

**Unity in Diversity.
The “Prophets” Muḥammad, Abraham and Jesus
and the Islamo-Christian Dialogue**

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For the best or the worst, Islam is still making headlines in our media. Even those who normally are not interested in religious questions at all suddenly turn into “specialists” in matters of “divine Law” and “Holy” wars. All this to name only a few because of September 11th, the war on terrorism with its “axis of evil”, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the tragic events in Israel and Palestine/Gaza and, since 2014, the horrible events related to Isis/Isil. While history continues to write its bloody pages, the vast majority of Muslims while watching how its faith is being hijacked almost on a daily basis is confronted with the enormous task to tell the world, what “Islam really means”, namely peace and not war, God’s mercy and not senseless bloodshed.

One method of fulfilling this task certainly leads into the direction of a renewed effort in matters of hermeneutics of the message of

the Holy Koran itself. At the same time the situation calls for a courageous continuation and deepening of the Islamo-Christian dialogue. Nothing would be more out of place than the thought that the present difficulties of Islam could be of any benefit for its "rivals", like Christianity for instance. Giving up on dialogue now would only strengthen the forces of ghettoization of Islam and this would backfire on *all* the religions, on their capacity of being a relevant spiritual force in the new millennium. It would also mask the fact that, although on a different scale, the same evils of "integrist", politization and intolerance, which threaten the Islamic faith today, also threaten the other religions: Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, etc., and even the traditional tribal religions. Far from being on the "safe side", the current events in history constitute a wake-up call also for the non-Muslims².

Yet, within this perspective, the purpose of an ongoing dialogue between Muslims and Christians cannot simply consist in stating generalities about the similarities of the Muslim and the Christian creed. This might be good enough for politicians but not for seekers of the religious truth³. Rather the interreligious dialogue will be confronted with the issue of unity *and* diversity, similarity *and* difference between Islam and Christianity. And nowhere is this more evident than in the appreciation and theological appropriation of the three founder figures, the three "prophets" Muhammad, Abraham and Jesus. Sooner or

¹ See for this also Th. Mooren, *September 11th 2001 and the Future of Monotheistic Religions*, "Mission", No 9, 2002, p. 39-64 and the original version of the present contribution, "Mission", No 10, 2003, p. 33-61; reprint, in "MST Review", No 6, 2004, p. 73-113 and in Th. Mooren, *War and Peace in Monotheistic Religions*, Delhi 2008, p. 153-185. The present contribution differs from the original one by the sad statement that things since 9.11.2001 have gone worse and not better.

² In this sense the renewed hermeneutical effort asked from the Muslim community concerns *all* religions. See for example G. Vattimo, *Wirklichkeit, wo ist deine Wahrheit. Das Christentum im Zeitalter der Interpretation*, "Neue Züricher Zeitung", July, 2002, #136, p. 61, and the papers presented in *Vijñadīpti*, (4-5) 2001-2002 under the title *Philosophy as Inter-Cultural Dialogue*. See also Th. Mooren, *On the Border: the Otherness of God and the Multiplicity of Religions*, Frankfurt/M 1994, p. 107-125, and by the same author: *Mission and Islam*, "Indian Missiological Review", No 19, 1997, p. 172-177.

³ To proceed on such a route would also violate the basic principle of hermeneutical truthfulness. It would furthermore hamper the possibility of transcending through the dialogue process one's own religious *territory*, so to speak, hence no such *transcendable* borderline has been fixed in the first place. For the notion of "religious territory" and the corresponding process of "deterritorialization" within the framework of interreligious dialogue see Th. Mooren, *On the Border...*, op. cit., p. 62-84.

later each Islamo-Christian dialogue will have to take into account the appealing unity of their messages as much as the profound differences in their "theological status" according to Muslim or Christian tradition and belief. Yet, it is only *through* facing these differences that the uniting elements can also play out their force in full.

Having made this point I propose to investigate three topics: Muḥammad the Prophet, the role of Abraham in the Islamic revelation and the question of the divine filiation of Jesus. In doing so I am fully aware of the fact that each topic in itself is vast and important enough to merit an exclusive treatment of its own. Consequently, the purpose of the present paper is not, to be exhaustive on all three questions but to put them as road signs, so to speak, on the map of the internal dynamics of any meaningful Islamo-Christian dialogue. Thus, the proposed topics are rather indications of unavoidable *crossroads* on the way to mutual understanding than the exhaustive exploration of the territory itself.

Muḥammad the Prophet

It is a generally accepted tradition that Muḥammad around 612 by then he must have reached the age of forty-two was shaken by a profound religious crisis⁴. Dissatisfied with the social and religious

⁴ For the life of the Prophet see for instance Ibn Hishm, *Sīrat al-nabī*, [in:] F. Wüstenfeld (ed.), *Das Leben Muhammeds nach Muhammed Ibn Ishik, bearbeitet von Abd al-Malik Ibn Hisham*, Vol. I, text, Göttingen 1859; W.M. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, Oxford 1953 and by the same author: *Muhammad at Medina*, Oxford 1956; M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, Paris 1957 and 1969; F.M. Pareja, *Islamologie*, Beirut 1957-1963; R. Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran*, Stuttgart 1957; furthermore T. Andrae, *Der Ursprung des Islams und das Christentum*, Uppsala 1926; H. Gätje, *The Qur'ān and its Exegesis. Selected Texts with Classical and Modern Muslim Interpretations*, transl. by A.T. Welch, London and Henley 1976, p. 1-44; A. Guillaume, *New Light on the Life of Muhammad*, "Journal of Semitic Studies" (Monograph, 1), Manchester s.d.; I.M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge 1988, p. 21-36; H. Monés, *Muhammads Leben und Ideen*, [in:] R. Italiander (ed.), *Die Herausforderung des Islam*, Göttingen 1965, p. 40-59; Th. Mooren, *Macht und Einsamkeit Gottes. Dialog mit dem islamischen Radikal-Monothetismus*, Würzburg, Altenberge 1991, p. 25-61, 152-157 and by the same author: *Monothéisme coranique et anthropologie*, „Anthropos“, No 76, 1981, p. 551-554 and also: *Life and Message of the Prophet Muhammad*, "Mission", No 7, 2000, p. 65-79; A. Noth, *Früher Islam*, [in:] U. Harrmann (ed.), *Geschichte der arabischen Welt*, München 1987, p. 11-57; L. Rathmann, *Geschichte der Araber. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, Berlin 1975; M. Rodinson, *Mahomet*, Paris 1961; E.S. Sabanegh, *Muhammad b.'Abdallh Le Prophète; portraits contemporains, Égypte 1930-1950. Jalons pour une histoire de la pensée Islamique moderne*, Paris 1981.

conditions of his hometown Mecca he broke with an environment that came with being a successful businessman. After having gone through the process of uncompromising soul searching he became first the warner (naḍīr; mundīr, sūra 25, 1; 79, 45) and finally the Prophet of God, the *rasūl Allah*. Obviously this transformation from “Wall Street” to “Church Street” did not please the rich Meccan elite. It engaged in a sustained and merciless confrontation with Muḥammad who had to flee to Medina (hiġra, 15/6 July 622). There, now fully acting as rasūl Allah, Muḥammad was able to establish Islam as a religion and a way of life independent from Judaism and Christianity⁵. Years of guerilla-like warfare, *razziastyle*, followed until in 630, without any bloodshed, Mecca was conquered by Islam. Two years later the Prophet died.

One of the frequently used methods by the Meccan elite to ridicule Muḥammad and to destroy his claim to “prophethood”, i.e., to *divine* inspiration, consisted in accusing him of madness. Crazy poets or diviners were a common picture in Arab preislamic culture. Indeed, the poetical, expressive linguistic devices employed by the Prophet in his early, still very apocalyptic preaching⁶, often bear a resemblance with the style of a *kāhin* (diviner) or a *šā’ir* (poet). Therefore it does not come as a surprise when we see the Prophet defending himself vigorously against all attempts to depict him simply as a “possessed” man among others:

“(O people) your companion is not a madman (maġnūn)” (S. 81, 22’).

Or:

“Therefore remind (mankind)... you are neither a soothsayer (*kāhin*), nor a madman”. ... they say: “(Muḥammad is) a poet (*šā’ir*)! We await for him some calamity by time!” (S. 52, 29, 30).

⁵ Cf. Th. Mooren, *Paternité et généalogie dans la pensée religieuse de l’Ancien Proche-Orient. Le discours monothéiste du Prophète Mahomet face à l’Arabie préislamique, Ugarit, Israël et le christianisme*; doctoral thesis, Paris 1979, p. 109-117, 349-356. I will try farther below to shed some light on the question, why the Prophet did not embrace the already existing religions Judaism and Christianity.

⁶ “La première vision coranique du monde est en effet celle de l’Apocalypse”. (J. Chelhod, *Introduction à la Sociologie de l’Islam. De l’animisme à l’universalisme*, Paris 1958, p. 138). Indeed, early Islam, like Qumran, is another example of a religion where apocalyptic visions, the obedience to a religious law and the interest for building a community go hand-in-hand. (For Qumran see B. Noack, *Spätjudentum und Heilsgeschichte. Franz Delitzsch-Vorlesungen 1968*, Stuttgart 1971, p. 55-56.

⁷ For Koranic translations compare: *Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur’an in the English Language*, King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur’an, Madinah, K.S.A., s.d.

From where does the Prophet take the strength to withstand these allegations of being just a mad poet? The strength comes from his profound inner conviction that the source of his preaching lies in God himself. Muḥammad calls God (Allāh) his “rabb”, his “Lord” with whom he has entered in intimate dialogue. Thus it is by his *Lord’s grace* (bi-ni’mati rabbika; S. 52, 29) and not because of a demon, some kind of mental sickness or simply because of poetical skillfulness that Muḥammad utters the verses of the Holy Book, the Koran.

Obviously, in the Islamic theological tradition the whole revelation process *as such* is put into the account of the Angel Gabriel (Ġibril). In fact, does sūra 6, 103 not unambiguously state: “No vision can grasp him (lā tudrikuhū l-baṣāru)”? And 42, 51 reiterates:

“It is not given to any human being that Allāh should speak to him unless (it be) by revelation (way), or from behind a veil, or (that) he sends a messenger to reveal what He wills by His Leave. Verily, He is most high, most wise”.

However, if we consider sūra 53⁸, 1-12, it seems not out of place to assume that Gabriel’s role is the fruit of later theological speculation. Or as Paret has it with regard to sūra 53: “*In course of time* he (Muḥammad) acquired the conviction that no human being is allowed to see God”⁹. Yet, originally (“ursprünglich”¹⁰) it seems that the Prophet really thought to have had a vision of God himself, i.e., that it was Allāh himself who pushed him directly into prophethood. Here are the verses in question:

1. By the star when it goes down...
2. Your companion (Muḥammad) has neither gone astray nor has erred.
3. Nor does he speak of (his own) desire.
4. It is only a revelation (way) revealed.
5. He has been taught (this Qur’an) by one mighty in power (‘allamahū ṣadīdu l-quwā).
6. One free from any defect in body and mind (dū mirrattin)¹¹. Then he rose and became stable.

⁸ According to R. Blachère, (*Le Coran [al-Qor’ān]*, Paris 1966, p. 560, ad loc.) the revelations contained in this sūra – certainly the verses with which we are dealing here – have been announced “dans leur plus grande partie” during the first Meccan period.

⁹ R. Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran*, 43; italics and transl. by me, Th. M.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹¹ R. Blachère (*Le Coran*, op. cit., p. 560, ad loc.), translates: “doué de sagacité”, while H. Gätje, (*The Qur’ān...*, op. cit. p. 166), renders dū mirrattin by “one very strong”.

7. While he was in the highest point of horizon.
8. Then he approached and came closer.
9. And was at a distance of two bow's length or (even) nearer.
10. So (Allāh) revealed to his slave ('abd) (Muḥammad) whatever he revealed.
11. The (Prophet's) heart (al-fu'ād¹²) lied not in what he (Muḥammad) saw.
12. Will you then dispute with him (Muḥammad) about what he saw?

These verses of the Holy Book are truly precious inasmuch as they offer us a unique glimpse on Muḥammad's initiation vision to prophethood. They begin with the usual defense against being mistaken for a crazy poet among others even they do so in poet-like style! – and end with Muḥammad's most sincere declaration that the vision he is describing is the truth stemming from his heart. Why should anyone believe him? Because this is what he *saw* (or better: still “sees” [māyarā]) and he is not a liar (53, 11)!

As already hinted, there is no sign of Gabriel / Ġibrīl in these verses. On the contrary, there is a strong indication that Allāh himself is the one who was “seen”, that he is the “one mighty in power”, particularly in light of verse 10. Therein Muḥammad is called “abd”, slave or servant, an appellation exclusively used for a human being's relationship with God and not with an Angel¹³.

It is true, as also Paret admits, that “in course of time” the canonical position in this matter changed in favor of Gabriel. A clear indication seems to be sūra 81, 19-26:

¹² Al-fu'ād, the lever, i.e., the “heart”. R. Blachère, (*Le Coran*, op. cit., p. 560, ad loc.) comments: “We know that among the Semites the heart is often considered as the seat of thought” (transl. by Th. M.).

¹³ I follow here R. Paret, *Der Koran. Kommentar und Konkordanz*, Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz 1971, p. 461, ad loc. and by the same author: *Mohammed und der Koran*, p. 44. Evidently, Islamic theological tradition does not see it this way. For instance the *Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language* adds, in bracket, from verse 5 on (see ad loc.) Ġibrīl/Gabriel as subject of the action, glossing especially in verse 6 before “rose and became stable” in the following way: “Ġibrīl-Gabriel in his real shape as created by Allāh”. See also in H. Gätje, *The Qur'an...*, op. cit., p. 166, *Zamahšari's commentary on sūra 53, 4-10*. (Zamahšari, a Persian-Arab scholar who died in 1144). Therein he clearly identifies the “one mighty in power” as Gabriel. Furthermore for the Islamic theological tradition the vision in question belongs “to the complex of events associated with the so-called ascension of Muḥammad” (H. Gätje, *The Qur'an...*, op. cit., p. 278, note 7). See too the commentary ad loc. in *Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language*.

19. Verily, this is the word by a most honourable messenger (rasūl karīm).
20. Owner of power, (and high rank) with (God), the Lord of the Throne.
21. Obeyed and trustworthy.
22. And (o people) your companion (Muḥammad) is not a madman.
23. And indeed he saw him (the honourable messenger) in the clear horizon.
24. And he withholds not a knowledge of the Unseen.
25. And it (the Qur'ān) is not the word of the outcast Shaitān.
26. Then where are you going?

In this sūra the “object” of Muḥammad’s vision clearly is the “honourable messenger” and not Allāh himself¹⁴. For Paret sūra 81 takes an intermediary position between sūra 53 and the above mentioned statements of sūra 6 and 42 about the total impossibility of “seeing God”¹⁵. Yet Paret also points towards Bell’s suggestion (“vielleicht mit Recht”) that originally sūra 81, 19 was all about the Prophet himself, Muḥammad being the rasūl karīm, the honourable messenger like it is the case in sūra 69, 40. Verses 20ss, on the other hand, would then have been a later addition in order to subsequently identify the honourable messenger as the Angel Gabriel¹⁶.

Yet, in the end, the important result of our exegetical investigation is really not so much the identity of the one who was “seen” by the Prophet, but rather the *process of investiture* to Prophethood, so to speak, the fact that it all started by an almost “classical” vision experience (see Ezechiel, Paul, etc.) whose truthfulness can only be warranted by the truthfulness of the Prophet himself. This becomes plain again, if we turn back to sūra 53, this time v. 13-18:

13. And indeed he (Muḥammad) saw him¹⁷ at a second descent (i.e., a second time).
14. Near Sidrat al-Muntahā¹⁸.
15. Near the garden of al-Ma’wā¹⁹.

¹⁴ See also R. Blachère, *Le Coran...*, op. cit., p. 639, commenting v. 23.

¹⁵ See R. Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran*, op. cit., p. 45.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 45. Paret mentions R. Bell’s article on *Muhammad’s Visions*, “Muslim World”, No 24, 1934, p. 145-154.

¹⁷ I.e., Allāh, or according to the canonical interpretation again Gabriel.

¹⁸ “The Jujube-tree of Muntahā” – selon Caetani a place near Mecca. According to tradition the limit of the seventh heaven. Cf. R. Blachère, *Le Coran...*, op. cit., p. 560-561, ad loc.

¹⁹ According to tradition, a garden of paradise; according to Sprenger a “retreat (al-ma’wā) house” or villa with garden near Mecca. Cf. R. Blachère, *Le Coran...*,

16. When that covered the Jujube-tree which did cover it.
17. (Muḥammad's) sight turned not aside (right or left), nor it transgressed beyond the limit (ordained for it).
18. Indeed he (Muḥammad) did see the greatest signs (al-āyata l-kubrā) of his Lord (rabihi).

Thus it all comes down to trust and sincerity. It is that kind of "subjective" truth one either rejects or accepts²⁰. Yet, respecting Muḥammad's personal sincerity does not mean one has to adhere to the content of his message. This is clearly a question of faith leading directly into each human person's "heart", into its inner consciousness. For the Islamo-Christian dialogue, it means that any attempt to demolish Muḥammad's claim to prophethood by trying to destroy him on a cross-cultural or psychological level is out of place²¹. Any dialogue on the *content* of the message delivered by Muḥammad becomes meaningful only if the messenger is duly respected. Also, only under this premise the real interesting *theological* question – from a Christian point of view – makes sense and takes all its breadth and urgency, namely why God should have spoken to Muḥammad, i.e.,

op. cit., p. 561, ad loc.

²⁰ The use of term "subjective truth" has to be taken in a simple descriptive sense. Put differently, I am not entering here into the debate on the concept of "supranaturalism" in matters of revelation. (See for this question for instance B. Nichtweiss, *Erik Peterson. Neue Sicht auf Leben und Werk*, Freiburg, Basel, Wien 1992, p. 360-363). To decide in an *a priori* manner that founders of religions like Buddha or Muḥammad only received a "natural illumination" (versus a "supranatural" that was at work in Jesus) is not what is at stake in a dialogue situation. Dialogue, as I see it, is not about *a priori* positions, which are ultimately faith positions, but rather about the "evidence", the reasons that *make* a faithful believe. In this way I place dialogue into the orbit of 1 P 3, 15-16: "... always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have. But give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience..." – This is not that far away from the Koranic statement that God allowed the different religions on earth so that they might compete among themselves, test the validity of the revelation they have received and rival with one another in the completion of good deeds! (Cf. S. 5, 48).

²¹ With regard to modern history the psychological demolition of Muḥammad's claim to prophethood has been practised for instance by Rousseau. In his *Émile* he simply denies that God might ever have spoken to *any* prophet; that "Holy Scriptures", whatever the religion, are the product of the human mind *alone*, and he cries out: "How many persons between God and me!" (See for this H.G. Kippenberg, *Die Entdeckung der Religionsgeschichte. Religionswissenschaft und Moderne*, München 1997, p. 23-24).

have set into motion the process of revelation again some 600 years after Christ!²²

Obviously, the visions of the Prophet as related in the Holy Book are just the beginning of the topic "Muḥammad the Prophet" and of the Prophet's theology itself. Paret goes even so far as to venture that Muḥammad's prophetic consciousness, his "Sendungsbewußtsein", did not really depend upon the visions, although it was *strengthened* by them²³. Nevertheless the vision stories allow us to already make two important theological points. Firstly, they display in a very graphic way the *level* of intimacy between the Prophet and his rabb, his Lord, a level identified as "a distance of two bows' length or (even) nearer" (S. 53, 9) – not more, nor less! Secondly, they imply that the Koran, *spiritually* speaking, might be read as the true *unfolding* of sūra 53, 18 ("Indeed he did see the *greatest signs* of his Lord") – the "signs" ultimately becoming the *verses* of the Holy Book²⁴.

²² The one Western philosopher with a real handle on this question is Schelling. For details see Th. Mooren, *Macht und Einsamkeit Gottes...*, op. cit., p. 59, note 86; cf. too M. Hayek, *Le Mystère d'Ismaël*, Paris 1964, p. 197-198. In a certain sense one could also say that the relationship Muḥammad-Jesus poses problems similar to the one between early Christianity and late Judaism. These problems turn around the question of how one part of the relationship is the prophetic fulfilment of the other – this particularly in the light of sūra, 61, 6 where Jesus says: "O children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allāh unto you!... and giving glad tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Aḥmad. (ismuhū aḥmadu)". Cf. for this B. Noack, *Spätjudentum und Heilsgeschichte...*, op. cit., p. 84-5, 94-95, 97, 103. For the translation of "ismuhū aḥmadu", "his name shall be Aḥmad" see also R. Blachère, *Le Coran...*, op. cit., p. 593-594, ad loc. Indeed, there is no doubt for the "Muslim conscience" (Blachère) that "aḥmadu" refers to the name of the Prophet (Muḥammadu), both terms sharing the same root HMD, "to praise" (see too H. Gätje, *The Qur'ān...*, op. cit., p. 69-70). However, R. Paret, *Der Koran...*, op. cit., p. 476, sees in "aḥmadu" a simple comparative or relative of "maḥmūdun" or "ḥamīdun" and translates by "more praiseworthy" ("lößlicher") or "truly praiseworthy" (hochlößlich).

²³ Cf. R. Paret, *Mohammed und der Koran*, op. cit., p. 45-46.

²⁴ It is not for nothing that in Arabic "āya" means both: sign and verse. – On the difference between the Christian "sign" (the logos) written into the "human sarx" and the "greatest signs of the Lord" becoming verses of the Holy Book see too Th. Mooren, *Macht und Einsamkeit Gottes...*, op. cit., p. 76-86, 136-147. Cf. also B. Nichtweiss, *Erik Peterson. Neue Sicht...*, op. cit. p. 235, 550, 568.

Abraham in the Koran

The importance of Abraham for the Islamic revelation can barely be overstated. Not unexpectedly, this venerable patriarchal figure has become even more significant after the events of September 11th. Suddenly, for various reasons, Judaism, Christianity and Islam were “discovered” even by the media as Abrahamitic religions. Indeed, in all three religions the patriarch plays a prominent role. Yet, even if we encounter him in the three Holy Scriptures, Torah, New Testament and Koran – his theological weight, so to speak, each time is quite different²⁵.

With regard to Abraham in the Koran²⁶ we have to consider, firstly, the role he plays as the founder of the Ka’bah, the Meccan sanctuary containing the Black Stone²⁷, centerstage of the ḥaġġ, the pilgrimage:

“And (remember) when we made the House (the Ka’bah) a place of resort for humankind and a place of safety. And take you (people) the maqām (place) of Abraham as a place of prayer” (S. 2, 125).

“And (remember) when Abraham said: «O my Lord! Make this city (Mecca) one of peace and security, and keep me and my sons away from worshipping idols»” (S. 14, 35).

“O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in an uncultivable valley by your Sacred House (the Ka’bah) in order, O our Lord, that they may perform the prayers...” (S 14, 37).

From an archeological or strictly historical point of view, it might come as a surprise to see how the Koran makes Abraham the founder of the Ka’bah²⁸ and with it the Father of the Arabs – see the

²⁵ Cf. too Th. Mooren, *Macht und Einsamkeit...*, op. cit., p. 16-17.

²⁶ For the following see Y. Moubarac, *Abraham dans le Coran. L’histoire d’Abraham dans le Coran et la naissance de l’Islam*, Paris 1958; M. Hayek, *Le Mystère...*, op. cit., and by the same author: *Les arabes ou le baptême des larmes*, Paris 1972; Th. Mooren, *Macht und Einsamkeit Gottes...*, op. cit., p. 45 and by the same author: “I do not adore what you adore!”. *Theology and Philosophy in Islam*, Delhi 2001, p. 45-75.

²⁷ On the “sacredness” of the Ka’bah see for example J. Chelhod, *Les Structures du sacré chez les Arabes*, Paris 1964, p. 205.

²⁸ For the ancient religious history of the Ka’bah see T. Fahd, *Le Panthéon de l’Arabie Centrale à la Veille de l’Hégire*, Paris 1968, p. 203-236; cf. too *ibid.*, p. 207-208: “Dans l’histoire religieuse de l’Islam, l’origine abrahamique de la Ka’ba ne fait pas l’ombre d’un doute, puisqu’elle est affirmée par le Coran... Quant à l’histoire proprement dite, elle attend toujours les résultats de fouilles systé-

“min *durritani*”, “some of my offspring” of *sūra* 14, 37!²⁹. Yet, we have to remind us that it is a widespread procedure to “make theology” or to stick out theological claims by means of biology, i.e., through the cultural organization of the human reproductive process-construction of marriage laws and genealogies, the theologoumenon of virginbirth, the ancestorcult, the phenomenon of *širk* (polytheism) including the “three daughters of Allāh”, etc.³⁰. In other words, not so much the genealogical

matiques sur le site mekkois pour pouvoir se prononcer avec certitude sur l’antiquité du sanctuaire. En effet, la documentation dont nous disposons jusqu’à ce jour, est bien insuffisante pour une datation précise de l’époque à laquelle fut occupée la Mekke et fut édifié le sanctuaire”.

²⁹ See too S. 2, 125-126. Cf. for this Th. Mooren, *Parenté et religion Arabe pré-islamique*, Koblenz 1979, 45, and by the same author *Le Kitāb al-aḥnām de Ibn al-Kalbī. Essai d’une traduction partielle*, Koblenz 1979, p. 6-7; furthermore, Th. Mooren, *Paternité et généalogie...*, op. cit., p. 117-120 and *Macht und Einsamkeit Gottes...*, op. cit., p. 42; R. Dagorn, *La geste d’Ismaël d’après l’onomastique et la tradition arabes*, Paris 1981 (reviewed by R. Caspar in “Islamochristiana”, No 8, 1982, p. 280-286); M. Hayek, *Les arabes...*, op. cit., p. 121-128. However, that “false identities” (like the Abraham filiation of the Arabs) might well be working on the level of ideological legitimization by eventually procuring “true identities” is underlined, for instance, by Hecker: “If we consider historical examples, it becomes plain that [in matters of identity] we are not necessarily dealing with *right* or *fictitious*. Rather two historical reality-levels are able to establish themselves side by side. The one is formed by the primary, *right* or authentic identity, while the other constitutes itself thanks to the legitimized new identity, the facts that derive from it and the history it puts into motion. The new identity can be historically effective as far as it is capable of enforcing its legitimacy”. (H. Hecker, *Dynastische Abstammungslegende und Geschichtsmythos im Rußland des 16. Jahrhunderts*, [in:] P. Wunderli (ed.), *Herkunft und Ursprung. Historische und mythische Formen der Legitimation*, Sigmaringen 1994, p. 121, transl. Th. M.).

³⁰ Cf. Th. Mooren, *Paternité et généalogie...*, op. cit., p. 156-161 (legal implications of kinship language with regard to the God of Ancient Israel), p. 175-186 (genealogy and divine filiation in the NT); on “*širk*” (polytheism by way of kinship language) see Th. Mooren, *Monothéisme coranique et anthropologie*, “*Anthropos*”, No 76, 1981, p. 532-533; on the “daughters” of Allāh see *ibid.*, p. 533-535, and Th. Mooren, *Paternité et généalogie...*, op. cit., p. 73-80 and by the same author: *Le Kitāb al-aḥnām...*, op. cit., p. 15-24; for the ancestor cult among the Arabs see J. Henninger, *Arabica Sacra. Aufsätze zur Religionsgeschichte Arabiens und seiner Randgebiete*, Freiburg (Switzerland), Göttingen 1981, p. 170-188; Th. Mooren, *Paternité et généalogie...*, op. cit., p. 41-47. For the virginbirth as a theologoumenon also outside Christianity see E. Leach, *L’unité de l’homme et autres essais*, Paris 1980, p. 77-107. For the formation of culture and religious systems through kinship in general see for instance C. Lévi-Strauss, *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*, Paris 1949; L. de Heusch, *Pourquoi l’épouser? et autres essais*, Paris 1971; F. Kramer, Chr. Sigrist, *Gesellschaften ohne Staat*, Vol. I

claim of the Koran is astonishing, i.e., theology disguised as genealogy, but rather the choice of the person in whose favor the claim is made, namely Abraham. Why the Koranic insistence on this patriarch?

In sūra 2, 124, we read:

“The Lord said to Abraham: «Verily, I am going to make you a leader for humankind (to follow you)...»”.

The sole reason for this, and it is the only one!, is the following: Abraham, in the Koran, is the monotheist *par excellence* and *as such* the first Muslim even before the historical act of formation of Islam as a distinct “positive religion” (Hegel) occurred:

“Say, O Muammad: «Truly, my Lord has guided me to a straight path (sirāt mustqīm), a right religion (dīn qiyam), the religion (milla) of Abraham...»” (S. 6, 161).

“And who can be better in religion than one who submits (aslama) his face to God... and follows the religion (milla) of Abraham. And God did take Abraham as an intimate friend (ḥalīl)” (S. 4, 125).

Or again, Abraham’s prayer at the Ka’bah:

“Our Lord! Make us submissive unto you (muslimīna laka) and of our offspring a community (umma) submissive (muslima) to you” (S. 2, 128).

It is only because of this submission to God that Abraham’s religion can be called straight and right and he himself God’s intimate friend. Without it Abraham would not be the leader to follow. Thus, he truly and really is in the *literal* meaning of the word “aslama” a “muslim”, that is a “submitted one”, the one who “surrenders himself” (to the One God)! This “surrendering”, i.e., “Islam”³¹, is his religion!

(*Gleichheit und Gegenseitigkeit*), II (*Genealogie und Solidarität*), Frankfurt/M 1978; Chr. Sigrist, *Regulierte Anarchie*, Frankfurt/M, 1979, p. 60-95; D. Sperber, *Das Wissen des Ethnologen*, Frankfurt/M, New York, p. 108-116; Th. Mooren, *Parenté et religion Arabe.*, op. cit., p. 7-10. It would be wrong to believe that the use of the kinship model (including totally fictitious relationships) is limited to the so called traditional societies. On the contrary, fictitious kinship relations were still used to legitimize, for instance, the power of Patrician families in medieval cities like Cologne. (Cf. R. Hiestand, “*Civis Romanus sum*”. *Zum Selbstverständnis bürgerlicher Führungsschichten in den spätmittelalterlichen Städten*, p. 100-102, [in:] P. Wunderli (ed.), *Herkunft und Ursprung...*, op. cit.).

³¹ Like “muslim”, the active participle, “islām”, the maṣdar or “substantivated infinitive”, stems from the same verb “aslama”, to submit oneself, to surrender, IV. form of the root SLM, “to be safe and sound”. (Cf. H. Wehr, *A Dictionary of*

Hence, before becoming a technical term for a “positive religion”, Islam, in the eyes of the Koran, simply expresses the deepest religious attitude of the Biblical patriarch himself. Within this perspective the Prophet Muḥammad and the “historical” Islam are only a repetition, a re-enactment of the drama called “Abraham, the monotheist”, i.e., Muḥammad is Abraham *redivivus*.

One should, however, not forget that any act of submission implies simultaneously an act of *rejection* – in the case of Abraham the rejection of other gods besides the true One God³². Yet, if it is therefore right to say, that Abraham is not a “polytheist”, a “mušrik” – “*walam yaku min al-mušrikina*” (S. 16, 120)³³ – it is also allowed, from the viewpoint of the rejected, predominant polytheistic culture, to qualify Abraham’s action as an authentic act of rebellion, of religious and cultural “dissidence”. This even more so, hence in the case of Abraham his “anti-polytheistic” stand leads him to something that weighs heavily upon a man’s soul in any patriarchal society, since it leads him into a direct and painful opposition to his own father³⁴ who had decided to remain a “mušrik” (S. 9, 114)!³⁵

It is because of this dissidence-aspect inherent to the very concept of “Islam” – i.e., the fact that you surrender *because* you forsake or reject someone or something³⁶ – that the Koran calls Abraham also a “ḥanīf”:

“So set (O Muḥammad) your face upright for the (only true) religion. (Do so) as a ḥanīf. It is the religion of God’s *fiṭra* with which he has created (*faṭara*) humankind. No alteration in

Modern Written Arabic, Beirut, 1974, p. 424-425; Th. Mooren, *Es gibt keinen Gott...*, op. cit., p. 84-85, note 224).

³² This too is reflected by the very term “aslama” itself. As much as it means, as we have seen above, to surrender, its primary meaning reads: “to forsake, leave, desert, give up, betray s.o.” (Cf. Wehr, *A Dictionary...*, op. cit., p. 425).

³³ The term “mušrik” should better be translated by “associationist”, since at stake is not so much the number game (*many* gods), but rather the diminution of power “polytheism” entails by forcing upon God webs of *association* (širk) in particular in the form of kinship associations (marriage, fatherhood; see also above my remarks on making theology by means of biology!) This however, as we will see in more details below, is considered to weaken God.

³⁴ “Tabarra’a minhu”, Abraham “got rid” of his father, “freed himself” from him (Cf. H. Wehr, *A Dictionary...*, op. cit., p. 49).

³⁵ See too S. 60, 4: “... Abraham (said) to his father: «Verily, I will ask forgiveness (from God) for you, but I have no power to do anything for you before God»”.

³⁶ This, by the way, should make more cautious those who like to portray Islam as *blind* or *irrational* obedience or submission unto God!

God's creation (ḥalq). This is the straight religion (ad-dīn al-qayyim), but most people don't know" (S. 30, 30)³⁷.

The meaning of the term "ḥanīf" is not easy to grasp³⁸. Within the Koranic context it obviously possesses a positive connotation meaning a "true monotheist"³⁹. However, to render "ḥanīf" in this way keeps unsaid the rebellious ground, so to speak, from which the term emerges, i.e., the aura of dissidence. It seems at least noteworthy to me that in the neighbouring languages the equivalences to "ḥanīf" are all outright "negative"⁴⁰. In other words, it is only the Koran, the religious genius of the Prophet Muḥammad that turn "being a ḥanīf", being an outcast and dissident into a positive, a noble attitude!

The case of "ḥanīf" would not remain the only one where such a turnaround happened. Another example is the Prophet being called an "ummī" (as in sūra 7, 157 and 158), a term rendered by the later tradition⁴¹ as "uncultivated", "unable to read or write". If this had been the case, then the miracle of the whole revelation process seems all the more shining and beyond grasping! The "ummī" of 7, 157 and 158, however, is above all a "pagan"⁴². In *this* sense it must have been applied to the Prophet by the Jews in one of their language games they played with Muḥammad, in order to express the idea that he belongs, as "ethnikos", simply to the *massa damnata*, to the "nations" (*ommot ha 'olam*)! Therefore his claims to prophethood or any kind of theological insight can only be disqualified as "heretical"⁴³. Yet, as in the case of

³⁷ My translation for Abraham as ḥanīf see also S. 2, 135; 3, 95; 4, 125; 6, 161; 16, 120, 123.

³⁸ See for this Y. Moubarac, *Abraham dans le Coran...*, op. cit., p. 151-161; M. Hayek, *Le Mystère ...*, op. cit., p. 136-146; Th. Mooren, *Macht und Einsamkeit Gottes...*, op. cit., p. 32, 43-44 and by the same author: "I do not adore...", op. cit., p. 55-66.

³⁹ See for example: "worship none but Allāh alone" (Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an..., ad loc); "muslimischer Monotheist" (R. Paret, *Der Koran...*, op. cit., p. 32).

⁴⁰ See for instance the Syriac "ḥanfo-ḥanpā": godless, pagan; the Hebrew "ḥanef": perverse; the Aramaic "ḥanfa", deceitful, haughty; the Ugaritic "ḥnp": without piety. Cf. Th. Mooren, *Macht und Einsamkeit Gottes...*, op. cit., p. 44, note 42.

⁴¹ And in conformity with it by the authors of the Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an...

⁴² As it is the case in 3, 20: "Say to those who were given the scriptures and to the pagans (ummiyyīna)..."

⁴³ Cf. for this M. Hayek, *Le Mystère...*, op. cit., p. 83-84, 142-146; J. Horowitz, *Qoranische Untersuchungen*, Berlin 1926, p. 52, 67; J.V. Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2.*

“ḥanīf” the negative connotation of “ummī” is fully assumed by the Prophet and thus being turned into a positive qualification!

What comes to light in cases like *aslama/islām*, *ḥanīf* and *ummī* is not something accidental or exceptional. Rather we are dealing with a true thought pattern of the Koran and of Islamic mentality and theology in general: This is best resumed by the structure of the *šahāda* (the Muslim creed) itself: “there is no God” (*lā ilāha*) – a negation, an almost “atheistic” action of *tabula rasa* which is then at its depth, around its own axis, so to speak, *paradoxically* and *simultaneously* turned into that *one* affirmation that says “except God” (*illallāh*)!⁴⁴

So much for Abraham the *ḥanīf* and the “psychology” of strict monotheism, also called *tauīd* in Arabic. Yet, the fact that Abraham the *ḥanīf*, the monotheist, served as “ur-model” for the Prophet himself, to such a degree that we could call the Prophet a “Abraham redivivus”, still reveals another important aspect of the Muslim faith. I mean by this that if Muḥammad is “Abraham redivivus” – then nothing new has happened in matters of history of salvation between the time of the Biblical patriarch and the Arabic Prophet. Indeed, do we not read in *sūra* 2, 136:

“Say (O Muslims): We believe in God and that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes (of Israel), and that which has been given to Moses and ʿĪsā (Jesus), and that which has been given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them and to him we have submitted (*naḥnu lahu muslimūna*)”⁴⁵.

Und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam, Vol. I, Berlin 1991, 31 (“ummī” means people who have not yet received a divine book); El¹ Art. “ummī”; H.-J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judentums*, [in:] *Gesammelte Schriften*, I, 2, Hildesheim, Zürich, New York 1998, p. 337-338; Th. Mooren, *Macht und Einsamkeit Gottes...*, op. cit., p. 44, note 41.

⁴⁴ See for this my study *Mytho-Logik versus Theo-Logik: die Fülle des Gewachsenen und die monotheistische “tabula rasa”*, [in:] Th. Mooren, *Es gibt keinen Gott – außer Gott. Der Islam in der Welt der Religionen*, Würzburg, Altenberge 1996, p. 103-133. Cf. too M. Hayek, *Les arabes...*, op. cit., p. 11: “L’islam s’est ainsi constitué à travers une série de contradictions éprouvées et surmontées; il n’a pris pleinement conscience de son originalité que dans ces refus qui en font apparemment une religion du Non, de la négativité historique et théologique. La particule arabe négatrice, *L*, par laquelle débute la profession majeure et salvifique de la foi musulmane... révèle l’islam comme l’Antagoniste par excellence, comme l’*Adversité*”.

⁴⁵ Cf. too *sūra* 2, 285; 4, 54; 5, 48. For interpretation of these verses see too my study *Paulus und Muammad oder die Leidenschaft der Dissidenz. Anmerkungen zu zwei typisch semitischen Glaubensschicksalen*, [in:] Th. Mooren, *Es gibt keinen*

This clearly audacious construction, that Schoeps and others rightly link to typical elements of Judeo-Christian theology, leaves no doubt about the Prophet's belief that there has been no fundamental alteration, when it comes to the revelation sent by God to humankind. The message of the Koran simply is the endpoint, the *recapitulation* and *confirmation* (muṣaddiq; 5, 48) of all previous messages. It is the message sent to Abraham, the "true prophet", the ḥanīf. It is the strict monotheism as Islam understands it⁴⁶. Within this perspective one can speak of "development" or "history" of salvation only in the sense that firstly the prophets, and with them the receivers of the one and same message (of monotheism) are changing throughout the ages and places; secondly the Prophet Muḥammad, as *endpoint* of the series of prophets, has preeminence over the previous messengers. With it comes the claim that he is no longer sent to a particular people or culture but rather to humankind as a whole: "O humankind (an-nās)! I am sent to you all as the Messenger (rasūl) of God, to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth..." (S. 7, 158). This claim also reflects naturally on the followers of such a Prophet. Their community has to be the best: "You (Muslims) are the best of the communities (kuntum ḥaira ummatin) ever raised up for humankind. You enjoin what is allowed and forbid what is forbidden, and you believe in God..." (S. 3, 110). In other words, Islam as caretaker of Abraham's monotheistic truth is also the purest, most *reformed* religion the world has ever seen – sticking only to the essential, the faith in One God and the practice such a faith entails.

The perspective of prophethood wandering through the ages and coming to rest with Muḥammad and his community (umma), obviously, has consequences for 'Īsā (Jesus) and his umma. It allows the Koran *at the same time* to accept Jesus – as a prophet in the abrahamic-ḥanīfitic sense (but sent to the Jews alone; S. 3, 49) *and* to reject "ortho-

Gott..., op. cit., p. 81-82.

⁴⁶ Also for the Judeo-Christians the *pneuma* of the one "true prophet", the prophet *alēthēs* or *tēs alētheias* – for them evidently Jesus – wanders from prophet to prophet until it finds its rest, has "come *ad requiem*" as they say, in the last one, the Son of Man. His final revelation, however, is nothing else than the one already given to Adam, First Man being indeed also the First Prophet. (For Islam and Adam, see below, my observations about the *fitra*!) Thus, the theologoumenon of the seven chairs (*hepta styloi*), the seven stages (prophets) the *pneuma* runs through. Moreover, the Judeochristians, as the Koran, avoid some prophets who are of vital interest for the "Greater Church" ("Großkirche") like Isias, Jeremy, etc. For details cf. H.-J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte...*, op. cit., p. 98-116, 334-342. For the concept of "Judeochristianity" see too the historical survey [in:] B. Nichtweiss, *Erik Peterson. Neue Sicht...*, op. cit. p. 293-295.

dox" Christianity, i.e., the belief in divine filiation and a triune God⁴⁷. To accept Jesus – for instance when he reiterates that “no one is good but God alone” (Mt, 19, 17; Mk 10, 18) or that “you must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone” (Mt 4, 10) etc. To reject orthodox Christianity – when this same Jesus becomes a victim of religious “exaggerations”⁴⁸. Exaggerations are statements like: “God is the Messiah, the son of Mary” or “God is the third of the three (in a Trinity)” (S. 5, 72/3). Against this the Koran affirms that Jesus, “son of Mary was no more than a messenger (ill rasūl)”; that he and his mother, although she was a holy woman, were “normal human beings”, both in need of food (sūra 5, 75). Hence it is no surprise, that Jesus, when asked by God himself, if he had ever taught people to worship him (and his mother) besides God (min dūni-llahi), vigorously denies this! (S. 5, 116-7).

In sum, the ambiguity with regard to Jesus is only the consequence of the position taken in sūra 30, 30, where we already learned that Abraham’s religion is the one of the “Ur-Zeit”, the fitra, the primeval time of the origin of creation, a creation that does not suffer any alteration on the part of the Creator. This, in turn, can only mean that Abraham himself is the perfect recapitulation of someone else *before* him – namely Adam!⁴⁹. Also, the identity Abraham-Adam is the reason why Abraham is neither a Jew nor a Christian (S. 3, 67), since these distinctions are not part of the fitra⁵⁰.

“O people of the Book (Jews and Christians)! Why do you dispute about Abraham, while the Torah (taurāt) and the Gospel (ingīl) were not revealed till after him? Have you then no sense?” (S. 3, 65).

In other words, Abraham’s message should be accepted exactly because it is older than Torah and Gospel⁵¹. It is, and with it the Koran,

⁴⁷ Sometimes even Mary acquired “divine” status (See S. 5, 116). Taking this into account together with the vagueness in the description of the “orthodox” position (see the Koranic examples of sūra 5, 72-73, given below) one could perhaps say, “orthodox” means basically “non-judeo-christian”.

⁴⁸ “O people of the Book (Jews and Christians): Do not exaggerate in your religion...! (lā taḡlū fī dīnikum)” (S. 5, 77).

⁴⁹ The same, by the way, is true for Jesus: “The likeness of Jesus before God is the likeness of Adam...” (S. 3, 59).

⁵⁰ It was, however, the will of God *not* to maintain the original unity: “If God had willed, he would have made you one community (umma waida). Instead he wanted to put the strength of the different religious group to a test – “that he may test you in what he has given you; so compete in good deeds...” (S. 5, 48).

⁵¹ Cf. too S. 2, 129-133, etc. See for this also H.-J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Ge-*

theologically speaking, as message of the primeval times (*fitra*) the true “ur-monotheistic” message and thus in reality the message of the “ur-prophet”, First Man Adam⁵². To put it differently, every human being is born a “muslim”⁵³. This sounds extravagant only if we forget the above discussed identity between “islām” as “submission” (literal meaning) and “islām” as a “positive religion” (that appeared on the world stage historically *after* Judaism and Christianity)! At any rate, *sūra* 7, 172/3 about the “*miṭāq*” only underscores this conviction of primitive monotheistic innocence – and the obligation that comes with it. The *miṭāq* is the pact concluded between God and humanity, while the humans were still in “Adam’s loins”, a kind of platonic pre-existence, before they experienced their physical birth, their fall into history:

“172. And (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed and made them testify as to themselves (saying): «Am I not your Lord?». They said: «Yes! We testify», lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: «Verily, we have been unaware of this»”.

173. Or lest you should say: «It was only our fathers a foretime who took others as partners in worship along with God, and we were (merely their) descendants after them...»”⁵⁴.

In sum, history cannot offer any excuses for living the life of a polytheist. The *fitra*-monotheism is not negotiable. It overrules history, hence it is that irreplaceable element which is *constitutive* for our being what we are, namely humans. Each human being is *as such* an “animal monotheisticus”. Indeed, if the Prophet “thanks to his Lord’s grace” (*bi-ni‘mati rabbika*; S. 52, 29) is able to claim something for himself, it is not a “divine title” of any kind, but a claim to be fully human! Fully human – because of the faith in the One God:

schichte..., op. cit., p. 336.

⁵² We encounter here again a thought figure of the Judeochristians concerning their self-understanding as the reform movement of Mosaic monotheism, i.e., why they considered themselves as followers of the true Mosaic religion. (Cf. H.-J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte...*, op. cit., p. 12-13, 342).

⁵³ We encounter this conviction again with the theologian and philosopher Ġazzālī (*Ilh̄yā* III, 56, 12ss). Al-Ġazzālī insists that only education/culture (i.e., parents) are responsible for the religious alienation of the newborns away from Islam! Cf. A.J. Wensinck, *La pensée de Ghazzālī*, Paris 1940, p. 44-45; see too Th. Mooren, *Macht und Einsamkeit Gottes...*, op. cit., p. 220, note 32.

⁵⁴ See too Th. Mooren, *Macht und Einsamkeit Gottes...*, op. cit., p. 83-85.

“Say, (O Muammad): «I am only a man like you (anā bašarun miṭlukum). It has been revealed to me that your God is One God...»” (S. 18, 110).

Finally, the interest the Koran shows for Abraham is not motivated by Abraham’s faith-gesture alone, but also by the fact that he is father (remember sūra 14, 35, 37; 2, 128 etc.), in particular the father of Ishmael. To be sure, Isaac, his other son, is not neglected, but there are occasions, where Ishmael is mentioned before Isaac. For instance in sūra 2, 125: “... and we made covenant (‘ahidnā) with Abraham and Ishmael (saying): purify my House (the Ka’bah at Mecca) for those who are circumambulating it...”⁵⁵. Also, for many Muslims it was not Isaac but Ishmael who was the destined victim to test Abraham’s faith⁵⁶.

Why this interest for Ishmael?⁵⁷ On the Koranic level the answer to this question is never given in an explicit manner, but perhaps we are not far from the truth, if we venture in the following direction: For the Jewish people Abraham is important as the guarantor of the divine promise – “It is to your descendants that I will give this land... All the land within sight I will give to you and your descendants for ever. I will make your descendants like the dust on the ground... I mean to give it to you”!⁵⁸. In other words, what is at stake with Abraham is the blessing of Gn 12, 3⁵⁹, i.e., the alliance (berīt) between God and his Chosen People (Gn 17, 1-14), an alliance *exclusively* linked to Isaac (Gn 17, 19-21)! The expulsion of Hagar/Ishmael dissipates the slightest doubts in this matter (Gn 17, 18/9; 21, 8-21).

However, as if this seemed too harsh a measure even for the staunchest partisans of Isaac, the Bible does at least not forget Ishmael.

⁵⁵ Cf. for this also H. Gätje, *The Qur’ān...*, op. cit., p. 11, 100, 102. See also: “And remember when Abraham and his son Ishmael were raising the foundations of the Ka’bah...” (S. 2, 127).

⁵⁶ H. Gätje, *The Qur’ān...*, op. cit., p. 272, note 12: “The Qur’ān mentions Abraham in a number of passages and includes several stories about him, including the story of the offering of his son (S 37, 102ff/100ff.), although it is not stated whether this son is Ishmael or Isaac...”.

⁵⁷ For the following see Y. Moubarac, *Abraham dans le Coran...*, op. cit., p. 63-72; M. Hayek, *Le Mystère...*, op. cit. p. 184-196 and by the same author: *Les arabes...*, op. cit., p. 87-118; Th. Mooren, *Macht und Einsamkeit Gottes...*, op. cit., p. 39-52, and by the same author: *Es gibt keinen Gott...*, op. cit., p. 67-102, and furthermore: “I do not adore...”, op. cit., p. 48-66.

⁵⁸ Gn 12, 7; 13, 15-17, etc.

⁵⁹ “I will bless those who bless you; I will curse those who slight you. All the tribes of the earth shall bless themselves by you”.

Ishmael does not totally fall out of the orbit of God's blessings. He is offered numerous descendants⁶⁰; he will be the father of twelve princes and the founder of a great nation (Gn 17, 20; 21, 18). This is *almost* as good as the promise made to Abraham, but falls short of the offer of true berit (Gn 17, 21). Even more so, hence Ishmael and his sons will be able to survive and taste the fruits of the divine promise made to them only in the state of perpetual adversity: "A wild ass of man he (Ishmael) will be, against every man, and every man against him, setting himself to defy all his brothers" (Gn 16, 12). Maybe it is here that we touch the deepest reason for the adversity or dissidence character of "islām" I discussed above. Yet, the story of Ishmael in the Bible does also this – it offers a window of opportunity to the Muslims as descendants of Ishmael, according to the Koran, to claim their due⁶¹. There are at least some passages in the Koran that insert themselves seamlessly into what I like to call the "dynamics of the ishmaelitic revendication", the protest against the Jewish and Christian attitude of exclusivity in matters of salvation:

"And the Jews and the Christians say: «We are the children of God and his loved ones». Say: «Why then does he punish you for your sins?». Nay, you are but (ordinary) human beings of those he has created..." (S. 5, 18).

"And they say: «None shall enter Paradise unless he (or she) be a Jew or a Christian». These are (only) their own desires. Say: «Produce your proof if you are truthful»" (S. 2, 111).

"The Jews say: «God's hand is tied up». Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for what they uttered. Nay, both his hands are widely outstretched..." (S. 5, 64).

In the eyes of the Prophet Muhammad, one of the most tangible signs of God's outstretched hands was certainly the fact that the revelation of the Koran occurred in clear Arabic, and not in Hebrew or Greek for example: "And thus we have revealed to you a Koran in Arabic that you may warn the Mother of the Towns (Mecca) and all around it..." (S. 42, 7).

⁶⁰ Gn 16, 10: "I will make your descendants too numerous to be counted"; cf. too Gn 17, 20.

⁶¹ This is certainly how the emperor Heraklius (610-641) and his court theologians understood the sudden appearance of the "Hagarites" on the threshold of the Byzantine empire. Cf. A. Ducellier, *Le Miroir de l'Islam. Musulmans et Chrétiens d'Orient au Moyen Age (VII^e-XI^e siècle)*, Paris 1971, p. 23-36.

We have now gathered enough elements to advance some observations on how different the *same* Abraham is when it comes to Judaism, Islam and Christianity, or more precisely to OT, Koran and NT. At least with regard to the First Book of Moses we can say that Abraham emerges as the guarantor of the alliance, which means on the level of the Genesis numerous descendants and land to populate. The decisive aspect of the story of the Biblical patriarch, however, consists in this: the divine promise can only work its way through history thanks to the patriarch's *faith*. This faith has been at least tested twice: when Abraham (then still Abram) trusted Yahweh enough to leave everything behind, in particular his family and his father's house, in order to set out for the Promised Land (Gn 12, 1/2) and when he was ready to sacrifice Isaac (Gn 22, 1-19).

In the same vein, for the Koran Abraham undoubtedly figures as the "father of faith". The Koranic Abraham too has to break away from his father's house and to sacrifice his son. Also his faith has the flavour of both, the dissidence or exodus-gesture and the strength of strict obedience. Compared to his Biblical model, however, we can say that the faith of the Koranic Abraham is much more "formalised", i.e., moulded into an exclusivist monotheistic creed that on the level of Genesis was not yet available. This detail, however, points already into the direction of what constitutes, despite all the common ground, the greatest difference between the Biblical and the Koranic Abraham – the *total islamization* of the patriarch.

This islamization, on one side, narrows the scope of the role and action of the patriarch, hence his monotheism, if we listen to the respective verses in sūra 2 and 14, only seems to concern the people around Mecca. More important, however, is that the same islamized Abraham, thanks to his link with the *fiṭra*, with "ur-religion" and "ur-creation", also becomes a "universal" figure – parallel to Muḥammad's claim to be the prophet of humankind and not only of the Arabs, parallel also to Gn 12, 3 (the blessing of "all the tribes of the earth" through Abraham). The simple blood relationship with Abraham and his son Ishmael – even if this is a source of pride for the Arabs⁶² – does not make a person a Muslim: "My covenant ('ahdī) does not include evil-doers (zlimūn)", says God to Abraham precisely when the latter was begging him to put

⁶² "Arabism" had certainly its ideological role to play in Islamic history, but did not develop into a "salvation racism". Cf for this too T. Nagel, *Eine Abstammungslegende im manlukischen Ägypten. Zur Problematik der Legitimation fremdbürtiger Machthaber im Islam*, p. 114, 116-117, [in:] P. Wunderli (ed.), *Herkunft und Ursprung...*, op. cit., p. 111-118.

some of his offspring into leading positions! (S. 2, 124)⁶³. Despite the parallelism between the Biblical “Promised Land” and the *safety* of the Meccan valley⁶⁴ (S. 2, 126, 14, 35 etc), what is at stake in the Koran is not a material good, i.e., land and descendants, but the universal offer to make one’s peace (salām) with God, to be safe from his wrath! To reach this peace, there is only one method: faith!

In this, the spiritual content of the blessing and its universality that transcends all blood-lines the Abraham of the Koran is closer to the Christian Abraham than to the guarantor of the alliance (berit) through Isaac alone on the level of Genesis. In particular, he is closer to the Abraham of the Pauline theology. Also Paul tries to break away from the “Promised Land” in the form of Canaan and an exclusive Isaac-based alliance in favour of an understanding of the promise made to Abraham as a universal *spiritual* blessing destined to all humankind. It is true that the picture of the blessing Paul has in mind differs under important aspects from the salvation discourse uttered by Islam. His is the salvation, the new creation, in Christ based upon the mystery of the Cross. But then again, the method to get there, to that “territory of the Cross” which is the new creation, is the same as the one employed by the Muslim for the attainment of his or her final spiritual goal: faith. Faith following the most faithful of all the faithful, a man called Abraham: “Take Abraham for example: he put his faith in God...!” (Ga 3, 6)⁶⁵.

Compared to the importance of Abraham in the letters of Paul the role of Abraham in the gospels seems almost pale. In Mt 3, 9 John the Baptist criticizes the Jews (Pharisees and Sadducees) in very harsh words for their religious self-assurance that makes them blind to repentance. Grounded is this religious “inactivism”, so John the Baptist, in the belief that the Jews have Abraham for father – but “God can raise children for Abraham from these stones”, vituperates the Baptist. The passage reminds us somehow of the Koranic polemics against Jewish and Christian religious exclusivism (S. 2, 111; 5, 18, 64; etc.), but does not tell us much about Abraham.

⁶³ “Ceux qui dans la postérité ismaëlienne tout aussi bien qu’isaaquienne... d’Abraham auront renié le patrimoine de la foi, sont mis à l’index et rejetés de la communauté. Il ne suffira donc pas de se dire fils d’Abraham selon la chair, mais de l’être aussi selon la foi”. (M. Hayek, *Le Mystère...*, op. cit., p. 186).

⁶⁴ Whose fertility, however, is not granted – therefore Abraham’s prayer to provide the people with fruits (S. 2, 126, etc.). See too S. 14, 37, that speaks of an “uncultivable valley” (bi-wādin ġairi dī zar’in); cf. too R. Paret, *Der Koran...*, 271, ad. loc.; Chr. Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran. Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache*, Berlin 2000, p. 299-300.

⁶⁵ For Paul and Abraham see also my detailed analysis [in:] *Es gibt keinen Gott...*, op. cit., p. 70-79 and in “*I do not adore...*”, op. cit., p. 49-55.

The most famous gospel passage with regard to Abraham is probably Jn 8, 58: "I tell you most solemnly, before Abraham ever was, I Am". Here again, the context is clearly polemic. At stake is to prove that Jesus is "greater than our father Abraham, who is dead" (Jn 8, 53) and that Abraham "rejoiced to think that he would see my (i.e., Jesus') Day" (Jn 8, 56). There is clearly no attempt to present Jesus as a second Abraham in the way the Koran did it with regard to Muhammad. On the contrary, the goal is to surpass Abraham. The new reality of the Johannine Jesus – a plain example of what the Koran would call an "exaggeration" – cannot be expressed in terms of recapitulation etc. Abraham becomes a "typos" of the past, a true prophetic figure, but he is nowhere close to the full salvation Jesus brings. As Erik Peterson puts it with regard to the intended sacrifice of his son: Abraham is not allowed to spread his own blood, nor the blood of his son. The true salvific sacrifice occurs only in Christ⁶⁶.

I like to conclude with a testimony the Jesus of the Synoptics himself delivers with regard to Abraham. I have in mind the well-known legal case of the seven brothers who all marry the same woman. The case is presented to Jesus by Sadducees known for their denial of the resurrection. Yet, what greater homage can be paid to the Biblical patriarch than to be named as one of the guarantors of the faith in just that – the resurrection, hence God, because he is God "is not of the dead but of the living". And the *living* are these: Abraham (at the first place!), Isaac and Jacob! (Mt 22, 23-33; Mk12, 18-27). Is there a brighter, more future-oriented beacon for the Islamo-Christian dialogue than this Abraham, the "father of the living?".

Jesus the Son of God

The fundamental position of the Koran when it comes to Jesus, son of Mary, has already been outlined while discussing the role of the prophets within the horizon of the *fitra*. In this last section of my paper I briefly like to make three points concerning the question of why Islam reacts so strongly in face of the Christian assertion of God's fatherhood, i.e., the divine filiation of Jesus. I am aware of the complexity of the question, even more so on the side of Christian theol-

⁶⁶ Peterson insists on this point in his criticism of Luther and the Reformation. By not taking fully into account the fundamental difference between Abraham and Jesus, the Reformation, so Peterson, ends up with a "purely declamatory theory of justification" ("eine reine deklaratorische Rechtfertigungslehre"). See the analysis [in:] B. Nichtweiss, *Erik Peterson. Neue Sicht...*, op. cit., p. 184-186.

ogy, hence Christian theology at its best has always been, and always will be, a wrestling with this one fundamental question: Who is Jesus? And the answers have been many – producing more a cacophony than a harmony!⁶⁷

My first point consists in focusing again on the Koranic protest against Jewish and Christian religious exclusivism. As we have seen, according to sūra 2, 111 “Paradise” is practically closed to non-Jews and non-Christians. The reason: only Jews and Christians are “the *children* (“sons”: *abnā’ ū*) of God and his loved ones” (S. 5, 18). In other words, the use of any kind of “kinship language” with regard to God – to call God “father” and ourselves his “children” – seems to harbour a deeply-rooted attitude of *discrimination* against those who do not enjoy such close kinship relation with God. The question here is not if this *has* to be so and if Christians acting the way the Koran describes it are justified in what they are doing⁶⁸. Rather it has to be acknowledged that in the run of history the temptation of embracing a discriminatory position in the name of God’s fatherhood and Jesus’ divine filiation has not been avoided.

Maybe the discriminatory position taken by Jews and Christians with regard to the “other” in the name of kinship-privileges has also strengthened the determination of the Prophet to embrace neither Judaism nor Christianity, but to find his “own way” out of the religious crisis that had shaken him at the age of forty-two. Being like Ishmael, the excluded “wild ass”, so to speak, would he have ever felt “at home” in the womb of these two great religions?

My second point directs to the Prophet’s acquaintance with the Arab Judeo-Christian milieu. First of all, it might come as a surprise to learn how strong Judeo-Christianity was among the Arabs. Taubes, for instance, points out that up to the X. century we still have testimonies in Arab manuscripts on Judeo-Christians, thus attesting to their presence on Arabian soil. For him it makes no doubt, that the Prophet did not, like a master-chef, simply mix up some Jewish and some Christian concepts to “fabricate his Islam”. Rather he has made his own some very precise Judeo-Christian traditions and incorporated them in the Koran⁶⁹.

This route is even more forcefully pursued by Schoeps who

⁶⁷ For the following see Th. Mooren, *Paternité et Généalogie...*, op. cit., p. 174-231 and my study: *The Trinity in the Eyes of Islamic Theology*, [in:] “I do not adore...”, op. cit., p. 78-107.

⁶⁸ Cf. Th. Mooren, *On the Border...*, op. cit., p. 126-132.

⁶⁹ Cf. J. Taubes, *Die politische Theologie des Paulus*, München 1993, p. 34-35.

states that an “indirect dependency of Muḥammad from sectarian Judeo-Christianity is beyond any doubt”⁷⁰. Even more, it is through Islam as one of its driving forces that Judeo-Christianity has been preserved until today on the stage of world history and history of religions⁷¹. Lüling, for his part, goes in the same direction when he calls Muḥammad “extremely knowledgeable in Judeo-Christian theology”⁷². Lüling even draws our attention to some sources, like al-Ya’qūbī, according to which already the Prophet’s grandfather ‘Abdalmuttalib was considered to be a “second Abraham” with a theology close to Judeo-Christianity rejection of the cult of images, belief in One God, establishment of a “sunna”, i.e., a set of rules, all of this later incorporated by Muḥammad into the Koran⁷³.

The reason why I mention the Arab Judeo-Christian connection does not lie in an attempt to reduce Islam to something else, whose simple copy it then would be, deprived of all originality⁷⁴. Rather I try

⁷⁰ H.-J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte...*, op. cit., p. 343; my transl. Th. M.

⁷¹ “Und somit ergibt sich als Paradox wahrhaft weltgeschichtlichen Ausmaßes die Tatsache, daß das Judenchristentum zwar in der christlichen Kirche untergegangen ist, aber im Islam sich konserviert hat und in einigen seiner treibenden Impulse bis in unsere Tage hineinreicht” (H.-J., Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte...*, op. cit., p. 342).

⁷² See G. Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muhammad. Eine Kritik am “christlichen” Abendland*, Erlangen 1981, p. 355, note 29. Cf. too by the same author: *Über den Ur-Qur’an. Ansätze zur Rekonstruktion vorislamischer christlicher Strophelieder im Qur’an*, Erlangen 1974; *Der christliche Kult an der vorislamischen Kaaba als Problem der Islamwissenschaft und der christlichen Theologie*, Erlangen 1992.

⁷³ Cf. G. Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung...*, op. cit., p. 255; cf. also *ibid.*, p. 398, note 79. While Schoeps and Lüling stress above all the Judeo-Christian character of the “Ur-Koran” or of some of the driving forces of Islam in general, Luxenberg, in his *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran* tries to demonstrate that the “Ur-Koran” or what is considered to be the “first Meccan periode” is *as kitāb*, the Holy Book, in reality nothing else than a Syro-Aramaic version (that was later no longer correctly understood) of the canonical Jewish and Christian scriptures *plus* some apocrypha. The *kiāth*, according to Luxenberg, even refers to orthodox Christian practices like the celebration of the Last Supper! (Cf. Chr. Luxenberg, *ibid.*, p. 79-83, 275-298, etc.).

⁷⁴ Also we should not forget that the theological question we are studying here is only one current of Islamic theology. If it is true that at a given moment in its process of development Islam has been fascinated by the “Judeo-Christian problem” – soon other preoccupations will take the center stage. Islam will turn more and more his back on christological problems and succumb to a growing fascination with the old Arab pagan world and Arab nationalism. (Cf. G. Lüling, *Über den Ur-Qur’an...*, op. cit., p. 406-412, and by the same author: *Die Wiederentdeckung...*, op. cit., p. 205-212, 309-311). The end-result is that the Koranic monotheism or Islamic theology in general is “Biblical” only in his “Abrahamitic-Ishmaelitic” phase, but no lon-

to present arguments that can help us understand the resistance on the part of the Koran with regard to any theology that considers Jesus (or the Messiah for that matter) to be the “son of God”. The Koran does not do it, *because* Judeo-Christianity does not do it. For Judeo-Christian as for Late Judaism both groups living at the crossroads with different kinds of Gnosticism and other sectarian formations⁷⁵ “the *kyrios*-title of the Messiah is a title he bears only because of his *angelic* nature”⁷⁶ and not because he is God’s “son”. For a theology that developed itself along this line including the recapitulation-scheme Jesus-New Moses⁷⁷ and thus considered Jesus above all as the *true Prophet* and *mighty Angelos*⁷⁸, there was no interest to embark on a theology of Jesus’ divine filiation.

So much for what I call the “outside” reasons for the Islamic rejection of a theology of divine filiation with regard to Jesus; “outside” in the sense of being conditioned by the historical context. Yet, there is still one last point dealing with “inside” reasons produced by the Ko-

ger in its totality. Hence the Vatican II Council positions Islam in *Lumen Gentium*, II, de populo Dei § 16 among the “nature religions”, i.e., those who acknowledge a Creator-God without the help of the written word of the Bible (“Sed propositum et eos amplectitur, qui Creatorem agnoscunt, inter quos imprimis Musulmanos...”). It is true, Islam gets the first place among this category of religions (imprimis), but its link with Abraham is reduced to a belief on the part of the Muslims (“qui fidem Abrahae se tenere profitentes”), contrary to the creed in One God. Here Islamo-Christian unity is stressed: “*noibiscum* (with us!) Deum adorant unicum, misericordem, homines die novissimo iudicaturum”. (See for this Th. Mooren, *Pengantar Agama Islam. I. Islam. Pencapaian Identitas Oran Arab*, Pematang Siantar, Indonesia, p. 106-113). Maybe we could say that Islam is a typical religion “on the border” permanently oscillating between Bible and “nature”.

⁷⁵ For the resulting multitude of Messianic expectations in Late Judaism and the fact that often they don’t have much to do with the OT see for instance B. Noack, *Spätjudentum und Heilsgeschichte...*, op. cit., p. 90-93; H.-G. Kippenberg, *Die Entdeckung der Religionsgeschichte...*, op. cit., p. 164-172. For the complex relationship between these groups, Judeo-Christians (of different generations), Jews, Gnostics (Ebionites, etc.), “Greater Chruch” (“Großkirche”), etc., – and all of them (often) bitterly divided among themselves – see H.-J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte...*, op. cit., p. 304-334.

⁷⁶ G. Lüling, *Über den Ur-Qur’ān...*, op. cit., p. 65 (italics and transl. by Th. M.), with regard to the “*rabbāniyyūn*” of sūra 3, 79 (according to Lüling: “angels of dominion”/“Herrschaftsengel”; *ibid.*, 67; for Judeo-Christian angelology see also Lüling’s interpretation of 4, 171/2, in his *Die Wiederentdeckung...*, op. cit., p. 69-71; cf. too *ibid.*, p. 55-6, 60-72, 307.

⁷⁷ Cf. H.-J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte...*, op. cit., p. 87-116.

⁷⁸ See too the “Wonder Counselor (Angel)” of Is. 9, 6; cf. for this G. Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung...*, op. cit., p. 55.

ran in order to sustain its position in the matter we are discussing. In sūra 17, 111 we read:

“And say: «All the praises and thanks be to God who has not taken a son (lam yattahid waladan) and who has no partner in his dominion, nor he is low to have a wali»” (helper, protector or supporter).

We can clearly see here that what is at stake⁷⁹ is not the question, if the “son of God” is (wrongly) understood in a “physical” sense or not. What only and alone matters is the fact that in the eyes of the Koran, according to the anthropological model it works with, “having a son” is equivalent to a situation of power-sharing and co-ownership, the very backbone of the notion of *širk*. Once a man enters the web of kinship relations – since “taking a son” normally includes “taking a wife” (or wives) – i.e., relations that are based upon a code of mutual rights and obligations, the loss of personal autonomy is inevitable. Inevitable but *necessary* – since it is the only way for a man to survive! In other words, a man *needs* a son because of his own weaknesses, and in the run of daily life there are many of them. Sickness, old age, need of protection in various situations including wars – all this and much more are good reasons for “taking” a son or sons⁸⁰. Last but not least, a man needs a son because of his own mortality. His “survival” is only guaranteed by a son holding up his memory, his achievements are only secured through the production of heirs.

Yet, all this, we see it immediately, does not, cannot apply to God!⁸¹. In fact, his being-God is demonstrated exactly by the fact that he is not in need of what is essential, fundamental and absolute necessary for humankind. He is God because he is absolutely *self-sufficient*: “(The unbelievers) say: «God has taken a son. Glory to him! He is enough to himself (al-ganyyu lahū)!»”⁸². He was not in need of anyone when

⁷⁹ For the following see for instance my studies [in:] *Anthropos, Monotheïsm et anthropologie*, and *The Lonely God and His Rebellious Children. Monotheism and ufism*, [in:] “I do not adore...”, op. cit., p. 108-115.

⁸⁰ Again it does not matter, if the son is “procured” through blood-relationship or adoption, for instance!

⁸¹ Cf. also S. 4, 171; 6, 101; 43, 15-16; 53, 21-23; 112, 2-3, etc. As especially sūra 53, 22-23 show (“Is it for you the males and for Him the females? That would be a division most unfair!”,; unfair (“*dīzā*”) because daughters are not what an Arab male is wishing for!; cf. S. 16, 57-59, etc.) the social “needs” are defined on the basis of a patriarchal system. Therefore the real argument runs via the son(s).

⁸² Cf. also S. 4, 131; 22, 64; 31, 26, etc. – Already Aristotle argues that a *truly* self-sufficient being is either an animal or God, but never a human being!

it came to creation, he is strong enough to govern the world alone, he does not die and is not in need of an heir. Furthermore, only because he is *ganyyu* and thus was capable of creating the world *alone* and for a first time, he will also be capable of creating it a second time, when the world is up for the final judgement (cf. *sūra* 75, 36-40; 31, 28, etc.). Try to weaken God by destroying his autonomy, by spinning a whole network of kinship relations around him, and be it one single son – and the whole monotheistic belief system will lose its stringency. Thus, the verdict is out, not only on the preislamic pagan gods, but also on the Christian Trinity. Trinity is *širk*, the illicit association between God and what is not Him, and those who utter such a belief, are exaggerating *mušriks*, associationists:

“O Christians! Do not exaggerate in your religion! ... Say not «Three!» Cease. It is better for you. For God is One God, glory to him. Far exalted is he above having a son. To him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. And God is all-sufficient as a disposer of affairs” (S. 4, 171)⁸³.

Cf. O. Langer, *Legitimitas spuria? Zu einigen Legitimationsformen in theologischen und mystischen Texten*, p. 56, [in:] P. Wunderli (ed), *Herkunft und Ursprung...*, op. cit., p. 53-70.

⁸³ For more on Islam and Trinity see my detailed study in “*I do not adore...*”, op. cit., p. 78-107. It might well be, as Lüling sustains, because of the role Judeo-Christianity played in the formation of Islam (see my discussion above!), that the term “*mušrik*” was initially coined not against pagans who practised “*širk*”, associationism, but against “trinitarian” Christians. (The same thing would then apply also to Abraham the anti-“*mušrik*”!) Lüling might also be right in supposing a later “revisionist” attitude of the Muslim intelligentsia with regard to the Christian elements in the Prophet’s early theological elaborations. To avoid the thorny and potentially harmful discussion of christological questions altogether, the Koranic main enemy, the *mušrik*, was then redesigned as the idolatrous pagan and the importance of the Prophet’s original wrestling with trinitarian theology occluded. (Cf. G. Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung...*, op. cit., p. 205-212; 309-311, etc.; Th. Mooren, *Es gibt keinen Gott...*, op. cit., p. 91-92, note 244.). Finally, the supposed Judeo-Christian elements in the Koran have to co-exist with Muḥammad the visionary as we encountered him at the beginning of the present study. There is no reason to put into doubt that the Prophet *also* acted in such a way that he could be taken by his contemporaries as the mad poet he denies so forcefully to be! Furthermore, there is nothing in Muḥammad’s visions that is incompatible with Judeo-Christian theology in the sense that they do not depict the intimacy of a “son” sitting in the womb of his “father”, but the distance of two bows’ length between God and his Prophet!

It is true that the Koran's anti-filiation discourse in order to establish what is a basic fact for all "natural" theology, namely God's self-sufficiency, only works before the background of a typical patriarchal tribal society. It is also true that anthropology, if ever, should only be used in a strictly analogical manner when it comes to positive statements about "God". Furthermore, the anthropological reality allows several interpretations, depending on what point one wants to make⁸⁴. Christians for instance use that very "son" in order to express the *freedom* they have acquired in Christ, being now able to call God *Father*. They are no longer his slaves but his children (Ga 4, 1-11; 2Co 3, 9, 17 etc.). Logically speaking, by stressing this point, the problem the Koran takes issue with (namely that a God who is "father" is *ipso facto* weak and powerless and therefore cannot be "God") might thus remain unsolved or unsolvable. It might not be possible on the level of pure logic to state God's absolute power and his mercy in one and the same breath, while still using anthropology as building block for the theological discourse. At least if one understands "fatherhood" in the way the Koran does.

Yet, be this as it might be – we can certainly learn from this dilemma, how careful one has to be in dealing with positive dogmatic statements in a given dialogue situation⁸⁵. One has to develop a "feeling" for the motives and intentions that lie beyond the mantle of language. One has to enter the "language game" (Wittgenstein) *of the other*, to detect its rules, its grammar. Only then can we discover the *validity* which is not the same as the plain truth of a given statement. And that is all what is needed to foster mutual respect.

There might never be a unity between religions on logical, i.e., purely rational grounds, unless someone simply surrenders to the arguments of the other side. Does the Koran not warn: "Never will the Jews nor the Christians be pleased with you (O Muḥammad), till you follow their religion! (S. 2, 120)"? Yet, history tells us not only that this kind of zeal worked both ways. It also tells us this: that unity within diversity and vice versa is not asking for the total surrender of the dialogue partner, in particular not on the level of dogmatic discourse. Instead, it points to the direction of a rivalry in an altogether different field – the field of sainthood, i.e., good deeds!⁸⁶: "Be patient; verily God wastes not the reward of the good-doers" (S. 11, 115).

⁸⁴ See for this Th. Mooren, *Macht und Einsamkeit Gottes...*, op. cit., p. 76-86, 172.

⁸⁵ See also my *Warum Muslime Christen nicht verstehen können*, "Kontinente", No 30, 1995, p. 25.

⁸⁶ See also my arguments [in:] *On the Border...*, op. cit., p. 76-84.



THOMAS MOOREN OFMCAP

**Unity in Diversity. The “Prophets” Muḥammad, Abraham and Jesus
and the Islamo-Christian Dialogue**

Abstract

The author argues that dialogue between Islam and Christianity is necessary to avoid intolerance and politicization of both religions. However, a real dialogue must be based not only on achieving easy approval resulting from the real similarities, but also – and perhaps primarily – on becoming aware of the differences. Such a dialogue can lead to unity in diversity, in which there will be no place for domination of a party, but rather a competition in faith and investigation towards achieving holiness.

The article discusses three problems that largely divide Christians and Muslims: Muhammad as a prophet, the role of Abraham in the Islamic revelation and the question of divine filiation of Jesus. The author, relying on the Qur’an, presents mainly the standpoint of Islam (supplemented for comparison with relevant excerpts from the book of Genesis and the New Testament) that sees Mohammed and his revelation as the crowning of a long series of prophets. Although Jesus also is considered a prophet and is one of the most important ones, but suras of the Qur’an strongly emphasize that he cannot be God’s son, because it would impair the perfection and self-sufficiency of the one God, and thus would deny His divinity. The Koran also performs the “Islamization” of Abraham, seeing him as a fully conscious follower of the monotheistic, universalistic religion and a kind of prefiguration of Muhammad – the only just one struggling with pagan (and even more broadly – un-Islamic) environment.

Keywords: Muḥammad, Abraham, Jesus, Islamology, Missiology, Islamo-Christian Dialogue, Interreligious Dialogue.

THOMAS MOOREN OFMCAP

**Jedność w różnorodności. „Prorocy” Mahomet, Abraham i Jezus
a islamsko-chrześcijański dialog**

Streszczenie

Autor dowodzi, że dialog pomiędzy islamem a chrześcijaństwem jest warunkiem uniknięcia nietolerancji i polityzacji tych religii.

Jednak rzeczywisty dialog musi opierać się nie tylko na osiągnięciu łatwej zgody wynikającej z realnych podobieństw, lecz również – a może przede wszystkim – na uświadomieniu sobie różnic. Taki dialog może doprowadzić do jedności w różnorodności, w której nie będzie miejsca na dominację którejś ze stron, lecz raczej na współzawodnictwo w wierze i w dochodzeniu do świętości.

W artykule zostały omówione trzy problemy, które w znacznym stopniu dzielą chrześcijan i muzułmanów: Mahomet jako prorok, rola Abrahama w muzułmańskim objawieniu i kwestia Bożego synostwa Jezusa. Autor, opierając się na Koranie, przedstawia głównie stanowisko islamu (uzupełnione dla porównania odpowiednimi fragmentami z księgi Rodzaju i Nowego Testamentu), które widzi w Mahomecie i jego objawieniu ukoronowanie długiego szeregu proroków. Choć Jezus również uznany został za proroka i to jednego z najważniejszych, jednak sury Koranu mocno podkreślają, że nie może on być Bożym synem, ponieważ umniejszałoby to doskonałość i samowystarczalność jedyne Boga, a tym samym zaprzeczałoby Jego boskości. Koran dokonuje również „islamizacji” Abrahama, widząc w nim w pełni świadomego wyznawcę monoteistycznej, uniwersalistycznej religii i swego rodzaju prefigurację Mahometa – jedyne sprawiedliwego zmagającego się z pogańskim (a nawet szerzej – nieislamskim) otoczeniem.

Słowa kluczowe: Mahomet, Abraham, Jezus, islamologia, misjologia, dialog islamo-chrześcijański, dialog międzyreligijny.