Markus Piennisch

THE „BIBLICAL-SEMITIC ASPECT" IN THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE WORD-DEED OF GOD (DABAR)

Dear Friends,

As in previous years, I would like to take the opportunity today to complete our professional conference with the following theme:

„The ‚Biblical-Semitic Aspect' in the Basic Structure of the WORD-DEED of God (dabar)"[1]

I would like to develop this theme around the following three issues:
1. Introduction: What is „semitic"?
2. The WORD-DEED of God: Creation, Israel and Messianic Promise
3. Conceptual asymmetry in the hermeneutical frame of understanding

1. INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS „SEMITIC"?

During our first two conferences it became obvious again and again in the lectures, how crucially important our understanding of the Biblical-semitic aspect is for the interpretation of Holy Scripture and its proclamation today. This is because God has given his word in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, therefore in a semitic language. Languages, however, are not simply instruments which can be exchanged. Instead, they represent unmistakable and non-exchangeable cultures.

Most currently this fact has been elaborated by Prof. Esperanza Alfonso[2] in his recently published research work „Islamic Culture Through Jewish Eyes: Al-Andalus from the tenth to twelfth century".[3] A language is nothing less than the self-definition and delimitation from other communities. Alfonso aptly remarks:
„The idea of language and its use are today perceived as inseparable from the way in which individuals and communities understand themselves and relate to each other ...".[4]

This is not only true for the Islamic and Jewish cultural sphere, where the people think and experience life in a semitic way, but also for Western and postmodern Christianity which has alienated itself from the semitic understanding of the Bible. About 1.000 years ago a fatal decision about Bible interpretation had already taken place in the age of Scholasticism.[5] This erroneous development in hermeneutics has not yet been overcome in European-American Theology.

Neither the historical-critical approach on the one hand, nor the evangelical-positivist approach on the other – in their respective variations[6] - have proven suitable to incorporate the Biblical-semitic way of thinking.[7] However, this is indispensable in or-

der that the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ can be understood by the Christian church as well as by people of other religions.

Therefore, Ulrich Kühn[8] in his current Christology draws a precise picture of the "historical Jesus":
„First of all … there is the growing insight into Jesus´ integration into the Judaism of his day and the Old Testament/Jewish tradition. It is the Jew Jesus in whom the Christian faith sees the salvation of the world (see John 4:22). This historical localization is foundational for the Christian faith. … whereas his roots in the semitic realm remain formative and unsurpassable, imposing and presenting a challenge to other cultures, even though Christianity has immigrated into other cultures as well. In terms of content, it is particularly the faith in Yahweh, creator and savior of the world, and the obligation toward the Torah as the good commandment given by God toward life, which are formative for Jesus from his origin in Judaism."[9]

Here it is rightly understood and acknowledged that the „Biblical-semitic aspect" is unique and indispensable for the understanding of the person of Jesus from the Old and New Testaments.

Therefore the reflection upon the sources of Holy Scripture in the shape of the Hebrew original text has indispensable significance for a Bible interpretation which does justice to the semitic nature of God´s self-revelation. Thus, the well-known Bible scholar and exegete Dr. Gregory Beale, Professor for Biblical Studies and New Testament at Wheaton College,[10] explains the following regarding the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament:
"… the more Hebrew exegesis you do in the Old Testament, the clearer the use is in the New Testament. The problem is, some New Testament scholars don't have much background in the Hebrew Old Testament. That's immediately a problem. There's such specialization in all fields today."[11]

Beale rightly emphasizes the contemporary deficit in exegetical work in the Old Testament, which is indispensable for an adequate understanding of the semitic links in the New Testament. This deficit can not only be observed in the USA, but also in theological research and education in German-speaking Europe, especially in the evangelical area.

But what exactly is the meaning of "semitic" in our context? Concerning this, Dr. Hermann Spieckermann, Professor of Old Testament at the University of Göttingen,[12] offers this precise definition:
„Semites. The term "semitic" was initially used in 1781 by A.L. Schlözer (1735-1809) for the supposed original language of the Syrians, Babylonians, Hebrews and Arabs, and later on advanced by J.G. Eichhorn (1752-1827) for the languages which are related to Hebrew … . The term Semitic refers to Noah´s son Shem; he and his brothers Ham and Japheth are considered, according to the table of nations in Genesis 10, to be the ancestors of all nations on earth after the Flood (V. 32). … The dominant concern is to derive Abraham, the patriarch of Israel, in a direct genealogical[13] line from Sem (Gen 11,10-32), and to secure predominance for him as early as possible (Gen 9,26f) … ."[14]

Therefore, we start from the assumption that the thought structure of the language of Biblical Hebrew has been personified in Shem and Abraham as the chosen bearers of divine revelation. From this it follows that Biblical-semitic thinking exercised a formative and structuring force upon the understanding of reality by the people of God.

2. THE WORD-DEED OF GOD: CREATION, ISRAEL AND MESSIANIC PROMISE

If we want to understand Bible interpretation and missions at its core as the process of revelation and communication of God toward man, the Hebrew word root dabar is foundational.[15] The noun dabar occurs 1442 times[16] and is the tenth most frequent noun in the Hebrew Old Testament.[17] Thus, dabar exercises a considerable and formative influence upon the world of thought and experience of the Old Testament. However, despite its lexical and theological importance, the origins of the word's root remain obscure. Already in 1971, G. Gerleman had observed: „A convincing etymology for dabar has not been found until today."[18]

The use of the word root dalet-bet-resh (DBR) differs as a verb from the substantive in the following way: the verb denotes in its most important applications the following activities: to speak, talk, say, discuss, command, threaten, assure, commission, announce, advertise, agree upon, present, compose, pray, think in one´s heart, persuade, promise.[19] Here the field of meaning is homogenous in the sense that all uses of the verb ultimately relate to the oral communication of the spoken word.

In contrast, the use of the noun dabar shows two different emphases which, however, complement each other and express in this way a holistic semantic[20] concept of dabar. On the one hand, dabar denotes the "word", either the word from God or from humans. On the other hand, dabar stands for „issue, matter", which again can refer to God or to humans.[21] Whereas in Western culture and theology both aspects occur as polar opposites, they form an undissoluble unity in the semitic culture and thought. Let us look at it in detail:

2.1 DABAR in the Context of Creation

The noun dabar occurs in the Old Testament in terms of content and timing in the context of the creational work of Yahweh, the God of Israel and Creator of the world. This creational work of God is described again and again in the Psalms as dabar, as the unity of word and deed – and therefore it is called "word-event-formula (d'bar Yahweh)".[22] For example, Psalm 33: 6 reads:
„Through the word (dabar) of Yahweh the heavens were created,
and by the breath (beruach) of his mouth all the stars."

Here we see in the synonymous parallelism[23] of the two verse sections, that God´s creative work happens through the creative word, and that this word is brought forward by God´s own ruach, his breath. In this, the basic function of the Spirit of God becomes visible, who is described in the OT as ruach as well. The use of the anthropomorphism[24] „mouth of Yahweh" underlines clearly that even the act of the outgo-

ing word itself already completes the deed. Da<u>b</u>ar in this instance means: Word is already completed action.

On this, Erich Zenger aptly remarks: „Insofar as the word is the thought of the Creator God which has become speech …, it is emphasized that the Creator has established through his creation a foundational order and that the process of creation in its entirety is a word through which the Creator communicates himself … ."[25]

This dynamic is again described a few verses later (Psalm 33:9): „Because he spoke (amar), and it happened (wayyehi); he commanded, and it stood firm (wayyaamod)."

Again, one and the same thought is expressed through the parallelism of the parts of the verse by the words which correspond to each other. Also here the immediate connection of word and deed is attested to in the creative work of God. Concerning this, Zenger again explains: „Insofar as the creational word is a commanding word …, which is being carried out almost inevitably like a royal edict in the ancient orient …, the events that were initiated in creation are inexorably accomplished."[26]

In Psalm 33:9, the verb „and it happened" (wayyehi) occurs, which has already been used in the creation text in Genesis 1:3: „And God said: Let there be light – and there was (wayyehi) light."

We see how already in the third verse of the Bible the basic structure of the WORD-DEED of God becomes visible. It is of foundational significance for the whole creation and salvation history, both for the acting of God and for the acting of humans.[27]

But not only in the context of the original creation, but also in the continuous sustainment of creation, the WORD-DEED of God becomes visible. Thus, Psalm 147:15-18 describes the work of Yahweh in the processes of creation: (see table below).

Here, the interaction between word and deed becomes very clear. God´s word, his speaking (amar), becomes a deed which expresses his power over the elements of creation. Water freezes and melts according to his speaking, because he is the sovereign LORD who devises creation.

But this speaking of God in the union of word and deed does not happen in a one-sided way. Rather, creation also answers to the work of the Creator.

WORD	DEED
"Who sends his word (imrato) toward earth; speedily his word (de<u>b</u>aro) runs.	Who gives snow like flakes of wool and who spreads frost like ashes.
	Who throwas down his ice like chunks, before whose frost the waters freeze.
He sends his word (de<u>b</u>aro)	- and they melt.
	He causes the wind to blow - then the water trickle".

This is described in Psalm 19:2-4:
„The heavens tell the glory of God (el) and the firmament proclaims the work of his hands.
One day tells the other, and one night proclaims to the other.
Without language, without words (debarim), inaudible is their voice."

Here, the communicative power of creation is expressed in a seemingly paradoxical way. Creation speaks by reflecting the glory of God. God, El, the creator, demonstrates in this the weight of his presence, his glory (kabod). We see that the word-deed of God can be operative even without the spoken word, as in the case of the creational work of God. Especially in this, the DEED-quality of dabar is underlined in an impressive way.[28]

2.2 DABAR in the context of Israel
The quality of the WORD-DEED becomes not only visible in creation but also in the relationship of God with his people. In the context of a prediction of judgment upon the powerful leaders of the people because of their injustice against their inferiors, Micah 2:7 says:
„Has the LORD become impatient? Is this his doing? Are his words (debaray) not benevolent toward Israel?"
Here, God´s judgment in his words and in his deeds are described in a parallel way as having equal content. God announces his judgment through his prophet Micah through his words, and he carries out this judgment with his deeds, even though the people do not want to realize this.[29]

But not only in the context of judgment the structure of the WORD-DEED of God becomes visible. Also in the context of the provision for God´s people Israel through Yahweh, the in-separable union of WORD and DEED of God is of foundational importance. Thus we read in the prologue to the repetition of the Torah in Deuteronomy 8:3 about the experience of the desert wanderings of Israel:
„He humbled you and made you go hungry and fed you with Manna, which you did not know and your fathers did not know, in order to show you that man does not live on bread (lechem) alone, but: From every utterance (moza`) from the mouth of Yahweh does man live."

At this point the dynamic of the WORD-DEED of God becomes very clearly visible. The physical manna which rained from heaven, was a supernatural utterance (from the word root yatsa´ - to come out, to bring forth, to go out)[30] of Yahweh to Israel. This utterance of God is a physical WORD-DEED, underlined again by the anthropomorphism "mouth of Yahweh". Through this, God illustrates that the earthly bread alone and taken by itself does not yet provide access to life. Life (chay) in the Biblical-semitic understanding therefore is both the receiving of the divine word and the receiving of the earthly bread. Here, the unity and wholeness of the life relationship of Yahweh with his covenant people Israel becomes obvious. This includes in a definite way the necessity of the supernatural dimension in the life of Israel and in its mission: to be already in the Old Testament a light for the nations.[31]

The effectiveness of the divine word in the earthly reality is not only true for the people as a whole, but also for the individual person, like, for example, the prophets of the Old Testament. Thus, Jeremiah prays to Yahweh (Jeremiah 15:15-16):

„You know, LORD, remember me and take care of me and take revenge on my persecutors. ... Your words were my food as often as I received them, and your words have become a jubilation and joy for my heart; because I am called by your name, LORD God Sabbaoth."

In this prayer of the prophet the words of God occur in the context of his acts of judgment toward the enemies of Jeremiah. The prophet believes the words of a God who can act on behalf of him, who has done this repeatedly in the past, and who therefore is able to do this again in the future. God´s words are a source of nourishment and joy for Jeremiah, because he knows that he belongs to Yahweh, the God of Israel.

To be called according to God´s name means for the prophet that he is the inalienable property of Yahweh. Because in semitic thinking, the name signifies the ownership and the essential belonging. Thus, Adam van der Woude[32] explains that the name in Old Testament perspective is the „exponent of the personality"[33], which, on the one hand, contains the meaning of the name according to its sense, on the other hand, the meaning of the name according to its force and effect.[34] Van der Woude aptly remarks:

„Because the divine name as such is unknown to humans ..., the unknown God himself must step out of his unknown status, in order to reveal his name to man through a theophany, so that he can be named and called by this name ...".[35] ... „Knowledge of the name enables for fellowship: If you know the name of a human or of a god, then you can summon him ... . In this sense, knowing the name means virtually to have power over the known person. If the person owns great power in itself, then also his name possesses the according effect ...".[36]

Thus it becomes visible how, on the one hand, the aspect of the righteousness of the actions of God, and on the other hand, the aspect of the undissolvable fellowship with God determines the quality of the words of God. God´s words nourish man because he is a God who implements his working in actual deed.[37]

2.3 DABAR in the context of Messianic promise
This word-deed-structure, as it becomes visible on an individual level in Jeremiah, can also be observed on a communal level in the people of Israel. The first Servant Song[38] in Isaiah 42: 1-9 announces the Messianic savior and judge who will bring restoration and justice in Israel and among the nations. Within this perspective on the future, Yahweh confirms through his prophet the call to repentance for all mankind (Isaiah 45:22-24):
„Turn to me, and you will be saved, all the ends of the earth; because I am God, and there is no other.
I have sworn by myself, and from my mouth justice has gone forth, a word which will not be revoked,
that in front of me every knee shall bow and all tongues vow and say: Only in the LORD I have righteousness and strength."

Here it becomes visible how the word of God contains the deed of judgment which he will carry out. All humans will acknowledge his lordship, his righteousness and his power. God invites Israel and the nations to return to him in order to experience salvation. Because he is God, the only God,

who joins together word and deed for the salvation and righteousness for man.[39]

This coherence becomes very clear shortly afterwards in the Book of Isaiah after the fourth Servant-of-God-Song (Is 52:13-53:12). Yahweh calls his unfaithful people Israel to repentance and he promises to establish an everlasting covenant with them (Is 55:3). Because of this promise, God offers to his people an active repentance and a gracious forgiveness (Is 55:7). This word of God on repentance and forgiveness originates from his sovereign wisdom and grace, as can be seen in the following comparison from nature (Is 55:10-11):
„Because as the rain and the snow fall from the sky and do not return there again but water the earth in order to give it fruitfulness and growth so that it produces seed to sow and bread to eat,
likewise my word (d'$\underline{b}$ari) which proceeds from my mouth, will not return to me empty, but it will do (`asah)[40] what I please and it will succeed in what I will send it to."

Here again, the undissoluble correlation between the word as the speaking of God, and the deed as the working of God, is clearly demonstrated. The deed-quality of the word of God becomes particularly visible in the fact that it does not return empty, ineffective and in vain, but that it possesses a factual-physical shaping power which Yahweh will exercise sovereignly in order to accomplish his purposes.

The Messianic promise reaches its completion in the Old Testament through the announcement of the New Covenant[41] (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Jeremiah 31:31-34). Through the New Covenant, Yahweh restores his honor by which he has bound himself with Israel, even over against the nations which live without him. Professor Moshe Greenberg[42] aptly remarks on this:
„The indissoluble connection between God´s glory and Israel´s destiny is the guarantee for Israel´s restoration; and in order that God´s name would never again be dishonored, Israel´s restoration must be sustained eternally. This is only possible if Israel is no longer capable to act against the divine will."[43]

Yahweh himself will restore his covenant people Israel, not only spiritually[44] but also physically and bring them back from death to life (Ezekiel 36:28-37:14). This is illustrated in the vision of the dead on the field who become alive again. Yahweh speaks to the dried bones directly with his words (Ezekiel 37:4ff):
„… hear the word of the LORD (de$\underline{b}$ar YHWH)!" Then Yahweh unfolds his life giving power by carrying out the WORD-DEED which he had announced. In three steps he introduces his creative word with the following words (Ezekiel 37:5,9,12):
„Thus says God the LORD (koh ´amar ´adonai YHWH)!" – this is the well-known Messenger-Formula,[45] by which the Old Testament prophets have emphasized that God himself by his own authority has shaped reality. This creative speaking of God is affirmed again at the end of the vision (Ezekiel 37:14):
„… and you shall know that I am the LORD: I speak and I also do it, speaks the LORD". Here it becomes visible how the unity of word and deed in the

da<u>b</u>ar of God is emphasized again, because it is God´s own concern which he will undoubtedly accomplish.

2.4 Results

We have examined texts within various contexts in the Old Testament in order to understand the use of da<u>b</u>ar in the context of semitic thinking. In this process, the quality of content of da<u>b</u>ar became more and more focussed and specific. This took place intentionally from the aspect of Christology[46]: God speaks and acts through his WORD-DEED in creation, he continues it through his Old Testament work with Israel and he focuses his self-revelation in his WORD-DEED in Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnated Christ. Here we observe a "Christological Focusing" of the self-communication of God in Jesus Christ.

In Jesus of Nazareth, God has revelaed his own nature as a human in space and time in the highest possible way. This self-revelation of God took place in the perfect union of WORD and DEED, as Jesus Christ has implemented it in his life, and completed it through his self-sacrifice on the cross. Thus, his living and his dying becomes the ultimate criterion of the love of God and his approach toward man whom he wants to lead out of the estrangement into the communion of the kingdom rule of God.

This is clearly emphasized in John 1: 3 where Christ, the living WORD, calls creation through the DEED into existence: „… eveything has been created by HIM, and without him nothing is made which has been made." The eternal WORD, which is life, creates

WORD and DEED in the Western-rationalistic frame of understanding
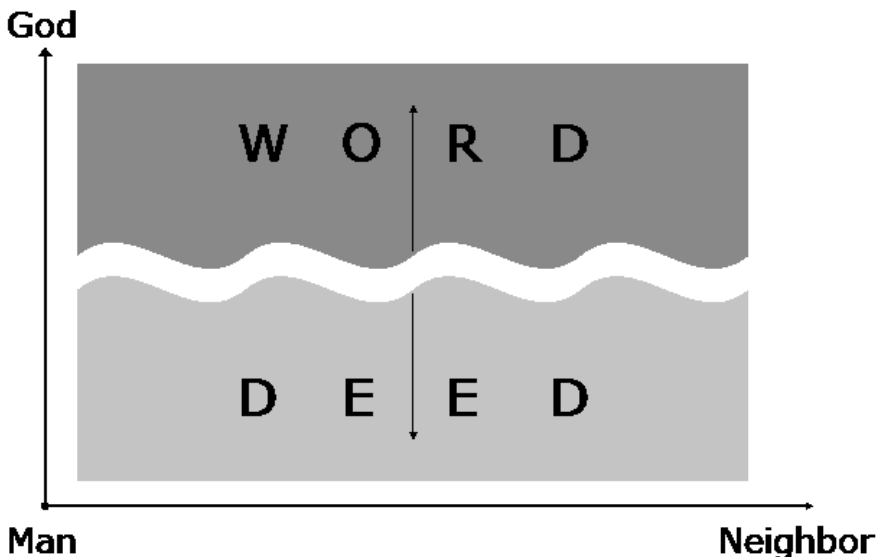
the DEED which generates life in space and time. Therefore, the DEED is the presence of the physical, geographical and historical dimension in space, time and locality.

In the Western-rational pattern of understanding, word and deed are structurally separate, therefore the relationship between God, man and his neighbor is in principle divided: (Picture 1).

In contrast to this, word and deed in the Biblical-semitic pattern of understanding form an undissolvable unity which becomes a holistic movement of approach from God to man and from man to his neighbor. Here, WORD and DEED do not function contrary but rather complementary to each other: (Picture 2).

This holistic character of dabar has been aptly summarized by Otto Procksch:

„Every dabar is filled with power which can manifest itself in a variety of energies. This power is being felt by the one who perceives the word and absorbs it into himself; but it is also valid independently from this absorption in its objective effects which the word generates in history. … Only in the Hebrew dabar is the concept of FACT, including its energy, so vividly present in the concept of WORD, that the word appears as a factual power which is and remains forceful, which runs and has power to give life."[47]

WORD and DEED in the Biblical-semitic frame of understanding
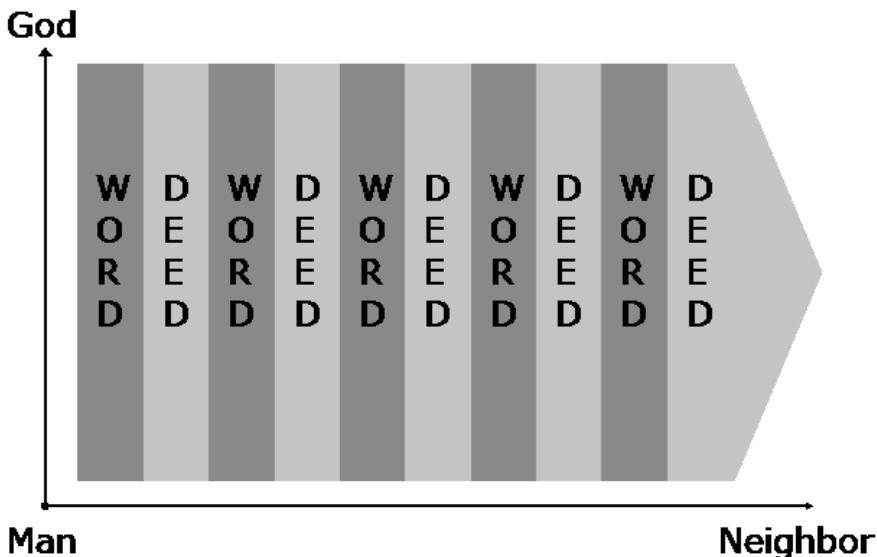
3. CONCEPTUAL ASYMMETRY IN THE HERMENEUTICAL FRAME OF UNDERSTANDING

Already during the previous conference we saw that it is necessary to develop an understanding of the complex problems of hermeneutics.[48] In missions, as in theology, we have to face up to the fact that different worldviews contain different thought structures.[49] This became obvious in the course of our investigation into the term da<u>b</u>ar as word-deed in semitic thinking in contrast to Western thinking.

These different thought structures, e.g. between the Biblical revelation and Islam, will lead even in the missionary dialogue inevitably to a dead end. This can only be overcome if we become aware of the "otherness" of the presuppositions of such thought processes.

I would like to use a well known example in order to clarify that there is a "conceptual[50] asymmetry" between the Bible and Islam, when we specify how man, sin and God relate to each other. (Picture 3)

In this picture we see the Biblical understanding of salvation in Jesus Christ. On the one side there is man, separated from God on the other side. Between man and God there is a ditch, representing the sin of man. The way of man to God is Jesus Christ, whose cross forms the bridge across the ditch. Even the "good works" of man are inadequate and fall short of bringing man to God.

This way to God and into fellowship

Conceptual Asymmetry: Bible

incarnated from transcendence

Man

Jesus Christ

Good Works

GOD
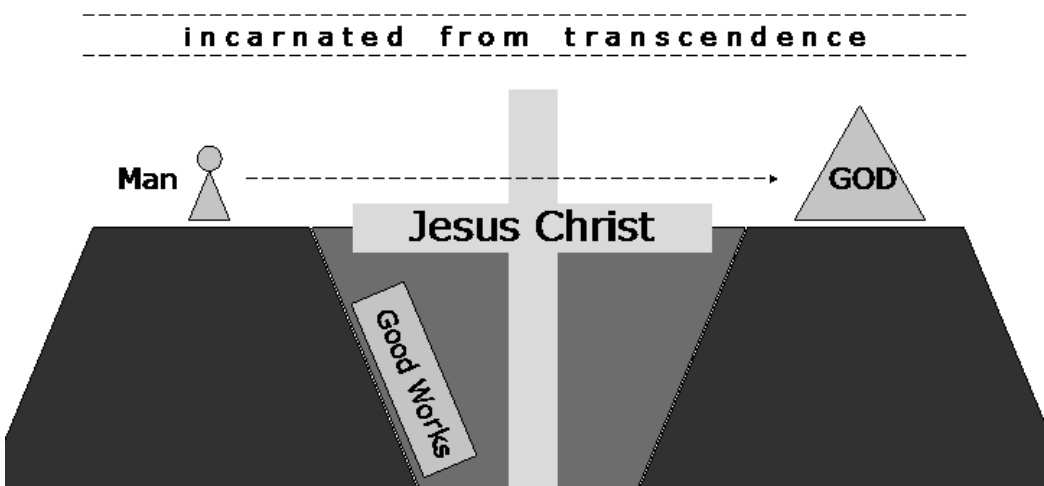
with him is, however, only possible and conceivable, in the first place, because God himself has come out of the invisible, the transcendent world, down to the level of man. God became man in Jesus Christ, he has incarnated himself out of transcendence into space and time.[51]

In contrast to this, the Islamic understanding of salvation is based upon an entirely different assessment of the relationship between man and God. Here, man is also separated from God through the ditch of sin, and he hopes to cross this ditch by his good works. The decisive difference from the Christian understanding of the secure salvation in Jesus Christ is found in the double asymmetry of the Islamic conception (Picture 4):
a) in Islam, the way leads „only" into paradise – and not to God and into the fellowship with him (here, Jesus speaks of the "Father´s house"), and b) this way of salvation – by man´s own works – is so insecure and untraversable, like the cutting blade of a sword.

Accordingly, the Muslim, on the one hand, has no access and entitlement to the communion with Allah, because Allah is inaccessibly transcendent. On the other hand, his assurance of salvation is so insecure as if it were not even existent.

The Biblical promise of communion with God himself, not only of a physical paradise, is plainly unthinkable for people in Islam. Not only this, but even the thought in itself is already a blasphemy, because Allah can never lower

Conceptual Asymmetry: Islam

ALLAH

inaccessibly transcendent

Man   Good Works   Paradise
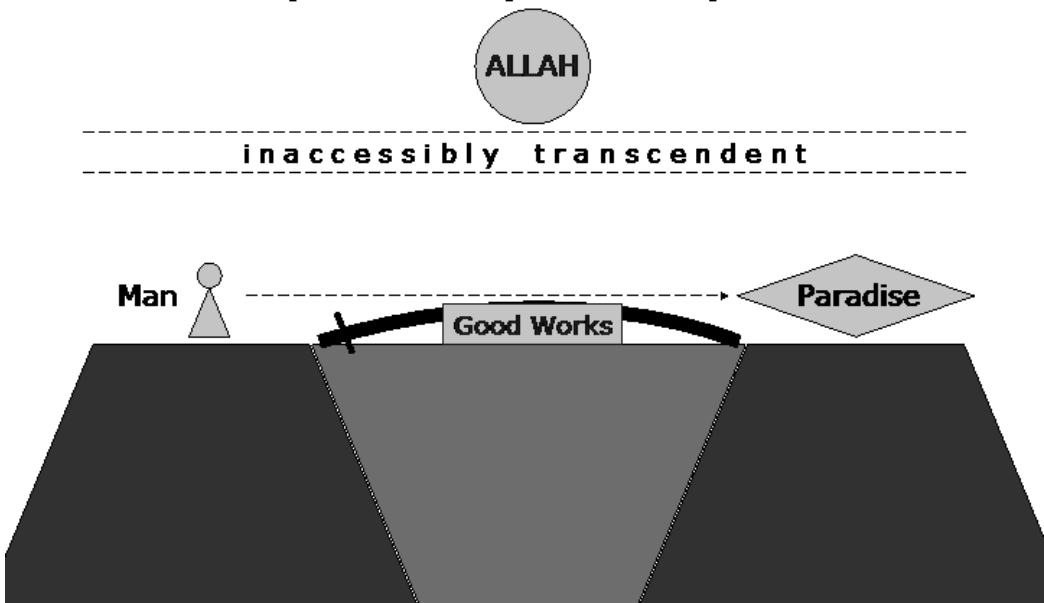
himself toward the level of humans and through this act humiliate himself. However, especially this self-humiliation of God is the foundation for the unique quality of the relationship between God and man according to the Biblical salvation history and self-communication of God. Only here there is the encounter of man and God on one and the same level, the level of the incarnation and <u>gracious</u> approach of God. This again endows us with the assurance of salvation through the atoning death of Jesus.

From this conceptual asymmetry follows the theological and missionary task to find a way of access to the Islamic frame of understanding, where the notion is at all acceptable and comprehensible from that perspective. Here, still huge tasks of the structural fitting are ahead of us which we would like to work on by developing a profile of the foundational "Biblical-semitic aspects".

We would like to say „Thank you" to all of you for your interest and presence at this professional conference and we look forward to seeing many of you again next year! Our theme in 2009 will be: "Missions in Church History", and again we will have international experts who will lecture on this subject.

Thank you!

MARKUS PIENNISCH (Dr. theol.), Stuttgart, is co-founder and Principal of EUSEBIA School of Theology (EST) as well as editor of STT. International teaching ministry in the area of Systematic Theology, Hermeneutics and New Testament.

ENDNOTES

[1] The term is pronounced „davar", since the second consonant „bet" is articulated as a fricative. The usual transliteration is an underlined „b". - See Allen P. Ross. Introducing Biblical Hebrew (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), pp. 22,25.

[2] Dr. Esperanza Alfonso, Assistant Professor for Hebrew and Semitic Studies at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, USA, ist currently Research Fellow in Hebrew and Aramaic Studies at the University Complutense in Madrid, Spain.

[3] Alfonso, Esperanza. Islamic Culture Through Jewish Eyes: Al-Andalus from the tenth to twelfth century. Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures (London/New York: Routledge, 2008), 201 pages.

[4] Alfonso, Islamic Culture, p. 9.

[5] The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines Scholasticism as: "... the philosophical systems and speculative tendencies of various mediaeval Christian thinkers, who, working against a background of fixed religious dogma, sought to solve anew general philosophical problems (as of faith and reason, will and intellect, Realism and nominalism, and the probability of the existence of God), initially under the influence of the mystical and intuitional tradition of patristic philosophy, and especially Augustinianism, and later under that of Aristotle." - www.britannica.com

[6] As an orientation regarding the spectrum of current hermeneutical approaches, cf. Barton, John (ed.). The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Goldingay, John. Models for Scripture (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); Maier, Gerhard. Biblische Hermeneutik (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1990); Oeming, Manfred. Biblische Hermeneutik. Eine Einführung (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998).

[7] The awareness that the „Biblical-semitic aspect" provides a decisive hermeneutical key to the future of theology in the global missionary context, is present even in the professional literature only in a minimal way. For example, if one searches in the University library of Tübingen – one of the authoritative libraries on a national and international scale – under the respective key terms for literature, one receives works which research the "Semitic" primarily on the level of cultural anthropology, linguistics and semantics. A good survey of the current approaches is provided by the essay collections of Bellamy, James A. (ed.). Studies in Near Eastern Culture and History (University of Michigan: Center for Near Eastern and North African Studies, 1990), 225 pages, and the current essay collection by Khan, Geoffrey (ed.). Semitic Studies in Honour of Edward Ullendorff (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 367 pages.

[8] Dr. Ulrich Kühn is Professor Emeritus for Systematic Theology at the University of Leipzig.

[9] Kühn, Ulrich. Christologie. UTB. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003, pp. 284-285.

[10] Gregory K. Beale is Chair of Biblical Studies and Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College. He did his doctorate 1981 in Cambridge in the area of Greek and Hebrew exegesis. Author of major works, like, for example, John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 166. Sheffield: JSOT Press; 1999). 400 pages. The Book of Revelation. New International Greek Testament Commentary Series; ed. by

I. H. Marshall and D. Hagner; Grand Rapids, USA/Cambridge, England: Eerdmans and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998. 1245 pages. Editor of Right Doctrine From Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994. 440 pages. The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John. University Press of America, 1984. 349 pages; further publications under: www.wheaton.edu/Theology/Faculty/beale/publications.html

[11] Hansen, Collin. "Two Testaments, One Story", Interview with Gregory Beale und D.A. Carson, Christianity Today Library, 28.3.2008, p. 2. www.ctlibrary.com/53549

[12] www.uni-goettingen.de/de/56469.html

[13] Related to the ancestral lineage.

[14] Spieckermann, Hermann. „Semiten". Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon. Internationale theologische Enzyklopädie, ed. Erwin Fahlbusch et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), IV: 208-209. The semitic language group, which is distinct from the hamitic and indo-european (p. 209), can be separated into eastern-semitic (Accadian, Assyrian, Babylonian), south-semitic (Arabic, Ethiopian) and northwest-semitic languages (Ugaritic, Aramaic, Phoenician, Hebrew). The semitic languages share basic commonalities in phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary, therefore they are homogenous regarding their thought structures. – See Allen P. Ross. Introducing Biblical Hebrew (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), pp. 11-15. This is the reason for the special access of the Biblical-Hebrew thinking toward the Arab language and world view, which facilitates a "hermeneutical correspondence", an equivalence in the frame of understanding. – cf. Piennisch, Markus. „Die hermeneutische Bedeutung des narrativen und monotheistischen Ansatzes für die Mission", Stuttgarter Theologische Themen, Band 1 (2006): 87-88; Streck, Michael P., „Semiten". Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 4. Aufl. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), VII:1199; Müller, Hans Peter, „Semitische Sprachen". RGG4, VII: 1199-1202.

[15] The revelation of God as entering into salvation history has been elaborated by Carl Heinz Ratschow through the structure of the changes (in German "Wandlungen") of God. Cf. Ratschow, Carl Heinz. Von den Wandlungen Gottes. Beiträge zur Systematischen Theologie (Berlin: deGruyter, 1986), pp. 117-139. – The term communication was first introduced in 1956 by Hendrik Kraemer (1888-1965) into missions theology and consequently into theological language in general. The communication of the faith begins for Kraemer on the basis of the self-revelation of God. This self-revelation distinguishes itself from other possible perceptions of God, because God discloses himself to man through his actions in human history where he fulfills his plan of salvation. Accordingly, God´s revelation is given with the purpose of sharing himself with man, and not only a descriptive information about his nature.– cf. Kraemer, Hendrik. Die Kommunikation des christlichen Glaubens (Zürich: Zwingli, 1958), p. 17.

[16] Even-Shoshan, Abraham (Hg.). A New Concordance of the Old Testament using the Hebrew and Aramaic Text (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1985), p. 256.

[17] G. Gerleman. „dabar Wort". Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament, ed. Ernst Jenni, Claus Westermann. München/Zürich: Chr. Kaiser /

Theologischer Verlag, 1984[4], I:434.

[18] THAT, I:433. Cf. the discussion on the origin of the word in W.H. Schmidt, „dabar. II. The Root". Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, ed. Botterweck, G.J.; Ringgren, H. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), III:94-95.

[19] See the various uses – in different grammatical forms – always with Scripture verses in Köhler, Ludwig; Baumgartner, Walter (Hg.). Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros (Leiden: Brill, 1985), pp. 199-200. A marginal use can be found in Job 19:18 and Song of Songs 5:6 („to turn away"), in 2 Chronicles 22:10 („to eradicate"), and in Psalm 18:48; 47:4 („to repel") (p. 199); cf. TDOT, III:97-98.

[20] Related to the meaning of words.

[21] See the extensive discussion in TDOT, III:103-106.

[22] TDOT, III:112-113.

[23] Synonymous parallelism is a figure of speech where the same thought is repeated in other words, so that the parallel parts of a sentence correspond to each other regarding content. – See Ross, Biblical Hebrew, pp. 348-349. Bühlmann and Scherer aptly remark on this: „The parallelism was one of the most elementary forms of expressing thought … . The parallelism confirms the credibility of an actual fact or underlines the reliability of a statement." – Bühlmann, Walter; Scherer, Karl. Sprachliche Stilfiguren der Bibel (Giessen: Brunnen, 1994), pp. 37-38.

[24] The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines Anthropomorphism as: "… the interpretation of nonhuman things or events in terms of human characteristics … . Derived from the Greek anthropos ("human") and morphe ("form"), the term was first used to refer to the attribution of human physical or mental features to

deities." - www.britannica.com

[25] Zenger, Erich. „Psalm 33". Die Neue Echter Bibel: Psalm 1-50, ed. J.G. Plöger, J. Schreiner (Würzburg: Echter, 1993), p. 209.

[26] Zenger, „Psalm 33", p. 209.

[27] For a further development of the action of God and of humans, see Welker, Michael. „Was ist ‚Schöpfung'? Genesis 1 und 2 neu gelesen", Evangelische Theologie 51 (1991): 208-224.

[28] This DEED-quality of the creational work of God is framed within systematic theology in the category of general revelation. All humans at all times in all places receive a limited knowledge of the Creator. This partial knowledge, however, needs the special revelation of God in salvation history, which aims at the knowledge of his son Jesus Christ. – See Lewis, Gordon R.; Demarest, Bruce A. Integrative Theology, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 61. The work of God in creation is also very significant in the New Testament regarding the salvation of man. Thus, Paul explains in Rom 1:20-21 that the explanatory power of creation takes away every excuse from those humans who do not know the Biblical God – for the fact that they did not give the glory (kabod/doxa) which ought to be accorded to God: "They did not glorify him as God." Thomas Schreiner aptly remarks on this: „… the fundamental sin is the failure to glorify God and give him thanks … ." Schreiner, Thomas. Romans. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), p. 87. Cf. Moo, Douglas. The Epistle to the Romans. The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, pp. 105-108.

[29] The structural unity of word and deed in the work of God is not sufficiently

considered by exegetical commentators. Rather, the work of God and the work of humans are perceived as separate levels of action. – cf. Wolff, Hans Walter. Micha. Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament, Bd. XIV/4 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1982, p. 52. Cf. Kessler, Rainer. Micha. Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg: Herder, 1999), pp. 130-131.

[30] Köhler-Baumgartner, Lexicon, p. 393-394.

[31] Regarding the sending of Israel in the Old Covenant in its various dimensions, cf. Uhlmann, Rainer. „Ein Gott wandert durch Wüsten: Hebräische Welterfahrung und Weltgestaltung im Kontext der Mission", Stuttgarter Theologische Themen, Band 1 (2006): 56-60.

[32] Adam S. van der Woude is Professor emeritus for Old Testament and Early Judaism at the University of Groningen.

[33] A.S. van der Woude. „shem Name". Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament, ed. Ernst Jenni, Claus Westermann. München/Zürich: Chr. Kaiser / Theologischer Verlag, 1984[3], II:939, 947-948.

[34] THAT, II:938.

[35] THAT, II:949.

[36] THAT, II:938; likewise, Fischer, Georg. Jeremia 1-25. Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg: Herder, 2005), p. 508.

[37] This structural unity of word and deed, however, is not discussed by G. Fischer. Instead, he treats them as two separate levels of action, which again is very typical for the Western pattern of thinking. – cf. Fischer, Jeremia 1-25, pp. 507-509.

[38] Concerning the genre and structure of the four "Servant-of-God-Songs", cf. Berges, Ulrich. Jesaja 40-48. Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), pp. 60-64. Berges, however, neglects the Messianic dimension of the Servant of God and reduces him to the people who trust Yahweh (p. 61).

[39] Here, the self-revelation of God as the only God and LORD is repeated, as it was already testified to in the Torah (Dt 6:4-5). The „Shema' Israel" calls the people of God toward the unique covenant loyalty toward Yahweh, as Daniel Block explains: „… within the context of covenant relationship, Israel´s love for Yahweh is to be absolute, total, internal, communal, public, and transmitted from generation to generation. „Yahweh our God! Yahweh alone": these are the words to be imprinted on the heart, to be worn on one´s hands and forehead, and to be inscribed above the doors and gates – that all the world may know that in this place Yahweh alone is served. This is what makes an Israelite a true Israelite. Whether they are descended from Abraham or not, the true covenant community consists of all and only those who make this their cry of allegiance, and who demonstrate this commitment with uncompromising covenant love." – Daniel I. Block, „How many is God? An Investigation into the Meaning of Deuteronomy 6:4-5", Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 47/2 (2004): 193-212, quotation p. 212. – Regarding the later effect of the Old Tesament monotheism on the interreligious context of the Graeco-Roman era, see Yehoshua Amir, „Der jüdische Eingottglaube als Stein des Anstoßes in der hellenistisch-römischen Welt", in: Baldermann, Ingo et al. (ed.). Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie, Band 2: Der eine Gott der beiden Testamente (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1987), pp. 58-75.

40 The verb `asah is used – beside the verb bara´ - for God´s own work of creation in Gen 1:1,7,16,25,26,27,31, in order to express the foundational shaping power of God which establishes a defined reality. In the creative word of God, the command and the accomplishment coincide with each other, it is a "creating command", as Claus Westermann expresses it. – Cf. Westermann, Claus. Genesis 1-11, Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament I/1, 3. Aufl. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1983), p. 153.

41 See the discussion on the „New Covenant" in Fischer, Georg. Jeremia 26-52. Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg: Herder, 2005), pp. 175-176.

42 Dr. Moshe Greenberg is Professor emeritus for Biblical Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

43 Greenberg, Moshe. Ezechiel 21-37. Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg: Herder, 2005), p. 436. Insofar as Israel acts against God´s will, the people fail to devote themselves undividedly to God. – cf. Herrmann, Siegfried. Jeremia. Erträge der Forschung, Bd. 271 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), p. 196.

44 Concerning the spiritual dimension of the New Covenant in Ez 36:27, see Zimmerli, Walther. Ezechiel. Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament, Band XIII/2, 2. Aufl. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1979), p. 879.

45 The Messenger-Formula authenticates the word of God, as it is communicated by the prophet (e.g. Samuel: 1 Sam 10: 18; Elijah: 1 Kings 21:19; Jeremiah: Jer 28:13-16). Cf. Jeremias, Joachim. „nabi´ Prophet". Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament, hg. Ernst Jenni, Claus Westermann. München/Zürich: Chr. Kaiser / Theologischer Verlag, 1984³, II:18; Westermann, Claus. Grundformen prophetischer Rede (München: Kaiser, 1960), p. 71.

46 Regarding the significance of the person and work of Christ as an expression of the ontological love of God, which is the source of his gracious movement toward man, cf. Prenter, Regin. „Der Gott, der Liebe ist. Das Verhältnis der Gotteslehre zur Christologie", Theologie und Gottesdienst. Gesammelte Aufsätze (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), pp. 275-291.

47 Procksch, O., „'Wort Gottes' im AT". Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Bd. 4, hg. Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1942), pp. 89-100, quotation pp. 90-91. Regarding the current Messianic Jewish theology, R. Harvey confirms this holistic approach to thinking: „Messianic Jewish thought is holistic, not dualistic. Much of Western Christian theology has been influenced by Aristotelian dualism, Enlightenment rationalism, and contemporary materialism. Jewish, or Hebraic thought, does not dichotomise the soul from the body, the spiritual from the physical and the material, or the individual from the community. It keeps them in relationship, as aspects of a whole, rather than parts that can be divided up." - Harvey, Richard. „The Impact of Christianity on the Development of Messianic Jewish Thought", Stuttgarter Theologische Themen, Vol. 2 (2007): 73.

48 Hermeneutics is explained by Dr. Grant Osborne, Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield/USA, in the following way: "Hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word meaning "to interpret". Traditionally it has meant "that science which delineates principles or methods for interpreting an individual author´s meaning." ... First, hermeneutics is a sci-

ence, since it provides a logical, orderly classification of the laws of interpretation. ... Second, hermeneutics is an art, for it is an acquired skill demanding both imagination and an ability to apply the "laws" to selected passages or books. ... Third and most important, hermeneutics when utilized to interpret Scripture is a spiritual act, depending upon the leading of the Holy Spirit."
– Osborne, Grant R. The Hermeneutical Spiral. A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), p. 5. Cf. Stuhlmacher, Peter. Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments. Eine Hermeneutik. Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), pp. 17-18.

[49] Regarding the question of the „structural fitting" of thought patterns, cf. Piennisch, Markus. „Christian Theology in the Islamic Context: Missionary and Hermeneutical Perspectives", Stuttgarter Theologische Themen, Vol. 2 (2007): 117-118.

[50] „conceptual, of an idea or concept; pertaining to the forming of a concept or idea" - www.mydict.com

[51] From lat. caro, carnis, f. = flesh, in Christian theology God becoming man in human flesh in Jesus Christ, see e.g. John 1:14: "The word became flesh and dwelt among us ...". – Regarding the relationship of the word-deed of God and the concept of Logos in the Johannine Prologue (John 1:1-18), cf. Kraemer, Hendrik. Religion und christlicher Glaube (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), pp. 254-277.