Prophecy and Holiness: From the Deathbed of Muhammad *Rasul Allah* to the Peaceful Valley of Ibrahim *Khalil Allah*

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Abstract: This article explores the meaning of prophecy and holiness in Islam. The thesis of the author is that here, at the deathbed of Muhammad, certain options of understanding Islam, his revelation, the work, and the role of the person of Prophet Muhammad (and his family) in daily piety, etc., can already be detected *in nuce*. Historically, we will have to deal with the great "schism" between Sunnis and the Shia. Within this context what can be the role of Abraham, called by the Qur'an *Khalil Allah* (friend of God), in searching for a synthesis between holiness and prophecy? The death of the prophet Muhammad has split the followers of Islam into two communities—the Sunnites and the Shi'ites. It has been established that Muhammad was the seal of prophecy but not the seal of holiness. It seems that the split between the Sunnites and the Shi'ites has reached its deepest level and turned out to be a choice between prophecy and holiness. The author, however, claims that one cannot stand without the other. Prophecy cannot be deprived of the aspect of holiness and holiness as imbued too with true prophecy. For the author, the ideal Muslim must be a 'synthesis' between the two poles of 'prophecy and holiness'. This prophet could be Ibrahim (Abraham). Finally, how can his role as God's friend work as an inspiration for the contemporaneous interreligious dialogue, above all between Muslims, Jews, and Christians?

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The Death of a Prophet

When the Prophet Muhammad was dead (June 632[1]), Umar, the future second Caliph of Islam (634-644), at the moment of the Prophet's death still a "simple" faithful, was convinced that this was not true, that the Prophet was not dead: "By God! He is not dead, but has gone to his Lord as Moses went!", so are we told by the *sirat an-nabi*, the biography of the Prophet by Ibn Ishaq.[2] Not dead (*ma mata*) but hidden by God from the eyes of the people for 40 days,[3] Muhammad would then return,[4] the same way Moses returned after 40 days to his people[5] – return for which purpose? To "cut off the hands and feet of men who allege that he (the

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[1] Sourdel and Sourdel, 596.

[2] "wa inna rasul Allah ma mata,wa lakinahu dhahaba ila rabbihi kama dhahaba Musa..." Ibn Ishaq, *sirat al-nabi* (redactor Ibn Hisham), vol. IV, Cairo, Muhammad Ali Sabih, al Azhar (eds), 1070; A. Guillaume, (intr., notes), *The Life of Muhammad. A Translation of Ishaq´s Sirat Rasul Allah* (Oxford 1955, Pakistan 1967), 682. The transcription of Arabic letters has been simplified. For the Suras of the Qur'an, with exceptions, see: *The Noble Qur'an*, English translation of the meanings and commentary, King Fahd complex for the printing of the Holy Qur'an, Madinah, K.S.A. – My gratitude goes to Nawel Hamidi for her interest and support regarding the sirat of the Prophet.

[3] "faqad ghaba ´an qaumihi arba´in lailat..." Ibn Ishaq, *sirat al-nabi,* 1070, Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad,* 682.

[4] "thuma raja´a ilaihim...", Ibn Ishaq, 1070, Guillaume, 682.

[5] "kama raja´a Musa...", Ibn Ishaq, 1070, Guillaume, 682.

rasul Allah) is dead."[6] This could mean, to get rid of all the enemies and to force them, to accept Islam. Hence oral tradition has it that the acceptance of the *rasul* and his creed implies just this: confessing that there "is no God but Allah" would procure to the believer "dominion over Arabs and non-Arabs." Such was the promise the Prophet once made to the Quraysh, in order to convince them to embrace his religion.[7]

The cutting off of hands and legs also reminds us of Sura 5, 33:

> The recompense of those who wage war against God and His messenger and do mischief in the land is only that they shall be killed or crucified or their hands and their feet be cut off from opposite sides or be exiled from their land. That is their disgrace in this world and a great torment is theirs in the hereafter.

Such reminiscences do not come as a surprise, since the story about the death of the Prophet – its *historical* correctness is not the focus here – allows a wide range of traditions to surface. They are part of a widespread apocryphal network of the Orient, its mythological underbelly so to speak, where Elijah, Enoch, Moses,

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[6] "falinqata´anna aydya rijali wa arjalahum za´amu rasul.. mata...", Ibn Ishaq. 1070, Guillaume, 682/3.

[7] See for this F. McGraw Donner, *The Death of Abu Talib*, in: J.H. Marks & R.M. Good (ed), *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East. Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope* (Guilford CT 1987), 241, 243; see too L. Berger, *Die Entstehung des Islam. Die ersten hundert Jahre. Von Mohammed bis zum Weltreich der Kalifen* (München 2016), 277: "The submission... of the world under the rule of the One God was a religious commandment. That the fulfillment of this commandment entailed inner-worldly advantages, did not present a disadvantage." (My translation, ThM). See furthermore ibid., 130/1. – For the way, the process of Islamization really worked on the ground, see too ibid., 150/1.

Jesus, and Muhammad are all united in the same "spiritual destiny" of divinely inspired people.[8] These "underground stories", if we can call them like this, inform us about the religious pulsation of the early Islamic community. About a time, when the dogma and what to believe, was not yet fixed, not yet cast into "theological concrete".

Yet the future Caliph Umar too had to learn what the truth is. His predecessor, the future Caliph Abu Bakr (632-634) was quick to intervene and to put the pendulum right. In open opposition to Umar, who was still not willing to change his standpoint, Abu Bakr loudly declared to a crowd which was gathering around him: "O men! If one worships Muhammad, Muhammad is dead, if one worships God, God is alive, immortal!"[9] And he added Sura 3, 144, which begins like this: "Muhammad is no more than a rasul, and, indeed, (many) messengers have passed away before him..." These strong words by Abu Bakr, combined with sura 3,144, finally turned even Umar around. He later confessed: "By God! When I heard Abu Bakr recite these words, I was dumbfounded ("´uqirtu", "wounded"), so that my legs would not bear me and I fell to the ground knowing that the apostle (rasul) was indeed dead."[10]

The surprising story or stories around the death of the Prophet Muhammad are not only interesting

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[8] Cf. too R.H. Charles, W.J. Ferrar, & R.A. Gilbert, *The Apocalypse of Baruch and The Assumption of Moses* (Boston, MA 2006), 86. – Even still later a religious figure like the Jewish Messiah Sabbatai Sevi (1626-1676) was believed to come back 12 months after his death. Cf. T. Mooren, *Wenn Religionen sich begegnen. Glauben und anders glauben in einer globalen Welt* (Wien, Berlin 2014), 122.

[9] "lahu man kana ya´budu muhammadan fainna muhammadan qad mata, wa man kana ya´budu Allah fainna Allah hayyun la mata.", Ibn Ishaq,107, Guillaume, 683.

[10] Ibn Ishaq, 1070, Guillaume. 683.

because they touch the question of Umar's unbelief, or because of the persistence of the "archetypical preconception" about life and death of holy people in the ancient Orient. Rather they are important for our inquiry, hence what happened here, in the presence of the corpse of the Prophet, thanks to Abu Bakr's strong statement, is nothing less than the foundation, the laying of the ground of the dramatic future of Islam itself – its fracture into Shia (Shia Ali: from the Verb "to follow," i.e., the followers of Ali, son in law and cousin of the Prophet) and Sunnis (from sunna, tradition, claiming to embrace only the tradition(s) coming from the Prophet).[11]

"Worshiping ('ibada) Muhammad" serves as an abbreviation or theological marker for a spiritual attitude that eventually allows for the Prophet to take center stage in the devotional or prayer life of the faithful. Hence, in the Shia, the accrued religious importance of the family of the Prophet and his descendants via Ali, Hussein etc. A family with a specific divine gift bestowed upon it in the form of the "light of Muhammad" ("nur muhammadyya"), the promise of spiritual guidance and correctness also for future generations – in particular, when it comes to the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

Thus the *Imams* were born, those persons – to begin with Imam Ali[12] – through whose thoughts, words and

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[11] See for this e.g. Mooren, *Wenn Religionen...*, 125-136; J. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam. Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (Cambridge 2003), 130-140; S. Makaram, (ed., transl.), *The Shi´i Imanate. A Fatimid Interpretation. An Arabe edition and English translation of the Tathbit al-imama, attributed to the Fatimid Caliph–Imam al-Mansur* (London, New York 2013).

[12] In Makaram's translation of the Shia treaty on the imamate we can read: "You have asked me... about the confirmation of the imamate of the Prince of Believers ´Ali b. Abi Talib... and his right to

actions the guidance could take shape in time and history. And Imams are infallible! *This* religious process, strongly supported by popular piety as much as by sophisticated philosophico-theological speculation, did not lead to outright divinization of the Prophet and his descendants, the Imams (in particular Ali), but it *could* take that turn. It is a turn coined "Shia extremism" or "religious exaggeration".[13] And even if it did not go so far, Shia spirituality clearly directed the act of religious obedience of the faithful towards the living example of the Prophet's family, the Prophet and his Imams. That is obviously the way in which the Shia claims Sura 4, 59 for its cause: "Oh you believers!" Obey Allah and obey the messenger (Muhammad) and those of you in authority (amr)!", the latter, naturally, being the Imams.

The net result consists in a move *away* from "sola scriptura" towards a daily life imbued with the striving for personal holiness (walaya), in strict imitation of the Imams. This in turn opens up the realm of religious inward experiences (mysticism). Hence also the kinship between Shia and Sufism, the Islamic spiritual movement. The spiritual gain of this approach consists in the

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it [the immamate] *before anyone else* (wa istihqaqihi al-amra duna ghairihi)", *The Shi´i Imanate,* 15 (arab. p. 1).

[13] See e.g. the case of the extremist sect led by Abu al-Khattab Muhammad b. Abi Zaynab al-Asadi (d. ca AD 755 or 762), where light and divinization process come together. God was conceived as light that embodies itself into the Prophets family and the imams, transforming them into Gods: "... God had been in ´Abd al-Mutallib, and then went to Abu Talib, who became God and sent Muhammad as his apostle; when Abu Talib died, the spirit (ruh) went on to settle in Muhammad, who became God, and Ali became his apostle, and so on down to Ja´far al-Sadiq and from him to Ábd al-Khattab himself." (McGraw Donner, *The Death of Abu Talib*, 240). – A similar spirituality can be detected among the Druzes (darazyya) (see J. Sourdel and D. Sourdel, *Dictionnaire historique de l´Islam* (Paris 2004 [1966]), 253 and elsewhere.

elaboration of the in-depth-meaning (batin) of the scriptures, including their legal aspects. In this way one tries to *transcend* the scripture's external meaning (zahir). This might go so far that some Shi'ites, members of the Ismaili sect, considered it eventually right and necessary to proclaim the law's *abolition* in favour of its "inner" spiritual meaning![14]

What I just outlined in some great strokes as a possible development of "worshiping Muhammad" is quite different from the spiritual potential that is unleashed by Abu Bakr's uncompromising statement: "Muhammad is dead! (Muhammad mata)"! If there could be any doubt in this matter, we only have to turn to Sura 3, 144 recited by the same Abu Bakr quasi as a comment to the death pronouncement of the Prophet, namely: Muhammad was/is a mortal man like you and I! Yes, he was a "rasul", but so other men also have been "messengers" and they too have passed away!

I think, what we can conclude from this is the following: in the long run, in particular as for the process of *revelation*, there will be no place or no *need* any more of the Prophet as a *person*! The question of how he received the revelation, the spiritual inner drama of his vocation in relationship to his *personal* life style and similar questions of this kind. Above all, the *enhancement* of his personal status to someone who is *more than mortal* is clearly blocked! Only the *result* of the revelation process counts, its final message, the proclamation of strict monotheism (tauhid); the Prophet himself being just a mouth piece, a "dictaphone" of God

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[14] Cf. Th. Mooren, " 'Your kingdom come'. Religious Exodus Movements and the Construction of the Endtime," *MST Review*, 17 (2015): 71-124, 99-101 (in particular 100, note 60), with regard to the the Ismaili proclamation of the Day of the "qiyama" (resurrection), coinciding with the *suspension* of the "law" under Hasan II of Alamaut (1162-1166).

almighty. All the spiritual energy is concentrated on the *literal* content of the text, truly a specific form of "sola scriptura" that, in addition, can be easily *legally* exploited.[15]

In the light of these reflections, the encounter with the Qur'an would not so much be animated by the desire to *transcend* the text in order to reach a realm "beyond the text" – in case we could find there the realm of holiness (walaya), the holiness of the Prophet, thanks to his supposed closeness to God, or to use another term: thanks to his supposed *friendship* with God. However, the "death of the Prophet", taken as a spiritual statement in the way Abu Bakr uses it (the Prophet is only a mortal etc.), rather seems to privilege an approach, more legalistic in fact, where the relationship to the "Other" is reduced to a drama of *mere* obedience. The famous "Sunna" of the Prophet, the Prophet's "tradition" – hence the name "Sunnites"[16] – serves mainly to tell us, how to fulfill *correctly* the require-

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[15] That the *popular* perception of the Prophet as a superhuman being, quasi identical to Jesus obviously goes beyond the limits drawn by Abu Bakr´s statement does not invalidate our findings. Popular piety in all religions always goes its own ways, barely controlled by orthodoxy. For centuries Islamic orthodoxy was and still is in our own time at odds with popular Islam. – On the other hand it is not at all surprising that *modern reformers* of Islam for their part try to "break open" again the process of revelation by introducing an *active* role of the Prophet with regard to the constitution of the message. Any active participation of the mind of the Prophet in this matter would enable the interpreter to introduce a *historic* and thus *relative* dimension into the message. Unfortunately, the reformers' efforts were mostly rewarded by banishment, exile, eviction from the academic life or death threats.– For details see Mooren, *Wenn Religionen...*, 133/4, 136 and R. Benzine, *Islam und Moderne. Die neuen Denker* (Berlin, 2012), [French: *Les nouveaux penseurs de l´islam*, Paris 2004], in particular 56-80 (for Abdolkarim Soroush) and 110-135 (for Fazlur Rahman).

[16] Cf. T. Nagel, *Geschichte der islamischen Theologie. Von Mohammed bis zur Gegenwart* (München 1994), 69-77, 223-218.

ments the Qur'an puts forward as conditions to reach paradise. Among them, as number One, the absolute acknowledgment of God's Oneness (tauhid).[17]

In sum, we can only be amazed, how the small episode of the Caliph Umar's unwillingness to accept the Prophet's death – some lines among thousands of lines in Ibn Ishaq's biography of the Prophet – is capable, at least if read in a certain way, of unveiling the fundamental choice with which the young religion of Islam was struck. A choice that split Islam into two, Shia and Sunnism, a choice on its deepest level, as it turns out, between holiness and prophecy. It might not be exaggerated to call it the core drama of Islam itself and which is as such all too often avoided. Yet, it was established, once and forever, that Muhammad was the *seal* (hatam) *of prophecy* (Sura 33, 40), but the seal of holiness, he was not. That position, if we follow the great mystical tradition of al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (d. circa 932) or Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240) was dedicated to no

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[17] In the word of the theologian and poet Amos Wilder it means: "to reduce the mystery of revelation to the category of the will." (A. Wilder, *Theopoetic. Theology and the Religious Imagination* [Eugene, Oregon: The Amos Wilder Library, 1976], 92). Something of this same spirit can still be found e.g. in the Second Vatican Council´s text *Lumen Gentium*, no. 25: "In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent... This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff... that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will." *www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils//_vatican_council/documents/vatii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_e.* – Not for nothing the Catechismus Romanus, pars II, caput 7 calls bishops and priests not only "angels", but even "gods"! (See M. Theobald, *"Über die Götter sollst du nicht schlecht reden!" Ex 22, 27 (=28 LXX) im Frühjudentum, im Neuen Testament und in der alten Kirche*, in Tück, *Monotheismus unter Gewaltverdacht,* 80/1, note 86).

one else than – Jesus![18]

But can such a split last forever? The dangers of depriving prophecy of holiness are all too obvious.[19] They render prophecy unprotected against all kind of ideological usurpations, over-politization, barbarization, brutalization, to name only a few items. Yet, also holiness has to be protected. Its quality can only survive if it does not fall into the trap of mere sentimentalism or emotionalism or the hypocrisy of self-boasting! To prevent this from happening, prophecy, even in the form of harsh criticism, as a *fact* finding, fact revealing capacity of the human mind over against self deception and intellectual laziness has a useful role to play.

Anyway, great spiritualities need both, prophecy and holiness.[20] The Imams of the Shia were certainly aware of this challenge. They answered on the basis of that special theological system that is theirs: the Imams had to embrace both, holiness and prophecy.[21] To the

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[18] See H. Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique. I. Des origines jusqu´à la mort d´Averroes (1198)* (Paris 1964), 262-283; A. Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen des Islam. Die Geschichte des Sufismus* (Köln 1985; Chapel Hill, USA, 1975), 316/7; also W.C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge. Ibn al- ´Arabi´s Metaphysic of Imagination* (Albany, NY 1989), furthermore Mooren, *Wenn Religionen...*, 135/6, in particular 136, note 184, and by the same author, "I do not adore what you adore!," *Theology and Philosophy in Islam* (Delhi 2001), 206-253 and *Purusa. Treading the Razor´s Edge toward Selfhood. The Self and Self-Experience in Islamic and Hindu Mysticism* (Delhi 1997), 113-174.

[19] These dangers are clearly denounced, e.g., in Hamed Abdel-Samad´s inquiry, *Mohamed. Eine Abrechnung* (München 2015) ["Mohamed, A final balance" (dt.: Abrechnung)]. See too Mooren, *Wenn Religionen...*, 134-137.

[20] Or on a somewhat similar register: freedom and obedience. See Th. Mooren, *Freedom Through Subjugation: The Good Shepherd according to Foucault, the West, the Chinese and the Church - Human Sciences in Dialogue with Missiology* (Wien, Berlin, 2009).

[21] "The primary allegiance (of a Shiite) is not merely to the message of the Prophet but to the Prophet himself, and that

Sunnites, who do not operate on the basis of the theological speculations of the Shia, naturally the vast hagiographical material, qur'anic and extra qur'anic talking about the prophets offers itself for inquiry. And what if we find therein, in the figure of one of the Prophets an answer to our question regarding prophecy and holiness, may be even a synthesis between these two poles laid bare by Abu Bakr's statement at the deathbed of the Prophet Muhammad? And finally, could this Prophet be Abraham?

Abraham – the Muslim

In recent times the interest in Abraham has been reignited thanks to the dramatic circumstances caused by Islamic terrorism, from al-Qaida to ISIS, Boko Haram to al-Nusra, from the desert of Timbuktu to the jungle of Mindanao, from the heart of Europe to the streets of Boston – to name only some milestones in a long list of places and organizations. Faced with the boundless brutality of this worldwide terror serious questions have arisen regarding the nature of what in the field of religions is commonly called "monotheism". Thus, theologians in Islam, Christendom and Judaism

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allegiance is due to his being ma´sum (protected from error and grave sin), a characteristic which he (the Prophet) *shares with Imams*." (V.J. Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam. Shi´i Devotional Rituals in South Asia* (Columbia, S.C. 1993), 121; italics by ThM)). See too on the concept of ´ismat (being sin and error free!; see ´asama, to hold back, restrain, preserve; H. Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (Cowan, J. M., ed), Beirut, [London 1974], 617): "´ismat is a crucial concept in Shi´i thought because the authority of the *Prophet and the Imams* derive from the fact that they possess ´ismat and are thus ma´sum" (Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam,* 121; italics by ThM). See furthermore Corbin, *Histoire*, 43-151 and by the same author: *En Islam iranien. Aspects spirituels et philosophieques. I. Le shi´isme duodécimain* (Paris 1971); see too Mooren, *Wenn Religionen*..., 136, note 185.

have tried to find answers to some basic questions regarding the eventual links between monotheism and violence, be it violence on the battle field or violence propagated in the founding texts of either Judaism, Christianity, or Islam.[22]

It is within this context that the figure of Ibrahim/ Abraham becomes important as a name and a program. As a name, since he is known to all three monotheistic religions. As a program, since Abraham's message sounds like a message of peace. Does God not say in Gen 12, 3b: "... in you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed"? Thus the hope to build in the name of Abraham a common firewall against the evils created in the name of religion in our time does not seem to be without foundation.

Yet in spite of the good will that such a perspective creates, some questions, nevertheless, have to be faced. And the first one is simply the following: are we dealing in Torah, New Testament, and Qur'an in spite of the same name, with the same person? And in case we have to face three "different" Abrahams, how great are these differences? Do they destroy a common cause or is a certain unity *within* diversity possible? With this in mind we will now proceed to have a closer look on Abraham in the Qur'an.

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[22] See e.g., J. Schnocks, *Das alte Testament und die Gewalt. Studien zur göttlichen und menschlichen Gewalt in alttestamentlichen Texten und ihren Rezeptionen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn 2014) [Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 136]; Th. Mooren, *War and Peace in monotheistic religions* (Delhi 2008); and by the same author, *Making the Earth a Human Dwelling Place. Essays in the philosophy and anthropology of culture and religion*, Lomé (Togo) s.d., Ed. Saint-Augustine Afrique (Würzburg, Altenberge 2000), 304-307; furthermore J.-H. Tück, (ed), *Monotheismus unter Gewaltverdacht. Zum Gespräch mit Jan Assmann* (Freiburg, Basel, Wien 2015); and in the same volume J. Assmann, "Ambivalenzen und Konflikte des monotheistischen Offenbarungsglaubens," 246-268 246-268 and numerous others.

There is no doubt that in the Qur'an Abraham plays a unique role, but a role, as we will see, that points toward the Prophet Muhammad and thus, at least for now, *away* from Jews and Christians. Indeed, in Sura 2, 140 we read:

> Or say you that Ibrahim, Ismail, Ishaq, Ya'qub... were Jews or Christians? Say: Do *you* know better or God?

In other words, we are confronted here, seen from the Jewish and Christian perspective, with a "*de-confessionalized*" Abraham as also in Sura 3, 67: "Abraham was neither a Jew, nor a Christian..."! With this, Abraham was free to receive a new identity – he could become *islamized*! The result of this process is announced in the second part of Sura 3, 67, where Abraham receives three different "titles" or "denominators". All three are theologically heavily loaded, cover a different theological field or background – but, as we will see, they all arrive at the same result. Thus, instead of being a Jew or a Christian, Abraham, according to the second part of 3, 67, was "a hanif, a muslim and not a mushrik" (wa lakin kana hanifan musliman wa ma kana min al-mushrikina).

To begin with: he was no "mushrik". Mushrik designates a person who commits "shirk". Shirk is often translated as "polytheism", but "associationism" would be better, since shirk is not so much concerned with numbers (that there are *many* gods) but with the fact of power sharing! Shirk means, to have associates, partners in business or exercise of authority for example, and these partners are people a man is absolutely in need of. He simply is not capable to do certain things alone! If this were the case for God, if he were struck by this kind of "helplessness", he would be

incapacitated not only to create, but to create *alone*, without a helper, a second "god", let us say a wife, a child or children or any other entity, angelical, or human. For human beings, partnerships are of the essence, but exactly this is not so for God. His godhead, his being God defines itself by the fact that he is not in need of all that which is imperatively necessary for a human being to survive. (La ihtaja ilaihi: he does not need it!)

Accepting any kind of power sharing would be like falling into a *trap* – "sharak", in Arabic.[23] This is especially true for any son, conceived as helper or support in life. God has nothing to do with it – "lam yalid wa lam yulad", hence "he has not and was not begotten" (Sura 112, 3).[24] The sonlessness is the absolute necessary basis for God's self sufficiency in all matters (huwa al-ghanyyu, Sura 10, 68[25]), again in

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[23] Shirk and sharak share the same root, sharika, to share, to participate (Cf. Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic,* 252). Shirk is also associated with lying or dirty language (qawla z-zur), as in Sura 22, 30; see R. Köbert, "On the meaning of the Three Final Words of Sura XXII," 30-31, in Ibn Warraq (ed., transl.). *What the Koran really says. Language, Text, and Commentary* (Amherst, NY 2002), 300-310, 304. For shirk see furtheremore Th. Mooren, "Monothéisme coranique et anthropologie," *Anthropos* 76 (1981), 529-761, 529, 543, 547 and by the same author *Es gibt keinen Gott – außer Gott. Der Islam in der Welt der Religionen* (Würzburg, Altenberge 1996), 81/2, in particular 82, note 216; see also G. Lüling, *Über den Ur-Qur´an. Ansätze zuzr Rekonstruktion vor islamischer christlicher Strophenlieder im Qur´an* (Erlangen 1974), 202/3. See too Y. Nevo and J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam. The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State* (Amherst NY 2003), 277 on "shirk" as an "Arabic equivalent of the Greek *synthetos* – compounding the singleness of God" – the trinity being an example of such a God put together (out of three pieces), an all together "synthetic" God. (Cf. ibid., 277).

[24] Cf. Mooren, "Monothéisme...," 535, 544/5; cf. too sura 9, 30; 6,100 etc.

[25] For "ghannyyu" see too Sura 31, 26; 22, 64; 4, 131. See too

particular in the matter of creation, the first one and the second one at the moment of final judgment.[26]

By the way, wife and daughter(s) are especially discarded on purely anthropological grounds: daughters are a burden and man does not want them, while wives do not count, since no wife would be suitable for God: being created, while God is the creator, the social status of such a wife would always be below the status of Allah.[27]

This is sufficient to demonstrate that shirk means above all power sharing. Yet, there is more to it. Hence these anthropological arguments are useful not only for the establishment of God's absolute self sufficiency. Rather, they also constitute the angle, under which qur'anic monotheism as *theological* dogma has to be approached. It is because of this anthropological background, that "classical" *Christian* orthodox trinity finds itself totally condemned! Rejected without any compromise. God's radical oneness conceived, humanly speaking, as God's total loneliness and God's unlimited power are one. Sura 112: "Say Muhammad: God is One. He is self sufficient (samad[28]), he begets not nor is he begotten; there is none equal to Him" – which means, that anything different from this is pure *exaggeration*:

> O people of the scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion (la taghlu fi dinikum) and say about God only the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary was a messenger (rasul) of God, His word (kalimatuhu) bestowed upon Mary and a spirit

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Mooren, "Monothéisme...", 543-545.

[26] See e.g. Sura 2, 113-117; 22, 64; 10,68; Mooren, "Monothéisme...", 545, 549/50.

[27] For the daughters, see e.g. Sura 16, 57ss; 43, 17; 53, 21-23. For the wives see e.g. Sura 43, 15/6; 6, 100/1.

[28] For "samad" see Mooren, "Monothéisme...", 546.

> from God (ruhun minhu). So believe God and His messenger (Muhammad) and do not say "Three" (trinity), stop it! That's better for you. Since God is ONE. Glory to Him who is above having a son (walad). To Him belong what is in heaven and on earth. He is self sufficient and (everything's and everybody's) care taker (wakil).[29]

Clearly, the status that remains for Jesus, the only one possible for him, is that of "son", but a "son" in the "normal" sense of the word as in "son of Mary" ('isa ibn Maryam), in sum, a simple "messenger", nothing more![30]

Furthermore, we also learn from 4, 171 that the specific kind of shirk that the Qur'an has in mind here is not "paganism" in general, but the belief of the orthodox Christianity in the Trinity![31] To take mushrik and shirk for polytheism in general or polytheistic paganism represents in all probability a later development.[32] We also have to take into account the

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[29] See too, Mooren, "Monothéisme...", 534.

[30] However, the same "son" Jesus is also called in the same breath "God's word" (kalima) bestowed on Mary and a sprit (ruh) "from God" (minhu). It is obvious that these words invite further interpretation which could be "dangerous" for Islamic orthodoxy (These words clearly seem to be part of a Christian creed and look strange compared with the general thrust of the sura.) The official interpretation plays these words down (so the Saudi interpretation of the Qur'an in the *English translation of the meanings...,* ad hoc); others, like certain mystics might draw different consequences (See Mooren, *Wenn Religionen...*, 133 and Sura 3, 45). – Finally, it is of interest to note also Sura 43, 81: "If God had a son, I (Muhammad) would be the first (awwal) to adore him!"

[31] See too Sura 5, 73: "Surely, unbelievers are those who said: ´Allah is the third of three. But there is no God, but one.`" See too Mooren, "Monothéisme...", 537.

[32] For the accusation of shirk directed "in a polemical sense against fellow monotheists" see G.R. Hawting, "Two citations of the Qur´an in ´historical`sources for early Islam," in Ibn Warraq (ed), *What the Koran really says,* 260-268, 263; see too Ibn Warraq,

influence of "Judeo-Christianity". Judeo-Christians also believed in Jesus the Messiah, but rejected as pagan the terminology "son of God". Instead, they applied to Jesus a complicated angelology, a speculation based upon the "angelic" nature of the Messiah. Indeed, there exist good reasons to believe that it was *this* brand of "Judeo-Christianity" that influenced the background or mother soil of the Prophet's creed itself. At least we cannot exclude an acquaintance with, if not active sympathy for some forms of "Judeo-Christianity" on the side of the Prophet.[33]

"Introduction to Raimund Kobert," in Ibn Warraq (ed), *What the Koran really says,* 296-300, 297, quoting Hawting that "mushrikun were not simple polytheists". Hawting´s quote is from his *The idea of idolatry and the Emergence of Islam. From Polemic to History*, Cambridge 1999, 20.– For Christians in Mecca as "mushriks", see too R. Köbert, "Early and later Exegesis of the Koran: A supplement to Or *35*," in Ibn Warraq (ed), *What the Koran really says,* 311-315, in part. 311, 313. Lüling, *Über den Ur-Qur´an*, 203; Nevo and Koren, *Crossroads to Islam,* 277.

[33] For Judeo-Christianity and possible links between Judeo-Christianity and the Prophet Muhammad see Mooren, *Es gibt keinen Gott*..., 91/2, note 244 and 84, note 222. Also H.-J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* [Collected writings, section 1, vol. 2], (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York 1998), f. ex 104/5, 108, 334/5, 339, 463; Lüling, *Über den Ur-Qur´an*, 65, 202; Nevo and Koren, *Crossroads to Islam,* 190-199, 258-260, 363; ibid., 259 on the Umayyad Caliph Abd-al-Malik (685-705) and Judeo Christians : "It is also possible that Abd-al-Malik adopted into the state religion, not the views of a community that currently existed (either in Jerusalem or elsewhere) but in the writings of a sect which had existed in the past (probably in Jerusalem or Mesopotamia)." At any case, as Nevo and Koren also state, the "Judeo-Christian view of Jesus was obviously well established in Arab monotheism; we consider it to be the earliest core of the new Arab religion" (235), and hence one should also not exclude the possibility that Muhammad´s strong stand against shirk has roots in his *family history*. Cf. G. Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muhammad. Eine Kritik des "christlichen" Abendlandes* (Erlangen 1981), 225; see Mooren, *Es gibt keinen Gott*, 84, note 222. For the general religious climate in the time of early Islam cf. too Berger, *Die Entstehung des Islam,* 104-

Yet, whatever the kind of shirk the Qur'an has in mind – it was not practised by Abraham. He was not one of the mushrikuna. A reason more, to make him the guide of humanity, hence God said to Abraham: "Verily, I am going to make you a leader for humankind." (Sura 2, 124).

Besides Abraham not being a mushrik, what other grounds for being a guide for humanity do there exist? The answer to this question leads us to Abraham the *hanif*. The term "hanif" is usually "translated" by the designation "monotheist". But this is pure interpretation. All we can guess is that hanif has to be something positive, since it is coupled with "no-mushrik" and "muslim". Yet, originally, if we take into account the neighboring languages of the Near East, also the Arabic "hanif" must have shared into some darker side of human behavior. Thus, the Syriac neighbor means "godless", "pagan", the Hebrew" neighbor gives us "perverse", the Aramaic "deceitful", "haughty" and the Ugaritic neighbor "without piety".[34] The verdict is without appeal: the Qur'an has turned around something outright despicable into a positive qualification, even the most positive that there is – being a *monotheist*![35] However, this amazing capacity of turning things around is part of the genius of Islam.

106; 275/6; furthermore C.-St. Popa's study on Giwargis I, *Giwargis I. (660-680). Ostsyrische Christologie in frühislamischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden 2016).

[34] For details see Mooren, *Macht*, 32, 44, note 42; Mooren, "Unity in Diversity," 89, note 40.

[35] For the "puzzle" (Margoliouth) that is "hanif"see too D.S. Margoliouth, "Some Additions To Professor Jeffrey´s Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur´an," in Ibn Warraq (ed), *What the Koran really says,* 193; A. Mingana, "Syriac Influence on the Style of the Koran," in Ibn Warraq (ed), 189/90. See too Calder, "Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir," 116, Berger, *Die Entstehung des Islam,* 104, 276.

Another example is the term "ummi" (as in Sura 7, 157/8), which later tradition rendered with "uncultivated, unable to read and to write". If the Prophet was indeed this kind of "ummi", that is an illiterate, then the miracle to be able to read the revelation offered to him by Gabriel in the form of a text (Sura 96, 1-5[36]), is all the greater. However, if we take Sura 3, 20, "ummi" clearly points to the fact that the Prophet was considered to be a "pagan" (not an illiterate): "Say to those who were given the scripture and to the pagans (ummiyyina)..." In this sense it must have been applied to the Prophet during his discussions with the Jews. *They* must have simply disqualified Muhammad as Prophet, considering him only to be a Prophet for the "nations" (*ommot* ha 'olam), for the *massa dammnata,* i.e., a prophet "ethnikos" and thus "heretical".[37]

Yet, as in the case of "hanif", the disqualification is fully *assumed* by the Qur'an and turned into something positive. Yes, the Prophet is a Prophet "ethnikos", a Prophet "ummi" (Sura 7, 158). But only to him and his people is the revelation revealed in perfect, pure Arabic (Sura 45, 2 and 16, 103)!

Back to "hanif". In the Qur'an we find numerous examples for Abraham as "hanif". In Sura 16, 120, 123 we read: "Ibrahim a hanif, who was not one of the polytheists (mushrikina)... Follow the faith ("milla"; religion) of Ibrahim the hanif!" The same 2, 125; 3, 95; 4, 125; 6, 161.[38] One of the most fascinating connections "hanif" assumes is the one that can be found in Sura 30,

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[36] "1. Read! In the Name of your Lord... 3. Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. 4. Who has taught the writing by the pen. 5. He has taught man that which he knew not."

[37] For Christians taking the "Muslims" for "pagans" see e.g. Nevo and Koren, *Crossroads to Islam,* 233-235.

[38] Cf. too Mooren, "I do not adore...!", 63.

30:

> Set, Muhammad, your face towards Hanifism (lidini hanifan), which is God's original creation (fitra) with which he has created (fatara) humankind. There is no change (tabdil) in God's creation. This is the upright (qayyim) religion, but people do not know it (la ya'lamuna).

We are dealing here with the connection between the very first day of creation (of universe and humankind), the moment of the "fitra" *and* of monotheism. The "fitra" is the explosion of life, pure, unmitigated energy, which also is the very essence of humanity, i.e., *theologically* speaking, the essence of monotheism itself. The human being was created as a monotheist! Farther outwards the limits of monotheism could not be pushed. They are pushed towards Adam, first man and first Prophet and even beyond, towards an oath ("Ur-pact", "mithaq") humankind had already sworn in favor of monotheism. At the moment of this oath the humans were still unborn, yet already gathered in a state of preexistence in Adam's "loin" – a kind of platonic myth on qur'anic soil. Sura 7:

> 172. And remember, when your Lord brought forth from Adam's loin his offspring and made them testify against themselves: "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 afortime who took others as partners in worship along with God...!"

In this way there are no excuses for not being a

monotheist once one is born, neither loss of memory with regard to the "mithaq", nor the bad examples given by the "fathers", i.e., by history, have any exculpating value![39] What it also implies is this – that this grandiose picture of our Ur-time is captured or "embodied" on the mere human, daily, historical level by something that is called "din", religion. It is the only religion that can withstand (qayyim) *unchanged* the storm of time and history – the religion of Abraham. His name is not mentioned here, but there is no doubt that turning one's face towards God in a "hanifite" way ("hanifan") means to act like Ibrahim/ Abraham, the *hanif*.

Abraham is the one capable of grounding, of mediating the "adamitic" religion of our mysterious beginnings into the reality of our own time and space. Only he could capture the primeval energy of creation and turn it into something historically concrete: the construction of a holy place (Mecca with its Kaaba), the settlement of a people at this very place (the Arabs), the teaching of rituals like the pilgrimage (hajj) and other rituals of prayer (salat) and norms and customs of daily life. And in doing so, in being the creator of the physical-spiritual complex that is Mecca, the "safe and peaceful valley green with plenty of fruit trees", and via Ishmael being the father of the Arabs, Abraham the hanif and the "non-mushrik" also becomes Ibrahim, the *first muslim*. Sura 2, 125-127:

> And remember when we (Allah) made the House (the Kaaba) a resort for humankind and a safe place... a place of prayer. And we commanded Ibrahim and Ishmael that they should purify my

[39] See too Mooren, "Unity in Diversity: The 'Prophets,' Muhammad, Abraham and Jesus and the Islamo-Christian Dialogue," *MST Review*, 6 (2004), 73-113, 94.

> House for those who are circumambulating it, or staying or bowing or prostrating themselves. (125)
> And remember when Ibrahim said: "My Lord! Make this city, (Makka), a place of security and provide its people with fruit... ". (126)
> And remember, when Ibrahim and his son Ishmael were raising the foundation of the House... (127)[40]

Obviously – to open a parenthesis – what is at stake here is not the "historical" or "objective" truth – a visit of Abraham in Mecca.[41] Rather, the events of Mecca's

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[40] Ismael Ibn Kathir (circa 1300-1373), famous for his commentary of the Qur'an (tafsir al-Qur'an al-karim), embellishes the story like this: "God ordered Abraham to build him a House which would be for the people of the earth just like the angels had a place of worship in the heavens. Every day 70000 angels, never the same angel twice, worship God in the inhabited House in the heavens." (Quoted after B.M. Wheeler, (selector, transl.), *Prophets in the Quran. An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis* [London, New York 2002], 99). The same Ibn Kathir also provides more details regarding Mecca: "Abraham built the best of mosques in the best of locations, in a valley without cultivation, so he asked God to bless its inhabitants, to provide them with fruits because it had only little water and trees, crops or produce. He asked God to make it a sacred and secure place. God responded and gave him that for what he had asked..." (Quoted after Wheeler, *Prophets in the Quran,* 101). – Something of this enthusiasm breaks through even in Sir Richard F. Burtons description of Mecca – Burton was one of the rare Europeans who in the 19th century successfully could enter Mecca: "It was as if the poetical legends of the Arab spoke truth, and that the waving wings of angels, not the sweet breeze of morning, were agitating and swelling the black covering of the shrine. But, to confess humbling truth, theirs (my Arab travel companions) was the high feeling of religious enthusiasm, mine was the ecstasy of gratified pride." (R.F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah*, vol. II, I. Burton ed., [New York: Dover Publications, 1964 {1893}], 169). Burton could proudly say: I have done it!

[41] For this see too Mooren, "Unity in diversity," 87 and in

foundation by Abraham are true, because and *only* because they are *told* to be true! The Mecca stories are not primarily "fact finding" stories in a scientific (archeological etc.) sense but function more like a code, delivering direction to the faithful, telling them how to conduct their lives[42]. And what more perfect examples of "Muslims" than Abraham and his sons, i.e., of people *submissive* to the will of God could there exist? Even the

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particular 87, note 28, and by the same author "I do not adore what you adore..!", 60. See too the "puzzle" of Sura 3, 96, where the first House of worship stands in *B*akka and not in Macca. (See T. Holland, *In the Shadow of the Sword. The Birth of Islam and the Rise of the Global Arab Empire* [New York 2013], 328).

[42] "Each assertion, description or narrative... can contain no element of fiction or fancy, invention or imagination. All is literally true. Men therefore hungered to probe every detail and nuances to save their immortal soul by deriving from the Qur'an a programme of impeccable belief and a code of unimpeachable conduct... " (J. Burton, *Law and Exegesis. The penalty for adultery in Islam*, in: Hawting, R., Abdul-Kader A. Shareef [eds], 269-284, 270). In spite of this sympathetic insight Burton´ s final judgment comes down on the "rationalistic", "scientific" side accusing the faithful to confuse, out of enthusiasm, "assumption with fact and to mistake exegesis for history." (J. Burton, 171). – Needless to say, that this "confusion" is the lot of all religions. The Shia practises it with regard to the life of the Imams (see Schubel, *Religious Performance...,* 25-33,121), Old and New Testament with regard to the Prophets and the life of Jesus; and about Chinese gods and goddesses in modern Chinese fiction e.g. we learn: "Deities exist because people believe they do, and fictional characters can thus be transformed into *real* gods, once they are conceived of as such by readers." (M. Shahar, "Vernacular Fiction and the Transmission of Gods' Cults in Late Imperial China," in M. Shahar and R.P. Weller, *Unruly Gods. Divinity and Society in China* (Honolulu 1996), 184-211, 186; cf. too B. Baptandier, "The Lady Linshui. How a Woman became a Goddess," in M. Shahar, and R.P. Weller, *Unruly Gods,* 105-149, 108). Perhaps it all comes down to the statement made by a philosopher in Dieter Wellershoff´s novel "Heaven is not a place": "The fact that we make an experience should not be confounded with the reality ("Tatsächlichkeit") of the content of this experience." (Der Himmel ist kein Ort [Cologne 2009], 253; my transl.).

future is taken care of (Sura 2, 128), a future that clearly reaches out toward the Prophet Muhammad himself (Sura 2, 129):

> O Lord! Make us (Ishmael and myself) submissive unto you (muslimaini laka) and of our offspring (min dzurritatina) a community (umma) submissive unto you and show us the rituals and accept our repentance. (128)[43]
> Our Lord! Send amongst them a messenger of their own who shall recite unto them Your verses and instruct them in the Book (kitab; qur'an) and in *hikma* (the wisdom of prophethood)! (129)

Thus, Abraham and his sons are Muslims, the future will know Muslims, including, evidently, the Prophet Muhammad. Yet, what should not get unnoticed is the fact that, when it comes to the term "muslim", we can play with *two* connotations: once the literal meaning "to be submissive" and secondly "muslim" as description of someone who follows the religious "denomination" (Hegel: a *positive* religion) of *Islam*. In the second sense Abraham was a "Muslim" *avant la lettre,* still before "Islam" was constituted as a "religion" on its own different from other religions like Christianity and Judaism.[44] Hence we see the Prophet in Sura 2, 129

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[43] Obviously, the *unbelievers* among the offspring are not included into the promise. *They*, in the end, will see "the Fire and worst indeed is that destination" (Sura 2, 126).

[44] According to Nevo and Koren, *Crossroads to Islam,* 234, the latter did not happen before the 690s: "The term ´Islam`was first used by ´Abd al-Malik in the Dome of the Rock, 691." And for the technical term "Muslim" we learn, that it does not appear in any pre-´Abbasid Arabic texts, i.e., before 750, "including official inscriptions, popular graffiti, coins, and protocols." (Ibid., 234). However saying that still in late 7th century terms like *Muslims* and *Islam* "were not yet used by the Arabs themselves, let alone by onlookers" (Ibid., 234)

acting like a second Abraham, when *he*, Muhammad, grounded *his* Islam in time and space on Arabian soil by "instructing people in the Book"! On the other side, if we take "muslim" in the first, the literal meaning, *everyone* submitted to God's will would act like a "muslim" – which allows to speak of "anonymous Muslims" in a somehow similar way some Christian theologians coined the term "anonymous Christians".

The latter, indeed, might be an interesting thought regarding the possibilities of contemporary inter-religious dialogue. Yet the Qur'an draws above all from the Abraham-Muhammad relationship far reaching consequences with regard to the "validity" or "truthfulness"of the Islamic revelation! It does not only underline the continuity of the message of the Prophets throughout time and history – that all the Prophets preached the same truth, namely the tauhid (strict monotheism)[45], in which way the message of Abraham is linked to the message of Adam, the first Prophet on the level of creation (seen in Sura 30, 30). Rather, because

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does not mean in my opinion that there was not a group of "submissive" people around somewhere in the Syro-Arabian desert, practising holy wars and venerating some (monotheistic) High God in some particular sanctuary. In other words, we open here the Pandoras box of the highly controversial question about the identity of the Prophet Muhammad, did such a one exist, what is the nature of the Qur'an and similar questions all hotly debated! See Nevo and Koren, *Crossroads to Islam;* J. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford 1977); P. Crone (and M. Cook), *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge 1977); Ibn Warraq (ed., transl.). *What the Koran really says*; H. Motzki (and N. Boekhoff-van der Voort, S.W. Anthony), *Analysing Muslim Traditions. Studies in Legal, Exegetical and Maghazi Hadith*, Leiden (Boston 2010); etc.

[45] Sura 21,25: "And we did not sent any messenger before you but we revealed to him, saying: la ilaha illa Ana (There is no God except Me, Allah), so worship Me!". See too Th. Mooren, *Macht und Einsamkeit Gottes. Dialog mit dem islamischen Radikal Monotheismus* (Würzburg, Altenberge, 1991), 39.

Muhammad is qualified to act as "alter Abraham"[46] he is also qualified to authenticate *his own message as true,* since it *confirms* (musaddiq) all the messages proclaimed before him! Sura 5, 48: "We have sent down to you (Muhammad) the Book in truth confirming (musaddiq) that came before it...". Or Sura 2, 136:

> Say: oh Muslims! We believe in God and that what has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes (of Israel) and which has been given to Moses and Jesus and that which has been given to the prophets from the Lord. We make no distinction between any of them and to Him (God) we have submitted (nahnu lahu muslimuna).[47]

We are here in presence of a chain of transmission that resembles very much the theory of the "seven chairs" (hapta styloi) of the Judeo-Christians. There it is the "pneuma" that runs through a list of Prophets, e.g. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses – to finally rest upon Jesus.[48] Obviously, in Islam the final resting place for the "spirit of prophecy" is the *second* Abraham, the Prophet Muhammad himself, who consequently is not sent to any particular tribe or culture but to humankind itself, to all people (an-nas): "Say (Muhammad) to *humankind*: I am sent *to you all* as

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[46] Sura 3, 65: "Oh people of the scripture (Jews and Christians)! Why do you dispute about Ibrahim while the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Have you then no sense?"

[47] See too Sura 2, 140; 2, 285; 4, 54. See too Mooren, *Es gibt keinen Gott*, 81/2 and by the same author, "Unity in diversity," 91.

[48] See Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte...,* 105, and also ibid., 104-114, 335. – It is interesting that Mani too has a series that runs like this: Adam, Seth, Noah, Jesus, Buddha, Zarathustra, Mani. See Ibid., 335.

rasul Allah..." (Sura 7, 158)[49]

Once it has been established that Muhammad's "Book" is the very last, definitive confirmation of all the previous prophecies, the Qur'an can even concede to Jesus a role similar to the one the Prophet himself plays at the end of the chain of transmission, namely that the Gospel of Jesus confirms all previous messages. Yet it does this only for the Jews, to whom Jesus was sent. The Gospel was destined to confirm the Torah, so that Jews might become Christians. With the coming of Muhammad the gospel then receives the same treatment by Muhammad's Book as the Torah had received by the Gospel:

> ... We sent 'Isa (Jesus) son of Mary, confirming the Torah that had come before him. And we gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light and confirmation of the Torah, that had come before the Gospel.."(Sura 5, 46)

However, it is important to keep in mind that the chain of transmission with mutual confirmation only works under the condition that the prophetic message of all times ("there is no change in religion", Sura 30, 30) is the *same* – the tauhid, the strict radical monotheism as preached by the Qur'an. Nothing more, nothing less.[50] This, however, is not a question of historical research or critical exegesis, the result of painstaking comparison of texts and ideas, but a pure question of *faith*, namely of that faith that God has *revealed* (finally consigned in a

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[49] No wonder, then, that Islam is *the best* of all possible communities (Sura 3, 110). See too Mooren, *Macht*..., 50/1.

[50] What does not conform with Tauhid must be the result of some *falsification*! Since Abraham´s appearance and work in Mecca this includes also the ritual complex, through which the intellectual content of Tauhid expresses itself on the physical/bodily level.

"Book"[51]) this, and for all times *only* this: that He is one (Allahu ahad)!

With faith (iman) we have reached the core of what "being a muslim" means, the cornerstone that keeps all the actions of Ibrahim/Abraham and of the Prophets together. What really animated Abraham the "non-mushrik", the "hanif" and now the "muslim" is *iman*, faith. To live one's faith *is* the "being submissive" of the Suras we have encountered above (2, 128/9, 136 etc.); it means to have reached *Islam*! And who would not know about this other striking example of faith/Islam, namely the sacrifice of Abraham's son (Sura 37, 102-111[52])? In the end, Abraham is called for his deed "slave": "He was one of our believing slaves" (innahu min 'ibadina al-mu'minina, v. 111).[53]

Yet, even if we translate "´abd"/pl. "´ibad" with "servant" instead of "slave" – the language and the image of this "Islam" remain harsh. They evoke, rightly or wrongly, the idea of *blind* obedience, of an unquestioning submissiveness and boundless authoritarianism. However, nothing is farther away from the truth, even if this "truth" is often times avoided by those in power who ask exactly for this kind of "obedience", for this kind of authoritarian "Islam".

Instead of pointing towards the "obedience" of a corpse, the term "Islam" itself, in fact, opens a different

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[51] The only "tool", so to speak, of the revelation, and the only one Muhammad as "rasul" was in need of.

[52] "Authority and tradition being more or less equally divided" on the question, whether the son was Ishmael or Isaac. (Cf. N. Calder, "Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir. Problems in the description of the genre, illustrated with reference to the story of Abraham," in G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef [eds], *Approaches to the Qur´an*, London [New York 1993],101-140, 122).

[53] See too the begin of Sura 2, 124: "Remember, when the Lord of Ibrahim tried him with certain commands which he fulfilled..."

door.[54] It suggest that we submit only *after* having "run away" from something/someone *else*, broken with something/someone *else*, having turned the back away from a thing or a person, in order to submit *then* unto the intended goal. We are dealing with an act of "dissent", of *reflective* conscious negation and rejection of something or someone we do not want any longer, and only in second instance are we dealing with an act of embracing/submitting unto whatever the desired goal is. Whoever wants to translate "Islam" with peace – it is peace after *conflict*, or peace still in the orbit of conflict.[55] It is exactly what happened to Abraham when he found *his* peace, *his* Islam, namely in a conscious break away from the world of idolatry and polytheism[56], including the spiritual world of his own father whom he could not persuade to convert, i.e., to accept only one God.[57] It is peace like hot lava, where glowing fire, the conflict can still be felt!

I call these courageous actions undertaken by Abraham "Exodus-gestures" as a reminder of the Ur-text of all Abraham stories, namely the Old Testament. Therein Abram's/Abraham's break away from his old

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[54] "Islam" is the substantivated infinitive (Masdar) of "aslama" ,"muslim"the part.pass. of "aslama". "Aslama" itself represents the so-called causative form (IV form) of the root SLM (salima, to be safe and sound). Salima, however, if turned into the mentioned causative form "aslama", puts the meaning of safety upside down. It gives us the choice between "to forsake, leave, desert, give up, betray! (See Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic,* 424/5).

[55] See too Mooren, "Unity in diversity," 87/8 and: *Es gibt keinen Gott* ..., 84/5, note 224, furthermore "I do not adore...!", 65.

[56] See Sura 21, 52-70. In reaction to Abraham´s action the unbelievers want to burn him, v. 70; cf. too Sura 37, 87-98.

[57] Cf. Sura 6, 74; 9, 114; 19, 42-48; 21, 51/2; 26, 69; 37, 85; 60,4. – Abraham´s father tried to stone his son! (19, 46). The son tries to ask for forgiveness for his father (19, 47), but in vain! (9, 114; 19, 45). In the end, Abraham has to "free himself" from his father ("tabarra´a minhu, 60, 4).

world is described in a succinct but dramatic way (Gen 12, 1-4): "Yahweh said to Abram: 'leave your country and family, and your father's house for the land I will show you...' So Abram went as Yahweh called him... Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran."[58]

Obviously, many more stories could be told about the life of Abraham,[59] but the essential features of the fascinating character of the man Ibrahim have been revealed, above all how all three aspects, the non-mushrik, the Hanif and the Muslim constitute one organic whole. Yet this way we can also see why Abraham is interesting for our questioning the destiny of Islam as it was "decided" at the deathbed of Prophet Muhammad. The turn prophecy has taken in Sunnism in the wake of Abu Bakr's "God is alive, but Muhammad is dead!" – this turn and its fruits seem to be obvious today.

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[58] Quasi like an echo from far away, the collection "Stories of the Prophets" (qisas an-nabiyyina) has this to say about Abraham: "Abraham left his country behind and took leave of his father..." (wa haraja Ibrahim min baladi wa wadda´a walidahu). The goal if his "exodus", however, is dictated by Islam: "and he took off for Makka." (wa qasada Ibrahim makkata); Qisas, 22/3. – For the Exodus motive cf. too Mooren, "I do not adore...!", 65/6; "Unity in diversity," 87/88; "Your kingdom come!", 92-94.

[59] Ibn Abbas (d. between 687-689), a companion of the Prophet, tells us how Abraham´s father, a maker of idols sent out his son to sell them. But he sold none, since he advertised them saying: "Who will buy that which harms him and does not benefit him?" (See Wheeler, *Prophets in the Quran,* 89). – Ibn Ishaq embellishes the story of Sura 6, 74-79, how Abraham discovered the true One God after having mistaken him for a star, the moon and the sun successively. But when these celestial bodies vanished, Abraham´s faith in them vanished too. (Cf. Ibid., 85/6; also discussed from a metaphysical and dogmatic standpoint in Calder, "Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir," 115-120). – See many more examples in *Qisas an-nabiyyin*a, Ismailaga Sokak No. 10/2 Carsamba Fatih-Istanbul; Wheeler, etc. See also below the discussion of the three lies of Abraham).

Did the progressive disappearance of the person of the Prophet from the picture of the revelation[60] not produce an ever deeper stiffening of the message into an edifice of legalistic bricks and mortar, thus in turn facilitating a mere "ideologization", politization and exploitation of Islam in favor of newly created Caliphs, Emirs, kings and Field Marshals?

Yet, there still exists the memory of Ibrahim, a true prophet, a true Nabi (Sura 19, 41), who is alive for us because of his unfading, unfaltering *faith*! A faith that courageously combines inner conviction and public action, prophecy *and* holiness – in the name of the ONE, who called him out, faithful to the Ur-model of Gen 12, 1-4! For this reason, and for this reason alone, Islam declared him rightly *khalil Allah*, God's *intimate* friend! (Sura 4, 125: "wa ahadza Allah Ibrahim khalilan", "God took Ibrahim as intimate friend"[61]!)

No other Prophet received a similar title![62] Moses is

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[60] Again we are not dealing here with the different features of so-called "popular Islam" from Pakistan to Africa via Indonesia and India, but of Islam´s "orthodox" "scriptural" version!

[61] In *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic,* 252, Wehr gives for "khalil": "friend, bosom friend, lover". One can see which direction of intimacy the Verb "khalla" takes, hence "khalla" also means: "to salt", "to cure with salt" – and the paramount importance of salt in the Orient (and elsewhere) is well known!

[62] Some theologians, however, could not accept such great particular status for Abraham. Calder, "Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir," 108-110, discusses the case of al-Qurtubi (d. 1272), lawyer, exegete and theologian born in Andalusia (Cordoba; see Sourdel and Sourdel, *Dictionnaire historique de l´Islam,* 694/5). At stake was the sinlessness of Prophets – and Abraham had lied three time in his life: thus "... he certainly compromised himself and betrayed to a degree his high status. From this Qurtubi infers that the status of *khalil* was not achieved in its perfect form by any prophet prior to the prophet Muhammad." (Calder, 109). Thus, in the eyes of this theologian it could not be that khalil belonged exclusively to Abraham. – With regard to the "lies" of Abraham there circulated however the following hadith: "The Prophet of God said: ´Abraham

called "kalimat Allah", the Word of God; David God's Representative ("khalif"); Jesus God's Spirit ("ruh") and Muhammad evidently God's "rasul", His final "Envoy".[63] All theses "titles" are precious and express a specific uniqueness, in particular "rasul Allah" (not only any "nabi" or prophet, but the *final* one, sent to *all* humankind) – but none of them reaches the level of spiritual warmth and intimacy of a khalil, of an intimate *Friend*!

Conclusion

> An honest religious thinker is like a tightrope walker. He almost looks as though he were walking on nothing but air. His support is the slenderest imaginable. And yet it really is possible to walk on it.
>
> (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*)

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did not lie, save three lies, two with respect to God (fi dhat Allah), namely saying "I am sick" and "This big one did it"; and one with respect to Sarah, namely his saying "She is my sister" `. (Calder 107). However, it turns out, that all three lies where of "tactical nature". "I am sick" (Sura 37, 89) was said by Abraham in order to be left behind in a procession, i.e., to be left alone, so that he could better destroy the idols. Sura 21, 63 ("the big one did it") refers to a big idol, which should have been able to defend itself against the accusation, uttered by Abraham, that he had broken the smaller idols into pieces. But the big one remained speechless, unable to defend itself and *that* was the proof Abraham needed to demonstrate the uselessness of idols! (See Sura 21, 57-70). The lie concerning Sarah refers to the well known story of Gen 20, 7, where Abraham saves his skin by declaring Sarah to be his sister. Had he said that Sarah was his wife, king Abimelech of Gerar would have killed Abraham, in order to be able to "take" his wife Sarah.

[63] For "khalil" see too "Khalil Allah": *http: //www. salahallah. com/english/15-ibrahim-friend-khalil-allah; http://www.answering-islam.org/Books/Wherry/Commentary2/ ch4.htm; http://www.answering-islam.org/Gilchrist/Vol2/4a.html; https://.www. google.ca/?gws_rd=cr&ei=y78jWI3EJKHUjwSOqbzgBA#q =explanation+khalil+in+Koran+surah+4+vers+125&nfpr=1.*

Intrigued by the possibility that the figure of Ibrahim/Abraham might reveal itself as a potential link between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, we had to clarify who the Abraham of Islam really is. The question that now, after due investigation, arises is the following: is the thoroughly islamized Abraham the Qur'an presents us, nevertheless still capable to fulfill the role of a common link – or has he become too "strange" for being useful for any successful interreligious dialogue? What does the Abraham who constructs Mecca and institutes the rituals around the Kaaba has in common with the Abraham of the Old or the New Testament, in particular with the extremely complex theological speculation attached to his person e.g. in Paul's letter to the Romans? Seen under this angle the disparities between the different "Abrahams" seem almost too huge for functioning as a common "denominator"! We are reminded of Wittgenstein's question: "How do I know that two people mean the same when each says he believes in God?"[64]

I hope, however, that a closer look is able to convince us of the contrary. Hence in all three traditions, the Jewish, the Christian and the Islamic version, Abraham is the "Father of Faith"! Faith understood as a *radical* trust in God. Faith concentrated in what I have called

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[64] L. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* (ed. G.H. von Wright; H. Nyman), transl. Peter Winch, University of Chicago Press [German: *Vermischte Bemerkungen* 1977, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt/M], 85e. — For the Islam-Christian dialogue, by the way, Wittgenstein's question is of fundamental importance given the fact that at the bottom of each dialogue this one question is lying in waiting: whether (what is commonly called) "God" is really the "correct" equivalent to (the qur'anic) "Allah". For example, should one say that the Qur'an is "God's" or "Allah's" word? The first statement settles the Qur'an into an *existential realm* ("Lebenswelt") that is close to the Christian "religious feeling"; while the second does not.

the "Exodus-gesture" – in Islamic terms the "hijra", the "haraja Ibrahim min baladihi"[65]: the Abraham, who left behind his country, his father, his culture, the "polytheism" of his homeland. It is this "hijra" that all three "monotheistic" religions acknowledge in Abraham. The difference then lies in this: the theology of the Qur'an does not only invite us to *have faith* like Abraham, but also to have faith *like* Abraham, in the sense that we are invited to imitate *his* rituals, actions etc., at the places *he* has chosen.[66] The *initial ignition*, to use this term of the world of auto-motion, is comparable in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The *direction* this initial ignition entails each time is different.

We could say: for the Jews a *country* is waiting, for the Muslims a common *ritual complex*, the Hajj etc., and a country only in so far as a place, a religious space for this ritual complex is needed – and for the Christians no country at all is waiting, only that amount of land that is necessary to erect a cross![67] Because of these differences any dialogue should concentrate on the initial ignition of the journey, the "explosion" of faith, so to speak, and less on the results of the journey in their often bewildering differences! For it is, in last analysis, only the authenticity, the power and authority of the initial ignition of faith that carries us through all adversities – everyone in a specific, unique way – to what I propose to be the one common goal: the *friendship with God!*

It is amazing how readily the Muslim commentator

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[65] Qisas, 22.

[66] See for this Mooren, *Es gibt keinen Gott*, 90.

[67] That is, if we follow the Pauline justification theology which draws heavily on the "cross" as counterpart to Abraham's "sola fide" ("faith alone")! See for this Mooren, "I do not adore...!", 50/1.

of Sura 4, 125 in the Internet[68] embraces this same goal. Firstly he states:

> Musa (Moses) was a man who suffered great trials in life. Yet he remained faithful to Allah. And Musa was blessed to see Allah, the record says "face to face". Musa was also a friend of Allah. (Taurat) Exodus, 33,11... Another man who was a Khalil of Allah was Daniel the Prophet... (Taurat) Daniel 10, 11... See also Daniel 9, 33; 10, 19. Then we have a man named "Enoch". (Taurat) Genesis 5, 24: 'And Enoch walked with God... and he was not; for God... took him.' So close did Enoch walk with Allah that He finally took him to Himself.

By drawing exclusively his examples from the Old Testament the commentator easily increases the number of God's friends – as if the closeness to God he invokes were in Islam a reality that goes without saying.[69] Secondly, he asks the decisive question: how does one become the friend of Allah? Answer:

> Is this an impossible task? No, or else none of the human family would have been titled such. Therefore we ought to strive to be among the

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[68] See http://www.*salahallah.com/english/15-ibrahim-friend-khalil-allah*.

[69] Remember only how hard some mystics in Islam had to fight for the "right" to have God as "friend". See Mooren, *Macht*, 329-338. – The "closeness" that is easily acceptable in the Qur'an is related to God the Creator (Sura, 50, 16): "And indeed we have created man, and We know what his ownself whispers to him. And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein." Not for nothing the Saudi interpretation of the Qur'an adds "by Our knowledge", meaning that we are close to God and he to us because he *knows* us – which is not the same as the closeness of the khalil Allah.

> friends (khalil) of Allah. But how? We simply need to look into the lives of those who have gone before us to secure that title 'khalil' or 'greatly beloved'.[70]

If this is really so simple as the commentator makes it look like is another question. Yet the result of the commentator's approach as far as dialogue is concerned is obvious. We certainly have immediately gained here a common platform of interest for all three "monotheistic" religions, namely *striving for God's friendship*. The dialogue can thus concentrate on questions like these: what is the nature of God's friendship with humanity? What is its "content", so to speak; and if friendship is really an avenue that brings us closer to the mystery of God, what kind of striving is then requested of the human being?

Within this context it might be useful as for the Jewish angle of the question, that an Abraham, friend of God, can also be found in Qumran. The *Zadokite document* states:

> Abraham, however, did not walk in this way (that of the sons of Noah who went astray). Therefore because he kept the commandments of God and did not prefer the desires of his own spirit, he was accounted the Friend of God and transmitted this status in turn to Isaac and Jacob.[71]

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[70] See http://www.*salahallah.com/english/15-ibrahim-friend-khalil-allah*.

[71] Quoted after E.R. Bishop, "The Qumran Scrolls and the Qur'an," in Ibn Warraq, *What the Koran really says,* 251-167, 254. It is noteworthy that the Ishmael line of Abraham is not mentioned here.

That is not so far away from Sura 4, 125, although totally reformulated within the Islamic context:

> And who can be better in religion than one who submits his face to God... and follows the religion of Abraham the Hanif. And God did take Abraham as friend.

Qumran and Islam insist that Abraham's friendship status includes not only the orthodoxy but equally embraces orthopraxy – as by the way does also the letter of James (not worthy to be part of the canon of the New Testament in the eyes of Luther) in 2:23-24: Abraham is God's friend because he is also a man of works and not of faith alone!

If we turn now to the Old Testament for Abraham as God's friend we are up for a surprise, if we follow the groundbreaking study by Goshen-Gottstein in this matter. The surprise lies in the fact that what is commonly translated by "friend" as in Is. 41, 8 should really be translated by *lover*!:

> But you, Israel, my servant,
> Jacob, whom I have chosen,
> the offspring of Abraham my friend...

Goshen-Gottstein comments: "We just have to face the statement that for the first time in the Bible one particular figure is termed God's *'ohebh*."[72] Given the fact that we are dealing here with an active participle of the root "´hb", "to love", the "´ohebh" as such "conveys the sense of relationship from actor to goal."[73] Hence it is Abraham who carries his love *towards* God, and it is

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[72] M. Goshen-Gottstein, "Abraham – Lover or Beloved of God," in Marks and Good, *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East,* 102.

[73] Ibid., 101.

"rather our own sense of language that prevents us from speaking of Abraham as the 'lover of God'."[74]

In other words: "Perhaps *'ohebh* was largely neutralized already in biblical Hebrew, meaning little more than 'friend'..."[75]. Too strong is the idea, as also in Qur'an and Qumran, that the relationship God-man is always one of election with God taking the initiative, God taking Abraham as "friend".

That the human being takes the initiative, the active role and expresses *its* yearning, caring, shortly *its* love for God seemed (and still seems) to break the canon, the rule and the norm! If Goshen-Gottstein's study makes sense, then we are up for a totally new challenge as daughters and sons of Abraham – a challenge by the way entirely compatible with Jesus' saying, that God is not the God of the dead but of he living *as God of Abraham*, Isaac and Jacob (cf. Mt 22, 32, Mk 12, 26, Lk 20, 38), i.e., the challenge not so much to preach and accept that God loves us, but whether *we are really ready to love God*![76]

Those who are of the opinion that there is too much of *Pelagius* in this position might consult the pleading in favor of *Pelagius* in Forthomme Nicholson's *Celtic Theology*;[77] or we can go back to Aristotle's view on the

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[74] Ibid., 101.

[75] Ibid., 101.

[76] Symbolically speaking, this would just be the counterpart, the opposite pole of the original meaning of the name "Abraham" in Akkadian language: ab(i)ram: my Father (God) loves, according to Akkadian "ramu/menu", to love. Thus, the circle would be closed! – (For ab(i) ram see too 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, Israel et le christiansme* (Paris 1978), [Inst. Cath., thèse dactyolgr.], 2vol., 40, 296).

[77] M. Forthomme Nicholson, "Celtic Theology: Pelagius," in J.P. Mackey, (ed), *Introduction into Celtic Christianity* (Edinburgh, 1989), 386-413.

superior delight of loving – "[f]or loving, *not* being loved, is the dream of the finest friend and the most energetic mother."[78]

God wants to be loved *by us* instead of being permanently accused because of wars, catastrophes, sickness, old age and death![79] One result of our investigation into Abraham, the friend of God, would thus be a challenge addressed in our post-post modernist time to all three religions, to those who pretend to embrace the heritage of this extraordinary figure of the Near East: do we really care about God? Do we want him in our life? Do we really – in spite of wars, violence and the often hopeless outlook history prepares for us – still want to be God's *friends* in the strong sense of God *lovers*?

Annex
Criteria for the imamate

On the previous pages we have discussed among other things the possible synthesis or synergia between holiness and prophecy. At that occasion we were confronted with the Shi'ite requirements regarding their imams – going so far as including ismat, "sinlessness". Yet, we have also seen that these spiritual "gifts" were

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[78] According to the presentation of Aristotle´s view on love in D. Farell Krell, "A small number of houses in a universe of tragedy: notes on Aristotle´s *peri poietikes* and Hölderlin´s '*Anmerkungen',"* in M. de Beistegui and S. Sparks (eds), *Philosophy and Tragedy* (London, New York 2000), 88-116, 94 (italics by ThM).

[79] See too within this context — which also does not turn away from what could be called God's "weaknesses" — Ruhstorfer's pleading for a *new theology*: "The God we need is the God that needs us"! (K Ruhstorfer, *Der Gott, den wir brauchen. Christsein in neuen Konstellationen*, in Ruhstorfer, K, (ed), *Das Ewige im Fluss der Zeit. Der Gott, den wir brauchen* [Freiburg, Basel, Wien 2016] (QD 280), 113-133, 120, my translation).

embedded into a complicated genealogical network.

However, human nature being what it is, it is by no means certain that genealogical criteria alone could produce the spiritual synthesis between mind and matter, body and spirit, or holiness and the conduct of daily life. In other words, if one had to choose between a good man or a bad man – what would be the prevailing attribute, external (genealogical) qualification – being a father, son or uncle etc. of a previous imam – or moral goodness?

In the following lines we witness a discussion that wrestles exactly with this question in the name *knowledge*. In case there are many candidates qualified by birth, can knowledge be the decisive factor in obtaining the imamate? Indeed, knowledge in itself, like being a well educated specialist of the law, is certainly a good thing, but how good is it when it comes to compete with other attributes that also qualify for the obtainment of the imamate? That is what we will see in the following discussion taken from the *Tathbit al-imama*, the "Establishment of the imamate", text attributed to the Fatimid Caliph-Imam al- Mansur (946-953/H334-341).[80]

The paragraph we have chosen begins with a question directed at the dialogue partners/opponents of the author of the Tathbit: "Tell us about the role of knowledge ['an al-fiqhi]!" — and this not in a general sense, but with regard to one specific question: "Is knowledge an attribute [min al-ma'ani] thanks to which the right to the imamate, i.e., the claim to be entitled to the imamate ['adl al-imamat] could be sustained [yastahhiqu]?" What is, if the answer is affirmative?:

"And if they say 'yes' [qala na'am], the next question

[80] See S. Makarem's edition and translation, Arabic text p. 93 (Arabic counting), English text p. 94. For our translation, see text in quotation marks, the Arabic text being in brackets!

addressed to them should be: 'Is it allowed to invest [yuwalli] a person of knowledge [faqih] that is *not* God-fearing [laisa biwari'i] with the imamate?'"

If the answer is "no" [la], meaning that is not possible, the next question should then be, why they think this is the case, given, on the other side, the adamant necessity of knowledge for obtaining the imamate: "If knowledge is the item thanks to which the imamate can be rightfully claimed [yastahhaqu] must it then not be transferred [tawliya] to the one *with* knowledge, even if that one is *not* God-fearing?"

One smells the trap. Thus it is time now, to present the opponent with an alternative. Let us take a candidate who indeed is not qualified for the obtainment of the imamate if one envisage the criterion of knowledge, i.e., a candidate *without* knowledge, who, however, on the other side, has all what is needed in the matter of *piety* – would he obtain the imamate? If so, that would prove one thing: piety is a more valuable asset than knowledge, namely *absolutely* indispensable! Here is what the text says:

> Given that on the other hand it is religious piety through which a man can assert his claim to the imamate [kana al wara'a huwa alladhi yustahhaqu bihi al-imamat], should he not obtain it [falan yastahhiqu al-imamat] — regardless of another person *with* knowledge [faqih] but who is *not* God-fearing [laisa biwara'i]?

And here comes the conclusion: yes! Meaning: "It is established [thabata] that the pious/the God-fearing [wari'u] can claim the imamate whether he is a person with knowledge [faqih] *or* without it [ghaira faqihi].

This settles the question of *priority* among those ingredients necessary for the obtainment of the

imamate. However, with all respect for the paramount importance of piety versus knowledge, or religion versus reason – an imamate based upon piety alone would be far from being an ideal solution. Yes. It is true that "knowledge should not go for the imamate unless it is accompanied by religious piety [hatta yakun ma'ahu al-wara'u]", but also piety should not go for it alone, since "the two, (piety *and* knowledge together), constitute a whole [walakin bihuma jamiran]".

Therefore the best chance for obtaining the imamate, or the most fertile, reasonable ground for claiming it, lies in a combination of both: religion *and* reason, i.e., "when a religious person is also a person of knowledge [kana wari'an faqihan]".

And this is how it should be in all sectors of life, and in particular when it comes to the interplay between prophecy and holiness!