

## Love and Law in Christianity and Islam

**Professor Mona Siddiqui föreläsning till Krister Stendahls minne tog sin utgångspunkt i föreställningen att den stora skillnaden mellan de båda religionerna är att kristendomen talar om en kärleksfull och förlåtande gud, medan islam är en lagreligion med en dömande gud. Det är en vilseledande förenkling, menade Mona Siddiqui – islam talar också om Guds kärlek, men utifrån andra perspektiv än kristendomen. Detta är ett referat med omfattande citat ur föreläsningen.**

Professor Siddiqui inledde med ett par personliga historier, som illustrerade missuppfattningar om lagens och kärlekens roll i islam. En präst hon var bekant med hade sagt att han aldrig skulle kunna konvertera till islam, eftersom han inte ville gå miste om bacon till frukost. Bakom den halvt skämtsamma anmärkningen anade Mona Siddiqui en oförmåga att förstå att matregler kan ha en andlig funktion som ett uttryck för människors gudsrelation.

Den andra berättelsen handlade om en nunna som frågat: "hur vet ni muslimer att Gud älskar oss? Som kristen vet jag att Gud älskar oss eftersom Jesus dog för våra synder". Det var en fråga som för Mona Siddiqui tydliggjorde skillnaden mellan kristendom och islam (och även judendom) vad gäller hur de förstår Guds kärlek: avsaknaden av ett avgörande ögonblick i historien då denna kärlek uppenbaras.

*This conversation has been one of several where you can sense that many Christians understand the concept of divine love not as a difference between Islam and Christianity but perhaps as the central difference. Not only is this often understood by clustering Islam and Judaism together usually against Christianity as religions of the law, more concerned with right practice than right doctrine. But this approach is further confirmed by acknowledging that whilst Judaism, Christianity and Islam are monotheistic traditions which speak of God's love, it is Christianity alone which speaks of God's unconditional love. The argument is that in Islam and Judaism the kind of love which is manifested through the fulfilment of precepts and submission to God's will, *nomos*<sup>1</sup> by its very nature speaks of a bilateral commitment between man and God. In these two religions, despite the plurality of words which command an affinity between God and his creation, there is no defining moment when God seals his love for human beings.*

Att tala om "islamisk teologi" är problematiskt, påpekade Mona Siddiqui, eftersom teologi traditionellt varit ett kristet begrepp. Det har inte samma funktion i islam, som inte har utvecklat samma typ av doktriner om Guds väsen som kristendomen. Men i den grundläggande betydelsen av "tal om Gud" är det ändå rimligt att använda begreppet "teologi" för islamiskt tänkande:

*Theology as a discipline doesn't translate neatly from the Christian context to the Islamic. But I understand theology at its simplest level to mean human attempts to talk about God. In doing theology we are attempting to define and respond to God in some way for God has spoken. In Islam prophecy and scripture are inextricably tied to divine communication so that it is principally through Muḥammad and the Qur'ān that Muslims come to see God as a moral and eschatological reality. There is an understanding that throughout history God sends and humanity receives different forms of God's communication. It is in this receiving that humankind understands something of a God who*

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<sup>1</sup> Binyamin Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism*, Routledge, 2003, 5.

*both hides and reveals of himself.. By contrast scripture and prophecy play a secondary role in Christianity in the sense that through Jesus Christ, God no longer offers us a prophetic message pointing to an eschatological reality, but rather offers himself.*

*Traditional theistic interpretations of God's omnipotence do not place any obligations on either God's essence or his attributes but God chooses to "reveal." But why is there revelation in the first place? For the muslim mystics such as Ibn al-`Arabī, the central ontological question, why there is anything rather than nothing was made explicit in the famous ḥadīth qudsī, "I was a hidden treasure then I desired to be known, so I created a creation to which I made myself known; then they knew me."<sup>2</sup> The very purpose of creation is for God to reveal himself. For Ibn al-`Arabī this is not because God needs creation in any way to realize his fullness but because God's creative love is so strong that it triggers of the whole process of creation. God's self identity is timeless, he does not become less God or more God in the act of creation but something within God inspires a movement of creative freedom. There is a privilege to this relationship expressed most poignantly where God himself says, 'Man is my secret and I am his.'*

*The tension between self-revelation and complete transcendence has exercised the minds of Christian and Muslim scholars for centuries – reconciling a God who is radically one and transcendent and a God who reveals for a purpose. In both religions, God reveals in diverse ways in history so that we can re-center ourselves towards him. As Rowan Williams says "God is the 'presence' to which all reality is present."<sup>3</sup> In developing the relationship between the divine and the human, Muslims focused on God's modes and purpose in revelation, the human obligation to submit to reading God's presence in the Qur'ān and understanding and obeying God's will in response to a revealed text. Christianity saw in revelation an aspect of God's self giving and the centrality of love in Christ. To this Karl Barth said, "God is he who in His revelation seeks and creates fellowship with us... He does not will to be God for himself nor as God to be alone with Himself."<sup>4</sup> In both faiths revelation is essentially about divine disclosure of a creative desire or love but these phenomena are located and expressed in different ways.*

*Against this background, the manner of God's love has been expressed in various ways within monotheism. In biblical and post biblical Judaism, love is the principle axis in the relationship between God and Israel. God's specific love for the people of Israel is described in the prophetic book of Hosea. In the Song of Songs, God is depicted as a husband or lover, not as a Father. In Isaiah, God says, 'Oh Israel, fear not, for I will redeem you... and I love you' (Ahavtichah).*

*For some the core commandment of Judaism is Leviticus 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Leviticus, 19:18). Others have stressed various passages in Deuteronomy which served as the most significant sources for many later authorities. The German Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig argues that this commandment to love the neighbour arises out of the unique love God has for the children of Israel and the centrality of this love is reflected most poignantly in the shema*

*Hear O Israel, the lord is our God. (Deuteronomy 6:4).*

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<sup>2</sup> Badi'al-Zamān Foruzanfar, *Āḥadīth-Masnavi*, Reprint, Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1987, 29.

<sup>3</sup> Rowan Williams, *Resurrection, Interpreting the Easter Gospel*, Longman and Todd Ltd: Darton, 1982, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Barth, *Dogmatics*, 2:1, 274.

*However, Rosenzweig also finds it remarkable that throughout the Tora, God demands that Israel love him but never professes love for Israel except in a future sense i. e. if Israel loves God, he will bless them in return. Love for God is expressed through carrying out the commandments. But in Jewish midrash it is said that the believer loves that which comes from God and that is why he studies the Tora.*

*In Islam the doctrine of God began and ended with an affirmation of God's absolute and complete unity. It was rather the dilemma of obedience to God not so much in worship (ibadat) but in the whole range of human activity mu`amalat, that has proved to be the essential theological activity of Muslim scholars in the classical period and which we call jurisprudence. With no clerical hierarchy in Sunni Islam, with no central focus of authority, classical scholars set the parameters of discourse, both defining and refining the detail, exercising juristic artistry as well as faithful devotion. As Norman Calder wrote, 'revelation can never be perceived directly as an act of God. Irrespective of the degree of metaphor discovered in the notion that God writes himself, it is the writings of God's mediators that are available for analysis. Not even of the Qur'ān is it claimed that God dictated, and merely dictated it.'*

*The problematics of love and law lie primarily in the fact that in both Islam and Judaism the outsider sees law largely through a prism of ritualism in opposition to the ethical. Law is the external, the public and the ceremonial whereas true spiritualism or true morality is to be found in the internal, the unstructured, the emotional and the personal. In comparing Muslim and Christian views on scripture and law, Zeidan writes, "The Christian view of scripture as law is more complex than the Islamic one, as it is tempered by the doctrine of salvation by faith rather than by obedience to a written law."*

*The complexity of law in relation to grace finds a particular tension in the Letters of Paul. Perhaps no other topic in Pauline studies has aroused more discussion and frustration than that of "Paul and the law." But if this subject is important within Pauline studies, it is also the most difficult.<sup>2</sup> The problem arises from the differing and seemingly contradictory statements that Paul makes about the law and the function of the law in relation to sin. Paul's dilemma on the law and sin reaches a particular complexity in his Letters to the Romans. In Romans 7:*

*What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.*

*Paulus talar om människans slaveri under synden, och hur han kämpar med paradoxen att lagen är en välsignelse som visar den rätta vägen, samtidigt som den visar att han är slav under synden och inte kan befria honom ur det slaveriet. Han lyckas inte lösa paradoxen, men finner att befrielsen ligger i nåden och kärleken som personifieras av Jesus. Och här ligger den stora skillnaden mellan kristendom och islam, menar Mona Siddiqui, i synen på syndens natur:*

*Herein lies a fundamental difference between Christianity and Islam in that the very nature of sin means that guidance alone can never redeem nor restore that which humankind has lost. Sin is not a human act but a human condition in which people are weak and need grace. If prophecy is not enough, neither is guidance, scriptural or otherwise. It is divine grace which must be seen to be active in human life which redeems. From the Muslim perspective, guidance and grace work together not to transform our sinful condition but to lead us to God.*

Även om islamiskt tänkande inte har några motsvarigheter till de kristna lärostriderna kring inkarnationen och treenigheten, så finns det en djup reflektion över Guds vilja och natur i de olika grenarna av islamisk teologi:

*Although Islamic thought does not have the equivalence of the complex Christian doctrinal debates such as the Incarnation, Trinity and Resurrection it has an inner story of God which has been lost to some extent in the modern preoccupation with simplifying prescriptive obedience through the generalised and misused notion of shariah. If theology at its simplest level is fundamentally human attempts to understand God, then the various intellectual disciplines of Islam, speculative theology (kalām), philosophy (falāsifa), jurisprudence (fiqh) and mysticism (tasawwuf) are therefore all examples of understanding the relationship of human beings to God. They are all ways of reflecting upon God, his will and his nature. The intellectual response to God is no less than worship itself because belief in God demands an obligation to talk of God; silence, even contemplative silence is not enough. I am reminded here of the last part of Socrates's Phaedrus and the comparison between a painting and the written word, both of which talk to us while maintaining a majestic silence.*

*It is up to the exegetes to give voice to this 'majestic silence.' Christianity and Islam have their distinct interpretative traditions but the reception of the divine word is different for each. In Christianity scripture is secondary to the event of Christ's life, death and resurrection. The Incarnation is the mystery of the divine taking on human form and thus becoming the essential structure at the very core of a Christian understanding of God. Jesus' role is salvific whereas Muhammad's role is prophetic. The structure and manifestation of God's love in Christianity is fundamentally different from that in Islam.*

I Bibeln är berättelserna om Guds kärlek ofta dramatiska, medan Koranens text kan te sig jämförelsevis tam, menar Mona Sidiqui, som också påpekar att det häpnadsväckande nog inte finns något bud om att älska Gud, motsvarande "det dubbla kärleksbudet" i Bibeln. Men Koranens kortfattade uppmaningar att göra gott eftersom Gud älskar dem som gör det (t ex i Sura 2:195 och 222) har ändå inspirerat de sufiska mystikerna till deras hänförliga utläggningar om Guds kärlek.

*Yet it was these same Qur'anic verses which inspired the exuberance of love themes in sufi literature. In Islamic thought, other than in Ṣūfī literature, the love rhetoric has been virtually eclipsed by the rhetoric of obedience as the discussions around law gradually took pre-eminence in Islam's intellectual heritage as well as in popular piety. Even amongst the Ṣūfīs, systematic theories of divine love did not develop in early Islamic mysticism. There are few works which provide a complete theory of divine love.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, it is still through the rich and wide prism of sufi poetry where the theme of God's cosmic love has been most poignantly felt. The Sufis kept a distinction between how God loves man and how man loves or should love God. Love in its various manifestations is part of the world order, the cosmic order, but there is no particular word which defines the relationship of love between God and man so that the concept of love carries within it the sense of both the divine and the profane. The challenge for the Sufis was to define how God loves but also whether love, which implies a need amongst human beings, can be attributed to a perfect God who has no need. Furthermore, not all Sufis agreed with the conventional dichotomies posed by the distinction between 'ishq-i haqiqi (love directed to God) and 'ishq-i majazi (love directed to human beings). In different*

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<sup>5</sup> For a useful introduction to the love motif in different religious and philosophical traditions, see Binyamin Abrahamov, *Divine Love in Islamic Mysticism*, Routledge, 2003.

ways in the Qur'ān, the emphasis on human worship of God remains the principle if not the only explanation as to why human beings were created. Ibn `Arabī however drew a connection between love and worship so that worship of God was not about knowing God or obedience to him, but essentially about loving him. For Ibn `Arabī, love becomes a universal principle encompassing the actions of all creation, the basis by which all phenomena are explicable. Human beings may not be able to attribute a beginning or purpose to God's love but he writes, 'We came from love, we are created in love.'<sup>6</sup>

Inspired by the Qur'ānic vocabulary of love and mercy as well as the divine names such *al-Laṭīf* (the kind), *al-Walī* (the friend), *al-Halīm* (the gentle), *al-Ra`ūf* (the merciful), *al-Ghafūr* (the Forgiver), many Ṣūfīs see the whole of the cosmos as pulsating with the love which flows from God and the ecstasy of desiring God:

You have infused my being  
Through and through,  
As an intimate friend must  
Always do.  
So when I speak I speak of only You  
And when silent, I yearn for You.<sup>7</sup>

The voice of love  
Each moment comes  
From everywhere  
We were in heaven once  
We were friends to angels once,  
To that place let us return,  
That is our country, our home.  
Higher than heavens, we are.  
Greater than angels, we are.  
Why not leave them both behind?  
Our goal is Majesty, divine.<sup>8</sup>

And Rumi's most famous lines:

However must I describe Love's qualities?  
When I am in it my words aren't adequate  
The tongue can throw some light on it  
But Love is most illumined by silence  
When the pen was busy writing, it was fluent  
When it reached the word of Love, it broke down.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibn `Arabī, *Tarjuman al`Ashwaq: A Collection of Mystical Odes by Muhyiuddīn ibn al-`Arabī*, edited and translated by R.A. Nicholson, London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1911, vol.2, p. 318. Ibn `Arabī defines God's love for man as *al-hubb al-Ilāhī*.

<sup>7</sup> Rābia Basrī in *Islamic Mystical Poetry, Ṣūfī Verses from the Early Mystics to Rūmī*, edited and translated by Mahmood Jamal, Penguin Books, 2009, p.7

<sup>8</sup> Jalaluddīn Rūmī, *Islamic Mystical*, p.133.

<sup>9</sup> Rūmī, *Islamic Mystical*, p.145.

*It seems to me that if the pen broke when it reached the word of love then it may be even more difficult if not impossible to define the extent of God's love based on the usage of 'loving' terms in the Qur'ān when the Qur'ān tells us that it contains that which is hidden and which remains with God. The Qur'ānic God is intimately but not openly tied to the lives of his creation. God retains the element of secrecy of self by speaking only through inspiration or from behind a veil, never revealing himself directly to humankind. The secrecy motif is presented throughout the Qur'ān in various ways; God hides and reveals; God knows the secrets of our hearts but human beings do not know the secrets of God:*

*To God belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth, whether you know what is in yourselves or conceal it, God calls you to account for it (Q2:284).*

*He knows your secret and your disclosure. (Q6:3).*

*However, this did not preclude Muslims understanding the Qur'ān as saying something about God and viewing the Qur'ān as a glimpse into God's being and mercy. The love vocabulary compliments that which lies at the core of divine engagement with creation. The fundamental term which allows us a glimpse of God's nature is in the principle of mercy or loving compassion (rahma). The Qur'ān is replete with the vocabulary of compassion as the defining essence of God:*

*Say, 'Oh my servants who have transgressed against themselves, despair not of the mercy of God (rahma Allah), for God forgives all sins: for He is oft-forgiving, most merciful (ghafūr al-rahīm) (Q39:53).*

*This overwhelming mercy is a mystery for it is essentially a plea from God to humankind not to despair of God's mercy. Mercy unlike love is not bilateral – human beings cannot have mercy on God, but God chooses, indeed desires to be merciful to human beings. Indeed there is a tradition where a believer implores God to keep him away from sin. God's response is 'All my believing servants ask this from me. But if I should keep them away from sin, upon whom will I bestow my blessings and to whom will I grant forgiveness?'<sup>10</sup>*

Islam anklagas ofta för att ha en gud som sätter upp villkor för sin kärlek, men så ser inte de muslimska teologerna och mystikerna det. Den store 1100-talsteologer al-Ghazali såg inte uppfyllandet av lagen som ett villkor för Guds kärlek, utan som det sublima sättet att visa Gud sin kärlek:

*Al-Ghazālī describes the mystical states and stations towards God by concluding that the love of God is the highest in rank and the last stage in drawing towards God before repentance and patience. Love is not a means to God love is the end station, for the acquisition of the love of God is the end. He emphasises that loving God and loving the prophet are compulsory, that the meaning of faith is the love for God and his prophet more than anything else. Al-Ghazālī like Augustine stresses that real love is love of God, not love of self. Al-Ghazālī is quite clear that love of God means something more than mere obedience while equally insisting that Muslims must be obedient.*

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<sup>10</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-Khauf, Ihyā'*, p.132.

*The intimacy of law in relation to God is such that Muhammad is presented as saying, 'Worship has ten parts; nine of those are the seeking of the lawful'.<sup>11</sup> It is possible to say that seeking knowledge (of the un/lawful) is considered by most Muslim theologians to be not only a form of worship, but also the most important aspect of worship even though the Islamic tradition is full of examples which emphasise divine love over human obedience.*

*A desert Arab asks the prophet that he had not prepared for the day of judgement by way of fasting or prayers but he did love God and his prophet. The prophet replies, he who loves one will be with him. It is said that 'Love of God even to the measure of a mustard seed is dearer to me than divine service for 70 years without love.*

*The law to which al- Ghazālī refers is a complex issue. Right belief is the path to salvation/success and this is contained not just in creedal formulae but in the vast corpus of writings on correct behaviour which dominated the Muslim intellectual output. The technical Muslim word which is used to convey the sense of practical faith as ordained by God is shari`a, commonly but misleadingly translated into English as Islamic law. Law implies a set of rules, a set of precepts imposed upon society, and shari`a is not a superimposed structure on society – it designates religion in its totality not just duties which man must perform in obedience to God. Shari`a is then fixed divine legislation of God, but rather a process of uncovering ethical behaviour. Shari`a is seen by some as normative ethics but it is fundamentally an ideal. It is God's law which the science of jurisprudence must endeavour to uncover and relate for the spiritual and practical benefit of the faithful. The jurist's perception of the written law is that it is a reflection of his faith, a vehicle for conveying moral and materials standards within the framework of the Islamic faith. But going 'against the law' is part of being human. When the Muslim tradition speaks of divine forgiveness and hope, it recognises the inevitability of human wrongdoing and recalcitrance which will be met by divine mercy.*

*According to the tradition, when the servant commits a sin and asks God for pardon, God Almighty says to his angels, 'Look at my servant, he has committed a sin and he knows that he has a Lord who will pardon and take away the sin. I testify to you that I have pardoned him. And according to the tradition, if my servant were to sin so that his sins were to reach the clouds of the skies, I would pardon him in so far as he asked pardon of me and hoped in me.'*

Lagen och kärleken ska alltså inte ses som två motsatta paradig, utan Mona Siddiqui vill de ett dialektiskt förhållande mellan dem:

*But to appreciate the love and law dialectic, we must understand the prior story, namely the overlapping concepts of how evil and sin entered the world. Gustave E. von Grunebaum expresses this succinctly:*

*Evil is the point where the perpetual contradictions of our existence intersect: our knowledge that we are free, our knowledge that we are not; our knowledge that we are masters and creators, and our knowledge that we are frail and transitory beings, feeble, multiply conditioned, and that our works along with ourselves are condemned to bear the stigma of futility.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> *Al-Ghazālī On the Lawful, the Unlawful and the Doubtful*, p.8.

<sup>12</sup> Gustave E. von Grunebaum, 'Observations on the Muslim Concept of Evil,' *Studia Islamica*, no.31, 1970, 117-134. I have developed Islamic and Christian approaches to evil and love in greater detail in my

*One of the major challenges for Christian theologians has been to understand evil not just in terms of the Augustinian notion of the fall and redemptive salvation, but in the earthly and metaphysical dilemma posed by the relationship between an all-knowing, benevolent God, with conditioned or unconditioned omnipotence and human freedom to resist God's goodness. For Augustine (354-430AD) the curses of sin and death were the consequences of sex and sexual desire. Adam and Eve's fall resulted in a basic disorder between the flesh and spirit but Augustine tried to exonerate God from any blame by attributing evil to the choices of human will. For Augustine the moral life finds its meaning in the interpretive representation of God as love.<sup>13</sup> In the Irenaean type of theodicy, humankind did not emerge as a finitely perfect but as an immature being who needed to develop and mature within the challenges of this world. In the two stage process of human development, mankind is not born perfect but rather perfection lies in the future. To grow into that perfect being while exercising genuine freedom requires a certain "distance" from God in a world where God is not overwhelmingly evident but where humankind has the freedom to grow to know and love God.*

*Islamic theology, both classical and modern has been less occupied with this subject as it could be argued that for the most part many Sunnī theologians generally denied that humans have the freedom to act. Furthermore, while free will was understood as a necessary corollary for the power to choose good, and for some, reflected ultimately on a God who is good, it is very difficult to be exact about any ontological definition of a word like evil in Islam. The variety of words in the Qur'ān and later Islamic traditions to encompass the sense of human wrongdoing and human erring do not in themselves contain anything similar to the depth of differing but related views of terrible human actions and terrible human suffering which have occupied the minds of Christian and western theologians and philosophers. With the exception of few medieval thinkers, the issue of evil was not approached directly but rather subsumed within the larger discussions around the unity of God and the goodness of God.*

*Max Weber was right to say that Islam lacks the sense of tragic which comes from the feeling of sin. This theme is reflected in the writings of 20<sup>th</sup> century Christian missionaries who travelled to Muslim lands. The Dutch reformed missiologist Hendrik Kraemer (1888-1965) identified a common perception among many Christians (and also extolled by some Muslims) that Islam is a simple religion in which submission to God's will and majesty encapsulates the very heart of the faith.*

*Islam may be called a religion that has almost no questions and no answers. In a certain respect its greatness lies there, because this question-less and answer-less condition is a consistent exemplification of its deepest spirit, expressed in its name: Islam, that is, absolute surrender, to God the Almighty Lord.<sup>14</sup>*

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monograph, *The Good Muslim, Reflections on Classical Islamic Law and Theology*, Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> For an interesting take on the legacy of Augustine's theology of original sin, see Charles T. Mathewes, 'Original Sin and the Hermeneutics of Charity: A Response to Gilbert Meilaender,' *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol.29:1, Spring 2001, pp.35-42. Mathewes writes, 'We ought to bury Augustine, not praise him.... burial would recognise Augustine's humanity. Like us he struggled with clarity, changed his mind and operated within a fairly limited set of intellectual options whose parameters he did not set. Like us, that is, he worked under conditions of original sin... Ironically enough, it may be the extremity of our respect for antique minds that traps us in the habit of scolding them for not being more like us.'

<sup>14</sup> Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, Grand Rapids Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1956 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), 217. Hendrik Kraemer was a Dutch Reformed missiologist, lay theologian and



*But whereas Muslims, rightly or wrongly see virtue in this “simplicity,” Kraemer saw in it superficiality. Kraemer identified two significant reasons behind this superficiality. Firstly, there is the “mechanical idea of revelation” in Islam, a rigid form which has become “externalized and fossilized.” This is in opposition to Biblical realism and “God constantly acting in holy sovereign freedom, conclusively embodied in the man Jesus Christ.”*

*Kraemer’ second point is that the superficiality of Islam lies in its “clumsy, external conception of sin and salvation.” Denying that there is any anthropology in Islam, he is amazed that despite Islam having its historical roots in the Bible, there is nothing of the “stirring problems of God and man that are involved in the terms sin and salvation.”<sup>15</sup>*

*Why did Kraemer think this? The Christian story of the fall has its parallel in the fall of Iblis in Islam. In the Qur’an Adam’s first act of freedom is also his first act of disobedience. But despite Adam’s actions, the Qur’anic story focuses on divine forgiveness of this disobedience and the transition of man to earth, not as a punishment but because humankind was always destined for the earth; it was here that man would find his true role. Infact the indian philosopher Muhammad Iqbal commented:*

*Adam’s transgression was not a loss and not an act of moral depravity: it is man’s transition from simple consciousness to the first flash of self-consciousness, a kind of waking from the dream of nature.<sup>16</sup>*

*In Iqbāl’s view, it is not that God desires to keep humankind from becoming more aware but Adam’s inherent human impulse is to reach out for autonomous experience and knowledge; his sin is that of being too inquisitive. For Iqbāl good and evil fall within the same whole of creation because both are predicated on God’s risk taking, faith in humanity and human freedom to choose:*

*That God has taken this risk shows His immense faith in man; it is for man now to justify this faith.<sup>17</sup>*

*The philosopher rather than the Ṣūfī in Iqbāl had faith in man’s khudi or ego so much so that for Iqbāl, man had an independent capacity for his ultimate salvation. The onus is on man not God. As Iblīs who is now satan expelled from paradise finds his new destiny is earth, his future is now intertwined with that of humankind. He vows to whisper temptation to humankind with the sole purpose of leading people away from God but the Qur’an does not explain why Iblis was given the reprieve he asked for. If he is now the personification of the source of potential and real wrongdoing, rejected by God, his nature and purpose is based on the intent to destroy goodness, beginning with the sexual innocence in Adam and Eve’s relationship. The awareness he arouses in Adam and Eve is not an increased awareness of the divine but that of the profane. Frithjof Schuon expresses this as the passing from sacred love into profane desire:*

*Loving each other, Adam and Eve loved God; they could neither love God nor know God. After the fall, they loved each other outside God and for themselves, and they knew each other as separate*

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ecumenical leader. He studied Javanese in Leiden before working for the Dutch Bible Society in Indonesia (1922-1937). His most influential writing is a *Christian Message in a Non Christian World* (1938) prepared for the International Missionary Council meeting in Madras. Kraemer states in this work that ‘In its main, genuine structure Islam is a simple religion’ and its admirers see none of the ‘intricate subtleties of the Christological dogmas.’

<sup>15</sup> Kraemer, *Christian Message*, 218.

<sup>16</sup> Muḥammad Iqbāl, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Ashraf Press, Lahore, p.85.

<sup>17</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p.85.

*phenomena and not as theophanies; this new kind of love was concupiscence and this new kind of knowing was profanity.<sup>18</sup>*

*However one understands this narrative, at one level the Qur'ānic story is essentially a story of struggle but not alienation from a transcendent God. Thus faith in God is not an antidote to evil but faith kept alive can counteract all the passion and tragedy of evil. Evil is not some objective malign force or as the French social theorist Jean Baudrillard says, "a deliberate perversion of the order of the world."<sup>19</sup> The Qur'ān itself does not give any abstract analysis of tragedy, evil and human loss but repeats the theme of human propensity to do wrong and the divine essence to forgive. Why evil, moral and natural exists alongside an infinitely good God and whether some evil is necessary, were not questions which occupied the world view of the majority of Muslim thinkers. Why humans have to suffer natural disasters or be subject to unbearable pain are issues often dissolved not resolved within the arguments for an omnipotent and just God. While much of Islamic thought tried to absolve God of actively creating evil deeds and leading people astray, it recognised that human wrongdoing is part of the divine plan and that God has a stake in both the good that we do and the wrong that we do. Evil accompanies us along life's journey and human beings who are part of the natural order live with the struggle of choosing right over wrong throughout their lives. Evil is not a contradiction but a challenge to human life. In this pursuit of the good life, God's revelation guides against all forms of wrong but human conscience has always been vulnerable from the time of Adam. Thus, human suffering and sin are not meant to be wiped out through any divine act but are intrinsic to the human condition.*

*Human nature is not tainted nor defined by evil. Evil is seen largely through the prism of human choice rather than divine damnation. Thus evil is not a state but acts. Minus the tragic element of sin as evident in much of Christian theological reflection, evil loses its transcendental dimension and can appear to be reduced to the more prosaic, even the banality of human wrongdoing. But in Islamic thought, wrongdoing is corrosive, futile for the individual and society and leads ultimately to an evasion of moral responsibility. It is through the possibility of wrongdoing, repentance and subsequent discernment, that humankind hopes to attain moral growth. Once committed, wrongdoing, wilful or inflicted has the capacity to transform us into something better and while ultimately everything comes down to God's grace, we ourselves bear some responsibility for our redemption. Iblīs is a symbolic but necessary player in the human quest for salvation since without him there is nothing for intelligence to master.*

*God's revelation as guiding revelation is not the central theme of sin/evil and salvation in Christian doctrine. Maurice Wiles writes that "The Christian tradition has never believed that men needed only to be shown the truth about God and about human life. Sin has usually been regarded as more fundamental than ignorance. Men need not only to be enlightened; they need to be changed. The forgiveness and transformation of man are at least as basic to Christ's mission as the impartation of knowledge and illumination."<sup>20</sup> Sin constitutes the most critical alienation from God, self and others; it creates a profound rupture in one's relationship with God. In Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man*:*

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<sup>18</sup> Frithjof Schuon, *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy*, World of Islam Publishing Company Ltd, 1976. p.191.

<sup>19</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Intelligence of Evil or the Lucidity Pact*, (translated by Chris Turner) Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005, 160.

<sup>20</sup> Maurice Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, London: SCM Press, 1974, 61.

*The Christian estimate of evil is so serious precisely because it places evil at the very centre of human personality: in the will. Sin is occasioned precisely by the fact that man refuses to admit his 'creatureliness' and to acknowledge himself as merely a member of total unity of life. He pretends to be more than he is.*

*Niebuhr believed that ultimate salvation is not a moral possibility, that "the sinful self-contradiction in the human spirit cannot be overcome by moral action." For Niebuhr human life remains contradictory in its sin no matter how high human culture rises. But the God of Christian faith is not only creator but redeemer. He does not allow human existence to end tragically. He snatches victory from defeat. He himself is defeated in history but he is also victorious in that defeat.<sup>21</sup>*

I kristendomen är kärleken central eftersom vi inte själva kan försona oss med Gud, utan det är Guds kärlek som åstadkommer försoning. Mona Siddiqui refererade till Anders Nygrens idé om att *agape* är ett grundläggande och centralt begrepp som är unikt för kristendomen. I islam har kärleken inte samma strukturella betydelse, menar hon.

*While both Islam and Christianity talk of a loving God, Islam relying on the concept of mercy for a more expansive definition of love, in my view, there is a profound structural difference in the way love is conceptualised in both religions. By focusing primarily on its human manifestation in Christ, love in Christianity is a redemptive act and becomes visible on the cross and its power in the paradox of the weakness of the cross (2 Cor 13:4). In Christianity evil is both a structural and an accidental element whereas in Islam, evil is an accidental element only.<sup>22</sup> Thus, in Christian thought salvation does not come about through our best efforts; it is not some happy state to which we can lift ourselves; it is an utterly new creation into which we are brought by our death in Jesus' death and our resurrection in his. Postmodern philosophers like Slavoj Žižek while accusing Christ of wanting our very souls when they say they don't want anything from us, saw in the coming of Christ, "the descent of the Sublime Beyond to the everyday level." This does not mean that we renounce transcendence completely but that in Him, the transcendent realm becomes accessible as "immanent transcendence."<sup>23</sup> Christianity is the religion of love for God does not remain in the Sublime Beyond. Thomas Altizer argued that after the Incarnation there is no transcendent God. Christians do not take the Incarnation seriously as long as they combine the doctrine of the Incarnation with a belief in a "transcendent, a sovereign, and an impassive God."*

*In Islam however, there is no divine Incarnation and neither is prophecy messianic nor Muḥammad the redeemer. God's love is manifest by the risk he takes in humanity by giving man both faith and freedom to work towards a moral life. Humanity has the choice to use both to transform itself to a state of higher consciousness. However, humankind is not damned by the impossibility of overcoming sin for there is no sinless place to which we can return only a better place which we can create. What matters is continued belief and hope in God not the sins we commit. We don't need to be saved from sin but rather from unbelief. Islam has a different concern. It lifts God back into the transcendent, not in the sense of a distant God but a God who chooses to retain the secrets of his Self. But despite keeping this distance between man and God, the faithful have remained restless to do away with that which separates humankind from God even in this life. . Nowhere is this desire to eradicate the*

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<sup>21</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Beyond Tragedy*, London: Nisbet and Co. Ltd, 1938, 18-19.

<sup>22</sup> Gustave E. von Grunebaum, 'Observations.' p.120.

<sup>23</sup> See the analysis of Žižek's work in Frederiek Depoortere, *Christ in Postmodern Philosophy*, London and New York: T&T Clark, 2008,

*distance between the human and the divine been more hauntingly expressed than in the words of the great sufi poet, Abdul Quddus who refers to the Prophet's night journey to the heavens:.*

*Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned.*<sup>24</sup>

Föreläsningen bygger på ett kapitel i Mona Siddiquis bok "Muslims, Christians and Jesus", som är väl värd att läsa. Den är tillgänglig via nätbokhandeln, men finns också att låna på Centrum för religionsdialogs bibliotek.

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<sup>24</sup> Iqbal, *Reconstruction*, p124. Iqbal uses this famous quote to discuss the difference between prophetic and mystical types of consciousness.