

God's Love and the Future of the World

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Cees Buys

To Jesus Christ, who showed us the greatest deed of Love ever.

Copyright: © 2020 Cees Buys
E-mail: cabuijs@gmail.com
Cover photo: Jan Heuker of Hoek, HECO Photography in Ede
Photography: Selahattin and Halperin Doğan
ISBN: 9789403672304
NUR: 707
Internet: www.godsfuture.org

First Edition

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Introduction

What You Need to Know before Reading this Book

The title of this book includes the words *God's Love* and *Religion*. God's holy love is universal and touches every human being.

God's love is at the core of this book. We know that there are very many religions, and each religion has many variations. In the first part of the book, I limit myself to discussing Christianity and Islam. I include Judaism indirectly, because the Torah is part of the Tanakh¹ (along with the creation story and the Laws of Moses), and this Holy Jewish Book is the early foundation of Christianity and Islam. Jesus Christ, as God's Son, fulfilled His ultimate act of love. Fethullah Gülen shows the love of God to the world through his actions as a Muslim clergyman and authority.

I would have liked to meet Mr. Muhammed Fethullah Gülen personally, to ask him my questions directly. A personal meeting provides a much more emotional and non-verbal impression of someone than one is able to get second-hand. But, because of the Covid pandemic, that was not to be. So I have relied on video footage, the books he wrote, and my interview with Mr. Abdullah Aymaz (Gülen's longtime student and his good friend). The questions I had for Mr. Gülen are:

You speak of the formation of a universal world religion. What is your vision of this?

What do you think is the key to resolving the duality that exists in Turkey between your views and those of the current Turkish regime?

Why not shout your mission (or criticism) from the rooftops, because it is good not only for Muslims, but for everyone?

In this first section I also address the future, when Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, will become the Prince of Peace in God's thousand-year peace kingdom. During

¹ The Tanach (or Tanakh) is the Jewish Holy Book and contains thirty-nine of the books of the Bible. These books also appear in the Old Testament of the Bible, but in a different order. *Tanach* is an acronym for three abbreviations of words, namely, *T* of Torah, the teaching of the Jews; *N* of Nebe'im, which describes the Prophets, and the *CH* of Chetoubim, which covers the Scriptures.

the 1000 year Kingdom of Peace there will be only one religion anyway. At the centre of this period will be Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, I give some background about God's plan for creation and humanity and outline the manifestation of God's love in and through people, with an awareness of how everyone lives his or her own life and can turn that life to the divine source of love.

In this book, I make clear what the similarities and differences are between Islam and Christianity so that the reader can become more familiar with both. And, finally, I provide an effective prescription for calming people's fears. (especially those of youth, who still have their whole life ahead of them) about the decay of creation (climate, nature, morality, and more). I do this by describing the plan God has for the future of His creation. The Bible, in Psalms 83:19 says: "That they may know that Thou alone with Thy Name art the Lord, the Most High over all the earth". The name of God is 'YaHWeH' and other believers use the name YeHoWaH.

Man is destroying Yahweh's creation and man is unable to repair the damage. The task of reparation is a divine one, which He has given to His Son, Jesus Christ (see the Bible in Revelation to John, chapter 5, verse 5 which reports: "But one of the elders said to me, 'Stop crying. Look! The Lion from the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has overcome, so he can open the scroll and the seven seals". So here, Jesus Christ gets the consignments from his Father to be the ruler over the earth for 1,000 years (after Satan will be locked up and made inactive in this thousand years of peace). In these 1,000 years, God's creation will be restored as the paradise of the beginning of mankind.

After God's thousand-year peace kingdom, Yahweh will give His final judgment, which will make clear the way to paradise.

Yahweh is love. In addition to love, Yahweh also has the attributes of divine power, justice, and mercy. Psalm 103:13 says, "As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him."

I focus on the effects of God's love when one chose for it in life. I will also use His actual name: Yahweh. This name can then be translated by each reader, as he or she see fit, as God, Allah, the Lord, and so on.

I focus on God's Love but I do not want to describe God's love in this book, because it is impossible for a human being to do so. It is too comprehensive and infinitely complex.

Jalaluddin Rumi (1217–73) was the most influential poet and mystic of his time. In his many poems. He sought to describe divine love, and at the end of his life, he reportedly regretted every one of them, having come to realize that he had not been able to capture God's love in his vast body of work.

Each time I sat down at my computer to work on this book, which I felt called to write, I first asked in prayer for God's Holy Spirit to bless me with inspiration and guidance. My goal was to describe Christianity and Islam in relation to each other (mainly in terms of similarities) and to keep the content as factual as possible. For the actual and more profound differences between the Qur'an and the Bible, I would like to refer to author Andy Bannister's book, "Do Muslims and Christians worship the same God?".

With my book, I want to build bridges between Christians and Muslims and preferably between people who think differently and also believe differently. It is my personal experience that when we sincerely talk about God's Love, people transcend their own religions and mindsets and get into the sphere of God's Love.

I am not a theologian, and I do not pretend to be one. I have written this book from the perspective of a Christian and layman with a great deal of interest in both Christianity and Islam, based as much as possible on the contents of the Tanach (Tanakh), the Bible and the Qur'an. I have tried to avoid personal interpretation.

I have personally been touched by a contradictory phenomenon of Islam that affects the security of us all. One group of Muslims is killing people, and the other group of Muslims is perfectly peaceful. Both groups claim that the Qur'an is on their side and believe that they are the true branch of Islam.

This begs the question: to what extent do Muslims endorse democratic freedoms and values, and when does each group become dangerous? Many Muslims are settling in countries all over the world. Is this (potentially) a major threat to us all? For years we have been warned in the political arena of a Muslim invasion, often through refugee routes. Various political parties around

the globe are vehemently against more Muslim immigrants, and the other party shrugs its shoulders and waves away any idea of Muslim danger. Meanwhile, many people experience the effects of more and more Muslim groups in our society (both positive and negative). But what does this really mean for our security and for our democratic freedoms, not only in the short term but also certainly in the longer term?

I have put my focus in this context on a group of Turkish Muslim refugees who are called FETO, which stands for Fethullah Terrorist Organization, whom Turkish people and Turkish officials refer to as terrorists. “Fethullah” refers specifically to Mr. Fethullah Gülen, whom the Erdoğan regime claims was behind the alleged coup of July 16, 2016, in Turkey. However, this claim is unlikely.

Many governments of democratic countries have asked the Erdoğan regime to come up with hard evidence to back up their statements about FETO’s terrorist connections, but the evidence was never produced. Many Erdoğan sympathizers claim, with the Qur’an in hand, to have legitimate grounds to torture members of this group (who are mostly highly-educated Turkish people) without any form of a fair legal process, to chase them out of the country, or to lock them up in prisons and even to kill them.

Later in this book, you will read about my own experiences with this group of Muslims while seeking answers to the following questions:

1. What is the truth behind the true Muslim?
2. Can we trust Muslims, and to what extent?

Our collective sense of security has been affected by all the terrorist attacks since 9/11 carried out by Muslim extremists in the name of Allah. If we do not know whether Islam is peaceful or not, and specifically which Muslims are peaceful and which are not, this fear deepens and takes on a life of its own. If there is no clear and verifiable answer to these questions, subjectivity and generalization fill the void.

Gradually, in the course of my research, I discovered that the Holy Books (the Bible, the Tanach, and the Qur’an) of the three world religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) have more similarities than differences. In this book, I will

describe these similarities and differences to give you, the reader, a better understanding of what Christianity stands for in relation to Islam and vice versa. To ensure that I would present my findings correctly and in accordance with the context and spirit of the Holy Books, I was supported on this journey of discovery by Islamologists and a Bible expert.

As a critical person, I have regularly been tempted to make value judgments about certain matters. However, I have done my best to eliminate those judgments from this book. Any form of value judgment is not for me to make, and it does not align with God's love.

The Bible and the Qur'an are different in many details, but how different are they? As a result of the many translations of the Holy Books through many centuries, adjustments inevitably creep in to alter the pure original text. However, as far as the Qur'an is concerned, the situation may be slightly different. Muslims argue that the original Arabic Qur'an is still intact to the present day. If, however, we are talking about the exegetical translation (tafsir in de Qur'an), that is again something entirely different. Exegesis (the careful and deliberate interpretation of the Holy Books) occurs in every religion and because people may have impure interests in this, one believer with his Holy Book in hand may claim to be the true believer and another with an opposite interpretation claiming the same. It is man that causes pollution of the Holy Books.

To get straight to the point here, as far as the Bible is concerned, I have also checked the early translations (the Greek, the Roman) text of the Bible to come as closely as possible to the original meaning.

The Tanach says (at first) that the name of God is YHWH. In Arabic this sounds like "Ya Huwa," or "O He!" From this source, we learn what the name is of the God of the Bible: YHWH, יהוה. This name is also known as the Tetragrammaton, the Greek word for "four-letter word." The Hebrew letters *Yōd*, *Hē*, *Vav*, and *Hē*, of the word YHWH, are consonants because written Hebrew has no vowels. In English Bible translations, the name YHWH was hoiswritten Yahweh. Later in history, this name in the Bible was changed to YeHoWaH.

God wants us to call Him by His name, which is not "God" or "Lord," because those are titles, no different from "boss," "king," "minister," and "director."

When you call your boss, you don't just say, "Hey, boss." Your boss would not like that, because she or he has a name and has introduced herself or himself to you as such. So, out of courtesy, you call that person by name (which is why everyone introduces themselves at a first meeting). It works the same way with God. Not calling God by His name creates distance between us and Him. Yahweh wishes to build a relationship with us (like Father and child). This Biblical view of God differs from that of the Qur'an whet Allah does not seek relationship with humans.

The Bible says that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13). Moreover, the prayer Jesus taught us in Matthew 6:9 says, "Hallowed be your name."

How can you sanctify God if you don't know His name? This basic contamination of the Bible (read: removing God's Name from His Holy Book) was brought about at some point by the Bible translators, under instructions by their supervisors. It is also written of the names of God that once written, they cannot be removed or erased. The Bible specifically says the following about this in Revelation 22:18–19: "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." God's Name has been removed from God's Word, the Bible. This was forbidden because God's names are holy.

Readers of the Bible will not find the name of God. Where it was once stated, we now find "the Lord." So, many of today's Christians will not know the name of God, at least not from reading the Bible. This is problematic because, behind a name there is always a personality. When you think of the name of a person, you naturally link it to his or her talent and character, and so memories arise. Similarly, when you think of Yahweh, you get a picture of God. You get much less of that if you call Him by His title and then keep on calling Him that.

In the ancient Hebrew texts the name of God: YHWH (YaHWeH or YeHoWah) appeared 6,000 times.

However, the Bible has taught me in several places that God wants us to use His name and call on Him by His name.

With God's name removed from the Bible, His Word, it was quite a search to look up these "various places" mentioned in the Bible. However, I have done so and below are the places where God admonishes us in this regard. Where you read Yahweh, Your Bible will show the word 'Lord'. Please also read the context of the Bible verses below:

Exodus 3: 15, "God also said to Moses, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "Yahweh [the Lord is written now], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my **name** forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations'".

1 Samuel 12: 22 "For the sake of his great **name**."

Psalms 83: 16-18 "16 Cover their faces with dishonor, So that they may Search for your name, O Yahweh. 17 May they be put to shame and be terrified forever; May they be disgraced and perish; 18 May people know that you, whose name is Jahweh, You alone are the Most High over all the earth."

Psalms 100: 4 "Come into his gates with thanksgiving, into his courtyards with praise. Give thanks to him; praise his name."

Psalms 135:13 "O Yahweh, your name endures forever. O Yahweh, your name endures for all generations."

Psalms 148:13 "Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent: his glory is above the earth and heavens."

Isaiah 12: 4 "And in that day you will say: "Give thanks to Jahweh, call on his name, make his deeds known among the peoples! Declare that his name is exalted."

Isaiah 52: 6 "For that reason my people will know my name; For that reason they will know in that day that I am the One speaking. Look, it is I!"

Jeremiah 23: 27 "They intend to make my people forget my name by the dreams they relate to one another, just as their fathers forgot my name because of Ba'al."

Hosea 12: 5 "Jehovah the God of armies, Yahweh is his memorial name."

Micah 4: 5 "For all the peoples will walk, each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of Yahweh our God forever and ever."

John 17: 3-6 "This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ. 4 I have glorified you on the earth, having finished the work you have given me to do. 5 So now, Father, glorify me at your side with the glory that I had alongside you before the world was. 6 "I have made your name manifest to the men whom you gave me out of the world.

Romans 9: 17 "For the scripture says to Phar'aoh: "For this very reason I have let you remain: to show my power in connection with you and to have my name declared in all the earth."

The above verses make it clear that it is God's will that we use and invoke His name. It is good when you also see the next video on YouTube: https://youtu.be/_B_Wy74SIHw?si=C6MbaVc6IWJLfB0Z.

Here, among others, orientalist Dr Rolf Furuli (Professor of Semitic Languages) gives his views on the use of God's name throughout the ages.

Incidentally, in the Tanach God has seven names. These seven names for God are as follows:

1. Y(a)HW(e)H (meaning: I am),
2. Elohim (meaning: the Almighty)
3. Ehyeh (meaning: I will be)
4. Eloah (distracted from Elohim)
5. Elyon (meaning: the Most High and Most Exalted)
6. El Shaddai (meaning: the Awesome)
7. Tzevaot (meaning: Master of legions)

The name *Yah* (the first letter *Yōd* of YHWH) is also sanctified.

You can choose from those names the one you want to use for God. But, out of respect for the Most High, when you invoke Him in your prayers or thoughts, do call Him by His name.

In the Qur'an, Allah presents Himself as the Merciful One, the Most Merciful. However, the beginning of the Qur'an says that Allah has at least ninety-nine beautiful names and attributes and preaches precepts and a morality that are similar to those in the Bible.

I would also like to invite you, the reader, to consult the Bible and the Qur'an for yourself whenever you read something in this book about which you have questions. Naturally, it is inevitable that if you were introduced to Islam or Christianity from an early age, you will have formed certain images and perceptions that are quite persistent but are not necessarily in line with what is written in these Holy Books.

I hope that what I have written will act as an inspiration for those of you who want to understand their own Holy Book better from the perspective of God's universal love, and that it will also inspire you to do your own search and embark on your own adventure of discovery.

The most important lesson I hope to convey is this: Transcend your own religion (mainly the dogmas), and you will certainly come into the sphere of God's holy love. Within that sphere, everyone, regardless of origin, is equal, and this creates dialogue, leading to more recognition, understanding, and acceptance of other believers.

Chapter 1

A Historical Perspective

Is there a relationship between Islam and Christianity?

The origin of Islam

To get a good understanding of the roots of Islam, let us go through some of its history. Christianity and Islam both evolved from the Jewish faith and tradition. Islam is the most recent world religion. Below I will primarily describe the origins of Islam while giving the two older faiths their rightful place.

After the destruction of the first temple of Jerusalem (ca. 587 BC) by the Babylonians, part of some of the Jewish followers of Judah left for Egypt. This was the beginning of the diaspora, the scattering of the Jewish people over the earth. The majority of the Jewish people were taken by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II to Babylon in exile for seventy years, as a punishment from God for neglecting Yahweh and His laws. Many went further east and also mixed with Samaritans and other local peoples and tribes. Judaism (with the Tanakh as the Holy Book) was mixed over time with the Pentateuch of the Samaritans, which was also based on the Torah (the first five books of the Bible, which includes the Law of Moses). Over the following centuries, the Jewish diaspora went from Babylonia and Palestine via Syria to Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, the Arabian Peninsula, and Central Asia and so spread the contents of the Torah throughout the region. Because of Roman rule (from 58 BC to AD 406), many Jews also spread out over Asia (Turkey and Greece) via Rome².

By AD 325, the conflicts among various Christian sects caused the Roman emperor to convene the Council of Nicaea, to create consensus in the church. In AD 380, Christianity was elevated to the state religion. Anyone who thought differently was killed.

² In the summer of 135 AD, the war between Jews and the Romans became very intense, prompting Emperor Hadrian to come from Rome himself to investigate. In the period that followed, 580,000 Jewish casualties were inflicted. The remaining Jews were starved or exiled.

Historians are less unified about the origins of Islam. Several sources indicate that it was around AD 610. At that time, various religious communities, including Judaism, the Christian faith, and a polytheistic faith originating from Iran, were active in Arabia in the Medina region. However, in the century before Islam began, Christians were in the majority in the Arab region around Medina.³

In about AD 610, Muhammad ibn Abdallah (570–632) is said to have received a visitation from the angel Gabriel (Jibreel in Islamic scripture) who taught him the Qur'an.

Muhammad ibn Abdallah was a merchant from Mecca who had received little higher education. Nowadays, we would call him illiterate. Regarding the meeting between the angel Gabriel and Muhammad ibn Abdallah (I here quote Karen Armstrong), the Qur'an writes the following at the beginning of surah 96, Al-'Alaq (translated: the sticky blood clot): "The first five verses, form the first part of the Qur'an that was revealed to Muhammad, peace be upon him, while he had secluded himself in the cave Hira on Mount Noer (translated: Light). The archangel Gabriel came and ordered the Messenger (read: Muhammad) to read. When the Messenger, peace be upon him, (who apparently thought he was expected to literally read a written text) said he could not read, the archangel pressed him against him until he lost almost all his powers and repeated his command: 'Read!' This was repeated three times. After the third time, the Muhammad asked, peace be upon him, 'What should I read?' Then the angel recited the first five verses of this surah and talks about the importance of knowledge, reading and writing, and warns people that they are wandering off by imagining themselves as independent. It also warns against the denial of God's message." End of quote.

Thus Muhammad received his first message from an angel of God, and in the following years, many divine messages followed. According to tradition, all these messages ended up in the Holy Book, the Qur'an. The divine mission of Muhammad was to "show humanity the way to Islam." The message of Islam is the submission of humanity to the will of the only God, Allah. It is also important to know that the word Islam is derived from the word Salaam, which means peace.

In AD 622, Muhammad and his followers fled from Mecca to Medina because his proclamation in Mecca⁴ met with resistance and threats from the polytheists

³ *Medina* is the name given to the place after the birth of Islam; before that, it was called Yasrib.

⁴ After receiving delegations from Medina and official promises to protect them there, by two Arab tribes, Muhammad proclaimed in 622 to his companions to migrate to Medina. In the same year he also moved there.

(the ‘unbelievers’ in his eyes) also present there. This flight, also called the *hijra*, is important for later Muslims.

Medina was initially a safe place for Muhammad to preach. When the situation there also became more unstable, he transformed into a warlord and statesman. In this way, the first Islamic state gradually emerged. To reinforce his divine message, Muhammed called upon his followers to fight against those who were, in their eyes, unbelievers (read: polytheistic believers). Many Jews as well as Eastern Christians, as also monotheistic believers, in that region signed a treaty with Muhammad, and so they let this fight happen.

The historical storyline of creation presented in the Torah and the Old Testament of the Bible is basically the same as that in the Qur’an. Based on this fact, one could argue that they all worship one and the same God, even though they call Him by a different name or title. In that sense, as Jews, Christians, and Muslims, we are all children of one Father. Therefore, the word *unbeliever*, when used by any one of these groups to describe any other is simply not accurate.

In AD 628, Muhammad and his followers returned to Mecca, which was then in the hands of, in their eyes, unbelievers (read: polytheists). He discussed the strategy for their return with his companion and advisor, Abu Bakr. Their initial idea was to arm their now large group of supporters. However, eventually Muhammed decided, in consultation with Abu Bakr, to make their return a pilgrimage and, following Allah’s guidance, to fight if they were attacked. The pilgrimage to Mecca resulted in the Treaty of Hoedaibijja⁵, and Mecca became the religious center of Islam, as it is to this day.

A few years later, in 632 on June 8th, Muhammad died after a sickness of a few months. Many people thought this would mean the end of Islam, but they were disappointed. A committee was appointed⁶ to designate the next Muslim leader from among his followers, at which time he was given the title “The Prophet”, which he retains to this day.

The Prophet’s successor would be a ruler, a *khalifa* or caliph. The question of the true successors of Muhammad, however, became a cause of division among the ranks of Islam. The Sunni Muslims accepted the principle of election for this office, and, therefore, believe that the first three caliphs, Abu Bakr (Muhammad’s

⁵ The Peace treaty of Hudaibiya is a treaty signed in the spring of March 628 by Muslims from Medina and the polytheists from Mecca. It takes its name from the nearby village named: Hoedaibijja.

⁶ By a slim majority, the ummah (representatives of the Muslim community) chose Abu Bakr as caliph. The discussion over the legitimacy of this decision is still relevant: it marks an important difference between Sunni Muslims and Shiite Muslims. Shiites have always believed that Ali, as immediate family of Muhammad, was the rightful successor.

father-in-law, his companion and advisor), Omar (the Prophet's counsel), and Uthman (the Prophet's son-in-law), were Muhammad's rightful successors. The caliphs are primarily the Prophet's political followers.

That claim, however, is disputed by the Shiite Muslims, who say that true leadership comes through the bloodline of the Prophet and through his cousin and son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib, the first imam (spiritual leader and successor to be), who married Muhammad's favorite daughter, Fatima. The Shiites also claim that from the beginning, Allah and His Prophet had clearly designated Ali as the only rightful successor, and that the first three caliphs robbed him of his legitimate office (for further reference, see Hitti's *History of the Arabs*).

After the rule of the first four caliphs had ended, the following caliphs continued to enforce the Prophet's ideas. The Shiites kept a low profile and let the four successive caliphs struggle for about a hundred years, after which time there emerged an Islamic world empire that stretched from India (bordered by the Indus River) to the south side of the Spanish Pyrenees. The Sunni Muslims and the Shiite Muslims more or less reconciled although their different opinions still exist until today.

The question has since arisen regarding what values the Prophet cherished, and what was left of them by the politically-driven caliphs. The more⁷ one delves into the history of the Prophet, the more questions arise regarding what he actually believed and proclaimed. His first divine message was completely pure. It convinced the Prophet to follow the path of God and to be guided by Him. The fact that some of today's Muslims call the Torah, the Jewish Holy Book, the "First Book," the Bible, the Christian Holy Book, the "Second Book," and the Muslim Holy Book, the Qur'an, the "Last Book," indicates that it was initially God's love that motivated the Prophet's actions. To understand his deeds and, therefore, also his values, which still apply today, one must read, preferably the Muslim Holy Book, the Hadith.

"Power corrupts," as the saying goes. As proof of this, over the centuries, the actions of a number of the caliphs who were eager for power have contaminated the Prophet's pure intentions, costing the lives of many people. Everywhere in the history of religion you find examples of power-hungry religious leaders who, with the Holy Book in hand, thought they could get away with anything. However, if

⁷ Author Karen Armstrong went further into the life and thinking of the Prophet. Her book *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* is, in my opinion, a must-read for every Muslim who wants to get to know the Prophet better. Karen Armstrong has become an authority, in a way, because she has written many more books on various religious themes.

God's sacred love is the basis of a religion, any form of violence against others is not of God. Violence can *never* be reconciled with God's love for us humans. The Qur'an states (as do the Bible and the Tanakh) that, in some cases, violence can and should be used. But believers should not think that the Holy Books, therefore, legitimize war.

Where in the world humans start a war, it can never be said that it is God's will. Yahweh created men with their own free will and Satan always tries to influence them to do the opposite of God's will. Exactly this causes all the unhappiness in the world.

In Europe, it was the Roman Catholics who, under the banner of God's will, destroyed the unbelievers (the heretics) a few centuries ago. And, as a Christian, I know that the Old Testament also contains many stories of atrocities that are definitely not, and can therefore never be, God's will.

The Roman Catholics denounced people who did not follow their teachings, even if those teachings were incorrect. In very many cases, the people who were killed as heretics were sincere people, pure in heart.

People often turn to the dogmas⁸ of a religion to create a way to better handle their religion⁹. However, dogmas can also easily cause people to turn to engage in fanatic behavior and cite specific chapters of their Holy Books to justify that behavior. This human behaviour has nothing to do with the love God represents and which is His nature.

In addition to the Qur'an, there are texts called "al-Sira," biographies of the Prophet that also provide a picture of the origin and course of the history of Islam. One of these biographers was Muhammad ibn Ishaq (AD 704-767). He was primarily a collector of the stories of storytellers at the time. These storytellers were itinerant preachers who often embellished their narratives so that their listeners enjoyed the story. It was not their intention to change the story, but it was common for many to give their own interpretations of what they told. The official clergymen of that time preferred to keep to the Qur'an. The general public, however, loved the stories of those itinerant Islam preachers who added or removed parts of the story to please their audience. Ibn Ishaq saw it as his role to strip these stories of fantasy. He did this by comparing all the stories sorted by

⁸ *Religion* here means traditions and customs.

⁹ Dogmas are ingrained stories based on lore.