THE anthropological question, What is man’s place in the cosmos and in history?, can be answered in the monotheistic religions only by referring to God. Man is God’s creature. This does not mean, however, that he is merely God’s object. By revealing himself to man, and by entering into history with him, God lifts man above the rest of his creation. This means for Christian theology that God makes man a person¹. For Islamic theology too this statement should be acceptable. Man as an individual is responsible before God for his deeds. History as described by the Koran consists of a series of pacts (‘ahd, mīlāq) between God and mankind which impose duties on mankind, but imply at the same time that God takes mankind as his partners. Certainly, the Koran does not view them as equal partners; but this is also true of the other religions.

Can we define more precisely the rank which man occupies vis-à-vis God in Islam? It is greatly different from that ascribed to him by Judaism and Christianism. For them the declaration of Genesis 1,26-27 holds good: God created man in his image. For Islam, with its anxiety to avoid anthropomorphism, this is impossible. The phrase was known to the Muslims in the shape of a hadīth: God created Adam in his image, his form (‘alā šūratihī)²; but they changed its meaning: according to Ibn Hazm, e.g., it does not say that Adam had been created in God’s form, but that God chose for Adam one of the many forms in his possession in order to imprint it on him³. The statement of Koran 42,11 must remain valid: laysa ka-mīlīhi šay, nothing is like God.

² For the sources see Wensinck, Concordance, III, 438 b.
Now there is a Koranic term which has a key function for defining the rank of man in Islamic theology, the more so as a development of its interpretation can be observed: it is the word *halifah* with its derivatives, applied to Adam and other men. Of course the meaning ‘caliph’ comes into one’s mind, originating from the fuller formula *halifat rasul Allâh*, ‘successor to God’s messenger’, or the title *halifat Allâh*, used by some of the Umayyad caliphs, which must be translated by ‘God’s deputy’, as God cannot have a ‘successor’. In both cases the supreme head of the universal Islamic community, the *umma*, is meant. But the Koran never makes it completely clear whose *halifah* the man in question is supposed to be. Rudi Paret, in his careful translation-work, has reached the conclusion that the Koran in all instances is referring to ‘successors’ of former generations or preceding groups. In his opinion *sûra* 2,30, where God tells the angels: I am going to place a *halifah* in the earth (*innî gâ’ilun fî l-ardi halifatan*), «must probably be understood in the sense that Adam (and with him mankind) shall in future succeed the angels (or the spiritual beings in general) as inhabitants of the earth».

It is not necessary to examine here whether Paret’s opinion must be accepted everywhere. I may just mention that at least once in the Koran the term *halifah* appears near an allusion to a rulership function of a man, namely in sura 38,26 when God, after appointing David as *halifah* on earth, tells him: *fa-hakam bayna n-nasi bil-‘haqqi*; Paret translates: «Entscheide nun zwischen den Menschen nach der Wahrheit» (decide, or judge, between men according to truth), but the verb *hakama* connotes also ‘rule’. For our train of thought it is important that no less an authority than al-’Tabari confirms Paret’s opinion regarding the sense of *halifah* in the Koran—with some interesting additional remarks.

In his *Tafsîr*, the great commentary embracing all knowledge on the Koran at the level reached in the 3rd/9th century, al-’Tabarî defines *halifah* decidedly as ‘successor’ (*ištâ qâma maqâmahû fihi ba’dahu*) with reference to preceding individuals, generations (qarn) or groups, thus excluding the meaning ‘deputy’. He mentions the use of *halifah* for designing the ‘supreme ruler’ (*al-sulṭân al-a’zam*), explaining the term as ‘successor of the predecessor’ without pointing to its origin from the formula *halifat rasul Allâh*. But then, when

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