis were ordered to be observed. Islam did not encourage laxity in disobeying the treaties as they are solemn pledges, but such contracts and treaties as are unlawful are not ordered to be observed." (Emphasis added).

The problem is: How will a non-Muslim be able to distinguish between lawful and unlawful agreements as far as the Quran (Islam) is concerned? The implication is that a Muslim can enter into an unlawful agreement and break it when it suits him.

Oaths and Vows

What about an oath? What are Allah's instructions as far as oaths are concerned?

Surah 2:225: "Allah will not take you to task for that which is unintentional in your oaths" (Pickthall, 1997:26).

Surah 5:89: Allah will not call you to account for what is futile in your oaths, but He will call you to account for deliberate oaths: for expiation,

feed ten indigent persons, on a scale of the average for the food of your families; or clothe them; or give a slave his freedom. If that is beyond your means, fast for three days. That is the expiation for the oaths you have sworn.” (Ali, 2000:95)(Emphasis added).

Pickthall (1997:82) renders *“futile in your oaths”* and *“deliberate oaths”* in the above quotation as *“unintentional in your oaths”* and *“oaths which ye swear in earnest”*. What would be the difference between these two types of oaths in Islam, and how is the other party involved able to distinguish between the two types? Does it really matter? If there is escape even from deliberate oaths (sworn in earnest) should you have enough money or are able to fast for three days, what is the purpose of oaths? There is always a convenient excuse to neglect your duty, and that with your God's permission.

Surah 66:2: Allah has already prescribed for you, (o men), the absolution (undoing or getting out of - according to footnote) of your oaths (in some cases).” (Ali, 2000:525) see also Ali, (1946:1569).

It is not clear when oaths can be absolved, or by what criteria it can be done. The Hadith also provides for the breaking of oaths, but again there are no clear guidelines.

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:24; 8(Vol.2):475): *“the Apostle of Allah said: Whoso takes an oath and then sees another thing better than it, let him expiate for his oath and let him do the latter.”*

As easy as that! No valid reason is necessary. You only have to do the expiation and you have no further obligation. What exactly are the expiation requirements? The answer is found in:

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:24; 24(Vol.2):479): *“the Apostle of Allah said: The expiation of a vow is the same as for an oath.”*

Surah 5:89 quoted above gives details of what is needed for the expiation of an oath: *“for expiation, feed ten indigent persons, on a scale of the average for the food of your families; or clothe them; or give a slave his freedom. If that is beyond your means, fast for three days.”*

Promises

To keep a promise is basically the same as keeping an agreement or treaty. However, the Hadith considers a promise to be something different. As far as promises are concerned, Karim (1998(Vol.1):470), in his Al-Hadis, says:

“All learned men are, however, unanimous that, in unlawful things, promise can lawfully be broken without being guilty of any sin.”

The argument above, in connection with unlawful treaties and agreements, is also applicable here. The question under debate is: Does a Muslim know when he is making an unlawful promise? If he does know, does he have permission to make an unlawful promise knowingly?

The quotation above, and the one which follows, provide evidence that Mohammed condones this behaviour and agrees that a promise can be broken without valid reason or explanation.

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:4:213(Vol.1):472): *“the Holy Prophet said: When a man makes a promise to his brother and his intention is to fulfil it for him, but he does not fulfil it, nor does he come at the appointed time, there is no sin against him.”*

To make a promise and break it is equivalent to lying. So, how important then is truth in Islam? It seems that, as a rule, Allah expects everybody to tell the truth, but as in the case of treaties, oaths and promises, there are exceptions to the rule.

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:4:201(Vol.1):465): *“she said: I did not hear him (she meant the Holy Prophet) giving permission of false-speaking in anything of what people utter except in three things – war, restoring peace among men and the conversation of a man with his wife and the conversation of a woman with her husband.”*

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:4:208(Vol.1):467): *“the messenger of Allah said: Falsehood is not lawful except in three things: falsehood of a man to his wife to please her, falsehood in war and falsehood in restoring peace among men.”*

As indicated earlier, Allah expects Muslims to obey his messenger, Mohammed. When Mohammed gives permission for telling lies under certain circumstances, it is as good as if it Allah himself gave permission. Bear in mind that *Jihad* is war, holy war, and falsehood (lying) is permitted in war. In other

words, Muslims are allowed to tell lies as far as *Jihad* is concerned, and non-Muslims are not always aware that they are the enemy against whom a *Jihad* is conducted. An example is all the people who were in the World Trade Centre in America on 11 September 2001. No one in that building even thought of being an enemy of Islam, but Islam in the name of, and with the permission of their God, Allah, claims they had the right to launch a surprise (lying) attack on their 'enemies'.

In view of this, one can only wonder what value any peace negotiations with Muslims have. There is always a 'lawful' escape route from any agreement, treaty, or promise for the Muslim. According to Muslim tradition, the agreement or promise could be either unlawful, or exempt from being upheld because it is a 'war' situation. Alternatively, the Muslim could wait four months, feed ten people, or fast for three days. There is always a way out.

One can only sympathise with Israel who previously tried to negotiate peace with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of Yasser Arafat. In fact, they are almost always willing to negotiate peace with Islam. May God (Yahweh) protect them from these empty treaties and agreements. Not only will any agreement or treaty be completely worthless, but can be extremely dangerous for Israel.

It is evident that a Muslim has no choice. If he wants to be faithful to Allah's commands, he must be violent for the sake of *Jihad*. With permission from Allah and Mohammed, he may tell lies. For instance, he can pretend to be peace loving even when he knows he is not. War is one of the three exemptions where a Muslim may lie - and why would it exclude holy war, the most important war in Islam?

In the Bible

For the God of the Bible the non-compliance with an agreement (covenant), oath, vow or promise is sin without exception, because it is deceptive behaviour, which is nothing but unloving behaviour. There are many examples in the Bible of covenants (agreements), not only between God and man, but also between people. No exception is made for the breaking of a covenant without committing a sin. A party in a covenant can only be exempt from obligation when the other party is guilty of non-compliance.

According to the Bible, oaths cannot be broken. Matthew 5:33:

“Do not break your oath, but keep your oaths you have made”.

Yahweh said to His nation Israel in Zechariah 8:16-17:

"These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace; Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate," Says the LORD." (NKJ).

The truth and peace are so important for Yahweh that in a later verse (19) He promised gladness and cheerful feasts for Israel on the following condition:

"Therefore love truth and peace". (See also Leviticus 19:12).

The God of the Bible is a God of truth, and in Him there is no deceit. Jesus is, according to John 14:6:

"... the way and the truth and the life."

In the truth, there is no place for the lie, and for that reason, He forbids all lying. Leviticus 19:11:

"Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another."

Proverbs 19:9 says:

"A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will perish."

Colossians 3:9:

"Do not lie to each other,"

There is this serious warning in the Bible for sinners, which include the liars in Revelation 21:8:

"But ... the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur (brimstone)." (Emphasis added).

Every person who continues to sin and does not come to the God of the Bible in repentance, and receive Jesus Christ as his/her Saviour, will meet this fate.

13. Booty, taxes and other benefits for Islam

Allah was so pleased when the people swore allegiance to Mohammed, (*Surah 48:18: "Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance unto thee beneath the tree,"*) that he promised them much booty in verse 20: *"Allah has promised you much booty which you will capture"* (Pickthall, 1997:371).

Historically, it was a common practice (customary) for conquering armies and soldiers to take the conquered soldiers' and nations' possessions as booty. This also occurred in biblical times when God's nation did the same when they conquered, but also lost their property when they lost battles. Muslims are, however, of the opinion that it used to be illegal to take booty, (and that it still is for others) but that Allah made it lawful for them. This is what Mohammed taught about this according to the Hadith:

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:142(Vol.2):407): *"the Messenger of Allah said: Booty was not lawful for anybody previous to us. That was because Allah saw our weakness and helplessness, and so He made it lawful to us."*

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:157(Vol.1):415): *"the Prophet said: Allah gave my people superiority over all the nations, and He made the booties lawful for us."*

This is again a clear encouragement for Muslims to *Jihad*. How just is a God who alters his laws for different people and for different circumstances? Unlike Allah, who can change his laws at will and has different standards for different people, the law of love of the God of the Bible is unchangeable, and He is righteous and treats all people the same.

Ephesians 6:9: *"... knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him"* (NKJ), or He *"has no favorites"* (Living Bible)

Allah, however, has a different set of laws for Muslims, and especially for those who fight for his cause. It seems as if even Mohammed had the right to change laws. According to Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987(Vol.9):343):

"Something forbidden by the Prophet is legally prohibited unless there is proof that (later on) it was (made) legal."

The distribution of booty was done according to Mohammed's instruction. One-fifth had to go to Allah and his messenger (Mohammed) and the rest was for the fighter.

Surah 8:41: "And know that out of all the booty that you may acquire (in war), a fifth share is assigned to Allah – and to the Apostle (Mohammed),"

It is unknown (to the author) how this rule was applied after Mohammed's death, because it is presently still a part of the Quran and Mohammed died almost fourteen centuries ago.

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:150(Vol.2):412): "the Messenger of Allah said: To whichever village you go and settle therein, there is your share therein and ... , its one fifth is for Allah and His Messenger, and the remainder is for you."

When Islam gains the upper hand in a country, everybody is expected to accept Islam. Those who do not, and are fortunate enough to escape with their lives, are subjected to a special tax, called *Jizya*, as was already seen in *Surah 9:29*, quoted in the previous section.

Surah 9:29: "Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the last day, ... until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued."
(Ali, 2000:153)

Jizya is payable to Muslim authorities by non-Muslims, called *Zimmis* [also spelled *Dhimmi(s)*]. In his footnote at the word *Jizya*, in his English translation of the Quran, Ali (1946:447) writes: *"the root meaning is compensation. ... was a poll-tax levied from those who did not accept Islam,"*

Another benefit accrues to Islam at the cost of non-Muslims who survived and live in subjection to Islam. It is called *Fai Property*, and is explained as follows in Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998(Vol.2):429):

"Fai is a property of the unbelievers as accrues to the Muslims without war".

It is not clear how exactly it is accrued, but the next quotation gives an indication:

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:23:200(Vol.2):437): "Ogbal-b-A'mer reported: I asked: O Messenger of Allah, we pass by a people, who do not entertain us, nor do they give us our dues justly, nor do we take anything from them. The Prophet said: If they make it necessary for you to take it by force, do so."

Will that be the fate of surviving non-Muslims if Islam is successful in its efforts to subdue the world?

14. Islam, Israel and violence

When God called Abra(ha)m, He gave him the following promise in Genesis 17:8:

"Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

In Genesis 48:4 this promise is repeated through the mouth of Abraham's descendant Jacob:

"Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession."

This promise of God to Abraham, of the land as an everlasting possession, is a promise to his descendants through his son Isaac, born of his wife Sarah. This is confirmed in Genesis 25:5, 6:

"And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east." (KJV)

The Quran actually agrees with this when it says about the Israelites and the holy land in *Surah* 5:20, 21:

"And (remember) when Moses said unto his people: O my people! Remember Allah's favour unto you, how He placed among you prophets, and He made you kings, and gave you that (which) He gave not to any (other) of (his) creatures. O my people! Go into the holy land which Allah has ordained for you." (Pickthall, 1997:75)

In spite of this, and other acknowledgements in the Quran that Israel is the chosen nation, Islam teaches that Israel was rejected and that Islam is now the chosen nation. The Quran says about the Israelites in *Surah* 2:88:

"Allah's curse is on them for their blasphemy".

According to the Quran, Allah rejected and cursed the Jewish nation because of their unbelief (*Surah* 2: 88, 89). The Quran also acknowledges that the Jews were the chosen nation of 'God' in *Surah* 2:122:

“Children of Israel, remember the favour I have bestowed upon you, and that I exalted you above the nations” (Dawood, 1999).

The claim is that, because of Israel’s unbelief, Islam (Muslims) became the chosen ‘nation’. The existence of Israel as a nation and a state is, therefore, an insult to Islam. As long as the Jews as a nation and the state of Israel exist, the credibility of the Quran is at stake. The state and nation of Israel must be destroyed in order to maintain the credibility of the Quran.

Feelings of hate against Jews are instigated in Islam by quotations like the following in the Quran:

Surah 5:13: “But because they broke their covenant We (Allah) laid on them Our curse and hardened their hearts. They have tampered with words out of their context and forgotten much of what they were enjoined. You will ever find them deceitful, except for a few of them.”

Islam accuses Israel of having received the Quran from God and then corrupting it. According to Islam, the Christian Bible in use today is a distorted version of the Quran. This is far-fetched and false because, except for some twisted facts about the history of Israel from Abraham up to Jesus, the Quran mainly consists of stories about fights, battles and disputes involving Mohammed and his followers. For the rest, it consists of threats against non-Muslims and promises of pleasures in paradise for those Muslims who qualify. Most of what was written in the Quran had not even occurred at the time when God gave His revelations to the inspired writers of the Bible.

It is understandable that so-called Muslim extremists feel it their duty to commit terrorist deeds against America, like the attacks on the World Trade Centre, as part of their *Jihad* (holy war) because of America’s relations with Israel. When one listens to the statements of the more ‘moderate’ Muslims, however diplomatic and tactful they may be, it is clear that their sympathy is with the extremists and that they see America’s relations with, and assistance of Israel, as the main cause of the problems.

Israel must be annihilated at all cost, and this is nothing new. Mohammed himself made the following statement concerning Jews:

In Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:39:35(Vol.4):25) Mohammed said about the last days: “The Hour shall not occur till the Muslims fight the Jews, and the Muslims will kill them, so much so that the Jews will seek shelter behind stones and trees, and the stones and trees will proclaim ‘O Muslim! This is

the Jew behind me. So come and kill him,' accepting the garqad tree as it is a tree of the Jews."

Israel is a small state with less than 1% of the land of its Arab (Muslim) neighbours and a Jewish population of more or less the same proportion to its Arab neighbours. Since its modern existence in 1948, it had to defend itself against the continuous attacks from its Arab (Muslim) neighbours. Israel's successful defence against these attacks is an embarrassment for Islam and aggravates the problem.

The writing of Weldon and Ankerberg (1991:8) are so true:

"Millions of Muslims are standing shoulder to shoulder against their perceived enemies – Israel and, more and more, America for its support of Israel. Even though most Muslims are not now militant, calls are increasingly heard throughout the Muslim world for Islamic unification and the waging of war against those it considers its enemies. Who can tell what the future will bring?"

The 'future' has brought suicide bombs and terrorist attacks worldwide, including the destruction of the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001, leading one to question: "What lies ahead?"

15. Jesus and Mohammed (Muhammad)

In the Quran, Mohammed claims that Jesus Christ, like himself, is only a prophet. He however, exalts himself above Jesus by claiming to be the final prophet with the final revelation from God. A comparison of some aspects of their earthly lives and personalities will soon convince the honest 'seeker of truth' that the one is, in all aspects, so far exalted above the other that they cannot really be compared. Just as Satan was unsuccessful in trying to exalt himself above God, no one who ever lived on earth or will ever live on earth, will be able to exalt himself successfully above Jesus Christ.

The Quran as well as the Hadith acknowledge the virgin birth of Jesus and the fact that He did miracles while on earth:

Surah 3:47: "She (Mary) said: 'O my Lord, how shall I have a son when no man has touched me?' He said: 'Even so; Allah creates what He wills; when He has decreed a matter, He but says to it, 'Be' and it is'" (Ali, 2000:44)

The Quran though, denies the crucifixion and death of Jesus. It claims that He was taken up alive to heaven. The Hadith agrees and adds that Jesus is presently living in heaven, that He will return to earth in the last days to subdue and kill the Antichrist, *Dajjal*, establish Islam on earth, and then die.

Is it not strange that the 'lesser Prophet' according to Islam, is still living after 2000 years, while Mohammed is dead, and that the lesser prophet will return to earth to establish Islam? The fact that Jesus still lives in heaven according to Islam's own books, while the so-called final prophet (Mohammed) died and was buried in 632 AD, are not explained in Islam's sacred books.

Surah 4:157- 158: "but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, ... No, Allah raised him up unto Himself;" (Ali, 2000:80).

Karim (1998(Vol.4):50, 79) writes in the Al-Hadis under the heading: '*Greater signs before the Hour*':

"Then Jesus who is alive in heaven will descend from heaven and kill Dajjal with his own hand." After which Jesus will then die, according to page 79.

Dajjal is an enigmatic creature (apparently, the Antichrist according to Muslim tradition) who has been living for more than 1 400 years. In Al-Hadis, Karim (1998(Vol.4):51, 77) describe him:

“living or at least born at the time of the Holy Prophet (Mohammed). He will not die till he will be killed by Jesus. In the mean time, he has been kept in strong iron chains”. Further to his description, he sounds like something from Star Wars or some similar occult fiction. “His father will be long statured, pointed of flesh as if his nose will be a beak; and his mother will be a woman, fat, long of two hands.” He is a terrifying being that will be released in the last days. He is exceptionally big (“there will be a distance of 70 cubits between his two eyes”), and will be followed by 70 000 Jews “with hoods or black head dresses.”

As a result of this obvious distortion of the facts about Jesus and His advent, Muslims do not realise that Jesus also came to save them from their sins and to reconcile them with the true God. The only requirement is that they must believe and accept it. Islam’s severe punishment for apostasy, as was shown, makes it almost impossible for Muslims to convert to Christianity.

Islamic literature discusses the antichrist without explaining who he is, because Muslims do not really know. The Bible knows who the antichrist is. According to 1 John 2:22, he is a liar who denies that Jesus is the Christ:

“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.” (NKJ). The Antichrist denies that Jesus is the anointed of God who takes away the sins of the world.

The Bible says that Jesus came to the earth in the flesh, as the Son of God, to pay the price of man’s sin, and to reconcile man to God. Ephesians 1:7 explains:

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (NKJ).

He didn’t only save us from the penalty of sin, but also from the power of sin: *“who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24 – NKJ); “reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:11 – NKJ); “For sin shall not have dominion over you” (Romans 6:14 – NKJ)*

Jesus came to the world in humility; to serve and not to be served. He said in Matthew 20:28 *“the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (NKJ).* The love of God can clearly be seen in His actions and in His teachings. Jesus lived a sinless life and His perfect love was proof of that. Perfect love is sin-free, the fulfilment of the law: *“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled*

the law" (Romans 13:8 NKJ). He is not only full of love, but He is love. This is more proof that He is God, because God is love, as has already been illustrated.

In order to teach humility, Jesus washed His disciples' feet (John 13:5). He said in Matthew 18:4: *"Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."* (NKJ). According to Philippians 2:8: *"He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"* (NKJ).

The following quotations from the Hadith will tell more about Mohammed's "humility":

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:44:18(Vol.4):323): *"the Messenger of Allah said: I shall be the leader of the children of Adam on the day of Resurrection and there's no boast, and in my hand will be the standard of praise and there's no boast, and there will be no Prophet on that day, Adam or anybody who will not be under my standard, and I shall be the first of those who will burst out of the earth and there's no boast."*

Mohammed and Islam see Jesus as a prophet. This means that, according to the above citation, Jesus will be under Mohammed's standard and therefore, in a lower position.

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:44:21(Vol.4):325): *"the Prophet said: I shall be given a dress from the dresses of Paradise. Then I shall stand by the right side of the Throne. There will be none among the creatures besides me who will stand in that place."*

Strange logic: A dead Mohammed exalted above a living Jesus, according to Islam's own books.

Al-Hadis (Karim, 1998:44:23(Vol.4):326): *"the Holy Prophet said: When there will come the Resurrection day, I shall be the leader of the prophets and one who will intercede for them without boast."* These prophets will of course include Jesus Christ.

According to the Bible, Jesus never sinned, and Islam does not deny this fact. Muslims, in fact, claim that Mohammed also never sinned. Both the Quran and the Hadith contradict this, as it can be easily proven from these books that he has in fact sinned.

Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987:319(Vol.8):213): *"I heard Allah's Messenger saying. 'By Allah! I ask forgiveness from Allah and turn to Him in repentance more than seventy times a day.'"*

Why would it be necessary to ask forgiveness and repent if he has never sinned?

Without doubt, the person addressed in the following quotation from the Quran was Mohammed himself:

Surah 48:1, 2: "Surely We (Allah) have granted you (Mohammed) a manifest victory: That Allah may forgive you your faults of the past and those to follow;"

It is clear that Mohammed's victory on the battlefield earned him the forgiveness of his past as well as his future 'faults'. It must be remembered that in Islam good deeds cancel out sins. Mohammed's success in battle was sufficient to forgive all his sins, past and future. If his 'faults' were not sins, why did he need forgiveness?

As already shown, sin is not clearly defined in the Quran and Hadith, so it is virtually impossible to determine when an action is sinful in Islam. According to the Biblical definition of sin, however, many of Mohammed's deeds, of which some are quoted in this book from the traditions of Mohammed (the Hadith), could be considered sins.

According to the Bible, transgression of the law or lawlessness is sin. (1 John 3:4 & Romans 4:15). The law is to love God and man (Matthew 22:37-39). **All unloving behaviour is therefore sin.** This love is not a feeling or an emotion; it is a choice to act benevolent in all circumstances, including in interaction with people you do not like, as well as your enemies.

The unloving behaviour of Mohammed (which is sin according to the Biblical definition) is seen from the quotations from the Hadith in this book.

Mohammed's Wives

Jesus, the Son of God, was never married during His earthly sojourn and work. This means that He was also sexually pure and without sin. Mohammed, on the other hand, had more wives than a Muslim is allowed, according to the Quran. The maximum number of wives allowed by the Quran is four, according to *Surah 4:3*. Conveniently however, the Quran exempted

Mohammed from this rule. Mohammed received the revelation excluding him from this limitation concerning the wives in *Surah 33:50*:

"O Prophet, We (Allah) have made lawful to you your wives to whom you have paid their dowers; and those whom your right hand possesses out of the prisoners of war whom Allah has assigned to you; and the daughters of your paternal uncles and aunts, and the daughters of your maternal uncles and aunts, who migrated (from Makkah) with you; and any believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to wed her; this only for you, and not for the believers (at large). We (Allah) know what We have appointed for them as to their wives and the captives whom their right hand possess; in order that there should be no difficulty for you."

Mohammed thoroughly exploited this special permission and took for himself many wives (as well as concubines), of which at least one was still a child when she became his wife. Muslim sources differ about the number of wives and concubines he had. Al-Bukhari mentions in one place nine and in another eleven, which were probably both correct in different time frames. The following quotation from Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987:268(Vol.1):165) will give the reader a better understanding of Mohammed's sexual appetite:

"Anas bin Malik said, 'The Prophet used to visit all his wives in a round, during the day and night and they were eleven in number.' I asked Anas, 'Had the Prophet the strength for it?' Anas replied, 'We used to say that the Prophet was given the strength of thirty (men).'"

According to Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987:6(Vol.7):5) Anas reported:

"The Prophet used to go round (have sexual relations with) all his wives in one night, and he had nine wives."

At least one of his wives was very young when he married her. In Western culture, a man would be guilty as a paedophile if he had sexual relations with such a young girl. Aisha (Aesha) who later became his favourite wife was only six years old when their marriage contract was concluded, and nine years old when she moved into his household. According to Al-Bukhari (Khan, 1987:64(Vol.7):50):

"the Prophet wrote the marriage contract with her when she was six years old and he consummated his marriage when she was nine years old, and then she remained with him for nine years (i.e. till his death)." (See also (Khan, 1987:88(Vol.7):65).

Karim's (1998:27:28(Vol.2):636) rendering of this fact is found in Al-Hadis:

"Ayesha reported that the messenger of Allah married her while she was a girl of seven years. She was sent to him while she was nine years with her toys."

Karim (1998(Vol.4):478) lists the names of twelve wives. Morey (1992:85-86) gives a list of twenty-two women in Mohammed's life that was compiled by another Muslim scholar by the name of Ali Dashti. Of these twenty-two women, according to Dashti, 16 were wives, two were slaves or concubines and four were neither wives nor concubines but devout Muslim women who gave themselves to Mohammed for the satisfaction of his sexual desires.

When Mohammed wanted to marry his adopted son Zaid's wife Zainab, and they were not willing, he received another convenient revelation from Allah in the Quran in *Surah 33: 36-37*:

"It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Apostle to have any option about the decision; if any one disobeys Allah and His Apostle, he is indeed on a clearly wrong path. Behold, you did say to one who had received the grace of Allah and your favour: 'Retain (in wedlock) your wife, and fear Allah.' But you did hide in your heart that which Allah was about to make manifest; you did fear the people but it is more fitting that you should fear Allah. Then when Zaid had dissolved (his marriage) with her, with the necessary (formality), We (Allah) joined her in marriage to you in order that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the Believers in (the matter of) marriage with the wives of their adopted sons, when the latter have dissolved with the necessary (formality) (their marriage) with them."

Jesus offered himself in order to reconcile man to God, but Mohammed seems to be more interested in power, honour, esteem, and pleasure. May God open the eyes of those who have not yet made a choice to enable them to distinguish between a false prophet and a true Redeemer.

16. Jesus, Son of God?

According to the Bible, Jesus was born as a result of the supernatural conception of His earthly mother, Mary, through the working of the Holy Spirit of God. It was no ordinary conception through the physical unity of a man and a woman, but it was a miracle through the power, will, and initiative of God. This miraculous conception occurred because God supernaturally ordained it. This is found in the Bible in Luke 1: 30-35:

30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.

32 "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

33 "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

34 Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (NKJ)
(See also Matthew 1: 18-25).

According to the story of creation in Genesis 1, God created everything by merely saying 'Let there be' and it was there. In the same manner, God spoke and Mary was supernaturally impregnated.

The Quran is in agreement with this. In *Surah 3:46* it says:

"She (Mary) said: 'O my Lord, How shall I have a son when no man has touched me?' He said: 'Even so; Allah creates what He wills; when He has decreed a matter, He but says to it, 'be' and it is.'"

If Jesus was born because of the miraculous conception by the decree of God, who then can be called His Father? The word 'father' does not only mean the one who physically impregnate but also 'contriver' or 'originator' of something. If Jesus cannot call God, who supernaturally created His earthly nature, His Father, then He has no father, according to the Bible and the Quran.

One wonders why God would not want to call the person He supernaturally originated, His son. According to the Quran, Allah does not want to call the

son he decreed by saying 'be' his son. Allah nevertheless regards this son (Jesus) highly enough to raise him up to himself in heaven (see *Surah* 4:157,158), and all this, while the final prophet, according to the Quran, died at the age of 62, was buried, and have never been seen since.

The Quran calls Jesus in *Surah* 4:171 "the Messiah" in Pickthall's (1997:71) translation and "Christ" in Ali's (2000:81) translations. Both words mean 'anointed' from the Hebrew word *Messias* and from the Greek word *Cristos*. This indicates that God anointed Him for the redemption work He came to do.

The fact is that Jesus, as the son of God, was "*The Word*" who according to John 1:14:

"became flesh and lived for a while among us ... who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

This is confirmed by 1 John 2:22, 23:

"Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also."

Is it possible for the Son of God not to be a divine being? Clearly, Jesus is in a class of His own. No other prophet among the prophets mentioned in the Quran as well as the Bible, including Mohammed, was supernaturally conceived. Why would God exalt an ordinary human being like Mohammed above his divine Son Jesus Christ, as is claimed in the Quran as well as in the Hadith?

Islam is correct, however, in believing that Allah is not the father of Jesus. In fact, Allah had nothing to do with the birth of Jesus, because Jesus is the Son of the true God Yahweh, and He came to save people (those who believe and accept it) from sin and to reconcile them to God.

17. The same God?

Is it possible that these two beings, Yahweh, God of the Bible and Allah of the Quran could be the same God? From the discussion thus far, it is clear that their completely divergent moral attributes should be sufficient evidence to the fact that these two beings cannot be the same person (see 1 John 2:23 again in this regard).

Muslims believe that they worship the true God and that their God, Allah, is also the God of the Jews and the Christians. Sincere belief that you worship the true God does not make your God the true God. If it were true, then it would mean that all religions do worship the true God, as some people nowadays want to believe. The Bible, however, does not make provision for that.

King David of the Bible, who is acknowledged as a prophet by Islam, said, according to 2 Samuel 7:22:

"Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD (YAHWEH). For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You,"

In the light of all the facts presented in this book, by way of citations from the relevant books, it is for the reader to decide for himself who is truly God, and what or who the other one is. Is the true God the one who is Love, or is it the one who expects violence and unloving behaviour from his followers? The reader's decision cannot change the truth, but it can affect his final destination.

To make the right decision about who the true God is, however, is not enough to guarantee eternal life with God. Repentance and complete surrender to God must follow the decision. This means regeneration and a new life in Christ, where He reigns in the life of the new Christian. That is what saving faith is.

According to the Bible in 1 John 2: 9-11:

"He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (NKJ).

Someone who hates is in darkness and will not be able to see the truth. It is important to stop hating in order to overcome the darkness and to allow oneself to see and to make the correct decisions.

True worship is total dedication to God in Christ. To worship the true God, Yahweh, is the only way to reach real love, because God is love. This real love enables people to find fulfilment, harmony, and the peace of God that transcends all understanding. There is no alternative way to reach these things than through true worship of the true God, Yahweh. Worldly prosperity and pleasure are only temporary and tend to lure one away from a life of true worship of God. This is the reason why God frequently calls people to a life of worship. He does not need our worship but **He knows that we need it and that it is there for our benefit**. That is why the psalmist says in Psalm 84:10:

"For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."

True worship is not a goal in itself; rather it is a way into the presence of God, His kingdom, where He reigns in love, peace, and harmony.

Worship by all people is the goal of Allah. He says in *Surah* 51:56:

"I created the jinn (spirit beings) and humankind only that they might worship Me." (Pickthall, 1997:379).

If worship of Allah is the only reason for man's existence, then it is understandable why neglect of this worship is not tolerated and is severely punished in Islam, on earth as well as in the hereafter.

The correct answer is to be found in the Bible. Just because some people do not believe it, does not change the fact.

18. Conclusion

It is a fact that Christians do not always act in a benevolent manner. It is, however, inevitable for a Christian, who is truly consecrated and dedicated to God (the God of the Bible who is love) to become more loving and benevolent in his behaviour. In Islam, it works the other way around. The more devoted a Muslim is to Allah, the more aggressive and violent he becomes, because Allah expects that of him.

It is a known fact that Christians are sometime persecuted, tortured or killed in Muslim countries, because of their faith in Jesus Christ. It is relatively safe for foreign Christians to these countries, as long as they do not try to evangelise (convert) people. Citizens of these countries who convert to Christianity are in grave danger. If Muslims deny these facts, it will be an acknowledgement that the commands of the Quran and Hadith are not followed, or it must be a lie, which under certain circumstances, is not a sin in Islam.

Christians are tried and executed, or sometimes just murdered for 'defection from Islam'. These acts are usually kept secret for the sake of Islam's public image. In the cases of high profile Christians, where there is international interest, the facts are denied, their murdered bodies later discovered, and nothing is ever said about it again.

One such example was Mehdi Dibai, an Iranian Christian leader who was imprisoned for more than nine years because of his Christian faith. In 1993 he was found guilty of apostasy (from Islam) and sentenced to execution. International outcry led to a denial of these facts and he was unexpectedly released in January 1994. Three days later Iranian Bishop Haik Hovsepian-Mehr, who had campaigned vigorously for the release of Mehdi Dibai, mysteriously disappeared. Government officials contacted his family 11 days later to identify his dead body by a photograph. According to the officials, his body was discovered with stab wounds to the chest. Five months later, Dibai's dead body was found in a forest with rope marks around his neck. (Estabrooks, 1996:54-56). Missionaries in Islamic countries report thousands of similar cases, where Christians are persecuted, tortured and killed on a regular basis, for the 'crime' of being a Christian.

In all Western, predominantly 'Christian' countries, there is freedom of religion and Muslims can freely and without any restrictions practice their religion. Muslims use this freedom to strive for (fight for) 'peace' where everyone will be subjects of Allah.

If Islam means 'peace', peace is only for those inside Islam. If you are not a Muslim, you have problems. If you do not accept Islam, you are seen as an aggressor against whom Islam has the right to wage *Jihad*. Peace must be maintained by violence, as have been illustrated. Islam strives for peace with other religions. The moment these people accept Islam there will be peace; otherwise they will keep on striving for peace by way of *Jihad*.

These facts can easily stir up thoughts of hate, resentment, and rage. In the minds of non-Muslims, there is sufficient reason to feel threatened. Should this be the result of this book, then it has completely missed its purpose. A Christian is not allowed to hate anyone, but must love everyone, including his enemy. This will be a test for anyone who claims to be a Christian. It will not be easy, because emotions of hate, rage, and resentment come naturally to anyone who feels threatened and who is trying to control his own life. Only those Christians who are completely consecrated to God and are led by the Holy Spirit (under His control) will be able to act benevolently (lovingly) towards all people regardless of their actions.

The Christian must trust God for wisdom to react in every situation to the honour of God and to the benefit of his neighbour, including his enemy. The reader should bear in mind that stern action could be beneficial. One can only think of a child who needs discipline. It must, however, always be done in love and to the benefit of the person or group acted against.

Where the New Testament clearly commands the individual to turn the other cheek and not be involved in any violence, it is the government's responsibility and obligation to maintain law and order to the benefit of its citizens.

"Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good" (1 Pet. 2: 13, 14 NKJ).

May God give them the wisdom they need to carry out this task.

The answer does not lie in strife and dissension but in prayer and trust in God.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God," (2 Corinthians 10:3-5, NKJ).

If any Muslim reads this book, in spite of things that he/she may find offensive, it is my prayer that he/she will be open to the truth of God. If he/she does not allow hatred in his/her heart and sincerely searches for truth, God will enlighten his/her heart to see and acknowledge the truth. The price for a Muslim, who comes to faith in Christ, is high because of severe persecution. Christians do not always realise that although redemption through Jesus is a free gift that is obtained by faith alone, the price of discipleship of Jesus is just as high. Man must die to self. Please read Luke 9:23 again and ask the Lord to help you to understand the true meaning of it:

"If anyone desires to come after Me, (wants to be My disciple) let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

Appendix A

Why is it necessary to become a Christian?

Yahweh, the God of the Bible, (who was introduced to you in this book) is a God of love. He does not want anybody, including you (the reader), to perish but to be saved.

1 Timothy 2: 3, 4: ***For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.***

Becoming a Christian is, according to the Bible, the only way to salvation. To be saved means to be reconciled to God, have eternal life and be with Him in glory for eternity. The Bible says the following about this:

- John. 6:47: ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.”*** (NKJ)
- Acts. 16:31: ***“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved,”*** (NKJ)
- Ephesians. 1:7: ***“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”*** (NKJ)
- John. 3:16: ***“For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”*** (NIV)
- Romans 10:9-10 ***“... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*** (NKJ)

No good deeds can save me. The Bible says the following about this:

- Romans 3:23: ***“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*** (NKJ)
- Ecclesiastes. 7:20: ***“For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.”*** (NKJ)
- 1 John. 1:8: ***“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”*** (NKJ)
- Isaiah. 53:6: ***“All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”*** (NKJ)

What is sin? The Bible says the following about this:

1 John. 3:4: ***“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”*** (NKJ)

It has been shown that the Bible teaches that the law is love. This means that unloving behaviour is lawlessness, and therefore, sin. We also know that we must love God above all. Accordingly, any behaviour to the detriment of God’s kingdom or honour is unloving, and therefore sin. Love towards my neighbour is never to do anything to him that I would not want to be done to me, and always do to my neighbour what I would want him to do to me in similar circumstances.

Why must I believe the Bible? No one can be forced to believe the Bible, but when the following facts are taken into consideration, one would expect any intelligent person to seriously consider the evidence before making a decision:

- Over a period of 1 500 years more than 40 writers (among whom were fishermen, shepherds, kings, doctors, etc.), in three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe), in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek), wrote down the revelation of God to mankind in 66 books, where hundreds of potentially controversial matters are discussed, without any real contradictions and in perfect harmony.
- All efforts over the centuries by critics to discredit the credibility of the Bible were unsuccessful. Many allegations about the so-called corruption of the Bible have been made without any proof.
- Sceptics have used archaeology in efforts to disprove the Bible, but each time they were proven wrong and the Bible true. One example is the fact that there was a time when there was no archaeological evidence for the existence of the Hittites, a powerful nation in the time of King David, which sceptics used to question the reliability of the Bible. To their dismay, evidence began to pour in, so much so, that there is presently an entire museum devoted to Hittite relics in Ankara, Turkey. There are more examples. The reliability of the archaeological record of the Bible makes it very useful to archaeologists and is used by many to locate ancient cities.
- The prophetic record of the Bible is impeccable. The Bible has many prophecies about world events as well as individuals, many years, decades and even centuries before the actual events that were accurately fulfilled. This includes prophecies about the first coming of Jesus Christ. This is proof of God’s existence and that the Bible is His revelation to mankind (His Word). There is no other religious book that can claim such an impeccable prophetic record. It is, therefore, certain

that all the Biblical prophecies that are unfulfilled at present, will be fulfilled as prophesied.

- The Bible brought millions of people into contact with the living God, who changed their lives irrevocably forever. They experience the joy and the peace of God that surpass all understanding, even in the midst of precarious circumstances and serious persecution.

Source: (Hunt, 1996 & McDowell, 1979)

Appendix B

What is a Christian?

There is a variety of meanings attached to the word “Christian”. Some people see themselves as Christians and are seen by others as such when their names are on a membership list of some Christian denomination, irrespective of their knowledge of, or relationship with the living Christ. Some people are perceived as Christians merely because they observe traditional Christian celebrations like Christmas or Good Friday. Some people think they are Christians when they have prayed a prayer in which they accepted Jesus Christ as their personal saviour, but without any notable change in their former sinful way of life. Some people think they are Christians when they regularly attend church, do not sin too much, live a decent life and do a lot of good deeds (like giving to the poor and the church), without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

According to the dictionary, a Christian is “a believer in the religion of Christ or one so classified”. This definition differs from the Biblical definition of a Christian. A person can, for instance, be classified as a Christian according to the abovementioned criteria, without being a real Christian according to the Biblical definition. A person can even confess to being a Christian without knowing what a real Christian is.

We find the Biblical definition in Acts 11:26 where we read: *“And the disciples (of Jesus) were first called Christians in Antioch”*. This means that a Christian is a disciple of Jesus. A disciple is not only a pupil or learner, but also a follower of the teachings of a person, which in this case is Jesus Christ. A Biblical definition of ‘Christian’ is therefore, a disciple (follower) of Jesus and His teachings. If Jesus is the leader (the one followed), then He is also the one who determines what the requirements are for a true follower of Him. Jesus said about this: ***“If anyone desires to come after Me (to be My disciple), let him deny himself (self and own interests are now less important than God and His interests), and take up his cross daily (be willing to die to self, as Jesus did when He took up His cross), and follow Me (be My disciple).”*** See also Matthew 16:24 and Mark 8:34.

A biblical definition of a Christian is therefore; someone who, because of the salvation in Christ, is completely dedicated to God, denies himself, follows Christ and is willing to die to himself every day (Luke 9:23). He is dead to the world and sin but lives for Christ (Romans 6:2-14) see verse 11: ***“Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*** (NKJ); who, as a child of God, is led by the Spirit of God

according to Romans 8:14: ***"Those who are led by God's Spirit are God's children."*** (GNB); and in whose heart the love of God has been poured out as seen in Romans 5:5: ***"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."*** (NKJ).

In this process of salvation God gets all the honour, because it is His work. Even the ability to believe and to choose is a gift from God; see Ephesians 2:8, 9: ***"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."*** (NKJ). God Himself enables us to dedicate ourselves completely to Him, as can be seen in John 15:5: ***"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."*** (NKJ). A Christian is someone who lives in total dedication to God (holiness) and does not live in sin any longer. 1 John 3:6 ***"Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him."***

Do his own good works then save a person? No good works can save a person. We are saved by faith alone, but it must be a living faith that leads to action. The apostle James wrote in 2:20: ***"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?"*** Verse 26: ***"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."*** If your faith (salvation) does not lead to good works and a dedicated life, your faith cannot be real.

But, how does one become a Christian?

Appendix C

How to become a Christian.

You must first, **want** to be a Christian. For that, you need a basic knowledge of the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ. In this book, it was endeavoured to give the reader sufficient information to enable him/her to decide whether he/she wants to be a Christian or not, or in other words to be saved or not.

In Acts 16:30 the keeper of the prison asked Paul and Silas: ***“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”*** ³¹***So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved,’”***. Redemption (salvation) is only possible through a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which leads to a total dedication to Him. It is to be born again into a new life where the new Christian or disciple of Christ, now lives for Christ and not for him/herself anymore (see John 3:3). There is now no more need for rituals. Jesus Himself, through the work of the Holy Spirit, will put the desire in your heart to live for Him and to His honour.

You decide and God provides the power and ability, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to become a true Christian. The ability is from Him but the decision is yours.

When you realise that you are a lost sinner, that your own good deeds cannot save you, but that Jesus paid the full price for you to be reconciled to God, and for your salvation, a real repentance is inevitable. That is, however, not enough. You must receive Him into your life and thereby become a child of God. A true and total dedication is required. John 1:12: ***“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”***

You must come to a decision and make your decision known to God through prayer. Prayer is conversation with the living God. He wants us to come to Him in prayer. James 4:8: ***“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”*** It is good to kneel before God in prayer, because it shows respect and reverence, but that is not compulsory. If you do kneel, it is not necessary to kneel in a specific direction because God is not only omnipresent, but also omniscient, and He knows that your intention is to kneel before Him. Prayer is to talk honestly to God about the things you have on your heart. No ritual washing of hands etc. is necessary and no fixed rhymes will impress Him. He knows the intentions of your heart but He wants you to bring them to Him in prayer. He may even, through the Holy Spirit, put things on your heart about which He wants you to pray. Do it to the glory and honour of God.

To become a Christian the following must also be addressed in your prayer:

1. Confess your sins to God. Confess all unloving behaviour. You must remember that God can and will forgive all your sins. You may feel that there are sins too big for him to forgive. He said in his Word that he will ***"blot out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remember your sins no more"***. (Isaiah 43:25). Through the same prophet Isaiah, God said in Isaiah 1:18: ***"Come and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."***
2. Accept his gift of salvation through Jesus, and thank Him that Jesus paid the price for all your sins through his death on the cross, which made your salvation and reconciliation with Him possible. You accept it as you would accept any other gift, taking it by faith as a gift from God, and thanking Him for it. Ephesians 2:8, 9: ***"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast."***
3. Surrender yourself to Him, tell Him that from now on, you will live for Him and not for yourself, and that He will have first place in your life.
4. Thank Him for the opportunity to become part of the family of God, and that He will, through his Holy Spirit, enable you to live a consecrated (holy) life.

To give God the first place in your life is to love Him more than you love yourself, and that is the fulfilment of God's law of love. If you are willing to deny yourself, you are also prepared to die to self, and then you will do nothing to harm your neighbour. Instead, you will always do to him what you want people to do to you in similar circumstances. For this reason, it is important to do restitution where you have harmed other people. Do whatever you can to compensate for damage or harm resulting of your sins, and get forgiveness. You must also forgive those who have harmed you. Jesus said in Matthew 6:15: ***"If you do not forgive men their trespasses, then my Father in heaven will not forgive your trespasses."***

If you still have questions about becoming a Christian, but feel that it appeals to you, then leave no stone unturned to get all your questions answered as soon as possible. Look out for a Christian who is serious about God and the Bible (it may be difficult to find one, but trust God to lead you through his Holy Spirit to such a person). Unfortunately, not all 'Christians', including pastors and church leaders, are serious about God and the Bible. It is,

however, always good to get guidance from a mature Christian. Get a copy of the Bible in the language you understand best, and read it prayerfully, trusting God to lead you to the answers to your questions. Preferably start your reading at the gospel of John in the New Testament. The Bible is God's revelation to mankind and that is where you will meet Him and get acquainted with Him.

What happens now that I am a Christian?

A new Christian must grow in his/her knowledge of God and in the process of sanctification (growing in holiness or consecration to God). It was already pointed out that a Christian cannot continue as before in his/her former sinful living. That is not real Christianity. There are so-called Christians, who not only live in sin themselves, but they also teach that sinless living is impossible. This teaching has been an obstacle (cause to sin) for many, and the Bible says about this in Matthew 18:7: ***"Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!"***

It is imperative for every new Christian to grow in his/her knowledge of God. This is the only way to learn how to live a life completely dedicated to God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is the only way to a holy (consecrated and sinless) life, for ***"without holiness no one will see the Lord."*** (Hebrews 12:14). This will be accomplished by reading the Bible prayerfully, and by receiving instruction in the truths of God's Word (the Bible) in a community of consecrated Christians.

The God of the Bible expects from Christians, in Jesus' words: ***"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*** (Matthew 5:48). He confirms it in the words of the apostle Peter: ***"but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"*** This is found in 1 Peter 1:15, 16 and it refers to Leviticus 11:44, 45.

People (many Christians) say that this sinless and holy life is impossible. It is impossible only if we try to do it in our own strength and ability, but the Lord promised us that if we want to do it, and trust Him for it, He will give us the strength and ability through his Holy Spirit to do it. Paul said in Galatians 2:20: ***"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*** Romans 13:14: ***"Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."*** (NIV). In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 Paul exhorts them: ***"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify (make holy) you"***

completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He assures them in verse 24 that: ***"He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it."***

It is unnecessary to try to convince you to be a witness for Christ, if you are totally dedicated to Him as explained here. It will be impossible not to be a witness for Him. ***"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me"*** (Jesus' words in Acts 1:8). It is the same with prayer. In prayer, you go to God and talk to Him, and if you love Him so much that you completely surrender to Him, it is inevitable that you will seek his presence in prayer as often as possible.

With the apostle Paul I say: ***"we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."*** (2 Corinthians 5:20b).

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