



What do Christians and Muslims Pray?

A Comparison of the Lord's Prayer and the Islamic Fatiha

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Introduction

More people pray to their gods regularly in Asia and Africa than the inhabitants of industrialised nations can imagine. Hindus, Buddhists, Jewish people, Muslims and adherents of other religions have not lost the ability for sincere meditation. Often, they adhere to strictly regulated prayer-times. Prayer appears natural to them. Not to pray would be considered a sign of decadence.

The innermost values of a person and his culture are expressed in his prayers. For this reason, when we recognise someone is praying, we should conduct ourselves with deepest respect.

Both Muslims and Christians possess their own prayer which they consider to be superior to all others: the Fatiha and the Lord's Prayer, respectively. Let us compare these two prayer treasures, so as to be better able to understand what unites and what divides these two world religions.

The Main Prayer of Islam: The Fatiha

(English Translation)

**IN THE NAME OF ALLAH,
THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSONATE.
PRAISE BE TO ALLAH,
THE LORD OF THE WORLDS,
THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE,
THE RULER ON THE DAY OF THE,
JUDGEMENT.**

**YOU ALONE WE SERVE,
FROM YOU ALONE WE SEEK OUR HELP.
LEAD US ON THE STRAIGHT PATH;
THE PATH OF THOSE
WHOM YOU HAVE GIVEN GRACE,
NOT ON THE PATH
OF THOSE UPON WHOM
YOUR WRATH RESETS
NOR ON THE PATH OF THE LOST**

The Fatiha means "The Opening" or "The Opening of the Fortress" because it is positioned before all the other suras in the Quran. It is considered to be directly inspired by Allah and contains the words spoken by Muhammad 1,350 years ago. Since that time, this prayer has been repeated by countless Muslim worshippers.

The Fatiha is one of the few prescribed prayers in the Quran. It is regarded by all Muslims as unique and holy. However, it should only be uttered in Arabic, even in those countries where another language is spoken. A translation into Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Indonesian or Swahili is not considered valid or possible.

Arabic, in which the 114 suras of the Quran are written, is described as the language of Allah. A direct translation of the Quran is prohibited, for the beauty, depth and power of the poetic

language would be lost. Therefore, any translation that does occur is only regarded as an interpretation of the Arabic original.

About 80 percent of Muslims do not speak Arabic. As a result, they do not know what they are praying when they recite the Fatiha in the language of its original composition. However when they pray it, they are sure that the main prayer in the Quran is passing over their lips.

In the course of the five prayer-times, which the Sharia (Islamic law) commands all Muslims to perform, the Fatiha is uttered up to 17 times a day. Thus, this prayer represents more of a "martyrdom" for Muslims than the Lord's Prayer does for Christians. The adoration, pleas and hopes contained in it shape the subconscious mind of every Muslim.

The Fatiha advances around our planet five times a day, according to the earth's rotation and alignment with the sun, being uttered by Muslims from the 11,000 islands of Indonesia in the East to the Atlas Mountains in the West; from the Russian steppe in the North to the Cape of Good Hope in the South. It has even made inroads into Europe and the Americas through the presence of foreign workers and students.

The Main Prayer in Christianity: The Lord's Prayer

**OUR FATHER,
WHO IS IN HEAVEN,
HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME.
YOUR KINGDOM COME,
YOUR WILL BE DONE,
ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.
GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD,
AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS
AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS.
AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION
BUT DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE.**

The Lord's Prayer, as found in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4, contains the words of Jesus to his disciples when they asked him to teach them an appropriate prayer in the spirit of his New Covenant. This prayer, which was originally uttered in Aramaic or Hebrew by Jesus and his disciples, was handed down through Greek writings and has now been translated into more than 2,000 languages. Yet despite its appearance in numerous languages, the Lord's Prayer has not lost its original vitality, spirit and power.

Nearly all Christian denominations teach the Lord's Prayer as a main ingredient to their particular confession of faith, because it includes the basic tenets of the Gospel. Many Christians consider the Lord's Prayer to be the most concentrated form of the Gospel -- indeed one of the most valuable treasures in the Bible.

The Lord's Prayer embraces the whole world. It is not only uttered during certain prayer times or church services; anyone can pray it at any time, alone or with others.

The Common Structure of the Fatiha and the Lord's Prayer

The Fatiha and the Lord's Prayer possess a similar inner structure and thought pattern. They can conveniently be divided into four sections:

We will examine and compare both prayers within the framework of their four sections, and discuss each concept according to how Muslims and Christians view them.

I. The Opening or Introduction

In the Name of Allah

The *Basmallah* forms the prelude of the Fatiha. It is a fixed formulation that sets the tone for all the 114 suras except one. The literal translation is: in the name of Allah, the merciful, the compassionate.

Some Muslim scholars claim that this introductory phrase was not originally part of the Fatiha nor was it from the other suras but that it was added later to the beginning of the Quran in the process of its publication. Today, Muslims consider it to be an integral part of the Fatiha. The Basmallah does not contain an invocation from Allah. It is equivalent to the words of an envoy who is commissioned to speak in the name and order of his distant Lord; however it also bears similarity to the incantation of a magician.

With these introductory words, a Muslim consciously draws himself nearer to Allah's sphere of influence and power; yet he does not actually establish personal contact with him. The Muslim's desire is to pray in the spirit of the Quran. He strives to conform to the ordinances of Islam. He wants to walk in the structure of the Sharia.

The first time we find indirect speech turned into a personal approach is in the fifth stanza of the daily petition. A Muslim does not dare to begin the main prayer of his faith with the words, "You are my God" or "Our gracious God." his official prayer is not a personal conversation or talk with God, where he brings requests, intercession, thanksgiving and worship before him. Rather, the Basmallah can be compared to a puny man attempting to draw near to his exalted ruler. He stands with his head bowed, respectful and humble, before his mighty lord, hoping that Allah will listen to his murmuring.

Allah

The distinctive meaning of the word *Allah* gives the Islamic prayer its own special weight; it is the Arabic name for God. The root of the word comes from the Semitic EL, similar to Elohim, and it means "the Powerful One," "the Only Strength," or "the Mighty One." When Jesus stood before the high priest, he used this term: "In the future you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64).

The difference between the Jewish *Elohim* and the Arabic Allah lies in the last syllables of both words. While Elohim allows the possibility of plurality and unity of the Trinity, Allah is limited solely to singularity. Allah cannot be a unity of three Persons, for he is uniquely and solitarily one. Consequently, the very Arabic name for God in Islam makes the antagonism to the Holy Trinity abundantly clear. This principle adds depth to the Islamic confession of faith which peals forth thousands of times daily from the loudspeakers of minarets onto the rooftops of countless cities, towns and villages, with the words:

There is no god but Allah. Muhammad is his Ambassador.

The uniqueness of Allah is apparent in this double denial of all other gods.

A non-Muslim could begin to understand the absolute sovereignty of Allah, if he were to contemplate the Muslim's call, *Allahu akbar*. This phrase, meaning "Allah is greater," rings out from minarets 40 times each day. It has also been proclaimed from the lips of innumerable Muslims during the holy wars, and it is shouted by Shiites and Sunnites during mass demonstrations. One should notice that this phrase does not mean that Allah is great, for that would imply the existence of another great being, which is incomprehensible; nor does it mean that Allah is the greatest, for this would mean that he could still be compared to something less sublime. It is necessary to understand this concept: Allah is greater than everything -- greater than all the misfortune that could ever befall someone, more important than all political events, more powerful than all the nuclear explosives ever devised by man. Allah is above all the promises of Communism and all the tempting allurements of Capitalism. Allah is greater than anything we could ever conceive about him. He is the different one, the unreachable one, remote, aloof, the great and all-powerful god. No human being can comprehend him. Every thought about him is insufficient or false. Allah is on the other side of a created being's cognitive faculty. He is the Almighty One who controls everything and who reigns with unchallenged, unquestionable sovereignty. None is equal to him. He is the supreme, unknowable, distant god who has no personal contact with his creatures. You can never understand him, only adore him as his slave.

The Merciful and Compassionate

These two names and characteristics of Allah, included in the Basmallah, emphasise that he is the merciful one. Muhammad most likely adopted the concept of the merciful Allah from the language spoken in Yemen, because this word sounded good and personified Allah's mercy. This word seems to have been little known in Mecca then and it required explaining. That is why "the Merciful" is supplemented with "the Compassionate". This adjective is meant to deepen the most important name of Allah, rendering it "all-encompassing" mercy.

If we search for evidence of Allah's mercy in the Quran, we find that its contents mainly encompass his deeds as creator and sustainer of the universe. Many of the statements that Christians utter in their first article of faith are similarly expressed in the Quran: he is the creator of the universe, preserver, protector, granting success, health, wealth, many sons and esteem in this life and the next. This is evidence of Allah's mercy in Islam. On the other hand, those who appear poor, weak, despised and have no sons, are regarded as living under the wrath of the Most High.

The two friendly names of Allah, which are mentioned about 160 times in the Quran, point to the welfare of Muslims in this life and the next. However, this mercy of Allah does not mean

a personal attachment to man, nor a covenant to his people, because "Allah misleads those whom he wishes, and guides those whom he wishes" (Sura Ibrahim 14:4). Allah is exalted high above those whom he created. He remains a distant, unknowable god. Allah is not personable. Even the statement, "Allah is spirit," is not permissible in Islam, for no one can know who or what his lord really is.

Any attempt to fathom the essence of Allah from the list of his 99 most beautiful names leads to disappointment, because 27 of these names do not appear in the Quran literally. They are theological constructions that developed later. Some names of God, borrowed from the Bible, manifest a strange content that distorts their original meaning. We must accept the confession of al-Ghazali, the great Islamic theologian who compared all the names and characteristics of Allah and came to the following conclusion: "Every name of Allah is contradicted by another of his names. Allah is everything and nothing. No one can approach his greatness or fathom his essence. He remains the unknowable and authoritative God."

Our Father

The prayer that Jesus taught his disciples focused neither on God the Almighty nor the Creator, neither on himself nor on the Eternal Judge. He also did not encourage them to pray to Elohim or Yahweh but shared with them his own privilege of being able to call God his Father.

This word offers a new relationship between God and us. What a spiritual revolution! Which mortal man could ever presume to call the Eternal One "Father"? We could sooner imagine the possibility of beginning the salutation with "Oh Creator" or "Lord of History". But Jesus wanted to lift his followers up to his level. He did not guide them to a great, distant, unknown God whom none could ever hope to know but whom one was obligated to fear and worship. No, Jesus revealed just the opposite to his followers: the personal God of love who is very near, the Father who in Jesus has bound himself to sinners forever. He remains a father even to lost sons and daughters and is coming for them. His fatherhood is the legal form of his love until eternity.

The fatherhood of God is the central concept of the New Testament, being Christ's theological revolution and answer to the rigid One-God doctrine of Jews and Muslims. Jesus mainly portrayed God as Father to his disciples. In his prayers, he addressed him personally as "Father". In the four Gospels, Jesus acknowledges the fatherhood of God more than 185 times. According to the Gospels, Jesus veiled his identity, using the name God 99 times. The fatherhood of God remained unknown also to demons. But to his innermost circle of disciples, Jesus revealed this essence of God and his unity with him. The Son always honoured the Father and, denying himself, said: "The Father is greater than me. He who sees Me, sees the Father...I and the Father are one...The Father is in Me and I am in the Father" (John 10:30; 14:9-11). It was for confirming the fatherhood of God and his personal sonship that Jesus was condemned to death (Matthew 26:63-66); his first and last words on the cross began with the name of his Father (Luke 23:34,46).

No person can understand the secret of the Father and Son by himself. Jews and Muslims alike believe that God is only one. They cannot tolerate or accept the existence of two or three gods. This sounds like blasphemy in their ears. That is why staunch Muslims despise Christians who believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The existence of the Holy Trinity remains to them a secret and an ugly threat. Their eyes are blind and their hearts are hardened.

With his unique revelation, Jesus wanted to encourage his disciples to trust God as their personal Father and create in them a childlike faith; for he has adopted them, despite their unworthiness and uncleanness (Galatians 4:5). Jesus justified and purified his followers, so that they became worthy to be called sons and daughters of God. They are no longer guests or strangers but members in the family of their heavenly Father (Ephesians 2:19; 1 John 3:1-3). He promised and sent them his Holy Spirit, so that would be born again and live in his strength and divine essence as his children (Romans 8:14,15; Galatians 4:6). We are, by grace, legally his children by adoption, and in essence his children by his spirit, which cries: "Abba, Father" giving testimony to our spirit, that we are children of God our heavenly Father.

In the Old Testament, the Lord revealed the following assurance through the prophet Isaiah: "Fear not, I have redeemed you. I have called you by your name; you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1). In 1 John 3:1-3, we read the answer of John the Apostle to this promise:

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

The Lord's Prayer does not adore God in general and glorify him indirectly, but directly guides us to speak to God our Father. Christians have personal contact with God. He hears, knows and cares for them. A Christian lives in a real and continual security, for the Almighty is his Father. Race, education, riches, sex, health and success do not entitle us to call God Father; only our faith in Jesus Christ grants us this privilege. Everyone who believes in him will pray in his name to the Father and experiences that he is accepted into the freedom of the children of God. Every Christian has a so-called "hotline" with which to call his heavenly Father anytime. The number is never busy, and there is never a time when the Father is not there. He is always present, hearing and answering the prayers of his children. Do you know this "divine telephone number"? Consider the words of God in Psalm 50:15: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me," then you will find real help in times of trouble."

Who Is in Heaven

The words, "*Our Father*," do not lead the followers of Christ to speak disrespectfully, presumptuously or in a demanding way, for they know their Father is in heaven. A "holy distance" remains, despite the very personal relationship. Christians are indeed children of God, but it has not yet been revealed what they will become. The Holy Spirit protects them from crude familiarity and over-confidence.

Heaven is the place where God lives; it is a spiritual realm, not a place that can be located geographically. When Jesus said that the Father is in him and that he is in the Father, it meant also that in Christ heaven has come to earth. On the other hand, Jesus was always in heaven, as long as he was one with the Father (John 3:13). It was only on the cross that the Son was severed from the unity of the Trinity. It was there that he reconciled sinners with God; it was there that he suffered hell; it was there that he bore the penalty we deserve, so that we can have access to the Father in his name. Heaven on earth begins now, invisibly, when the Spirit of the Father and the Son is present in us. But this should not be confused with prosperity or feelings of well-being. This privilege of security in God, our Father, can be experienced by

all, whether in a concentration camp or among the hungry in India. Heaven can be found by those in the sky-scraper jungle of New York City, and is just as accessible to the bush tribes of Africa. He who believes in the words of Christ and calls God Our Father enters a new creation. The theme of the Lord's Prayer is not fear but love, not isolation but security, not despair but continual thanks.

Some critics say: "Islam testifies to Allah being merciful and compassionate. Christians call their God "Love personified". Mercy and love look as if they are the same. Therefore, both religions are directed toward the same God!" In response to this, we recommend that the critics think about what love and mercy really mean. If a bridegroom were to say to his bride in a condescending way, "I will have 'mercy' upon you and marry you," how would his bride respond? If she would not reject him with the words, "No thank you, we're through!" she would not realise the suffering in store for her. But if her groom were to say, "I love you," then the matter would be clear, for he would be placing himself exactly on the same level with her. It is precisely at this point where the difference between a relationship to the God of the Bible and Allah in Islam lies. Even when portrayed with his most endearing and noble characteristics, Allah remains the great, distant and sublime god, who, at the most, may stoop to notice a poor wretched worm and perhaps consider helping him.

In Christ, however, God our Father came down to our human level. He became one of us. He even went lower, for he took our guilt upon himself, dying in our place on the cross. True love means sacrifice for the unworthy. The Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is not only merciful to those in distress; he redeemed the sinners, unable to build up their own righteousness before they were born, and bears with them patiently.

The first words in the Fatiha and the Lord's Prayer determine the content and spirit of both prayers. In Islamic prayer, each thought is directed toward Allah, for Islam is a theocentric culture, ordering all areas of life around the name of Allah. But in the prayer that Jesus taught, it is the fatherhood of God that influences all further requests. Therefore, the matter can be summed up thus: The al-Fatiha glorifies and illuminates Allah, only, whereas the prayer of the Lord exalts "our Father in heaven." Whoever has understood these two great names, and the difference between them, has understood the essence of Islam and Christianity and their differences. Islam is in essence the explanation of Allah's eminence. While real Christianity is what has been revealed and born again out of the Father.

II. Worship and Requests for the Kingdom of Heaven

Praise Belongs to Allah

The Fatiha begins with a confession and an indirect praise of Allah. The mighty one who rules over all demands all praise and worship for himself alone. He holds every person and incident in his hand. One can only tremble before him. A Muslim will not be so bold as to speak to Allah and praise him personally. The Fatiha does not say, "We praise you, our god" or "I praise you, my lord." "Praise belongs to Allah" is an indirect call for everybody to worship him. We should realise that Islam is a religion of worship. According to the Quran, people are created to worship Allah. In Arabic, the words for worship and worshiper are derivations of the terms for slavery and slave. They reveal that people are not free to decide if they will worship Allah or not; rather, praising Allah is a duty, a must, which obligates each Muslim

from the moment of birth. The Muslim lives under his law. He is a slave of Allah, not a child of God. With each prayer, he reaffirms anew his submission to Allah -- a submission birthed out of fear and awe.

In the mosque, there are virtually no songs of thanks or rejoicing; at the most, one can occasionally hear monotone choruses or rhythmical war cries. But everyone in Islamic countries can observe how Muslims, alone or in rows, during their prayer times bow down to Allah up to 34 times daily, touching the ground with their foreheads. This line going along their bent backs all the way down to their feet is a demonstration of the incarnation of Islam in the flesh; it represents a visible interpretation of the word Islam. Translated, the word Islam means surrender, sacrifice and submission to Allah. The mighty lord, the strong, powerful and incomprehensible one has to be worshipped with fear and deep respect.

Earlier, during the age of the caliphs and sultans, even generals occasionally had to kneel down and crawl on all fours to the throne of their ruler. The ruler then placed his foot upon their necks, as a sign of absolute lordship. Through this ceremony, the submitted one declared: "Here I am. I am at your disposal. Do with me what you will!"

Even today, worship in Islam directs a Muslim to lie on the ground before Allah, as if to say: "Set your foot upon my neck. I belong to you. I am yours. I am ready to do what you want: to serve, to sacrifice and to fight. I stand at your service unconditionally."

Worship in Islam is an ever-renewed submission to the great, unknown Allah.

The Lord of the Worlds

Unconditional surrender to Allah is heightened in the Fatiha with the mention of the name, "Lord of the Worlds". The pre-Islamic concept of Allah controlling all people and events surfaces in this title. He is the All-knowing One, the All-powerful and All-wise, who notices, sees, hears and can find a solution for everything. Nothing escapes him. He rules the macro- and microcosms. He controls the vast seas of galaxies. No super-nova explodes, no star is born or dies without his will and knowledge. There is also no electron moving in the invisible orbit of an atom's nucleus that is not controlled by the Creator.

The name, "Lord of the Worlds," has an additional meaning. Allah not only controls matter and the things of this visible life but also eternity and the invisible. He is the lord of the spirits. Angels and demons were created by him, and they serve him as slaves. In Islam, even the Holy Spirit is a created angel who serves Allah without reserve. Absolutely nothing happens without the knowledge and will of Allah. He alone is lord.

In the Muslims' concept of Allah's absolute lordship over the visible and invisible, we find the stern belief in double predestination. Allah hardens whom he will and leads whom he will; he saves whom he will and damns whom he will (Sura al-Fatir 35:8; al-Muddaththir 74:31). The personal accountability of the individual dissolves into meaninglessness. In the Quran, we find the statement that "man was created weak" (Sura al-Nisa 4:29); accordingly, a Muslim can hardly reach a comprehensive awareness of his own sinfulness. A Muslim confesses that he makes mistakes but never agrees that he is a lost and broken sinner.

Occasionally, Muslims in prison write to literature centres: "Allah led me to prison, so that I could establish contact with you." With these words, they are expressing: "I am weak, because Allah created me weak. He is ultimately responsible for my error. I am not wholly guilty. I am

not corrupt, for I was created this way in the womb." Such passive, irresponsible thinking influences Islamic culture in all aspects. Everyday life often carries the stamp of a lazy fatalism. Skilled workers from the West, who have become acquainted with the mentality of Muslims, speak of an Arabic "IBM" which stands for:

Inshallah: Perhaps something will happen, if Allah permits.

Bukra: Maybe the work will be finished tomorrow or the day after or next week.

Malesh: It does not matter, even if something breaks down.

This spirit penetrates the Muslims way of life more than we can imagine.

A glazier's apprentice needed to install a window and was not cautious; it fell to the floor and broke. The owner of the house became angry and shouted, "Why were you not careful?" The boy opened his eyes wide and responded with the word, "Maktub." With that he meant: "Thus it has been written. It was predetermined that the glass would fall to the ground." In other words, he was saying that he was not responsible, because Allah wanted the window to fall and shatter.

All aspects of a Muslim's day to day life are controlled by the determination and greatness of Allah. Here we find a reversal of the words, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him" (Genesis 1:27). This can mean: "Tell me what your God is like, and I'll tell you why you live as you do." The understanding of God on which a culture is based influences the lives of its citizens down to their very thoughts and relationships. The life of a Muslim is determined by the spirit of Allah. The Muslim remains forever his slave and worshipper.

The Merciful and Compassionate

It is not astonishing that Muhammad, after acknowledging the slavery of all Muslims, emphasised the certainty of Allah being merciful as well as compassionate. Without this verbal ray of hope, the spiritual prison in which the Muslim finds himself would be unbearable. However, these two characteristics of Allah are somehow empty words that do not grant true freedom, for they only speak of possible help without giving comfort. Hope is awakened here, yet it is not based on God's plan of salvation -- unless one chooses to view the oil billions of the Arabs or the victories achieved in holy wars as the special grace of Allah upon his subjects.

All the 99 names of Allah are only names, not verbs. A name reveals to us a possibility, a potential, a programme, a hope but in the end it does not actually produce an action. Only a verb can describe an act that takes place at a particular time, in a definite place, to a specific person. The Quran is full of Allah's names, whereas the Gospel reveals the will of God in verbs where he is active and fulfilling his promise.

Ruler on the Day of Judgment

The Fatiha leads us still deeper to an Islamic understanding of Allah. He is not only the unknown one, strong, powerful and all-ruling, he is also the "Ruler on the Day of Judgment".

Islam has its own view of history. Everything is like a river that flows onward toward a dreadful end: the Day of Judgment. The literal translation of this expression is "The Day of Religion". Islam's view of itself climaxes in the final judgment of Allah; all religious yearnings are directed toward this ultimate goal. On this Day, every good act and evil deed, as well as everything hidden and not understood, will be brought to the light, being judged finally.

Islam is a juristically-based religion. It is not grace, mercy and forgiveness that are the governing principles, but the stern demands of the law, which includes the payment of debt and the inflicting of vengeance. The law cannot be bent and must not be broken! This is especially aimed at protecting the clan's honour, defending all privileges, and struggling to uphold one's own position unto the very end.

A large balance will be set up on the Day of Religion (Sura al-Shura 42:17). All the good deeds of mankind will be weighed against the bad deeds. Thereby, the Muslim hopes that his good deeds will outweigh the bad ones (Sura Hud 11:114). He fails to understand that his whole nature is evil and corrupt from birth. The belief in original sin or total depravity, as a result of Adam and Eve's sin being passed down to all their descendants, is rejected by Muslims. Islam is based on justification by works. The religious striving of Muslims is aimed at making recompense for mistakes committed. In the early morning, the muezzin calls from the minaret: "Rise to prayer, rise to success!" he who prays will be blessed. All those who repeat the Fatiha seventeen times during the course of the day's five prescribed prayer-times hope to erase, by these prayers, several negative entries on the black slate recording their sins.

A Muslim remains captive to his reward-punishment mentality. He hopes to be guided into the Eternal Garden on the Day of Religion, based on his good deeds. There, material pleasures await the thirsty bedouin. He had suffered the scorching heat of the desert envisioning the scene of a lushly shaded oasis awaiting him. Exquisite delicacies of all kinds, fresh fruits, ever-virginal maidens, and young lads are to be at the disposal of every good Muslim, in addition to his own wives (Suras Ya Sin 36:56, al-Dukhan 44:54, al-Waqia 56:11-37 etc.) However, Allah is not necessarily present among his Muslims in Paradise. Even there he remains the great, distant, exalted and unknown god.

Muslims are not certain that they will be granted entrance into Paradise. Only those who die in a holy war, fighting for the sake of Allah, nourish this assurance; they hope to be translated immediately to the everlasting gardens. After having built a mosque on this earth, a wealthy Muslim believes that a palace awaits him in the afterlife as a reward. Other Muslims learn to recite the entire Quran by heart, hoping to secure a sure place for themselves and twelve of their relatives in the gardens of eternal delight.

The Quran gives much detail about the flames of hell, with its deafening shrieks, as it does about the joys in the cool shade of Paradise. Whoever says that there are other gods besides Allah, or who confesses that Allah has a son, will be roasted on glowing embers while his skin bursts open, peels off and reforms over and over again, thereby sealing his eternal agony and pain (Sura al-Nisa4:56).

Dante's description of hell's "intensive-care unit" originates from the interpretation of various Quranic verses (Suras al-Araf 7:38, Ibrahim 14:16, al-Hijr 15:34, etc.; especially al-Masad 111:1-5). The paralyzing fear of Allah climaxes in a deep horror of the scorching flames of Hell, prepared first of all for non-Muslims; but it also awaits those Muslims who were not faithful worshippers.

However there is an awful verse in the Quran (Sura Maryam 19:69-71), which states that all Muslims, without exception, will enter hell. This was inevitably ordained by Allah and is without discussion. Only later is he able to save those who have been faithful and fearful Muslims. The Muslim scholars do not deny this very fact but claim that hell will be cleansed and without fire while the Muslims are passing through. Others say that Muslims will only enter it in the twinkling of an eye, or stand barefoot in the flames. The depth of the flames will be according to the intensity of their sins. Only good Muslims can hope to be rescued from hell.

Nobody knows what exactly makes a good Muslim, for even Muhammad, the founder of Islam, is in an intermediate state, awaiting the Great Day of Religion. He himself is not yet saved. Therefore, all Muslims must say, "Allah pray for him and grant him peace," whenever they mention his name. When the founder of the religion is not yet saved, where will his followers end up? Normally the founder of a religion prays for the salvation of his followers. However, after 1,350 years Muslims are still praying that Muhammad will find peace.

Expectations, hope and fear mingle together as a Muslim prays the Fatiha while worshipping Allah. Personal thoughts do not determine the Muslim's prayer: Rather, an Allah-centred liturgy forces him, 34 times a day, to prostrate himself before the great unknown god. He worships Allah with fear and deep respect as his almighty Lord and the Judge that cannot be bribed. The Muslim hopes that by keeping all the instructions and rules of the religious law, he may be able to win some mercy and pity from the Compassionate One. Yet he is never sure whether his deeds and prayers will be enough to help free him from hell.

Hallowed Be Your Name

Have you ever considered what the first and most important request in the Lord's Prayer means? Only when reaching the second or third request does the one praying actually realise what he is saying. We often overlook the request that Jesus himself put at the top of the list. He leads us to ask, first of all, that the new name of God, which he revealed to us, be hallowed. What is the wonderful characteristic of God in the New Testament that is to be hallowed but his fatherhood? God is not only called Father, he is our Father both legally and spiritually. Whereas the prophets under the old covenant had recognised the Creator of the Universe as the thrice-holy and incomprehensibly Glorious One, before whom every mortal man must fall as though dead when viewing him from afar, Jesus revealed God to his disciples as the Father of light and grace, making him accessible to everyone who approaches him in Jesus' name.

Since the coming of Christ we can say that "God", in the old sense, no longer exists, as far as the earlier understanding of the word is concerned. He that exists is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in a complete unity of love and truth. He who worships the Father also worships the Son and the Holy Spirit simultaneously.

A father is only a father when he has children. The very word implies that a man has begotten or adopted a child. With the first request in the Lord's Prayer, we pray that millions of spiritual children will be born to our Father in heaven. This honours and hallows him. We are not to consider only the legal side of the adoption but also the essential rebirth through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a man. The love of God, his joy, his peace, his patience, his goodness, his self-control, his humility, his meekness, his truth and his holiness are to be visible in the followers of Christ. This is the goal of the first request.

Sometimes in a conversation among friends who have children we can hear the remarks, "He looks like his father!" or "Exactly like her mother!" The spiritual equivalent of this rule is written for everyone in the first chapter of the Bible. There we read: "God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). This was the original intent of Creation, but it was lost through the fall into sin. It was only restored through Jesus Christ. He alone was able to say, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). Jesus is the true picture of our Father in heaven. If you want to know what God looks like, look at Jesus, his love, his holiness, his humbleness and his kindness.

In the first request of the prayer of the new covenant, we ask that our Father in heaven will change and sanctify all his children into his image, so that his character will be developed in them and they will cause him no shame, being instead like him in their thoughts, words and deeds. Their new lives are to glorify the Father. Indeed, he is holy in himself and he does not need the holiness of his children. But it was his pleasure to grant us a share in his own holiness, provided that we accept the leading of his Spirit, choosing as our highest calling the honour and glory of his Father's name.

Jesus taught his disciples: "You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). This command could drive us to the depths of despair, if the fatherhood of God were not his presupposition and goal. The strength of the Father, his leading, correction, help, care and love, transform us into his image. The Father of Jesus Christ is our hope and strength. He distinguishes the voices of his children, just as a mother hearkens to the voice of her child and recognises it immediately, even among other competing voices. Our heavenly Father hurries to help his children and does not leave them alone. He comforts them with his Holy Spirit who lives in them.

Your Kingdom Come

The kingdom of God is one of the main themes in the New Testament. God's kingdom is not underdeveloped but rich in gifts, strength and endowments. However, only the spiritually poor will enter into his kingdom; that is, those who stand before God with empty hands, confessing their sins and accepting his grace, justification and life-power (Matthew 5:3).

According to Semitic word usage, there is an inseparable connection between a king and his kingdom. He is the owner of the entire country. All inhabitants belong to him. It is their duty to obey him without hesitation. In the same way, God is our king. We belong to him since he has created us. All mankind are his possession, whether they realise it or not. Many live in rebellion and animosity toward God. They do not want to submit to their master. But one day, the King will appear as their Judge, and he has the right to annihilate all rebels.

However, our Father in heaven is a God of patience and longsuffering. He is almighty, omniscient, all-wise, the Lord of history, and will again send his son, the Judge who cannot be bribed, on the Great and Final Day. In view of the sovereignty of our Father in heaven, we know and confess that the God of the new covenant is not lacking any attribute, power or authority. Every person belongs to him from head to toe. He waits for our full surrender and obedience. But there is a decisive difference between the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ and Allah in Islam: the Almighty is our Father, the Eternal King loves us, the Holy One is personally with us. We need not tremble before a great lord. His existence is the reason for our eternal life, happiness and everlasting hope.

When we pray, "Your kingdom come," our first thought is not of splendor, honour or power for ourselves nor for our future pleasure, but we consider the spiritual kingdom of our Father, which has become visible in his Son. Jesus said to his disciples: "The kingdom of God is in you" (Luke 17:21). The kingdom of our Father is a spiritual kingdom, not of this world. We do not employ trickery or violence in our efforts to further the kingdom of Christ, for the essence of his kingdom is love, sacrifice and patience. Holy war is not a legitimate method to use for establishing the rule of the Eternal One. Jesus did not arm his apostles. He preferred that he himself should die, instead of having his killers extinguished. The Apostles did not attack their enemies but practised the command of Christ: "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven..." (Matthew 5:44,45).

Whoever prays seriously for the kingdom of our Father to come will soon realise that he himself is challenged to work, with all his might, for the coming of that kingdom. He whose family owns a business or a farm knows that family members must often work hard; overtime is a matter of course! The father works more than all the others. In the same way, the kingdom of our heavenly Father is a family affair. His sons and daughters are called as princes and princesses to employ their lives, time and money in the furthering of the Father-kingdom.

It is Jesus' desire that all who pray for the coming of this kingdom also consistently believe that this kingdom is being irresistibly realised. Each generation in this world is called on to participate heartily in this act of faith. By your faith his kingdom comes (1 John 5:4)!

The kingdom of our heavenly Father could certainly be established without our involvement. But the Father makes us worthy to participate, for he has made us, his children, to be joint possessors, trustees and inheritors of his kingdom. His glory waits for all faithful labourers in his harvest.

When someone does not know exactly how to participate in the furthering of the kingdom of Heaven, he may ask the Father in heaven to show him concretely where his task lies. One is called to testify, another, to serve, a third to pray unceasingly; again, others see their duty in sacrifice of money and personal suffering. Some disciples of Jesus are led through different opportunities for service, whereby the ultimate aim is always the salvation of the lost. Jesus said, "For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost" (Matthew 18:11). He who has been accepted into the kingdom of the Father will also want to win his relatives and friends for eternal life. Being saved results in wanting to lead others to salvation. It should be our desire to show many Muslims the way to the kingdom of our Father's love.

Whoever prays, "Your kingdom come," does not only think about the saving and sanctifying works of God in the present but anticipates the future excitedly, awaiting the final coming of our Father's kingdom full of grace, ruled by his Son on this earth. The return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the Day of Judgment are stages in the coming of the kingdom of our Father. Therefore, we should always be asking ourselves: What is the goal of our lives? What are we living for? What do we really expect in the future? Are we only striving for good grades and a life of ease and prosperity? Are we paralyzed by fear concerning the nuclear contamination of the planet? Are we trying to prepare for the coming of the Antichrist or to predict the exact timing of Christ's second coming? Have we become uneasy concerning the final verdict on our lives on the Day of Judgment, or are we comforted, even at death, when contemplating our resurrection from the dead? Do we await a paradise of eternal pleasure, or do our faces grow sullen at the thought of eternal damnation? It is necessary that Christians

occasionally review their past, draw a balance from it, and seriously consider the hope they have for eternity.

We can perhaps summarise the goal of hope in the Lord's Prayer in other words: "We want to go home! We want to see our Father!" Neither material enjoyments nor exciting spiritual expectations are the ultimate goal of our hope, but rather the home-coming of lost sons and daughters who can only kneel before their Father, and with a stammering voice, cry: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Your sight. I am no longer worthy to be called Your son or daughter. Do not cast me away from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me" (Luke 15:21; Psalm 51:11). If this is our prayer, then we will experience the Father embracing and kissing us. He will lay his robe of righteousness upon us and invite us to the feast of his eternal joy.

Neither the Day of Judgment, the flames of hell, sensual delights, nor comfort are the goal of our lives; rather, in Christianity, unbroken fellowship with the Father awaits us! We are wayward wanderers returning home to our Father. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death, sorrow, crying or pain in his presence. The things of this world will pass away. The new will surely come (Revelation 21:3-7)!

Your Will Be Done on Earth As It Is in Heaven

The third request in the Lord's Prayer is often understood as a prayer of devotion, in light of unavoidable suffering and heavy burden in the lives of believers. But we should remember that we are not dealing with an indifferent Lord. No, we pray to our Father in heaven -- that his will would be done.

A good father wants the best for his children. He seeks to save them from worry, sins, failure and misery. He does what he can to help them. He does not initially demand that they do this or that but is prepared to sacrifice for them. He encourages them to participate in his work within the framework of their talents; he does not overburden them. He leads them and gives them the necessary preparation for carrying out their task. Thus, it is not we ourselves who must fulfill the will of God. He is the One who initiates and blesses.

The will of our Father in heaven is the greatest power on earth. It is his desire that all shall be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

With these first three requests in the Lord's Prayer, the grand theme of world missions is outlined. Christians are not victims of a divine despot, or a higher power tormenting them, or a god seeking to drive them against their will. Jesus does not call us to passive suffering or blind fatalism but leads us to work actively with others as we seek to realise the Father's will. All heaven rejoiced when Jesus became man in order to redeem the world. The angels glorified the Father and the Son as the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the followers of Christ who prayed and waited in expectation to receive the very life of their heavenly Father.

If the will of God is to be done in our cities and villages as it is in heaven, then we are called to fully align our wills with the will of the Father and to participate with him, so that his intentions will be carried out. God's will can certainly come to pass without us, but we are not the slaves of a careless sultan; we are the children of our heavenly Father, and he has called us to share in his own blessed work! We do not tremble before the fluctuating, indiscernible will of an unknown despot. Much more, we implore the Father to be gracious to all -- those whom we know and do not know. It is the Father's good pleasure to bless all who seek his peace.

A Christian's inner attitude and outer conduct during prayer are glaringly different from the manner of worship in Islam. Whereas a Muslim, like a slave, throws himself to the floor before his exalted lord up to 34 times a day, a Christian is not bound to any particular prayer time, prayer position, or prayer direction. Christians are free to pray, whether riding on bicycles, at church, or flying in airplanes. The prayer of a bedridden patient can have more power and authority than that of a bishop in his parish. Christians do not need to touch the floor with their foreheads to express their submission. They are free and do not live under the law. We do not live like the slaves of Allah but are children of our Father who is in heaven. We have a different attitude towards life. For Muslims, prayer and worship are a part of their religious law, an obligation outlined in the Sharia. To worship the Father is for us a privilege that moves us to eternal gratitude.

"God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16).

III. The Daily Requests

You Alone We Serve

In the Fatiha, the Muslim addresses Allah personally for the first time when he utters the practical, daily requests. He says, "We serve you alone as slaves."

In English, there is no word that conveys the exact meaning of the Arabic word for "serve". Therefore, we will attempt to provide a translation that comes near to the original meaning: "To you alone do we offer ourselves as slaves. We are servants enslaved to you, unable to decide whether we wish to serve or not. We cannot free ourselves from our bondage to you. We must wait upon you at all times. We are your property. You may do with us as you wish." Every Muslim, whether he is a committed believer or not, has this attitude toward Allah.

A Muslim's service to Allah entails all spiritual and material aspects of life, aspects which cannot be separated in Islam. According to Islamic law, religion and politics are united. The Islamic concept of the kingdom of Allah must be realised today in the present world. All areas of life are understood as integral parts of the obligatory worship of Allah. Very often, the Friday messages at the mosques are delivered with a political slant, touching on foreign and domestic matters. These often start or motivate political demonstrations and attempts to overthrow governments.

One of the words for "mosque" in Arabic is *mabad*, meaning "place of worship". This concept stems from the root word for "slave". Mankind must praise Allah. They are not free to live for themselves. They remain bound in their submission to Allah.

When a spiritual dignitary calls for a holy war, the Muslims under his leadership are expected to participate. This was the case during Muhammad's time. Even today religious and political leaders expect the same. However, the desire for war expected after such a summons is rarely ignited today. The personal motivations of the one giving the order are all too evident. Wars fought for religious causes are often more brutal than those fought for other reasons. It is not for nothing that the Quran says repeatedly: "Kill them wherever you find them. Lay an ambush for them and seize them wherever possible" (Suras al-Baqara 2:191ff, al-Nisa 4:89-

91, al-Tawba 9:5, etc.). These words are not designed to be strategic suggestions from Muhammad; rather, they are understood to be inspired commands from Allah.

Allah is no god of common peace. His goal is the ultimate spread of Islam, whether through business dealings, the sword, or by economic and military means. All prevailing options are to be harnessed, and all tactics employed. Islamic worship encompasses all areas of life, from the adoration of Allah to Holy War.

In Arabic, there is a word preceding this testimonial request that strengthens the Islamic confession of loyalty to Allah. When praying, the Muslim does not say, "We serve you as slaves," but, "You alone are the one we serve." These words emphasise the exclusiveness of Allah as the one being worshipped. As long as a Muslim remains a Muslim, he will not worship or serve other gods; he is geared toward Allah only.

All aspects of a Muslim culture is of a theocentric nature, whether the family, the economy, education, politics or religion. Everything is a part of the world view that is centred in Allah. Therefore, if a Muslim falls away from Islam and becomes a Christian he is to be warned and then punished. If he fails to return, death awaits him (Sura al-Nisa 4:90, al-Nahl 16:107). No one is permitted to step out of his slave-relationship to Allah. A Muslim belongs to Allah for time and eternity, and he has no right to leave him. Freedom of religion does not apply to Muslims, even if Western-styled laws have been enacted in Islamic countries. This is a right granted only to the non-Muslim foreigners who happen to be living or working in their countries.

In Islam, repentance means a return to Allah and an acceptance of his religion. The main issue here is not a change in lifestyle or a repudiation of one's bad character. What is most important is a willing submission to Allah. Illustrating this, Muhammad, after being joined by some Bedouins from the Arabian peninsula, said, "Do not say, 'We have believed,' but say, 'We have surrendered ourselves to Allah and his ambassadors'" (Sura al-Hujurat 49:14).

The pride of Muslims, resulting from this exclusive dependence upon Allah, is understandable, for it seems to them that they are placed higher than all "unbelievers". Muslims are convinced that all other gods are nothing and that all other religions are false and blasphemous. They believe that they alone know the true god, that they alone are on the true path. All other people are to be converted to Allah. Owing to his submission to the exalted, sole god, a Muslim feels superior to all other people; hence, the saying, "as proud as an Arab!"

From You Alone We Seek Our Help

A Muslim's total dependence upon Allah makes his request for help possible. More precisely, this cry means: "We seek our help from you alone. We are not relying on neighbours, friends, or anybody in a position of power and authority." But this attitude is valid in theory only. Reality shows us an endlessly complex and tangled web of corruption and deceit. Everyone looks for mediators and helpers in the government, schools, jobs and everywhere else. But this proud attitude makes it nearly impossible to openly help a Muslim. Such a suggestion would be insulting to him. He accepts gifts or direct help on rare occasions, unless of course if they have originated from Allah. Quite often, food, money, or clothing can be given to needy families only if one secretly leaves these gifts lying at their door or at some other private place. Otherwise, the honour of the individual or clan would be jeopardised, which would mean that Allah has stopped caring for them, owing to their unworthiness or guilt.

A Muslim seldom says "Thank you!" to his benefactors, because all that he receives is understood to have originally come from Allah. It is from Allah alone that a Muslim seeks help. Thus, it is Allah that moved a person to offer help, and the praise goes to Allah and to none other.

A Muslim not only prays to his lord during the five regulated prayer-times. He also has the option of uttering self-formulated prayers at any time. Those calls, as in all religions, mainly consist of requests for help. However, the prerequisite for such prayers is different in Islam. Whereas disciples of Jesus Christ regard themselves as sinners unworthy of receiving God's help -- yet, who have gained access to the Father through the justifying blood of Jesus -- a Muslim considers his prayer an urgent request for help from his lord because he is his slave serving him. The worthiness of the petitioner or the legitimacy of the request is not what initially matters; rather, everything depends upon Allah who may or may not meet the desired request.

Whoever enters into Islam as a slave of Allah has a fundamental right to divine aid. He has stepped into the circle of those who are qualified, those who alone can expect help or guidance from Allah.

In Sudan, an Islamic agricultural-development farm was started, in an effort to reclaim the desert through irrigation with water from the Nile. Over the entrance of this farm are the words from the Fatiha: "You alone we serve [as slaves]. From you alone do we seek our help." Any individual among the millions of unemployed Sudanese who wants to work on this farm is welcome to do so, provided that he accepts Islam and circumcision. General developmental assistance from mere humanitarian sources appears absurd to a Muslim. Only those who are walking along the true path of the Sharia can expect to receive help.

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

With the daily requests, Jesus teaches his followers to pray for the bread necessary for each day's needs and no more. In our present age of freezers, refrigerators, canned goods, bank accounts and life insurance policies, we have lost the earnestness and power of this request to a large degree. Only he who has experienced dire need, has been unemployed for a long period, living without any means of support, or who, as a refugee, has lost all possessions, will be able to comprehend the privilege of this prayer for help.

Why does Jesus teach us to pray for the needs of each day only? The reason for this is the existence of our Father who is in heaven. He lives and does not change. He is more important than bread, income and health. He cares for his own. His people can trust him and speak with him about all their needs. He will provide what they need if they faithfully ask him.

A child does not concern himself with the affairs of his parents. He does not think about the supply of provisions in the basement but asks his mother for a sandwich, for clothing even for toys, and he is certain that he will receive whatever he needs. "My father cares for me" is the vital, basic experience in this small boy's life. It would be unnatural for him to ask for enough sandwiches to last him an entire week. It would also be unthinkable that he should throw himself to the floor before his parents in adoration, in order to receive an apple. The child is not a slave. His parents are always there. They give him whatever he needs. There is a personal relationship between them which is based on deep truth.

If the young lad were to ask for something harmful, such as a razor blade to play with or poison to drink, his parents would certainly not grant his request, even though he were to kick and scream. It is the love and wisdom of parents that determines which requests are granted. In the same way, it is the goodness of God that determines which of our prayers are answered. He knows whether granting our request will bring good or harm to us.

Our Father in heaven is not stingy. Sometimes he even grants prosperity, which can be a spiritual inheritance to those whose ancestors worked, hoped and endured faithfully. However, prosperity often means a great temptation and demands responsibility. Those who amass money and possessions, without giving to those in need quickly corrupt their own character along with their family's.

We should realise the importance of the fact that Jesus' prayer was not given to us in the singular or "me" form; it is meant to pass over our lips in the plural form. It is not fitting that we should only think of our private needs. Jesus also teaches us to pray for the needs of our friends and neighbours. It is unfortunate that during the Christmas season most of us only buy gifts for ourselves and those we love, never thinking of providing a little joy for the foreigners living among us, the prisoners or the handicapped.

The daily petitions in the Lord's Prayer also motivate us toward a brotherly concern for mankind. Our Father is a God of love. He prompts us to think not only about Christians but also about Jews, Muslims, Hindus and followers of other religions. Industrial nations must reconsider their traditional views and try to understand the developing countries in which the father of a family often earns only ten dollars per month. Those who open their eyes and look at the facts will conduct themselves differently during the often bitter disputes that erupt over wage increases in the West, for the small increases they gain usually amount to more than the total yearly income of many wage earners in India and Bangladesh.

The Lord's Prayer trains us in intercessory prayer and gives us a global vision of mercy, so that we can entrust others to our Father; after all, he lets the sun shine upon the evil as well as the good.

Jesus gave a deeper meaning to this comprehensive request by his piercing words:

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:9-13).

Jesus left no room for misunderstanding when he taught that man does not live by bread alone but by every word of God (Luke 4:4). Spiritual nourishment is just as vital as daily bread. This means that mere developmental assistance without genuine Christian teaching is superficial and in the end harmful. People in developing nations must learn to think, work and act responsibly toward others. A renewing of the mind in each individual is necessary, if aid to developing countries is to be truly effective. Only then can productive work be carried out by faithful workers. Without being converted to Jesus and our Father in heaven, we will not find lasting love in us for our fellow man. Without thankfulness for his daily care, it is seldom that someone would be ready to invest his time, energy and money in the lives of difficult

people. Without a salvation experience, there can be neither lasting social work nor a true commitment to communal living. Those who provide aid to developing countries without explaining the Gospel clearly will find that the people whom they trained will take the first chance they get to steal the very tools and materials with which they were trained. Whoever has not experienced a cleansing of his conscience through Jesus Christ will hardly be motivated to clean his tools thoroughly after work, to prevent residue or rust from forming. Bread alone is not sufficient. The Spirit of the Father should be at the basis of everything.

Whoever utters the Lord's Prayer with true spiritual intent will not forget to be thankful. Quite frequently, those who pray ask for help, blessing, health and success. But the time and energy they invest in giving thanks is meagre indeed. Mature believers express their thanks to God and man in word and deed. Whoever is thankful remains steadfast in joy and lives confidently. We really want to thank our Father in heaven for all he has provided for us, his children.

And Forgive Us Our Debts

This brief unique request does not appear in the Fatiha; it is not even hinted at, because the awareness of sin in Islam is superficial. The Quran certainly provides many names for shame, crime, adultery and lewdness in all their different forms. But this has nothing to do with a shocking realisation of real sinfulness before the holy God, or our acknowledgment of personal guilt. In general, both are missing from Islam

Thanks be to our Father in heaven for this request in the Lord's Prayer! What a privilege it is that we Christians can acknowledge, grieve over and confess our sins clearly. With these words, Jesus frees us from all inferiority and superiority complexes. This request plucks out our pride by the roots and plants our attitudes in the ground of reality. We are all nothing but sinners. No one is better or worse than anyone else. No one is good but God alone (Mark 10:18; Luke 18:18). Our Father in heaven is the true measure for us all. There is no occasion for anyone to boast, be he great or small. There is room only for brokenness, acknowledgment of our deficiency, and the confession of our state of total corruption.

No one will confess his sins to another unless he can completely trust that person. However we should admit our deeds, words and thoughts with stammering lips before our great and holy God, where we will receive his mercy. It is our Father who is our Judge. He knows, understands, loves and bears with us. He has planned our forgiveness and redemption before the foundations of the earth. Our forgiveness flows from the wellspring of his loving compassion. Therefore, we are encouraged to confess our sins in front of him, even though this means the death of our very "self".

Islam cannot acknowledge a Father-God. It is true that Muslims pray to "the Forgiving One". They read over 111 times in the Quran that Allah forgives. However, not one of them knows Allah actually has personally forgiven him his sins, for this is to be revealed only at the Last Judgment.

Christians know that, in this life, they have been granted full and complete forgiveness. They experience this grace daily. It was Jesus himself who gave us this decisive request. He is the Lamb of God who carried away the sin of the world. He reconciled everybody with God. Had he not been crucified, there would be no reason to ask for forgiveness of sins. God does not arbitrarily forgive "when he will or whom he will," for his holy law would accuse us before him throughout eternity. Our Father is always truth and love simultaneously. He is goodness

and holiness in one. Jesus took all our sins upon himself because of his great love. He was judged and tormented in our place and has justified his followers once and for all through his substitutionary death on the cross. We are freed from our guilt and bad conscience by his grace. Jesus has saved us from the wrath and judgment of God. "The chastisement for our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed... for by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Isaiah 53:5; Hebrews 10:14).

Christians are not obliged to pray five times a day, nor to fast for an entire month or to embark on a dangerous pilgrimage. They need not constantly make offerings, dealing severely with themselves in hope that God may "perhaps" be merciful to them. They do not have to secure their own salvation through their own striving, for it has already been accomplished. They no longer live in an age of law but in one of grace. They are released from all demands and legalities, for Jesus fulfilled the entire law, suffering the punishment for all the sins of human history. He who believes in Jesus is justified forever. He who refuses Christ's pardon will never find a helper on the judgement day.

Now that Jesus has reconciled God with men, each committed Christian can adore his heavenly Father with a spirit of thanksgiving. We sacrifice our time and energy, so that his kingdom may come. We do not serve God only with a hope of being justified and saved by our good deeds. On the contrary! We dedicate our life, time and money to the service of our heavenly Father, out of a spirit of thanksgiving because we have already been saved.

He who has grasped this great privilege is able to sigh with relief and is freed from psychological or religious pressure. He leads a life different from non-Christian's. Were we to ask a Muslim if he had received forgiveness of sins, he would say, "Perhaps, hopefully." Were we to continue questioning, he would respond, "If Allah wills." But he can never be sure if Allah wills, for no Muslim has the heart-felt assurance that his sins have been forgiven. He has no Lamb of God that died for him. The eternal flames of hell await him, because the sum of his good deeds will not be enough to cancel out his evil deeds.

It is particularly typical that the fifth request in the Lord's Prayer not only says, "Forgive me my debts." The Lord's Prayer is in the plural form. Therefore, we are not only to acknowledge our own sins, to regret, confess, hate and overcome them; neither are we to keep the gracious gift of salvation for ourselves alone. No, we are also called to intercede for our neighbours, friends and relatives -- as well as for all Muslims and Jews -- that the Lord would open their eyes to see their lostness, their bondage and the danger of their eternal damnation. We are bound to pray for each individual to repent, to return to his Father in heaven, fall before him and by faith receive his love and grace. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Whoever accepts the forgiveness of his sins is also called to be a priest of the Most High. The Lord's Prayer encourages him to practise this privilege for everyone by faith. The love of Christ drives us to do so.

Christ bound himself personally to the requests of the Lord's Prayer. He made our sins his sins, prayed for our forgiveness and bore the penalty for our sins in his body, even though he himself did not commit a single sin. "For [God] made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ is God's Lamb and the true High Priest simultaneously, who prays the Lord's Prayer with all his being and who pleads for us before the Father. His prayer has been answered! We depend on the grace and spiritual care of our Saviour for every second of our life.

Have we already thanked, our heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, for the forgiveness and pardoning of all our sins through his atonement? It is the joy and privilege of each Christian to praise the Triune God for the reality of the redemption in Christ. Even before we utter this prayer request, we can know that it has already been heard. Where then is room for our praise and thanks, our devotion and service? The apostle Paul willingly made himself a slave of Jesus Christ out of a spirit of continual praise for this wonderful salvation. In the same way, may the name of the Father be hallowed among us, so that his kingdom will come and his will be done in and through us. That is our devotion, our "Islam", and our song of praise and worship. It is not demanded of us, not forced. There is no pressure, no law, no slavery; rather, all we do is motivated by peace, joy and love. Christian missions are the expressions of our thanks for Golgotha.

As We Forgive Our Debtors

The little word as can shake up every committed Christian, for we pray: "Father, forgive us our debts, just as we forgive our debtors." Seen from another angle, this could mean, "Do not forgive me my debts if I am not ready to forgive the sins of my adversary. He has hurt me too much, insulted me, wronged me, persecuted me and hated me! I can never forget this." Again, this could mean, "Forgive? Yes I will try. But forget? Never!" If we entertain thoughts like these, we are indirectly praying, "Father, forgive me, but never forget the evil I have done." Now, no one would want to utter such words! Maybe with a little inner struggle we could force ourselves to say, "I am prepared to forgive and forget, but I never want to see this person again! If I ever see him on the street, I'll just cross over to the other side to avoid him." This would mean, "Father, forgive and forget all my sins, but I do not ever want to meet you throughout all eternity." Such words coming forth from our hard and unrepentant hearts would bar us from the glory of our heavenly Father's immediate presence.

A meditation in the school of intercession, with special emphasis on the Lord's Prayer, would crush us. Perhaps we would then be ready to give up our reservations toward our enemies and to forgive them wholeheartedly. But would that be enough? Jesus expects more from us than just forgiveness. He calls us to a level of spiritual maturity that makes it possible for us to love our enemies. We truly love the Father once we have begun loving our enemies. "God is love, and he that abides in love abides in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16). That is why Jesus taught his followers this lesson: "I say to you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you, that you may be the sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:44,45).

Moreover, when there is a dispute, it is seldom only one person who is to blame. Perhaps we are only responsible for five or ten percent of the entire problem, either because we used too harsh a tone in our speech, did not inform the other person in time, or prayed too little for our neighbour. It is a privilege to be able not only to forgive the sins of another but also to ask him to forgive our shortcomings first, when he feels that it is we who are at fault. The way of humility is always open to us. It does not hurt us when our proud "I" is ground to dust, for self-justification is the disease of mankind, indeed, his very self-deception.

However, thoughts of self-denial are foreign to the mind of a Muslim. He never experienced real forgiveness from Allah. That is why he can never simply forgive. Allah to him is like a salesman who measures man's good deeds against his evil deeds. It's a matter of right, payment and revenge not of forgiveness, love and substitution. Only when all the demands of the law have been met can forgiveness be extended. Therefore, blood revenge is the logical result of the spirit of Islam. He who forgives an enemy commits a crime, for then the demands

of justice will not be satisfied. This principle was already at work in the Old Testament: "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22; Leviticus 17:11). In Islam, every offence demands a severe punishment or a payment of debt. Should someone be generous, overlook the offence and choose to forget the whole affair, he would be guilty of an additional offence. The demands of the law must be met. Therefore, for those under the law of the Old Testament and under the law of Islam, the following principle is still valid: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth... ear for ear, blood for blood" (Leviticus 24:19,20; Sura al-Maida 5:45).

Those who live in the spirit of the New Testament can hardly understand such thinking, because they have been converted to another way of life and they have been programmed to forgive. But from where do we get the right to forgive? Isn't the forgiveness we extend shallow, or even faulty? On the contrary, Christ did not bear only our own individual sin on the cross, he also bore the entire guilt of all mankind. For this reason, we can forgive everyone at all times. Jesus has freed us from the compulsion for revenge. His crucifixion has made this possible, and this compels us to forgive our enemies gladly.

A woman was once brought to Muhammad. She was pregnant by man other than her husband. Her accusers and witnesses asked Muhammad, "What shall we do with her?" He answered, "Bring her back to me after she gives birth to the child." After a few months they brought her back and insisted that Muhammad tell them again what they should do with her. Muhammad was finally obliged to sentence her to death and said, "Take the child from her and then stone the woman immediately in front of my house." They did as he said. Muhammad was right according to the law.

Jesus encountered a similar incident. Some eyewitnesses brought a woman to him who had committed adultery. They asked him, "What shall we do with her?" he bent down and wrote something in the dirt. (We do not know what he wrote, maybe *mercy*!) They insisted that he give an answer, so Jesus stood up and looked into their eyes and said, "Stone her!" However, he added a striking sentence to the demands of the law. "The one among you who is without sin should throw the first stone." These words pierced their hearts and all of them left the scene silently one by one, the priests, scribes and even the apostles. Only Jesus and the woman remained (John 8:1-11). At that point, Jesus should have taken the first stone and thrown it because he really was without sin. But he did not do it. Did he break the law by not stoning the sinful woman? No! he took her sins upon him and died for her. He had the right to pardon her, because he took her place and sacrificed himself for her, the holy one for the sinner. Muhammad did not die for the Muslims. Therefore he had to judge and execute the sinner. In Islam there is no cross and consequently no forgiveness, no forgiveness from God to man and no forgiveness between men. Only Christians have the capacity, the right and the obligation to forgive as God forgives, always, everyone and every sin completely.

Since Muslims reject the historicity of Christ's crucifixion as well as the need for salvation, they remain under the law and must either take revenge or demand complete compensation. Whoever reads the law of revenge in Iran, which Khomeini and his mullahs derived from the Sharia, will be sickened. In it is written:

"When a cyclist who is blind in one eye causes another person to lose an eye as a result of an accident, the victim has the right to determine the type of compensation to be received, whether it is the good eye of the accused or a monetary indemnity equivalent to the loss of his own eye.

"When the driver of a car causes an accident and, as a result, the leg of the victim has to be amputated, the victim has the right to demand that the leg of the driver be removed. Should wounds on the leg of the driver be found, these are required to heal before the leg can be removed, so that no "unjust" claims are made."

Several young Muslims studying at a mission school in Lebanon assured one another that they would no longer practise the law of blood revenge. But as the great feast, Aid al-Fitr, at the end of the fasting month Ramadan drew near, an uncle roused one of the young men and challenged him, "How can you celebrate the breaking of the fast when you have not yet cleansed your family reputation, which has been dishonoured?" So the young man went home, got a gun, and shot the father of his friend who was chatting on the balcony of his house. Immediately after this incident, the young man jumped onto his motorcycle, raced to the police station and placed himself under protective custody. He was sentenced to prison for only a few years, because the matter was seen as one of family honour. When the day came for his release, his former friend stood at the door of the prison and shot him as he was released. This former friend then turned himself in to the police, placing himself under protective custody. Similar patterns often continue throughout generations. A wall of hatred separates the various clans. The law does not allow for forgiveness.

Islam is not a religion of love but of rights. That is why the unconditional forgiveness of an enemy's offences is nearly impossible. Hatred is fuelled and hearts grow hard. Even today such feuding often results in political tension and wars. Compromises cannot be reached, because the harsh demand for rights cannot be bent. Consequently, wars of extermination are waged, without hope of peace. He who tries to free himself from the law of revenge, attempting to espouse a pragmatic approach or to negotiate a partial peace, risks being shot like President Anwar Sadat of Egypt in 1981.

We seldom realise how much our Western culture has been influenced by the cross of Christ. We can reach compromises fairly easily, hope for mutual forgiveness and try to establish peace where hate is strong. Practices such as these have their root in the reconciliation that was established between God and man through the blood of Christ. Without the cross of Christ, there would be no reconciliation, neither with God nor man. The Father himself suffered the most as his only Son was being offered in our place, so that we, the guilty, could be justified and enabled to forgive those who sin against us, just as God forgives. But since Islam rejects the Triune God, it places itself outside the scope of grace, remaining instead under the curse of the law.

IV. Petitions for Protection against Falling into Temptation

Lead Us on the Straight Path

A Muslim's subconscious mind is directed towards the great Allah and his final judgment. It is Allah that a Muslim wants to serve like a slave, in hope of attaining an eternal reward. He seeks help from him for a successful life, one that conforms to all the demands of Islam. He asks Allah to lead him daily in conformance to the letter of the Islamic law. He does not comprehend that he is sinful and wicked by nature. He believes that by being a Muslim he is

on the right path and will be acceptable to Allah just as he is. For extra assurance, he prays for the ability to recognise the only true path and the wisdom to tread upon it.

The word for path in the Fatiha is a foreign term in the Arabic language. The root most likely stems from Latin and hints at the Roman cobblestone roads that passed through the Near East on their way to Rome. These wide roads made fast and comfortable travel possible. A light horse-drawn carriage could travel on them speedily, a vast improvement over the slow pace of camel caravans in the desert. The "broad way", the wide, straight and comfortable road that leads straight to paradise was Muhammad's ideal.

Muhammad knew nothing about Christ's words of the steep and narrow way that leads to life through salvation, nor of the broad and comfortable way that leads to death and damnation. Apparently, Muhammad had not heard much about self-denial in the area of sexuality. He legally had thirteen wives and several concubines. Carrying the cross was for him a foreign concept. He created a religion allowing his men the possibility of indulgence in their private lives. It is no problem for a pagan with several wives to become a Muslim, for Islam allows him this privilege. Those who acquire rich rewards through fighting in a holy war think that they are reaping Allah's blessing for being his victorious helpers.

The only right way for a Muslim is Islam, and the straight path is the Sharia, Islamic law. Virtually all areas of life are encompassed by this allegedly theocentric system: worship, family life, inheritance, economic matters, the keeping of slaves, rights in war and contracts with believers as well as unbelievers. Everything is regulated in detail, according to Muhammad's teachings and example. Whoever lives faithfully within the framework of these practical laws hopes to be successful in this world and the next. Islam is a religion of the law in which all areas of culture are permeated by the Islamic spirit. This is the straight path for a Muslim.

However, the belief that a Muslim who keeps the Islamic law will be lead directly to paradise is the greatest self-betrayal possible. No man can fulfill the demands of the law. No Muslim has confessed his faith enough, prayed in all the obligatory prayer times, fasted faithfully, or honestly calculated his religious tax. Everyone has made mistakes concerning their family life and in relationships with fellow believers. The law does not save a Muslim but judges him mercilessly. The Sharia, on which all Muslims build their lives, will judge them and guide them straight to hell. There can be no greater error.

For this reason a Muslim really needs to pray. 'Lord lead me on the right path,' because Muhammad could not say that he himself was the way, the truth and the life. He confessed three times that he had to ask Allah for forgiveness. Every Muslim needs to find the way to Christ, who grants to every repentant believer everlasting forgiveness and his own nature.

The Path of Those you have Given Grace

The Fatiha characterises the legal path to God as a "highway" for those who serve and fight for Allah. The expression for "grace", which dominates the New Testament, appears here, yet with a totally different meaning.

Grace, according to the Arabic definition of the word, means "to lead a blessed, comfortable, easy and good life." Job serves as a good example of this. After Job had been afflicted with boils, passing his severe test of faith, the Lord healed him and granted him more houses, bigger herds and more sons than before. Job was showered with grace from God because of

his faithfulness. In Islam, faith is honoured with earthly and heavenly rewards. Whoever repeats the testimony of faith, prays five times every day, and fasts daily during the month of Ramadan will be greatly blessed in this life and the next. But whoever is poor, deaf, childless, persecuted, or experiences suffering is obviously under Allah's wrath for having left the straight path of Islamic law.

The Muslim prays up to 17 times daily, "Lord, lead me on the right path, the path of those who are given grace." With these words, he hopes that he is basically walking in the right direction and requires only the help of Allah to keep him alert, so that he can reach the goal of complete bliss in paradise with certainty. Islam offers a life insurance policy that promises a Muslim security in all situations -- in time and for eternity. He is careful not to overstep the restrictions of the "insurance policy". he will defend and protect Islam, for it represents the essence of his life.

Not on the Path of Those Upon Whom Your Wrath Rests Nor on the Path of the Lost

The Fatiha leads the Muslim purposefully onward. It lets him pray repeatedly for Allah to protect him from committing any act of disobedience that would kindle the anger of the Eternal One or prepare him for the fires of hell. The Muslim prays especially that Allah would protect him from religious deception which, in the end, leads only to the place where divine wrath and unquenchable thirst await him.

The last two requests of the Fatiha are uttered by sincere Muslims, so that Allah will protect them from deliberate or unintentional backsliding from Islam. This two-fold request is intended to thwart all the negative influences that might hinder the successful course of a believer's strife.

Expositors of the Quran, al-Jalalain, as well as other notable Islamic scholars, expound these two requests confidently. According to their understanding, those upon whom Allah's wrath is resting are the Jews, because they received the commandments of God but did not keep them. The Lord entered into a covenant with them but they broke it. According to the Quran, they were led to the Promised Land, but they turned to other gods. The Muslims say that the wrath of Allah was unleashed upon them for this reason. Therefore they were driven out of the promised land, hounded on every continent of the earth and will not find rest until the Last Judgment. Some Muslims claim that Allah is gathering them together in Palestine so that the Islamic countries can finish the divine punishment and annihilate them along with the state of Israel. According to Islamic belief, the people of the Old Testament live day and night under the continual wrath of the Eternal Judge.

But who are those who have gone astray? According to Islamic belief, these are the Christians. The best proof for this is the Lord's Prayer, which Muslims call "the Prayer of the Lost". The Christians dare to call God "our Father", claim that he has a real Son, and believe that the Holy Spirit dwells within them. In the eyes of Muslims, this is a triple blasphemy that can never ever be forgiven (Sura Al Imran 3:116). A Muslim cringes at the thought of such a temptation. Whoever believes in a trinity is violating the first commandment: "You shall have no other gods beside Me" (Exodus 20:3). By committing this crime, the guilty places himself in direct opposition to the Islamic statement of faith. Muslims think that if the Jews themselves were disobedient after receiving their laws through Moses, and are now being pursued by the wrath of Allah, then the fate of Christians will be worse, a fate comparable to

someone slowly languishing in a parched desert. They will live eternally in hell, searching for truth and salvation but never finding it.

Those experienced in counselling are deeply shocked by the last two requests in the Fatiha. When Muslims repeat this prayer up to 17 times daily, it seems they are taking deliberate steps to harden themselves. Muslims plead with Allah not to lead them in the way of Moses and his law, and especially to keep them from the heresy of the Christians. By praying in this way, they exclude any awareness of sin; they spurn the Ten Commandments and beg Allah to save them from the power of the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. A good Muslim teaches his children that Christians believe in three gods, and that they claim one of them was crucified. Therefore, he warns his children not to believe such lies lest they end up in hell.

The Fatiha is not only the main prayer of Islam; it is also an effective agent that hardens their hearts against the salvation of Christ. What initially appears as a natural form of piety is in reality an anti-Christian prayer. The first sura in the Quran keeps many Muslims from the eternal life which Christ won for all mankind.

This comparison of the Fatiha and the Lord's Prayer shows us that prayer, fasting and deep religiosity cannot save a man. It may be that we, the prayer-weary citizens of industrial nations, find the developing countries with their elaborately liturgical religions fascinating. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that religions are, in the end, anti-Christian powers that fight against the crucified Son of God as they lead their adherents along a path of self-righteousness by works; they stir people up into thinking they can earn eternal life through their own achievements, submission and personal sacrifices. Consequently, the gift of salvation that Christ offers is considered a serious error and is staunchly resisted. All non-Christian religions are based on laws that must be fulfilled. Only Christ offers free and abundant grace to everyone who believes. This is the sum and substance of the Islamic opposition to the Gospel of Christ.

And Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Every Christian can know from the Epistle of James that God does not lead anyone into temptation, for each individual is led astray by his own desires (James 1:13). When Jesus taught us to ask our Father not to lead us into temptation, he referred to the sanctification of his followers -- those who have already received forgiveness for their sins. Everyone has character flaws, peculiar sins and bad habits which, when examined carefully, prove to be glaring deficits and incredible bondages to ungodly powers.

With the request for protection from temptation, we implore our Father in heaven to keep us from indulging the sins of our flesh. We beg him to teach us, discipline us and to help us triumph through the power of his love, so that we will not desert him but continue to live by the strength that he provides. The forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ has already sanctified us. There is no greater holiness than the cleansing and justification we receive through faith in the Son of God. It is for us to remain steadfast in this grace, to mature in the fruits of the Spirit, and to strive not to bring shame upon the name of our Father.

Jesus was led into the desert, being tempted in our place. Satan did not confront him immediately but waited until he had fasted and prayed for 40 days. Although the tempter called Jesus the Son of God openly, he called the truth of his divinity into question, using this as a springboard to tempt Jesus to save the world as a bread provider rather than by suffering on a cross. From this incident, we can see that religious exercises neither save nor secure a

person. Satan purposely targets religious people, making them want to fulfill the law by their own strength, along with sowing doubts about their salvation and awakening lust in them. He seeks first and foremost to shake our confidence in our heavenly Father, just as he did with Eve and then Adam, our first parents. After he had achieved this, it was quite easy for him to tempt them to increasing backsliding from God, to inner turmoil and to deliberate disobedience. Jesus willingly suffered our temptations and remained victorious. We need to remain in him, not slipping away from the grace of God for even one second, so that we shall not fall from his eternal love.

If there are deliberate offences, character deficiencies and favourite sins in our lives, which sometimes hinder us from being led by the Spirit of God, then the sources of these temptations must be willingly renounced. It was not for nothing that Jesus said to his own: "He who follows me must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23). Remaining in the grace of God causes a severe spiritual struggle. We do not fight against enemies around us, as required by the demands of an Islamic holy war; rather, we experience a constant battle against ourselves. We should resist the tempting voices arising within us, flee to Jesus and judge ourselves in the light of his countenance. The Father will strengthen us to resist falling into temptation if we ask him humbly. He will not allow us to rush headlong into disaster, for no one can pluck us out of his hand (John 10:29). His grace will remain victorious in the life of every broken believer.

But Deliver Us From the Evil One

No one should ever think that he is more intelligent or stronger than Satan. No person can understand or overcome the devil by his own power. He is mighty and is the father of lies. That is why Jesus taught us to cry out to our Father to save us from the craftiness and power of the tempter. The children of God especially need protection and deliverance after they have received salvation through Christ. Those who are actively serving Christ and have experienced real persecution know what the cry "Father, save me!" means.

Regrettably, many do not take the devil seriously anymore and play him down. However, with the current craze for parapsychology, we have every reason to believe that the period of demythologisation lies behind us. This trend is becoming more perilous, as more and more people take up direct contact with spirits and the dead. Television has presented such practices directly before the eyes of the masses. We must stay awake and sober, so that we will not be overpowered by the reality of evil. The Bible teaches clearly that the whole world lies in the evil one. (1 John 5:19) The risen Christ commanded Paul to open the eyes of the people, so that they might turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:15-18). Anyone who contradicts these testimonies, claiming that Satan and hell do not exist, is naive, superficial and disobedient to the Word of God.

The lies of Satan certainly sound reasonable, but in reality they brainwash people and make them spiritually dull and blind. Humanism maintains that man is naturally good and requires only a good education for proper development. This would make the need of turning to God and being born again unnecessary. Religions and cults convince their adherents to save themselves through good works and great sacrifices, yet this approach immunises them against salvation by faith in Christ. Materialism in East and West presents people with a delusive picture of a full and prosperous life, promising a paradise on earth; yet materialism denies the existence of the soul and its longing for God. Moreover, a concealed or blatant occultism often accompanies materialism with healings, wonders, appearances and bondages through powers of darkness. The rejection of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the

persecution of believers in the Triune God is the most apparent indication of the present rule of anti-Christian spirits.

What possibilities are available for us to escape or overcome these demonic powers and to save us from the ever present temptation of falling away from Christ's salvation? The Bible tells us 175 times that believers of the new covenant live "in Christ" as if in a shelter. They have been translated to his dominion of protection and have the privilege not only of having their sins freely forgiven, with the overcoming of their character weaknesses through the grace of sanctification, but they can also realise that God is a secure fortress where they can be kept safe. He who follows Christ lives in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit in an eternal security (Matthew 18:19; John 17:21-23).

An African evangelist explained this mystery of born-again Christians to his children in a story. He told them: "I was wandering alone on the grassland when I suddenly heard a noise behind me and saw a black water buffalo charging towards me. I ran as fast as I could. The buffalo ran too, gaining ground. I almost lost my breath. It got so close to me that I could hear its breathing behind me. Then, I suddenly saw a large, open crate directly in front of me. With a mighty leap, I jumped inside. While still in the air, I could see that in the large crate was another crate with iron bands; and inside this crate was yet another. I actually had landed in the middle of the third, innermost crate. When the animal crashed against the sides of the outer crate, grunting and thrashing its horns wildly, I did not feel a thing. I was saved and triple-secured." Then the evangelist continued: "In the same way, in a spiritual sense, we are grafted into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit through baptism. Thus, the enemy has no power over us."

No man can save and protect himself from Satan. No one can be drawn out of the mire of his sins by his own hands, nor can he be freed from demonic chains. To be saved, everyone needs a strong Saviour who stands on the firm foundation of God's own righteousness. However, we need to cry loud and clear: "Father, save me!" he does not force his salvation on anyone. Faith in Christ demands that we clearly renounce all religions, ideologies, humanism, materialism and occultism. Faith in the Son of God means the full and willing devotion to the only Saviour that the Father sent to us. What a comfort! Even before we asked our Father in heaven for salvation from Satan, the Victor over sin, death and evil powers is already standing by our side. Whoever trusts Jesus completely, committing himself to him forever, will experience his authority and will remain safe throughout all eternity.

The problem is that quite a number of Christians want to live in Christ and in the world at the same time. This is impossible. Nobody can enter a car with one leg turn the key and begin to drive while his other leg is still outside on the ground. He would be torn into pieces. The same happens with Christians who do not abide fully in Christ. You can either be fully in Christ or only in the world but never in both.

The last word in the Lord's Prayer is *the evil one*. Jesus not only revealed a new, unique name for God at the close of the Lord's Prayer; he also exposed Satan and made his true identity known. Satan is the original source of evil, the wholly evil one, the source of all that is bad, the tempter to rebellion against God, and the deceiver who leads people to fall away from their Creator. He himself wants to be considered as God. He would like the whole world to worship him, to cling to him, to serve him alone. He wants to make us godless and evil, just as he himself is. During his temptation in the wilderness, Jesus gave Satan one last chance to repent, commanding him clearly to worship God and to serve him alone. But Satan did not prostrate himself before the Son of God; he refused to bow before Christ, God incarnate. He

did not want to submit himself to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He chose to remain in his rebellion and departed.

In his temptation, Jesus denied the riches, power and glory of this world, preferring to take the judgment of God for our sins upon himself by hanging on the cross of Calvary. He decided to reconcile mankind with his Father and to divert the judgment we had earned through his suffering. His humility, gentleness and obedience triumphed over evil. Jesus' faith, love for the Father, and hope did not waver, even during the final moments on the cross, as the Father forsook him for our sake. Jesus loved and prayed for his enemies, clung fast to the faithfulness of the hidden Father, thereby remaining victorious over Satan. Because of this, we need not fear the evil one. Jesus, the Victor, is standing on our side. We are under his protection.

If we look at the Lord's Prayer as one unit, we will see that all requests lie between the two names *our Father* and *the evil one*. This throws light upon our human predicament: We live in constant tension between good and evil. We are standing in the middle and are pulled in both directions. To which end will we allow ourselves to be directed? Which end do we pursue? Christ is waiting for you, calling you and drawing you gently to the Father. Are you responding to his love for you?

Summary

Muhammad did not recognise the lies of Satan. He surrendered himself to Allah, thereby submitting to an evil spirit that had taken the Arabic name for God, binding that name to its face like a mask. Posing as Allah, Satan demands that all Muslims worship him alone and requires the rejection of the crucified Son of God. To those who worship him, he promises blessing, power, riches and lordship over this world as rewards for submitting to him and rejecting God's Son. The Fatiha is an active means of establishing this anti-Christian seizure of power in the hearts of all who pray it. The Lord's Prayer is not as Muslims claim "the Prayer of the Lost"; but rather, the Fatiha itself is. Even though the Fatiha gives an impression of deep religiosity and piety, in actuality it drives Muslims away from Christ's salvation daily, leading them to a frightening and real separation from God.

But Jesus has come to find and save that which was lost. That is why there is the full and free salvation awaiting all Muslims. But every one of them must acknowledge and confess his own fallen nature, ask Jesus for his salvation, willingly renounce Islam, and by faith unite himself to Christ his Redeemer for all eternity. Jesus will then lead him to the Father, so that he can come to know and bow before the true God, confessing with trembling lips: "You are my Father, hallowed by Your name, even through my very life!"

We who by grace have already partaken of this salvation need to comprehend the we form of the Lord's Prayer and purposefully include all Muslims in our prayers, so that as soon as possible they too may become partakers of eternal life, coming to a saving knowledge of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Let us call them one by one to come into the open family of God, and rest in the embracing arms of the Father.