

## **Revelation and Inspiration in Christianity and Islam**

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### **1. Introduction**

1.1. In order to study the question of revelation, or of inspiration in these two religions, I am obliged to start first of all with the religion based on a preexisting horizon which is the whole biblical tradition. I mean by this: Islam.

If the bible had been composed of several traditions, starting from Genesis, passing through the Hebrew law and the Prophets, the Psalms and the Books of Wisdom to get finally to the new testament -also composed of many traditions, Islam on the contrary is based on a single book, the Koran, that constitutes by itself a unique coherent written tradition framed during Mohammed's life and the twenty years after his death when the process of compilation of all the verses was completed under the caliph Uthman. This is at least according to the Muslim tradition; something we will not put in doubt here because we do not have to raise this issue now.

1.2. Therefore, it is easier to identify in the first place the spirit in which the Koran was conceived rather than to analyze the different biblical traditions. Nevertheless, later on we will have to study them more attentively, in particular, at the New Testament tradition.

1.3. For, when we read the Koran, one thing attracts our attention, we cannot understand it without knowing certain important components of the biblical tradition. Yet, not all of them, since there are essential elements of the Christian Bible which the Koran entirely ignores. On the other hand, the Koran largely exceeds the written Bible by getting inspired from non canonical biblical traditions even so that scholars have enormous difficulties in finding the origins. It is evident that the Koran draws widely from preexistent Christian and Jewish sources like the Bible, the Talmud and the Midrash, the apocrypha of the old and New Testament, Jewish and Christian legends as well.

1.4. We don't have to search here for these sources of the Koran. By mentioning some of them we are rather going to detect what the Koran wants to do with this "biblical material" it adopts. What is the fundamental message it seeks to transmit? It is here, in fact, where we may possibly find what can be called "revelation" in Islam.

1.5. Many of you know in one way or other the history of the Koran and Mohammed's proclamation. Yet, I will concentrate on this for a while, since it is the

essential point of my talk.

## **2. The context in which the Koran appeared**

2.1. We all know that Mohammed was born in Mecca, in a polytheistic environment. The Muslim sources describe the Ka'ba, a religious center managed by the Kuraysh tribe, the surroundings of the Ka'ba, the columns representing an important number of divinities present at that time, various holy places of the region related to this center, the sacrifices that take place, pilgrimages which gathered numbers of tribes from the west of Arabia, the three astral divinities worshipped by polytheist Arabs: al-Lât, Mnât, and al-'Uzza mentioned in the Koran to challenge them in Chapter 53. It is obviously the furthest region of the Middle East where the ancient Semitic polytheistic religion survived. We find several common elements of this religion with the Hebrew's neighbors in the Bible. So, it is a survival of a thousand years' history.

2.2. It is a survival, because during the sixth century after Jesus Christ, the Middle East was christianized. Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia were Christian as well as Syria and a large part of Mesopotamia. Palestine of the sixth century was Christian. If Judaism was only sporadically present in Palestine among others in Tiberias, many tribes settled in Arabia fleeing probably from the Roman repression after the defeat of the last resistance in 135. We could find them also in Yathrib, that became later on Medina, Madinat-an-Nabi, the city of the prophet. There were even Jews in Yemen together with Christians. Some of them were known: they are the Christians of Najran.

2.3. All this is very well known. But, the kind of presence Christians and Jews had in Arabia is less clear: they are above all the bearers of oral biblical traditions, and as for the Christians, they were also impregnated with heterodoxy if not ignorant of the essential elements of Christianity. When Father Heshaymeh analyzed the preislamic Arabic poetry studied by Father Sheikho, he concluded that certain poets were Christians however, they didn't know or knew very little about the essential Christian message: Incarnation, Trinity, Redemption,...

2.4. Another essential point: the social and economic context of Mecca. We know that the Quraysh tribe managed to monopolize the caravan trade that related Yemen –and thus, Africa- to Mesopotamia and the rest of the Middle East. The departure of these caravans was certainly a very important event because it is evoked in chapter 106: the people of kuraysh get along very well when “the caravan of winter and summer ”is in question because these caravans brought wealth and power. A wealth and power that will be criticized by the Koran for the self-sufficiency that derives from it. Moreover, they know that they are protected by the lord of the Ka'ba, their supreme god.

### 3. The fundamental message of the Koran

3.1. Here we have two elements joined together in this chapter 106 which goes back to the early beginning of Mohammed's recitation: the caravans (verse 2) and the call to worship the lord of the holy temple "RABB AL BAYT"(verse 3). We can say that Mohammed was writing his message entirely within the context of Mecca where he was born and grew up.

3.2. Yet, it is nothing of the sort. And this is the real fundamental issue. Let's read together some of the oldest verses of the Koran recited at the beginning of the recitation by Mohammed.

Chapter 93, 9-11:

- 10 Therefore, as for the orphan, do not oppress (him).
- 11 And as for him who asks, do not chide (him).
- 12 And as for the favor of your Lord, do announce (it).

Chapter 96,6-8:

- 6 Nay! Man is most surely inordinate.
- 7 Because he sees himself free frok want.
- 8 Surely to your Lord is the return.

Chapter 102,1-8:

- 1 Abundance diverts you.
- 2 Until you come to the graves.
- 3 Nay! You shall soon know.
- 4 Nay! Nay! You shall soon know.
- 5 Nay! If you had known with a certain knowledge.
- 6 You should most certainly have seen the hell.
- 7 Than you shall most certainly see it with eye of certainty.
- 8 Then on that day you shall most certainly be questioned about the boons.

Chapter 104,1-9:

- 1 Woe to every slanderer, defamer.
- 2 Who amasses wealth and considers it a provision (against mishap).
- 3 He thinks that his wealth will make him mortal.
- 4 Nay! He shall most certainly be hurled into the crushing disaster.
- 6 It is the fire kindled by Allah.
- 7 Which rises above the hearts.
- 8 Surely it shall be closed over upon them.
- 9 In extended columns.

Chapter 107,1-3:

- 1 Have you considered him who calls the judgment a lie?
- 2 That is the one who treats the orphan with harshness.

3 And does not urge (others) to feed the poor.

3.3. I have at length enumerated these verses, since they reveal the initial message of the Koran. An outline of a basic message appears from the start taking shape in the early recitations and leading very rapidly on to a double theme:

The rejection of sufficiency as well as self-satisfaction, and the assertion of the ethical responsibility; mankind is interpellated because he will be judged upon his acts.

“Then as for him who gives away and guards (against evil),  
And accepts the best,  
We will facilitate for him the easy end.  
And as for him who is niggardly and considers himself free from need (of Allah),  
And rejects the best,  
We will facilitate for him the difficult end.  
And his wealth will not avail him when he perishes”.  
(Koran 92:5-11).

The image of the judgment day, which expresses this theme, is very close to the prophetic biblical eschatology. We encounter hell, a devouring fire (167 times in the Koran) The Hebrew nomination of this hell “Djahannam” 77 times in 39 chapters... the term “djanna”, gardens of paradises, 70 times!

3.4. The conclusion I deduce from this short analysis of the early times of the Koran is the following: in the social, economical and religious context of Mecca a prophetic message with biblical characteristics is suddenly proclaimed by a Mecca citizen who was always well integrated in the Mecca community. All the Meccan people were astounded.

3.5. Defining the initial kerygma which the Islamic message has, doesn't seem so difficult to me. It is present in this refusal of self-sufficiency shown by the Meccan citizens at the time of Mohammed. It is the mirror of their refusal of the recitation of the Koran, which has an exceptional expression in the rhythm and the vision - that fascinates them -, we distinguish best what constitutes Mohammed's initial flash of revelation. We distinguish this light that enlightens, with a new spirit, the ignorance of the Meccan. Satisfied with themselves and with their success in trade, they prefer the comfort of their affluence to the values of solidarity and transcendence to which the prophet calls them. Three themes are bound together; they constitute a turning point that separates a world at his end, the last vestiges of a certain Semitic polytheism, from a new humanism: 1-justice and solidarity; 2-judgment in the hereafter; 3-the only Lord, master of all the world and all the livings: RAbb Al-âlamîn. Faith in God, justice and solidarity come together and are in the core of the religion.

3.6. So, it seems to me, that if we analyze the Koran theme of the Meccan chapters, an important eschatology appears clearly, associated with the assertion of God the sole creator: It is the requirement of justice and solidarity in the light of judgment, primordial theme of the Koran which leads the listener to ethic interrogation. Yet, this message has a fundamental biblical character and is not related in any way to the ancient religion of the Meccan.

3.7. from this message the Koran says that it has a divine origin. It is revealed abruptly:

Chapter 39:1 and 40:2:

“The revelation of the Book is from Allah, the Mighty (the Wise), [the Knowing]”.

Chapter 41:2

“A revelation from the Beneficent, the Merciful God”.

We note in passing that we know through inscriptions from Yemen that the Christians and the Jews of this region used to call God by the name of Rahmân whereas the Meccan knew only Allah, the supreme god and the lord of the Ka’ba. Yet, the Koran identifies this supreme god and lord of the Ka’ba to God the creator, judge and merciful which is the God of the Bible .

#### **4. Explicitness of the message**

4.1. This message assembles three essential elements of the biblical message in which the Meccan didn’t believe or didn’t know - here we have an essential point in our presentation - (1) the eschatology: the last judgment and the payment in the future life, hell and paradise, (2) the strict monotheism, that gathers in one God the important attributes: being creator and merciful judge (3) the prophecy whereas the Meccans only know soothsayers - and their oracles - as well as poets. Prophecy isn’t in the first place the same as it is in the Old Testament with Amos and the majority of the prophets, knowledge of the future, but a rude warning and an ethical requirement.

4.2. This message of the Koran will be made explicit - first it will take the form of commandments, as we know in the Bible. Then, when Mohammed has to take refuge in Yathrib, Medina, and becomes the head of the city, the commandments will be detailed into concrete prescriptions concerning the rituals, the family, the society, the holy war and other aspects.

4.3. As for the fundamental commandments, we encounter them again in two chapters 17 and 5 (in brief). So, we won’t be surprised to find in the Koran a list of

fundamental precepts that guide human behavior, these precepts are on the whole analogue to the ten commandments of the Bible expressed in the book of Exodus (20: 1-7); imposing commandments with the risk of eroding what constitutes the human itself. These rules of conduct are found in the middle of a Meccan Surat, 17:22-39, (al-Isrâ'; the Night Journey) as well as in chapter (6, 151-156) where Moses is mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

Among others, we come upon this beautiful expression of verses 23-24 related to parents who become old:

“And to be good to parents, whether one or both of them attains old age with thee; say not To them: “Fie” neither chide them, but speak unto them words respectful, and lower to them the wing of humbleness out of mercy and say, “My lord, have mercy upon them, as They raised me up when I was little”.

#### Other prescriptions command

- to be good with your kinsman, the poor, and the passenger.
- not to kill children in fear of poverty.
- to avoid adultery.
- Not to “kill except by night, the life which Allah made sacred”.
- not to seize the property of the orphan.
- to hold to one’s commitments, to be just, not greedy...
- not to “trample the earth with pride” or insolence...
- “That is the wisdom the Lord has revealed to you”!

4.4. All this is framed within the first commandment of not placing any other god next to God (verses 22-23 and 39) as is the case in the Bible (Exodus 20,

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<sup>1</sup> 6,151: Say: Come, I will recite what your Lord has forbidden you: that you associate not anything with him, and to be good with your parents, and not to slay your children because of poverty; we will provide you and them; and that you approach not any indecency outward or inward, and that you slay not the soul God has forbidden, except by right. That then he has charged you with; perhaps you will understand.

6,152: And that you approach not the property of the orphan, save in the fairer manner, until he is of age. And fill up the measure and the balance with justice. We charge not any soul save to its capacity. And when you speak, be just, even if it should be to a near kinsman. and fulfill God’s covenant. that then he has charged you with; perhaps you will remember

6,153: And that this is my path, straight; so do you follow it, and follow not divers paths lest they scatter you from his path. that then he has charged you with; perhaps you will remember.

6,154: Then we gave Moses the book, complete for him who does good, and distinguishing every thing, and as guidance and a mercy; perhaps they would believe in the encounter with their lord. (on the judgment day)

6,155: This is a book (the Koran) we have sent down, blessed; so follow it, and be God fearing; perhaps so you will find mercy;

6,156: Lest you should say, “the Book was sent down only upon two parties before us, and we have indeed been heedless of their study”.

3:”You shall not have other gods besides me”): human beings are not fundamentally divided, each one having his god, every tribe or every nation their own divinities, expelling those of others, adoring whatever they like. The unity of God creates the unity of humanity. This is how these rules of conduct apply to everybody. One cannot deny this fundamental Law with impunity.

4.5. It appears immediately that this fundamental Law, does not proceed from the human being’s freedom. This orphan mentioned by the Koran, the Bible and the Gospel, these parents weakened by age, this poor person, this traveler seeking hospitality evoked in the Koran, the injured person helped by the good Samaritan in the Gospel, cannot – by their very weakness – compel anyone to exercise their rights! The proof relies in the fact that we can easily pay no heed.

Now, it is this precise weakness that opens to us a new dimension of the human being revealed in the Bible, the Gospel and to a lesser extent in the Koran. For the Gospel goes very far on this path, much farther than the Koran, namely to the death of Jesus on the cross. Man can continue his own path by only looking after his affairs but then he passes along side of what apparently constitutes an essential dimension of humanity. While man is used to exercising his autonomy, to taking care of the world he controls, to developing his own activity and thus to striving at the flowering of his personality, to freeing himself, he is confronted by otherness which challenges him, which imposes itself on his freedom and which does not proceed from his liberty.

The precepts evoked do not depend upon his arbitrary will: They are heteronomous. Religions declare that they are divine commandments. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam meet thus in an essential way. These obligations disclose a human dimension that completes - but in an essential way - the dimension of autonomy cherished in particular by the west, the conquest of the world, the continuous surpassing of the limits of our knowledge and capacity, the limits of our own progress and the development of the world which we make our own.

The respect for the other and his property, welcoming him, hospitality, trust, generosity, gratitude, the acceptance of a gift, forgiveness, mercy and especially, compassion (ar-Rahma) all which the fundamental commandments imply and the virtues religion puts forward, belong to a completely different order than that of autonomy, domination and struggle for the rights. For the religious person, human rights are thus based not on the application of a coercible force that obliges the other to recognize my rights and those of my group, but they are based on the respect of the rights the other which at times, in his weakness, he cannot impose on me.

4.5. Two things are important in these texts:

1. The Koran considers itself to be a perfect continuity of the Torah and the Gospel, both of which it considers as “coming down from God”.

2. The commandments are heteronomous: they come from God, people cannot extricate themselves in a movement of self-sufficiency.

## **5. Commandments and prescriptions of the Koran: which statute?**

5.1. The message of the law is essential in the Koran. I personally think that Muslim scholars of the revival perceived it clearly.

They are right to assert that Judaism, Christianity and Islam share a vision of God's Shari'a. As much as it is a matter of ethical questioning, it is this aspect of the Koran which seems authentic to me. But, we must emphasize one more time that, firstly, the Koranic recitation took place in opposition to the Meccan, and that, it uses biblical material. This Koranic material is mainly non-canonical; i.e. to make the idea explicit, it derives from the large oral tradition of Jewish and Christian elements. Was Mohammed aware of what he was doing? I do not know: We only know that the Koran talks about "revelation" of God's Book. It also says that it is a repetition of the previous messages: it is obviously the case. But only in some extent: as much as it is about fundamental commandments and heteronomous ethical questioning. The Koran drops all the rest.

5.2. One of the big problems of the contemporary Muslims is positioning themselves in relation to the fundamental commandments and the prescriptions of the Koran to which is added "As-Sunna", Mohammed's way of life. We know in addition that Muslim dogma considers Mohammed's way of life perfect, as much as it considers the Koran as an inimitable divine word. It emerges from these two dogmas that Muslim orthodoxy considers the Koran and the Sunna, fundamental commandments, Koranic prescriptions and rules of life on the same level. They are at all times universally valid. The Koran and the Sunna thus became the pillars of the political Islam: a structure of a universal society. The one and only that suits God. Yet, it is obvious that the Koranic prescriptions of Medina and the prophet's manner of life are tied to Mohammed's historical conditions. Some modern and liberal Muslims separate, from that time, the fundamental principals of divine calls and their concretizations connected to time and circumstances; even if Koranic prescriptions are in question.

5.3. We touch here the reasons of contemporary fundamentalism: by not taking into consideration the historical circumstances of the prophetic way of life, this movement wants to impose them on everybody as being the only possible human culture in disregard of the diversity of human cultures due to the different human contexts. It also wants to impose the universality in time although we all know, more than ever before, that time changes. From that moment, on the political Islam has become a dangerous totalitarianism of which we have experienced misdemeanors crimes and atrocities. Starting from the incorrect idea that Koran prescriptions and Sunna are the expression of God's will for all times and all places

the Islamist militants want to impose all the details of Mohammed's way of life in Medina; which is absurd. I am not saying the same about the fundamental commandments that are found in the three monotheist religions.

5.4. I also leave aside the question of whether Mohammed's conduct was really so perfect as Muslim dogma says. I very much doubt it! And this is one of the major obstacles that encounter the Islamo-Christian dialogue. Anyway, the Second Vatican Council doesn't mention it while enumerating the rapprochement between Islam and Christianity.

## **6. Relation of Islam with the two other Religions; Judaism and Christianity**

### **6.1. Judaism**

6.1.1. Those who know how many times the Koran mentions the Bible patriarchs, as often as it refers to Mary and Jesus. These "stories of the prophets" - *Qisas al Anbiyâ* - or rather these allusions to the stories of biblical characters which the Koran calls "the prophets", form more than half of the Koran. One thing strikes us: these allusions to these stories do not repeat biblical history except for the story of Joseph in Egypt, which is a structured one, but seems to be built around Joseph's profession of faith in prison in chapter 12:38-40:

*"12,38". And I follow the religion of my fathers, Ibrahim and Ishaq and Yaqoub; it beseems us not that we should associate aught with Allah; this is by Allah's grace upon us and on mankind, but most people do not give thanks.*

*"12,39": O my two mates of the prison! Are sundry lords better or Allah the One, the Supreme?*

*"12,40". You do not serve besides Him but names which you have named, you and your fathers; Allah has not sent down any authority for them; judgement is only Allah's; He has commanded that you shall not serve aught but Him; this is the right religion but most people do not know.*

As I understand the Koran, it doesn't linger on the story itself of the people of Israel and its patriarchs but makes allusion to these characters just to find in their words and their acts the elements of the initial Koranic message: the demand for justice and solidarity, demand for obedience to God's law, in the light of the judgement of the one and only God.

Even if other elements of the prophets' stories appear, the Koran cuts them down; they have no importance at all. It is the eschatological and monotheistic message that prevails.

6.1.2. The Koran collects, in a way, the fruits of the Jews' history, and

affirms the only law of God without mentioning, as the Bible does, the long march of the people who discover little by little their relation to Yahwe, their own sins, and lots of privileged moments when God reveals himself to his people. The Koran does not have this diversity in its revelation: God is already present with all his attributes. He does not reveal himself in the history: he appears abruptly with all the requirements of his law. Anyway, he does not reveal himself: he only reveals his unchanging decree, his law, his future judgment and the reward which ensues from it. God remains mystery. Therefore the Koran knows neither evolution nor history. Human history only has unimportant events: everything is tied to obedience of the law already known by Adam and his descendants:

“7,172” - And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: “Am I not your lord ?” they said, “Yes! We bear witness”. Lest you should say on the day of resurrection: “Surely we were heedless of this”.

6.1.3. The Koran will take little by little a position of refusal toward the Old Testament and the Jewish history. The complete rupture between Mohammed and Judaism will take place in Medina. Thus in Koran 2,87:

”And most certainly, we gave to Musa the Book and we sent apostle after him one after another... Whenever then an apostle came to you with that which that which your souls did not desire, you were insolent so you called some liars and some you slew”.

These references of Moses’ story are not what is the most surprising in these texts but the radical criticism of Jews. The discussion that has started with the Jews in Mecca takes in Medina such dimensions that one can speak about a radical rupture between them and the Muslims, particularly in verses 153 to 161 of chapter 4. We cannot disregard the military situation in Medina either which finally led the three Jewish tribes to disappear by being exiled or by physical elimination.

6.1.4. By becoming autonomous in Medina, with its own rites and prescriptions, Islam refused to find the manifestation of a relation with God in the Bible and in the history of the Jews. The Koran will proclaim that the Torah was corrupted and that only the Koran is the revelation of God.

At the same time, the whole richness of the Bible is put aside with all its contents, which the Koran never took back. The simplicity of the Koranic message will object to the biblical image of Job, David’s sin, God’s implication in history...

6.1.5. It will only retain the requirement of God’s law that arises abruptly before every human being. I understand the abrupt coming down of the Koran in this way. However, Mohammed and even the Koran with all the Muslim traditions understand this coming down of the Koran as if each word, each verse, each

Koranic expression, each used term, each detailed precept, comes directly from God with no human or historical mediation.

## 6.2. *Christianity and the Koran.*

6.2.1. What happens in the relation between the Koran and Christianity is more grave, since in Christianity this mediation, this incarnation of God's Word in history has a name: Jesus-Christ.

While the Koran asserts the holiness of Jesus and his mother, the Virgin Mary, it doesn't touch in any way the story of Jesus as in the Gospel. Here too, the story isn't important at all, even though the Koran presents what we may call "an apocryphal gospel of Jesus' childhood". This is how we can consider the elements of chapter 19 and chapter 3 that concerns rather Mary than Jesus.

As for the adulthood of Jesus, the parables, the sermon on the mount, his special relation with people he encountered, his conflicts with the Pharisees, his suffering, and especially his death on the cross - for the salvation of all - the meaning of this death, there is not even a word or too little in order that Jesus' life and death take on all the meaning that the first witnesses perceived in it.

6.2.2. In fact, the image of Jesus in the Koran agrees perfectly with the conception of the identity of God's law throughout the ages as well as the divine message, which is always identical. So, the message of Jesus is nothing else but a new version of the eternal book. Jesus transmits the book that is, once more, coming from God. Notice as well that the Koran talks about the Gospel in the singular without mentioning any other texts of the New Testament, apart from the four gospels whether it is the Acts of the Apostles, Saint Paul's letters, or the Revelation. The Koran presents Jesus in its own way and this presentation is perfectly in accordance with the mission of Muhammad and other prophets. Consequently, the Christians of the Koran become authentic believers only in as much as they are islamized Christians and accept exclusively the Koran Kerygma. The central role of Jesus as a mediator of the revelation that the four gospels present, thus was not integrated by the Koran, nor was the dogmatic expression of his divine filiation. This formula of divine filiation is much too suggestive of the old polytheistn representation. Therefore, the Koran rejects it. It is almost natural that this criticism already appears in the Meccan Chapters of the second period, particularly in Chapter *Maryam*. And it is this apparent incompatibility of the Christian dogmatic expressions with the strict monotheism of the message that led the Koran to the idea of a "falsification of the original message of the Gospel".

6.2.3. Moreover, one of the most characteristic features of the Koranic Christianity is the complete absence of Paul's interpretation of Jesus: the one which frees man from the burden of the old law. On the contrary, the whole late Muslim tradition accuses Saint Paul of devising a reinterpretation of the Gospel, thus

distorting the original meaning of Jesus' message taking away from it the fundamental aspect of God's law the "Sharī'a". Only in one place, chapter 3, verse 50, does the Koran allow to filter in a certain distancing of Jesus with regard to the old Law: "... and that I may allow you part of that which has been forbidden to you".

6.2.4. The most revealing sign of the Islamic position toward Christianity is the categorical refusal of the cross; a significant element for Christians. In fact, this refusal displays a crucial point; i.e. what is highly significant for Christians in the life of Jesus is not pertinent for Islam. Now that the Muslim version of Jesus' life is radically different, we should search for the mediation and the source of faith in Islam somewhere else: we find it in the ethic interpellation of the recitation as we have said.

6.2.5. As a result, we certainly cannot assert that the Koran is Christian: the interpretation it gives of Jesus in his relation with God and the Law no longer resemble any of the New Testament versions of the person of Jesus. That Jesus' death on the cross be put aside as insignificant, indicates to us that the "memoria Christi", that Christians considered essential, has no real meaning for Islam. Therefore, the Koran does not have a Christology in the Christian sense of the word, since it does not present any element which would permit bringing to light in the person of Jesus Christ that which makes him (for Christians) a mediator of salvation. While the content of the Koran is fundamentally biblical, as we have said, it does not include the redemptive mediation of Christ, because the Koran sees itself as the only mediation of salvation.

Every temptation to match Christianity and Islam on this point is doomed to failure, considering the role attributed in Christianity to the life, actions, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, under the sign of his relation to the Father.

Islam possesses its own religious doctrine and sensibility especially since the recitation in Medina even if some "Christian elements" in relation to Jesus are integrated.

## **7. Jesus, the epiphany of God**

7.1. Let us read the words of Jesus:

"Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one iota, not a dot, will pass from the law..."(Mt .5,17-19).

It seems to me, in the light of what Jesus has said and done and what his disciples have practiced after Pentecost, that we must effectively conclude that

Jesus didn't want to abolish the fundamental commandments and especially not the divine interpellation they express. God's law remains acquired knowledge. The demands, on the contrary, are greater. For he has shown by his person the will to save all humankind emanating from God. The believer is invited to share this will of salvation, which is not an easy task and demands a certain renunciation.

7.2. By going beyond what was revealed of God in the history of Israel, Jesus manifested what was still veiled of God. Consequently, he allowed us not to stick no longer to the letter of the law, but to its spirit. As the Christmas liturgy expresses it using the words of Saint Paul in Titus "but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our savior appeared" (3,4) "for the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all" (2,11).

It is the manifestation of this God that the prophets of the Old Testament like Isaiah have announced.

7.3. Yet it happened that this truth of God, which appeared in Jesus, wasn't accepted by everybody: on the contrary, the Pharisees and doctor of the law vehemently opposed him, up to demanding his torture and death. Being staunch to the truth of God he incarnated, Jesus did not deny him even in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and to the cross.

And starting from the Easter morning it was clear that God also did not disavow him. Jesus is raised from the dead in glory. Christians can therefore follow his path and live in his spirit that remains with them.

7.4. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ takes place then in the manner of the epiphany, the manifestation in the human person of Jesus. The evangelists tried, each in his own way, to describe the life, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus in a way that shows effectively this epiphany to the reader or listener. No divine and eternal word came down on them: with their own words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, they told us about Jesus. He, who is the Good News.

Later on, the councils tried to express this reality: Jesus, Son of God, divine and human; God; creator and judge, Jesus, his saving Word among us, the Spirit of God present in the community of believers, in which we see the action of this Spirit; Jesus, our savior.

8.1. Unfortunately, the Koran knows nothing about this. Neither does it refer to the prophets who foresaw and prophesied those things that Jesus would fully reveal. It doesn't mention this. It lingers upon words which it rejects, without knowing their meaning, afraid of facing a certain polytheism in Christianity; a polytheism it has vehemently struggled against. "It is not convenient for Allah ("ar-Rahmân") to have a son".

A phrase that is repeated 13 times in the Koran and is confirmed in this sole verse of Medina: "the Christians say: "The Messiah is the son of Allah" (9:30).

8.2. Not having understood the gospel message, Muslims can undergo the possible drift of the Pharisee and of attachment to the letter of the Law, of the Koran and of the Sunna. This is, unfortunately, once again, the case at the end of this century with the Islamic militant movements.

There is nevertheless in the Koran an echo of the gospel message that Louis Massignon has perceived through his religious experience and has translated in many of his works. This echo is the compassion, the transcendence of oneself for others; it is sharing the suffering or the joy felt by a fellow human. A compassion that welcomes others, hospitality: the rahma, the essential attribute of God, ar-Rahmân, the most important name of God which we find in each chapter, and that came-according to the Meccan -from elsewhere.